



# Silas

**Author:** *Liza Bee*

**Category:** Romance, Paranormal

**Description:** She thought moving to a small town would be easy until she met Silas.

**Nova**

I have lived my entire life in New York City, dreaming of the day I could move to a small mountain town. A new job in Jasper, CO, launched my new life, only to be met by Silas, the grumpiest person ever. He won't be able to prevent me from fulfilling my dream of living here. His hatred fueled a fire in me, a defiant joy in proving him wrong.

**Silas**

The day the city girl moved to town, my life was ruined. Not only is she new here, but she is my mate. The problem? She is human. I don't have time to deal with the upcoming mating heat when I have to worry about the debt to the Ghost River Pack. Now, if I could only stop the meddling of Gail, the matriarch of our pack, I would be golden.

Rocky Mountain Pack is a cozy shifter romance with spice. The series is full of cozy warm feelings and a meddling grandmother. Each book features a new couple and is interconnected to the other books in the series.

**Total Pages (Source):** 43

# Page 1

*Source Creation Date: July 19, 2025, 2:22 am*

## Prologue

“This motherfucker has got to die. He is being more of a harm to our pack than any sort of benefit,” I say, fuming to my best friend, Warrick.

“I know what you mean, man, but let’s be real. If anyone is going to take down the standing alpha, its gotta be you, man. There isn’t another strong enough wolf to take him on,” Warrick says as he shrugs his shoulders.

He’s too strong for me. What in the world has given you that impression?” I say in shock.

“With pack members ready to follow you, having doubled in size, and the establishment of the Alpha bark, I would say. I can’t imagine that you haven’t noticed all of this?” Warrick shrugs.

“Well, yeah, but I just never imagined that I would be an alpha or that I would challenge the alpha for his position. Simply existing and enjoying our full moon runs was enough for me.”

“Either you defeat the alpha, or we’ll face Orion’s destruction of our pack. At the pace he is going, we will look for a new pack sooner rather than later.” Warrick says matter-of-factly.

“You have a point. I will think about it.”

“Just know that I support whatever decision you make. I am your best friend.

Everything else comes after that,” Warrick says as he places his hand on my shoulder.

“Thank you for that. I am going to head back to my cabin and really consider everything. I will get back to you soon.”

“See you later, man.”

Turning, I headed toward my cabin at the rear of all the pack houses. I preferred pack closeness but wanted a bit more personal space than sleeping near another packmate. It’s a beautiful 1800 sq ft log cabin built from the trees surrounding the pack land. We always plant new trees for every tree that we cut down for building pack buildings. This replanting is why dozens and dozens of trees surround our land. There is nothing more peaceful than smelling the crisp, clean mountain air and the warm aspen scent floating through the air.

Walking into my cabin, I shrug out of my thick navy jacket and hang it by the front door on the hooks lining the entryway. Rubbing my boots through the boot brush to keep the soil and snow from outside off of my wood floors, I toe off each boot and place them neatly on the shoe rack beneath the coat hooks. Hooking my house keys on the row of hooks full of keys. There isn’t much of a need for a vehicle in pack land, with everything being within walking distance and the town isn’t more than a ten-minute walk. We all have a vehicle for grocery trips and things of that nature.

I need whiskey quickly. Heading over to my wet bar, I flick on the electric fireplace. Don’t judge me, it is a lot less work than maintaining a fire all night long. I grab a crystal glass and the silver tongs. I drop a few cubes of ice into the glass and pour three fingers of single barrel malt whiskey. That first sip always burns on the way down, but after that, it just goes down smoothly.

Am I really ready to take on Orion for the spot of Alpha? This will be more than just a fight to see who’s the better fighter or who gets knocked down first. This is a fight

to the death. What happens if I lose?

Am I really willing to risk losing everything, hoping I can take him down for good? I don't think that I can keep sitting here watching him take this pack down to the dirt. Like Warrick said, if I don't do it, then who will?

The best time for me to challenge him will be the full moon. When is that? It has to be coming up soon. I can feel my wolf itching to take a run. He usually isn't this restless unless the full moon is coming. Opening my cell phone, I pull up the search drive and look at the Lunar calendar. It looks like the next full moon is in two days. I guess it's now or never then.

It's the night of the full moon. I can't take back what I am about to do, but it's time to put this tyrant in the ground, literally. "Orion, I challenge you for the role of Alpha." There is a collective gasp from the pack as everyone turns to face me. We were all heading into the woods for our monthly pack run. It is the only good thing that he did for our pack. I will at least give him that.

"Is that so, pup? You think your balls have dropped enough to challenge me? Who do you even think you are?"

Puffing up my chest and standing to my full height, "I am the man who is going to not only strip you of your role but of your life as well."

"Well, alright then, you know the rules. It has to be done inside the circle of our pack members, no outside influences, such as a best friend jumping in to save you, and it has to be done in wolf form. Wolf against wolf till death. Are you sure you are ready for this?"

"Let's go. Your time has ended."

With whoops and jeers coming from the pack as they all shift into a circle around us, I strip myself of my clothes. Warrick comes over and claps me on the back. “You got this man. Wouldn’t have suggested it if I didn’t think that you could take him down.” I dip my head to him as he walks over to join the rest of the circle. I hand off my clothes to Gail, our pack matriarch. She is one of our elders and most cherished members. She winks at me, giving me one of her warm smiles. “You are the chosen one. Claim what is yours by destiny.”

I turn around towards Orion who is bouncing up and down like he is some professional boxer preparing for a match. He is shaking out his arms and acting as if he is popping his neck from side to side. He looks completely ridiculous given that we never fight in our human forms.

I bring my wolf to the surface, allowing him to take over. It will never not be the strangest sensation. One minute you are standing there as a human and then the next you are a wolf on all fours. My deep gray fur sprouts along my arms and my claws spring from my nails. The first crack of my back is when I fully allow Storm to take over. The next time I blink open my eyes, I am looking through the eyes of Storm. It’s like sitting in a dark room, but I can hear his thoughts and feel his feelings. I have no control over what he does, which is why we allow our wolves to fight. It is truly a battle of which is the more powerful wolf.

I watch as Orion shifts into his wolf, Onyx. It is really happening. Here we go. The wolves won’t waste time with pleasantries. My wolf has been ready to go since Warrick put the thought into our minds. We circle each other without losing eye contact. Who will jump first?

Onyx takes his chance and whips around and runs directly at us. Storm easily dodges the attack by rolling in the opposite direction and springs back up, ready to make our own lunge. Before we can spring back up, Onyx is on us, swiping his paws at our face. His right paw catches my eyebrow as he swipes down my face, causing a huge

gash to open up and pouring blood into our eye. Storm places his paws under the belly of Onyx and shoves up, causing Onyx to fall off us. Springing to our feet, Storm shakes his head to clear the blood from his eye. It's no use. We won't be able to do anything until our healing begins. We need to figure out a way to surprise attack him.

Onyx turns to run towards us again. Storm quickly flicks his paw, causing dirt to fly into Onyx's eyes. He shakes his head, trying to dislodge the dirt. Lowering his head towards his paws to swipe the dirt out, Storm takes this chance to aim for his neck. Clamping down on his neck, Storm releases the toxins from his canines as he clamps down harder. Onyx is thrashing, attempting to break the hold that Storm has on him, but it's no use now. Once Storm released the toxins, it immediately began working. Wolf bites are toxic to other wolves if the wolf biting drops his/her toxin. Onyx slows down in his movements and Storm pulls on his neck away from his shoulders. Onyx whimpers as Storm continues to pull. There is a loud ripping sound, and Storm separates the head from the neck. It's over...we won.

We are the new Alpha of the Smoky Mountain Pack.

Chapter 1

## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: July 19, 2025, 2:22 am*

Nova

Shocked with my achievement, I grasp my college degree in my hand. I am officially a teacher! I didn't think that I would ever get here, but here we are! Ready to begin my next chapter, I crack open my laptop to check on the applications for different teaching jobs I applied for. I applied all over the country, allowing the job to choose where I am going next. All I know is that I am over being in the big city and I am quite ready to see where this is going to take me.

Bing, my computer, chimes with an incoming message.

I see the header of the email in the right-hand corner of my computer. Thank you for selecting Rock Stream Elementary.

Clicking the email, hoping that this is an acceptance letter, my mouth drops open when I read the content. We are excited to offer you a position as our kindergarten teacher for the Spring Term of 2025. Consider this a trial period to see how you do in the small town setting with a smaller class. We would love to see you here before December 15th to give you the grand tour and sign some paperwork. If you accept this position, please fill out this digital acceptance letter and email it back to us. We look forward to meeting you! Sincerely, Principal Truman.

I can't believe it! This is really happening! I quickly sign the acceptance letter and email it back to them. I looked up the location to find that it is a small town of Jasper, Colorado, with a population of around 2000. Holy shit, that is a small town compared to what I have been living in my whole life. I can't wait to head out, but first I am going to have to break the news to my bestie Nellie. She is probably going to be

really mad at me, but here we are.

“Knock, Knock...Bish, you better be dressed because I am coming in, and you know I love a good set of titties.”

Giggling, I say, “Girl, get your ass in here with the wine. I have the bottle opener and glasses already!”

“Damn girl, you really ready for me? Alright, spill it because you are never this prepared for when I come over. Normally I find you nose deep in a book and missing that the entire hour has gone by.”

“I will tell you as soon as we pop that cork and pour the wine. So bali bali get it!”

“Alright, alright,” she pops the cork on the Chardonnay and pours both of us a healthy serving, “spill the beans, lady. You have your wine now, cough it up.”

“I have accepted a position as a kindergarten teacher at Rock Stream Elementary in Jasper, Colorado,” I rush out, hoping she doesn’t murder me.

I look up from my wine to find her sitting there with her mouth ajar. I think I might have broken her.

“Okay, okay. That wasn’t exactly what I expected you to say, but it’s not terrible. When do you have to be there?” She says as she takes a sip from her wine.

“See, this next piece of news is the part that you will not like. They would like me to be there by December 15th for an orientation of sorts and to complete the paperwork before the winter break. I know that is really soon, but I have been ready to move long before I even graduated. This is exactly what I was looking for. I want the slow, quiet life a small town offers with a quaint little classroom with 10 to 12 students



versus the hustle and bustle of the city life. I don't want to work in a school full of snotty teens or spoiled children. While I know that is still a risk even in a small town, I just know that it is a lot less likely to happen. I want to be somewhere I can watch these kids grow into adults and have their own children someday as well."

"I know you have been counting down your days to move away from here. New York City would never be your long-term home. I am going to miss the hell out of you, but I fully support your decision. Who knows, maybe you will convince me to move down there too."

"I don't know that I will ever be able to do that, but it won't stop me from trying for sure. I love youuuusss."

"I love youuusss too. Well, now that we have that out of the way, let's relax and watch the latest Christmas romance movies. I don't know when we will do that again."

"Let's do it!"

After finalizing on the cutest little cottage a few days later, having the movers come in to pack not long after, and belongings shipping out this morning, it is finally time to head to Jasper! I am a bundle of nerves, but this is going to be great. The realtor said I was welcome to come any day to move in!

Throughout the entire almost four-hour flight from NYC, I am researching different ways I would love to decorate my new home. Nothing too wild like DIY Demo, but paint colors and the aesthetic I would like to have. I am busy pinning images to my idea board when the Captain dings the announcement button.

We will land in Denver, Colorado, in a few moments. Please buckle your seat belts, stow your large devices, and put up all the tray tables.

It's time! The descent of the plane triggers a rush of nerves in my stomach that I've been trying to ignore. I really hope that this turns out to be everything I have dreamed of and not a huge mistake.

Welcome to Denver, Colorado. The current forecast is 42 degrees and partly cloudy. Thank you for choosing to fly with us.

This is it. There is no going back now! I can't wait to see my cottage and meet people in town.

After an almost hour taxi drive, the GPS chimes that we are only a few moments away from our destination. Rolling my window down, I take in the surrounding view. Wow, this quaint little town is so peaceful; you can hear the gentle sounds of birds chirping and a nearby stream flowing. The gentle giggles of a group of girls floats across the air. I glimpse what appears to be a diner. I will have to check it out later.

Before too long, the taxi pulls to a stop in front of my cottage with its white shutters and light blue siding. I knew I would be close to downtown; I didn't realize I would be within walking distance. Thanking the taxi driver, I take my first breath of mountain fresh air and sigh in contentment.

Opening the front door, I roll my suitcase inside. Gosh, the house is so much cuter in person. I can't wait to fill it with all my furniture and belongings, really making it mine. Even without a single item of my belongings, it already feels more like home than any of my New York City apartments ever did.

Since I don't have any of my belongings and definitely can't cook anything. I think I should explore the town and see what I can find to have for dinner. There was that diner I saw on the drive in. I realized, upon glancing at my cell phone, that cell service would clearly be an issue here. A quick google search shows that the diner's name is You're Bacon Me Crazy. What a hilarious name for a restaurant. It shows

that it is only a five-minute walk from my house.

Wrapping myself up with my coat and a scarf, I take off to explore the town. I love that this town is full of such old world charm and that they haven't modernized it. Beautiful rose bushes and old-fashioned street lamps, which look like they have candles inside, line the street, offering a last display of color before winter sets in. There are all kinds of unique little shops lining the street that I can't wait to explore further. There is a coffee shop, thank goodness for that, called Flick the Bean. This town sure knows how to name their businesses. I can't quit giggling over their names. Walking along the sidewalk, I follow the smells of baked goods. I stumble across the source of the smell. I find myself in front of the window of the bakery, Cinnamon Buns Alot. Giggling, I keep exploring.

## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: July 19, 2025, 2:22 am*

There are so many places that I can't wait to walk through. I have the distinct feeling that these are locally owned and operated. Something I rarely experienced before. A cool breeze, carrying the scent of wood-smoke and frying bacon, cuts through the air, pulling my coat tighter as I quicken my pace toward the diner's warm glow.

The restaurant is bustling with activity at eight o'clock at night. Opening the door, I am greeted by the hostess asking how many. I hold up my finger, signaling that it's only one. She nods and walks me over to my table, handing me the menu. I couldn't stop giggling; the food names were so silly and cute, each one more delightful than the last. I mean Stuffed & Creamed French Toast? I love that they have so much fun with their names.

I feel the presence of someone beside me as I flip through the menu. Looking up, I find the sweetest looking older woman. She looks like everyone's grandmother. I immediately feel at ease in her presence.

She gives me the warmest smile, "Welcome to You're Bacon Me Crazy. My name is Gail. I will be your server tonight."

A smile graces my face. "Hi Gail. My name is Nova."

Her smile never falters. "Well, hello Nova. It's lovely to meet you. I don't think I've seen you before. Did you just move to town or only passing through?" she asks.

I dip my head down. "Is it that obvious?" I feel my face warm with embarrassment.

"Well dear, I've been living here my entire life. I have watched almost every child

grow up and every young couple find love. I don't think there is a soul in this town that I haven't met yet. That makes you a fresh face to get to know."

"That makes so much sense. Yes, I am new to town. I literally just got here twenty minutes ago. I bought the blue cottage on Aspen Street."

"Ah yeah, I saw that it no longer had the for sale sign in front of it. I was waiting for the owner to show themselves. Well, it's a pleasure to meet you, Nova. Do you know what you would like to drink?"

"Oh yeah, can I have the hot chocolate? Do you happen to have peppermint to add to it?"

Chuckling, she pulls out her notepad. "Ah, yes, we can do that for you. Would you like whipped cream and chocolate shavings too?"

"Seriously?! Hell yeah, I will take those too! You are a woman after my heart already!"

"I will mentally note down that food is the way to your heart. Especially, chocolate and whip cream. Take a moment to look over the menu while I put in your drink order. I'll be back shortly." She smiles as she turns away.

Opening my menu back up, I scan through all the options. There are so many items I would die to try, especially their take on cheesecake. Running my finger along the menu, I spot made from scratch waffles with whipped cream and sliced strawberries. I know that it's dinnertime, but damn, that sounds amazing.

It doesn't take long for Gail to come back with my steamy cup of hot cocoa. She places it in front of me and I almost melt into a puddle right there. It's beautiful. A gorgeous swirl of fluffy whipped cream, covered with shaved chocolate, and little

wisps of steam rise above it.

“What do you think?”

I smile up at her. “It’s perfect.”

“I’m glad you love it. So, Nova, what brings you to our tiny mountain town?”

“Uh, I accepted the Kindergarten teacher's job at Rock Stream Elementary. I just graduated and wanted to find a place far from the hustle and bustle of New York City. So here I am trying out this new adventure.”

“We are glad to have you here. Did you decide what you would like to order for dinner?”

Giggling softly, “don’t judge me, but I want the Waffles with whipped cream and strawberries.”

“No judgment from me. Breakfast for dinner is always a choice in my book. Alright, I am going to put your order in but if you need anything,” scribbles and rips a paper, “be sure to call me anytime. Even if you just need someone to give you a tour around town.”

“That is so sweet of you. Thank you.”

Hours later, laying in bed, listening to the crickets chirp, the wind howling, and the quiet, I realize the biggest change to small town living will be getting used to the lack of sound that comes with big city living. New York City is known for being the town that never sleeps and you will never find a moment that is quiet enough to hear the wind howl.

Howl.

Shooting up in my air mattress, my heart is racing. What was that? Howl. Is that a wolf? Is it normal for them to be this close to town? I know I moved to a mountain town, but I can't imagine that it's normal for a wolf to be this close to houses. Shifting to place my feet on the ground, I hear the howl once again and pop out of the bed. Wrapping my robe around myself, I slip my feet into my slippers, snatch my phone from beside my pillow, and flick on the flashlight feature. It's a joke of a flashlight, but it's the best I can do without any of my belongings with me. I pad my way over to my back door and crack it open.

Swiping my phone back and forth, I look out towards the back part of my property to see if I can see the wolf. With how close that howl was, I would have expected to see the wolf standing in my backyard. I see a flash of white towards the back corner of my property by the largest fir tree. Glancing into the shadows, I see a pair of piercing blue eyes staring back at me. "Argh!" I rush back inside and lock every lock on the door. I rushed around the house, the floorboards creaking beneath my feet, double and triple checking each lock.

I couldn't believe it—a wolf, so close to my house; I could almost smell its musky scent. Settling into life here is proving to be quite a process. I didn't have "wolf as possible pet" on my Bingo board for this year, that's for sure.

Toeing off my slippers and hanging my robe back on the back of my bedroom door, I pad my way back to my air mattress. Snuggling into my blankets, I flip my laptop open and click the Netflix app to put on a cute little Christmas movie to fall asleep to. I definitely will have to play background noise until I adjust to the quiet.

## Page 4

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Tomorrow I want to do more exploring of this cute little town. I can't wait to meet more people from this town.

Hopefully, I won't have to deal with wolves every night. In the distance, a long howl cuts through the quiet. What I didn't know is that soon I wouldn't be just dealing with wolves in my yard...I would be dealing directly with the one I don't see staring at me through my window as my eyes fall closed.

### Chapter 2

Silas

You know what nobody even bothered to mention when they were rooting for me to challenge Orion for the Alpha position? Oh, that would be all the paperwork. Not only was Orion being an abusive asshole to the women of our pack, he was also heavily borrowing money from another pack. So much so that I am not sure how we will pull ourselves out of that hole.

Once I took the position, I came into the office to find a literal hurricane mess. There were papers from one side to the other. Piles and piles of files and books to where you wouldn't have known there was actually a stunning hand-carved oak desk with wolves howling to the moon underneath it. The first week of being Alpha was cleaning and organizing the office, creating a filing system, and determining what my first month was going to look like.

Apparently, the first thing that I will deal with is this debt to the Ghost River Pack to the attunement of \$3,456. I don't even understand why he was borrowing so



outlandishly, anyway. Yes, a pack has financial needs, but as a pack, we contribute financially to cover those costs. I have gone over and over this paperwork, still unable to determine the cause of this debt. The only thing I can think of is that he was into some shady business. I just have receipts tracking the deposits from their pack.

I think the best thing to do now is appoint my pack leaders who will help me manage all of this. There is no way that I can do any of this, especially without a Luna to assist me. Picking up my cell phone, I dial Warrick.

He picks up on the first ring. “Hey man, what’s up?”

“Can you round up the pack into the pack house for a meeting? I am ready to appoint the leaders who will help me with managing this pack,” I heave out on a heavy sigh.

“Yeah, man, for sure. Do you have a time in mind?” I can hear him shuffling around his house as the wood creaks under his feet.

“Yeah, let’s say in an hour. Give me time to complete my meeting notes and make my way over there.” I say as I stare down at the sheet of paper, ensuring all my thoughts are on it.

“Alright, good deal. See you soon,” he says as he clicks off the call.

Putting my phone down on my desk, I drop my shoulders and just sit for a moment. Truth is, I have my meeting notes done. I just needed some time to just sit in peace. It’s rare these days that I have time for myself. You can almost bank on someone bothering me every few minutes. Not that I am complaining by any means, but I went from a life of solitude to a life of never ending people needing something. It is taking some time to get adjusted to it.

Standing up, I walk over to my whiskey cabinet. It’s an ornate oak cabinet depicting

wolves running through the woods on our pack land. I think it might be my favorite piece of all those I've ever had commissioned by our pack artisan. Dropping three cubes of ice into my crystal glass, I pour three fingers of single barrel malt whiskey. Plopping myself down into my desk chair, I turn to stare out the massive picture window to my pack lands. Sipping on my whiskey and just enjoying the stillness before I have to get back to work.

Loud chattering and the mingling of voices assault me as I walk into the large open meeting space in the pack house. It's a vaulted ceiling room inside our log pack house. The ceiling peaks at 20 feet, with carved untreated wood beams running from one side to the other. We have pews lining both sides of the room with a dais front and center. Pups running across the open space have worn the beautiful oak floors over the years. It has a beautiful warm rock hearth on the left side with a roaring fire going already.

Walking through the aisle towards the dais, there is a hush that falls as the pack members turn to acknowledge me entering. I bow my head towards each member as I walk past them with my hands clasped behind my back. I haven't quite gotten used to the change from pack member to pack Alpha.

Stepping up the dais and coming to the center, I take a deep breath before stepping up to the podium.

"Good Evening Rocky Mountain Pack. I appreciate all of you coming on such short notice. I will keep this brief so our pups don't miss family dinners and nightly routines. As you are all aware, with the change of Alpha comes the change of leadership within our pack. This is to ensure each Alpha has leaders he trusts and can rely on. After a week of organizing, filing, and thought, I have determined who will be my pack leaders." Clapping breaks out from the group. Holding up my hand, the crowd dies back down.

“It should come as no surprise that I am appointing Warrick as my Beta. This man has been with me from the time that I was a pup and I wouldn’t be here today without him. As the man who inspired me to challenge Orion, he is equally invested in improving our pack.” A rapid round of applause breaks out across the room. Some even whistling in their excitement. Holding my hand up again, everyone settles back into their seats. “Thank you for welcoming him into his position. Warrick, please join me on the stage.”

I am so proud to call this man my best friend and have him with me every step of the way. Warrick walks up to stand to my right, acknowledging his acceptance of his role. I clap him on the back and smile at him. Everyone sees the playboy and hardass, but I know he is one of the sweetest men you will ever meet.

“This next one should go without saying as well, for the temporary spot of Luna, the responsibility of ensuring our pups are cared for, activities are being well organized, and our females are being respected. I am appointing Gail, our pack matriarch. Until I find my mate, I appoint Gail as our temporary Luna. Gail, will you please join me on stage?” Awe and sniffing comes from the women of our crowd.

No one has any memory of when this meddlesome woman came into town, but we all know that we are grateful she is here with us. She has seen the rise and fall of several pack leaders. She has watched this town bloom from a few shops into a bustling little town. I know that it’s only temporary, but I couldn’t think of someone better suited for the role.

Warrick holds his hand out to Gail to assist her onto the stage. She gives me a loving tap on my cheek as she passes to take the spot to my right. She stands one step back to acknowledge that she isn’t my fated mate.

“Introducing our financial advisor, Caelon. After reviewing our finances, not only were they not being taken care of, but they were being abused. To put it mildly,

Caelon will have his work cut out for him. Come join us on the stage, please.” Clapping rings out again.

Caelon joins the stage next to Gail as she wraps him into a hug. She really is the grandmother to all of us. He smiles warmly at her as she taps his cheek as well. See what I mean about being a grandmother to us all? Caelon is what you would call a nerd. He is always crunching numbers and can spit out the answer to the hardest math problem without paper. You always will find him huddled in some nook with a book, graphic novel, or in front of his computer programming some new thing.

“The last position will be our pack recruiter and trainer. This position helps young pups learn how to shift, control their wolves, and develop a better relationship between wolf and human. I couldn’t think of anyone better than Xavier who shows exemplary patience within all aspects of his life. Come up to the stage and join your other leaders.”

Xavier is the silent, brooding type. His time in the military really changed who he was as an individual. Not that it’s a bad thing, but the man that came back to us wasn’t the same pup that left. He will do great in the training portion of our pack. I think that is what he is needing somewhere to put those skills to use. Forget the militia; we need to focus on training our inner wolf.

“Everyone, give your new leaders a warm welcome and show them your appreciation for stepping up in our pack.”

The room erupts in applause, cheers, wolf whistles, and fuck yeahs. I take a step back, allowing them to walk forward to bow to their pack mates. Warrick moves to the front of the dais and looks back towards me. “Everyone, show your love and appreciation for the man who saved us and is going to bring the pack into a far better world for ourselves, pups, and future generations. Long Hail Alpha Silas!”

## Page 5

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Turning towards the room, I see everyone has dropped to one knee with their heads bowed. Their support and loyalty have been so profound, so steadfast, that I'm left speechless; it's a gift I can't fully process.

Warrick holds his hand out to me in a gesture to bring me forward. "Thank you everyone. Your love, support, and loyalty means the world to me. I am not perfect, I will probably make many mistakes as I figure out this leadership role. I appreciate everything you guys have done and will do from now on. This is all I have for tonight. If there's nothing pressing, let's end this meeting."

Everyone clears out to head to their own cabins. I grab my coat and shuffle myself into it as Warrick pats me on the back. "When are you going to move into the Alpha Cabin? You know it's yours by right and you don't have to stay in your cabin anymore?"

Shrugging, I look at him. "I know, but it doesn't feel right without Luna. It's meant to be a family home, not a bachelor pad. It doesn't feel right moving in without her and creating a home. I would rather wait for my Luna and allow her to create the home she wants instead of having to move around me."

"That's fair man. I just didn't want you to think that any of the pack members would hold that against you."

"I appreciate it. Well, I am going to head home. I don't get a lot of time to myself these days, so I like to take advantage of the moments when I have them."

He nods his head at me. "See you later, man."

Watching the fire pop in my electric fireplace, sipping my whiskey, I can't quite wrap my head around all the things that I need to do. Even with my to do list for the month. I am feeling so overwhelmed by the amount of tasks that need to be done. Especially this debt to the Ghost River Pack. I haven't quite figured out how we are going to fix that one. I hope Caelon will come up with a solution.

I know that running a pack would not be easy, but God dammit, nobody ever mentioned that it would be this overwhelming amount of stress and pressure. What if I fuck up and make it worse? What if I cannot come up with the money for the Ghost River Pack?

I can rest assured that I will always treat the females in our pack with respect and kindness, and I will work hard to ensure our financial stability. I guess there is that.

Knock, knock. Someone is knocking on my front door. My eyebrows pull together in confusion because I wasn't expecting anyone. Especially at this hour. Sniffing the air, I relax when I realize it's Warrick.

Opening my door, I find Warrick standing in my doorway with a solemn look on his face. "What's the matter?"

"There is a wolf here from the Ghost River Pack asking to speak with the new alpha. He wouldn't tell us what it was about or what the message was. He said he would only tell the Alpha. I am sorry, man. I didn't want to interrupt your peace, but here we are." He says as he shifts from foot to foot with a nervous energy about him.

"Is everything okay? It's not like you to be nervous or fidgety."

He rubs the back of his neck, pulling in a lungful of air. "Yeah, everything is alright. I just don't like the vibe I am getting from him. If I could have forced him to tell me why he was here, I probably wouldn't be this nervous."

Grabbing my jacket off the hook, I toe on my boots. “Let’s go see what he has to say. I know we won’t like it, but it’s the only way to get him off pack property.”

I wrap my jacket around myself as we step onto my front porch. Thankfully, everything is within walking distance. So we take off walking back to the pack house.

Shortly later, we are walking back into the pack house and into my office. I find a slender man with a buzz cut sitting in front of my desk. He is busy flipping a zippo lighter open and close when we enter. He turns to acknowledge me and I see he has a three claw mark across his face and one of his eyes is dead. Jesus, what do they do to their wolves in this pack?

He stands from his seat, bowing his head and extending his hand out to me. Grasping his hand, I shake it. “My name is Nate, from Ghost River Pack. I am here on behalf of my Alpha. We gave you a week to settle into your role and look over the state of your affairs. As I am sure you are well aware by now, your pack is in debt to mine. We would like to extend the same offer we did for the past Alpha, if you so wish to proceed with that route. Otherwise, we expect our debt will be settled by the next full moon.”

“The next full moon????” Warrick erupts.

“Yes, the very one. See, the way we look at it is, if you fail to pay the debt, then we will kill off your males and acquire fresh females for our males. So either way, we win in this situation. The choice is yours.”

Seething Warrick lunges for the man, snatching him by his collar. “You dare threaten to kill our pack mates and kidnap our females. This is your version of peaceful negotiations?”

Grabbing Warrick by the shoulder, I tap his hand, gripping the man's collar. He drops

the hand and the man. Nate brushes the front of his shirt and fixes his collar back. “Yes, I view this as peaceful negotiations. We have extended a few options for your Alpha to consider and gave him the better part of the month to decide which way he will go. How this plays out is completely up to him at this point.”

Clearing my throat, I bring their attention back to me. “I could not determine exactly what Orion was doing for your pack or why he even had this debt to you. Before I can decide, I need to know all the pieces. You say that you can extend the same offer to me that was given to him, but I don’t know what the offer even was.”

Nate chuckles, shaking his head from side to side. “Figures the dumbass would have kept everything in the dark. I can tell you he had a bit of a gambling issue. Seems he liked to gamble the odds on professional sports games. He was shit at it which lead him to blowing through the money your pack contributed each month. In order to pay for the needs of the pack, well...that lead him to us. My alpha doesn’t just hand out money, so of course we had to find a job for dear ol’ Orion.” He looks at his nails and moves his hand from side to side.

“Obviously, we aren’t aware of gambling issues he had. Least to say that is not his worst attribute. What was his job?” I prod him to continue.

“Drug running. He would get a text once a week at a disclosed location. He would show up to find a car with the drugs in the trunk. His job was to drive them over the border. He would unload and then return the car to the disclosed location. That simple. I am shocked you never noticed him gone for days at a time.”

Warrick and I exchange a look. We didn’t notice him gone, but then again, we considered it a good day if we didn’t cross his path altogether.

“I appreciate your time and the options your Alpha has so graciously presented us. I will have an answer for you by the full moon. Now, if there is nothing left to present



us, you are no longer welcome on Rocky Mountain Pack lands. Do well to send a notice next time before showing up on my lands.”

“Yes, sir. We shall see you soon, Alpha.” He bows and turns to exit the room. “Also, Beta, do well to learn to control your temper. You won’t always be met with someone willing to allow you to put hands on them.”

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With that, he exits the office. Warricks slams his body down into the chair that Nate just vacated, like his body couldn't hold itself up any longer. "I can't believe that he was gambling away our money. I don't know which is more shocking, the drug running or the gambling. What are we going to do, Silas? Money doesn't grow on trees."

Calmly sitting down in front of my desk, I pull out my cell phone. "Don't I know it." I send a text message to Caelon.

### Chapter 3

#### Silas

Shortly after shooting off a text to Caelon, there is a knock at my door. I can smell his distinct scent coming through the door. Sometimes the advantage of being a wolf is knowing who is coming before they even open their mouths or make their presence known.

Clearing my throat, "Come in."

Caelon peeks his head around the door before he fully steps into the room. His eyes scan the space as if he is looking for someone to be here with me. He's wearing his typical gray henley, and it's unusually wrinkled.

"Uh," he clears his throat. "You wanted to see me, Alpha," he says with his head bowed.

Steepling my hands together on top of my desk, I put a warm smile on my face. “Caelon, how many times will I have to ask you to call me Silas?”

With his head still bowed, “A few times Al...I mean Silas.”

Letting out a chuckle, “Fair enough. You know why I called you here. Have you reviewed the numbers and come up with a plan?”

That seems to knock him out of his submissive state. “Yes, I have. It doesn’t look good, but it is completely possible for us to make the money back. While it isn’t a large amount of money, it is still money we will have to find a way to raise while also taking care of the pack. I think if we can work together for a massive fundraiser, we should hit our goal.”

“Good, that is great news. Do you have any ideas about what we could do as a fundraiser?”

He gently shakes his head, “No sir. That isn’t my area of expertise. I am only great with numbers, not people or events.”

“Surely you aren’t that bad with people. You are talking to me just fine. What makes you think you aren’t good with people?”

He scratches the back of his neck as his knee bounces up and down. “The thing is...nevermind.”

“Caelon, look at me.” He lifts his head, bringing his eyes to mine. “This space is safe for you to be yourself and to talk to me about issues you are having. Don’t feel like I can’t or won’t give you the time or the space.”

His eyes brighten with the news. “You mean that? I’ve never had someone to talk to

or felt that I could talk to someone. I really appreciate that. Honestly, it's not an issue when it comes to you because I can easily talk numbers. Numbers I understand. Numbers always make sense. I can plug them in a certain way and they easily give me an answer. When it comes to people, there are emotions involved. I can put into it a certain thing, but each person's reaction will be different. There are too many variables when it comes to interacting with other humans. Let alone trying to communicate with females."

Nodding my head, I make sure I keep my expressions open and accepting. I think that might be the most emotion he has expressed. "That makes a lot of sense, actually. I can't fault you for viewing it that way. You know, one day you are going to find a mate that will adore this part of you. Goddess be, I hope for your sake that she equally has a hobby to occupy her time. We all know how hard it is to pull you away from your computer."

A blush creeps across his cheeks as he tucks his head. "I love numbers. What can I say?" He shrugs his shoulders.

Pushing my chair back, I stand up and walk around the desk. He lifts his head to look up at me. Resting my hand on his shoulder, "Alright, together we will break the news to the pack. They have a right to know and maybe someone will have an idea for a fundraiser. What ya say? You ready to tell everyone?"

"Uh...I am never ready for anything that involves public speaking of any sort."

A huff of a laugh comes out of me as I shake my head. "Alright, fair enough."

After sending out a message to our pack members to come to the pack house, we head into the main portion. I stand on the dais as each of the pack members file in, nodding my head as they pass to their seats. On each side of me stands a member of my leadership team, chatting amongst themselves while we wait. Before members

started pouring into the meeting hall, I brought Warrick, Gail, and Xavier up-to-speed so nothing I say will come as a shock to them. I don't want to be the bearer of bad news, but it has to be done.

Everyone is chatting amongst themselves as the final pack member enters the hall and takes their seat. I clear my throat and the room goes quiet. "Thank you, everyone, for coming for another pack meeting so soon after the last. Rest assured, once we have this issue settled, we won't have such frequent meetings. That being said, I know that I have talked to you about how things were not being managed well. What I didn't elaborate on was that we are in debt to the Ghost River Pack."

Gasps ring out across the pack house as the news washes over them. I don't blame them for being upset over the news. People know the Ghost River Pack for being ruthless and far more abusive than Orion. It's been said that they will use their women until they pass. The pack beheads anyone caught trying to escape, and posts their wolf's head on the fence surrounding the pack house. There have only been a few that could actually escape. By sheer luck or perfect timing, nobody will ever know. But, owing them money is the last thing that we need. I will not lose a single female to that pack, even if it's the last thing that I do.

Holding my hand up to silence the room, "I know that this isn't the news that you would have wanted to hear today but with a representative showing up last night, we are now aware what Orion's deal with them was. They gave us until the full moon to decide whether to continue Orion's deal, repay the debt, or fight them—a fight we'd likely lose. I don't want you to think that I have any intentions of continuing the deal that Orion had with them. That being said, we have to figure out how to come up with the money before the next full moon."

"How much do we owe them," a pack member asks from the back.

"We owe them a little over three thousand dollars. I know it isn't a ton of money, but

it's far more than we have in our savings. How can we quickly raise that much money? Any ideas?"

Chatter begins throughout the room as people brainstorm ideas. Caelon is shifting from one foot to the other in nervous anticipation. I don't expect him to have all the answers to a situation like this and I think it would be great for the pack to work together like we should have been doing all along. "Coming up with this much money is an immense problem, Silas. A review of our finances shows zero revenue. We are really hoping for a miracle here."

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“I know we are, but this will be great for the pack, too. Too long we haven’t been acting like a pack, but more like individuals. Granted, that isn’t anyone’s fault except for Orion’s but, we need to learn and grow from that.”

“I agree with that as well. I just am not sure how we are going to pull it off is all I am saying. What are we going...”

A quiet clearing of a throat sounds beside us. “I think that I have an idea that would bring in lots of money.” The timid woman says. I look at her expectingly. “With Christmas only a month away, what if we hosted a Christmas Festival for the town? We could have game booths, food booths, and then, of course, a silent auction. I am sure that the local businesses would love to donate items to the silent auction. We also have several crafters in our pack that could also donate items. What do you think?” Selene, one of our younger female pack members, asks.

“That is a wonderful idea! Thank you so much for the suggestion, Selene. I know we haven’t had a lot of time to get to know each other, but I want you to know that I appreciate your input.” I squeeze her petite shoulder with appreciation.

A slight blush pops on the apples of her cheeks, “You are quite welcome, Silas. If you need any help organizing it, I would love to help.”

Giving her a warm smile, “I am sure that Gail would love the help. Thank you for volunteering.”

Turning towards the pack, clearing my throat, “Thanks to our lovely Selene for her idea, we are going to host a Christmas Festival. Gail, our matriarch, will look for

volunteers to help with planning, organizing, and putting everything together. As I am sure that everyone will step up for the pack, but I want to mention that we will need to act fast. Unless anyone else has something to add, I think we should call the meeting for now to allow Gail to begin her process.”

Stepping down from the dais, Warrick throws an arm around my shoulder, “Hey man, when was the last time you ate?”

“Uh, I had a bagel with cream cheese this morning before I headed to the pack house. Why?”

“Well, now that there is a plan in place, I thought we could go to You’re Bacon Me Crazy and have a quick bite to eat. You are allowed time to eat, ya know?”

“Yeah, yeah I know. Alright fine, let’s grab a quick bite to eat. I want to be here in case they need any help with planning. Let me tell Gail that I am heading out so she knows to reach me by cell if she needs me.”

“Fair enough, I will allow it. If you must, I mean, I am not kidnapping you to Alaska or anything. Just lunch.”

Huffing out a laugh, I grab my coat and scarf. With the scarf wrapped around my neck, I walked down the long hallway with oak-paneled walls. Gail has taken the Luna’s office across from mine. When I find my Luna, that will become her office, but for now it is Gail’s. Rapping my knuckles on the door, I hear a quiet, “Come in.”

Gail, a woman in her sixties with long flowing silver hair and laugh lines from years of laughing and loving. No one really knows when she arrived in Jasper, Colorado, or where she came from. All we know is that she has loved and cared for generations of pups, watching as each of them grows into adults with pups of their own. This woman treats every single pup as though they are her grandpup. She is the matriarch



for a reason. Glancing up from her paperwork, her eyes warm as she acknowledges it's me in the doorway. "What can I do for you, Silas?"

Scratching the back of my neck, "I just wanted to let you know Warrick is forcing me to go to You're Bacon Me Crazy for lunch. I shouldn't be gone that long, but I just wanted to let you know in case you need anything."

"Silas, come sit down for a moment. We need to have a talk." She points to the chair in front of her.

I shuffle my feet over to where she pointed. This is feeling an awful lot like a parent scolding and she isn't even my parent. I plop my ass down into the chair and mentally brace myself for the verbal lashing.

Humming to herself, she places a warm smile on her face and her eyes twinkle with love. "Silas, I know that you have been feeling overwhelmed and stressed with all that comes with being an alpha. I also know that you are trying to make up for all the horrible things that Orion did. I also know that you feel you have to be here every step of the way, but I really need you to hear me when I say this. You can't be here every single second of the day. I need you to make sure that you take care of yourself. Nobody will fault you for eating lunch. You have assigned your pack leaders and you need to have faith that they can take care of things when you aren't around. Otherwise, what is the point of having leaders to begin with? Now, I know I am just the grandma of the pack, as you guys like to call me, but I think I know a thing or two."

I knew she was going to lecture me, "I know Gail, I just don't want to make the same mistakes that Orion did or have pack members feel as though I am not there for them."

Giggling, "Well do you plan to borrow thousands of dollars or begin abusing our

females,” she asks with a quirk of her eyebrow.

“Absolutely not. I would never lay a hand on any of our females in any manner beyond friendly. I hope to never have to borrow money from any pack, let alone from a pack like the Ghost River Pack.”

She gave me that knowing look, unsurprised by my response. “There you go. I think it’s safe to say that you can take care of yourself by enjoying a pleasant lunch with Warrick. Now go on! We will be fine.”

“Alright, alright I will go, but if anything happens, you better call me. I mean it Gail. I will be right back if something happens.”

Standing from her desk chair, she comes around her desk and opens her arms out in the show of wanting to embrace me. This is that grandmother vibe that I am talking about. You can’t help but accept her love. She wraps her arms around me and squeezes firmly. You can feel the love and admiration pouring out of her. It is almost as though she can erase the stress with one of her infamous hugs.

Warrick keeps glancing around, almost like he is looking for something. “Are you good? This is like the seventh time you have scanned the room. You know we know every single person in this town, so who could you possibly be looking for?”

“Man, the other day when I was in here, there was a new girl. Gail could tell you more because, of course, she was talking with her and got all the details. But I really think you should meet her.”

“No, thank you. You literally had to drag me out of the pack house for lunch. What in the world makes you think I have the time or the care to meet a woman?”

Chuckling, he shakes his head. “You know you need to be actively looking for your

Luna and mate. I am just saying clearly it isn't anyone around here because you would already know if it was. So, that is why I am mentioning it."

Continuing to just stare at him, I sip from my ice cold soda. "I have no time to look for Luna, despite what you or the pack may think. My Luna, my mate, is just not high on my priority list right now. Gail and I can run the pack just fine. Why do I need to add to my already full plate by searching for her?"

"Well man, because it is your responsibility as the Alpha to ensure that we have a Luna to care for our females and pups. Now, while Gail is great at it, she isn't going to give you pups and she doesn't have years to dedicate to that. I mean, the woman is in her sixties, for crying out loud. Let her enjoy her remaining years without stress and responsibility."

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The bite of food in my mouth turns to ash. I can't believe I am being selfish and not considering that. "I will see what I can do, but I am not making any promises."

Nodding his head in acceptance, "That is all that I am asking. I still say that you should ask Gail about the new girl in town. She is a stunning beauty for sure."

I nod my head once, diving back into my lunch. I don't understand where Warrick thinks I am going to fit in looking for my Luna. There just isn't enough time in the day to add that to my plate. Even if I was to stumble upon my mate, where would I even fit in dating her and caring for her? I understand it is something that I will have to do, but why bring it up when our biggest concern is this debt we have? I can't imagine that this new girl is going to be my Luna. It's a joke really to even mention it.

Finishing up our meals, we pay our ticket and head back to the pack house. I have lots of paperwork that needs to be done and I have no more time to waste.

Low music is playing in the background from the jukebox in the corner while I swirl the ice in my whiskey on the rocks. It's rare that I come to Pour Me Another, but with Warrick's words floating around in my head, I took a moment to sit at the bar while I consider how I will fit this into my life. My plate is so full that I can't wrap my head around even thinking about a woman, let alone searching for one.

The smell of warm vanilla, cinnamon, and apples floats in the air, reminding me of my mother's baked apple pies. "Whiskey on the rocks, please." A timid and sweet voice speaks next to me. Glancing to my right, there are long flowing amber red curls, a cute button nose speckled with freckles, bow lips tinted a deep pink, and

leaning back on my stool slightly, I see curves in all the right places. My wolf perks up. It can't be true. Taking another deep inhale of her scent, I am fucked.

"Now that you have finished checking me out, I think it's only fair that you at least tell me your name after basically undressing me with your eyes," she snaps.

"I am sorry about that. My name is Silas. What's your name?"

"I'm Nova. I am the new girl in town, but you already know that, don't you?" A whiskey on the rocks slides towards her and she tips her head to the bartender. She lifts the glass to her lips, taking a slow sip. There's this lost look in her eyes, like she is just trying to find her feet here. I wonder if I can help with that?

"I mean, I knew that you are the new girl in town. But I can't figure out why you would even want to come here. I can't imagine a city girl like yourself would even be happy in a place like Jasper. So why are you here?"

"You are rather rude and presumptuous. How would you even know that I am a city girl? It's not like I slide an information card to you."

"You have this air of snooty, city girl behavior about you. You might as well write it on your forehead with how glaringly obvious it is."

Her mouth drops open, "You know, they say that small towns are warm, friendly, and welcoming. So far, you are off to a shitty start in that department. Is this how you treat all new people in this town?"

Shrugging my shoulder, "All I am saying is that you don't belong here City Girl. So why not do us all a favor and scurry back to whatever big city you came from?"

Picking up her whiskey, I think she is going to continue to sip it and ignore me.

Suddenly, she hurled the drink in my face, the icy liquid stinging my skin, the glass clattering harshly against the bar as she screamed, “You are such an asshole! If I want to be in this town, I have every right to be. Let me tell you, I couldn’t stand living in the big city, which is why I took the elementary school job. Your snap judgment about me doesn’t require a response from me.”

Twirling around, she storms out of the bar. I am beyond fucked. Not only is she my mate, and my future Luna, but she is human. That can’t be right. Our mates are not supposed to be human. My wolf is pacing inside of me, demanding that I chase after her. Ignoring him, I grab napkins to wipe down my face and shirt.

Our mate can’t be human, fate had to have gotten it wrong.

## Chapter 4

### Nova

The absolute audacity of that man. Who does he think he is to make those wild assumptions about me and then demand that I leave town? He has another thing coming if he thinks I am going to leave just because he demands it. I have dealt with far ruder men while living in New York City, so if he thinks that being rude is going to chase me out of town, then he doesn’t know who he is messing with.

Slamming down onto the couch, I snatch out my phone from my purse and call the one person who will have my back on this, Nellie.

Within one ring, Nellie is answering the phone. “What is my beautiful queen doing, calling me at such a late hour?”

“You won’t believe what happened.”

She lets out an excited giggle. “Oh, spill the tea.”

“I decided tonight that I would go to the local bar, Pour Me Another...”

“What is with this town and its crazy business names?”

“I don’t know, but I love it so much. It’s unique and adorable. Anyway, as I was coming up to the bar to place my order, this man decided to not only check me out but make it so obvious that he leaned back on the stool to stare at my ass. As if that weren’t bad enough, he then proceeded to make some seriously wild assumptions about me. The cherry on top of this fucked up sundae is then he told me I didn’t belong here and should go back to whatever big city I came from.”

A startled gasp comes through the phone. “That asshole! Who does something like that?”

Lifting my feet off the floor, I slide each one under my legs and pull the blanket across my lap. “I know right! I couldn’t believe that he did that. So I took my one and only sip of my whiskey and then threw the rest of it in his face. I left right after that, came home, and here we are now.”

She lets out a loud whoop. “Girl, I don’t blame you! I would have kicked him in the dick for acting that way, so he got off easy if that is all that you did to him.”

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Giggling, “Girl, I was in shock. I might have let him off easy, but I won’t be making that same mistake again.”

Scoffing, she says, “What are you going to do?”

Bursting out with a cackling laugh, “He thinks that being an asshole to me will make me run back to New York City. I am going to show him that he can be as mean as he wants. I’m not going anywhere. Killing him with kindness and all that. Seems it would annoy him more than anything else.”

“Well,” she says. “How do you know it will work?”

“I don’t know,” sighing in indignation, “I have always dealt with these kinds of assholes, but unlike being in the big city, I know I will bump into him all the time.”

“That’s true. I am all for it. This poor guy doesn’t know what he started. Are you going to do anything to him or just every time he is an ass, you are super sweet,” she asks.

Sighing, “I am going to only be super sweet, which isn’t an act, but still...”

“I know. I wish you were having an easier time with the move. Any hot guys that you are interested in besides Silas?” she giggles out the words.

“Honestly, I haven’t been looking. I have mainly just explored the new town, but I met the sweetest older woman named Gail. She gives off these grandma vibes.” I say as I scoot down the couch, cozying up with the blanket.



“Oh,” she says with a note of intrigue.

“Yeah, but can I tell you about it tomorrow? I’m kinda sleepy now. There are some shops in town I want to see tomorrow. Hopefully, I don’t bump into the asshole.”

Tsking, she says, “I think that not only should you NOT avoid him, I think you should be obnoxiously sunshine in his presence. Every time that he is an asshole, shine even brighter to piss him off more.”

“I love the idea! Alright, I’ll keep it in mind for when I run into him. But seriously, I am going to bed now.”

“Love youuuussss. Goodnight!” she says.

“Love youuuusss, too.”

After picking my tired body up off the couch, I trudge to the bedroom, hoping to crash out when my head hits the pillow. As I cuddle into my pillow with the blanket wrapped around me, I can’t keep my mind from going back to him.

I know that I have dealt with it before, but really, I don’t know what I could have done to piss him off this much? Is he always this way? How did he go from checking me out to demanding that I leave? Talk about whiplash.

Men can really be such assholes and I can’t wait to see just how much of a thorn I can be in his side. He is going to regret being such an asshole to me. Tomorrow, I will start Operation Sunshine.

Silas won’t know what hit him when he gets all this sunshine coming his way.

Chapter 5

Silas

She can't be my mate. I can't have a human as a mate. They can't breed with us because we are incompatible. She wouldn't even be able to handle my wolf in his humanoid form. What was the goddess thinking when she fated us together? Besides that, she's a city girl. Lord knows they don't like the slowlife that you find in small towns. Even with his constant presence in the back of my mind, I can't give into the Goddess's wishes.

She is our fated mate and you know it. I don't know why you are ignoring all the signs.

Because she can't be our mate. What are we going to do with a human?

You know, there is always the option to turn her into one of us. Not ideal, but I don't see it as an issue.

Of course, you don't see it as an issue. You aren't thinking as a human, obviously, but as a wolf who wants to breed.

That is true, but she is our mate and I don't know why we wouldn't pursue her. I want my mate and you will not stop me from getting her.

I am in charge here.

So you think. My wolf growls into my mind.

I am going to have to get ahead of this if I don't want my wolf to take matters into his own paws. I need Warrick.

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Opening my phone I shoot a text to him: I need to see you in my office immediately.

There is an immediate text response. Alright man, heading that way.

Not even ten minutes later, there is a knock at my door as it swings open. “What’s up, man?”

“Close the door because I don’t want anyone else to hear this.” I say quickly.

“Uh, alright.” Clicking the door shut and sliding the lock in place, he heads over to the seat in front of my desk. “You are kinda freaking me out. What’s going on?”

“Last night while I was sitting at Pour Me Another, the smell of warm vanilla, cinnamon, and apples suddenly enveloped me. It reminded me of my mother’s apple pies. I was so wrapped up in the smell that I didn’t realize that I was essentially being a perv and checking the woman out. When I came back to her eyes, she was glaring at me. It was at that moment that I realized she was my mate and she...” I rush out the words.

“Wait, you found your mate? That’s great...”

“No, it's not great. Fuckkkkk. Man, she is human!”

“Oh shit, okay that isn’t the worst thing. I thought you were going to say she was ugly with a missing leg or something. Her being human isn’t that bad.” He huffs out a laugh.

Glaring at him, I take another sip of my whiskey. “I can’t have a human mate. The goddess had to have gotten it wrong. Maybe I am so desperate to find the Luna of our pack that I thought it was her, but it was someone else there. That has to be it, right?”

“I think that you are making a far bigger deal out of this than it really is. I mean did you even talk to the girl?” He says with an eyebrow lift.

“I might have, sort of, been a complete asshole to her by assuming that she is a big city girl and that she has no place here...”

“You did what?” He says as his mouth drops open.

“Yeah, I might have been a bit of an asshole to her, hoping that she would leave town if people were mean to her.” I say as I scratch the back of my neck.

“Who was it anyway? I forgot to ask that with all the revelations of your behavior.”

“It’s exactly who you thought it would be.” His eyebrows crunched in confusion.

“The new girl?”

“I don’t know. I think so? I mean I didn’t see her before and I’ve never seen her around town. So, I guess it is? Regardless, I came here this morning to talk with you because I don’t have time for this. I have too much going on with the debt and fixing this pack to be worried about a mate.”

“I think you are hiding away from what you know to be true. Maybe you should bring her around the pack and let her meet everyone. It will be easier to tell her about wolves and you know shifters that way.”

“I’ll think about it. I am not sure what I will do yet about my mate.”

“Alright man, well, if you have nothing else, I am going to head out to do a run around the perimeter. I want to make sure that we don’t have anyone sneaking on to pack land.” He pushes his chair back as he heads towards my office door.

“No, you are good to go, but I will head outside with you.” Gathering my jacket from the coat rack, I slip it on as I walk out the door behind him.

Warrick claps me on the back as we head outside. I always love the smell of the fresh mountain air and the cypress trees that are warming in the sun. I love listening to the pups running around playing tag with the faint sounds of giggles ringing out through the trees. The tinkling of hammers from the leather workers, the smell of fresh breads coming from the bakers, and the tinkering sounds of wrenches coming from the mechanics.

It is wonderful to hear this pack finally developing into what it should have always been. I know it’s only been a few short weeks since I became Alpha, but already you can see the growth in our pack.

I don’t see how bringing Nova into this and spending any ounce of my time on teaching her about pack life will be beneficial to us. I just don’t have the time to spend on that. We still have this festival to put together and a silent auction to get items for. I just don’t have time for a human woman even if she is my mate.

I will just have to avoid her for now. That shouldn’t be that hard, really. I know it’s a small town and all that, but with everything I have going on, I really won’t be in town that often. I just will have to avoid going to Pour Me Another for now.

We are down to less than two weeks until the Ghost River Pack will arrive for their money or our females. Ugh, I don’t have time for anything else but this festival.

Nova is off limits for now.

Chapter 6

Nova

## Page 11

*Source Creation Date: July 19, 2025, 2:22 am*

The bell above the door chimes as I enter You're Bacon Me Crazy. "Hello dear, so lovely to see you again. Just you today," Gail asks as she walks by with a tray of food.

"Yeah, just me, like always." Gail gives me a warm smile that gives that grandmotherly vibe to her. "Right this way, dear."

It's awfully busy here for a Wednesday morning. I know that it's one of the few restaurants in town, but good lord, the place is bustling with activity. Don't people work? "Here you go, dear, a nice little booth in the corner. Do you know what you want to drink today?"

"I actually do. I would love a coffee with sugar and oat milk, please. Also, can I order two waffles with strawberries and whip cream?" Gail nods as she pencils all of it down onto her notepad. "It's awfully busy here for a Wednesday morning. Is it normally like this?"

She looks around the place and smiles down at me, "Of course. Most people love the sense of community that we get here in Jasper. So people don't mind coming in for breakfast to chat with their neighbors and the other residents of our little town. It keeps everyone close knit and bonded."

"Wow, that is definitely something I am not used to. Not the restaurant being busy on a Wednesday morning, given that New York City is always busy. But I definitely am not used to people being so friendly. Speaking of, last night I had the rudest experience in this town."

Shocked, she prompted, “I’m all ears; tell me more.” After unloading all the details of last night, she still has a look of shock on her face. “Can you describe this rude man to me?”

“Yeah for sure, so he was roughly 6’ 2” with black hair, chiseled jawline, scruff beard, with dark broody eyes.”

Gasping, she says, “Oh, I know who you are talking about. Odd that he was so rude to you.”

“Yeah, well, I threw my drink into his face because of his behavior.” I say with an attitude.

“Silas isn’t usually that rude, odd indeed. Well, let me go put your order in and grab that coffee for you.”

Gail may mean well, but the Silas I met was a complete asshole. I mean, who would make such assumptions about a complete stranger? My big-city background doesn’t prevent me from embracing this small-town atmosphere. For as long as I can remember, I have been dreaming of the day that I would leave New York City behind and find some quaint little town to settle down in for the rest of my life. Nobody, not even Silas, will ruin that for me.

In the short time that I have been here, I have already fallen in love with this town. It’s slightly terrifying that they are so close knit because that is the farthest thing I am used to. I can’t even imagine people being that in my business that they know when I am not having a good day just by looking at me. I mean, don’t get me wrong, Nellie could do that, but she is my best friend, so obviously she could. Random people walking down the road being able to spot it though? Absolutely not! It will take some getting used to, but I am excited about this adventure.



“Here you go sweetie, nice steaming cup of coffee with sugar and oat milk. Your waffles with strawberries and whip cream, nice and hot off the griddle. Does everything look wonderful?”

The waffles smell amazing. There are little dollops of whip cream topped with slices of strawberries. The intensely sweet smell of freshly picked strawberries filled the air, a stark contrast to the bland, weeks-old berries from NYC supermarkets. I assume this whipped cream is also homemade, unlike the kind in aerosol cans.

“Oh my gosh Gail, it smells amazing, as always. Question, does Moe make the whipped cream?”

“Oh yes. We make everything from scratch here. We also locally source as much as we can to continue to help our community.” She looks over to where I assume Moe is busily working in the kitchen.

“That is wonderful! Definitely something that I am not used to. I can honestly say that I did not know where my food was coming from outside of the big box store I purchased it from. So this is another reason I am falling for Jasper. I love how this community gives back to each other.”

“Speaking of giving back to each other, we have a Christmas Festival coming up and we need volunteers to run some booths. Would you be willing to help?”

“Oh, I don’t know about that. I am not sure that I am quite ready to put myself out there like that.” Looking down at my hands as I twist the ring around my finger. I don’t know if I am ready to meet so many people at one time. I can only imagine that running a booth would lead to meeting the entire town in one day.

“It would be a great opportunity for you to meet others in the community and make some friends.” She says with a reassuring smile on her face.

“That is actually what I was afraid of. That is a lot of people to meet at one time. I know I am a big city girl, but that doesn’t mean that I am good at meeting hundreds of people at one time. Big City people are actually not social creatures.” I say with a huff of a laugh at the irony of the statement.

She chuckles, “Don’t I know it. I actually don’t think I have ever met a nice New Yorker. But then again, I haven’t met that many. It would be good, either way, to show the community that you aren’t a big-city girl and are willing to give back to the community welcoming you.”

“You drive a hard bargain, Gail. Fine, I will help out. When do you need help, and what am I doing?”

“It’s going to be this Saturday, and I would need you to run the cocoa booth. Nothing too crazy, just pouring cups of hot cocoa for the patrons.” She chippers up at my acceptance.

“I guess I can run the hot cocoa booth. What time do you need me there?” I sigh in defeat.

“8 AM sharp, young lady. The festival is opening at 9 AM, so that will give you an hour to get acquainted with the booth and ready to go.”

“Gail, it's hot cocoa. I can’t imagine needing an hour to learn to pour hot cocoa.”

“Be there at 8 am,” Gail says, hitting me with her mom face.

“Fine.”

## Page 12

*Source Creation Date: July 19, 2025, 2:22 am*

I don't know what it is with this town and all their early morning shenanigans, but this city girl is having the hardest time with that adjustment. I am used to 3AM waffle dates and sleeping till noon. Giggling comes from outside the window beside me. Glancing over, I see a couple of teen girls, arm in arm, holding up a romance book between them. I didn't know there was a bookstore here either. I will definitely have to find that soon.

Stuffing the first bite of my warm waffle with a smidge of whip cream and the perfect slice of strawberry into my mouth, I can't help but close my eyes, sighing in contentment. Moe adds a pinch of nutmeg to his waffle batter, honestly these are some of the best waffles that I have ever tasted.

As I continue to stuff my face with waffles, I watch all the people walking by smiling and waving to each other. Some groups stopping to chat with the others. It really is such a change of pace and I love it.

Snow falls slowly outside and dusts the ground with white. My coffee is warming my insides thankfully before I have to brave the cold. I know what everyone thinks. I lived in New York City. How am I complaining about the cold? The mountain cold and the city cold are just built differently. I don't know if it's the elevation or the distinct part of the world, but by god this cold is in my soul.

Finishing off my waffle, I signal for Gail to come over. "I guess I will be seeing you on Saturday then."

"That you will, dear. Be careful out there. The forecast is calling for six inches of snow tonight."

“Will do Gail. Have a great rest of your day.”

Opening the door, the bell rings again, and I am blasted with a whirl of snowy wind. Wrapping my scarf around my neck, I breathe in a deep lungful of that crisp mountain air I am falling in love with. Pushing the air back out, looks like I will be meeting people on Saturday. Hopefully, I don't run into Silas while I am there.

## Chapter 7

### Silas

We are down to only a few more days until the Christmas festival and the pack is buzzing with activity as everyone finalizes the preparations. I should check in with Gail this afternoon after she finishes her shift at the diner. I need Gail to update me on our progress and needs.

There is so much left to do and I only hope that this works because we will only have a week to fix it if it doesn't. Everything is riding on the success of this festival. Nothing can be out of place.

I shoot off a text to Gail that I would like an update after her shift. Meanwhile, I am going to check in with the artisans to see how their wares are coming along.

The crunch of dead pine needles sound from beneath my feet as I walk to the bakery. You can already smell all the sweet doughs, sugars, and honey floating through the air. It's really my favorite smell outside of the pine. Although we live close to town, we have quite a few of our own things to give our pack mates places to shine and give back to our pack. We have a bakery, a leather smith, a carpenter, and a mechanic.

There is a massive window with displays of all kinds of baked goods and a hand-painted sign. The door has those square window panes where you can see into the

shop. Merelle is busily working behind the counter as I open the door. She pops her head up looking over to me, “Good afternoon, Silas. What can I do for you?”

“Merelle, I just wanted to check on you to see how the food is coming along for the festival on Saturday. Do you have everything that you need?”

“Oh, of course. Thank you for checking on me. I have all the dough prepared. My mate will help me tomorrow and Friday to begin the baking process.”

“You are very welcome. Be sure to let Gail or I know if you need anything in the next few days. I might not be a baker, but I will give you an extra set of hands if you need them.”

“You are too sweet Silas.”

After doing some more rounds and checking that everyone has what they need, I head back to the office. I have a couple of hours before Gail finishes at the diner, so I can finish some of this paperwork.

Knock, knock. Inhaling through my nose, I pick up the distinct notes of Gail’s scent.

Looking up from my paperwork, I spot Gail peeking her head around my wood door. Sliding my reading glasses off, I wave her over to my desk. She gives me one of her signature smiles as she walks over to the chair in front of my desk. I have been dreading this, but only because I really never thought I would be this involved in planning a festival.

“You wanted to see me for an update,” she asks.

“Yes, I just wanted to check with you about the Christmas Festival. Do you have everything that you need for it? All the booths have volunteers? Is everything ready

to go?”

“I have everything that I need and we have everything ready to go, but I have one thing that I need from you.” She lifts her eyebrows at me with a coy smile on her face.

Sighing, “What are you up to?”

“Oh, nothing dear. I just have one booth that I need someone to run. I am sure that you can handle that, right?” To be completely honest, I had absolutely no expectation of working at the festival. But it’s clear: She’s not going to change her mind on this.

“There isn’t anyone else that can run the booth for you?” I eye her skeptically.

“I am afraid not, dear. Everyone else is tied up with either booths or selling their wares. I have no one else that can run the hot cocoa stand for me. Surely, you wouldn’t mind helping out with one simple booth pouring hot cocoa into cups.”

“Fine. What time do you need me there?”

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“8 AM sir. Bright and early.”

I will do anything to ensure that we meet our goal, even if it means that I have to work the hot cocoa stand. Fuck my life.

### Chapter 8

Nova

It's moving day. Well, officially, since the moving trucks are arriving today with all my stuff. I can finally deflate the air mattress. I am so ready to fall into my tempurpedic mattress and hopefully get this crick out of my back.

“Alright ma'am. You selected for drop-off but not install. Where are we dropping off all the furniture?” The gruff, hairy delivery driver that smells of a stale pack of cigarettes lifts an eyebrow at me. At least I think he is lifting the eyebrow at this point. They are one solid line, so it's really hard to tell. I am having a hard time being near him with the cigarette smell. I really hope that my furniture won't smell that way.

“Uh, can you at least put it inside the house?” Please say yes. Don't tell me you are going to put it on my lawn.

“No ma'am. With your current selection, we can only unload from the truck. We can place it in the yard but we aren't permitted to enter the home. For extra money, we can place them into the house.”

“Nevermind, just place the stuff on the lawn and I will move it into the house.”

“By yourself,” he for sure is lifting an eyebrow at me this time, “I don’t see any men around here to lift these heavy pieces of furniture.”

“I don’t need a man to do this. I will be just fine. Why don’t you do your job and not worry about what I am doing?” Crossing my arms across my chest, I pop my hip out and give him the sassiest no bullshit look on my face. Who does this man think he is? Just because he thinks I need a man doesn’t mean that I actually need a man.

A couple of hours later, they unloaded all of my stuff onto my front lawn. You can’t see a speck of grass underneath it. Glancing at the sky, I am grateful that there isn’t a cloud in sight. I hope this weather holds up.

“Here you go ma’am, if I could get you to sign right here that you received your delivery and that we followed all the set out instructions, we will be on our way.” He hands over the clipboard with the work order and a ballpoint pen.

Scribbling my signature quickly, I hand it back to him. A few more scratches of the pen later, a rip of the paper, and the rumble of the box truck leaving. Here I am, just standing, staring at all my worldly belongings. Sighing in resignation, I don’t quite know how I am going to get all of this stuff into the house. I really didn’t think this one through. Okay, okay. Let’s think about this. Who do we know that could help us? Gail!

I shoot off a text to her asking for her help and she lets me know she will be by shortly. Meanwhile, I start bringing in the boxes that I can handle on my own.

Roughly an hour later, drenched in sweat, and already feeling as though I am going to collapse, I hear Gail calling out for me from the front of the house. Following the maze of boxes, I find not only Gail, but a group of ladies standing behind her. She



gives me the warmest smile, “I thought I would bring some more help. These lovely ladies are here to help. Meet Hazel, Willow, and Aspen. There are a couple of local store owners and we are here to help you!”

“Awe Gail, that is amazing. I am dying here. The delivery guy was disgusting, and I hadn’t considered the sheer amount of stuff involved. I don’t know how I am going to get all of this stuff into the house.” Coming over to me, she wraps me in her warm hug.

“We got you, dear. We don’t need any men. Woman empowerment and all that.” I sniffle back the tears. I didn’t realize how much I needed this. My move here initially filled me with worry about being alone. Gail is showing me I don’t have anything to worry about.

Hours later, we are all drenched in sweat sitting on my couches amongst the boxes. Clinking our wine glasses together, we sip on our crisp Merlot. “Thank you so much, ladies, for helping me with moving in today. I think I would have collapsed before I even had the first row of boxes in the house. You guys are amazing.”

“You are more than welcome, dear. This is what I have been telling you about when it comes to the community of Jasper. We are so closely knit that we are always willing to help fellow members of our community in their time of need. Now I had a dual purpose to bringing Hazel, Willow, and Aspen. I know you moved here all by yourself and you haven’t made any friends yet. So, I thought I would bring along some ladies who I think you will hit it off with.”

Hazel rolls her eyes, “Gail, you are always up to something I swear.”

Giggling, Aspen leans over to nod her head at Hazel, “Yes, but she is never wrong in her meddling. She always has a sense about people. I, for one, am glad she brought me here to meet Nova.”

“Me too! I definitely think that we are going to be fast friends,” Willow says as she raises her glass towards me. Raising my glass in return, I take a small sip of my wine.

“Why don’t you tell us all a little more about you? We can all share stories and drink more of this delicious wine together.” Hazel says as she pours herself another glass of wine.

“I’ll order us some food! Jason, our local deliver kid, is always looking to make some cash! He will jump on the opportunity to grab the food for us! You said slumber party, right?” Aspen giggles as she clicks through different apps, doing as she said she would.

Gail gets up and starts a fire in my wood-burning fireplace. I never even dreamed that I would have one of those. I have always wanted one, but there was never a way to have one in NYC.

Later that night, after hours of laughing, my sides are hurting, but I am feeling a sense of contentment that I have never felt before. I piled all the ladies on my living room floor, except Gail, who I let sleep in my bed. This feeling of fullness in my heart confirms that I’ve finally found where I belong. I still feel as though there is a part missing. Not really sure what it is, but there just seems to be this piece of my heart that is empty.

“Hey,” comes whispering from below me.

Looking over the edge of the couch, Aspen is looking up at me. She smiles a small, sweet smile at me. “I really am glad you moved here, Nova. I feel that you’re my long-lost soul sister, and that we were always destined to be best friends.”

Smiling back to her, “I feel the same way Aspen. I really do. Something drew me here and while I believed it was the job offer. I don’t know if something feels like this

is where I was always meant to be.”

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“I can definitely agree with that. Well, goodnight Nova. I look forward to building our relationship tomorrow. Starting with getting everything ready for the Christmas Festival.”

“Goodnight Aspen. Sleep well.”

You know, when Gail first asked me to help with the Christmas Festival, I was extremely nervous about it. I didn't feel comfortable meeting so many people at one time. But given how these ladies just accepted me into their lives and made it feel as though they have always known me, I am not feeling as nervous about it now.

## Chapter 9

Silas

I regret all life choices that lead me to this exact moment. Why is Nova standing at the hot cocoa stand that Gail said she needed someone to work? This is a literal nightmare. I can't be trapped all day with my human mate while she smiles and flirts with everyone in town, ignoring me. To top it off, with the full moon only a week away, my wolf is restless and downright rude to me lately. Usually he would chatter about the hunt, but now he's also ignoring me because I haven't claimed Nova yet.

As soon as her smell wafts across the breeze, he immediately perks up. Our mate is working with us today!

Yeah, well, that doesn't change the fact that she is human and doesn't know about wolf shifters, fated mates, or bonding.

You aren't giving her a chance to learn about them and instead choosing to ignore her.

We have gone over this. I don't have time to walk her through wolf packs, mating bonds, fated mates, and shifting into a wolf.

You are running out of time on more things than this debt to the Ghost River Pack.

Ignoring him, I take an immediate turn and head to find Warrick. There has to be some way that we can swap. I'd rather spend all day in freezing water than be stuck at the booth with her.

I find him chatting with a beautiful woman by his booth, thankful that I didn't have to do much hunting for him.

Coming up to stand beside the two of them, "Warrick, do you have a moment?" He glances between the two of us and nods.

"Will you excuse me for a moment?" She nods her head and walks down the path to the coffee shop.

"What's up, man?"

"I need to change booths with you."

His eyebrows shoot up. "Why?"

"I just do man. I can't work at the hot cocoa booth all day. You can't tell me you wouldn't rather spend your day flirting with the local girls than being dunked in icy water." Shifting from foot to foot, I look around as a couple walk past us.

Glancing around at me, he looks down at the hot cocoa booth and busts out laughing. “Nah man. No can do. Gail said there would be no switcharooing. Each of us is to stay in our assigned roles. Now I see why. You’re going to be fine. What is the harm of spending one day with your mate? Surely it can’t be that bad?” Chuckling, he claps me on the back, “Anyway, it’s almost time for the event to start. Might as well head on over there and rip that bandaid off. Have you even spoken to her since you were an asshole to her?”

Glaring at him as I turn to head back towards my booth, I throw a no over my shoulder as I walk away. All I can hear is his full belly laughter ringing out into the world. Asshole. Why is everyone so determined to make me spend time with Nova? My wolf is giving me smug satisfaction, feelings radiating through me. Clearly, he is happy with the turn of events.

Just think, this is a great opportunity for you to get to know our mate. And maybe not be an asshole this time?

There will be no ‘getting to know her’. I am going to do everything in my power to not inhale her scent all damn day whilst also keeping my distance.

Walking up to the booth, I clear my throat to grab her attention. She pops her head up, smiling as planned, only to immediately drop the smile from her face. “Oh, it’s you. Is your visit to tell me I can’t attend the Christmas Festival? Come to ruin the holiday cheer with your Grinchy ways?”

“Uh no, I came to work at the hot cocoa booth that Gail told me she needed someone for. If anything, you have her to blame for this lovely meeting. If I had it my way, you wouldn’t be here, let alone working in the same booth as me.”

Her mouth drops open in shock. Snapping it shut, she glares at me. “You just couldn’t help it, could you? Is it normal for you to just be a dick, or do I just get special

treatment?”

“I don’t have time for this or I guess I should say we don’t have time for this. The festival is opening soon, and the town is riding on the success of it. So if you don’t mind turning off your attitude and focusing on the booth...”

“My attitude?! Oh, you have some nerve. Just so you know, everyone tells me how wonderful you are, but I think they just don’t know the real you. So here is how today is going to go. We aren’t speaking again. I am going to set it up so you have the cash register and all you have to do is take the money. Lord knows we don’t need your shitty attitude to rain on everyone’s Christmas parade. I will take the orders and disperse the hot cocoa. You good with that, your majesty?”

“Yeah, I’m good with that.” That is exactly what I wanted to happen. I need her to keep her distance from me and what better way than to piss her off?

We work in silence over the next twenty minutes, making sure there are enough carafes full of hot cocoa and there is enough change in the cash register. She sets up a device to take cards via my phone right as Gail comes walking up. I watch in wonderment as Nova’s face lights up with the most beautiful smile as she spots Gail. When did these two become so familiar with each other? Looking over to Gail, I can see that she is already staring at me and if we weren’t in the middle of the busiest day, she would likely give me another one of her lectures. Dipping my head to break eye contact, I pretend to be arranging the napkins, straws, and cup holders as she walks up.

*Source Creation Date: July 19, 2025, 2:22 am*

“Nova, sweetie. How is everything coming along with the booth?” I can feel Gail’s eyes boring into the top of my head.

“Everything is great Gail. We made up six carafes of hot cocoa. We will begin making more when the first three run out. Silas will be in charge of payments while I take and distribute the hot cocoa orders. I think we have everything all set up and ready to go.” I glance out of the corner of my eye towards her and she is beaming with pride over having the booth ready to go. Seemingly waiting for Gail’s approval.

“And you...do you have anything you would like to add to what Nova said?” I look up to find Gail is still staring at me in anticipation of what I am going to say. Fuck. She knows. I don’t know how she knows, but of course she knows I was a dick again to Nova. I swear nothing ever gets past her.

“Uh, no, I think she covered everything. She even installed some apps for my phone so I can take electronic payments. Pretty nifty, if you ask me.” I cut my eyes away from her and fiddle with the straws some more.

“Is that so? Well, that is fantastic, Nova. What is the app called so I can share the information with the other booths?”

“Uh, it’s called Circle. It’s just an app where they can tap to pay in case they don’t have cash on them.”

“Perfect. I’ll be sure to pass that along. Do you mind if I steal Silas for a few moments? I am afraid there are some crates that I need help with lifting, and a woman of my age shouldn’t be lifting such heavy items. Isn’t that right Silas?”



“Yes ma’am,” I blow out as I feel my cheeks warm from embarrassment. I already know there aren't any crates that she needs lifting. It's just her excuse to get me away from Nova and into a space so she can lecture me.

Softly giggling under her breath, “No, no do take him. I think he could use some manual labor. Might do him some good.”

I cut my eyes to her, only to find her giggling behind her hand, with her eyes crinkling. Oh, she thinks this is so funny. That just adds to the shit list that is today. Coming around the booth, Gail wraps her arm around mine as we head away. “I'll have him back in time for the opening of the festival,” she calls over her shoulder.

We walk in silence back towards the opening in the woods that leads to our pack land. There are people bustling all over the town. There is a light dusting of snow on the ground, warm lamp posts lit with the lights that look like a flame. Evergreen wreaths hang beneath the glass with those felt red bows. Each artisan in our community has their wood booths set up with signs calling out their wares. There is gleeful chatter ringing out across the town as everyone prepares for the opening. Honestly, I can't believe that Gail pulled this off in a week. I knew she was amazing at planning, but it looks like it took months to prepare, and she pulled it off in a week.

As we enter the opening to our pack land, we walk far enough that we are covered by the shade of the Fir trees towering over us. She let go of my arm, only to step in front of me with her arms crossed over her chest. She is radiating anger and there is only one reason she would be this mad. Nova.

“Listen, before you start your lecture, let me explain. I was...”

“Silas Matthias West, you will not continue to treat Nova with such disrespect. Your attempts to deny what is truly meant to be are becoming a genuine concern. On top of that, you are treating our newest member of our community, regardless of her

meaning to you, with the most outrageous behavior. It is so shocking that I have community members seeking me out to inform me of how you spoke to her earlier. Now you might be the Alpha of this pack, but I am the Matriarch and I will no longer tolerate such behavior from you. If your parents were still alive, your mother would have slapped you by now. I know she didn't raise her son to be this disrespectful to women. Do I make myself clear?"

"Yes ma'am. Crystal clear. I just don't have the time to walk her through pack life right now. There might not be a pack in a week. How could I subject her to this with that possibility on the horizon?" I say as I shuffle my foot in front of me like a child. I know she is right, but I can't do this to her.

"You might not have that choice for much longer. Be wise to be ahead of it then having to ask for forgiveness. Now we have a festival to run. I better not hear any more outlandish behavior from you." She wraps her arm around mine again as we walk back down to the festival.

An hour later, I am annoyed with her bubblyness. I can't quite tell if this is who she is or if she is putting on a show for the customers. She doesn't seem bothered by the long lines, the chilly breeze blowing through, or the snow that has fallen again. She just keeps smiling and thanking guests. There hasn't been a break in our line since we opened. Partly because of the weather, but also because of everyone wanting to meet the newest member of the community. I've gotten quite a few glares from the older members after they have to meet her. Clearly, it's gotten around town that I was rude to her earlier.

That's one thing about this community: once they welcome you in, they don't accept people being mistreated, even if you have been here longer. It doesn't surprise me that this many people are already taking a liking to her. I mean, I get it. She seems really nice. She would make a wonderful Luna. Stop it. We can't think about that.

“You know you can cut the act,” I barked at her.

“What act would that be?” She says without looking at me. “There you go, sir. Enjoy your hot cocoa. I heard there was a fudge vendor down the way about four booths. It would pair lovely with this hot cocoa.” The man tips his cup of hot cocoa towards her as he ambles down the row.

“That! This overly friendly, cheery, fake act. They will like you without all this over the top friendliness.” I grab the card from the next guest, tapping it on my phone screen, then the green check mark and confetti fall on the screen. Handing back their card, “They have two cups.”

Smiling again at the guest, “How are you loving the festival so far?” The woman looks up to her, “It’s been quite lovely. We have never had a festival like this before. I hope it becomes an annual thing,” she says in a British accent.

Handing her the two cups of cocoa, “Oh, how delightful another out of towners like me. I just moved here from New York City. I hated living in a big city, definitely couldn’t wait to move out of it. Where do you come from?”

“I am from a wee bit further than you. I came from London to the United States looking for a place in the mountains with a pack to call home.” She smiles warmly towards me and I tip my head to her.

Looking between us, Nova looks confused. “A pack you said? What does that mean? I’ve only heard about a pack when it comes to wolves and, well, in my romance books, I read. Surely you misspoke.”

“Oh dear, I did. I meant a place not pack. Goodness me. Well, I best be getting to these other booths, not sure how much longer I will be able to stand in this cold.” She cuts her eyes over towards me again before shooting a smile at Nova. She quickly

turns and disappears into the crowd.

“That was odd.” Nova stares off in the direction that Tera took off in. That was too close for comfort. Hopefully, Nova doesn’t ask anything else.

“See, that is what I mean. You literally info dumped on her and had a meaningless conversation with her. Why can’t you just stop? You know, smile, hand her the hot cocoa, and let them be on their merry way.”

Without missing a beat, without dropping her smile, and for sure without looking at me, “Maybe this is a hard concept for you, but not everyone is faking it when they are being friendly. Given that I intend to live my years out here in this lovely town that has welcomed me, bar you that is, I will continue to be friendly to each guest. Now, if you don’t mind, we agreed to the no talking rule. Seems only I can manage to follow such a simple command.”

From then on, no matter what I said, she wouldn’t give into the bait. She would hum between talking to customers, and continued to get to know each and every one of them. I already know that Gail has been told about my behavior again. I will deal with that later. For now, wrapped in her warm vanilla, cinnamon, and apple smell, I can’t help but watch her as she works. Glancing over every few moments to watch her work and the radiance that glows from her as she learns more about our community.

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Seems fate will not be swayed so easily. Maybe I can make time for her and get closer to her. If Storm had anything to do with it, he would already know everything about her.

### Chapter 10

Nova

It is almost the end of the Christmas Festival, thank goodness, because while I am enjoying annoying him with all my sunshine, my feet are killing me. I am pretty sure this is the longest I have been on my feet in a long time. Granted, when I was at the University we had a ton of walking to do between classes, but still I mostly was sitting in classes. Pouring myself another cup of hot cocoa from the newest batch, I take that first warming sip, close my eyes, and allow the warmth to seep into my soul. “Uh, I wanted to ask you something,” Silas says from beside me.

Snapping my eyes open, I cut a glare at him. “What? Want to know if I will move away now that you have spent the entire day seeing how big of an asshole you can be?”

He drops his eyes to the ground and a visible gush of air rushes out of him. “No, that wasn’t what I was going to say. I was going to ask if I can take you out to dinner tomorrow night.”

My mouth drops open as I stand there just staring at him. I am waiting for the ‘ha you thought I was serious’. He has to be joking, right?

I shake my head from side to side. I have to be having a fever dream. “You have to be joking, right? This is your new tactic? Couldn’t get me to leave by being an asshole, so let’s embarrass me by not showing up for the date?”

He is still staring at me, not even smiling. Almost as though he is waiting for something. I don’t know what it is, but I won’t be the butt of this joke. “No, I am not trying some new tactic or plan to embarrass you. I’m afraid I made some snap judgments. I want to have a chance to actually get to know you.”

I pop my hip out and place my hand on it. I am pretty sure I am close to catching a fly in my mouth with how long I have had it open. I am flabbergasted. What is his angle here? You don’t go from being a dick all day to let’s have dinner. “You have some...”

“Hey kids. How was the hot cocoa stand today? It looked like you guys had a steady line the whole day.” Gail comes up to stand in front of our stand. She looks between the two of us with an expectant look on her face. Clasp her hands in front of her, with the light pink showing across her cheeks and nose, she looks exactly like you would imagine Mrs. Clause would look. Especially with her authentic looking Santa hat, red coat lined with white fur, and is that elf shoes on her feet? Noticing where my eyes are, she taps her toes together so the little bell rings out. Giggling, I look back to see her eyes are crinkled in humor as well.

“Good evening, Gail. We had a phenomenal day with the guests. I don’t think I have ever sold so much in one day. There isn’t an exact total since that is Silas’s department, but I can say there were tons of people who came back for second cups and some even third cups. I would say it was a great day,” smiling I answered her.

I look over at the man who hasn’t said a single word, not even sure he is still standing here. Unfortunately, he is still standing exactly where I left him when he asked me to dinner. Is he even breathing? Blinking? What is wrong with him?

Looking back over to Gail, I am about to ask her what is wrong with him when Gail beats me to it. “Silas...How well did we do with the sales?”

Shaking his head quickly, he turns towards Gail, and a megawatt smile spreads across his face. “I don’t have the final numbers, but I would garner close to \$500. How did the other stands fare?”

She beams with pride as she says, “Silas, this was a tremendous hit. I have had so many people come to me to ask if we can make this an annual celebration. I even had some ask if we could do a Fall Festival next year.”

Silas claps his hands together, “That’s fantastic to hear Gail. I don’t see why we couldn’t make this an annual celebration and we can discuss the logistics of the Fall Festival at the next meeting.”

She nods her head at him before turning back to me, “I hope you will be here next year for the next festival.” She has this twinkle in her eyes, like she is up to something. “How did you get on?” She glances back and forth between us, acknowledging the distance between us and the daggers I am glaring at him.

“Well, I can say I met far more pleasant men in the big city and that’s saying something, since they are known for being tools.” If looks could kill, he would already be dead.

Chuckling softly to herself, “Silas, what did you do? Surely, you can’t have been so bad that she would prefer one of those obnoxious city boys to you? That doesn’t sound like you at all.” She has dropped her sweet Mrs. Claus look and now she looks like an angry grandmother about to scold a child for stealing a cookie. Ope, he fucked up.

He even looks like a scolded child when he responds. “I might have mistreated her

and I might have misjudged her.”

She looks over at me, examining my body language. It feels like she can see into my soul. I shiver under her gaze. “I don’t think that is true at all. Women don’t tend to dislike someone so strongly for might or slights.” She gives him that knowing look.

“Fine, I was an asshole to her, and I snapped at her for being fake with the customers. But I want to make it up to her by taking her to dinner.” He is looking at me with that unblinking look again.

“Ah I see, so you think that after being an, as she said, asshole all day that you could ask her to dinner at the end of the day and she would, what? Say yes?” Now she has both hands on her hips and she is glaring at him. I almost feel sorry for him because she is intense and I don’t know that I would want to be the recipient of that glare.

Shifting his weight from side to side, he looks up at me with a softer look on his face. “I hoped that I could have a chance for her to know the real me. It’s my mistake and I own that. I’ve been acting like an asshole because of my own problems. She deserves far more and I can only hope that she will let me have the chance.” He is looking at me like a puppy who wants a piece of the cake you are eating.

Gail looked at me while rolling her arms like she wants me to follow that up with my declaration. Yeah, no. I look at Silas as I cross my arms across my chest. “You know, honestly, I couldn’t care less what your reasons are. The fact that you just assume I will forgive you and move on just shows even more how you don’t know me at all. I don’t know why I would subject myself to an entire dinner with your undivided, aggressive attention.”

Gail puffs out a breath as if she was holding it in anticipation of my response. Clearly, that wasn’t the one she expected. “Nova, I think...”



“It’s fine Gail. I deserve it. I haven’t even given her one reason to believe that I am anything but an asshole. What if I give you a guarantee that I won’t be an asshole and that this dinner is truly about getting to know you and you, me?”

“I’m listening.”

He looks around at the people milling about as they break down their stands and pack away their wares. Smiling at a couple as they walk by waving to him. Shaking his body, he looks towards the sky, blowing out a breath. “Alright, if I don’t hold up my end of the deal, not being an asshole during the dinner, I will allow you to choose one revenge activity to be used whenever you choose.”

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“You drive a hard bargain, Silas. Fine, I will go to this dinner with you, but only because I don’t think you can make it a full dinner without being an asshole. I am looking forward to winning the revenge activity.”

Clapping her hands in excitement, she pulls Silas into a hug as she whispers something into his ear. She let him go as he says “Yes ma’am.” Wrapping me in a hug, she whispers into my ear, “You are destined for him. Give him a chance to show you the real him.” She pulls back with her hands on my shoulders. The warmest, most welcoming look on her face as she gives me the smallest of smiles. “You are home, Nova, and I am so glad you finally made it here.”

There is a sting behind my eyes as the tears spring up. After losing my parents, all I wanted was to find a place that felt like home. Her saying that means so much to me. “You can go ahead and head home, dear. Silas can handle tearing down the stand, plus I need to have a conversation with him, anyway.”

Looking between the both of them, “You sure?” They both nod at me. “Okay, well, I will see you guys later than.”

“Oh and dear, Silas will pick you up tomorrow at 7pm for dinner.”

“Oh, okay. Well, see you then, Silas.” He tips his head towards me as I turn to walk my way back home.

As I’m pulling off my seventeen decorative pillows, pulling back my comforter and flat sheet, I can’t help but reflect on today. I can’t say that when I woke up this morning that I would end the day with a date with Silas, of all people. Shaking my

head, I pull off my diamond earrings that my father gave me on my 21st birthday. It was my last gift from him before I lost him. I pull off my mother's wedding band from my right ring finger. Thankfully, they were able to recover it.

Pumping lotion into my hands, I think about the stolen glances I was able to steal from Silas as he was busy with customers. He is a rugged beauty. He flexes his jaw when he is trying to figure something out. I am blown away that he not only knows everyone in town, but also remembers things happening in their lives. Not going to lie, the second I saw him hold one of the babies as he cooed at her, my ovaries were crying. I had to look away because what woman doesn't swoon when you see a man being cute with a baby?

He has these piercing blue eyes that seem unnatural, but no matter which way I look at his eyes, I never see the blue ring of contacts. I've never seen a blue like his. At one point, he rolled his sleeves up to his elbow, swoon. What is it about a man's forearms that when he rolls his sleeves up, all bets are off. I was almost willing to forgive his assholiness just from looking at his forearms alone. If they are that toned, lord knows what he looks like under all those layers.

Shaking my head as I chuckle at myself, I agreed to one dinner, not to sleep with him. I hope that agreeing to this wasn't a huge mistake. Granted, the revenge activity sounds great.

Clicking off my lamp, I snuggle under my blankets. Sighing, I really hope that he isn't an asshole at dinner tomorrow.

## Chapter 11

Silas

Man, I am glad that she agreed to the dinner, although reluctantly. It wasn't my idea

to give her the revenge activity, but if I didn't convince her, I was afraid that Storm was going to take over and do it his way. Nobody wants to deal with a wolf determined to claim his mate. He doesn't even realize how foolish he made us look when we were just standing there staring at her.

Well, maybe if you didn't royally fuck it up every time you happen to open your mouth towards her, then I wouldn't have had to take control during that conversation.

I was doing just fine. You made us look weird by just staring at her. If it wasn't for Gail interrupting, do you think that you would have snapped out of it?

I would rather look weird than an asshole, like you were behaving. Gail is the only reason that you have this date.

I could have convinced her without either of your help. You guys didn't give me a chance.

Oh, but we did. For a week we have let you handle this and all you did was push her further and further away. This is our chance to make her ours. Don't fuck it up again.

I got this. I just need to come up with some ideas on how to win her over. Do you have any ideas?

Yeah, bite her, mark her, and then ask for forgiveness.

I am glaring at him, and he knows it. You just said that I was being an asshole and you don't think that is very assholeish behavior?

Okay, okay. Yeah, that isn't going to do it. I don't know; I am a wolf and follow those instincts. Maybe Warrick would be better to ask?

You might be right, I will see if he can come help. I open my phone and tap Warrick's contact. I shoot off a quick message for him to meet me at my house.

Only a second later, a message pops up, showing that he was on his way.

I put on a pot of coffee for the both of us. I am going to need it. Storm isn't wrong. I am pretty sure this is the only chance Nova is going to give us. We fuck this up and we might as well accept that our mate will never be ours.

Warrick calls out from the front door, "I'm in the kitchen," I yell back to him.

I hand him a cup of coffee as soon as he enters the kitchen. "I am glad that you were able to make it over here."

Smirking, he looks at me over the rim of his coffee cup, "Ahhh, well I figured after the way you behaved yesterday towards Nova, plus what Gail told me when she came by to see how the dunking booth went. You are going to need all the help that you can get."

"Yeah, well, it wasn't my finest moments, but I want to win her over. I know this dinner is going to be my only chance to do so. So instead of giving me shit over the past, how about we go over some ideas," I glare at him.

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“Alright, alright. What do you know about her?”

I breathe out a heavy sigh, “Only thing that I know about her is that she is from New York City and that she took the teaching job at the Elementary School.”

He just stares at me expecting more, “That’s it??”

“I know I don’t know much, but it’s not like I have spent a lot of time getting to know her. I’m not sure what you are expecting from me.”

“I know more about her than you do, and I haven’t even spoken to her. The entire town is buzzing with information about her. Did you know she applied to teaching jobs all over the country but this is the only one that contacted her about the job?”

My eyebrows shoot up, because no, I didn’t know that. He continues on, “Seems that fate was determined to bring your mate to you.” He gives me that look to say I fucked up big time.

Shrugging my shoulders, “I obviously didn’t know that, but you have to agree that I do have a lot on my plate right now. I didn’t see the point in adding walking a human through pack life, regardless of what Fate has in mind.”

“Well, it does appear that Fate has had other things in mind because no matter how hard you try, she keeps putting Nova back into your path. So instead of rejecting the idea, maybe we, ya know, go with the idea,” he shrugs.

“Are you done lecturing me? I asked you here for advice on how to win her over, not

a lecture about how I have been fucking up.” I glare at him as he chuckles.

“Yeah, man, I have some ideas. Just know that I am going to be the best man in the wedding. Since the only reason there will be one is because of me.”

We spend the next hour going over all the things that I can do to win her over. Apparently, I really am the only person in this town that hasn’t gotten to know her. For Warrick to be able to give me a list of ideas, yeah, I really have failed my mate. I have made a smaller list of items that I want to do tonight, a game plan on how to get it done before our date, and I can only hope that it’s enough.

“Alright man, I think you got it. Just remember to be your true self, not this asshole you have been acting as. I don’t think you need to buy her love, but it is always nice to give mating gifts. I know that telling her about the wolf stuff is intimidating but, she is your mate, she will come around to it.” He claps me on the shoulder a couple of times while giving me a warm smile. “I am going to head out. Don’t worry about pack stuff today, worry about winning over your mate. I will get with Gail to see how the Festival did for our debt.” He heads towards the front of my house.

“Thank you Warrick. I don’t know what I would do without you.”

“Hopefully, you never have to find out.” And with that, he leaves.

Alright, with my list in hand, I head out to town to purchase my mating gifts. Although she doesn’t know what they are, I can’t dismiss the need to buy her these things. As the mating heat rises with the full moon approaching, we have this deep-seated need to buy our mate gifts. If she was a wolf, she would need to build her nest.

In the wooing stage of mating, our gifts are designed to show her what we can provide for her as a mate. So think of things like jewelry to show the wealth we can provide. Food to show that she will never worry about hunger. A comfort item, such

as a blanket, to show she will always find comfort in her mate. An item for her home, to show that you wish to build a home with her.

For her, she would be out buying comfort items for her home; blankets, pillows, candles, her favorite snacks/drinks. All the things that would show that she was prepared for a long mating and ready for breeding.

“Can’t we just bite her and move to the mating portion of the night? I don’t want to wait any longer,” Storm grumbles.

No, we can’t just bite our human mate and assume that she would be completely okay with all of this.

All I am saying is that if I just bite her and turn her, then all you would have to worry about is teaching her how to be a wolf.

Absolutely not. Don’t even think about it. We will not be traumatizing our mate because of your impatience.

I wouldn’t be this impatient if you hadn’t fucked this up so badly. If you would have listened from the beginning, then we would have been beyond this stage and closer to the mating already.

Fair enough, regardless, we won’t be biting and turning her without her consent. That is final.

If you don’t have this in the bag by the time the full moon happens, you won’t have any say in what happens.

We are down to less than a week before the full moon. I have even more reason to ensure that I do this right because, if not, I don’t know what Storm will do. During



the full moon, the wolf completely takes over, leaving the human side in the far recesses of our minds. Generally, it is like having a split personality. We both have our own but with similarities that allow for, usually, a peaceful co-existence. But once a month, we repress our human side and release our inner wolves. Think of it like the subconscious of your mind taking over and you are now the subconscious of the mind. We are each aware of the other, but only one side is in control.

Orion's one redeeming quality was he would take us to the other side of the mountain to allow us to run freely without concern for the citizens of Jasper. It's something that I will continue because although I am in the far recesses, waking the next morning, I always feel my best. I don't want to lose that now.

After I acquired all my mating gifts, I showered, shaved, and put on my best outfit. Looking at myself in the mirror, I straighten my deep navy and orange plaid shirt as I smooth my hand down the front, tucking it into my dark khaki pants that I paired with my leather loafers. I adjust my dark brown leather belt and spritz some cologne on my neck and chest. I move my head side to side to ensure that my gelled hair is still exactly where I put it. Glancing at my watch gives me a spike of adrenaline as my nerves ratchet up. It's time to go.

Grabbing all my mating gifts, I head out to my truck. It is an odd feeling to be driving since we generally never do with everything so close. But this is the date to win her over. I didn't want to walk there. I have to show her I can provide for her every need.

I might have added wooing our mate to my overflowing plate, but it's now or never.

## Chapter 12

Nova

Idon't think that I should do this. Maybe I can fake being sick? Cough, cough. Surely, he wouldn't force someone who is coming down with something to go back out into the cold? Ugh, I need my bestie.

Dialing Nellie, she answers before the first ring finishes. Sometimes I swear it's like she knows when I am going to call.

"What's going on with my beautiful bish?" She giggles into the phone.

"Do you think I can fake being sick and get out of this date with Silas?" I gush out in a puff of breath.

"I mean you could, but what will be your excuse next time he asks? Are you planning to have a never ending illness? Should we say you were diagnosed with like cancer? I mean, how else will you be sick for a long period of time?"

Scoffing, I say, "Don't be ridiculous. We aren't going to pretend that I have cancer."

The phone is silent. I can tell she is giving me that look like I am the one being ridiculous, not her. "Don't give me the silent treatment, woman."

Giggles come through the phone, "I am just waiting for you to realize that I am not the one being ridiculous. You just asked to fake being sick, so you didn't have to go out with the man that fate has literally thrown in your path repeatedly. I don't even believe in that shit, but even I can say it might be true."

Sighing, I pinch my pointer finger and thumb together at the bridge of my nose. “I know, I know, but he has been such an asshole to me. I just worry that I signed myself up for an entire dinner where he will have all the opportunities to be an asshole again. Why did I agree to this?”

“Nova, give him a chance. I think you are going to be surprised when you go out with him tonight. Call it intuition, or whatever. But there’s this feeling that everything is about to change for you. I mean, well, more than it has already with the whole move to Jasper.”

“Fine, I will go, but if this goes awfully, I will be immediately calling you. So be ready for that phone call because it’s likely going to happen. Since I am going to go, what should I wear?”

“Ohhhh, you know your high waisted suede bodycon mini skirt? You should wear that with that black Cable Knit long sleeve sweater. Make sure to tuck it in! Then pair it with the black suede over the knee boots! You could add some gold hoop earrings and soft makeup. with a bold red lip. Boom!”

I pull my phone away from my ear and just look at it. Did she have this answer like primed and ready? That was very specific. “Did you have this answer prepared before I asked?” I giggle.

“Yeah, I pretty much figured that you would ask me at some point what you should wear. So, yes, I had the answer ready to go. Now go get dressed. Don’t forget to curl your hair too. It’s so pretty when you wear it down.”

“Fine, I am going. I will let you know how it goes tomorrow. Be prepared for a lot of bitching.”

“I doubt I will hear bitching, but I will await your phone call.”

“Alright, love yooouuus.”

“Love youuuuss too.”

Hanging up with Nellie, I breathe out a deep breath. Well, let’s get this show on the road. I only have about an hour before he shows up. I will cut it close, but I got this.

An hour later, I am fluffing my hair and doing my final outfit checks. I realize I don’t need a fairy godmother when I have Nellie in my life. This outfit is hella cute and even if this date is a disaster, at least I look hot as fuck. I hit my hot spots with my perfume oil, especially right behind the ears. I love that this perfume is subtle, with just enough of a scent to smell amazing, but not so much to make someone gag.

I am just touching up the bold red lip when my doorbell rings. It’s time. Blowing out my breath, I shake out my hands to try to release some of the nerves that are bubbling up. Listen, Silas is hot and I haven’t been on a date since I was an undergrad. Grad school doesn’t give a lot of free time for dating. It’s been a hot minute since I was on a date and, of course, the first date I am going on has to be with the hottest asshole in town.

Sliding the dead bolt out of the door frame, I turn the handle, pulling the beautiful cherry wood door open. As the door slides past my face, I am hit with the smell of sage, sea salt, and amber. I close my eyes and take a deep breath of it, feeling as though it calms me down somehow. When my eyes come open again, I find Silas standing there with a beautiful bouquet of red roses and sunflowers. Is that a fuzzy blanket? Why does he have Oreos? Clearing his throat, I bring my eyes lazily up from the bundle of goodies in his arms. His blue and orange plaid button-up shirt is open at the top three buttons. He trimmed his beard, and it glistens with beard oil. He even gelled his hair back. Color me shocked. Looking down, I notice he is also wearing a dark brown pair of khakis with a black belt and black loafers. Alright, how are we matching on our first date? That’s weird right?

He clears his throat again, and I pop my eyes to his. He has a smirk on his face, but his pupils are blown. “Good evening Nova. I brought you some, uh, gifts. May I come in to show them to you before we head to dinner?”

I’m just standing here staring at him because this completely surprised me. His smell, how well he looks, and the gifts. Ohdear, this is off to an interesting start. Don’t fuck him just because he bought you Oreos and a fuzzy blanket. Be strong. We got this.

He clears his throat once again and chuckles softly to himself. “Are you alright?”

Shaking my head slightly, “Yeah, sorry. I just wasn’t expecting gifts, so I am a little thrown off. But come in, let’s put those flowers in water before we head to dinner.” I open the door a little wider, taking a step back, and hold my arm out towards the interior of the house. He dips his head slightly and walks past me. As soon as he comes close to me, his smell wraps around me. Why does it feel as though it’s wrapping around me?

He steps in a little closer to me, “You smell so good I could eat you for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.”

I feel a gush of wetness come out and I am pretty sure I am soaking my thong now. What is happening? I have never reacted to a single man the way my body is reacting to him right now. He leans in and brushes my hair off my shoulder. Before I can process what is happening, he inhales deeply right by the spot I put the perfume oil earlier. He tilts his head towards my ear and growls, “I can smell your arousal, Nova. Be patient, we will remedy that later tonight.” Planting a quick kiss on my cheek before stepping back with a big enough smirk on his face that his dimple pops.

He turns and heads toward my kitchen, leaving me standing there with my mouth hanging open. I am equally aroused and confused right now. He looks over his shoulder, seeing that I am still standing where he left me, chuckling when he says,

“Come on Nova, our dinner reservation is in thirty minutes.” With that,he turns back and continues to my kitchen. I can hear him opening cabinets and then water running.

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The sound of the water running snaps me out of my stupor as I hustle into the kitchen. How?... how did he know where my vase was? He looks up from the sink to see me staring at him. "You only have one cabinet with the shelf height to hold a vase. It was just a process of elimination, nothing stalkery or anything." He turns back to the vase to see that it has plenty of water. Shutting off the water, he comes to the counter and gently places it on the counter. He opens my drawer, finds the scissors, and proceeds to cut the elastic holding the flowers together and the plastic that is around them. As I watch, he carefully puts my flowers in a vase.

He chuckles to himself when he glances to see that I am still standing here, staring at him like he is a zoo animal in an exhibit.

He walks over to me to present me with the Oreos and the fuzzy blanket. "I know you love Oreos and fuzzy blankets, so I wanted to gift you both, but I have one more surprise for you." He places both the Oreos and the blanket on the counter and turns back to me while digging something out of his pocket. He pulls out a long rectangular red felt box. "I wanted to give you this necklace." He pops open the box and there, on a delicate silver chain, is a silver paw print with two little stones. I grab the box and pull it closer to examine the stones. The one on the right is a ruby which is my birthstone. But the other is an aquamarine. Scrunching my eyebrows in confusion, I glance up at him. "The aquamarine is my birthstone. I am a March baby." I blink down at it. It is simple, but beautiful. My parents are the only ones who have ever given me jewelry. I feel tears well up when I look back at him.

"Will you put it on me?" he nods his head and pulls the necklace out of its box. I turn around and lift my hair out of the way. He lifts the necklace over my head and grazes his fingers across my neck as he pulls it to the back. Chills race down my spine as

bumps cover my skin. He clasps the necklace on and comes back around to face me. Holding his elbow out toward me, “Are you ready to go?”

As I looped my arm through his, his scent enveloped me in a warm embrace. I wrap my fingers around the paw charm, realizing that maybe this date won’t be as bad as I thought it would be.

## Chapter 13

Silas

We have a problem. I knew the moment that I opened the front door that Nova was feeling the mating pull. With the Full Moon less than a week away, our bodies are preparing for mating. She has no idea how much she is perfuming the air, but you know who noticed? Storm. He is riding me so hard right now that I am surprised that fur isn’t sprouting along my arms.

“You need to chill out or you are going to scare the shit out of her,” I grumble to Storm.

He scoffs, “Do you smell that perfume? I don’t know how you aren’t humping her leg already.”

Rolling my eyes, “Because humping legs is highly frowned upon in human society. We would for sure lose her then.”

“Humans have such weird rules. I bet if I humped her leg, she would already be begging me for my bite.”

“This is why I haven’t let you out since we found her. I am terrified to see what you will do if given the chance.”



There is a small clearing of a throat next to me. Shaking my head, I glance over to Nova sitting in the passenger seat of my truck. “Are you doing okay over there? You were making all these facial expressions. You battling with a split personality over there? That’s something I should probably be made aware of” she says while staring at me with concern written all over her face.

Chuckling, “If you only knew but no split personalities to worry about.”

She is still staring at me without blinking. “I swear, if you turn out to be a psychopath, I am going to make your life miserable.”

If she only knew that while I am not a psychopath, I do have a split personality of sorts. Maybe I should drop subtle hints to warm her up to the idea of Storm. What could I say? Oh, hey how do you feel about dogs? No, that is too on the nose. How do you feel about fur? Shaking my head internally, no, that is an odd question.

I glance over at her, “I’m not a psychopath at all, I swear. Do you ever have conversations with yourself but feel as though someone is responding to you?”

She just slowly blinks at me. Okay, maybe that sounds a bit psychotic. Chuckling, I say, “Yeah, I am just joking with you. You can close your mouth now.”

Shit, this isn’t going well at all. I really need to find a way to bring her around to the idea of the wolves without scaring her away. “You look beautiful tonight. I love that outfit on you.”

Blushing, she says, “Thank you.”

“Well, I am glad that I was able to give you an opportunity to put it on. Those red lips are taunting me, though. I am not sure I will be able to make it through dinner without getting a taste of them.”

Her cheeks redden even further, allowing her freckles to deepen as well. Her perfume fills the air and my wolf presses against my skin. A growl builds in my throat and I have to cough to prevent it from coming out.

Rolling the window down slightly, I try to let out some of the perfume before I fully shift while driving us to dinner. I glance over at her, only to find her scowling at me. Damnit, I can't seem to prevent myself from messing up. Rolling the windows back up, I try to take shallow breaths to keep my wolf settled. I am going to have to ignore the zipper digging into my lengthening dick. Fuck, this is going to be a long dinner.

We pull up in front of You're Bacon Me Crazy and I jump out to run around to her side. I open the door for her and hold out my hand to help her down. As soon as her feet hit the ground, I pull her hand into the crease of my elbow. This only brings her scent closer to me, and it's like it is seeping into my pores. I really love that smell, even if it is making me harder in a couple of ways.

Holding open the door for Nova, I watch as her beautiful smile spreads across her face. That can only mean one thing. "Gail," she squeals. Fuck my life. Of course, Gail is here tonight. This meddling woman is up to something.

"Awe, look, it's my two favorite people finally arm in arm. What a sight to see." Gail smiles fondly at both of us. Glaring at her from behind Nova, I shake my head at her, but she keeps going. "I just knew that before long, you guys would finally end up together." She claps her hands together, giving me a wink.

Nova turns to the side and looks back to me, "Oh Gail, we aren't together. This is only his chance to show me how much of an ass he isn't."

Gail places her hand softly on Nova's cheek, "Oh, he isn't at all like he has been behaving. That man right there is going to be the love of your life, just wait and see."

Giggling, Nova looks back to me and I just shrug. I mean, what else am I supposed to do here? “Alright ladies, let’s get to the actual eating part of the dinner. I would love to actually talk to Nova.”

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“Oh yes, I’m sorry. Right this way, you two lovebirds.” Gail wraps her arm around Nova’s and pulls her towards the back corner. I asked for this spot so we could have some privacy. Not that we will have much in this town, but it was the best I could do.

Gail keeps whispering to Nova and I shake my head. Gail says to Nova, “He is such a handsome man, don’t you think?” Nova nods at her, “Gail, you know I agree he is handsome, but that doesn’t take away from his behavior.” Gail taps Nova’s hand sweetly, “I know dear. But trust me when I say you will want to give this man a chance. You might be in for a life you never expected.”

I knew this woman wouldn’t resist an opportunity to meddle in this. Shaking my head, I follow behind the two until we get to our table. After we are seated, Gail says, “I’ll be right back with some Merlot.” I look up at her, “You don’t sell Merlot Gail.”

Waving me off, she says, “I know, I know, but it’s Nova’s favorite, so I thought I would make sure there was a bottle here for this special occasion.”

Shaking my head, “Thank you Gail.” She smiles warmly before turning to rush off to do whatever meddling grandmother’s do.

Giggling to herself, Nova looks up to me. “That woman is up to something.”

“She sure is. I would like to start this off by actually asking you what brought you to our small mountain town.”

She tilts her head slightly to the side, “About time you asked for the story. I’ve always disliked city life, but as a child, you can’t choose where you live. While

attending college to become a teacher, I knew it was my last step. My plan after graduation was always to move to a small town and teach. You know how small towns give you the opportunity to watch children grow into adults? That was something I would never get to experience that while living in the city.”

Huh, well when she realizes she is the Luna of our pack and will achieve that goal, she will feel so fulfilled. “That is fair. Growing up here, I never had a desire to leave. I’ve traveled to larger cities but never anything like New York City. I am sure this is a culture shock to you.”

Chuckling, she says, “Yeah, the first night that I was here, I couldn’t handle the silence. I also had a wolf howling in my backyard. Now that was wild. When I looked outside, there was a literal wolf standing in my backyard.”

“Whoops.” Storm mumbles.

“We will have a talk about that later.” I say to Storm.

“Yeah, you will get used to that. I mean, we have wolves and all kinds of wildlife running around. The wolves are friendly. We haven’t had any incident of them attacking. What’s been your favorite things so far about the community?”

“You mean besides the town asshole?” She raises her eyebrow at me and winks. “I love the feeling of the community. Everyone is so friendly and accepting.”

“That is very true of our community. I am sure that Gail told you, but we are big on helping each other. We buy as much locally as we can, I mean, there are things that we have to purchase outside of our community, but not much.”

“Yeah, she told me..”

Gail comes back to the table with not only a bottle of Merlot and two wine glasses, but she brought a plate of mozzarella sticks as well. They smell amazing. “Here you go, dear. I know how much Nova loves cheese, and that Silas loves mozzarella sticks, so I thought I would bring you a fresh plate of them both. Oh, look another thing you guys have in common.” She winks at me.

I can’t help but shake my head at her antics. The diner doesn’t sell mozzarella sticks either. Harrumphing, I glance up at Gail, “Do we need to look at the menu or do you have the entire meal planned already?”

“No need to be rude Silas, I am sure that Gail means well.” Nova glares over to me.

“You’re right. I am sorry Gail. I am sure that it will be a fantastic meal filled with love.”

Gail smiles warmly down at me. “I am going to give you guys some time to chat with each other. I will be around if you need anything.”

Giggling to herself, Nova looks over at me. “You know I think Gail is trying to ensure that we like each other, don’t you think?”

“Yeah, you could say that. I swear that woman can’t keep herself out of it. But she means well. She is the grandmother that I never had and she treats everyone as if they are her own grandchildren.”

Nova spreads a warm smile across her face as she picks up one of the mozzarella sticks and dips it into the marinara. “You know, she was the first person to truly welcome me into Jasper. When my stuff was delivered, she showed up with Hazel, Aspen, and Willow to help me move it all into my house. It was my first experience with the helpfulness of this community. I am truly grateful for her.”

“She truly is an amazing woman, and those ladies are going to be great friends for you. Each of them owns a business in the community and has lived here their whole lives. I am sure they are grateful for another woman moving into the community.”

She takes a bite of the stick and a long string of cheese comes out until she bites it off. She hmms in approval and a small moan escapes between her lips. My wolf perks up and starts to press against my skin. I watch as she sticks her finger in her mouth and sucks off a drop of marinara.

“I am going to need you to not make those sounds while eating.” Glancing up at me with another mozzarella stick sticking out of her mouth, she sucks it in her mouth, moaning in pleasure. Her cheeks tint with embarrassment. “I know Gail said you loved cheese, but I didn’t know that it was an orgasmic experience for you.”

Now her cheeks are really red as she dips her face, “Yeah, I love cheese so much that I enjoy it in all its forms. But nothing compares to warm gooey cheese.”

Popping my eyebrow up, I look at her with amusement. “Nothing compares, huh? Are you sure about that?” I trace my finger down her arm that is laying on the table as I watch bumps pop across her skin. Her scent fills the air, my wolf presses against my skin as my dick presses against my zipper. I don’t know who is riding me harder right now, my dick or my wolf.

Looking at me with lust clear in her eyes, “I wouldn’t know of anything better than mozzarella, do you?” When I feel a foot rubbing along my calf, I know I am in so much trouble now. I don’t know how much longer I can handle being this close to her with her perfuming the air, my wolf riding me, and my dick pressing against my zipper.

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“I can think of a few things that are better than cheese and definitely will elicit a stronger reaction. You might even fall in love with it more than you love cheese.”

She bites her lip then says, “Is that so? Would you be willing to show me these things that are better than mozzarella?” She doesn’t know it, but the mating pull is getting stronger. I can see it in the way that her pupils are blown, the blush creeping across her face, and the scent wafting across the air.

Since she doesn’t know that she is mated to an alpha, she doesn’t know that the more that she is around me, the more that her body will react to prepare her for breeding. I know it, and I am struggling to maintain the ruse that I am only human. Right now, I would be okay with bending her over the table and fucking her right here. Not giving a damn about those around us and who could see it. But, since I don’t want to scare her or the lovely people of Jasper, I will refrain from doing so.

We have to go though, I can’t keep sitting here. I don’t know how much longer I will be able to keep Storm in check. As it is, I can feel him scratching on my mental walls, trying to get out.

“Do you want to get out of here and take a walk?” I ask her as she finishes her last mozzarella stick.

“Uh, yeah, we can do that. It’s a bit cold out there, but it would be more private than this booth. Since I can see everyone listening in to what we are doing and saying.”

Sliding out of the booth, I hold my hand out to help her up. I don’t realize my mistake until when she stands, and she is flush against my front. I notice the minute that her



brain realizes that my dick is as hard as granite. Where nobody could see, I feel her brush her fingers along my length and her mouth drops open.

Yeah, we got to go. Storm is literally tearing at my skin. I can't keep this up. We nod towards Gail as we exit from the diner. Her arousal is so strong at this point, and I am panting. She glances up at me, "What will we do now, sir?"

She has to go, Storm is about to take over and I don't want to freak her out. I won't be able to stop him this time.

"I need you to run." A growl rips from my throat. Oh fuck, I am losing my grip on him. "Run Little Wolf, Run!"

The last thing I see before I transform is Nova running full speed away from me with a look of panic on her face.

## Chapter 14

Nova

My god why am I reacting this way? I never thought eating mozzarella sticks would be this much of a turn on, but I can't handle it. I know what he is hinting at, and it has nothing to do with food. The longer that we sit here, the more I realize I might die if I don't fuck this man tonight. Like, why are we still sitting here?

"Do you want to get out of here and take a walk," he asks me.

"Uh, yeah, we can do that. It's a bit cold out there, but it would be more private than this booth. Since I can see everyone listening in to what we are doing and saying."

I watch as he slides out of the booth. My eyes almost bulge out of my head when I

see the massive, thick indentation in his pants. What is that man sporting under there, a bat? He comes around to stand in front of me and I am now eye level with it. I mean, damn, will that even fit in me? He holds his hand out to me, I place my hand in his as he pulls me to stand.

As my body presses into the front of his, I realize he is all muscle. I can't resist any longer, where nobody can see, I run my hand along his shaft. Oh, fuck me. It is thick and as hard as granite. Ya girl is pumped to play with that. He really will show me something better than mozzarella sticks. I can feel the arousal dripping down my leg. I don't think I have ever been this turned on in my life.

We both nod to Gail as we exit the diner. I glance up to Silas, "What will we do now, sir?" I see the moment that my words cause a reaction. His eyes are filled with lust; his pupils are wide open. I feel him tense under my hand, almost like he is about to strike.

He turns to me, "I need you to run." Was that a growl that just came from a man? What is happening? "Run Little Wolf, Run!"

Turning, I flee from him. What is happening? Looking over my shoulder, he is gone. I don't know where he went, but I keep running, the icy wind whipping through my hair, blurring my vision. I run, my breath catching in my throat, toward the dense, shadowy woods at the end of the street. The sound of a howl, raw and primal, slices through the silence behind me, making my hair stand on end. Damn, I know he said that wolves were friendly around here, but right now, I am scared out of my mind.

The sound of a growl, sharp and sudden, sent a shiver down my spine. I whirled around to see a black wolf, its teeth bared, bounding toward me, the forest floor shaking beneath its powerful paws as I stepped into the woods. Oh fuck. His howl cuts through the air, and I run faster, the sound a chilling force pushing me onward. I don't understand the strange sensations and changes happening within my body.

Arousal seeps down, wetting my thighs. This shouldn't be turning me on. My cunt is throbbing in time with my heart.

Glancing over my shoulder, I can see the wolf still pursuing me. I make a quick turnaround a tree, hoping that I can lose the wolf. Where is Silas? I don't understand why he told me to run and why this wolf is coming after me.

When I come around the tree, I don't see the wolf anymore. That is weird. Where did it go? Should I keep running?

I stop running, bend over and put my hands on my knees. Air is rushing out of my lungs as I try to catch my breath.

I hear the low grumble of a growl right before the wolf jumps at me, tackling me to the ground. I look up to see the pearly white teeth of the wolf inches from my face as he rumbles a growl above me.

I am thrashing back and forth. With a will to live, I fight back against the wolf.

## Chapter 15

### Storm

I can't take it anymore. I know Silas wants to do this patiently, but I can't sit here smelling her arousal and not do anything about it. It's time to make her ours. I have given him plenty of time, now we will do this my way.

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He warns her to run right before I take over. Silly human, I love the chase. Having her run is only further giving me something I desire.

Time to claim our mate. I smirk as I watch her running with her hair whipping through the air. Oh, good, she is heading to the woods, even better. Now I won't be yelled at for doing this in public.

Inhaling deeply, I smell her arousal on the wind. She doesn't realize she is giving me a trail right to her. I could sit here and still find her. As my mate, I will always be able to find her by scent alone. Howling towards the sky, I take off running after her.

She glances over her shoulder and sees that I am running behind her. Her eyes widen in fear, and now her arousal is tinted with fear. This is the best dessert in the world. Scenting my mate with arousal and fear rips a growl from my throat. I can't wait to sink my teeth into her neck.

I could have easily caught her by now, but where's the excitement in that? The thrill of the chase is intoxicating as I watch her struggle to escape. With a swift movement, she spun around a towering pine, the scent of pine needles filling the air, hoping to disappear. Silly girl, you're approaching this all wrong; it doesn't work that way. I shift to stand behind the brush beneath a tree close by. She looks around, her eyes scanning her surroundings. Seeing that I am no longer standing where she last seen me, she comes to a stop, deeply breathing. Huffing out a chuckle, I shake my head back and forth. Lesson number one will be survival. Our mate is clearly lacking survival skills.

She bends over and puts her hands on her knees as I watch her body try to calm itself.

Silas is knocking on our mental walls. He is trying to stop me, but I won't let him this time. He thinks that the full moon is the only time that I can take full control, what he doesn't know is that I just have never had a reason to before.

Right before I go to step from behind the brush, Silas gives one last attempt to stop me. He pushes me back to keep me from coming out. Growling, I thrust past it and thrash my head back and forth.

I lunge at her right as a scream rips from her throat. Pinning her to the ground, I bare my teeth at her. She starts thrashing from side to side, I need to get her to sit still. Snapping my teeth at her, she freezes. Before anyone can stop me, including Silas, I lunge forward and clamp my muzzle down on the junction between her neck and shoulder. She perfumes the air and I can't resist any longer. I will have the perfect Luna. The venom drops down my canines and into her neck. She will be ours forever.

She is crying below me, but I can't stop now. She has to have all the venom, or this won't work. I don't know when I will have another chance before the full moon.

Silas comes forward in our minds, "What have you done?"

I respond back with, "What needed to be done."

After the last of the venom drops out, I unlatch from her neck. I lick the wound to help heal it faster. Lifting my head, I look down at our Luna. She is sleeping as the venom works its way through her body.

Silas finally breaks through the mental wall, "What have you done!"

Chapter 16

Silas

Once I finally break through the mental wall that Storm put up, I look through his eyes to see that he has bitten Nova. I scream into our mental shared space, “What have you done!”

I am stunned. I know he was determined to claim our mate, but to force the wolf life upon her. What was he thinking?

Now I will have to fix this mess with a woman whom I had just built trust with. I don’t know that she will be happy to see me after this. Storm releases his hold on his form, allowing us to transform back into our human form. This asshole really made this gigantic mess and then left me to deal with it.

Swooping down, I pull Nova into my arms. She snuggles into my chest as she softly snores. She is so beautiful while she peacefully slumbers. I know when she wakes up that I will probably never see this again. Although she doesn’t know that I am the one who turned into a wolf. I will have to tell her somehow.

Growling, “Do you realize what you have done, Storm? You are forcing her to become a wolf and took away her choice in the matter! What if she didn’t want to be a wolf?”

He huffs into our shared mind space, “We can’t have a human mate. I couldn’t resist the chance to turn her into a wolf. You can be mad at me, but we both know that you aren’t mad that she is a wolf. You are mad that I took the choice away.”

“I am mad that you took her choice away, and that you forced her to become a wolf. Yes, I am glad that I have a wolf mate now, but I don’t want her to believe that this is what we do. You don’t even know that she can take the venom and become a wolf. You know she has to have it in her lineage, otherwise it will kill her.”

“Trust me, get her back to the pack house before she wakes up,” Storm mumbles

before disappearing into the back of our mind space.

Grumbling to myself, I pick up the pace to make it to the pack house. I don't know how I am going to explain this to any of the pack mates. Let's hope that I don't come across any of them on my way to the Alpha's portion of the pack house. I also need to find Gail, hopefully she can help me with explaining everything to Nova.

As I'm carrying Nova into the main hall of the pack house, thankful nobody is around, I glance down to the silent woman in my arms watching her chest gently rise and fall. All I need to do is walk up another flight of stairs and to the back...

"Why is Nova unconscious?"

Turning around, I find a furious Gail with her hands balled up on her hips. "I can explain what is going on, but first I want to get her into the Master Suite. I know you are angry, but can you help me get her settled in and then you can yell at me?"

"Fine, but you are going to explain yourself as soon as she is settled. I will also call Willow, Aspen, and Hazel to come here immediately. Hopefully, they can help as well."

We walk into the Master Suite; it has obviously not been used in a long time. A thick layer of dust coated every surface, the air heavy with the stale, musky odor of neglect. I am going to have to get someone to clean this up immediately. Although, that isn't the most pressing issue right now. Laying Nova down on the bed, I pull the comforter from under her and cover her with it.

I need to get a fire going to warm up this room. Log cabins don't exactly have central heat and air. I move to the massive fireplace in the room and clear it of the old debris. "I know you are going to want the full explanation, but I don't have it."

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I can feel her glare into my back, “What do you mean you don’t have it?”

I let out a heavy sigh, the match flaring briefly before igniting the kindling with a satisfying whoosh. I tossed the dry logs onto the fire, and watched the flames dance. Wiping my hands on my pants, I stand up to turn around to Gail. “Not that it is a surprise for you, but Nova is my mate. I know that you already figured that out, how you did, I don’t know.”

I look over at Gail to see that at least that has given her a warm smile on her face. When she realizes that I’ve seen it, she immediately drops the smile. “Well, yes, I have known all along that she was your mate. I was waiting for you to pull your head out of your ass so you would see it.”

“Be that as it may, Storm has known and been pushing for me to claim her. He told me he would give me to the full moon to claim her my way. While you also know that with the full moon so close, being near your mate spikes your perfuming.” She nods her head, so I continue on. “Well, while we were having dinner, Storm was riding me so much that I was having a hard time keeping from shifting. I thought if we went for a walk that it would help. Unfortunately, as we were exiting, she rubbed against me and my control over Storm snapped. I told her to run...”

Gail slams her hands down on her thighs, “You told her to run when you knew you were about to become a predatory animal that loves the chase? Did you think that through at all?”

Sighing heavily, I rub my hands down my face. “I thought I didn’t want her to freak out when she saw what she thinks is a human man transform into a massive wolf.”



She drops her shoulders slightly and finally graces me with compassion. “I understand, dear, but now we have a big problem on our hands. But enough of this for now. Let’s get her mended and decide what we are going to do from now on. She shouldn’t be out for much longer.”

Sighing again, I help Gail as we dress her wound and I drop a few drops of my saliva into the wound to increase the mending process. Now that she is transforming into a wolf, her own healing ability will help. Although we can heal rather quickly on our own, we heal the fastest when we are in our wolf form. The couple drops of Alpha saliva will speed it up even faster. I don’t think that she is ever going to forgive me. I wouldn’t forgive myself either.

This is such a mess. I don’t even know where to begin and I really didn’t need this added to my plate while worrying about the money owed to the Ghost River Pack. Glaring internally, I say, “You don’t even have some advice to add to the mess that you made?” Storm shrugs into our shared mind space. I know that sounds weird, I can’t see him shrugging, but it is a feeling that I get that gives me the impression of him shrugging. “Really! You made this mess and now you are going to rest?” I snap at him.

He lifts his head up and says, “I think it is pretty obvious what you should do. She is our mate now, a new wolf, and she doesn’t know what any of that means. Seems you should start with, you know, telling her about wolves. That seems like a logical starting point to me. Now, if you don’t mind, I am going to rest now.” I feel him leave our shared mind space. He isn’t gone. It’s more that he has pulled himself so far back that it feels as though he has left it completely.

I walk over to the chairs in front of our fireplace and dust off the lingering cobwebs. Plopping myself down into the chair, I drop my head into my hands. I feel a soft hand rest on my shoulder as she gently squeezes. “Silas, I know you are feeling overwhelmed and stressed, but this isn’t as bad as you think it is. She is your mate

and although your wolf chose the most unconventional way to bring her into this, I think she will come around quickly. You are going to have to be kind, patient, and compassionate. Her entire world has changed yet again. I will help you as much as I can, but you will need to be the one who takes this on. I think you will see it is a great bonding opportunity for you.” Gail taps my shoulder a few times before she rubs a circle on my back. “Get some rest Silas, tomorrow we shall see how she does with the news. I am going to head back to my cabin for now. Call me if she struggles with the transformation. For now, we just have to wait.”

Nodding my head in my hands, I glance up at Gail. “Thank you for everything, Gail. Do you want me to have Warrick walk you back to your cabin?”

She smiles warmly at me before chuckling, “That boy wouldn’t be able to keep up with me. I am quite fine, thank you.” She turns and walks out of our room before closing the door behind her.

Sighing, I drop my head back into my hands. What a mess. Only time will tell if she will forgive me for this.

## Chapter 17

Nova

What is that delicious smell? Why am I smelling bacon? Sniffing, I smell bacon, eggs, and is that pancakes? Alright, where the hell am I because there shouldn’t be anyone at my house cooking for me. Wait, why can’t I remember going to bed last night?

Cracking my eyes open, I see a wood paneled ceiling above me. Okay, okay. Let’s try to not freak out. That is definitely not my ceiling. Running my hands up the blanket, it is buttery soft with patches of different fabrics. I can hear the clinking of silverware

and the opening of cabinets. Someone is in the kitchen, but the question is who. I sit up in the bed that feels as though it is made of clouds. I am glancing around the room, taking stock of my surroundings, when there is a gentle rapping of knuckles on the door.

“Come in.” I hold my breath because I don’t know who is opening the door. Silas comes around the door with a tray of food and sniffing the air. Is that peppermint coffee? He walks on soft feet towards the bed with a hesitant demeanor about him. Not going to lie, breakfast in bed has always been a dream of mine. I mean, what girl wouldn’t love to have someone bring them all their favorite breakfast items to their bed right after they wake up? Am I right?

I can’t figure out a few things, one being why am I in his bed, two why can’t I remember getting here, and three, why can I hear the bubbles popping in the coffee?

Silas places the tray of goodies in front of me, giving me a hesitant smile. “Good morning Nova. How are you feeling?”

My mouth is watering. Not only did this man deliver breakfast in bed, but he made me the waffles I get from You’re Bacon Me Crazy. There is chewy bacon that he baked in the oven with brown sugar and red pepper flakes. Then, to top it off, he has made cinnamon apples! Cinnamon APPLES! Grabbing the fork I am about to dig in when Silas clears his throat.

“Nova, how are you feeling this morning?” I pull my eyes from the plate and place my fork back down. I look up to see a very concerned look on his face. Okay, I know I said that I wasn’t going to freak out but, now I am a little freaked out. Why does he have that look on his face?

“Uh,” I squeak out. I take a sip of my coffee to warm my throat and try again. “Physically, I feel okay. There is a shitload of questions running through my mind,

and I'm trying to not freak out about the fact that I am waking up in your room. But with that concerned look on your face and you asking how I am feeling twice... Now, I am freaking out."

He pulls up a dining room chair that was sitting next to the bed and sits down on it. "I am not trying to freak you out, Nova. I am concerned for you and you were so focused on that food that I had to grab your attention again."

I squint my eyes at him in an attempt to look mean, but he just chuckles as he runs his hands through his hair. God, I want to do that. It looks so silky and full. "You brought me three of my favorite foods and peppermint coffee. Did you expect me to give you my undivided attention after that?"

He huffs out a laugh, "Fair enough, I didn't quite consider how much of a foodie you were when I made you breakfast this morning. Gail just told me you love food and to bring it with me when I came in this morning."

I smile fondly, I don't know how that woman knows me so well already, but here we are. "Well, she isn't wrong. I will always be more pleasant once fed."

He smiles this soft smile that is almost tender. My chest warms at the site of it and I feel this pull towards him. Almost like a rope going from my chest to his. He stares into my eyes and I see a flash of bright blue. I rub my eyes with my hands because I have to be crazy, his eyes didn't flash a different color, did they?

"I am glad to hear that I made the right choice in bringing food with me. If you want anymore, just let me know. I might have made enough for a small army of people."

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“I will keep that in mind for sure. So I have some questions, if you are open to answering them,” I say to him with a lift of my eyebrows.

“Yeah, I am okay with that. Let me ask you a question first, though. What is the last thing that you remember from last night?”

My heart rate picks up. How did he know I was not sure how I got here? I can feel my face flush when I say, “The last thing that I remember from last night was a very enjoyable dinner, then you asking if I wanted to take a walk. I remember us walking out of the restaurant and then your demeanor changing. You told me to run and after that, everything is pretty hazy.”

He breathes out a heavy sigh before saying, “I am sure that another one of your questions is ‘how did I get here’ followed closely by ‘why don’t I remember going to sleep last night’. I can answer all of those for you and more, but first I would like for you to eat your breakfast and get dressed. Gail brought over some of your clothes. Apparently, you gave her a spare key to your house. Anyway, I would like to talk with you in the living room by the fire with our coffees, if you are okay with that.”

I look down at the tray of food and back up to Silas, “Yeah, I am okay with that. Give me about 20 minutes to eat, then I will be ready to sit down to talk with you.”

I finish pulling on the fleece lined leggings with paw prints, trees, and wolves that were definitely not in my belongings. The long sleeve thermal shirt matches perfectly to the leggings. She also gave me a pair of fur lined soft boots to pull onto my feet. I have no idea why she told Silas these were my belongings, because I know for a fact it wasn’t. Super cute outfit and all that. I love the little paw prints that match the

necklace that Silas gave me. I run my finger along the chain down to the pendant and lay my hand across it.

Placing all my breakfast plates and silverware back onto the tray as I pick it up to take to the kitchen. Not sure where that is, but I am sure it can't be that hard to find. The tray balances on my hip as I pull open the solid wood door that Silas came through earlier. A look to the left and right, I decide that the right is the correct direction given there is a staircase in that way. Heading towards the staircase, I look along the walls. There is a handrail on my left that opens to the bottom floor. There is a soaring ceiling that is vaulted with the wood planks running along it. From one wall to the other wall, there are enormous logs running across the room. On the farthest wall from me is floor to ceiling windows displaying powdery white snow, snow covered spruce trees, and the sun peaking over the mountains. It is a stunning view, that is for sure. I run my fingers down the wall to my right and where there are frames with all sorts of different families. Each one is standing before the windows I just seen with a Christmas tree behind them.

Descending the stairs, I hear the crackling and popping of logs in the fireplace. The smell of burning spruce fills the air and gives that cozy, warm feeling. I come around the staircase into the open area I was just looking in. There are overstuffed couches with a beautiful hand carved coffee table between them. In front of the fireplace are two matching wingback chairs with a small round matching hand carved wood table. The fireplace is stunning with masonry work all the way to the ceiling. Above the fireplace is a wood mantle adorned with small trinkets with Pine Garland hung across it.

Silas is sitting in one of the wingback chairs, quietly reading a book. I clear my throat to get his attention. He looks up from his book, "Oh good, you are done with breakfast. How was it?"

"It was wonderful, thank you. I was going to bring the tray into the kitchen if you

could point me in the right direction,” I say as I look around for an idea which direction the kitchen is.

“Nonsense, as a guest of this house, I can’t have you do that. Let me take that for you.” He reaches for the tray and gently pulls it from my hands. “Would you like a fresh cup of coffee?” I nod my head and follow him as he heads towards what I assume will be the kitchen.

He opens the swing door into the kitchen, I almost faint at the beauty of it. This might be every single person’s dream kitchen. There is a center island large enough to seat six along the bar top. The seats are made of cut trees that have been sanded and sealed. There is masonry running all around the sides of the island. Hanging above the island is what looks like a tree coming out of the ceiling and lights glow softly beneath it. The island is covered in butcher’s block with a copper farmhouse workstation sink. Across from the island is an 8 burner gas stove with masonry running along both the cabinets and backsplash. The hood vent above it is also decked out with stones and wood accents. There is another wall covered with floor to ceiling windows showing the snowy exterior. You could seriously cook anything in this kitchen.

I hear chuckling only to look over and see that Silas has placed the tray on the island and is looking at me. I realize that my mouth is hanging open as I snap it shut. “You good over there?”

“Don’t make fun of me alright. For one, I have lived my entire life in New York City, where the size of this kitchen is most people’s entire apartment. For two, you know that this is basically every woman’s dream kitchen,” I say as I pop my hip and place my hand there.

He holds his hands up in surrender. “Fair enough, it was just cute to see you processing the kitchen. I have seen it my whole life, so I forget the grandeur of it. I

am glad to hear that it exceeds your expectations.”

I join him at the coffee bar as he pours our fresh cups of coffee. He has an assortment of coffee syrups, various sugar bowls, and all different types of toppings for your coffee. I nudge him with my elbow, “You have a little bit of everything for a coffee. Are you one of those coffee snobs?”

Shaking his head back and forth, he smirks at me while looking at me out of the corner of his eye. “Gail might have told me you love sweet coffees and since I am just getting to know you, I might have bought everything, hoping I got something here to make you happy.”

Oh, now that is the sweetest thing. This man is doing a number on my heart already and I don’t know how much more of this I can handle before I am a puddle on the hardwood floors.

My cheeks burn with a blush, “That is sweet of you Silas, thank you. I love my coffee sweet, probably too sweet, but coffee should be enjoyed however you like it.”

“Good to know. Let’s take our cups back to the fireplace. This house might be gorgeous, but it doesn’t come with central heat and air. So you will want to be near a fireplace as much as possible.”

Taking our fresh coffees back to the chairs, I pick the chair he wasn’t sitting in before. He smiles fondly at my selection before taking his original chair. “Before I begin, I want to ask you to have as open of a mind as you possibly can. There are explanations for everything, but first I need you to understand some things first.”

I pull my cup back from my mouth and feel my heart rate pick up. I feel a sense of panic that is stronger than my own, which is weird because I shouldn’t feel another set of emotions outside of my own. Silas takes a deep breath and forces the air out



through his clenched teeth.

“Gail told me you have read books about wolf shifters. So you are familiar with at least how the fictional world of wolf shifters works, right?”

My eyebrows shoot up, “What does my taste in reading have to do with why I can’t remember getting here last night?”

He holds up a hand, “I promise it will all make sense shortly. I am trying to gently tell you without scaring you...”

“Are you trying to tell me you are a wolf shifter?” He has got to be joking. I am not sure this man is sane if he really thinks that he is a man who can shift into a wolf.

He lets out a heavy sigh as he rubs his hands down his face, “There isn’t really a gentle way to say this, but yes, I am a man who can shift into a wolf. I am exactly what you have read in your books. Well, to some degree. They have a few things wrong, but the concept is there for sure.”

Scoffing, I set my coffee down on the little table between us. “You are insane, Silas, and I don’t find this funny at all. That doesn’t even explain why I can’t remember anything past you saying run last night, nor how I got here.”

Shaking his head, “You don’t believe me, do you?”

I stand up from the chair and move to put distance between us. “No, I don’t believe you at all. Frankly, I think it would be best for me to leave. Can you...”

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He shoots up from the chair and before I finish my statement; he transforms before my eyes into a steel gray wolf with black tips along his fur. His piercing blue eyes blink up at me. Those are the eyes I have seen flash behind Silas's a few times. I know I am standing here with my mouth gaping open again. I think I am broken, this can't be real, right? He shifts back into this human form.

Taking slow steps backwards. I am really trying to not freak out, but it is one thing to read about this stuff, a whole different thing for it to be happening in front of you.

He holds his hands up in front of him, "Before you fully freak out, I want a chance to explain some things. Yes, it is real. You didn't imagine it. I shifted into a wolf that you have seen before. Yes, my wolf is the one who was in your backyard the first night. Although, I didn't know about it until you mentioned it to me. You want to know why you can't remember anything from last night or how you got here?"

Nodding quickly, I pace back and forth. "You can't remember anything because after I told you to run, my wolf took over and chased you. Before I could wrestle control back from him, he attacked you and bit you."

I suck in a breath quickly and feel a full-blown panic attack setting in. My breaths are sawing in and out too rapidly. My temperature is rising and my hands are shaking. Silas comes over to place a calming hand on my shoulder. I jerk out of the direction his hand is heading. I am shaking my hands frantically when he speaks again. "Nova, you are going to have a panic attack. Can I get you to take a deep breath and hold it for 10 seconds before letting it out?"

Nodding my head, I suck in a breath and hold it for 10 seconds before letting it out.

“Great, can you do that again? I want you to focus on the ten count when you hold the breath.” I suck in another breath, hold for ten seconds, ensuring I am focusing on the count, then I let the air back out.

“Good girl. I am going to ask you to move to the couch so we can prop your feet up above your heart. Can you do that for me?” I nod my head again and move to the couch. He grabs some throw pillows and places them under my feet. “While you are laying here, let’s do the breathing technique until we feel our heart rate come back down. Is that okay?” Nodding my head, I continue the breathing technique.

A few breaths later, I feel my heart rate come down to a normal rate. I glance to where Silas has been sitting on the coffee table. He has such a concerned look on his face that his worry line is deeply creased in his skin. I almost want to reach up and smooth it out. That is until I remember he said that his wolf not only chased me but then bit me.

Sitting up slowly, I grab the glass of water from Silas. I am not sure when he went to get that, but I am not one to complain. Panic attacks can cause the mouth to dry out because of the rapid breathing. “What do you mean by your wolf bit me and what does that have to do with the memory loss?”

He drops his head, “When Storm, that’s my wolf’s name by the way, bit you he injected you with a venom to turn you into a wolf as well. A side effect of the venom is a coma of sorts to allow the body to transform. The concern is that he knows that only those with wolf lineage can take the venom. A factor I know he is aware of.”

I am numb at this point, I am not sure I am even processing the information. I just sit there staring at him waiting for the rest of the story. “After I could wrestle back control from Storm, I grabbed you, bringing you here.”

Nodding like this makes the most sense, “Where is here exactly?”

“We are at the Pack House. We are still in Jasper, if that is what you are worried about. You know the woods at the end of town?” I nod my head because who doesn’t know of the entire forest of trees at the end of town?

“That is our pack lands and we are in those woods. Our homes and this pack house are far into the trees right between the mountains.”

I keep nodding my head to keep him talking. At this point, I know I am in shock and that I haven’t even begun to process this information. “I brought you here so that Gail could help me with cleaning you up and healing you.”

My eyebrows shoot up, “Wait, Gail knows about this? Is she one too?” He nods his head and points to the glass of water.

“Please drink the water. Yes, Gail is one of us. She is actually our matriarch, a grandmother of sorts, to every pup in the pack, regardless of their relation to her. She is also known for meddling. As I am sure you are aware of now.” I chuckle to myself as I shake my head from side to side.

I heave out a heavy breath, this is really a lot to take in. To find out that not only do wolf shifters exist but that also everyone I have met up to this point is also a wolf. “Is everyone in this town a wolf shifter?”

“Not everyone is a wolf shifter, we have some other shifters here, but we also have just your average human as well. Most of the humans know we are different, but they also know that our wolf pack provides heavily to the community, so most of them don’t ask questions.”

I just keep nodding my head, “So, you are saying other shifters exist too?”

He lets out a hearty chuckle, “Is that too farfetched to believe? Given magic’s role in

our existence, why wouldn't it extend to others too?"

"Okay, fair enough. I guess it isn't hard to believe. Is there anything else that I should know? Like am I trapped here?"

"You are not trapped here, but I would recommend that you stay here for a little while because you seem to have skipped the fact that you are now one of us. You are a wolf, Nova. I think it would be a good idea for me or Gail to walk you through what that means. It isn't hard, but it isn't easy either."

I stand up abruptly, "Oh no, I didn't pass by that fact or that you took that choice away from me. I know you say that it is your wolf, but you brought me into this when you pursued me. Now, I am going to go if you don't mind. I honestly don't know what to do with this information, but I don't want to be around you right now."

I turn to walk out of the room when he gently grabs my arm, "I know you don't believe me but when you shift the first time and your wolf takes over, you will know we don't always have control over them. Please hear me when I say this, let one of us teach you so don't have to worry about harming someone."

I jerk my arm out of his hold, "I will talk with Gail, but I am serious Silas, I don't want to see you. Are you going to take me home, or do I need to walk?"

His shoulders drop in defeat, I know I am being a bit of a bitch but this is a lot. I am feeling overwhelmed and honestly not sure how to feel right now. He nods his head solemnly and heads towards the front door. He grabs a thick winter jacket off the hooks by the door and holds it out towards me. "I don't think you want yours back. This is the one Gail brought over for you."

Nodding, I grab the jacket from him and put it on. He opens the door and holds it open for me. I step outside into the crisp mountain air to see the world covered in feet

of snow. Fuck. There is no way anyone can drive in this, and I was only willing to walk in decent weather. He steps up next to me after shutting the front door, “You can have the room that you were sleeping in. I can always take one of the extra bedrooms. I know it’s not ideal, but unless you plan to dig your way out of here, I don’t see you making it home safely.”

I cut my eyes over to him, “This doesn’t get you off the hook just because I can’t leave. I am still mad at you.”

He smirks at me, “For what it’s worth, I really am sorry that this happened. Before all of this happened, I was trying to figure out a way to tell you about all of this and to bring you to meet the rest of the pack.”

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"I don't really care right now. That might be harsh, but I am overwhelmed with information right now, and my sympathy meter is empty," I say as I crack open the front door and place my jacket back on the hook.

Just as we are closing the front door, we hear Gail call out from the back of the house. "Hello dears, where are you guys?"

Silas steps around me as he gives me a small smile, "We are by the front door Gail," he says as he heads back towards the grand living room.

Following behind him, I am staring at the floor, trying to process all of this. I know what he is saying is probably true, at least to a degree I understand. It might have been out of his control, but I was on that date because he kept asking for it. He is lucky there is that much snow outside, otherwise I would be long gone by now.

I step into the living room right as Gail claps her hands, "Alright who is ready for Wolf 101?" She has the warmest smile on her face as her eyes glint at me.

Sighing, I come to sit in front of her. "I guess I am ready. Not really, I wanted to leave but clearly mother nature has other plans." Gail winks mischievously at me.

## Chapter 18

### Silas

It's been a few days since Nova was brought to the Pack House. To say there is tension would be an understatement. She won't speak to me unless I ask her a direct

question. Even then I receive one-word answers or a thumbs up. I hate that gesture, to say the least.

I don't know which fire to work on right now. Either I work on the money issue with the Ghost River Pack or I work on the angry Luna. I need to talk with Caelon about how much money we made with the festival. I also need to meet up with Gail to see what to do with Nova and check on her progress in Wolf 101, as Gail put it.

I shoot a text message off to both of them, saying I would like to have a meeting. Caelon and I will just do a video chat because of the weather. Since Gail has been staying in the house; I told her to meet me in my office.

Not even a few moments later, my computer dings to notify me I have an incoming video call. Hitting the green button, my computer screen is filled with Caelon's face and his office in his home.

"Good Morning, Alpha. How can I help you today?" Caelon smiles knowingly into the screen. Shithead.

"I know we haven't gone over the numbers from the festival because...well. Anyway, I would like to go over those now to see what we still need money wise," I say as I open my notepad and click my pen open.

He nods his head once and pulls out his spreadsheet. "We did really well with the festival financially speaking. Everyone was able to sell almost all their wares on top of making a profit. Overall, it was a hit and requested to be annual."

I nod my head, "I know all that, but right now if we don't pay off this debt, there won't be a next year."

He runs his finger down his spreadsheet, "Looking at the numbers, we were able to



make almost all of it, but we are still missing a thousand dollars.”

“FUCK!” I slam my fist down on my desktop. “How are we going to make a grand in literally a few days?”

He shrugs his shoulders, “I don’t know Alpha. I am all out of ideas. What if you talk with Gail and Nova? If she is going to be Luna, she needs to learn what that means.”

He is staring at me when I don’t respond, “She knows she is supposed to be Luna, right?”

I rub my hand across the back of my neck, “She doesn’t. She doesn’t even know that she is my mate. She didn’t exactly take the news well when she found out that Storm forced her to become a wolf.”

He looks sheepishly at me, “I take it she is still not speaking to you?”

I shake my head, “No, the most I get from her is one-word answers or sounds when I ask her direct questions. I have a meeting with Gail to discuss what I should do next.”

He nods his head, “Well good luck Alpha, we are rooting for you. Leave it to you to be mated to a woman who is so strong willed. Did you need to go over anything else?”

“No, that will be all. I will get back to you via text if I come up with any other ideas in the meantime.”

“Sounds good.”

I click the end button on the video chat. I huff out a breath as I pick up my coffee to take a sip. It is almost to my mouth when I hear a knock at my door. “Come in.”

I look at the door as it opens, Gail comes walking in. She gives me her warm smile as she shuts the door. “You wanted to see me, Alpha.”

“Yes, please sit Gail,” I say as I gesture to the seat in front of my desk.

She takes the seat in front of me and places her hands in her lap. “How is she?”

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She keeps smiling as she says, “She is doing wonderful. She is coming around to the idea of being a wolf shifter now that the shock has worn off. I wish that Willow, Aspen, and Hazel could have been here, but with the snow they weren’t able to make it.”

I nod my head, “Good, good. I’m glad to hear it. This meeting is so we can discuss what to do with Nova. I know she has started Wolf 101, as you call it, but I still can’t get her to speak more than one word to me.”

“I see, well she is progressing beautifully. I think you should take over the wolf 101. She needs to move through her first shift, and it would be best if you showed her how to do it.” She winks at me.

“You want me to take over the training even though she isn’t speaking to me?” I raise my eyebrow at her.

Chuckling, she says, “Yes, there isn’t anything else I can teach her. It’s time that her Alpha and her mate show her the rest of the way. I think tomorrow is going to be a great day to head outside to stretch our legs.”

I look outside my windows at the snow still covering the ground and back to Gail. She simply winks at me and stands. “Make her Chicken Fajitas for dinner and I will handle the rest,” she says as she walks back out of my office door.

Shaking my head, I make a mental list of all the ingredients needed for the dinner. I should have everything I need.

A few hours later, I am putting the finishing touches on dinner when Nova walks into the kitchen. “Smells amazing,” she smells as she sniffs the air. She doesn’t know that she is already displaying wolf-like behaviors. I don’t think I have seen her out of cozy clothes since she has been here. She also gathering supplies for her nest, although she doesn’t know why she is doing it. Or maybe Gail has gone over nesting already? I need to check with Gail on what all she has covered.

I finish plating our dishes and grab them both with silverware. “I just finished it, you couldn’t have planned that arrival any better.”

“Yeah, I have been sitting in the living room judging how much longer based on the sounds and smells coming from here. Gail says that we have a really powerful sense of smell and boy, she wasn’t lying.”

That is the longest sentence to come from her mouth since this happened. I only hope that I can keep it going.

Chuckling, I grab our plates and head to the bar with them. Sliding the plate down in front of her, I place mine in front of the seat next to her. I sit down on the bar stool next to her and I watch with excitement as she leans over, inhaling my scent. I feel the smile pull my cheeks up. “You will get used to the smells. A lot of things you will become nose blind to, but there are also scents that you will always be able to pick up no matter where you are.”

She hums as she takes in a bit of the fajitas. Closing her eyes, she moans in enjoyment. I suck in a breath, knowing that with the Full Moon less than three days away that it will take all my strength to ignore the pull to her. She opens her eyes and glances over at me. “Like what smells?”

Coughing, I clear my throat, “Uh, well, important scents to you. Like your home and your belongings.”

She squints her eyes at me, “Any other scents that I won’t ever forget?”

My cheeks warm as the blush spreads across. I rub my hand across the back of my neck, “There are a few others.” I shove my fajita into my mouth so I can’t say anything else.

She scoots a little closer as she runs her finger up my forearm. She looks up into my eyes as she perfumes the air. “Are you sure that’s all? Nothing specific?”

Coughing, I hit my fist on my chest. “Yeah, there is one specific scent that will mean the most to you, a scent you will smell above all others. A scent that you will never forget.”

Her finger trails even higher, she is about to round my shoulder when she says, “And what scent might that be?”

I snap my eyes from her finger to her face. I know what she is doing. Gail must have told her because this isn’t the act of an innocent woman asking questions. “You will never forget your mate's scent.” I squeeze out between my teeth. Every aspect of my body is on high alert.

She runs her finger along the scruff of my beard before she splays her hand across my cheek. I can’t help but rub my cheek into her palm. She smiles a seductive smile at me. She leans in closer to me and whispers, “So like crisp air, spruce, and musk.”

Storm perks up, pushing against my skin. I know my eyes are glowing bright blue. I growl, “Yes, just like that. How long have you known that you are my mate?”

She lets out a soft giggle. “Wolf 101, remember? Gail told me about the mate aspect day two, but I didn’t put it all together until this morning when I could smell your scent above the bacon. I realized that ever since I woke up as a wolf, your scent is the

one that I can always pin point out no matter where you are in the pack house.”

I come closer to her and lean next to her ear, “You are my mate Nova and even more than that, you are my Luna.”

Bumps pop along her skin as I run my hand down her back, pulling her flush with my chest. “I can’t wait to chase you for pleasure. I think you quite liked it, wouldn’t you agree?”

Her chest is rising and falling rapidly, her perfume is thick in the air. She nuzzles into my neck and sucks in a lungful of my scent, “Yessss.”

I lean back quickly, “Good, I am glad to hear it. But first, in order to earn a chase through the woods, you will need to complete your first shift. Are you up to the challenge?”

The glare she gives me as she crosses her arms across her chest almost brings a smile to my face. She looks adorable when she is angry. She continues to sit there, staring at me without saying a word.

Huffing out a laugh, “Is that a no, then? I figured you would jump at the opportunity to prove to me you could do it.”

I slide my bar stool back and collect our dishes. Heading over to the sink, I begin washing the dishes. I glance over my shoulder to see that she is still sitting exactly where I left her, and she is still glaring at me. Chuckling, I say, “I guess not then.”

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I finish washing the dishes and place them on the drying rack. “Well, if you don’t mind, I think I am going to go outside for a pleasant run.” Drying my hands off on the kitchen towel, I head towards the back door.”

I glance one last time at her before stepping out the back door, “Looks like you weren’t up to the challenge then. I will see you later. ”

### Chapter 19

Nova

Huffing, I slap my hands down on the countertop. This man and his audacity. Who does he think he is? I know he is only amping me up to make me meet his challenge, but how does he even know that I would fall for it? Alpha, my ass. I scoot the bar stool back quickly. Popping to my feet, I run to the front door to grab my coat. I know Gail says that we won’t need it, but it’s a force of habit.

Rushing to the back door, I step outside to find Silas casually leaning against a large cedar tree in the backyard. He has that damn smirk back on his face. Asshole.

“Took you long enough,” he says as he pops off the tree.

Glaring at him, I say, “How did you know I would even come out here? I could have just gone to bed.”

He gives me that knowing look, “I knew you would come out here, just like I know you love Oreos. It’s my job to know you and give you the things that you need in life.

Whether that is challenging you, holding you, or loving you.”

I put my hand on my hip, “Am I ever going to know those things about you?”

He smiles a sweet smile, “Of course you will. As you understand your wolf's side, then you will learn more about reading the bond between us. Now, would you like to shift for the first time, or...”

“Yes, let's do this. I have no idea what I am doing. Gail told me what it would be like, but I don't know how to do what she described.”

He claps his hands together, “How about I do it first and then I will talk you through it.” I nod my head.

I watch in astonishment as if I blinked, and suddenly there is a wolf standing in front of me. He makes it look so easy. Before I know it, he is back in his human form.

He claps his hands together and walks towards me, “Alright, now it is your turn. First thing you are going to do is open your mind to your wolf. Each of us shares our mind space with our wolf. You will eventually have conversations with them internally. The more you bond with her, the easier it will be to transform, as well as work together.”

My eyebrows shoot up, “Wait, is that why I would catch you staring off into space from time to time?”

He drops his shoulders and looks up to the sky, “Yes, Storm didn't appreciate that I wasn't pursuing you. He had quite a bit to say about it. So, yes, there are many times that I would be pulled into conversations with him.”

Giggling, I say, “That makes so much sense now.”



He heaves out a sigh, “Yes, well, on to teaching you how to shift. I want you to coax your wolf into speaking to you. For your first time, it is easier to shut out the world. Close your eyes, tune out the outside sounds, and take deep breaths.”

Slowly, I shut my eyes. The fear that it will not work grips me. My wolf has been silent since I was bitten, leaving me to fumble my way through this. I suck in a deep breath and hold it for ten seconds, then release it. “Hello?” I say into my mind space.

“Hello Nova, it’s nice to finally meet you.”

My eyes pop open, and I look at Silas. He nods his head, “Keep going. You are doing great.” I slowly close my eyes again.

“What’s your name or should I just call you wolfy,” I ask my wolf.

She snorts, “My name is Nyx, although wolfy is kinda funny.” It is so weird to have a conversation with someone I can’t see and we are just chatting in my mind.

“Nice to meet you, Nyx. I am really nervous. Is this going to hurt?”

“The first time is going to hurt, but you will get used to it. Listen, we are going to shift and then we are going to run. Since it’s the first time, I will be fully in control, but over time we will work together during the shifts. Are you ready?”

I nod my head and open my eyes. “Do you feel the pull,” Silas asks.

“Yes, I feel it,” I shudder out the words.

“It’s okay Nova, let her do the work for you.” I close my eyes again and allow the pull to take over.

The first snap of my bones to change the structure of my body is excruciating. Before I can even process that one, there are several more pops in a row. I let out a wail of pain as I drop to the ground. Arching my back, I feel tears build at the corners of my eyes.

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I know they said it would be painful, but I wasn't expecting this kind of pain. Before I can think any longer about it, I open my eyes and realize I am no longer kneeling on the ground. I am standing on four legs, looking through my wolf's eyes.

"You did great Nova, I am proud of you. Now are you ready to give our mate a run for his money," Nyx asks me.

"I am always down to give him a run for his money," I tell her.

She sits down and looks up at Silas. He is smiling handsomely, with pride shining in his eyes. He walks over to us and is about to kneel to pet our fur when Nyx takes off running.

I hear him shout, "Oh you want to play games huh," as we are running further into the woods.

I didn't realize how freeing running through the woods would be until now. The wind rushing through our fur, the crisp mountain air filling our lungs, and the snow puffing as our paws hit the ground.

### Chapter 20

Nyx

Although we are working together now, but I am ready to claim my mate. Hopefully, Storm will give chase. He needs to be so wound up that it will be cake for me to claim him. I know Nova is new to the world of wolves, but I have been talking to

Storm without the knowledge of our humans. We have been trying to get the human parts of us to finally move on from how we got here.

Now that I am finally free, I am going to have to push her further into the recess of our shared mind. There will be nothing that will stop me from claiming my mate, not even the human portion of me. I know I am taking the choice away from her, but to complete the bond, both sides have to claim each other. Storm initiated ours by biting me. Now I have to bite him back. Sighing, then we have to get the humans to do it as well.

They are going to be the hardest ones to convince because they allow their emotions to get in the way of their nature. Wolves don't take emotions into consideration, we follow our instincts.

I'm rushing through the woods, turning every so often to keep the game alive. I know that if Storm really wanted to catch me, he would. Looking over my haunch, I notice he isn't behind me at all. Damn, I really thought he was going to give chase.

I see a clearing up ahead where the snow is glistening. Deciding that I am going to stop there and bask in the sun. As I run into the clearing with my muzzle towards the sky, I catch the scent of our mate. I bring my nuzzle down and slide to a stop. There, in the middle of the clearing, is our mate, sitting on his haunches. He smirks at me as if I came to him exactly as he planned. I mean, I guess I did.

He stands and paces in a circle around me. The entire time, neither of us breaking eye contact. "Our beautiful Little Wolf has finally graced us with her presence," he says through our mind link.

Forcing wind out of our snout, "There is no way that you knew this is where I would go. I changed directions several times."

He huffs out a sound that seems like a laugh, “I know these woods better than you do. I also kept adjusting my direction to make you think you were the one deciding where we were going. Then, when I had you close enough, I ran ahead to sit here. Surely, you aren’t already testing my knowledge of you?”

Shaking my head from side to side, “Fine, you caught me. Now, what are you going to do?”

He moves in closer, continuing to pace around me. Now the circle isn’t big enough for me to follow him. Once behind me, he snaps his jaws by my neck. I whip around to face him. I lunge at him with my teeth bared. He shifts out of the way. I land in the snow beside him. I whip my head towards him with my teeth bared.

He huffs out another laugh. Growling, I lunge at him again. Ugh, why does he have to make fun of me? “Are you going to do something, Nyx, or are we going to just keep playing around?”

I have to submit to him in order to bite him. It’s rare that we have a female alpha, almost unheard of. I just don’t want to submit right away, but if I want to claim my mate, then I will have to do it.

I lower my body down towards the ground and lay my ears flat against my head. I crawl, taking a tentative few steps. His ears snap to alert me. I keep pushing closer to him, showing my submission. He tilts his head as if he isn’t sure that he should believe it.

I am only one step away from him when I lunge for him and catch him off guard. Hovering over Storm on his back, I stare at him in victory.

“Nooooo, don’t do it.” Somehow, Nova has pushed through the mental wall. Damn it.

“Be quiet Nova, this is supposed to happen. One day you will figure that out too. In the meantime, we will mate him.”

Before either Storm or Nova can stop me, I clamp my snout down on his throat. I apply enough pressure to ensure that the mark will not heal.

Finally, he is ours. I can't wait for the official mating where we can be knotted by him. Just going to work extra hard on convincing the human sides to accept this.

## Chapter 21

Silas

The next morning, after our first run through the woods, I am feeling as though things are going to be fine until there is a knock at my office door. I know that we only have two days to get everything finalized before the Ghost River Pack comes to collect their debt.

“Come in,” I say without looking up from my paperwork.

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There is a clearing of a throat and based on the scent, I know it's Warrick. I glance up from my paperwork. "What's up?"

He runs his hand on the back of his neck, "There is another wolf from the Ghost River Pack. Do we have an answer for them?"

I drop my head into my hands. "We are a thousand shy, but we are going to tell them we have it. I don't care that it isn't true, but I won't show our belly just yet."

He nods his head down, "Makes sense to me. Alright, let's go out there and get this man to leave."

I stand up and follow Warrick out of my office. We walk into the meeting hall to find the wolf wandering along the walls looking at all the past alpha's family photos. Clearing my throat, "Can I help you?"

He turns around with a smirk on his face, "I would assume that you would know why I am here. You have two days, Alpha. Have you made your decision yet?"

A low growl rumbles out of me, "I told you the last time you graced us with your presence. We will pay the debt back. Since I have two days, you can see yourself off the pack land."

He lets out a chuckle, "See, I don't think that you will pay the debt back." He looks around the room and up towards the Crest of our pack hanging above the fireplace. "I can't wait to make this place ours. I noticed some fine-looking females on my walk into the pack house. Can't wait to take them for a ride, either."

Growls erupt from myself and Warrick, “You will do well to remember that I am still the standing Alpha of this pack and I won’t tolerate the discussion of our females as if they are nothing more than meat.”

Tsking, he throws his hand in the air in a shooing motion, “We will see about that. As for how I talk about your females, you are not my alpha. I am also protected under the laws that visiting embassies can not be attacked while on a diplomatic visit. So I think I will do as I please.”

I take a step towards him, baring my teeth, “Now I know you are a young pup so I will let this slide, but the amendment to that law is that the visiting embassy is to respect the wishes of the Alpha he is visiting. So if you are going to quote the bylaws, be sure that you know them in their entirety. Now, you will be leaving.”

He shrugs his shoulders and brushes past me towards the exit. “I look forward to your failure in two days.” With that, he slams the door.

I am just about to turn to Warrick when I catch the scent of Nova coming into the room. I turn to see her coming through the door that leads to our private portion of the pack house.

She looks concerned, “What was all that growling and shouting?”

Warrick claps me on the shoulder, offering a soft smile, before heading out of the room.

I hold my arms open to her to see if she will willingly let me give her a hug. She easily walks into my arms, allowing me to wrap her in my arms. I place a gentle kiss on her forehead before I pull back from our hug.

“That would be an emissary from a rival pack. I haven’t brought you into this part



because you are still so new to being a wolf. When I took over being alpha for this pack, I found out that our old Alpha was borrowing money from a rival pack. It seems like he was selling something for a time, but I am not sure what. When they found out that I was the new Alpha, they sent someone to demand that either I pay them back the debt, continue doing whatever he was doing for them, or I forfeit our pack to them.”

Her mouth drops open in shock, “Okay, that isn’t what I expected to hear this morning after grabbing my peppermint coffee, but here we are. So what does that mean? Obviously, you aren’t forfeiting the pack to him and I am sure that you would never do whatever he was doing to make the money. Do you have all the money for the debt?”

I breathe out a heavy sigh, “No, we don’t. The festival earned us a huge chunk of it, but we are still \$1,000 shy.”

She sucks in a breath, “Okay, what does it mean if we don’t come up with the money in two days?”

I give her a grim look. I know she knows, but she needs me to say it out loud. “If we don’t come up with the money in two days, then we will have to forfeit to their pack. I know you don’t know this group, but they aren’t known for being pleasant. Their females never last, which is why they are always searching for packs to take over. I am not 100% sure what they do to their females, but there are rumors.”

“Shit, this isn’t good. Do you have any ideas on how to make that last thousand?”

I shake my head from side to side, “No, I actually had planned to talk with you about this today to see if you had any ideas.”

She seems to think as we walk back into our private area of the Pack House. We are

just entering the living room when she speaks up. “I think I have an idea. It might be a dumb idea, but it’s worth a ...”

“There is no such thing as a bad idea when it comes to this. I am always willing to hear ideas. We might not use it, but I always want voices to be heard. Especially yours, as my mate and my Luna, your opinion is the most important one.”

A blush creeps across her cheeks, “Uh, thank you. That is very sweet of you. So I was thinking, what if we did a yard sale? I know that it would have to be quickly but I am sure that we can all throw in items that we are no longer in need of or want anymore. What’s that saying, ‘one man's trash is another man's treasure?’ What do you think?”

I place my hand on her shoulder and give a gentle squeeze. “I think that is a wonderful idea. Want to lead the event and get everything together? It would be a great chance for you to meet more of the pack and them to meet you.”

She covers her face with her hands, “I don’t know Silas. I have never led something like that or organized something like that. I think there is someone else that would be far better suited for it.”

I gently pry her hands from her face and put my finger under her chin. I tilt her head up till she is looking at me, “You will do amazing at this. Don’t doubt yourself. I will have Gail help you if that will make you feel better.”

She nods her head while still looking at me with vulnerability. “Alright, let’s find the meddling woman.”

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Grabbing her hand, I pull her to her feet. “Come on then, I want to introduce you to the pack, anyway. I’ll shoot off a message for everyone to meet up in the meeting hall. You ready for this?”

She shakes her head gently from side to side, “Not really, but let’s do this!”

I pull out my phone and type out a message to the entire pack to meet us in the meeting hall quickly.

I place her hand in the crook of my arm, “Alright, let’s take you to meet the pack.” She smiles meekly up to me and nods her head.

I smile down at her, I hope that she is ready for the full moon in two days.

### Chapter 22

Nova

Okay, so I didn’t know there were this many wolves in the pack. There are so many smiling faces from one side of the pack hall to the other. I look up at Silas and he gives me an encouraging smile. I lean in close to him and whisper, “You didn’t tell me that there were this many pack members.”

He lets out a low chuckle, “There were more of us, but during the past Alpha’s reign, we lost a lot of members.”

I pat his chest, “Well hopefully with the new Alpha, we will be able to build the pack

back up.”

“That is the dream. Are you ready to announce your plan?”

I shake my head, “Absolutely not, but let’s get this over with.”

He clears his throat and steps up to the front of the dais. The room falls silent as everyone sees he is waiting for them. “Thank you, everyone for coming here on such short notice. I hope that this will be the last time that we have to do such a meeting. I wanted to take a moment to introduce you to my mate and your future Luna, Nova Quinn. It is my hope that you welcome her in, but also help this new wolf learn the ways of the wolf pack.” A round of applause breaks out around the room. Silas holds his hands up to silence the room again. “Thank you, thank you. Now for the reason for the meeting. As you know, we have two days to finish raising the money for the Ghost River Pack. We did phenomenal with raising money with the festival but, we are still short a thousand dollars. Nova has come up with a great idea, at least I think so.” He turns and holds his hand out to me. I place my hand in his and he pulls me to stand next to him. “Nova, why don’t you tell everyone what your idea is?”

My face warms with the blush breaking out across my cheeks. “I...uh...” I clear my throat. I can do this. Stepping in front of him and I square my shoulders. “My idea is hosting a huge yard sale. Everyone has items in their home that they no longer want or need. Let’s finish the last thousand dollars by cleaning out our houses.”

Another round of applause breaks out around the room. My cheeks warm again. I hold my hand up just like I saw Silas do. “Thank you. I have never held a yard sale of this magnitude. I am going to need all hands on deck from everyone. Do you think that you guys will be able to go to your homes, collect your sale items, and meet back here in a few hours?”

There is a chorus of yeses from around the room. “Alright, let’s meet back here in a

few hours, say 2pm?”

Later that night, with the moon high in the sky, Silas and I sip our hot cocoa by the fire in our living room. “I can’t believe how many items people brought for the yard sale.” He hums his agreeance while he sips his cocoa.

“I know Gail said that the pack and community are big into helping each other, but I just wasn’t expecting this.”

Silas sets his hot cocoa down on the side table between us. “There is a lot riding on the success of this yard sale. More beyond just helping each other, we all know that if we don’t succeed that our lives will forever change. I hate that this is your initiation into pack life, but unfortunately we didn’t get a choice in the timing of this. But alas, we don’t choose when things happen in our lives.”

Placing my hand on his, resting on the arm of the chair, “I think this is the best time for my introduction to pack life. I can experience what it really means to be part of the pack. I get to see you when you are facing challenges and how you handle them. Although, we might need to assess that again since you know...you were an asshole to me at the beginning.”

He cuts his eyes to me, “To be fair, I didn’t want to drag you into this. I worried I would be dragging you into the death of our pack or the worst possible things to happen to you. Wouldn’t you have preferred to have been ignorant of all this so you could get away if shit hit the fan?”

I rub my hand over his and squeeze it gently, “You don’t get to choose that for someone else. While I can understand your thought process, you don’t get to make those decisions for me. I would rather experience a year of love than to never experience it at all. Even if you told me at the end of that year my heart would be shattered, I would still choose to experience a year of memories with you over never

knowing you.”

His eyes soften, and he gives a slight nod of his head. “Fair enough, I didn’t consider it that way. I just wanted what was best for you, you can’t blame me for choosing to protect you.”

“I know, I forgive you Silas. From now on though, remember I would like to be included in decisions, especially if they affect my life. Don’t make it a habit of deciding things for me even if your Alpha instincts insist you do.”

He nods his head and picks his hot cocoa back up. We sit in silence, sipping our cocoa and watch the flames dance across the logs.

The next morning, the yard sale is in full swing, with the town is abuzz with all the preparations. I have a clipboard with the checklist to ensure everything is where it is supposed to be. So far, we are on track to be ready in time to start at 11 A.M.

“Hey girl! Where do you want us?”

I look up from my clipboard to see Hazel, Willow, and Aspen walking up. I let out a sigh of relief. These girls are quickly becoming my support group here in Jasper. Their arms are laden with baked goods!

“We brought an assortment of baked goodies to help with the fundraising. We thought if we placed them at the cashier tables as a last-minute treat they grab before leaving,” Willow explains while she places her tray of laden with cookies, muffins, and mini pies in front of me on the table.

“You ladies are amazing. I wasn’t expecting you guys to do all that for me. You had to have been baking all night to have this many baked treats.”

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Aspen comes over and places her baked goods on the table next to mine. She shrugs, “It’s the least that we could do. We wanted to help in the best way that we could. Since we didn’t have any items to add to the yard sale, we baked instead. We don’t want to lose our newest bestie, so here are dozens of cookies, muffins, and mini pies.”

Hazel places her tray of treats on the other table. She claps her hands together, “Where do you want us? We came to help run it as well, but you gotta tell us where to go.”

“Perfect, if you three can man the cash registers, that would be amazing. I want to tally the products that are purchased to keep a running score on where we are on our goal.”

We all busy ourselves with finalizing the last details before opening. The girls set out their baggies of cookies with their pricing stickers around the cash boxes and ensure their cash boxes have plenty of change. I walk around, checking off my list to ensure everything is ready to go.

I catch a whiff of crisp air, spruce, and musk right before Silas runs his hand across my lower back. He nuzzles my neck before placing a gentle kiss on my temple. “I brought you a peppermint hot cocoa.” He hands me a steaming cup.

Grabbing the cup, I feel the warmth seep in through my gloves. I take that first sip of pure bliss in a cup and my soul warms immediately. “Thank you, this is exactly what I needed.”

“You’re welcome Little Wolf. Are you guys ready for the opening?”

I flip over my clipboard and check over it once again. “Yep, we are ready. Fingers crossed this works. Did you see what the girls brought to sell? That is so sweet of them.”

He nods his head, “I saw that. They are great friends. I am glad that you have them, not that I am surprised. Of all the ladies in our town, I can easily see you guys being friends.”

“What makes you say that?”

“You guys all have a lot more in common than you think. Things I am sure you will find out when you get to know each other more. You have to remember that I grew up here, there isn’t anyone I don’t know unless they are new here.”

I giggle, thinking of how much he has to learn about me. “Fair enough. Alright, let’s get this show on the road.” I turn to head back to the registers so I can open the yard sale.

The entire community showed up in full force for our yard sale. I am still blown away by the people of this town coming out to help each other. I never experienced this in New York City, not once in my life. Looking around, I see not just shopping, but people chatting as neighbors and friends. A heartwarming scene. I look down at my clipboard to the tracker I made to track our goal, knowing that an hour ago we hit our goal and we still have a couple of hours to go.

When I glance back up, Gail is making her way to me. Her warm smile graces her face right before she reaches me. “Just the woman I was looking for. You are doing amazing with your first event. It’s so well laid out and everyone is chirping about how well organized it is, especially on such a short notice.”



I feel the blush creep across my cheeks, “I, uh, thank you.”

“No need to be bashful Nova, you did amazing. I knew when I met you that our goddess chose well. You will be an amazing Luna, I can’t wait to see what you do with this pack.”

My eyebrows shoot up, what does she mean when she met me she knew? “Don’t look so surprised, young lady. One day you will understand.” She taps my hands. “Today isn’t that day. Celebrate in achieving the goal and cherish the beginning of your relationships. Especially with Silas, he meant well but went about it all wrong. When he asks, just say yes.” With that, she winks and disappears into the crowd.

I am still sitting here reeling from what she said when Silas walks up. “There you are! I heard we hit our goal!”

I shake my head slightly to clear it of what Gail just said. I look at Silas, “Yeah, we actually hit it about an hour ago. Everything from here on out is just bonus money.”

A beautiful smile spreads across his face, I don’t think I will ever get used to how beautiful his smile is. “That’s wonderful. Have you decided what you will do with the extra money?”

I shake my head, “I haven’t fully decided yet but I would like to donate it to the school to help with the education of our youth.”

Nodding his head, “Spoken like a true Luna. I think that is a great idea.” He grabs my clipboard from my hands and places it on the table next to us. “Listen, I wanted to ask you for a redo on our first date. I know I fucked that one up and I want a chance to make it up to you.”

I lean closer to him, “Will it end with another run through the woods?”

His eyebrow arches, “Do you want it to end with a run through the woods?”

I lean close to his ear, “Not only do I want you to chase me through the woods, I want you to claim me in the woods. Claim me the way it should have been done the first time. Do you think you can handle that, Alpha?” I run my hand down his chest and feel him shiver under my touch.

His chest rumbles with a low growl, “Be careful, Little Wolf, you don’t know what you are asking for.”

My hand travels south towards the growing bulge. “Oh, I know exactly what I am asking for.” I graze the bulge like a whisper of a touch.

He snatches my hand by the wrist and brings it to his mouth. He bites gently on my wrist and I feel myself flush with arousal. “Do you know what tomorrow night is?”

Breathing out a soft moan, my chest heaves. “The full moon.” He moves his mouth down my arm, planting gentle kisses with a scratch of his canines.

“Do you know what that means for mates? Hmm, did Gail cover that in Wolf 101, or did she leave that one for me?” He looks at me with an eyebrow arched, mischief glinting in his eye.

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“I don’t think she told me...” I breathe out a moan. “Maybe you should show me.”

Tsking, he takes a step back from me. “Oh, don’t you worry, Little Wolf, I am going to show you, but not here in the middle of our community. Say yes to dinner.”

I pull in a few breaths to calm my libido. Closing my eyes, I take a few more breaths. “Yes.”

He leans back in and runs a finger down my neck. I shiver as he whispers into my ear, “Good girl.”

He steps back and smirks. “I will see you later. Let’s have our date tomorrow night so I can show you exactly how fun being a shifter can be.”

With that, he turns and disappears into the crowd.

“Shit, I am wet and I am not even attracted to him. That was hot as fuck.”

Whipping my head to the side, I find Willow leaning against the other table. I snarl at her before she thrusts her hands up in the air. “Hey, whoa chill. I came to find you because all items have been claimed and all monies have been exchanged. Don’t bite me for walking in on you two, practically claiming each other in the middle of a yard sale.”

My wolf settles back down, realizing she isn’t stepping in our territory. “Outstanding, I will be right there to close out the yard sale.” She nods her head and heads back to the cash tables.

Between my wolf and this full moon, I don't think I can resist Silas any longer.

## Chapter 23

Silas

I am so glad that Nova agreed to a second chance date, or should I say a redo of our first date. This time there aren't any secrets between us. Well, maybe one. But, this time she will love this secret. I have some plans for the after dinner run through the woods. There is one thing that she hasn't learned about being a shifter yet, a surprise I am sure that she will love.

I splash on a little musk after combing my beard. It's almost time to trim it again, unless my mate loves it scruffy and long.

Grabbing my coat, I pull my truck keys off the holder by the door. Hopefully, after tonight, we will move into the Pack House. I know that is fast, but as wolves, we don't wait around like the humans do. Looking around my home, I am ready to let this place go to a new pack member so I can live with my Luna.

I pull up in front of Nova's home and cut the truck off. I can feel Storm right under my skin. He is eagerly anticipating the after dinner run. He was elated when Nova said that she wanted to be claimed the way she was supposed to always be.

Nova steps out of her house in a tight pair of leggings, knee-high boots, and a knitted sweater. Fuck me. This is going to be a short date. There is no damn way I will make it for hours with her dressed like that and the full moon rising tonight.

She is already perfuming the air with her arousal. I bite my lip, can we skip the dinner completely? No! No, we promised to redo the first date. We are just going to try really hard to not hump her leg in the restaurant.

She walks up to me, and I am wrapped in her scent. Okay, I can do this. Show her a good time, then we can fuck the night away.

I grab her hand and place a gentle kiss on the back of it. “You look good enough to eat, Little Wolf.”

She snatches her hand back from me and playfully slaps my shoulder. “Cringe, don’t say that. Is that a wolf pun? Are you supposed to be the big bad wolf and I am the helpless grandmother? Is that your kink?”

I stand there slowly, blinking at her.

She bursts into a fit of laughter. “You’re...” She pulls in a gasp of air. “face...” Giggling, she places her hand on her chest.

Shaking my head, “Let’s go to dinner before you pass out from laughing at my expense.”

She is still giggling as we get into my truck. “You good over there?”

She taps her chest as she continues to laugh. “Stop...You are making it worse with your look of concern.” She laughs even harder.

Shaking my head slightly, I head towards You’re Bacon Me Crazy. Lord knows what Gail will have up her sleeve tonight. I told her to let us just order like normal, but we know she loves to meddle.

Nova’s laughing finally dies off when she looks at me. “I know we didn’t start this the best way, Silas, but I really am glad that fate brought me to Jasper. Just in the short few weeks I’ve been living here, I already know I made the right choice.”

I glance to the side and see her smiling at me. “I know I was an ass at the beginning, but I agree. Fate knew what she was doing when she brought you to Jasper.”

We pull up in front of the restaurant. I jump out of the truck to run around and open her door. I hold my hand out for her and she places her hand in mine. She slides out of my truck as I pull her closer to me. When our bodies are flush, I run my hand up around the nape of her neck. Gripping her hair, I tilt her head back and place my thumb under her chin. I lean down and brush her lips with mine. Gasping, her lips pop open slightly. Seeing my chance, I dive in.

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The kiss starts out tentative and sweet as we learn about each other. I slowly slip my tongue into her mouth and the second she twists her tongue around mine, I know I am already losing the battle. I wrap my other arm around her lower back and pull her even closer to me. I know she can feel my thick erection grinding against her abdomen.

She lets out a low moan that goes straight to my dick. I suck in a breath, only to realize that her perfume is a thick cloud around us. Fuck, we will not make it to dinner. She runs her hands up my biceps and wraps them around my neck. She grasps my hair the same way I have hers and gently pulls on it.

I growl low in my throat when she grinds against my erection. Yeah, we aren't going to dinner. Fuck eating. There is only one thing I want to eat right now, and it isn't a steak. I break our kiss and look down at her. Her pupils are blown wide open, it looks like I am not the only one wanting to skip dinner.

“Did you learn about perfuming the air and what it does to your mate, especially during the full moon?” She shakes her head slightly.

“When the mating heat begins, you will scent the air with your specific blend of scent and arousal. It signals to your mate that you are ready for mating.” I inhale her scent and a low rumble comes from my throat. “Do you know why Storm reacted to you on our first date?” She shakes her head again.

“You perfumed the air so full of your scent that I lost control of him. Do you know what you are doing tonight?”

She sucks in air, “Perfuming the air?”

I nod my head, I run my hand down her ass and cup it. I use my hand to grind her along my erection. Her mouth pops open and her eyes roll to the back of her head. I run my hand down the back of her thigh and pull it up to my waist. I push her back up against the side of my truck. Running my nose up the side of her neck, I whisper into her ear, “Do you want to skip dinner and get to the mating?”

Her chest is rapidly rising and falling when I pull back to look at her face. She quickly nods. “Alright then, Little Wolf. Let’s head to the woods and have some fun, shall we?” I drop her leg and pull her hand into mine. Pulling her around my truck, I head towards the woods that are down the walkway from us. I can only envision the slick coating her leggings right now. I hope those aren’t her favorite leggings because I have every intention of ripping them off of her.

We briskly walk to the woods, both hungry for what is going to happen next. The second we reach the first tree, I whip around to face her. “Are you ready for this?”

She nods her head frantically, “More than ready. So what’s next?”

I allow the slow smile to break across my face, “Run, Little Wolf, Run.”

She gasps as her eyes shoot wide. I growl and shift into my wolf form. Seeing my four paws hit the ground, she takes off, running into the woods.

Unlike last time, this time I am going to drag this out to build her adrenaline. Let the game begin, Nova.

Chapter 24

Storm



Fucking finally! Nova takes off running into the woods. I am going to enjoy chasing after her. Our mate is in for a few surprises tonight, ones that I can't wait to show her. When Silas told me of his plan, I couldn't wait for this.

Lifting my muzzle to the air, I scent the air. Oh, that slick is dripping like a faucet. I lick my lips, running in the direction her scent is the strongest. My paws are pounding against the soft forest ground covered in patches of snow where it's fallen between the trees.

I run up right behind her and snap my jaw by her legs. She squeals and runs in a different direction. I slow my pace to allow her to pull ahead of me and out of sight again. I ran in the direction she headed, only to be two paces behind her. A growl rumbles out of my chest and she picks up the speed again before turning around and running in a different direction.

I love she loves being chased and I only hope that we will keep this as a part of our lives forever.

We keep up this cat-and-mouse game for a little while longer until I feel she is ripe for the taking. I am just about to launch onto her to knock her down when she shifts into her own wolf form. Her coat shines with red, gold, and white spots. Just like the human she is, of course, her wolf has a beautiful coat.

She whips around to face me and snaps her jaws at me. God, I love she is feisty. This is going to be fun. If I thought the Goddess would gift me a submissive mate, I was fucking wrong.

She jumps at me, and I slide out of the way. We circle each other a few times before I lunge at her again. She slides out of the way and takes off running. I chase after her, but I am ready to finish this game. Circling to head her off, she comes sliding to a stop when she finds me in front of her. Before she can react, I jump and slam her to

the ground. She is belly up below me with her tail between her legs, before she can move again, I snap my jaws down on her junction between her shoulder and neck. Sinking my teeth in, I let the venom seep into her blood. She will relax any second now and feel the warmth of the bond. As the venom is seeping into her skin, she lets go of her wolf form.

I feel her hands glide into my fur and pull it like she had my human form's hair. Oh, she is ready for her surprise.

I let go of my full wolf form and shift into a more human-like form. My paws become fur-lined hands, claws intact, as my forelegs shift into muscled forearms. As I look down, I notice my stomach changing into a muscular set of abs, resembling those of a human man but covered in fur. The shift changes my hind legs to strong, human-like thighs, yet they still maintain a wolfish form, a peculiar blend of both. Just thicker and bigger, kind of like my dick.

Releasing her neck, I pull back to show her my full humanoid version of my wolf. Her eyes pop open as she scans down the length of my body. Sitting back on my haunches, I allow her eyes to scan my entire body, especially my proud member standing at attention. I watch the second her eyes register it. Between my legs is my engorged dick, that is ten inches long and thick. As my knot swells at the base, I can feel the anticipation building for the upcoming mating. My balls hang between my legs, thick and ready. I can feel my mushroom's head throbbing, leaking precum.

Instead of backing away in fear, she licks her lips and moves to touch it. I put my hand on her shoulder to hold her down.

“Before you can take that, we are going to have to prepare your body for it. I don't want you to get hurt if we move too fast. You aren't quite ready to take me. Is this your first time?”

She nods her head frantically as her chest rises and falls rapidly. I lean my muzzle down and inhale her scent directly from the source. She lets out a soft moan. "I hope you don't love these leggings." Before she can answer that, I use a claw to rip a hole into the crotch of the leggings. Sticking out my long tongue, I lick the honey from my new favorite dessert. Humming in satisfaction, I rip her leggings the rest of the way off.

Her back arches off the ground the second the icy wind caresses her heated flesh. Bumps pop all along her exposed skin, I take one of my claws and skim it gently across her skin, watching her shiver as I do so. I lean back down to her pussy as I lick again. Thrusting my tongue into her hole, I take my claw and use the very tip of it to flick her sensitive spot. Her pussy gushes more honey after a few flicks of my claw. Oh, so she likes a hint of pain to her pleasure. Noted.

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I continue to lick and flick until I feel her orgasm crest the hill, right before she crests the hill I lean back, line my cock up with her clit. Using my hand, I flick my dick quickly over her bundle of nerves until she crests the hill. After the first wave of her orgasm washes over her body, I thrust my cock in.

She arches off the ground when I hit the wall of resistance. “This is going to hurt, but the faster I get it over with, the sooner you will feel the pleasure.” She nods her head rapidly. I thrust quickly as I bottom out. She is sitting right above my knot as she lets out a deep moan.

“Fuck Little Wolf, I knew it would be tight but God dammit, you are strangling my dick.” She gushes a flood of slick onto my dick. “You are soaking me.”

I roll us over until she is riding my dick. The new angle moves me even deeper, hitting a whole new spot inside her. Her eyes are rolling to the back of her head. “Oh my God, Storm, you are so fucking deep. Fuck, it feels so good.” She rocks her hips as she grinds down on my dick. She is riding my knot and the heat from her pussy is teasing my knot with how close it is.

“That’s right, Little Wolf, fuck me how you want me. You are soaking my fur.” I run my hand down to the drenched fur that is sticking to my skin. Collecting some of her slick, I use it to rub her bundle of nerves. She immediately starts grinding faster as she moves towards another orgasm. I want one more before I shove the knot into her.

“Give me one more, Nova. I want to shove my knot deep into you before I come. Fill your womb with our future pups.” I feel her inside quiver at my words. Oh, does our mate love the idea of being full of my seed?

I pick up the pace on her nub as I thrust up into her cunt. She sucks me in even further. I can feel my knot cresting the lips of her pussy right as she explodes into her second orgasm. Before she finishes the first wave of bliss, I thrust my knot fully into her. My pelvis is fully flush with her when I flip us back over to where I am over the top of her again. I rock my knot into her repeatedly. She lets go again, sucking me even further into her. I can't hold on any longer. I erupt and fill her womb with my seed.

I can feel it splashing along her walls. There is so much cum that it feels like I am floating in it. I look down at Nova. She is flushed and panting beneath me.

She is gasping for air, "Holy fucking shit. If this is what it's like to be a wolf, I am 1000% down for this for the rest of my life." She goes to move and sets off another orgasm between both of us. We are both shuttering as the waves move through us.

"Fuck, don't move. We are locked together and with the full moon, we are in our mating heat. We will literally be here in the woods all night if you don't let it deflate."

She looks between us to where we are locked together; she rolls her hips, and we both let out moans. "So, you say that if either of us moves, it will set up another round?"

I nod my head, "Yes, and Silas is bitching that he wants his turn now. I wanted to show you my second form tonight, but I have to let him have his turn, too."

She lets out a giggle, "Okay, that is fair. We will do this again soon, I promise. This was a lot of fun." She reaches up and brushes her hand along the fur on my cheek.

"Plus, I have always had a monster kink and now I have my very own monster to fuck whenever I want to. Winner right here." She points at herself.

My knot finally deflates, and I slip out of her warm heat. A flood of cum gushes out of her, I take my finger and scoop it back into her. I thrust my fingers in, being careful with my claws. “I don’t want any of this to go to waste.”

“Oh fuck me, I am going to end up pregnant tonight if you keep this up.”

Giving her my best wolfish grin, “That is the point, my Little Wolf.”

## Chapter 25

Silas

As soon as I can take control back from Storm, I take advantage of it. Quickly shifting back into my human form. It is important that we also mate in our human forms to fully cement the bond. While we don’t have to, since it is already formed through our wolves, this bond is unbreakable if formed by both sides of us.

I gently caress her cheek as I stare into her eyes, “I know you loved the chase and the fucking in the woods but I want to take you to our home. I want to mate you in our bed where hopefully we can spend the rest of the night learning all about each other. You good with that?”

She slowly blinks at me as she nods her head. “I don’t know how many more rounds I have in me, but I am good with a bed. I am pretty sure there is a stick jabbing me in my side.”

I reach into her hair and pull out a few leaves and a small twig. Holding them up to her so she can see. We both burst out laughing. “Yeah, let’s take you to the house. Maybe we can shower before another round?”

She puts her hand into mine as I help her stand up. We both attempt to brush off as

much of the soil, leaves, and twigs that our adventure gave us. She glances at my still nude body, “Why am I still so horny? I literally want to jump you again and it hasn’t even been ten minutes!”

I chuckle as I grab her hand to lead her through the woods to our home. “Welcome to the mating heat. There is one every full moon. It increases your libido and ramps up your desire to breed. Consider it our goddess’s way of encouraging more pups for our pack.”

I turn to see her mouth hanging open, “So you are saying that each month I will not only have a visit from mother nature but also the Goddess?”

I nod my head at her, “Well, not so much from Mother Nature. Now that you are a wolf, your cycles will adjust to produce the most optimal breeding. You will only bleed after the full moon if we are unsuccessful in our mating.”

“Oh, okay, that makes more sense. So the reason for the heightened lust is to encourage us to mate and produce pups. The punishment is a period.” She giggles as she shakes her head. “Alright, let’s get to fucking because I have always wanted kids and lots of them. Who needs more encouragement than that?”

We make our way through the woods back to our cabin. Thankfully, we weren’t that far to begin with, but it was still a bit of a hike to make it back. We could have shifted and ran back, but I didn’t want to zap all of her energy.

I had hoped that tonight would go the way it had gone so far. I might have made some plans ahead of time in hopes that we would end up here in our bedroom. Opening our bedroom door, we are greeted with the warm embrace of the fireplace. I asked Warrick to start the fire so it would be warm. Since Warrick doesn’t have a mate yet, he doesn’t experience the mating heat during the full moon. Unmated wolves are the ones that go running with the pack to drain some of their excess

energy. It's a good bonding moment for the wolves.



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I whirl Nova around and bring her lips to mine. She hums in approval as I roam my hands down her body. Slowly, I walk us towards the bathroom. I really hope that she is going to let me do the things that I have planned. While the time in the woods was amazing, this was going to be a lot slower and sensual.

She giggles as we bump into the door frame. Maybe kissing and walking isn't the best idea. Breaking the kiss, her hand finds mine as I flick on the light of the bathroom. "I know you are ready for more, but first, let's clean off the dirt from the romp in the forest. I promise I will make it worth it for you."

Switching the shower on full blast, I close the glass door to allow the steam to fill it. "Put your hands on the counter, Nova. Show me how much you want to please me."

Slowly, she turns to place her hands on the counter as she looks at me in the mirror's reflection. "Spread your legs." She pulls in a quick breath as she slides her legs apart.

"Good girl. Now I want you to pleasure yourself while I watch. Think you can do that?" I ask, with the challenge written across my face.

Hesitantly, she moves her hand down to the apex of her thighs. I watch with rapt attention as she touches her bundle of nerves for the first time. Gasping, she slides her hand in slow circles across it. That's just not going to do.

I slide in behind her, grasping her hand in my hand. I quickly wrap it around my hand and pull. Her back is flush with mine as I tilt her head to the side. "Is that how you want it, Nova? Slow? Gentle caresses?" Her breasts rise and fall rapidly as bumps rise across them. Blow a whisper of a breath up her neck, I nibble her earlobe. "I

think you want it rough, hard, and your full submission.” I whisper into her ear. The air fills with her arousal.

Running my hand down her body, I dip my middle finger into her honey, bringing it up to her face. “Hmm, looks like I was right. Taste yourself.” I bring my finger to her mouth as she brings her tongue out to lick it.

“Good girl, now the next time I ask you to pleasure yourself for me, do it how you actually want it. Do you understand me?” I look at her in the mirror as she nods her head. “Use your words.”

“Yes...yes sir.”

“Let’s shower so we can move to what I have planned for you.” We step into the steaming shower as I pour a generous amount of shampoo into my hand. I might have asked Willow to tell me what she uses so I could grab my own. Lathering my hands in the shampoo, “Wet your hair for me, love.” She dunks her head under the spray of the water, moving her hands to ensure its fully wet. Stepping out from under the showerhead, I twirl my finger in a circle, signaling for her to turn around. My fingers massage the shampoo into long trusses. They rub along her scalp in small circles as she arches her back, rubbing her ass along my hard as steel dick.

Dropping a hand down, I shift my dick to the apex of her thighs, allowing her to grind along it. Gripping her breast in my palm, I squeeze it as she mewls. “Rinse your hair Nova.” She turns, tilting her head underneath the water, the soap suds running down between her breasts. I watch a trail of bubbles as the all down her stomach. She shifts from foot to foot as if my eyes are leaving a physical caress along her skin.

“Silas, touch me,” she lets out breathily.

“Not yet Little Wolf. I have to condition your hair and wash the dirt from your skin.”

Whining, she sticks out her lower lip. "But I am so horny. I am dying over here."

Shaking my head from side to side, a smile breaks across my face. "All good things come to those who wait. Now turn around so I can condition your hair. I know you don't want to deal with tangles tomorrow because we skip this step."

She lets out a huff before turning around. Squirting the conditioner in my hand, I smear it across both hands before running it through the ends of her hair. I can feel their irritation coming through the bond with a sweet mix of lust and anticipation. Grabbing the sponge from the hook, I squirt the soap on it before lathering it up.

Nova sniffs the air before looking at me over her shoulder. "Should I be concerned that you have all of my stuff here already?"

Shaking my head slowly, "As your mate, it's my job to ensure your needs are met. I might have asked the girls to give me some intel to ensure I had the right stuff here."

"A girl could get used to this. That is for sure."

I take the sponge, rubbing it down her back till I get to her ass. Gathering some of the soap in my hand, I rub it along the globes of her ass. A whisper of a touch across her sex as I make my way down her legs, washing as I go. "Turn," I ask from my kneeled place at her feet.

I pick her left leg up and place her knee over my shoulder. "Hmm, you smell amazing, Little Wolf. It's my new favorite scent." I lean in with a swipe of my tongue along her seam. "Tastes as amazing as I expected it to. Storm was right, your honey is addicting."

Diving in, I swirl my tongue around her clit, sucking it into my mouth. Nova arches her back, pushing it further into my mouth. She places a hand along the back of my

head and grinds on my face as I continue to suck her clit. With my right hand, I curl two fingers inside her. Hooking them in a come here motion, I stimulate her G-spot.

“Fuck...fuck...fuck...Silas that feels amazing. I am going to come.” Taking that as my signal, I curl my fingers faster and bite down on her clit. She explodes on my hand, covering it in cum.

Her leg slides down from my shoulder as I place her foot back on the ground. I stand up, bringing the sponge along with me, cleaning as I go.

Lathering her body the rest of the way, I watch as her eyes follow my every movement. “Rinse off, love. I am going to wash up while you do that. Then we can move to the bed.”

Using the sponge, I quickly lather my body because she isn't the only one ready to move to the bed. I am so hard it's becoming uncomfortable.

After we are both rinsed, I turn the shower off and snatch both fluffy white towels. We both quickly dry off, as she is wrapping the towel around her, I stop her. With a shake of my head, she drops the towel to the ground. Swooping down, I pull her into my arms and walk us into the bedroom. She reaches up and pulls my face to hers. Her tongue strokes the seam of my lips, begging to be let in. Opening my mouth, I twirl my tongue around hers in an erotic dance. My arm lowers as we near the bed as she slides down my body.

I walk us backwards and when her calves hit the edge of the bed; I break our kiss. “Get in the middle of the bed, Nova.” She quirks an eyebrow at me, but does as I ask. Color me shocked, I didn't think she would be this malleable but I am here for it.

“Now that we have had our fun running through the trees, I want to cherish every inch of your body. I want to know every single button to push, caress, lick, and nibble

to make you sing for me,” I say as I grab the nylon wrist bondage that is attached to the bedpost.

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She sits up on her elbows, “Is that so? What do you have planned, sir?”

I flip the cuff part of the bondage back and forth in a waving motion. “I want you completely at my mercy. Do you trust me?”

“Yes, I trust you. I can’t wait to see what you have planned, sir.” She thrusts her wrist towards me and I gently glide the cuff over her hand.

I tighten it to where it’s snug without cutting off circulation. “Is this okay? Not too tight, right? The point is to keep you from moving it but not to cut off circulation.”

She jerks her hand a few times towards her chest. “Nope, it’s good.”

I walk down to the foot of the bed and grab the ankle bondage. “We should discuss your hand signals. It’s imperative that we have them.” I gently grab her ankle and pull it towards the corner of the bed. Slipping the cuff over her foot, I tighten it around her right ankle.

I look up to see her face full of wonderment. “What do you mean by hand signals,” she asks.

Chuckling, I walk to her left ankle. “I am about to play with your body to the point that you will be overstimulated. The concept is to bring all of your nerve endings to a point of heightened awareness. The smallest, softest touch would cause a bodily reaction. It will be very intense and since it is, we need hand signals that will allow me to ask you how you are doing.”

Slipping her left ankle into the cuff, I run my hand up her calf and look up at her. Her eyes are rounded and her pupils are blown. “Sir, I have only ever read about these things in books. So while I understand the concept, I think I have never experienced it in real life.”

My fingers make contact with her calf before sliding up her leg. Her breath hitches as my fingers sink into the silken crease of her thigh, the heat of her skin a palpable thing. “I am glad that I will be your first Nova. Have you ever experienced the loss of one of your senses? Been in a completely dark room and thought you could hear the world breathing?”

She nods her head as I keep slowly trailing my fingers up her side. “It’s known that losing a sense will heighten the other senses. It’s the body’s natural defense.” I run my fingers over her rib cage, trail them around the side of her breast. I watch in fascination as her chest rises and falls rapidly. I already have her senses on high alert. “What do you think would happen if you are deprived of two senses, hmm?”

A breath comes shuttering out of her, “I don’t know, sir.”

Humming, I trail my fingers up her arm. “I would think it would heighten the other senses even more, don’t you think?” Her mouth pops open as she licks her lips.

Grabbing the final bondage, I slip it over her left hand. “Do you know why I have bound your arms and legs?”

She shakes her head slowly, never removing her eyes from mine. “What we are about to do is going to make your body naturally want to move away from it.”

Her eyes grow large as she begins to panic, “Silas...”

Caressing her cheek, I say, “Shh...I promise I am not going to hurt you. It will be a

natural response to the overstimulation.” Kneeling on the bed on her left side, I watch as the chilly breeze caresses her skin. Bumps seem to pop along her skin everywhere my eyes wander. Leaning down, I pull one of her hardened nipples into my mouth. As her chest arched off the bed, I gently traced my left hand across her chest towards her other breast. Her nipple is caught between my thumb and forefinger as I give a gentle squeeze. A moan slips from her mouth as I let go with a pop.

“For your hand signals, I will tap you twice on your breastbone as a signal to check your position.” I take my forefinger and middle finger and tap twice on her breastbone. “Just like that. Do you understand?” She nods her head quickly. “You will signal one with your fingers for good to continue. Two fingers means you need me to slow down, and three fingers we stop everything. If you signal three, I will remove the headphones, blindfold, and unbind your wrists. We can always continue after you have had a breather. Don’t feel obligated to continue because you think that is what I want. You are in control, even if it appears as though I am. Do you understand?”

She nods her head. “Nova, you have to use your words. The only time I will accept non verbal commands is when we have agreed to them beforehand.”

“Yes sir, I understand. I am ready when you are.”

I reach over to the nightstand, where I set up the other goodies. I grab the silk blindfold and slide it over her eyes. “The first sense you are losing, your sight.” Chuckling as her mouth pops open as she pants. “Now I will take your hearing. All you are left with is touch, taste, and smell.” Grabbing the noise canceling headphones next, I slide them over her ears. There isn’t music playing yet, so she will still be able to hear me.

Jumping off the bed, and head over to the dresser, I grab the Spruce branches that I had Warrick bring in. I drop them on to the fire. The smell aspect for her will be the



spruce burning.

Walking back to the dresser, I grab the iPad. We are going to use classical music as our sounds for today. I will follow the buildup of the music to build her up. We will both be listening to the same song at the same time. She just won't know that.

Pushing play on the music, I make myself a whiskey on the rocks while the music begins her journey. As I am sipping on my whiskey, I enjoy the view of the stunning beauty the Goddess chose for me. She is shifting her hips, probably wondering what I am doing.

The first notes of the music swelled, and I moved to the bed slowly, feeling the beat of the music echoing my steps. With a clink, I scooped a melting ice cube from the glass, the damp chill seeping into my hand, and set it down on the end table beside the bed. Nova, welcome to heat/ice play.

Holding the ice cube over her breast, I watch as a drop of water splashes down right next to her nipple. Her body immediately shutters. I lean down and swipe my tongue across the spot where the water was rolling. Taking the ice cube, I rub it across her nipple as her back arches off the bed. I pull the ice cube away and blow hot air across her hardened peak. While her back is arched, I drop the ice cube right where her abs drop from her rib cage. I watch in fascination as it slides down her stomach to her belly button. Leaving the ice cube there, I follow the trail with hot air. She is shivering from the conflicting temperatures as her skin is covered in bumps. I grab the ice cube with my teeth and glide it from her belly button over her mound. I see her thigh muscles jump as they try to stop me from going any further.

Using my hands, I hold her hood open for better access to her clit. Leaning in, I glide the ice across it in a swiping motion. Her hips buck to attempt to get away from me. I stop swiping and hold it directly on her clit. Her body breaks out in a full-blown shiver.

Leaning over her, I grab the whiskey glass off the table. I tilt the cup, allowing the contents to pour over her pussy lips. The music builds even more as we enter the second courtet. I dive into her pussy, licking all the whiskey from her lips. Thrusting my tongue in, I swirl my tongue in a circular motion. I pull her clit into my mouth and suck hard. She arches off the bed and I can feel her thigh muscles twitching against my shoulders. Popping her clit out of my mouth, I run my tongue along her back towards her mound. As I cross over, I make sure I swipe my tongue as close to her clit as I can get without touching it. As I lick my way down her opposite thigh, I bite down on the meatiest part of her thigh. Dropping my fangs down, I push a little of our venom into her. I know the minute it hits her because she lets out the loudest moan. For mates, our venom heightens our arousal even further.

Lifting myself up, I draw my knees under her legs. I grab my dick as I lean over her body. I glide it over her glistening lips as I circle her hole, only allowing the tip to graze her dripping center every few circles.

“Fuck, this is torture. This isn’t even fair,” she shouts into the air.

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Her body is vibrating with anticipation. “Yess, fuck me.” I thrust the tip into her.

I pull back out and slap my dick onto her clit. Her body wracks with a visible reaction to the slap. Chuckling, I reach over to the end table, allowing my dick to rub along her lips as I reach for the feather wand lying there.

We are moving into the third movement of the song, the final build up. Reaching over to her breastbone, I double tap to check in on her. Glancing at her hands, I see her give me one finger. It isn't her forefinger, but I will let it slide this time. I keep circling my dick along her lips as I take the feather wand and move it along her skin.

“Fuck, fuck, fuck...” she is chanting into the air. I slide my dick into her all the way to my swollen knot. She arches so hard off the bed you would think she is possessed.

She squeezes me so hard that I am not sure I will be able to pull myself out. I don't move, just allowing the anticipation to continue to build.

She whimpers, “Please, please, please...”

Using my thumb, I swipe some of her slick onto my finger. Swirling it along her clit, I feel her clench even harder. Without moving my dick, I continue to swirl her clit. I am going to build her up right to the edge then will rip myself back out.

She is squeezing me so hard that I can feel her walls flutter. She is right there; the music is swelling, and we have almost reached the top. I swirl my thumb faster, pushing her even higher. “Yes...oh my god...right there...don't stop...”

Her thighs are trembling, her walls are fluttering. I can feel her pulling me further in. “I’m almost there. Yes...yes...yes..” she is chanting to the ceiling.

Knowing she is about to come, I rip myself out of her. “Nooooooooo!” She screams.

Before she can even lecture me, I pull off both her ankle bindings, flip her over on to her stomach, and pull her ass up till her knees are resting under her.

I slide between her knees, shifting them out of my way with my own knees. As soon as I am in position, I thrust into her with one swift motion; I bottom out to right before my knot. Leaning down across her back, I slid the headphones off her ears. “We are far from done, Little Wolf. I am going to fill you so full of my cum, you will feel it sitting in your cunt. You ready,” I whisper huskily into her ear.

Her mouth is hanging ajar as she nods her head. I grab a hold of the headboard as I scoot us closer to the head of the bed. With one hand on the headboard, I use the other to wrap around her hair. I don’t want to smash her face into the headboard.

As I begin to rock and find a new depth in her, I say, “Good girl” before I thrust in earnest.

## Chapter 26

Nova

Oh fuck me, this man is so damn deep that I feel like he is hitting my throat from the inside. There is still a slight burn from the stretch to accommodate his size. Fuck, this shit feels so good.

He slightly tugs on my hair as he pushes further into me. Damn, I don’t know that he can get any deeper. He pauses right before he huskily says, “Good girl.”

He slides in and out of me in the most torturous rhythm. The feeling is almost as orgasmic as him rubbing on my clit. He wasn't lying when he said that removing senses will heighten the others. I feel as though my skin is on fire and the slightest breeze will send me off.

I hear a click and then the humming vibrations of...is that a vibrator? Before I know what is happening, he leans down over me, I can feel him slide his arm around my waist, then the cool metal of the vibrator is right on my clit.

"Fuck," I hiss out.

"That's it. Be a good girl and give me an orgasm. I plan to get at least three out of you before I knot you," he whispers into my ear.

Oh fuck, I didn't know that we would also be knotting in human form. Fuck me. Alright, I got this.

He leans back and starts thrusting faster. All the while holding that vibrator to my clit. I can't hold on any longer between the foreplay, his size, and the vibrator I am done for.

I explode so hard that I almost fall to the bed. "Oh yes, that is a good girl. You just creamed my cock so much, I can feel it lubing my knot." He pulls out of me with a wet sound.

Grabbing my hip and he flips me back onto my back. He slides my ankles up to his shoulders and thrusts back into me. He doesn't move, though. I am about to ask why when suddenly he rips the blindfold off me.

"I want to see your eyes when I fuck you. I want to watch your orgasm as it washes over your face. You are so beautiful, Nova. I am beyond grateful the Goddess blessed

me with you.”

I watch him as he grabs hold of the headboard with both hands. He rocks into me and this is giving him a whole new angle. I feel him rub against my G-spot and my toes curl.

Noticing my reaction, he rocks right along that spot with the ridge of his dick. Oh fuck. I am so sensitive that it only takes a few rocks before I explode again. While I am riding the wave of my orgasm, I feel the stretch of his knot. He slowly glides the knot into me and it rubs right along my G-spot, setting me off again.

“Oh fuck, oh fuck, oh fuck.”

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Silas reaches over and unbinds both of my wrists while I am still riding the wave of my third orgasm.

He drops my ankles back down to the bed as he leans down over the top of me. “Fuck Nova, you are squeezing me so hard that I don’t think I can last much longer.”

I slap him on the shoulder, “Hey buddy, this isn’t my fault. You are the one that keeps setting off orgasms.”

He chuckles and says, “Well, as my knot swells, it is going to push on your G-spot. Consider it an insta button for your orgasm.”

“Oh, fuck...”

He chuckles, “Oh fuck indeed.”

He slowly starts rocking his hips while staring into my eyes. This is far more intimate than anything else we have done so far. He leans down and sensually begins kissing me.

Grinding his pelvis against mine, he is not only massaging my G-spot from the inside, but he is also massaging my clit. I can feel his knot swelling as it grinds even more into me. I don’t think I can hold off any longer.

Leaning up to his ear, I whisper, “Come for me, Silas. Fill me full of your seed.”

“Fuck,” he roars before erupting into me. Just like before, I can feel the semen

splashing on the walls of my womb. I didn't even know he would have this much again so soon.

Collapsing down on top of me, he places a gentle kiss on my temple. "Nova, I adore you. I know it seems really fast, but I can feel it in my soul. I was always meant to find you."

My fingers glide through the hair at his temple. "I love you, Silas. I never would have imagined that this is where my life would have gone, but I always knew I needed to move to the mountains. Something was always calling me here. It seems it was you all along."

He nuzzles into my neck, "I am glad that fate brought you to my small town, even if I was an asshole at first."

Giggling, I hook my leg over his and pull him closer. What I didn't know was that it would set off a chain reaction.

He growls into my neck, "Woman, I was trying to be sweet. Now, you started this whole thing up again."

Before I can say anything else, he flips us over to me, straddling him.

"Your turn Little Wolf."

The warm rays of the morning sun peek through the curtains of our bedroom. Stretching, I can feel all the sore muscles along my body from our adventures last night. Glancing at the nightstand, I see that it's 8:00 A.M. Oh fuck; we have the meeting with the Ghost River Pack in only a few hours.

I feel a hand run across my side as it makes its way down the valley of my stomach.



Slapping the hand, I say, “Absolutely not, we have only been asleep for three hours because of you. Besides, it’s time to get up.”

Grumbles sound behind me as I sit up in bed. The deep gravelly voice of Silas says, “Oh, come on, one more time before we have to go be responsible adults again? I haven’t gotten enough yet.”

Walking over to the attached bathroom, I grab the silk robe hanging on the door. “You haven’t gotten enough?” I walk back over to the bed where a dreamy, sexy looking Silas is laying. I rip the blankets off of him to the end of the bed. “Six hours, countless orgasms, more positions than I can even count, and you still haven’t gotten enough?”

Smirking at me, he rolls over to his back and I watch as his dick springs to full mast. He looks down at it as he strokes it a few times, “Nope, I sure didn’t. Seems he agrees with me. I vote we fuck for at least another hour before getting out of bed.”

I throw my hands in the air, “You have lost your damn mind. I am going to go shower to ensure I am presentable as Luna. Although, I have no idea what that even means.”

Silas jumps out of the bed and comes around to my side. “First of all, don’t change anything about yourself to be a Luna. Secondly, you are beautiful, strong, and compassionate. All those are traits of being a Luna. Thirdly...” He pinches my ass before saying, “I am going to shower with you.”

I slap his chest, “Like hell you are. I am not dumb. You and your big dick are going to stay right out here while I shower. I don’t need you getting any ideas while I am bent over shaving my legs.”

He bites his knuckles, “Fuck, now that is all I can see. You lathered up with soap bent over. You are killing me.”

Leaning up to plant a kiss on his lips, I smirk. “I am sure you guys will be fine.” With that, I whirl around and lock myself into the bathroom.

Through the door I hear. “Fine, I will just sit here and stroke it till you get out. Me and my big dick will be here waiting for you.”

Forty minutes later, I am freshly showered, shaved, and lathered in lotion. I put on a soft amount of make-up and a little bit of gloss on my lips. My hair is hanging in loose curls down my back.

I don’t find a naked Silas stroking his dick like he promised I would. Instead, I find a well dressed Silas who exudes the confidence of a pack leader.

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“You ready to go,” he asks as he walks over to me.

“Yeah, I think so. I hope I am dressed appropriately.”

He gives me an assessing look, “You look exactly as Luna should look. The Goddess chose well.”

I grab Sila’s hand and place it on my heart. “Silas, I want you to know that no matter what happens today. You are mine and I am yours. As the Goddess blessed the union, I will forever be your mate.”

He leans down and places gentle forehead kisses. “I love you Nova. I can’t wait for us to put this behind us and begin our future together.”

He grabs my hand and places it in the crook of his elbow. “Me too Silas, me too.” With that, we walk out into the main area of the house.

## Chapter 27

Silas

Walking into the main area of the pack house, we find Warrick, Caelon, and Xavier standing with Gail. They are all talking amongst each other until Warrick spots us walking towards them.

He walks over and claps me on the shoulder, “You ready for this?”

“As ready as I am ever going to be, man. I am just ready for us to put this behind us so we can finally start moving in a positive direction.”

He nods his head, “Fair enough, they should be here any minute. Do we have all the money?”

Caelon walks over to us, “Yes, we were able to finish off the last of it thanks to Nova’s yard sale idea. Not only that, but we have more than we need. Nova, did you decide what you would like to do with the extra money?”

She blushes at the attention of everyone, “Uh, yeah I did. If it’s okay with you guys, I would like to see the money go to the Elementary school. Teachers could always use extra supplies for their classrooms.”

Gail walks over to Nova and wraps an arm around her, “Sweetie as Luna, it is your decision to make. You don’t have to ask if it’s alright with everyone else. Although we appreciate you asking and considering what everyone else would like.”

Nova nods her head, “Sorry, this is all still so new to me and I don’t want to upset anyone by deciding. I will remember that, or at least try to. Might take me a bit to get used to that.”

I lean in to her side, “You are doing great, Nova. None of us expect you to master your wolf, become a Luna, and all of that within a few moments of learning about all of it. Take your time, ask questions, and remember, I love you.”

Warrick sucks in a sharp breath, “Oh shit, I didn’t know my man had already moved to the love you stage. Wow, color me shocked. Welp, good for you, man. I am happy for you.” He lets out a chuckle as he shakes his head from side to side.

There is a clearing of a throat from behind me. “Sir, the Ghost River Pack has arrived

on pack land. There are fifteen wolves heading towards the pack house now. Do you want my men to trail them to ensure all fifteen come to the pack house,” Xavior asks.

“Yes, let’s monitor all their activities. Continue to have wolves run the parameter to ensure that they don’t have more right outside our pack lands. While I hope they will hold up their end of the deal, I also wouldn’t put it past them to attack us, regardless.”

“Noted. Alright, I will send the message out to our guys. I will stay here with you, as well as Sampson and Tomlin.” With that, he turns around and heads outside to pass his messages along. I shake my head because you can take the man out of the military, but you can’t take the military out of the man.

Nova shivers next to me and through our bond, I can feel her panic rising. I let out a low Alpha purr to help calm her nerves as I stroke my hand up and down her back. “It’s going to be okay, I promise.” She nods her head and leans into my side further.

We don’t have to wait long for Xavior and the Ghost River Pack to walk into the Pack House. I personally have never met their Alpha and looking at him now, I wasn’t missing anything. He is every bit of 5’6” tall man with a pissed off look on his face. I wonder how a man of his size was able to claim the pack to begin with. Shaking my head, I decide it doesn’t matter much. After today, I hope to never deal with this pack again.

“Well, well, well, I am finally meeting the Alpha who took down Orion. I have to say I am a tad bit disappointed,” Jeramiah says with a gritty, higher-pitched voice.

I have to refrain from laughing. Warrick has a coughing fit which is clearly to cover up his laughter.

“Alpha Jeramiah, I want to say that I am pleased to see you, but that would be a lie. Why don’t we cut to the chase here and head to the meeting room?” I don’t give him

the opportunity to say anything in rebuttal to that. Heading to our meeting room is purely to establish that this is my territory and to sign paperwork stating we no longer have a debt to their pack.

Everyone files into the meeting room. I guide Nova to the head of the meeting table. I pull out the chair that is seated to my left and hold my hand out for her to take the seat. She sits and places her hands in her lap. I take the seat at the head of the table while Warrick takes the seat to my right. Xavier takes the seat next to Nova, whereas Caelon takes the seat next to Warrick. Gail, Sampson, and Tomlin all take the seats along the wall behind me.

I watch as the Ghost River Pack each takes their seats. Once Jeramiah is seated, I can't help but wonder if his feet dangle from the seat. I glance over to see Warrick with a sly smirk on his face. I know he is wondering the same thing. We are in a silent discussion over the idea when I feel a gentle hand come into mine. Nova gently squeezes and I know she wants to get this over with.

“Alpha Jeramiah, your pack was owed a debt from mine. You gave us two weeks to either pay the money, forfeit the pack, or fight you for the pack. As you are aware, today is the final day of the two weeks that we were given,” I state the facts of the meeting.

“Yes, yes, boy. You know why we are here. Either you have the money or I will be takin' the women. So what will it be,” his voice squeaks out.

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It is getting harder and harder to understand how this man is the Alpha of one of the most feared packs. “We have your money and you won’t be touching a single one of our females. Before we hand over the money, though, you will be signing documentation that our debt has been paid in full. I will need two of your wolves to sign as witnesses as well.”

“How about a compromise, hmm? Let’s have my guy count the money as I am reviewing the paperwork. When he confirms that it’s all there, then I will sign on the dotted line. Fair enough?”

I nod my head, “Fair enough. Caelon, if you could place the money in front of his guy. Xavier, if you could please lock all the doors. I want to ensure that we all feel secure inside the room while the exchange is in process.”

Everyone begins their given task. I pass the paperwork down the table to Jeramiah. He is reading it, at least I think he is. For all I know, he is bullshitting me and just pretending to read. Not that there is anything in there that isn’t exactly what was agreed upon.

His guy whips out a money counter from a duffle bag that was sitting on the floor. The machine whirls to life as it begins to count the money. I glance over at Nova as she has been unusually quiet this whole time. She is watching everything with discerning eyes. I rub my hand across her arm that is leaning on the table next to me. She looks at me and a soft smile graces her face. I match her smile and mouth, I love you.

The machine beeps, indicating that it has completed the counting process. The guy

nods to Jeramiah, who looks across the table at me. “It appears that you held up your end of the deal,” he says as he signs his name across the line. “Kevin, Jacob, come sign this as witnesses.” Two men sitting behind him stand up to come to the table. They both sign the paperwork before stepping back to their seats again.

The paperwork is passed down the table to me, where I quickly sign my name. “Sampson, Tomlin, come sign here as witnesses, please.” Both men step forward and sign as well. Everything is done, we will never have to deal with this pack again, hopefully.

Jeramiah scoots his chair back and stands. “It appears that our time here is done. I didn’t think you could do it, but I was wrong. Pleasure doing business with you.”

With that, the doors are unlocked, and everyone files out of the meeting room. I can’t believe that we did it, but man, am I glad our dealings with them are over.

All of their wolves have made it back outside by the time that Jeramiah reaches the door. Right before he steps out, he looks over his shoulder and says, “Till the next time I see you.” As he walks out the door and shuts it behind him.

“What does that mean?,” Nova asks.

Shrugging my shoulders, “I don’t know. Xavior, make sure that all fifteen of those wolves make it out of our territory. Keep the perimeter checks going until tomorrow. We can reevaluate then to see if we think we will continue to need it.” He nods his head before he also turns to leave. “Caelon, see that I have a budget on my desk tomorrow morning with the new numbers and what we will allocate funds to from now on.”

He nods his head, “Yes, sir.” I watch as he heads back to his office.



Warrick claps his hands, "Alright guys, as much fun as this has been, your boy is ready to go find a wet hole to sink into."

Nova's mouth pops open, "That is gross, Warrick. Is that how you treat all the women?"

He shrugs his shoulders, "The goddess hasn't been nice enough to deliver my mate to me, or at least one that will acknowledge I exist." Before Nova can say anything else, Warrick has already turned to leave.

She looks at me, "What does he mean by that?"

I watch his retreating back as he leaves, "Honestly, I don't know."

## Chapter 28

Warrick

Fuck, it never really bothered me that other people have found their mates or completed their mating. That is until Silas found Nova. I mighta gave him shit about it, but really, I was jealous.

Most people see me and the womanizer that I am, but what they don't know is that my mate has been here all along. The problem? I can't get her to even acknowledge I exist. One day, I will get her attention.

The bell tolls over my head as I enter the Find Me Between The Pages bookstore.

"I'll be right with you," her voice sounds from the back.

I breathe in as her scent comes closer to me. Today is going to be the day.

## Epilogue

### Six Months Later

“Ugh, I am as big as a house,” Nova says as she comes out of our bathroom.

I rub my hand along her swollen belly. “You aren’t as big as a house. You are beautiful, amazing, and glowing.”

She is glaring at me as her eyes flash with her wolf’s eyes. “You didn’t tell me that the chance of being pregnant with twins was high. You also failed to mention that pups grow faster than human babies. So forgive me for not feeling like I am glowing. I can’t even get out of bed without assistance anymore.” She throws her hands up as she waddles over to our chairs by the fire.

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She slowly lowers herself down to the chair and props her ankles up on the ottoman. “I have cankles! How am I supposed to marry you today when I can’t even see past my belly? What if I knock over the cake trying to give you a bite?” She drops her head into her hands.

I walk over to her and lift her head, “My love, you are as beautiful to me today as you were the day that you walked into my life. You are more beautiful now that you are carrying our children. Your cankles, as you called them, will never be seen by me. I am too busy being blessed by your presence, graced by your beauty, and awestruck by my luck to even notice something such as that. Now, if you would be so kind as to stand up, I would like to kiss my mate before she becomes my wife.” I grab her hands and gently lift her to standing. I wipe the stray tears that are sliding down her cheeks before pulling her into a kiss.

It isn’t normal in wolf packs for there to be a wedding. We usually only mate and that is enough. I wanted to go over the top for Nova since she was experiencing so many changes at once. Pups grow up expecting to find their mate and bond with them. Humans, especially little girls, grow up dreaming of their wedding.

I wanted to make sure that she didn’t lose out on that just because she is a wolf now. The entire pack is beyond excited to do something like this. Everyone has pitched in to make this the dream wedding for Nova.

There is a knock at our bedroom door. That must be Gail and Nellie. I was shocked when I met Nellie. She couldn’t be any more different from Nova if you tried, but it works. Nellie has been giving Xavier a run for his money. He doesn’t like how loud and obnoxious she is. She doesn’t like how cold and detached he is. Super fun!

Opening the door, I find the two ladies with their arms loaded down with stuff. “Why are you still here,” Nellie screeches when she sees me.

Moving out of her way, she bustles into the room. Gail smiles at me as she pats my face on her way by. “You have to go Silas, it's bad enough you stayed together last night. Don't you know it's bad luck to see the bride on her wedding day?” Nellie is a ball of energy as she frantically moves around the room, setting everything up.

I lean my shoulder against the door frame. “Nellie, I know you are new to the whole wolf pack life and all that. But we don't recognize those traditions and as such, I won't miss out on a chance to wake up with my arms wrapped around my mate.”

Sighing, she nods her head. “Fair enough, but can we at least have some of the traditions? Like you not seeing her wedding gown until she is walking down the aisle?”

Gail lets out a soft giggle, “Silas, you won't win this argument. Might as well let her have this one. I am sure you have a suit to put on and do something with that hair.”

Pushing off the door frame, I walk over and plant a kiss on Gail's cheek. “You are right, I will see you guys downstairs in thirty?”

“Oh my gosh, I have thirty minutes to get her ready?” Nellie comes flying at me with her arms swinging around. I stumble out into the hallway right before she slams the door.

I shake my head as I head to the guest suite down the hall that is the “groom's quarters” as Nellie put it.

Opening the door, I find Warrick already fixing his suit. He has been pretty quiet over the last few months. Something changed after that day when the Ghost River Pack left. I haven't even seen or heard of any more women leaving his cabin at all hours of

the night.

“You good,” I ask Warrick.

He turns around to face me. “Yeah, why wouldn’t I be?”

“I don’t know. You have just been different the last few months.”

He comes over and claps me on the shoulder. “I’m good man. Besides, today is all about you and your mate.” He looks down at what I am wearing. “Speaking of, don’t you need to be getting dressed? I know we don’t normally do weddings, but I think it’s frowned upon to get married in pajamas.”

Chuckling, I walk over to where my suit is hanging in the closet. “Fine, fair enough. You know you can talk to me whenever, right?”

“Yeah man, I know. I just have a lot on my mind lately. But this isn’t about me. Let’s get you out there to that beautiful bride of yours.” He straightens his coat before walking over to the wet bar.

I finished getting myself dressed, and I fixed my hair since Gail pointed it out. I am just finishing the last inspections of my appearance when Warrick leans his head into the bathroom.

“Hey, it’s time. Let’s go.”

With one last look in the mirror, I flip off the light and head to the door. Warrick holds the door open and gives me a bright smile.

“You ready for the future?”

I clap him on the shoulder, “More than ready.”

The End For Now....