

Paws on
Me

Law and Supernatural Order Book Two

SILVIA ONYX

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Also by Silvia Onyx

Paws on Me by Silvia Onyx

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

Silvia Onyx is a new pen name for the paranormal stories of author Silvia Violet. *Paws On Me* was previously offered by Silvia Violet. I hope you enjoy reading this series as much as I enjoyed writing it.

SETH

I'm Seth Morrison. I'm a cop, a police lieutenant to be precise. I've been on the force more years than I want to think about. I've seen good men get killed, turn dirty, lose themselves in the bottle, and lose their fucking minds, but I'm still here doing what I do. I don't know any other life. People tell me I need a break, a vacation, to relax. I don't want to fucking relax. I just want to do my job and keep this city from falling apart.

I park my car, grab my coffee from the cup holder, and charge up the front steps of the station. I could take the side door, it's closer to my office, but I love the chaos of the bullpen. When I open the door, I breathe deeply, enjoying the variety of smells: coffee that's been on the warmer too long, the sickeningly sweet smell of candy and doughnuts, pine-scented cleaner used after God-knows what accident, and something unnamable that simply smells like cops and hard work. I shake my head as I try to imagine not being here nearly 24/7. This is where I belong.

My stomach rumbles. I should've had dinner, but after pretending an afternoon nap was a night's sleep, I'm running late. I'll grab something from the vending machine while I dream about a juicy burger and thick home fries. It sure would be nice to have someone cook for me. I don't seem to get along with stoves. Years ago, I tried being married. That worked for about thirty seconds. My wife wanted me to work shorter hours. I wanted her to not be fucking our neighbor.

Friends tell me I should make an effort to date, but I'm more comfortable at a gruesome homicide scene than making small talk at dinner with a woman or a man. Yeah, I like both. I stopped going out with men when I entered the academy. I couldn't deal with the shit the guys would give me. Now, I don't advertise what I like, but I pick up a guy now and then. I'm discreet, but if somebody finds out, I'll deal.

One-night stands I can handle, but relationships are beyond me. People think police work is draining, but I'd rather spend all day in the field and all night at my desk filling out fucking paperwork — and often I do — than try to decode relationship signals. I inevitably screw things up and never understand why. Sex I need. Romance I don't.

My phone rings. I pull it out of my pocket hoping the call will save me from the mountain of paperwork on my desk. It's Drew Danvers, detective and vampire. That's right, a vampire who works for the good guys. We've got a werewolf in homicide too. And he's a damn fine cop.

I remember when the shifters came out of the closet, scaring the hell out of us humans. One by one other monsters made themselves known. Most people assumed they were all assholes who wanted to eat us, but I quickly learned not to judge a person because he sucked blood or turned into a wolf. Instead I judge people based on how they treat others.

I answer the call. "What's up, Detective?"

"Two dead werewolves found in a closet at Shift. Hacked up pretty bad. The scene's a circus. Jenkins called in sick. I'm on my own, and—"

"I'll be there in ten."

"Thanks, sir."

"No problem. Murder scene or paperwork, which would you choose?"

He laughs, and I hang up.

Ten minutes later, almost to the second, I pull into the parking lot of Shift, a shapeshifter club in the river district. The area was up and coming several years ago, before the economy

went to hell. Now crime is on the rise, and if things don't turn around, it'll soon revert to the shithole it used to be.

I step inside the club. A crime lab team is there, and several uniformed officers are talking with employees. I spot Drew in the entryway of an office. He's frowning as he questions a tall hairy hunk of a man. I've seen the man around the area several times, and, like always, he makes my cock sit up and take notice. The first time we met, I was out on another call and a riot broke out when a werewolf with too much attitude got kicked out of Shift. I helped break up the fight and ended up pulling a guy off him.

Our most recent encounter was a week ago. When I want to grab a beer and be left the fuck alone, I go to Mitch's, a dive just down the street from Shift. Last time I spent the evening there, he sat next to me at the bar and came on strong. I was in a shitty mood. I wanted him, and it pissed me off. He's not my type. He's young, hip, and outrageously flirtatious. I walked away, but I regretted it later that night when I couldn't stop fantasizing about him.

The man looks my way and catches me staring. His grin says he knows the direction my thoughts are going. Then the fucking bastard winks at me, and Drew scowls.

I grab one of the uniformed officers as he finishes with an employee and question him about the scene. When I learn all I can without talking to Drew, I head toward him and the shockingly gorgeous man. I now know his name is Brandon Lord. He's the owner of Shift, and as I suspected, he's a bear shifter. Before I reach them, I see trouble headed down the hallway.

Drew's lover, Jason, reaches them before I do. As I feared, Brandon gives Jason the same lascivious grin he gave me at Mitch's. Budget cuts have hit the Atlanta PD hard. We let officers go, and we're pathetically understaffed. For the last few weeks, Drew has worked every night from dusk 'til dawn, and he's slept at the office more days than not. He's poised to snap with only slight provocation, and nothing is slight where Jason is concerned.

But Brandon is oblivious to Drew's mounting anger. He looks Jason up and down. "Mmmm. Venison. I could go for some of that."

Jason grins. "Sorry, I'm ta—"

He never finishes the sentence. Drew slams Brandon into the wall and wraps his hand around the bear's throat. Brandon's eyes widen as he struggles. Bears are damn strong, but he's still no match for a vampire. Drew's eyes go dark and cold, his scary vampire look. His fangs shoot out. This could get ugly fast.

Jason tugs on Drew's arm, and I push between the two men. "Danvers, he's just flirting. It's not worth a suspension or worse."

Drew fights me and Jason for a moment, but ultimately, he backs away. Jason wraps his arms around Drew, pinning his lover's arms to his side, and whispers in his ear.

With Drew under control, all my awareness goes to the fact that Brandon is pressed against my back. I want him as much now as I did last week. I need to step away before he realizes how affected I am, but I have to make sure he and Drew aren't going to go at it again.

Jason still has his arms around Drew, and he's nuzzling the vampire's neck. If he keeps that up we're all going to see more than we want to. At least Drew's no longer showing fang.

I step away from Brandon and turn to face him. He grins down at me, that same cocky-as-fuck smile he'd given me earlier, making me even more aware of how close we are and how big he is. At 6'2", I'm hardly small, but he's got several inches on me. And while I've got a rather thick pelt, the fur visible above the vee of his t-shirt is seriously impressive.

I take a step back. "Are we going to have any more trouble here?"

He shrugs. "How the hell was I supposed to know the stag was his boyfriend? I see a hot guy, I flirt. No harm intended."

"This is a murder investigation, not a party. Answer our questions and quit playing around, unless you'd rather we take

you down to the precinct.”

He smiles mischievously. “You gonna cuff me if you take me in?”

“Impeding a murder investigation will get you thrown in jail.”

He rolls his eyes. “I found two dead guys in my closet when I came to work tonight. My business is shut down, and I am losing money every minute that you’re here, but at least I still have a sense of humor.”

“Well, I don’t.”

He shakes his head. “Are you taken too?”

I take another step back. “You’re making a lot of assumptions.”

I look over at Drew and realize he and Jason are grinning like loons. Fuck. All I need is the two of them ragging me.

I glare at Drew. “Detective, do you think you can question this man without killing him?”

Drew smiles, giving Brandon his dangerous vampire look. “Probably.”

“Fine. Fleetfoot, head back to the lab. Take my car. I’ll get a ride with Danvers.” I throw him my keys, and he snatches them out of the air as he gives Drew’s hand a final squeeze. Jason is better in the lab than any tech we have. We only send him into the field when we’re desperately short-staffed. I run a hand through my hair, wishing I knew how I’m going to hold the homicide division together if we don’t get more funds.

Brandon holds out his hand. “I’m Brandon Lord. I own Shift.”

“Lieutenant Morrison.” I shake his hand. His skin is surprisingly smooth, his grip tight and warm. I want to feel those big hands running over me. I want to rub his furry body with my own. Fuck! I should assign someone else to this case right now and get the hell away from him. But some crazy restlessness he’s dredged up in me makes me fight my instincts.

“Nice to meet you, Lieutenant.” His voice is low and rich, and his grin lets me know he’s well aware of my reaction to him.

I need to get away. His smell alone is making me hard. “I’m not here to play games. Drop the act and treat this case seriously, or I’ll find an excuse to throw your ass in jail.”

He grins. Fuck, he knows he’s got me rattled. “I’d never kill anyone, Lieutenant. I’m just a cuddly teddy bear.”

The bear shifter and the bear. Ridiculous. I need to leave now. This man is no cuddly toy. I don’t think he’s our murderer, but he’s far smarter than he wants me to believe and likely far more dangerous. “I know what cuddling leads to.”

Brandon laughs, a deep, infectious sound. I can’t help but respond. Now I want him more than ever. Taking this case is a supremely stupid idea. Staying on it now is unprofessional, but I won’t walk away.

BRANDON

I 'm Brandon Lord, and I'm a bear. No, really. I walk around on four paws and forage for berries. In late summer, the blueberries on Crown Peak are sweet and juicy and simply perfect. On the rare occasions that I get to play in the river outside town, the fish don't stand a chance against me. A bear's life is a simple one, but then there's my human side. That's a bit more complicated.

I own Shift. It's a club for shifters, just like it sounds. A lot of crazy shit goes on there, much of it less than legal. In these times, a man's got to work hard to keep a business afloat. If I turn a blind eye to some of the shady deals taking place in the back rooms, it's no more than most people would do to get by. But now someone's left bodies stashed in my office. That is taking things too far, way too fucking far. I don't condone murder, not ever.

"Where were you last night?" Lt. Morrison asks me.

I sigh. We'd had a good laugh, but now he was the humorless cop again. I know Morrison is responding to me even if he doesn't want to. And the more I see of him, the more I want him. The first time we met, I was in the middle of breaking up a vicious fight. He waded right in, not content to leave it to the uniformed officers. He knocked a werewolf on his ass. Not many humans can do that. When he pulled a man off me, I got a deep breath of his sweaty scent, and I couldn't get him off my mind for days.

Tonight, I'm finding everything about him attractive, his dark, bottomless eyes, his big furry body, his gruff exterior, the neediness I sense in him. "Like I told the detective, Shift is closed on Mondays. I stopped by to do paperwork in the early afternoon. I went to Mitch's for dinner and stayed until closing. The staff knows me. They can verify that I was there hours before ten, and they locked the door behind me."

Morrison looks at Danvers. "Has the medical examiner gotten a look at the bodies yet?"

The vampire nods. "She puts time of death between ten and eleven last night. Mr. Lord gave me names and numbers so I can check his alibi."

Lt. Morrison cups his chin, rubbing his neatly trimmed beard. I want to run my tongue through it. I want to taste all of him, to watch those gorgeous eyes darken as I work him into a frenzy.

He glares at me as if he knows what I'm thinking. "Something literally ripped those wolves apart. A bear could have done that."

The implication pisses me off. Whether in animal or human form, most humans assume bear shifters are savages who might rip a human apart for nothing more than sport. Most of us just want to be left the fuck alone. I glance at Danvers. "So could a vampire."

He scowls but has to agree. "We usually make a cleaner kill, but of course we have the strength to tear you apart."

The chill in his gaze makes me shiver. "So we've established that the killer could be a bear or a vampire, but whoever it was, it wasn't me."

The lieutenant gives me a tight smile. "I'm inclined to believe you but be prepared for more questions."

I sure hope he wants to question me again, preferably in bed. "As long as they're coming from you, I won't mind at all."

"Mr. Lord, I think I made myself very clear about taking this investigation seriously."

I resist the urge to growl. “I’ll behave, but if I ask you out after you close the case, what will you say?” Color rises in his cheeks. I want to kiss him so badly; I can hardly stand it.

“I’m way too old for you.”

“I like a mature man. Hell, I like all kinds of men when the chemistry is there. You know you feel it too.”

Morrison shakes his head. “You’re imagining things.”

Danvers snorts, and Morrison turns to him. “Detective, don’t you have more people to question?”

The vamp nods. He looks like he’s fighting the urge to laugh. “Yes, sir, I do.”

“Then get to it. And don’t let me catch you in the crime lab later when you’re supposed to be working your cases.”

Danvers grins like the Cheshire cat. “The crime lab is an integral part of my investigations.”

“Yes, but there are techs to deliver evidence, and you can call for results.”

His grin widens. “We cleaned up the mess.”

Morrison scowls. “That will never happen again.”

Drew nods. “Yes, sir.”

There’s got to be a good story there. “Do I want to know what that’s all about?”

“No.” Morrison glares at me. “Well, *you* probably do, but my lips are sealed.”

“Too bad.”

He shakes his head. “Don’t leave the premises. We might have more questions later.”

I watch Morrison walk away. He joins the uptight vampire who is questioning one of my bartenders. What the fuck is a vampire doing on the police force anyway? He’s got damn fine taste in men though. But while his stag is all kinds of hot, I’m determined to have my grumpy cop.

I'm a flirt, I admit it. Most people think I take home a different man every night: young men, ones who are as cool as I pretend to be, but really, I go home alone more often than not. I love hot sex for its own sake, don't get me wrong, but the older I get, the more I want to make a connection with someone.

I don't care what rules I have to break I will have that man in my bed. He's wound so tight, he's going to snap soon, but I have every intention of loosening him up. Passion is simmering under his jaded cop exterior. I bet when he lets go, he really knows how to pound a man until he screams.

When the police finish with my employees, I send everyone home. No way in hell will we be opening tonight. At least I don't have to worry about negative publicity hurting business. With the crowd Shift attracts, a murder will only increase our popularity. I just hope we can get back in action soon.

After what feels like most of the night, my office is done serving as the set of a CSI episode, and I'm allowed to collect my laptop and the other things I need to take home. Of course, I have every intention of coming back later. I'll give the cops a few hours to clear out and close the place up. Then I'll have a look around.

Lieutenant Morrison seems like a good man, but no way in hell am I leaving my future, my club, or my life up to the police. I've learned not to rely on anyone but myself. With the budget cuts in this town, we're lucky to have any police left.

SETH

I get back to my tiny rental house at one in the morning. The street is so quiet every step I take echoes like a stomp. Most of my neighbors are elderly folks or young families. I'm likely the only one still awake on the whole street. Usually sleep at the office on nights like this, but I was too restless. I can't stop going over the details of the Shift case or thinking about my intense attraction to Brandon Lord. Could Brandon be the murderer? Am I dismissing him as a suspect because I want to? I hope to hell not. He doesn't fit the profile, and his alibi appears rock solid even if Mitch is a friend of his. The bartender, two waitresses, and another customer confirm that Brandon was at Mitch's from early evening until closing.

That was almost suspicious in itself. Why would a cocky flirt like Brandon stay at Mitch's all night when he could take any number of men or women home with him? Or is he, as I suspect, a completely different man when he drops the aggressively flirtatious facade? If I'm right, the real Brandon Lord will be even more devastating. For the sake of my sanity, I hope I never get acquainted with him.

I drop my keys and my messenger bag full of case notes on the kitchen table and lay my jacket over the back of a chair. I should be ready to collapse, but my body hums with tension. If I lie down, I'll just stare at the ceiling or the clock.

Maybe a shower will help. I strip on the way to the bathroom, dropping clothing here and there. I'm not usually such a slob, but restless as my mind is, the rest of me of is stumbling around like a zombie.

I turn on the water, wait until it's scorching hot, and step in. The heat pounds my stiff neck and shoulders, but I would need hours of massage to truly loosen them up. I'm working on an enormous caseload, trying to put together a schedule that allows my officers to catch a few hours sleep between shifts, and attempting to find the resources my division needs without the proper funds. I'm so tense I'm not sure the best massage therapist in the city could work the kinks out of my shoulders.

I close my eyes, trying to relax a little under the hot spray. Immediately, my mind conjures an image of Brandon with that sly grin on his face. Fuck. I don't need to be thinking about him now when I'm naked, my cock slick with soap, but once I get started, I can't stop. I imagine him as he looked the first time I saw him, the way he checked me out from top to bottom, fucking me with his eyes.

I'm a good-looking man. I can get a date when I want one, but I'm well past forty and Brandon's decidedly under thirty. Age difference aside, I'm not hip enough to get in the door of Shift, much less date its owner. I've never dated a shifter before, and I have to admit I'm intrigued. How much of his animal side would come out in bed?

In my mind, I see Brandon in the tight t-shirt he wore today. Thinking about how it showed off his broad shoulders and sculpted arms leads me to imagine him without the t-shirt, then without his jeans. Damn, he's a fine-looking man. My cock responds rapidly to Brandon's imaginary nakedness. I long to wrap my hand around myself and see where my fantasies go, but I don't.

I force myself to shut off the water. No way in hell am I going to jack off thinking about a man who, suspect or not, is deeply involved in my top priority case. I've got to stop thinking about him in anything but a professional manner no matter how fucking sexy he is.

I climb into bed, my cock still hard as steel. I lie there on my back, trying to think of the least sexy things I can imagine. My mind turns each and every one into an image of Brandon looking like sex incarnate.

I glance at the clock. It's 2 AM. If I'm going to get any sleep at all before heading back to work, I've got to give in and let my body have what it wants. There's no way to do that without thinking about Brandon.

I close my hand around my dick, jerking myself slowly. I think about kissing Brandon, tasting him, learning the inner recesses of his mouth with my tongue while he clutches me, moaning and kissing me back with abandon, so intimate, so hot, so fucking right. My hand moves faster as I lose myself in the fantasy.

Our kiss grows more aggressive. I want to shove Brandon up against a wall and fuck him hard and fast. I'm close now. Images flood my mind. Me fucking Brandon, Brandon fucking me. His strength, his size, his hairy body rubbing against mine. The sound of him calling my name as he comes. That does it. My balls draw up, and I tense as fiery heat gathers at the base of my spine. I spill over my hand, shooting strand after strand of thick cum across my chest with a force that surprises me.

BRANDON

I watch a cop car drive slowly down the street. It stops in front of Shift. Lights illuminate the parking lot in front of the building, so I stick to the shadows by the side door. The police car pauses for a few seconds then drives on, tires hissing on the wet road. It's well after 2 AM. By now the other bars and clubs in the neighborhood have closed for the night. A few squirrels chatter in the faraway trees, but otherwise, the street is quiet. I don't smell any human or shifters close by except for the homeless men who always congregate in the alley.

The police have padlocked the door. No problem if I simply wanted to remove it. Bears might not be as fast as werewolves, but even if the wolves are loathe to admit it, we're stronger; not quite vampire-level strength, but nearly. I could rip the lock off without any problem, but then the police will have to investigate the break-in, and the club's reopening will be delayed even more.

Fortunately I thought ahead. I walk around to the back of the building and open my office window. I unlocked it just before I left, and lucky me, the overworked officers hadn't checked it again after I left.

I pull on some gloves to avoid leaving fingerprints and haul myself up. Squeezing through the window is not an easy task, but I get in. I'm not sure what I expect to find. The team from the crime lab tossed the place rather thoroughly. I doubt they missed physical evidence, but they don't have my sense of smell, especially not in bear form. I pull off my t-shirt and

push my sweats and underwear to the floor — shifting when dressed results in torn clothes and a bear running around with scraps of fabric hanging off him.

Thankfully, shifting isn't the painful act of contortion depicted in old movies. I take a deep breath and call my bear form. My chest and shoulders broaden. My arms and legs thicken. Claws push from my fingers, and my pelt grows until it covers my whole body. I drop onto all fours and begin sniffing around, reading scents like a human reads a book.

The smell of carrion drowns out nearly everything else near the closet, but as I back away toward the door, I recognize Jordie's scent. I pray this murder isn't connected to him. It has been almost two weeks since I helped him escape from his abusive family. I'd expected retribution long before this, and I'd expected it to be personal. Is there a message here I'm not getting?

Then I smell two new scents. Foxes. Both male. As far as I know, they've never been in the club before, and the smell of wolf blood is mixed with their odor. Jordie's brothers were hanging out with foxes the night I rescued him, but these two men weren't with them. Their species might be a coincidence, but I'm not holding out much hope.

I wish I could copy the scent signature and take it to the police, but all I can do is tell them what species to look for. They'd have a better chance at a conviction if I could smell the men out of a lineup, but while the government gives lip service to shifters having equal rights, our leaders are still scared as hell of us, and nothing gathered with our superhuman abilities can be used as evidence. If the police could tap the tracking abilities of bears or wolves, they'd track down a lot more criminals, but after years of fighting for basic rights, most of us aren't inclined to help the police anyway.

Lt. Hottie will have to find a creative way to use the evidence I gather. I want these assholes caught. I'll keep Jordie out of it as long as I can, but I won't withhold evidence.

What I need to figure out is if these foxes are the killers, how the fuck did they get the best of a pair of wolves? They could

have sedated them, but it takes a hell of a lot of drugs to put a wolf out. I need to figure out who the wolves are and what message their death is supposed to send.

After checking every corner of my office and nearly turning my stomach inside out by smelling the closet where the dead wolves had been stashed for hours, I shift back to human form so I can open doors more easily as I explore the rest of the club. Now that I know the scent, I can detect the foxes' scent as a human if I concentrate.

After getting dressed, I step into the hall, listening carefully. Not a sound. I walk down the hall. I can still smell the men's signature, but I won't be able to distinguish it once I reach the dance floor. I probably couldn't detect it in bear form either. There are just too many bodies moving through here on any given night. As I get closer to the end of the hallway, the scent grows stronger. I realize way too late that they're back.

The click of a doorknob gives away their location. I run for the front door, but the open dance floor gives me no cover. Bears are built for strength, not speed. Their first shot misses, but the second hits me in the back of the thigh. I stumble, but I reach the door, ripping it off its hinges. I enter the vestibule as their footsteps pound across the floor behind me. Another shot buries itself in the door. Ignoring the searing pain in my leg, I slam the door shut and shove the bouncer's console against it.

I shift. There's no time to strip, but the shift will push the bullet out and start the healing process. As a bear I can break through the padlocked door to the outside. The men rattle the door, but I reach the parking lot before they break through. I gallop off down the street, thankful for the cover of darkness.

People tend to freak when a big black bear lumbers toward them. But I don't dare go back to human form. Bears aren't impervious to bullets, but we can take more and keep going than a human, and a swipe with one of our paws can knock a smaller shifter flat.

Where the hell do I run? I can't go home. I have to assume these men know where I live. I could go to a friend's house,

but if they track me down, I've put my friend and maybe his family in danger.

Lt. Morrison told me to let him know if I thought of anything new. Showing up naked at his house at three in the morning is most likely not what he meant, but at least he'll be armed and prepared to defend himself in case my attackers find me.

I use a claw to dislodge a scrap of t-shirt that still clings to my fur. It's the same shirt I wore when I talked to Morrison earlier in the evening. I bring it to my nose and take a deep breath, sorting through the various smells until I find Morrison's scent. I make the bear equivalent of a sigh. I would happily follow that smell anywhere.

I work my way through a few neighborhoods. A couple of dogs work themselves into a frenzy, but otherwise, no one notices me. As I approach Morrison's house, I use all my senses to make sure no one followed me. Then I shift and knock on his back door.

After three rounds of pounding nearly hard enough to crack the door, I hear him stirring. So much for a cop waking at the first sign of danger.

He pushes aside the curtain covering the glass in the door. I wave. He scowls. He drops the curtain and for a moment I think he's going to walk away. Eventually, I hear the lock disengage and then he opens the door a tiny crack. I wedge my foot in the small opening in case he decides to try and slam it shut. He glances down and suddenly realizes I'm naked. "Are you drunk?"

"Ha! I wish. I've got info you need."

"And you have to give it to me in person. Naked." He's clearly pissed, but he steps back and opens the door wider. He's wearing nothing but pajama bottoms, flannel ones with polar bears on them. He looks sexy as hell.

I step inside, limping a little. I shouldn't have gone as far as I did without seeing to my leg. "I was shot. I had to shift to get away."

“Shot? Are you okay?” He looks me over and sees the blood on my thigh. “Why didn’t you go to a hospital?”

“Shifters don’t like hospitals. I’m fine. I just need to clean it.”

“If the bullet’s still inside you...”

I grimace. “Shifting forced it out.”

Morrison’s eyes widen. “That must’ve hurt like hell.”

“Yeah, pretty much.”

He locks the door and peers into the yard. “Any chance you were followed?”

“I don’t think so. I couldn’t smell them anymore when I got here.”

“Was anyone else hurt?”

I shake my head. “No. I went back to Shift to look around my office.”

“You’re not—”

I hold up my hand. “You can bitch at me later. Two men found me there, both fox shifters. I smelled them in the office and their scent was overlain with wolf blood. They shot at me, and I ran.”

“Can you describe them?”

I try to speak, but I realize I’m so dizzy that if I don’t sit, I might fall over. The adrenaline that kept me moving despite my aching leg is now making me shake. I slump against the counter.

Morrison puts his arm around my waist and keeps me from sliding to the floor. “Let’s get you on my bed.”

Just where I want to be.

He helps me limp down the hall and into the bedroom. I’m feeling so shitty I can’t fully appreciate his big warm arms supporting me or the feel of our naked skin pressed together.

When I’m settled on the bed on my stomach, he lays a hand on my thigh just below my wound. Now that I’m not fighting to stay upright, his touch sends sparks through me. He reaches

for his phone with his other hand. “Stay here. I’ll send someone to check out Shift and see if the men are still hanging around. Then I’ll get my first aid kit.”

I nod. “Not going anywhere.”

Several minutes later, I hear him coming back and turn my head so I can see him. He’s still wearing those adorable pajama bottoms. He’s got a gun in one hand and a phone and first aid kit in the other. How does he make flannel look so hot? I want to lick every inch of his chest then pull his pants off with my teeth.

Morrison notices my appraisal of him. I have a feeling the man notices everything. I smile. “You have to know how fucking sexy you are.”

He looks down at himself and shakes his head. “You’ve got to be kidding.”

I grin. “You can tell yourself that, but my body can’t lie.” I wiggle my hips and rub myself against the bed. The movement pulls at my injury but it’s worth it to see the shock on his face.

He tries to ignore me as he kneels by my injured side. “I’m going to clean your leg, then you’re going to answer some more questions.”

He opens the first aid kit and pulls on a pair of gloves. Then he tears open the edge of an alcohol wipe. Fuck, that’s going to hurt. He wraps his hands around my leg and bends over to get a closer look. The heat of his long fingers burns into my thigh and he’s nearly close enough to lick me. Too bad he’s not a cat shifter. He probes the wound, and sexy thoughts vanish as I hiss in pain. “What the fuck are you doing?”

“Making sure it doesn’t get infected.”

Without warning he presses the alcohol pad to the wound. I nearly bite through my bottom lip holding in a yell. “Jesus Christ, you could have warned me.”

“It’s easier when you don’t know it’s coming.”

“There is nothing easy about alcohol on an open wound.”

Morrison snorts. “Would you rather it get infected?”

“Shifters heal easily.”

“Quit bitching.”

The pain begins to subside, and once again I notice how fucking hot he is. His hands are huge, nearly as big as mine. I want them wrapped around my cock.

“How did you figure out where I lived?” he asks as he opens a bandage.

I force myself to stop fantasizing so I can answer his question.

“I sniffed you out.”

“All the way across town?”

I nod. “You have a very distinctive smell.”

He sniffs himself under the arms, and I can’t help but laugh. “I took a fucking shower when I got home.”

He jacked off after he got home, too. I’d smelled sex on him as soon as he opened the door. Dare I hope he’d thought of me?

“That’s not all you did.”

He glares at me, but he doesn’t try to deny anything.

“Black bears have the keenest sense of smell of any mammal. My t-shirt still carried your scent. I followed it until I found you.”

“Like a bloodhound?”

I smile. “Not that dog shifters would appreciate being compared to bears or vice versa, but yes.”

“Seems like shifters get enough flack from humans. You’d think they wouldn’t be prejudiced against each other.”

I sigh. “That would be nice, but we’re too territorial.”

He nods, and I can tell that, unlike most humans, he really does get it. He presses the bandage onto my leg. I hold my breath as he seals the edges with surgical tape. His fingers brush my skin lightly, as if he’s teasing me. Just that small contact has me hard for him despite the pain. I need this man like I haven’t needed anyone in a long time, maybe ever.

Morrison finishes with the bandage and slides his hand down my leg to the back of my knee. I fight the urge to hump the mattress. He skims over my calf. He might as well have wrapped his hand around my dick. If he keeps this up, I'll come right here on the bed. How can something so simple be so erotic?

His phone rings, interrupting whatever might have happened. "It's Danvers. I have to take it." His voice is low, husky. Could Danvers's timing be any worse? Morrison grabs some shorts from a drawer and tosses them to me. "You can wear these. I'll be back."

I smile as he walks out of the room. He damn well better come back, and he better be prepared to pick up where we left off. I throw the shorts on the floor. Bear shifters never sleep in clothes, and I'm not about to start now.

I shouldn't try to seduce the lieutenant, not when he's working my case, but I have a strange feeling that while this relationship might be trouble now, in the long run, he's exactly what I need.

SETH

I fill Danvers in on what happened to Brandon.

Drew agrees that a gunshot to the leg indicates Brandon's attackers want him alive. "He needs someone to stick close to him," Drew says. "He's got better defenses than a human, but obviously he's not bulletproof."

"I'll see that he's protected." I try to keep my voice casual, but something must have given away my eagerness to be Brandon's personal bodyguard, because Drew chuckles.

"I just bet you will. If you plan to spend the rest of the night with him, you might be the one who needs protecting."

"Fuck off, vampire."

He laughs. "Sir?"

"What?" I snap at him. I'm pissed that he saw through me.

"Sometimes it's okay to break the rules."

"Call me when the lab results come in." I end the call. Shift was deserted when my men arrived, but they found the bullets and a partial print. Hopefully we're close to tracking down the killer or at least an accomplice.

I want to ask Brandon a few more questions, like who he thinks is after him and why they would set him up for a murder charge, then wound him. What is he involved in? I believe him when he says he didn't kill those wolves, but plenty of illegal shit goes down at Shift. How much of it is he involved in? Had one of his business transactions gone wrong?

I need answers, but I don't want to know too much about what goes on at the club. I'd hate to end up tossing him in jail.

I pour myself a shot of whiskey. I need fortification before I go back in my bedroom and see Brandon stretched out in all his beefy glory. Danvers's call saved me from going too far, but what would've happened if he hadn't called? Would I have stopped? I didn't want to stop. I wanted Brandon. I would be an idiot to risk my career for a taste of him, wouldn't I?

I set my glass on the counter and walk to the bedroom. The bastard hadn't put on the shorts. He'd just dropped them by the bed. He was still stretched out on his stomach, his round furry ass on display, making me want to climb on top of him and bury myself deep inside. My cock hardens and presses against my pajama bottoms.

"You awake?" I ask, keeping my voice low. If he's sleeping, I'll have an excuse to walk away. I can make some coffee, add to my case notes, and not have to talk to this man who's doing strange things to my insides.

No luck. He rolls over and looks at me. His cock is as hard as mine.

"You're still naked." Fuck! Why did I say that? He grins, catching sight of the erection tenting my flannel pants.

"Shifters like to be naked."

I grip the doorframe, trying to keep myself from climbing on the bed and licking his cock like an ice cream cone. "Cops prefer suspects to be dressed."

He smirks. "I'm not a suspect anymore. My alibi is solid."

"You may not be suspected of murdering those wolves, but something suspicious is going on at your club. Care to tell me what?"

"If I knew, I'd tell you." He runs his hand along his thigh, massaging it, his fingers coming dangerously close to his thick cock.

"How's your leg?" I mean to distract myself, but as soon as I ask, I wish I hadn't. I remember the feel of his thigh under my

hand, hard muscles, soft flesh, coarse hair. So many textures to think about. Fuck. I can't let him stay here.

"Better. By tomorrow I probably won't feel it much."

"Good. I need to talk to you about the case. Maybe we should move to the living room."

He looks so disappointed I almost change my mind, but I can't let the longing in his eyes distract me. He sits up and swings his legs off the bed. The bandage catches on the sheet and rips loose, tearing away part of the scab and plenty of hair. "Shit!" he yells. Blood wells up and trickles down his leg.

Later, I couldn't decide why I ran across the room. It wasn't like he was going to bleed to death. Did my subconscious push me to make a move that would get us in bed together? Surely I understood where touching him again would lead. We reached for the bandage at the same time. My hand lay on his as we used pressure to stop the bleeding.

"That was dumb. I should have been more careful. I..." His words trail off. I look up. Our faces are inches apart. My heart pounds. I know how supremely stupid I would be to kiss him, but I can't help it. His lips beg me to take a taste. I close the distance between us and swipe my tongue across his lips, savoring his woody flavor. "I need this," I mumble against his lips.

"God, yes. So bad." He opens his mouth, and we devour each other. I forget who I am, where I am. I forget that his leg is bleeding, and I'm supposed to be holding the bandage on. I sink to my knees between his legs and cup his face with my other hand, pulling him down so I can explore every inch of his mouth. I slide my tongue along his, growing more desperate for him every second. My hand tightens on his thigh, and he flinches, forcing me back to reality. I let go of him and sit back, panting. "Fuck, this is so wrong."

Brandon shakes his head and cups me under the chin, forcing me to look at him. "I don't know if I've ever done anything this right."

The intensity in his eyes scares me. I start to pull away. What am I doing? Wrecking everything I've worked for? I can't fuck a man who's involved in my case.

Brandon squeezes my arms, immobilizing me. "Stop thinking. Stop analyzing everything with that fucking cop's brain. Just feel."

I'm not used to being with anyone stronger than me. But I like the way he's holding me, refusing to let me go. Having a man like him—young, hot, cool, seductive—wanting me goes to my head. He makes me forget all the rules, makes me let down barriers I've held in place my whole life. I can't stop.

I kiss him again. My mouth is brutal in its assault. He could easily take control, but he opens to me, letting me have him my way. He tastes rich and smoky like a campfire, like fall. I suddenly want to do more than kiss and fuck him. I want to take him to my favorite restaurant, introduce him to the best coffee in the city, take him boating on the river. I want a fucking relationship.

The thought nearly frightens me into backing away, but he tastes and feels too damn good. I run my hands over his chest, enjoying the feel of his fur. I release his mouth and nibble his throat, his collarbone, his shoulder. I sink my teeth into one of his muscular pecs. He growls and pushes his hands into my hair, pressing my face against his chest. "More."

I bite him again, harder this time, sucking at his flesh, wanting to mark him. He digs his fingers into my scalp, groaning and rubbing his body against mine. I circle his wrists with my hands as I lick at the bruise I made. He lets me pin his hands to the mattress and keep them there. I slide lower and rub my face against the thick hair covering the center of his chest, loving the feel of it brushing my face and catching in my beard. I take a deep breath of his musk.

Then I drop to my knees. "Don't move." I release his hands. I'm eager to feel Brandon's cock in my mouth. I want to know what sounds he'll make as I suck him and whether he'll let me remain in charge. I wrap one hand around the base of his shaft. He sucks in his breath. I look up. His eyes are closed and he's

so damn hot he's making me crazy, but I'm determined to savor him.

I watch him as I lick his cockhead, flattening my tongue in firm swiping motions. He groans and squeezes his eyes shut. "Keep that up and I'll confess to anything, Lieutenant."

Encouraged, I dip my tongue into his slit and savor the taste of his precum. Then I suck just the head, gently, not giving him the pressure I know he craves.

"Don't fucking tease me," he says.

I smile with his cock still in my mouth. I want him so worked up he's ready to fight me, to force me. I try to ignore how strange that feeling is for me. Nothing is typical about this man. I push my other hand between his legs. He scoots to the very edge of the bed, giving me better access. I tease his hole, brushing lightly with a finger as I lick his shaft and nip gently at the loose skin around his balls. "Seth," he snarls, using my name as a warning.

Tension tightens his muscles. I glance at one of his hands. His knuckles are white, and I'm surprised he hasn't ripped the sheet. I can't wait any longer to feel his reaction to my mouth around him. He groans as I swallow him down, sliding my tongue against the underside of his shaft, then sucking hard as I pull back.

I lick and suck and tease, drawing moans and whimpers from him. When I push my finger into his ass, his control breaks. He takes my head in his hands and holds me against him so he can fuck my mouth. I want to fight him, to enjoy the struggle, the anger, the quest for dominance, but I need his total loss of control more. I want to make him come, hard, fast, and right now.

I relax and let him push his deep into my mouth. I push a second finger into him, working them in rhythm with his thrusts.

"Christ, I'm gonna come!" he shouts and pulls out of my mouth.

I tilt my head back, wanting to see his face. He aims his load at my neck and chest, coating me with sticky droplets.

I pull my fingers from his body as I try to catch my breath.

“On the bed. On your back.” His voice is low and rough. I stand and push my pajama bottoms to the floor, kicking them off before I climb on the bed.

Brandon bends over me and licks my chest, sucking at my skin, lapping up every drop of his cum. He takes my hands in his and pins them to the mattress. It’s instinctive for me to struggle, but I can’t break his hold. If he doesn’t want to let me up, I’m not going anywhere. “Your leg?” My voice is low. It’s a struggle to get the words out, but I don’t want him to hurt himself.

“I’m fine.” He nibbles my right wrist and kisses his way down my arm. Then he buries his face in my armpit, licking, biting, and making deep rumbling sounds that have my cock threatening to blow without a single touch.

The rasp of his tongue against my nipples has me arching up, wanting more. I want his dick up my ass right fucking now.

“Fuck me.” I cry out, knowing that as a shifter, he’ll be ready to go again despite having just come.

He stops and raises off me. I immediately miss his weight pressing on me, the slide of his skin against mine, the hot, wet sensation of his mouth.

“You really want that?” he asks.

I look up at him and nod vigorously. His eyes are dark, and he’s so damn gorgeous with his ridiculously broad shoulders and muscular arms. A drop of sweat drips down his bicep, and I want to lick it off, but he holds me tight.

I force myself to look back at his face. He looks uncharacteristically uncertain. “I just thought that—”

“I didn’t bottom?”

“Yeah.”

I arch against him, making our cocks rub together.

He groans and squeezes his eyes shut. “Feels so good.”

I laugh. “Good. I want you as crazy for it as I am.”

“I’ve been crazy for you since I first saw you.” I try to turn over and offer my ass, but he pushes me back down. “No, like this.”

Face to face I can’t hide my raw reaction to Brandon, the way he’s tearing me up inside. I fight his hold, but he digs his fingers into my shoulders, keeping me in place. “I want to see you.”

I shake my head. “No.”

He growls. “If you want me to fuck you, Lieutenant, this is how it goes.” I start to tell him to get out, but he wraps a hand around my cock and slides it slowly up and down. I freeze, not wanting to do anything to stop the pure pleasure he’s sending through me. He teases one of my nipples with the other hand, flicking his thumb across the tip and making me squirm.

He slides his hand across my furry chest. “You sure you’re not a shifter too?”

I laugh. “Hell no.”

Brandon smiles. He’s got me so turned on I’m about to explode. He leans over and kisses me. I let myself get caught up in the kiss, loving the way the softness of his lips contrast with his scruffy face. He supports himself on his arms, but I want his weight on me. I wrap my arms around his back and try to pull him down.

He stops kissing me, concern on his face. “I’ll crush you.”

I shake my head. “I want to feel you on me.”

He still looks worried. I guess he’s rarely had a partner close to his size. I try to reassure him. “You won’t hurt me.”

He sinks down onto me, a look of pure lust on his face. I use a hand on the back of his head to bring his lips back to mine. We eat at each other’s mouths as we grind our hips together. The weight of him on me is delicious. The feel of his massive thighs working against my legs has me going insane. I want to

last until he's inside me but at this rate I'm not going to make it.

Just before his thrusts drive me over the edge, he lets my mouth go and pulls away. "Condoms?"

I tilt my head toward the nightstand. "Middle drawer." He slides away from me, pulls the drawer open, and takes out the condoms and lube. He positions himself between my legs again and slicks up his fingers. We both groan as he slides a finger into me. "Fuck, you're tight."

I gasp as he pushes deeper and brushes my prostate. "It's... been a while." He works his finger in and out. The slow drag feels so damn good. "More." He obeys, adding another finger, twisting and working them to open me up. It's not long before I'm pushing against him impatiently, silently demanding he give me what I really want.

He leans over and licks my cock from balls to tip. I dig my fingers into his shoulders, feeling like I'm falling even though I'm lying down. "Fuck!"

He smiles. "You ready?"

"Hell, yeah."

"Good. I don't think either of us can wait much longer." I shake my head. Words are beyond me.

BRANDON

Sex can be hard and rough or luxurious and indulgent, but it's never been this whirlwind of emotion and desperate need that has me wanting to pound the hell out of Seth and cover him with slow sensuous kisses at the same time.

I slide my hands along Seth's thighs and push them up on his chest. If I hadn't been so desperate to get inside him, I could have spent hours worshipping his gorgeous legs. He stretches them over my shoulders as I guide my cock to his ass. When I push inside him, he tightens around my cock, almost making me spill right then. I freeze and take a slow breath, fighting for control.

I push deeper, watching Seth's face. His eyes close, and he sinks his teeth into his bottom lip. Even with the tension of pleasure on his face he looks softer, more vulnerable than I've ever seen him. I want to make that soft side come out, want to force him to relax.

I pull back as slowly as I can.

Seth groans. "Fuckin' hell, that's good."

"Oh yes." My words come out in a low rumble.

Seth opens his eyes and looks at me.

I shove back in harder, sinking all the way inside. His eyes open wide.

"Brandon?"

He sounds uncertain. Knowing I've rattled him makes me hotter than ever. I grip his hips and pull him onto my dick. He sucks in his breath. He's probably never been with a guy who can lift him like this. I thrust deep, over and over, going slower than my body is screaming for me to. I want to give him plenty of time to adjust to me, and I want to feel every inch of his hot tight passage as I slide in and pull out.

I lean over him and let his legs wrap around my waist. He squeezes me between his legs, trying to trap me in place. I nuzzle his neck, breathing in his scent, dark-roasted coffee and bright clean soap. Our sweaty bodies slide together as I make shallow thrusts. I'm going faster now, so ready to explode that I can't keep a steady rhythm.

He pulls my head to him. His breath rushes against my ear, hot and rapid. "Can't. Hold. On."

I flick my tongue against the tight skin behind his ear. "Don't."
"Oh, fuck!"

I push myself up on my arms and double his legs onto his chest to get a better angle.

"Harder. Give it to me harder," he begs.

I give him everything I've got, shoving him into the mattress as I fill his ass. He pumps his cock, his strokes frantic. "Come for me," I shout.

He roars as his cum shoots across his chest. The erotic sight combined with the muscles in his ass clenching my cock is more than I can take. I thrust one final time and come so hard my vision blurs.

When I can move I sit back, letting my cock slip from his warm body. Seth hasn't moved. I'm not even sure he's conscious. I dispose of the condom and crawl back on the bed. The sight of Seth covered in come has my cock responding all over again. I'm not usually up for round three this quickly. Seth does things to me no man ever has, but he's still recovering, and in the meantime, I have a mess to clean up.

I lap at his chest, groaning at the salty, musky taste of him, licking, biting, cleaning him like I would my own in bear

form. “You’re killing me,” he whispers, rubbing my back as I keep up my ministrations. His cock brushes my side, as he grows hard again.

“More?” I ask, letting my breath tickle his chest.

He laughs. “Only if you swear I won’t have to move again until well past dawn.”

I grin. “I’ll even bring you breakfast in bed.”

“Deal.”

I lick my way across his hard abs and down to the coarse hair at the base of his cock. Damn, he smells good, like sex and man. His own unique scent signature is so strong here, it makes my cock jump with need. I suck and nibble on his balls, loving the feel of them in my mouth.

He makes low, needy sounds as I explore him. “Mmmm. So fucking good.” He starts to sit up, but I stretch a hand out on his chest and push him down. He’s not used to having someone take care of him, and I want to change that.

“Relax and enjoy.”

“I—”

I glare at him the way I’d look at a bear encroaching on my territory. He rolls his eyes and lies back.

“Fine, have it your way.”

“Damn right I will, and you will fucking love it.”

I continue to explore him until his cock begins to stir. I take him into my mouth, licking and sucking while I work his balls with one hand and finger his ass with the other. I love the feel of his cock expanding as I play with him. Before long he’s fully hard and thrusting into my mouth. I let him go deep, taking nearly all of his impressive length down my throat. The taste and scent of him is driving me wild.

I’m so fucking lost to this man.

Finally, I relax enough to take every inch of him and bury my nose in his bush.

“Jesus, Brandon.” He runs his hands over my head, trying to get a grip on my too-short hair.

I pull back when I run out of air. He thrusts back into me. I could have fought him. I would have with anyone else, but I want him to use me, to fuck my mouth and come deep in my throat.

I groan around the hard flesh in my mouth, teasing him with my tongue even as he thrusts into me hard and fast. My cock throbs with need. There’s no way I’m going to last through this despite having come twice already. We’ll both be lucky if we aren’t half-dead when this is done, which, based on Seth’s frantic thrusts, will be any second now.

I drive my fingers into his ass, seeking his sweet spot as I wrap my other hand around my own cock. I’ll be lucky to last another few seconds. When I drag my fingers over his gland, he curses long and loud and the first shot of cum fills my throat, triggering my own orgasm.

He shudders against me, and I swallow everything he gives as I pump out my own seed, coating my hand and the sheets. When I’ve milked every drop from both of us, I slide my hand from his ass and let his cock slip from my mouth.

With the last strength I can muster, I crawl up the bed and collapse next to him. He pulls me against him, and I lay my head on his chest. There’s so much I want to say, but my stomach does flip-flops at the thought of letting him know how I feel about him.

He rubs his face against the top of my head and squeezes me tight. “Amazing.” His voice is still breathless.

I smile. “Damn right it was.”

He chuckles and kisses my head, more gently than I would expect. “Stay with me.”

I nod, glad to have his protection, physical and emotional.

SETH

Brandon and I slept for a few hours wrapped tightly around each other the entire time. I hadn't been that relaxed in years. Then my phone rang and jarred me from my fantasy world.

Brandon sits up in bed, watching warily as I end the call. "What's up?"

"The crime lab found DNA evidence in your office from a young boy who was reported missing several weeks ago."

He frowns, eyes filled with worry. "Jordie."

My stomach knots. I'd hoped Brandon wouldn't know him. "Why was he in your office?"

"He'd been forced to sell himself."

Bile rises in my throat. "God, Brandon, he's seventeen. How the fuck could you take advantage of him?"

Brandon's eyes turned cold, and claws shoot out of his hands.

I stand up, prepared for a fight, but he stays still, taking slow breaths, and the claws recede. He glares at me, and I shiver.

"You actually think I took a scared boy in my office and fucked him, treated him like the goddamn dogs his brothers sell him to. How the hell could you sleep with me if you think I'm scum like that?"

He starts to get out of bed. I stop him with a hand on his shoulder. "Don't go. I'm sorry. I don't know what's wrong

with me.” Shock? Anger? Desperation for him to be innocent?
“I... I know you wouldn’t. I’m sorry.”

He nods. “I wanted to help him. I should have known this involved him when I smelled the foxes. Jordie’s an otter shifter, but his brothers work with a gang of foxes.” He pauses and runs a hand through his hair. *Shit!* I figured if anyone was going to come after me for helping Jordie they’d have done it by now.”

“Tell me what happened.”

“I took Jordie to my office. He thought I was going to use him just like you did. But—”

I shake my head. “I didn’t really think that. I just—”

“Shut up. I gave him some money and sent him back to tell his brothers I wanted him for the night so they would leave him alone. Then I started working on a plan to help him.”

“You helped him run away?” I ask.

Brandon nodded. “He deserves to be somewhere safe. The filthy fuckers in his ‘family’ pimp him out to further their business interests.”

Anger burns my chest at the thought of someone selling their own brother. “What kind of business interests do they have?”

“He wouldn’t give me any details, but I know they deal in high-end stolen cars.”

“It didn’t occur to you to go to the police?” Brandon looks down almost as if he’s afraid. I’ve never seen him back down before. “Brandon?”

“They’ve got a judge in their pocket. Jordie was forced to... service him in exchange for the man’s silence.”

I slam my hand down on the counter. The resulting pain does nothing to calm my burning rage. “I want a name.”

Brandon shakes his head. “He wouldn’t tell me.”

“Well his family must think you know something important.”

Brandon nods, looking tired and painfully young.

“You think the judge is connected to the murder case, don’t you?”

“There’s no proof.” He doesn’t look at me as he speaks.

“Take me to Jordie. We’ll see if we get him to talk now.” I knew how unlikely it was that a scared young man would talk to a cop, but I had to try.

“I don’t know where he is.”

I don’t believe him. I see the fear in his eyes, and I admire his desire to protect Jordie, but I need to find Jordie if we’re going to get a conviction on the sons of bitches who’ve hurt him and want to hurt Brandon.

“You can track him, like you did me. I swear I’ll protect him.”

“No. I promised to help him get away. I’m not dragging him back into this.”

“Until these men are caught he’s involved no matter where he is. If you can track him, so can someone else.”

He looks away and clenches his fists. “I can’t.”

“Brandon, two men were found dead in your office. A boy is missing, and his last known location is your club. This doesn’t look good for you.”

“You think I killed those men? And then what, paid off the staff at Mitch’s? Maybe I killed Jordie too, after I fucked him.”

My stomach knots. The whiskey I downed threatens to burn a hole through me. “You know I don’t think that. but someone would like me to. You’re impeding this investigation by not talking to me. I want to keep this conversation between us, but I will take you in for questioning if I have to.”

Brandon’s eyes go cold. “You’re not locking me up.”

“I’m not letting you get killed because you’re too fucking stubborn to understand the danger you’re in.”

He takes a long slow breath and picks up my phone from the nightstand. “I’ll call Jordie and let him know what’s going on. I’ll see if I can convince him to meet with you.”

Thank God Brandon wasn't going to challenge me. "That's a good plan."

He taps the screen a few times and holds the phone to his ear. After several seconds, he ends the call and sets the phone down. "He's not answering."

"Then we've got to go after him," I say.

I don't see Brandon's fist coming. I simply register an explosion of pain across my jaw and slump to the floor.

I wake up some time later with my head pounding, my jaw aching, and the taste of blood in my mouth. I fight my roiling stomach as I sit up. My skull feels like it's been split in two. When I gently touch the back of my head, I find a considerable lump. I must've hit my head against the bedpost when I fell. I get my feet under me and manage to stand without puking.

Son of a bitch! I don't bother to check whether Brandon is still there. I'm sure he ran as soon as I hit the floor. He's probably with Jordie right now.

Why did Brandon have to be such a fucking idiot? His alibi was supported only by friends. Running is going to look damn suspicious, not to mention how fucking dangerous it is. The men we're up against aren't just going to let him walk away.

Men *we* are up against? *We*? Am I really still on his side when he cold-cocked me and took off? I'm not supposed to pick a side. I'm supposed to be objective. It's not my job to prove his innocence. How did I fuck this case up so badly?

An hour later, I'm sitting at Drew Danvers's kitchen table. He's the one man I trust to bust my ass or tell me it's time to hang up my badge. He may be a vampire, but he's a damn fine man, a good cop, and the closest thing I have to a friend.

I'm holding my head in my hands when he sets a cup of coffee in front of me. I probably look like I got trashed last night. I wish the worst thing about this day was one too many shots of tequila. I glance up, bracing myself to confess my dark deed.

He takes one look at me and shakes his head. “Fuck.”

I exhale harshly. “Yeah. That about sums it up.”

“I wish I had more time to commiserate, but we’ve got a lead on Brandon’s whereabouts.”

That’s all he said. No condemnation. No “Wow, you really screwed this up” or “You better resign before you get fired.”

“You still don’t think he’s guilty?” I ask.

“If I did I would’ve gone after him myself, then busted your ass for being such an idiot.”

I run a hand through my hair and gulp down half a cup of coffee. “What the hell have I done?”

“Let your guard down.” Danvers pours himself a cup of coffee and sits across from me. “Hurts like hell, doesn’t it?”

Did it ever. “I broke who knows how many rules last night, personal and professional.”

“You didn’t follow the rules when you kept me on after I Changed, and I’m damn thankful for it.”

“That’s not the same. I just protested the chief’s order to fire you.”

He studies me as he takes a sip of coffee. “You defied a direct order and kept handing me cases.”

“That was about justice; this is about me perving on a hot, young suspect.”

Drew snorts. “Maybe there’s a bit of that, but I think your behavior is more about taking care of needs you’ve neglected for a long time.”

“I can get laid without compromising an investigation.”

Drew traces the design on his mug with his finger. “Sure you can, but you need more than good sex, you need a friend, someone who cares about you.”

I down the rest of my coffee, needing time before I can trust my voice to stay steady. “Brandon and I fucked each other, Drew. I fucked a man who’s part of a murder investigation.”

“And if I thought he was guilty or that you’d compromised the investigation, I’d tear you up for it, but I trust your judgment.”

I sighed. “Why?”

“You’re a good cop. One of the best.”

I shake my head. “You may believe that, but what will everyone else think?”

He shrugs. “Hopefully they won’t find out. I’m sure as hell not going to say anything.”

“But if Brandon and I…” I can’t bring myself to suggest that we will keep seeing each other. The idea is ludicrous.

Drew grins. “So I was right. It *is* more than just a good fuck. I’d know that look anywhere.”

“What look?”

“The one I had when I started seeing Jason.”

I ignore his comment. I can’t bring myself to acknowledge that I’m as lovesick as he is. “Where do you think Brandon is?”

Drew smiles. He sees right through me, but thankfully he doesn’t push his advantage. He hands me a map he’s printed out. “I called Jason, who called a bear shifter acquaintance. We discovered that most bears have a den on their foraging grounds, for some, it’s a literal bear den, for others, a cabin where they can crash if they don’t want to come back home after a night in the woods. After a little more research, we found Brandon’s family’s territory. There’s no record of a cabin up there, but we’ve narrowed down the most likely locations for one.” Drew points to three circled areas on the map.

I push my chair back and stand. “I’m going after him.”

“*We’re* going after him,” Drew says, blocking my way to the door.

I push at his arm, even though I’m as likely to move a skyscraper as a vampire. “Brandon’s scared, and he’s likely to run. I’ve got a better chance of getting him to lead us to Jordie if I go alone.”

“The men that are after Brandon can rip werewolves apart. You need backup.”

“*You’re* bitching at *me* about taking off without backup?”

Drew scowls. “I’ve done some crazy shit, but I’m also hard as hell to kill. You’re human. One human with a gun is no match for the men we’re up against.”

“I need to do this myself.”

“You need to live long enough to work through what you’ve got with Brandon.”

I scowl at him. He doesn’t understand why I need to be the one to find Brandon. “I’m ordering you to step aside, Detective. I’ll call you when I find him.”

“Fuck you for pulling rank, you stubborn bastard.”

“Please just let me go, Drew.”

He steps aside. “Fine. But if you get yourself killed, I’ll do my best to bring you back so I can kill you myself.”

I grab my jacket and head for the door. “Stay on your boyfriend until you get some useful information on the bullet and the fingerprint we found. I want these bastards taken down.”

Drew nods. I reach for the doorknob, but he grabs my arm. “Promise me something.”

The concern on his face makes me summon what patience I can. “What?”

“When we wrap this up, don’t walk away.”

“From Brandon or the job?”

“Either one.”

I shake my head. “I can’t do my job if I’m not objective.”

He raises his brows. “You honestly think this will happen again?”

I took the time to think it through. “No, not unless Brandon’s involved in more fucked-up shit than I realized.”

Drew squeezes my arm, then lets go. “You’re my Lieutenant. I don’t want to work for anyone else and neither do the other guys in homicide. If you leave, who are they going to replace you with? Someone who’s as friendly to non-humans? Not fucking likely.”

“But I deserve to be fired, don’t I?”

“You deserve a chance to be happy.”

I can’t help but smile at his romantic notion. “Jason really is perfect for you.”

He’s grinning like a dope. “He sure is.”

I’d been happy for them since I realized how well they worked as a couple, but I’d scoffed at the idea of romance and figured it must be really good sex that made them all starry-eyed. I never imagined I’d feel a connection like I do with Brandon. One night. One fucking night, and now I’m envying what Drew and Jason have. Still, I can’t really imagine having it myself.

“Don’t push him away.” Drew uses his scary vampire voice as if to imply that I’ll have him to reckon with if I do.

I scowl back, giving him *my* scary cop face. Sadly it just doesn’t compare.

“This isn’t something you can do by the book, Lieutenant,” Drew says. “Let go of your rules and run with your instincts.”

BRANDON

I have no doubt Seth has sent the cops after me by now. He wouldn't have been out long. I made sure he wasn't seriously hurt before I left. I'm a bastard to knock him out and run, and I...

Fuck. I think I'm in love with him. Now I've wrecked any chance of a relationship, if there ever was a chance to begin with. I refused to trust him, and he probably thinks I'm guilty now, but I won't let those bastards get their hands on Jordie, no matter what I have to give up..

When I called Jordie from Seth's house, he didn't answer, and I panicked. I had to get to him fast. Seth would've insisted on coming with me and he'd have wanted to wait for backup. I was so relieved when I got to my cabin and found Jordie there. He was in the shower when I called. He stayed up all night studying for some online courses he's taking. I made him something to eat, and now he's sleeping on the couch.

Jordie confessed that his brothers are in a war with a rival gang of car thieves, a gang run by wolves. He's concerned that his brothers think he leaked information to me, and I sold it to the wolves. That would certainly explain the dead wolves in my closet.

I have to get him out of town and find him a place to start over before his brothers and their accomplices catch up with us. I knew they were assholes, dangerous assholes, but I didn't know they could rip werewolves apart.

When I escorted Jordie to my office the night we met, he thought I was going to use him just like everyone else did. I offered to help him, and he thought I meant I'd buy him from his brothers and keep him as my personal sex slave. Then I explained how my father kicked me around as a kid. I told him I'd spent plenty of time hiding in a cave in the woods.

He'd smiled then for the first time. Being an otter, his retreat wasn't a cave but a den he made in the riverbank. He spent as much time there as he could. But in the last year, his brothers started forcing him to work for them instead of just beating him up.

They said if they were going to have a fucking fag for a brother, they might as well put him to good use. They already had girlfriends who fucked their clients for them. Now they could please their clients who'd rather have a boy to service them.

The thought of what his brothers had done to him makes me sick. I'm not going to let them get their hands on him again. Initially, I sent Jordie to one of my friend's houses. When I was confident no one was tailing me, I took him to my mountain cabin.

I'm still contemplating our next move when I hear something rustle outside. Someone's in the woods, moving toward the cabin. I step into the middle of the living area where I have room to shift. As soon as I draw my first breath in bear form, I know the man in the woods is Seth.

I breathe deep, wanting his scent in my lungs. Then I step outside and confirm my initial impression. He's alone. I can't decide whether to be thrilled he hasn't sent someone else after me or pissed as hell he's out in the woods putting himself in danger. If Jordie's family finds us, they sure as hell aren't going to worry if Seth gets hurt in the crossfire.

I stay in bear form. As much as I want to see Seth, scaring him away is best. His position requires him to report Jordie's whereabouts, and I can't let that happen.

When he moves into my line of sight, I see he's got his weapon out. Will he shoot me if I threaten him? I don't want

to be shot for the second time in less than a day, but I'm willing to take the risk.

Seth moves closer to the cabin and sees me as I come around the side. He stands his ground, which is more than most humans would do.

"Brandon?" he calls.

I ignore him and lunge toward him. He aims his gun at me. I rise on my hind legs.

"Nice fur," he says with a wry smile.

Fuck. He's way too confident. I've got to convince him I'm a threat. I bare my teeth and move closer, raising my arms and showing off my dangerous claws.

He holsters his gun and looks me up and down, eyes all sultry. "Impressive, but I'm not that kinky. Human form only, please."

He's all swagger, but I smell sweat and uncertainty. He's scared under that bravado. But man oh man does he look sexy standing there defying me. I want to shift and have my way with him. If only I didn't have to worry about Jordie. I fucking hate this impossible situation.

I play my last card. I lunge for him. He flinches, but he doesn't back away. I shift just as I would've ripped into him with my claws if I hadn't. Then I drive him back into a tree. I've gambled and lost. He isn't going to run. Since I'm out of options, I do what I wanted to do anyway; I kiss him.

I press the full length of our bodies together. The butt of his gun digs into my ribs, but I don't care. At least he didn't shoot me. The denim of his jeans is rough against my naked cock, but underneath, he's as hard as I am. I grind my hips into him as I eat at his mouth. He struggles, trying to push me away, but his mouth opens under mine, pliant and needy.

He shoves my shoulders, catching me off guard. I stumble back, but no way in hell is he getting away from me. I grab his hands and slam them into the tree above his head. Then I sink my teeth into his neck, marking him as mine. He cries out, and I kiss him into silence. We hump each other as we kiss hard

enough to bruise each other's lips. I want to be inside him. I think about ripping his pants down, lifting him, and driving into him as I hold him against the tree. His ass would feel so good squeezing my cock.

I'm going to come if we don't stop, but I can't let go of him. I drag my lips from his and nibble his jaw. Then I lap at his neck and breathe in his scent from the hollow behind his ear. I didn't want him here, but now I can't let him go. In the space of a day he's made me long for the kind of life I thought only existed in fairytales. The shifter and the cop. What were we going to do? Buy a little house together with a picket fence and settle down? Why the hell did that sound so nice?

"Not here, not safe." His husky words penetrate the desperate need that's wrecked my senses.

What am I doing getting ready to fuck him here in the open? If he found me, the shifters who shot me sure as hell could. I keep my hold on one of his hands and start to walk toward the cabin.

"Inside," I order, jerking him roughly.

He tries to tug his hand from mine, but I squeeze hard enough to make him gasp. "Don't fight me."

"Fuck, Brandon, I'm trying to help you."

His words constrict my chest. I don't deserve his help, don't deserve to have him put his career on the line for me.

"Inside. Now. And don't say a word." I stomp toward the cabin, pulling him behind me. My cock is as hard as an iron bar, and it's demanding attention, but the moment for getting any relief has passed. Once Seth sees Jordie sleeping on the couch, he'll want to take him into protective custody and lock my ass up. This time, Seth will be expecting my right hook.

We step through the door and his eyes go straight to the blanket-covered form on the couch. "Jordie?" he asks, keeping his voice low.

I nod. I pull down the wooden bar that serves as a lock for the door and point toward the bedroom. Seth follows me. There

aren't any chairs in the room, so I sink onto the bed as Seth shuts the door behind us.

He leans against the door, watching me warily. *Deja vu*. How the hell do we keep ending up in bedrooms together when we aren't supposed to be fucking? My anger drains away. All I want is to taste him again. I drop my head into my hands, unable to look at him anymore.

I hear him take a long breath and imagine his muscular chest expanding, his eyes squeezing shut, his head dropping back. I listen to him exhale. "You knew he was here."

I nod and force myself to look up. "I couldn't risk telling you. I swore I'd take care of him, help him find a place to start over. I have no confidence that his brothers will have a real trial, and I won't let them get their hands on him again."

Seth stares at me for several silent seconds. "Jordie's not the first kid you've helped escape from hell, is he?"

I shake my head.

"Why?"

My gut tightens. I've never told anyone the details of my past except the kids I've helped. Before I ran away, I denied what was happening when anyone tried to help me. I was ashamed of my family and embarrassed I couldn't take care of myself. I was just a kid, but that didn't matter. I thought I should be able to fix everything. "My dad drank. A lot. He used me as a punching bag when he was wasted, sometimes when he wasn't. He made me steal so he could buy more booze. I ran away at fifteen. If I'd stayed at home much longer, he would've killed me."

Seth's chocolate eyes fill with sadness. "I'm sorry."

"I don't want to be pitied, but I'm not going to watch the same thing or worse happen to another kid."

"Neither am I," he says.

"Once Jordie's in the system, you might not be able to stop it. His brothers have inside contacts. The judge and who knows how many more."

“We’ll find the bastards, and they better hope I find them before Danvers does.”

I smile despite the knot in my stomach. “They won’t stand a chance against that scary vamp.”

Seth runs a hand through his hair. “And if he gets to them I’ll have one more mess to cover up.”

I don’t want to complicate his life like this. “You’re a good cop.”

“I’ve compromised this investigation, and now I can either arrest you and put Jordie in protective custody or break even more rules.”

I don’t know what to say, but I’m not going to let him take Jordie. “I’m sorry.”

“I need to talk to Jordie now.”

I tense. “And then what?”

“If I try to bring you both in, what are you going to do? Eat me?”

I grin. I shouldn’t find his words funny, but I do. “I’d love to, but I don’t think that will solve our problem.”

He laughs, but there’s no real mirth in it. “What the fuck am I going to do with you?”

I lift my brows and give him a sultry stare, unable to resist lightening our mood. “I can think of several things.”

“Do you ever stop flirting?”

I shake my head, laughing. “Not really.”

“I need to talk to Jordie, then you two need to disappear.”

I stare at him. “Disappear?”

“To somewhere harder to find than this. I’ve got some suggestions, but I want to consult with Danvers first.”

My heart pounds. I’m thrilled he wants to help me, that he trusts me, but I will never forgive myself if he gets caught. “Don’t ruin your career for me.”

“I push the regs to the limit when I need to. I’ve never gone this far, but... I’m going with my instincts.”

I look up and catch his gaze. I have to fight to keep from getting lost in the depths of his dark eyes. “Thank you.”

He turns and opens the door a crack. Then he stops, frozen in the doorway. A few seconds later, he pushes it closed and uses the rope and peg lock to secure it. When he turns back toward me, he’s smiling. “Actually, I think we should let Jordie sleep, don’t you?”

I nod, heart pounding.

He tosses his jacket on top of the dresser and his shoulder holster follows. He pulls his shirt over his head and unstraps the bulletproof vest he’s worn underneath. He finally approaches the bed as he strips off his t-shirt. “I want your paws on me.”

“Fuck, yeah.” I grab him by the waistband and pull him to me. I might act like a player at Shift, but Seth has me shaking with need, desperate for anything he’ll give me. My fingers are clumsy as I unfasten his pants and discover he’s naked underneath. I push the fabric out of the way and wrap my hand around his cock. He’s fully hard already. I give him a long stroke up and down and smile. “Looks like you came loaded for bear.”

He laughs as I guide his cock to my mouth. “Damn right I did.”

I run my tongue around the tip, groaning at the sensation of the soft silky skin covering the head of his shaft. I dip my tongue in his slit, and he rewards me with a groan as his hands tighten on my shoulders.

“Suck me, Brandon,” he begs.

“Mmm.” I give his length a few rough licks with the flat of my tongue before I encase him with my mouth.

He shudders. “Fuck, that’s good.”

I slide my lips up and down, giving him good hard suction. I want him shaking like I am, messed up as hell, ready to break

all the rules, ready to beg. I might have nearly vampiric strength, but he could break me like a twig if he walked away. How the fuck did this happen to me?

I increase my pace. He shifts his grip on my head, and I pump the base of his shaft with one hand and use the other to tug on his balls, pulling at the loose skin. I swallow him all the way, feeling the wiry hair of his bush brush my face. He groans.

“God, Brandon. So close.”

But I don't want him coming now. I want his cock buried in me first. I pull back slowly and let his shaft go, lifting it out of my way so I can suck and lick his balls. I push his legs apart, and he lifts a foot onto the side rail of the bed, letting me get under him. I lick the taut skin of his perineum, teasing the edge of his hole with my tongue. He pitches forward, bracing himself on the edge of the bed. I pull his cheeks apart and circle his entrance with my tongue. When I push inside, he jerks, muscles tensing. “Jesus!”

I work my tongue deeper as I circle the base of his cock and his balls, squeezing him, not letting him come. I tongue fuck him until plaintive whimpers escape him. I love what I can do to this hard cop. Finally, I let him go and lie on the bed. He shoves his jeans down, kicks them off along with his shoes and climbs on top of me. “I... no one ever...”

“Feels damn good, doesn't it?”

He nods. Then his mouth takes mine as his hips pump against me. Our cocks rub each other, and I'm suddenly right on the edge.

I wrap my legs around him and roll us until I'm straddling his hips. “I want you inside me.”

He nods. “Condom?”

Fuck, how did I forget that? I lay a hand on his stomach, rubbing the soft hair there. “Don't move.”

I cross the room quickly, grab the box from the bathroom cabinet and rip it open as I hurry back to the bed. Seth is lazily stroking his cock with his eyes closed. I stand there, mesmerized by his big, gorgeous body. I try to decide what I

like best, his wide chest, his thick muscular thighs, or his tall, hard cock.

He looks at me then, catching me staring, and smiles. That decides it. That smile is absolutely his best feature. Seeing him truly happy could push me over the edge with no other provocation.

I ready his cock while I slick my fingers with lube and reach behind myself to slide a finger into my ass. He groans and I tighten my grip on him, sliding my hand up and down, coating him with lube. I push another finger into my ass. The sensation of filling myself and working Seth's cock in the same rhythm is so fucking erotic, but I force myself to stop and straddle him so his cock pushes at the seam of my ass. I guide it to my hole and lower myself, gasping at the way he stretches me.

Seth holds my hips in his strong hands and thrusts deeper. I sink my teeth into my bottom lip to hold back a cry. His cock fills me up in a way that's both startling and fucking amazing. I want to move, but he forces me to stay still. I could break his hold, but I don't want to. I want him to fuck me any way he wants. I want to please him.

"Kiss me." The desperation in his voice makes my chest tighten. I love the way he needs me.

"Hell, yes." I lie across him, loving that I can let my weight rest on him without hurting him. When our lips meet, a jolt of lust races through me, and heads straight to my cock. I can't stay still anymore. I struggle against his hold, working myself up and down as our mouths devour each other. The friction of our hairy bodies against my cock has me right at the edge. Seth thrusts into me in short hard strokes, trying to hold me in place for his assault.

SETH

I fight to hold Brandon still. I want, need to be in control. I want to take him hard, use him, show him how much I hated him running from me, hated my heart pounding against my chest, because I was afraid I'd find him ripped to pieces or never find him at all. I hate him for making me need him so damn much, and I love him for showing me how a kiss can make me feel, loved, cared for, needed.

He pulls back, and I release one of his hips and cradle his head, forcing his mouth back down on mine. He moans into me. I suck his tongue, pull him to me, thrust as deep as I can go. I want to flip him over and drive into him from behind, but I need to hold him even more, need to keep us fused together.

He works himself up and down on my cock. I give up trying to hold him. Our movements are frantic. He thrusts against me as he slams his hips down. I work a hand between our bodies and circle his cock. He makes those needy sounds that drive me crazy as I stroke him, and I know I can't hold on much longer.

He kisses and bites my neck, my collarbone. I arch up so he can suck one of my nipples. When he bites down, shock waves run through me, and heat races along my spine. I dig my fingers into his back. "Fuck! I can't..."

He shudders against me. His hot, sticky seed spills over my hand as I come deep inside him. He collapses on me after he's thoroughly spent. I love the weight of him, warm and reassuring. I knew he was trouble the first time I saw him. And when we fucked earlier, I knew I'd lost myself, but holding

him like this, after a storm has run through us both, I realize he's transformed me. I want him, and not just right now. I want to come home to him, to make him mine. I don't care what rules I have to break. I will not let him go.

He nuzzles my neck as I kiss the top of his head. We have to get up. I need to question Jordie, and he and Brandon both need to get somewhere safe.

"Don't disappear on me when this is over," I whisper, rubbing my cheek against his thick, cropped hair.

He kisses my neck, and his warm breath makes me shudder. "Never. I need you."

I sigh. "Me too, but we've got to get moving."

"Yeah." His tongue flicks up and down over the curve of my shoulder. Suddenly, he freezes. "Jordie's awake."

I hear a blanket rustle and feet settling on the floor. Brandon jumps out of bed and opens the door a crack. "Jordie, you okay?"

"Yeah. Is there any coffee left?"

"No, but I'll make you some."

He takes a shirt from the laundry basket, wipes himself clean, and tosses it to me. Then he grabs some pants from a drawer and pulls them on. "Come meet Jordie when you're ready."

I get cleaned up and dress before following Brandon into the living room. Jordie tenses when he sees me. He looks even younger than his seventeen years. He's slim with shaggy, dark brown hair and hazel eyes haunted by what he's been through.

Brandon positions himself in front of me. "Jordie, this is Lieutenant Morrison."

Jordie sits up straighter. "I won't go back." His voice is level, direct. I can see the strength that's kept him from falling apart.

"I won't let anyone hurt you," Brandon reassured him.

"They'll find me, no matter what. I know too much." His hand shakes, but he keeps his voice steady and never breaks eye contact.

Hot rage gathers in my gut. I will get justice for this young man. “My men and I will find your brothers and everyone they work with. We’ll make them pay, but first I need you to tell me what you know so we can do our job.”

Jordie glances toward Brandon.

Brandon nods. “Morrison’s a good man. Talk to him.”

Jordie turns his attention back to me. “Promise me Brandon won’t get in trouble for helping me.”

The concern on Brandon’s face as he watches Jordie and the memory of his hands on me make something flutter inside me.

“Brandon hasn’t done anything wrong.”

“No, he hasn’t,” Jordie agrees.

While I question Jordie, Brandon disappears into the kitchen to make coffee. I’m so immersed in taking notes that he returns without me noticing.

“You hungry?” I look up, and Brandon is holding out a blue plate topped with a beautiful slice of apple pie. I stare at the pie, probably looking like I’ve never seen food before.

Suddenly I’m starving, and not just for pie. “Did you make this?”

He grins. “I have many hidden talents.”

He hands another plate to Jordie, who practically inhales his slice.

I take a bite of the pie. The crust is flaky and buttery, and the apples inside still have a slight firmness, contrasting with the sweet cinnamony juice. It’s almost as good as my grandmother’s. I’m now officially in love with a hot young stud of a club owner who can become a black bear at will. I wait for panic to rise, but I haven’t the slightest urge. Maybe I’m dreaming, but if so, I don’t want to wake up.

I moan as I take another bite. “This pie is amazing.”

Brandon’s cheeks redden. “Thanks, I…” His words trail off, and he stands very still. “Listen.”

Jordie freezes, fork halfway to his mouth. “They found us.”

“Do you recognize the scent?” Brandon asks.

He nods. “They work with my brothers.”

I listen, but I can’t hear anything other than the rustle of leaves and a squirrel scurrying across the roof. “How far away are they?”

Brandon tilts his head to the side. A few seconds pass before he responds.

“Maybe half a mile.”

“Fuck.” I grab my phone from my pants pocket and call for backup. The dispatcher informs me that Danvers and a team are already on their way. He probably planned to come after me all along. I’ll bust his ass for it if we survive. I glance at my phone, see the date, and realize Wolf is due back at work today. Drew will have him tracking us.

“Backup is already on their way. Brandon, have you got a gun?”

“I can’t shoot a gun with these.”

I look up from checking my own weapon and see that Brandon’s hand is now a paw.

I’ve seen Wolf do a partial shift, but Brandon’s talent affects me differently. My heart thunders against my ribs as I imagine the damage he can do with those claws while also thinking about how they would feel against my chest. What the fuck? I’ve never gone that far in flirting with danger. Not in bed anyway.

He laughs. “I can’t tell if you’re turned on or scared as hell.”

My cheeks heat. “Both. But claws can’t stop a bullet.”

“True but I plan to make them scared enough to drop their guns and piss themselves.”

“That might work on a burglar. These men aren’t going to scare easily,” I remind him.

He kisses me. “Jordie has a gun.”

I start to protest, but he places a finger against my lips. “He’s a damn fine shot. Stay here with him. I’m going to find out how much trouble is coming.”

I’m used to being the one giving orders. I make the plans and other people complain about the risks I’m taking. Now I’m getting a taste of how they feel, and it fucking sucks. I take a slow breath and assess the situation. “Recon only. Find out what we’re up against and get your ass back here as fast as—”

Brandon cuts off my words with another kiss. His hands, human once again, hold my face, keeping me still while he makes love to me with his lips and tongue. I cup his face too, needing to hold him close, to feel his soft beard under my hands, to remember this moment of bliss. He ends the kiss all too soon. “Keep Jordie safe.”

He steps back, but I hold on. “Don’t take risks. Backup is on the way. Just figure out how many men they have and come back.”

He disappears through the door. Jordie is smiling at us. I should be embarrassed by the show we put on for him, but I’m not. “We need to stay down and away from the windows.”

“Yes, sir.”

Damn, I hope I can keep this kid safe. “I can’t believe I’m saying this but get your gun.” Jordie looks pale, but he goes into the bedroom and comes back with a handgun.

“I’m going to check the perimeter of the cabin. For God’s sake don’t shoot me when I come back. I’ll knock three times fast like this.” I rap on the coffee table, and he jumps. “Look at me.” He does and I lay a hand on his shoulder. “Brandon’s going to be fine. We’re all going to be fine.”

He nods but doesn’t say anything else.

I stick close to the cabin, wishing I had the senses of a shifter. I’m tense, waiting for an attack. I don’t want to end up in a firefight, but the waiting is worse, knowing something is going to come at you but not knowing from where. You get nervous and nervous often equals stupid.

I find no evidence that anyone but Jordie and Brandon have been here. I check the windows to make sure they're locked. If they want us dead, they don't need to break into the cabin, but I have to assume they still want to take Brandon and Jordie alive. For that, they'll need access.

I knock, and Jordie lets me in. He paces as we wait, making me jittery as hell. The morning is still, silent. Then three shots echo through the woods. Jordie runs for the door, but I hold him back "Wait. We can't just go charging out there. I promised Brandon I'd keep you safe."

I watch from the front window. I can't see anyone or anything out of the ordinary. I count slowly, forcing myself to listen to my own advice and stay put. After a full minute, I move to the door and raise the bar out of the way. Jordie steps behind me. I shake my head. "Stay inside and keep your head down."

I open the door and slip out, praying Jordie will listen. Weapon out, I survey the woods from the porch. Without a sound, a man rises from the brush across from the porch. He has the bright orange-red hair typical of a fox. He fires before I can take aim. I slam back into the wall, fighting to stay conscious. A flash of black fur comes from the left. Brandon roars and leaps through the air, knocking the man to the ground, ripping into him. Another man appears from the same direction as Brandon. He raises his weapon, aiming at my bear.

I try to get my gun, which lies on the porch next to me. My vest stopped the bullet, but I'm too stunned from the fall to make my hand work.

The shot hits Brandon in the back.

"Noooo!" I scream.

Almost simultaneously, the shooter crumples to the ground, the back of his head blown away. It takes me a second to register what happened. Jordie is standing over me, weapon trained at the man who'd attacked Brandon.

Two more men burst from the trees, and pure chaos erupts. I watch it all through a fog I can't shake off. Brandon struggles

to his paws. A wolf slams into one of the men. “Don’t shoot!” I yell at Jordie. “That’s one of my men.”

Drew is right behind him, moving nearly too fast to track, but the other man gets a shot off before Drew takes him down. I gasp and turn toward Jordie. He’s standing beside me in otter form. There’s a bullet lodged in the cabin right where his head had been. My stomach knots and I fight the urge to vomit.

Drew finishes off the other man, and Wolf runs to examine Brandon’s wound. Drew calls to me. “You okay, Morrison?” I nod weakly. Somehow I manage to get to my feet as Drew checks to see which of the men are alive and secures them.

Before I can get my voice working Drew is standing beside me. “I’m just bruised and a little stunned.” Brandon has shifted to human form, but he’s not moving. Jordie is at his side, still in otter form, nudging him with his snout.

I fight the panic rising in me. “Is he...”

Drew puts an arm around my shoulders. “He’s going to be fine. Wolf’s just trying to get him to shift again.”

I want to go to Brandon, but my legs won’t work. I watch as he becomes a bear once more, and then a few seconds later he’s human again. This time he stirs and sits up. Jordie circles him, chittering. I’m still trying to process how close we all came to dying. I stare at the wound a few inches below Brandon’s shoulder as he hugs Jordie’s squirming form. What if the wound had been a few inches lower? What if I hadn’t worn the vest? What if Jordie hadn’t shifted in time?

A team arrives to clean up. Drew leaves me so he can talk to them. When he returns, Drew lets me know that there’s a crime lab van on the way. I struggle to think of a proper response.

“Are you sure you’re okay?” Drew asks again.

I nod and then regret it as my stomach threatens to revolt. “My head hit the wall. I lost my breath. And then...” I point to Brandon, who is being tended to by Wolf and his partner, Jacobson.

Drew smiles. “He’s going to be fine. His body’s already healing the wound.”

“Yeah I know. It’s just —”

“We cut it damn close this time.”

“Yeah. I guess I won’t bust your ass for disobeying me after all. How long did you wait before you started after me?”

He grins, unashamed. “I gave you an hour before I put Wolf on your trail.”

“Is everything okay?” I gesture toward the flurry of work going on around me.

“It’s all under control. Brandon identified two of the shooters as the foxes who attacked him at Shift, and Jordie says the others are humans who work for his brothers.” A wave of dizziness makes me grab one of the porch supports.

“Jenkins is on his way to take over for me. Wolf and Jacobson will take care of Brandon and Jordie. Let me drive you to the hospital.”

“No. I’m fine.” I start down the steps, and my vision darkens. Drew catches my arm. “I’m taking Morrison to the hospital,” he calls to Wolf.

I try to protest, but I’m not sure if the words come out or not. I black out then and wake up in the passenger seat of Drew’s car. “Where are we?”

“About two miles from town. I’m glad you’re awake. I was starting to get worried.”

“I’m fine.”

He snorts. “Right. You always black out at crime scenes.”

I wasn’t fine, but I really didn’t want to go to the hospital. I wanted to be with Brandon. “I don’t think I hit my head that hard.”

He glances over at me. “How long has it been since you got any sleep?”

“I got an hour or so last night.”

“I mean real sleep as in several consecutive hours. And what about food? When did you last eat?”

“Brandon made me a pie.”

Drew laughed. “Did he just?”

“Well he didn’t really make it for me, but he gave me a piece and... fuck, I’m babbling. I’m messed up, aren’t I?”

“Yeah, you’re a bit out of it, but I think it’s more the fact that you’re running yourself into the ground than the hit on the head. I think you’ve finally hit the wall.”

I want to protest, but I think he’s right.

“Once I’m reassured you don’t have a serious concussion, I’m sending you home and ordering Brandon to tuck you into bed and not let you up for at least a day.”

“We’re in the middle of wrapping up a case. A case he’s involved in.”

“I’ll handle the wrap up, and he’s in protective custody under your care.”

“No. I need to—”

“You need to rest.”

I slump back down in the seat, pouting like a surly kid.

Drew shakes his head. “You’re a workaholic and a control freak. I get it, but you have a breaking point. None of us in homicide want to see you kill yourself. We’re willing to shoulder part of the burden.”

“Thanks. I guess, but I don’t think telling Brandon to keep me in bed will help me get any rest.”

Drew laughs. “He’s got to wear out sometime.”

“I’m not so sure about that.”

BRANDON

I pull the pot roast from the oven and set the timer to let the pie cook ten more minutes. I hear Seth heading for the bathroom. Perfect. He'll be ready to eat when it's all done.

Danvers brought him home from the hospital several hours ago, and we both insisted he get some sleep. I'd been worried sick when Danvers left my cabin half carrying him. I wanted to go to the hospital with him, but Jordie needed me too, and the police wanted to question me. Wolf assured me Danvers would take care of Seth.

As Danvers suspected, Seth's head injury wasn't serious, but he was dehydrated and exhausted. He'd been running on caffeine and candy bars for far too long. He asked me to stay with Seth under the guise of being in protective custody. How could I say no to that?

As soon as I was able to leave the police station, I got to work cooking Seth a proper meal: pot roast with carrots and potatoes and a big salad. And after watching his reaction to the slice of pie he ate at the cabin, I had to make him another one. This time, I'll see if he wants to use me for a plate.

The police found the warehouse where Jordie's family stashed the cars they stole. They caught several of the men involved, including Jordie's brothers, and they had leads on the location of all the others. Jordie was still giving his statement. I was reluctant to leave him, but Wolf took personal responsibility for him and even called in his wife to sit with Jordie while he

waited to talk to Drew. Wolf is scary as hell, but, like Danvers, he's a good man.

I smell Seth getting closer before I hear his footsteps. He stops in the kitchen doorway and freezes. "It smells amazing in here."

"Pot roast and salad. If you eat all your dinner like a good boy, there's pie for dessert."

He smiles but looks nervous. "Drew told me he was going to get you to babysit me and make me behave, but I didn't know he was going to make you cook for me too."

"I'm cooking for you because I want to, and I have no intention of making you behave. I'm going to feed you, fuck you, and put you back to bed."

I expect Seth to laugh but instead, he tenses. "Brandon, you don't have to—"

"The hell I don't. This... whatever it is between us is unstoppable."

Seth pulls out one of the kitchen chairs and sits down, looking pale.

I watch his chest rise and fall rapidly. "Are you sure the doctors should've let you go? Maybe you needed to stay overnight."

"I'm fine. I'm just tired. I've been pushing myself too hard, and then there's you and what you do to me—"

I smile. "I plan to do lots of outrageous things to you, but first you're going to eat this pot roast."

He nods. "Brandon?"

"What?" My voice is soft, barely there. The tension in the air is palpable.

"I want to do this every night." The words burst from him. He looks shocked like he can't believe he said that out loud.

I push away from the counter, drop to my knees between his legs, and capture his face in my hands. "So do I. I think I fell in love with you the moment I first saw you."

I kiss him, gently at first. I lick at his lips, savoring the taste of them and their softness. Passion builds, and soon I'm pushing into his mouth, tasting the deep recesses. I force myself to pull away before I lose control completely. "We need to eat first."

He lets me go, and we both try to catch our breath. I take the pie out of the oven so it can cool, then heap his plate with pot roast and salad. I set it in front of him along with a glass of water. Wine would be better, but he needs to rehydrate, and I don't want to mix alcohol and a head injury. His eyes widen in amazement. "It's been a very long time since anyone cooked for me."

I smile. "I'll do it again tomorrow. I intend to spoil you."

We eat in comfortable silence. I can tell he's trying not to wolf down the food on his plate in a matter of seconds. When he finishes, he lays his fork down, takes a sip of water, and looks at me. "This is so damn good. Where did you learn to cook like this?"

I smile, remembering the years after I ran away from home, thinking how lucky I was to get hired to wait tables by a decent guy who pretended he didn't know I was lying about my age. The friends I made at the restaurant helped me survive by giving me a place to live and teaching me lots of important life skills.

"When I first left home, I lived in an apartment with some colorful characters. One of them loved to cook, which was good, because the rest of us would have lived on M&M's and ramen noodles otherwise. What she did with food seemed like magic. I wanted to do magic too, and she taught me."

"She did a great job."

His compliment pleases me more than I could've imagined. "Thanks. Apple pie? Or are you too full?"

He grins, no longer nervous or pale. "I'd love to taste your pie."

"Shall we take it to bed then?"

Seth looks uncertain. "The poor sheets."

“I do laundry too. It’s another of my hidden talents.”

He grins. “You’re a very useful bear.”

“Damn right.” I cut a big slice of warm pie and put it on a plate.

Seth follows me to the bedroom. I set the plate on the nightstand and turn to face him. “Strip.”

He glares at me for a second and then curiosity and desire take over and he does as I say. I follow suit. When I’m naked, I lie on the bed and dump the contents of the plate on my chest. “Come get your dessert.”

He stares at the warm pie sliding over the planes of my chest. “Holy fuck, that’s hot.” He climbs onto the bed and goes to work, licking bites of pie off me. I reach for some, but he shakes his head. “Arms over your head. I’ll feed you.”

I fucking love his commanding tone. I reach up and take hold of the pillow. He offers me a bite of pie. I drag my teeth along his fingers as I pull apples and crust into my mouth. Then I suck all the stickiness from his fingers. Seth groans as he laps at the pie on my chest, letting his teeth scrape my skin.

I nearly rip the pillow apart when his mouth closes over one of my nipples, biting hard. He smears it with pie and then flicks his tongue back and forth over the tip before sucking the sticky mess away. I squirm under him, fighting the urge to grab his head and press it against me. “God, that feels good.”

He gives my other nipple the same treatment. By the time he finishes, I’m losing my mind. I arch off the bed, thrusting my hips in the air, desperate to have Seth inside me. “Fuck me!”

He laughs, his breath tickling my belly. “Not yet.” He coats his fingers with the last of the pie filling and smears it over my cock.

“Jesus, Seth!” I bite my lip to keep from begging for his mouth as he wraps his hand around my shaft, sliding up and down, lubricated by the juicy filling. My hips pump against his hand. He looks up, sees me watching him, and holds my gaze as he meticulously cleans the pie off his hand. I watch every swipe of his tongue, wishing he was licking my cock.

He glances down at my cock and then back up. “You look...” He pauses and circles his palm with the tip of his tongue. “... hungry.”

I dig my fingers into the pillow, splitting the fabric. I’m at my breaking point. “Please!”

He grins. “Please what?”

“Suck me.”

“Oh, yes.” He leans over me, licking my cockhead playfully before taking me deep into his mouth. I shudder as he encases me in his heat. He sucks, licks, teases, taking me deep, then pulling off to give small licks. I can’t keep from touching him anymore. I take hold of his head, spearing my fingers into his soft, dark hair.

He slides a finger into his mouth alongside my cock, then works the digit into my ass. He pushes deep enough to slide over my prostate, and I jerk, thrusting farther into his mouth. “Fuck. Need more.” He adds another finger, twisting and scissoring them, opening me up, but I don’t want to wait. I want him inside me right this fucking minute. “Can’t wait. Please.”

He ignores me, sliding his hand up and down my slick shaft and licking my balls.

“Seth,” I growl, trying to warn him. I tug on his hair, attempting to pull him away so he can shove his cock in me. I want him to ride me hard, make me scream. “So fucking close. Want you inside when I come.”

“Mmm. Hmm.” He kisses his way up my stomach, my chest, my neck.

Our lips meet in a cinnamony kiss. He lies on top of me, smashing the last of the pie between us. So much for worrying about the mess on his bed. His kiss is both sweet and hot, a slow devouring of my mouth that makes the need already burning in me threaten to erupt. *Fuck!* Am I going to come from a kiss?

He slides his lips along my jaw and nibbles at my ear. “Turn over. I’m going to fuck you deep and hard.”

The combination of sweet low whispering and nasty talk is the hottest thing I've ever heard.

"Fuck, yes!" I scramble to get in position, pushing my ass back against him as he gets to his knees. He leans over me and pulls a condom and lube from the drawer. He readies himself quickly, which is good, because if he waits much longer I'm going to throw him down and take what I need.

SETH

Wrapping one hand around Brandon's hip, I guide my cock to his hole with the other and brush my cockhead back and forth. He writhes against me, snarling. "Now!"

I want to tease him, but I'm desperate to feel his heat around me. Thank God I know he can take a serious pounding, because there's no way in hell I'll be able to hold back.

I push in, giving him more and more until I'm completely sheathed. I tell myself to wait for him to adjust, but he doesn't want to wait. His ass squeezes my cock, and he pushes back against me. "Damn it, Seth! Fuck me!"

That's more than enough encouragement. I hold onto his hips and pull out, torturing us both with the slow pace. He squirms against my hold. I know it's taking incredible restraint for him to let me do this my way.

When I drive back in, he exhales sharply. "Fuck, Seth! Do that again."

I go slowly out, then back in hard.

"Oh yeah, right there. Just like that."

I hold his hips at that angle and work him the way he wants me to until my control breaks, and I have to fuck him hard and fast.

"Yes! Harder! Seth, I fucking love you!" His words drive me mad, make me desperate for release.

I give it to him as hard as I can until I'm right at the edge.
"Can't last. Gotta come."

He groans. "Oh, fuck."

He tenses beneath me, and his ass clamps around my cock as he comes first, a fucking hands-free orgasm. Knowing I can do that to him pushes me over. I drive into him one last time and let go.

My orgasm wracks my entire body. My hips jerk against Brandon, and he pushes back, meeting every rough stroke. When I'm done, I collapse on top of him. His knees give out, and he slides to his belly, lying flat on the bed. We're a fucking mess, but I'm too tired to move.

"Holy fuck, that was incredible," he whispers.

I nod against his back. "Hell, yeah."

"Can we do it again?"

The eagerness in his tone makes me groan. "Are shifters always this horny?"

He chuckles. "I might be a special case."

"That's for damn sure." I lift up long enough to remove the condom and drop it in the trash by the bed. We'll get to the rest of the mess eventually. I lie on my side and pull him against me, loving how solid he feels. "Can't we rest for a bit? I'm a tired old man, you know?"

He snorts. "After a shower and another piece of pie you'll be ready to go again."

I smile and kiss the back of his neck. Even there he tastes like pie. I bite down and suck at his skin.

"We could do it again right now," he suggests. "I like it messy."

My cock stirs against his ass. Maybe now will work after all. "You do things to me no other man could."

He turns to look at me. "I've never felt like this before. Like I could just stay right here fucking you and taking care of you forever."

I shake my head, fear knotting my stomach. “I don’t do relationships.”

He flinches. Hurt fills his eyes.

“No. That didn’t come out right.” I take his hand. “I’ve never been good at relationships. That’s what I should’ve said, but I need you. I’ve never felt like this either. Can you be patient with me?”

He laughs and rolls over, pulling me to him for a kiss. “Absolutely. I’ll need a lot of patience to put up with you, but as long as you keep fucking me like that, I’ll be too relaxed to care.”

I love the feel of his big, hairy body pressing against mine. “As long as you keep making me pie, I’ll fuck you any way you want.”

“Let me up, and I’ll put another one in the oven.”

“Hell, no. You just promised me a demonstration of your famous shifter stamina.”

He smiles. “How ‘bout I show you in the shower? We can take care of two things at once. Then make a mess all over again.”

“Perfect.” I start to sit up, but he stops me. “Thank you for trusting me.”

I cup his face. His soft beard tickles my hand. “You’re a good man. No matter what your father told you. No matter what badass club owner act you put on, I know you’re a good man. What you did for Jordie proves it.”

He smiles and blushes. “Thanks.”

“I love you.” I can’t believe I can say the words without choking.

“I love you, too,” he says, lips right on top of mine. I kiss him, and we don’t make it to the shower for quite some time.

EPILOGUE

Brandon

Several months pass before Jordie stops being scared all the time. His brothers are convicted along with many of their friends. The other players disappeared. I'm guessing someone higher up the food chain did some housecleaning. In any case, we've not heard from them.

Jordie told the cops the name of the judge his brothers pimped him out too. The fucker wouldn't admit to a thing, and since it was Jordie's word against his, we didn't press charges. But Judge Asshole didn't sit the case or give Jordie's family any assistance. In the end, he must've decided he wouldn't risk his career for them. I wonder if he'll live to see the end of the year.

Jordie works at Shift now. Technically he's underage, but I intend to keep him close, and Seth hasn't said anything, so I guess it's cool. Jordie doesn't work out front anyway. Turns out he's a fucking genius with numbers, so he's doing the books for me and helping with other office work.

His brothers made him drop out of school, but he's got his GED now, and he's taking more online classes and hoping to start college next year. He inherited some money when his parents died, and now that his brothers are out of the picture, he can use it freely. He moved into my old apartment when I moved in with Seth, but sometimes he stays over with us. I guess you could say we've adopted him.

So yeah, I'm living with Seth now and things are good, really good. Sure we fight sometimes. He's stubborn and short-tempered, but I love him more and more every day. And I was right. He really does know how to please a man when he puts aside that cool cop facade. We plan to keep on pleasing each other night after night. I can't imagine life any other way.

Thank you for purchasing *Paws On Me*. I hope you enjoyed it. Would you like to meet the a fox shifter who doesn't fit in with him kind? Check out *Dinner at Foxy's* (Law and Supernatural Order 3)

I've got a **free** bonus scene starting Seth and Brandon. Grab it [here](#).

See the whole Law and Supernatural Order series [here](#).

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Silvia Onyx writes high heat paranormal romance with shifters of all descriptions. Her character-driven stories bring you right into the shifters' world. When not writing, Silvia loves to read, crochet, play with her oodles of planners and notebooks, and enjoy time with her family and beloved dogs. She also writes contemporary romance as Silvia Violet.

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