



FERAL SHIFTER  
UNTAMED

# FERAL SHIFTER UNTAMED

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NASTY RABID BEASTS BOOK ONE

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# ABOUT

They hunt shifters like me.

With good reason.

I'm a threat to everyone. Even myself.

My bear has gone feral.

It's lost control.

Sometimes fate can be cruel.

Sometimes it makes us wait too long for our mate.

Some bears can't handle it, and my wild grizzly is one of them.

He's gone too long without her and he's snapped.

This untamed savage creature lashes out at everything it can get its nasty paws on.

He's become a danger to society.

So, they've come for me.

A group of shifters have come to put me down.

To stop the threat. To put me out of my misery. To put a bullet in my head.

My mate is the only one who can save me.

She's the only one who can tame this savage beast.

But with the killers closing in on me, will she be too late?

And is my monstrous grizzly too far gone to be saved?

*We're getting wild with a rabid bear shifter who might just devour you whole! Can the right girl handle this vicious beast or is it too late?*

*Hot shifter insta-love with these two fated mates. SAFE, no cheating, and a HEA that will have you blushing and grinning! Enjoy!*

*To my favorite waitress, Chrissy,  
Who must have refilled my coffee a hundred times while I  
wrote this book.*



# CHAPTER ONE

---

*August*

“TIMBERVILLE, MONTANA!” THE CONDUCTOR SHOUTS AS THE freight train slows to a stop.

I sigh as I look at the old weathered sign with the town name on it barely visible behind the peeling paint and old faded graffiti.

*Is this town going to be safe?*

I sigh as I realize that no town is safe for me. Not when the biggest danger is lurking inside of my body. With a heavy breath, I get up off the large bags of rice I slept on all night and leap off the train.

My grizzly bear snarls inside of me as I head for the forest.

“Hey!” the conductor yells. “Stay the fuck off my train! Bloody vagrant.”

I don't turn around. For his protection, I lower my head and hurry to the colorful tree line. It's a gorgeous fall day, but this is no time to admire the autumn leaves.

My bear is growling inside. He's pacing angrily. I know what's coming and I don't want any part of it. I'm sure the nice people of Timberville, Montana don't either.

“Stay calm,” I whisper, but that only infuriates my bear even more. He snaps and lets out a low rumbling growl.



It's been two days since he last burst out of me. The rocking of the train must have helped soothe him, but now that I'm off it, he seems ready to fuck up my life some more.

"Hey!" the conductor shouts as I hurry forward.

Shit, why can't he just leave us alone? If he knew what my bear was capable of, he'd be hightailing it back on the train and hurrying the fuck out of here.

"Sorry!" I say as I raise my hand. I don't turn around. If my savage grizzly gets a look at him, I won't be able to hold him back.

"Motherfucker, I'm talking to you," he says as he cocks a gun.

*Oh, come on...*

I sprint to the forest.

He fires into the air and my whole body goes cold.

"Why'd you have to go and do that?" I whisper.

The booming sound makes my bear *livid* and he unleashes his wrath in a ferocious growl. He's gnashing his teeth and violently clawing his way up, furious at everyone and everything.

I look at the conductor over my shoulder and he steps back with a look of horror on his face.

"Run," I warn him in a deep monstrous voice.

My maniac of a bear is about to rip out, so my eyes are probably that eerie golden color they get before I phase. I can feel my teeth already expanding, pushing my lips out and making me look like a monster. Long brown hair sprouts out of my face as my body swells so big my muscles tear through the clothes I stole from some hunter a few towns back.

"What... are you?" he gasps as he raises his gun for another shot.

I'm a feral shifter, that's what I am.

My mate hasn't arrived and it's driven my bear insane. I've lost control of him. I've passed the point of no return.

I'm a danger to everybody, even myself. Wherever I go, it's like bringing a ticking timebomb with me. It's only a matter of when it explodes in a furious rage of snarling teeth and slashing claws.

I should put a bullet in my head. That would be the responsible thing to do. The sane thing.

There's no going back for a feral shifter, but...

It's just not in me to give up. Even with all of this shit going on, I still haven't given up on finding my mate. I just need to see her once... To lay my eyes on her beautiful face just one time and then I'll gladly put a gun to my temple and pull the trigger.

I can't be with her. Even I know that. It's too late for us. My bear is corrupted. He's wild, untamed, and full-on feral. Nothing can change that.

But if I can see her one time before I die... Then, I'll die happy.

"Get out of here, you freak!" the conductor says as he points the barrel of his rifle at me.

I grit my teeth as I try to force my bear back down. It's hopeless, but I try anyway. I squeeze my body, flexing my muscles to the max as I struggle to force him down. It's like trying to stop a burst dam with your hands. It's like trying to hold down a rocket. He's fucking unstoppable.

He explodes out of me, tearing skin, breaking bones, shredding the only clothes I got.

"Oh, fuck!" the conductor gasps as he raises the shaky barrel of his gun. He fires it at my vicious grizzly but misses by a mile.

*Stop, I hiss at my cruel grizzly. Leave him alone. He's just some guy.*

My bear is not having any of it. He crunches the dry leaves as he stomps forward on those massive paws, long strings of

drool hanging from his snarling lip. His hateful growls rumble through me as I watch helplessly from the inside.

There's nothing I can do from in here. He's too powerful to pull in. Whenever I try, he shakes me off like I'm nothing more than a pesky flea on his back.

*Go in the forest, I scream at him. It's right there!*

He never listens to me anymore.

It wasn't always like this. Years ago, before he turned, we actually got along. That feels like a lifetime ago now. We're so far from that it's fucking funny.

My grizzly's thick black claws sink into the hard autumn soil as my bear slowly steps forward, growling like a bloodthirsty beast.

The old man weighs his options and then turns and runs. Bad move. He should have kept shooting.

My bear sprints after him, pumping those big strong legs as I scream at him to stop.

The conductor leaps into the closest train cart and slams the metal door closed. My crazy bear slams his shoulder into it, caving the door in.

*Alright! You've made your point! That's enough.*

He paces along the train, growling as more people come to check out the reason for the gunshots. They take one look at the giant wild grizzly bear prowling along the train and quickly disappear back into the small station.

*Let's go!* I urge him, but my words slide off his back like waves washing over rocks. They have no effect.

A low distant rumbling fills the air. My bear raises his head and releases a furious primal roar. From inside, I can feel the intense anger consuming him.

He's getting worse every day.

The rumbling gets louder. Dirt bikes. Four of them.

Shit. I hope it's not who I think it is.

When a bear shifter goes feral, he must be put down. It's a sad reality, but one that all shifters agree on. It's for the good of the species. For the good of the packs. For the good of civilization.

There are designated mercenary shifter packs who take care of the problem, and this one has been hunting me through three states.

They call themselves The Foxhounds. Hunters of feral shifters and I'm their main target.

My bear catches their scent and the hairs along his back stand up. He lowers his head and snarls at the approaching sound.

Behind the exhaust of those engines, that familiar smell hits our nose and I'm filled with a feeling of dread.

*What the fuck is he doing here?*

This is not good. I try to grab onto my bear and pull him in, but he's unshakable. There's no way he's going to budge when he's infuriated like this.

I urge him to run away instead, but he plants his big paws and faces the dangerous rumbling noise with a rabid eagerness. There's nothing my grizzly likes more than unleashing violence onto the world. It's payback to the universe for depriving him of his mate.

The Foxhounds arrive, bouncing along the train tracks on their dirt bikes.

Jackson is leading the charge as usual. His black hair is shorter than the last time I saw him, but he's still got that same determined look in his eyes. My older brother always insisted on finishing a job.

His team members are behind him, looking ready for a fight. They came to the right place. My bear will definitely oblige.

Ryker stops his bike with a grin on his face. He revs the engine with those big arms that are covered in tattoo sleeves. I can smell the Kodiak bear he's hiding inside.

“There’s our favorite teddy bear,” Grayson says as he hops off his bike and cracks his huge knuckles. He’s got a giant polar bear ready to burst out that’s nearly as big as my enormous grizzly.

Remy arrives last and swings his long leg off his bike. My bear spots that long Samurai sword that’s always strapped to his back and lets out a low growl.

“Come on, mon ami,” Remy, the French Canadian wolf shifter says with a sly smirk. “On va faire ça nice and easy, okay?”

He unsheathes his sword as the others spread out. For a paramilitary force, these four do not dress the part. They’re all in jeans and t-shirts, probably clothes they picked up in that rural town after our last fight days ago.

“Gus,” Jackson says as he carefully approaches. “I know you’re in there. If you still got any control over your bear, you gotta let us know.”

My bear lunges forward with a warning snarl. His black lip is curled up over his sharp powerful canines as he glares at my older brother.

“He’s past saving, Jackson,” Ryker says as he rolls his tattooed shoulders, looking excited for the battle that’s about to start any second now. “Look at the crazed look in his eyes. He’s full-on feral.”

“You saw what he did in the last town,” Grayson says as he unbuckles his belt and pulls off his jeans. “I know he’s your brother, but he’s already gone.”

“Hold up,” Jackson says as he puts up a hand to Grayson, stopping him from phasing. “You’re right. He’s my brother. Which means I have to give him a chance.”

“We gave him a chance on the last time,” Remy says in a thick French accent. “And la savage nearly ripped my throat out.”

My bear growls at him as if to warn that next time he won’t miss.

Jackson ignores them all as he steps a little closer. His eyes are on me.

“Are you in there, Gus?”

My own brother has come to take me out. I should feel betrayed, but I don't. I just feel shame. And anger. At myself, at my bear, at the world for being so cruel.

I just want it to end. If it were up to me, I'd let them do what they came here to do, but all my bear wants to do is fight.

With a grunt, I try to pull him in as hard as I can, gripping and yanking down as I try to force my way up. It's useless. He's become way too strong. I sink back down inside with a sigh as he snarls at my brother.

“We tried,” Grayson says as he lets his polar bear come forward. My nasty bear watches with adrenaline pumping through his veins as Grayson explodes into a roaring white polar bear.

“Sorry, mon ami,” Remy says to Jackson as he swings his sword, cutting eights into the air. “Dis is de only way.”

Ryker stays in his human form as he circles behind my bear. He foolishly gets too close and my bear spins around in a murderous rage.

*Nooooo!*

He swipes his deadly paw at Ryker and slices his long black claws across his chest, tearing through flesh. Blood flies into the air, splattering the ground, the trees, and my grizzly's snarling face.

“What the... fuck?” Ryker mutters in horror as he stumbles back, face pale, open mouth, bulging eyes staring down at the deep lacerations in his chest. Dark red blood pours out of the four thick claw marks now carved into his skin. He covers it with his hands as he stumbles and falls onto his ass. He's desperately trying to keep the blood in but it's pouring through his fingers.

“Calisse,” Remy says with a gasp.

The polar bear growls with the scent of blood in the air.

Ryker is a Kodiak bear shifter and he's got enhanced healing like the rest of us. He'll survive. The wounds will heal slowly and he's in for a painful forty-eight hours, but he'll survive.

"Fuck," Jackson mutters when he sees his bloody friend hollering in pain on the ground. "Alright, guys. He's a goner. Let's take him out." He looks my bear in the eyes with a sad look on his face. "Sorry, Gus. I tried."

*I know you did.*

I urge my bear to lay down and take what's coming to us, but of course, the fucker ignores me. He charges right at the polar bear and slams into his ribs with a roar. The two bears lunge on each other with gnashing teeth and hacking claws.

Grayson's polar bear puts up a good fight, but there's no competition between a sane bear and a feral one. It only takes a few seconds before the enormous polar bear is on the ground with his neck in my grizzly's jaws.

Jackson's grizzly slams into mine and we get thrown off of Grayson, rolling through the dirt and dry leaves as he attacks again. This time, my bear is ready and slices at his face. His claws miss by a hair.

The polar bear and grizzly regroup and come at my feral bear side-by-side while Ryker writhes on the ground, grunting and cursing as he bleeds into the dirt.

My savage grizzly faces them with a snarl. The fucker is actually having fun. He's enjoying this.

The two bears stomp forward on their massive paws while my—

*Fuck!!*

My grizzly roars in outrage and agony as hot searing pain slices through our back leg. He whips his head around in time to see Remy pulling his long bloody sword out of our flesh. Blood pours out, hot and slick, covering the long thick fur on our hind leg.

Fury rips through my bear. He slices at him, but the French Canadian is as quick as he is stealthy. He rolls out of the way with a grin.

With his head turned, he doesn't see the two bears lunging on him. They slam into him and slice us up with razor-sharp claws. The polar bear chomps down on our shoulder as Jackson's grizzly stands up on his two hind legs and slams his massive front paws down on our ribs, crunching and snapping the bones.

My feral bear roars in fury as pain surges through us like bolts of lightning. He lunges on the polar bear and chomps down on his ear, tearing a piece off as Jackson's grizzly slices up our backside. Grayson's polar bear roars in pain and anger as blood leaks onto his white fur, staining it pink.

*Stop!* I scream at him. It does nothing.

He turns and swipes at my brother's face. Jackson's grizzly rears back just in time and my sharp bloody claws whizz past his nose.

My bear is about to swipe again, but that sharp searing pain pierces under our arm.

"When you want something done right," Remy says as he digs the sword deeper into my bear. "You leave it to the wolf."

He yanks it out with a grunt and my bear stumbles back with a whimper as more blood leaks out onto the dried-up leaves.

*That's what you get,* I growl at him. *This is what you deserve.*

My bear glances back at the tree line. It's so far away. We're bleeding pretty badly. From our back leg, from our ass, from under our front leg. The thick blood is turning the hard soil to mud under our paws. My bear takes a step and slips.

"*Oh fuck,*" Ryker groans as he winces in pain. He's still clutching his torn-up chest, but at least the blood isn't pouring out as much. It's only trickling out now that his enhanced healing has kicked in. "Look at my fucking chest! I need a fucking hospital!"



*Look what you do, I growl at my wounded bear. I'm furious now. All the pain he causes. All the shit. Fuck him. Just give yourself up. Let us die. It's what we deserve.*

He snarls back at me, the hatred in him increasing. He'll never give up. He'll never lay down.

I used to think that he was so intent on finding our mate that he would never let up, but now I think he just wants to watch the world burn. It's not about our mate anymore. It's about causing the maximum amount of damage he can inflict before he ultimately gets taken down.

“Get me to a fucking hospital!” Ryker screams.

“There's no hospital in this shit town,” Remy says as he shakes the blood off his blade with a firm swipe. “Quit your whining, ostie.”

“Fuck you, dog!” Ryker shouts back at him. “I can see my fucking lungs!”

Remy chuckles. “Fucking bears. All a bunch of loud fury pussies.”

The train groans as it starts moving.

Jackson's grizzly and Grayson's polar bear are both huffing out heavy breaths as they regroup and circle around my bear. Jackson is bleeding from his neck and Grayson is bleeding from his ear. His whole right side is pink.

It's nothing compared to my bear though. We're bleeding heavily. His energy is draining along with every drop of blood.

*Lay down, I urge him. It's over.*

He lets out a low growl, then gathers all the energy he has left and sprints along the rolling train. It's picking up speed.

*Stop! Just fucking stop.*

My words only seem to push him further. He sprints forward despite the burning pain searing through our legs. He's one tough motherfucker. I'll give the monster that.

The train starts to really pick up speed. My grizzly darts in front of it and races across the tracks. The front grazes his

bloody ass, barely missing him.

The other bears try to follow, but the conductor is hanging out the window with the rifle in his hands. “A fucking polar bear?!” he shouts in shock. “Where the fuck did that come from?”

He fires a warning shot into the air and it makes the bears hesitate just enough for the train to pull away. We’re on the other side with a headstart. The train is really long, so we have a few minutes before The Foxhounds can cross the tracks to finish the job.

*Stay, I urge him. Let’s end this nightmare here.*

With a growl, my bear ignores me and runs toward the town.

Of fucking course.

What did I expect? Really?

## CHAPTER TWO

---

### *Hazel*

“STOP EATING THE FRIES!” LOU SHOUTS AS HE TRIES TO SLAP my hand with his greasy spatula. I’m too fast for the surly cook.

“Last one,” I say with a wide smile as I shove the hot french fry into my mouth. “Promise.”

It won’t be the last one.

This rundown diner doesn’t do much right, but even I have to admit they know how to make one crispy delectable french fry.

“*Hmpf*,” Lou grumbles as he shuffles over to the grill. I snatch another one while his big back is turned to me.

Kathy is laughing. “Do you have a death wish or something?”

“It’s worth the risk,” I say with a moan as I swallow the delicious fry down. “It’s one of the benefits of working in Timberville’s finest restaurant.”

“Its *only* restaurant,” she says as she wipes down the plastic menus. “Why did you move here again?”

I sigh as I grab the pot of coffee. “I ask myself that every day.”

She chuckles as I head onto the floor, smiling at all of the regulars as I refill cup after cup.

There are about five thousand people scattered around the mountainous area, mostly working in logging and a few ranchers. We always get a few of them in here for lunch. They're nice, wholesome, salt-of-the-earth people, which is a nice change from where I come from.

"Did you hear anything about that scuffle by the train station this morning?" Dan, one of my regulars, asks.

"Dan, you know as much as I do that nothing remotely interesting happens in this town. Ever."

He laughs as I refill his coffee.

"Well, get this," he says in a low voice. "Apparently, there were some bear shifters battling it out and a French guy with a sword."

I roll my eyes and chuckle. "A French guy with a sword? Bear shifters? Were they riding in on unicorns?"

"Dirt bikes."

I laugh.

"It's true! My buddy Reggie works there. He saw it."

I sit down across from him in the booth with a sigh. "Never trust info from a guy named Reggie. I shouldn't have to tell you things like this, Dan. What are you, fifty?"

"I'm thirty-seven!"

"Oh! Shit, sorry. You look great for your age by the way."

He frowns. "It's true. One guy turned into a polar bear and his ear was bleeding."

"A polar bear?" I shake my head. The people in this town will believe *anything*. "Bear shifters don't exist."

"Yes, they do!" he says with a fierceness in his tone that forces me to fight back a laugh. "My friend's cousin's boyfriend was one."

"Always a friend of a friend of a cousin of a neighbor, right?"

His eyebrows bunch up as he frowns at me. I don't think I'm going to be getting a big tip from Dan today.

"You city folk don't know what you're talking about."

"Coming from the guy who's saying there are polar bears and French ninjas running around town."

"How long have you been here?"

"Three months." Three long boring ass months living in the tiny one-bedroom apartment over this diner. All of my stuff smells like hamburgers.

"You'll see," he says as he nods with complete confidence. "There are no bear shifters in the city, but out here... there are tons of them."

"Hazel!" Lou hollers from the kitchen. "No sitting at the tables!"

"I was just checking the fluffiness of the seats," I holler back. "They're terrible by the way. The wood is digging into my butt."

Everyone in the diner chuckles as I get up with a sigh. They all know me by now and they all know Lou too. They seem to love the way we bicker.

"The garbage needs to be changed," he says with a huff as he shuffles back into the kitchen.

"I'm on it!" I say with a firm salute.

I refill a few more cups on the way back to the kitchen and overhear some more talk about the big bad bear shifters fighting by the train station. I wonder what it really was that's getting these townsfolk all riled up. Maybe a raccoon wandered into the station and Reggie's overactive imagination went overboard.

"Garbage," Lou says when I return behind the counter and slide the coffee pot back onto the burner. "Now."

"I'll take the garbage out since I'm a stellar employee," I say as I walk over to it. "But you're not my boss, Lou. For the hundredth time."

“I’m the one who opened this restaurant thirty-three years ago!” he says as he flips an egg on the grill. Why is his shirt always so dirty? Speaking of shifters, this man looks like a giant mutant frog shifter.

“Too bad you sold it to buy a hunting cabin,” I say with a sad face. “Now, you’re just an employee like me. So, no more boss.”

He grumbles as he flips another egg. “Just take out the dang garbage.”

I tie up the bag and pull it out with a grunt. Gross mystery liquid leaks onto my shoe.

“Ew!” I say as I rush out the back, half-carrying, half-dragging the heavy leaking bag.

The cool autumn air hits my skin and I shiver, but it feels good. I’m excited for the seasons. I’ve never experienced them before. I come from Florida where it’s sweaty weather all year round. I’m not used to needing jackets and gloves and hats. I guess I’ll have to save up and buy all of that stuff unless I want to freeze this winter.

I push open the large dumpster with a grunt. The heavy door groans as it swings over and then slams into the side.

“Alright, muscles,” I say as I rub my hands together with a grin. “Let’s get this on one shot this time.”

I grab the heavy bag, grit my teeth, and swing it up with all of my strength. It slams into the side of the metal dumpster and then falls back down on the ground. At least, it didn’t tear open this time.

“Try number two,” I say as I grab the leaking bag, bend my knees, and hoist it up with a grunt. It swings over the edge and disappears inside.

“Oh, yeah!” I say as I do a little victory dance in the back of the diner where no one can see me. It’s embarrassing that I’m celebrating getting a garbage bag into the dumpster as a win, but you have to take your wins where you can, right?

I turn to head inside when I hear a masculine groan coming from inside the bin. My body freezes. My blood goes cold.

*Was that...?*

Another one. It sounds like someone is in there and it sounds like they're in pain.

With my pulse racing and my heart pounding, I sneak up to the bin and try to gather the courage to peek in.

I step on my toes and—*Holy shit!*

There's a naked man in there!

I hightail it back to the door of the diner to get Lou, but stop when I wrap my hand around the door handle.

I turn and look at the bin with my heart thundering in my chest.

*Go to him*, a little voice inside says, coming out of nowhere.

I should get my head checked. There's a naked man in that dumpster and my brain is urging me to go to him. I've barely been interested in any boy, haven't even had a crush before, and the first time my brain is like 'oooooh, a man!' it's over some naked stranger laying in a dumpster behind a crappy old diner. I really know how to pick 'em.

I turn back to the door to do the smart thing and get Lou, but there's something *pulling* me toward him. Some invisible force that feels like it's gripping my soul and urging me to go back. I feel *drawn* to him in some strong weird way.

"Shit," I whisper as I let go of the door and hurry back to the dumpster. I put my hand into my waitressing apron and grab the canister of pepper spray I always keep on me. A prickling feeling crawls up the back of my neck as I step on my toes and peek in once again.

I swallow a gasp when I see him laying there. He's injured. And naked. *Very* naked. He's laying on his side with his leg covering the triple X-rated parts. His leg is covered in dried blood. There's a wound on his thigh that looks like it's a few weeks old. It's still red and raw, but it's no longer bleeding at

least. How long has this guy been in here? Why the heck is he naked?

He shivers and I dart away with my heart pounding. I take a few deep breaths and then peek back in.

There are deep scratches all over him. Long parallel pink lines run along his ass and up his back. They look like they are incredibly painful. What, did this guy get mauled by a bear? There's thick fresh blood pooled all over the garbage bags under him. I spot another deep wound under his arm. This one is still leaking out blood.

Before I can stop myself, I put my pepper spray back in my apron, grab onto the dumpster, pull myself up, and swing my leg over.

“This is a bad idea,” I say as I'm about to drop in, but I do it anyway. I land on the garbage bags and he stirs with a painful groan. His eyes are closed and he doesn't even open them as I lean down and look him over up close.

He's gorgeous. Truly beautiful, even considering that he's covered in blood and laying in a dumpster. I stare at his face—furrowed brow, clenched jaw, stubbled cheeks with an adorable dimple in them—and wonder what color his eyes are. I wonder how it feels when they look right at you. My body craves the answer.

*What the heck is wrong with you, girl? This man needs a hospital, not you ogling him.*

But still, I can't look away. My curious eyes roam along his hard muscular arms and over his massive chest that's moving up and down as it takes rough haggard breaths.

My fingertips tingle as I imagine running my hands through his messy brown hair. A sudden urge to lay down beside him and rest my cheek on his shoulder hits me, but I shake it off with a roll of my eyes. *What the heck has gotten into me?*

“Come on,” I say as I slide my hand into his. It's warm despite the cold weather.

His hand squeezes mine gently and I feel a tug in my heart.



He groans again, but his eyes don't open.

"You can't stay here," I say as I pull him up with all of my strength. Man, this dude is heavy!

He lifts his head with a moan and his eyes flicker open for a second as he's jerked up, but then they close just as quickly.

"I need you to help me," I whisper in a smooth calming voice. "You're too heavy to lift up and I don't want Lou to see you in here. He'll chase you out of town with a dirty spatula."

I manage to pull him up to a seated position. His head is hanging low and his eyes are still closed. We've gotten some progress, but I did seem to open the wound under his arm. Fresh blood leaks out.

"Shit, I need to call an ambulance," I whisper to myself.

"No... ambulance," he mutters in a groggy voice as his head rolls. He looks like he doesn't have the strength to lift it, let alone open his eyes. "No hospitals... Please."

"I can't leave you here," I say as my mind races. "You'll freeze to death."

"Just leave me here," he says in a weak voice.

I can't. That tiny voice from before is now hollering at me to save him.

"Hazel!" a voice rings out. "Hazel, where are you?"

Shit. It's Kathy.

This is going to look sooo bad.

"Stay here," I whisper to him like he's going to go anywhere. "I'll be right back."

I pop my head out of the dumpster with a forced smile.

Kathy jerks her head back in surprise when she sees me. "Um, what are you doing in there?"

"I... ah... dropped my ring."

"Your ring?"

“When I threw the garbage bag,” I say with my voice racing. “My ring slipped off with it and sailed into the dumpster. I’m just looking for it.”

She stares at me for a long moment. “Do you need help looking for it?”

“No, no,” I quickly say. “Can you watch my tables though? I’ll just be a few minutes. The ring means a lot to me and I don’t want to lose it.”

“Okay,” she says as she heads back inside. “Good luck.”

“Thanks!” I say and then duck my head back down.

Strange mystery garbage man is starting to wake up a little. His eyes are still closed, but he’s holding his head a little higher at least.

“I live upstairs,” I say as I grab his big muscular arm. “You can sleep on my couch for a bit. Just until you gain some strength back.”

“It’s... not a good... idea,” he says in a throaty whisper. “Just... leave me... here.”

His head drops back down.

“Not going to happen, buddy. Up you go.” I stand up and pull him up with me with a grunt.

With some struggling and a lot of swearing, I manage to get him up, his heavy body leaning against the metal wall. I’m out of breath and my heart is pounding when he finally helps me and swings his body over the dumpster.

He lands on the ground and collapses on the dirt with a moan.

“Okay,” I whisper as I look at him sprawled out on the dirt. This time there’s nothing covering him. I look away from his big package with my cheeks flaring.

*This is the guy you’re going to bring back to your apartment? Is this really a good idea, girl?*

I know it’s a horrible idea, but I can’t seem to stop myself. I hop out of the dumpster and struggle to get him to his feet.

With his big heavy arm around my shoulders, I push and pull him toward the stairs that lead up to my place.

“Why are you... doing this?” he whispers. Every word he says is oozing with pain. It’s thick with suffering.

“I don’t know,” I say as we struggle to get up the stairs. “Maybe I have a thing for naked guys in dumpsters or maybe I have some self-destructive tendencies. I don’t know, just keep moving your feet before I change my mind.”

The poor guy is barefoot. His feet are covered in dried blood and now my shoes are too.

He’s a real mess.

I open my door and drag him into my apartment. His eyes are still closed. I don’t think he has the energy to open them.

I bring him to the couch and he falls onto it with a wince, laying on his back with his full package in view. Well, at least something on his body is not injured. That thing is impressively long. I shake my head and close my eyes when I catch myself staring at it for too long. I quickly grab a blanket and put it over his lower half.

He groans as he drifts off to sleep. What do I do now? Leave him here? I still have an hour left on my shift. I still have tables.

“Hazel!” Lou’s deep froggy voice hollers from downstairs. I run to the door and poke my head out. He’s standing below, looking for me.

“Up here.”

He swings his big head up and frowns. “You’re not allowed up there during working hours!”

“Again, Lou, not my boss.”

His frown deepens. “Dan wants to pay.”

He marches back inside.

I turn and look at the gorgeous sleeping naked man on my couch and my heart squeezes into a tight little ball. I know this

is a horrible idea, but it doesn't feel that way. It feels like it's the right thing to do. I almost *want* him here.

Like I'm glad that he's here.

I shake my head, close the door, and hurry back downstairs wondering what this weird little town has done to me.

## CHAPTER THREE

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*August*

A HEAVY GROAN RUMBLES OUT OF ME AS I CLOSE MY EYES and let the hot water wash over my face.

This has got to stop.

It's a never-ending hell. Ripping up one town after another. Ripping up my body. Bringing danger wherever I go.

I don't even know where I am right now.

I turn my head and force my eyes open. A pink towel. More beauty products than I can count crowded around the small sink. A tiny pair of bunny slippers by the door.

The memory comes back, but it's all cloudy and full of holes. I remember climbing into the dumpster and passing out. Then, the bright light when someone opened the door. Stumbling up the steps. A scent that was like fire in my lungs. I had lost so much blood and I was so weak. I didn't know what was happening.

"*Fuck,*" I wince as I reach for the soap with my injured arm and a bolt of pain lights me up. I'm going to kill that French fucker with the sword.

*No. He's just doing his job. He's doing what's right. He's doing what you're too cowardly to do.*

I sigh as I take the soap and wash the dried blood off my skin. Pink water swirls around my feet before disappearing

down the drain.

“You see what you do?” I whisper to my bear. “You’re fucking ruining my life.”

He’s not even paying attention. He doesn’t give a shit. He’s somewhere deep inside, licking his wounds, getting healed up for the next fight, sulking like the asshole that he is.

All of my wounds are closed at least. Everywhere still hurts like crazy and I’m not done healing by a long shot, but at least I’m not going to bleed out all over this nice person’s apartment. Whoever they are.

I’m wondering what kind of person would pull a bleeding naked man out of the dumpster and let them stay in their home when I hear the front door open.

My body perks up. Adrenaline courses through my veins. I slowly turn the water off and take the pink towel off the rack.

The smell on it stuns me for a second. It’s so intriguing that it grabs all of my attention and makes me forget that there’s probably an armed paramilitary shifter force in the living room about to take me down.

I bring the towel to my nose and inhale deeply. My whole body comes alive. It ignites. My bear snaps to attention, on full alert now.

I can’t take my nose away. I can’t stop inhaling this intoxicating scent. It’s so addictive. It’s fucking incredible. Every one of the hairs on my arms and neck are standing straight up as I take another long whiff.

A knock on the door jerks me out of my daze. “Hello?” a feminine voice says. “Are you okay in there?”

I whip the towel around my waist and tie it into a knot.

I’m bracing for my maniac bear to come charging out, but he’s just watching from inside, calm as can be.

That’s not normal. How badly did he get his ass kicked? Is he afraid to come out now?

“I’m going to open the door, okay?” the girl says.

I step back, looking for weapons in the small bathroom. This could be a trap. The Foxhounds can be behind her, or this town's entire police department. I grab the ceramic top of the toilet and hold it up as the door handle turns.

The door slowly opens and the most stunning girl I've ever seen steps into the bathroom. My heart clenches. My breath gets caught in my throat. All I can do is stare at her in awe as her mouth drops while she looks at me like I'm a crazy person.

"Please don't break my toilet," she says when she sees the top part in my hands. "The landlord will be pissed and then it will be a whole thing. He's still mad that I painted the living room."

I can't answer. I can't even move, let alone talk.

My hands are gripping the ceramic so hard I'm worried it's going to crack as my whole body hums with warmth.

She's standing in the doorway with her red hair loose on her shoulders like she just shook it out of a ponytail. She has the most adorable freckles on the bridge of her nose and along her cheeks. They highlight her spectacular green eyes that shine so brightly as they stare at me.

I'm getting lightheaded as I watch her. My body is craving this girl. It's desperate for her.

Every breath is searing through my lungs as her delicious scent fills this bathroom.

Even my bear is stunned. He doesn't seem to be moving inside me at all. Normally, he lashes out at the sight and sound of any stranger, but with her... shit, with her, everything has changed.

"Sir," she says in that adorable voice. "My toilet. Please. It wouldn't be very nice to repay my kindness by breaking my toilet cover? Toilet hat? Whatever it's called."

I come to for a second and lower my hands. With my heart thundering in my chest, I manage to put the ceramic cover back on the toilet.

“Sorry about that,” I say. My voice is all cracked and haggard. It’s deep and throaty. Half from my injuries and half from her.

I don’t know why this girl is having such a strong effect on me. I don’t know why—

“*Fuck,*” I whisper when it hits me.

Her eyebrows raise. “You okay?”

This girl... She’s my mate.

Of course, she is. I’m certain of it.

I’m standing here like a total dope as I stare at her in awe. She’s perfect. She’s fucking perfect.

She’s wearing a white collared Polo shirt with stains all over it. Black pants and there’s a waitressing apron around her waist with money, a notepad, and a couple of pens sticking out of it.

“You’re a waitress?”

She looks me up and down and I’m suddenly very aware that the only thing I’m wearing is a pink towel wrapped around my waist. My hair is a wet mess and my skin is still dripping water onto her tiled floor.

“At the diner downstairs,” she says with a nod. “And you’re...”

*Not worthy of you.*

“I’m just... passing through town.”

“Uh-huh,” she says with a nod and a skeptical look. “And an hour ago you were a naked man bleeding in a dumpster.”

She looks at my fresh wounds and nibbles on her bottom lip. I have to look away or I’m going to get hard and there won’t be any hiding my massive towering erection behind this thin towel.

“How about I go make some coffee while you finish up in here?” she says as she steps back out. “You can get your story straight while I find something for you to wear.”



I'm unable to speak as she closes the door. The breath gets knocked out of me as it clicks closed. I grab the sink, my whole body tight as I stare into the mirror. My eyes look... different.

There's no longer that golden hue to them. They're back to the blue they were before my bear lost it. I feel different too. More... in control. Less tight. Less on edge.

Even my bear is calm. He's not snarling or growling or trying to claw his way up. He's just calmly watching from inside, completely chill. This feels strange. It's eerie.

I grab the towel and quickly dry off. I towel dry my hair and then look around for something to put into it. It's been so long since I've worried about how I look and I'm not sure what to do. I find some hair mousse and squirt some into my palm. I run it through my hair, wincing as I raise my arm.

My girl knocks on the door again. "I have some clothes for you."

I tie the towel around my waist and open it. The stunning sight of her wracks my core and seizes my heart once again. I swallow hard as I grip the door.

She looks so adorable standing there with some folded clothes in her hands.

"This is a giant sweater," she says with her cheeks blushing. "Well, it's big for me. Maybe it will fit you. I got it at a garage sale for a dollar. And I don't have any pants that will fit you, but you can try these basketball shorts. I think they're for men, but sometimes I sleep in them."

My body stirs as I imagine her in those black shorts, sliding into bed, so vulnerable, so sexy.

"Thank you," I manage to grunt out as I take them from her. My hand touches hers for a brief moment and we both feel the electricity. Our eyes dart to one another and she opens her mouth as she stares at me in shock.

"I'm going to go... make that coffee," she says as she stumbles backward right into the wall. Her cheeks are blushing as she stares at me. Suddenly, her eyes are on the floor and

she's muttering something to herself. I watch her with my heart flipping around in my chest as she rushes into the kitchen.

I come out a minute later in the clothes. The black shorts are tight on my thick muscular thighs, but the orange sweater fits well. It must be huge on her, but it fits my frame snugly. I hope I don't look too ridiculous.

The coffee is brewing. It smells good, but I'm almost angry at it for overpowering her angelic scent. I want to be engulfed in that scent. I want to live in it forever.

She smiles when she sees me in the clothes. I must look ridiculous, but it's okay. If it gets a gorgeous smile like that out of her then I don't mind.

"So, I'm guessing you wouldn't know anything about that brouhaha at the train station this morning?" she asks as she pours the coffee into two cups. "Milk? Sugar?"

"Black," I say as I sit at the counter. She's behind it, adding one heaping spoonful of sugar into her cup after another.

"There's been a lot of chatter in town about bear shifters and French ninjas. I thought it was all crazy talk, but then I saw you all bloodied up out back. Now I'm thinking... I don't know what to think, honestly."

She looks at me over the mug, those sparkling green eyes piercing into me as she puckers her lips and lightly blows on her coffee. "Want to fill me in?"

She takes a slow sip as I sigh. She's my mate. She'll find out everything eventually anyway and I don't want there to be any secrets between us. I want her to know it all.

"The truth is... I am a bear shifter."

I'm expecting her to be shocked, but she rolls her eyes before taking another casual sip. "And I'm a vampire."

"It's true. I have a grizzly bear inside of me. A nasty one."

She leans on her stove, watching me skeptically.

“Those men, the three other bear shifters and the French ninja... He’s actually a wolf shifter not a ninja, but it doesn’t really matter. They’ve been chasing me.”

She’s sipping on her coffee and watching me with an amused grin like someone listening to a five-year-old telling them they just saw a unicorn flying in the sky.

“And why were they chasing you?”

I drop my eyes and take a deep breath. “My grizzly has gone feral.”

“Feral?”

“Yeah.”

“What does that mean?”

“All bear shifters have one fated mate who belongs to them,” I say with my voice cracking. I still can’t believe that my bear is still calm inside of me. He hasn’t been like this since before I started puberty. “One soul that connects with theirs. That binds together and completes them.”

“Okay,” she says, looking even more skeptical now.

I exhale long and hard. “Sometimes, if a shifter can’t find their mate, their bears go a little crazy. They get a little unhinged. It doesn’t happen often, but when it does, it’s not pretty. In fact, it can get downright ugly.”

She tucks her red hair behind her ear and my whole body begins to ache with need. I’ve dreamed about meeting my mate for years, but I never thought it would be like this—being so close, but not being able to touch. To have a ravenous hunger, but not being able to taste. My blood is burning with need for her and I have to sit here and calmly drink my coffee. Talk and act like everything is normal when I’m dying to have her. This is torture.

“My bear lost it about a year ago. He went feral. He was pushed over the edge while waiting for my mate to come into my life. He’s been... dangerous.”

She looks at my chest like she’s trying to see the bear inside.

“So, those men, they came after me.”

“To do what?”

I sigh. “To put my bear down.”

“To kill him?”

I nod.

“But if they kill your bear, what happens to you?”

“We’re two halves of the same coin. If he goes, I go.”

“That’s horrible,” she says with a gasp.

I shrug. “Maybe, but it’s necessary. At least, it was...”

She looks at me for a long moment. “Why? What’s changed?”

“I found my mate. Finally.”

“You did? Where is she?”

I stare right at her.

“Uh...”

“It’s you,” I say in as calm a voice as I can manage.  
“You’re my mate.”

## CHAPTER FOUR

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### *Hazel*

I SHOULD HAVE LET KATHY TAKE OUT THE GARBAGE.

Then she could have dealt with this strange guy who is claiming he's my mate. I mean, come on. A mate? It sounds so primal and barbaric. Like I don't even get a say in the matter.

Although, if I'm being honest, it doesn't sound so bad...

I am still feeling this strange pull toward him. The feeling of being drawn to him when I first saw him lying injured in the dumpster is even stronger now. It's taking over.

"What did you say your name was?" I ask as I look at him a little differently.

"I didn't. My name is August, but people close to me call me Gus. And you?"

"I'm Hazel," I say in a shy voice.

"Hazel," he whispers as he watches me with those deep blue eyes. I feel my cheeks blush under the intensity of them.

"I'm going to call you August," I say. "I like that better. Gus sounds like an eighty-year-old grandpa working in a gas station. No offense."

He smiles. Not the worst sight in the world.

He is really hot. That orange sweater is huge on me, but it's hugging his frame nicely. I can see his round shoulders and

I like the way the material is tight on his big biceps. I saw him naked and I know that he's got a gorgeous body full of perfectly carved muscles hiding under those clothes. A full six-pack, a big powerful chest, and a long thick package that would make any hot-blooded woman blush. I'm blushing right now just thinking about it.

"Wait a minute," I say as I clear all of these unhelpful thoughts from my head. "All of that would be great, *if* bear shifters existed. But they don't."

"They do, unfortunately. I am one."

"Prove it."

I cross my arms and stare at him with a challenging look. He squirms in his seat. Got him. This is all bullshit.

"I can't."

"Why not?" I say with a winning stare. "If you have a grizzly bear inside of you, bring him out."

"No. It's too dangerous."

"A bear shifter would never hurt his mate," I say mockingly. "Right? So, I should be fine. Bring him out."

He shakes his head, looking disappointed. "He seems calm right now, but... I can't risk it. Not around you. I don't trust him. Like I said, he's gone feral."

"That's convenient," I say with a roll of my eyes. "Maybe you should get going..."

"Wait," he says as he stands up and yanks the shorts up his right thigh. "Look at this wound. It was from this morning. From the French guy with the sword."

"From the wolf shifter?" I say skeptically.

"Yes! This was a fresh wound this morning. Look how it's healing. Only a shifter can heal this quickly."

"Unless you're full of shit and that happened last week or last month. How am I supposed to know when you got those wounds?"

Although, everything does look much more healed than it did when I found him in the dumpster a few hours ago. He looks much better overall and I did notice that some of the scratches on his chest that were deep pink lines when I first saw him were almost completely gone when I saw him shirtless in the bathroom a few minutes ago. Maybe he does have quick healing... It would explain a lot. Like why he isn't dead.

"You can't have mates without trust," he says as he gazes into my eyes. "We're going to have to trust each other."

I feel myself leaning toward him, the desire and yearning inside increasing with every breath. I want to be his. I want him to have me...

I catch myself and close my eyes for a second to gather my spiraling thoughts.

"This is ridiculous," I finally say when I've composed myself. "You're making an outlandish claim that you're a bear shifter. Prove it. Bring your bear out or else I won't believe you."

I cross my arms and stare him down.

He sighs and I almost feel bad for him. My heart goes out to him and I get a strong urge to go over there and wrap my arms around his big hulking body. I grit my teeth and fight the urge off.

"That's not going to happen," he says in a pained voice. "I'd never risk your safety like that, Hazel. I would never let anything harm my mate. Ever."

We stare at each other for a long moment until he jerks his head toward the window. He jumps up from his seat and rushes over.

"Shit."

"What is it?"

"Dirt bikes. Can you hear them?"

I try to listen, but I can't hear anything. "No."

“Well, they’re coming.” He yanks the curtains closed. “Did you tell anyone I was here? Anyone?”

“No,” I say. For some reason deep down I knew to keep him a secret. I wanted to keep him safe. I wanted to keep him all for me. I knew that if I told Kathy or Lou or any of my customers, they’d tell the police and they’d come and take him away. I wanted him all to myself.

I start to hear the faint rumbling of the dirt bikes in the distance. How the hell did he hear that so early? Maybe he is a shifter...

“They must have healed up and then picked up my scent,” he says as he rushes to the door. “Do you have a car?”

“A crappy one.”

“Grab the keys,” he says as he yanks the door open. “We’re leaving. Now.”

I burst into action, grabbing my coat, the spare money I have hidden under the kitchen sink, a few granola bars, and then I’m running after him down the stairs and toward my car.

It’s parked on the side of the diner.

Just as I’m shoving the key into the door, the dirt bikes arrive. There are four of them, each with a terrifying man on top, all of the men barefoot except for the one with the sword strapped to his back.

*The story at the train station was true?!*

My stomach drops as all four of them glare at my man. The engines roar as they accelerate, circling us in a threatening manner.

“Jackson!” August says as he looks at the guy in the lead. He’s the largest one and kind of resembles Gus. “I need some time. Something has changed.”

“No more time,” Jackson says sadly. “Your bear’s out of control.”

“You fucked up my chest,” the big guy with the tattoo sleeves hollers as he gets off his bike. He yanks up his t-shirt,



showing four fresh pink scars running along his chest that look like they're from bear claws. "This is permanent! It cut through the tissue!"

"It wasn't me," August says with a sigh. "It was my bear."

"Same shit," the big guy says with revenge in his eyes.

The blond guy steps off his bike, not saying a thing. He's got huge broad shoulders and a fire in his blue eyes.

*What is he...?*

He's stripping! Why is he stripping?

I watch in shock as he pulls off his shirt in one swift motion and begins to shake. His whole body quivers and then quakes in angry convulsions. His shoulders balloon even larger and then with a *rip*, a full-grown polar bear bursts out of him with a savage roar.

It takes my brain a second to absorb the shock, but then I realize... It's all true. Shifters exist, August is one of them, and I'm his mate.

My pulse races as I turn and look at him.

He grabs my arm and pulls me protectively behind his large body.

"Do your thing," I whisper to him as the polar bear snarls at us.

"What?" he whispers back.

"Your bear thing. Bring him out."

"No," he says with a fierce shake of his head. "I'm not risking it around you. I don't trust him. Hazel, I... have to go with them."

"They'll kill you!"

"It's the best thing." He turns and looks at me with watery eyes. "All I've ever wanted was to look at your beautiful face. Just once. You're even more stunning than I ever thought possible."

My heart squeezes in my chest. I wish I was all done up and wasn't still wearing my dirty waitressing uniform at least.

“My time is up,” he continues, looking like his heart is breaking. “But now that I've met my incredible mate, I can die happy.”

My breath lodges in my throat as he leans in and kisses me softly on the lips. That big powerful hand cups the back of my neck as our lips open and I get a taste of his delicious tongue.

“Thank you,” he whispers when he pulls away. My chin is tilted up in the air, my eyes half closed, my heart beating wildly. There's no way that's going to be our last kiss. I want more of them. Every day, I want more.

He turns to surrender himself to the four shifters, but I grab his wrist and yank him back.

“No,” I say firmly when he looks at me in shock. “We're not giving up yet.”

I pull him to my car and tell him to get in. I take a breath of relief when he does, because trying to force him in would be like trying to force in an elephant.

“Don't do this,” Jackson says, looking exhausted. He looks at the Frenchman with the sword and nods his head. “Remy.”

Remy steps off his dirt bike with a grin and slides the sword out of the sheath strapped to his back. My door is open, but I'm not in the car yet as he comes over, gripping that sword with a smile on his face. He swipes it at my back tire, slicing through the rubber. The back left side of my car sinks down with a hiss as I shove my hand into my waitressing apron.

August jumps back out of the car. He growls at Remy.

“Back in,” I shout to him. “I can take care of this.”

“How?” he asks as Remy grins at me.

“With this!” I pull out a canister of pepper spray and point it menacingly at the Frenchman.

His forehead creases. “Chapstick?”

“Shit,” I say as I look at it and then reach back into my purse. I grab the real canister of pepper spray and yank it out. Before he can read the label, I’m pushing down on the button and spraying the fiery liquid into his eyes. He stumbles back with a scream.

The polar bear advances with a growl and I spray him too. He throws his head back and releases a vicious roar.

“Let’s go!” August shouts. I jump into the car and start the engine.

I’m reversing at full speed before I can even close the door. The guy with the tattoos leaps out of the way as my crappy twenty-year-old car slams into his bike, sending it flying with a crunch. I slam my door closed, throw it into drive, and speed out of the parking lot with my back bumper hanging down.

Adrenaline surges through me as I peel onto the street. August is looking through the back windshield. I glance at the rearview mirror just as Jackson comes rolling out on his dirt bike. The big tattooed guy comes next even though I destroyed his bike. He probably grabbed Remy’s.

My car isn’t going nearly as fast as it normally can and it’s vibrating like crazy with the shredded back tire, but I keep my foot pressed all the way down regardless.

Everyone in town stops and stares at us in shock as we fly down the main street, my broken bumper screeching and sending up sparks as it drags on the concrete.

I rocket through a red light and my tires squeal as I make an abrupt turn onto the state highway. I’m booting down it, but the two bikers catch up to me easily.

Jackson pulls up on my side and the tattooed guy pulls up on August’s side.

“Maybe we should pull over,” August says in a low voice. “I don’t want you to get hurt.”

“Fuck. That.” I yank my car to the left, slamming it into Jackson. His bike wobbles and he flies off the road,

somersaulting off in a cloud of dirt. I yank it back to the right and hit Tattoos, sending him flying as well.

They're not getting up from that for a while. I grin as I look at the two brown clouds of dirt rising from the sides of the highway.

*We're free. We're—oh, you gotta be kidding me!*

Sprinting down the highway between the clouds of smoke is a huge wolf. I stare at it in shock through the rearview mirror. It looks so out of place that it takes my brain a second or two to realize what's happening.

I shove my foot down on the gas, pushing this crappy car to its limit. We hit a groove in the road and the back bumper finally falls off.

The wolf leaps over it and keeps on coming.

All the rubber finally flies off the wheel and we start to go faster now that it's just the metal on the concrete without the busted tire getting in the way. It's making a racket and the steering wheel is vibrating so hard that my hands hurt.

The wolf eventually begins to slow as we outrun it. I finally take a breath of relief when he's a speck in my rearview mirror.

Then, he's gone.

We're both silent as I keep driving. Where to, I don't know. But my mate is by my side and that's all that matters.

That's all that will ever matter from now on.

## CHAPTER FIVE

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*August*

“WHERE DID YOU LEARN HOW TO DRIVE LIKE THAT?” I ASK MY girl as I pull the spare tire out of her trunk.

“John Wick movies and Mario Kart,” she says with a laugh as she leans on the car, watching me.

My whole body is buzzing with her sexy eyes on me, but it’s no time to get distracted. I have to change this tire as quickly as I can so we can get back on the road. I know my brother and he’s not going to stop until he finds me.

We drove for about fifteen minutes before we pulled over on the side of the road. We’re surrounded by mountains and Hazel managed to park behind a couple of large trees. We’re probably safe here for a few minutes, but I don’t want to linger for long. Those boys are going to be pissed now that I’ve shaken them off again. Not to mention, they got outsmarted and beaten by a human girl. For an elite paramilitary shifter force, that’s not going to go over well with them.

“Your axle is fucked,” I say as I unscrew the lug nuts with my fingers, grunting as I force each one loose. The metal is all bent up and ground down to shit.

“Can you get the tire on?” she asks as she looks over my shoulder.

“I think so,” I say as I get the last bolt off. I pull off the remains of the old tire, slap the spare tire on, and start

screwing the lug nuts back on. “I wouldn’t recommend driving on this, and the alignment will be totally off, but since there’s a team of mercenary shifters after us, it will have to do.”

We get back in the car and keep driving. This car has taken a beating and it’s gathering a lot of attention. Everyone we pass is staring at us, probably wondering why the whole back bumper is missing and the doors are caved in. It would probably be good to get off the road as soon as we can.

“Why did you save me back there?” I ask as I watch her beautiful face. She blows the red hair out of her eyes as she focuses on the road.

“Because...”

“Because why?” I want to hear her say it.

“Because maybe you were right.”

“About?”

“About us being mates.” She looks at me and my chest flutters with those gorgeous green eyes on me. I adore her freckles. I could stare at this girl’s angelic face for years and not get bored. “When I saw that guy turn into a polar bear shifter—”

“That’s Grayson.”

“Yeah. Him. It all kind of clicked. I knew you were telling the truth. About all of it. And I could feel that you were right. Then, when you kissed me...”

Her cheeks begin to turn an adorable shade of pink.

“I knew I couldn’t let you go.”

We sit in silence for a long moment as we drive along the curvy mountain roads.

It suddenly hits me that my bear is silent. He’s calm. He’s not trying to rip his way out of me and he’s not snarling in my ear. Even during all of that action back there, he was calm. He was letting me handle it. He was ready in case I needed to pull him out, but he wasn’t trying to force his way out either.

It almost makes me think... No. He's gone feral. It's over for us. This might be a nice break, but the beast will return and I can't risk having Hazel around him when he's out of control.

"Who was that big guy?" she asks. "Jackson."

I sigh as I look at the huge pine trees whipping by us. "That's my older brother. He's the leader of The Foxhounds."

"Your own brother is trying to kill you?" she says as she looks at me in horror.

"It's not his fault," I say in a low voice. "He's just doing the right thing."

"Don't say that," she says as she looks at me with a ferocity in her eyes. "Don't ever say that again. You deserve to have a life. I just met you, but I can tell that you're a good man. I wouldn't be mates with someone shitty."

"It's my bear who's the problem," I say with a sigh. "He's dangerous to be around."

She huffs out a breath as she turns back to the road. "You let me worry about your bear," she says with a firm resolve in her voice. "I'll tame him properly."

I laugh as I watch her in awe.

She whips her head back, looking at me with a challenging stare. "You don't think I can?"

"I think you can do anything," I say as my heart aches in her presence. "You're the most amazing person I've ever met. You've already changed everything for me."

She gives me a little wink. "And I'm just getting started."

## CHAPTER SIX

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*Hazel*

“WHOSE CABIN IS THIS?” AUGUST ASKS AS I SLAM MY shoulder into the solid wooden door. It doesn’t budge. I grunt as I try again.

“Lou’s.”

“Who’s Lou?”

“The grumpy cook where I work,” I say as I try slamming it open with my other shoulder. “He comes hunting here sometimes. Uses the elk meat in the hamburgers.”

August is looking around the secluded property. There’s nothing but trees and mountains around here and we’re far from the road. I think we’re as safe as we can get from the Foxhounds.

I’m lucky I had the address in my phone. The owner sent me to fetch Lou here one time when the backup cook took a fit, quit, and walked out in the middle of his shift. Lou was not happy to see me.

“He doesn’t mind that you use it?” August asks.

“Umm... No.”

He would totally mind. Actually, he would blow a gasket if he knew what I was up to.

“Help me out here, would you,” I say as I step back from the door. “I forgot the key.”



Those sexy blue eyes roam over me as he steps up to the door. With one soft push of his shoulder, the door flies open with a *crack*.

I was expecting a crappy hunting cabin with only the bare necessities—grimy cot, outhouse, bucket of water for a sink, large carcass of a dead animal in the kitchen—but this is nice. It looks like a cute little couples’ retreat you’d book off of Airbnb. There’s a nice stone fireplace with some birch logs piled up beside it, an adorable kitchen with a cast iron stove, brass pots and pans hanging over the tiny island, comfy couches, and a beautiful bedroom with a big king-sized bed. Only one bed. Interesting...

I didn’t know Lou had it in him. If he ever decides to quit his job as a grumpy cook, maybe he can have a promising career as a grumpy interior designer.

“Want me to make something?” I say as I head into the kitchen. “You must be hungry.”

“Why do you say that?”

I laugh as I look at him. “Because you’re enormous, so you must always be hungry. I mean, I’m always hungry and look at the size difference between us.”

He laughs as he walks over, checking out the place, checking out me. “I am a little hungry now that you mention it.”

The fridge is pretty empty besides a half-full bottle of ketchup and some expired Ranch dressing. I open the fridge and jackpot! Well, jackpot if you love elk stakes. Lots and lots of elk stakes. Not much else in here. I take out two big ones and leave them in the sink to defrost.

“I’ll go see if Lou has any better clothes for you,” I say as I head into the bedroom. I open the closet and take out a pair of jeans and a t-shirt that might fit him. I’m drawing the line here. I am *not* opening up Lou’s underwear drawer. No way in hell.

“Thank you,” August says when I hand them to him. “For everything.”

The way he's looking at me... God, it makes me shiver all over. I've never had a man look at me like this. The yearning in those blue eyes... The need... The want... I can't look away.

"No problem," I say in a shaky voice. "Although, I hate to see you lose those sexy black shorts."

They're skintight on him. He grins as he flexes his leg and shows them off. "We'll keep them for later."

"Okay," I say with my cheeks blushing.

He heads into the bedroom to change as my mind swirls and spins with the fact that we're going to be alone in this adorable secluded cabin all night long. Fire going. Music. Elk stakes. Can it get more romantic than this?

This is the first time I've ever been alone with a man in this way. I'm twenty-two, but I still have my virginity intact.

All these years, I've pretended to have crushes, faked that I liked this boy or that, but in reality, I didn't want any of them. None of them got my heart cranking like August does. One look from those sexy blue eyes has given me more tingles and butterflies than the past ten years of boys trying to impress me, pick me up, or trying to flirt with me. They were all just annoying. A nuisance. But August... He's different. He's a real man. He knows how to get me going.

I'm breathless just thinking about it when the bedroom door opens and he steps out in Lou's clothes.

A heated throb of desire pulses between my legs when I see the sexy sight. This man can even make Lou's wardrobe look good. Unbelievable.

That gray shirt is tight around his large chest and the sleeves are hugging his big round biceps. The jeans fit well too, molding to the solid muscles in his thighs and ass. He's so freaking hot.

"Not as sexy as the tight shorts," I say with a playful shrug, "but what are you gonna do?"

He laughs as he walks over to the window and looks outside. I follow him, just wanting to be near him, and look out at the stunning colorful trees. Fall is so gorgeous in Montana. I thought the summer was stunning, but when the leaves started changing colors... I knew I had found my new home.

“Isn’t it magnificent?” I ask as I stare out at the vast forest view with the majestic mountains in the background.

“Huh?” he says and then looks around at the trees. “Oh yeah. They’re stunning.”

It hits me that he wasn’t looking at the beautiful view. He was looking out for danger. He was watching our backs.

It makes me sad to think that my mate has had to live like this. Always on the run, always looking out for danger. I slide my hand into his, entwining our fingers. He grips my hand gratefully.

“How long has it been like this for you?” I ask as I sneak a peek at him. “On the run?”

“A few months,” he says, looking so tired. “But it’s been a living hell for years. Since puberty.”

“How old are you?”

He looks at me with a sad look. “Twenty-nine. But I feel like I’m a hundred.”

I squeeze his hand and rest my cheek on his arm.

“We’re safe here for the night at least,” I whisper to him. “Let’s take a break from the danger and sadness in our lives and focus on the beauty in the world. Just for tonight.”

He kisses the side of my head and breathes in my scent. “I can do that,” he whispers. “There’s so much beauty around here that it feels like my heart is going to shatter.”

I hug his arm as I breathe in his warm masculine scent, knowing exactly what he means.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

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*August*

“YOU’RE NOT FROM AROUND HERE, ARE YOU?” I ASK THE gorgeous girl across the table from me. She looks stunning in the candlelight. Every time I look at her, it tugs on my heartstrings. I still can’t believe she’s real.

“No,” she says with a shy smile. “How did you know?”

“Most folks around here have come into contact with shifters before. Or at least, someone they know has. It seemed inconceivable to you that I had a grizzly bear hiding inside. You didn’t want to believe it.”

“I’m still not quite sure if I do,” she says with an adorable laugh. “I think I might be going insane.”

I smile as I raise my glass of wine. “That makes two of us.”

She clinks my glass with hers, but there’s no smile on her face. “Are those guys really going to kill you if they catch you?”

I nod slowly.

“I won’t let them,” she says with a fierceness in her tone that makes me fall even deeper in love with her.

I love her for that, but there’s nothing she can do about it. She got lucky back there with the pepper spray, but next time, the boys will be ready. There’s not much anyone can do

against three bear shifters and a wolf shifter determined to take you out.

I don't want to talk about this anymore. I want to see her smiling and happy. This may be my last night on earth. It might be our last night together. I want to make it a good one.

“So, tell me about Florida.”

She sighs. Shit, maybe that was the wrong topic to bring up.

“Maybe you're not the only one running,” she says in a low voice.

My body tightens as my hand squeezes into a fist under the table. “Are you in danger? Is someone trying to hurt you?”

I'll kill them if they are. I'll skin anyone alive who tries to hurt my girl.

“No, no,” she says with a shake of her head. My body relaxes a little as I listen. “There are other things to run away from.”

I sit in silence, just listening and letting her take her time. She looks so raw and vulnerable, and I can tell she's not like this very often, if ever. I feel so privileged to be the one she trusts with her story.

“There were rumors about me at school,” she says as she drops her eyes to her plate, her cheeks burning red. “Horrible rumors. I don't even want to say them.”

I reach out and put my hand on hers. She looks up at me with a grateful look.

“You're the most incredible person I've ever met,” I tell her in a soft calm voice. “You took me in when I was injured, you took on four shifters and won, and you cooked this elk steak to perfection.”

She smiles.

“You're amazing, Hazel. You're smart, resourceful, clever, funny, and you're a goddamn knockout. If those assholes were making up rumors about you, it's because they were jealous.”

She takes a deep breath and then sips on her wine. I can tell she's feeling a bit better by the way she's sitting up straighter.

"It was horrible," she continues. "I played tennis at school and one of the guys was always hitting on me. Tanner Jones."

I can feel the heat and anger pulsing inside. This is usually the time when my grizzly explodes out of me in a vicious rage and fucks shit up, but right now, he's as calm as a cat lying in front of a roaring fire on a cold winter day. He's actually sitting back and letting me handle it. Wow. This girl is changing everything. She's what he needed all along.

"I told him to leave me alone," she says as she gazes into my eyes. "I guess I bruised his fragile little ego, so Tanner told everyone that I was a huge slut who fucked around with everyone on the tennis team. The rumors got around the school. And then it got around the town."

My blood is boiling. I want to leap out of my chair, run to Florida, find this guy, wrap my hands around his neck, and strangle him until his fucking eyes pop out of his head.

"My parents had a fit," she says as her gorgeous green eyes begin to water. "They didn't believe me that I hadn't even kissed a boy, let alone done all that nasty stuff he claimed I did. The rumors followed me after high school. They even grew and took on a life of their own. Eventually, I became known as the town slut who fucked the entire football team too. So, I left. Moved across the country. What's more opposite to the beaches of Florida than the mountains of Montana? It sounded perfect. Nobody in this town uses social media. I don't think they even know what it is."

She chuckles as she looks at the dead deer head mounted on the wall. "I mean, can you picture Lou with a Facebook account? It would probably be full of pictures of dead animals."

I lean in and look into her beautiful eyes. "I'm sorry that happened to you," I say. "If anyone ever says a horrible thing about you again, they're going to have to deal with me. You're my girl now, Hazel. You're under my protection. You say the

word and I'll travel to Florida, find that tennis player, and shove his racket up his ass."

She laughs. "He's not worth it. I'd rather you stay here with me."

After dinner, we move over to the couch. The fire is roaring in the fireplace and the room is nice and cozy. We sit on the same couch with the bottle of wine we found in the cabinet and gaze into each other's eyes. I'm already so in love with this angel. I can't get enough of her.

"We should be safe here tonight," I whisper as she flicks her hair back and gets comfortable on the couch. "But I'll have to leave tomorrow. These guys are magicians when it comes to following a scent."

Her eyes harden as she stares at me. "You mean, *we'll* have to leave tomorrow."

"It's too dangerous," I tell her. "At least for now. If you didn't come crashing into my life, I would have given myself up, but now... well, you've changed everything. My bear feels different. I thought he was past saving, but now, I don't know. I'd like to see how he does in the next few days. Maybe it's a permanent change."

"I'll tell you what's a permanent change," she says as she rests her palm on my chest over my heart. I wonder if she can feel it beating harder under her palm. "Me in your life. You're not getting rid of me. I'm coming with you."

"But these shifters are—"

"Not going to hurt you," she says with a certainty that somehow makes me feel better. "We'll make them see that everything is different."

"But when they come," I say with my stomach in knots. "My bear is going to get angry with them around you. They're never going to see this side of him."

My mark is not on her neck yet. My grizzly is going to be even more protective, more outraged to have any rival shifters around our mate.

She seems to sense what I'm yearning for because she reaches up and lightly touches where my mark should be—On her neck, below her right ear. That's the spot. That's where I'll make her mine. Permanently.

“Like I said,” she repeats with a grin as she leans in close. “You let me worry about your bear. I'll tame him properly.”

Her soft supple lips are a breath away from mine. My eyes roam down her gorgeous face, over the dusting of freckles on the bridge of her nose and cheeks, all the way down to her tempting luscious mouth.

I lean in with a moan and kiss her softly as the fire crackles beside us. She puts her wine glass on the coffee table and then wraps her arms around my neck, pulling me into her as she kisses me back.

Our lips part and I slide my tongue into her hot tasty mouth, groaning as I begin to claim her. When our tongues touch, the urgency increases. I kiss her harder, deeper, as our hands explore.

She moans into my mouth as I cup her cheeks and tilt her head up. Her hands are running along my hard arms, her fingertips tracing the curves of my muscles.

We may only have this night together. It might be my last.

I'm going to make every second count. I'm going to show this sweet girl what it means to be my mate.

I slide my hands to her hips and pull her closer. She sucks in a breath as I pull my mouth away from hers and kiss her neck. She smells so good. I could *devour* her.

She moans when she feels my hardness digging into her thigh. I'm kissing her harder, sliding my hand up her ribs as she holds her leg against me, not shying away from my hard cock.

“Oh, August,” she moans when I cup her breast with my big hand. This girl makes me fucking crazy. It's taking everything I have not to shred her clothes off and fuck her like an animal.



I slide my hand under her shirt, pull down her bra, and cup her bare breasts, one at a time. Her hips are rolling against my erection. Fuck, it feels good...

She suddenly sits up, grabs her shirt, and yanks it off. Her perky little tits are pushed up over her bra and a low growl rumbles out of me when I see her perfect pink nipples staring back at me. She's gorgeous.

I graze her shoulder with my teeth as she reaches behind her and unclasps her bra. She tosses it onto the coffee table and lays back down, each movement making those beautiful tits jiggle and bounce. They're begging for my attention. They're irresistible.

I lean down and take a hard nipple into my ravenous mouth.

"*Oh yes,*" she moans as she sinks her hands into my hair, gripping and pulling me closer. She's grinding and writhing her hips as I taste her sweet tits. I can smell the lustful scent of her pussy and I know she's wet and ready for me.

"We're mates," I tell her in a throaty growl as I switch from one breast to the other. "That means you're all mine. Our bodies were made for each other. These tits were made for me," I say as I cup her breast hard, making her whimper. "And this pussy was made for me."

I cup her needy little cunt with my hand and even though she's still wearing pants and underwear, I can feel the heat.

"*Shit,*" she hisses as her eyes fall closed. Her hips curl up, pressing her pussy against my hand. Her back is arched, those perky tits in the air.

"Pull your hair down for me, baby," I growl as I look at her. "I love those red locks and I want to see them bouncing around while I fuck you."

She yanks the elastic off her ponytail and shakes her hair free. It comes down around her, blazing red and so fucking sexy.

"That's my girl," I whisper as I slide onto my knees on the floor and grip the waistband of her pants. My fingertips slide

under the elastic of her underwear and my cock rages with anticipation. I'm so fucking hard it hurts. I need to thrust inside her. I need to claim her cunt. I've been waiting for this moment for so damn long. I thought it might never come.

She starts clawing at my shirt, desperately trying to get it off. I suck in a breath as I lean back, grab it, and pull it off for her.

Her eyes light up as she stares at my naked torso. They're darting all over my shoulders, abs, chest, and arms. She licks her lips as those sexy green eyes get a lustful shine to them.

"You're so hot," she says as she dips her hand into her pants. I grab her wrist and pull her hand back out.

"I'm here now," I tell her as I inhale the sweet sugary scent of her wet cunt. "*I'm* going to make you cum. Let your man take care of you properly."

She leans back on the couch, watching me as the fire roars and devours the logs beside us. She looks like a goddess like this—red hair draped over her shoulders, breasts moving up and down with every heavy breath, pink lips parted, green eyes shimmering, the soft light of the fire casting her in an orange glow like she's some kind of goddess of fire.

I'm in awe.

I'm in love. This girl was worth waiting for. She was worth all the shit my bear put me through. All of those years of pain, of torment, of wanting to die—All. Fucking. Worth. It.

I wouldn't trade anything for this moment.

The urge to claim my mate's pussy and breed her young ripe body hits me hard. I unbutton her pants and yank the zipper down. Our eager eyes meet. So much is said in that look. She gives me permission to do what I was meant to do. I try to let her know that I'm going to treat her right, that I'll give her the night of her life.

With my cock throbbing, I grab onto her pants and pull them off. My eyes are locked between her legs, her pussy only covered by a thin wet strip of cotton. My mouth waters as I

stare at it while slowly sliding my big palms up her thighs. She shivers as I grab onto her underwear and pull it down.

The wet material sticks to her mound and it takes a little tug to separate it. I hold my breath and look away as I slide her panties off her feet and stuff them into my pocket. I'm keeping these. She doesn't even try to argue with me, which makes me grin.

"Keep these legs wide open for your man, baby," I say as I take her knees and gently part her thighs. She keeps her legs wide open for me as I stare into her eyes. I haven't looked yet. The anticipation is killing me. I hold her gaze, wanting to stretch out the moment, wanting to torture myself. The excitement is unbearable. Her smell is lighting my lungs on fire. Finally, I crack and look down.

"*Fuck,*" I whisper when I see her beautiful pink pussy on full display. Her puffy lips are glistening with juice, her virgin opening barely visible.

My chest hurts as I stare at her in awe. She's the most mesmerizing thing I've ever seen.

Her pretty little asshole is visible underneath, her gorgeous tits too. Nothing is hiding my girl. Finally, I can have all of her. See all of her. *Feel* and *taste* all of her.

I grab her hips and pull her closer. She slides down on the couch, her soaked pussy an inch from my face. I inhale her needy scent, letting it fill my lungs.

"*Mmmmm,*" I growl as I dip my head down and let my hot breath wash over her pussy lips. She shivers all over.

"Oh, August," she whines. "I need you so badly."

"Then be a good girl and keep these legs wide open," I say as I marvel at the tempting shade of pink. "I'll take care of the rest."

She cries out in bliss as I drop my tongue onto her wet cunt and devour her like the beast I am.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

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*August*

THIS SEXY LITTLE MINX IS CRYING OUT AND ROLLING HER HIPS as I dig my tongue into her hot virgin hole. She grabs my shoulders, digging her nails into my flesh as I slide my flat tongue up her cunt and tease her clit.

My mouth is covered in her pussy juice. I'm dripping in her.

I suck on her clit and trace her opening with my fingertip, wondering how I'm ever going to fit my big cock in this tight little hole. I can't wait to try.

My dick is *aching* in my pants. It desperately wants to come out and join the party. There will be time for that, but I want to make this girl cum on my lips first. I want to taste her cumming on my tongue.

She's writhing on the couch with her hips rolling and thrusting against my mouth. Her eyes are glazed over. She's grabbing her tits hard. Any self-consciousness, shyness, or apprehension has been obliterated. She grabs my hair and holds my mouth against her wet cunt as she grinds my face.

I'm going to have a bruised lip after this. I grin, loving it. Watching my girl overcome with lust is the sexiest I've seen her yet.

"Oh shit!" she screams as I wrap my tongue around her clit and move it up and down. "I'm going to cum. I'm going to

cum!”

I wrap my arms around her thighs and hold her against my mouth as I fuck her with my tongue, sliding it in and out of her tight hole.

Her body tightens. Her face gets all twisted up—eyes closed, mouth open. And then with a scream, she releases, shaking and trembling as she cums all over my mouth. Sweet savory pussy juice gushes all over my lips and tongue as the intense orgasm sweeps through her, obliterating everything in its path.

My chest swells with happiness as I watch her cumming for the first time. She drops her legs on my shoulders, barely able to lift them as the intensity decreases to a warm glow inside her. I’m darting my eyes all over her body, not knowing where to look.

I settle on her gorgeous face as she sinks into the couch, watching me through half-closed eyes.

“We’re not done yet,” I say as I peel her legs off me and lower them onto the couch. She perks up a little as she watches me stand up, a huge long rod thrusting against the inside of my pants.

She swallows hard as I unbutton my jeans.

My bear is pacing inside, urging me to mark her neck. I can feel the fervid urgency from him flowing through my veins, but I ignore it. I don’t care what he wants. I’m claiming this sweet girl’s cherry and that’s it. I’ll mark her another day.

I don’t want to overload her with too many sensations and marking her neck after claiming her cunt will definitely be too much for an inexperienced girl like her.

It might keep him agitated and untamed, but I don’t care. He’s just going to have to fucking deal with it.

Her sexy green eyes light up as I pull out my hard throbbing cock. I’m holding my thick shaft with a tight grip as I let the jeans fall to the floor. Drops of pre-cum are oozing out of my tip as the fire roars beside us, filling the small room

with heat. Or, maybe that's just us. This little beauty is so fucking hot she might just melt me with one touch.

I drop back down to my knees in front of her spread legs. She's breathing heavily, watching me with those big wide eyes as I guide the head of my dick to her opening.

A shiver wracks my spine as I push against her tight wet hole. Her pussy lips part for me and I wonder if there's ever been a more beautiful sight.

"*Oh,*" she whimpers as I slowly push in until my head disappears. Her pussy clamps down on it, clenching around me as she bites her bottom lip and squeezes her eyes shut.

I know I'm big for her, I'm feeling it too. She's so fucking tight that it's all I can focus on.

Even with her pussy drenched and slick and so primed and ready for me, she's still so fucking unbearably tight. I hold in a breath and try to get myself under control, but it's hard. This little virgin cunt is threatening to ruin me completely.

Her engorged clit is begging for attention. She moans deeply as I rub it with my thumb while sliding deeper inside her.

She shudders when I come up to a barrier. I grip her thigh, suck in a breath, and thrust through it with a hard punishing drive of my hips. My cock tears through her cherry and slides all the way into her sweet virgin pussy.

I'm grunting hard as I hold it in her, loving the insane tightness, the intense warmth, the unbelievable softness. This is right where I belong. Fucking this pussy is what I was put on this earth to do.

She's crying out and writhing her hips as I stretch her out with my long thick dick. I continue rubbing her clit, hoping it helps open her up and after a minute or so, it seems to work.

Her eyes open and she looks at me as she breathes heavily.

"You're doing amazing, baby," I say as I rock my hips a little bit at a time. Her pussy is leaking out warm juices all over my full balls. I drag my finger up it, scooping up some of

that wetness, and then lick my finger clean. *Mmmmm*. She's so damn tasty.

"That's it," I say as I start thrusting in and out deeper. "I love watching you taking my cock."

"Your dick is *huge*," she moans as I thrust all the way in and out, stopping right before the head of my dick slips out. "It feels so good... *fuck*..."

I wrap my arms around her thighs and start fucking her harder, slamming my dick into her over and over.

Her perky tits are bouncing around as she watches me with a lustful look in her eyes, her mouth open, her breath lodged in her throat. It finally comes out in a scream when I hit the right spot.

The urge to breed her right here and now comes in hot as I thrust in deep.

I want to unload in this ripe little cunt. I want to fill her with my hot cum.

It's all I can think about—breeding her young womb, filling her with my seed, making her mine in *every* way.

"There's nothing between us, baby," I say as I thrust into her at a faster pace. "Nothing to stop me from cumming all over that ripe and ready womb of yours. You want that?"

"*Yes*," she gasps as she grabs her tits and massages them hard. "I want you to have me. *All* of me."

"I'm going to make this beautiful pussy nice and messy," I say as I pull my cock out of her. She cries out and tilts her pussy up, wanting me back in.

"You're already addicted, aren't you?" I say with a grin as I spread my pre-cum all over her clit. "Be a good girl and rub that all over."

She reaches down and starts rubbing her clit hard, spreading my seed all over it.

"Fuck," I whisper when she puts her finger in her mouth and tastes me. She's the sexiest girl alive.

“Put it back in,” she moans as she licks her finger clean.  
“*Please...*”

I thrust my hard dick back into her and she cries out in pleasure.

Feeling the warmth and tightness once again pushes me closer to the edge. I can feel an orgasm coming on strong.

I grab her hips with a growl and yank her forward as I thrust in hard, fucking her at a reckless, merciless pace.

“*Oh shit,*” she cries out as I slam my cock into her, making the couch jerk across the room. “*Oh fuck!*”

“I’m going to cum in you,” I growl as I feel it barreling down on me. It’s an unstoppable force. It’s thundering through me, threatening to unravel everything.

She’s close too... I can see the wild frenzy in her eyes. I can see her struggling to hold on.

“Cum on me,” I growl. “Cum all over my big dick.”

A scream rips out of her mouth as she cums *hard*. Her pussy clenches on my shaft, squeezing and milking it as the pulsing heat consumes her in shakes and convulsions.

The added tightness sends me spiraling over the edge and I cum too. I thrust in deep, holding myself as close to her womb as I can get, and unload all of the hot cum I’ve been building up for her.

It rocks both of us.

I drop my head onto her bare breasts, feeling her heart hammering in her chest as she clings to me. Her impossibly tight pussy eventually relaxes as the orgasms work their way through our systems.

It takes a few minutes, but I catch my breath and pull out of her.

She whines and whimpers, but she doesn’t have to worry. I’ll be returning inside her the second she’s ready to go again.

I won’t stop until this beautiful body is bred with my seed.



Even then, I'll keep going. I want to have an enormous family with this girl. I want to fill her with so many kids that she won't be able to keep track of their names.

I grin as I straighten my back and look down at her. She looks so satisfied. So beautiful.

This is how I always want to see her—happy, fulfilled, and dripping with my seed.

And once I can get my bear under control for good, that's exactly how she's going to be.

## CHAPTER NINE

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### *Hazel*

“I DON’T KNOW ABOUT THIS,” AUGUST SAYS AS HE STANDS IN the backyard, shirtless.

“Will you stop?” I say with a laugh. “It’ll be fine.”

He doesn’t look so sure.

“Has he been acting up at all since you met me?”

August shakes his head. “No. But in the past he’s—“

“The past is the past,” I tell him. “We both had it hard before we met, but those hard days are behind us, okay? We have each other now. We have to trust that everything will work out or it never will.”

He sighs as he reaches for his belt. He hesitates.

“Normally, I wouldn’t mind staring at you shirtless all day, but get on with it already. I want to meet your bear.”

“If he shows even the slightest sign of aggression,” he says, “you start spraying and you don’t stop until he runs away. Do you have the pepper spray ready?”

“Yes,” I say as I show it to him in my hand. There’s no way I’m spraying his bear, but if it makes him feel better, I’ll hold it.

He takes a deep breath and looks at me with sad eyes. “If anything happened to you because of me...”

“Will you just let him out already?” I shout in frustration. “I’m your mate, Gus. He’s not going to hurt me.”

He smiles.

“What?”

“You called me Gus. It’s just funny to hear you say it.”

“Now you’re just trying to buy time,” I say with a chuckle.

“Okay,” he says as he opens his buckle and yanks out his belt. “You win.”

I’m clapping my hands and squealing in glee as he slides off the jeans that we borrowed from Lou.

My squealing turns into a gulp when he’s standing in front of me naked with that long thick cock hanging low between his legs. It’s never not shocking to see. He’s impressively large.

“Here he comes,” he says as his body begins to tremble. “Get that pepper spray ready.”

I already know I’m not going to need it.

His shoulders grow monstrously large as long brown hair sprouts from his skin. I watch in shock and fascination as his lips press out, his teeth transforming into big sharp canines. His hands curl as long black claws split through his fingertips. His deep blue eyes turn a golden color. My heart pounds as I watch.

In a heartbeat, he explodes into a huge grizzly bear, even bigger than I was expecting.

“Whoa,” I whisper as I stare at him in shock.

He huffs out a heavy breath as those golden eyes watch me closely. He’s so *big*. Even larger than the two other bears I saw.

He raises that giant furry head and sniffs the air between us. There are no signs of aggression. Nothing but calm as he lowers his head, watching me with a loving stare.

I toss the pepper spray behind me, not wanting to make a bad first impression.

“So, I’m your mate,” I say as he huffs out another breath. “Not that we’re going to mate or anything... That’s only for August. But we can be friends. Good friends.”

My pulse picks up as he starts walking toward me, his massive paws leaving tracks in the dirt.

Excitement rushes through me, but there’s no fear. No nerves. I can feel the affection emanating off him. I already know he’s not going to hurt me. There’s no chance of that.

He lowers his head with a friendly rumble and pushes his forehead into my stomach. I laugh as he takes me a few inches off my feet. “Easy there,” I say with a laugh as I sink my hands into the thick scruff of his neck.

“For the record,” I whisper into his ear, “I knew you were going to be nice to me.”

He keeps making these happy grumbling sounds as I scratch behind his ears and pet his face. It’s like petting the world’s largest dog. His head is bigger than my whole torso.

“But I need you to be nicer to August, okay?” I whisper into his ear. “I’m here with you guys now, so you have nothing to worry about. I need you guys too, so don’t go doing anything foolish like losing your cool and getting into trouble with that explosive temper of yours. Those days are over, okay?”

He lifts his head and looks at me with soft kind eyes. I’m not sure if he’s understanding the words coming out of my mouth, but I can tell that he’s understanding the intention behind them.

“Let’s start over. All of us. Together.”

He exhales long and hard as he watches me. His body language changes. It’s subtle, but I can tell by the way he lowers his shoulders and relaxes his back that things are going to be different now.

“Thank you,” I whisper as I scratch his legs. “Look how big you are!” I slide my hand down to his paw and compare the size of the two. His claws are longer than my fingers and thicker too.

“And you can tell that big grump Gus to let you visit me more,” I say as I scratch his cheeks, giggling when I hear the grumbling sound he makes. “Tell him he has nothing to worry about when it comes to you and me.”

The long brown hairs on his back stand up straight and he lets out a low deep growl. He turns away from me, staring down the dirt road with his black lips curled up in a snarl. My eyes lock on his sharp white teeth, little bubbles of saliva dripping down them as he lets out a protective growl.

“What is it?” I whisper as my stomach drops. Did they find us? How? Are they that good at picking up scents? I remember reading that a bear’s sense of smell is seven times greater than even a bloodhound’s. It’s so good that it’s difficult for humans to measure. With three of them and a wolf tracking August down, I guess we didn’t stand a chance. At least we got one night together. At least we got that.

He steps in front of me protectively as I start to hear the roaring of the dirt bikes. They’re in the distance but closing in fast.

“Remember what we talked about,” I tell my protective bear as the dirt bikes come closer. They suddenly appear in the distance, all four of them rumbling forward. “This is where you’re going to prove it. Don’t do anything rash. Let August handle it, please.”

The four of them park in a horizontal line a few yards away. The French Canadian, Remy, is the first one off his bike. He pulls out his sword and is looking excited to use it as he cuts through the air.

“Hold on!” I say as I rush in front of August’s grizzly with my hands in the air. He growls, not liking me in front of him and so close to these dangerous men.

“Step aside, cherie,” Remy says as the three others step off their bikes. “You keep your hot spray spray in your purse, okay? Or bad things will happen to you too.”

“You can’t hurt him,” I plead to August’s brother, Jackson. “Everything has changed!”

“There are things going on here that you don’t understand,” Jackson says. “For your own safety, you should get in your car and leave now.”

“I’m not going anywhere,” I say in a fierce tone with my shoulders back and my chin up. “I’m staying with my mate.”

“Your... mate?” Jackson says, looking confused.

“You’re his mate?” Grayson the polar bear shifter asks.

Ryker laughs. “Talk about some shit luck being mated to that psycho bear.”

“He’s not a psycho bear,” I say, feeling my blood starting to boil. “He’s a sweetie and August is a wonderful man. And none of you are going to hurt either of them. Got that?”

Remy shakes his head. “He’s turned, cherie. There’s no going back for him now.”

“That’s not true,” I say as I step to the side. “Look at him. He’s different.”

“He’s different alright,” Grayson says. “He’s the nastiest bear I’ve ever seen and I’m going to enjoy putting him down once and for all.”

I look at his brother Jackson, pleading with my eyes. He still looks shocked, like he can’t quite believe it.

“Look,” I say as I turn to my grizzly. He’s snarling and growling, but at least he hasn’t charged at them yet. Although, I might not have much time before he snaps. I have to hurry. “August said that he couldn’t control his bear anymore, right? He couldn’t pull him back in no matter how hard he tried.”

Jackson is listening. I have to make him see.

“Well, watch,” I say as I put my hand on the grizzly’s head.

“Best not touch that rabid beast,” Remy says with a grimace. “He’ll snap off your arm and use it as a toothpick.”

“Let August out,” I whisper to him, trying to calm and soothe him with my words and touch. “Let him handle this. You have to trust me.”

He’s snarling and growling as his protective eyes dart from one shifter to another.

“It’s no use,” Ryker says. “Let’s smoke this beast and get the fuck out of here.”

“That beast is my *brother*,” Jackson snaps, glaring at the tattooed mercenary. “Let’s give him a chance. He’s my younger brother. I think I owe him that at least.”

“I owe him too for fucking up my ear,” Grayson says. He’s touching his right ear and there’s a chunk missing from the top of it.

“Come on,” I whisper as I turn back to the grizzly. “Let him out. Please. For me.”

I step back as his body begins to shake.

*Yes! Come on!*

His massive shoulders cave in and then in a flash, August’s naked form explodes out of him and the bear disappears.

They all stare at him in shock.

“See?” I say as August catches his breath. “Have you ever seen a feral bear do that?”

“No,” Jackson says, shaking his head. “I haven’t.”

August and his brother stare at each other while the other three look annoyed.

“This proves nothing,” Remy says as he slices his sword through the air. “We came to put the monster down and that’s what we’re going to do.”

“I agree,” Ryker says as he rolls his big shoulders and steps forward.

“Hold it!” Jackson bellows, making them all freeze.

His eyes soften as he turns to his brother. “Is it true, Gus? Is she your mate?”

August looks at me with those stunning blue eyes and my legs nearly give out. I don’t know how you can love someone so deeply after only one day of knowing them, but here we are. We’re in love.

“It’s true,” he says. “This incredible woman is my mate. And it appears that she’s changed everything. She’s calmed my bear. She’s calmed me.”

“Your eyes don’t have that golden hue anymore,” Jackson says. “You look more at peace. Like the young boy I remember growing up.”

“That’s how I feel,” he says as he walks over to me. He takes my hand and gazes into my eyes. “It’s all thanks to Hazel.”

“That’s just fucking great!” Grayson says as he throws up his arms in frustration. “What about my fucking ear?”

“And my fucking chest?” Ryker hollers.

“I’m sorry about that,” August says with a sigh as he turns to them. “I’m truly sorry. I was out of my mind with needing to find her. I’m sure you guys can understand that. Have any of you found your mate?”

Grayson drops his eyes to the ground, Ryker looks away, and Remy sighs. Jackson is the only one looking at his brother and I can feel the sadness and yearning emanating from him. “No,” he finally says. “We’re all waiting too.”

“Then, I’m sure you can understand what I was going through.”

They’re all silent. They know. They know about the long nights thinking about her, wondering if she’s safe, wondering where she is. The torture of knowing she’s out there but not being able to be with her and look after her. From what August told me, it’s pure torture.

I look at my man and my heart goes out to him, knowing what he went through all those years because of his love for



me. I vow to never forget it. I'll make every moment from now on so good for him that it will be worth all that pain, torment, and frustration.

"I feel the change in my grizzly," he says to the guys. "The nightmare is over. He's not going to go back. Not while this beautiful angel is by my side."

Jackson looks at him for a long moment and then steps forward with his arms out. Tears well up in my eyes as he hugs his brother, forgiving him for everything.

"I'm glad to have you back, Gus," Jackson says as he holds him tight. August is hugging him too, those big sexy arms wrapped around him.

"It's good to be back."

The two brothers release each other and then Jackson turns to me. "I guess this makes you my sister then," he says with a warm smile.

"I guess so. Do I get a hug too?"

He laughs as he comes over and hugs me. His arms are big and hard, just like August's. This family has some pretty good genes.

"So, we're not killing him?" Grayson says with a sigh as he walks back to his dirt bike while shaking his head.

"Calisse," Remy says as he sheathes his sword.

Ryker is grumbling too as he gets back on his bike. "Can we at least go take down that feral Kodiak bear that's tearing through Abottsville, Montana?"

"I got first dibs on him," Remy says as he starts his bike.

"No way," Grayson says as he cranks the engine. "You had first dibs on those rabid beasts in Cooperville and look how that turned out."

"That wasn't my fault!" Remy says as he turns his bike. "I didn't know there were two of them!"

The three of them race off, disappearing down the road as they yell at each other over the rumbling engines.

“Duty calls,” Jackson says with a smile as he watches his boys racing down the dirt road. He turns back to us with a warm smile. “I’m really happy for you, bro. For both of you.”

“I’m sorry for everything I put you through,” August says with a heavy heart.

“Water under the bridge,” Jackson says. “It doesn’t matter now.”

“You’ll come visit us, right?” I say as I give him a firm stare. “Thanksgiving in three weeks. We’ll set you a spot at the table. You better be here.”

He grins as he hugs each of us one more time and then races to his bike. “I’ll bring the pumpkin pie!”

I laugh as he starts his engine and then rides off with a wave.

I’m smiling as I watch him disappear down the road, but when I turn back to August, the smile on my face disappears.

“What is it?” I ask when I see him flexing his hands into fists. His body is all tight and that golden hue is back in his eyes. “August, what’s happening?”

It’s gone as quickly as it came.

“Nothing,” he says as he turns away from me. “What should we do for lunch?”

He’s already walking back into the cabin, trying to change the subject.

My stomach drops, knowing that this might not be over yet.

## CHAPTER TEN

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### *Hazel*

AUGUST IS FINE FOR THE REST OF THE DAY, BUT THAT ALL changes at night.

“What’s happening?” I gasp when I rush into the kitchen from the bedroom and see August kneeling on the ground, his whole body flexed and strained. Veins are popping out, running along his jacked muscles. His teeth are gritted and he’s grunting fiercely. A broken plate is shattered around his knees.

I step back with a whimper when he looks up at me with golden eyes. They’re no longer his normal shade of blue.

He’s fighting something... His bear? Is this the vicious beast he’s told me about?

His shoulders swell up and then quickly return to normal. His hands are curled and I spot a flash of black splitting his fingertips before they retreat just as fast.

I rush over and drop to my knees in front of him. Shame fills his eyes and he jerks his head away, not wanting me to see him like this.

“August,” I whisper as I grab his hand. “It’s okay. I’m here with you. We’ll get through this together.”

He seems to calm as soon as I touch him. Not much, but a little bit. His breaths are coming out a little less violent. A little less angry.

“Is it your bear?” I whisper as he drops his head into his hands.

“Yes,” he growls.

I thought he was better. I thought I was having a positive effect on him. I thought that maybe he was past all of this.

I guess I overestimated the effect a mate can have on a feral shifter. Maybe he truly is past saving.

No. I won't accept that. I *refuse* to accept that.

“Lay down,” I whisper softly as I gently push his chest down with my hand.

I wipe the broken plates away and he drops onto the floor, laying on his back and covering his face with his hands.

“Let your woman take care of you,” I whisper as I unbuckle his belt. I reach into his pants and pull out his thick cock. It gets as hard as a rock the second I touch it.

He groans as I lean down and take him into my mouth. My jaw stretches wide as his big cock fills me up, making my cheeks flush, making my pussy throb with heat.

Fuck, he tastes good. So masculine. So salty and sweet.

I pull his cock out of my mouth with a pop and squeeze his thick base with my hand. He moans as I tease him with my tongue. I slide my tongue up his shaft from the base all the way to the soft round tip.

“Focus on my mouth,” I whisper between licks. “Let me take care of you. *Both* of you.”

He relaxes on the floor and removes his hands from his face. He watches me with a heated gaze as I suck his big dick.

I wrap my lips around his shaft and slide up and down, letting him fill me completely. He's so large that my eyes water, my jaw aches, but I don't stop. It's going to take much more than a little pain to get me to stop.

I slide my open hand up his stomach, feeling his hard abs as I jerk him off with my other hand. His lustful eyes are locked on me as I stroke his length. He's so fucking sexy. He

makes me feel like the sexiest woman alive with the way he looks at me like this.

It's not long before my mouth is back on his cock, moaning and sucking, my whole body throbbing with the need to pleasure this wild powerful man.

"Yes," he growls as his hands squeeze into fists. His body tightens once again, but it's not from his bear this time. It's from my slutty little mouth.

I pick up the pace, moaning hungrily as I suck him harder and faster until tears are streaming down my cheeks and my jaw is aching.

He sucks in a breath and I know he's close. I push him as deep into my throat as he'll go, holding him there as he begins to pulse in my mouth. He cries out as he unloads surge after surge of hot cum down my throat.

I swallow it all down with a moan. He drops his head onto the floor and closes his eyes. He's breathing heavily, but he doesn't look as tormented now. He looks satisfied. At peace even.

I wrap my hand around his wet dick and jack him off slowly as the orgasm calms his demons down.

The moment of peace doesn't last long.

Whatever is bothering his bear is back. He shakes on the ground as his arms and chest swell up to double their size. With a vicious roar, he shrinks back down, but the shaking continues.

"What is it?" I ask, desperate to help him.

The spot under my ear is tingling like crazy. It's vibrating through my entire neck.

"It's my... grizzly," he says in a voice that's half human, half beast, and all growl. "He wants our... mark... on you."

Once the words are out, the yearning and need to have him mark me becomes unbearable. I know just where it belongs.

I touch the spot on my neck as my pussy aches with need. All of my body is aching with need.

“Do it,” I say, more sure of this than anything else in my life. “Mark me, August. Make me yours.”

He grabs me with strong hands and lifts me on top of him. My pussy lands on his hard cock and I’m so happy that I chose to wear a skirt today.

I reach down and yank my soaked panties to the side. I’m *drenched*. My body is on fire. I’m so ready for him.

“Yes,” he groans as I wrap my hand around his thick shaft and guide him into my pussy. There’s no need to go slow this time. No need to take it easy. I’m so soaked that he slides in without any resistance, stretching and filling me up as I sink down onto his beautiful massive cock.

He grips my hips so hard that I whimper. That golden color is back in his eyes and I know that I’m not just looking at him. I’m looking at his feral bear too as I ride his big dick that feels thicker and longer now.

“Oh fuck,” I moan as he sits up and grabs my ass hard. He takes over, lifting me up and down like he’s jerking himself off with my wet pussy.

I grab onto his shoulders and enjoy the ride as he watches me with those sexy golden eyes. I can feel the possession radiating out of them and enveloping me. I’m his territory. I’m all his in every way.

I cling to him as he fucks me harder, his grunts and groans turning into growls and snarls.

“Do it,” I beg as his cock thrusts in and out of my pussy. “Mark me. *Please*.”

I look at his face and his golden eyes are shining brighter than ever. His canine teeth are extending long and sharp, pressing his lips out as he slams his cock *deep* into me.

“Yes,” I cry out as I tilt my head, giving him access to my neck. His lips hover over the tingling spot. When I feel his hot breath on the spot, I almost cum.

“My mate,” he growls as he kisses my flesh. “My love. My girl. *Mine.*”

I cry out as he sinks his teeth into the spot, marking me as his forever. An orgasm thunders through me, shattering me to pieces as I cling to him with my body shaking.

His teeth hurt, but at the same time, they feel good. It feels right. It feels like I’m finally all his.

The blissful heat of my orgasm numbs the pain. I feel him cumming deep in me as well, filling my pussy with his hot cum as I scream out his name.

He slides his teeth out and we both collapse into each other’s arms, breathing heavily and shocked to the core from the intensity of it all.

“Wow,” I breathe as our temples touch, both of us looking down at where we’re joined. “That was incredible.”

I reach up and touch the mark. It’s no longer hurting. No longer tingling. There’s no more yearning or need. It just feels right, like putting on your most comfortable pajamas at home after a long hard day. It feels like all of my inner discontent and restlessness is gone, replaced with a warm satisfaction.

I want to sink into this beautiful moment forever.

“I think I’m okay now,” he says in his normal voice. “Now that you’re mine, I can feel the difference. It was immediate. The rabidness. The anger. The bloodthirsty frenzied thoughts... It all just slipped away.”

I look at his gorgeous blue eyes and kiss his cheek. He smiles as I kiss a trail down to his chin.

“I’m sorry if I was rough,” he says with shame in his eyes. “I lost control for a minute.”

“It was perfect,” I say, knowing there’s going to be bruised fingerprints on my ass cheeks tomorrow. I grin, excited to see them. “I kind of like it when you’re out of control.”

“Hopefully, it’s just in the bedroom from now on,” he says with a soft smile, “and I’m not losing control in the middle of Costco.”

I grin as I drag my hand through his hair. “I’ll be there to calm you down whatever happens. You and your bear. We’re a team now.”

He wraps his arms around me and holds me close. “Thank you,” he whispers. “For everything.”

I hold him back, enjoying the feeling of being so close to him, of being so loved. “I love you, August. You and your crazy bear.”

He kisses my collarbone and starts rolling his hips, his cock hardening inside of me once again. “I love you too, my mate.”

I kiss him hard on the mouth as our hips start moving, about to show just how much we love each other.

All. Night. Long.



## EPILOGUE

*August*

*Seven months later...*

*“DID YOU MEET UP WITH JACKSON?”* HAZEL ASKS ME ON THE phone as I slide into the back door of the country club.

“Yeah,” I lie.

*“How’s he doing? Has he found his mate?”*

“No,” I answer. “But he’s still looking.”

*“I hope he finds her soon,”* she says with a sigh. *“I don’t want what happened to you to happen to him.”*

“He’ll find her,” I say as I sneak past the locker rooms and head toward the indoor tennis courts. “Luckily, his bear is more patient than mine was.”

*“You tell him I said hi, okay?”* she says. *“I love you so much.”*

“Me too,” I say as my heart aches. “I gotta go. I’ll call you later.”

After a few more I love you’s, I slip the phone back into my pocket and close my eyes, taking deep calming breaths. I hate lying to her.

It kills me to do it, but this is something I have to take care of. It’s been eating away at me for months.

It's not a complete lie. I am visiting my brother Jackson for a couple of days, but I'm making an important stop first.

It's time to pay someone a visit.

My pulse picks up as I peek into the window of the first tennis court. Two ladies are playing. Two older men in the next one. The third one, bingo.

I can tell by the weasely smile and the slick-backed hair that this is my guy. He's training a girl who looks like she's barely eighteen years old and he seems more focused on her ass than her backswing as she hits balls from the machine.

A growl rumbles out of me as my body tenses. I squeeze my hands into fists, picturing his neck between them.

My bear perks up, ready for action, but I give him the bad news.

"He's all mine," I whisper. "I've been waiting too long for this prick."

Furious heat is flushing through my body as I open the door and step in.

The girl doesn't break stride. She keeps hitting the balls as Tanner Jones glares at me.

"Hey!" he barks. "This is a private session. Out."

I grit my teeth as I walk over to the machine and yank out the plug.

"Session is over."

His mouth drops open in outrage. The girl lowers her tennis racket and looks at me.

"Why don't you go get some fresh air or something?" I tell her. I really don't want to do this in front of her and give her nightmares.

She looks at me, then at Tanner, then at me, and then quickly leaves.

"What the fuck do you think you're doing?" Tanner says as he rushes over with an air of self-entitlement. Look at this

fucking prick with his short white shorts and white collared shirt. They're going to be stained red by the time I'm done with him.

He charges right up to me, dripping with self-importance. I grab his neck with a firm grip and give him a taste of my strength. His eyes bulge open as he claws at my wrist, trying to squirm free.

After a few seconds, his skin is blue and his mouth is open wide, gasping for air that doesn't come.

Finally, I let go and he crumples to the ground.

I grab a fistful of his hair and yank his head back. He's on his knees, looking up at me with terror in his wide eyes.

"Do you remember Hazel Stewart?" I growl as I look down at him.

I see the recognition on his face. He looks like he's going to be sick.

"What was it that you told the whole school about her?" I say in a calm voice despite the fury raging through me. "That she was a what?"

"It wasn't me!" he says in a panic. "It was Matt!"

I punch him hard in the face. Blood spurts out of his broken nose. It splatters all over the floor. He starts crying as the thick red blood leaks down his chin and onto his shirt.

I feel the weight go out of his body. He doesn't fall down because I'm still holding him up by his hair.

"Don't lie to me again," I growl as I tighten my grip.

"I'm sorry!" he cries. "It was an asshole thing to do. I didn't know it would go around the whole school!"

He's shaking and sobbing as I clench my fist.

"But when it did, you didn't tell anyone it was a lie. Did you?"

He's trembling as he looks up at me. "Please..."

"Did you?"

A sob bubbles out of him as he bleeds all over himself. “No.”

I crack him in the face again. His head snaps back and this time I let him go. He falls to the ground, moaning and crying like a little bitch. I kick him in the ribs and he curls up in the fetal position.

“I should kill you for what you did to my girl,” I growl at him. “You made her life a living hell.”

I kick him again.

“Calling my innocent little angel a slut,” I say as I grab him and hold him an inch away from my face. He can’t even look at me. His eyes are closed as he begs me to stop. “You’re lucky I don’t pull my grizzly out and let him maul you to death.”

My grizzly is pacing inside angrily, begging me to let him out. A few months ago, I wouldn’t have been able to stop him, but everything is different now. *I’m* the one in control.

“If you ever utter her name again,” I say as I grab his neck and squeeze it, “I’ll come back. And I won’t go so easy on you the next time.”

I launch him across the court and he slams into the rack of tennis rackets. They tumble down on him as I turn to leave.

The girl he was giving the lesson to is standing outside the door, staring at me in horror.

“Get a new instructor,” I say as I walk by her. “That guy’s a creep.”



I return home a few days later and my whole body is aching to see my girl.

She answers the door in her bathrobe with nothing on underneath.

“Welcome home,” she says with a seductive smile as she lets it fall open. I growl as I lunge on her, pick her up, and carry her to the bedroom.

When we’re finished making up for lost time, both of us lying on the bed and breathing heavily, she turns to me with a smile.

“I have something to tell you.”

I smile back at her. I feel like my heart is so full it’s going to explode every time I look at her.

I’ll tell her about Tanner eventually, but it won’t be today. I’m not sure how she’ll react and I don’t want to ruin the moment. Especially since I’ve been dying to see her for the past four days.

“Well...” she begins as she slides her hands on her bare stomach.

I know immediately. My whole body perks up as I sit up on the bed. “You’re pregnant?”

Her face lights up in a smile. She nods. “I am. I took the test this morning. It was positive.”

I’m in shock, even though it shouldn’t be too surprising. We’ve been making love multiple times a day with no protection since we met.

I wrap my big arms around her and hold her tight, thrilled for this new chapter in our lives.

“I’m so happy,” I whisper in her ear.

She holds me back. “Me too. I can’t wait to see you as a father.”

Me. A father.

It’s mind-blowing to think about.

Months ago, I was a lost cause. I was marked to be put down.

My life was over. It was a complete disaster.

And in walks this amazing woman and everything has changed.

Now it's about to change even more.

And I can't freaking wait!

# EPILOGUE

*Hazel*

*Twenty-five years later...*

“HEY, KATHY!” I SAY WITH A BIG SMILE AS I WALK INTO THE diner with August following close behind.

She smiles when she sees us. “I reserved your favorite booth for your special day.”

I laugh when I walk through the restaurant and see a dozen red roses on the table. “You didn’t...”

August is behind me, grinning. “I did. Happy anniversary.”

I step on my toes and plant a kiss on those irresistible lips. “Thank you, honey.”

We slip into the booth for lunch and I have a permanent smile on my face as I look at my man. It was twenty-five years ago on this day that I was working in this diner and first laid eyes on my mate. I can still remember it perfectly, lifting up that dumpster and seeing him lying naked inside. I mean, how could I forget that?

We’ve been through a lot since then. Five children. We bought a ranch. Started our own business. Gosh, how time flies by.

Our oldest Mandy is already in college and our youngest Jacob just started high school this year. I adore my wild and

crazy family. *All* the kids are shifters. All five of them bear shifters like their loving dad.

August is so different than when I first met him—calm and patient, but he still has that wild side lurking inside. Lucky for me, it only comes out in the bedroom.

“What will you two lovebirds have?” Kathy asks as she comes over with a grin. “The usual?”

“Sounds good to me,” August says.

“Me too.”

“A club and a roast beef dip,” Kathy calls out to the new cook, Marcus.

I’m happy to say that Lou has retired and now spends all of his time in his adorable little cabin, hunting and fishing, but mostly napping.

“I can’t believe it’s been twenty-five years,” I say when we’re alone once again.

“I’ve been obsessed with you every minute,” he says as he swallows my hand with his.

I believe it. This man takes care of my every need. He’s given me a wonderful life and I don’t even want to think about where I’d be without him.

“I’m taking you somewhere special tonight,” he says with that sexy grin that always gets my heart going. “A fancy dinner and we’re staying the night in a luxurious hotel. Just the two of us.”

“Really?” I ask, perking up. “I thought this was our anniversary date.”

“Do you really think I’d take my mate here for our anniversary? No way. I’m wining and dining you properly and then we’ll go back to our room...” He leans in close as I shiver. “And I’ll fuck your brains out.”

I feel my cheeks blush as my body hums with excitement.

Twenty-five years and this man can still make my cheeks heat up. If that’s not true love then I don’t know what is.



“Have I told you I adore you?” I ask as the anticipation builds. God, I’m already getting wet just from thinking about it.

“Not in the past hour.”

I lean over the table, letting my breasts press against our hands, and grin as I hover my lips over his. “I adore you.”

I give him a soft kiss on the lips and sit back down.

The ravenous look in his blue eyes tells me that I’m in for a hell of a good night.

I lick my lips with a grin, already counting the hours until we can get started.

“Hey, Kathy!” he calls out.

“Yeah?”

“Can we get that order to go?”

She nods. “Sure, hun!”

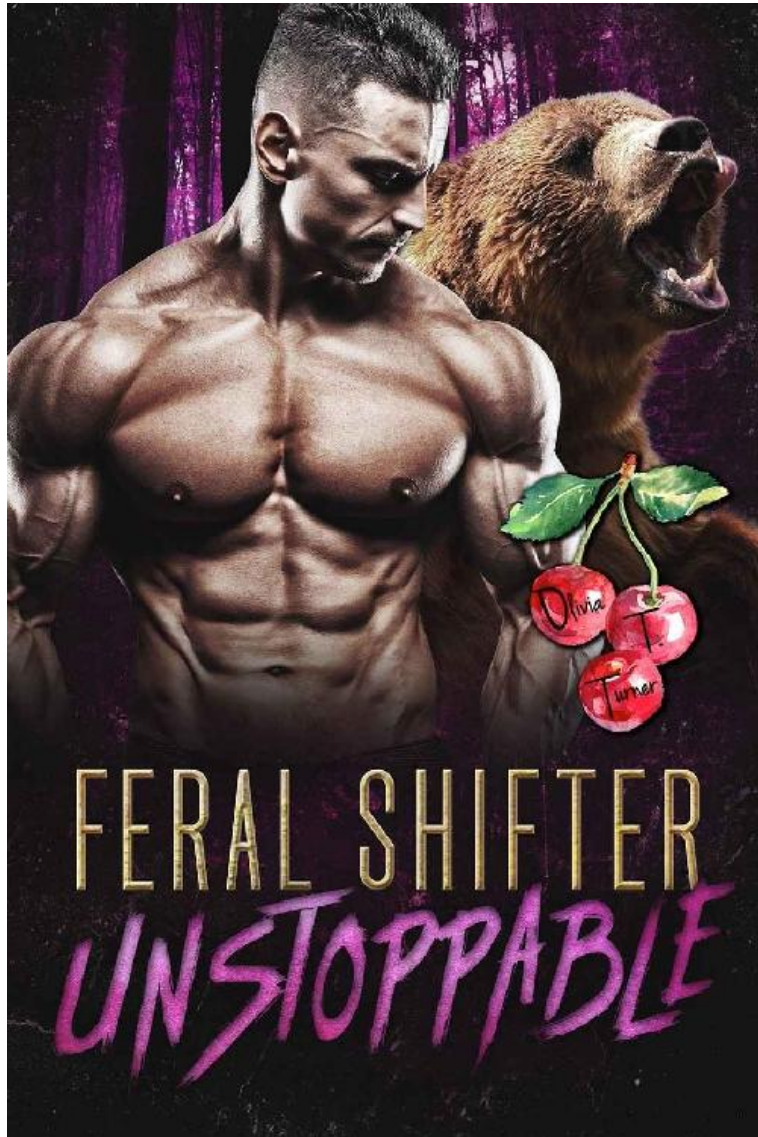
I smile as he turns back to me.

“Let’s check in to that hotel early,” he says with a hungry look in his sexy blue eyes. “I’m ready to get started on our anniversary night.”

I grab my roses and hurry out of the booth. “Better cancel it altogether, Kathy! We gotta run.”

She chuckles as my mate and I race out of the diner, more in love than ever.

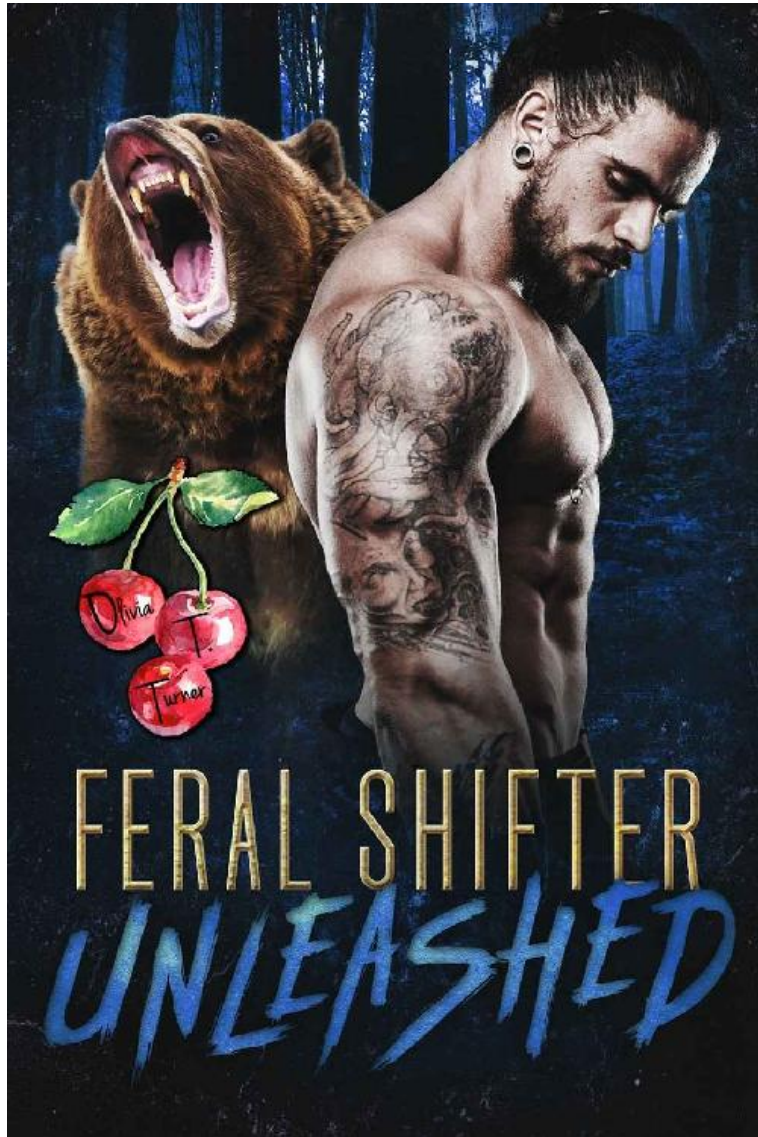
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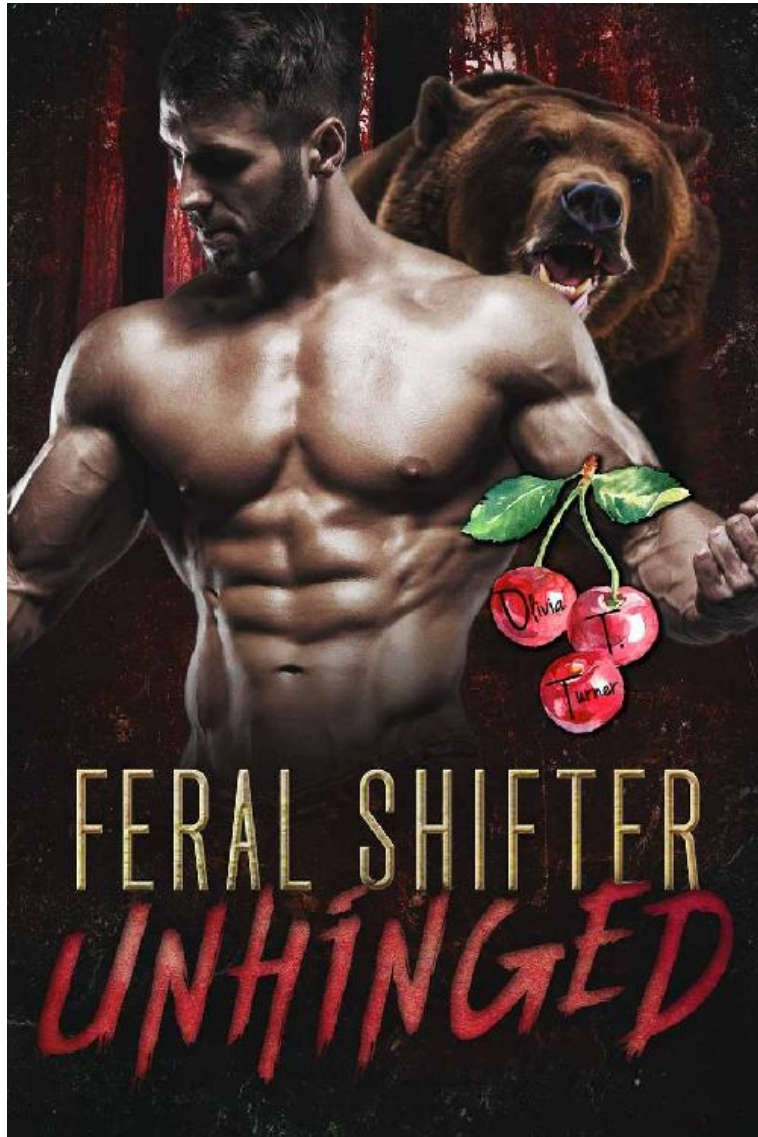
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