



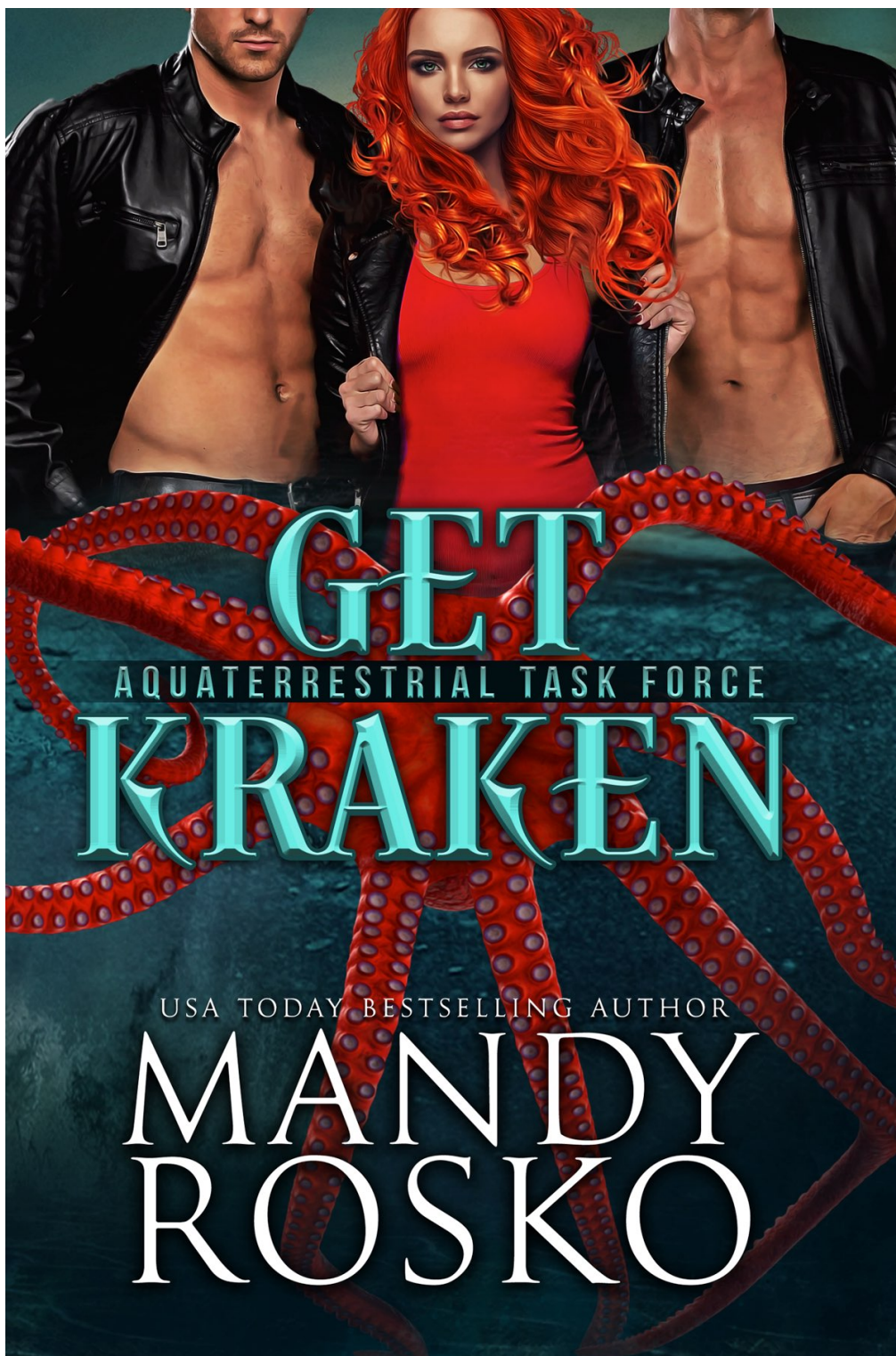
GET

AQUATERRESTRIAL TASK FORCE

KRAKEN

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

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THE AQUATERRESTRIAL TASK FORCE

BOOK ONE

MANDY ROSKO

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GET KRAKEN

Two hot alpha shifters. One woman determined to clear her name.

Olivia is a kraken shifter, the only one of her kind. She's used to how freaked-out people get when they find out what she is... her kind is rare and rumored to be monstrous. But when bodies start popping up with marks that appear to be made from a kraken, Olivia knows she needs to do whatever she can to clear her name and catch the person doing it. That starts with going to the Aquaterrestrial Task Force and volunteering to help with the case.

Mike is a goblin shark shifter, an agent of the ATTF. He's not pleased when the agency sends Chase, a harpy shifter, to be his communications man, and he's even less pleased when he learns that Olivia, an untrained civilian, will be completing the team.

It only gets worse when Mike finds out that not only is he Olivia's mate... Chase is too!

Can the team figure out how to deal with two men mated to the same woman? And can they accept using her as bait to lure out a dangerous killer before it's too late?

CHAPTER
ONE

“ I don’t need a partner.”

“Actually, you do. You need someone a lot prettier than you for effective bait, unless you want to put a wig on that huge fin of yours, slap on a bikini, and go splashing around in the water on your own.”

Mike Stone knew his boss wasn’t making a dig at his looks, though he could see it on the man’s face that he was cringing a little on the inside for the comment.

The crooked scar that ran down half of Mike’s face was enough to get most people who didn’t know him to stare. It was enough to make a few of the people who *did* know him to stare at times.

He was lucky he still had use of both of his eyes, but deep scarring on his right cheek, the crooked set to his mouth, and the red lines that raked down half his face didn’t make him the best looking guy in the world.

But he didn’t give a shit about his looks, and he was glad his boss didn’t make some kind of casual apology for his words either.

Honestly, it would have been insulting. Mike didn’t work for the Aquaterrestrial Task Force, a department of the Federal

Paranormal Unit, because he got his feelings hurt easily.

If he did, then he wouldn't deserve to be there in the first place.

"You're getting a new partner." Jack Williams wasn't budging.

"AILE already sent Chase down. We were supposed to handle this on our own."

"Chase is here for the communications and surveillance. You still need a female. That's what the killer wants. This woman is a mer shifter, can shift just her bottom half when needed. She's also got a few natural skills on her side that will make it harder for anyone to do anything with her if something happens while you're at a distance."

"What could another mermaid do to this guy? He's already killed six of them." Mike pictured the traditional fish-tailed beauty. It was a shame what was happening to them, but he didn't know what special skills could help this new one get the better of the killer.

"She's not a mermaid. Not specifically."

Mike frowned. To this day, the action pulled at the scarring where his right eyebrow used to be.

"She's a kraken shifter. Think Ursula—"

"I know what that means." Mike really didn't have the time for this. "Where did you find her?"

"She came to us. Offered her services when it got out the killer was leaving suction cup marks and digging their claws into the victims."

Mike popped his knuckles. "So she's saying she came in because she thinks the killer is one of her kind. And we're sure

she's cleared? That she didn't do it?"

Though it was a worthless question to ask. Of course, their department would do a complete and thorough background check into anyone working for them, but especially one who could fit the description of a killer.

"She's got alibi; work-related and social activities. Phone traces ping to towers confirming her location, and none of her tentacles match any of the marks we pulled off any of the victims. Whoever this is, is much bigger than her."

Fuck. Of course the bastard would have gone through every step. Dotted every *i* and crossed all the *t's*.

"You know I don't like those types."

"Mike."

"You know exactly what my issue is with this, too, so don't go pretending this is something you don't understand."

Jack nodded. The man carried himself with an air of self-confidence, more assured than stubborn. He knew what he wanted, and he'd already made up his mind, and there was nothing Mike could do that would change it for it.

Bastard.

"You're going to meet her in an hour. She's a volunteer, and we need her. You're here to do a job, and you're either going to do it or be reassigned."

Mike was pretty sure his ears began to ring. The ridiculousness of those words... they couldn't be real. "She... What? What do you mean she's a volunteer?"

"No formal training, but we're going to give her a week, a crash course in what we do around here and what her role will

be, then we're putting her out in the field with you and a few other men."

"You've got to be shitting me. You're making me work with a squid who is also a *civilian*?" The word tasted dirty on his mouth. He practically spat after saying it.

A civilian. An added responsibility on his shoulders while he chased a killer. If anything happened to her, he would be haunted by it for the rest of his life.

"There's not many out there like her. She might be the draw we need to pull the killer out."

"I don't believe this."

"Your job will be to shadow her. Stay down low while she swims higher up. Keep her safe, and if anyone suspicious approaches while she hunts for crab, collects seashells or whatever, intervene."

"And if she's attacked? If anything happens to her, that's going to be on my conscience, you know that, right?"

"And mine." Mike heard the deadly seriousness tone to Jack's voice, but he couldn't appreciate it. Not when this was already so heavy. "Mike, I want this guy caught. I wouldn't take a risk like this with her if there was another choice, but Fedya Afanasi's team is on the trail of a trafficking operation, and now the AILE has handed down three different cases that could potentially link up with it. We have to do everything we can to stop this."

He was right, about the need to stop the disappearance of the women, but Mike still disagreed with his methods. "Having someone with wet feet, *you know what I mean*, is the last thing we need if this is our trafficker."

“A kraken shifter is a major asset. She’s just what you need with you on the Scotland shores.”

“Come on, what do I know about Scotland?” His Texas twang should have made that point for him.

Jack ignored the comment. “Chase will be there for surveillance and backup.” Mike would be in the water, though, hiding at deeper, darker depths, where he could sense the approach of most anything with a pulse. “And you’ll be there, doing your best scary-looking motherfucker shit. When in your shark shape.”

Mike definitely caught the way he said that. “*Thank you.* It’s nice to know my talents will be going toward babysitting.”

“We’ll get her ready. We’ve used civilian volunteers before for stings.”

“Those were different.”

“How so?” The sharp-eyed look Jack gave him suggested the boss didn’t give a shit how they could be different, and he was seconds away from throwing Mike’s ass right out of the office.

But Mike couldn’t stop himself. “We’ve used civilian actors in situations where we could have them wired up with mics and followed by dozens of cameras while we waited for the suspect. It doesn’t matter how good Chase is, communication and surveillance are going to be heavily limited two hundred feet down in murky waters.”

“Which is why I need you to cooperate with me on this.”

Motherfucking, manipulating, cocksucking asshole.

“All right, fine.” He might as well give in since he never got his way around here. “When do I meet Ursula?”

“Right now.” Jack gestured to the door opening behind Mike

Damn it. Mike spun around, pissed that he hadn’t sensed someone there. Christ. Had she heard him?

But then she stepped inside, and Mike got a full look at her, and he got a full *smell* of her.

He got a full *everything* of *her*.

She was...definitely not like Ursula.

The blood-red hair seemed more akin to Ariel than anything else. She was pale, almost ghostly so, which was normal for most merfolk who spent a lot of their time underwater.

She looked more delicate and, dare he think it, *ethereal* than what any octopus shifter, let alone a *kraken* had any right to be.

This willowy, delicate beauty was supposed to be a fearsome kraken? A descendant of the great monster of the sea feared by many a sailor?

...one of the creatures who had torn off half his face when he was a kid.

She looked right at him, bright green eyes shimmering as though the waves of a sun-kissed ocean danced within them, and Mike’s gut clenched. The intensity of the contraction inside his body felt more like a punch to his stomach than anything else.

He’d never liked freckles before. Now he realized just how much he was really into them.

She was his new ideal type of woman.

Perfection.

And then he *knew*. The knowledge came suddenly and with little warning. Without a shadow of a doubt, he knew it, and it made him want to curse Jack to hell and back all over again.

Fuck him sideways.

This was his mate.

“Hi, I’m Olivia Gray,” she said, holding out her slim hand to him. She didn’t hesitate or pause while looking at his face in a way that suggested she was disgusted or shocked by his looks.

Mike figured she’d probably been briefed on his looks before coming in, but that was all right; he didn’t care about any of that. He immediately took her hand and held back on the stupid urge to kiss her knuckles. “Very pleased to meet you.”

Indeed, he was.

Jack nodded approvingly. “Good. Mike Stone will be underwater with you while you’re all fishing for anything suspicious. Mike, you’ll be glad to know Olivia’s already met Chase.”

“Have you?”

She nodded, looked down, and pushed a long strand of red hair behind her ear. “Yeah.”

His senses immediately went haywire. What had Chase said to her? Something she didn’t like?

Jack cleared his throat. “It’s going to be an awkward situation, but we’re short-staffed and we can’t let this

opportunity pass. And Chase insisted he could work through it.”

Mike frowned. “Work through what? What’s the problem with Chase?”

Olivia wet her lips, clearly uncomfortable, but speaking through it. “Chase Belair...he and I saw each other, and...it looks like we’re each other’s mates. He doesn’t want to be reassigned now that he knows me, and since I’m the only kraken shifter around to make this work, the AILE wants to continue to use me.”

Mike didn’t hear much of anything else that came after the word mate. “Chase is your mate? You’re saying you looked at him and knew he was your mate?”

Olivia looked him right in the eyes, and he wasn’t getting the sense that she felt anything remotely similar for him. “Yes. He’s my mate.”

Son of a bitch.

CHAPTER
TWO

Not again. This couldn't be happening again, and Olivia refused to believe that any god could hate her that much.

Even she couldn't be so unlucky.

Not one mate, but two.

How could she have *two*? Did her species mate more than once? Take multiple partners?

Olivia didn't think so.

She knew very little about the kraken kind. Of that knowledge, one thing she knew for certain was that they tended to die shortly before their eggs hatched.

Hence why Olivia grew up as an orphan. She'd never even met another kraken.

The fact that both of these mates were in the prime of their lives, perfect age to start having kids, wasn't what Olivia had hoped for when she signed on to help catch a creep who was kidnapping and killing women.

If she had sex with her mates, would she get pregnant or lay eggs?

And would she die before they had the chance to hatch?

Mike Stone smiled at her, but it looked steely and not exactly sincere. “You mated with Chase? Isn’t that lucky? I’ve heard of people who find their mates by complete chance, but this, huh, it’s really something.”

“Yeah, crazy, right?” Olivia tried to smile back at him, but it only left her mouth feeling stiff.

The worst part of it all was the way she’d only barely stopped herself from swan diving into Chase Belair’s arms. It was as though the scent of his musk was enough to make her into some kind of primal animal in heat.

Chase had looked at her with intense gray eyes like he wanted to eat her up, and she’d wanted to let him.

Then she was directed out of the room, her hand still burning from when she’d shaken Chase’s hand, and into another room where she found another male who made her blood sing, her heart pulse, and her sex swell and fill with moisture.

The water gods *so* hated her.

“Mike, this is for you.” Jack held out a folder to Mike, who turned away from her, though he seemed to do so hesitantly. He took the folder, flipped it open, and then shut again quickly.

“Jesus, are you kidding me?”

“She’s going to see it soon enough. We’ve already shown her some of the tamer photos.”

Mike glanced back at her, his eyes intense and searching. “You have?”

Olivia steeled herself, lifting her chin just a little. “Yes. I know this killer is someone like me.”

“Allegedly,” Mike said quickly. “We don’t know that for certain yet.”

Olivia nodded. She didn’t want to argue with the people in the room who had more experience than her and knew more of the case than she did. She was here to help in any way she could, but it was probably best to leave the investigating side of things to them. “Right, yes, allegedly, sorry. Anyway, it’s most likely someone like me. I asked to see the photos.”

They started her off with the less horrible ones, hoping to ease her in, but she thought she was ready to jump straight in.

Before Mike could say anything else, there was a soft knock at the door.

“Hey, just checking in.”

Chase.

Oh no, what if he sensed what was happening in the room?

Olivia couldn’t ignore the way Mike and Chase stared at each other. Chase tilted his head just a little. Barely enough for anyone else to notice, but for Olivia, sirens might as well have been blaring in the room.

They noticed. And now they were proceeding to size each other up like men did whenever they were fighting over a piece of meat. Which wasn’t such a far-out idea, when you considered that Chase was a male harpy, and Mike was supposed to be a shark of some sort.

Chase placed a hand on her arm in greeting, sending an immediate surge of sexual desire through her. That was something she couldn’t help, regardless of how innocent it was. Otherwise, she wasn’t sure how she felt, being in the middle of these two men.

“You’re going to be swimming in the deep with her. Can I count on you to keep my mate safe?” Again, the casual observer might not have noticed the way Chase put emphasis on the word *mate*, but Olivia sure as hell did.

Christ, if she caught it, did *Jack* notice? It was sort of his job to be aware of those things, wasn’t it?

It was starting to look as though the little muscles beneath Mike’s eyes were beginning to twitch. “Yeah, I think I can keep an eye on her and make sure nothing happens. Hell, all this worry might be for nothing. One of the other teams might end up catching this guy before we do. It’s a big ocean.”

Chase grinned, and he looked right at Olivia. “You see? Nothing to worry about, and if something were to happen—”

“Which is unlikely,” Mike added.

“Just swim up to the surface, and I’ll pluck you right out of the water if I have to.

Olivia nodded, hoping that their posturing had some real promise of protection under it. “Sounds good.”

She was annoyed that Mike and Chase were having a silent dick measuring contest while she was worried about what would happen if she ran into another kraken.

“*Riiiiiiight*,” Jack clearly sensed something was off with the frequency in the room and wanted to be free from it. “The three of you can get acquainted with each other. You have one week. Olivia, spend some time getting to know what to expect, and we’ll have some of our other team members working with you too, to get you prepped.”

“Yes, sir. I’m fully prepared to face what I need to in order to help. The gruesome photos, the long hours. I know I’m not a trained agent, but you can count on me to give everything I

can to this mission.” She ignored Mike and Chase, focusing on the boss, Jack, and hoping she was doing a good job of convincing him that she was confident and capable.

“Glad to hear it.” Jack took a moment to look at each of them, one after the other, before continuing. “This mate thing between Chase and Olivia presents a conflict of interest situation, but the higher-ups have okayed us to continue. If I swapped teams and had someone else with Olivia that would just leave Chase distracted, worrying about her, so this is our best option, as long as all three of you are sure you won’t let it get in the way of this investigation. Do you understand?”

They all spoke together. “Yes.”

“Good, so Chase? If I even get so much as a *hint* that you’re affected in any way that hinders this mission, then I *will* replace you. No leaving your post because you feel like you have to protect her. While she’s in the water with Mike, acting as bait for the AILE, you do what you’re assigned to do so you don’t put her life, or Mike’s, in danger. Got it?”

Chase stood a little taller. “I understand perfectly. I would be the first one wanting me to be reassigned if I was in any way going to be less than professional or do anything to put either of their lives in danger.” He sounded as though he meant it, as though the whole dick measuring thing had never even happened.

And when he looked at her, Olivia believed it. “You’re going to be safe.”

A shy heat welled up within her in response to his confident statement. “Thank you.” If he was able to hold himself back from her, then she could follow in his example.

She hoped.

Maybe.

Fuck. She doubted it.

“Right.” Jack stood, signaling the end to the meeting. “The three of you can get the hell out of my office now. Go. And Chase, remember, don’t let your dick get in the way of this mission.”

Olivia wanted to die. Her chest, neck, cheeks, and ears blew up as though someone had put a furnace on full blast just beneath her skin.

Why would he say something like that with her standing right there? Was this just the way they talked in this office?

Maybe not, because Chase seemed about as pleased with his boss’ choice of words as Olivia did. “Great. Thank you so much for *that*.”

Chase did not do anything so obvious as take her by the hand and lead her out the door, but Olivia still sensed a certain protection from him as they left together.

She walked ahead of her two mates, both men flanked behind her like they were bodyguards to some she was a high-priority client. She didn’t like the feeling. She was here to help with the job. Sure, she wasn’t going to be an equal partner to them, but at least she wasn’t going to let them treat her like her protection was the mission, or like she was made of glass.

“I can’t believe you just let him say that,” Mike muttered under his breath.

“You want me to start a fight with Jack? Don’t think that would go so well for me, but thanks for your opinion.”

She stopped and turned to face them, pinching the bridge of her nose. “I wasn’t offended, you don’t have to come to my

rescue.”

Mike wasn't willing to let it go so easily. “Something we need to get clear right now, we know you can defend yourself, in the water and out. You're a kraken shifter, which means you're powerful as fuck. You're also someone strong enough and motivated enough to come in as a volunteer for a case like this. You wouldn't exactly be doing any of this if you were some kind of delicate princess.”

Olivia heard his words, but there was something lacking in them. Despite Mike saying he trusted her to hold her own, something about him screamed “protector.” It made Olivia feel like she needed to do more to convey a sense of strength. To shout from the rooftops that she was independent and self-sufficient.

But actions spoke louder than words, so no matter how much she wanted to insist that she did not need to be coddled, she would have to wait it out till she could show them what she was capable of.

“I don't know why you're both following me. I don't know where I'm going. Do you have an office or a cubicle, we're heading to? Or another meeting room to go over the files? They call that a war room, right?” She'd seen plenty of movies that had meeting rooms set up with photos pinned to the walls, and maps marked up with all the victim's locations and reports of other suspicious activity that could be tied to the suspect.

“You can wait in this room for us.” He motioned her to follow and opened a door into a small room with a little table and a few chairs. It looked like a room she'd seen on TV, all right, but not the war room she'd thought of. This one looked like the kind of room where witnesses and suspects were

questioned. Where someone tried to pull a confession out of a perp.

She looked at both men. “Where are you going?” She was pretty positive, looking at the way they tried not to glare at each other, that they were going to have a talk about her.

“I just want to go over parts of the case with him,” Mike said.

Chase nodded, going along with the garbage excuse. They acted as though Olivia was an idiot. “Go over the case?”

“Right,” Chase said. “And I want to grab some of my notes I left behind at my desk.”

Olivia wasn’t about to put up with that. “No.”

They both kept it up with their fake smiles. Chase cocked his head a little. “No?”

“That’s what I said. No.” If she was going to be stuck in the weird position of having two mates, then Olivia was going to get a few things straight from the start.

Olivia entered the room, sat down in one of the plastic chairs, and put her feet up on the table. “You want to unload me here so you can go off and argue over me. Well, forget it. I’m part of this, I know what happened in there. It’s stupid, and should not be happening right now, but you’re both my mates.”

It was interesting watching the way both pairs of eyebrows flew up into their respective hairlines. They entered the room and shut the door behind them.

Olivia continued, “But I’m here to catch this killer, and I’m going to follow Jack’s orders and not let this situation be a distraction. So, we have one week, and you don’t get to go off

and argue and waste precious seconds that should be used to training me.”

Both men gaped at her. “You could tell?” Mike said, his voice flat and dead.

Chase, on the other hand, glared at the other man. “I fucking knew it. I *knew* it. You’ve got eyes for my mate.”

“*No*,” she hissed, pointing a finger at one and then the other. “You are not about to devolve into some shit like that and ruin this for me. I don’t care if you’re my mate, if it’s one of you or both of you or the whole damn task force. I’ll walk right back into Jack’s office and tell him to find me someone else to work with, because, fun fact, I’m essential to this operation. I can’t be replaced, but you both can.”

Both men were speechless.

And Olivia felt powerful as fuck.

She kinda liked it. It went right to her head in the best possible way.

They both continued staring at her as though they were trying to figure out what just happened, how a civilian had gained control over them. It was enough to make Olivia smile. Just a little bit. And mostly for herself.

“Now, would you like to accept me as a team member, and show me to the war room where you can fill me in on the case? I’m going to need to start working on my strategy, and I can’t do that without taking in all the information you have.”

She stood and pushed past them to leave the room.

Damn, it felt good to be in charge.

CHAPTER
THREE

For Chase, finding his mate was supposed to be the best day of his life. From when he was a kid, his mother and father and every mated adult he'd ever known had told him he would be blown away when it came.

It would knock him off his feet, make him see stars, and then leave him begging and slobbering for more.

That much had been true. However, he hadn't imagined or prepared himself for learning that he was going to have to share the woman he was meant to spend his life with.

Add on top of that getting chewed out by her, and Chase wasn't having a great day.

At least Olivia showed that she understood the situation. She was clearly not pleased about the way Chase and Mike continued to growl at each other, but she knew exactly where she was and what she was in the middle of.

That was enough to remind Chase that he was a professional, and despite wanting to do very unprofessional things to Olivia, and violent things to Mike, his dick was no longer allowed to do the thinking here.

At least, not until he could get Olivia all to himself and experience what her thighs felt like around his waist.

How tight was her grip? He knew what they said about tentacles....

Like Chase, Olivia was new to the Aquaterrestrial Task Force. Unlike him, she was untrained, not an agent, but a civilian, and she was going to be used as bait to flush out a killer. It was a risky mission.

Chase was on loan from his main team at the AILE. A harpy shifter, he wasn't a water shifter like the rest of the Aquaterrestrial Task Force members, but he was damn good at his comms job, so he was sent down to help. When he'd first met Mike, he thought they'd get on just fine. Now Chase thought that fate had a really sick sense of humor, bringing them all together like this.

Mike nodded at him, a motion that suggested a tentative truce.

Prick. Chase should have been the one doing the silent nodding here.

But he couldn't fight with Mike. They had a job to do. Somebody, a kraken just like his new mate, was out there tearing up young women and teen boys in the water. Chase was going to do his job, do it well, and not think about the fact that he couldn't be underwater with Olivia the way Mike could be.

Or the way they would have a chance to bond down there. Just the two of them.

But this was stupid. He shouldn't be worried about Olivia picking favorites.

Because he was most definitely the favorite.

Except...

Chances were good her favorite would be another shifter capable of entering the water with her, who could protect her in those depths when she would most need it.

No. He was not going to think like that. He had to get his head back in the game. Had to focus.

They wouldn't be flirting underwater with each other because they had a job to do. People were dying and this case needed to be solved as soon as possible.

With all that going on, there was no need to be jealous. There would be no time to be jealous.

When this was all over with, they would figure it out. Do all the flirting and passionate fucking they wanted.

Hopefully.



FOR THE NEXT WEEK, Olivia was put through her paces.

The fact that she had never held a gun before was worrisome, but she learned quickly. Chase stood at her side while she did an impressive job of putting holes into the target. She wasn't flinching so much with the loud, popping noises either.

Olivia emptied her clip, and he watched her lower her weapon, safely hand it over to him, and then remove her hearing protection. "Will I even be able to fire this when we're under?"

"No," Chase said.

"So why am I learning this? Shouldn't we be doing other things?"

Mike, who was supervising their training, spoke up. “You need to know this because standard safety practices are a must. The goal will be to keep any and all weapons out of your hands since you’re not an agent, but on the off chance something happens, knowing you can defend yourself will be an asset.”

Olivia nodded. Chase wished he was the only one teaching her.

“Protect myself out of water, right?”

“Right. The fortunate thing is that you’re the sort of species not too many people or shifters are going to be prone to messing with.” She was a goddamn kraken, and that was so much hotter than Chase thought it had any right to be.

“Why?” Chase asked, something unpleasant coming to mind. “Are you concerned?”

“I can defend myself,” Olivia said quickly, pushing a strand of that bright red hair out of her eyes. It had come loose from her ponytail, and Chase wanted to swirl it around his fingers. “I’ve done it before.”

Wait a minute. What?

Mike spoke up. He set down the clipboard he was using to grade her progress and stood. “Underwater missions are tricky. Communication is low, and standard pistols are near worthless, but we make it work. Now come on, the both of you. We need to get back to work.”

Chase fought back a growl.

He hated this. Hated it so much that the woman who volunteered to help, the only kraken they could find for their plans, just had to be his mate.

His very sexy, ultra-attractive, and deadly mate.

The fact that he had to share her with Mike, and that he was on their asses as they worked, taking his stupid notes and looking over Chase's shoulders was enough to make the Pope antsy.

The short amount of time Olivia had to learn the ropes went by way too damn fast. Practically the blink of an eye. Which was amazing in and of itself because Chase had yet to take his mate to bed.

Newly mated couples tended to fuck like bunnies. They needed to. The heat of the mating pulled them together. Their bodies demanded it.

At least he could be content knowing that Mike was in the same situation. He would have been able to smell Mike on her if they'd been together.

And he really fucking hated thinking about that. His inner animal was wild with jealousy.

Focus. He had to focus on the job and not on her delectable body.

They moved quickly. The public wanted answers, and everyone wanted the killer off the streets. But now that Olivia was involved, now that she was going to be using herself as bait to lure out what they believed to be another kraken, Chase wished they could take their time. He wanted her to get all of the training exercises possible so she'd be as prepared as possible.



THEY HAD their first outing barely a week after she first volunteered. It was meant to be only a test exercise, but as far as Chase was concerned, it was still too soon to put Olivia through the paces.

It wasn't just the three of them, either. There was an entire team watching and participating. The AILE and ATTF weren't about to clear a civilian for a mission if she presented any sort of liability. She had to prove herself in this test.

In a way, Mike and Chase were also being tested. They had to show everyone that they could work together, and professionally, despite their personal situation.

The exercise wouldn't last long. Mike was to be the biggest fish in the water, aside from Olivia, and that meant that the smaller water shifters faced certain risks with being in the water too long. Larger fish eat the smaller fish and don't stop to ask their meal if they're actually a shifter. The last thing they needed was for an agent to become a snack.

Mike would be with Olivia, but at a distance.

But not too much of a distance.

Chase might be jealous as fuck that he couldn't go into the water with them, but that didn't mean he was stupid. He wasn't about to risk the life of his mate. He had to trust Mike.

Olivia, on the other hand, would be only shifting halfway. Meaning, her top half would stay in its human form, and, well, her bottom half would be showing a few more tentacles.

Chase hadn't been sure of this plan at first. But then he realized the entire point was to draw attention to themselves. Rather, for Olivia to draw attention to herself.

If this was another kraken shifter they were dealing with, then they wanted him, or her, to have a chance to see that

Olivia was one of them.

Kraken shifters were rare, and there was a good chance that if one heard about another, that they'd want to meet. If their kraken suspect heard about Olivia, they might be compelled to track her down.

And then they hoped to make contact. Which would be followed by a swift and smooth suspect apprehension.

The beaches where the bodies had washed up were still closed to the public. Thanks to a team of dedicated security, the only people who would be on the premises would be those assisting with the mission.

“Carol, are we good to go?” Chase asked from his spot in the van as he tapped his fingers on the consul in front of him.

“Eyes and ears are up in the air, cameras have been set down below, we should be good.”

“Should be, or we are?” He checked the monitors, seeing the cameras above the clear, almost crystalline turquoise water shimmering with the light that reflected off its surface. It was beautiful.

And the last place in the world he would've expected a killer to be lurking.

“We're good,” Carol answered.

Chase could feel her looking at him, trying to figure out what his problem was. “If you're worried about Mike—”

“I'm not.” He swiveled in his chair to look at her. “And what makes you think I'm worried about anything, anyway?”

She shrugged and turned her nose back to the screens in front of her. “No reason.”

Clenching his hands on his knees, Chase turned back to the screens that needed to be watched. There were so many coves and caves where something or someone sinister could be hiding.

Tiny underwater cameras had been set up in as many nooks and crannies as they could manage. Sonar systems measured the noise below the water, but no one would be communicating with Mike, or Olivia, or any of the other agents down there.

All Chase could do was watch and wait.

CHAPTER
FOUR

The mission was to keep within sight of the cameras. For this exercise, they would be sticking to more shallow waters. The deeper, darker waters, where the light struggled to penetrate and the cameras would likely pick up little, would come later.

Olivia's heart raced. She forced herself to breathe deep through her gills, which were barely noticeable on her human neck. She had on a bikini top and carried a bag.

This was it. This might be the day she met someone else just like her. Another member of her kind.

Someone who was probably a serial killer.

So, not fun.

At least the actions expected from her, which consisted of frolicking around in the water while keeping to the paths set out for her, wasn't so bad.

She'd memorized these paths on the maps and studied enough photos and videos during her training to feel like she'd swam there a thousand times before. *There's the jagged coral, and the greenish-grey rock over there.*

She felt down a pair of eyes watching her from below. Eyes that had nothing to do with the many cameras hidden on

the planned path.

Mike.

He was down there. She could almost see him.

Almost.

But she felt him.

Which concerned her. If she felt him, then could the killer pick up on his presence, too?

She'd make it known in the exercise debrief that Mike was probably going to have to back off just a little, going even deeper in the water.

She wasn't going to let him being too close mess things up. She'd gone through so much just to be here. Had put herself through a week of hell, all the rigorous training combined with being carefully watched by suspicious ATTF members who didn't trust her just because of her shifter form.

She was going to find this person.

Whoever it was.

Kraken shifter or not, they needed to be brought to justice.

That's what she told herself. It was all true, but as Olivia's tentacles pulled her along, she couldn't ignore the other reason.

She didn't want Mike too close to her in this form. She didn't want him to see her like this.

When they were preparing to go in the water, before she shifted, she'd gotten a good, long, sweet look at the perfection that was Mike's abdomen when he took off his shirt. She'd somehow expected it would be scarred, like his face, but it wasn't. She tried to look away before he stripped out of his

jeans, but he'd caught her eye when he stuck his thumbs into his waistband, teasing her. And her traitor eyes had flown to that waistband and caught a glimpse of his penis. It was something she regretted very much because now she couldn't get that image of large thick perfection out of her mind.

Mike and Chase were both incredibly sexy men, and somehow they were saddled to her.

A monster, complete with tentacles.

Olivia grabbed a seashell, pretending to admire it before stuffing it into her little bag. She was supposed to be pretending to be a collector, gathering this thing and that as she followed the trail.

Olivia had no fantasies about being anyone's first choice.

She'd dated non-shifters but didn't want a life where she'd never be able to be herself around someone she cared about. The shifters she'd dated had been disgusted by her kraken form.

Then there was the one oddball who was a little bit too into the idea of tentacle porn. She didn't want to be someone's kink. She wanted something real.

Her struggle was finding someone in the middle. A mate who wouldn't run the first time they saw her transform, but also a gentleman who didn't get so excited at first glance of her tentacles that they pitched her an idea of working in pornography together.

She recalled the proposition of a sixty/forty split. *Cheap bastard.*

It didn't matter how uncomfortable she might be, and it wouldn't matter if she told them that Mike would have to

swim deeper. The ATTF cameras were capturing everything she did. They were all seeing everything.

The monstrosity that she was couldn't be unseen.

She was never going to live this down.

The only thing she could do was keep going in her wide circle, enjoying the sights, searching for anything out of the ordinary. She would do the job she'd volunteered for, without focusing on how her two new mates must think she was a freak.



SHE WAS BEAUTIFUL; the most lovely creature Chase ever had the pleasure of seeing.

“Did you know a kraken shifter could keep a halfway form like that?”

Chase shook his head. “Before this mission? Nope.” He left it at that. He was too busy focusing on the monitors in front of him to want to get into any light chitchat.

Not that Carol seemed to notice. The woman sharing space in the van with him seemed to be in a mood to talk. “I’ve never seen a kraken shifter before. Apparently, she wouldn’t shift all the way when doing the pool exercises with the swim team. Do you think that’s weird?”

“What? No. Why?”

“I don’t know.” Despite the discussion, Carol wasn’t taking her eyes off the monitor. Chase couldn’t tell if it was because she was just doing her job, or because she was fascinated by seeing a kraken for the first time.

Maybe it was a little bit of both.

“It’s just interesting, you know? Like, when I found out you were a half harpy, that blew my mind. I hadn’t met a guy harpy.”

That made sense.

Whenever a new shifter entered the scene, especially one that was more on the rare side, people got curious. The first time he found out that Mike was a goblin shark? He’d never even heard of a goblin shark. Learning there was such a thing had piqued his curiosity.

Some shifters were rarer than others, and they were bound to draw the attention of the more common shifters.

As for him? He stared at the monitor, captivated by her. She looked like she was flying through the water, as graceful and gentle as a mythical fairy. She was clearly in her element, a woman of the water.

His surveillance wasn’t picking up any other activity, at least nothing large enough to cause alarm. Olivia and Mike were still the biggest fish in the sea.

She was safe.

Chase exhaled deeply.

That was his woman in the water. His woman who had volunteered to help find a killer.

She was that amazing, and more than ever, Chase wanted to brush his fingers through those strands of red hair, to touch her porcelain skin.

How sensitive would she be to his touch?

The more he thought about it, the more it irked him that he had to share her.

Because as much as she belonged to him, she also belonged to that stupid goblin shark circling in the water below her.

“Hey, new question, kind of perverted,” Carol said. “You think Mike can see her lady bits down there? I mean, are her important parts on the bottom, or like, does a hole open up on her backside?”

He didn’t want to hear this. “What the hell, Carol?”

“I just mean, well, you know? When is squid or an octopus grabs pray, they bring it to the center of the tentacles. That’s where the mouth is. So does she have two mouths right now, or is that her privates?”

Chase groaned and rubbed his eyes. “This probably isn’t work-appropriate topics of conversation.”

“I know! I don’t want to think about it either. But I can’t get my mind off it. Think I should ask her, you know, like woman to woman? Because the idea of someone going after her and thinking they were going to hit the honey pot, and instead they get a dick full of teeth...” Carol broke off into laughter.

Chase was really starting to get a headache. It annoyed him to think about Mike, in his shark form, swimming down below and constantly looking up Olivia’s *skirt*.

That lucky bastard.

And Carol was looking at him.

He tried not to growl at her. “What?”

She shrugged, turning back to her monitors. “Nothing, nothing. You just look like you’re about to rip the console off the wall.”

He realized his claws were out, so Chase quickly put them away and relaxed his shoulders. “I’m fine. I wasn’t going to rip anything off the wall.” Though it did feel as though he came close to doing just that.

She raised a brow at him, that damned little brow ring glinting as she turned away to look at her screens. She reached a hand noisily into her potato chip bag and started crunching down on them.

Likely filling her mouth with snacks instead of saying what she really thought.

“What?” Chase growled.

She shrugged, smacking loudly. “Just that you’re refusing to talk about how the three of you all... connected. You know, in *that* way.”

He sighed. “So what? We are. And that doesn’t change anything. This is a professional setting, and nothing is going to happen until the mission is over with.”

“That could take years. No offense, but you’re asking a lot out of yourself, you all are. Holding back from jumping into the sack is just going to make your instincts redirect. You know, like you gotta get that passion out somehow, and redirecting it into fighting Mike is a bad alternative.”

He couldn’t believe this was what it was coming down to, but he had to admit that he wanted somebody to talk to. Since Carol had offered her ear, he might as well take her up on it.

“Mike and I will not be doing any fighting, and this mission won’t take years. Not now that we have Olivia here.

We'll draw out the killer, put the guy away for good, and then we can celebrate by having a massive orgy."

"Orgy?" Carol looked back at him and smiled. "Are you planning on inviting more people?"

"Shut up." Chase crossed his arms and stared at the screen. "That's not what I meant."

"Okay, but if you ever change your mind, I'm always here."

"I'll keep that in mind."

Carol wasn't done. "All I'm saying is that you have a pretty nice body. Don't think I never noticed it, and even when you get those giant scary talons of yours out, you still look like you'd be a lot of fun. Add in another guy—"

"I get it. You don't have to say anything more. If Mike and I ever feel like sharing Olivia with you, we'll give you a call."

"Share Olivia? God no! Are you kidding? I was talking about you and Mike. I'm pretty jealous of her."

Chase was genuinely starting to get embarrassed. "Fine, fine."

On the bright side, the conversation had taken his attention away from Mike looking up Olivia's skirt.

It was almost as though Carol had been distracting him.

He couldn't believe he was about to say this. "Hey, Carol?"

"Yeah?"

"Thanks," Chase said, but then he felt the need to tack on, "I'm not inviting you to be shared between Mike and me, however."

“Spoilsport.”

He shook his head. “I think there’s only one woman for me at this point.”

But something new had bubbled up from Carol’s comments. There was jealousy, but it wasn’t about Mike and Olivia.

It was about Mike and Carol.

Just as Chase knew that Olivia belonged with him, he felt it in his bones that Mike was theirs too. Olivia was the only woman allowed to touch Mike. Chase felt an unexpected possessiveness, sure that he didn’t want Mike to ever be with any other person outside of their threesome.

CHAPTER
FIVE

“Ten days, and we have nothing. How is that possible?”
After proving she could handle herself, the ATTF and AILE green-lit the mission and sent them off to Scotland, where they set up base camp in the local Paranormal MI5 office.

Olivia didn't appreciate the looks of sympathy that Mike and Chase gave her. Not when everything was as screwed up as it was now.

“These things take time,” Mike said, reaching across the table and taking her hand.

Chase inched his chair closer to hers. She thought he was going to take her hand, too, but he didn't. Stopping himself before his fingers could brush hers, he set his elbows into the old, wooden table in the break room, their coffee getting cold in front of them.

“Olivia, these things aren't like what we're used to seeing in the movies. They take time.”

“I know that, but we've been going out every day so far.”

She knew it sounded so incredibly whiny, but she couldn't help it.

She wanted this done. She wanted to know if it was another kraken shifter out there and put him away.

Mike took in a deep breath. “Sometimes, these things can take years. You being here does help a great deal, but there’s no guarantee we’ll slam dunk this in a couple of days.”

“I know.” It wasn’t just that, and she was pretty sure both men knew it.

It was a multitude of things. The curious glances she got from employees around the building didn’t help. Everyone from the woman who answered phones, to the kid who worked the printers, glanced in her direction whenever they passed by.

Sitting in the tiny room designated for breaks was no different, and she could see those glances whenever they walked by.

Chase also noticed. He got up, a low growl rumbling in his chest as he grabbed the door and slammed it hard enough that Olivia was surprised the glass didn’t shatter.

A conflicted part of her enjoyed that Chase and Mike were looking out for her, but another part of her didn’t want to come off as though she needed the protection.

She said nothing when he sat back down.

She felt his irritation. She knew it was genuine.

A mate was always looking out for the best interests of his partner.

In this case, she had two mates, and both men were not only protective of her, but because of the mission at hand, they had yet to touch her in ways that didn’t involve the innocent hand-holding Mike was doing now.

“You don’t have to worry about them,” Mike said, his tone gentle. “They’re just curious.”

She nodded. “I know. They’re waiting to see if I’ll turn into the killer.”

“That’s not what they’re doing,” Chase insisted, crossing his arms over his wide chest. The shirt he wore seemed to struggle to not have its buttons popped. “If they were, we’d put a stop to that fast.”

Again, she was conflicted. “I don’t mind it if people are suspicious of me. That’s normal.” It was only a small lie, but that wasn’t what had her attention. What she did like was the way Chase had said the word *we*.

As though he and Mike were finally starting to see eye to eye on the whole sharing a mate thing.

“They shouldn’t be looking at you like anything,” Mike said, nodding to Chase. “Your story and alibi checked out. There’s nothing for them to see.”

“Exactly.” Chase lifted his arm over the back of his chair, leaning back a little. “If they need a reminder of that, we’ll give it to them.”

“No, you won’t.” She was letting them take command because of the situation because they were agents who had years of experience, and she had only just arrived, but in this, she would be firm.

“Neither if you are going to confront anyone else on the team over this.” She made sure to look at both of them, one then the other, when she spoke. Making sure they got the message loud and clear.

“I’m new here, it’s a risk to even have me, you’re not going to jeopardize this by getting all alpha on me now.”

“We’re your mates,” Mike said. “It’s kind of our thing to get *all alpha* on you.”

“I don’t care, cut it out. I’m a volunteer here. I want to keep doing this. I want to find who’s doing this and put him away, and I can’t do that if I’m seen as someone who needs defending from every little thing. You’re trusting me to go into the water and find a bad guy. Trust me to be able to handle a little staring.”

She didn’t think she would get through to them that easily, but it seemed to be enough.

Both men said nothing to her. Chase pressed his lips together and seemed as though he was trying his damndest to keep himself from saying something he would regret.

Mike snarled at the drink machine in the corner of the break room. It looked almost as though his shark teeth were starting to make an appearance.

“This isn’t the only thing that’s bothering you,” she said.

If she was going to force a little honesty from these men, she might as well include herself in that too. “You’re both just pissy because we haven’t had the chance to fuck yet.”

She felt the eyes of both males on her in an instant.

Of course, she knew they felt that way. She did too. Ever since meeting Chase for the first time, Olivia had been drowning in the scent of his lust. It brought something to life inside of her that she never before realized had been there.

She’d been prepared to hold herself off, to ignore that feeling, but doubling up that same feeling, that same instinct with Mike, and after ten days, she was a mess.

God only knew what these two alpha-holes were thinking. She felt them looking at her and then looking over her to stare at each other.

Mike was the first to respond. "I figured it would be less distracting to keep a distance. A physical distance."

Since they were sitting close enough to each other to physically touch each other right now, she could only assume he meant sexual distance.

"Same here," Chase said. "I wasn't about to do anything that would cause a distraction when you were both in the water."

"That's sweet, but it's just one more reason to have people staring. They're curious about the strange kraken shifter, wondering if I might actually be the crazy killer, and also wondering whether or not I've gotten laid yet."

She wished she had. But, so far, she hadn't so much as kissed either of them on the mouth. And cutesy kisses on her knuckles didn't count by a long shot, not when she could see the outlines of every muscle through their clothes. Even when both men wore leather jackets, she was somehow aware of their abs, and how badly she wanted to run her hands over them and feel each one.

She'd seen Mike naked again, every time they went out for another exercise. Those glimpses gave her plenty to think about, but equal time was taken up in her mind wondering what Chase would look like without his clothes on. The not knowing was just as bad as the knowing.

"Why are you both staring at me like that?" She cringed and wished they would stop it already.

“You haven’t been so open with us since we met you.” Chase leaned forward.

So did Mike. “I always assumed you were kind of shy. Chase?”

He nodded. “Same here.”

The heat decided that it would be a great time to flood into her cheeks at that moment. Because of course it did. “I don’t always come right out and say the things that I want, but this seems to be an important situation.”

“Are you a virgin?” She felt Mike’s hand reach around behind her and swat at the air where Chase’s head just was. The other shifter was fast. He ducked out of the way before Mike’s palm could crash land on his head.

“What the hell is the matter with you?” Mike muttered.

“I want to know what we’re getting into, here, all right?” Chase snapped. “You’re about to take two males at the same time. I want to know what your experience is.”

“Fair enough.” Now it was Olivia’s turn to lean back in her seat, pretending she was so much more calm and collected than she actually was.

In truth, her heart pounded. She knew they would be able to pick up on that, too.

“I’m not a virgin, but there weren’t many, and I’ve never been with two men at the same time.”

Which made her *feel* kind of like a virgin since she was going to do something she’d never done before.

It was one thing to be intimate with one other person. There was only that one person in the room with her to know

about her embarrassing little quirks, to see her face as she blushed, to spread her open and take her.

That was an intimate act that she could get around to with one person.

But with two? That was going to be something different entirely.

“Are you both going to be inside me at the same time? Because I might need to set up some ground rules before we get into that.”

“I’ll be as vanilla as you need me to be if this is what you need to do,” Mike said.

“There is such a thing as being a little too eager,” Chase snapped.

“Maybe you’re not too into the idea of finally getting your mate, but I am.”

Chase bristled. “I wasn’t insulting her!”

“I know you weren’t, and Mike, please don’t. I was so pleased that you were both starting to get along.”

“We have to get along,” Mike said. “No offense, Chase, but if I had my way here, I’d hog tie you and throw you into the nearest closet so I could have her first.”

“As if you could find anything that would keep my claws from cutting through.”

“Both of you, stop it.” Olivia pushed her chair back, standing sharply.

As though she were the queen, they stood with her.

Olivia rolled her eyes. “Don’t start getting all formal with me now just because I’m mad.”

Chase cracked his knuckles. “We’re not getting formal with you because you’re angry, we just don’t know what to do around you. You’re an asset to the team, even as a volunteer who’s barely qualified to help us. If anything happens to you, it’s entirely our fault, and we’re talking about going to bed with you as if that doesn’t mean anything.”

“I’m your mate, of course you want to take me to bed,” Olivia said, ignoring the comment about how she was barely qualified.

She supposed it was true, so there was no point in getting angry about it.

Mike rubbed his jaw. He had some darks stubble coming in, and Olivia was a sucker for that level of beard scratch on a man’s face. Him moving his hand over it made her want to do the same. It made her knees wobble and heat pool between her thighs.

Then there was Chase, who still looked at her with that smoldering, jealous expression.

No one had ever looked at her in such a possessive way before. Which was interesting, because he could have her. He was one of the men she was meant to spend the rest of her life with.

Her mate.

She liked both of these men. She wanted to have them, and she was perfectly capable of making the sentiment known, so why not go for it? “Look, you’re frustrated, I’m frustrated, so we might as well do something about it, right? If anything, this is just causing a distraction to our work.”

She thought that was a perfectly logical response to this whole thing.

Chase and Mike looked at each other again.

Was there some secret language that only males could understand? A silent code that allowed them to communicate with each other without words? Because they seemed to come to an understanding.

“It would get our heads back in the game,” Chase said.

As if he and Mike needed to convince themselves of anything.

“Right. A healthy mating will smooth out any wrinkles and allow us to focus.”

“I’m a shifter, not a sweater,” Olivia said, though she was glad they had come to a conclusion she could get behind.

They were clearly ready to get on with this. There was just one more thing to figure out.

“Your place or mine?” she asked.

Both Chase and Mike raised their hands at the same time, speaking up at the same time. “Mine.”

They looked at each other again, and Olivia could see that the struggle for dominance was going to be an ongoing issue.

She wasn’t sure who she wanted to win.

CHAPTER
SIX

Chase only realized that, yes, this was something he was going to have to get used to, sharing his mate with another male, when he and Mike had to come to an agreement to take Olivia home for their time alone.

To her place.

The three of them.

Honestly, it was probably for the best. He turned into a bit of a slob when there was an active case, and he didn't think it would be the best idea in the world to show that to their mate. Just because he had her didn't mean he was going to skimp out on trying to impress her.

And if there was one thing he knew about women, and he liked to think he knew women very well, it was that dirty clothes and empty beer cans strewn around wasn't exactly a turn-on for most.

Next, he had to weigh the pros and cons very quickly in his mind to figure out whether or not he wanted to do the driving. If he was driving, it looked as though he had some control over the situation.

Of course, that left Mike's hands free to do as he wished with Olivia on the way.

She had expressed an interest in being made love to, in being touched and stroked. If Chase's hands were free, he wouldn't be wasting any time.

"You know what? You drive," Chase said to Mike. It was a very last-minute decision as they were already in the parking lot.

Olivia didn't seem to think anything of it, but Chase caught the way Mike looked at him. The slight raising of his brow, followed by a barely there lifting of the corner of his mouth. The fucker knew what Chase had done, and he was going to let Chase get away with it.

Whatever. Chase didn't care.

The only thing he cared about was that he was totally taking the backseat with Olivia as Mike chauffeured them. The fact that Mike had to be such a good sport about it just rubbed salt into the wound.

Shit. If Chase had offered to drive then he could've been the one taking the high road right now. Who knew that having a woman in his life would turn him into such a petty piece of shit?

"No having fun back there without me," Mike said.

"We won't," Olivia replied, giving Chase an apologetic look.

He shrugged and put his arm up on the back of the seat as though it were no big thing. "Wouldn't dream of it," he said, totally lying through his teeth.

Could she tell he was lying? Why did this have to be so damned hard? Why couldn't he just relax? He felt like a teenager who was desperate to get close to the first girl he'd ever had a crush on.

He was a grown fucking man, and he was going to act like it.

“You both don’t have to worry about impressing me,” Olivia said quietly. “Whatever it is you’re both struggling with, I can help. I mean, you both do kind of need me for this next part.”

The way she smiled at him had every nerve in his body lighting up as though he had an electric current running right through him. He wondered if this was what it felt like to stick a fork in an outlet.

He was never going to test that and find out, so Chase was happy to leave that to the imagination.

Mike chuckled at her joke. “That’s true, but don’t forget that we are the ones who are supposed to be servicing you.”

Fuck. Why couldn’t Chase think to say something as cool as that?

He added what he could think of. “For the rest of the night, you don’t have to ask for a damn thing. We’re here to take care of you, and that’s that.”

Olivia smiled, but there was still a look of discomfort on her face. She pressed her hands between her knees.

“Unless you don’t want us to?”

Olivia shook her head. “It’s nothing like that. I wasn’t... It’s just that usually, no one wants to take care of me. I mean you both saw me when I was in my...”

Chase tensed up real tight. He thought he even felt a slight swerve in the car.

“Baby, no.” Chase grabbed her hand. He squeezed it tight without thinking. “If that’s what you’re worried about, then

you could put that thought right out of your head. You're beautiful."

"But I'm really not."

"All right," Mike said. "You need to tell us right now who gave you that idea so we can pay him a visit."

"Don't joke around about something like that." Olivia pushed a strand of red hair behind her ear. "You're a federal officer."

"He didn't mean it," Chase said, even though he was pretty sure the other man did actually mean it.

Chase wouldn't allow him to go after anyone, of course. Unless he was able to go with him. The idea that someone could make Olivia feel less than worthy put a sour taste in his mouth.

"Are you sure?"

"Absolutely!" Chase couldn't believe he was about to do this, but he needed to hype up Mike as a decent male to the woman they both loved.

"He wants to protect you, but he wouldn't do anything to endanger his job, or to embarrass you."

Mike mumbled something under his breath that Chase didn't quite catch, and he was afraid to figure out what it was he said.

The three of them were sharing a rental car, but they all had separate rooms in the extended-stay hotel. The office wasn't far away, so their talk came to a quick end as Mike pulled into their parking spot.

"Well, we're here," Olivia said, clearly wanting an end to the conversation.

Chase wasn't done, and one glance at Mike and he could tell the other man wanted to say something, too.

But neither of them did.

If she didn't want to talk about it, then that meant bringing it up would only embarrass her. It wouldn't matter how much they denied it or claimed she was the loveliest thing they had ever seen. If they did too much insisting, it would come off as less than genuine.

Mike got that too. Chase could tell. They both nodded at each other, silently coming to the decision to find other ways to make their mate realize how gorgeous she was.

"Cute place you got," Mike joked as they got out of the car, as though they were a normal couple going back to a woman's house to have their first sexual encounter with each other.

"Yeah, the rent is good." She joked back, alluding to the fact that AILE was paying for it.

Olivia led the way but paused when they got to her door. "It's a little messy inside, is all, I might need a second to do a little cleaning up."

"I'm sure it's fine," Mike said, waving his hand. "No one is more of a slob than Chase."

"Shut up," Chase growled. He would have punched the man if Olivia wasn't right there.

Mike shrugged and said nothing because he knew he was right.

The cock.

Olivia just smiled nervously. She hesitated after unlocking the door, as though debating on whether or not to insist they

stay outside for a minute so she could tidy up.

He really hoped she didn't ask that. He wanted to get inside. His hands itched to slide across her body, into her hair. His mouth ached to kiss every inch of her body he could.

And he wanted to do that right now.

He'd needed it ten days ago.

He should be knighted for being so patient. Saints were canonized for that level of self-control.

But he'd done it.

So had Mike.

Olivia opened the door, stepping inside. Mike followed after her, the expression on his face as cold and aloof as it ever got whenever he was masking something.

Or feeling nothing.

Chase had been going crazy these last ten days without the touch of his mate. Trying to keep everything professional had left him with the feeling of an active bomb inside his belly, waiting to erupt.

He supposed the anecdote wasn't that far off. Something wanted to erupt all right.

But Mike had kept a perfect aura of control.

He had to be suffering these same side effects. He was as mated to Olivia as Chase was, and yet the guy looked like he slept soundly every night.

He must have the sort of willpower that could make Superman look like a Junior Boy Scout. And that made Chase realize what a pathetic worm he must look like in Olivia's presence.

The shame hit him as he followed after them. Olivia was likely nervous about the idea of being shared by two men, but now he realized she must also be disappointed that one of them had to be a guy like Chase.

Especially when Mike was so clearly the winning candidate.

The stupid, overachieving, motherfucker.

When Chase entered the room, he stopped short at the sight of Olivia's apprehensive smile and noticed that Mike's cool, calm, and aloof expression was long gone.

It had been replaced by something that looked a little more like cartoon, bug-eyed, shock.

Chase almost reached for his weapon before he realized there was no threat waiting for them. "What? What are you looking at?"

Chase stepped through the entry and heard Olivia let out a little groan of embarrassment. He took in the large suite, getting an eyeful of what had Mike so out of character.

Chase's brows lifted, and he had had to bite down and crush the intense urge to laugh. A snort squeezed out of his closed throat, and Olivia hung her head in shame.

"I'm sorry, I know this isn't the best way to accept company. Maybe we should go to Mike's." Olivia rushed around, picking up stray bras and panties from the floor and over the back of the sofa, and then tossing them into the basket before kicking it behind the kitchen island.

Which didn't hide the sink full of dishes in the tiny kitchenette or the old Chinese take-out containers on the counter and the coffee table.

“I’m kind of a messy person, but not all the time!” she quickly added. “This is just...well, things are kind of haphazard right now and—”

“You don’t need to explain,” Chase said, suddenly so much more in love with her.

He looked at Mike, then took great pleasure in closing the man’s mouth with a tap from his fingers.

“We’ve all been working hard. Stuff gets tossed around. I understand.”

Olivia bit her lower lip, glancing around, as though just seeing the place for the first time.

Chase understood that, too. The feeling of looking at his own damned mess with new eyes whenever he had someone he was trying to impress over at his place. He walked right up to her, curling his arms around her waist, putting her attention back on him, where it belonged.

“You and I are messy little soul mates. Mike can clean up after us.”

“*What?*” Chase ignored Mike, leaning down, taking Olivia’s mouth with his own, finally kissing her good and hard. The way he’d wanted to for ten damned days.

CHAPTER
SEVEN

Something within Olivia awakened when Chase's mouth touched hers. She'd known that being mated was a force bigger than both of them, or all three of them, but she hadn't known how it would work. There was jealousy, and there was the fact that none of them had experience being in a relationship with more than two people.

She'd been glad to put her focus almost entirely on her work, on helping the AILE find out who was killing those unlucky swimmers and shifters in Scotland waters.

But it wasn't because she didn't want them. It was because she'd been afraid. Afraid of feeling that rush of electricity, of feeling that desperate surge of *wanting* hitting her when Chase kissed and touched her.

She'd been glad to push it down and ignore it. To try to ignore it, but now that his mouth was on hers, his hands sliding across her lower back and pulling her close to him, all she could feel was the intense heat of his body.

A heat of another kind pooled between her legs, her pussy flooding with warmth, and she knew she was done for.

Or so she thought.

Whatever she was feeling then, was nothing compared to the sensation multiplied by two.

Mike slid up behind Olivia, sandwiching her between the intense fire of both of their solid bodies. His mouth pressed down on the side of her throat, and a noise escaped her.

Olivia *moaned*. She couldn't stop herself. She didn't want to make any noises. She tried holding them back. They were just doing this for their mating, so they could get it out of the way and get focused back on their work.

Nothing more and nothing less.

What the mind wanted and what the body demanded were two separate things. She was old enough to know this, but it seemed she still needed a lesson. When Chase slipped his tongue between her lips and Mike reached his hand down and around her slim stomach to roam her hips and below, she knew that her body was in control.

Mike's hand made his way between her legs, and even with her jeans in the way she could barely contain herself. She moaned again, helpless against both men as they worked together to drive her wild.

Chase was good with his tongue. Olivia wanted to keep tasting it. She laced her fingers into his hair, pulling him closer, refusing to let him go. She imagined him working his tongue like that on her sex, while she gripped him the same way.

Not to be forgotten, Mike thrust his body against her, rubbing his cock against her ass. She pushed back against him, encouraging him while feeling his firm length between their pants.

Then she laughed. A puffy, heated sounding thing as she pulled back from Chase's mouth. She felt Mike's smile before looking back at him. "What's so funny, darlin'?"

"The look on your face when you saw I'm just as messy as Chase, the fact that you're both here with me like this, and I haven't said it yet, but I love your accent."

He played it up immediately. "Then I guess I'll just have to keep on talkin'."

"Saying *darling* the way you do is the best."

"You mean *dahlin*?"

She nodded. "Yeah, just like that."

"Fuck, I'm screwed," Chase muttered.

Olivia whipped her head back around to face him. "What? Why?"

"Because he's got the accent. I've heard women talk. There are two major accents I've heard them gushing over. British accents and Southern accents."

Olivia brushed her fingers through Chase's hair. "We're in Scotland. If I was that big into accents, you'd be in big trouble."

He paused, as though finally realizing that was indeed the case.

"Okay, so now it's my mission to keep you away from every Scottish male, shifter, or otherwise."

"You should. I'm really into *Outlander* lately. So I'm all about the Scots."

Chase's face dropped, crestfallen. "I don't know what *Outlander* is, but now you're definitely not getting near

anyone else. Other than Mike.”

She laughed out loud. Throwing her head back and everything.

She thought she heard Mike grumble in that deliciously sexy voice of his how she nearly got him on the nose, but she couldn't bring herself to mind.

She was selfish like that.

“Mike has the accent, which gives him an advantage over me, so I'm going to do this,” Chase said, and before she could ask what, or Mike could stop him, Chase scooped her up into his arms and made off with her, toward the bed.

She couldn't bring herself to care that Mike was complaining as he followed them. She only cared that she had both of these men. They were both hers.

Two alpha males, who looked as good as they did, wanted her and only her.

“Your chariot has brought you to your destination,” Chase said, making a big show about placing her delicately on the bed.

“My chariot?” She scooted back to make room for them.

“I always wished I was a horse shifter. Those guys get all the fun.”

“You don't need to be a horse shifter to give a girl a good ride.” Olivia traced her finger down his chest while she smiled at him, giving him a sultry look.

He blinked, his head jerking back a bit before the corners of his mouth quirked. “That's not where my mind went at all, but if that was what you wanted to think about, then be my guest.”

“You idiot,” Mike said, his hand smacking the back of Chase’s head. “Like that’s not exactly what we’re all thinking about right now.”

Chase didn’t stop smiling. Instead, he grabbed Olivia by her ankle, yanked her forward, pushing himself between her legs and looking slyly back at the other male.

“Don’t hate me because I’m chivalrous.”

Olivia rolled her eyes, but as cheesy as it was, it was also kind of funny. She couldn’t help a giggle and marveled at her situation. Here she was, turned on as could be, with two ultra sexy men, but the experience was about more than sex. It was about fun, companionship, play. They could joke, and laugh, and that just added to the intimacy.

It was perfect.

Olivia always thought her first time with her mate would be more sensual. More slow, with no words spoken between them. Instead, she was getting banter and joy. She was feeling like herself and getting to see more of these men she was falling for.

Olivia cleared her throat. “Since I kind of figured we’d get here eventually, I made sure the top drawer had some condoms waiting.”

They looked at her, and she could almost smell the thick rush of male testosterone that permeated the air. It was one thing to know they were getting laid, another for her to admit that she’d been wanting them since the moment they met, but apparently telling them that she’d been prepared for this moment pushed them to a new level of lust.

Their eyes became wild and animalistic.

Mike's eyes turned black, as though he were in his shark form smelling blood in the water. He made his way over to the drawer she indicated, while Chase's lids fell to half-mast and he leaned over her, groaning.

"Just remember," her voice turned softer, more timid. "I've never done this before. I need you to both go slow, and to be open to talking through each move. No surprises." She wrapped her legs experimentally around Chase's waist.

"You got it," Chase said, his nostrils flaring.

Mike pulled two boxes from the drawer and turned back to them. "You have nothing to be afraid of. We're going to take care of you."

CHAPTER
EIGHT

Mike realized that reacting as he did to Olivia's messy side was not the best thing to do when trying to set the mood. Had it just been the two of them, she might have kicked him right out of her place. He was glad Chase was there to make light of it, and even to take advantage of it. Mike and Olivia shared similarities as water shifters, and now Chase and Olivia had something they shared.

As long as they didn't really think he was going to be their maid, that is.

Those thoughts left him as he rubbed against her, and they were even further from his mind when he opened the drawer and saw what she had inside. Several varieties of lube, and two different boxes of condoms: one regular, one extra large. He smirked at the extra large size and shook the box at Chase. "She guessed correctly."

"For me, maybe," Chase said, rolling off Olivia and lying back on the bed, pulling her on top of him so she straddled his waist. "You might need another size."

The barb didn't bother Mike a bit. He wasn't in competition with Chase. This woman belonged to both of them, and he had nothing to prove. "Play nice, or I'll take one for myself and flush the rest down the toilet."

Chase's eyes sharpened, but he smiled. "Yeah, right."

"It's funny watching you pretend not to be threatened," Mike said, stepping up behind Oliva, pressing a soft kiss to her shoulder. He pulled down the neck of her shirt, forcing some of the buttons of her blouse open, revealing smooth, warm skin.

"I love tasting you."

"Yeah," Olivia said, a breathy little sigh leaving her. "Which...which one of you is going first?"

That was a good question.

"Well," Chase said, opening his stupid mouth. "Taking turns kind of seems a little unromantic, right?"

Turns out, he didn't always put his foot in it.

Olivia blushed. "Well, I guess you're right. So, how exactly do we go about this?"

Mike realized something at that moment. Chase was picking up on more of Oliva's thoughts and feelings than Mike was. Chase understood her fears when they sailed right by Mike.

Here Mike thought he was getting a lot of extra time with Olivia, swimming beneath her when they were in the water together, but Mike had only been guarding her, watching for any suspicious activity around her.

Chase had been able to observe her. To see her body language, her facial expressions. In that short time, he'd been able to figure out more about what makes Olivia tick than Mike could even guess at.

"Well, we go slow, for starters," Chase held her waist and rocked his hips, which also pushed Oliva into Mike. "It won't

be the most comfortable feeling at first, but if you can relax and let us both in, you'll be in for one of the best experiences ever. Or so I've heard."

"Really?" Olivia seemed like she wanted to believe Chase. "I'm nervous, but I want it. I want both of you..."

Oh lord, that got Mike right where it hurt the most.

"Well, it goes just like normal. Touch." Mike slid his arms around her and underneath her shirt, reaching up to cup her breasts.

"Kiss." Chase pulled Olivia's mouth to his, while Mike trailed his lips up her neck and behind her ears.

Mike's dick pulsed, watching Chase and Olivia's embrace. It wasn't just Olivia turning him on. It was watching them together...

Why?

Because they both belonged to him. It wasn't just Olivia.

Olivia, Chase, and him. The mating was for the three of them, and the knowledge caught him like a fist to his gut.

Since learning that he was mated into a triad, he'd looked into it, asked around. He'd heard that they could tear themselves apart if they refused to come to terms with it. That's why Mike had tried so hard to put aside his jealousy and work as a team with Chase.

But there was more to it, and he could see that now. This wasn't just sharing one woman between two men. This was a joining of the three of them into one whole unit.

Watching another male's tongue thrusting into Olivia's mouth didn't make Mike feel possessive at all. It turned him on. He felt a certainty that they would all get satisfaction out

of this relationship, and he was happy to see Olivia gratified, no matter who was giving her the pleasure.

So he watched them, transfixed as they made out and grinded. He focused on unbuttoning Olivia's blouse and making her moan here and there when he pinched her nipples or dipped his hand down to the waist of her pants.

Olivia pulled back from Chase and turned her torso toward Mike. Her eyes were alive with lust as she grabbed the hem of the tank top she wore beneath the blouse, and she looked directly into his eyes as she shed the garments.

Red hair cascaded down her shoulders as she shook it out, taking his breath away. Her lips were full and dark from all of Chase's kissing, and her eyes were half-lidded and screaming for him to take what he wanted.

So he did.

Mike pulled his shirt off, then leaned in, pulling her into him so he could feel her hard nipples graze his chest. He kissed her, more roughly than Chase had. It was a biting kiss that made her moan.

Olivia stood, giving Chase a chance to scramble out of his clothes, and Mike a chance to get her out of her pants. He did so by lowering himself to his knees and kissing down the front of her with each painstakingly slow inch of her zipper.

Olivia leaned back against Chase's chest, and Mike looked up to see her arms reaching up, curling around Chase's neck. He finished pulling down her jeans, and then her panties, pulling them off one leg and the other.

Then she was bared for him to see all of her. He placed his legs on her thighs and gently pushed her legs apart. Then his

mouth was on her, tasting the sweetness between her legs while she mewled in pleasure.

He'd waited too long for this. They all had.

He added a finger, and then two, penetrating her while he tongued her clit. Then, with a mind toward where they would be ending up, he gently touched her second hole. She gasped and stiffened momentarily, but he held still until he felt her relax. Using her natural lubricant, he continued to use two fingers in her pussy while pushing the other finger into her ass a tiny bit at a time.

She grabbed his hair, gasping, and starting to squirm. Her calls of "Yes," encouraged him to keep going, but he didn't want to take everything. Her first orgasm between them wasn't for him to enjoy on his tongue alone. Mike pulled back, removed his hand, and stood.

"Thank you," he told her, before stepping back to let Chase take over.

Even though he was intending on being a good sport and letting Chase in, he didn't expect Olivia to drop to her knees and survey Mike's dick.

Mike grinned. "Well, take what you want."

She smiled back at him. "I've been thinking about your cock in my mouth for way too long."

He sure as hell wasn't going to stop her, and Chase wasn't issuing any complaints. With more confidence than he thought she would have, Olivia reached for his cock, stroking his length with one finger, and then following that by licking him from root to tip.

He groaned a deep, guttural noise that rumbled from within his chest at the soft touch of her against his shaft. His

prick was sure happy to see her, happy to be stroked and licked.

She didn't wait for any more encouragement. She leaned in, clamping him with her lips and massaging him with her tongue, while literally grabbing him by his balls.

The pleasure was an instant sizzle that scorched hot and made him shiver. He looked down, watching his cock, slippery with her saliva, vanish in and out of her mouth as she moved back and forth.

When she looked up at him, he thought he would die from the lovely sight, but then she winked at him, and *Jesus!* He nearly burst.

He let his head fall back, his testicles tightening as he enjoyed the wet heat of her mouth around his cock. Then he noticed Chase watching them, as though he were transfixed.

Mike couldn't help how much he liked being watched. "See something you like?" He'd meant to speak in his normal, casual teasing way, but it came out as more of a grunt; something raw and sexual.

The other man nodded dumbly, and Mike watched Chase's hand grip his own cock while his eyes were glued on Olivia's bobbing head. When she made her own little moan that was accompanied by a slurping noise, Mike saw Chase shudder with pleasure.

Then Olivia seemed to remember Chase. She pulled back from Mike, replacing her lips with her hand, continuing to stroke him as she turned to Chase, who moved his hand away to let her mouth take over. He gave Mike a mock salute, and Mike swore, if he wasn't in the middle of getting off right

then, he would have reached out and smacked the man upside the head.

But it was hard to stay irritated about anything when Olivia's hand worked skillfully on his cock, making his anger melt away.

He could almost feel what she was thinking in that moment. As though she was telling them, "*that's enough, boys.*"

Right. It was enough. He'd do as she said for the rest of his life if it meant getting more of this.

He'd had other women on his cock before. Women he hadn't much cared for, or women he'd thought he'd loved at the time. He usually dated the kind of woman with perfectly manicured nails, the kind of look that made a hand job look like it could be filmed for a porno video. He usually liked to watch that, to see his cock worked over by what looked like a hand model.

But Olivia's nails were natural, pink, with square tips. She was bringing him this kind of pleasure without all the dressings of the fake women he'd dated before. Olivia wasn't like the others. She was his mate.

She switched again, getting into a rhythm of alternating her hand and mouth on each man until finally Mike couldn't take it anymore. He reached for her hand, pulling her to her feet.

"Little too much for you to handle, Mikey?" Chase teased.

Mike growled. "Shut up, fool."

"Sure thing, cowboy," Chase said, reaching around Olivia to work his hand over her mound, making her emit pleased sounds. When Chase didn't slow, Mike moved in close. He

cupped her face, her cheeks damn soft on his rough palms, her eyes cloudy with pleasure.

He needed to taste her lips as she came to her pleasure on another man's hand.

He didn't care where her mouth had just been. As far as Mike was concerned, that made it even better. He leaned in, taking her mouth with his own as she moaned against his lips, her body tensing and quaking as she thrust into Chase's fingers and tilted her head to the side so Mike could lick deep into her mouth.

And when she was done, when she finished riding out that pleasure, he could see the satisfaction in her eyes.

A glow in her smile.

"Did you like that?" Chase asked, pulling his fingers away from her pussy.

She exhaled hard and spoke in a small, breathless voice. "Yeah."

"Good," Mike said, stroking his cock. "Because we're not done with you by a long shot, darlin'."

CHAPTER
NINE

Chase was more than pleased with Mike's enthusiasm, but now that he'd had his taste of their woman, Chase needed some for himself.

He started with tasting Olivia's slick, still shining on his fingers.

Part of him expected her to taste like every other woman he'd had before, but no.

There was a difference.

He couldn't quite put his finger on the taste. There was definitely something different, more pleasant about the taste of her on his tongue.

He attributed it to the fact that she was his mate.

If this was what a mate tasted like, then he didn't understand how he'd gone his entire life without it.

"Turn around, Olivia, I want to face you when we do this."

She seemed to be struggling with who she should keep her focus on. Her red hair whipped around as she looked from Mike to Chase and back again.

Mike grinned, brushing that blood-red hair out of her face.

“Don’t worry, sweetheart. You’re not going to hurt our feelings by looking too long at just one of us.”

Chase didn’t quite mind it when she looked at Mike with her eyes half-lidded with lust, but that didn’t mean he was content with being ignored for too long.

“How are we doing this, Chase?” He was shocked Mike was being so good about sharing. Mate or no mate, Chase realized he needed to up his game here.

He might be a petty asshole, but Chase was still more than capable of showing his mate the love she needed, and deserved, by not getting overly possessive with her other mate.

But he was going to make sure Olivia’s beautiful face was looking his way when he slid inside her.

He put his hands on her waist, pulling her with him onto the bed. She followed him easily, and this time her attention was focused solely on him.

He was drunk on that feeling.

Her skin was soft. Even the smell of her was soft.

She might be deadly, but there was something interesting about the fact that she didn’t seem so in that moment.

Which made him want to treat her delicately.

Gently.

“Mike and I are going to fuck you. At the same time.”

Olivia nodded. “All right. But, both in the same spot, or one in each spot?”

Mike snorted a laugh behind her, and Chase couldn’t help but smile at that, his hands sliding up and down her bare arms.

“We’re starting slow, we’ll do one and one this time, we’ll work up to two in one, eventually.”

Mike handed him one of the condoms. Chase felt a little too close to a fumbling teenager when he snatched it from his hand.

Olivia didn’t seem to mind. She smiled at him, her arms coming up to rest on his shoulders.

“It’s kind of nice, knowing one of you is as nervous as I am.”

“I...!”

The first thought on Chase’s mind was to deny it. But he stopped himself. The look on her face was enough to prove she’d seen through him.

He was full of shit, and if he denied it, she would know just how pathetic he was.

Best to keep his mouth shut on that one. So he did.

Chase cleared his throat. He couldn’t even look at Mike, just in case the bastard was smiling back at him. “Lift your hips.”

Olivia’s face turned almost the same shade of red as her hair. She did as she was told.

He felt her heartbeat spike when Mike slid up behind her and kissed her shoulder. Chase heard the clicking of the lube bottle and then heard Mike’s hands rubbing together, warming it up before he applied it on her.

“You don’t have to be scared of us,” Chase said.

“I’m not scared.” He believed her when she said it, even when her grip tightened on her shoulder in reaction to Mike

rubbing the lube on her.

“We’ll make you forget all about everything in a few seconds,” Chase promised.

Oliva nodded, and Chase watched her throat working in a hard swallow. “Yeah, I know.”

She was still slick and ready for him. He pushed his cock inside her easily.

He didn’t want to say anything as cliché as *she fit him like a glove*.

But *Goddamn*. She fit him like a glove.

Her body tensed. She was tight around him, and he could remember her saying she didn’t take many partners before this.

Mike kissed her throat and shoulder as she adjusted around Chase’s cock. His one hand settled on her other shoulder, while his other hand...

He knew where Mike’s other hand was, and the excitement of that nearly made Chase burst within her.

Mike was using his fingers to get her ready, stretching her, Chase could feel the movement through her body. And he felt it when Mike entered her, both in her tension and in the way her pussy tightened around him.

“Breathe, baby,” Chase murmured in her ear. “Remember, this is pleasure.” He started to slowly rock his hips, reminding her that he was there, and she responded, still tentatively while Mike kept his slow and steady pace.

Chase was envious of the way Mike could keep his control about himself. Himself, Chase was eager to go for it, to get to the climax they all wanted.

Finally, he heard Mike grunt. “I’m all the way in. Are you okay?”

Olivia groaned, a deeply passionate smile on her face. “More than okay.” She bounced on Chase, just a little at first, and then more, until Chase felt she was able to accept him thrusting inside of her. Mike joined in. Before Chase knew it, the three of them were slamming into each other.

She was both of theirs. Taking her like this made it real.

“I’m close,” Chase said, gritting his teeth until it hurt, refusing to be the first one over the edge.

“Come,” Olivia begged. “I’m close too.”

Chase hated himself for it, but he shook his head. “Not until Mike’s with us, sweetheart.”

“I’m almost there, darlin’s. Almost there.”

Chase was not about to ask what the plural was about. He didn’t care. He just wanted the pleasure to wash over all of them. He was so fucking ready to blow.

“I think she’s going to drive us a little crazy,” Mike said, his eyes black. His teeth looked a little more pointed than what should have been normal, but that was fine. Chase didn’t care.

There was nothing else in the world but the way this red-haired beauty moved on him. Ariel could go and fuck herself. Olivia was the real ocean princess here.

“Mike, not to...not to hurry you along or anything, but you think you can get a move on here. She’s killing me.”

“In a good way?” Olivia smiled when she said it, but there was still something in her eyes that told him how she was worried.

“In the best way,” he promised. “But I still want him to hurry up so I can hear you scream my name.”

“If she’s going to be screamin’ anybody’s name, it’s gonna be mine,” Mike drawled.

His accent seemed to get thicker in that moment. Chase was going to have to remember that. That the man got a little more Texan when he was fucking their mate.

“Just hurry up,” Chase said, squashing down how much he was starting to like that accent.

“I can scream both your names,” Olivia said, breathlessly, before following through, saying each of their names over and over again.

It was apparently what Mike needed to get him to the edge with them. “That’s it, darlin, I’m getting there.”

He was inside his mate, but so was Mike. They had her together, and inside her body, their cocks were practically touching, only a thin bit of flesh and the latex from their condoms separating them as Chase fucked his mate in earnest.



THE PLEASURE WAS TOO MUCH. Olivia thought she would be able to go on a little while longer after that beautiful first orgasm Chase had given her with his fingers.

But now... her toes curled. Every single nerve in her body lit up like a firework, and she didn’t need to push back against either man now.

They all worked together, and she came between them, sudden, sharp, and strong. The orgasm was a wide implosion of pleasure that she rode. It took over her whole body while

the men continued to pump into her. Her front was pressed to Chase's chest, and Mike leaned over her back, slamming into her and occasionally giving her ass an extra slap for pleasure.

And even though she was still in the wake of the orgasm, she felt the pressure rising once more.

Oh god. She was going to come again.

She was theirs. All she could think about was her men. It was only them.

Them and nothing else.

With a little more time to prepare herself for it, Olivia clenched her inner muscles, trying to hold off the orgasm, but that seemed to make both Mike and Chase groan and growl low and guttural noises as they fucked harder inside her.

"God, you should see the look on your face," Chase said, touching her throat, the back of her neck. His hands slid across her body as though they had a mind of their own. "So fucking beautiful."

She shook her head. "No, I'm not."

"Yes, you are," Mike said, his voice a lovely, shivery drawl in her ear as he leaned in close.

Everything about him was warm. That shouldn't be possible for a cold-blooded shark, but maybe it was that damned voice of his that did it.

"Don't you ever think for one second you are not the most beautiful woman on the planet. You are."

"And don't even think about arguing with us, sweetheart," Chase said, his fingers playing with her nipples, his face flushed from his own pleasure.

She wanted to fight them on that a little bit, but they both seemed so determined to make her admit to something she didn't exactly feel.

She felt it a little with them. It was hard to feel sexy when she wasn't anything as beautiful as a stereotypical mermaid, or as noble and majestic as a wolf or a doe, but these men made her feel it.

So why not go with it?

It wasn't as though it would hurt anyone for her to have it with just them in the room with her.

So she let it wash over her. Let herself be swept away by it, and she didn't try to push back her orgasm anymore.

She let it come onto her, let it take over her.

She was going to relish this.

And she did.

Chase fucked into her hard and fast. His soft grunting turned into hard gasps. She almost didn't hear the squeaking of the bed over the sounds the men were making.

"I'm coming," Chase said in a quick whisper before he tensed. She felt the vibration of his growl from deep within his chest, and his hips pumped into her a few more times before he lay still on the bed.

Chase stayed hard inside her. He kissed her on the mouth, his tongue pushing deep.

Mike, on the other hand, grabbed her waist so tight it almost hurt. She cried out, pushing her ass back against Mike's cock, wanting more of him, wanting to feel his climax.

Mike slammed her onto his prick, and Chase moaned through his aftershocks of pleasure as she swiveled her hips, still riding him while Mike brought both of them to their orgasm.

Olivia's final orgasm was a slower one. Slower in the sense that it took longer for her to fall off that sweet high she'd reached up to.

It was the best orgasm of her life.

Mike squeezed her tightly when his orgasm hit him. It was a massive bear hug, holding her still while he finished inside of her.

"That's it, darlin'," Mike said, his mouth pressing heated kisses to her neck while she dozed against Chase. "You're ours now."

Olivia nodded. She felt Mike gently leaving her, then pulling her down onto the bed, off of Chase. She snuggled between them, her arms loosely wrapped Chase's lower body. Mike pulled her into him, making her his little spoon.

There could be nothing in the world more perfect than this. Nothing that would ever make her want to leave this spot between her two perfect mates.

She was a lucky girl.

CHAPTER
TEN

Mike cursed his luck when he heard Jack's ringtone go off.

The boss was calling them in.

Dammit all to fucking hell.

Mike had just started feeling ready for a nap, too.

But orders were orders, and they'd had a tip come in that there was suspicious activity in the water not ten miles from them.

And that freaked him right the fuck out enough to wake up in a hurry.

Same with Chase, who didn't need to put his ear to the phone to hear every word Jack said.

Something big had been spotted. Something that didn't quite look natural to the local environment. Something that couldn't be an octopus, but they were still to treat the sighting as a potential threat.

Mike got all the information he needed and then returned his attention to Olivia, who sat naked on the bed, perfect breasts high, nipples still tight and rosy, but the steely look on her face was what showed her dedication.

She wasn't reluctant to get out of bed or wanting to tuck into the covers and ignore whatever was going on out in the real world. She was ready to throw on some clothes and get to work.

She surprised him though when she went into the bathroom and turned the water on. "I probably need to get the scent of you two off of me, as much as I can anyway. Don't need any of that lingering as protection against a predator."

She was right. The kraken shifter might scent two alpha males on her and decide not to risk messing with her. Mike loved that she thought of it.

Chase and Mike joined her in the shower, careful to avoid any extra touching that would put their scent back on her. "A local spotted something slithering in the water not too far from here," Chase said. "The description didn't fit anything with tentacles, but it's worth testing."

"If it's not a kraken, then it's probably not our guy, but we're going anyway?" Mike knew that Olivia held a lot of guilt by association with the case. It was as though a kraken shifter murderer automatically made her a villain.

He didn't want her to feel that way. "It was never a certainty that the one responsible for killing those people was a kraken like you," Mike said. If that hadn't been clear before then, he wanted to make that very clear right now. "We always have to keep the options open."

"But the markings on the bodies—"

"Could have still come from the natural wildlife," Chase said, and Mike had to admit, he loved the guy for sounding just as certain about this as Mike felt about it.

He was so done with the people in the office getting their panties in a bunch because the killer had possibly been an octopus shifter or even a kraken shifter.

Enough with that shit. There were other shifters in the ocean, and enough of them could be psychotic.

“Jack reports that it wasn’t just some dark sighting we’re going after. Someone was attacked by it. Tried dragging a young man into the water before his friends heard him screaming and chased it off.”

Olivia’s eyes widened. “Jesus.”

“Yeah,” Mike said quietly, trying to not imagine Olivia in that situation.

“You need to get ready,” Chase said, hopping out of the shower. Mike followed.

“Right. You’re right.” She stepped out, grabbed a towel, and went to her wardrobe.

Mike certainly didn’t mind the view from behind as she pulled out clean clothes and quickly dressed. It wasn’t lost on him the way she did so without a worry for who was watching, either.

Their comfort and intimacy with each other was already noticeable. There was so much more to be done, but Mike was pleased with their progress so far.

Chase threw Mike’s pants in his face.

“Stop admiring the view and get dressed. We need you in the water.”

“Wait,” Olivia said, pulling a bikini top over her breasts, making Mike just a little sad as she covered them. “Do we have everything we need, or do we need to go back to base?”

Chase pulled his jacket around his shoulders. “Yep, I have our go-kit in the trunk.” They had an emergency kit for this situation, in case they had to go into the water without a chance to set up cameras first. The little seashell-collecting bag Olivia used had cameras and sonar that she could drop in her path. Chase would monitor them through his laptop and mobile devices and tablets.

Olivia nodded. She put on her brave face and followed Chase to the door.

Mike stayed behind them.

He didn’t want Chase, or Olivia for that matter, to see how much this bothered him.

Until those cameras were set up, Mike was going to be the only one with eyes on her in the water. And they were going after something that was apparently very big. He didn’t like not knowing what they were going to face, and he didn’t like his mate being in the line of fire.

But that’s what they’d prepared for this whole time. Operation Olivia as Bait.

Chase glanced back. He clearly felt how much Mike didn’t like this, but he didn’t say anything. Not when they locked up and left the hotel, and not when they were in the car heading to the site.

Probably because he wasn’t happy about the situation either.



MIKE WATCHED her through the dark, depths, staring up at her from his place in the deep below.

Admiring the view. Protecting it.

Not that there was much light to be had for his viewing pleasure. The moon was barely out. Everything was dim, but there was a difference between the cold black of the deeper waters and the navy blue of water and sky from above.

Olivia looked like little more than a shadow, but he sensed every moment.

She put the cameras in place as she swam around. Hid the sonar equipment in the rock and seaweed, and the more she did so, the more at ease Mike became.

Though he never relaxed.

It didn't matter how many eyes were on her. If something was out there that wanted to kidnap her and sell her on a black market, she was still in danger.

And it was apparently something big.

So big that the teenagers barely got their friend out of its jaws.

So big that the young man might lose his leg.

This thing had proven that it was willing to kill if the victims fought back enough, and its latest victim was lucky, all things considered.

But it was when the descriptions of the male came in, before Mike had shifted and gone into the water, that unnerved him the most.

Red hair. Not bright orange. Not ginger. Blood red hair, like Olivia.

That was new. The other victims hadn't had a pattern of red hair. Was it a coincidence? Or had the attacker been

watching them, waiting? Grown impatient and sent out a message by choosing a substitute for Olivia?

Hard to say, but if there was any chance that their exercises had made an impression, then they might just be able to draw this fucker out.

Mike felt every motion of her long arms, the flow of her tentacles as they rolled along, moving her through the water. She made a show of wandering, almost dancing along in the water, trying to tempt the attacker to make a move.

Then, when the fucker showed himself, Mike could swim in and make the arrest.

Kraken weren't the only creatures who could shift halfway.

Mike had a talent for that himself, which was why he currently still had hands and feet to work with, despite the head of a shark that watched and breathed for him.

A difficult form to maintain, which was why he couldn't go too deep in the water.

But it also allowed him to keep a net handy, to have a holster strapped to him with his spear and blades ready should he need them.

The eyes of his goblin shark, and the gills, were all he needed.

If that thing was in the water with them now, he was going to take care of it.

Was he the only one watching? Right now, he hoped so. Aside from Chase with all his computer and tablet monitors, that is.

Mike couldn't imagine anyone not being drawn to Olivia. Had she not been a kraken shifter, she would still have been

the perfect bait. The attacker couldn't resist her. The sway of her hips, the motion of her hair floating in the water in the current she made around herself with each twist and dive of her body.

He shook his head, blinking, and then went back to circling her.

Focus. Idiot. Don't lose your focus.

He couldn't move as quickly with just his legs. The flippers he'd put on before going under helped, but not much.

He sensed the other animals and marine life nearby. Smaller game. Curious and nocturnal. Creatures that, had he not been here, would potentially get closer for another look.

Even when he was just a shark head and a human body with flippers, he was still a badass, alpha son of a bitch.

But maybe they wouldn't get close anyway.

Olivia might not look like it, or act like it, but she was every bit a predator as Mike was. The way she moved in the water, even pretending to enjoy herself and search for food and other trinkets, was a thing to behold.

Her tentacles behind her swaying in the current like a ghostly red gown, her hair that same blood-red color haloing her face...

How could she think she was ugly? How could she think she wasn't tough?

He was ugly. In both full human form, Goblin shark form, and his current form.

She was exquisite.

Stop it. Get your head back in the game.

Christ, he finally had her once, and he was already being led around by his cock.

He was supposed to be working.

Try as he might, Mike couldn't stop his mind from wandering. He couldn't understand how she could think so little of herself.

They had been in this same spot for nearly twenty minutes. Olivia must have realized the time and decided to move on, to continue pretending she was only there for her own amusement, or to hunt for fish and crab.

She only had so many of those tiny cameras in her bag, and their radius only went so far. She and Mike couldn't stray too far.

Chase would attempt to follow them down the coast in the car, but there was still a risk every time they moved.

Mike followed her. He stayed down below, keeping his distance uncomfortable between them.

At least she was swimming slowly. Shit, this water was cold. With a mostly human body, he felt it even with the wet suit.

If anything happened to her because he was not fast enough to protect her, not only would that be entirely on him, but it would tear his heart out on top of everything else.

It would destroy Chase, and Chase might just kill him for failing.

Stay focused. Stay calm.

Mike continued to follow as Olivia moved. Every ten minutes or so, she would swim farther down the cliff, making it look as though she were exploring, as though she were just

another young woman having a leisurely swim and collecting odds and ends for when she went home.

The fact that this was happening in the night probably looked suspicious as hell, but it couldn't be helped.

She certainly *looked* like a tourist around here. Every once in awhile, she reached into the coral or along the rock and pulled something out to put into the bag at her waist.

It didn't matter what she was taking. It was all for show.

For show for a creature that would try to kill her if she fought too hard.

Mike wanted her off this mission.

He couldn't do it. He couldn't let her put herself in danger anymore, and he didn't care what an asset she was or how much she could defend herself with those red tentacles.

Chase would back him up.

He hoped.

They would find someone else to be the bait.

After five hours and nothing happening, they packed it in.

It was well past midnight now, and their giant, mystery creature had yet to show up.

Olivia didn't have to give him the signal. He knew.

They were both tired.

If anyone was watching her, then it would look a little strange for a mermaid, even a Kraken, to be dilly-dallying about for that long.

Assuming their target *was* watching.

Mike watched her make her rounds to retrieve all her cameras and sonar devices. He continued to glide slowly through the water, and even when he couldn't see her, he still sensed her on his skin, felt as she shifted her body to have legs again instead of those deadly tentacles, and began her swim back to the shore.

He waited a moment, and even that was enough to crush his insides a little, but then he too went with her.

Mike circled around a little so it wouldn't look as though he were swimming in a straight line for her, but he arced around enough that he was able to change fully back to human.

No more breathing underwater. He came up with a heavy breath.

Just another thrill seeker looking to swim in freezing waters for the night.

Not the most secure plan in the world, but at least this way, to any casual observer, he was meeting her first. Not because he'd been down below, watching her that entire time.

Olivia stayed in place, so the water was waist-high. Mike could only smile at her as he could plainly see her reaching into her bag, pulling out her bikini bottoms, and putting them on before tightening the purple scarf she'd been wearing down below around her waist.

"I hate you," she said, gutting him a little even though he could tell she wasn't serious. "Getting to wear a wetsuit."

He let his face and head melt back into its more human shape, but he kept his shark smile. "Yes, it is nice, isn't it?"

She rolled her eyes, but he could see her smiling.

“You get to keep your bikini top on.”

“It’s not the same thing, and you know it.”

“But, I like it.”

She grinned at him. “Because you’re a pervert.”

He raised his hands as though in surrender. “I will not confirm or deny that.”

When Olivia had sufficiently covered herself, she walked farther out of the water. The waves crashed against them, but nothing so powerful that they couldn’t push ahead.

When she reached the area where the surf barely skimmed across the sand, Olivia pulled her little flip flops out of her bag and began moving again.

She still wasn’t saying a word to him.

He didn’t understand that.

“If you’re upset nothing happened again, just know that this isn’t bad news. We’ll report in and see if there are any updates.”

“And likely hear no news.”

“Positive thinking, Red,” he said. “Even if he didn’t make a move, it means the killer hasn’t struck again.”

“And what if that’s because he knows what we’re doing?” She clenched her hands to fists, marching up the rocky beach to where Chase hid the car. “What if he’s not striking because he knows we’re looking for him?”

“Then we keep looking. So long as we’re doing our jobs, he’s not killing anyone else.”

Olivia pressed her lips together. She reached for the handle of the passenger side of the car. She pulled on it. When it

didn't open, she tried again, and then looked into the car to motion for Chase to open it.

Her voice was a low mutter. "He's not in here. Where is he?"

Mike pointed a little down the parking area. "Isn't that the local team's van?"

"Yeah, I guess he called for backup?"

They approached the vehicle, Mike reaching forward to knock on the sliding door. They waited.

The door still didn't open, and in the silence, Mike put out his other senses.

And then he finally picked up on the scent of copper.

A lot of it.

Every instinct within him screamed in high alert.

"Olivia."

He reached for her, taking her hand.

The door burst open, as though exploding from the inside out.

A roar. A long snout and heavy-looking teeth snapped out.

Mike barely yanked Olivia out of the way of those jaws, instinctively turning into that mouth and letting his arm and shoulder take the brunt of the bite.

Olivia screamed, backing away as Mike was tossed aside as though he were made of feathers.

His head smacking onto the pavement felt anything but.

CHAPTER
ELEVEN

Olivia flew backward in a desperate bid to stay away from those snapping teeth.

The thinking side of her brain shut down, though she glanced to the side and saw Mike on the ground.

She couldn't see his face. Was he dead? There was so much blood. She could smell it even through the terrible, hot breath that whooshed at her through those crooked, sharp teeth.

The creature stopped clapping its huge snout at her. Now it approached her with deathly, black eyes.

It looked almost like a crocodile. Or an alligator. She had no idea what the difference was, but she knew this creature was not native to Scotland.

It took her a minute to realize what it was. The heavy flippers and wet fur gave it away.

It was a bunyip.

It was big. She'd never seen one in real life before. Had heard shifters of this variety did not exist.

But here it was. The sound of the ocean waves got her mind thinking again, as she realized that in just a few

moments, the creature had managed to push her back to the water.

No. No, she couldn't let it do this to her.

Olivia was part of the AILE, goddamnit, and she was going to act like it.

“What did you do with Chase?”

She forced herself to not look back at where Mike lay. This creature would only use her distraction to its advantage.

“Who are you? What do you want?”

The water was up to her knees before that twisted body stopped. That long, wide mouth somehow pulled back into a tense smile.

Olivia's heart pounded. Then it stopped.

“I want...you...”

It talked. It was talking to her in this shape.

Shifters weren't supposed to be able to do that. How was it doing that?

Think. Don't panic. She had to keep her wits about her and not get distracted.

Keeping calm and thinking about her situation, looking for any distraction, any way out could save her life.

Chase and Mike taught her that.

She wasn't sure if either of them were alive right now, but if they weren't, she was going to make sure she got this fucker back for it.

“You want me. All right, you got me.”

That crocodile head tilted slightly to the side. It had long, floppy ears, like a dog's. They rose up slightly, as though it hadn't quite understood what she'd said.

"You got me," she said, forcing a smile. She lifted her arms and chopped them down, as though presenting herself as a prize.

"I mean, all you had to do was ask."

Olivia backed into the water on her own this time. She kept smiling at the creature, inviting it to join her.

It did, though it followed cautiously.

All she had to do was get to the point where the water covered her waist. If she was quick enough, she could get her bikini bottom off and—

"Stop."

The bunyip barked the word at her, forcing her to stop.

"What? What's wrong?"

It seemed to have naturally narrowed eyes, but there was something about the way it looked at her that made it seem as though it was extra suspicious of her.

"You're tricking me."

Shit.

She dove under. It likely wasn't enough room, but she didn't have the time.

The bunyip followed after her, the water and sand of the shallows splashing around her, distrusting her vision.

Getting her tendrils out even with her bikini bottom on felt tight as hell around what was left of her waist, but it wouldn't

be nearly as tight as though teeth crushing her if she let this thing get her.

Even if it did, even if it ate and killed her, she was going to make sure it was caught and arrested.

She as not going to let this ugly fucker get away with murdering her mates.



MIKE GRUNTED, then growled when something hard whacked him in the face.

It happened again, and the second time was enough to yank him back to the surface of the murky waters he'd been swimming in.

“Wake up!”

He snapped his eyes open.

He was wet, but not in water, and the teeth in his mouth were in rows of shark teeth, not human.

Chase sat above him.

There was blood all over the man's face, and for a second, through the pounding in his head, the fogginess he'd come out of, through everything, Mike didn't recognize who he was.

Then he did, and everything came back in an instant.

“Olivia—“

“She's in the water with that thing. We have to go.”

Chase grabbed his hand, yanking Mike up to his feet.

The Earth tilted, he stumbled, but then he was good. There was nothing to stop him from rushing to the water, tearing at

his clothes.

“Where’s the backup?”

“On their way. I made the call the second I woke up.”

He kicked his feet over the surf, throwing his clothes away as he made it to chest height.

“Mike, he killed Carol. She’d shown up, a surprise backup, and the fucker killed her for her kindness.”

Mike couldn’t believe it. Carol was supposed to be back in the US with the rest of the ATTF. She’d come all this way, just to die?

The sound of sirens came to him, not far off, but it might as well have been a world away for the good it did to Carol.

And if Mike didn’t get into the water soon, it would be a world too far away to do any good for Olivia.

Mike didn’t care about making an arrest. Fuck the arrest. He was going full shark, and he was killing this thing.

“Go take care of yourself. Fill in the team when they get here. I’m going in the water.”

He dove under just as he heard Chase roar his curses and abuse.

Whatever. He’d deal with it later. The man would forgive him when he came back with their mate.

He hoped.



TAKE CARE OF HIMSELF. He was bleeding out his neck and down his back, but no arteries had been nicked. He knew it

because he would have bled to death long before he had the chance to wake up.

The cars carrying the local team kicked up sand and rock as they screeched to a halt. Chase spat out a briefing quick as he could before he turned to go. There was no way in hell he could stay here and wait patiently while Olivia and Mike were out there without him.

His right arm was numbing, but he was strong enough to pull himself into the sky as he shifted. Long feathers came loose, he kicked off his boots in the sky, and then he circled overhead.

The clouds had parted. The moon shone down on the dark water, but he could just barely make out an oversized shadow kicking around just beneath the surface.

And he waited for his chance.



OLIVIA BARELY MANAGED to keep her tentacles from becoming sushi as she swam around, staying out of reach.

Thankfully, when her lower half was fully shifted, legs gone, replaced with boneless appendages, she was better able to dart around.

She'd dropped her bag on land when she was attacked. It had her little dagger and other items she could use as weapons. It also had the cameras and sonar. She had nothing to help her gain an advantage, but she'd look at the bright side... the bag wasn't adding any drag. At least she was faster without it.

Faster... but unarmed.

She'd spent five hours in the water, trying to tempt the killer, and the whole time the bastard had been in the van.

It was hiding...

No. She wouldn't think about that.

Mike and Chase had been right. It wasn't a creature like her.

It was something worse.

But whoever it was, was as stupid as could be. He lunged at her with brute force, no strategy at all. Most importantly, it was fixated on her. If she could keep dodging his grip, then she could hopefully keep him enthralled until someone from the Scotland team came to help her.

She wanted them to capture this thing. She wanted to show the world that the killer was put away. And she also wanted to clear up the reputation for kraken shifters everywhere.

She was going to make sure this thing was caught if it was the last thing she did.

Olivia thought she was fast in the water, but with the speed of the creature behind her, she was forced to take more twists and turns than she was used to. She felt those teeth behind her, the intensity of that large body getting closer, the tips of her tentacles buzzing as though they knew how close they were to it.

She glanced back. Olivia opened her mouth in a silent scream as she realized she was damn near in the thing's mouth.

Then something attacked from below. The teeth of the bunyip snapped closed, narrowly missing her tentacles as she

clenched them closer to her body to avoid it, but then it was pushed upward.

Something had it. A shark. A shark with a long snout had been down below, and it surfaced and grabbed the bunyip around the middle, clenching its teeth down hard, the water clouding with blood.

It looked black as they rose to the surface, as though a smoke bomb had gone off.

Mike. Olivia shuddered with relief.

Mike was alive.

She followed him up.

The bunyip was larger than he was. He was going to need her help.

Already it wiggled and desperately tore away from those teeth, but even with those many rows, Olivia was certain it would push away eventually.

She sent out her tentacles to reach for the creature, avoiding its teeth, and letting her suckers latch onto its face and hold on tight.

Then she engaged the talons inside of the suckers, pinching them into the bunyip.

Olivia meant to get at his eyes, but she couldn't quite get there. The bunyip twisted and spun too much. They broke the surface of the water, and she was barely keeping her grip on the thing.

But Mike didn't let go. Even as they went down below and back up again. He didn't let go, and she damn well wasn't either.

Blood mixed with the saltwater. It nearly choked her. Nearly made her sick.

Or it could have been all the thrashing.

She felt like she was on a broken carnival ride. One she desperately wanted to get off of.

She was going to be sick. She was going to have to let go, but she was too close to the monster. If she freed herself, she'd get bitten. All it would have to do would be to turn its head to the side just a little, give one hard bite, and it would break her in half.

Don't let go. Do not let go!

They broke the water again, staying there longer this time, based on how long she felt the cold air whipping her face.

She screamed, in fear and anger, but another screech drowned hers out. It was another creature, airborne and coming toward them with long, dark feathers.

Like an eagle but so much bigger.

It swooped down with talons the likes of which she's never seen before. It gripped straight into the bunyip's exposed eyes, crushing them.

Olivia had to look away as the winged creature tore at the bunyip. It was too much. The dizzying twisting and turning, the blood in the water and the sloshing, biting, and ripping, all made her face too hot, her stomach heave too much.

She fell off the bunyip's face, feeling her form go limp.

But then the winged creature reached for her.

Its talons clasped around her arms, pulling her up and away from the water just as the creature made one last attempt

to snap its teeth at her.

It missed, and then it was alone in the water with Mike.

The red water frothed only for a few seconds longer before the commotion stopped entirely.

CHAPTER
TWELVE

Mike killed the bunyip.
It was confirmed a few moments after Chase nearly crash-landed back on the beach.

Many of his feathers were missing on his right arm, and with all that blood on him...

It was a small miracle he'd managed to keep them in the air in the first place.

He shifted back into his human form, and Olivia threw herself at him. "It's you! Chase! You're alive!"

He realized then that she'd gone into the water with the bunyip, thinking he was dead. "Yes, I'm alive." He didn't tell her about Carol. That could come later. For now, they needed to wait for Mike.

Chase pushed off the medic, refusing to be treated until they knew that Mike was okay. "It looks worse than it is." He would need some stitches, but he was a shifter, he healed quick.

Olivia, however, was relatively unscratched. She'd managed to keep out of the grasps of the bunyip. She was the only one he allowed to hold a compress to his wounds, and he

accepted her kisses while she told him how glad she was that he was alive.

Chase looked somberly at the body bag that was wheeled away. Carol deserved better. She was a good agent, and in the short time he'd known her, she'd been a good friend. She'd gotten approval to come out and help their mission, and now she would be sent home in that body bag.

That could have been him. It could have been Mike.

When Carol showed up in the van, sent there after Jack had given her the same call he'd given them, Chase was thrilled. The van was better equipped than his makeshift kit with the tablets and laptop. He'd settled in, feeling excited that they might finally catch the fucker, and then there was a knock on the van door.

Chase barely remembered Carol opening the door.

It was a blessing, perhaps a natural defense mechanism. He knew that victims of traumatic events could have memory loss of the incident, and if his mind never reconstructed the last moments of his friend's life, he'd be grateful for it. He would remember her at her best, not at her end.

Chase saw Olivia shiver as she looked out into the ocean. "He's coming. I know he is. We would feel it if he were dead."

Chase's heart sank, thinking about how she must have felt when she thought he was dead. He pulled her close, rubbing her arm to warm her. "You were so fucking brave. I was so damned proud when I found out what you were doing."

Her eyes widened as she looked up at him. "You were?"

He nodded. "Yeah, I was. Just, uh, don't ever do it again, please?"

She laughed a watery sound. “I promise I won’t be in a mood to go hunting baddies for a while.” She leaned her head on his chest and sighed. “I just want to know what’s taking Mike so long.”

The bunyip had been so quick, so clean, that he’d been able to kill one member of the AILE, and badly injure another, while their backup had been less than five minutes away.

When Mike’s scarred face finally came out of the water, Olivia ran to him, and Chase followed close behind. He was moving slowly as a result of what looked to be multiple injuries, as well as the fact that he was hauling the lifeless bunyip behind him. “I had to shift so I could grab this fucker. No way I was letting him drift off.”

Chase and Olivia didn’t care, as long as he was there with them now. The Scotland team rushed forward, taking the bunyip corpse, which gave Olivia and Chase a chance to celebrate.

With the surf cascading over their feet, Olivia threw her arms around Mike and kissed him on the mouth. She pulled back, giggling as she commented, “You taste salty.”

“Better than blood,” he replied.

Chase clapped him on the shoulder. “Well done, you must be beat.”

“Thank you for saving me,” Olivia said, taking both of their hands and pulling them away from the water.

“Thank you for staying alive.”

Chase knew that Mike likely felt as he did, and wanted nothing more than to take Olivia in their arms and hold her tight, but he could see she was leading them to the paramedics. He would have protested, but he was just as worried about

Mike as Olivia was, so he sat dutifully and allowed them to check him out.



OLIVIA SAT BETWEEN HER MATES, holding both of their hands.

And in that moment, she was exhausted.

It was as though everything had suddenly caught up with her.

It all happened so fast, and now that the adrenaline was over and done with, she felt sucked dry.

Entirely drained.

“I can’t believe you said this might have lasted for years.” She inhaled deeply, then let her breath out slowly. “I’m so glad that it’s over.”

She felt Mike leaning in close. His lips touched her damp hair. “There’s still more to be done, darlin.”

“We still have quite a bit of paperwork,” Chase commented. “Still have to see if he’s connected to any of the other open AILE cases.”

She frowned. Even if the killer in this area was over, there were still cases open, still murderers out there. She watched as the Scotland team took photos and notes, documenting the bunyip’s carcass. It had stayed in its shifter form, so the investigators would have to do some digging to figure out who this person was in their non-shifted form.

As far as Olivia’s role in it all—she was done. She’d played bait, and come through.

“I guess we need to start with checking in with Jack,” Olivia reasoned. “He’ll need to know about Carol.”

“He will,” Chase confirmed, sadness in his voice.

Something occurred to Olivia. “Does the bunyip have tentacles? I didn’t see any, but all the victims had sucker marks on them.” It was the reason they’d thought it was a kraken shifter.

“Not tentacles like yours,” Mike said, pointing to the carcass. “But the ends of his fingers on each arm appendage ended in a sucker.”

That gave Olivia the answer to that question, but it didn’t calm her worries about all the other kidnapped people who were still out there. All the active AILE and ATTF cases that were still open. All the people who needed help.

“I’m going to join the AILE.” It was the only choice there was. She could never go back to a normal life after all of this.

They didn’t shout a huge *no* at her, but she felt her mates’ displeasure.

Chase’s jaw tensed. Mike wouldn’t look at her for a few seconds.

They didn’t say it, but she *felt* it.

“I can still help, and I want both of you to train me.”

Mike looked at Chase. Something seemed to pass between the two men.

“If we try to stop you,” Chase said softly. “You’d never forgive us.”

“I would forgive you,” she said easily. “I would just not do as you say. It’s not up to you, to be honest.”

Her heart didn't slam around against her ribs like she expected it to when she said that. She felt entirely confident in this decision, even though she had no idea where this confidence had come from.

"I'm not going to just sit home waiting for you both to come back after missions for hot sex. I'm going to be out there with you, taking down assholes like this." She forgot to keep her voice lowered for that last part. Not that she'd shouted it, but she had said it loud enough that a few people looked their way.

Okay, now she was embarrassed.

Mike chuckled at her. He leaned in close, and in that sensual southern drawl, he purred in her ear, "As long as the hot sex happens, regardless. Starting tonight."

"Even if we have to take it a bit gentle tonight. We're all a bit banged up," Chase added, ever observant and considerate.

She took their hands, gripping them tight. "Let's get out of here."

The End

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



USA Today Bestselling Author Mandy Rosko is a videogame playing, book loving chick. She loves writing paranormal romances that range from light steamy to erotic, and has some contemporary and historical romances as well. You can find her on all sorts of platforms, including [Twitch](#), where she does writing sprints, crafting, and video gaming!

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