

K.C. MILLS



LONE
BENNETT PACK
E T O M X

LONE WOLF

BENNETT PACK

K.C. MILLS

Copyright © 2022 by K.C. Mills

All rights reserved. This book may not be reproduced, scanned, distributed in any print, electronic, or audio form without written permission from the author. Please do not participate in or encourage piracy of copyrighted materials in violation of the author's rights. This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidences are fictions and the product of the author's imagination.

NOTE TO READERS:

REVISED EDIT 11.3.2022

Hello Beautiful people!

Welcome to *Hollow Grove* where things go bump in the night.

This is a fictional town with fictional characters and although my supernaturals are based on the general understanding of how they live and function. There may be things that don't fit your expectation.

I reserve the right to shift, tweak, and twist these individuals to be what I create them to be.

With that being said, please move forward with an open mind and if you can't, then this might not be the one that feeds your soul. You'll definitely get my signature style with an Alpha male who isn't afraid to show his heart but I've added a bit of a supernatural twist.

Thanks so much for allowing me to share my craft with you and enjoy!

Sincerely,

Me!

FATED MATES

The crazy thing about fate is you can't do a damn thing to control it. No matter how hard you try, what's for you is for you...

CHAPTER I

JOELLE “JO” CARVER

“**L**et me go, now.”

“You’re mine, Jo. Why would I let you go?”

Abe’s smile was mocking and dangerous. He had no intention of letting me go. In his mind I belonged to him. I could feel fear trickling down my spine and not because I was afraid to stand up to him. The fear I felt was because I was alone. No one in our pack would stand up for me. They all cowered when it came to Abe. He was a ruthless leader. Cruel and heartless. A complete contrast from his father, who had been kind and fair. Another reminder as to how different our pack had been since Conrad had been killed.

“That’s not for you to decide. I would rather die first...”

“Don’t tempt me.” Abe yanked me to him. The snarl he released was a warning and a promise. If he couldn’t have me, no one else would. His lip peeled back and before I had a chance to snatch free of his hold, his teeth were exposed, and they sank into my neck. The word no was lodged in my throat, stuck there as I screamed in panic.

My eyes shot open and my hand immediately went to my neck. My fingers moved frantically searching my skin and I sighed in relief realizing that no marks were there. I hadn’t been claimed as Abe’s mate. It had only been a dream.

More like a nightmare.

After inhaling a few cleansing breaths, I climbed from the back of my Wrangler, over the seat, and tugged open the rear door, to stretch my body. The vehicle was a decade old and

had belonged to my father, but it had been good to me. As good as my father had been before he'd left me. I was grateful for this piece of him because when I'd left my pack and went on the run, this Wrangler had become my home. I'd traveled across the country from place to place, always on the run. I refused to allow Abe to control me and even more I refused to be his mate. That meant disowning my pack and becoming a lone wolf. Being on my own wasn't all that terrible considering how the pack I'd once considered my family was now nothing more than a collection of weak men and terrified women under the rule of a cruel and heartless leader.

Sleeping in my vehicle wasn't ideal, but it was the most economical option. It was best for me to keep my head low which meant working for places that would pay me in cash and never renting anything in my name. I was exhausted, both mentally and physically, from being on the road but I'd run for the rest of my life it meant never seeing Abe or anyone from my old pack ever again.

I had currently been working at a diner in a small town north of Atlanta and after several weeks, it was time for me to move around again. I never remained anywhere for too long because there were packs all over the country and they all knew each other one way or another. Some were helpful when they found out I was running from Abe and others? Not so much. They saw me as an opportunity to gain a favor from a man who was known for lacking morals and ethics, which came in handy if you didn't want to get your hands dirty. Most chose not to get involved either way and wouldn't offer help nor the threat to capture me and return me to the man I was running from. I was fine either way, it just meant always keeping my guard up, being extra cautious about hiding who I was and more importantly keeping my wolf at bay.

She was clawing beneath my skin to be set free. It had been months since I'd allowed her to run wild because I didn't want to allow Abe the opportunity to catch wind that a red wolf had been spotted. I was a rarity. An Alpha female, which was another reason Abe wanted to claim me as his mate. My power combined with his would make him much more ruthless

than he already was. I refused to be used in his twisted manipulation of our kind.

But today, I needed this. I needed to set her free. To run wild through the forest and be myself. Even if only for a little while.

I bent down and unlaced my Doc Martins, then stepped out of them. My socks and clothes were next to go, all of which I tossed into the backseat of my Jeep, closing the door to keep out any unwelcomed critters. I did a quick scan to be sure I was completely alone and once satisfied, I lowered to a crouching position and leapt with all my might, shifting in midair, trading my skin for fur. Once I landed on all fours, I shook my fur and stretched my body before I glanced at my Wrangler and took off through the forest. I was on a deserted road, tucked away in the woods. It wasn't likely that anyone would find me so I wasn't concerned about leaving my things behind. The only thing on my mind was going for a nice long run.

After a long sprint where time escaped me, I reached a clearing and came to an abrupt stop. My senses piqued and I sensed that there were wolves nearby. A wave of alarm jolted through me and I quickly regretted being so careless.

A low growl surfaced and then two wolves appeared in my peripheral. A streak of grey leapt toward me and in a matter of seconds I was surrounded. There were three in total. Massive animals, fangs out and snarling. They were in attack mode, but I wouldn't go down easily. My best defense was to attack first. With every bit of energy I had, I advanced on the smallest one and collided with its solid frame, ripping at its throat with one quick swipe of my claws. He hit the ground and I pounced on him only to be knocked away, tumbling hard as a second wolf knocked me onto my side. Once I was incapacitated all three charged me at the same time. In a blur of sharp teeth and claws, I did my best to defend myself but lost the battle. My body burned as their claws dug into my side, ripping through fur until they tore muscle. I went down fighting but there was no way I would win this. Each time I hit the ground, I fought hard and scrambled, lifting again until my body took flight for

the last time and I landed awkwardly on the ground. My head hit something hard and my mind clouded. The last thing I remembered was the low, deep growl and the thunder of what sounded like a stampede moving toward me.

Help me, please.

It was the last thought I had before everything went black.

CHAPTER 2

LAZAR “LAZ” BENNET

A *red wolf.*
And she's injured.

While my brothers handled the wolves that had attacked the little wolf, I hovered protectively over her body.

After doing a quick survey of her injuries, I lifted my head searching for my brothers. Both were actively attacking the wolves that had no business on our property exploring our land.

Attacking this wolf.

I couldn't worry about them, but I didn't have to. We were all Alphas and deadly when necessary. My focus dropped back to the injured wolf. I nudged her with my snout and she whimpered but didn't physically move. However, she shifted back into her human form. A sea of beautiful brown skin appeared, marred by claw marks and gouges.

She was badly hurt and barely conscious. We needed to get her back to the house and fast. I linked with my younger brother first.

Zion, get back to the house and bring a truck. I need to get her out of here. - Me

She's alive? - Zion

Barely - Me

What about you? - Xander

Xander was the oldest of the three of us. Always the protector.

I'll be fine. I'm not leaving her, go, now. - Me

One dead wolf and two severely injured were what was left when my brothers Zion and Xander were done with them. They took off toward the house while I stood watch over the woman. Little wolf. Her scent matched the Wrangler we'd found. The reason my brothers and I were out here. But that wasn't the only thing about her scent that spoke to me. My wolf was angry and ready to kill and maim.

My nose lowered once more, and I nudged her again, licked her arm and face. The minute her blood settled on my tongue I knew for sure. Everything I was feeling became more potent. Mine.

This wolf was my mate. My gut clenched.

Hurry. - Me

I growled to my brother in my mind. His response came quick.

Coming now. - Zion

I lifted my head to the sky and let out a howl sending a warning. The wolves that did this to her would pay with their lives no matter who they were or their reasoning behind the attack.

My brothers returned with one of our long bed pickup trucks. I shifted, replacing fur with skin and gently lifted the woman into my arms. Xander removed clothes from the rear of the truck and when I was close enough he reached for her. I growled a warning to stay back but my brother stepped closer.

“Put some clothes on, Laz. I won't hurt her.”

He was speaking sensibly but giving her to anyone didn't sit right with me. She was naked. Xander realized I wasn't going to budge so he tossed my clothes at my feet, reached in the back and grabbed the blanket he'd brought with him. After draping it across his arms, he averted his eyes. “Give her to me. You need to get dressed.”

I struggled internally with the idea of another man holding my mate, even my brother, however, I did as he asked and handed her over. I kept my eyes fixated on them while he kept his head turned but managed to toss the ends of the blanket to cover her. I quickly slipped on the briefs and jeans he brought me in record speed. She was in my arms again shortly after and I guided us both to the rear of the truck, holding her firmly against my chest in my lap. Zion was in the driver's seat and Xander found his way to the passenger.

"The Wrangler is hers." Xander glanced over his shoulder.

"I know," I murmured watching her take in shallow breaths. She was alive.

My mate. The bruises on her face were slowly healing but the blanket was tinged with blood from the gashes along her torso and limbs. She needed rest to properly heal. My blood boiled and anger rose through my chest.

The half a mile drive felt like an eternity, but we eventually arrived at our properties in the woods and I carried her into mine. Xander followed. I wasn't sure where Zion was going nor did I care at the moment. Xander filled me in as soon as I had her on my bed and began moving around my room to get some of my things to cover her after I got her cleaned up.

"Zion is on his way to get her Wrangler. He'll bring it here. The key was tucked into the console. What do you need?"

"Tell him to leave it. I can—"

"Are you going to leave her?"

No.

I glared at my brother as I fisted one of my T-shirts. He smirked and spoke to me through a link.

He won't disrupt any of her things. We know what she is to you. - Xander

His eyes lowered to the woman on my bed and a growl, rose from my chest, lingering in my throat.

"What do you need, Laz?"

“Toyin. Tell her to come, now.”

My brother tensed but I didn't give a damn about the aversion he had for the witch. She was my best hope of healing my little wolf while she was too weak to heal herself. Xander offered a tight nod and then stepped out of my room, closing the door behind him.

Once he was gone, I moved into the bathroom, lifting two towels and a washcloth before I filled the sink with warm water and some of my body wash. The idea of her skin smelling like mine had my chest tightening and dick stiffening with thoughts of her covered in my personal scent after claiming her.

It took me a while to clean away most of the dirt and debris from her skin. I gently shifted her injured body onto the towels and softly swiped her skin to clean her up which took several rotations. I managed to get most of the blood and dirt from her skin and then covered her in one of my t-shirts before tucking her beneath a clean blanket. Her lids fluttered a few times while I was handling her. She moaned lightly from the pain, but not once had she opened her eyes.

She's alive.

I repeated the mantra in my head over and over again but until she was awake and fully recovered my soul wouldn't settle. My wolf was anxious and split right down the middle. He wanted to rip to shreds the ones who had caused her current condition and he was also ready to mark and claim the little wolf. That option had my dick agreeing, causing it to expand thick and hard, stretching my briefs and jeans uncomfortably. Now wasn't the time, but it was happening, I assured my wolf.

I sat on the edge of the bed, watching her. Focused on every inch of her face and body. This didn't make sense. My mother had warned all of us. A mate would show and when she did, everything about us would change. Our fierce natures would shift, becoming even more protective and vengeful, while we softened to the core.

But only for them. Our mates.

I snorted at the thought. My brothers and I had sworn off anything remotely close to being forever bound to anyone. Me especially. My eyes squeezed shut and our mother's smile drifted from the recess of my mind.

"I know, I know. You were right," I whispered just before there was a soft knock on my door.

"Come in..."

Toyin cautiously stuck her head in the door trying to gauge whether or not to enter. She was a tiny little thing, barely five feet and extra petite. Dressed in jeans, flats, and a silk shirt, she stepped into my room lifting a canvas crossbody purse from her shoulder and then offered me a warm smile.

"Xander said you needed me."

"I do or rather she does. Thank you for coming?"

"You don't have to thank me, Laz. I'm always here for whatever you guys need." Her proclamation had me glancing behind her to where my brother stood in the doorway, body tense and arms locked across his chest. His brows were pinched as he watched Toyin with a trained focus that almost made me laugh.

Stubborn fool.

"May I?" Toyin's tiny voice asking for permission had my eyes lowering to her. She smiled smugly which meant that Xander had filled her in on who this woman was. Hell, I didn't know her name, but I knew she was mine.

With a nod, I approved Toyin's request and moved away from the bed. She placed the crossbody on the bed and glanced over her shoulder.

"You can step outside while I—"

"I'm not leaving. Do what you need to and I'll stay out of your way."

Xander chuckled and Toyin's smile expanded. "Over there. I need room and don't want you hovering." She pointed with her forehead to where Xander was standing. I did as she asked

but with a compromise and stopped midway between my bed and my brother.

After pulling the covers back and doing a brief inspection, Toyin began removing things from her bag. “She’s healing slowly. Her energy is vibrating low. I can’t sense her wolf. She must be injured pretty badly.”

“Can you help?” My tone was laced with more anger than I liked, but it couldn’t be helped. Thankfully Toyin wasn’t offended.

“I have a few things that can heal her externally. Once she’s physically better, and her body is repaired, she can handle the rest on her own.”

I knew this but for some reason, I felt out of sorts and desperate.

“Should we wake her?”

I wanted, *needed* to see her eyes. For her to acknowledge me so that I could see if she felt the same connection.

“No, absolutely not. Her body has shut down as a way of rejuvenating. It’s best not to disrupt the process. Let her rest and allow the natural order of things to work in her favor. She’ll come out of it when she’s good and ready.”

I nodded and watched as Toyin removed small metal tins from her bag. As if she could feel my eyes on her, she explained as she opened them one-by-one and began gently dressing the wounds with care.

“Calendula, ulmus rubra and gotu kola. All three have natural healing elements but I’ve infused them with a little something extra to expedite the process.” Once she was done tending to the wounds, Toyin stood and extended her arms so that her hands hovered over my little wolf’s body. She muttered something under her breath and began chanting, eyes closed and voice soft, but stern. When she was done, she used one of the towels to wipe her hands and placed the items back in her bag, draping it across her body. She placed a delicate hand on my forearm and peeked up at me. “Let her rest. She’ll be fine in a few hours. A day max.”

I didn't miss the warning. She was demanding that I not interfere with her healing. I wanted to, but I wouldn't. She needed time. I would give her that.

"Are you staying?" I murmured with my eyes still on my little wolf. She looked so peaceful, but I knew she wasn't well.

"Does she need to?" Xander grunted which had the right side of my mouth lifting into a mocking grin.

"No, I don't need to. Call me if she's not better in few hours or if you feel she's getting worse." I lifted my eyes in time to see Toyin square her slim shoulders and leave my room pushing past Xander. I chuckled at the conflicted and pained expression on his face. He wanted to go after her, yet refused to be vulnerable. Admitting that his mate was a witch wasn't an easy reality to accept. It was only a matter of time, however, because if he felt anything remotely close to the pull I felt to my little wolf, there was no hope for my brother.

After Xander and Toyin were gone, likely silently avoiding their mutual attraction, I closed us into my room and settled on the bed next to my little wolf. I stretched out near her, inching as close as I possibly could without creating a disturbance. My heart clenched when she released a sigh of contentment and turned into me, so that her face was resting inches from my chest.

My wolf went crazy and my dick swelled again. It was only a matter of time before she was officially mine.

Rest well little wolf.

CHAPTER 3

JO

My body felt stiff and weighted. I wasn't sure why, but then again sleeping in my Wrangler wasn't the best option for comfort.

I attempted to flex my limbs which had my eyes bolting open when nothing restricted the expanse of my reach.

Where the hell am I?

The room was dimly lit, smelled warm and spicy with a tinge of citrus, but that wasn't the most alarming thing.

Room.

Where the hell am I? And why the hell is my wolf going berserk and clawing at my skin. The minute the thought entered my mind, I felt a strong urge to turn my head and then my body went stiff and my muscles clenched. There was a man next to me. One who I distinctly felt connected to. One who smelled divine and made me feel safe, loved, protected. Which shouldn't be happening because I didn't know who he was.

What the fuck?

I didn't know him. But then again, I did. Or at least my wolf did. She was chanting the one word I wasn't prepared to acknowledge.

Mate.

Mate.

Mate.

I shifted and so did he. His arm lifted and crossed over my waist. Strong fingers dug into my hip possessively and I felt a mixture of annoyance and uncontrollable lust. My body's temperature spiked and I felt all gooey inside.

"You're awake." His deep, gravelly, sleep-laced voice vibrated around me and then rolled through my body while I watched with caution as he lifted his head. A scowl rested on his handsome face.

Fuck, he's gorgeous. Ruggedly beautiful and...

Mate.

My wolf was chanting again. *Shush*. I warned her and he raised a brow in question. I inched back or rather my head did because he was still holding firmly to my hip, not allowing me the ability to move away from his massive frame.

"Where..." I paused and cleared my throat. "Where am I?"

"My house."

My brows pinched. "*Your* house, why?"

His fingers moved rhythmically, pulsing against my skin. My bare skin. They were warm and eager but cautious. I liked the way it felt to be so close and my body and mind had formed an alliance. My nipples went erect and the muscle in my abs tensed multiple times.

"You don't remember what happened?" He frowned but the sentiment I felt was one of concern and...

Anger.

He was angry, but not with me.

"I don't..." fumbled from my mouth but it was a lie. After a brief moment everything came flooding back to me.

"Wait, I was attacked. By wolves." A spike of fear jolted through me. No matter how safe I felt next to this man, under his loaded gaze. Was he...

"No."

I frowned.

“I didn’t ask if it was you.”

“You didn’t have to. I could feel the minute your fear kicked in and your guard lifted. You were attacked and wanted to know if I was one of the wolves who did it.”

I opened my mouth to respond but he leaned in toward my face. I inched back but there wasn’t anywhere to go. His fingers pressed into my hip again and I was pulled flush against him with ease. He’d barely exerted any effort at all, but I was thrust against him like a rag doll.

“I feel your emotions. All of them. You can’t hide from me, little wolf.” The smug grin on his face had my abs flexing again and my nipples sensitive to the touch. They were touching his very solid and firm chest. While I was mentally trying to suppress my body’s reaction to him he caught me off guard and brought his mouth to mine. I moaned seconds before his tongue skimmed the seam of my lips and then glided completely across them. But then he drew back and I wanted to scream.

“It’s been a day and a half. How do you feel?”

“I...” My eyes lowered to inspect my body, but I suppose his mind went elsewhere because I felt something very thick and hard pushing between us. “Good, I feel good.”

I managed to push away but only because he allowed me to. He sat up and stretched, rolling massive, wide shoulders back and my line of sight followed the warm brown skin with red undertones, taking in the layers of muscle and intricate designs that completely covered his left side. From the neck down half of his chest, including his arm, there were deep, dark lines of beautiful artwork. No color, just black and shades of gray.

When I realized I had been staring for too long, my eyes shot up to find his pinned on me. An insanely sexy smile softened his hard features and had me shifting back a little more and tugging the blanket that covered my lower half up higher. I fisted it against my chest.

“Don’t be embarrassed. You’re allowed to look. I belong to you.”

“You absolutely do not.” I frowned hard and he smiled harder.

“I do, but we’ll get to that later. What’s your name little wolf?”

“Tell me yours first...” I squared my shoulders. “And while you’re at it, tell me why I’m at your house.”

“Lazar or Laz. Either is fine, but I’d prefer mate.” He winked and my stomach fluttered. “You were attacked in the woods, on our property. My brothers and I found your Wrangler, scented you, and then tracked you down just in time to catch the three wolves that attacked you. You were injured. We brought you here, I brought you into my bed. *Our* bed.”

“Stop that,” I warned but there was no denying who he was. I felt it. He was mine. My mate. God, how? Why now?

“Fair enough. Name, little wolf...” His tone was demanding and sexy but I wasn’t giving in so easily.

“It doesn’t matter. Thank you for helping me...”

“*Saving* you and you’re mine to save, to love, to protect. Name?”

I groaned. “Joelle. *Jo*. Can I leave now? I need to...”

“You’re not going anywhere. You’ve been running long enough. The question is from who and why?”

The warning in his tone couldn’t be missed. He’d forged a personal attack against the person I was running from.

Abe.

“I appreciate your help, but my problems are not yours.” I scrambled to get off the bed, realizing I was naked from the waist down. However the shirt I wore, which I assumed belonged to him—it smelled like him—covered me down to mid-thigh. The minute I was steady on my feet he was on me. Looming, big, wide, and sexy.

“Everything you are is *mine*, little wolf. Especially your problems. Now, who are you running from and there’s no point in lying. Your Wrangler shows proof that you’re living out of it. You were parked in the woods, away from the city, intending to remain under the radar. Who are you hiding from?” The last question released on a growl that vibrated through me, traveling down my chest, and lodging right between my thighs.

What the hell is wrong with me?

He’s sexy and you’re horny.

His dominance and protectiveness was indeed sexy and *annoying*. My wolf was divided in two. As an Alpha she wanted to flex and demand respect but also submit to this Alpha and his wolf.

“Abe Jeffries. My old pack leader.”

“Your Alpha?” He frowned and I squared my shoulders.

“He’s *not* my Alpha. He’s bully and a coward. I don’t respect him and an Alpha who can’t garner respect isn’t shit.”

“Is that why you left your pack?”

“Yes. I’m an Alpha. Abe claimed me as his mate...” The reference of mate granted me a snarling growl from Laz and I smiled internally. “He wanted to use me to strengthen his rule. I refused. I’m not his to claim.”

“No the fuck you’re not.”

I raised a brow. “I’m not *anyone’s* to claim.”

He snorted at the lie. It was indeed a lie. I was his and he was mine. I simply wasn’t ready to settle on that truth just yet.

“So, you’re a lone wolf. You’ve been on your own?”

“Yes, for the past couple months. I’ve moved around a lot.”

“Why?”

“Abe is not the type of man to accept no as an answer for something he wants. And he *wants* me.”

“That shit isn’t happening.”

We both turned toward the door when someone knocked interrupting us but his eyes moved back to me, trailing from my head down to my bare legs. His chest rumbled as he crossed the room and opened the door, using his body to block whoever was at his door from seeing me.

“What?”

I peeked around him to find another male. I could only see his face and it closely resembled Laz’s. *His brother*. He mentioned having brothers.

“Toyin’s been calling to check on her. She threatened to come back if you don’t give her an update.” His voice sounded tense and had me wondering who Toyin was, why he didn’t want her to come back, but more importantly why she wanted an update on me.

“Who is Toyin and why is she asking about me?”

I quickly moved to the door and dipped around Laz, placing myself between the two of them but I was moved back by a solid arm around my waist and a massive hand splayed across my stomach.

The other guy lowered his eyes to me, taking in our position before he looked at his brother and smiled. “Toyin is a friend of ours and a witch. A healer. You were pretty bad off when my brother found you, so I called her to come help.”

A witch. Did she use a spell? Was that why I want to climb this man and let him do dirty things to me?

I frowned hard. “What did she do to me?”

“Nothing harmful. She used something to help heal your wounds. You were weak and your body was struggling to...”

“I’m not *weak*,” I growled and his brother snorted and smiled.

“I’ll tell her your little wolf is doing just fine and she doesn’t need to come back.” He lowered his eyes to me. “I’m Xander, glad to see you’re doing much better than when we

found you.” He smirked at me and then Laz before walking away. Laz pulled me back and slammed the door.

“I wouldn’t allow anyone to harm you.”

“I don’t know that and I’m *not* weak.” I took a step forward placing my hands on my hips. He smiled mischievously, advancing closer until he was looming over me once again.

Shit, he smelled good and I bet he feels even better.

“No, you’re definitely not, but you were injured, and your body needed a little extra help to recover. I made sure you had that. You’re welcome.”

Before I could object his hands gripped the hem of the shirt I was in, lifting it up toward my chest. A cool breeze whispered across my skin and then disappeared with the heat of his eyes traveling over my body.

I yanked hard ripping the material from his hands and stepped back.

“What are you doing, perv?”

“Making sure you’re truly healed.”

“I am, but you could have just asked?”

“Could have but didn’t. I’ve seen it all, Jo. Every inch of you.”

The way the word inch rolled on his tongue had my nipples hard and my abs flexing again.

“Again, thank you for your help. Where are my things? I’d like to shower and dress because I need to be going.”

He laughed lightly. “You’re not going anywhere, but I will get your things for you so that you can get dressed. Then we’ll eat and you can tell me more about Abe and your old pack.”

“I’m not staying here.” I angled my head, forcing my chin higher and he only grinned.

“I’ll get your things. Don’t leave this room.”

Whether I liked it or not, I wasn't going anywhere. I'd have to fight him to do so. As soon as the door clicked softly behind him and I was alone, I sank into the mattress, leaning over my legs while I buried my face in my palms. I was tired, so tired and exhausted from always having my guard up. For the first time in months, I felt safe, which had my body trembling with relief. So no, I wasn't leaving. At least not today.

CHAPTER 4

LAZ

I gathered the two duffels from Jo's Wrangler and then headed back inside feeling an uncontrollable need to be close to her. My mother's explanation about what it felt like to be bound to my mate did little justice to prepare me for what I was currently feeling. I had instantly become an addict and she was my vice.

And I hadn't officially claimed her yet.

I ran my tongue over the points of my canines with the increasing need to have them sinking into her skin. My dick was hard again and pressing aggressively against the zipper of my jeans.

When I entered my room. I caught a quick glimpse of my little wolf bent over, but she quickly shot to her feet and squared her shoulders. Her eyes were red. She had been crying and my stomach knotted.

"What's wrong? You in pain? Can I..."

"I'm fine." She stepped forward, tugging at her bags. I released one into her care and tossed the other on the bed, studying her closely while she hid her face from me. "Can I please have some privacy?"

I wanted to say fuck privacy and that I was going to fuck her, but now wasn't the time.

Soon.

Very soon.

"Bathroom's right there. If you need anything..."

“I don’t.” She was out of my sight seconds later, slamming the door. Such a little stubborn ass. I liked that she was feisty and resisted the urge to yield to me, but she would. She wouldn’t have a choice. I wouldn’t force her hand and her body, but she would enjoy receiving *me* just as much as I was going to enjoy delivering.

While she showered, I made my way to the kitchen. My stomach growled as soon as my feet touched the tile flooring that separated the space from the rest of my house.

My brothers and I owned two hundred acres where we each had cabins. Mine was the smallest. I didn’t need much but it was still modern and nice. Zion was younger so his was more upscale and slightly larger because he was a bit flashier. Xander’s was the largest. A three level with six bedrooms. Three were private suites for Zion and me, which according to Xander was the reason his space was so massive. Never mind the fact that we had our own homes on the property. It was simply his way of asserting that he was the oldest.

By the time I had everything pulled from the refrigerator to fix a quick meal of subs and chips, I felt Xander’s presence. He joined me in the kitchen, settling at the small dinette while I constructed two sandwiches.

“Didn’t think I’d see you for a while.” The smugness in his tone had me glaring his way.

“Then why are you still here?”

“Because I need to know her deal. Figured you would surface sooner or later. Was just banking on later.”

“Mind your fucking business,” I grunted.

“Put your dick away, little brother. I’m not competing with you. She’s your mate not mine.”

“Clearly since yours is a foot shorter and an expert with magic.”

His glare met my amusement.

“Wolves and witches don’t mate.”

“If you continue to deny her, no. Someone else will take up your slack.”

Xander grunted through his displeasure with the idea of anyone touching his mate, regardless of that fact that he was refusing to claim her.

“What’s her story?”

“Been on the run from her Alpha and his pack. Abe Jeffries.”

“Conrad’s kid? Aren’t they from out west?”

“Yeah. She’s been moving around. Living out of her Jeep.”

“What did he do to her?” She was my mate which made her family. Xander’s anger closely mirrored mine.

“Not sure of everything but she said he claimed her, or wanted to, but she refused. She’s an Alpha.”

Xander chuckled. “No shit. I could feel it the minute she looked at me.”

I growled knowing that it wasn’t anything more than his connection to her through me. “She said he wanted to use her as a tool to strengthen his rule, so she ran. Left her pack behind and has been on her own for the past six months.”

“Lone wolf.”

“My wolf,” I corrected. “She’s ours, Xander. She belongs to no one but us from now on.”

“She is. You mark her yet?” His amused tone was back and I didn’t like it. Mostly because my wolf wanted nothing more than to mark her, fuck her until she submitted followed by openly admitting that she was mine. Not this annoying ass game of denying what was inevitable.

“No, she needs time.”

“For what? She looked perfectly good to me. Are you scared, baby brother?”

“Are you?”

The reference about Toyin had him snarling. “I’m heading home. Check in later.”

“To the city?”

“Yes. I have a few things I need to take care of. Zion left this morning. You staying here?”

“For now, yes.”

He didn’t want to leave me out here alone. I understood why but no one would be stupid enough to try us. Our pack was in charge of this area. The wolves that attacked Jo took advantage of an easy opportunity but didn’t know she was mine. The damage my brothers caused had provided a clear and concise warning.

“You don’t have to worry about me.” I assured my brother. He wanted to object but knew it would do him little good. We were all stubborn in our own right.

“Be in touch, Laz. I mean it.”

Not long after Xander was gone, I was finished piling too much meat and cheese atop two sourdough sub rolls. I left them on the kitchen counter and went to find Jo only to realize that my room and bathroom were both empty. I growled at the thought of her running...

From me.

But I knew that was exactly what she’d done. I hurried to the back of my house and glanced through the sliding doors to where her Wrangler had been parked and sure enough it was gone.

Damn it, little wolf.

I hurried to my room, threw on a shirt and running shoes, and grabbed my phone and keys so that I could find her. I knew her scent. It wouldn’t take me long to locate her, but had I claimed her it would have been a lot easier. She’d just sealed her fate. I’d deal with the consequences later but as soon as I got my hands on Jo, I was marking her.

I drove through the woods reaching the clearing where we’d found Jo’s Wrangler. I slowly edged to the dirt road and

then gunned it, moving a lot faster than I needed to. I didn't fucking care. The chase was on. Xander would have gone in the opposite direction so there was no chance that he would have crossed her path. Based on her scent lingering in the air, which was light but enough for me to track, she was close.

Thankfully I lucked up. The universe was on my side because a few miles down, just off the path, I spotted that damn Wrangler and then my little wolf knelt down beside it, attempting to change a tire. The Jeep was up on a jack which meant the only way she could escape was to run. Based on the way her stance widened when I slammed on brakes, threw my door open, and stalked in her direction with long meaningful strides she knew running wasn't her best option.

Smart girl. There was no way she could outrun me or my wolf and if I had to chase her any more than I already had, she'd pay and the price was going to be high.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?" I was on her in a matter of seconds and when her body collided with the side of her Jeep, mine collided with hers, preventing an escape.

Just in case.

"I told you I was leaving," she ground out.

"And *I* told you that wasn't an option."

"You don't tell me what I can and can't do. I'm not your ___"

Fuck that.

I kissed her hard. With possessive swipes of my tongue I claimed her mouth offering a sample for what was next and like I knew she would, Jo kissed me back with just as much vigor and need.

With one hand pressing flat near her head, I worked the other between us at the same time I forced her thighs wider with my knee. She rocked forward and I smiled into our kiss, working my fingers across the soft, thin fabric of the leggings she was wearing, grateful there wasn't much of a barrier between us. I roughly rubbed along the seam, pressing my fingers between her slit through the spandex that covered it

and then pinched hard on her clit, while I continued kissing her just as ferociously.

“Please,” she mumbled into my mouth, and I pulled back, locking my eyes on hers.

“Please what, little wolf? You want me to make you cum?”

She nodded and I smiled mischievously. “Not good enough. Say it. Tell me what you want and it’s yours.”

She growled and I pressed harder forcing the tips of my fingers as deep as the fabric would allow them to go.

“Say it, little wolf. Tell me what you want.”

“Oh fuck. Make me cum, *please*.” She thrust forward trying to get there on her own and I decide to help her out.

“You ask and you shall receive.” My mouth clashed with hers again and I used both hands this time. One I shoved under her shirt, palming her left breast which felt perfect in my hand, while the other went to work rubbing between her thighs at a nice steady pace. Both provided more than enough pleasure to get the job done and sure enough...

“Laz...” My name leaving her mouth nearly did me in and the minute she reached the peak of her climax, I kissed the curve of her neck, finding my spot, letting my teeth graze her there before I bit hard, clamping down, allowing my teeth to penetrate her skin.

She said my name once more. She fucking moaned it and pushed forward against my thigh and my hand, trembling, greedy for more as she took flight. I sucked hard on her neck until the last of her orgasm rolled through her body and she sagged against to me. I pulled back and sensually licked over the spot where I’d just marked her, sealing the wound. Jo moaned again and another round of tremors rolled through her body before she was blinking away the haze of my handiwork.

She was now officially mine. I’d claimed her. I leaned in close to her ear, kissing her just below her lobe.

“You’re mine now, little wolf. If you run again, I will always find you.”

When I pulled back to see her face, I noticed the minute she realized what I'd done.

"You asshole." She shoved me away but only because I allowed her to, then she advanced forward, getting right back in my face. "You made me cum so that you could mark me."

"Yeah I did, but you didn't leave me much choice, did you?"

"You had a choice, you arrogant bastard. I don't belong to you."

The lie held no merit. She was angry. She was just as much mine now as I was hers. I walked her back until she was caged between me and her Jeep. I grabbed her leg, yanking it up my thigh, pressing my dick into her center. "We're bound to each other, little wolf." Her body betrayed her because she pushed forward seeking more contact, but her jaw flexed as she glared at me.

"Just because I want to fuck you doesn't mean I belong to you. It's just a natural reaction."

"It is. To your *mate*." I kissed her hard and her hands pressed into my chest, but not with the intention of forcing me away. I'd take it. She wasn't exactly resisting but she wasn't submitting either.

When I ended our kiss, she glared at me and I smiled in amusement. "Let me finish changing your tire so that we can leave. We need to talk."

"I can change my own damn tire," she asserted, sliding from beneath me. I also noticed that she hadn't objected to leaving with me. Maybe she'd finally come to her senses. If not, I'd fuck some of mine into her. As long as she had some sense, it didn't matter to me where it came from.

CHAPTER 5

JO

I followed Laz into the city and to his building which was a massive high rise that took up an entire block. We parked in a garage which I assumed was beneath it and then took an elevator to the top floor. All of my things were with us because Laz insisted I wasn't going anywhere. Maybe not at this very moment but I was definitely getting away from him.

He mated me.

Made me cum hard enough to scramble my brain while he bit me and damn if that bite didn't heighten my already otherworldly orgasm. I understood how this worked. I was his and he was mine, but I still wasn't ready to submit. Maybe it was the Alpha in me or hell, maybe I was just stubborn. Either way, I wasn't ready but that didn't mean I couldn't enjoy the perks of being mated to such a ruggedly handsome, sexy, and dominating wolf.

Sex.

I wanted both of us naked, with him fucking me hard and fast. My wolf wanted the same which was why I didn't argue when he removed all of my things from the Wrangler and then demanded I follow him to his place. In the elevator I kept my distance and Laz kept his eyes on me. I could literally feel them roaming my body and every so often they'd circle back to my neck where his mark was and would be *forever*. I couldn't escape our bond. Not that I wanted to. No matter how stubborn me and my wolf were, being claimed meant I had a family. A pack. A home where I could feel safe. I didn't have to run and maybe I wouldn't but for now I wanted...

Sex.

We were both quiet. The mood was tense and for a good reason. My hormones were out of control and so was my wolf. The minute we reached the door and Laz pressed his thumb to the sensor, my restraint snapped. I stepped into his apartment and leapt at him only seconds before the door closed behind him. Lucky for me, his reflexes were on point because he dropped my bags and caught me just as my legs locked around his waist.

In a frenzy of heavy kissing and groping, we thumped through his apartment and ended up in the bedroom. I landed on the bed, while Laz came out of his clothes and then ripped mine off of me.

“You sure you’re okay? Nothing hurts?” I could see him struggling with the ability to restrain himself. My eyes lowered to his dick which was long and thick and *mine*. Even if I only wanted temporary custody.

“Nothing hurts, but you’re going to if you don’t get in me, now.”

Oh hell.

The look he blessed me with was a warning. One I chose to ignore. His hands were at my ankles, jerking me to the edge of the bed and then he was in me. *Deep*. So damn deep that I couldn’t breathe. My eyes went wide and then narrowed immediately after. He was big and the stretch of him inside me burned deliciously. And then I had his tongue, sweet and eager. He was hungry for me and shit, I loved it which had me giving as much as I hoped he’d take.

I could have resisted. He understood the same which was why I chose not to resist. I was in control and as much as he wanted to dominate me, he wouldn’t without my consent. There was a twisted underlying respect and appreciation for me being an Alpha which turned me on that much more.

Laz reached under me, cupping my ass to lift me higher. The motion spread my thighs wider from the force of his body pressing forward. Hard thrusts followed. Nailing me one after

the other, pausing between to hold me steady. The intensity in his eyes kept mine locked on his. I wanted to see it all. Everything he felt each time he thrust in me.

“This is why you don’t run,” he growled, pinning me with several harder thrusts back-to-back.

“Sex isn’t enough to make me stay,” I challenged, and he roared deeply.

“This isn’t just sex, little wolf. This is me proving that every fucking inch of you belongs to me.”

“*I belong to me.*”

He sneered and followed the reaction with a challenging grin while powering into me with my hips held high. This angle spread me painfully wide and from the confident smirk he sported, that was the intent. Right here, right now, I was his and I did belong to him. There wasn’t a damn thing I could do to protect myself, not that I wanted to.

“Mine, little wolf. All mine.”

He crashed into me, his hammering stealing my air while he growled and grunted his demand that I submit. The angle at which he had my hips had my clit brushing his abs when he leaned over me. I took every thrust, challenging him to go harder until his name was being yelled over and over again as I came, blacking out a little from the intensity. I snapped out of it when I felt his final drive and his release following, while he held me close. His large hands held me firmly to the point of pain.

The good kind.

He came, taking in several deep breaths before his eyes locked on mine and he disconnected from me. I felt out of sorts but only for a brief moment because he flipped me onto my stomach, forced my thighs apart, and slid in me deliciously deep, with no warning. Laz took me hard with powerful strokes. This was to prove a point. This time I would submit. He was going to make me and I didn’t care.

The warmth of his chest met my back and his chin hit my shoulder just before he bit down hard and a pinch of pain shot

through me, followed by the sensual feel of his tongue swiping across the new bite and then my mark. I bucked forward and then back meeting his thrusts, forcing his dick to a new depth. It was just enough to have me cumming again. Laz growled and held me steady for his last few thrusts. His dick swelled inside me, locking us together. His cum shot into me again and then he collapsed on my back. I was exhausted. While I drifted, he nuzzled my neck, kissing and licking my mark. My body pulsed and trembled a little more and that was the last thing I remembered until I was being lifted into his arms, against his chest and then tucked under his bedding. The warmth of his body followed and that was the last memory I had until the next morning.

I woke with a renewed sense of vigor. It had been months since I was relaxed enough to sleep for the purpose of rest and rejuvenation. Since I'd been on the run, sleep was a necessity, not a luxury. I needed to be somewhat alert and to keep moving. A few hours here and there did the trick, but since I'd crossed paths with Laz, I'd been able to let my guard down and truly rest.

The bed I was in was massive. My body was tangled in the sheets, giving me a sense of comfort and belonging, but I was *alone*. I frowned at the thought that Laz had left me. My heart clenched a little.

Stupid bond.

This mate thing was going to prove to be a pain in my ass. I felt an insatiable need to be close to him and that *need* wasn't anything I could control. It was innate. I'd heard the stories and seen it firsthand with my parents. My mother was also an Alpha. A rare breed of Alpha females which was where my red fur came from. The bond she shared with my father was so insanely strong that after he was killed in battle, the loss of him took a toll on my mother and her life ended a few months later. It broke me but there wasn't much I could do other than learn how to survive on my own. Years later, here I was experiencing the same intense bond with Laz that my parents shared.

I sat up on a sigh and extended my arms above my head giving my body a much needed stretch. The delicious ache I felt throughout my body reminded me of the way Laz had handled me and a smile surfaced quicker than I could prepare for.

There was sex and then there was *Laz*. What we had done, what *he* had done to my body was wicked. I loved every minute of the time we'd spent together in his bed.

His bed.

The thought had me frowning as I climbed from the massive structure detangling my limbs until I was standing naked beside the king-sized monstrosity. Where the hell was he?

I rolled my shoulders back, creating an arch that handled the stiffness in my lower back before scavenging through his room to find something to wear. I could have easily dressed in some of my own things, considering that at some point my bags, which had been dropped in the living room when I jumped Laz, were now neatly placed on the floor near his dresser. I walked right past them and began digging through his things where I located a cotton button up. I fastened two buttons near my chest and then crept from his room, following the smell of something sweet and salty. My stomach growled with the awareness that I hadn't eaten in almost a day and a half.

When we arrived, my hormones and lust had taken control so I didn't get a chance to check out my surroundings, but now as I caught a glimpse of the beautifully designed interior of his apartment I could get used to this type of living. In San Diego, my parents and I had lived modestly but we weren't poor. The house I grew up in was in the hills overlooking the city and had been breathtakingly beautiful. I hadn't been there in years. Last I heard the pack had sold our property. It wasn't theirs to sell, but I was sure Abe made some type of deal and manipulated the paperwork. He was the type.

“Good morning.”

My cheeks warmed at the site of Laz, looming over the stove, bare chested, muscles flexing as he flipped bacon in a fryer. He didn't bother turning and granting me those beautiful brown eyes which meant he'd sensed me and felt my presence. I entered the kitchen and peeked around his massive body, inhaling the scent of salt and brown sugar and my stomach growled again, but this time loud enough for us both to hear.

"Hungry?" The smugness in his tone had my cheeks warming again. Yes, I'd worked up an appetite and he was part of the reason why.

"The past few days have been a bit of a scramble. There wasn't much time for food."

I extended my height slightly and attempted to step away, but Laz moved quickly, hooking my waist with a thick corded arm, while he used his free hand to turn off the flame beneath the bacon and moved the pan to different burner.

I didn't fight the hold he had on me and instead anticipated having his full attention. He didn't disappoint, giving me all of him shortly after pulling me into his body and running his nose from my chin down the length of my neck and then between the opening in my shirt.

"You smell like me. My scent is all over your skin and I like it."

"Then maybe I should go shower."

His face lifted to me, sporting a handsome grin and his lips were on mine immediately after. "If you want wash me off, you little wolf, I won't stop you from trying."

He stole a kiss and pushed a hand beneath my shirt over the side of my hip and down to my ass, which he gripped hard, pulling me in tighter. I moaned at the feel of him thick and hard against me.

"I love a good challenge. Don't tempt me." I groaned and pushed away from him, although it took some effort, and the separation left me feeling unbalanced.

"Stubborn. I like that. We need to talk, so let me fix your plate."

“I can fix my own plate.”

He chuckled, pressed a kiss to my forehead, and then stepped around me, settling at the bar that lined the outer perimeter of the kitchen. “Fine, you can fix mine too.”

My head whipped over to him and my eyes narrowed. He lifted his phone, ignoring me while he swiped through screens and pecked away, likely sending a text. My brain shifted to thoughts of who he was communicating with and I decided to choose my battles, busying myself with fixing our plates.

I opened several cabinets until I located the one that held sleek black dishware, grabbing two massive plates. I piled them full of eggs and bacon dropping them both on the counter. Once I had silverware and napkins I lifted onto the high back metal stool next to his and began shoving food in my mouth, moaning as I chewed and swallowed. After a few minutes, I looked up to find Laz watching me with a frown in place.

“You haven’t been eating much.” It should have been a question but he wasn’t asking. He knew.

“I have,” I lied. I ate decently enough but mostly quick meals on the go. Nothing healthy.

His eyes traveled over my body, taking me in introspectively before he growled lowly. “You’re thinner than you need to be and your eyes look tired. You haven’t been taking care of yourself.”

“How would you know?”

He raised a brow in challenge. I could literally feel his confirmation. *Mine. My mate.* I wouldn’t argue. Laz reached forward gripping the seat of my chair, tugging it toward him so that one of his massive thighs was between mine and one of mine was between his. Once we were both situated, he moved my plate closer to me, so it was within reach again. He nodded at what was left of my food.

“Eat.”

I grinned at this dominant man who felt responsible for me. Normally I would have been offended. I didn’t like

anyone assuming I was weak, or that I couldn't hold my own, but that wasn't what this was. Laz was settling into his role as my equal. My mate whose role was to ensure my wellbeing at all cost.

“How long has it been since you left your pack?”

I cringed with the thought of *them* being mine. They weren't. Hadn't been since my parents and Conrad had passed.

“A little over six months.”

“And you left because of him?”

Abe.

I nodded, lifting a piece of bacon. Nipping the end, I chewed slowly. “Conrad, Abe's father, and my dad were really close. They were both Alphas but managed to merge two small packs into one and they ruled cohesively side-by-side. It worked. Most of the time it doesn't but with them, they ruled together with no egos. A few years ago, they were out on a run. There had been word of a pack on the outer borders of our territory. Their plan was to move in and forcefully join with us. Their Alpha was bad news. My father and Conrad went to demand they leave, refusing any type of unity. They didn't come back.” I whispered the last part and Laz placed a hand on my thigh moving his fingers soothingly over my skin.

“His son took over?”

I nodded. “They tracked the rogue pack down. Conrad and my father had done a lot of damage, killed off most of them but their pack hadn't fought fair. They used weapons. That's how they gained the upper hand. Our pack took out what was left of theirs and since Abe spearheaded the attack he naturally settled into the role as Alpha. But things changed. He wasn't like his father or mine. He was power hungry. He forced his guards to choose mates that aligned with his agenda, ignoring fated bonds. They pillaged neighboring territories, taking over weaker packs, dominating. It was bad.”

“And he chose you to be his mate.”

I nodded again.

“I’m an Alpha. My mother was an Alpha. The leadership my parents had was what Abe wanted, but I refused.”

“And your mother?”

What happened to her?

“The loss of my father was too much...”

Laz leaned in, brushing his lips over my mouth and then placed his forehead to mine. “I’m sorry you lost your family. I don’t give a damn about your pack. You have a new one. You have us. *You have me.*”

I smiled, nodding.

“Maybe I like being a lone wolf.” It felt natural to antagonize him.

Laz’s eyes narrowed to slits and he grunted. “Too bad, not happening. Eat,” he demanded and then lifted his fork to do the same. When I didn’t budge, his gaze trailed over me issuing a silent command to which I rolled my eyes, but I lifted my fork.

“Zion has done some digging. There’s a bounty on your head. Your old pack has been searching for you. The wolves that attacked you in the woods were sent by him. They have been tracking you for the past couple weeks.”

I stiffened and his gaze went hard. “You don’t fear anyone, little wolf. Your problems are now mine. I’ll solve this one and it ends with bloodshed.” His tone was harsh and cold. There was no need for a debate. His mind was made up.

“Is your pack just you and your brothers?”

“No, there are about fifty of us. Most stay in this building and work in the city.”

“This building?” I frowned slightly.

“Yes, we own it. The top floor is three units. Mine, Xander’s and Zion’s.”

“Only your pack lives here?”

He shook his head. “No, we’re integrated with humans. We keep to ourselves and so do they. It works because it builds trust that there’s no need to fear who and what we are.”

“Makes sense.”

“Your brothers, are they mated?”

He grinned. “No, but Xander should be.”

“What do you mean should be?”

“Toyin is his mate, but Xander refuses to accept the idea of being mated to a witch.”

“Why?”

He lifted one shoulder into a lazy shrug. “He’s stubborn and thinks he knows better than anyone, even fate who paired them. And considering the way it pains him to deny her, you’d think he would get over it.”

“He rejected her?”

I had heard how refusing your mate was painful and utterly unbearable to suffer through, but some did. It was even known to cause death.

“No, not completely, but he refuses the bond. For now, anyway.”

“Does she know?”

I’d always known my mate was out there. I could feel it and when I came to Hollow Grove a few weeks ago, the feeling was much stronger. It made me feel off, unbalanced in a way.

“She’s attracted to him. I’m sure she knows something but she’s not a wolf so she may not fully understand the draw she feels to him. They’ll figure it out.”

“I guess.”

“Eat, we have to meet my brothers soon. But first, your Alpha needs to properly welcome you home.”

I rolled my eyes. “This isn’t my home and you’re not my Alpha.”

The words felt like a lie on my tongue and from the smugness of his expression, he sensed the same.

“This *place*, maybe not, but *me*, I’m your home *and* your Alpha, little wolf. That’s never going to change. Now eat so that I won’t feel bad about the way I’m about to fuck you. This time I plan on taking my time.”

My eyes shot up to his. It should have been a sin for one man to be so...

Everything.

The deep, husky delivery of that threat and *promise* sent shivers over my skin. Two words slipped through my mind. Two words that meant more than I could process at the moment but also two words that I knew with certainty I could depend on...

Home.

Mate.

Laz was now both to me. No more running.

CHAPTER 6

LAZ

I delivered on the promise I'd made to welcome Jo home. After breakfast, I took my time learning every inch of her body. I pushed her limits and she pushed mine. The final result being a rotation of intense pleasure and incredible climaxes. Being near her, experiencing the familiarity of her scent wrapping around me, further confirmed that she was meant to be in my home, in my bed, with me buried deep inside of her as often as I could.

The hours we spent, fucking, clawing, and biting left both of us marked. Her nipples, stomach, and thighs. My arms, shoulder, and groin. Jo was no novice when it came to pleasing me. It seemed as if we both found our rhythm with each other, learning how to expertly navigate the perfect combinations to ensure powerful orgasms.

Eventually we showered and dressed mostly because I needed to officially introduce Jo to my brothers and decide how to move forward with ending this thing between her and the wolf who would die if he didn't concede. Jo was mine. He never had a claim to her before and he damn sure didn't now.

I had already processed the many ways I would make him suffer for causing my little wolf even a moment of distress. She'd been on the run, alone for the past six months. *Alone*. The thought of what she'd been through and the things she could have suffered had me envisioning ripping his heart from his chest after slowly shredding him to pieces.

Forcing a bond with a mate that didn't belong to you was wrong and cruel. Doing it for power was even more

unscrupulous. Abe would die by my hand. There was no reprieve as far as I was concerned. He didn't deserve to live and he wouldn't.

As we stepped outside my apartment, Jo glanced left and right. The floor was separated into three spaces, with my apartment being the center while Zion and Xander's were on opposite ends.

"Are we just meeting your brothers?"

"For now, yes. Once we decide how to move forward, we'll meet with our team. I'll introduce you at some point. They'll need to know we're mated."

She stepped into my side and grinned up at me. "You like referencing that, don't you?"

I leaned in and flicked my tongue over the mark I'd left on her neck noticing the shiver that traveled through her body. "I like anything that references you being mine."

The sultry look she gave had my dick swelling again. I could now understand why new mates often spent weeks alone together. The insatiable feeling that sprouted from the bond was a hunger that needed to be satiated constantly.

We were meeting in Zion's apartment. When Jo and I stepped inside, both my brothers gave their full attention. Xander, however, was the first to speak. A slow grin spread across his face as he surveyed us both and then focused on Jo.

"You look much better, which is surprising considering I know you haven't gotten much rest."

She stiffened next to me and when I glanced down I could see the blush settling into her expression. I dropped a kiss to her mouth and then issued a warning look for Xander to shut up. Zion was on his way to us, pulling Jo into a hug that caught her off guard and caused her to yelp. He chuckled, hugging her tighter.

"Welcome to the family, Jo. Glad to officially meet you. I'm Zion."

“Nice to meet you too, Zion.” She smiled softly, stepping out of his embrace and moving back to my side. I guided her to the living room, took a seat and then pulled her down onto my lap. Mostly because I needed her close. Needed my hands on her; her body on me. I also wasn’t ready to share her with anyone else, not even my brothers.

“Did you tell her about the bounty?” Xander’s mood shifted becoming serious.

I nodded. “Yes, she knows.”

“A few of his men are here. The ones that attacked you were local. Rogues, not a part of our pack. Two are dead. One we allowed to live so that we could get what we needed from him. Abe is a determined little bastard...”

She stiffened on my lap and I planted a kiss to the mark on her neck. “He won’t touch you. That’s my word.”

“And mine.” Xander confirmed followed by Zion who added. “We’ll kill him first.”

“Sounds too easy.” Jo’s gaze raked over my face before she glanced at Xander and Zion.

“Because it is. Your old pack is a group of pussies and cowards. No match for real Alphas, which we are.” Zion insisted and then asked, “Will there be a ceremony?”

“Yes,” rolled off my tongue so easily but Jo countered it.

“No. We don’t need that. We’re mated.” There was a strained look on her face which had me pulling her in closer.

“We are, but the ceremony will be for our pack. To properly introduce you to them.”

“But it’s not necessary. Just call a meeting or something.”

Something was off and I needed to know what was holding her back. A mating ceremony was cause for celebration. Was she not ready to celebrate our union? Did she not want to accept our bond?

Anger crawled through me, but I stilled when I heard her voice. In my head. Subtle and embarrassed as if she had a

reason to be.

My parents were mated before I was born. The few ceremonies I experienced as a child I don't remember and there weren't any after my father and Conrad passed. The bonds were forced. Ceremonies didn't matter. - Jo

They shouldn't have because what they were doing wasn't right. Ours will matter. Our bond is meant to be. -Me

She nodded to me just as we heard Xander's voice.

"I don't know what the fuck you were just communicating but I feel left out. Are we doing the ceremony or not?" His tone was teasing and forced a smile on Jo's face.

I glanced down at her and she nodded. "Yes."

"Thank fuck. Laz was going to lose his damn mind if he didn't get to parade you in front of the pack and beat his chest grunting *mine*."

I threw my head back and laughed. Zion and Jo joined in until she tried to ease from my lap but I gripped her tighter.

"Bathroom, big guy. I'm not going anywhere."

"Let the woman take a piss, Laz," Zion teased and I grinned at him but allowed her to break free of my hold.

"His apartment is the same as mine." I motioned with my head to the back so she would know where to go. As soon as she was out of earshot and I heard the door close, I turned to my brothers.

"Our guys sent the offer?"

Leave and live. Stay and die.

"Yes. Marcel delivered it personally."

"And?"

Xander looked me right in the eyes. "He's still here."

"Good."

Even if Abe had taken the out, he still would have died. Just not by my hand. I would have sent my guys to him to handle it for me. He'd done as I expected and stayed. Based on

what Jo had told me, I knew his ego wouldn't allow him to walk away. He'd already lost her. There was no winning my mate unless he killed me and then my brothers and that was the choice he'd made. To come to our territory to fight. A fight that would be his last.

“When?”

“His choice. I'll let him come to me. We'll have the ceremony tomorrow evening on our land in the woods.”

Xander nodded and so did Zion. I didn't have to tell them what I was thinking. The two of them knew me better than anyone. We'd draw Abe out and then kill him.

“I'll send word for everyone to be here tomorrow. He won't dare try anything while it's happening, but afterwards I'll hang back and send Jo to the house alone. If I'm right, he won't be able to resist the opportunity to get to her.”

“And we'll handle him.”

“*I'll* handle him. Only me. The only thing I need from you and our guys is to keep his pack away to ensure it's one on one. He dies by my hand for not being smart enough to accept his one chance to walk away from this.”

“He wasn't going walk away,” Xander challenged.

I smirked. “He didn't know that.”

I could already taste the sweetness of how it would feel to fuck my mate after I shredded the man who thought she'd be his. And as the thought slipped through my mind, she slipped into my lap as if she understood my interminable need to have her close.

My hand went to her neck, turning her face to mine where I brushed my lips across hers and then allowed my tongue to follow the same path. She opened her mouth and moaned her approval and I felt my dick rising again.

I was lost in her. She and I were all that existed because she consumed me and I her. I loved the way her tongue explored, taking, and navigating, urging me to give more until a throat cleared.

“You might want to take that across the hall, Laz. I haven’t quite explained where pups come from to Zion yet.”

“Fuck you,” Zion ground out in amusement. “I get more pussy than you, *daily*.”

I smiled against Jo’s mouth, pecking her lips a few times before pulling away. I stood, easily lifting her with me but allowing Jo to slide down my body and stand on her own. I turned her back to my chest, covering her stomach with my hand, extending my fingers so they rested just below her breasts.

“We’re leaving. She doesn’t need to hear about either of you or your women.”

“Me and mine. Xander has blue balls because he won’t fall in line with what the universe has given him. Keep playing big brother and I’ll add her to my list. Maybe I’ll even consider mating the witch. Either way, she’ll be a Bennett and the mating gods will be satisfied.”

Xander growled, moving with a quick pace that had his hand around Zion’s neck in the blink of an eye. My baby brother only smiled wider when Xander sneered at him. “Touch her and lose your ability to fuck anyone ever again.”

“Time to go. Xander and the threat of castration isn’t anything I want to bear witness to.”

Jo frowned at the two of them before I ushered her to the door. Just before we stepped outside I tossed over my shoulder. “Be ready for tomorrow night.”

“Got it,” Xander grunted.

After I closed them inside, Jo looked up at me and then back at the door. “Shouldn’t you stop that?”

“No, they won’t hurt each other. At least not too badly but Xander has it coming. He’s being a pussy.”

“Because of Toyin?”

“Yes. It causes him physical pain to be around her and not be mated.”

“I don’t understand that.”

“Neither do we but it’s his choice to make.” I pushed her back and moved in so that she was pinned between me and the wall. “But it’s also not my problem.” My mouth lowered to hers and I growled as my tongue mingled with hers. It took all of my restraint to move away.

“Let’s go.”

I tugged her towards the elevator and she frowned. “We’re not going back to your apartment?”

“Not unless you want my dick in you, which isn’t such a bad thought after all. I think it’s best if we invest in learning something more about each other than how deep I need to be in you or how hard you need to ride me to make each other cum.”

“You’re nasty.” She shoved my chest and I nodded.

“And apparently so are you because I smell your arousal, little wolf. Now, let’s go eat before I change my mind.”

CHAPTER 7

JO

We ended up at the mall. Not what I had in mind, but Laz insisted that I get a few things. He'd been through my bags and knew that what I owned wasn't much. Nor was it nice. I'd been on my own since my parents died with little income to splurge. And over the past six months, I'd barely been surviving. I didn't need much but it felt good getting new things. It felt amazing with Laz demanding I try things on, experiencing his inability to keep his eyes off me. It also felt good knowing that the look in his eyes didn't have a damn thing to do with what I was wearing. It was me that kept that charmingly alluring smile on his face. Just me.

Now we were at a restaurant waiting to be seated. My body was humming with need, but Laz insisted we share a meal out and then he'd have me for dessert once we were back in.

"Alpha." A deep, raspy timbre so melodic sounded from behind us that I was quickly drawn in, searching for who had addressed Laz. He had to be just as pleasing on the eyes as his voice was to my other senses. The big guy smiled, tipping his head and wow. The man was breathtaking and a *vampire*.

"Lafayette." Laz pulled me into his side so that I was slightly behind him but still able to see the man who he'd just addressed. Lafayette smiled smugly and tipped his head to me, offering a sexy smile which had Laz's chest vibrating with a growl.

"Easy, Alpha. She's your mate. I smell *you* all over *her*."

“As long as you know,” Laz bit harshly, which had Lafayette smiling brighter.

“I do. She’s beautiful and also an Alpha. Suits you well, Lazar. You’ll have your hands full with this one.”

I frowned watching the exchange between the two of them which ended with Lafayette’s name being called at the same time as another server called out Bennett.

“Send my regards to your brothers, Lazar. Enjoy your meal. It was a pleasure, *Mrs. Bennett.*” He offered me a smile before following the young woman in one direction while we followed the one who was seating us in another. As soon as we had our drinks and placed our orders, I had to inquire.

“You’re cordial with vampires?”

He smiled, lifting the glass of liquor, taking a sip. “Some, not all. The Lafayette family is different, yet the similar to ours. They rule the vamps in this area same as my family rules the wolves. We have an alliance. Sort of an understanding to stay out of each other’s way and to align if and when necessary. That was Izan. He has a younger brother and they have a younger sister. Like us, they’re purebloods which is a type of royalty with our kind.”

“Interesting. So, is that what makes them different but the same?”

“We have fated mates, they have blood mates. It’s a blessing and a curse. More of a curse for Izan than his siblings.”

“Why?”

“He’s the first born of his lineage. Because his father chose to deny his blood mate, a witch, to love their human mother instead, she cursed their lineage. Each first born will suffer the feelings and emotions from each person they feed from until they find their blood mate.”

“That’s not much of a curse.”

“But it is. They only absorb the bad feelings and emotions and from what Izan has told me, it’s ten times worse because

he's receiving them all at once. Imagine a million different tragedies being sent through your system all at once."

"And he hasn't found his blood mate yet?"

"No and he may never. Which is a curse on top of the existing one."

"That's why he congratulated you?"

"Yes, he understands what it means to have that bond. One he wants but might never experience."

"Are you glad that you have me?"

He smiled. "Have I not proved that to you over and over again?"

My face warmed and my panties drenched. "Sexually, yes but I hope this is more than just physical for you."

I felt a wave of vulnerability that I didn't like.

"Don't second guess what you feel, Jo."

I *felt* his heart. I *felt* his love. I *felt* his promise of forever. The bond allowed me to connect with him on such a profoundly deep level that it was silly of me to think otherwise.

"Say it," he demanded as if reading my mind. Maybe he had.

"You love me."

"More than you will ever be able to comprehend. Now eat. I'm ready for dessert. I smell the sweetness of you more potently than I do this food." He winked and I rolled my eyes but didn't bother wasting any more of our time. I was just as eager to be home as he was.

Home.

When we got back to his apartment we barely made it in the door before clothes were coming off. Laz handled me differently this time. No clawing, biting, and riding me hard. This time it was more sensual. Slow deep thrusts, lingering kisses and touches paired with praises for how perfect I was

and how blessed he was to have me. It was overwhelming. Laz didn't like me second guessing and I appreciated his effort. This man belonged to me and I to him. Nothing would change that.

We slept through the night, our limbs tangled as I faced him and he kept one arm beneath my pillow with the other holding me to his chest. I slept like a baby. Heavy and peaceful. I awakened the next morning with Laz between my legs, sucking my clit while he thrust his long, thick fingers in me, which granted a very powerful climax followed by one more with me on my hands and knees and my face buried in the mattress while he fucked me hard and fast. Afterwards we shared a long, leisurely shower where we managed to escape without him finding his way inside me again.

I cooked us breakfast. We ate and then lounged in the living room until just after lunch when someone interrupted the moment by repeatedly knocking on his door.

Laz answered and then was shoved aside by a tiny, little thing who was smiling brightly at me and demanding I show her my dress.

"Toyin..." Laz seemed annoyed, but I needed to know what was going on and why she was barging in on us.

"What dress?" I frowned up at her from the sofa and she planted her hands on slim hips allowing her eyes to dart back and forth between me and Laz.

"For tonight."

"Shit," he hissed and I shot daggers at him.

"What's tonight?"

"Your mating ceremony. You didn't tell her?" She scowled at Laz who smiled arrogantly.

"Been a little busy. It slipped my mind."

"Right at the same time you slipped your dick in her. *Men.*" She rolled her eyes. "I swear you're worse than we give you credit for."

“Wait, our ceremony is tonight? That’s soon. Like too *fast* too soon.” I thought about the royal blue slip dress he’d insisted I buy. I tried it on and he’d lost his damn mind. I didn’t know where I would wear it but the way he looked at me while I had it on made me agree. “The dress. That’s why you made me buy it?”

“Yes and no. You look like sex and sin in it, which is why I wanted you to buy it *and* because you needed something for tonight. If I told you why you would have argued with me.”

“You’re such a fucking dick,” I muttered.

He grinned. “I have a dick but I’m not one. I am however very skilled with the one I have, but you know that don’t you?”

My wolf howled and my pussy thumped.

Toyin’s eyes darted between us. She pointed at me. “No, absolutely not. *You*, bedroom. You go to Xander’s place. He’s waiting for you.”

When he started toward the bedroom and not the front door, she placed her tiny body in his path. Laz lifted her with ease and set her out of his way. “I need shoes, Toy.”

“Fine. Go and hurry.”

After he was gone she and I settled into the bedroom while she demanded I try on my dress. She chose to sit on the dresser, frowning at the bed. I grinned, thinking that was a good choice. We’d done really dirty things in that bed.

“This dress is so pretty. Simple, but perfect.”

“Thank you.” I felt beautiful but didn’t feel excited about this ceremony. “So, you’ve been to these things before? They said you’ve been friends with them for a while.”

“I have and only one. It was pretty basic but there doesn’t need to be much. Just the two of you saying your vows for the pack so that they know your role in Laz’s life.” She glanced at the bed and arched a brow. “But most of them live in the building so I’m sure they already know.”

“How?” My eyes went wide wondering if the walls were thin.

“Relax, mating bonds are stronger with Alphas. They can likely smell it on you.”

“Can you?”

She quickly shook her head. “No, I’m not a wolf. It’s different for humans.”

I was curious about her and Xander, so I asked. “You’re not a wolf but you have a thing with Xander or at least that’s what Laz said.”

She rolled her eyes. “He has a thing for me but is being stupid.”

“You don’t feel the same?” I frowned.

“I do but there’s nothing I can do about it. I won’t force him to choose me. If it’s meant to be, he will decide.”

“And if he decides to choose you, will you choose him?”

She nodded and shrugged. “I already have. Which doesn’t make me much of a crowd favorite.”

I slipped off the dress and worked my way back into my leggings and T-shirt. “What does that mean?”

“It means, I’m a human witch who is fated to be the mate of a Bennett Alpha. There are some who don’t want to accept that I’m his chosen one, but I don’t care.”

“You shouldn’t,” I asserted. “But it is odd.”

“Trust me I know. My mother had a vision when I was a child that sealed my fate.”

“A vision?”

“Yes, of me standing under the moon and a massive black figure hovering protectively over me. It wasn’t until I was an adult that she realized the black figure was a wolf, *my* wolf.”

“Xander?”

“Yep.”

“Did you search for him?”

“No, he found me. Stumbled into me at a coffee shop and the minute he reached out to steady me so that I wouldn’t fall on my ass, we both knew. His touch settled me and not just from falling. It was weird. He felt like...”

“Home.”

She smiled and nodded.

“It’s stupid that he won’t bond with you.”

“He’s a stubborn Alpha, but so am I. The stubborn part that is. I’m also patient and I know magic.” She grinned and my eyes narrowed.

“You’d do a spell to make him your mate?”

“I could, but no. I want to be chosen. I won’t force him.” There was a bit of uncertainty that surfaced but only briefly.

“He called you for me?”

“Yes, there are other women in the pack but until you’re officially introduced as their Luna, Xander thought it best that we handled this.”

“*Or* maybe he just wanted a reason to see you.”

“Considering it causes him physical pain to be around me and deny me, I doubt it but I do take pleasure in knowing I make him hurt.”

“Ah, you’re mean.”

“And he’s a dick of an Alpha.” She shrugged.

“So how does that work. All three brothers being Alphas?”

“It just does. They rule together. They all have their roles, but Laz is more of the leader. Zion chooses not to be and Xander sees himself as their protector which is easier to do from the shadows versus the spotlight. They just work.”

“I guess.”

“And now the pack has you as their Luna. I’m glad you’re here, Jo. The other woman are cool. You’ll love them and

they'll love and respect you, but they'll never fully accept me."

"They will. Or I'll make them," I declared. I liked Toyin. I could see us being close. I wanted that.

She laughed. "Right, your first duty as Luna will be pissing off the others to force them to accept me, the witch who's destined to steal one of their own. I like you already and you are definitely a perfect fit for Laz."

Toyin and I had gone over some loose plans. I didn't care about the details, however she did. She was such a tiny, delicate, girly girl type in contrast to my lean, fit, Alpha personality. She and I were night and day but that didn't mean I was opposed to the idea of dressing up for my mate and saying vows with him. We were already official in my eyes but expressing that to his pack had me nervous and also proud. I wanted their acceptance but wouldn't beg for it.

When Toyin was gone and Laz returned, he had me in his arms the second he walked through the door.

"You angry with me?"

"Yes."

"Can I make it up to you?" He nuzzled his face in my neck, caressing my bite with his tongue.

"Yes and you will but not right now. Right now, I choose your punishment."

He pulled back and grinned. "Which is?"

"On the bed, hands behind your head."

His brow lifted as he stared at me. "This is punishment?"

"It is, you'll see. Go."

Laz kicked off his shoes and pulled his shirt over his head which he tossed on the floor. Once he was on the bed, back against the headboard, fingers intertwined behind his neck, I crawled to him and stood on my knees, sliding my hands into his sweats and briefs, retrieving his dick which was already completely hard.

“You sure this is a punishment? Seems like I’m getting a reward.”

“Actually, you’re not.” I began a slow, firm stroke that had him moaning. “I’m the only one getting rewarded.” I lowered my head and circled the tip of him with my tongue. I felt him reach for me, but I lifted my eyes and motioned no. “You touch me and we’re going to bed, *Alpha*.”

His eyes narrowed now understanding what was happening. His punishment was me taking away his control and for my Alpha that was worse than death. When it came to sex with me, he was a dominant lover which I loved, but right now? I was going to play and he was going to suffer through it. Hands off, submitting to me.

“For how long,” he growled.

“Don’t know yet, but right now, you watch, no touching.”

I took him in my mouth, traveling as far as I could go and then back up again. I sucked him hard and slow, using my hands and tongue to add a little something extra. His body was already humming so I paused to prolong the torture. I was up on my knees again, removing my shirt and bra and then my leggings and panties. Once I was completely exposed, I moved my hand down my stomach between my thighs and I could see his muscles tensing with the need to touch me.

“You move, I stop. I’ll stay with Toyin tonight if you don’t follow my rules.”

“The hell you will.”

I arched a brow and he growled. I smiled and leaned over him, taking him in my mouth again. This time I sucked sensually slow and then fast and didn’t stop until he spilled down my throat. When I lifted my eyes again his face was tight and his fists were clenched next to his thighs.

“That’s enough,” he gritted, close to losing it.

“No, actually, it’s not.” I lifted and crawled over him, wrapping my hand around the base of him until I guided him inside me, lowering myself incredibly slow. His fingers flexed and his arms lifted but I shook my head.

“No. You don’t touch me. This is all for me. You watch and enjoy from the sidelines.”

He snarled but lowered his hands and I fastened my eyes to him, enjoying the pained expression on his face while I used him to pleasure myself until my body was trembling, so close to a release that I threw my head back and groaned his name. That was it. The last straw. I was lifted in the air and then landed hard on the mattress. Laz pounded into me like a madman. His wolf was in control. I could tell from the red glow of his eyes. Seconds before I came, he bit my shoulder and his release followed.

My Alpha.

Mine.

CHAPTER 8

LAZ

My chest swelled with pride as I watched Jo walking to me. Almost our entire pack was present and the clearing where we held the ceremony was decorated for the occasion. Wooden posts adorned with tiny lights and flowers outlining the area and a circle of bodies enclosed us to symbolize a union. Jo was now a part of our circle, my mate and their Luna.

She was so fucking beautiful. Hair twisted behind her head, in loose curls with tiny flowers and jewels that matched her sapphire silk dress. Her chin was slightly lifted as she moved in my direction with timid steps. She didn't want to appear weak in front of the pack, but her nerves had gotten the best of her.

My beautiful little wolf.

Mine.

My fingers itched to touch her and they did. As soon as she was close, I had her body flush with mine and my tongue in her mouth.

“Alpha. You have to wait for that part,” a soft but firm voice warned which I debated.

“The hell I do,” I growled at Mara, one of the elder women. She would officiate the ceremony. Jo and I would speak, confirming our bond and pledging our allegiance to stand as the leaders of our pack, alongside my brothers. She would be their Luna and, no matter who my brothers mated, her position would never change. It was the natural order of

things. Neither of them objected. We'd discussed it multiple times prior to Jo showing up and even after we'd mated. I respected my brothers as equals same as they respected me. None of us wanted unnecessary tension. Communication prevented any misunderstandings between us.

Jo and I said our vows facing each other. It was short and sweet. I kept my hand at her waist, needing her close. Once we sealed the deal with our *official* kiss. I turned to the family which surrounded us and pulled Jo into my side.

"Bennett Pack. I present to you Joelle Bennett. My mate and your Luna." A roar erupted and it was done. She was theirs and more importantly *mine*. The next few hours were a blur of congratulations, introductions, food, and dancing. I was antsy the entire time because I knew what was coming. Jo hadn't a clue that my plan was to spill blood, but she didn't need to.

Near the close of the evening while Jo was swept away by several of the other female wolves, Zion and Xander stepped to me with confirmation.

"They're out there. I've located six and the Alpha," Xander said.

I glanced at Jo.

"Our guys are ready? They know the plan?"

"They do," Zion assured me. "Toyin will go with Jo to your house. Alec and Sal will stand guard. No one in or out. You handle Abe. They know not to get involved but his guys are up for grabs." Zion smirked, his eyes flashing a golden hue rimmed in red.

"It's time." They both nodded and I left them to go to my mate. I pulled her into me as she stood near Toyin, the two whispering quietly amongst themselves. I liked that they were close. Xander would one day claim Toyin as his mate which meant they would one day be family.

"It's time to leave, little wolf."

Jo smiled up at me, sinking deeper into my chest. Her hands covered the one I had resting over her stomach.

“People are still here.”

“Not for long. Alec and Sal will escort you and Toyin to my house.”

She turned against me, frowning. “You’re not coming?”

“I am but I have to discuss a few things with my guys first. Pack business.”

“It can’t wait?”

I smiled, leaning into her face. “Don’t worry, little wolf. I’m going to thoroughly take care of you tonight. Just give me this.” I kissed her hard and when I pulled back, she smiled slowly. “Now go. They’re waiting.”

I motioned to the truck where Sal and Alec were standing. I’d already communicated to them that their punishment would be severe if one hair was out of place on her head when I got to my house. They were my strongest, most loyal Betas. She was in good hands.

“You better hurry or I’ll start without you.”

I growled at the visuals that jolted through my head.

“Careful with the threats, little wolf.”

She smiled sensually and looped her arm through Toyin’s and the two turned to leave. I heard Jo lean into her and whisper, “Xander must have plans for you since they’re sending you to the house with me.”

I snorted at the thought. At least she didn’t suspect that I was up to something.

Like killing her old Alpha.

Ten minutes later I got word that Jo was locked away in my house. Most of our guys were on the outer perimeter of our land, leaving only me and my brothers exposed. We knew the woods better than Abe and his team which was how we’d managed to move around without them realizing they were the ones surrounded. Not us.

As I expected, they stepped out of the shadows assuming they had the upper hand. Their seven to our three. It assured

me of how stupid Abe was. He wasn't fit to be an Alpha leading his team into danger. There was no way in hell we'd allow them the advantage on us in *our* territory. He should have expected that much.

"Alpha." The condescending way he addressed me forced a smile to my face as he continued. "You have something of mine. It's time she be returned."

"If you mean, Jo, *my* mate, then you've wasted a trip." He approached with his men flanking his sides. Once there was only a few feet between us he stepped ahead of them. Xander was to my right and Zion to my left.

"*She* belongs to me," he sneered.

I smirked. "Does she? I'm sure you can smell her on me. If you try hard enough you can smell me on her. I've spent the last few days making sure there was no mistake as to who she belongs to, *Alpha*."

That did it. He leapt, shifting in midair. I did the same. Our clothes flew away from our bodies in a frayed mess while the two of us collided.

There were several howls from his pack and mine as they followed suit. I wasn't concerned with anyone but Abe. My brothers and our guys would handle the rest.

Deep rumbling growls echoed through the woods. Glowing eyes moved with fury from the tree lines and our pack descended on Abe's. While I locked onto Abe's neck, another wolf leapt at us but was knocked to the ground when Xander met him in the air. One by one his pack went down, whimpering and bleeding out from their wounds. The battle of fur, teeth, and claws was loud and chaotic.

Abe and I knocked into each other, swiping claws, and tearing muscle. I avoided most of his advances, but he caught me a few times. The burn of his claws scraping my skin only fueled my rage. I charged him full force and caught his side, feeling the depth of my claws digging into his muscle. He snarled, shaking away the pain, coming at me once more and I braced myself for the impact as he advanced. I bared my teeth

in challenge as he met my claws once more. The blow landed hard against his throat sending him tumbling back.

I descended on him with no mercy, locking my jaw down on his throat, flinging him with all my might until we tumbled to the ground. I refused to let go as warm blood spilled and my teeth shredded through fur and muscle until his whimpers and fell silent.

I threw my head back and howled so loud and deeply that my body vibrated from the motion.

“Laz...”

My brother called out and I caught the glimpse of a streak of gray just as it leapt towards me. I growled and braced for the impact that never came because a blur of red fur followed, colliding with the wolf instead.

Jo.

She moved so swiftly and viciously the wolf didn't stand a chance. Her claws ripped through its throat until a pile of blood and fur dropped at her feet.

My mind went crazy with so many thoughts and emotions but one more than any...

Need.

I needed her. To be in her. To feel her wrapped around me.

I shifted and extended to my full height standing over Jo.

“Shift. *Now!*”

CHAPTER 9

JO

I shifted.

The demand was too strong for me to ignore. Laz had me in his arms, moving with a supernatural pace into the woods and away from the clearing. Once we were surrounded by nothing but darkness he placed me on my feet and towered over me.

“What the fuck was that?” he growled, eyes glowing a deep shade of amber, rimmed in red. His wolf was hovering just under his skin and they were both angry.

“That was me saving your ass. You didn’t see him and neither did your guys. He would have...”

“He wouldn’t have done anything that I couldn’t handle. I can take care of myself. I. Am. Your. Alpha.” He advanced on me with every punctuated word. “I don’t need you being reckless and placing yourself in danger.” He yelled so loud, I could imagine the ground and the trees vibrating from the roar of his voice, but I didn’t back down. I refused. Instead, I got right in his face and yelled back.

“I didn’t need you playing save the weak *little wolf*, but you did it anyway, didn’t you? On the day we pledged our union to your pack...”

“*Our* pack.”

“It’s not mine and won’t be if you can’t accept me as your equal. I’m an Alpha too, Lazar. I should have been standing beside you. *Not* being lied to and guarded like I’m fragile and

weak, which by the way I'm not. I saved your ass. You're welcome."

My chest heaved as we glared at each other. And then he was on me. Kissing me hard. Tugging me to him until my legs were around his waist and his dick thrust upward causing me to gasp for air.

"Oh fuck, yes." My cry of pleasure had him snarling, teeth bared as he held me roughly, fingers sinking into my skin to a painful degree. This was an angry fuck and I was okay with the delivery. We'd talk things out later. Right now, all I wanted was to be claimed and that was exactly what Laz was doing.

He rocked into me hard until we both came and then he carried me to his house. It was empty which meant that Xander had come for Toyin. Alec and Sal had followed me back to the clearing after I demanded they do as I said. I was their Luna. As much as they feared disobeying Laz's orders, I suppose they knew there would be hell to pay from disobeying mine.

After we showered and dressed, Laz got a call from Zion saying that the bodies had been cleared away and word had been sent that anyone who tried to come for me would suffer the same fate as Abe and his pack. *Death*. I hadn't felt this safe and protected since before my parents died. I was home. The Bennett Pack was now my family and Laz was my world. But first we had to get past what happened tonight. I sat crossed legged on the bed while he was across the room facing me, leaning against the dresser. He was pissed. But so was I.

"How did you get past Alec and Sal?"

I shrugged. "I'm their Luna. Aren't they supposed to obey me?"

He growled and I smiled. "Not if it means putting you in danger," he murmured through clenched teeth. "I'll deal with them later."

"It was either disobey you and piss me off or disobey me and piss us both off. You wouldn't stand for any of your guys disrespecting me as their Luna. They knew that and so did I?"

I could see his lip twitching because I had played my hand nicely. I'd seen my mother do the same to my father plenty of times before when I was a child. It worked.

“But like you said, you will deal with them later. I will however deal with you now. You lied to me.”

He raised a brow in challenge. “I didn't lie—”

“You did. You told me you had *pack* business. Not that you planned on taking down Abe.”

“Taking him down was pack business. You are a part of our pack, Jo. He was a threat to you.”

“And his guys were a threat to you,” I argued. “I could have helped. I'm an Alpha too, Laz. You don't have to handle me like I'll wilt or break.”

He pushed away from the dresser and climbed onto the bed until he was hovering over me. “I know what you are, Jo. And I don't think you're weak or fragile. You're my mate which makes you my equal. You are strong enough and fearless enough to stand in front of me or beside me, defending *me*, if it comes to that. It's also my job to make sure it never does. I trust you with my life, but I also need you to respect my wishes and tonight I needed you away from that shit.”

I understood. And I also knew that he didn't need my help. That wolf didn't stand a chance with Laz. Even if I hadn't interfered there was no way he would have won that battle against Laz. “You're mine as much as I'm yours. I will never stand by and watch anyone do you harm. Especially if I can help.” I lifted my chin defiantly, but my eyes fastened to his with a promise to always stand by him same as I knew he would stand by me.

Laz smiled. It was slow to surface but it came. “Careful, little wolf. I might be inclined to think you're ready to claim me as your Alpha.”

I snorted a laugh. “I will as long as you claim me as yours.”

He chuckled and kissed me, flipping us so that I was on top of him and his hands were cupping my ass, holding me in

place.

“Today, we officially start our lives together, Mrs. Bennett. Nothing else matters. Can we agree on that?”

“I think you’re right, *Alpha*.”

His dick instantly swelled and I knew it was only a matter of minutes, possibly even seconds before it was in me again. Not that I cared.

Bring it, Alpha. I’m more than ready.

We rolled again and his mouth crashed with mine and I smiled into the kiss because apparently so was he.

EPILOGUE

A year and some change.

Laz. I kissed my wife and my dick sprang to life. This was not the time considering we were expecting guests, but it was a natural reaction and couldn't be helped. Her sexy ass did things to me and in turn, I did things to her—as often as I could.

“Give him to me. You need to get dressed.” I lifted our son from her arms and watched as she moved through the bedroom with more sway in her steps than required.

I groaned and kissed our son Kaleb on the forehead. “Your mother is seriously trying to make you a big brother, kid.”

“I heard that,” she yelled from the closet.

“Good. Then don't be surprised when I invest in getting the job done.” Kaleb smiled up at me, kicking his little feet.

“Are you giving your stamp of approval? You ready to be a big brother?” He smiled wider and cooed at me with his adorable toothless smile.

“No, absolutely not. He needs to be walking and talking before I consider having any more.”

On cue, Kaleb began babbling. I grinned at Jo. “One out of two. Maybe we can compromise on the walking.”

“No way, buddy. I will not be one of those three under three type parents.”

“You won’t?” I raised a brow in challenge and she narrowed her eyes.

“No, I *won't*. Use your big bad Alpha act on someone else. You know that doesn’t work with me.”

She was right. My little wolf had no problem going toe to toe with me when she felt like it but most days, she and I worked like a finely-tuned machine. To our pack we were their Alpha and Luna. With our family and most importantly in the bedroom, I was in charge. If I wanted her carrying my pup she would be pregnant in the blink of an eye, but I respected her need to enjoy our son before we decided to grant him a sibling. Make no mistake about it though, we would have more. Several more.

“My big bad Alpha works just fine and I am more than willing to prove that if you need a reminder.” I winked and kissed her on the cheek just as someone knocked on the door.

“That’s probably Xander. I’ll get it.”

“You ready for this?”

“No but it’s not like we have a choice. He needs to know.”

“Yeah he does but she needs to be the one to tell him.”

I quickly shook my head. I knew my brother. Finding out what had happened after he’d left was going to gut punch him. I was fucking pissed that he’d disappeared the morning after my mating ceremony and even more fucking pissed that he was completely off the grid until a few weeks ago. But right now, none of that mattered. I needed to prepare him for what was happening next. His mess. He’d made it and while he was gone, Jo and I did our best to make things right but now it was time for him to step up.

As soon as I reached the door and was face to face with my brother, I was temporarily lost in the fact that he was really here. A year was a long time. Too long for us. We had never been separated for such an extended amount of time.

I hugged him tightly, yanking him into my place. He growled and shoved me away, smiling seconds after and then he was the one pulling me into a hug.

“You look like shit,” I mused after stepping back to take him in. His hair was longer than usual up top but still trimmed and tapered on the sides. His beard though, it had some inches to it and completely covered half of his face.

“Women love this shit look. Got me a lot of pussy while I was gone.” He smirked and clasped his hand on my shoulder. “Where’s Zion?”

I tensed. “On his way. He’ll be here soon. We need to talk before he gets here.”

“About? Is something wrong?”

“No, he’s fine. We’re fine...”

“*And* your nephew is amazing.” Jo walked up beside me grinning from ear to ear as she held our son. Xander frowned hard at both of them before his eyes rounded over to me.

“You got a kid?”

“Yes and you have a nephew that you’ve never met because your stubborn ass got a wild spur up you rear end to go travel the world and not be in touch with your family.”

My voice was clipped. I was a little angry, but I understood. He had shit to work through and had to do it on his own time and own terms. I had no idea what had happened that night after the ceremony. Only that he’d made sure the bodies from Abe’s pack were dealt with and then he was spotted with Toyin hours later. No one knew much after that and she’d never told her side of things.

“Shit.” He brushed his hand over his face and frowned at our son. “You’ve got a kid.” His eyes darted between Jo and I before he moved closer to her. “Can I hold him?”

“Of course. He’s your nephew.”

She gently handed him over and at first Xander looked awkward cradling him, but he eventually relaxed. “Fuck, Laz. This is your kid.”

His smile was wide as he stared at Kaleb’s little face.

“That’s some shit, right? How the hell did I end up here?” I grinned and Jo shot me a nasty look.

“I can tell you *exactly* how.”

I chuckled and kissed her cheek. “That’s not what I mean, little wolf.”

“I can’t believe you actually let this fucker get you pregnant.” He grinned at Jo who rolled her eyes and slid her arm around my waist.

“He’s not so terrible.” She smiled up at me. “Most days.”

“I’ll take your word for it. What’s this little guy’s name?”

“Kaleb Micah Bennett,” I stated proudly.

“Looks more like a *Xander* to me.” My brother smirked as Kaleb offered up a toothless smile before he grabbed his finger and tried to shove it in his mouth.

“Is this what we need to talk about? You mad at me because I missed the birth of your kid? If so, don’t worry I’ll make up for it. Uncle Xander is going to teach you your first curse words, kid. And how to handle your old man. He can be a bit of a dick.”

“Xander,” Jo warned as he kept his eyes on Kaleb and grinned.

“He’s a baby. He has no idea what I’m saying.”

“Yet, but eventually he will so you might as well adjust all that now.”

He chuckled and nodded. “Got it. Keep things PG for the pup. I’ll work on it.”

I glanced at my wife and then our son. “Jo, why don’t you take him so that Xander and I can talk.”

“Talk?” Xander frowned as Jo eased Kaleb from him. “What’s going on, Laz? Stop fucking around and tell me what’s going on.”

A moment passed before my door was flung open and Zion walked in fussing about something with Toyin beside

him. He was draped with a baby bag, carrying a folding stroller and car seat while Toyin had a screaming baby in her arms which she was actively trying to smooth.

Xander growled so deeply that I knew the fireworks were about to begin.

“What the fuck are you doing with her and whose kid is that? And Zi, before you answer, it better not be yours or I’m ripping your god damn head off.”

“And if he was, then what? It’s not like you care. You left remember?” Toyin squared her shoulders. “You just walked away from all of us like we didn’t matter. Like *I* didn’t matter.” She whispered the last part and Xander stepped closer.

“Zion. Is. That. Your. Kid.”

I needed to stop this before things went too far and these two tore up my apartment. I crossed the room and stepped in front of Xander looking him right in the eyes. “He’s not Zion’s kid. He’s *yours*.”

Xander’s face went tight and his eyes narrowed before they moved past me focusing on Toyin and then their son.

“Mine?”

“Yes, he’s *yours*. Had you cared enough to check in with us, you’d know who he belonged to and *he* would know his father. Welcome home, asshole,” Toyin barked and then stormed out of the room.

Zion grinned and shook his head. “Glad you’re back, Xan. It’s been hell trying to play daddy and uncle to your kid...”

THANK YOU

Okay, okay wow!

That was a hell of an ending! I'm sure you're now aware that Xander is up next from the Bennett Pack and he has a lot of making up to do. Let's hope it's not too late. I pray you enjoyed Jo and Laz's story. This is the very beginning of my venture into the world of supernaturals. More or less sticking my toe in to test the water. I really enjoyed this group but only skimmed the surface. There's so much more to come and I pray you hang around to travel down this new road with me.

-There was a mention of the Lafayette Family as well and their stories will follow. -

Thanks so much for offering me your time and I'll see you next time.

As always, you'll find me in the cut...

Crafting Romance With An Edge ♥