



BRIAR FALLS WOLFPACK

WOLF CALLED

Casey

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

J . E . C L U N E Y

WOLF CALLED CASEY

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This is a short instalove fated mates PNR book with a HEA. It is written at a length to be enjoyed within a few hours, so is NOT a full length book.

First I'd like to thank you for purchasing this book. I hope you enjoy the story. I'd love it if you could drop me a review if you do, it'd mean the world to me and it'd help me reach more readers.

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PROLOGUE



“Wyatt Tanner, what a lovely surprise, although I hope the circumstances are on good grounds.” Regina leaned back in her seat, flashing me her dazzling smile that made my wolf rumble strangely, but I pushed it down.

“Regina, I’m here on business terms, as usual,” I stated as I stood before her desk, taking in the pile of tarot cards to one side and assorted stones and bones on the other.

“Are the amulets losing power? They should’ve been good for a year each.” Her brows knitted together as she leaned forward and steepled her hands on the desk before her. Her golden locks were braided in a viking style on one side, while the other was allowed to flow freely down her shoulders.

Anyone else would think she looked quite odd for a witch, giving off powerful dark feminine vibes, not witchy woo-woo vibes. No chakra posters of spiritual artwork on her walls, just mystical landscape settings that she painted herself. Although that was the Regina I’d known all my life. Never one to take shit from anyone, always herself.

“The amulets are fine,” I said with a sigh as I sunk into the chair opposite her.

“Then what’s going on?” She leaned back, swiveling the chair so she could rest her heavy brown boots on the corner.

“Still offering matchmaking services?” I asked, and she just snorted.

“Why? Getting desperate for a mate, Wyatt?” Those piercing blue eyes twinkled with delight as I rumbled in frustration.

“Not for me.”

“Your Pack?” This caught her attention as she arched a brow. “You know I mainly work with humans, not shifters.”

“Werewolves,” I corrected her, and the corner of her mouth curved up. Sure, we were classed as shifters, but we preferred the term werewolves.

“I mean, my matchmaking services are more expensive than everything else, but I have a solid stick rate. I’ve matched many married partners now,” she said as chewed her lip, giving me a quizzical look.

“The amulets and potions aren’t cutting it. Half the Pack can’t go into town now, so hunting for a mate isn’t easy. The local Packs want nothing to do with us.” I dragged a hand through my hair. I was growing desperate. A Pack of lone male wolves was frowned upon by outside Packs, and none of them wanted to help us. I’d hoped the men would find their own mates in their trips into town, but women were few and far between, and no one had been drawn to them. Now, half of them couldn’t leave the territory due to their wolves becoming harder to control.

“North Mountain Pack is breathing down your neck still, aren’t they?” Her tone was soft and understanding, and my wolf whimpered inside me, but I pushed it aside. He’d caused me enough dramas for a lifetime.

“Yes, one misstep, one wolf showing signs of true madness, and they’ll step in. My Pack deserves a chance, Gina.” I hated having to come to her like a wolf with its tail between its legs, but I knew she wouldn’t think less of my Alpha status for it. I was putting my Pack first, wanting to give them a chance at life.

“It’s getting bad, huh.”

“Yes, the amulets are containing it well, but they’re running out of time.”

I’m running out of time.

My wolf snarled at the reminder, but I didn’t let him show.

“Well, I mean, I could try. It won’t be cheap, it’ll use a lot of magic. And I’ll need something from each of your men. DNA or a valued object. Something I can use to harness their energy so I can find a match,” she said carefully as she played with one of the many rings on her fingers.

“I can do that, and I’ll pay. Just tell me how much.” God, I sounded beyond desperate, but she didn’t latch on like a vulture at the opportunity. Instead, she pursed her lips.

“Other wolves or shifters would be better, but I only access the known dating apps for it, I’m more likely to find a human. That’ll be different.”

“A human mate is fine.” I didn’t care what species they were at this point. Cross-species mating wasn’t unheard of, and humans were the common one. We needed this.

“A Pack of lone wolves with a makeshift Alpha, the madness would be growing,” she said with a click of her tongue. “Got anything on you right now for anyone? I can try to find you a match?”

“No, not me.” I practically snarled, although I slammed my wolf back in its cage. I didn’t want a mate. This wasn’t for me.

“Going to have to do some magical NDAs for humans too, but I’ll make this work. It’ll be okay, Wyatt.” Her face softened as she reached out to touch my hand reassuringly.

“Thanks, Gina,” I sighed, hating that I’d turned to her so many times since my Pack had been formed. But she was a friend I was lucky to have, and she never judged me. Being an Alpha was not easy, especially not with a Pack of lone wolves, and even more so when I wasn’t a true Alpha.

“So, what have you got, anything? I’ll get started right now,” she offered as she sat back, switching her friendly,

comforting manner back to business.

“I’ve got a few things, actually.” I reached into the bag of things I’d gathered. I knew how her spells worked, so I’d come prepared—it wasn’t a short drive into the town of Cedar Grove.

I laid out the objects. Glasses from the bar, each labeled with who had used it.

“Wow, impressive.” Regina clucked before she grinned. “This makes things easier, their DNA energy will be on the glasses.”

“I know how these types of spells work,” I admitted. I’d known Gina for a long time, and how her magic worked. “So, what exactly will you do?”

“I’ll cast a chemistry spell, I use magic with my awesome computer skills to find a backdoor into the dating apps. It requires a lot of magic, so I’ll have to charge up, spend some time with nature, you know how it goes.” She grinned as she surveyed the glasses on offer, as if she was deciding who she’d work with first. “It’ll give me a few profiles to inspect. I’ll then pull their numbers from the apps and make a call with yet another chemistry spell. It’ll be stronger and more accurate with a call, whereas the app one will be like casting a net. Calls will narrow it down, and I’ll give them a proposition they can’t turn down if I feel they’re a perfect fit.”

“What if they say no?” I dared to ask, and she just winked.

“I do this for a living, Wyatt. Trust me, I’ll find your Pack mates.”

I didn’t understand exactly how it worked, but then again, magic was not something that made a lot of sense to me, despite how I’d tried to learn when we were children. Gina knew what she was doing, she always had.

I flexed my hand as my wolf stirred once more, rippling beneath my skin. I tried to mask it by adjusting my watch, but Gina’s gaze narrowed.

“Your wolf is getting worse, isn’t it?” She asked quietly, her gaze softening.

“I can handle him. You help my men.”

“You need help too, Wyatt. You’re running out of time...” Her brow pulled together in a harsh frown, her face lined with worry.

She was right. I was twenty-nine this year. Mate Madness would start to reveal itself much more when I hit the thirty mark. It was already making itself known in small ways, but I hid it well, refusing to let my Pack or those around me sense the change in me. I needed to remain strong for them, they needed me.

“Wyatt...”

“Text me your price, Gina. I’ll make sure you’re paid upfront.” I shut down her sympathetic attempts, not wanting to hear them. I knew my fate. I was not destined for a mate. But my Pack still had a chance, and if it was the last thing I did before I lost my mind, it would be to save them from the same fate.

I rose from the seat, turning before she could try to coax me into allowing her to find me a mate.

My wolf whined as I headed out of her workplace and headed straight for my truck. I paused at my door as I cast a glance back at the little *Psychic Readings* store. I would owe Gina big time for this, and I’d find a way to repay her. She’d never let me down, and as much as she pretended she was only doing this as a business transaction, I knew our lifelong friendship swayed her. Even if it had cost her more than she’d bargained for.

I owed her everything.

My wolf whined and growled as I climbed into the truck.

“I know, but we’ve done enough as it is,” I muttered as I forced myself to not look back. Regina had lost so much because of us, and I’d promised to not ever hurt her again.



“**W**hat do you think the meeting is about?” Zack grumbled as we headed to the small bar set up solely for our Pack.

“Probably to install more cameras out near the North border,”

I muttered. The North Mountain Pack had made a few appearances in our territory lately, and we knew they were keeping an eye on us. Sure, we had to allow it since it was the deal Wyatt had struck when he founded these lands for our Pack, but it was unsettling. Sure, they were just wanting to keep the area safe, but it was a harsh reminder of our circumstances.

“Wyatt and Scott are twenty-nine this year, maybe they’ve got plans to find mates somehow. Maybe they want to leave the territory,” Zack mused as he clasped his hands behind his head as we walked to the small central zone of our territory. Our cabins were set up throughout the forest we called home, but we had shared areas centered between us all where we’d have gatherings and had a bar area set up, along with a games room and the main lodge.

The thought of our Alpha and his right-hand man leaving was worrisome, but Wyatt had said this was an important meeting regarding the future of our Pack. Sure, we were

misfits and outcasts, all lone wolves who'd come together to form this haphazard Pack, but we were struggling. All of us, unmated, and Alpha Wyatt not taking on the task fully by securing an Alpha mate, meant the madness that plagued unmated wolves was stirring in all of us.

I played with the amulet Regina had made for me. She'd made them as adjustable bracelets and pendants depending on our preference, and I'd gone for the pendant, opting for something that I never had to take off. Sure, the bracelets adjusted with our shifts, but I didn't like having something on my wrist. The pendant was loose and not constricting like the leather bracelets.

"No outbursts this week?" Zack asked as he cast me a look, those dark eyes concerned in the afternoon sun.

"Not yet," I mumbled as I grasped the pendant tight, my wolf pacing impatiently within me. Even with the amulet, he was getting more antsy, more on edge. I wasn't even as old as Wyatt and Scott, but my wolf had always caused me dramas, more wild than he was meant to be. I struggled to keep control over him, something that caused a ruckus in my old Pack.

I shoved the sadness and pain aside that tried to rise up with that memory.

"You okay?" Zack asked, my emotional distress not going unnoticed.

"I'm fine, let's just hurry up, don't want to be late," I said as I hastened my pace. Zack's cabin was closest to mine, but we were set furthest away from the communal area.

"Hell, he's probably just calling a meeting about how Jamie keeps stealing booze," Zack barked out a laugh, and I cracked a smirk. Jamie did have a tendency to do that.

We hurried the last part of the way to the outdoor bar area, finding half a dozen wolves already gathered there.

"Where's Wyatt?" Zack asked Patrick at the bar. I joined them on one of the stools as I glanced around my Packmates, although they all looked as clueless as we did as they sipped a few beers at the various wine barrel tables we'd put together

over a year ago. Scott was behind the bar, and he slid me my usual rum and coke as I nodded.

“He’ll be here in a moment, Scott said Regina is here too,” Patrick answered as Scott moved before us as he cleaned a glass.

“Why’s she here too? Something wrong with the magic in these?” Zack asked as he raised his arm to show his leather bracelet.

“Nah, Wyatt will explain,” Scott answered gruffly to shut us up. He’d always been a quiet man, using only a few words to converse, but he’d always done right by us, along with Wyatt.

“Righto,” Zack clicked his tongue before taking a swig of the beer Scott offered him.

As if on cue, now that we’d all arrived, Wyatt strode into the covered bar area, taking us all in with one sweeping gaze. Even if he wasn’t a true Alpha, he still had the air of one about him, and his entrance silenced the soft conversations instantly.

Regina walked with him, looking out of place amongst all of us wolves in casual wear while she wore army pants and a leather jacket. To think she practiced psychic work in Cedar Grove always made me smirk. She did sometimes attempt to look the part, but right now she gave off that odd little viking pixie vibe we’d nicknamed her as. She was a petite thing, but she’d helped us in more ways than I could count with the amulets and potions over the years.

I knew she, Wyatt, and Scott had history, but I never did learn the full extent. Childhood friends, apparently, although things got tense when she’d been cast out of her Coven years ago, before our Pack was formed. But they’d reconnected, and she’d become a big help.

“Glad to see you all made it, I’ve got some news regarding where this Pack is headed,” Wyatt stated as he stood at the end of the bar to address us all.

“Madness, clearly,” Jamie scoffed, and a few snorts and chuckles of agreement filled the air.

“Well, it has to do with that as well.” Wyatt nodded, not dismissing the remark as Regina stepped up beside him with a grin plastered on her face.

“Why do you think she’s grinning?” Zack muttered, barely audible, although Pat and I both shrugged, while Scott didn’t stray his gaze from his brother. Whether or not he heard, I wasn’t sure.

“As you know, Jamie just turned twenty-five, meaning we’ve all passed the halfway mark in our twenties,” Wyatt said.

“No shit, we know how old we are.”

“Big thirty is coming for us all.”

I recognised the voices, but I focused on our Alpha as he nodded solemnly.

“With the North Mountain Pack breathing down our necks and watching our every move, ready to put us down at the first sign of true Mate Madness, I’ve accepted I’m out of options. Half of you can’t even go into town any more to attempt to find a mate, and let’s admit it, there’s not many options there,” he stated.

“Yeah, they’re all taken or far too old.”

“We need outsiders coming through if we’re to stand a chance.”

“Exactly, we need outsiders,” Wyatt agreed with Eli’s comment. “But it’s not like traveling for lone wolves is easy, we get run out of other territories simply for what we are. Lone wolves are frowned upon. Reaching out to other Packs all across the country has proved useless. They won’t help a Pack of misfits like us.”

Again, he was stating things we already knew, but no one said anything this time. We all knew he was reaching his point.

“So, I’ve employed Regina’s matchmaking services.”

This caused an uproar of disbelief and laughter from my Packmates, and I couldn’t help but shake my head as Zack laughed at the absurdity of it all.

“Matchmaker? You think she can really find us mates if we haven’t already?”

“That’ll never work.”

“Little witch will find us mates? I doubt that, it isn’t that easy.”

“My wolf is picky, there’s no way.”

“Alpha, this is ridiculous—“

“Silence!” Alpha boomed, and I instinctively lowered my head, as did my Packmates, our skepticism falling silent.

“Regina will be using magic to find you suitable mates. And in all honesty, have we got many other options? Do any of you have any better ideas?” Wyatt snapped as he folded his arms, gazing at each of us hard.

There was uncomfortable shifting under his harsh gaze, but no one said a word. He was right, we didn’t have a lot of options left, not with how our wolves were already starting to act out. All of us were struggling to control the beast lurking beneath our skin in some way.

“Now, Regina has worked hard at this for us,” Wyatt said as he looked at the small witch beside him, who was simply smirking at our doubt. She clearly held no such reservations about her abilities, which gave me an inkling of hope.

Wait, she had worked hard? Did that mean this was already underway.

I shot Zack a look, and his face shared my matching thoughts.

“And I’ve secured a potential match for one of you. She does, however, vibrate with quite a few of you, although I’ve decided there is one wolf she’ll fit with most here,” Regina’s voice was not small like her frame, instead filling the area just as much as our Alpha’s, although with less dominance.

“Vibrate with us?” Patrick questioned uneasily.

“I find candidates whose energy frequencies resonate with that of one of you. Narrowing them down is always a mission,

but she's a good potential," Regina explained.

So this was actually happening? I couldn't believe it.

"We're still working out the finer details, but we've decided that our initial matched wolf will have twenty-four hours to decide if he wants to reject her. If so, we'll see if she clicks with any of the others," Wyatt explained.

Our wolves would decide fast if we liked someone, they acted on instinct, capable of scenting and reading the energy of the females. I'd tried my luck out when I could still go into town, but my wolf had turned his nose up at all of the potential women. Although the selection had been poor really.

"Imagine if there was a Calling," Patrick muttered, and both Zack and I gave him dubious looks. A Calling. When a wolf recognised his mate instantly. It was the way wolves found their true mates, their perfect match. It was what we sought most of all, but with time running out, we could take another, someone we resonated enough with. A mark bond was the way to lock our wolves to them, and it was not something easily broken.

"Don't be absurd, this witch might have skills, but that's too far." Zack snorted as he crossed his arms and leaned back on his stool.

"There's a car coming," Eli called out as he stepped out from the covered area to peer towards the main lodge. All heads swiveled at this, our wolves on high alert.

"That'll be her. We'll greet her, and you best be on good behavior when we bring her down to meet you," Wyatt warned as he moved off with Regina, leaving us all to wonder about this candidate.

Could Regina's services actually work?

"This is insane," Zack muttered.

"First time we'll have females in Pack territory apart from Regina," Patrick commented.

"Do you know who she's matched with?" I asked Scott, hating how my wolf rumbled with excitement. It

wouldn't be me, not a chance. If it was anyone, Wyatt would have been looking for himself or Scott since they were the oldest.

Scott just shook his head as he poured us new drinks.

I accepted the drink, wishing my excited wolf would stop rippling beneath my skin. As much as my Packmates acted like this was absurd, I could feel their excitement. Someone could be finding a mate, and the conversations were becoming eager now.

Was it really possible for our Pack to find mates?

And could I ?



I chewed my lip as I took the windy dirt drive slowly, my stomach knotting wildly.

I still couldn't believe it. Werewolves were a thing.

When I'd answered that phone call from the bubbly self-proclaimed witch, I wouldn't have thought I'd actually pack up my car and take the ten hour drive to get to Briar Falls.

But she'd been adamant it was a once in a lifetime opportunity, and she'd even come out and sat down with me. She'd explained she worked for a matchmaking service and saw my online profile, thinking I was a suitable match. I'd been skeptical at first, until she'd rocked up and had me sign an NDA. Then my world was flipped on its head. Regina introduced me to a world of magic and shifters, telling me she'd selected me as a possible match for a werewolf. *A goddamn werewolf!*

Who wouldn't leap at that? I didn't believe her at first until she showed me her magic, informing me the NDA I'd signed was a binding one. I wouldn't be able to tell anyone about this other part of the world. Not that I cared, learning it was mind-blowing. Sure, I wouldn't have minded sharing it with my work bestie, but I'd survive.

She'd told me about the Pack of lone male wolves seeking mates. She'd given me a folder of information, saying I

needed to think on it, let the information settle for a few days before I'd call her back and decide if I truly wanted to accept the offer.

One month I'd stay in the wilderness with this Pack, tucked away from the world in a small community. My bills would be covered, and Regina would get me the time off work, which impressed me. But if magic was real, I wouldn't question it.

All I had to do was live amongst them, and see if I clicked with the wolf chosen for me.

Casey Miller.

Apparently I was the one who matched his energy the best, whatever that meant.

God, I was really doing this. I'd just upped and left, eager for something new in my life.

And romance. Who didn't want that? I'd had no luck in that field, so maybe this was my chance, my calling.

I grinned stupidly at the thought. A witch had matched me with a werewolf. It was mind-blowing, but thrilling. I'd always loved reading and watching all the shows of supernatural stuff, magic among us. And it was all true.

What were werewolves like? The folder Regina had given me simply outlined how I'd live there, no expenses. She'd remain in the area too for the first week to make sure I was comfortable before she'd return to her town, so that relaxed some of my nerves.

But in regards to the werewolves themselves, there wasn't much information. It was like a brotherhood, they were like family now, but they were typical males, fueled and bit more by animalistic instinct. Regina had clarified I was safe there, but growling and such from the men would be normal.

That had caught me off guard, but of course it'd make sense. How did they operate amongst the human world though? Hiding what they were?

I guess they just got well at masking it.

My breath caught as I rounded a corner and a large lodge came into view. There were a few other buildings around it, and I tracked my gaze over them in the dwindling afternoon light as my heart hammered frantically.

I pulled up before the lodge as I pursed my lips, wondering if I'd made the right decision after all.

Think of it like a wonderful holiday.

All expenses paid, and Regina had said the men were handsome, although that could be subjective.

What would they be like? What would Casey be like? Would he like me? I wasn't anything special, just a rather nerdy girl with a bit of extra fluff on my hips, but I'd accepted that. Maybe I should've done more gym or not eaten half that mud cake after I got stood up by my date the other week.

No, if it was real love, they wouldn't care.

But these are werewolves.

I squeaked in surprise, my heart fluttering as someone knocked on my window.

I whipped my head to find Regina's smiling face at my window.

Crap, I'd been lost in my own thoughts.

I switched the engine off and unbuckled sheepishly as she stepped back, allowing me to swing my door open.

"You made it! Welcome to the Briar Falls Pack," Regina bubbled, and my gaze moved to the man standing by her.

Holy hell, if all werewolves were that handsome, I was screwed. No one would want my average little ass.

I swallowed as he stepped forward and offered me his hand.

"I'm Alpha Wyatt Tanner, I run this Pack and manage the territory," he stated, and I shook his hand as I fumbled for words.

“Nice to meet you, thank you for this chance,” I managed to squeak out, and Regina just chuckled as my cheeks burned.

“Relax, girl. He doesn’t bite, much,” she teased with a wink as Wyatt released my hand, and I jerked my gaze between them.

“Do you go by Alpha...” I mumbled, uncertain how to address the stunning man before me.

“You can call me Wyatt or Mr. Tanner,” he said, his mouth curving into an amused smirk. “Now, how about we introduce you to the Pack and your selected... match,” he said the last part carefully as he glanced at Regina.

“Should I be meeting them all at once?” I tried not to let the unease into my voice, but it was a feeble attempt as I played with the hem of my shirt. Meeting all the Pack? A Pack of men? I’d not been prepared for that, I’d expected Regina to just introduce me to Casey like a blind date and it would go from there.

Then again, I hadn’t been sure what to expect.

“Yes, it’s the best way to see if there’s a Calling,” Regina said, still smiling pleasantly at me. I liked her, she made me feel slightly at ease despite all this. Maybe it was magic that made her a calming presence despite her bubblyness.

“A Calling?” I questioned stupidly.

“It’s when a wolf sees their perfect—“

“Match,” Regina cut Wyatt off quickly. “He’ll know she’s an ideal fit. If one of the other guys feels this, he gets to override my matching and court you,” she explained quickly as Wyatt cleared his throat.

“Right...” I nodded, not completely understanding. Was it like a crush or something? I had no idea, but I’d take her word for it.

“What should I do with my stuff?” I asked as I glanced at the lodge. Would I be staying in there while one of the men courted me or whatever? Regina’s folder had said they had

cabins spread throughout the forest, but this was a communal lodge, the Alpha taking up residence in it.

“Let’s get you to meet the Pack first, we’ll go from there.” Regina waved off my concern.

Guess it was time to put my game face on.

Wyatt led the way down a concrete path to another structure. It looked like half a shed structure, and as I got closer, I could see the covered concrete area with wine barrel tables.

And a selection of fine as all fuck men milling around chatting.

Until all eyes locked onto me and they fell into silence.

Well, fuck me.

Suddenly my sneakers were very fascinating as I stared down at them.

Regina really should’ve included a photo of these fine-ass men. I would’ve run the other way. Every single one of them was out of my league. I didn’t belong here at all.

Regina moved to fall in step with me.

“You okay?” She hissed as we pulled up and Wyatt moved to stand before the bar.

“Sure, just a bit intimidated,” I admitted, hating how small my voice sounded as I played with my silver bracelet.

“It’s fine, don’t let these animals scare you.” She chuckled as she bumped me with her shoulder, and I relaxed a little. At least I had her, it made things easier.

“I’d like to introduce to you all, Dahlia Lee!” Wyatt called out, and my stomach dropped as I forced my gaze to meet those of the Pack.

“I’ll treat her right!”

“That fine doll better be for me.”

“Maybe this matchmaking ain’t half bad.”

I didn't try to find the owners of the calls as I looked at Regina, and she rolled her eyes.

"Enough!" Wyatt boomed, and even I trembled as the ruckus died down instantly. "We'll treat her with respect, she's come all this way to our territory, we don't want to scare her off by acting like a bunch of feral animals!" He was baring his teeth now, and I shrunk back.

Right. Werewolves.

"Sorry, Alpha."

"We've not had a female in the territory before. Save for Regina."

"We are animals..."

"Silence. Fuck, you make me think you all could be a lost cause if you act like this," Wyatt groaned before he gave me an apologetic smile. "Forgive my men, Dahlia, as you can see, not being in the presence of any lady for some time has made their manners... falter," he said distastefully.

"Who is she paired with?"

I jerked my head to the man behind the bar. Now he was a beast of a man. Sure, they all looked like they'd stepped out of a sexy firemen calendar, but this man was huge. I'd associate him with a bear rather than a wolf, all muscle and built like he intended to fight off grizzlies his whole life.

"Well, we've deemed her best match to be with Casey Miller."

"Casey? You think he's worthy? He can barely control his wolf!"

I flicked my gaze to the man seated at the furthest wine barrel.

Casey couldn't control his wolf? What did that mean?

"Surely one of us is a better match!" Someone else called out.

"Quiet! Casey is the selected wolf here, accept it!" Wyatt barked out. "Casey, get your ass up here."

A round of uneasy murmurs filled the air, and I shifted uneasily as I waited for one of the men to step forward.

My gaze landed on a short-haired blond man moving forward, his mouth set in a grim line as his dark eyes locked onto me.

Holy shitballs, that was Casey?!

I clenched my jaw to keep it from falling open at the stunning man moving towards me. He had to be six-foot two at least, with lean muscle and gorgeous genes, and the thin layer of darker stubble made my breath catch. Something inside me somersaulted as I just watched this picture of perfection walk right up to me with dark earthy eyes and cheekbones that would make any girl envious.

This was some trick, or a dream. No way in hell was this man my designated match.

I swallowed as his brows knitted together, his mouth still set in a grim line, and my stomach sank.

Oh fuck. He looked shocked and confused. Right, who wouldn't be. He was paired with simple old me.

I gave him a forced smile, but it dropped as I let my gaze fall. Fuck. This was a mistake. I never should have come here. I had no chance in hell with any of these men, least of all my *match*.

He clearly had no interest in me, he probably thought he'd gotten the short stick of the draw. He was not thrilled with this match, clearly.

Why had I thought this could be my calling?

I didn't belong here.



I knew before I even saw her. Her scent had drifted in, all eyes moving to her as the air thickened with tension and wanting.

But my wolf surged to the surface, howling like mad at the sweet scent.

Mine. My mate.

I'd just blinked stupidly as the rumble rose up in my chest, and I fought to suppress it as she stepped into view.

Whatever control I'd regained was lost as I took in the perfect woman before me. Her long mousy brown hair tumbled down her shoulders as she stood awkwardly by Regina, as if she could feel the hungry gazes boring into her. She had soft green eyes that looked stunned as she took us all in, and as her gaze moved over me, my wolf tore to the surface, desperate to break free.

Mine. Mine to claim. Mine.

He was intense, and I clutched my amulet in hopes it would help me keep him under control as I swallowed uneasily.

This woman was beyond perfect, and my wolf wanted her. He had to have her. There was no question about it. Regina had found my mate.

My Packmates broke out into shouts, and I knew they wanted her too. Who wouldn't want this walking goddess?

But my wolf snarled protectively inside me as I started to tremble, struggling to keep him under wraps.

The Alpha demanded quiet, and my trembles ceased as his influence washed over me. An Alpha always had an air of authority he could use to influence his Pack, and despite Wyatt's only part Alpha status, he still wielded it well.

"He said your name, dingus," Zack hissed as I fiddled with my pendant.

I turned to him in shock.

"What?" I mumbled.

"He said she's matched with you, get up there!" Zack slapped my back enthusiastically, and I forced my feet to move as I looked at the woman he'd declared as Dahlia.

No way in all hell was she matched to me. I was not worthy of this stunning woman, although my wolf argued that with tooth and claw.

I forced myself to let go of my amulet, although I had no idea how to behave as I walked up to my Alpha and selected female, still not believing this.

I had a chance with her. She'd been chosen for me. And my wolf knew she was everything I needed immediately. The woman I wanted to prove myself to, do anything for. I'd do whatever it took to win her heart.

Was this a true Calling? Surely that was what this feeling was. I'd not thought it would be possible for me.

So why was she now looking at the floor, uncertainty and sadness wafting off her in waves?

Was she not satisfied with me?

"I'm Casey," I managed to mumble stupidly as I offered her my hand.

Her eyes finally met mine as her brows knitted together.

“Dahlia,” she said softly as she shook my hand.

Great, I was making this awkward as hell.

“How about you guys have a drink at the bar, get to know one another?” Regina suggested as I just stared at Dahlia. God, she was divine. Her mouth pulled into a soft smile as she nodded at Regina, and I wondered what those sweet lips tasted like.

Stop, she’s human. She needs to be comfortable.

So no acting on impulse. This was not going to be easy. But I had to win her over.

“I’d offer to buy it for you, but the drinks are free here,” I admitted as I let her walk over to the stools at the bar. Patrick and Zack sat at the far end, watching the pair of us like hawks.

“The rest of you, dismissed,” Wyatt called out, and I watched a few of my Pack brothers wander off, allowing me the chance to get to know Dahlia without all eyes on us.

“No pressure at all,” she said nervously as she swallowed and glanced at the remaining wolves milling around. They couldn’t help it, I could smell their interest in her as well, but the Alpha had ordered they give me my chance first. No one had declared a Calling, which I was grateful for. Would they know?

We do. She’s ours.

I blinked at my wolf’s thoughts mingling with my own. He tended to act alone, like a separate part of me, all instinct and primal.

“Drink?” Scott pulled up before us, his eyes on Dahlia, but they were masked. How did he feel about her? And why was my wolf raising its hackles at him?

“Um, vodka and orange juice?” She said it as a question, but Scott just grunted as he got to work making her drink.

“You’re human,” I noted, wishing I could think of something better to say, but I was just gobsmacked by this beauty before me.

“Ah, yeah...” She chewed her lip uneasily, and I wanted to put her at ease as she looked at Regina, as if she sought her help.

Regina was too busy chatting with Wyatt and Jamie though, and she focused back on me.

“Is me being human an issue?” She asked as her shoulders stiffened. Everything from her scent to her body language told me she was on edge. This was not going well. I was doing this all wrong.

“No, not at all! It’s just, this must be different for you... with what we are...” I struggled with my words as she nodded, thanking Scott when he slid her drink to her before he moved off down the bar towards Pat and Zack.

“Considering a week ago I would’ve laughed at anyone who said magic and shifters were real, yeah, it’s very different.” Her lip pulled up in a genuine smile, and my chest fluttered at the sight. Good, this was good.

“You’re fine with it though?” I checked.

“Look, I was team Jacob all the way,” she chuckled, and I couldn’t stop the frown.

“Y’know, *Jacob*, Twilight?” Her eyebrow arched as I just stared at her, not a clue in the world as to what she was referring to. “The movie?”

“I don’t watch a lot of movies,” I admitted, and her brow creased.

“Oh... what do you do in your free time then? And for work?” She sipped her drink as if it would help relieve her nerves. Her scent was settling though, so she was relaxing. It probably helped that my Packmates were attempting to busy themselves and talk while Scott had thrown some music on.

“I keep busy working, hunting and collecting firewood, patrolling our borders. I used to do labor work in Cedar Grove too,” I shared, not going into detail on why I didn’t go into town any more. That was a sore point, and I didn’t need her recoiling from me. I’d hoped she didn’t understand what Jamie

had yelled out about me having no control over my wolf. I'd have to keep it together to be worthy of her.

"Oh nice, so a hands on guy," she mused, a smile playing on her lips now.

"What about you?" I leaned on the bar, unable to stop myself from smiling at the divine being seated beside me. How had I gotten so lucky to be matched with her? Her smile alone had me bursting at the seams.

"Well, I do like watching my TV shows, but I read too, sometimes do clay work. Used to sell them at the local markets actually. I work as a Solutions Specialist in a Call Center too."

"What does a Solutions Specialist do exactly?" I queried, loving how her smile widened at my interest.

"Well, mostly I help people figure out why their program that we sell doesn't work. I'm the helpline for them," she said as she focused on her drink. "It's no fancy job, but I like it, and it pays my bills."

"That's all that matters, you like it, and it serves its purpose," I stated.

Her delighted grin at that had my wolf whining like a lovesick puppy.

"I guess that's it, ultimately. Whatever makes us happy in life," she agreed as she enjoyed her drink.

I just stared at her, disbelieving all of this was truly happening. She was right though, all that mattered in life was happiness, and I knew this sweet human would make me beyond happy. My rumbling wolf was certain of that.

And I'd do anything to make sure she sported that heavenly grin every day.



I relaxed as Casey spoke, his grin melting my heart. Perhaps my belief of his reservations was misplaced, and the more he spoke and asked about me, the more I believed he truly wanted to get to know me.

Wyatt had taken up a position at the far end of the bar with two other men, while some of the others had wandered off. A few remained, and Regina was happily chatting with the large bartender.

Although my focus was on the man before me, who was now asking me about the clay work I did.

“I make little mythical critters and paint them, dragons with books and such,” I shared, my chest fluttering at the awe that rippled across his face.

“That’s awesome, they must be good if you sell them at markets,” he stated. “I’d love to see them sometime.”

“Really?” I cocked my head at him. Sure, I loved my clay work, but not many others cared for it, save for my customers really. It was my little hobby, something I enjoyed.

“Really.” He bobbed his head solemnly, and my cheeks were starting to hurt from the smile that didn’t want to leave.

“I’ve got some on my phone,” I stated as I dug it out of the back pocket of my jeans.

I pulled up a picture of my latest piece, a custom larger dragon perched on a stack of books, wearing a wizard's hat.

"Damn, that's amazing," he breathed, and my stomach flipped at his genuine interest.

"Thanks, I've always loved working with clay, even as a kid," I admitted.

"Can't say any of us have worked with clay."

I turned to the man who'd wandered over, staring at the newcomer who'd just slotted himself into our conversation. I glanced at Casey, noting how he'd sat up straighter, his eyes narrowed at his Packmate as his smile faltered.

"Jamie, twenty-four hours, leave them," Wyatt called out, his voice slicing through the area like the Alpha he was.

The newcomer rolled his eyes and turned tail, and Casey's stiffness eased.

"Twenty-four hours?" I frowned at Casey, and he just arched a brow at me. "What does that mean?"

"Alpha said if there is no connection with your initial matching felt by the wolf in the first twenty-four hours, the others are allowed to court you instead to see if they're a suitable match," he explained.

"Oh." I didn't know how to feel about that. I was just going to be shuffled onto the next man if Casey didn't like me? What if none of them liked me? Sure, they'd seemed eager, but maybe I was just a boring piece of ass.

"I just get passed around if I don't click with someone?" I sat back as I pursed my lips, the thought sitting uneasily with me.

"No, it's not like that." His face fell, hurt evident in his eyes. Why though? I was the one that could be rejected by all of them. He had nothing to be hurt for.

"Look, this matching thing is new, it's only something they're trying out now," Casey said as he bit his lip uneasily.

“What if you all decide you don’t like me after a week? What then? I’m supposed to be here for a month according to what I signed. All expenses paid, and my home expenses covered. Do I just go back?” The thought of being rejected hurt like hell. I’d had enough of that in my life, I didn’t want to go through it again. I’d known this was too good to be true.

“Wait, you came because of that?” Casey frowned at me, and I shook my head.

“What, for a paid vacation with a Pack of werewolves? Sure, that was enticing, but no. I jumped at the offer of freedom. And Regina believed I was a good fit, so I got excited. I thought...hoped, that I was,” I admitted as I played with my bracelet.

He stared at me, those dark eyes whirling with emotions as he toyed with his own pendant. It was an odd little teardrop stone on a cord, and I wondered if it was a sentimental piece.

“What’s the deal with your necklace?” I asked in an effort to salvage our conversation. I wanted to give this a solid chance, although the gloom hanging over me now, the possible rejection, it was putting a downer on things.

“It keeps my wolf in check, I can have some troubles with him,” he mumbled as his brow creased.

“Aren’t you the same being?” I asked, and his mouth curled up as he scoffed.

“We’re supposed to be, but sometimes the wolf can act separately, more primal. It acts on instinct.”

“That must get tough, I’m sorry.”

He cocked his head at me as a genuine soft smile spread across his features. “Why are you sorry? You’ve done nothing wrong.”

“I’m just sorry you have to struggle with that part of yourself,” I said sheepishly, unable to stop my own smile from forming at the way he was looking at me. No one had ever looked at me like that.

“Where do you live anyway?” I asked as I cleared my throat, needing to distract myself from the mushy feelings I was getting just looking at him. God, he was hot as hell, and he exuded this lost, lone wolf vibe. Then again, Regina had said it was a Pack of lone wolves that had come together.

“I have a cabin west of here,” he stated as his smile grew.

It was short-lived though as his gaze moved over my shoulder, and I instantly stiffened as I felt a body draw close.

“Why has your match been in a state of distress most of the time?” he asked, and I looked over to where Wyatt and Regina had been. Neither of them were in sight though, and I looked to Casey, although he looked unimpressed to say the least.

“If you keep putting her on edge, perhaps you’re not worthy of her. May I suggest you come have a drink with me?” This new wolf was rugged, and if Casey was light, then he was dark. And sure, some women would love the bad boy, they’d fall for his five o’clock stubble and cowboy hat, the broad shoulders and promise of no-good he brought with him. But Casey was my match, and I had no interest in this man.

I froze as a rumble rose up, and I turned my attention to Casey. Was that sound *coming from his chest?*

“Someone struggling with his wolf?” The new guy rumbled as well, and I caught my breath as his icy blue eyes flashed yellow.

Fuck. Werewolves.

I turned to Casey, who had a pair of matching glowing eyes as I shrunk down.

“Fuck off, Benny,” Casey snarled, baring his teeth. “She’s my match, you need to honor that.”

“I think she’ll want a man who can control his wolf, who has a handle on their inner beast,” Benny scoffed.

Casey’s rumbling increased as he shot off the stool, and I flinched as they drew right up to one another, rumbling like true beasts, practically head-butting one another.

I should've been terrified by their behavior, but all I could do was stare in shock.

"She's mine, Benny." Casey's tone was laced with venom and yet utter conviction, and I just blinked stupidly. Why on earth did that ignite something inside me? This act of... possessiveness?

"Enough! Wyatt will be back any minute, you want him pissed?" Scott barked as he leaned over the bar beside me, as if he was ready to launch and yank the pair apart.

"Benny, honor it." Another man moved in, forcing himself between the pair. I recognised him as the man who'd been at the end of the bar with Wyatt and another.

"Be careful, Zack, he might bite, you never know," Benny smirked as he pulled away.

"Casey, take her back to your place," Scott stated as he pulled back over the bar.

"You can get to know her there, I think the bar might not be the best place," Zack added as my chest tightened.

Back to his place? What?

Casey growled as he turned to me, but those eyes softened as he offered me his hand.

I glanced at Benny, at the way he was watching me like he hoped I'd reject Casey.

I accepted Casey's hand, the warmth of his hand sending a tingle coursing through me as a smile touched my lips once more. I focused on Casey, on the feel of his hand in mine, as if we were a perfect match while he led me away from the bar.

"Um, I thought I'd be staying in the main lodge," I mumbled sheepishly as we moved into the shadows of the forest, following an unlit path away from the others.

"Why? You're my match, staying with me means we can get to know one another better," he stated as if it was obvious.

Sure, close quarters would definitely help us figure that out, but damn, I'd not really thought that'd be the case. It

made sense though, although perhaps Regina should've explained that. Way to throw me in the deep end.

“So, is that normal behavior for werewolves?” I asked carefully, noting how he'd not let go of my hand. Not that I was complaining in the slightest.

“Being protective over what's ours?” He questioned, but then his shoulders stiffened as my heart fluttered.

Is that what he thought of me? That I was his? Why did that thrill me beyond anything?

“Sorry,” he mumbled as he looked aside, but I just squeezed his hand, forcing him to look at me.

“Is that how you feel?” I dared to ask, my heart thumping away in my chest as he stared at me in the darkness, leading me into the forest down a barely visible trail now that night had fallen.

“Well... I'm a wolf, our animal side can tell pretty quickly, you know, instincts and such...” He started to fiddle with his pendant again, and I grinned stupidly. Sure, I liked him, that was obvious. The way my heart fluttered whenever our eyes locked, the way my stomach swam while he held my hand.

But he knew? Why hadn't he said anything?

“What does your wolf think of me? That I'm... yours?” My voice faltered, and he drew in a sharp breath.

Before he could answer, I flailed, my foot catching on a root and lurching me forward.

I expected to land on my face unceremoniously and embarrassing myself, but I'd never have expected those strong arms to whisk me off my feet to save me.

I stared up at Casey in stunned silence, my arms locking around his neck as he held me bridal style. My heart was on the verge of exploding from my chest at the way he was looking at me, those yellow eyes glowing eerily in the dark, but they were soft and warm right now, not wild. And despite knowing about his wolf, I didn't feel unsafe.

Instead, it was like I was right where I belonged.

“As soon as I saw you, I knew, Dahlia. My wolf...*I*... want you. You’re my mate, the one fate has chosen for me, not some matchmaking service. My wolf has Called for you, I know that now, it’s as real as you are in my arms.” His words made my cheeks burn, and all I could do was stare up at him. Being in his arms... it had sparked things in me I’d never felt for someone before. Was there such a thing as knowing someone was the one for you? Because right now, it was all I could think. I didn’t know Casey as well as I wanted to, but *I knew*.

This was a man who would do anything for me, I could see it in those eyes, a promise of a life I could never have dreamed of.

Of true love.



When Benny had tried to coax Dahlia away, red had seared through my vision, and it had taken my all to keep my wolf from bursting forth, desperate to protect my mate.

I knew without a doubt now. This was the Calling, I knew it.

My wolf knew she was ours, and I'd tear apart anyone who tried to take her from me. But I'd sensed her fear when my wolf had revealed itself through my eyes, ready to challenge Benny without a second thought, so I'd held onto my wild side, not wanting to terrify her.

But as soon as her hand took mine, *choosing me*, my wolf had settled, calmed yet excited all at once by her warmth.

This sweet, kind human was *mine*. And I'd do anything for her now.

And now, she was in my arms. As soon as she'd started to trip, I reacted instinctively, my wolf leaping into action to save my mate.

The way she was staring at me, like I was all she could see in the world, her cheeks rosy—it was making my wolf wild.

How could such a perfect creature look at me like that? Like *I* was the gift?

“I...” She just smiled up at me, and my heart tightened. I’d do anything to make this blessed woman smile every day.

“Yes?”

“I’m sorry, I’m just... no one has ever looked at me like this,” she admitted, although she didn’t look away.

I just smiled brightly at her, my heart melting at how her face lit up more, reflecting my own joy in the darkness.

“And your eyes...”

My smile faltered. Fuck, my wolf was rippling beneath the surface, and he’d pushed through. I hadn’t even noticed.

I set her down, hating the flicker of hurt on her face.

“Sorry, he’s hard to control—“

“It’s fine, it doesn’t bother me.”

I froze as her palm cupped my cheek, my wolf howling with need within me as I stared down at her.

How could this be? Was she truly not concerned by my lack of control? How my wolf was always simmering so close to the surface?

“But, I think... we need to get to know one another better,” she said as she dropped her hand, her lips pulling into a small smile. “So how about you tell me about your life here while we walk, and you can save me from any more deadly tripping hazards?”

I nodded, knowing words weren’t going to form right now—I was too busy pressing my wolf back down as he howled and yearned for her.

But then her fingers entwined with mine, and my wolf eased back, sated momentarily by her touch.

How could she have such an effect on me?

Mate.



“So, one big family of brothers, that’s gotta be intense at times,” Dahlia whistled as we walked.

“We came together years ago, Wyatt and his brother, Scott, the one behind the bar, they founded this Pack when they took Zack in, another lone wolf,” I explained, my shoulder brushing hers. My wolf was rumbling happily within me as we walked, and I’d made sure she’d not had any more trips.

“Regina told me you were all lone wolves. What does that mean exactly?” She looked up at the night sky overhead, her warm hand in mine tempting me to pull her closer. But just watching her was enough for me right now.

“It means we were kicked out of our Packs. Many of us have no ties to our families because of this,” I explained, and her brows knitted together. I could feel her pain and sadness at this, but also... understanding. As if she knew the feeling.

“I’m sorry, that must be tough,” she murmured as she gave my hand a soft squeeze. My mate, so caring and sweet.

“It was, at first. I was cast out because of my wolf. I was causing too many issues for the Pack having so little control over my wolf. My parents were ashamed of me...” I frowned, hating the ache in my chest as I was reminded of it. I’d never hurt anyone, but I’d started having outbursts, wolfing out at times which weren’t ideal. It’d started with my eyes glowing at times in public, which I’d managed to hide with shades. But it progressed to a point where uncontrollable shifts started happening. The last one I’d nearly revealed myself in the public eye of humans. My Pack had banished me after that, not wanting to have to deal with the consequences of a wolf that revealed its true nature before mankind.

“That’s terrible! They were your parents,” Dahlia hissed, and the anger and rage that boiled off her had me stopping in my tracks.

“I don’t blame them, Dahlia. It’s rare that one can’t control their wolf. And a wolf who puts their Pack at risk by potentially exposing their true natures to mankind, it’s the worst. It’s the main rule for our kind, and the penalty for it is severe...” I explained, but her eyes were alight with emotions,

emotions she felt on behalf of me. *For me.* How could one care so easily for another?

“How severe?” She pressed, those emerald eyes boring into mine, desperate to know why my family had disowned me.

There was only one way to deal with such a problem, and despite their shame, even my Pack didn’t want to put me down.

“Death.”

Her eyes widened, her jaw clenching as she squeezed my hand tight.

“It’s okay, Wyatt and Scott found me, took me in, got Regina to make this amulet. It let me work and live a normal life for a while until the wolf got too strong,” I tried to assure her, but her broken look crushed me.

“I’m so sorry,” she said softly, and I wanted to wrap her up in my arms to stave off the despair she felt right now. How could she feel so deeply on behalf of me? How had I been blessed with such a caring, empathetic mate?

“I’ve come to terms with it, and this Pack, it’s my family now. Sure, we have our tiffs, but we’d do anything for one another, and we may joke about our flaws, but we don’t really care.” Even Benny who’d commented on my issue while trying to coax her away, I knew he was just being led by his wolf too, desperate for his own shot at a mate. We were still Pack brothers, and we’d look out for one another.

“Even that guy before?” She shifted uneasily, and I just smiled.

“Even Benny. He’s always on edge and feisty, quick to point out everyone else’s issues, but that’s because he has his own, and we know that. He’s also the first to help when one of us needs something,” I explained, and her posture softened.

“Oh, that’s good then.”

“You care so much, Dahlia, why?” I turned and continued walking, glad she maintained holding my hand as she stayed in

step.

“Because I know the feeling in a way. I wish I could’ve been closer with my family, but I’m an only child, my mum is an alcoholic, and my father left when I was little, so I’ve always looked after myself. Having a family was just a dream really.”

I looked over at the sweetest being I’d had the chance to meet, my heart breaking for her. She’d never experienced the love of a family, and yet she still dished it out like it was a simple commodity. She was stronger than I could even imagine.

“I’m sorry,” I moved closer, our arms brushing one another, but she just smiled at me.

“Don’t be. It made me who I am, and I wouldn’t change that. After all, it’s led me here.”

Hope. That was what she was filled with, so optimistic despite everything.

“Right, and I’m glad you’re here, Dahlia,” I said as we stepped into the clearing around my cabin. I’d left the outside light on, and she paused as she took it in. I loved how she drew in a breath, her hand squeezing mine slightly with her awe.

“It’s beautiful,” she stated.

“Thanks, I built it with Zack. Always been good with my hands, and we’ve all had to learn to build now that we’re with this Pack,” I stated, my wolf preening at her delight in our home. *Her home.*

Although I wouldn’t say that yet. I didn’t want to frighten her off by coming on too strong. Then again, if she was my true mate, she wouldn’t run.

“That’s incredible.” She dragged me up the steps and onto the porch, grinning as she inspected the antlers by my door. A trophy from one of my many kills, not that I’d tell her that. I was a wolf after all, hunting was a part of my nature.

“Here, ladies first,” I moved to open the door for her, and she beamed up at me like I’d just given her a key to the world. Fuck, how had she come into my life?

“Wow, this is amazing.” She released my hand, and my wolf grumbled at the loss of her touch, but it settled at her sheer delight as she twirled around the living room like a wild spirit, not caring how I watched on.

Truly perfect.

I was happy with my loft style cabin, and she clearly loved it too. Her face and scent told me as such. And her scent alone... I would never be able to get enough of it. As we’d walked, I’d drawn it in, searing it into my mind. So sweet and delicate, yet a touch of something wild too.

“Hey, do you have a car? That was a long ass walk,” she chuckled, and the sound made my wolf rumble happily.

“I do, but we all like walking and being with nature. Most of the trucks we keep parked up behind the main lodge.”

“Oh, right. It was a beautiful walk, guess I’ll get used to it,” she mused as she plopped onto my couch, still staring around the cabin in wonder. “Is it weird I always wanted a loft style place like this? I used to dream about building my own place one day.” That smile lit up the entire room, and all I could do was stare.

Well, it’s yours now, my little wildflower.

“You know what would make this perfect?” That smile turned on me as it widened even more, which I wouldn’t have thought possible.

“Mmm?” *Anything for you*, my wolf promised.

“Hot chocolate. We really should’ve grabbed my bags from my car too, should’ve thought of that sooner, sorry.” She winced at the realization, but I just moved into the kitchen to make the desired beverage. If that’s what she wanted to make this perfect, then so be it.

“I’ll collect your things later for you.”

“I can do it, you don’t have to—“

“I want to,” I cut her off, although I kept my tone gentle. “You’re my guest.” *Mate*.

“Right.”

I glanced over at her as she lolled her head back on the couch, a sweet smile on her lips as she closed her eyes and sighed.

“If your wolf is difficult to control, what do you do when you go into town?” She asked as I made the hot chocolates.

“I don’t anymore, it’s too risky.” There was no point in lying to her. She deserved the truth, and I felt like I could tell her everything.

I turned to her with the two mugs in hand, finding her peering over the back of the couch at me, her forehead creased in a way that made her utterly adorable.

“You must get... restless, unable to go out anymore,” she said slowly, as if she was looking for the right words.

“It can’t be helped. My wolf... sometimes I have outbursts where it shines through, even shift involuntarily. We have to remain hidden from mankind, so I can’t put my new Pack at risk. At least I’m hidden here, we’re safe. My old Pack, it was in town, sure, we had access to a forest on the outskirts, but we lived right amongst the humans. It wasn’t ideal there.”

She chewed her lip as I handed her a hot chocolate and sat on the armchair. I wanted to sit beside her, but there was an uneasiness wafting off her now, and it worried my wolf.

“Am I... safe?” Her voice was barely a whisper, and my heart broke at the question.

“Yes, I promise, I’ll never hurt you. I can’t.” I vowed, and she managed a small smile before she lifted the mug to her lips.

“Okay, I believe you.”



Believing Casey was easier than I would've thought as I patted the couch beside me, inviting him closer. It was something I couldn't describe. Sure, I'd been in short relationships, none of them ever working out, but I'd never felt so in-tune and on the same wavelength as someone like Casey. It was like I'd already connected with him on some strange level.

"I'm glad you've found a family here," I said softly as he moved closer with no hesitation, as if it was second nature to do as I asked.

"Perhaps you'll find it here too." The words struck something deep inside me, and I dared not cling onto that hope. I didn't want to get hurt again, and yet, right now... everything felt right. How was that possible so soon?

The way he was watching me, like I was the greatest treasure on earth, it made my heart squeeze. Was it possible I'd find my place here? Sure, I'd always longed to belong, to have a family that truly cared about me. I'd had great friends over the years, but we'd always drifted apart, something else coming up that took them away, and I didn't fight it. I was used to people coming and going in my life.

"So, tell me more about yourself," I said as I set my mug down on the coffee table.

“What do you want to know?”

I asked him about the things he loved, which was nature, and his beliefs. What he looked for in those around him. Honesty, loyalty, the usual things one would expect. But also that they were true to themselves, never hiding who they really were.

Which I found incredibly sad since it was exactly what he struggled with. Sure, everyone knew his problem, but so many had never bothered to get to know him until his Pack here.

I was happy he'd found them, but troubled by the family he'd lost.

He asked me about my clay work, how I'd gotten into it. I told him of the mud creatures I'd made in the backyard when I was small, my mother having locked me outside after drinking a bottle of vodka in the backyard while watching me before wandering inside. I'd created a heap of little creatures, and found my love for creating things that day. I read a lot to escape reality, and had a love for anything magical.

“I'm sorry your mother was like that. No child deserves a life where they fend for themselves. But this love for magic is probably why you took to my kind so easily,” he mused, a smile teasing at his lips.

I stiffened as I stared at them. Were they as soft and sweet as they looked? What would kissing him be like? Hell, just the way he was leaning in, completely immersed in what I was saying, it had my stomach in knots. He truly wanted to know everything, hanging on my every word.

Was it possible this was really fate as he'd said? That he was my better half? My soulmate?

“You're passionate about the things you love and enjoy. Despite everything you've been through, you've still loved life and found joy in it,” he commented, his hand moving to rest on my knee. The spark that coursed through me at the innocent touch was definitely not something I'd felt before, the way my chest tightened as I stared at him, something igniting within me. God, how could I feel this for a man so soon?

His smile faltered as his nostrils flared.

“You’re...”

“Mmm?” I searched those dark eyes as they dilated even further. *Fuck, that was hot.*

“Aroused.” The word was a rumbling growl as his eyes lit up, the yellow pulsing as he drew in a deep breath.

“You can smell that?” Crap, of course he could, he was a damn werewolf. So why was that oddly hungry look making it all that much more intense?

“We can smell a lot of things, even your emotions if they’re strong,” he said, his voice low and strained as he just gazed at me.

I couldn’t help myself as I just stared at his lips, the need to see what he tasted like stronger than anything I’d felt before. This close, he smelled like the forest, with a touch of something truly wildly that had my heart hammering wildly.

“Dahlia...”

My name on his lips did something, the way it was a gravelly growl making something come undone deep inside me.

His hand caught my cheek, and I sucked in a breath as he drew closer, giving me enough time to yank back if I wished to.

Not that the thought even crossed my mind. His lips brushed mine gently at first, as if he sought permission. And when I kissed him back, he caved, drinking me up like I was all he needed in this world. His kiss was possessive, claiming me as his tongue dove between my parted lips, tasting me as his hand moved to tangle in my hair.

Heat scorched through me, searing my very soul with this claiming kiss, stealing away my breath and heart in one go as I crumbled, all my unease dissipating with the passionate kiss.

He couldn’t get enough of me, his lips hungry and desperate, as if he could brand me as his with this fiery kiss.

His other hand snaked around my waist, yanking me closer so I was flush against his chest.

Desire tore my logic to shreds, snaking through me as my heart pounded frantically, my hands fisting in the front of his shirt.

A rumble rose up from his chest, vibrating through me, and the sound only excited me more.

I winced as he nipped my lip, the sharp pain shocking me as the metallic tinge of blood brushed my tongue.

He stiffened as he broke the kiss with a hiss.

“Dahlia... I’m sorry,” he groaned as he pressed his forehead against mine, his chest heaving as another rumble vibrated through him.

He still held me tight against him, but his grip was crushing now, and I clenched my jaw as a moment of fear trickled in.

That was all it took though as he released me like I was on fire, those yellow eyes filled with dread and pain as he instantly gripped his pendant like a lifeline.

“It’s okay...” I tried to soothe him, but my gaze fell to the red smear on his lips. My lip was pulsating, and I touched it, finding the smear of blood on my hand a little unsettling.

“I didn’t mean...” Casey shook his head as he rose and moved to stand behind the armchair, his nails digging into the head of it as he stared at me with utter guilt and hurt.

“Casey...” I didn’t know what to say. I’d been caught up in the moment, not caring about what he was. But he was a wolf underneath that human skin, and right now, I could see it shining through, those bright golden eyes, the way his nails were digging a little too sharply into the armchair.

His face crushed me, the broken expression as he just stared at me like he’d destroyed the one thing he most desired in life. It was a look I’d never seen before, and my heart broke.

“I can’t do this...” He hissed as he gritted his teeth and hung his head.

My throat constricted as I just stared at him, wanting to go to him and assure him everything was okay. But was it? He'd drawn blood, and we'd only kissed.

"You promised you'd never hurt me," I mumbled, but my reminder only served as a tragic blow as he looked at me like I'd just torn his heart out.

"I mean... that's not what I..." I shook my head, regretting my words instantly. "You said you couldn't hurt me. This, this is nothing, it was an accident, Casey. I know you wouldn't hurt me," I tried to clarify as he just swallowed, still looking at me like a lost soul.

"But I did hurt you."

Those words were like falling stones as he looked away, his expression taut.

"You didn't mean to." I rose, hating how he tensed as I rounded the couch to pause beside him. His hand had snaked to his pendant again, and it made me want to cry for him. This man had made me smile so much in just a few hours, and yet he was terrified of himself.

His jaw was set as he refused to meet my gaze, and I pursed my lips as he hurried past me, disappearing into a room opposite the kitchen.

He returned just as quickly with a damp cloth and offered it to me.

"I'm sorry," he mumbled.

"Don't apologize," I said firmly as I took the cloth and dabbed at my lip. He watched my movements like he expected me to turn and flee from him.

"I don't think I can do this, Dahlia."

Those words cut through me as I froze, meeting those torn eyes that were still shining vibrantly with his wolf.

Had he changed his mind on me? Decided I wasn't worth it?

“Why not?” I choked out, hating how my eyes welled. Rejected once more. Why did it hurt so much?

“Dahlia...”

I gasped as he pulled me into his arms, crushing me against him as he nuzzled my head.

“Don’t cry. Please. I can’t hurt you like that too.”

“Why can’t you do this?” I whimpered against his chest. I’d really thought this could be something, and now he’d done a 180 on me.

“I can barely control myself with you. You make my wolf crazy, you make *me* crazy. And I’ve hurt you now, and I know we need to get to know one another more, but my wolf... *I*... we want to claim you. Mark you as ours, make you our mate. We know that’s who you are to us, but humans work differently to wolves, I know that. You’re not ready...”

I pulled back, staring up at him wide-eyed. So he was afraid *I’d* reject *him*?

“Mark me? What does that mean?” I blinked as his arms around me slackened. That sounded big, whatever it was.

“When a wolf finds the mate they want for life, they mark them, bond with them,” he explained as he searched my eyes desperately.

“Like... marriage?” I squeaked out.

“No, it’s stronger than that.”

Well, shit. That sounded like a lifelong commitment. Regina hadn’t said anything about that.

“What are you thinking?” Casey shifted uneasily as I just held the cool cloth to my lip, his lips drawn tight and his brows knitted.

“I think... I do like you. A lot. Already, I have no idea how I can like you this much already, I only know you a little. I’d like to get to know you more though, especially before anything like... marking,” I said carefully.

His shoulders dropped as his expression eased and he managed a smile.

“Even after this?”

“Yes, but we need to talk a lot more, so why don’t we sit back down and get to know each other more?” I suggested. “No kissing.”

“Right,” he managed a small chuckle. “I’ll not make any moves, you hold the strings here now. Hands and lips to myself.”

I just smiled stupidly at that, loving the sweet smile he now sported.

I did need to understand him more though before I’d leap into something as grand as being his mate.

Even if that thought made my heart swell.



I stared down at the sweet woman now draped over my lap, her chest rising and falling with each breath as she slept.

We'd chatted for hours after what had happened, telling each other absolutely everything. I'd learned so much about this perfect being, and I'd told her everything. All about how my wolf knew she was ours, how I'd have to mark her to claim her as my mate.

She'd ended up relaxing and laying on me as we chatted, and the vulnerability and trust she showed with such a move filled me with such joy and comfort. She was comfortable around me despite what I'd done, and she'd assured me she understood it was an accident. I'd explained my wolf had gotten excited, and I'd slipped.

She'd taken it in her stride, not turning away from me, and that only overjoyed me. She truly was different, and I couldn't have been any luckier to have her chosen for me.

My mate.

So kind and sweet, with such passion and love for life. I'd started to play with her hair automatically as she'd sprawled on my lap, and before I knew it, she'd drifted off while telling me about her schooling. She'd had it rough, parents who weren't there for her, but she'd gotten by with good friends, until they, too, left her life.

I'll never leave you, little flower, my wolf vowed as we stroked her hair.

To think she'd felt so at ease that she'd fallen asleep on me, it warmed me to my core and filled me with something I'd not truly felt for a long time.

Love.

I stiffened as a soft sound left her lips, one that shot straight to a place I didn't need to awaken right now.

I wanted to enjoy this moment, but if she started making those sounds, my wolf was going to flood back through.

No. I wouldn't let it. I'd hurt her once already. I'd never do that again. I'd gotten careless, caught up in the moment. I needed to be beyond careful. This was my mate, my future, my life. I'd do anything for her.

She sighed as I rearranged my arms under her body to lift her up. She looked peaceful, but the way her back was arched, I doubted she was fully comfortable. I didn't want her waking up stiff.

I rose with her in my arms, intent to tuck her into the bed and return to the couch to let her sleep. I'd rather lay by her side and watch her all night, tracing the curves of her body with my gaze, but I knew that was asking for trouble. I wouldn't risk it.

Her arms instinctively wrapped around my neck as I carried her bridal style up the stairs to my loft, loving how perfect she felt in my arms.

As I reached the landing, I faltered as she nuzzled into my chest with a soft moan.

Fuck.

My dick reacted instantly, jerking to attention as I withheld a groan. I wanted to be the one causing those sounds, bringing her the bliss and pleasure she deserved, but I didn't trust myself.

I forced myself onward despite the erection straining in my jeans, and laid her down on the bed.

I froze as a particular scent hit me, much like earlier, but this time it enveloped me, entangling me and trapping me.

She was aroused, and badly.

A moan escaped her lips, and all control failed me for a moment as I sat on the bed next to her, staring down at her as my wolf rumbled deep inside me.

Our mate. Claim her. We should make her feel like this.

I drew in a ragged breath as I clutched my pendant, hoping the magic imbued in it would suppress my horny, chaotic wolf right now. He wanted to stake his claim on this delicate flower, mark her. Bring her all the bliss she wanted.

Fuck, her scent was wrapping around me, dragging me into a lust that I struggled to shake.

My wolf snarled, my rumbling chest only amplifying.

“Why are you growling?”

I blinked as I stared down at Dahlia, those tired eyes confused as she gazed up at me.

“You’re...” I croaked out the word, struggling as her scent overrode all my senses. I wanted to make her moan, please her beyond anything, show her just what I’d do for her.

“Excited?” Her cheeky smile made my chest tighten as she sat up.

“Yes... why?” I ground out, fighting every urge that rippled through me.

“I was having a nice dream,” she murmured sweetly as her hand touched my upper arm. My skin sizzled beneath her touch despite my shirt, and the rumbling only intensified as I closed my eyes, desperate to keep my wolf at bay.

“It’s hard to not...” I gritted my teeth, not sure how I even wanted to end that. Not to be excited by her? Want to rip her clothes off and worship her body?

Claim her?

“You made it clear you wouldn’t do anything, that I held the strings, right?” Her voice was husky, and my dick twinged as I opened my eyes.

The way she was looking at me, it had my wolf going berserk.

“Yes.” How I even managed to answer was beyond me, but then her mouth jerked into a grin as she glanced down at my excitement.

“Wow, my scent does that?”

“Yes.” It made me want to go insane, my wolf wants to tear its way free, to claim her and make her mine, her body entangled with mine as one.

Every fiber of my being froze in shock as her hand moved to trace the outline of my dick.

This was torture, and it took every ounce of my control to not move a muscle.

“If I said you could have me... what would happen?” she whispered as she drew her face up to mine, those sweet emerald eyes holding my gaze.

“I...” I swallowed as my wolf snarled and howled within me. “I’d make you moan like you were before, show you just how much I want to please you.” I chose my words carefully, although the rumble had returned after my initial shock at her touch.

“And if I said I didn’t want you to mark me just yet, could you manage that?”

“Yes. Anything for you. I’ll do as you ask,” I vowed.

Her devilish smile was something I hadn’t expected to see on her face. A mix of delight and desire flickered in her eyes, and I just stared. How could this incredible woman be mine?

“Okay, I don’t want you marking me yet, but I want you, now. And you can have me.” Those words ignited me, and I stopped fighting my wolf as I crashed my mouth against hers.

I claimed her mouth roughly, wishing I could force myself to be gentle, but the wolf was pushing through, desperate and wanting.

I yanked back with a growl.

“Fuck. I won’t mark you, I promise,” I groaned. “But...”

“You’re not sure you can be gentle, right?” Her voice was soft and understanding as she cupped my face.

“Dahlia...”

“It’s okay. You won’t hurt me.”

She said it with such certainty and belief that my heart constricted, my wolf whining as he pulled back. She trusted me, despite everything, my slip up, her past, she was so willing to let me in, trust me with her very being.

And that struck something deep, forcing my wolf to submit.

“I won’t hurt you,” I promised, and she just smiled as she drew me back in for a kiss.

She took the lead, her lips soft and sweet, the kiss gentle yet passionate. And I followed suit, matching her tenderness as I lay her back down on the bed.

This woman had shown me nothing but compassion and understanding, not judging me or rejecting me. She accepted me, and I owed it to her to make our first time perfect.

And, for once, my wolf agreed as he settled.

Her hands fumbled with my shirt as her kiss grew hungry, her mouth now ravenous. I couldn’t get enough of her, and I helped her unbutton the top of my shirt before I yanked it over my head.

I undressed her amidst desperate kisses, removing my own clothing until we were nothing but two naked bodies pressed against one another.

I pulled back on one arm to gaze over her, carving the perfect curves of her body into my mind, branding her into my memories.

Her hand moved to cover her, and I caught her wrist, bringing it over her head.

“Don’t hide yourself, Dahlia. You are beyond beautiful,” I breathed as I pressed a kiss to her jaw. So sweet.”

Her scent was intoxicating, sweet and delicate, caressing my senses, but the underlying tinge of arousal made me groan. I kissed down her neck and worshiped each perfect mound of her breasts, teasing the perky buds with soft licks and tugs. The moans and soft cries that escaped her lips were heaven to my ears, coaxing me onward.

“Casey...” Her breathless whisper had a shiver rippling up my spine as I littered kisses down her navel, my hands relishing every inch of her bare body as I explored her.

I finally reached the golden fruit, and her soft pants as I kissed each of her thighs had my wolf whimpering with need.

“Can I?” I asked, not wanting to press onward without her consent.

“I’m yours, Casey,” she whimpered, the declaration and sound rendering me undone.

I rumbled as I spread her legs, diving down to taste her as she whimpered and arched up to meet me.

My mate was sweet, and the taste of her slick had my wolf howling like it was the final moon of its life.

I licked and kissed her sweetness, flicking my tongue over her clit and adoring how she moaned.

“Casey, please,” she begged.

Fuck, my mate was begging for me. She needed me. She’d never go wanting again. Whatever she desired, I’d grant her.

I glided a finger through her wetness, shuddering at how drenched she was already.

I stroked her with careful movements, altering my movements until she was jerking and writhing before I added another finger.

“Oh, God.” She hissed and bucked against my face as I closed my lips around her clit, swirling my tongue over the pearl and sucking on it.

“Casey... I’m—“ Her words failed as she cried out, her body jerking as her walls convulsed around my fingers with her release.

There was no question about it as her cry of bliss filled the air. She was mine. I’d stop at nothing to please her.

I eagerly lapped up her finish, my wolf delighted at her climax.

“Casey, I want all of you.” Her heady words had me sliding up her body to capture her lips.

I wanted to feel her, claim her as mine. Taste every inch of her and brand her with my mark.

But I’d promised her I wouldn’t.

I stilled as her hand moved between us, and as soon as her fingers closed around my cock, I knew I stood no chance of holding back. I’d give my heart to her, offer it to her with my very soul. I belonged to her.

She guided me to her slick folds, and I eased into her, rumbling as she moaned. I filled her up to the hilt, her walls stretching to accommodate me. I’d been worried she’d struggle with my girth, but she took me like we were made for one another.

I kissed her deeply, swallowing her moans as I pulled out before gliding back in, and she bucked up to meet me.

Her body was my solace, my promise of eternity as I drove into her, burying myself deep inside her with each thrust as she writhed and panted. My wolf whined, desperate to mark her, but I shoved him down. We’d obey our mate, stick to our promise.

“Casey, don’t stop,” she breathed, her fingers digging into my back as she arched beneath me. I could scent her oncoming climax, and I growled. I’d do anything she asked, no questions asked. And pleasing my mate was my sole purpose now.

I dipped one hand between our bodies, finding that delicate little nub as she jerked.

“Casey.”

Every time she said my name, I wanted to explode, unload myself and show her just how much she excited me, how much I longed for her, needed her, wanted her.

She was everything, the only thing in this world for me now.

“Come for me, Dahlia,” I growled as I pulled back to stare down at her. Those emerald eyes were hooded, her mouth open in an orgasmic ‘o’. The sight alone nearly made me come undone, but I held out until I felt her walls tighten.

“Casey!” She threw her head back, her finish tearing through her as she cried my name.

My wolf howled triumphantly as I rumbled, burying myself deep inside her as I finally fell apart, joining my mate in climax.

I dropped my head down, pressing my lips to her forehead as her chest heaved.

“Anytime you need satiating, little flower, just ask,” I stated as I rolled off her and pulled her into my arms.

“That was...” She drew in ragged breaths as she nuzzled into my chest, my wolf rumbling happily.

“Perfect.”



I awoke to the most amazing sensation, being wrapped up in someone's arm with his head nuzzled against my shoulder.

Casey.

I couldn't contain the grin as last night's fun flooded through my mind. We'd actually done stuff, and I'd only just met the man. Then again, one night stands were a thing, but this was more than that. I knew it, I could feel it in my very bones.

This felt so right, so perfect here, like I was right where I belonged.

And last night was more than just sex. I'd never experienced anything like that before.

His grip on my waist tightened, and my grin just widened stupidly as he mumbled sleepily.

I wanted to close my eyes and fall back asleep, savor this moment, enjoy the warmth of his strong arms.

But I also had an idea. It was silly, but he'd done so much for me last night, worshiping my body and pleasing me more than any other guy had.

I wanted to make him breakfast. Surely he'd have something I could throw together in his kitchen.

But I had to escape the snare of his arms to do that.

I chewed my lip, not wanting to wake him, but I'd barely started to try to free myself from his arm when he stirred.

His arm clutched me tight, pinning me against him as he kissed my shoulder.

"Everything okay?" He mumbled through a yawn as he propped himself up on one arm. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing's wrong," I said with a sigh as I rolled over to stare up at him. God, I really had been given a gift with him. His face was lined with slight worry, like he really thought something was wrong.

"Are you sure?" He asked, his tone concerned.

"I just wanted to make you breakfast," I admitted, and his face softened as he smiled.

"Ah, my sweet flower, *I* should be making you breakfast," he said sweetly as he kissed my forehead.

The warmth and content that flooded through me from that simple gesture made my heart flutter.

I didn't get a chance to say anything else as he scrambled out of bed, all words escaping me as I watched that fine ass saunter towards the stairs. Yep. A divine gift for sure. A man on a mission.

And there was no way I was letting him waltz out there butt naked without me. Sure, having breakfast brought to me in bed by God's gift was something of my dreams, but it was too tempting to join him.

I wasted no time sliding out of bed and following after him, not bothering to grab anything to cover my body with. He'd made it clear he adored every inch of me, and a newfound confidence had set in at that.

"I'm not a great cook, but I can manage the basics. Bacon and eggs okay?" He called out as he got busy in the kitchen.

"Definitely," I answered as I made my way down the stairs from his loft, pausing at the base to stare at his ass as he

searched the fridge.

“Do you like them scrambled or—“ He froze as he turned, those eyes rolling over my naked form as he held the carton of eggs.

I sucked in a breath at the way he rumbled, those eyes lighting up with his inner beast.

“Where are your clothes?” He growled, and I swallowed as I instinctively covered myself with my arms. Maybe I should’ve thrown something on first.

“Don’t do that.” The tone he used had my arms falling away, like I’d committed a horrible crime. “Don’t you hide yourself from me.”

The way he was watching me, it had every inch of me on fire, like I was everything he could possibly desire.

And that feeling, that realization, it filled me with a confidence I’d not felt before.

“Something wrong?” I asked innocently as I moved towards him, giving him my most seductive, daring smile.

“This could never be wrong.” He moved quickly, and I squealed as he lifted me up and set me on the edge of the counter.

“Casey!” I gasped as he spread my legs.

“Tell me to stop, little flower, and I will,” he groaned as he kissed my thigh. “Or tell me to continue.”

His face was so close to my core, it had my breath catching as heat spread through me. How could I dare stop him?

“Continue,” I breathed, and he rumbled happily as he pulled me closer to position me right.

I let my head fall back as he dove between my legs, his tongue dragging up my slit and swirling over my clit as my legs shuddered.

I pressed my palms into the counter as he worked his magic, dipping his tongue inside me before replacing them with his fingers. I lolled my head back as he teased and toyed

with my clit, his fingers stroking me in a way that had my core clenching.

“Casey...” I hissed his name as my legs shook as I fought the urge to clamp them together. He certainly knew how to make me feel good, and I wasn’t going to last long at this rate.

But when those glowing eyes caught mine as he used his tongue to tease my clit, I unraveled. Fuck, that was hot as all hell.

I cried out, my body trembling with my release as my head spun, his tongue lapping up every inch of me as he rumbled happily, like I’d delivered him the greatest gift.

He snaked up my body with desperate kisses, pausing to savor my breasts, kissing each and nibbling on the perk buds before he finally planted a kiss on the edge of the mouth.

I drew in a shaky breath as he kissed along my jaw, and then I felt it, something prodding my thigh.

“Can I have you, Dahlia?” He groaned as he littered kisses all along my neck and jaw, like it would somehow be enough to sate him.

“Yes,” I breathed, my breath hitching as he took no time pushing inside me.

Having him filling me up as he rumbled, the muscles in his arms rippling as he clung to the edge of the counter like a lifeline, it did something to me. Something exciting and new, a need like nothing else. I needed Casey, *wanted* him, more than he knew. I couldn’t get enough of him and his loving.

I clung to him as he drove into me, the kitchen wall rattling as he claimed my mouth in a desperate kiss, one that threatened to pull me under as he pulled me closer to him.

His hands were firm but not painful as he held me close, and I buried my head into his neck when we broke apart as my climax neared. I couldn’t fight it, this felt too good, too perfect, and I was about to shatter in his arms.

I wasn’t sure why I did it, something primal and wanting rising up in me, but I grazed my teeth on his neck, holding his

skin to muffle my cry as the climax tore through me.

“Fuck, Dahlia,” he rasped and shuddered, his fingers digging into my skin as I rode out the waves of bliss. He was driving into me with a ferocity now as he panted, and I could feel his cock tightening, close to release.

“Fuck!” He tore away from me with a snarl, nearly tugging me off the counter as he pulled out of me.

I clung to the counter to save myself, watching him as he stumbled away.

“Casey?” I drew in shaky breaths as he put space between us, his chest heaving as he stared hard at the floor.

Something fluttered in my chest at the way he gripped the back of the couch with one hand. Something was wrong, I could see it. He was struggling.

“Dammit,” he growled as he shook his head and dragged a shaky hand through his hair, still avoiding looking at me.

“What’s wrong?” I asked as I slid off the counter, but the bestial growl that tore through him had me freezing, my hear hammering.

I flinched as he spun around, hurtling for the door and shoving it open as I just stared after him.

In an instant, he was gone, leaving me naked and alone in the kitchen, beyond confused.

What the fuck had just happened?



Dahlia was heaven on earth, the way she'd cum so easily as I teased her on the counter, tasting her sweet essence of life itself.

I'd needed her beyond anything, and I'd asked the question, knowing I meant it as more than just sex. I didn't want to just have her body. I wanted her, needed her completely. Bound to me as my mate.

And when she'd said yes, my wolf had howled, desperate to mark her. But she didn't know that the question was more than just sex, and I wouldn't take advantage of that. I'd make sure she was ready before I marked her as mine, no matter how much I burned to do so, how much it pained me not to.

Feeling her body moving with me, the scent of her need shrouding us, it was going to undo me, but I fought through, focusing on her and the promise I wouldn't mark her or hurt her, no matter how feral my wolf was getting. I'd do anything for her.

Until she bit me. Sure, it was soft, but it broke all my restraint, my wolf forcing itself through like it was tearing itself free from the confines of my human form. He was going to mark her and take her like the feral creature he was.

I'd yanked myself away from her, fear coursing through me with a chill as my wolf took over.

I fought with it desperately, battling to regain control, but when she'd stepped towards me, I knew the risk was too great. I couldn't do it. I wouldn't. There was no way I'd put her in danger from this beast inside me. But I couldn't control him right now, he'd yanked the reins from me, rearing up and clawing his way free.

So I did the only thing I could do to protect her.

I ran.

I was too broken for her, a man who couldn't control his wolf. Even with the pendant, I had lost all control, and I ran as the shift consumed me, my limbs cracking and changing as my body morphed. My wolf was too much, and I couldn't do this to her. Scare her, or worse.

The thought of hurting her killed me, and my wolf howled now that he was free, unleashing all the emotions that swirled within me. We ran like there was hell on our heels, flying through the forest.

Was I running from myself? Probably. And deep down I knew I couldn't outrun it. But what else was there? I'd nearly hurt her, the one woman I never wanted to hurt.

I faltered as I heard her cry far behind me, begging me to come back.

A part of me wanted to, to run to her and hide in her arms, to find the comfort and peace that I knew she brought me. But right now...

If she knew how close I'd come to marking her, hurting her with claws and teeth, she'd turn away. If she knew I had as much control over my beast as I could a runaway train, she'd cast me aside like everyone else.

I'd hoped, pretended even, that I could do this, love her and not succumb to my wolf. I'd thought I could control it now that I found the greatest reason to.

But I'd been kidding myself. I was a lost cause, a man and beast destined for madness. To die at the hands of a Pack I barely knew when it became too much for me.

My wolf whimpered as my paws tore across the pine-nettled earth. I didn't want that, but my wolf was out of control. I'd tried forever to get control over him, but I was weak. He was able to knock me aside, taking control of my body despite my struggles.

Dahlia deserved better. She deserved the world.

Not a broken wolf.



My heart broke at the miserable, broken howl that rose up outside. Now I understood. He'd lost control, something he'd admitted was a struggle. When he'd spoken about it, I knew it scared him despite how much he tried to hide it. He was terrified of himself, his inability to control this part of himself.

But he had, whether he realized it or not. He'd pulled away, putting space between us before running. Sure, that wasn't full control, but it was still control. He'd chosen to do that, to protect me.

I'd seen the panic and fear across his face as he'd scrambled away, and it crushed me. He was beyond ashamed of himself, and petrified.

How could such a perfect man have such pain and despair?

I hissed as I yanked the burning eggs off the stove, smoke filling the kitchen.

I tugged the window open and switched the stove off before rushing up the stairs to pull my clothes back on.

I wouldn't let him do this alone. I'd been alone for too long, and I knew exactly how much it hurt. And I could only imagine how he was feeling, what he thought I was likely

thinking. It made my chest tight as a lump formed in my throat.

He'd think I'd throw him away as well, and I could never do that. I had to find him, to tell him it was okay, we'd work through this, no one was perfect and I understood that there was a wild side to him. He'd not hurt me since his vow to me. And I trusted him. This whole thing had only solidified that.

I rushed outside, grinding my teeth as I wondered which way he'd gone. I had no idea where he was, but I had to find him.

"Casey! Come back!" I cried out as I set off at a jog, praying I was going the right way, opposite to the way we'd come from the communal area.

It was the only direction that made sense.

I jogged through the pines, scanning my surroundings for any movement, but only seeing birds flitting through the trees. Would he have stopped somewhere? Where would he go?

I continued on, calling out desperately as my chest remained tight. Surely he couldn't have gone far. But then again, he was hurting, hating himself and his inability to control his wolf nature.

I slowed as rustling caught my attention, and I turned towards the sound, my heart catching with worry.

My shoulders sank as Scott stepped out of the trees with a frown marring his face.

"Hey Scott, sorry, I'm looking for Casey, he got freaked out and ran. Have you seen him?" I asked, not wanting to delve into the details right now.

Scott just stared at me, his eyes flickering yellow, and I instantly stiffened.

Why did something feel terribly wrong right now? Like I was a deer caught in headlights. Regina had said I'd be safe here, but Scott's eyes were oddly glassy despite their golden glow, like he couldn't truly see me.

“Scott, are you okay?” I asked, my voice hitching as I fought the urge to retreat.

He blinked as he cocked his head at me, and I flinched when his face twisted into a snarl, his canines elongating.

I couldn't help it as I took a step back, but it was all it took to set him off.

Panic ripped through me as Scott lurched towards me, snarling like a rabid beast as a scream tore from my throat. I turned and ran, my cries piercing the air as Scott thundered after me, roaring like a monster.

I was going to die.

That thought terrified me, and I pumped my legs harder, fear hurling me through the forest at an insane sprint. My chest burned, and I knew he was right behind me. There was no way I could outrun a werewolf. I was screwed. I stood no chance defending myself against him.

I tripped as a shape shot out of the shrubs before me, something large, dark and covered with fur. I stumbled as it shot past me with a deafening snarl, and I threw myself at the nearest tree, pressing my back against it as I looked back.

A wolf, that's what it was. A large dark brown wolf barreled into Scott, dragging him to the ground with snaps and snarls before it leaped over him and planted itself between us.

I knew without question exactly who it was.

Casey.

He snarled ferociously as he stood before me protectively, his ears flat and his fur on end as Scott rolled onto all four and snarled back.

My heart pounded frantically, threatening to explode from my chest as I sucked in ragged breaths, my legs trembling and on the verge of giving out.

To my relief, another wolf appeared, with sleek black fur and larger than Casey as it stepped into the space between Casey and Scott. It wasn't snarling or on edge as it padded forward, its head low as it watched Scott.

Casey's snarls died down, and when Scott lurched forward, the black wolf moved faster than I could blink, knocking him down swiftly and snarling.

I instinctively cowered at the snarl, the sound piercing through me with such strange power that I couldn't fight the urge.

Scott fell still beneath the wolf, and I watched as the beast shifted back to man as another wolf, this one gray in color, joined him.

Wyatt pinned his brother down as the gray wolf reverted back to man, and Benny helped Wyatt lift Scott up.

"I'm sorry, Dahlia," Wyatt looked at me with utter pain as Scott just frowned at the ground, his eyes still glassy but all the ferocity gone.

What had happened?

"It's the Mate Madness, it makes our wolves crazy as we get older," Benny explained, and I had to focus on their eyes to avoid looking at their naked bodies.

"Mate Madness?" I breathed, still in shock as I moved my gaze to Scott, who refused to look at me.

"If a wolf has not taken a mate by their thirtieth birthday, it starts to drive them completely insane. A madness where the animal has more power than the men, and they become feral. I should have told you from the beginning, but we weren't sure how you would handle it," Wyatt explained as he looked painfully at his broken brother.

"Will Scott be okay?" I found myself asking, despite how he'd just been madly trying to kill me.

"I don't know. He hasn't had an outburst like this before, so we'll be taking him home now. I'm sure Casey can explain the rest, but we need to go. I'm truly sorry, Dahlia," Wyatt apologized profusely as Benny's jaw set.

I just nodded as the pair moved off, and my focus moved to the brown wolf before me.

They'd just left me alone with Casey, was that even safe? I'd barely had the thought before I scolded myself.

He'd saved me, put himself in danger despite his own struggles.

Casey turned towards me, his ears flattening on his head as he whined before me.

I let myself collapse to my knees, all my adrenaline flooding out of me as my lower lip trembled.

He padded forward, those golden eyes gentle and concerned as I drew in sharp breaths. He'd saved me, I was okay.

I stared at those eyes, and when he looked away, I forced myself to stop shaking. I wasn't afraid of him, and he needed to know that.

"Casey, it's okay. I'm not afraid of you. I know you'd never hurt me," I said softly, forcing him to look back at me with those golden eyes. "You're beautiful, perfectly imperfect. I know you struggle, but that's okay. We'll get through this, I promise."

Another whine greeted me as he gingerly stepped forward, and I just smiled as he nuzzled me. I wrapped my arms around his neck, burying my face into his fur as I let all the fear and unease drain out of me. I wasn't afraid of him. He made me feel safe despite everything. I could see it right now. His wolf may try to control him, but it meant me no harm.

I frowned as his fur receded, his bones creaking and shifting as his body returned to that of a man, his arms wrapping around me as he kneeled before me.

"Thank you, Dahlia," he mumbled as he held me tight against him.

"No, thank you. You saved me. And not just from Scott. I never thought I'd find something real, something as amazing as this. I trust you, and I know this is what I want. I want you. I want a life with you," I said as I pulled back to look at him, my heart exploding at those soft, dark eyes looking back at me.

“Really?” His face broke into a relieved, shocked grin, and I just laughed softly.

“Really. You may be afraid of your wolf, but I’m not. He won’t hurt me, I know that.”

His face softened as he cupped my cheek.

“I don’t know where you came from, Dahlia, but I thank the moon and the stars for bringing you into my life.”

I quivered as his lips met mine in the sweetest of kisses, one with such promise and love that my entire body warmed with comfort and love.

“I thought I’d lost all control, but as soon as I heard you scream, everything suddenly made sense. My wolf and I came together, like the one soul we are, desperate to save you,” he explained as he pressed his forehead against mine. “I can’t lose you. You’re my mate. You’re everything to me now. And I’ll prove that to you for the rest of my days.”

“Well, how about you tell me about this Mate Madness? I take it you need a mate to stave it off?” I asked softly, and he sighed.

“Yes, exactly. Which is why when the desire to mark hits, it’s hard to fight. We don’t often find a female so easily that triggers that response in us. A mate is for life, a bonding like no other.”

I stared into those eyes, so full of adoration and love. Was it truly possible to love a man so quickly? But I knew it was what this was. This was something deep, something true and real.

“Okay. Then I want you to mark me. Make me yours,” I said firmly, without a doubt in my mind.

He frowned at this as he swallowed. “Are you sure?”

“I’m positive, Casey. From the moment I saw you, I knew there was something about you. I never would have believed love at first sight was a thing. But right now, I know it’s true. I do love you.”

The grin that tore across his face as he crushed me against his chest and nuzzled my head had me giggling like a schoolgirl.

“I love you too, Dahlia, I was afraid saying it would scare you off, but my wolf and I knew you were what we wanted from the moment we scented you.”

I nestled against him, grinning stupidly at the way his chest rumbled happily. It was something I could get used to. Not to mention I could feel another prod of happiness against my lower stomach.

“Bit excited, huh?” I chuckled as he pulled back, his cheeks rosy as he smiled widely.

“Can you blame me, the thought of claiming my mate is beyond exciting,” he said smoothly, his eyes flashing golden before they returned to their natural earthy brown. “But, I also won’t do it rashly right here. I want this to be done right.”

“What do you mean—“ I squealed as he swept me up into his arms, planting a tender kiss on my forehead as I instinctively wrapped my arms around his neck.

“It means, this will be done right. My wolf agrees. I’ll take care of you, always,” he promised as he took off at a jog effortlessly despite me in his arms.

My stomach knotted as my heart burst.

This man was quickly becoming my world. And I couldn’t wait to become his.



My mate. There was nothing I wouldn't do for her.

I didn't falter or slow until I was taking the stairs up to my loft two at a time, my heart hammering for a whole other reason.

She wanted me to mark her, to claim her as my own, and the thought was earth-shattering. This was the tipping point of my life, when it would change for something greater. I'd find my purpose in life, my better half.

"Close your eyes, my little flower," I said sweetly as I set her down on the bed.

She was smiling like I was giving her the world, and my heart swelled as my wolf howled in delight. This delicate flower perched on my bed was *mine*.

And I'd show her what that meant every day for the rest of my life.

"Why am I closing my eyes?" She asked quietly, although she didn't peek.

I removed the pendant Regina had made for me, staring down at the stone. I'd relied heavily on this magical talisman to restrain my wolf, to hold him at bay. But I didn't need that. We were on the same wavelength now, thanks to our mate. She'd brought us together, showing us what truly mattered.

I did the pendant up around her neck, and her smile softened.

“You can open your eyes.”

She looked down at the pendant, touching the stone before she smiled at me. “Why?”

“Because you brought us together, little flower. It was something I thought I could rely on, but in truth, it’s you. You’re what I need, Dahlia. The only thing I’ll ever need.”

Her eyes glittered, and my wolf rumbled uneasily as she sniffled.

“I love it,” she croaked as she grinned again and shook her head. “My God, I’m crying like a baby, I’m sorry.”

I sat on the bed and swept her up into my arms, littering her face in kisses until she was giggling.

“Don’t ever apologize for feeling, Dahlia. Your emotions are pure, and I would never change them. I’ll also do everything in my power to keep you from crying tears of sadness, but tears of joy—“ I kissed away the tears from her cheeks—“I will allow.”

“How did this happen for me? How did I find you?” she whispered as she cupped my face, those eyes brimming with love and tenderness. And hope.

“We’ll thank Regina later,” I chuckled. “For now, I intend to make you mine.”

Her breath caught as I captured her lips, trailing my tongue over her bottom lip before she let me in.

I drank her up, our tongues twining as I lay her back on the bed. She tasted like a sweet promise, something I would hold tight and never let go. The key to everything I hoped for in life.

I broke the kiss, kissing every inch of bare skin as I peeled her clothes away until she was completely bare beneath me. I pulled back, admiring the gorgeous woman in my bed. *My mate*. Perfect in every way, every curve designed to match my hard lines.

Complete and utter perfection.

She swallowed as I gazed down at her, her arm shifting to cover herself, but I caught her wrist and pinned it over her head.

“What did I say about hiding yourself, my flower?” I growled softly.

The wicked smile she gave me in response made my heart flutter madly as I drew in her intoxicating, aroused scent.

Well, my little flower had a devilish side. And that only excited me more.

Time to show her just how much she meant to me.

I worshiped her body, exploring every inch of her with sweet kisses, tasting every inch of her. Her soft pants at my touch had me trembling, but I intended to make this a day she'd never forget.

I branded her skin with my kisses, claiming every piece of her before I finally spread her wide, the sight of her dripping core making my eyes flicker as my wolf howled.

“I don't know why I love seeing your wolf, guess it lets me know just how excited I make you,” she breathed as she peered down at me.

So not only did she accept my wolf... she enjoyed it.

Fuck me.

I couldn't stop myself as I dove in to taste her sweet slick, loving how it drew a low moan from her as I held her legs wide for me. I nuzzled into her, smearing her excitement all over my face, her scent sending me wild.

“Jesus, Casey!” She threw her head back as I rumbled, slipping a finger into those soaking folds.

“You're so wet, little flower,” I growled before I dragged my tongue over her clit, her whole body arching and rippling from the movement. I'd have to do that more.

I stroked her walls and teased her clit, taking my time and bringing her close before I slowed, loving how she whimpered

pitifully. I wanted to please her, to let her fall off that blissful cliff, but I wanted it to be something powerful. Something she remembered always.

“Casey, please,” she begged as I slowed once more, feeling her walls clamping down around me as her climax neared.

“Anything for you,” I stated, and buried my face on her core as I quickened my movements.

She moaned, arching and grinding against my face before the cry was torn from her, her climax ripping through her and covering my hand and face as her core clenched around my fingers.

I pulled my fingers out as I slid up her body, pausing to suck her juices off as she watched me with hooded eyes.

Her jaw clenched at this, and I saw the desire burning in her eyes.

“I’m far from done with you, Dahlia,” I promised, and her breath hitched as I hooked her leg over my hip and buried my cock inside her. I slipped in with ease, her walls tight and perfect as I moaned. My mate felt perfect, her legs wrapping around me as she bucked up against my thrusts.

I muffled her cries with a heavy kiss, needing to have all of her. She was mine, and I’d make sure she knew that, forever and always.

I slid a hand under her, angling her hips as I drove into her hard and fast, right to the hilt.

She broke the kiss as another cry rang out, her walls milking my cock and making me rumble with delight. I wanted to have her screaming my name by the time I was done with her. But it was time, my wolf couldn’t hold out any longer, not with how she was writhing beneath me in orgasmic bliss. I wanted to join her in the pleasure, join us fully.

I slowed my movements as I planted soft kisses along her jaw.

“Are you sure you’re ready to be marked, little flower?” I rasped.

“Yes.” There was no hesitation, not a doubt in her mind, and it made me ripple with delight.

“It’ll hurt, Dahlia, but only briefly, I promise,” I said, and she just nodded as her lips met mine in a soft kiss.

“I want you, Casey. All of you. Always,” she breathed against my lips.

My mate. So perfect. Soothing my wolf with ease. I wanted her bound to me for eternity, she was the only one for me.

“Then you’re mine, forever, Dahlia, and I’m yours. I’ll never let you down,” I vowed as I stole a heated kiss from her as I drove into her. I pulled her up against me, leaning us back so we sat on the bed as I bounced her in my lap, burying myself as deep as I could in her.

Her nails dug into my shoulders as she joined me, driving down hard and fast as she panted.

“Casey.” My name on her lips was all I ever wanted to hear, making my wolf and I completely wild. Every time she said it, I lost another piece of myself to her. She owned my heart already, it was hers from the moment I saw her.

“Forever and always,” I promised as I kissed her neck. I could smell her climax nearing, and I knew now was the time.

“Always yours,” she gasped, those words tearing my wolf to the surface.

I grazed my teeth on the spot where her neck met her shoulder before I bit down, the rumble tearing through me as my wolf howled triumphantly.

Mine.

She screamed my name, her walls clamping around my dick as her whole body arched and shuddered, our joint climax hurling us into oblivion as the bond snapped into place with the mating mark.

Her pleasure coursed through it, tangling with my own as she clung to me desperately, gasping for air with each shuddering wave of bliss.

I held her tight, licking the wound I left before I nuzzled her. It'd heal instantly, leaving the scar that marked her as mine, bound for all eternity.

I carefully laid her back and rolled us over, her legs straddling me as she rested on my chest, still riding out her blissful high with me.

Absolute heaven. That was what this was, her body nestled against my chest as she drew in ragged breaths, our bodies joined and our souls bound.

"I can feel you," she whispered as he traced her fingers over my shoulder. "Your love for me, the bond. It feels... right."

"Because you're my mate, Dahlia," I breathed as I kissed the top of her head.

"So I can feel what you're feeling?" She asked.

"Yes, as can I."

"I like that," she said with a soft sigh as she planted a lazy kiss on my chest. "This is perfect."

"You're perfect," I stated, and she just chuckled before her head shot up, those eyes wide.

"Casey... it feels weird..."

I frowned before I realized what she meant, sensing it through the bond.

I couldn't keep the sheepish grin from breaking out.

"Right, uhhh... there's something that can happen, since I'm part wolf..." I mumbled, and her mouth just fell open as she sensed what I was saying.

"We're *knotted* together?!"

"Sorry, I forgot it can happen," I said earnestly, my frown shifting as she snorted and grinned.

"Well, how fascinating. Doesn't feel too bad. Guess we're stuck like this for a while," she chuckled before she kissed me softly. "I wouldn't have it any other way."

You can find book 2 below.

[Wolf Called Scott](#)

About the Author

J.E. Cluney is a full-time author who lives on the Sunshine Coast in Australia. She spends her days writing, bingeing on TV shows, and reading. With a slight addiction to chocolate to fuel her midnight ravings.

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