



WILLO NIGHT

WOLVEN BROTHERHOOD
BOOK FOUR

NIKOLAI ANDREW

WILD NIGHT

WOLVEN BROTHERHOOD



NIKOLAI ANDREW

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by Nikolai Andrew

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CHAPTER 1



Rayia

*I*t's been three weeks since I saw him. Every waking moment, he's taking up space in my thoughts. The beast in the dark, tearing two people to shreds in front of my eyes. Teeth, claws, glowing eyes. Brutal beyond belief and without remorse.

I should be terrified.

I should be having nightmares.

I should be a mess.

But I'm not. I think of him, wondering... Will I ever see him again? Or will he just occupy my naughtiest fantasies for the rest of my life, a perfect memory of what a man can be? What I saw him do was horrific.

But the thoughts and feelings that seized me as I watched...

"It's too hard," I say, staring at the same page I've been looking at for the last half hour. How can I concentrate on my studies now? "*Modern Requirements for the Criminalization of Behavior*. I mean, I've been studying this for a week now and there's so much I feel like I'm drowning in it."

"How long until you're a lawyer?" Stephanie's voice comes through the loudspeaker on my phone, and at the same moment JD starts screaming through my stereo speakers. "Jesus, Ray, turn the music down, would you? I don't know how you can listen to that crap."

I huff, climbing off my bed and plodding to the other side of the room. It's an old stereo. No remote controls or MP3s for me, just CDs I have to get up and change over for myself and a slightly unreliable radio tuner. Everything of mine is old—some by choice, like my vintage heavy metal and classic rock t-shirts, others because as a family we have little to no money.

As I lower the volume, standing at the window, the back of my neck tingles, the hairs going up on end. I pause, drawing a long, slow breath and counting to ten. I resist the urge to look outside and find what's lurking out there.

It's been happening more and more lately. The feeling I'm being watched, followed, stalked. Like I'm a bunny and there's a predator after me. Part of me wants to flee into a hole and wait for the danger to pass but another part...

I have to admit, another part gets excited, heart racing, shallow breaths, chills as the feeling courses through me.

Ever since *that night*.

Glancing at the wall, my eyes fall on the drawings I've been doing every spare moment I get. There are half a dozen of them, my best work yet, all showing the same scene, half-glimpsed in the darkness on that road out of town. Lots of blood. Teeth. Claws. If my parents saw them, I'd be institutionalized by the end of the week, and who knows, maybe that's where I belong. I know what I saw, but it doesn't make sense.

After all, monsters don't exist, right? That's what they'd tell me. What I claim to have seen can't be real.

"Hello??? You there?" Stephanie's voice pulls me back to the present, and the chill passes. Even so, I turn away from the window as I head back to the bed.

"I'm here. And it's not crap, it's called *music*. Unlike all that weepy, *oh I'm so in love but he doesn't even notice me* yawn fest you listen to."

"Hey!"

"Well. Don't insult Korn, okay?"

“Fine. Touchy. So how long?”

“How long?” I search through my memory, trying to figure out what we were talking about but coming up blank. I’m more distracted lately than I’d like to admit.

Stephanie’s voice raises an octave. “The degree! How long before you can start charging clients five billion dollars an hour to tell them what they already know?”

“Right. Well, this is pre-law. Another two years of this, then...”

“*Then* you’re a lawyer?”

I shake my head, staring at the page again. “No, I can be, like, a cop or parole officer or something. I have to go to law school to be a lawyer.” *If I ever get there.*

“Jeez. Lucky you already have a job.”

I ignore that comment. Stephanie grew up on the same street as me, and I don’t want to say she has no ambition but she’s aware of the limitations. The truth is, nobody from around here thinks they’re going to be a doctor or a lawyer or a politician. Those are careers that our school would never have suggested to us.

When my brother got into law school, it was all anyone was talking about. No way would two kids from the same family manage to escape their destinies like that. My studies are a dream, and life has taught us all that dreams don’t come true. Most days my school work feels like a waste of time and money.

Looking again at the page in front of me, I wonder if I should accept that and move on with my life. I already have a job. A good one, with good prospects. Not everybody is fortunate enough to have a dad with friends who all need someone who’s good with figures to help them with their books.

“I wish you hadn’t moved away,” I complain. “You’re my BFF, you should already know all this. You should be helping me study.”

“I know. It’s bullshit, but it is what it is. Hugh had to move for work, and if I’m going to be with Hugh... Anyway, don’t you have Daniel to help you study?”

My hand goes to my lips to stifle the happy laugh, but it’s no use. I’m sure she can hear me squealing with excitement. “His first date with Jules is today, you know that? I’m so pumped for them both, they make such a cute couple.”

“Imagine if they get married! Daniel’s dad is *loaded*. He’s like a multi-billionaire.”

“Sure, but...I’m sure Jules doesn’t care about that. You should see the way his eyes light up whenever Daniel is near. And it’s not like Daniel’s all about his money. Not everything in life is about money.”

“No, but it doesn’t hurt either. Look at me and Hugh.”

“That’s *not* why you’re together. For starters, Hugh’s a mechanic, he’s not working on Wall Street.”

“Sure it is.” Stephanie laughs. “His big bank balance and his big—”

“Stephanie!”

She cackles on the other end of the line, knowing how awkward I get about that stuff. Trouble is, my eyes jump to the drawings again, and my mind goes back to that night, those eyes in the dark, the impression of size and strength.

If that thing I saw decided to...hold me down...there would be *nothing* I could do about it.

I’d just have to do as I was told.

Open your legs, Ray. Do it now, before I make you.

“Have you had any more trouble with...what’s his name?” Stephanie clicks her tongue. “Mike?”

“No, thank Christ. After what he tried at that party a few weeks ago, I don’t want to be anywhere near him.”

Truth is, until then I thought me and Mike were friends. He was sweet to me. Maybe I thought he had a bit of a crush, but I never imagined he’d try to touch me like that. Or when I said

no he'd make a big deal of it and try to pull my dress up against my will. I don't understand it. With his looks and prospects, he'd have his pick of girls. *What does he want with someone like me?*

After it happened, I ran. I wanted to get away. I didn't even know where I was going. I thought I was heading home, but I found myself on the edge of town. And that's when I saw two people being ripped apart...

For a second I try to imagine it's Mike I've sensed following me so many times, and not the massive beast I saw when I fled. But somehow I know, if it was him it would feel gross. It would feel slimy and repulsive, not strong and safe.

My mom's voice draws me out of the thought, and the growing feeling in the pit of my belly dissipates. "Rayia! Family meeting!"

Stephanie laughs, imitating my mom. "Yes, Rayia! Family meeting!"

"Don't!" I say with a soft chuckle. "Looks like I've got to go. I'll call you back later?"

"Sure. Any idea what the family meeting is about?"

I shrug. "No clue. I'll let you know."

We sign off, then I put my bookmark back, having not moved on a single page, and head downstairs. The last "family meeting" was when my dad asked me to help out with his fishing business by keeping the books. I think they were both surprised when I jumped at the opportunity, especially since he wasn't offering to pay me. Since then, he's persuaded one of the other fishermen to employ me and that one is paying for part of my law studies, with the small amount I have saved covering the rest. Some others have shown interest, so if this is another job, I'm not complaining, even if it does mean less time for study.

"What is it?" I ask as I come into the living room.

I grab an apple out of the bowl by the door on my way past, my appetite being a voracious beast of its own. I used to eat a

lot of junk but lately I've been trying to get something a little healthier when I can.

"Take a seat," my dad says, and I hesitate when I see his expression. *This isn't a job opportunity.*

I bite into the apple as I sit, needing the distraction. Mom's expression is unreadable, as usual, but she isn't smiling. My mind races, trying to figure out what this could be about. *Have they found out about my law course? Are they going to tell me it's a waste of time and money?* Dad draws a breath, clearing his throat. Something tells me this is less of a family meeting and more of an inquisition.

"What's this about?" I ask, holding back the urge to defend myself. I don't know what this is about yet. It could be anything.

"You and Daniel Balaur get along well, don't you?"

For a second I'm thrown. Has Daniel done something wrong or— "What's happened?" I ask, dropping the apple on the table as my heart thunders. "What's wrong with Daniel?"

"Nothing." My dad shakes his head. "Nothing's wrong, I promise. That's not what this is about."

"Then what?" I stare at him but he doesn't meet my gaze. Turning, I look at my mom but she looks away. "Why are you both acting so weird?"

My dad doesn't say anything. His knuckles on the table are white as he grips the bare wood. My stomach twists into knots.

"Mom," I say, and she turns to meet my eyes. "What is this?"

"You like Daniel. He likes you." There's no question there and still no answers.

"Sure. I don't know how the two of you know someone like his dad but I'm glad you introduced us. He's been one of my best friends these past couple of years, especially with Stephanie moving away."

She nods. "That's good. And what if it was more than just a friendship?"

“More than just a friendship?” I shrug. “What? Are you adopting him? Isn’t he a little old for that—?” I know I’m grasping at straws.

“We want you to marry him,” my dad blurts out, and I can’t help the laugh that bubbles out of my mouth.

It feels like laughing at my friend, but come on...me and Daniel? Married? I can’t begin to explain all the reasons that’s not going to happen.

Not least of all because none of them know he’s gay. Not my parents, and certainly not his. I’m not about to out him either.

“Come on, be serious,” I say, wiping away laughter tears.

“We are serious,” my mom says.

The grin falters on my face when they stare at me. My mind instantly jumps to that night, to the beast I saw in the dark, to the things I’ve imagined him doing to me. I shake my head.

“No. Why would you suggest that? Because he has money?”

“It’s not about that,” my dad says, a little too quickly. “It’s about the future. Your future and ours. We want you to do this.”

“Well I don’t. And I won’t. And I’ve got news for you, Daniel won’t agree to it either. You’re both mad if you think—”

“Daniel will do as his father says,” my mom interjects.

I stare at her, trying to get some sense of what she’s talking about, but it’s impossible. My next words falter even as I say them, “And why would Trevor Balaur tell his only son to marry a girl from the wrong side of town whose father owns a fishing boat? I’m sure there are plenty of heiresses queuing up to get their hands on Daniel. Not that he’d be interested in *them* either.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

I feel my cheeks heat. I shouldn’t have said that. I stay silent and stare between them both, unwilling to give an answer.

My dad sighs. “You’ll do this, Rayia.”

“No I won’t.”

Before I know it, I'm standing up from the table, pushing my chair back. Why I'm reacting so viscerally to the idea is beyond me, but my heart is racing, my mind conjuring images of that thing I saw, of size and power and sharp teeth. Daniel's a nice boy, but even if he was straight, I wouldn't want him.

I wouldn't want anyone touching me except...

"It's not happening," I say, turning away. "Me and Daniel are friends. Nothing more."

I'm heading for the door when my mother speaks behind me, using the stern voice that always makes me do as I'm told. But not today. "Rayia, come back here. This isn't finished."

"Yes, it damned well is," I mutter to myself as I grab my coat.

And before they can call me back, I'm out the front door into the dark night.

CHAPTER 2



Tulak

Ben whines, and I lean down to muss the thick fur over his massive head, but don't take my eyes off Rayia through the broken window. Wolves are sensitive creatures. He knows there's something wrong with me, he just doesn't know what.

Shit, I don't know what's fucking wrong with me either.

I've been watching this girl for weeks. She's all I think about, all I dream about, the entire reason for my existence. She doesn't know that the abandoned building across the street from her house has a new occupant. Or that from here I can see into her bedroom, to keep eyes on her every moment she's there. And, yes, to satisfy my own base needs. The only breaks I take are to run down prey for myself and my wolf, and to sleep when I know she's at work and won't be home for a couple hours.

I'm gone for her. I need to see her, to know she's close all the time. This is my life now.

Right now, I see the set of her shoulders. I see the way her movements are jerky, the hesitation in her step, like she doesn't know where she's going. The way her slender fingers, nails painted black as my own thoughts, comb into her dark curls, pulling them back from her face.

She's upset. And knowing she's upset is a frustration I could do without. Every instinct is telling me to help her, to solve

whatever it is, to protect her. But my involvement can only make it worse.

“Quiet now, Benka,” I growl as he whines again.

Is he whining for her?

She’s my mate, I know that. I’m not an idiot, I know the signs. As my pack brother, he must know it too. But that doesn’t change the fact I can never allow her to see me. Never again.

“She’ll hear you. There’s a good boy.”

Three weeks ago, she came upon me tearing apart two fucking vampire’s slaves on an old road out of town. They’d attacked us, and that couldn’t be allowed to go unpunished. What was she doing there? I don’t have a fucking clue. Maybe she was drawn to me. I’ve heard that happens. The moment I sensed her there, things changed. I nearly forgot to deliver the killing blow on the half-dead scumbag I was dealing with as I stared at her.

Either she wasn’t scared, or she was so terrified by the sight of me she froze to the spot. I’m sure it’s the latter. Nobody but another Wolven could ever truly see a thing like me and not be horrified. Hell, even other Wolven find it hard to hide their disgust.

Ben is my only companion, my only real friend. The Pact has tried to accept me, but I’ll never be one of them. All I have is the puppy I saved from hunters in the Alaskan wilderness some eight years ago, now a full-grown adult, temperament and all. Every human I ever knew rejected me. I horrified them all. Even my adopted parents took me out to the woods and left me to die because they couldn’t bear to look at a monster like me. But he and I accept each other as equals.

Clouds drift to cover the moon as I watch from the darkened window. Illuminated by the street lamps, she pulls her coat closer around her, and saliva fills my mouth at the way the fabric hugs her ample curves, imagining my fingers on those wide hips, my mouth on those fuckable tits. My dick starts to engorge at the very idea, and I have to turn away.

It can never be.

“She’s better off without me,” I explain, but Ben just stares at me. “I can’t, and that’s that.”

The thought of her seeing me and rejecting me, the way everyone rejects me, is more than I can take. You’d think I’d be immune. I’ve walked the earth for sixty years, and seen the look of terror and disgust on more faces than I can count. It should be water off a duck’s back, but not with her. It would destroy me. She *is* better off without me, but I’m also better off not punishing myself any further.

I step away from the window, unable to watch her anymore, as Ben runs to the door, scratching at it with one massive paw.

Fuck. “Right now?”

He whines and I growl. Whatever. I need the distraction while she’s gone, until I can get another glimpse of her.

I follow him down the back stairs and out into the cold night. The courtyard at the back of the building is old, flagstoned and uneven. This place must have been a factory or something, I have no idea, but it’s big. I watch Ben run over to the other side of the yard where he always does his business.

Then out into the alley.

“Benka. Heel.” I make the words a command, but he isn’t like other dogs. Sure, I’m the pack leader, but he’s big enough to do as he likes and take the fucking consequences. “Jesus.”

I pull the door closed behind me and follow, already knowing where he’s going. *Do I want this? Do I want us to go after her? Is he defying me because he knows what I need better than I do?*

If so, we’re both fucking fools. Nothing good can come of this.

Out of the alley, I catch her scent and it nearly floors me. How can such a delicate creature as her smell like this? Like forest fires and top-shelf vodka, like roiling ocean currents and mountain wildernesses. She’s dangerous to me in a way nothing else ever has been, because she holds my heart in her hands and she doesn’t even know it.

But I want her all the same.

Ben drops back to bounce along happily at my side, but I warn him with a growl that we won't be getting close. Follow from a distance. Satisfy myself that she's safe. Then back home to jerk off over her goddamn scent. Maybe catch another glimpse of her undressing to carry me through the night.

It's cold. The weather turned a week ago and it's brought freezing temperatures and snow to the tops of the mountains. I stick to the shadows and dig my hands into the pockets of my jacket, snarling at the thought of her out here in this. She should be at home, warm, or better still wrapped in my arms.

No.

Fuck. No. Don't even think it.

Ben's tail wags as we wind through narrow, nearly-empty streets. I keep my head down to avoid being seen whenever a straggling human passes by. This is why I keep away from town, why I live alone with my wolf. Staying hidden when you're seven feet tall and built like a wrestler gets difficult.

Following her scent is easy. I'm a tracker by nature. Ben and I make our way out into the harbor, where the hollow thump of water lapping against the hulls of fishing vessels accompanies the soft sigh of the wind. I see Rayia's small, dark figure crossing the jetty, heading for the building where her father rents an office. So that's where she's going. Some work to catch up on? But that doesn't explain why she was upset.

"We'll wait here," I tell Ben, scratching behind his ears. "We won't get any closer."

I watch her key in the code at the doors, then go to push one open. Then hesitate and turn.

Someone else is there.

Jesus, how did I miss him? I was so focused on her scent, I didn't notice it wasn't pure, that there was another running through it. *How long was he following her?* He steps out of the shadows from the side of the building. Even from here, I can see there's something not right. She senses it too, drawing back, but there's recognition in her stance.

Recognition and disgust.

“Benka,” I mutter softly, and his ears prick up immediately.
“Stay.”

I move forward, telling myself I’ll just get a little closer so I’m there if anything happens. I won’t intervene unless I have to.

As I move from the shadow of one building to the next, I hear Ben padding along behind. *Disobedient little fucker*. I reprimand myself for not being sterner with him when he was a pup, but as I get closer my focus is all on her.

“What are you even doing here?” she asks, her voice shrill, panicked. I grind my teeth.

I should step in. But then she’d see me. I can’t see the disgust in her eyes. I won’t.

I have to stay back.

“I could ask you the same thing.” The man chuckles as he takes a step toward her and she steps back. My muscles clench. I should break his arm for even trying to put a hand on her. “Seems like maybe you wanted to get caught. All alone. Nobody to see what happens.”

“Just go home, Mike.”

“Come *on*, Ray. Sweetheart. I know you want it. You know you want it. Stop playing hard to get.”

“I said go home.”

“I don’t want to. And I don’t think you want me to either, not really.”

I growl, and hear Ben do the same. If this Mike takes another step toward her...

“What was that?” Rayia’s eyes dart to the darkness, connecting with mine. I’m *sure* she doesn’t see me. If she did, she’d be screaming. “Did you hear that?”

Mike chuckles. “Nice try, but I’m not falling for it. What do you say we go inside and have a little fun?”

“No! For Christ’s sake, Mike, why can’t you get it into your head? I’m. Not. Interested.”

He takes another step forward, and I see Rayia pale.

“Get the fuck back—!”

I can’t stand here and watch. I can’t do nothing.

My legs are moving before I know it, and out of the corner of my eye I spot Ben outflanking Mike the way we do when we bring down prey. I keep my face turned away as I cross from one shadow to the next, knowing I can’t let her see me.

Everything is automatic from there.

CHAPTER 3



Tulak

“Let him go!” Her voice is a screech from behind me.
“Please don’t hurt him!”

“You care about this motherfucker?”

I don’t turn.

I can’t let her see me. My heart begins to tear at the thought that what I interrupted might not have been what I thought. Perhaps she *was* playing with him after all. Perhaps she *likes* him.

Fuck. I couldn’t bear it. The need to kill him for that alone surges through me.

“I don’t want to see him torn apart like...like...”

Like those other two, I finish for her in my mind.

The scumbag’s face is bloodied, but he’s fine. Well, besides him pissing himself. He won’t ever be able to get tonight out of his mind. But physically, he’s fine.

Right now, he’s staring at Ben as he stalks back and forth. I kept my face hidden. He thinks the wolf is the horror here, but he has no idea.

He wouldn’t be the first human I took out of this world. I doubt he’d be the last.

“Scum like him don’t deserve to live,” I tell her, remembering the first man I killed. A fucking degenerate trying to hurt a prostitute in a dark Chicago alley back in 1984. She thanked

me before screaming and fleeing as soon as she saw what I was. That was when I learned my lesson. Even if I save a life, humans will only ever see the monster. “I’ll kill him. For you.”

“You’re right,” she says, spitting the words. “He doesn’t deserve to live. But *don’t*. Please.”

“Do you care about him?”

I need to know what this is. I need to know her feelings.

The moment lasts a lifetime as I hold my breath. One one thousand. Two one thousand. It’s torture of the highest order. If someone was tearing the extended claws from the backs of my clenched fists with fucking pliers it couldn’t possibly be more painful.

“No,” she says finally. “I just don’t like violence, that’s all. Please let him go, I don’t think he’ll bother me again.”

“Fucking right,” I grunt, then snap my fingers. “Benka. No.” The wolf snarls in disappointment, but obeys my command and lopes over to my side. Mike starts to sob, rubbing at his scuffed knees, hands scraped on the ground. I step toward him as he scrambles back. “I ever see you anywhere near Rayia again, you’d better enjoy taking your last breath. You hear me?” He nods as I roll my shoulders. “Get the fuck out of here.”

He can’t move fast enough, taking his stench with him.

It’s then that I hear the most beautiful sound in the world. My girl’s laughter. I close my eyes and savor it, knowing I need to commit it to memory, that I can’t ever get this close to her again.

“It’s Ray,” she says as I start to walk away. “I mean, it’s Rayia, but nobody calls me that except my parents. Ray to my friends. That’s what we are, right?”

Friends.

I shake my head. “You don’t want to be my friend. Trust me, Ray.” Her name feels good in my mouth.

“Wait. Don’t go. I haven’t even...” I stop still, hesitating as I anticipate her words. “I haven’t even thanked you.”

Fuck.

In an instant, my dick is hard inside my jeans, straining at the front of my boxers with glee. Thank me. Shit, yes, even I recognize the offer in her words. But she doesn't know what I am. I should let her get on with her life. A life without me in it.

Or I could have one fucking taste.

Jesus. No. What am I saying? Then I will forever mourn tasting heaven.

“Thank you...” she says. “But... You're him, aren't you? I'm not mistaken. You *are* who I think you are?”

I nod, but I don't turn. I'm used to staying in shadow. I can hide my face. But I can't stop myself from seeing hers. And if I saw her right now...

“I knew you were. I've thought about...about what happened but also, I...” She doesn't know what her voice is doing to me. How my mouth is watering. How my fangs are elongating. “I've dreamed about you.”

Fuck. I bite my lip to avoid telling her I've dreamed of her too.

Fuck.

Just one taste, I promise myself as I turn, lowering my head to my shoulder like some fiend in a vampire movie. I grab her shoulders and lift her gently, easily, pressing her up against the wall of the building where the darkness will cover me, where the hood of my jacket will ensure my face stays covered in shadow.

She squeals, but only in shock, not in fear. Perhaps...

No. Absolutely not. Just because she doesn't fear me right now, doesn't mean she wouldn't scream and flee at the sight of my face.

“What are you going to do to me?” she pleads, but the words aren't afraid. The look I see in her eyes is excited. Needy.

I draw a deep breath of her scent, tasting the undercurrent, the tang of her cunt on the air, wet for me or I'd like to think so. I

move my face to her throat and she doesn't hesitate, tilting her head to give me access. I hear the pulse, I feel her heart throbbing as I press against her, those womanly curves soft to my hard edges.

“What do you want me to do?” I ask, my mind racing. What if she screams? What if she tells me to stop? Could I?

She swallows, then her hand goes to my wrist and she guides me down. My fingers slipping between her legs as she bites into her bottom lip. “This,” she whispers, and I can't hold back.

I push my fingers against the seam of her pants, the pressure against her sensitive skin making her gasp. Keeping my head down, away from the light, I breathe in the scent of her arousal. The confidence rolls through me as I take in her openness to me. This isn't what I'm used to. But I've thought about this moment, dreamed about it. Yet the reality, the feel of her body pressed against mine, makes all those dreams vanish on the wind. This is bliss. My soul is on fire, my need to have her far outweighs everything else.

Take it slow. Be fucking gentle.

Her hands slide against my jacket to my shoulders, bunching the fabric as I make slow calculated circles and she pulls me closer. Her ravenous need matches my own. It's as if I've already memorized every curve, every inch of her sexy body, without ever touching her before.

My mate. This is my mate.

Mine to protect. Mine to cherish. Mine to use as I see fit.

She moves her head to look up, and I nuzzle into her neck, trailing my lips against her pulse, her heart frantically racing. *She can't see me if her eyes are closed.* Her pulse calls to my beast as I struggle to maintain my calm.

“What do you want?” I growl, grating my teeth as it takes every ounce of control to keep from taking her right here, mating her until I know she's mine forever.

“I—I,” she moans, struggling to stay on her feet as her legs shake. “You. I want you.”

My fingers trail over her cunt. I feel the heat of it seeping through her pants and my body cries out for more. The hair trigger of control I have is being stretched to its limit, and I long to rip her clothes off right here, right now. To get my teeth on her, to suckle at the divine spring she's hiding between those thighs.

"That's not all you want, princess." I press my body to hers, her coat falling open, the only layers between us now my jacket and her thin shirt. "Say it. Tell me all the things you want me to do. I want to hear it from those pretty lips of yours."

I lower my face to her luscious, full tits, feeling their softness, ripe flesh yielding to me as I graze them with my teeth. Every time I caught her undressing, I imagined doing this. The nipples press out beneath her thin bra, rising through her shirt to tease me. I pause, waiting for her response.

Tell me you want me. Tell me you want me to possess you.

"You inside me," she says, breathlessly.

"Don't hold back. How do you want me to worship you?"

It takes every ounce of self control to pause. My lips hovering over her skin, my hand stalling at her cunt. Her body tenses, aching as I wait for her response.

"Please. Keep going." The plea comes out of her mouth like a prayer. "Make me come," she begs. "Touch me, please. Get those dirty fingers inside my pussy the way I do to myself thinking of you. Make me scream."

Her words are my undoing.

I slide my hand past the hem of her pants, pushing her panties to the side to find her wet pussy. She gasps as I swirl her hardened clit, my thumb trailing in the trimmed hairs along her mound. I press a fingertip inside her warm hole and she throws her head back, breath coming in quick gasps and pants. Her pussy grinds down on my fingers greedily as my thumb flicks against her sensitive clit. She pulls me closer, wriggling against my hand, yearning for more, squirming against the wall as I nip at the flesh of her neck and slide two fingers deep

inside of her. I groan as I savor the feel of her wrapping around my fingers, coating me. Her warmth a stark contrast to the cold night.

“Is this how you touch yourself?” I ask, picturing her in her bed, out of my view at night, knowing I’m out there watching her, protecting her.

Her back arches, pushing her chest to mine. *These damn clothes are in my way.* I’m too aware of my cock, engorged and hard in my pants, pushing to get to her. Not my first erection. That came the first night I watched her from my vantage point across the street. But my first one with her. The first I’m tempted to dip in her juicy cunt or force her face down to take into her mouth. There was a time I thought I was broken, when I read about such things and had never experienced anything of the kind. Now I know the truth. I was waiting.

For her.

For us.

Trapped as it is, it’s uncomfortable, but there’s no way I’m going to stop what I’m doing. I want to watch her come apart. I need to. Her soft moans and writhing body push me to keep going.

I mercilessly play with her clit, unrelenting as I watch the agony and pleasure vie for control on her features. She wants this. She wants more.

“Ohhh, yes, yes,” she wails, her high-pitched voice tearing through me. “Just like that.”

“Fuck me,” I growl as I feel her clamping around me, her thighs pulling taut. Her body trembles as I press into her moist walls, swiping at the spot that sends her eyes rolling back as I peek down at her face.

I smell it. Her scent. I can almost taste the musk as it seeps out around my squelching fingers. The thought of getting them in my mouth almost has me pulling them free.

I long to kiss her, to rip her clothes away and devour her. I want to taste her, every single glorious inch of her. I want to

nip at her milky flesh, bruise her lips with mine. I want there to be no question as to who she belongs to. Reality tries to worm its way into my mind as I bat it away. Now is not the time for self-loathing.

Focus Damn it.

Ray squirms as her moans become frantic mewls, her pussy wet on my fingers as my other hand slides up her shirt, teasing a pebbled nipple through her thin bra. I know she's close. I can smell it, sense it as I move my fingers faster within her, unrelenting on the circles my thumb is making against her swollen clit. I imagine it red and swollen, throbbing with its need for me. The thought of stretching her wide with my obscene cock makes me grit my teeth to hold back the cum threatening to spurt at any moment. Something about her shock at me touching her, the sweet unhindered scent of her wrapping around me, has my beast clawing to get out. With each stroke of my finger, that awareness, wildness creeps in. My cock aches, twitching, wanting her attention.

"I'm...I'm..." She gasps between panting breaths. My eyes are glued to her lips as she moans into the night, her breath condensing as she writhes against me.

"You're what?" I ask. I can feel it, soaking up everything she's giving me. "Don't hold back. I want all of it. It's mine."

"Oh god," she moans. I feel my cock twitch at the sound of her moans, the head wet with my own pre-cum. I don't dare stop or try anything else. I don't want to ruin the moment, even though I know her touch will be the death of me. It will be over. It likely already is.

She leans her head back, her mouth agape as she moans into the night. I long to kiss her as she shatters. Her orgasm rocks through her as she soaks my fingers. The only thing holding her in place is my body, my hand bringing her release, holding her up as her legs tremble and her knees go weak.

I slow my pace, trying to match the waves of it as it ebbs away. I peek through the shadows enjoying the rosy tinge to her cheeks as she pants to catch her breath.

“I...that was...” Ray rights her clothes, looking bashful as she worries her bottom lip with her teeth.

I bring my fingers to my face and inhale, drawing in the scent of her, my mouth watering before I suck each one clean, her arousal like ambrosia in my mouth. Then, with her moans still running through my mind as my eyes rake over her, taking it all in, committing it all to memory, I do the only thing that makes sense.

I turn and melt into the shadows. I can't stay. I can't have her. This was the only taste of freedom, life, that I get. The only taste I can ever hope for.

“Wait...Please,” she calls after me, her voice cutting into every nerve as it fades. I can't linger. If I linger, I'll want to stay. And I couldn't do that. Not to her.

I don't even call after Benka, knowing he will be reluctantly shadowing me.

“Don't go. Please come back.”

The confusion tinged with lingering arousal hits me as her voice follows me into the night.

I don't know how long she calls after me, but each time feels as if it's ripping my heart out a little more. When I finally get far enough away not to smell her, I lean against a tree, knowing I can't go all the way back without making sure she gets home safely.

I can't decide if making her come, having that moment only once is better than nothing or if I just doomed myself to yearn for her for eternity.

CHAPTER 4



Rayia

I press the door closed behind me and lean back, not bothering to turn the light on, drawing a deep breath.

Did that really happen? Did I let that...beast...do those things to me? Yes, and I really enjoyed it too...

Standing here in the dark of my own house, it doesn't seem real. Like a dream. Or a nightmare. But if it's a nightmare, why am I still tingling all over? Why do I want to run upstairs and pleasure myself while I think about him? The size of him, the strength of him. The way he stepped in to protect me. Why am I disappointed that as soon as it was over he disappeared in the shadows as I called to him to stop. He was following me. I should be terrified by that realization but I'm not. I feel warm and safe and loved.

Loved. By someone that can rip people apart without a second thought. That would have killed tonight for me.

I abhor violence. I won't watch boxing or cage fighting. Yet, somehow...

When he does it, I like it.

But why did he leave like that? Can he only stand to look at me in the dark?

With a sigh, I push away from the door and flick the switch.

And my hand goes to my mouth.

Flowers from the vase my mom keeps by the door are strewn and trampled on the floor. The hall mirror has a spidery round crack in the center. Everything's quiet, but my racing heart.

"Mom? Dad?" I call out into the empty space, tears burning in my eyes. What happened here while I was gone? Did we get robbed?

My mom steps out into the hall from the living room and I draw back. I've never seen such fury in her eyes, such wildness. She's holding a baseball bat out like a weapon as she turns toward me, then almost collapses as the tension dissipates.

"Rayia. I thought you might be..." She licks her lips. "Where have you been? We've been worried sick." She looks me up and down, her eyes narrowing. "Did somebody hurt you? Your clothes are a mess..."

I'm shaking my head, feeling the blush rise on my cheeks. "No, I...I just needed some air. What happened here?"

It's my dad who answers from behind her, his voice weak. "You need to come through. I need to tell you the truth."

My mom doesn't even look at me as she turns and goes back inside. When I follow her in, I'm not prepared for what I see.

Dad is a mess. His eye is bruised, his lip split open, a big bump is rising on his forehead. He's lying back on the sofa, his hand clutched to his side, his face pale and clammy.

"Papa," I gasp, running to his side. "What happened? We need to get you to hospital."

"No," he says weakly. "No hospital. I'm fine. It looks worse than it is. Rayia, we need to talk. Please sit down."

I'm stroking his face, but he pushes my hand away, as I try to blink back tears. Why doesn't he want me near him? My mind is racing along with my heart, confusion muddling everything that happened tonight.

"Sit down, Rayia," my mom says, and I turn to find her slumped into a hard-backed chair. Her eyes are cold, defeated. I shake my head, but she repeats the words. "Sit down."

Instead I get to my knees on the floor and take my dad's hand in mine. "What happened? Somebody tell me something. Did...did Mike do this?"

"What would Mike have to do with anything?" Mom asks.

"Nothing, it's—"

"I couldn't do it," Dad says. "You were upset about marrying Daniel and I couldn't force that on my daughter. He didn't like hearing the word no."

"*Daniel?*" I can't believe what I'm hearing. Daniel wouldn't hurt a fly. And why would he care about marrying *me*?

My dad is shaking his head. "Not Daniel. I don't think he knows about this. It was Trevor. Well, someone Trevor sent anyway."

"What? I don't understand. *Trevor Balaur?*"

I fall silent, closing my eyes, trying to figure out any of this. Trevor Balaur did this to him? Daniel's father? It doesn't make any sense. Why would Trevor Balaur want me to marry his son enough to have my dad beaten up? I'm nobody. Daniel walks around with a gold watch worth more than our house. He has gold cuff links that would pay my way through college. Trevor's house in Ulric's Haven is a sprawling mansion up on the cliffs on a massive plot of land, one of the oldest residences.

How could he possibly be interested in marrying his son off to a girl with no prospects, the great-granddaughter of Russian immigrants who had to flee with nothing? What could he possibly gain from that?

Has he found out about his son's sexuality and wants to force him into a loveless marriage for the sake of saving face?

"I..." My father swallows, turning his face away from me. "I owe him a lot of money."

"None of this makes any sense," I insist. "The business is doing well. I look after the books, I know."

He shakes his head. "No, it isn't. Four years ago, you remember that storm? When the boat got turned over in the

harbor?”

“Yes. The insurance—”

“I didn’t have insurance. I lost everything. We were already behind on the mortgage on this place, and it needed repairs.”

“What are you saying?”

My mom scoffs, drawing my attention. “Trevor stepped in.”

“Trevor Balaur lent you money?”

“He came to the house while you were at school. Said he’d heard what happened and he wanted to help.” My dad sighs. “It seemed perfect. I’d borrow a little, get everything back on track, pay him back and move on. I’d never met him before. He has a reputation for generosity and he loves this town. I thought he wanted to help. But the boat was more expensive than I thought. The repairs were serious. For some reason, each catch I made got smaller and smaller. I borrowed a little more from Trevor, then a little more and a little more. And he kept saying it was fine, not to worry about it. Then...”

“Then *what*, Dad?”

“Then he asked me to run some of his money through my books. He said it would be the one time, a favor for a friend. How could I say no? But it wasn’t once. It happened again the next month, and every month after that. He said we should introduce you to his son. It was Trevor that suggested I should give you a job taking care of my accounts. I said no, I didn’t want to take the risk of you seeing what we were doing, but he insisted. I tried to keep you away from it, but you’re too good, Rayia. You were getting so close...”

I feel cold. Frozen to the spot. I can’t believe what I’m hearing. How did I not know any of this?

The few times I’ve met Trevor, I kind of liked him. Handsome in a clean-cut, multi-billionaire kind of way. Daniel’s mom is so glamorous. They seemed like such a loving couple. I never imagined any of this. Money laundering? Loan sharking? Does Daniel know about it? Has he been keeping it from me?

“What does any of this have to do with...” I look at my father’s injuries and feel sick. “Why are you hurt like this?”

“Because I told him I couldn’t take his money any longer. I said I’d find a way to pay him back. But Trevor didn’t want it. He said he wouldn’t take my money, but that if I didn’t want to run the risk any longer he understood. He needed one last favor. You marry Daniel and all my debts to him would be written off.”

I almost fall back as I pull away from him. “You *sold* me?”

“It wasn’t like that, Rayia. I had no choice.”

“We all have to do things we don’t want to do sometimes,” my mom chimes in, and I shoot her a dirty look. Working a boring job? Yes. Marrying someone to pay a debt? No.

The very thought of marriage makes me think of *him*. The man in the dark whose hands did such wonderful things to my body... My heart is thundering, my skin clammy as I imagine having to say *I do* to anyone but him. After the things we did, how could I even contemplate some sham marriage to a man I like but could never love and wouldn’t love me back?

“You’re acting like a child,” my mom says rolling her eyes. “You’ve seen what happens when Trevor doesn’t get what he wants. Do you think he’ll stop with black eyes and a split lip?”

“You still want me to do it, don’t you?” I’m on my feet, unable to believe what I’m hearing.

“No,” my father says from behind me. “That’s why I told him I wouldn’t do it. That’s why—”

“Yes,” my mom interrupts. “Yes, child, do something for your family for once.”

I gape, turning to look at the wall where a photograph of my brother hangs. My brother who got into college on a full scholarship. She’s been cold towards me since his death, but this is something else.

“No,” I tell her, setting my jaw. “I’m sorry I’m not the child you want.”

And with that, I turn and leave, ignoring my father's pleas as I walk out for the second time.



IT'S STARTED TO RAIN. Freezing droplets being flung at my face, burning my skin. It seems fitting somehow.

Where am I going? What am I going to do?

For a second I consider going to find Daniel, to tell him what's been going on. Surely he'll be as horrified as I am to find out what our parents have been cooking up.

But do I want to do that to him? Tonight was his first date with Jules. He'll be happy and loved up, and I'll bring all this down on him, tearing his world apart the way mine has been torn apart.

I turn my face up to the sky, not knowing what I'm doing but needing to do *something*.

"Help me," I plead. My hand goes to the crucifix at my throat. I never believed in God. I wore it because it was what my parents wanted.

Angrily, I grip the little silver charm, feeling it dig into my palm, and tear it from my neck, tossing it into the street.

And this time, I know what I'm doing, what I'm asking.

"I know you're there," I call out, turning back and forth. "I know you've been watching me since that night. I need you now. If you care about me at all, you'll help me."

CHAPTER 5



Tulak

*M*y heart thunders, as my claws and fangs extend, a response to her pain.

But I'm frozen to the spot.

She's calling out to me, begging for my help, and I'm standing here watching, unable to make a decision, unable to go to her. Because if I go to her now, I might not be able to stop. And when she rejects me—which she will—it will destroy me.

“No,” I say to Ben as he stares up at me, wagging his tail. “I can't.”

Yes you can. You must. He doesn't have to speak for me to understand what he wants.

The cry of frustration tears from my lips as I grip the window frame, nearly ripping it from the wall in my fury. She doesn't know what she's asking. I've helped people before, and every single time they've wished I hadn't. They've screamed in horror at the sight of me. Even when I first came here, seeking others like me, following rumors and whispers, I found rejection. They'd never seen anything like me before. They thought I was a Feral. After all, who but a Feral could look like this?

They took me in in the end. But I don't subject them to my face more than I have to. When I go to the settlement, I cover myself in dirt just to keep the horror hidden, trying to look wild instead of monstrous.

“No!” I insist to Ben’s unspoken plea. “She won’t understand.”

He growls at me, pawing the ground, and sauntering over to the door. Her scent is in my nostrils, pheromones calling out to me. Her sobs are in my ears, raising my hackles in protective need.

“Please...” Her voice is soft. Nobody but a Wolven could hear it from here. “I don’t know what I’m going to do! I can’t do this without you!”

If I could cry, I would right now. Vague, distant memories come back to me. Memories of my adopted parents looking at me with disgust, leaving me to die the way my birth parents must have done before them, knowing this was what I would become. Memories of wandering the wild places, a monstrous rumor. Memories of bedding down in the dirt and grime of the city, to keep from making people sick at the sight of me. Memories of rejection even when I saved a life.

The world is cruel. I know it. Benka knows it.

Then how can you let her suffer?

Fuck. *Fuck.*

“Motherfucker,” I mutter to myself. “Get a fucking grip. If you can’t protect your mate, what good are you to anyone?”

Ben’s ears prick up as I turn away from the window. And his tongue lolls as I open the door.



BY THE TIME I reach the street, she’s on her knees in the rain. Her beautiful dark curls are bedraggled, stuck flat to her skull in wet waves. Her clothes are soaked as she sobs.

Ben speeds past me, right to her, and pushes his muzzle into her shoulder. When she turns, and sees me standing in the dark, it’s like the sun suddenly breaks through the clouds. There’s no fear as she runs her fingers through my wolf’s thick mane, getting to her feet. The smile on her face defies the cold of the rain.

“I knew you’d come,” she says. Then hesitates, her steps faltering. “You have come to help me, haven’t you?”

I nod, sticking to the shadows.

“Come on inside,” I tell her. “Before you catch your death.”

She grins and runs over, followed closely by Ben. I try to keep away from her, telling myself that I’ll do this then go back to the shadows where I belong, but when I see her shivering it’s too much. In an instant, my arm is around her shoulders, pulling her in close. Her wet clothes stick to me and I berate myself for allowing this to happen.

How could I leave her like that for so long? I’m truly a monster.

“I have some dry things inside,” I tell her. “You can borrow a shirt or something.”

“Th—thank you,” she stutters, her voice wracked with shivers.

“Here.” I strip my jacket and drape it around her as I pull the door open, stepping inside.

“I didn’t know anyone lived here. I thought it was abandoned.”

“It is. I’ve been using it while...” I let the words trail off. She knows I’ve been following her. How much more of a creep do I want her to think I am? “Why were you out in the rain like that?”

She coughs as we head up the stairs, and I grab my battery lamp to light our way. I’m used to the dark but she belongs in the light. “Believe me, you don’t want to know. I wouldn’t know where to begin anyway.”

“Try me,” I insist. “Otherwise, how can I fix it for you?”

“There’s no fixing this.”

I turn, holding the lamp out of the way so she can’t see my face as I take her chin in my hand. She shivers as she tries to look into my eyes through the dark shadows. Can she see how much I want her right now? Even as she is, it’s taking every ounce of strength to keep from putting my lips on hers, or

getting down on my knees and worshiping at the altar of that beautiful ass, those luscious thighs, that dripping cunt.

I need more.

“What?” she says, blinking.

I murmur, “Never hold anything back. I’ll help you, princess, but you have to tell me what’s wrong. Begin at the beginning.”

She nods, swallowing. “Okay. Um... Before I met you earlier I kind of had a fight with my parents.”

“About what?”

“About Daniel. Well, sort of...” She rolls her eyes. “They want me to marry him. Me and Daniel, I mean... You don’t know him but that’s *not* happening.”

I growl despite myself, trying to hold back from kidnapping her. “Who is he? I’ll—”

Her hand is on my arm in an instant, her touch calming me. It’s like water poured on the flames, soothing, extinguishing.

But I need to know.

“Who is he to you?” I demand, like some entitled asshole.

“He’s my friend,” she says, and I detect a hint of challenge in her voice.

“Why do your parents think you’d want to marry him? Have you...” I can hardly speak the words. “You and him? Have you done anything?”

A slight smile plays on her lips as she stares at me. “Are you jealous?”

“No. Answer the question.”

“You are, aren’t you?”

“Answer the fucking question, princess.”

She laughs. “Not a chance. We’re not...compatible.”

I release my held breath. “What does that mean?” I move my hand to the small of her back and guide her forward, up the stairs to the room where I’ve been sleeping.

“That it wouldn’t happen if he was the last man on Earth and I was the last woman. I can’t say more than that but trust me. Please?”

I nod, more to myself than to her, trying to control my emotions being this close to perfection. Trust her. She says it like it’s the easiest request in the world. She has no idea how few people I’ve ever been able to trust in my life.

Ben goes to his dog bed in the corner as I pull a duffel from beside my sleeping bag and open it, taking out a shirt. “Here.”

She takes it from me and lets it unroll, holding it up against herself but not moving to put it on.

“It’s clean,” I tell her.

Ray nods. “I know. It’s not that, it’s just... Do you mind?”

“No. I have plenty. I can always buy more. Go ahead.”

“No. Could you turn around? I feel kind of exposed here.”

I huff a breath through my nose, but turn to face the window. And her bedroom. If she knew how many times I’ve seen her undress, she would know there’s nothing to be embarrassed about. But I give her privacy. After all, what right do I have to demand openness when I won’t even let her see my face?

“Why did they want you to marry this Daniel person?” I ask as I stare at her house. There’s a light on in the living room. Why did nobody go to her when she was crying in the street?

“It’s a long story. My dad owes Daniel’s dad and I was being offered up. Can you believe that? I don’t even know why Trevor would *want* his son to marry me.”

“Trevor?”

“Uh huh. Trevor Balaur. You know him?”

I shake my head. “I know of him. His property abuts mine. Ours. Pact land.”

“You’re Pact?”

I turn at the disbelief in her voice, and catch a glimpse of a pale bare breast before she moves quickly to cover herself,

shrieking. “Yes, I’m Pact. Does that bother you?”

“No, it’s just...I’ve heard stories. I’m sure they’re exaggerated.”

“Probably not,” I mutter, turning back to the window.

There’s a moment of silence before she continues. “Anyway... Trevor is a billionaire. Why on Earth would someone like that want someone like me as a daughter in law?”

I shrug. “Because you’re perfect?” I hear her laugh, and turn to find her fastening the last few buttons on the shirt. “Because you’re beautiful. And smart. And fascinating.”

“I’m none of those things. Trust me.”

“You’re all of those things. And more.”

She stares at me, and I can see her eyes moving, trying to distinguish me from the shadows. But I’m too used to hiding. She won’t see me unless I choose to show myself. “Anyway, why would you say that? You ran away from me earlier.”

“Not because I wanted to. Because...”

“Because?”

“You wouldn’t understand.”

“Do you think I’m stupid?”

I growl. “Never.”

“Then why did you run? Why did I have to beg you to come for me?”

I look her up and down slowly, committing her to memory. “As soon as I’ve fixed your problems, you have to go back to your life and forget all about me. I want that for you. A happy life.”

“I can’t be happy without you.”

“Yes you can. You will.”

“*Why?*” She takes a step toward me, and I tense. “Why won’t you let me see you? You think I can’t tell you’re hiding? You don’t want me to be able to recognize you—?”

“Because you’d scream and run,” I tell her. She stops moving, her eyes narrowing. “Everyone who’s ever seen me has been horrified. Your parents want to sell you off to the highest bidder, mine left me to die because I made their skin crawl. I don’t want you to look at me that way, Ray. I can’t.”

“What?” Her face falls. “Your *parents*...? That’s...” She shakes her head. “That’s stupid. I don’t *care* what you look like. You saved me tonight. *Twice*.”

“It won’t matter. Believe me. If you saw me—”

“I saw you *already*. Out on that road. You didn’t scare me then, what makes you think I’d be scared now?”

I clench my fists, grinding my teeth as I mull her words. “How much did you see?”

“Fangs. Claws. Glowing eyes. Two people being...um...”

“That’s all?”

“Isn’t it enough?”

The words hang between us. Is it enough? So she wasn’t horrified to see me as a monster, but what about as a man? Humans have empathy for wild animals, they don’t have much for each other.

Is it possible that once in my life, a human being could see me and not freak out? That I could show myself to *her* without losing her?

“Come on,” she says. “I want to see you. Please?”

Finally, with a growl, I force myself forward. As I feel the light of the lamp fall on my face, I hear her gasp and every sinew in my body tenses, waiting for the inevitable. The scream of horror, the words of hate.

From anyone else I could ignore them, but not from her.

They’ll tear me in two. The last remaining faith in my heart will be extinguished.

“Wow,” she says, a soft smile playing on her lips. “You’re amazing.”

CHAPTER 6



Rayia

*T*ouch his face and he pulls back, but I don't relent. I hold my hand across the multitude of criss-crossing scars. His eyes are slanted like a wolf's, wide apart, each one beautiful, perfect. Hair covers not just his chin and cheeks, but right up to his eyes and across the bridge of his thick nose, a shaggy salt-and-pepper mane of it pulled back from his forehead in a short tail.

One ear is higher than the other, more canine looking with its soft, thin skin and pointed tip.

This is why he was afraid. He thought I'd be horrified.

"Your parents were the monsters," I say. "How could they not love you?"

He draws a deep breath. "Thank you, but you don't have to—"

"No. I don't have to. I want to. You didn't need to be afraid to let me see you like this."

His hand goes to my waist as butterflies start in my tummy at his touch. I love being here with him, more than I probably should. I'm not stupid, I know that from here he could see into my bedroom. Has he watched me undress? The thought makes my nipples harden beneath the thin shirt and I blush. My body is suddenly ready for a repeat of earlier.

"They were my adopted parents," he says, his voice a low growl that connects with my flesh like a caress. "I never knew my birth parents. I was left outside an orphanage. They must

have known what I'd become one day." He shrugs, like it's all long forgotten history, but I see the pain in his eyes and want to draw it all away. "I don't remember much about the adoption. It was nearly sixty years now. What I do remember is being left in the woods. I think there was some discussion about killing me outright, but my adopted parents couldn't do it."

"Sixty years?" I ask, trying to puzzle it out. The light here isn't great, but he doesn't look more than mid forties.

He nods. "You've seen the teeth and claws. I'm not human, I'm Wolven. All the Pact are. Does that scare you?"

"Not one bit. You need to learn that nothing you could do would scare me. Your adopted parents were stupid. They never got to know you. The man you've become. Strong, protective, caring. Their loss."

He searches my face, his eyes glinting just a little in the light from the lamp, that same yellow I saw in the darkness three weeks ago. He stares deep into me, then draws a breath. "You're not lying, are you?" Something flashes on his face. Relief?

I laugh. "No. I'm not lying. You'd know if I was. I'm the worst liar in the world."

He nods. "That's good to hear. I don't like being lied to."

"And if I *was* going to lie to you, I'd use your name." I stare into his eyes, waiting to see if the hint catches. "Which I don't know..." I add when he stares at me.

"Tulak."

"Tulak..." I repeat. "That's an unusual name."

He nods. "An old man called me 'tento tulak'. It was dark but he made the sign of the cross over his chest while he said it. He'd become separated from his tour group and I'd saved his life from a mountain lion. All he saw was a childlike creature in the woods. I was twelve, I think. That was the first name I remember being given."

“I’m sorry. The world has been cruel to you. What...” I don’t know whether to ask the question.

“Say it,” he growls, as if in answer, and I nod.

“What are we going to do about Daniel and Trevor and my parents, and—”

“I’ll kill Trevor Balaur,” he says, matter of fact. “Seems like he’s the keystone in this whole thing.”

“No.” I swallow. He’s clearly not used to this sort of thing. “That’s not really the way I do things.”

“It’s fine. You don’t have to be there.”

“No, that’s not what I mean. Trevor...he’s the father of one of my best friends. I don’t want him dead. I hate violence anyway. You could talk to him? He might listen to you.” I hesitate. “Although, I guess even then he’s likely to still hold my dad to his debt. I love my dad, even if he was willing to sell me.”

“Then it’s settled. I’ll kill Balaur. No Balaur, no debt.”

I lean my head on his chest, trying to think it through. “No, Tulak. I don’t want him dead. I’ll have to speak to Daniel. If he tells his father a few truths, I think this whole thing—”

“I’ll pay the debt then,” he says. “How much?”

I splay my fingers over his heart in the darkness, shaking my head. “Thanks, but I can’t ask you to do that.”

“How much, princess?”

My heart flutters. I love him calling me that. “I have no idea. A lot, I’m sure.” I glance around at the meager surroundings. I’m not even sure if he owns this place or is squatting. “It’s more than my dad could contemplate paying, or he wouldn’t have done any of this.”

“It’s settled. I’ll pay.”

“No.”

“Yes. The Pact has money. They keep telling me that a share of it is mine. I’ll use my share to pay your father’s debt. No

killing, as you say. But I will fix this for you. You're not marrying anyone. I won't allow it."

"Well, not Daniel anyway," I say before I can stop the words coming out of my mouth.

And in the silence that follows, my brain has time to process the thought. Somehow, it feels like Tulak and I are already more than just a fling. He's more than just the first man to give me an orgasm. He's the *only* man that will ever give me an orgasm. He's the only man I'll ever want or need. As heavy as all that is, it feels right.

"I can't imagine ever being with anyone but you," I whisper. "How is that possible? I've only known you, properly known you, for a few hours."

He kisses the top of my head. "We're mates."

I chuckle. "Nobody uses the word 'mate'."

"No. Mates. Bound to each other. Fated to be together."

I look up into his face. His beautiful, strange face. And I smile. "I don't believe in fate. But I do believe in paying my debts."

"What do you mean...?" His eyes go wide as I grin and lower myself to my knees. "What are you doing, princess?"

What am I doing? I'm not even sure myself. All I know is, it feels right. My body humming in response to all the dirty thoughts floating in my head.

"My father was going to sell me to pay his debts. Since you're the one paying his debts, that makes me yours now." I lick my lips, my heart thundering. It feels dirty in the best way to be doing this with him. I brush my fingers through my tangled hair, still damp from the rainwater, and pull it up, putting it in his hand. "You'll want to get your money's worth," I tell him.

"Fuck... Rayia... Please don't..."

I make a frown, pouting like he's taken away my favorite toy. "But I want to. You're not going to make me stop, are you?"

"No, I—" His fingers loosen and I reach up, putting my tangled, thick hair back in his grip, giving up control to him.

My lord and master.

“What do you like?” I ask as I lick my lips, my body humming as I snap the button on his jeans with fumbling fingers as his erection strains against them, making it hard for me to get it undone.

I pull them away enough to pull his rigid cock from his boxers. *Holy Crap.* My brazenness gives way to nervousness as I take in the size of him. What possessed me into thinking I could do this having never done it before? I have no idea how to make this sexy. I fumbled getting him out. Now what?

“I don’t know,” he says, staring down at me as I wrap my hand around the base.

“You don’t know?” I squint one eye. *This hulking muscle man doesn’t know what he likes?*

“I’ve never done anything like this before.”

“You’re teasing me?”

He shakes his head. “We’re mates. Fated to each other. It’s impossible for a Wolven male to—”

He grits his teeth as I stroke my thumb along the underside of his cock, feeling bumping ridges of hardened flesh. His breath hisses as his eyes roll back in his head. My heart races in my chest. His reactions to my touch have my stomach in knots. I want to do this as much as I want him to finish what he started after saving me. I don’t know what’s gotten into me, but I don’t fight it.

“Impossible to what?” I ask, smiling to myself as his body goes rigid.

“To get an erection. Princess, you’re the only one. Until I saw you on that road, I’d never had one before.”

“You’ve never had a blowjob?”

At least I know I can’t royally botch it if he’s never had one. I like the idea of being the first to touch him, taste his cum, make his eyes roll back in his head.

Suddenly his grip in my hair tightens and I yelp as my head is forced back to look up at him. The fury and strength in his expression should be frightening, and it is but I love it. I love looking at him.

“What do you know about blowjobs?” he demands. “Who have you done this with before? Who’s taken the mouth that belongs to me?”

“Nobody,” I say, then cry out as he pulls harder. “Nobody!”

“Are you lying?”

I shake my head. “There isn’t a nineteen year old in the world who doesn’t know about blowjobs. Just because I know about a thing doesn’t mean I’ve done it. Please, Tulak, I want you in my mouth.”

He loosens his grip, and as soon as he does I wrap my hand back around his cock, lovingly pulling my fingers along its length as it jerks in response.

“Tell me you’re a virgin. Tell me no man has had the pleasure of filling that tight cunt that yielded to me, begging for release.”

I lick my lips, savoring the word. “I’m a virgin. My nubile body is all yours to defile. I’m selling you my innocence, Tulak. Make every penny count.”

I should be mortified by the words, but there’s this call within me. Touching him feels...right. I stroke him from base to head and back, taking in how silky his skin is as he hisses through his teeth.

“You’re not *selling* me your innocence. You’re my mate. It’s *mine* to take. I’m ready to fuck that pretty mouth of yours.”

I look up into his eyes, and all I see is pure lust. The heat of his gaze washes through me like molten lava, straight to my core. I’m getting wet by touching him. He encircles my hand with one of his, squeezing harder than I thought I should as he shows me how.

He said he’d never had an erection until he saw me. But somehow I don’t think this is his first rodeo as far as touching

is concerned. *Is this what he does to himself when he's watching me through my window?* I love that he's obviously watched me undress. I love the thought that I was giving him a peepshow without even knowing it. It's flattering, turning me on as I lean up on my knees, flicking my tongue against the head of his cock, tasting the droplets of pre-cum forming at the tip.

I go to pull back, but he holds my head still, his fingers tightening on my hair until there's a bite of pain. My nipples harden as it ebbs away to pleasure. I have no idea how that thing will fit in my mouth. But there's no time to think about it. His hand gripping my hair as I wince, pulls my head forward, his thick cock splitting my lips, just the head sitting bulbous and heavy on my tongue as I gag and suckle desperately.

And just as quickly, I'm pulled away again.

"Fuck, princess." He pauses as I watch the struggle on his face. He's trying to be a gentleman when I'm ready to taste the wildness that is him. "You don't have to do this," he struggles to say, panting already as his massive chest heaves. "You can walk away from me. The money is still yours. Tell me before I take you because once I have you, there's no going back. Fucking you with my fingers earlier is all I can take. Anymore and my beast will demand you to be mine and I can't say I'll want to hold back."

"I want this," I tell him. I watch goosebumps bloom on the flesh of his arms as my breath tickles against his wet cock. "Now shut up and use me."

His eyes widen as I pull him back into my mouth, pushing him farther in, testing how much I can take. I put my hand at the base, buffering the size difference as I reach the back of my throat. I fight my gag reflex as I start to pick up the pace, grazing my teeth across his shaft as I go.

His hold on my hair tightens, keeping my pace as I tighten my lips around him. I want him to take this from me. I want to feel dirty and loved and used. I don't resist as he guides me along

his cock. I can feel him growing in size in my mouth, stretching my lips wider. The surprise must be on my face.

“Wolven knot in their mates. It won’t happen in your mouth,” he says, through gritted teeth.

I nod, not really understanding except at a basic level. *Knot? Tied together?*

Thank god it’s not going to happen in my mouth. Keeping this pace is already making my lips sore, holding the o shape around the thickness of him. Each pass of my mouth has my own body reacting. My nipples straining against my shirt as my panties grow wet.

It’s almost as if I can feel the ghost of his fingers inside me again. The lust coursing through me, pushing me to taste all of him until tears spring to my eyes. I take him farther, harder into my mouth. My hand and lips are coated in saliva as I work him.

His pace becomes frantic as he fucks my mouth. His cock twitches before I start to feel him pulse.

“Fuck me,” he growls.

I am. When his hips jerk and he hits the back of my throat, I second guess if that’s true.

I don’t know if he meant it as a warning that he’s about to come, but his growl vibrates through me, making me more confident, pushing me to suck, harder, rolling my tongue across the base of his cock until he releases. I want to taste him, take all he wants to give me.

He uses my hair to push my head back until our eyes meet. A groan leaving his mouth as I smile around his cock. The pulsing increases as he’s pushing into my mouth. I relax as he gets rougher, hips rocking as he slides into my mouth until his cock pushes past how far I thought I could take him. His hot seed starts to fill my mouth as I try to swallow him down. The hot, salty spurts of him coating my mouth and throat as his moans fill the room. It’s leaking past my lips, wetting my hand, but I clean him with my tongue, taking every drop of his tangy sweet and sour cum until I sit back on my feet.

He rips off his shirt, showing off impressive muscles with snaking tribal tattoos covering zigzagged scars.

My mouth waters at the thought of tracing his abs with my tongue. My fingers itch to map out his ripped body until I know it as well as I know my own.

“Here,” he says, panting as he tries to catch his breath.

“I don’t need that,” I tell him, licking the remaining cum off my hands, swiping a missed drop off my cheek before sucking it off my fingertip as we make intense eye contact.

He doesn’t have a chance to go soft, his cock springing to attention as I grin up at him.

A harsh growl vibrates from him as he leans down, lifting me to my feet.

“You don’t need to pay me. You don’t owe me anything.” Tulak seems frustrated.

He’s mercurial going between telling me I’m his to telling me to go, that he will do all this for nothing.

“I do though. I want to. You’re keeping me from a loveless marriage. I was sold off and you’re buying me.”

“You are not a possession to be bought and sold. You’re something to be cherished and worshiped.”

“What if I want to be a possession?” I whisper. I tremble as my own lust blooms in my center. The ache in my core ready for him. “What if I want to be *your* possession?”

There was something so freeing, so sexy about relenting to his body, giving my mouth to him in exchange for his help. It was dirty and possessive, and I don’t think I could be any wetter thinking about it.

“When all this is through you will be free to live your life, Ray,” he says, shaking his head at me. His cock already straining again. I smile, knowing I do that to him. “You don’t need to pay me back.”

I shrug with a lazy grin. “I don’t have to, but after what we just did, I know I’m going to enjoy it.”

CHAPTER 7



Rayia

I grin as I sit by the camp fire and watch Tulak running with Benka, chasing each other across a path of stones through a freezing stream, sure-footed and confident as they follow the scent of a deer.

Well, apparently they're following a scent. All I see is two wild animals on the hunt, enjoying what they do. I won't pretend the idea of them chasing down a deer doesn't make me a little squeamish, but it's what they do and I wouldn't take that away from them.

Tulak is shirtless. In the light of day, the tribal tattoos that cover his chest, shoulders and arms are mesmerizing. Black against his weather-tanned, slightly furred skin, the patterns are intricate and detailed, with diamonds, stars, lines and teeth. One day, I'll have to ask him where they came from. He's a mountain of a man, not slim and tightly muscled like a bodybuilder but thick and solid. Looking around at his current camp, I can believe that he survives like this, and would survive no matter what the world throws at him.

Which makes me sad and happy at the same time. Sad that he's had to learn to live like this, but happy that he's found a kind of peace. It's clear that he and Benka share a bond that goes beyond species, and Benka has welcomed me as if I'm the leading female in his little pack. Which I suppose I kind of am.

I hear a whistle, then a low growl. “Benka.” The word echoes through the river valley, barely more than a bark, as a deer darts from the trees.

Flinching back, I narrow my eyes, unwilling to watch the animal torn apart, but thankfully I don’t have to.

Benka bounds out into the open, snapping at the animal’s heels. He misses, but I don’t think that’s the plan. Instead, Tulak comes from the side, running fast to cut the deer off. But he leaps just a little late and it skips over the long grass, disappearing into the woods.

“What happened?” I tease, grinning up at my wild man.

He shakes his head. “Distracted. Thinking about tasting something other than red meat.”

I blush and look away, still dressed in nothing but his massive shirt and knowing if I keep thinking about it, I’ll be leaving a wet spot on the tree stump where he told me to sit.

I know soon, I’m going to have to face reality, but being here with him, in the wilderness, it feels like the rest of my life doesn’t matter. Like this is my world, living off the land, caring about each other and nobody else.

“So this is the Pact land,” I say as he returns, grabbing a towel and patting himself dry of sweat and river water. “Do all of you live like this?”

He shakes his head. “The others have cabins. They’re traditional for the most part, but they’re modern too. I can’t be tied down to one place. I need...”

“Freedom?” I finish for him, and he nods. “I get it. It must be nice living like this. Except when it’s cold.”

“I make shelters,” he says. “And there are ways of keeping warm. I mean, usually it’s me and Ben sharing body heat but maybe...”

I grin, nodding. “That sounds cozy.”

He leans down, taking my lips with his, and I sink into the kiss gratefully, enjoying that he’s no longer hiding his face from me. The thought of others rejecting him over the way he looks

is so stupid. To me, he's perfect. His sharp teeth brush my tongue, but I don't mind it. He's gentle, so careful, that I know they won't cut me.

Not by accident, anyway.

"Venison would have been great," he says, "but I think we'll have to catch a fish for lunch now. That okay with you?"

"You're sure you can manage it? I'm not going to be distracting you?"

He pulls me up into his hair-covered arms, wrapping me so tightly it's like being snuggled in a fur blanket. "How did I get a mate like you?" he says, and I smile at the word.

I like it. A lot. I'm his mate and he's mine.

And if what I understand is correct, this is forever.

I shrug. "I guess you're just lucky."



HE EATS ME.

And then we eat fish.

And both make me feel completely sated.

I never imagined what it would feel like to have a full, thick beard tickling me down there, but it's something else. An experience I wouldn't swap for fish, but if I can have both, why not?

After we're done, he shows me a little store he's made since he saw me on that road. It's sweet. Old CDs of heavy metal bands he knows I like; Korn, Metallica, Rage Against The Machine, Iron Maiden. And a battery powered CD player so he could find out what I enjoyed.

"You did this because of me?"

He nods. "I wanted to feel close to you. Because I thought we'd never actually..."

"Meet?"

“Yes. I didn’t imagine someone like you would ever be able to look at someone like me.”

I wrap my arms around his center and smile. “All I see when I look at you is *my* Tulak. What could be better than that?”

We listen to Evil Empire together, then I notice that he’s looking agitated. When I ask, he says it’s nothing, but even Benka is antsy, like there’s somewhere else he needs to be.

“What’s wrong?”

“Hunters sometimes stray onto Pact land,” Tulak admits when I press him. “I thought I heard the snap of an animal trap. It’s one thing to take down a wild animal when you need that meat to eat, but some of these hunters are assholes. They don’t pick up their traps when they leave. Something gets caught in it, that’s a slow death.”

I nod. “Then let’s go.”

“Oh no, you’re not going. If that’s a bear—”

“Then you and Ben will be there to protect me. Right?”

He grunts in annoyance, but nods. “You do as I say.”

“Ooh, I like it when you’re all masterful,” I tease, running my hand over the bulge in his pants and feeling it grow hard at my touch. I like that I can do that to him at a moment’s notice. A girl has needs and I know he can meet them.

Following him through the woods is a thrill, but as we get closer something howls with pain, and I draw back. Tulak tells me to stay put but I want to go with him. I need to see all of him, no matter what, and today is the first day of the rest of our lives.

But nothing can prepare me for the scene in the clearing.

This high up the mountain, it’s been snowing recently. There are patches of it on the ground around the conifer trees that grow close together. In the center of the open space is a massive bear, bigger than I ever imagined a bear could be, its leg torn and bleeding, caught in the jaws of a medieval-looking trap.

A man, smaller and more human looking than Tulak, is standing to the side of the bear, trying to dart in and open the trap whenever the creature isn't attempting to swipe him with a giant paw.

"Art," Tulak says as we enter, and the man glances our way.

Compared to Tulak, he looks like he belongs in town, not on the mountain side. Pressed gray slacks, a white shirt, shiny shoes. His eyes light on me for just a fraction of a second, then he nods to Tulak.

"Could use your help here, old boy!" Art shouts, backing away as the bear sweeps a paw right across his path. "This lady's got herself a bit stuck. Bloody city arseholes forgetting where they left their traps again."

"I figured. What can I do?"

"Distract her for me? I don't think she's badly hurt, just needs to get loose before she causes herself a proper injury."

Tulak nods, then turns to Ben. "Benka. Guard Ray. Stay back the both of you."

Without another word, he steps into the clearing, making eye contact with the bear. What happens next is a sight to behold. Tulak goes toe to toe with the massive creature, talking calmly to her while ducking every time she goes for a strike.

I gasp and cover my mouth when she connects with the side of his face, sending him sprawling, but Benka cocks his head curiously, and it soon becomes clear why.

"That's the ticket, old boy!" Art shouts with a whoop, as he steps in and pries the jaws of the trap apart. The sheer strength it must take to do it is beyond belief, but it doesn't even look like he's straining. This was a part of their plan, and one they've used before. "One moment!"

The bear roars as it looms over Tulak, drool dripping from bared fangs as I shriek with fear, but before she can drop for the killing blow he rolls away, and she thunders into the bare ground.

She growls, sauntering forward, and snarls with pain. But her leg is free now, and with one last look at her two saviors she bounds off into the woods.

Art lumbers over to Tulak and holds out a hand, helping him to his feet, but when he turns my way I see the red welts across his face.

In an instant I'm running over to him with Benka by my side. "You're hurt!"

He raises a hand to his face, wiping away blood, then looks down at his hand and shakes his head. "Just a scratch." He opens his arms as I fling myself into them, my heart racing with panic. "I'm fine," he growls, but pulls me in close. "We heal fast. She must have caught me with a claw, that's all."

I shake my head as I pull myself in to him. "If I ever lost you..."

"You're not going to lose me. Never."

The thought draws me out of this moment of perfection, where my life and his are all that matters. I suddenly remember that I have a family. That people haven't seen me since last night. I might be angry with my parents, but I left my phone at home, and the thought that they will be worried makes me feel guilty.

"I should go back home," I tell him. "Everything is better. We have a solution, right?"

Tulak nods. "I'll go get the money, then we'll head into town. A couple of hours, tops." He looks into my eyes, and I can't hide from him. I don't want to hide from him. "What is it?"

"Can we go back first? I need to let them know I'm safe. We left it on a bit of an argument."

"They didn't fucking bother to go after you," he points out, and I nod.

"I know, but they're still my parents."

"I don't want you seeing them until this whole debt thing is sorted out," he says with a growl. "They wanted to marry you off to someone else. I can't allow that. If they tell me you can't

be with me, I'm liable to start tearing limbs off, princess. I can't help it."

Art clears his throat as Tulak and I both turn to face him. "I'm not busy and you just helped me out. I could go, get the money from Roark and meet you in town. How much do you need?"

Tulak glares, and Art draws back. Something else is going on here I don't understand. "I don't think that's a good idea."

"Come on, old boy. Just tell me how much."

"I don't know, Art."

"Right. Well. I'll just bring as much as there is then. How does that sound?"

CHAPTER 8



Tulak

“*I* like Art,” Ray announces. “See, you do have friends. He obviously doesn’t see you as a monster.”

As one of the Wolven that were born since cars became a big thing, I know how to drive. Trouble is, I haven’t needed this old truck in years, and while Callan has kept it going for me, I don’t think he ever expected it to be used again. The tires are fine, but the gearbox could use work and the shocks are about to give up.

I shoot Ray a thin smile in response, but don’t commit further than that.

Art and I haven’t always seen eye to eye, especially as I was the one that brought his thieving to the attention of the rest of the Pact and nearly got him ripped apart. He’s a con man, which is the weirdest thing for a Wolven. I’m not convinced by that British accent of his and I haven’t been able to find out how old he is. Or why he’s chosen to stick around even after Roark threatened to cut his balls off. They figured out their differences. Art isn’t a bad person, but he’s done bad things and his loyalties are an unknown. And when he first saw me...

Well, let’s just say some of the words he used weren’t complimentary.

I wouldn’t be trusting him with my money, except I won’t be separated from Ray for even a second.

But of course, being a con man, he knows how to turn on the charm. Which means Ray likes him.

“When we go in, let me do the talking,” I tell her, reaching across to put my hand on her knee. “It will be fine, but your parents need some home truths.”

She nods. “You’re right. But no violence, okay?”

“Deal. And I’m going to cover my face.”

Ray frowns. “You don’t have to. You have a lovely face.”

“To you. But I don’t want your parents’ first impression of me to be the monster that stole their daughter. Don’t forget, you’re not wearing your clothes, you’re dressed in one of my shirts.”

She giggles. “True. But you’re only doing it because you want to. I’m not ashamed of you.”

I pull up to the curb, then throw her a growl when she goes to open her own door. Let her stand out in the street on her own? I don’t think so. I’m out of the truck and around to her side, opening it for her in an instant. Ben moves to jump out of the back seat, but I shake my head at him and he settles down with a whine of annoyance. I get it, he’s part of our pack too, but one wolf at a time.

Taking Ray’s hand, I help her out of the truck and we walk together up to the front of her house.

Even with my untrained eye, I can see that there are some repairs that could be done on the place. I’ll figure that out for them, but first it’s time to make sure they know what’s going to happen from now on.

“Ready?” I say, and Ray grins and nods.

She’s doing pretty well with all this, which makes me happy. I don’t like that she had problems and I wasn’t there to fix them, but from now on all that changes.

I try the door knob, finding it open, and push my way in with just a single knock as I pull the hood up over my head, casting myself into darkness.

But something isn’t right.

I step ahead of Ray as soon as I sense it, making myself even bigger than usual, taking up the entire entrance hall as my nose

twitches. “Go back to the truck,” I warn.

“What? Why?”

Why?

I’m not one hundred percent sure. I’ve smelled a similar scent before, but not quite like this. It smells like wizards, but not quite. Less formalized but in some ways more powerful. Something rotten, something that shouldn’t be here.

And then I realize what it is. And draw up to my full height, claws suddenly bristling.

“Get in the truck. Lock the doors. If anyone comes for you, tell Benka to *kill*. He knows the command.”

“Tulak, what’s going on?”

“Do it. Right now.”

I sense her pull back from me, then freeze as the woman enters the corridor. “Mom? What on Earth... Did Trevor do this to you?”

“That thing is not your mother,” I growl.

It looks human enough. But I only see half the world with my eyes. My nose is more reliable. The woman looks sad, frail. There are traces of injuries. Swelling on her face, scrapes across her knuckles, hair thrown into disarray. I’m sure it’s all an act, because unless Balaur is some sort of supernatural creature there’s no way he could injure a witch. Not unless she chose to allow it.

I’ve never been this close to one, which is why I didn’t recognize the scent right away. I’ve seen them dancing out in the forest when I was a child, but those were good witches. They left food for me, not knowing exactly what I was but knowing I needed help. This one smells of evil.

I see the smile pass across its lips as it looks from me to Ray. “What do we have here, Rayia? You’ve found yourself a guard dog?”

“Mom...what are you doing? You’re creeping me out.”

“I told you,” I say. “It’s not your mother. Go back to the truck. Lock the door.”

The witch shakes her head. “I don’t think so.”

With a snap of her fingers, I hear the door slam behind us, a bolt being thrown. Not even an effort for a thing like her. Her magic can be used for the good of others or the good of herself. It’s clear she’s practiced the latter.

“And you’re wrong,” she says. “I *am* her mother. She’s a very special child. Very special indeed.”

“Ray. Run.” The words come out as a growl as I step forward, raising my claws. I don’t stand a chance against a powerful witch, but all I need to do is make a distraction. To keep her busy long enough for Ray to get away. “Now!” I demand as I take a swipe.

The witch smiles, shaking her head.

And the world goes black.



“ALL RIGHT, old boy, there you go. Try to take a deep breath if you can.”

The world is foggy as I open my eyes. Everything is blurred. My brain feels like a baker has been trying to knead it into bread. “Ray,” I moan.

“Not here, I’m afraid. It’s just me. What happened? I’ve never heard of a Wolven losing consciousness like that. Not for any length of time.”

“There was a witch,” I growl, and take Art’s hand, pulling myself to my feet. Despite how he sounds, and how human he looks, he’s probably the strongest Wolven I’ve ever known. “I need to find Ray.”

“A witch, you say? Are—are you sure?”

Something in his voice makes my skin prickle, and I turn to glare into his face. “What do you know?”

“Nothing.” His eyebrows shoot up. And I believe him. But... There’s something he’s not telling me. “You say there was a

witch, I'm sure there was."

"I don't have time for this. I have to go to Ray."

"Good plan. Look, here's your money." He shoves a bag into my arms and grins when I growl at him. "It's all there, old boy. Count it if you like. Do you know where the girl is?"

"I have an idea."

"Splendid. Then you go and rescue the princess, and I'll go after the witch. Deal?"

I turn on him, snarling. "You know where the witch is."

"Yes. Um. Well, no. I might know how to find it. I could explain it to you, but that will take time neither of us has, so you're just going to have to trust me on this."

"I don't," I growl, but step past him and wrench the door open so hard it nearly falls off its hinges. "But you can do whatever the fuck you want so long as you stay out of my way."

CHAPTER 9



Rayia

The whole world is wrong.
Nothing makes sense any more.

My own mother kidnapped me, dropping me off at Daniel's house, then leaving without a word. Apparently, she's a witch. I mean, maybe when I was younger I would have thought that a humorous irony, but now it's just crazy. I'm tied up, sharing a seat with my father and one of my best friends, while Trevor paces the floor, caressing every gold statue and icon in this bizarre shiny room.

"Let her go," my father pleads. "The debt is mine, Trevor, not hers. She's never going to marry your son."

"What?" Daniel glances across to me. "What's he talking about?"

I roll my eyes. "That's apparently what this is all about. Your father has this crazy idea that the two of us are going to be tied together in *holy matrimony*."

"That's..."

"I know."

"Shut up!" Trevor bellows, as I feel the ground thunder beneath us. "Stop your idle chatter, all of you. You *will* be married, I just need to figure out how to get you out of the country. Private jet would be best, but that takes time to set up. But we can't take a commercial flight..."

“Dad, have you gone *completely insane*? I’m not marrying Ray.” Daniel shakes his head. I can see the shock I felt yesterday on his face.

“Yes you are.”

Trevor stares at his son. When he had his goons bring him in here, he had him stripped of all his gold. The gold watch, the gold cuff links. Even his gold-rimmed glasses. I think he’s lost the plot.

But all this talk of marriage makes me think of Tulak. I have no idea what happened to him. One second, he was about to attack my mom, then the next he was flat on his back. Breathing, but unconscious. Mom grabbed me and I ended up here.

Marrying Daniel is completely out of the question. I have no idea why that’s even an issue. There’s only one man my heart belongs to, and that’s Tulak.

“I’m not marrying him,” I declare. If my hands weren’t tied, I’d fold them and sulk. “I already have a boyfriend, if you must know.”

“*Really?* Who?” Daniel stares at me, wide eyed, and even in our situation I can’t help grinning.

“You’ll love him. He’s...unconventional. But amazing. He has this wolf—”

“Yes yes, that’s fine,” Trevor says, shaking his head. “You can go back to him just as soon as the marriage is done. Once you’re pregnant with Daniel’s child—”

“*What?*” me and Daniel say in unison. “Dad, that’s not going to happen,” Daniel adds, and I see the red heat rising on his neck. He doesn’t want to tell his dad the truth, and I feel for him that it might come to that.

I want to comfort him but that might just make things worse.

“Yes it is, it’s the only way. You have to marry a princess, and she has to be pregnant with your child before either of you are twenty years old. That’s the way it is, so come to terms with it.”

I snort a laugh. “A princess? That rules me out.”

Trevor looks at my dad. “All these years and you haven’t told her?”

“How did *you* find out?” my dad says.

I can’t believe what I’m hearing. “I’m *not* a princess,” I insist. “What the hell?”

“I’m afraid you are,” Trevor replies. “A Russian princess. I know there’s no royal family there any longer, but I don’t think that will change the rules. Romanov blood, from your father. Your mother told me, oh, a few years ago now. She suggested this whole thing, actually—”

The door flies open and Daniel’s mom strides into the room. She’s dressed fabulously, as always, her blonde hair perfectly coiffured and her blue eyes shining as she looks at her husband.

With unrestrained fury. I knew there was a reason I liked her.

“What *is* going on here? Why have you tied my son up like that? And that poor girl. Trevor, start talking.”

“He’s *our* son, Hannah.”

“Not if you don’t treat him properly, he isn’t.” Without another word, she turns her back and heads over to us, leaning down and untying the ropes that are binding us together. “I am *so* sorry about this, my dear. Your father looks terrified, poor thing. Whatever will your mother say when she finds out?”

I scoff. “Apparently, this was all her idea.”

“*What?*” She turns her head, even as her hands keep working the knots. “Trevor?”

“He has to marry a princess, Hannah. You know that. Otherwise the Balaur name dies out. No more Balaur.”

“Her mother came to you with this suggestion, and you didn’t stop to question that? Were you born this stupid or has it taken years of practice?”

“Hannah! Dear. Don’t talk to me like that. I…why should I have questioned it? What could she possibly have to gain?”

Daniel's mom huffs in frustration. "There. You're both free. Daniel, where's your watch?"

"He took it."

She snaps her fingers, and Trevor sheepishly takes the watch out of a gold bowl beside him, handing it to her. She fastens it around Daniel's wrist. "Here. That better? Good. You need to be touching gold at all times, darling. You remember the headaches you used to get? I'll explain it to you later." She stands, turning to her husband. "How can you be this stupid, Trevor? First, you're being old fashioned. So Daniel doesn't have a biological child. So what? It's the twenty-first century. If he wants a child, there are other options."

"But—"

"Dragons. Yes. I know. You might have to accept that there won't be any in the future. Daniel might be the last one. If you ask me, that's for the best. All this stealing princesses, it's so dark ages."

"I don't remember you complaining when I—"

"Trevor. That's not the point. I was in love, it was very romantic."

"What are you talking about?" Daniel gawps, but his mom just pats his wrist comfortingly. "You're a princess?"

"Of a very small country, darling. Hardly worth mentioning. I'll explain it all, I promise." She glares at Trevor. "Second, this girl's mother wanted her pregnant with a baby dragon. It doesn't take a genius to figure out she wasn't going to let the child live. Obviously, she's working some spell and she needs baby dragon scales, or some other body part. You know how this stuff works as well as I do. Those things are potent."

"I suppose..." Trevor frowns. "Really? She wouldn't hurt her own grandchild...surely..."

Hannah stares at him, nodding as she puts her fists on her hips. "Witches, Trevor. Witches."

"Oh," Trevor says. He turns to me. "Is your mother a witch?"

“This is all new to me.” I shrug. My plate of new things to sort through keeps growing by the minute and I can’t pick anything out. It’s all muddled.

Princesses, witches, dragons...and a Wolven. Sounds like the set up of a bad joke.

“Is she a...a good witch or a bad witch?”

“Well, gee, Mr. Balaur, I don’t know. What do you think?”

Daniel snickers as his dad licks his lips.

“She seems evil,” he says with a nod.

Hannah sighs. “Trevor, I know you. You’re a good man. A little stupid at times, but we’ll call that endearing. It’s about time you showed your basic human decency. Ray needs our protection from whatever her mother is planning. We have to look after her.”

“Well, yes, of course. I...” He looks at me and draws a breath through his nose, puffing out his chest a little. “You’re safe now, young lady. This house is a fortress. Nothing will get past me to harm you, you have my word as a Balaur—”

The scream from the hall cuts him off.

CHAPTER 10



Tulak

“*W*hat do you think they’re doing in there?”

“Beats me. I just do what I’m told to do. Mr. Balaur tells me to guard the front gate, I guard the front gate.”

The two men pass a cigarette between them as I watch from the shadows, less than twenty yards away. Benka already passed them and is coming back from the opposite direction, ready for my signal.

I recognize professional security when I see it, and this is decidedly amateur hour. I have no doubt that they’re guards, but professional they are not.

No professional would be slouching the way they are. And I’m not even convinced they know how to use the submachine guns strapped to their shoulders, or if they’re there for show. For me to get this close and not even draw any attention is unforgivable.

If this is all that’s guarding Ray, I’ll have her out of here in no time. And I’ll be taking her as far away from this craziness as I can get.

I clear my throat.

“What was that?” says the one currently holding the cigarette, fumbling it in his fingers and clumsily dropping it to the ground. “Who’s there?”

He doesn’t go for his gun. I would shake my head, but now it’s sad and pathetic.

When I rush at them, it takes them by such surprise I'm only disappointed they both don't scream and run away. They cower back, their weapons forgotten, and drop to the ground unconscious as I knock their heads together. Ben follows me into the compound without anyone inside being any the wiser.

The guard by the front door, on the other hand, is less for show. He's alert the moment he spots me striding his way with a hand raised, and has his gun trained between me and my wolf in a heartbeat. In a way, it's nice to be dealing with a professional.

"Here to see Mr. Balaur," I say, hiding my face beneath my hood. "The guy at the gate told me to come on in."

"Fucking hell," he says with a sigh, letting the muzzle of his gun drop a fraction. "They're supposed to radio ahead. I'm going to have to stop you here while I check with the boss."

I shake my head. "That doesn't work for me. I'm going to go inside."

"Can't allow that. Mr. Balaur said—" He puts an arm out as I go to step past him, blocking my way. "Hey, I said—*fuck!*"

He cries out as I take hold of his fingers, twisting hard until he's turned around backwards, facing the door. "Don't ever try to stop me again," I growl. "Now lead the way. I want to see Balaur."

It's a cakewalk. The guard leads the way while Ben and I follow down empty corridors with more gold on display than Fort Knox. With all this to protect, I'm surprised Trevor Balaur doesn't employ better security. Apart from the two guys by the gate, who I'm guessing don't do guard duty too often, and this guy who must be former armed forces, I don't encounter a single soul.

In fact, everything is going perfectly until the maid spots us.

Her scream, and the clattering of the tea service she's carrying as it smashes into a billion pieces all over the floor, is the first I know of her. I don't think she was expecting to see a massive guy with a wolf striding through the house with a guard in a wrestling hold.

“Help!” she cries as she runs in the opposite direction. “Mr. Balaur. Help!”

The guard tries to struggle out of my grip, but I have him held tight. That is, until the man steps out of the room the maid just fled into. And demonstrates why security isn’t an issue.

By throwing a fireball my way. From his mouth.

Before I can try to figure out what the fuck is going on, I have to duck down and bring the guard with me before he’s burnt to a cinder. He might be my enemy right now, but shit, he’s just a guy doing a job. I don’t want him dead.

“Benka. Back,” I command, and he backs off, taking refuge behind a solid pillar.

The fire-breather’s eyes go wide as he stares at me, then he leans across to take hold of a golden statuette of a young nude, and draws another breath.

“Move!” I shout at the guard, pushing him out of the way and rolling in time to avoid the next fireball as it spreads over the marble floor, leaving a trail of ash. “Where’s Ray?” I demand as I get to my feet and face down whatever the fuck this guy is. “Tell me or you die.”

His lip curls back from teeth as sharp as mine, and I notice that the golden figurine has melted in his grip, dripping liquid to the floor from his fingertips. “Get out of my house, beast. Begone!”

I reach back and pull my hood into place. He’s seen me, but that doesn’t mean I don’t want to save some dignity.

Seriously, beast?

“Give me the girl and I’m gone,” I tell him.

“Go back to your mistress and tell her I figured out her plan.” He grins. “That witch is going to have to try pretty hard if she wants to fool Trevor Balaur.”

I see his eyes dart to the wall, where a golden sconce—one of many—is blazing with electric light. He darts that way, grabbing it, and the light flickers and goes out.

As he starts to draw another breath.

“I’m not with the witch!” I shout.

Another fireball shoots my way, and I growl as I dodge out of its path. That does it. I’m dropping into a crouch before the heat haze has cleared, and his eyes go wide with shock when he sees me heading his way. The golden scone is dripping from his fingers as I plow into him, throwing him back against the wall as my teeth extend and my claws bristle.

“Where. Is. Ray?” I demand, snarling down at him. Ben is suddenly there, snapping at my elbow, warning him not to try anything. “If you’ve hurt her, I’ll kill you. I’ll kill everyone you care about. I’ll make it my mission in life to kill every motherfucker you’ve ever had a conversation with.”

“Tulak?!” Her voice cuts through me, and I turn.

And there she is. Ben is skidding and sliding across the floor in an effort to get to her, and I release my grip on Balaur, forgetting all about him as I turn and meet her eyes.

Ray grins, jumping into my arms as I reach out for her and pull her in close. Her soft curves, her gorgeous hair, the scent of her is overwhelming as I hold her like she might evaporate. My heart is thundering. I never want to let her go. *She’s mine. Mine to protect, mine to love, mine...*

I can’t watch her from afar. Not now. I need her in my life, wholly and completely. She sees me. All of me. And she wants me just the same.

“So this is him, huh?”

Ray tries to pull away at the sound of the voice, but I’m not done. I plant my lips on hers, drinking her in, tasting her warmth. Right now, I don’t care who sees me. Let them hate me, let them think I’m a monster. So long as I have her, that’s all that matters.

And as she kisses me back, a little piece of my heart starts to heal.

“This is him,” she says in a half whisper as our mouths part. She turns and grins at the boy that’s stepped out of the room

behind her. “Tulak, meet Daniel. Daniel, Tulak.”

At the sound of his name, I can't help the growl that emits from my chest. “You're him. The one she's supposed to marry.”

He laughs, his face reddening. “Believe me, that's not going to happen. I—” He licks his lips, turning first to the man, Balaur, who is rubbing his elbows and looking puzzled and slightly annoyed, then to a blonde woman who steps out from the room behind him. “Mom. Dad. There's something I need to tell you. But it's kind of difficult. I don't want to disappoint you. Either of you.”

The woman shakes her head. “You will never be a disappointment, darling. To either of us. Right, Trevor?”

Balaur clears his throat, and his eyes dart to mine. I glare. “I guess I should apologize...to all of you. I've made a mess of this whole thing. If you don't want to marry the girl, Daniel, I'm going to have to accept that. You're my son and I love you. I just wanted what was best, but... Where's her father? I need to make amends for the way I've treated him over this whole thing.”

“He's passed out,” the woman says. “Which is just as well. I don't want the whole town knowing you breathe fire. What did you want to say, Daniel?”

She puts her arm around his shoulder, and from her expression...I think she's guessed what's coming next. I know I have. So that's why Ray was certain he wouldn't want to marry her.

As he explains things, and his mom tells him it's okay, I lift Ray in my arms and leave them to it.

“I've got something to tell you,” she says, pulling herself close around my neck as we step out into the cold night air.

“What's that, princess?”

“Exactly,” she says, grinning. “Turns out, I am one.”

CHAPTER 11



Rayia

We spend the drive to a cabin on Pact Land talking about the idea of me being a princess. The irony isn't lost on me. I've spent most of my life living like a pauper, barely any money to our family name. There were times I might have dreamed of having more. But now? Now I have everything my heart could possibly desire, and not a bit of it has anything to do with money. My mother wanted me to marry Daniel, and the gold in that one room alone was more than I've ever dreamed of, yet I'm choosing love. I'm choosing my Wolven mate, to go where he goes, not caring about the monetary value of things.

If I spend the rest of my life with nothing, I'll still be happy so long as I have him.

"I've been thinking," Tulak says, interrupting my thoughts.

"About? I mean there is a lot to take in from the last twenty-four hours." I laugh. The cab of the truck is a mess of emotions. There's something lingering, heavy. I can't put my finger on it. It's not the fresh air filled with the scent of pine and dirt.

"Before you were taken by the witch, I didn't want a cabin because I wanted—"

"Freedom," I answer, nodding. "I understand."

"Right. But that's not fit for a princess."

I gape at him. He's teasing, but whatever he's trying to say, I can tell he's weighing his words, unsure of himself.

I'm going to love him so thoroughly that he will never feel neglected, unsure or hurt by the past anymore.

"Tulak, I need you to know that whatever you want, I want too."

I would be happy with him anywhere. A tent in the woods. Campsite to campsite. None of those things matter. I can get used to it.

He glances at me then back at the dirt road as the truck bounces along as he tries to gauge my reaction.

"I think it's time for a cabin," Tulak starts. "We can roam around as we want, but I think I need to build you a home base. Somewhere...fit for royalty."

I roll my eyes. "I tell you I'm a princess and suddenly you want to cater to that. I'll do whatever makes your wild heart happy. You and Ben won't want to be cooped up."

"We can still hunt, but I think...well, Benka is getting old and would like to be pampered."

I laugh. "Is that really the reason you want a cabin? For Ben?" I ask, my eyebrows raised in question. "I've seen him sleep in a pile of snow."

"Okay, so maybe the cabin idea is more for what I hope our future holds." Tulak sucks in a breath as we pull up to a well taken care of cabin. "You're my mate. I know this and you know this."

"I'm lost, Tulak. I've accepted us being mates. I now have a little pack of my own with you and Ben. What are you getting at?"

"After we do this, I want babies. I want to build a cabin and fill it with children."

"And here I thought you were going to ask me to marry you," I tell him, a blush creeping into my face. I hadn't thought of kids. I couldn't even picture dating anyone a week ago let alone settling down.

“That’s what we’re doing here,” Tulak says before hopping out of the truck, making it to my door before I can get out.

“What do you mean?”

“This is a Wolven version of getting married, being bound together.”

“I wouldn’t say either of us is dressed for such an occasion.” I run a hand over his wrinkled shirt.

“You look beautiful.”

“I think you’re a bit biased.”

Tulak grabs my hand, pulling me inside. I’m surprised to see the others he has only briefly spoken about. I look around at all the unfamiliar faces. Lobo and his wife Gail are first to introduce themselves. Their old school style clothes instantly tells me I will like these two. Callan, the one that helps Tulak with his truck, and his wife Sestina greet us as she pulls me into a quick hug. Vargr shakes his hand, nodding hello as his wife Holly gives me a nod. I somewhat recognize her. She was on the police force. She stood out being the only woman on it. Then a man by himself off to the side, Roark, seemingly the leader, shakes my hand. Tulak doesn’t have to tell me that, I can see it, feel it in the way they are treating him more as a father figure. The only one seemingly missing is Art. He’s a curious man. So different from the others. Maybe he’s not here because he’s not Wolven? But didn’t Tulak say all the Pact are?

No one is reacting with disgust at him without his hood. No one is treating him any differently. I can’t help but wonder if the Pact is more there for him than he was comfortable with, using his insecurities and horrible past to keep everyone at arm’s distance.

I smile, thinking about all the ways I can help him change that.

“Is this what you both want?” Roark asks us, but looking at me. I nod. I’ve never been so sure about something in my life.

Lobo hands him an old CD player as he puts in a CD I didn’t see him bring in from the truck. With that, Tulak turns down the lights until the cabin is dark and I’m utterly lost. *This is*

one hell of a wedding. The guests can't see or hear anything besides the loud rock music.

"I wanted to make this special for you," he mumbles.

"It is because you're here with me."

I feel his strong hands come to my shoulders as he backs me up until my butt hits a table. He lifts me up, laying me out on it like I'm a five course meal. I think I had the wrong idea about what was going to happen, but I'm not mad at it.

"Tulak, you have some explaining to do."

I hear a few chuckles as I feel his smile against the skin of my neck. My body hums with excitement even though I'm more nervous now than I was when he finger fucked me or when he took my mouth.

"We're going to complete the mating bond, princess. Right here. Right now. I'm going to fill that tight pussy of yours, claim you as mine."

I shiver as his warm breath tickles the wet skin he's licked near my earlobe. "I don't know that I'm into voyeurism."

I'm overly aware of the eyes on us. It's strange to know how personal this is going to get and that all his Pact is here to watch.

"Are you sure about that?" he asks, sliding my shirt up until my bra is exposed. "I think you liked undressing, knowing I was watching you. You even admitted to making yourself cum to the thought of me spectating."

Thank god it's dark or everyone would be seeing the blush blooming on my cheeks. *Okay so I did, but this is a whole different level to that.*

As he leans over, wrapping his arms behind my back to unhook my bra, I can feel the massive bulge in his pants, pushed against my wet seam. I bite my lip to keep from moaning. He kisses me, pushing his tongue into my mouth, tasting me as I breathe him in.

I like the roughness of his facial hair tickling me as I kiss him back, our tongues warring for control as he plays with one of

my nipples, tweaking it with his fingers. A bite of pain before pleasure washes through me.

Suddenly everyone around us is forgotten as one of my favorite songs fills the warm air of the cabin. Bring Me To Life by Evanescence. So appropriate. He sees me, and I see him. All of him. And between us, we've shown each other a life we never thought we'd have. We've saved each other.

He pulls away, moving to suck at my nipple, long, hard pulls as his teeth rake against my skin.

He moves to the other, swiping his tongue across it, sending ripples of heat to my core, as he deftly runs his hands up my legs, spreading them as he hooks his fingers into my panties, ripping them away from my body. After everything sexual we've done over the last twenty four hours, I was needing a new pair anyway.

"I want to take my time on you, but I don't know if I can hold back," Tulak says, his voice strained as his hands grip my thighs, fingertips pushing hard into my soft skin.

"Then don't," I tell him breathlessly. "Fuck me. I need you."

He grits his teeth as if fighting to keep himself in check. His muscles tensed and straining. I ache to watch him let loose. "It will hurt," he says. "I wish it didn't have to but it will at least for a moment."

"I want it," I tell him, smiling in the dark. "I want to feel alive. I want the craziness of this past day to be grounded by you filling me, completing me."

"You're sure? Because once this starts, I don't have the restraint to stop. I need that tight cunt wrapped around my cock."

"Take me. I want it. But Tulak?"

"Mmm?"

"I can't promise I won't scream."

His lips meet mine and I feel the sharpness of his teeth against my tongue, not cutting me but reminding me of what he is. A

wild animal. And all mine. “The louder the better, princess,” he says.

His hands are gone from my body and I’m aware that every place he touches feels scorched, but my body aches for him to come back. I don’t have to ask as he rubs the head of his hard cock across my wet seam, coating himself in my arousal as I bite my lip.

He pulls back again pulling a desperate moan from my lips. It’s quickly replaced with a heady, wanton moan as he sucks my clit into his mouth, flicking it with his tongue as I writhe beneath him, fisting my fingers into his hair. He runs his tongue along the length of my pussy in strong, calculated strokes.

When he pulls back, I can see the glint of my arousal coating his lips as he pushes the thick head of his cock to my center before leaning in for a kiss. Tasting myself on his tongue as he slides himself across me sends me into a fevered madness. My tongue wars with his as I try to get closer, trying to get him to push into me.

He’s still holding back.

I need him.

“Mmm,” he says, kissing his way to my ear. “I think you’re my favorite flavor.”

I growl with frustration. As much as I want him to devour me, I need him inside me more. I need him to deal with the heavy ache he’s built up inside of me. I push my hips down, wrapping my tightness around his cock. I sigh.

“Greedy princess,” he laughs.

“Damn right and you’re a tease.”

He chuckles against my skin as I rock towards him, needing to feel him stretch me, fill me up. He plants his hands behind me, taking the scream from my lips as he forces his monster cock inside me. He feels bigger now, thicker. I feel my pussy stretching, tearing in its efforts to accommodate him, even as I strain every muscle, my back arching from the table as I whimper into the kiss. He pumps forward and I cry out, a

screech that the daughter of a witch should be proud of. He doesn't relent. Each inch of his, filling me. The bite of pain ebbs away as I gasp through it, the feeling of being complete taking me by surprise.

"So fucking tight," he groans against my lips. "Is this what you want? You want to leave here dripping with my seed, because I'm not leaving here until we are both spent."

"Yes...please." I tell him through gritted teeth. I feel insatiable and we've barely started.

I thought being near him made me feel like home, but this... this is so much better. He stays still, letting my wet walls pulse around him. He takes my lips in a rough kiss, a low growl coming from his chest as I moan.

He's waiting for me. I know he doesn't want to hurt me, but what I'm feeling is the complete opposite. I need him to move, to push into me, to drive deep, each stroke fanning the fire of this heat that consumes me from the inside.

"I need you to fuck me, Tulak," I beg.

I rock against him as he slides my ass closer to the edge of the table until he can't pump into me any farther. Slowly he pulls out, pushing back in at a slow pace that will be the death of me. I push harder against him, wrapping my arms around his neck, trying to pick up the pace. My center squeezes at him, tightening, coating him as he starts to get my hint, until he's slamming into me.

He nuzzles at my neck, nipping at my pulse, teeth grazing my flesh as I feel the heaviness of my orgasm start to build. He pushes a hand between us, finding my clit and sending light dancing behind my eyelids as he starts to rub vicious circles. I grow wetter around him until I can feel it on his thighs as he rocks into me, harder and harder.

Impossibly, it feels like he's growing bigger inside me, stretching my thighs wider, stretching my already battered pussy beyond its virgin limits. Gone is the smooth skin that was in my mouth. The skin is coarse, rubbing against my tight

walls in a delicious friction as the head of him expands within me, holding me in place.

This is what he meant. Knotting.

“Mine,” he growls out, biting into my neck. *My wild man.* His growling and possessiveness should scare me. Hell so should him growing inside me until we are stuck together, but it drives me to the brink of ecstasy. It’s like a chain reaction as he sucks at my neck. Sliding the last inch until he can’t push any deeper, he starts to fill me with hot streams as my own body responds, my orgasm shattering through me as I tighten up around him, my whole body going rigid. I can feel him start to knot as the streams, pulsing from his cock start to slow.

“Yours. I’m all yours.” I moan, panting as I try to catch my breath.

He lays his forehead against mine and I know it’s just us now as the quiet fills the room, the song coming to an end.

I try to move but his massive cock, knotted inside me, holds me in place as he wraps his arms around me.

“That was fucking beautiful, but I think I can do better.”

“After we clean up and head back to camp?” My mind is blank as I struggle to grasp reality, as pleasure still ebbs through me.

He chuckles, pulling me into a quick kiss before whispering in my ear. “I’ll be making sure we don’t leave here until you’re pregnant or close to it.”

The shock rolls through me before his cock twitches, reminding me that we’re still connected as his cum drips between my thighs. I wrap my legs tighter, enjoying the dampness of his skin as I roll my hips against his.

“Then we have some work to do.”

CHAPTER 12



Rayia

*E*pilogue 1: Nine months later

“ONE MORE PUSH,” Sunburst says with a grin. “You’re doing brilliantly, honey. Just keep it going.”

She glances up at Tulak, who’s been gripping my hand hard for the last three hours as I screamed and shouted, holding on to him for strength. The moan comes out of my hoarse throat as I push again, Sunburst telling me she can see the head. Baby is almost here. It’s all going to be fine.

And deep down, even in this pain, I know it is.

Things haven’t exactly been plain sailing, but I love my new family and what’s left of the old one. It took me a minute to forgive my dad for trying to sell me to Mr. Balaur, and it took even longer to forgive Trevor for trying to purchase me for his son, but when I found out that my father’s injuries had been caused by thugs hired by my *mom* and not by him, it was hard to stay mad. Whatever happened to her, I’m not sure. The last time I saw her was when she dropped me off at Trevor’s house.

I guess after that, when it was clear her plan hadn’t been successful, she moved on and forgot all about me. I was nothing but a playing piece to her anyway.

My dad insists that she can’t always have been like that. They were childhood sweethearts. He says she changed when my

brother died, and started reading some strange books, but that he thought she was over it. He never would have guessed anything like this, or that she would put her own daughter in danger.

Tulak told me what he saw when she was there in the hall. How old she looked, how twisted. All I saw was my mom, but the Pact says magic corrupts. They've told me what some wizards can look like and I'm just glad my mom never became anything like that.

I miss my brother. I always will. But as far as my mom is concerned I say good riddance.

"She's in too much pain," Tulak complains, gripping my hand tighter. "Make it stop, Sunburst. Please!"

My chest hurts as I strain with a chuckle, and Sunburst glances up at me, grinning. "Not for me to decide," she says. "Baby's not pleased about being forced out into the world."

Daniel and Jules were married a month ago, with me looking about ready to pop while I cried. I watched them looking so handsome and happy together. Stephanie came back for the wedding, and the four of us caught up on old times before the happy couple went off on their honeymoon. They're going down the adoption route, which is perfect. Hannah has been an absolute rock for Daniel, and even Trevor has come round to the idea that okay, it's not a dragon, but it's a new generation in their family and that's enough.

They'll make great parents.

It took some time for Daniel to come to terms with what he is, but in a way I think it's kind of cool. Gold is his power source, and he can breathe fire. I mean, that's out there even by my new standards but I know Daniel. He'll never use his powers for evil. It's a bit like knowing Superman, except I know he's still a nerd even with his glasses off.

"That's it!" Sunburst says excitedly. "She's here. Come on, little one, your mommy and daddy want to meet you."

When I hear the first cry, it melts my heart.

CHAPTER 13



Tulak

*E*pilogue 2: Six Years Later

IT'S BEEN a hard few years, but I couldn't be prouder of my beautiful wife.

"Mommy!" Jasmine squeals in my ear, making me flinch as Ray walks up onto the stage. She's balanced on my shoulders as her little brother Brad sleeps soundly in his stroller. "That's my mommy!"

I grin despite the ringing in my ears. She's right to be excited. Ray worked hard these last years, fitting her study around the kids, working by lamplight when we needed the freedom of a wild campsite instead of the comforts of our cabin. I love her so much, and I would give up my need to roam, but somehow I ended up with a mate who fits me so perfectly she wanted it too. She says that when we're out there, in the woods, she feels alive and connected to the world.

People clap to the left and right of me, the hall filled with other families here to see their loved ones graduate. Not one of them is screaming in terror at the sight of me. That's thanks to Art, but it's a whole other story and not mine to tell. Suffice to say, we worked out any differences we may have had.

Ray wants to go down the human rights route, and I support her completely. I know how much this means to her, and honestly taking care of her and bringing up our children is my mission. One that I take fucking seriously.

Jasmine snaps a photo with her phone, then shoves it into my face to show me.

“A little artist like your mom, huh?” I tease, ignoring the fact that the top of Ray’s head is missing from the shot.

She still draws every chance she gets, and no more pictures of what she saw on that road either, thankfully.

“Daddy, I have to take photos to show Benka!”

I chuckle. “Good plan, sweetheart. I know he won’t want to miss this.”

Ben’s an old wolf now, but you wouldn’t think it to look at him. Maybe there’s a bit more gray in his fur, but he’s strong as ever and still able to bring down prey when the urge to hunt comes over us both. He’s as protective of our little pack as I am, and I never have any fear of him being around the kids.

As Ray stands there, obviously trying to fight the urge to grin, I lock eyes with her and wave. And the smile spreads over her lips. The secret nobody else here knows is how they were wrapped around my cock just hours ago in our hotel room, tears in her eyes as she struggled to fit all of me in her mouth.

In short, life couldn’t be better. I have everything I ever wanted and never dreamed a guy like me could have.

CHAPTER 14 WILD MAGIC PROLOGUE



Wild Magic – The Wolven Brotherhood Book 5

Art

I hold my hand up to the night sky, the silvery powder sticking to the deep creases, reminding me of how old I really am. This locating spell is one of the few I remember from the hundreds Giselle taught me, patiently going over each one again and again until I could recite the ingredients and methods from memory. I never thought I'd be using this one to find *her*.

Witches. Can't live with them, apparently can't live without them.

As soon as Tulak said there had been one, it made so much sense of the dreams I've been having. I knew she was here. My mentor. My mother in all ways that count. The one person I have a connection with from my childhood. My adopted family for a century until I realized I had to get away.

As I get closer, the house is unsurprising. She always did favor the grand and impressive. It sprawls, newly built and imposing. Three stories on a wide plot of land in the most fashionable part of town. I can smell the magic coming off it from here.

Here goes nothing.

Inside, it's palatial, but I have no difficulty knowing which way to go.

I'd recognize Giselle's voice anywhere.

“You can and you will do as I say,” she croons, her delicate French accent belying the pure power she wields.

“No!” A voice I don’t recognize screams the word as I head their way. “I *need* that child. A baby dragon, that’s what you said to me. A baby dragon would resurrect my son. Without it, what am I doing all this for?”

“You’re doing it for me. Unless you want me to think you’ve outlived your usefulness? That wouldn’t be good for you. It wouldn’t be good at all.”

“I kidnapped my own *daughter*. I think I’ve proven—”

“You’ve proven nothing,” Giselle spits, as I near the door. “Kidnapping your daughter was your idea, not mine. I merely told you the spell, *you* decided to act on it.” Then there’s a pause before she laughs. “Perhaps I don’t need you after all. Hello, Arthur, please come in.”

Fuck.

I should have known she’d sense me. Did she draw me here, or did I come of my own accord? I no longer know who’s in control of my thoughts.

As I step into the room, she smiles and it spreads into her eyes. Crows feet lines are visible now, but otherwise she barely looks a day older than when we first met. The same statuesque figure. Beside her stands a shorter, older-looking woman that I can only assume is Ray’s mother.

“Arthur. My love. I knew you’d come eventually.”

Ray’s mom glares at me. “*Who* is—?”

Her words are cut off by a glance from Giselle. Her mouth is still moving, forming the words, but the silence spell means they don’t reach us.

“I’m not your love, Giselle,” I tell her, cursing myself for feeling guilty when she looks hurt. “I’m here to kill *her*. She hurt a friend of mine.”

“Really?” Her eyes go wide with delight. “You have friends? That’s wonderful. I always wanted that for you.”

“Yes, and she has to die.”

She nods. “Of course. She was useful for a time, but frankly I find her methods distasteful.” Ray’s mom’s eyes go wide, and she starts shouting, but of course we can’t hear a word of it. “She hurt a friend of yours. Say no more, darling.”

She snaps her fingers, and the old woman explodes in a spray of flesh and blood. It should cover us both in gore, but while it splatters the walls and ceiling, naturally it manages to miss us entirely.

Giselle hates getting her clothes dirty.

“There. Better?” She steps my way, and I draw back. As witches age, their power grows. She could destroy this whole town with a single thought. She was my only family once, and I was hers, but now...who knows? How long does a witch hold a grudge? “Oh, don’t be like that, honey bear. It’s been so long. If you’re worried about that rock you stole, I’ve forgotten all about it. We need to catch up, but first things first, we need *her*,” she says, passing me a photograph.

I draw a sharp breath. That face. Those eyes. Those ruby red lips. A slender neck leading to shapely, firm breasts. Narrow waist. Wide hips.

“Fuck...” I mutter as my cock starts to respond.

No. Not now. Please, not now.

Giselle frowns. “Teddy bear, you know how I feel about you slipping back into your American accent.”

I growl. *How does she not detect what just happened to me? How does she not realize that I’m no longer under her spell?*

I belong to the girl in the photograph.

“Bloody hell,” I mutter, and she laughs, delighted.

“Much better. Now, go and kidnap the girl, there’s a good boy. Don’t hurt her unless you have to, she hasn’t done anything wrong. I only need her teeth.”

COMING NEXT

[Art's Story Is Next in Wild Magic!](#)



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