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KATU WOLVES



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DEDICATION

For all the readers that love the Katu Wolf pack.
Thank you for loving these characters as much as I do.

CATCHING THEIR MATE

Katu Wolves, 6

Jade Marshall

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Content Warning

Catching Their Mate may contain triggers for some. As a reader, I find trigger warnings to be spoilers, but as an author, I understand they are sometimes necessary. Although I am not going to list each one, there are many, please feel free to email me at author.jmarshall@gmail.com with your specific trigger(s) and I will let you know if that trigger is in this book.

For those of you that wish to go in blind, please remember that this is a work of fiction, and I *do not* condone any of the situations or actions of the characters.

Chapter One

Sayer

Since I can remember, all my twin brother, Raleigh, and I have ever known is violence. We were ripped from our mother at an early age and trained to be in the *Shikari*. An archaic cult of sorts, used by the older, more traditional packs to track down dangerous shifters and runaways if necessary.

Our father was a member until he was killed, and it was always expected of us to join. We were trained to be ruthless, fearless, and remorseless. Taught that all emotions were a hindrance and that any reaction was only a weakness and something that could be used to either your benefit or your detriment.

But the Katu pack changed all of that. The first moment we arrived in the pack we knew that these shifters were different from any we had ever experienced, and they proved us right when they accepted us into their pack without blinking an eye.

Keela and Godrick have opened their home and their family to us. Even though we were here to retrieve Godrick and return him to his original pack to face his accusers. We have been welcomed with open arms and treated like normal people instead of the killing machines we were raised to be. We aren't shunned or looked upon with fear and it's a surreal feeling.

I'm so deep in thought, reliving the past, that I don't even hear the approaching footsteps.

"What are you thinking, brother?" Raleigh asks as he reaches me where I am resting in the forest after allowing my wolf to run.

"I'm getting tired of waiting."

I don't try to hide the impatience from my tone. It's not like my brother hasn't listened to this complaint before.

"I know. But we can't just stroll into town and grab a human. It will raise too many questions."

I hate when he is logical. He always knows exactly what to say to piss me off and calm me down at the same time.

"Well," I grumble. "Seeing as you have all the answers, how do you suppose we move forward?"

Raleigh glares at me. I know he is just as miserable as I am. See, the thing is, the day we came here to take Godrick back to his pack, we found our fated mate. Yes, one woman for both of us. The problem is, she's human.

She works at the local diner down in the town of Katu Falls. But humans don't feel the mating pull the same way shifters do. She may be drawn to the forest where we wait but it's not like the irrational need that now drives me and my brother. It surprised the shit out of me. I didn't even know that a human mate was a thing.

We have been here for six months, and we still aren't any closer to our mate. We both take turns, stalking her from the edge of the forest, making sure she is safe. But neither of us has ever approached her.

"I think we need to talk to Xavia," Raleigh says.

"What if she doesn't have any answers? Or she wants us to end the mate bond?" I ask angrily. "Are you ready for that?"

"Sayer," he says gently, trying to calm me down. "We can't continue living this way. It's driving both of us insane and one of us is bound to snap sooner or later. We need help."

He's trying to speak to my rational side again and I want to smack him, even if I know he's right.

"We won't know until we talk to her," he adds, running a hand through his shoulder-length hair.

"Fine."

"Let's go then." Excitement laces his tone.

Rising from the ground I follow my brother back to the compound. I know he has a point, and we need to find a way to get our mate. There are too many questions we don't have answers for and if there has ever been a situation like this, Xavia will know about it.

Reaching her home, we find her sitting on the back porch, drinking lemonade.

"I've been waiting for you," she says with a smile.

Raleigh and I look curiously at one another. I don't know why we are surprised, most of the elders know things without being told. Why would Xavia be any different?

"Would you like to tell me what has both of you all tied in knots?" she asks, handing us each a glass of lemonade as she gestures to the empty seats beside her. "I can feel the tension rolling off you like waves."

"We found our mate," I blurt out.

"That's wonderful, dear," Xavia smiles softly.

"Not so much," Raleigh sighs. "She's human."

Xavia doesn't look shocked at this revelation. Instead, her smile

widens.

“That certainly complicates things, but the goddess wouldn’t bless you with a mate if there wasn’t a way for you to be together.”

“We aren’t allowed to share our existence with humans. How do you suppose we win over a mate that doesn’t even know we exist?”

The defeated tone my twin uses to ask the question tears at my heart. I know we were trained to avoid emotions but not everything can be trained away. Being twins I have always been able to sense his emotions, to feel his pain, anger, and even his joy.

“I’m sure you boys will find a way,” she says. “Go on, Caine is looking for you.”

A moment later, Godrick comes around the side of the house.

“There you are. Caine called a meeting.”

Both of us nod in agreement, saying our goodbyes to Xavia, before following Godrick to the pack Alpha’s home.

Chapter Two

Raleigh

When we reach Caine's house, Godrick leads us to the kitchen where Caine, Calum, Max, and Marc are waiting with a few other members of the pack. Each has a plate in hand already feasting on the spread that has been set forth by Peyton, our pack Luna, and some of the other ladies.

We have these meetings every so often. Caine is looking for a way to end the constant war with the hunters. They continue to target the Katu pack and have caused untold damage. They have burned down our homes and even killed pack members without any provocation.

"We have some intel that a hunter may be in town," Calum says once he is finished eating.

"Intel?" Sayer asks. "Is it dependable?"

"When I say intel, I actually meant that Max caught a known scent from one of the previous attacks," Calum replies with a shrug.

Max is one of the best trackers I have ever met, better than even Sayer, and I don't doubt that he knows what he's talking about.

"I actually caught the scent before the twins arrived," Max says. "Around the time that Bryan was killed, but there was so much going on I wasn't sure. It's there every time I go into town."

"Have you narrowed it down?" I ask.

"It's most predominant around the diner," Marc interjects.

Sayer bristles and Caine catches his reaction. His gaze shifts from my twin to me, questions burning in the depths.

"Is there something you aren't telling me?" Caine asks.

We have been hiding this secret from everyone in the pack. It isn't really something we expect people to be open to. Humans haven't always been accepting of our kind. Our pack members may look at the problems with the hunters and worry that all humans would treat us the same.

As the Alpha, he deserves to know the truth. I know my brother isn't going to be happy about this, but I don't really have a choice. It's time to spill the beans.

"We didn't stay around and join the pack out of the goodness of our hearts," Sayer says lowly. "We had an ulterior motive."

His words cause everyone to focus their full attention on us. I see a look of shock and hurt flash across Godrick's face before he schools his

features.

I can't help but cuff my brother behind the head. He has zero tact.

"We scented our mate when we first arrived on the compound," I explain and some of the tension leaves the gathering.

"Why would you hide that?" Caine asks, confusion coating his words.

"And why haven't you claimed her?" Max jumps in.

"Wait," Marc frowns. "There aren't any available females of age in the pack."

Everyone stares at us. I thought someone would mention the fact that I said *our* mate, indicating both of us. But of course, this is what they would pick up on.

"She's not in the pack," I say.

At the same time, my idiot twin blurts out, "She's human."

Silence descends on the gathered males. The cat is out of the bag now. A murmur of confusion can be heard as each person tries to work through our revelation.

"How will that work?" Marc asks tentatively.

"No idea," I shrug. "But Xavia says fate wouldn't gift us a mate we couldn't claim."

"That makes sense," Godrick says with a nod.

"What is the problem with the diner?" Caine asks, getting us back on topic. "I saw the way Sayer reacted."

"She works there. And I think she stays above it," Sayer supplies.

"That means she could be in danger." Calum jumps up from his seat. "We need to do something."

"Yes, brother," our Alpha nods. "But we need to know what we are walking into. We can't just go off half-cocked. I won't put any more members of this pack at risk."

"What do you suggest?" Godrick asks, already pacing the length of the kitchen.

Godrick basically adopted us, taking us in and giving us a second chance at life. We owe him more than just gratitude, but the entire life we are living. He is protective of us and seeing him already feeling the same about our prospective mate has me smiling.

"The twins need to get closer to their mate and we need someone unknown to the hunters to scope out the town, see if anyone out of the ordinary is hanging around."

“You want us to go into town?” I ask incredulously.

“Yes.”

“This isn’t going to end well. Neither of us has much control over our animals at the moment. Knowing our mate is near and not being able to claim her has already pushed us to the edge. Being that close to her and not able to do anything about it is liable to have one of us fucking up.”

“It’s a chance we’re going to have to take,” Caine says calmly. “Besides, I have faith in the two of you.”

I wish I could say the same. Just the thought of being near her already has my wolf pacing the corners of my mind, agitation pushing him harder. My animal is chomping at the bit to be allowed to go into town and retrieve our mate. He wants what I want, what my brother wants. Our mate.

Chapter Three

Iris

I've been in the town of Katu Falls for a little more than a year. In the beginning, I wanted nothing more than to leave but I have found that I love small-town living. The sense of community, knowing the people that live around you. It's quaint.

There is also something to be said about the nonexistent crime rate. I never have to worry about someone trying to rob me or being attacked if I walk around after dark. I have felt a sense of peace since coming here. In the last six months, I have also had a feeling of safety, a strange sensation of being protected somehow.

My father wants me to come back home but I am trying to avoid leaving. I want to stay here.

I also found that I enjoy the menial job of being a waitress. My entire life I have been studying, working, and training. It's nice to just be. No pressure.

"Order for table three," our fry cook, Dan, calls from the window after ringing the bell. I grab it before dropping it off.

"Thank you," Mrs. Murry says with a smile before I head over to the next table.

The bell above the door rings drawing my attention. Two men walk in, and it feels like all the air has been sucked out of the room. Both are blond, muscular, and tattooed but that is where the similarities end. They have an air of danger that surrounds them and my training kicks in.

I watch them move, how people instinctively try to move away from them, sensing the predator beneath without actually knowing. Most people react this way when their kind is around.

Shifters.

It takes me a moment to gather myself before I grab two menus and head over to the back booth where they are seated.

"Hey," I say in an overly bright tone that makes my ears want to bleed. "Welcome to The Skillet. My name is Iris, and I will be your waitress today."

I place the menus on the table. The one with the shorter hair stares at me intently making my skin tingle. I feel a blush creep up my neck and

frown. What in the ever-loving fuck is that? I can't remember ever blushing in my fucking life.

Clearing my throat, I continue. "Do you want to hear the specials, or do you know what you want?"

"We'll both have some orange juice," the one with the ridiculously sexy man bun says.

His voice is deep with a raspy quality. His words have my body reacting in ways it never has before. My nipples pebble in my padded bra — thank God for that — and I swear my pussy contracts around nothing. My voice fails me, and I nod before scurrying away.

My navy-blue waitress uniform feels too tight, scraping against my skin with every move I make. I'm oversensitive and a little overheated. These guys are doing things to me that I simply don't understand.

Jesus.

Fucking.

Wept.

My father would be so fucking disappointed in me right now. This is my first real assignment, and I am acting like a damn bitch in heat. This would prove that I am not capable of being a hunter, just like he has always said.

I take my time getting their juice ready before taking it over to them. I can hear them arguing softly, but I can't make out the words. They stop abruptly when they spot me approaching.

The one with the man bun smiles at me as I serve their juice and I swear my ovaries weep. Dear Lord Almighty, this is not fucking good. The other man sounds like he is sniffing the air before a loud crack is heard throughout the diner.

"Thank you, Iris," Man Bun draws my attention back to him. "I'm Raleigh and this is my brother, Sayer."

His voice is deep and smooth, making me want to hear him talk some more. I wonder what he would sound like if he just woke up. Would his voice be deeper? Quickly, I push the thought aside.

I nod, his smile once more stealing my breath and rendering me speechless. I look like a fucking idiot. I clear my throat again, for what feels like the millionth time in the past ten minutes.

"Have you decided what you want to eat?"

My voice has taken on a husky quality I have never heard before and

a second blush infuses my features.

I swear I hear Sayer mumble, "I could eat you all day long."

But Raleigh talks over him, ordering them both the brunch special, while glaring at his brother.

With a nod, I hightail it away from them as quickly as my legs will carry me. I need time away from them, from their drugging presence, so I can figure out how the fuck to deal with this situation. I do know that I won't be calling my father until I have the situation under control. I am here to do recon and help my father wipe the shifter disease from the area before moving on to the next infected area.

I can't do that if all I can think about is being bent over one of the diner tables and getting mounted like a horny bitch. I need to figure out a way to control my reaction to them and if possible, why the hell I am reacting to them this way.

Chapter Four

Sayer

The thin wood top of the table splinters in my hand the moment I smell her arousal. This is new territory to all of us but knowing our fated mate finds one or both of us attractive enough to get aroused is doing my damn head in. I am struggling to control myself and my animal, and I'm not altogether sure I will.

"Breathe, brother," Raleigh says calmly, and I have to hold back the urge to growl at him.

"Why, yes," I say sarcastically. "Smelling my mate's wet cunt shouldn't work me up." I roll my eyes so hard at my idiot twin that I worry everyone in the diner can hear it.

He drags his hand down his face with a grimace. "I know this is hard, but we need to keep calm. There is a hunter threat in this area and if that isn't enough to scare her, you going psycho and shifting probably will."

His words have my wolf receding back into my mind with a huff, allowing me some semblance of control. He isn't happy about any of this and he is making it hard to miss his displeasure. It has already been an epic battle to keep the damn beast under control for the past six months. I honestly don't know how long I will be able to keep my grip on him.

"Fine. How do you want to do this?" I glare at my twin.

"I was thinking we should just do some recon. Take in all the scents and see if anything changes. Perhaps come into the diner every day for a week. That should give us a better indication." He looks thoughtful. "It will also give Iris the opportunity to get more comfortable around us."

"A week?" I choke out.

I know for a fact I won't be able to control myself if I must see her every day for a week, smell her, and be close enough to touch her and still not have her.

"I know," he says in a pained whisper. "It's a lot to ask. If you can't..."

But he never finishes the sentence, my low growl cutting him off. We glare at one another for long moments, neither willing to look away first. If there is one thing I hate, it's being seen as weak. Even by the person that has already seen me at my lowest point in life.

Laughter has both of us snapping our gazes in the direction of another table. Iris has her head thrown back and her left hand is placed on the shoulder of a man I don't know. My chest aches seeing her touch another man and my wolf howls in displeasure. My brain feels like it has been electrocuted, pain rolling through every synapse.

I look back at my brother and see the same soul-consuming sadness scroll across his features.

"You're right. I can't do this." My voice is low, tortured as the words slip from my lips. "I am sorry, brother."

Slipping out of the booth, I hastily leave the diner without turning to sneak a final look at the woman who is both my reason for living and the thing that is killing me ever so fucking slowly.

My legs carry me into the forest quickly. The moment I am deep enough into the thick foliage I allow my animal the free reign he so darkly craves. My skin ripples with the change, my clothing rending from my body as I drop down into the dirt.

I have been shifting for years and the pain of my muscles and bones realigning to my new form isn't as bad as it used to be. Soon, my paws are digging deep into the dark earth. The feeling of being closer to nature is usually enough to calm my wolf but I'm not that lucky today.

What feels like a never-ending howl of pure agony rips from the soul of my wolf, rending the air and scattering all the animals near me, sending them cowering in fear.

One would think my animal would want to run, to escape the pain of being near our mate but not claiming her. But no. This asshole is a glutton for punishment and heads straight back to town. Remaining within the confines and camouflage of the forest, he makes his way around town until we reach the back of the diner.

We've spent days in this exact spot, staring at the same building. And we will be doing just that today as well.

Yes, it hurt to be near Iris and not claim her.

Yes, my wolf wants nothing more than to drag her back to our home and make her ours.

But we would rather be here than miles away. We both understand the need to be careful even if we don't like it. And this is the best we can do.

Chapter Five

Iris

I laugh at the joke Raymond tells me when I deliver his check. It's a daily routine for us. He moved to town only a month ago, but we have become close friends. He is the principal at the only school in town and someone I have grown fond of. I know my father would disapprove of me making friends, but the hunter's life is solitary and I deserve a little bit of happiness.

The bell above the door draws my attention and my gaze meets the angry glare of Raleigh before he is able to school his features. He smiles quickly before looking down at his cell phone. Through the large windows, I only catch a glimpse of Sayer as he crosses the road and wanders into the forest beyond.

Moments later a howl rips through the air. I know it's Sayer. I hear the tittering of customers but I'm not afraid. I can't explain it and it doesn't make sense. What makes even less sense is my hand rubbing at my chest as a strange feeling of longing and pain fills me.

What the hell?

"I heard there were wolves in the forests surrounding town, but I've never seen or heard them," Raymond says drawing my attention back to him.

I stare into his green eyes, mesmerized by the ring of gold around the edge. My breathing is harsh as I try to filter through the strange feelings assaulting me from all sides.

"Don't worry, dear," Raymond says, squeezing my hand gently. "You don't need to be afraid. Wolves rarely come into towns." I'm glad he mistook whatever the hell I am feeling for fear because I don't know how I will ever be able to explain my reaction.

I nod absently as I hear my next order called. Giving Raymond a wobbly smile I head to the window and grab the two plates. My legs feel wobbly as I make my way toward Raleigh, where he now sits alone.

"Where did your brother go?" I ask softly as I set the plates down.

"He had some other things to take care of."

"And his food?"

"He wasn't really hungry."

Raleigh finally lifts his gaze to meet mine. If I didn't know better, I would say he was sad, but that doesn't make any sense.

“Are you from around here?” I ask, changing the subject.

My training kicks in and I know I need to gather all the information I can. Being able to report something back to my father that furthers his cause could finally be the thing that makes him proud of me. He hasn't been the same since my older brother, Aaron, died in a raid last year. He doesn't believe I have what it takes to be a hunter and I intend to prove him wrong.

Not even ten miles from where I am standing, one of these shifter animals took his life. Sadness wraps around me like a cloak. I loved my brother more than anything else in this life and I want to avenge what was done to him. We never even had a body to bury.

“Not really,” Raleigh replies. “We've only been here about six months.”

“What made you move here, to the middle of nowhere?” I try to smile but I'm not sure it works. My mind isn't in the game.

He chuckles. “We found something we have been looking for.”

“Oh, that's cryptic,” I try to joke. “What could that be?”

“You'll find out soon enough, beautiful.”

Taking my hand, he raises it to his lips, placing a kiss on my knuckles. Again, arousal roars through my veins, and Raleigh smiles like he knows exactly what effect he has on me. Reaching into his pocket he pulls out some money and drops it on the table as he stands.

“I'll see you soon.”

With those words and a wink, he is gone. I stand there, dumbstruck. Staring at the door after he leaves.

“I wouldn't mind a piece of that,” Raymond says beside me, startling me out of whatever trance I was in. “But I have a feeling that fine-ass man only has eyes for you.”

“Don't be ridiculous,” I mumble, trying not to blush. “What would a man like that want with someone like me?”

Hell, that isn't nearly as absurd as the thought of what a shifter would want with me. If this is true, I need to watch my step. I may end up dead, just like my brother.

Raymond stares at me in disbelief. “Girl, do you really not see it? You are stunning. I mean, if I was straight, I would be giving that man a run for his money.”

And there goes that blush...

Chapter Six

Raleigh

I know I told my twin that we need to visit the diner every day and I planned to stay there at least two hours, but I need to get the fuck out of here right now. Hearing Sayer's wolf howl in pain accompanied by her smell and the feel of her soft skin against mine, is enough to have even me pushed to the brink. My usually well-behaved wolf is pushing at the corners of my mind, demanding to be set free so he can go to his mate.

I don't allow myself to shift as my brother has done, my wolf may not allow me to hold him back. Instead, I walk around the small town of Katu Falls, trying to breathe through this intense need. I fully intend to stay away from the diner for at least the rest of the day, if not a little longer. I need to keep some distance from Iris. I won't be able to control myself much longer if I spend too much time with her.

When I finally feel calm enough to be around people, I stop at the quaint little bookstore on Main Street and buy the latest horror novel and make my way to the town square. I've always thought it was a beautiful spot and now I will be able to enjoy it. There are a bunch of beautiful trees and lush green grass. Taking a seat beneath one of the large elm trees, I settle in for a read.

I lose myself in the pages, the world the author has carved with his words entrancing me, and lose track of time. Soon the sun starts to creep beneath the horizon.

"Have you been here the entire day?"

The melodious lilt of her voice has my cock stirring in its confines. Closing my novel, I place it on my lap to hide the evidence before smiling up at Iris.

"It's easy when you have a good book," I say with a smile.

"I wouldn't have taken you for someone who enjoys reading," she chuckles, fidgeting.

I raise a brow at her words. "And what would make you say that? You don't even know me." I tease, watching her blush.

"I'm sorry, that sounded horrible and not at all how I meant it. But to be honest, you look more like a biker or a mechanic than an intellectual."

"I could be all of those."

The words leave my lips without any forethought, easily flirting with

her. Her laughter fills the empty spaces in my tortured soul, and I can't help but smile back at her.

"Would you like to grab some coffee?" I ask.

A look of shock dominates her features before it softens. "If we can make it a beer instead. After a day at work, I can't stand the smell of coffee."

Standing, I discreetly adjust my erection. "Sounds good to me."

"Where is your brother?" Iris asks as she walks beside me, heading toward the only bar in town.

A strange feeling settles in my core. I would never have an issue sharing a mate with my brother. But I never even considered that she might prefer one of us above the other. Is that what this is? Is she only making conversation with me to get to Sayer?

"Why do you ask?" I say carefully.

"No reason." She smiles. "I read somewhere that twins spend more time together than any other siblings. I was wondering how accurate that was."

I nod as the irrational fear quickly recedes. "Sayer and I are close. Very close actually. But he's busy today."

"Yes, you mentioned that he had things to do."

She sounds a little disappointed, but I don't think about it too long. Pushing the door open, I lead her into the dimly lit bar. Jamie, the bartender, nods when he sees me.

"I'll grab us each a beer and you can grab us a booth," I say with a smile.

Iris nods before heading toward the back. I need a moment away from her intoxicating scent to get myself and my wolf under control before spending more time with her. I wait patiently as Jaime helps another customer before he hands me two ice-cold beers and I head over to where Iris is seated.

This is going to be a special kind of torture, but I don't think I can deny myself the chance to spend some time with her. She has already become as important to me as the air I breathe and I don't even know her last name.

How ridiculous is that? I wonder if it is only because of the mating bond or if it's more. Could I honestly be falling for a stranger?

Chapter Seven

Iris

When I spotted him sitting beneath the massive elm tree reading a book, my feet carried me in his direction, like I was being drawn to him. It doesn't make any sense because I don't know him or his brother, but I missed them both today. It isn't something I can explain but since they walked into the diner, I have felt this indescribable draw to both of them.

They are shifters, the enemy, and I know this as well as I know my name. Either one of them could have been the animal that dealt the fatal blow that killed my brother. And yet, I can't stop thinking about them.

Watching him from across the hazy bar I can't help but appreciate him. He is tall and muscular. His jeans encase his thighs and well-sculpted ass perfectly driving me slightly loopy. My hormones have been on the rampage since I laid eyes on the two of them. I've never been the type of girl that let my pussy lead me but I swear I have had a few moments where I strongly considered it today.

"I hope this is okay," Raleigh says, placing the amber bottle in front of me. "I can get you something else?"

I take three big sips, hoping to settle my nerves and give myself some liquid courage. This man does things to me I'm not quite sure how to explain. I want to do the right thing and use him to gain all the information I need to end his pack. But on the other hand, I want to jump over this table and kiss the ever-loving shit out of him.

We sit in silence simply staring at one another. Strangely, it's not even the slightest bit uncomfortable and I feel weirdly at peace in his presence. If I was one of those girls that believed in happily ever after, I would say he is my soulmate. But things like that don't exist in real life. Do they?

"Is this weird?" I ask softly. I need to talk to keep my mind from wandering to all the dirty thoughts running through my mind.

"More than you know," Raleigh chuckles. "Do you want to leave?"

"No." I shake my head. "I'm just trying to figure out what we're doing."

"How about this? You can ask me any questions you want, and I promise to reply honestly. And if you still feel weird in half an hour, we can go our separate ways."

The idea of walking away from this man has me breathing harder. For some inexplicable reason, I want to be closer to him, not further away.

“Is it only you and Sayer? I mean, where is the rest of your family?”

“It’s just us. We never knew our dad and our mom died when we were young. We were raised by an uncle, of sorts, but we don’t see him anymore,” he says. “But we’ve built our own family. Godrick and Keela took us in, and we’ve grown fond of their friends.”

“That sounds great,” I muse, taking a moment to think about my own family. “It’s just me and my dad now. My brother died last year.”

“I’m sorry to hear that,” Raleigh reaches across the table and clasps my hand.

Strangely, I believe his words. He really is sorry for my loss. I don’t think anyone has shown me this much compassion in years and it warms my heart.

“It’s okay. We were never that close.” I shut down the conversation and my emotions.

Raleigh frowns at my reaction. “What brought you to Katu Falls?” he asks, easily continuing into the next logical part of our little conversation.

I know I should lie to him, but it feels wrong. I want to tell him the truth and see where the chips fall. But I know I can’t do that. He is dangerous. All his kind are, and it’s my duty to make sure they don’t hurt anyone else.

“I just needed a new start.”

The lie slips out effortlessly and we continue our conversation. We talk for what feels like minutes but is probably more like an hour. We have a couple more beers and soon my stomach growls loudly and embarrassment sweeps through me.

“I’ll order us some food,” Sayer says and chuckles. “How does a bacon cheeseburger sound.”

“That sounds perfect.”

My heart beats a mile a minute as I watch him approach the bar. Now is probably the best chance I will have. Retrieving the vial from my handbag, I pour the white powder into his beer before looking back at him. His back is turned to me as I swill the contents, making sure the powder dissolves before he returns. Guilt gnaws at my insides but I know this is what needs to be done to protect the people of Katu Falls.

I am doing the right thing.

I think.

Chapter Eight

Sayer

I've heard that humans believe in a twin bond. That one twin can sense the other's fear or some shit like that. Let me tell you what a true twin bond is.

The moment Raleigh is near our mate, which has been two hours by the way, I can feel his arousal. His happiness and contentment at being able to spend time with her swim through my veins like a fucking drug. It even calms my crazy-ass wolf to know that at least one of us is making some progress with her.

But this connection also lets me know the moment there is something wrong. Drowsiness and disorientation hit me like a freight train, confusion coating my mind. My wolf changes direction from where we were hunting a small deer and heads back toward town. It only takes us a couple of minutes to get there and circle toward the bar where we feel Raleigh's presence the strongest.

The inky blackness of the moonless night hides many things from humans but as a shifter, my eyesight adapts, and I can see everything as clear as day.

In the alley behind the bar, Iris has my brother pinned to a brick wall. If anyone else were to walk past it would look like a lover's embrace, but I can see and feel the truth. Raleigh is barely conscious, and she is struggling with all her might not to let him fall to the dirty alley floor. If it were anyone else, I would be laughing.

I know he isn't drunk. Shifters have an insane tolerance, and he isn't a big drinker. Also, the effects of whatever he ingested, acted way too fast for alcohol.

Instead of hiding in the shadows, trying to figure out what happened, I allow the shift to shimmer over me, transforming me back to my human form. Naked, I walk slowly toward Iris and my brother.

"Why the fuck do you have to be so big?" she grumbles, struggling to get a better hold of Raleigh.

"What are you doing, Iris?" I ask softly into her ear.

A shriek leaves her lips as she spins, letting go of my brother. I watch his body drop to the ground like a bag of potatoes. My attention quickly snaps back to our mate. The shock of my appearance is quickly wearing off.

Her gaze travels across my body, taking in my nudity and the erection I have no intention of hiding from her.

“You’re naked!”

“And you’re a hunter.”

It didn’t take me long to figure it out once the drug or whatever she gave Raleigh kicked in. The mask of shock on her face is genuine. Either I am wrong in my assumption — which I fucking doubt — or she didn’t think she would be caught.

“What? A what?” she stammers.

“Let’s not lie to one another.” A low growl escapes me as I step forward and cage her against the wall. “We both know why you’re here.”

Defiance has her lifting her chin, anger sparkling in the depth of her beautiful smokey-grey eyes. Fuck, I want to kiss her so badly. She is not only our mate but the enemy. That fact doesn’t do anything to quell the lust drowning me.

“What were you planning on doing with my brother, little huntress?” I ask, pressing the full length of my body against hers.

A small moan escapes her when my erection rubs against her belly. That fucking sound. It’s enough to drive any man to the brink of madness. I should know because there is no explanation for what I do next.

Grabbing her jean-clad leg, I wrap it around my hip, making sure my erection is cradled against her covered sex. Slowly, I pull my hips back before thrusting forward. Iris swallows harshly, desire and fear warring on her features. But she doesn’t scream or push me away, so I continue.

The smell of her need coats the air and I want to drop to my knees and run my tongue all over her pussy. But now isn’t the time or the place for such things. I need to keep my wits and find out what the fuck is going on.

Is what I am doing wrong? Yes, it is.

Am I enjoying it? Every fucking second.

“Iris,” I say softly, my lips millimeters from hers. “What were you planning on doing with my brother?”

It takes every working brain cell I have to ask her that simple question.

She shakes her head vehemently from side to side and I know I need to push her a little more. My left hand fondles her breast and I thrust against her cunt with more force, lifting her feet off the ground. She is so fucking small.

“Tell me, little huntress,” I say.

“I ... I...” Her impending orgasm is making it hard to talk. “My father wants me to gather intel.”

The broken words fall from her lips, sadness coating them. It breaks my heart knowing that not only has fate destined us to be with a human, but with the enemy no less. There isn't any scenario where I can see this working out.

This may be the only opportunity I have. I may never have her in my arms again. The thought alone is enough to have my wolf howling in outrage, rattling my mind. Pressing my face into the crook of her neck I breathe in her intoxicating scent. Vanilla and fresh rain.

“I should rip your throat out.” Her entire body goes tense at my words. I lick along the column of her neck, tasting her natural flavor.

“Sayer?” Her voice is soft, the fear clear in every syllable.

She knows she is outmatched. I am so much bigger than she is, and she would never be able to fight me off. What kind of man is her father to send her here alone? She could be hurt. Or worse, killed. Anger sweeps through me at this entire fucked-up situation.

“I'm not going to hurt you, Iris,” I finally say. “But you are coming with me to the compound. I can't have you running off to tell your little hunter friends what is going on here.”

I stare at her. Arousal has her flushed, her breasts heaving. If I never get to be with my mate, I am going to take this one opportunity to make her feel good. Quickly I undo the top of her jeans before sliding my hand inside. When I feel the heat and wetness of her pussy, I can't hold back the growl in my throat.

“This isn't fair,” I mumble as I rub circles around her clit. “Why couldn't you have been a wolf? Or even a normal human?”

But Iris isn't hearing a word I say. Her orgasm crashes through her. Her entire body shakes with the force of it, and I want to howl at the sounds of pleasure that escape her. Cum drips down my painful erection but there isn't much I can do about that. I can't claim her even if I wanted to.

Chapter Nine

Iris

What the hell is wrong with me? The list of things that have gone wrong in the last hour just keeps growing.

Fraternalizing with the enemy? Check.

Unable to perform a simple kidnapping? Check.

Caught by the enemy and having my cover blown? Check.

Letting the enemy give me the best orgasm of my life and not doing a damn thing to stop it? Yeah, check that one too.

And now? Now I am in the front seat of a massive forest-green pickup truck being driven to God knows where. They are probably going to kill me and serve me at dinner. A-la-spit-roast style.

I have no idea how I am going to get myself out of this mess I have created. And the weirdest part? I'm not scared. Not. One. Bit.

For some reason, I don't think Sayer or Raleigh will hurt me. What's worse is the strange confidence I have in these shifters to protect me from any harm. Even from their friends. I don't know them and I sure as shit shouldn't trust them to keep me alive in this situation, but it is the most intense gut feeling I have ever had in my entire life.

Sayer drives us deeper into the dark forest, dressed in pair of grey sweatpants, country music softly playing on the radio while Raleigh snores on the back seat where his brother put him. He looks peaceful. Hopefully, he won't wake up until after I've been killed. I don't want to have to apologize and beg for my life at the same time.

"What are you thinking about?" Sayer asks, pulling me from my thoughts.

"Not like it matters," I say with a huff, crossing my arms over my chest. "I'll probably be dead in the next hour."

"Dead?" He sounds shocked. "Why would you be dead?"

A hysterical chuckle escapes me. "I know what you shifters do to hunters."

"Which is?"

"I can't believe you're going to make me say it. That's really cruel, you know?" When he doesn't speak, I continue. "You're going to kill me and feed me to your pack."

A riotous roar of laughter leaves Sayer. "Are you crazy?" he asks

once he gets himself under control.

“Don’t call me that,” I hiss.

“Look,” he says bringing the truck to a stop outside a massive gate. “We are just like normal people except for two differences. We have fated mates, and we need to go for a run as wolves every now and then.”

I stare at him in disbelief. “You can’t expect me to believe that bullshit.”

“Believe whatever you want, little huntress. I’m not the one that’s been lying since we met.”

Heat infuses my face. I feel like a child being scolded by an adult. Could this day possibly get any worse?

“Where are you taking me?” I ask softly.

I need to remember my training instead of panicking. I need to know where we are headed and make sure I know which route he took so I can get away from these monsters once I escape. I need to fucking focus.

“I am going to take you to our Alpha.” His words are low, and I can see the frown creasing his forehead. “Caine needs to decide your fate.”

“And then?” I ask with no small amount of trepidation lacing my words.

“I don’t know, little huntress,” he says with a sigh before silence once more envelops us.

The drive to the pack compound takes a little less than an hour. The road, if you can even call it that, isn’t suitable for any type of vehicle except a truck or something like it. Blind fear flows through my entire body with every harsh pump of my heart once we reach the compound. Seeing the high walls and large gates beneath the thick canopy of trees has my throat closing in pure unadulterated terror.

Remember that fear I wasn’t feeling? I am drowning in it right now.

“Breathe,” Sayer says, holding my hand firmly in his. “I won’t let anything happen to you.”

I make a broken sound from somewhere deep inside myself at what can only be a blatant lie. Slowly, the gate opens, and Sayer maneuvers the truck inside only using his free hand. The longer he touches me, the calmer I feel. Strange.

We drive past houses and what looks like one of those great halls you see in foreign films until we reach a single-story house. I can see that many

of the lights inside are on and there are people milling about. On the porch stands a woman. She has long blonde hair and a curvy figure I would die for.

She doesn't wait for us to get out of the truck, instead approaching us.

"Sayer," she says leaning in through the window with a smile.

Her gaze assesses me before moving to the passed-out figure of Raleigh in the back seat. Shaking her head, she chuckles.

"Peyton, this is Iris," Sayer introduces us. "She's the hunter in town we were trying to find."

Her gaze snaps to mine as a frown slashes across her forehead. "She is also..."

"Yes," Sayer cuts her off.

"Go to the newly built house on the east side of the compound. It was furnished a couple of days ago." She is speaking a mile a minute. "I will have Talon bring you guys some food."

"What about Caine?" Sayer asks, staring at the house in front of us.

"Let me deal with my mate," she says before turning to me. "Did you do that?" Her chin lifts in the direction of Raleigh's prone form.

"Um, yes," I say softly.

She laughs shaking her head. "Have fun with that."

She raps her knuckles on the roof of the truck before disappearing back into the house.

Chapter Ten

Sayer

I never considered the fact that Raleigh and I were living like overgrown children with Keela and Godrick to be an issue. I didn't think farther than being able to claim our mate. Where would we live? Would she want her own home? What if we had a baby? We couldn't keep living with our pseudo-adoptive parents. We needed to go out on our own eventually.

Pulling up to the little home that was only recently built on this side of the compound, I can't help but steal glances at my — at *our* — mate. I know this house hasn't been assigned yet and there isn't currently anyone in the pack with a need for a home, so maybe we could stay here. Permanently.

Raleigh, Iris, and me.

But that's just a simple fantasy and something I need to get over. Caine is going to lose his shit once Peyton tells him the truth. I know I told Iris I would keep her safe and I meant every word, but the reality is, she is probably going to end up dead. My grip on the steering wheel tightens at the thought of her in pain.

Shutting down the engine, I take a few deep breaths and get myself under control before facing Iris.

"Wait in the truck. I need to get Raleigh inside first. And then we should have a talk."

"You trust me to wait here?" she asks in surprise.

"I trust a hunter to know better than to go waltzing through a wolf-shifter compound by herself."

"Fine. I'll wait."

I watch her fold her arms, her breasts pressed higher by the action, straining against the shirt she has on. I want to rent the material from her skin and bare her to me but that isn't in the cards.

Getting out of the truck I open the back door and pull my brother out. Throwing him over my shoulder in a fireman's carry, I quickly climb the four steps to the porch before opening the door and walking in. The layout is the same as most of the houses. Lounge, open-plan kitchen and dining area, two bathrooms, and three bedrooms. Most people add as their families continue to grow but I think our house will remain as it is. Empty and never becoming a true home. My chest aches as I lay Raleigh down on a bed in one of the rooms. I'm not sure how either of us is going to take losing our mate but I do

know it isn't going to be easy.

Closing the door behind me, I make my way back to Iris. I was worried she might try to take off, but she is exactly where I left her. I make a "come here" gesture with my index finger, and after watching her glare for a moment, turn and walk into the house. I know she will follow me. I mean, I can't see her sitting there in the open, waiting to be seen by another pack member. I can smell the fear radiating off her.

"I'm in the kitchen," I call out when I hear her footsteps on the porch. "Close the door, will you?"

Another unhappy huff leaves her at being told what to do but she complies all the same. What other choice does she have after all? It takes her a moment to make it to the kitchen, but she doesn't step into the room, instead standing on the threshold like a lost little girl.

"Sit down." I gesture to the island while filling the kettle with water. "I'll make us some tea and then we can have a nice chat."

"A chat about what?" she asks taking a seat and glaring at me.

"Well, for starters, I need to know what you've communicated to your father."

"I'm not going to tell you anything." She grits her teeth.

"Then perhaps you'll listen to what we have to say," Raleigh says.

He is clearly still groggy and seemingly pissed off that he was drugged. Iris ducks her head, hiding her face behind a curtain of hair, effectively avoiding him.

"I don't care what you have to say," Iris says softly. "I can't trust either of you anyway."

"We never lied to you," I point out.

"Neither did I," she snaps back, glaring at me.

"Well," Sayer says casually, taking a seat beside her. "Neither of us drugged and tried to kidnap you. So, I think we are a little more trustworthy than you."

"Whatever," she mumbles, looking out the window at the dark night sky.

"This will go a lot easier if we can just be civil about this," I say, handing her a cup of steaming hot tea. "The fact is we are all in this situation together and nothing is going to change that."

"That's where you're wrong, Sayer," Iris says angrily. She slams the cup of tea on the counter, sending hot liquid sloshing out of the cup. "You

aren't being held captive by the same monsters that killed your only brother.”

Chapter Eleven

Raleigh

Waking up after being drugged is a pain in the ass. Your mouth feels like it has been stuffed full of cotton wool and tastes like someone used it to dump their garbage. My tongue is sticking to the roof of my mouth, and I want nothing more than a gallon of water to finally drain this horrible thirst.

Rolling off the unknown bed I woke up on, I take in my surroundings. Beige walls, white bedding, white curtains, and not a single personalization of the space. Where the hell am I?

It's then that the familiar scents hit me. Sayer has been here recently. And Iris is nearby, though this isn't her home. No, the underlying scents of the rest of our pack members are faint but clearly discernible.

I hear their voices as I walk out of the room and my feet carry me forward without a single thought. I want to see her again, be near her, and perhaps even lay her across my knee and spank her sexy ass for drugging me. Although, that is mostly my own fault. If I wasn't so preoccupied with my mate, I would have realized sooner that she is a hunter and I could have saved myself this narcotic hangover.

Sayer and I try our damndest to get her to listen to us, but she simply doesn't want to. She has been raised to believe that we are monsters, and I don't know if anything we say will ever change it.

It doesn't matter that she calls us monsters, but what cuts me open is the hurt in her tone when she accuses us of killing her brother.

"Why do you think one of us killed him?" I ask. I remembered her sadness at the bar when she originally told me about him.

"My father told me everything!" She is standing now, screaming at us, her entire body heaving from the exertion of her rage. "They came here a year ago to scope out the pack and you animals killed him. We didn't even have a body to bury."

Her voice breaks on the last word and a single tear trickles down her cheek. I want nothing more than to go to her and hold her, comfort her, and take this terrible pain away, but I can't.

"That wasn't us," Sayer cuts in. "We've only been in Katu Falls for six months. And the only people we've killed in the past three years have been rogue wolves."

His words have her snapping out of her sadness to face him. "You're

lying.”

“No, Iris,” I say softly, stepping closer to her. “We are also hunters. We hunt rogues and outlaw shifters.”

She looks confused as she sits back down. I leave her to process everything we just said. I share a look with Raleigh, hoping he understands that we need to be careful proceeding with Iris.

“Then it would have been someone else in the pack,” she says loudly.

“I can’t answer that, Iris,” Sayer says. “But if you want, I can find out.”

“I can answer that question,” Max says from the doorway, flanked by Caine. “I killed him.”

You could hear a pin drop in the silence that descends around us. No one moves, I don’t even think anyone breathes. Until a cup goes sailing past my face and crashing against the wall, sending porcelain flying everywhere.

“Fucking monster!” Iris roars, charging at Max.

Raleigh grabs her around the waist, lifting her off the ground and running around.

“What the fuck? Was that really necessary, Max?” I ask, glaring at him.

“I don’t like lying to people,” Max says calmly. “And she wanted to know.”

“I’m going to fucking kill you!” Iris screams from behind me.

“Stop!” Caine says loudly, using every bit of Alpha infliction he can.

I’ve wondered if his Alpha commands would work on humans, and now I know. The moment he gives the order even Iris falls silent in Raleigh’s arms and stops struggling. She doesn’t drop the glare she has aimed at Max, though.

“Everyone, take a seat,” Caine says. “I am going to ask some questions and I want answers. You don’t want to push me tonight.”

“Caine,” I start but he cuts me off with a glare.

“My mate has asked that I keep an open mind about this entire situation, but having a damn hunter inside my compound isn’t making me feel all warm and fuzzy. Not to mention that she managed to drug one of the best-trained men I have ever met, which does not instill me with confidence.”

No one dares to ever defy Caine and this situation isn’t any different. Each of us takes a seat around the counter. We don’t say a word but the tension in the room is thick and heavy, shrouding us in a cloak of mixed

emotions.

Chapter Twelve

Iris

The largest man among them assesses me carefully. I am assuming he is their Alpha. I have heard rumors among the other hunters about an Alpha being able to bring other shifters to heal by simply using his voice. But I've never heard of it working on a human before.

"Why are you here?" he asks, directing the question at me. "And don't lie to me."

"I don't have to tell you a damn thing."

I know I should be terrified right now but I don't give a shit. The man with him has just admitted to killing Aaron and I can't think of anything else right now. I have an irrational need to exact revenge for my brother.

"Iris, please," Sayer implores. "Caine is the one person you need to tell the truth."

I see the look on both Sayer and Raleigh's faces, and something shifts inside me. They look concerned and I want to erase that.

"I'm here to give feedback about your pack," I say facing him head-on. "My father sent me."

"And what have you told him?" the brother murderer asks.

"I don't owe you shit!" I hiss. "Don't talk to me, asshole."

"Max, let me talk to her," Caine says. "Okay, Iris. What have you told your father?"

I contemplate ignoring him but change my mind. "I haven't told him anything. There wasn't much to tell. I haven't seen any shifters or even what I thought were shifters. All I had to report was hearing howling some nights and I didn't even tell him that."

I fold my arms across my chest and all the men track the move. A low growl comes from Sayer and Max chuckles, raising his hands in surrender.

"Now, I want some answers." I wait for Caine to nod before I direct my glare at Max. "What did you do with my brother's body?"

Caine and Max frown in unison.

"By the time the raid was over there were no bodies inside the compound," Caine answers. "The only dead left behind were our people."

"That can't be true. My father said he never got Aaron's body back."

"I'm not even sure I killed him, to be honest," Max cuts in. "He was attacking my mate and I defended her. I was in a rage, and I ripped him off

her and threw him down the hallway.”

“What? Are you serious?” I jump to my feet and the twins follow suit. “Sit down, I’m not going to do anything.”

I turn and pace the length of the kitchen, running my hands through my hair. There is so much right now that doesn’t make sense. I know my father keeps secrets from me but would he really lie about Aaron’s death? And then it hits me.

“I never wanted to be a hunter,” I say softly before letting my gaze slip back to Caine. “I told my father I was quitting before they went on the raid and when he came back everything changed. I stayed to avenge Aaron.”

“Fuck,” Raleigh says softly, shaking his head.

“Would your father lie to you?” Caine asks seriously. “Can you honestly say he wouldn’t manipulate you like that?”

“Let me ask you something. Do you eat humans?”

I feel stupid the moment the words leave my lips. Instantly, I know it’s all been a lie. My father has been manipulating me my entire life and I was too stupid to see it.

“No, Iris,” Caine says with a chuckle. “We do love bacon, though.”

I blush beet red before sinking down against the wall and resting my forehead on my knees. My heart is breaking. How could I have been so naive? How could my father be so cruel? This revelation has changed my entire life, and shaken me down to my core.

Everything I have been taught, everything that I believed in, is a lie.

When I look back up again, it is only me and the twins in the kitchen.

“Where did they go?” I ask softly.

“They’ve gone back to their own homes,” Sayer says. “Caine wants to see you in a couple of days, but he doesn’t think you’re a threat so you’re welcome to stay.”

“Or, we could take you back to town,” Raleigh adds. “If that’s what you want.”

“I don’t have anywhere to go. My father pays for everything,” I say, my voice broken. “The apartment is in his name.”

“You can stay here if you want,” Raleigh says reaching his hand down to help me up. “We wouldn’t mind the company.”

“You don’t know me. Hell, *I* don’t even know me right now.” I sound slightly hysterical. “What the hell am I supposed to do with my life now?”

“Why don’t we take it one day at a time?” Sayer says when I finally

stand. “We can work it out from there.”

Chapter Thirteen

Raleigh

My heart broke last night when Iris finally figured out the truth. Having everything you've believed your entire life ripped apart couldn't have been fun. I know it won't be easy for her going forward but I am hoping she will allow me and Sayer to be by her side through this. We both want to support her in any way we can.

I grab a quick shower before heading downstairs where the smell of freshly brewed coffee is already floating through the air. Iris is standing at the counter, wearing one of my t-shirts and very little else. It is much too big on her and comes to the middle of her thighs, but her tan legs are on full display, and it takes me more than a moment to get myself under control.

Adjusting my erection for what feels like the millionth time, I enter the kitchen.

"Morning," I say announcing my presence.

"Hey," she says shyly. "I hope you don't mind I brewed a pot."

"Not at all." I smile making my way around her and filling my own cup. "Coffee is my second favorite smell in the morning."

"Will you take me back to town?" she asks after a moment of silence. My chest hurts at her question and the uncertainty in her voice. "I have to be at work later."

"Peyton spoke to Ingrid this morning," Sayer cuts in as he enters from outside wearing only a pair of sweatpants. "They've known each other for years. Ingrid has someone filling your spot until you decide what to do."

"What?" Iris demands loudly. "I need that job. I need to be able to survive on my own now."

"You still have your job," I say softly. "But now you also have a couple of days to work through everything."

Her hands go to her hips as she glares at each of us in turn. "What am I supposed to do for a couple of days? Sit around here? I don't even have clean clothes."

"Keela is going into town, and she'll pick up some of your stuff," Sayer says.

"That's an invasion of my privacy!"

"And we need to talk to you," Sayer adds hastily. "I know last night was a lot to be bombarded with but there are still some things you don't

know.”

Hurt flits across her features. “Such as?”

All the fight leaves her instantly. I hate that she expects the worst already but why wouldn't she?

“Sayer,” I caution.

“No,” he says with finality. “We have been waiting six months to talk to her and I am going to take my chance while I have it.”

“What are you two talking about?” Iris asks with a frown.

“We should sit down for this conversation,” I say, running my hand through my hair.

“I don't want to sit,” Iris starts but Sayer cuts her off.

“It would be better.”

Both of us implore her with our gazes until she nods, giving in to this one request. We each take our cups of coffee and make our way to the living room. The tension in the air is a palpable thing, vibrating through each of us.

Iris takes a seat in the only armchair, folding her legs beneath her, flashing her milky thighs, and forcing myself and Sayer to sit on the tan leather couch.

“Spill.”

She watches each of us closely. I am trying to find the right words to break the news to her when my brother simply blurts it out. Again.

“You're our fated mate.”

I am going to have to spend some time teaching him about tact and finesse. You can't just go around blurting out whatever you feel like.

Iris frowns before carefully placing her cup on the glass coffee table with trembling hands. “What does that mean?” she asks cautiously.

“What exactly do you know about shifters?” I ask, watching her closely.

“After last night?” A harsh chuckle leaves her. “Let's say for the purposes of this conversation that I just found out about the existence of shifters.”

“Okay,” Sayer says with a nod before turning to me expectantly. Of course, he would keep his mouth shut now, leaving me to deal with everything.

“Shifters have three things that make us unique from humans. We are pack orientated. Which means that most of us prefer to spend time with our own kind. We can shift. Our pack is made up of wolf shifters but there are

many different types of shifters. And lastly, we have fated mates. Someone chosen for us by the Goddess to spend the rest of our lives with.”

“And I’m your *mate*?” Iris asks in disbelief.

“Yes,” we reply in unison.

“How do you know?”

“There’s your scent,” Sayer says, taking a deep breath. “I’ve never smelled anything like it.”

Iris blushes deeply and a smile tugs at the corner of her lips. She tries to hide it by ducking her chin, but I already saw it.

“And there is the inescapable draw we feel. We weren’t even within fifty miles of Katu Falls and we already knew you were here,” I explain. “It’s why we joined this pack.”

“Wait,” she cuts me off with a hand in the air. “You left your entire lives behind because you sensed your mate might be here?”

“Well, to be fair, it wasn’t much of a life before,” I say and Sayer nods in agreement. “And it was time for us to move on.”

“And what do you mean, your fated mate? Who? You or Sayer?”

A small note of panic creeps into her voice. I want to take a moment and reassure her but it’s probably better to just rip the Band-Aid off and get it all out there.

“Both of us.”

Chapter Fourteen

Iris

“Hell, no,” I say jumping from my seat. “You’re nuts.”

“Iris,” Sayer starts but I cut him off with a glare.

“Okay.” I breathe deeply, frowning at the carpet. “I can buy into the fated mates part. But how is it possible that you two are so calm about sharing a mate? How will that work? Switch every day and then I get Sundays off? Or, am I supposed to choose one of you and the other needs to walk away?” A thought dawns on me and terror slams into me. “Do you need to fight to decide who gets to keep me?”

Raleigh moves so fast that I barely have time to prepare myself. He scoops me into his arms before sitting back down beside his brother. With me, on his lap.

“Take a breath, Iris. You have a million questions, and we are willing to answer all of them,” he says gently. “You don’t have to choose, and we won’t be fighting to claim you.”

Relief makes my shoulders sag. I would never be able to choose between them. I know it’s insane, but I like them. They are good people from the little I’ve seen so far, and have gone the extra mile to protect me. I also don’t want either of them to get hurt. I feel protective of them.

“But we will be sharing you,” Sayer says softly from beside Raleigh. “And you won’t be alternating between us. The three of us will be a mated couple and we will do everything together.”

“Everything?” I croak.

The image that my mind conjures is dirty. Me sandwiched between their muscular bodies, their hands touching me everywhere.

“Iris,” Raleigh rumbles beneath me.

“Mmm?” I’m not really listening to him. But he has my full attention when his lips graze my earlobe.

“I can smell your wet cunt,” he whispers.

“Oh!” I squeak, my eyes large as I stare at first one brother and then the other. Both nod in confirmation. “Oh, my.”

“If you don’t want us, you can end the bonding,” Sayer explains with a note of sadness in his voice. “We don’t know what will happen to you, but shifters go through terrible pain and some even die when the bond is broken.”

I don’t have any words, so I shake my head harshly. I won’t put them

through any pain or danger.

“I won’t be mated to someone who wants to be where I’m not, Iris.” Raleigh holds my chin and forces me to look at him. “I would rather be dead than know my mate is out there in the world without me.”

“What if I decide to be your mate?” I ask in a whisper, staring deeply into his eyes.

Raleigh growls. I shit you not, he actually growls, and I feel him rubbing his erection against my ass. My pussy contracts around nothing and a weird moan I have never heard escapes me.

Sayer grabs my hand, drawing my attention from his brother. “If you decide to be our mate, we will fuck you and mark you. We will be your family and you will be ours. There will be nothing on earth that we won’t do to keep you happy and safe. Only death will be able to ever separate us.”

Oh.

My.

God.

My heart beats faster as I replay his words in my mind. Everything he said, is all I have ever wanted. I’m terrified to take this chance, to put my faith in these two men. But if I walk away from them now, I know I will always regret it.

“We don’t know anything about each other.” My logic tries to override my heart.

“We know you’re perfect for us,” Raleigh says. “All three of us were forced into lives we didn’t want. We have been lied to and manipulated for other people’s causes. And I don’t think I have ever met another woman that has enough guts to drug either of us or stand up to us.” He smiles and I punch his shoulder. “You’re beautiful, and strong, and determined. I couldn’t image a better mate.”

“What if this is a mistake?” I allow my fear to voice the words I’ve been thinking.

“I can’t explain it to you. Our entire lives we knew our mate might be out there somewhere in the world,” Sayer explains. “We knew we might go our entire lives without finding you. But we had faith that we would.”

“We know our mating will last because that’s all we’ve ever known,” Raleigh adds. “We’ve seen it happen hundreds of times. It’s just the way shifters are.”

“It’s not the way humans are,” I supply.

“No, it isn’t,” Sayer agrees. “But how many humans do you know who stay married? I know a mated couple from a pack we once visited that have been mated for a hundred years.”

The shock must show on my face because they both chuckle.

“We age slower,” Raleigh explains.

“I don’t know what you want from me.”

“We just want you.”

This is the biggest decision of my entire life, and I really shouldn’t make it on a whim. But I don’t want to think this through. I don’t want to overthink and overanalyze any of this. I just want to take a leap of faith and hope they are there to catch me when I fall.

“Okay.”

Chapter Fifteen

Raleigh

I don't need her to say anything else before I fuse my lips to hers. Her taste explodes across my taste buds, and I am instantly addicted. A sigh escapes from her, lips opening and allowing me entrance. I kiss her slowly, getting to know what she likes and dislikes.

Pulling away, I smile at the dazed look of lust on her beautiful face. Sayer is watching us. I can feel the tension vibrating off him.

"You need to be sure," I say lowly, gripping her ass tightly. "If we do this, there is no going back."

"I'm afraid," she says softly. "But somewhere deep inside me, I know this is the right thing."

I lightly brush my lips across hers. Once. Twice. Three times before helping her stand. My hand slides between my legs and grips my cock harshly. Her eyes follow the movement, her pupils dilating as she licks her lips.

"Why don't you strip for us?" I say, my voice low and guttural. "Show your mates what you have for them."

I see the nervousness and excitement warring for domination in her. Yes, I could take over and do everything, but she needs to take control. For years all her choices have been made for her, so much of her life has been dictated, and she needs to take back control. She fidgets with her hands, looking unsure of herself.

"Baby," Sayer says. "You're in charge here. You always have been."

Her gaze connects with his before glancing over at me. "What if I don't want to be?" Her voice is soft but sure.

I don't allow her a moment to feel unwanted or insecure, quickly standing and pulling her into my arms and holding her close. Sayer envelops Iris from behind, his hands on her hip. A visible shiver works through her before she lets out a mewling sound.

"Don't worry, beautiful. We've got you," Sayer says before running his lips up her neck and sucking her earlobe into his mouth.

His hands bundle up the fabric of the t-shirt before slowly inching it up her body. Releasing her from my hold, I retake my seat on the sofa. Slowly, Sayer exposes more and more of Iris to my hungry gaze. Beautiful thick thighs lead up to her lace-covered pussy. Her rounded hips and soft

stomach before the bottom swell of her breasts are skimmed by the material. The entire show is sexy as fuck and my erection is obscenely tenting my shorts.

Gripping the length, I give it a harsh squeeze to try and stave off the tingling in my balls. Iris tracks the movement, rubbing her thighs together.

“Take it off, Sayer,” I say with a nod.

My twin doesn't disappoint, whipping the material over her head and tossing it to the ground. Her full breasts sway gently, her arms at her sides, Sayer gripping her hips once more. He has a look of concentration on his face as he slowly skims his hands up her body, cupping her breasts.

“Fuck,” he groans. “Her skin is so soft.”

Iris rests her head on his shoulder, eyes closed, enjoying the way his hands fondle the globes he cannot fully contain. Slowly, he works a leg between hers and spreads her thighs, little by little. The smell of her arousal coats the air, and I can see the way her entire body trembles when she lets out another small moan.

“Take off her underwear,” I command lowly.

Sayer releases her breasts before complying with my order. Even though Sayer and I have never shared a woman before, our dynamic as twins makes this easy. I know he is in better control of his lust and his animal. I am terrified of hurting her and I won't touch her until I know I am in full control of myself.

Her neatly trimmed dark curls are exposed to my gaze and I want to crawl over and bury my face between her thighs. I hold back, though, instead continuing to instruct my brother.

“Sit down in the armchair, Sayer. Use your knees to spread her thighs wide so I can see the pretty little cunt and everything you're going to do to it.”

It only takes a moment for Sayer to divest himself of the grey sweatpants he is wearing and arranging her just like I have instructed. I can see the wetness glistening on her pussy lips and some of my control snaps. Lifting my hips, I lower my shorts enough to free my already weeping cock. My grip is firm as I stroke from root to tip, Iris watching my every movement through a hooded gaze.

“Raleigh,” she moans, watching pre-cum leak from the tip.

My cock kicks in my hand at the sound of my mate's voice saying my name.

“Make her cum on your fingers, brother.”

Sayer doesn't disappoint, spreading the lips of her pussy before working a finger inside her. “She is so fucking wet,” he groans, rocking his hips beneath her. “And she is tighter than a damn vise.”

“Please,” Iris begs.

It's that word, whispered in her desire-laced voice, that has me snapping. Moving quickly, I fall to my knees between her spread thighs. My brother spreads her wider, allowing me better access. I push his hand out of the way before I lap at her pussy like the fucking fiend I am. If I thought her kisses were addictive, it was only because I hadn't had a taste of this perfect pussy.

The moment I suck her enlarged clit into my mouth, Iris screams out an orgasm so intense that her entire body trembles, and her pussy weeps against my chin. I want to make her come again and again, and once she is fully mated to us I will.

Chapter Sixteen

Iris

I've never had an orgasm this intense in my entire life. My muscles are languid after the violent tremors finally stop. Sayer pinches my nipples harshly, bringing me back to the moment. I stare down at where Raleigh is lightly lapping at my entrance, his gaze fixed on mine. The pure intensity he puts off has me writhing against Sayer.

"More," I moan like a wanton whore. "I need more."

Sayer lifts me from Raleigh's lap until I feel the head of Raleigh's cock at my entrance before Sayer slowly lowers me back down. His dick is thick and wide, stretching me. I ache for him to fuck me, to fill me with his cum. I slam down on his cock until I feel his lower stomach muscle firmly against my ass.

"Fuck!" Raleigh curses, grabbing my hips and holding me in place. "I need a minute."

I want to protest but Sayer's tongue traces my clit, and the words die before ever making their way up my throat.

"That isn't helping, brother," Raleigh rasps in my ear. "I'm never going to last."

"Please," I cry out. "Fuck me."

Sayer pulls away with a smile. "You heard her, brother."

Raleigh quickly lowers us both to the carpet without removing his cock from inside me. He positions me on my hands and knees, his hands firmly on my hips. Sayer kneels in front of me, cupping my face, kissing me harshly. I feel Raleigh withdraw until only the tip is still inside me before thrusting in savagely.

A scream tears from inside me and Sayer grins. Slowly he rises until his erection is in front of my face. His hand slides along the length and I lean forward to lick the tip. Raleigh thrusts harder, inching me forward until my lips move further down the length of Sayer's veiny cock.

"I don't know why, but that is fucking hot," Raleigh says.

Sayer moans, thrusting his hips forward, his cock hitting the back of my throat. I gag and both men groan. Raleigh's thrusts speed up and the idea of him coming inside me has my pussy clenching.

"Fuck!" Raleigh roars behind me.

His cock grows thicker inside me before he stills, painting my walls

with his seed. My own orgasm sweeps through me, my arms struggling to hold my weight. Sayer's cock slips from between my lips a moment before I feel a searing pain in my shoulder. It quickly morphs to pleasure and a second, more powerful orgasm sweeps through me. Raleigh lifts my torso, holding me against his chest just as my arms give out.

Sayer is in front of me, harshly sucking first one nipple and then the other before lifting me off his brother's cock. Lying flat on the ground he positions me over his hips before lowering me on his erection. He isn't as long as his brother, but he is thicker, and I feel the intense burn as he lowers my shaking body down his length.

"I want you to ride me, mate," he says. "Take your pleasure from me before I fill you with my cum and put my mark on your other shoulder."

A shiver runs through me at his words, but I don't need to be told twice. Placing my hands on his pectorals, I lift my hips before slamming back down.

Growls and grunts escape from deep within Sayer. I can see his wolf pushing to the forefront, his eyes shimmering from one color to the next. His breathing is ragged, and his muscles are tense as I ride him like my life depends on it. Leaning down, I lick the side of his neck before whispering in his ear.

"Fuck me, Sayer."

He growls softly before flipping me over. Slinging my legs over his shoulders he pummels me, his hips snapping into me with more speed and ferocity than I even knew was possible. My orgasm crests once more and my pussy grips his length. Sayer shifts us so he has access to my shoulder. He clamps his teeth down into my skin sending us both into the abyss.

Moments later, Raleigh lifts my spent form into his arms before carrying me into the bathroom. He gently lowers me into a tub of warm water, and I swear it feels like my muscles are melting as my body sinks lower into the heat and I close my eyes.

"Are you okay?" he asks after a long silence and I simply smile.

"Never better."

"Are you sure?" He frowns, concern creasing the corners of his eyes. "We weren't exactly gentle, Iris."

Closing my eyes, I rub at my chest before opening my eyes and looking at him. He is sitting on the closed toilet. "If I can feel your worry, can't you feel my contentment?"

“It’s the mating bond,” he says taking a deep breath. “I probably missed your feelings when I started panicking.” He looks a little chagrined.

“This is what all of us wanted, Raleigh. Unless you’re having second thoughts?”

“No!” He kneels beside the tub, kissing me sweetly. “I just never want to cause you any harm.”

“I believe you.” I smile before laying back in the tub. “Now, go away so I can enjoy my bath.”

Raleigh leaves me with another kiss on my forehead and a soft chuckle.

Epilogue

Raleigh

We spend two days locked inside the house, fucking Iris, and making sure our mating bond is as strong as it can possibly be. Every so often, someone will knock on the door, but we steadfastly ignore them.

Today, we are going to introduce Iris to the entire pack. We want her to know she is welcome and has nothing to fear.

“Caine has set up a get-together for the entire pack. It’s a good way for you to get to meet everyone in a relaxed setting,” I say to Iris.

We have just finished eating breakfast and are still enjoying our coffee when I finally bring it up. He sent me a text yesterday, but I haven’t said anything yet.

“Everyone?”

“Well, we’re a smaller pack than most so it will only be around twenty people.”

“That’s a lot of pressure.” She looks a little intimidated.

“We’ll be there with you the entire time. You don’t have to worry about a thing,” Sayer adds, kissing the top of her head.

For a long time, she simply stares into her coffee before nodding. I can feel her fear through our mating bond, and I know she is aware of it.

I need to talk to Caine before I meet the rest of the pack.” Her words surprise me. “I want everything out in the open before I can face anyone new. I don’t want to start this new chapter in my life if I’m not being honest.”

“Let me hear if he has time to see us,” Sayer says, already putting his phone to his ear as he exits the kitchen.

We wait in silence until he returns. “He is on his way.”

Each of us sits, not speaking or drinking the remnants of our coffee as we tensely wait. Iris is scared and ashamed and her emotions have put myself and my brother on edge. When someone knocks on the door, all of us turn to stare in that direction. I finally get up and open the door.

“Hey, Caine.”

“Raleigh,” he replies. “Sayer said that Iris wanted to see me.”

I nod leading him into the kitchen. The moment Iris sees him I can feel her resolve snap into place even though the fear remains. Caine takes the seat across from her and smiles.

“You look good, Iris. Being mated suits you,” he says.

She blushes beautifully and I feel some of her trepidation fade.

“Thank you,” Iris says softly. “I have some things I need to tell you before you introduce me to the rest of the pack. I don’t want to hide anything from my mates or the rest of you.”

“Sounds serious.”

She nods. Her gaze slips from Caine, to me, to my twin. “My father’s organization is bigger than you think.”

“What do you mean?” Caine asks leaning forward.

“He doesn’t just run around on a whim killing shifters,” Iris explains. “There are different cells all over the country, they have surveillance on several packs at a time. He has been recruiting since before I was born.”

“Shit,” I say, running my hands through my hair. “This isn’t good.”

“It gets worse,” she says softly.

“How?” all three of us ask in unison.

“For the past two years my father hasn’t just been killing shifters. Are you missing any people from the last raid? You can’t find them or their bodies?”

We turn toward Caine, waiting for his response. When he nods, my heart beats like a drum.

“Three,” Caine says and a tear tracks across Iris’s cheek.

“He took them,” she whispers brokenly. “He has been experimenting on shifters. Trying to find a weakness and building specialized weapons.”

“Fuck!” Caine roars.

I am instantly beside my quivering mate, glaring at my Alpha, although I know he didn’t mean to scare her. He breathes harshly as he paces the kitchen, slowly getting himself under control.

“Do you know where he keeps them?” Caine asks calmly.

Iris nods. “I only know of one holding station, but I think there are more.”

“Will you show us?”

“Yes. My father isn’t who I thought he was. I need to be there when his insanity finally comes to an end.”

“Thank you for sharing this information,” Caine says with a frown. “I’ll talk to Max and set up a plan. We will need to run a raid and free any shifters your father might be holding.”

Our mate nods and I feel the relief work its way through her system.

“But first, its time for the pack to meet their newest member,” my

brother smiles, beaming with pride.
“Let’s do this.”

The End

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BONUS SAMPLE CHAPTER

THE WOLF

Gypsy Bastards MC, 1

Jade Marshall

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Sample Chapter

Hadley

I hate my job.

It isn't something I say to get people to pity me. I genuinely hate working at Mary's Rib Shack. I hate the mauve one-piece uniform, made of an awful, itchy fabric. I hate that the owner likes us to show off our assets, which means our uniforms are short around the legs and low around the neck. I don't particularly enjoy showing off my barely-there B cups, especially not to *our* clientele. I hate that Mary's is in downtown Gypsy Falls and the people who show up here are sketchy at best, but most are completely creepy. But Mary pays in cash and I need to stay off the grid.

This isn't something I've done out of choice but more out of necessity. Growing up around an outlaw motorcycle club, which I then managed to piss off—through no fault of my own, might I add—means running and hiding to stay alive. If King were to ever get his hands on me, I wouldn't survive. Knowing that death chases me daily and could catch up with me at any moment ensures I always keep my head down.

The area where the diner is located is far from ideal, with drug dealers

on every second corner and a nonexistent police response rate. From the linoleum flooring that's cracked and peeling in places, to the faded leather booth seats, and the god-awful music, there isn't a single thing about Mary's Rib Shack that I don't hate.

I work the evening shift until closing time, from four in the afternoon until around midnight. I want to be able to work my way out of this hellhole and provide a better life for myself. I have aspirations and being a waitress isn't one of them.

One day, I want to be able to open my own tattoo parlor. For as long as I can remember, I've loved drawing and through the years, I've honed my craft. Add to that the fact I did an apprenticeship at a tattoo parlor, learning from one of the best, and you have my dream. The only thing I want to do for the rest of my life.

"Hey, can we get some more coffee over here?" the man with the biker's cut sitting in my section all but yells at me.

Earlier, I saw them enter and a chill ran right down my spine. My first instinct was to run, to get the hell out of here as quickly as my legs could carry me. After catching a glimpse of their patches and not recognizing their club, I was able to calm myself.

My hands shake, and my legs feel weak as I make my way to their table. Bikers terrify me. Not some bikers, but all bikers.

The three other guys with him seem rather normal-looking although anyone with eyes can tell that's not the case. One blond and two with dark-brown hair, all of them with protruding beer bellies. The fourth man, the one who just spoke and whom I'm assuming is the leader of this merry band of misfits, gives me the straight-up chills.

He's large, burly, and bald, with a snake tattoo running down his arm to his wrist. It's garish and badly done with absolutely no detail. The man looks me over with eyes the color of mud as I refill the cups. There's no depth to his eyes, just a flat deadness, and I try to avoid eye contact at all costs. I refill all four cups and start to move away when a large hand clamps around my wrist and pulls me back. Again, I feel this crawling sensation running over my skin. It takes everything I have within me not to pull away from his grip.

"Why don't you sit down with us for a minute, darling?" the leader drawls at me.

"I can't. I'm on shift and have to get back to my customers," I reply

while trying to pull my arm from his grip.

My breathing becomes shallow and a shiver works its way through my body. The need to get his hands off me is almost overwhelming.

“Well, now, Mary won’t mind, and the other waitress can see to your customers while you have a seat with us.”

He uses a tone that’s supposed to be reassuring but simply serves to creep me out even more. He yanks on my arm and I lose my balance, toppling forward and pouring half the remaining coffee down the front of his pants.

“You stupid fucking whore,” he bellows.

Before I can react, he backhands me across the face, causing me to fall. My head connects with the counter and then the floor with a resounding thud. Lying on the floor, all I can think is this is it, my last day at Mary’s. I would rather live on the fucking street than work here one more day. Regaining my senses and opening my eyes, I find complete chaos around me. All the guys from the table are on their feet. The two dark-haired men are holding back the guy who just slapped me. He’s doing his best to pull away from their grip and has his eyes trained on the front door to the diner.

Storm, my best friend, stands in the doorway. She’s a petite Asian woman with long black hair streaked with purple, full sleeve tattoos—courtesy of myself, a small waist, and an awesome set of all-natural C-cup breasts. Storm knows how to defend herself from the time she spent living on the street. She may be a stripper, but she will never let a man get the upper hand again. Apparently, she learned a painful lesson and quickly found someone to teach her how to defend herself.

In three-inch stilettos with her gun pointed straight at him, she stands her ground in front of this monster of a man.

“Viper, why don’t you take your little cronies and leave?” She’s deadly calm in the face of this man and for a moment, I envy her confidence. I haven’t moved from my spot on the floor and simply watch their exchange like the coward I have become.

“You know good and well that your kind isn’t welcome around here. Or do I need to make a call?” She appears calm while taking her phone out of the back pocket of her jeans.

Viper tries to charge at her again but the blond man steps between them.

“Time to go,” he says, and the other two men start pulling Viper toward the door on the other side of the diner.

“I’m gonna get you. You and your little waitress friend. You’re gonna pay. You hear me, Storm? You and that little cock tease!” he bellows as he’s dragged out. “That pussy club ain’t gonna save you.”

As soon as they are on the motorcycles and roaring into the distance, Storm puts her gun back in her purse and rushes over to me. “Oh, sweetie. Are you okay?” she inquires while pushing my hair from my face to inspect the damage.

“Hurts like a bitch but I’ll live. Gonna be blue tomorrow and I’ll probably have an egg on my head later, but I’ll be fine,” I assure her as I push up from the floor. “Thanks for the help.”

Storm looks at me with sympathy in her eyes, something I despise more than I can ever explain. I hate being seen for the weak, broken, scared little girl I become once I am faced with something that triggers my past. My past affects me more than I would like to admit, even to myself. So many things can trigger me and have me turning back in on myself. For years, I have secluded myself from people except for a select few. My friendship with Storm often pushes my boundaries and I feel like she is helping me rejoin the world again, one little push at a time.

As she opens her mouth to respond, Mary comes shrieking around the corner.

“You stupid bitches. Do you know what you’ve done?”

Her face is blood red from the lack of oxygen during her rant and her over-styled, bleach-blonde hair flies all over the place.

“Those assholes are gonna burn my place to the fucking ground because of the two of you!”

“What the fuck is wrong with you?” Storm turns a glare on her. “One of your staff members was just attacked, and all you can worry about is your business? What kind of person are you?”

Mary stares daggers at Storm as I pull myself to my feet.

“What’s wrong with me?” Mary continues shrieking. “Do you know who the fuck those guys were and how bad it can get when you fuck with them?”

“Yes, I do,” Storm says calmly. “Those are the limp-dick Mongrels MC and ain’t shit gonna happen to anyone. Pope is gonna lose his shit when he hears they were in his territory.”

Mary pales when she seems to realize Storm actually knows what she's talking about.

"Now," Storm says, looking back at me over her shoulder, "I am gonna take Hadley home and get some ice on her face. You're gonna cover her tables and still pay her for the hours she's missing. Because that's what a good boss would do."

"Oh, go choke on a dick, Storm. You won't be telling me how to run my goddamn business. Why don't you and Hadley just get her shit and get out because I don't need to draw any more attention."

She calmly turns to me and, looking me in the eyes, says, "You're fired."

Before I can think it through or contemplate my actions, my fist flies out and connects with Mary's nose.

She gives an undignified shriek as she cups her nose. "You cunt! You broke my fucking nose."

I stare at her before regaining my footing. Today may have been my breaking point. I have never—and I mean never—in my life laid hands on another person. "Oh, bite me, Mary. You're a fucking bitch and I quit."

Between hitting Mary, telling her to piss off, and quitting my job, I feel like I'm on top of the world. For the first time I can remember, I stood up for myself.

With what I'm sure is a seriously crazy smile on my face, I turn away from her. I head to the back of the diner where my personal effects are in a locker and change out of my shitty uniform. Taking a deep breath, I realize what I have just done. I stood up for myself but in the process, I've quit the only job I have. How am I going to pay rent, buy food, or pay for my damn car repairs? I am so fucked.

Instead of lingering on that, I square my shoulders and walk out to the front. People are crowded around Mary while Storm is smirking from her spot at the front door. Looking back at Mary, I smile. As I walk out of the diner, I give a single finger salute in farewell, light up a smoke, and walk home.

End of sample chapter

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