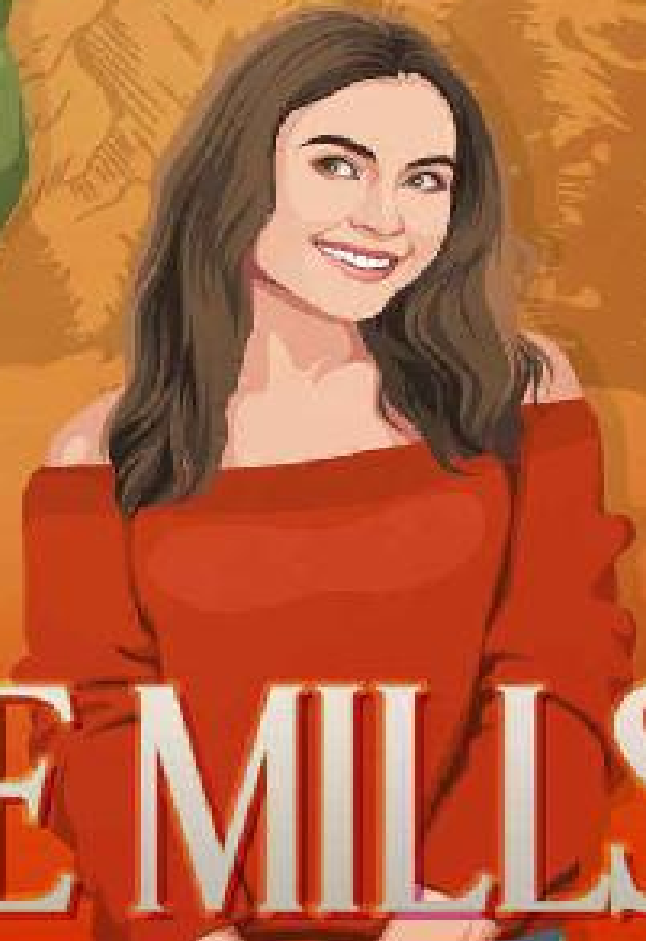


SWEET MONSTERS TREATS



TWINS *for the* WILD ORC



MICHELE MILLS

Twins For The Wild Orc

Sweet Monsters Treats

Michele Mills

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Twins For The Wild Orc

A drunken, one-night stand with a wild Orc turns into a life-long commitment.

Because I've given birth to his twin babies. And now I can't find the green, horned father of my children, which is really my own fault. He came on strong, calling me his "Bride" and I got scared at the idea of marrying a ferocious Orc. After he passed out next to me, snoring loudly (because he'd finished for the seventeenth time) I slipped out of the hotel bed and sprinted off into the night.

A year later, our babies are three months old and it's nearly impossible, caring for the needs of Orc twins all on my own.

My babies need their daddy. And maybe...I need him too?

After hiring a private investigator, I've found the exact commune he lives on in the wilds of Maine.

And I'm bringing him two sweet treats for Halloween—his twin sons.

Sweet Monster Treats

Twins for the Wild Orc is a sweet and steamy monster romance that is part of the Sweet Monster Treats collection. Each book is a standalone, containing its own Happily Ever After, and they can be read in any order. Be

sure to explore the other titles in the collection:

Cookies for my Orc Neighbor by Michele Mills

Candy For My Orc Boss by Ava Ross

Cupcakes For My Orc Enemy by Honey Phillips

The Single Mom and the Orc by Honey Phillips

Single Dad Orc by Ava Ross

Chapter 1

Drew

Both my precious orc babies are asleep in the backseat of my brand-new SUV.

I've never in my life found it necessary to own a car so freaking huge and rugged, but driving through northern Maine in chilly October, to meet up with the twisty-horned Wild Orc who knocked me up a little over a year ago, has convinced me to purchase something different.

Halloween is three days away and I'm on my way to visit (and hopefully move into) an Orc Commune that I think is entirely off the grid. Therefore, I've got a shit ton of luggage and baby paraphernalia squeezed into the back of the car and I'm certain all of it will be highly necessary.

White pines, maple trees and lush green mountainous countryside zip past on either side. This newfound quiet with both twins dozing off behind me feels like a massive lottery win. My tires finally crunch through the leaf-swept roads in peace.

Both of my three-month-old babies, Bran and Owen, each spat out their pacifiers earlier in the drive, wailing loudly, with nowhere for me to pull over to try and calm them. I'd made sure to stop at the last bit of civilization to feed and change both babies to keep them comfortable before progressing farther up the narrow roads, but to no avail. I about had a panic attack at their constant crying, tearful from my own frustration. But now I can see through the rearview mirror that my fussy twins are finally asleep, their little chests rising and falling.

Oh, babies.

I love them desperately—their small black starter horns, soft green skin and dark eyes cause my heart to melt—but I'm also grateful they're out for

the duration of this trip. This cease-fire is what I need so I can focus and get us to our destination—and this is what they need too. Now I can finish the rest of this long-ass drive ahead of me. Because I'm on a mission to reunite my babies with their long-lost daddy, and nothing is going to stop me from accomplishing this task.

Because my babies are a blessing and I've come to the realization that they need their orc daddy.

And I need him too.

The moment I discovered I was pregnant with not one but two orc sons, I was all-in. Strangely, I wasn't scared, just happy and elated. Yes, it was nerve-wracking to discover at twenty-nine years old I was going to instantly become a single mom, especially since I'd always envisioned marriage and raising children with an eventual husband in the picture. But it didn't work out that way, and since I was financially stable, I wasn't horribly concerned about the ramifications.

I've got this I wrote constantly on post-it notes taped onto my fridge, bathroom mirror, and wall calendar.

And I did, at least at first.

The pregnancy and delivery of the twins turned out to be the easy part. I cradled them both in my arms in the hospital bed, their pudgy tummies causing my heart to skip a beat with love and devotion. I wanted to nibble on their little arms and kiss their delicate hands twenty times a day.

Like I said, a blessing.

But as soon as they came home, the honeymoon ended and the hard work began. My best friend Amelia flew across the country to stay with me the whole first week after I brought my babies home, which was super sweet of her. But the babies were a handful for the both of us and not just because there were two of them. The twins wanted only me, and I wasn't enough to keep them happy.

The live-in Nanny who arrived when Amelia left tried to help but the babies rejected her too, which was bizarro considering she was wonderful. Bran and Owen are often restless and want only to be fed directly from my breast. Bottles simply won't do. They prefer my arms holding them and no one else. Nothing much seems to comfort them. I fall asleep each night with the both of them in my arms, and even then, their sleep is fitful.

I haven't published a thing, written a single word, or even checked social media, since the moment I went into labor. I'm lucky if I can get a shower.

My life has been a roller coaster of feeding babies, changing diapers and trying to eat and sleep.

I kept trying to tell myself it would all get better with time, but I sense irritability and unhappiness from Bran and Owen that isn't normal. I know this isn't the way my boys naturally behave, but I have no proof. Just a mother's instinct. My pediatrician and my lactation nurse in southern California are sympathetic but neither of them understand orc development and think a single woman raising orc twins without their orc father nearby is a never-before-seen oddity. They've literally asked to use me as a case study.

Ugh.

I truly thought I could do this on my own. I mean, I'd run away from the babies' father, whose name I didn't even know at the time, for a very good reason.

And children are raised all over the world by single-parent households all the time. This isn't new. And I was lucky enough to be financially secure, able to take all the time I needed off work, and hire extra help.

But a few weeks ago, I read a brand-new book I found at the bookstore, written by a modern orc in a small town with his human Bride and four orc sons. It was an eye-opening memoir, explaining the ins and outs of raising orc children in an urban setting amongst humans. I learned orc lore states sons are raised mainly by their fathers. Sadly, human mothers are considered transitory. Never did the author mention his sons being irritable, sleepless, and only wanting their mother. I believe this is because my own babies need their father nearby to thrive. And I need guidance from actual orcs.

I can't continue to raise Bran and Owen on my own in the human world, on the opposite side of the country from their mysterious orc daddy. They aren't thriving with only humans in their vicinity. Hence this desperate drive with my babies in tow to an Orc Commune in the middle of nowhere.

And how did I end up pregnant and alone?

I blame it on too much wine and a hotel bar in Bangor, Maine.

I was decompressing after a writer's retreat. Drunk after only two glasses of wine. And instantly hot for the big, sexy orc who sat down next to me. Everyone else in the room squealed or tensed in fear. I licked my lips and moved closer to his bare chest that peeked from an unbuttoned shirt.

He smelled sooooo good.

I lost my mind, behaving in ways I never have in my entire life. I loved his tusks and horns and all those powerful muscles. Some people think orcs

are ugly and in fact beastly, something to be avoided. But I'd never been so bold. In fact, just sitting in that bar by myself was a first. I was all over him in an instant, so forward, with my hand on his bare arm much too often. In minutes I'd talked him into taking me up to his room.

I know. It was cray. I'd never in my life had a one-night stand or picked a guy up in a bar, club, or anywhere else. But I was just that attracted to him. The area between my thighs was hot, wet and throbbing for him alone.

And he was really into me that night too.

After that big orc finished nutting for what seemed like the seventeenth time and insisted I have just one more orgasm, I thought I might have found someone who I should try to keep in touch with, because sex with this guy was clearly next level.

But as the night wore on the growl in his voice became more and more intimidating. He was a reasonably normal and gentle orc at first, despite his tall, twisted horns and jutting tusks when we met at the hotel bar. But after I removed my clothes in his room on the tenth floor, he immediately referred to me as his "Bride." And much later he started mumbling about fighting his own urges, wanting to drag me by my hair into his cave? I loved his big muscles and his horns, tusks and claws, but he started getting a bit rough at the end of the evening as if he were losing control. He'd originally referred to himself as a "Wild Orc" which I should have realized meant "off the hook."

Yeah, as soon as he passed out, I got out of there quick. I ran away from our hotel bed and sprinted off into the night.

In my defense, when I left after our one-night stand, I thought my IUD was working great, but somehow it didn't.

Maybe I should've stayed and given him more of a chance? He could've woken up the next morning, acting completely normal again. But I also had a flight to catch that very next morning. And I wasn't in the frame of mind to find a husband. I'd wanted a rare hook-up after days spent at a writer's conference and nothing else. Something daring and different to shake up my boring workaholic existence. Three hours later I was already on an airplane heading back across the country. I thought my night with that hot orc would be a pleasant memory and nothing more. Also, I'd dodged a bullet—getting away from a Wild Orc who might've woken up and dragged me off to his lair.

But, back home in my own lonely bed in my condo with views of the Pacific Ocean, I quickly discovered I was missing that big orc and his

luscious green dick. The sound of his voice and his scent haunted my mind and body. No wonder I'd fallen into his bed so quickly, after very little conversation. And I stayed all night because my orc's shaft was thicker than any man I'd ever met. He knew exactly how to touch, suck and lick a clitoris and he'd even managed to find my G-spot in record time. I was so desperate to recreate these conditions, I ordered a green, custom-made dildo to his exact specifications. It's still not good enough because the simple dildo isn't the same as having his large, hot body covering mine. His lips, the scrape of his tusks and his large fingers. Oh, and his scent, the touch of his hot skin...but the dildo works in a pinch.

I got extremely horny while pregnant and it would've been great having him there to service me. But then I'd remember how he wanted to drag me off to his lair and possibly kidnap me, and I'd again decide to go this alone.

Yes, I should've told him I was pregnant right away, but I wasn't ready to see that orc with questionable motives again.

But a whole year later, I continue to want him desperately and no one else. The thought of someone other than Bran and Owen's father touching me leaves me cold. And after I read that book about orc families, I understood his motives so much better.

One year later I want a do over.

So I hired a private investigator and discovered that hot orc is named Whelan Overlook and he lives on an Orc Commune in Maine.

My babies need him.

And...and maybe I need their daddy too.

I glance down at the GPS which clearly shows my progress to this mysterious commune. I'm almost there. Ten minutes away. We're off the main highway now, with dense forest on either side and views of remote mountain lakes, having left the last vestiges of civilization over an hour ago. Luckily, it's a crisp and sunny day, with no rain or snow. Although the winter weather should be showing up in the next month because it's nearly Halloween.

I bite my lips as anxious nerves flutter in my stomach. Supposedly orcs don't approve of random human visitors to their communes. What if they turn me away because I'm not arriving with their father?

Oh, well, I've still got to try. I'm coming in hot and fast with two orc babies in tow. I'll just do my best to talk them into letting me inside to meet up with Whelan. I was told his residence was at this specific commune.

A whimper escapes my lips.

What if the private investigator is wrong and Whelan lives elsewhere?

And I haven't seen him since the night of our twins' conception. As far as I know, he didn't know my name either and he doesn't know he has sons. Maybe he won't want to have anything to do with me and our sons because of how I left? Which is sad because our babies are adorable. Maybe he's already moved on and found another human female to mate and I'm a distant memory?

The guilt hits me hard. Who am I kidding? He's going to hate me. This isn't going to be pretty. He'd called me his "Bride," and I left without a backward glance and then later found out I was pregnant and never told him.

I lift my chin, ready to face the drama I created. Nothing is going to stop me from doing what needs to be done to make sure Bran and Owen get the care they need. I'm here to make up for the past and that's what I'm going to do. No chickening out now.

I pass a sign that says Warning: Orcs Only Past This Point.

I keep going.

Now the road turns to mainly gravel. Good thing I purchased this four-wheel drive after my recent cross-country move to Maine. It's made for actual off-road driving. I pass another glistening mountain lake and realize the setting here is stunning. A hundred thousand acres of nearby wilderness is owned by Whelan's Orc Tribe. I'm starting to think living here might not be so bad.

Oh hell. There's a checkpoint up ahead and two scary-looking orc guards are stationed nearby. They look similar to Whelan, but with shorter horns and a slightly smaller build. Both wear dark pants and unbuttoned flannel shirts and aren't carrying guns, thank god. Behind them, I assume, is the commune. There's a fence made of thick wooden spikes and barbed wire on top that curves to the right and left with no end in sight either way. Very formidable. I can't see past the fence, so I still have no idea of the layout of the commune or how many orcs live here.

I park at the checkpoint and lower my window.

The two orcs exit the wooden security shack positioned in front of the thick metal gate. They each eye me with obvious skepticism. The taller one speaks first. "And you are?"

I give him a brilliant smile with my best attitude. "My name is Drew Reilly."

Stony silence.

I try to remain calm and quell the inner fright at their beastly green muscles and those flashing tusks. Whelan didn't scare me, but these two are different. Ancient Orcs used to routinely kidnap human women from their villages and fill them with their sons. Hence the reason orcs are still remembered by many humans as dangerous beasts. But these are modern times and there is nothing to be afraid of because I'm here to visit a resident.

I can do this. I can do this.

“What is your purpose for arriving at the commune, human?”

I swallow. “Well, um... I met an orc about a year ago while visiting Bangor. We had, um, one night together and then I left him to catch a prearranged flight back across the country to my home in Southern California. But something happened as a result of our meeting that he doesn't know about. And I'd like every much to be let inside of the commune so I can speak to him about it.”

“What is this orc's name?”

“I'm here to meet up with Whelan Overlook.”

They nod and glance at each other. One of them goes into the guard shack and I see him talking on a phone.

“Whelan is not here,” the other guard announces.

“What?” I squeak. My heart drops into my stomach and my control slips away. And then I start babbling out of pure desperation, trying to quell the heat welling at the back of my eyes. I knew this could happen, but it had always seemed impossible. But after everything I've gone through to get here, along with the long drive and my lack of sleep, I can tell I'm about to have total breakdown. “But...but he must be here. I was told this was where he lives. I have to see Whelan. I have to. I have nowhere else to go and the babies need him.”

At that exact moment both of my sons awake in their car seats behind me because they hear the distress in my voice. Bran and Owen cry from the back, a familiar chorus. Tears start streaming in my eyes because now we're all crying together.

“Orc infants?” the males shout and they each rush for the rear of my car.

I lower both back windows.

The guards end up on either side of the SUV, both leaning into a window to coo at the babies in their car seats. Bran and Owen instantly stop crying.

Wow. I turn around in my seat and see my babies smiling up at the males

with sparkling black eyes. “How did you do that?” I rub at the wetness on my face and click out of my seat belt and open the door and step out. I gesture at Bran and Owen, sudden delight hitting me hard. “That might be the happiest my babies have been their whole lives. Keep smiling at them, it’s working. They like it.”

The bigger orc shrugs. “Infants need other adult orcs nearby to thrive. They have been unhappy without their kind nearby. Without their father.”

The other one flashes a look of anger at me. “You took these infants from their father?”

“No,” I try to explain, “No, I didn’t know I was pregnant when I left. I didn’t even know I could become pregnant. I was on birth control. I didn’t find out until later, after I’d returned home to Southern California.”

“We are very potent,” the male agrees.

“Well, when I discovered I was pregnant I didn’t know that orc’s name or where he lived or how to reach him. Plus, I still wasn’t sure that I wanted to...”

“You didn’t know if you wanted his offspring?”

“No, of course I wanted my babies.”

“Even if it was two orc sons?” the shorter guard challenges.

My brow furrows because I literally don’t understand this line of reasoning. “They are my sons. I love them no matter what and I think they’re adorable exactly the way they are. I want what’s best for them and coming here is obviously what’s best for them. So, I’m here. Yes, it took me a bit, until they are three months old, because there was a lot for me to sort out before I arrived. But again, I’m here.”

Their demeanor softens.

I turn because the metal gate rumbles open and an older orc with gray hair at his temples thunders through, charging straight for us. He looks mad, becoming easily the scariest orc I’ve ever seen and with horns taller than Whelan’s.

I take a step back, starting to doubt coming here in the first place. Maybe this wasn’t such a great idea. What if they try to take my babies away from me?

“You’re the female who drove my son mad?” he growls.

Heat rushes across my face as the babies’ grandfather confronts me. “Um...maybe?”

He stops at the SUV and glances into the back seat and his features

soften. Large, rough fingers reach out through the open window to brush against Bran's horns. "You've brought my grandsons back?"

"Yes. My name is Drew Reilly and these two are Bran and Owen Overlook. I wanted them to rejoin their father, Whelan Overlook. I'm here to see Whelan."

He nods, seeming pleased by the discovery of their names. "I am Rogan Overlook, Whelan's father and the grandfather of these two. We are family. You can drop the orc offspring here, with their belongings, and return from whence you came. I will take them in until my son returns. Thank you for traveling this long distance to return these infants where they belong. You may leave."

Chapter 2

Drew

“**W**hat?” I gasp in horror. “I’m not dropping off my babies and leaving them behind for good. Bran and Owen are mine. I’m their mother. I’m here to let Whelan know he has two sons and...and...well, I need to talk to him in private.”

The taller of the two orcs stomps forward. “My name is Urdan Overly, the head of security at this commune. And as I already explained, he isn’t here.”

“Where is he?”

“Whelan is on a hunting trip and isn’t scheduled to return until late this evening.”

I cross my arms and flash a determined glance at all three green orcs in the vicinity. I’ve never met or confronted this many orc males in my entire life, and they are certainly big and a tiny bit scary but I’m not backing down. No way. No how. “Then I will wait until he returns. I need to talk to him.”

They each stare at me in confusion, then look at each other.

“You’re not here to drop the babies off? You want to stay?”

“Yes. I’m staying.”

The head of security crosses his arms. “Did you originally leave Whelan because he tried to harm you?”

I rear back. “No, he didn’t hurt me. But he did call me his Bride and he growled and talked of kidnapping me. I was uncomfortable. That’s why I left.”

“He threatened to kidnap you and bring you to the commune?”

“No, he was half asleep, mumbling about kidnapping me. I felt unsafe hearing of his secret plans.”

“Whelan is a Wild Orc,” Rogan Overlook says with a thoughtful look on his harsh features. “My son is not from a modern tribe. His blood runs with Overlook family traits. He’s wilder than me or any of his closest relatives. And you need to know that he’s not in his right mind at this moment after being separated from his Bride and offspring for the past year. When an orc male mates with a human female the outcome is always pregnancy. This is how it is with our species. He mated to breed you and his intention was to stay at your side so he could attend to you during pregnancy and hopefully convince you to remain with him as his Bride for the rest of your lives. But you ran away. This has happened to orcs since ancient times and the outcome is always tragic. He assumed you would never return and that it was possible you’d terminated the pregnancy.”

And now the guilt is debilitating. “Whelan knew this entire time I was pregnant?”

“Yes. You were unaware that human birth control doesn’t work on orcs?”

“No. I’ve never heard that in my life.”

“Heh, I thought that was common knowledge.”

“Yes,” Urdan nods. “I’m certain Whelan thought you knew what you were getting into. He thought you knew you were being bred.”

And now my face heats up because I can’t believe I’m having this discussion with Whelan’s dad and two other orcs who might also be his family. Embarrassing.

“When he sees you again, my son might become dangerous and unable to stop his wild instincts to roughly reclaim his Bride. You cannot stay. Leave the twins behind with us and go back to your human community and never return.”

I clench my fists. “That isn’t happening. Listen, I’m not an orc baby-making machine. I’m a person with feelings, a life and career. When I met Whelan, I wasn’t planning on marriage or kids. I mean maybe, if I found the right person, sometime in the distant future.” I wave a hand at the wooden fence of the commune... “And after I met Whelan and he growled at me and called me his Bride and spoke of how he wanted to kidnap me, I was afraid because I didn’t know if I was ready for any of this.”

I pause to gauge their reactions and find they are all staring at me in silence.

Ugh.

“I thought I was coming here today,” I continue, “to surprise him with the

fact that he has sons. After a year of deep thought throughout the pregnancy and then having a hard time raising orcs alone, I knew Bran and Owen needed other orcs. And...well, I discovered I was missing Whelan too. I sometimes wonder if I left too quickly. I'm here to speak to him because I'm willing to have a do over and give this a real chance if that's what he wants too."

"Wait, you missed Whelan?" Rogan questions. "You are here not just to drop off the babies and leave, you want to try and become his Bride?"

I clench my jaw and give a curt nod.

"Well, that changes things."

"He must not have entirely mistreated you?"

"No. No, like I said he was growling and said those things while half asleep. But I figured that was him admitting his plans, so I got out of here as soon as he fell asleep. But now I wonder..."

Rogan grunts, "I raised my son to not kidnap. All of us at this commune refuse to kidnap. But sometimes our baser instincts, especially in the dark of winter, get in the way. It is a constant battle, which is why the majority of us live in this remote location. You met him in the early fall so you were safe. But I can easily see him mumbling about kidnapping while asleep because he's constantly fighting against his wild side."

"Does this mean I can come inside the commune and wait for Whelan to return so I can speak to him?"

The third orc steps closer. "I'm Whelan's cousin, Kelt Overholt. I also consider him my best friend. He'll be surprised to learn he has *two* sons. But I'm still not sure of his ability to remain rational when he sees his Bride again. This could easily turn into a shitshow."

Rogan's grin turns to a frown. "Female, we understand your initial reasons for leaving Whelan. Human females have the right to decide if they want a claiming or not. At this commune we do our best to follow modern laws, despite our baser instincts. We do not kidnap human females as orcs commonly did in the ways of old. We are pleased to hear that you are not simply here to drop off your sons but want to reunite with my son. This bodes well and makes me pleased that he managed to remain calm enough and treat you well enough for you to want to return."

"She's lucky she didn't meet him in the dark of winter," Kelt snorts. "That would've gone bad. The locals would've had to call the police to take him down so no harm came to her."

They all laugh at the joke, which I don't find particularly funny.

"But the fact remains that Whelan is an orc and was traumatized by your actions, no matter how you felt them necessary. When you left, he slowly went mad," Rogan explains. "He's only recently returned to the community fires, sitting on the edge."

I throw my hands up. "I couldn't drop everything and let an orc I barely knew drag me off to his lair."

"I know, female. No one says you had to. But the bottom line is that Whelan is not going to react well to your return. He might try and roughly claim you. It is our duty to keep you safe. You need to drop the babies off here at the gate and leave immediately. I know you wanted to speak to him to try and start over, but you must see that is not possible with a Wild Orc who was separated from his mate for over a year. You can live in peace amongst the humans knowing you left Bran and Owen in good care."

"I'm not leaving without my babies!" I shout and march over and stand next to Bran's open window. "Where they go, I go."

Rogan shakes his head. "I say this for your own safety, female. We are experts at taking care of orc infants who are left behind. You need to leave the twins and we will alert you later if you can return."

"And when will this be? One week from now? Six months from now? Never? No," I repeat. "I will not be separated from my children. They are mine. I am their mother."

A growl rumbles in Urdan's chest. "If you stay, I cannot confirm your safety when you are alone with Whelan. He will not harm his offspring, but orcs who have been separated from their Brides in the past have been known to be overly aggressive upon their mate's return and cause harm. Sometimes they have to be knocked out and thrown in the pit until their rage passes."

I lift my chin. "He will not hurt me."

"But you didn't think that way a year ago. You left originally because you considered him unsafe."

"I've already explained that I might've been too hasty. Also, I was unfamiliar with orc lore and culture."

Urdan shakes his head. "I am the head of security for the compound, I say no. Female, do you see how strongly you feel about your infants and how the thought of leaving them behind causes you great distress? That was exactly how Whelan felt for the last twelve months. He's still on edge. Again, I say no."

“I am the leader of the Commune,” Rogan points out. “I have a say in this.”

“And I am part of Whelan’s family and his best friend,” Kelt says. “I have a say in this too.”

I cross my arms. “I am the mother and possibly Whelan’s Bride,” I say, using my fingers to create quotation marks around the word Bride, “and I’m the one most affected by this decision, so I have final say. I understand the lack of safety and what could happen, and I agree to the risk involved.”

All three of them let out snorts and then walk away to huddle out of earshot and have a private meeting. I watch as the three orcs argue amongst themselves, point at me and then at the babies, appearing very animated as they talk it out. I’m fascinated, watching the flash of their horns and their tusks. At least I know these three are thinking this through, mainly seeming to be worried about my safety, which is nice.

And they understand I’m not kidding when I say I’m not leaving without my babies.

I gaze down at my boys in amazement, stunned as they quietly sit in the backseat, kicking their little sock-covered feet, sucking at their fingers while I talk with the orcs. They aren’t crying or immediately needing to be fed. Although I am certainly ready to feed them again, my breasts feeling heavy and sore.

“How are my big guys?” I question through the open window.

Both babies quietly coo up at me, looking so freaking adorable. Even though they are so small I can easily tell them apart. Amelia, the Nanny, and the medical staff couldn’t tell them apart, but Bran has bigger horns than Owen and Owen’s cry is higher pitched.

“I love you two so much,” I whisper. “And I’m so happy I brought you here. It was the right thing, wasn’t it? You already look happier and we aren’t even inside yet. Don’t worry. We’re here with your family now and soon you’ll see your daddy too. And I’m not leaving you behind, okay? Not leaving. You’ll still have me too.”

Whelan’s father returns. “You can stay,” he announces. “I assume my son would want to speak to you before you leave. We will give him this opportunity. It’s also possible that not having the ability to speak to you would also be detrimental to his mental health. None of us approve of the risk you are taking, meeting him alone, but we will deliver the three of you to Whelan’s cabin and will leave you there to await his return. At that point the

two of you can decide on your future. Know this, female, no matter what happens, these babies are staying on the commune. You can decide to stay with them here, which would be ideal. We always want human mothers and mates to remain with us, for their entire lives if they want. But if you choose to leave, you will be leaving these babies behind. As so many other females have also chosen to do since the dawn of time.”

“Where the babies go, I go,” I repeat. “I’m not leaving without them. I will not be separated from my children.”

He shrugs.

“Guards will remain in the woods around the cabin and watch you both from afar but give you privacy,” the orc head of security says. “If you need help just shout for assistance and we will take Whelan down. You understand the danger involved and still accept the risk?”

I swallow against the lump in my throat. “Yes, I do.”

“Good.”

Urdan marches over and opens the front metal gate.

I move toward the driver’s side door, readying to start the large, shiny SUV and drive it through the gate.

“Wait,” Kelt says. “Your car must be left outside in the garage. There are no cars allowed within the commune. We walk or use electric-powered utility vehicles. We will help you transport the babies to Whelan’s cabin.”

I blink, entirely surprised at this turn of events. “Sorry,” I say. “I’m from California. We drive everywhere. Even if it’s just up the street.”

Rogan and Kelt chuckle and direct me to park in an enormous metal garage I didn’t see before outside the gate, hidden behind trees. There are a few other trucks and SUVs inside, all of which look newer and in perfect working order, along with a row of smaller utility vehicles.

“These vehicles are left here for communal use,” Rogan explains. “If any of us need to leave the community to visit the nearby human settlements to shop or for Doctor appointments, or for any reason, we just check in and a car is readied.”

“Oh, that’s nice.”

I get out and pop open the back of my SUV. Then I walk around and open a side door in the back, readying to start taking out the babies.

“What is all of this?” Kelt laughs, gesturing to all the items I’ve managed to shove into the back of my large SUV.

“You have a lot of suitcases,” Rogan agrees. “And bags, and...I don’t

know what most of this is.”

I take Bran out, hold him in my arms and walk over. I hand him off to Rogan, who beams with pride as he holds his grandson in his arms for the first time. Then I walk around to Owen’s side, while I explain, “I wanted to make sure the babies have all they need. There’s a double stroller and that box holds a crib. And I brought all their clothes and mine too.”

“And this?” Kelt laughs. He lifts a bag of Halloween costumes and treats that I hope haven’t melted.

“Halloween is soon and it’s my favorite holiday. I was hoping to take the babies trick or treating for the first time. Don’t you do that here?”

“No.”

“Do you at least have a Halloween party?”

They shake their heads.

“Nothing?” I put my hands on my hips. “That’s the saddest thing I’ve ever heard.”

“You are funny, human,” Kelt says. “I’m going to enjoy watching you deal with Whelan. I have a feeling you are going to be a good match.”

“If Whelan doesn’t scare her away first,” Urdan growls.

Chapter 3

Drew

Urdan walks over, unplugs a vehicle, and pulls it up alongside the SUV. It looks like a large, new electric golf cart with two rows of seats up front and a bed in the back to haul large items.

I'm holding Owen. His diaper feels dry and smells fresh.

Rogan continues to stare, entranced, at Bran in his arms.

Both of my boys are calm and happy, which is a minor miracle.

The other two orcs quickly take out my heavy luggage and set it on the ground first, I suppose looking to see what we've got. Kelt rummages through the items I brought.

I'm strangely jovial in the company of these three orcs. My initial fear over their tall horns and snarls is long gone and I'm comfortable in their presence. It helps that they obviously love the twins, so we have much in common. Getting to know Whelan's father, his best friend, and the head of security makes me feel closer to the orc who fathered my twins. He's becoming less of a stranger and more like a male I can build a relationship with—which is my goal. And I also love the idea that I've brought the boys to their roots since I don't have any family of my own back home—no siblings, parents, grandparents, nothing. This closeness with Bran and Owen's family gives me the warm fuzzies.

I wander over to examine the golf cart, surprised at how high tech it looks. "This is electric?"

"You're surprised?" Urdan answers.

"I was told that Orc Communes were..."

"Primitive?"

I nod.

“We used to be primitive, in the same way that humans used to be primitive. There are other communes farther out in the wilderness that are indeed still living in entirely ancient ways. But we are a commune on the edge of civilization and often our males eventually mate with humans and stay in human communities. But sometimes they return with their females here. And there are many unmated males here, like me, who choose to live here their whole lives, not wanting to mingle more than necessary with human communities. But we’re a commune that has added modern conveniences because we’re on the edge of the wilderness and communicate more with humans. We have direct satellite internet, solar with battery capacity, wind power and backup generators.”

“Oh, thank god.”

They chuckle and continue to unload.

I see they forgot something important, so I point out the double stroller. “Can you please pull that out? I use it all the time. It’s important. I brought that with us checked on the airplane.”

Kelt shakes his head. “Some of this furniture and supplies you won’t need.”

“I need all of this. Especially my Keurig.”

“Cure-ig? What’s that?”

“It’s the best coffee maker ever invented.”

“Wait for the rest of it until you see the cabin. Then you will know better what you need or don’t need. We can always return later to bring more from the SUV.”

“Okay,” I huff, certain we will be coming back immediately. Whelan lives in a tiny bachelor cabin in the middle of nowhere and I’ve already learned he hunts a lot. I’ll probably need to travel back to town in the next few days to purchase more supplies. I love the idea of trying to build a relationship with this orc, but I also refuse to live without my morning cups of dark roast. “Can I please have my coffee maker?”

Kelt laughs and puts my brand-new silver Keurig in the cart.

The suitcases, Halloween bags and the most important baby items and supplies are in the back. I double-check that my all-important backpack with my MacBook and tech equipment is with us too. And they bring along the box for the crib. The rest is left behind for now.

I close the SUV and lock it up. My purse is on my shoulder, and I still hold Owen in my arms. I take the back seat of the golf cart. Rogan slides in

beside me, still holding Bran. Urdan takes the driver seat and Kelt sits next to him up front.

My cooing babies still seem completely content. “You know they’re never like this,” I try to explain. “The boys are deceptively cute right now. Normally Owen would be reasonably happy because he’s in my arms, but Bran would be screaming.”

“They know they’re home,” Rogan agrees. “They can scent us, and it fills their lungs and brings peace.”

The cart starts and we’re soon leaving behind the garage.

“Another reason I left behind my life in California,” I admit, “was because of all the stares and looks of horror at my green, horned babies. Most of the people in that part of the country had never seen an orc in real life before. People always tried to act as if the babies were cute, and they meant well, but it was as if my boys were darling stuffed animals and not sentient beings to be treated as equals.” Tears spring up in my eyes as I bend down to kiss Owen’s precious forehead. This is the first time I’ve been able to admit this feeling to anyone, especially to someone who I feel can truly commiserate.

Rogan’s arms tighten around Bran. “You did the right thing, coming here,” he agrees.

After a quick pause to lock up, we’re soon on the road, passing the guard station. The front gate opens again, and we drive inside along a well-kept path. I gasp with surprise because I feel like I’m driving into a nice mountain resort which isn’t at all what I expected. Cabins are far enough apart from each other, allowing each orc to live in privacy, but still have community. Everything appears rough-hewn, as if built from hand, but this makes it all quaint. There’s a large communal lodge with an enormous fire pit in a center square. “It’s beautiful,” I exclaim.

“Yes, we spend a lot of time keeping our commune up to date and in good working order.”

We drive down a wide gravel path to our left. Male orcs of all shapes and sizes, young and old, walk alongside the path, going about their daily life, sometimes yelling out greetings. It never ceases to amaze me how there are only male orcs and how they must mate with human women to procreate. A whole species that is entirely male.

Rogan’s chest puffs with pride as we drive through the community with his grandson in his arms. Orcs yell out in greeting and give me strange looks,

probably wondering what I'm doing here.

A few different groups of human women, of all ages and ethnicities, turn and wave and smile at me as we pass by. It comforts me, seeing them dressed entirely "normal," as if we were out in the regular world. They look pleased to see me. I wave at them in return, happy to see other women freely choosing to live here.

"If you decide to stay, I'm certain the females will quickly come by to greet you," Rogan offers. "They are a tight group with deep friendships."

I nod, loving the idea of having a group of women who also have orc husbands and children to hang out with and commiserate. It would be lovely to talk with women who are going through the exact same thing I'm going through.

Now we reach a part of the commune where the cabins seem farther apart with less people around. Tall, thin trees and greenery abound everywhere. I can't get over how green and lush Maine is compared to California.

We turn and start on a wide path that seems to lead into the forest again. "Where are we going?"

"My son lives on the outskirts of the community. He prefers more privacy because of his wild instincts."

I look around and notice that it's true that there aren't any neighbors in this section. "This area looks empty, like we're just in the surrounding forest again. The fence is still out there?"

"Yes, it's just too far away to see."

"That's a lot of fencing."

"We've built it up over centuries because in old times we needed safety from human mobs. But now that Brides in this commune are here with their own consent, we are left alone."

"Oh, that's good... You really did kidnap women against their will and drag them off to your lair and keep them against their will?"

"Sadly, yes. Ancient Orcs considered this part of orc culture and the only way to mate. Humans and orcs used to never communicate except through warfare. The kidnapping often turned violent with many humans killed during kidnappings, especially in the dark of winter, and the female traumatized. In the past, no one ever thought human females would freely want to remain with an orc and it was considered the way to find a mate. But that hasn't happened within this commune in centuries. We have changed our ways and you are safe here. Remember, the three of us didn't want you to

stay. You are here of your own free will, accepting the risk.”

I nod in agreement.

“But we will still do our best to keep you safe,” Urdan shouts from up front.

And then he parks in front of a cabin that stands all by itself and I’m pleasantly surprised. I’d been expecting something one step above a lean-to or an older RV and instead it’s a small log home with large glass windows and an expansive porch. It’s almost nicer than any of the other cabins in the center of the community.

“Wow, this is nice,” I comment.

“It should be,” Kelt grunts. “He’s been fixing his cabin up for you since the moment he returned from his mission in Bangor.”

“Really?”

“Yes, really, female.”

All three orcs exit the vehicle. Urdan strides forward, up the front steps, onto the porch and boldly opens the front door without knocking or using a key.

Oh wow.

I follow behind the orcs and step inside behind them, still amazed at how much I like this little cabin. I spin circles with Bran in my arms. There’s a little kitchen with an actual oven and stovetop and even a small fridge. The chairs and couches look bigger than normal for huge orc bodies. The ceilings are tall I’m sure to accommodate their horns. But everything is very tidy, and the cabin smells good. I see the perfect spot to set up my coffee maker. In the front living space is a new-looking flat screen TV. “Oh my gosh, I can watch Netflix here?”

“Yes,” Kelt laughs.

I stride down the short hallway because I’m nosy. And that’s when I see the nursery. I walk in. There’s a crib and a changing table and...and... Tears instantly form behind my eyes. I stumble into the room and wander around, more tears falling. “Did he build this crib?”

“Yes, with his own hands. It’s an orc tradition.”

It hits me hard then that Whelan Overlook really did know the whole time I was pregnant, and he wanted his babies as much as I did. And I kept them from him on the other side of the country. I sit down heavily in a rocker in the corner. I look down at Bran’s precious green features, reminding myself that they are only three months old.

I can fix this.

Whelan can have all the time he wants, being with them, giving them bottles, getting them washed and dressed and changing their diapers and holding them in his arms. He wasn't able to be there to watch me carry them or for their birth, but he can still be with them now, when they are still small. And he'll have his sons by his side always to watch their growth for the rest of their lives.

Rogan stands patiently beside me, holding Owen, his other hand on my shoulder as I cry. "My son did a good job with this nursery," he comments. "The only problem is that Whelan thought you were carrying one child. He didn't account for twins."

I use the back of my hand to swipe at my tears. "Good thing I brought along that crib. We will really need it."

"Yes, we will."

Kelt and Urdan unload the cart. Then they put together the extra crib and push it right next to the other one. The rest of my luggage and everything else we brought is placed in the front room. I place Bran in a bouncer so I can walk around, set up my Keurig and start moving luggage to the correct spaces and unpacking supplies.

"Are you sure you want to do that so soon? Maybe you should wait to fully unpack until you meet again with Whelan?" Kelt questions.

"Nope," I insist. "I will start as I plan to go forward."

He chuckles and leaves me alone.

The sun starts to set outside, leaving shadows and beams of golden light. "Kelt and I leaving," Urdan finally announces. "There's much for us to ready prior to Whelan's arrival. Don't forget that this whole night there will be many of us hiding outside, ready to take him down if he turns feral."

I fish out two bags of Halloween treats and give one to each orc. "Thank you for all your help today. I really appreciate you putting together the crib." I give Urban and Kelt each a big hug. They duck their heads because I suspect they are blushing. Finally, the two orcs drive away in the utility cart.

Rogan stays behind with me for another hour. I suspect it's because he wants to make sure I'm a good mother before he leaves me alone with the babies in Whelan's cabin. I should be angry at this lack of trust, but instead I admire the fact that he's looking out for his grandsons.

We sit on opposite couches and I relax, with a blanket over my torso, nursing the twins while we chat. My breasts are heavy and I'm happy to be

able to feed them. Maybe I'll be able to start giving them that extra milk I always pump and bottle, just in case. I express enough breast milk for these two to feed an army, that's another reason why I feel they haven't been thriving, because they've been rejecting all the extra milk I produce.

I realize I feel comfortable around this huge orc because he looks very much like his son and therefore my babies look like him too. He hands me a glass of water and makes me a turkey and cheese sandwich which is surprisingly tasty, and I gladly eat every bite.

"Is Whelan's mother here too?" I suddenly question.

"No," Rogan answers gruffly. "Whelan's mother came with me to the commune after she discovered she was pregnant in order to hide her pregnancy from the prying eyes of the wider world, but she left the both of us soon after she recovered from his birth. She wanted nothing to do with this lifestyle or raising an orc son. She was embarrassed of us. As far as I know she went back to her normal life, never telling anyone about me or our son."

"Oh no. I'm so sorry."

"The good news is that I was lucky enough to meet a second Bride whom I love and who loves me in return. Miranda chose to live here with me. She enjoys our life on the commune."

"Oh, that's wonderful. Does Whelan have a brother?"

"Yes, my younger son, Even, is only eleven years old."

"I'd like to meet her and your other son."

"If you choose to stay after meeting again with Whelan, I will bring them over."

Fair enough.

After both the boys are fed and burped, Rogan and I both stand and head with them to the nursery. He helps me change their diapers, then he places a sleepy Bran down in his crib. I place Owen in the opposite crib. Both of them are bundled and propped for sleep.

He looks down at his grandsons with love shining in his dark eyes. "Thank you for this," he rasps.

Then he strides out of the nursery and heads for the front door of the cabin. He pauses in the dark doorway. "Whatever you do, don't run," Rogan tells me. "Whelan might scare you at first with his aggression, but if you run it will simply reignite his need to chase and he will instantly devolve into ancient instincts. Remain still and let him scent you. Let him bury his nose in your hair and your neck and let him get his fill. This will be your best bet for

keeping him calm and reasonable. And remember, he would never hurt my grandsons. Orcs do not harm their sons, or any other orc children. It is not within our species. We have so few offspring that each orc child is treated with care and attention.”

And then the door shuts and I’m alone with the babies.

I grin and rush to the primary bedroom and click on a light, ready to snoop. There is indeed only one small hall bathroom in the cabin. This room has no attached bath or closet but there’s a dresser. I already checked out the hall bathroom earlier, placing my items alongside Whelan’s next to the sink and in the shower. This was nice. It felt right.

I’ve never in my life had a live-in boyfriend. There were a few boyfriends who were serious, but we never got to the point of moving in together or speaking of marriage.

I pull my suitcase in from the hallway and start fully unpacking. I didn’t bring a carry on—this is a big suitcase that I checked along with the double stroller. I managed to fit all my toiletries, shoes and the clothes I wear the most for fall and winter.

I open his drawers and see Whelan’s huge black underwear, his dark pajamas, plaid shirts and blue jeans. I’m unable to fit all my clothes, which means we’ll need another dresser, but I do my best, loving the sight of my small panties next to his huge underwear.

And then of course I remember the feel of his ass in my hands and the slide of his large, thick cock. Now I want him to return as soon as possible.

The need for sleep hits me hard. I have no idea how long it will take for Whelan to return but my eyelids are already drooping. This is my chance and I need to take it. I kick off my shoes and slide off my cardigan, still fully clothed in jeans and t-shirt.

Then I slip into Whelan’s comfortable bed, loving his scent.

And I fall into a deep, exhausted sleep, my head on his pillow.

Chapter 4

Whelan

The edge of the commune comes into focus.

It's still pitch-black outside with a hint of moon shadow to light the way and only a few hours until dawn. I'm filthy and exhausted. But this state of mind is good because it's kept me away from subjects best left untouched. Like the fact that a little over a year ago my Bride ran out of my hotel room the moment I fell asleep after fucking her hard and long, doing my best to bring her intense pleasure, and she never looked back.

Which means she took my growing seed with her—my son. And I still have no idea what my mate chose to do with my child. In fact, I may never know.

I've volunteered these last six months, hunting nonstop, pausing to eat and rest and then going back out. This schedule seems unsustainable, a shift no one else in their right mind would take on. But for me, it works. It also allows others to take a break from this difficult chore. The other hunters don't mind my temporary deep dive into orc hunting.

The elders say I'll stop soon with this self-inflicted isolation, but I see no end in sight.

I like the quiet and the solitude.

Reconnecting with my ancestral instincts, scenting the wind and finding the trail of a variety of wild animals. I hunt using ancient orc weapons and techniques passed down for ages. Traps are made from leaves, branches, and holes I dig with my own hands or whatever is available in the forest. I wash and drink in rivers and rest in front of a fire I made. I enjoy wading into rivers and capturing fish. I also took down a moose recently with my own hands. This is the most honorable way. I bring all I caught back, and it is all

eaten and used, completing the circle of life. I've been in the back country for three days straight and this time I'm ready for my bed and a shower.

I pause and drop off the large moose carcass and the rack of fish in the walk-in freezer of the lodge. I've already done most of the dirty work and I leave the rest for the team to butcher the next morning. I wash up some at the basin and then march back out into the quiet dark. All the lights and fires are out.

The depression returns and hits hard as I make my way to my cabin in the farthest corner of the commune. My mind was focused on the hunt and survival instincts, but now the memories come flooding back. Because I'm about to return to an empty cabin with an empty nursery, even though I'm a male who impregnated his Bride.

I have a son out there, hopefully.

And a Bride who wants nothing to do with me. I don't even know if she went through with the pregnancy. This is her right. But this doesn't mean the thought of her choosing to not carry my son and moving on with her life hurts any less. Also, she might've indeed chosen to carry and give birth to my son and is out there, somewhere in the greater human world, raising my orc son alone. A son who needs his father in close proximity to thrive.

Both scenarios are torturous and never leave my thoughts.

I met my female, whose name I do not even know, when I left the commune for the wider human world in Maine, for the first time at thirty years old. Prior to that the farthest I'd gone was monthly grocery runs to the nearest town. This time I went to Bangor, alone.

I'm the wildest-looking orc on the commune. Taller than the average orc, my horns sharper, and my tusks longer. I've been told by humans that my features are "scary." If I move an arm to point at something on a shelf, humans squeal and move out of the way, assuming I'm about to hit them. It is nonsensical. Therefore, I normally choose to stay amongst my kind, beginning to believe that I'd never have a Bride of my own or have offspring because simply going to the grocery store in town causes humans to scream and run away in fear. The other Brides I live amongst, who are mated to other males in the commune and who happily choose to stay with their mate and children, avoid me too with fear in their eyes. Only me.

I couldn't envision a modern human woman wanting to live with a monstrous-looking wild orc on the edge of the wild zone. Every wilder in my tribe is either unmated or a single father. It is a sad situation. Many regular

orcs live on the commune with a human Bride who lives at their hearth, feeds them home-cooked meals by hand and loves their sons.

I am jealous.

Many modern orcs, like my cousin Alden, have migrated and now live amongst the humans in their communities. Alden Overlook is an example of a wild orc who taught himself over time to act modern and eventually he found a female who accepted him. She lived next door to him, and she didn't have to leave and come to the commune to stay with him.

But I cannot leave the commune and try to live amongst humans, not only because they will scream in fear, but because I am the eldest son of the leader. It is my responsibility to stay and eventually take on his role.

A year ago, I went on a business trip by myself, trying to be mindful of my effect on humans. I was supposed to go with Rogan, but my father's Bride fell and broke her ankle, and he needed to drive his mate down the hill for medical care. I wanted to stay or reschedule but my father sent me alone because he called the negotiations "low risk." And it's always better to go out amongst humans alone or in groups of two. Anything else can ignite a mob.

I drove a truck past the towns I knew and onto freeways and to Bangor.

For the first time ever, I was taking an overnight trip out in the human world. I ended up at a place called a hotel. There were the requisite gasps of fear when I stepped out of the truck. Screams echoed from small children and senior citizens when I walked into the lobby. I tried to ignore these humans and made sure I offered a smile and tried to appear non-threatening. I simply checked in and asked for the key and paid. Luckily, they knew an orc was checking in and this was an orc-friendly establishment.

I went to the meeting that same day in a tall building. It went well. I negotiated favorable terms for the continued boundaries of the land of our commune. I am an expert in orc law, and even though I look wild I am highly articulate in both ancient orc and human speak; this is why I was sent.

That evening I walked past a place called a bar.

I'd heard of these establishments but had never been inside one. A pint of ale sounded wonderful before hitting my bed. Tomorrow I would return to the commune. I made a fateful detour into that quiet, half-empty hotel bar, hoping to find a pint of orc ale. And immediately found a lone human female seated nearby.

She was simply the most beautiful creature I'd ever seen. Long, thick brown hair. Sparkling blue eyes. A slender, curvy figure, but not too delicate.

She wore a black dress and fancy shoes. I couldn't keep my eyes off her.

I'd met many human females over the years and none of them affected me the way this female did. A few young unmated female lawyers had worked alongside me at the meeting with the government and again, nothing but professional discourse.

I was drawn to this female's scent and the sound of her voice. I should have run back to my room immediately the moment I realized I was reacting abnormally to this particular female. But the moment I inhaled her scent I was already too far gone. The scent doesn't lie.

I have heard it told that a male can have more than one female match in his life, but it has never been documented that there is more than one at the same time. A male latches on to one female until her death or if she has chosen to leave for so long that eventually over many years her scent fades from that male's body, from his mind and from his senses to the point where it leaves room for another to replace it.

I sat down next to her and expected to hear the requisite human scream. Maybe she'd get up and move away. I began to entertain ancient thoughts of kidnapping and carrying her away by her hair. I could throw her in my truck and take her to my cabin in my commune and fill her with my sons. And in time, after I pleased her so often, she'd realize that she wanted to stay. I was amazed at how quickly these ridiculous, primitive thoughts entered my mind. But none of my chase receptors clicked and had to be pushed away, because luckily it was not the dark of winter and I could remain sane.

She moved closer and gazed at me with heat, her arousal thick in the air between us.

After this shocking realization that this female wanted me, the Wild Orc with tall horns and hair so long I had it tied up on the top of my head, I was all-in. The mug of ale was ignored and all I wanted was to strip her bare and sink inside of her heat.

Soon she was so close her thigh brushed mine and her forearm touched mine. She looked into my eyes and purred, "Let's go to your room."

Of course, I said yes. I'm not a fool.

She attacked me in the elevator, pushing me back against the wall and basically climbing me, moaning with desire. I lowered my face, and she captured my lips.

It was my first kiss.

We ended up in my room and I did strip her bare, trying my best to not

tear her clothes. Her bare breasts, soft stomach and curved hips caused my shaft to harden and leak. I lost my virginity that night and did my best to fill her with my seed again and again.

I made sure she constantly screamed with pleasure. I was much larger than her, but I worked hard to make sure she was always wet and ready to take my shaft with ease. Finally, I passed out next to her, with my female in my arms, assured she was satisfied, bred and mated. The next morning, I would discuss and explain her move to the commune.

But I awoke the next morning alone in my room, with her long gone, and roared with rage.

I ran half-naked down to the lobby and demanded to know who she was, but no one would tell me, or they didn't know. Because I didn't know her name, nor did I know what room she was staying in. I didn't even have her cell number.

Had that been her plan all along?

How could I have been so enthralled to have not acquired this basic knowledge? I bred a female whose name I didn't know, nor did I pause to tell her my own name or what commune I lived on. My trust was that strong. My mind and body that certain that she was my Bride and that she felt the same about me.

I felt I'd been tricked and made a fool.

Had it been a human scam?

The reason why I had acquiesced so easily was because I could smell her arousal too. I knew she felt the same as I did. Why then would she leave?

But this has happened before to many, many a male. I am not the first nor will I be the last. What I'd most feared ended up happening. An orc's fear is to end up a single father. This is common, as to almost be expected. The worst fear of all, is that a female would run away and not leave the son with the father. And that is what happened to me.

It can't be said she didn't leave me because I kidnapped her, dragged her by the hair or did any of the stereotypical things my ancestors have done. But I must have done something wrong because she didn't stay, and the worst part is she has taken my son with her. Maybe as a human she didn't understand orcs don't pleasure mate, we only mate with our Brides in order to fill them with our seed and see their stomach swollen with a son. It is instinctual. I thought she knew that I was breeding her, but maybe she didn't know? I was so far gone I never explicitly told her I was giving her my son.

Kidnappings have always happened since ancient times. Males took human females into dark caves, far from revengeful mobs of humans with pitchforks and torches, and kept the female long enough to give birth and only then allowed the choice of leaving. I refuse to kidnap a female. My father banned kidnapping when he came into power. It was a difficult transition, and many orcs left our commune for other secret settlements that still practiced the ways of old. But Rogan held firm. If we were to continue living reasonably close to humans in peace, he knew we had to accept human law. Modernize or fail. I agree.

That first morning after she left, I was deeply upset and ashamed that I hadn't been able to show her that staying with me was a good idea. When I returned home, I didn't want to say anything to my brothers but admitted to my father what had happened. Eventually I opened up and told everyone that I had found my Bride and filled her with my seed but lost her, because I couldn't hide my anguish.

There was no way to find her. Legally, I was unable to go into human communities to search for her.

As the months progressed, I went through a nesting phase as any orc male would. My brain and body knew I had a growing son even though my female wasn't nearby. I tidied up my cabin and invested in upgrades and remodeled. I even crafted a wooden crib with my bare hands, in the way all fathers have done for millennia. I imagined often that she would arrive just in time, that she would come to her senses and find me and come to my hearth. Finally, when I knew that the time came, and my son would have been born and yet she hadn't arrived, I concluded that she'd terminated the pregnancy and moved on with her life, considering the whole thing a mistake.

That was when I began to exclusively hunt. This took me into the wilderness by myself because I wasn't good to be around. Depression hit me hard. Tears often filled my eyes. I couldn't stand to be in the cabin with an empty crib. I began to wonder how I was going to be able to carry on. I wanted my female in my bed as much as the son she was carrying. I want my family at my hearth.

Instead, I am alone.

I pause before I stride up the pathway that leads to the front steps of my small cabin because from this distance, I see a light on inside. What is going on?

There's a soft whistle and Urdan, the head of security, waits in the

shadows.

“What has happened?” I growl.

He steps forward. “Your Bride is right now sleeping in your bed.”

I place a claw on my chest and freeze. “And my son?”

He nods. “They are here too.”

“They?”

“Yes. You will see.”

I throw back my head and let out a thunderous roar of pride and domination.

My friend grabs my arm. “Whelan, calm down, I am here to caution you before you enter and do anything you will later regret. Your female drove up to the gate today with your offspring. Rogan, Kelt and I spoke to her and allowed her into your cabin so you can speak to her too and decide the next steps. I am here to warn you that if you attempt to cause her harm there is a group of us surrounding your cabin and we will rush inside, take you down, chain you up and toss you in the pit. This is not an idle threat. I will not allow you to harm that female.”

“Understood,” I pant. Then I snarl and push him aside and jog up the path and enter my cabin. I close the door behind me and look around. A single light is on in the front room. My chest fills with her scent. My Bride. I slump back against the door with the enormity of this discovery.

Two more scent trails enter my lungs. Two? I have two sons?

I stand back up and race down the short hall and enter the spare room I’ve created for my offspring. I built this addition with my own two hands. Everyone thought it was sad and in fact crazy of me to go through the bother, considering they must’ve all secretly thought it was for naught. That I was preparing for a female and a son that would never join my hearth. But I was compelled by instinct. I had no idea there’d be two of them. She must’ve brought a second crib with her because there’s the one I made and another that is store bought. I snort with disgust. Soon I will craft a second for my other son.

I lean against the wall of the nursery, watching my sons both sleep for a moment in the moonlight, inhaling their scent, enjoying the curve of their faces and their black starter horns. *My sons*. I use the back of my hand to wipe away the tears that stream down my face.

Then I stride down the hall to confront their mother.

Chapter 5

Drew

“Female? Wake up,” a harsh voice snarls.

I snuggle deeper into my pillow, which smells of Whelan Overlook, and try to remain asleep, despite the disturbance. For once the babies sleep soundly and I’m trying to take advantage of this magical occurrence before I need to awake and feed them again. Also, this bed is so freaking comfortable. “Leave me alone,” I mutter.

Something shakes me awake.

My eyes flutter open.

A huge, menacing Orc growls from above and bares his tusks.

I squeal with fright and reach over to click on the bedside light.

“You are here to return my sons?” he growls.

I sit up straight because I’d know that deep voice anywhere. My body instantly heats up in response to his nearness. I push my hair back from my face, wishing I’d had the foresight to pull it back into a ponytail. “Oh my gosh, it’s you? Whelan? You’re back?” My eyes roam from that familiar face down his chest. I haven’t seen him in a whole year. His wide, green, bare chest is smeared with dirt. He smells like soil, leaves and leather. The long black hair I remember is tied up in some sort of man bun, which I find sexy as hell. And of course, my gaze drops down his amazing muscular chest, past the belt buckle to the bulge of the package down below, that looks just as intimidating as I remember.

A whimper escapes my lips. I’ve missed him so much. I had real, tortured reasons for leaving and then staying away for so long, but right this instant, as I sit in his bed and gaze up at all that is him, those reasons seem silly. Why didn’t I just stay?

A snarl rumbles in his chest. “You’ve learned my name? This is more than I know of you,” he accuses. “And I have *two* sons?”

Oops. My eyes dart back up to his harsh face and the tusks that erupt past his lower lip and my cheeks burst into flame. “Oh sorry, my name is Drew, Drew Reilly. And yes, I’ve...” I swallow against the lump in my throat, “You have two sons who are identical twins and I’ve brought both babies back to you.”

He gives a curt nod and turns to exit the bedroom. I fly off the bed and race after him down the hall. Whelan enters the nursery and stands next to Owen’s crib. The curtains are still open, allowing a bit of moonlight. He reaches out a hand, like he’s going to try and lift the sleeping baby into his arms.

I let out a squeak of dismay. “How about you take a shower first,” I whisper, “and wash off all that dirt, before you touch the babies.”

He gives a curt nod and points to the sitting room. “Wait for me until I return.”

“I will.”

I stumble into the front room and sit on the couch, grateful that Whelan hasn’t yet attacked like the others said he would. His voice sounds harsh and rough, which is new and different since I’d only ever seen the sweet, sexy side of him. Mainly I’m stunned because I haven’t seen my orc in over a year. And I think he’s more focused on his twins than on me.

The shower starts and I glance out the dark window, knowing the orc guards are out there somewhere but I can’t see them. I’m assuming they saw him arrive and moved in closer than before.

The shower shuts down and minutes later Whelan stomps into the front room.

I look up and catch my breath because the male I remember has returned, even more spectacular than before because now he’s barefoot with only black pajama pants. I love his twisty horns that burst out from either side of his forehead. And I remember how easy it was to still kiss him despite his tusks and how I loved holding onto those horns when he gave me the most amazing oral sex. His hair is long and damp down to his shoulders. And I want to climb him like a tree.

My body is enflamed, exactly as before.

And this time I’m sober.

He holds up a hand and shakes his head. “Don’t.”

“What?” I question.

“I can scent your arousal filling the air, just like the last time at the hotel bar. Despite the havoc your pheromones play on my body, I will not again be tricked into sharing your bed. If this is your intention before you leave, it is wrong.” He reaches down to adjust his thick cock through the black fabric which I can tell is growing in his pants. He points out the window. “They are out there to protect me from you, but I assume they are also protecting you from *me*.”

My face heats up because it’s true that images of our last encounter continue to fly through my head and that space between my thighs that only he fills the best is heating up too. Plus, it breaks my heart that he thinks I tricked him. “You think I tricked you?”

He crooks an eye ridge. “You are the one who suggested we go to my room. Then you left the very next morning after I’d pleased you many times. What else would I think?”

“I was drunk. I didn’t know...”

“Don’t... I don’t want to hear the excuses. I only want to know why you finally decided to return.”

His words land like sandbags, but I lift my chin and manage to carry on. “I am here to bring the boys because you need to meet them. Their names are Bran and Owen.”

“You named them without me?”

“Yes, your father said that too, like it’s weird. Of course I named them. What else was I supposed to do, just say ‘hey you’ for the first three months of their lives?”

“You were supposed to remain at my side so that I could be there for my sons’ growth and birth and name them.”

“Orc fathers always name their sons?”

“Yes, this is the custom since ancient times. You named them without me but I do approve of their names so we will not change them.” He crosses his massive green arms. “Why did you give birth to my sons without me in attendance?”

I twirl my hair. “Um, I couldn’t find you.”

“You found me now. Why couldn’t you find me a few months ago? What has changed?”

I wince and decide to tell him the truth. “I...I thought I could raise them by myself. But then I learned they weren’t thriving without you there, so I

hired a private investigator to find you and now I'm here."

He takes a step closer, his face clouded with anger. "You could have remained with me here at the commune during your pregnancy and I would have been with the twins from day one and neither of them would have known a moment's distress." He pauses and backs away and runs his thick fingers through his hair. "Where were you living this whole time when you hid from me? I went to the lobby trying to find you after you left, but I didn't even know your name." He looks out the windows again. "I could not go after you. Modern law dictates that orcs cannot search for Brides or sons who've rejected them and live in human communities. If you've wondered why I didn't track you down, this is why. I had to wait for you to return on your own."

"I never go into bars by myself and pick up guys but...it just seemed necessary that night. I had two drinks and realized I was a total lightweight. Then you arrived and I was bolder than ever before because of those drinks. I don't know what happened to me, but yes, I did pretty much attack you and asked you to have sex with me. This is true. The next morning, I left you snoring in your bed and went back to mine to clean up and finish packing. Then I caught a prearranged flight back home to California. I was on that airplane probably three hours after I left your bed. That was why you couldn't find me. I wasn't even in the state any longer. I live on the other side of the country."

"Why did you leave? I did my best to make sure you were pleased. Why didn't you decide to change your plans after meeting me and choose to stay?"

I wring my hands. "Whelan, you were scary. And you were coming on too strong. You called me your Bride. And you said you were going to kidnap me and take me to your cabin and keep me there."

"I didn't say that. It wasn't even the dark of winter. I was acting reasonable. I did not kidnap you and instead gave you pleasure and filled you with my seed. It was a perfect orc mating. I treated you with respect and made you my Bride."

"Maybe I didn't want to be anyone's Bride? And you were scary. You threatened to kidnap me and drag me off by the hair. You were half asleep when you said it, but you still scared the hell outta me, like you had a secret plan I didn't know about until then."

"There was no secret plan. I was breeding you. This whole time I've

known I've had a pregnant female out there and that you were carrying my growing offspring and giving birth and I didn't know what was happening with my son. I was going insane."

"I'm so sorry, Whelan. I didn't know you were trying to breed me. I thought we were having a fabulous one-night stand and I was on birth control. When I left, I thought there was zero chance of me being pregnant. And later when I did become pregnant, I thought only I knew about it and was making decisions and you had no idea. I didn't know your name and you didn't know mine because to me it made the hook up mysterious and sexy. I didn't know where you lived. I knew nothing. I finally had to hire a private investigator to find you."

"Why didn't you try to find me the moment you knew you were pregnant? Why did you wait until now when my sons are three months old?"

"I learned that Bran and Owen need you."

"It was my right to know of my offspring as soon as you knew."

Tears spring to my eyes because he's right. I stand and pace the room. "You're right," I say. "It was wrong of me. You did have the right to know about your children the moment I learned I was pregnant. I'm sorry. In my defense, most one-night stands between humans don't result in the man wanting commitment. Most men would be happy that I was carrying on and leaving them out of it and they didn't have to financially support the babies. And also I was still worried that you wanted to kidnap me. What if I returned to you and you tried to harm me?"

A growl rumbles in his chest. "That doesn't make any sense. I didn't threaten to kidnap you and you were never going to be harmed. I'm not human. And that wasn't a one-night stand. Orcs don't pleasure mate."

"I'm not lying. You did threaten to kidnap me. And I didn't know that orcs don't pleasure mate, but I know it now."

"You can't raise orcs without their father."

"I didn't know that until I read a book by an orc named Alden Overlook. I learned so much then and learned how I didn't understand what was happening that night."

"You read Alden's book? I'm glad you finally educated yourself," he says stiffly, with a hint of sarcasm. "Well, you've done the right thing, leaving them with me now. You can leave tomorrow morning. I will care for them."

"What? This is what your father said too. Whelan, I'm not leaving Bran

and Owen behind. I'm here to stay. Where they go, I go. If they need to remain on this commune with you then I'm here too. They're still breastfeeding—they need me.”

He crooks an eye ridge at me, obviously skeptical. “There are a few other human females on the commune who would gladly feed the babies too. You do not have to stay out of a sense of misplaced responsibility. We are used to orc babies being dropped off by human females. Sometimes they drop off babies to the wrong commune, but we still take them in and adopt them if we're unable to locate the father in another tribe. Again, you are free to go. You do not need to stay. I am grateful that you did not terminate the pregnancy and that you gave birth to my sons and provided them care. Your obligation is now over.”

“Obligation? No, I love my babies. I'm telling you, I'm not leaving without them.”

He inhales deep. “Why are you really here, Drew Reilly? I can still scent your arousal. You want to pleasure mate with me and leave again? I already told you that isn't going to happen.”

It's the first time he's said my name and I like it. “No...well, yes I want that but...I want to stay and try again. You said you wanted me as your Bride. Maybe I'm ready to try that out.”

He gives me a sharp glance. “Are you trying to trick me again? How can I believe this?”

“It's the truth. Yes, I thought we were having a one-night stand. But since then, a lot has happened. Like I said, I read that book, many times, highlighting parts and trying my best to learn about orcs. I have Bran and Owen in my life. And I've even met your father and cousin and seen many other women living here. I'm...I'm at a different place and I'm not here to simply drop off the babies. I'm here because I know they need you, but I also want to give us a chance.”

“A chance?” he snorts. “You're willing to give us a chance? There it is again. Human thinking. I cannot simply become your boyfriend and then you leave later when you realize you don't really want to stay with me or in this commune. You cannot divorce me. I will not start anything with you again because I cannot trust the female who kept my sons from me. You left me once. I won't give you the opportunity to do it to me again.”

“Whelan, I had a lot of fears. I thought you'd wake up and kidnap me and drag me off to your lair.”

He crosses his arms and frowns at me. “This is preposterous. It never happened. I did not say that, even in my sleep. Stop making up this terrible excuse.”

“Whelan, it’s the truth. I was drunk when I propositioned you and fell into your bed. But it was great between us, of course it was and I probably would’ve woken up with you and said goodbye at least before I caught my plane, but when you started mumbling about ‘kidnapping your Bride,’ I decided it was smart of me to instead sneak away.”

“I didn’t say that.”

“You did. Also, you don’t realize what a big deal it was for me to come to you. I mean, I live on the other side of the country. After I learned you lived on an orc commune in Maine, my best friend convinced me to move out to Maine, which is her home state. I always thought I’d be a California girl to the day I died, but instead I moved across the country. I had to fire my beloved Nanny who’d been helping me out with the boys the best she could. The airline wouldn’t allow me to fly with both babies by myself so my best friend Amelia went through the bother of flying out to California, just so she could help me pack up and fly back to her hometown with the babies between us. Flying with them out here was a harrowing experience with lots of exasperated passengers glaring at my crying infants the whole time. I put my condo up for sale and all my stuff is in storage. Coming here with the boys wasn’t easy, but I’m here.”

He blinks. “You moved across the country?”

I sit down heavily in a nearby chair. “Yes. I’m not simply here for a visit. I changed my entire life so I can make a go of this with you.”

“You love your orc sons?” he demands.

“Yes. I am their mother. I love them. They are the most important things in my life. And I’m not kidding. I had no idea until I gave birth to those two that love like that could exist.”

A pleasant sound, almost a purr, rumbles in his chest. Then he stands up. “I am going to check on them.”

“No, don’t wake them,” I blurt out.

“Why?”

“It’s so hard for them to sleep. I think they’re both exhausted. That’s why I fell asleep so easily too, I’m also exhausted.”

“You do appear thinner than I remember and there are dark circles under your eyes.”

My lips thin. “Thanks.”

“Do not worry, female, you did the right thing, coming to me. You will now get all the sleep you require. Our sons will sleep well too.”

“They’ve been fussy,” I admit as I stand and follow him back down the dark hallway. “I’ve been worried they’re too small and not thriving like they should.”

Whelan quietly opens the bedroom door. He walks to the nearest crib and lifts a baby tenderly in his arms, unwraps him and places Owen against his bare chest, skin to skin. Owen snuggles and buries his face into the chest of his father. I can literally see the contentment on his tiny face. Then the massive orc reaches out and uses his other arm to pick up his other son and brings Bran too against his chest. Then all of them are together. It’s a thing of beauty. I pull my cell phone from my pocket and take a quick picture.

Whelan moves to the open window, lifting both babies, so the guards can see. Then he exits the room with them still snuggled in each arm.

“Where are you going?”

“I am taking them to bed with me. We will sleep together this way the rest of the night. They need my scent and I need theirs.”

“Oh.” I shuffle, uncertain of where I belong in this little tableau.

He pauses. “You can sleep in the bed next to us.”

“Are you sure? I thought you said...”

“I am not touching you, female. But your scent in my lungs will also be comforting. When you leave, I will have trouble sleeping again, but at least I will have had it for a time.”

“I’m not leaving.” I repeat.

“Uh huh.”

And then we all go into the dark bedroom together.

Chapter 6

Whelan

“Do you mind if I change into my pajamas?”

I nod, thinking my female will go into the hall bathroom to change but instead she closes the curtains, strides over to the dresser and takes out clothes from the drawer that I’ve never seen.

“What is this?” I move with the babies, so I have one arm free and open the other drawers and find she’s moved much of my clothes and filled many drawers with her own clothing. And that’s when I fully understand the fact that when I took a shower earlier there were so many of her products on the shelves. “You moved in?”

“Of course. I told you I’m here to really try.”

And then she turns her back to me and strips out of her pants and tosses them into a basket for dirty laundry. She takes off her shirt too and now she’s only in her underwear. I swallow hard, my eyes roaming down her exquisite form in the shadowy dark. She’s as beautiful as I remember. That ass was in my hands often as I plowed into her from behind. She turns to face me but doesn’t make eye contact. That’s when she reaches behind and unlatches her bra, bends forward to slip it off and tosses that too into the basket.

Her large breasts are even more spectacular than I remember. Heavier with milk for our sons and still perky and perfectly shaped.

She is tall and slender but not too much of either. My female isn’t delicate, which is important. She was able to easily withstand my violent orc lusts. I nudded in her at least seventeen times, pounding inside of her nonstop and she held up nicely, moaning with delight. I thought this proved we were a great match. But I was wrong.

And I’ve learned her name is Drew Reilly.

She named our two sons Bran and Owen, names which I surprisingly enjoy. But she is also a female who tells untruths about her reasons for leaving me.

She places her hands on her stomach. “I delivered the babies only three months ago but I’m already back to my normal weight and even though I was carrying twins I don’t really have any stretch marks. It’s pretty amazing.”

“Humans who give birth to orcs have always commented on this, going back to ancient times. There is some type of protection that our infants pass to the mothers. The labor is easier too and so is the nursing.”

“Oh wow,” she chuckles. “You know if more women knew that bit of important information it might be easier for orcs to find Brides.” She kicks off her underwear so I can see the dark triangle between her thighs.

This enticement is not going to work. Drew Reilly wants me to fuck her again and of course I want the same. I could easily put our sons back in their cribs and take her all night long.

She continues to push me to the edge and she’s lucky I’m able to keep my wild instincts at bay. Both of my sons are keeping me sane. They are the difference between me standing here talking, and the guards having to rush in and keep me from taking their mother much too roughly and harming her in the process.

Also, not once has she run from me. This helps too.

Drew claims she’s not here simply to drop off my sons and leave, but instead wants to try and live here with me at the commune as my Bride, at my hearth, so we can care for our sons together. It sounds too good to be true, because I vividly remember the pain and agony of this last year, left alone, not knowing what had happened to her or my son.

I can’t switch that easily.

Nor do I trust a female who’s already tricked me once. She claims I mumbled something about kidnapping her, but I’d never say such a thing and it irritates me that she makes up excuses for her behavior.

And she wants to *try* to remain at my side? “Try?” I snort quietly.

But she does sound sincere in her love for our sons. And I continue to scent her intense arousal for me. This is why I haven’t kicked her out yet. But I will not touch this female who isn’t sure if she wants me. Drew Reilly might want our sons, but their father she only wants as a temporary pleasure mate. My cock is hard and leaking, wishing to sink in her heat, but instead I concentrate on my sons. Also, I’m exhausted.

She pulls on a loose, short nightgown and starts unbuttoning the front to again expose her perfect breasts.

“Stop. It’s not going to work. I’m not going to fuck a female I cannot trust.”

She rolls her eyes and sits down on the bed and turns on the bedside light. “I can hold one of them,” she offers.

I shake my head.

“I need to feed them again.”

“I will help.”

She sits up against the headboard and starts to put a blanket over her chest then glances at me, smiles and tosses it aside. I rest back against the headboard too with pillows and place Owen on my chest while he waits to be fed. I hand her Bran first and watch with wonder as she allows me a full visual of what’s happening as she nurses our son. Bran eagerly latches onto her nipple, grunts and starts feeding from his mother. His green hand is on her breast. She cradles his head and sniffs his head and smiles. She smiles at me too.

Why is my chest so warm? And why can’t I keep my eyes off her much larger breasts?

Then our son finishes and she pulls him off her nipple with a pop. I take back Bran and hand her Owen. My other son also latches onto her other breast and starts to fill his belly. This has to be the most beautiful sight I’ve seen in my entire life. I prop Bran on my shoulder and gently pat his tiny back until he lets out a growly little burp.

“Their diapers feel full,” she comments.

I nod and roll off the bed and take Bran with me to the bedroom and get to work changing my son’s diaper. I have everything set up, along with some new additions she brought. I frown at the disposable diapers, but it will do for now. It pleases me to see that my Bride has taken care of my sons despite being alone with them without orcs in attendance. They seem small for their age but nothing that can’t be fixed in a short time. I lean in close and rumble in Bran’s ear and he gurgles. “I’m pleased to see you too, my son. You are with me now and all is well.”

I return to the bedroom and find her still nursing Owen.

“You really did change Bran’s diaper?”

“Yes.”

I can see she’s checking my work. “Hmm, looks good.”

“I am an orc. We wait all our lives to raise a son. This is the greatest joy of our lives. I have trained for this. Males who never have a son live with a deep sadness.”

She takes Owen off her breast and we again switch babies. I hand her Bran to hold and I take Owen to change his diaper too. I repeat the same ritual with him as I did with Bran, giving him time to burp and then reassuring Owen that he is now rejoined with his father and can also sleep in peace.

I return to the bedroom and see Drew can barely keep her eyes open.

I turn off the light and rest on the bed and take both babies in my arms. She snuggles into my side and quickly falls asleep with a look of utter contentment on her face. I can't help but feel content too, even if I believe this family tableau is short lived.

MY EYES BLINK open at the sun light filtered through the curtains.

One baby gurgles in one arm and the other in another. Their gorgeous mother is still snuggled next to me, asleep. I love the sight of her brown hair against my green skin. I should be tired and wanting more sleep but I'm energized with the reappearance of my boys. Learning I have twins was the happiest moment of my life.

I very carefully move out of the bed with both babies, allowing Drew to continue sleeping. She needs her rest after the last few months of raising orcs without their father and I'm looking forward to alone time with my sons.

Many orcs would lose their minds at the sight of their Bride who'd run from them. But I think the difference is that she brought back my two sons. And she's told me she wants to stay. This has calmed my chasing instincts. She's right here with me, her scent in my lungs along with the scent of her arousal. And all I think of is joy at the sight of my boys.

This helps to decrease my animosity towards the female who kept my sons from me.

Their diapers are reasonably dry so I walk with them out into the front room. I find breast milk in bottles, still fresh, in the fridge. Perfect. I sit down with them on the couch. I place one infant between my thighs and the other in my arm and feed him with the bottle. When the bottle finishes I switch them. After they are fed I spend time giving them each a bath in the kitchen sink with a tiny bathtub. And then I give them fresh diapers and clothing. This

time alone with the both of them is wonderful for me and my sons. They smile and gurgle the entire time. And I can already tell them apart. Bran has taller horns and Owen has a thicker chest. I leave them in their cribs, quietly listening to their mobiles, while I take a quick shower and sneak into my room for clothes.

Drew is still asleep.

Then I go back into the nursery and hold my sons in my arms and proudly step outside onto my front porch and out to the path. My father joins me as well as Urdan and Kelt. I scented their arrival prior to stepping in the shower. I hand Owen over to my father, who obviously wants to hold a grandson.

“How did it go?” Urdan questions.

“It went well. It was good you stayed outside because I could have easily lost my mind and hurt her. If she’s ran. If she’d tried to keep my sons from me. But I think it helped that I went into the nursery first and inhaled their scent. And she also immediately told me she wanted to stay and she never tried to run from me.”

“Good.”

“She says she wants to stay and give this a chance.”

“Hmm. She said that yesterday too, which is why we let her enter and speak to you, because we thought you’d want to hear her request.”

A growl rumbles in my chest. “I cannot trust the female who tricked me and took my sons across the country.”

“Maybe she didn’t trick you?”

I shake my head in disagreement.

“My grandsons already look happier and settled,” my father comments.

“Yes,” Kelt agrees, “both infants immediately smiled when they scented us from the car at the gate.”

I shake my head. “Three months without me.”

“But at least they’re here, to stay.”

“I’m letting her stay for now,” I confirm. “Because she wants to give this a human ‘chance.’ But she says I threatened to kidnap her and that’s why she ran away. I can’t trust her because she’s still lying to me.”

“Maybe you did say this.”

“I didn’t.”

They all three stare at me as if they don’t believe me.

“I would never say that to a female. You know I would never threaten a mate.”

“She told us you said this while half asleep. It’s possible this happened and you don’t remember.”

My jaw clenches because I’m irritated that these males who know me the best would believe a female they recently met over me.

“We’re going back to our cabins and we’re going to leave you two alone now,” Urdan announces.

I nod. “This is acceptable. I am calm. I’ve slept the night with her at my side and my sons in my arms. If she chooses to leave I will calmly allow her to go. I told her that if she leaves my sons remain with me. She knows the rules.”

“Yes,” my father answers as he hands Owen back to me, “she understands that once she entered commune space with the babies, they were legally ours. If she leaves, she leaves behind your sons. But she sounds very certain that she’d never leave her children.”

“Sometimes the women say that at first...” I remind them.

“We know. But this seems different. I think she’s serious in wanting to stay at your hearth. I think you should give your Bride a chance,” my father says. “She might surprise you.”

I RETURN to the sound of the shower running.

I sit at the kitchen table with both of my sons in my arms because I can’t stand the idea of being separated from them.

Finally, Drew strides into the front room with damp hair and skimpy new clothes. Her feet are covered in thick gray socks—my socks. And she’s wearing shorts that barely cover her ass and a long sweater jacket of some sort. Her large nipples poke enticingly through her thin t-shirt.

“My babies!” she cries out. “They look so cute in your arms.” Then she rushes forward and gives each of them a kiss on the face. “Sorry I slept so long. You should’ve woken me up. Bran and Owen must be starved. I’m ready to feed them.”

“They’ve already been fed.”

She blinks. Her blue eyes wide and mesmerizing.

“They each took a bottle earlier.”

She swiftly opens the fridge and gasps with surprise. “You fed them?”

“Yes.”

“And you bathed them and changed their diapers and even dressed them

in new outfits? And you took a shower too?”

“Yes.”

She places a hand against her chest and gives me a watery smile. “You’re wonderful.”

I let out a grunt.

“Well, give me a minute to express some milk. My breasts feel really engorged. Then I’ll make some coffee and then breakfast for us,” my female says. “Since you did all of that work earlier, it’s the least I can do.”

“No,” I grumble.

“No?”

“You know that males like their Brides to cook home-cooked meals and feed them by hand. You are trying to trick me again.”

“Maybe I just like to cook, and I’ve always wanted someone to cook for?”

“I don’t trust you.”

She tosses her damp hair over her shoulder. “Obviously.” Then she takes out a small, clear plastic object out of a cabinet and glances at the windows. “Do I need to close the curtains? Are the guards still out there?”

“No, the others went home. We are alone. This corner of the commune is very private.”

“Good.” Then she sits down and lifts her shirt and fixes a plastic object to her luscious breast. “At first, I had a fancy breast pump and this manual one was supposed to be something quick for the middle of the night, but I decided I like this little thing better. It does the job and it’s easier, doesn’t leave me sore and there aren’t a bunch of tiny parts to clean. It’s all I need.”

I watch in fascination as she gets to work, pumping each breast, filling a milk storage bag. Watching my female feed my sons last night and now expressing extra milk for them is maybe the second-best moment of my life.

Finally, she sighs with relief and fixes her shirt. “All done. There’s a lot of milk, it’s crazy. If they don’t nurse, I have to get rid of it or it starts to hurt.”

“Orc infants cannot take human infant formula. Also, you have twins, so your body is making extra.”

“I have even more milk than the normal woman giving birth to an orc?”

“Yes.”

“Well, that explains things.” She puts the milk in the fridge and then putters around the kitchen.

I have a hard time knowing who to gaze at, my sexy female or my gurgling sons. All three cause my heart to swell with pride. But I force myself to remember this is temporary. She's here at my hearth now, but tomorrow Drew Reilly could be gone. Forever.

She pauses in front of a contraption on my kitchen counter I've never seen before. "I'm making some coffee for myself. Do you want some too?"

"What is that machine you're using?"

"Oh, this is my new Keurig," she smiles, exposing smooth white teeth and an exotic lack of tusks. "It's wonderful."

I let out a snort of disgust. "Why do humans invent these useless things? That coffee maker creates too much trash that cannot be recycled."

"Please don't burst my bubble of happiness. A Keurig in a commune might not work out in the end but let me use it for now, okay?" She lifts a special pod in her fingers and waves it at me. "Do you want to try my favorite dark roast?"

I grunt my acceptance.

"Sugar and creamer?" she questions.

"Yes."

"Tell me exactly how you like your coffee."

I sigh with resignation and let her know I like one scoop of sugar and a splash of creamer. Soon we each have a steaming mug of coffee. She sits at the table for a moment and takes Bran in her arms, smiles at me and sips her steaming drink.

I sip at this special coffee too, learning that it's actually more delicious than anything else I've ever tasted. Not that I'd admit this to her. "You drink black coffee?" I question.

"Yeah, I'm weird that way. How about pancakes? I saw pancake mix and syrup earlier in your cupboard."

"That's my favorite breakfast," I agree.

She smiles again, places Bran in a nearby bouncer and soon my Bride is up and fixing breakfast.

I should complain. Say no. Stop her from performing this loving task between mates. But I can't. Even if this is pretend, I find I want it.

She chats with me while cooking, telling me stories about the babies' delivery. About how my sons rejected the arms of their Nanny and her best friend she says is named Amelia. And I look down at my sons who have been content in my arms and smile.

“...I carried them like a normal pregnancy, and in fact it wasn’t such a bad time. At least I was able to have a fast delivery without even the need for painkillers or a C-section. Both babies were perfectly healthy. The worst part was going back home with them because caring for two orc twins is exhausting. My best friend, Amelia, was there with me the first week. That woman is a saint. And when she had to return home to her own family, I cried.”

All I can think is that she should never have left and how I missed out on the birth of my own sons. But I’ve said this obvious statement already, so I remain silent because I have nothing new to add.

She pours circles of batter onto a sizzling grill then turns to me. “This is nice,” she says. “We never talked before. Didn’t have a chance to get to know each other the last time...”

“Because you left,” I point out.

She exhales and turns back to the pancakes. “But I’m here now,” she says over her shoulder. “And there’s plenty of time for a do over.”

Soon Drew sits next to me. She places a plate of steaming pancakes, butter and syrup between us. She cuts a piece and pierces it with her fork and leans forward to offer the food to me.

I take the bite and chew and swallow. And suddenly that constant need to toss her onto the bed in the bedroom becomes overwhelming.

She gasps at the heat in my gaze. “Oh my.”

“Drew,” I rasp, taking the fork from her small hand. “Don’t start something you aren’t prepared to follow through with.”

“I’m staying,” she affirms. “I know you don’t believe my words, but I plan on showing you with my actions.”

Then she stands and fixes another plate for herself and places it on the table. She takes Owen from me and I reach down toward the bouncer and take Bran back into my own arms. Soon we both have a happy baby on our lap and are quietly eating.

Chapter 7

Whelan

After I finish my meal, scraping every last bit of food off my plate, that somehow tastes more amazing because she made it, I place Owen in a bouncer and stand up to tidy the kitchen and separate the trash from recyclables.

“Oh, you don’t have to do that,” my female exclaims. “I was about to clean.”

I give her a sharp glance. “No, remain seated. I will clean. Females at our commune sit and relax with our offspring. I am grateful you offered to cook, therefore I will always clean afterwards. This is the way in our commune.”

“Oh. Okay...Are you saying that orc males always do the cleaning?”

“Yes.”

“The laundry, the sweeping, the bathroom cleaning...?”

“All of it,” I confirm.

She sits and watches me with mouth agape.

AFTERWARDS WE END up in the nursery together because the babies look sleepy.

My female shows me what she brought with her from her home in California or purchased just prior to arriving at the commune. Most of it appears superfluous, similar to the appearance of that over-the-top coffee maker. But I do appreciate that my sons have all the clothing they could possibly require, in fact she’s even purchased clothing for them for when they grow older, at six months and nine months. “You’re a good planner,” I tell

her. “And you’ve taken good care of our sons, even while living amongst humans.”

Her cheeks flush with color. And I want to pull her into my arms, but I refrain. Because I still can’t trust her.

She stands next to the crib I crafted, running her delicate hand along the polished pine. “I heard that you made this crib yourself, by hand.”

“I did.”

“It’s nice...”

“Thank you.”

I notice then that Owen and Bran are turning restless. “They need to be fed again,” I announce.

“Already? How do you know?”

“Orc fathers and sons have a special bond. I can sense their needs easily. They are going to be very hungry at first because they are in fact small for their age and need refeeding.”

“I’m not sure if I’m ready to go again because I just expressed...”

“We’ll use bottles of breast milk.”

“I’m not sure they’ll take it.”

“They will.” I stomp into the front room with both of my sons in my arms and my female follows behind closely. She cuts in front of me and opens the fridge and takes out two bottles. Then we both sit side by side on the couch in the front room. I take Owen and she takes Bran. And they each easily take a bottle from our hands and noisily begin to feed.

“Oh my gosh, they’ve never drank a bottle from my hand, they always refused. It’s nice knowing I can take a break sometimes or that others can feed them too, not just me.” She looks at me with watery eyes. “You have no idea what an upgrade this is.”

I glance down, trying to hide my smile. I can’t help but be pleased at the thought of her life being easier. Even if she is most likely still planning her exit. “We will soon need to revert to reusable diapers,” I let her know. “Orcs don’t use human disposable diapers. They create too much waste.”

“Are you kidding me?”

“No.”

“How do you know all of this?”

“I tended to my brother often when he was a baby. And I’ve tended to many other babies. There was a baby I fostered for a few months before its father was found at the commune in Siberia. I’m good with babies.”

She grins. "They give the babies to the wildest orc on the commune?"

"I might appear fierce, but I have a soft heart for infants. All orcs feel this way."

"And I hope orcs like Halloween as much as they like babies. Do they trick or treat around here?"

"No, that is a strange human tradition that we do not yet participate in."

"That's too bad. It's fun."

We're both quiet for a moment.

"Do you have to go to work today?" Drew questions.

"No. I am here, bonding with my sons. Rogan and the others are giving us alone time."

"You're bonding with *only* your sons?" she smirks. "What about me too?"

And that's when I realize she's so close to me while she feeds our son that our hips and legs are pressed together. A grumble erupts in my chest.

She glances out the window. "I'm surprised no one has entered the cabin. There were a lot of orcs hovering around me when I first arrived, and it's been so quiet."

"They see that you remain unharmed and chose to sleep next to me. And you haven't left yet. I also took my sons outside this morning to meet with their family again."

"Oh, you went out with the boys to talk to Rogan, Urdan and Kelt this morning while I slept? You should've invited them inside. I could've made breakfast for them too."

"You know my father and the others?"

"Of course, I do. I met them when I first arrived yesterday. I'm happy I was able to meet the babies' grandfather and your best friend and Urdan. They weren't going to let me in at first because they thought you'd be dangerous for me, but I told them I understood and accepted the risk and still wanted inside. Also, I wasn't leaving my babies behind. That was nonnegotiable."

"That wasn't a good idea. They were right. I could have hurt you. You were lucky I picked up the scent of our sons first and calmed slightly. What if I'd first stormed to the bedroom?"

She meets my gaze. "I was certain you wouldn't hurt me."

I shake my head at this foolish statement. "Human, I'm a wild orc. I'm the tallest, largest male on the commune with the sharpest horns. I live in this

private wooded corner of the commune because my appearance often scares the other females. My primitive urges are right there, under the surface.”

“I still knew it would be okay.” She snuggles deeper into my side. “You know, one of the first questions they asked me when I arrived was if I was basically disgusted or happy to have given birth to orc babies, which I thought was a weird question.”

I nod. “We always ask this because it is common for humans to be horrified to have given birth to infants they consider monsters. It lets us know if this is a quick handover and how to proceed.”

She lets out a squeak of dismay. “It happens all the time?”

“Yes, it does. But I sense your love for our sons,” I tell her. “Your bond with them is strong and I also sense they deeply love you in return.”

“They do? Oh my babies,” she croons. “I love them both so much.” Then she rests her cheek on my shoulder, adjusts the baby in her arms, tilts the bottle higher, and keeps talking. “I told Rogan and the others that I wanted to stay at the commune. I can’t leave Bran and Owen behind. I know you don’t truly believe me, but these are my sons. Yes, I had an epic one-night stand with a scary orc and found out later my birth control didn’t work. But I decided, after careful thought, that I was financially and emotionally ready and could do this alone. Sorry, but I wasn’t ready for an orc who might kidnap me as my husband.”

I sit in silence, frowning, amazed at her ability to keep up her fake story of how I threatened to kidnap her. I’d never do such a thing. And every time she reminds me of this falsehood, I’m thrown back into remembering this gorgeous female who emanates thick arousal for me and obviously loves my sons—isn’t trustworthy. Which hurts. How is it possible for this human to claim I threatened to kidnap her, which caused her to run from me and keep my infants from me at first. How can she want me as a husband at the same time? Humans make no sense.

She yawns. “Sorry, I’m babbling I’m just tired. I’ve barely slept for the last three months. That flight across the country with screaming babies is still giving me PTSD. And then there was the drive up here to the commune. And I’m still dealing with the time change.”

Her chin hits her chest and the bottle starts to fall from her fingers, which is fine because Bran is done.

I stand up carefully and rearrange both babies into her arms. All three of them are sleepy, recovering from their exhausting trial—living amongst

humans.

Then I take the bottles into the kitchen and soak them, then return and scoop my little family into my arms. I carry all three of them at once down the hallway to the primary bedroom. I frown because the bed isn't made. I'll have to remember to take care of this later.

My female yawns and stretches as I place her onto the bed and cover her with a blanket. I can't help but stare at her sleek legs and the curve of her generous breasts under shirt. She buries her cheek into my pillow, inhales and falls quickly asleep.

I carry Bran and Owen both back to the nursery and wrap them up and place them gently into their individual cribs for a nap.

Then I walk back into the doorway of the bedroom and watch my luscious female sleep. I could easily slip into the bed and take her now—she'd be eager and ready. The scent of her arousal is wreaking havoc on my body and all I want it to shove my fingers between her thighs to check how wet she is for me.

But I turn, cross my arms and stomp out to the front room.

Because I will not touch a female I cannot trust.

Ever again.

Chapter 8

Drew

That night I make a quick dinner for the two of us.

Whelan starts a crackling fire in the stone fireplace, pulling from a stack of logs on the front porch that I suspect he cuts himself.

I drill Whelan with more questions about his life because I can't seem to shut up. A good night's sleep and a terrific nap earlier have turned me both bright and cheerful. I haven't felt this good in a long time. And I want to know everything about this orc who is the father of my babies because understanding him makes *me* understand my boys better.

And I really do enjoy the idea of cooking again for the both of us, especially since I'm able to start fresh with a sparkling clean kitchen. I'm the type who likes to cook meals for myself rather than grab take out. I've tried to invite dates over to my home for dinner, but they usually want to go to the latest LA restaurant instead. There's nothing wrong with a fancy restaurant, of course, but I love quieter nights at home plating food for others and watching their reaction to the yummy food I made specifically for them.

I cut Whelan another glance because I can't keep my eyes off him. If I'm going to cook and he's going to always do the cleaning, then sign me up. This male is amazing. He's huge, powerful and intimidating and yet generous, loving and protective at the same time.

I'm beginning to wish this orc was my actual husband. Strange, but true.

He's handsome in a proud, rough-hewn, edgy way. Whelan stomps over and calmly sits at the small kitchen table, barefoot and bare chested because he said his blood runs warmer than mine. His hands and feet are huge, as are the hard muscles on both arms. His nose is large and crooked but regal. His neck is thick and his lips plush. And I wish I could crawl onto his lap and

plant kisses all over that warm green skin.

Both babies are nearby in bouncers and grip a tiny rattle in each hand, smiling and drooling. I love their matching blue outfits and their little starter horns. So damn cute. They both had tummy time earlier on blankets with their daddy at their side and I thought I'd faint from the adorableness.

I really like this wild orc with the large horns and flashing tusks. The male I originally found at a hotel bar is easy to talk to. I enjoy caring for our babies together. Not only is Whelan sexier than I remember but I haven't found anything about him yet that's a red flag. I've met his father and two of his friends, slept in his bed and snooped in all his drawers and cabinets. It's only been twenty-four hours, but he seems an open book with nothing to hide.

I'm still wearing super short shorts under my long cardigan and no bra under my thin t-shirt. And I've managed to appear half naked in front of him at least five different times since I arrived.

Because a girl's gotta try.

"I was told you'd gone, hunting?" I ask as turn up the heat on the gas stove because the pot of water is close to boiling. "Does this mean that's your job? Are you a hunter for the commune?"

"I'm a decent hunter but that's not my main job. I sit on the council and usually settle disputes between orcs according to our laws."

"You're an orc lawyer?"

"There isn't such a thing within my culture. But I've become well known over the years in my dedication to learning orc law, most of which is recorded on pictographs and passed down through oral tradition. My cousin Alden helped to invent a written language for orcs which I've also learned and now I want to write down our common law. I've barely started on this project, but it is my goal."

I look over at him, impressed. "That's a great project. I'd like to help too, in any way I can."

He snorts, not believing I'll be around long enough to help him with anything.

I pour a box of pasta into the pot of boiling water. "I haven't seen any guns or weapons here in the cabin. What do you use to hunt?"

"Orcs aren't allowed permits to carry guns. We are already considered deadly weapons."

"Don't you need rifles to hunt?"

“No. Only weak human males use guns to take down their prey. I hunt with my bare claws or with weapons I create at the commune, in the ways of old. There are a team of hunters who work daily, bringing in fresh meat and we eat what we hunt. Human food is purchased from the local grocery store an hour away, but orcs who live in communes enjoy fresh wild game to retain optimal health.”

“Is it okay that I’m making this pasta? It was next to the pancake mix and syrup I used earlier. The package was dusty and it’s close to expiring but it was in the cabinet along with that jar of spaghetti sauce...”

“No, of course that’s something we can eat. It’s there in case...”

“In case, what?”

“In case I ever had a female.”

I smile wide. “And now you do.”

He shakes his head. “I mainly eat at the communal fires with the single orcs. Mated orcs and their families join us sometimes, but they like to eat together at their own hearths.”

“So single orcs eat together the wild game that’s grilled and males with human wives who like to cook for them eat their meals, that include a lot more human food, together with their children in their cabins?”

“Yes, and they are considered lucky. We don’t want to intrude on their bonding time at meals.”

“Oh, that’s sweet.” I pause to pour spaghetti sauce into another pot, then turn to smile at him. “I think it’s good that we’re talking like this. We have children together, but we were still strangers who didn’t know each other. This is another reason why I wasn’t certain about you that night, because I didn’t know you.”

“I was always certain about you,” he grumbles.

I grab some plates and start setting the table. “You know, I think the problem is that you are used to having family you can count on. You need to know that I’m a very independent person. I’ve had to take care of myself. I never knew my mom. My dad took care of me but always seemed annoyed to have to pay to keep a roof over my head, like he got the bad end of the deal. I moved out and left for college as soon as I was old enough and never looked back. I’ve had a zillion jobs, slept on friends’ couches too many times to count. Working hard and being able to take care of myself is important to me because I learned long ago that no one is going to take care of me but me. Do you see how the idea of starting something with you was scary? I’ve never

had a real boyfriend, just a lot of serial dating.”

He crooks an eyebrow at me.

“I didn’t know if I could count on you. It just seemed smarter to do it all myself.”

“Because you always had to do everything yourself?”

“Basically.”

“That ends today,” he says.

“What ends today?”

“Even if you don’t choose to stay, you are not caring for the twins alone. I am their father. I am in fact their main caregiver—this is according to orc law.”

I place my hands on my hips. “Whelan, I flew across the country for you with my babies. You might be their main caregiver according to orc law but I carried those babies for nine months and delivered them and I’ve been breastfeeding them ever since. Never forget that I’m their mother.”

He narrows his eyes at me. “I also wonder if a female from the other side of the country can really live here for the rest of her life. Many males have moved out to live amongst the humans in their cities but that is not me. I go to the nearby town and buy groceries. Humans there know me, but still scream in fear. My father is the leader of our tribe, and it is expected that as his son I will one day also lead our tribe. This means I will also be the main contact with the tribe and the human government. Rogan sent me out on my first mission without him. I had to go out and speak for my tribe and be the representative.”

“This is why you were staying at the hotel?”

“Yes. And did you end up at that hotel bar in Maine if you live in California?”

I turn and stir the pasta and then the sauce, noting that it’s almost ready. “It all started when my best friend, Amelia, invited me to a writer’s retreat on the other side of the country. We’re both full-time professional authors who write thrillers for a living.”

“You tell stories for a living through published books?”

Pride warms my chest. “I do. And I make a good living too with a large readership. This last year Amelia talked me into going to a retreat with her in Maine, of all places. The retreat was wonderful, with five published authors staying too at the same hotel. I mean I got a whole book partially written. Then it ended and everyone left for home. But I stayed one extra night,

waiting to catch my flight back home the next morning. I decided to go to the hotel bar that night. I'm not a hang-out-at-a-bar-and-pick-up-guys kind of girl, but I was still high off all that 'peopling' and wasn't ready for it to end. So I got all dressed up, slinked downstairs and sat at the bar, perched on a seat with a drink in my hand. And a huge, sexy Orc with tall twisty horns, long hair and an unbuttoned plaid shirt sat next to me. And the rest is history."

I twist around to strain the pasta in the sink and see that he's staring at me intently. "I think you wanted to go to the bar because you scented me faintly in that hotel. I never go into human bars either, I think I scented you too."

I start plating our food. "I think you might be right."

"I am."

"Hey, I moved across the country for you. That wasn't easy. I left civilization, fully intent on living on this commune with you and our sons. I'm here to give this a real chance. I guess I just wasn't ready to do that when we first met. I'm a self-employed professional author and running my own business. I couldn't just hook up with a stranger and relocate. I have a mortgage. A car. A house full of furniture. I had to rearrange deadlines and let my readers, my assistant and my editors know I'm on another break. It's a whole thing. I figured if this all went bad and you didn't want me, at the very least we could have custody of the boys fifty-fifty. I could do my best to live in a town that is reasonably close to the commune, while still having civilization, so that they could spend time with you during all their school holidays and summer breaks."

He's holding my hand, lost in thought and rubbing my skin with his thumb. "You've thought this through."

"Yes. I really believe I can continue my work here. Since you have satellite internet all I need to continue my work here is for us to squeeze a small desk into a corner of our bedroom and I'm good."

He looks down at our joined hands, frowns and let's go of me. "A human used to living in large mega cities cannot suddenly enjoy life on an orc commune."

"That's where you're wrong. I bet lots of the women who live here now used to live in big cities. And now they're perfectly happy." I twirl some spaghetti onto my fork, lean forward and offer it to him.

"No." Whelan meets my gaze. "No, Drew." He quietly finishes all his pasta in record time, wipes his face clean with a cloth napkin and stands.

Then he unclicks both of our sons from their bouncers and carries them away, leaving me alone at the table. “I’ll clean it all up later,” he growls over his shoulder.

“Ugh,” I groan, propping my chin in my hands.

TEN MINUTES later I rejoin my husband and babies in the nursery. “Let me help.”

He looks over his shoulder and gives a curt nod.

I take the comfy chair in the corner and start breastfeeding Owen while Whelan changes Bran’s diaper and then puts our other son in his pajamas. I can’t help but be happy and at peace, having all my guys here with me. The babies are thriving and happy to be with their father. Coming to the commune was certainly the right decision. I just wish Whelan would let me in further and stop pushing me away. I understand all his reasons but that doesn’t make them any easier.

I look down at my son’s tiny green hand against my chest and the smooth skin of his precious face. Gorgeous. He bites on my nipple in his eagerness to get his fill and I shift him to a better position. Then I glance up at Whelan’s wide back. “I wish you were there for their birth,” I say with complete honesty.

“I wish I’d been there too.”

“No, really. I’m sad you weren’t there.”

“Yes.” Then he turns around and marches over with Bran in his arms. “Tell me female,” he demands, “why do you want to stay here with me?”

“Because I want what’s best for the babies. They weren’t doing well on the outside and I learned they needed you. And...and I need you too. I’ve already said this before. I told you I’m here to try and make this work.”

“Try,” he mutters.

“I know you hate it when I say that word...” I pause to pluck Owen off my breast because he’s finished. I reach up and carefully hand him off to Whelan. In exchange he gives me Bran who I put against my other breast so my other boy can get his fill. Then I lean back in the chair again. “But that’s what we’re doing,” I say as Whelan strides away with Owen in his arms. “We’re *trying* to make this work between us.”

“Orcs don’t try to remain with their Brides. We are physically mated. Your commitment isn’t at the same level as mine.”

Ouch. “Well...” I toss my hair over my shoulder. “I’m actually not certain yet of your commitment either.”

He snorts with disbelief and looks over at me from the changing table. “I called you my Bride that first night when I took you. I gave you my seed countless times until I passed out. You know of my commitment.”

“No. I don’t. I know of your commitment to the boys. But as far as I know you’re just waiting for me to leave so you can finally be alone with them. I think you only want me as a way to breed more sons. You don’t want me, you just want more offspring.”

He fully turns with a look of shock on his harsh features. “You really believe that nonsense?”

Oh, damn. “Maybe,” I grumble. *No, not really. I don’t believe it at all.*

He shakes his head and doesn’t say anything else to me, probably wondering if I’ve lost my mind. I mean, maybe I have? This man has no idea how much I want him, all of him and maybe I am going a bit insane at his constant rejection. He smells so good and he’s so close, but unobtainable.

Eventually Bran finishes feeding too. I kiss both my twins goodnight. Whelan puts both our bundled babies into their cribs and turns on their soothing mobiles. We both quietly step out of the nursery and he closes the door behind us.

Now we’re together in the hall, so very close. The top of my head barely reaches his shoulders and I’m staring hard at his green muscled chest and corded neck. He’s gazing down at me with dark lust and I can feel the heat radiating from his body.

I take a step closer and put my hand on the hot skin of his bare chest.

He reaches down and places a warm, heavy hand on the back of my neck. “Your arousal is causing you agitation because you require relief?”

“Yes,” I whimper. “That’s exactly the problem.”

He lowers his head and captures my lips and I’m in heaven. I sigh with delight. Maybe he’s intent on bringing me relief? We haven’t kissed in a year and it’s still as wonderful as I remember. I love the scrape of his large teeth and the boundaries of those tusks. He tastes amazing. Whelan groans and deepens the kiss.

I reach up and dig my fingers into his fabulous hair and rub myself against that amazing erection.

His lips and tusks leave a hot trail down my neck. His other hand moves to my waist, so very close to my breast. A growl rumbles in his chest and he

breaks off the kiss. “No,” he pants.

“No?”

“It is normally my job to make sure you are always pleased but I will only fuck you again when I am certain of your commitment.”

“Whelan, I’m staying. I’ve moved here with the babies. How many times do I have to say this?”

He leans in and hisses, “It’s not only that. You kept my sons from me for a whole year. I missed their birth.”

Anger courses through my veins. “Yes, you are the father and you deserved for me to tell you. But I’m not simply a body for you to breed and an oven for you to grow offspring. I’m a person with actual feelings. I had to think everything through, alone, without you there to talk me into anything I didn’t want. I knew I immediately wanted to keep the babies, so there was that. Then everything else grew from there. And it’s not like I’ve kept your babies secret from you for the last decade. They are only three months old. We can make up for time lost. I’m here Whelan. I’m here...”

Then he growls and pushes back. “I cannot live a life where you show up occasionally to check in on your sons, have sex with me and then leave to return to your real human husband and offspring, back in the human world. It isn’t fair to me or our orc sons,” he thunders.

I suck in a sharp breath. “Now you’re the one who believes in nonsense,” I challenge. “I only want you Whelan. Just you.”

“You say that now, but what about a year from now? Two years from now? Other females have done that to our orcs. They beg at the gates to be let back in just for a night and are turned away.”

“You need to stop blaming me for the mistakes of other women. I am ready to commit to you, Whelan. Ready and waiting.”

He puts his hands on my shoulders and gently pushes me back, drops his own hands and steps away. “Drew, I cannot trust you, therefore I will not touch you.”

And then he turns his back on me and he’s gone.

Chapter 9

Drew

Two days later we're still at a stalemate.

We are friendly and get along great, but he's not even sleeping in the same bed at night with me. He squeezes his huge body on the too-small couch in the front room because apparently, it's the only way he won't end up fucking me, which he refuses to let happen.

Meanwhile, I might verbally respect Whelan's boundaries, but I can't seem to help my insistent arousal. Every time I pass too close to him in the hall, or whenever I'm alone in the bedroom or the shower all I can think of is how much I want his cock in my mouth. My clit throbs for his attention. My vagina weeps for him. I literally can't help myself from trying to entice this amazing male to have hot sex with me. And he continues to reject me, despite his semi-permanent erection, which I assume is painful since he's often grabbing it through his pants, trying to adjust it.

I want nothing more than to help him with that, but I'm not allowed. I can see the outline of his long cock under this towel after his showers and it's epic. I'm constantly reminded of why I fell into bed with him in the first place. Every time Bran and Owen go down for a nap, I wish we could scurry off to bed together. But he considers me untrustworthy and my motives problematic.

Meanwhile, the more I get to know Whelan Overlook, the more I like him.

It's crazy but I've felt very comfortable around Whelan from the first moment he arrived at the cabin. I breastfeed and pump in front of him, like it's nothing. In a short amount of time, we've fallen into a caring-for-the-babies-together routine that feels right. It's comfortable. He lets me sleep in

every morning and makes sure I take a nap in the afternoons. I feel like I've caught up on all my missed sleep. I look at myself in the mirror and the circles under my eyes are fading.

He really does do all the cleaning and I do the cooking. Our life here at the commune with our boys is cozy. I want to be in his arms. I want to be able to snuggle next to Whelan and entwine my legs with his. I love cooking for him and wish he'd let me feed him by hand because it's so loving.

The thought of packing up to leave without my boys or my orc makes me want to cry. I look back at the first three months in California without him and wonder how I even managed.

I'm about ready to set up a desk in a corner of the bedroom so I can open my MacBook and get back to work from his cabin.

That's when you know I'm serious.

I should continue to be angry that he doesn't believe that he growled at me in his sleep and said he wanted to kidnap me, which was my whole reason for initially running away. But I'm distracted because it's obvious Whelan is head over heels for me, it's just there under the surface. The way he looks at me, the way he can't help but reach out and brush his rough fingers against my cheek at least once a day and the way he eagerly watches me nurse the babies. He sleeps on the couch, but I know that won't last long. He's got it bad.

I'm patient. He'll finally see reason.

The good news is that we've stopped arguing. I've said everything that's to be said about the subject and I suppose he has too. Now I concentrate on showing him that even though I initially left—for very a good reason—I now want nothing more than to live with him here in this commune. I want to raise our family together and make a life here with him.

One day, he'll crack and realize this is right. And I'll be there with open arms.

"You know tonight is Halloween?" I say from the floor next to Bran, trying to start another conversation with my brooding orc husband.

Whelan sits against the couch with Owen propped on his thighs, making funny sounds that makes our baby gurgle with delight. "Yes, I heard," he comments.

"Are you going to dress up in costume?"

"I don't need to dress up for this strange human tradition, considering I already appear monstrous to humans."

This response breaks my heart. “I’d like to have a chance to show you that it can be fun, even for orcs. Don’t you celebrate it at all?”

He shrugs. “No, but I am willing to accommodate my Bri—” he cuts himself off and goes silent.

“Your...what?” Was he about to call me his Bride?

“Nothing,” he responds with a gruff voice, avoiding eye contact.

Heh. “No one is mentioning Halloween around here, which is troubling. I haven’t seen any carved pumpkins or mention of trick or treating. My condo got lots of kids trick or treating, which I always loved. It was fun dressing up, decorating the front of my doorstep and passing out mountains of candy. The best part was seeing the children’s costumes was telling them how much I loved what they were dressed up as and watching them beam at the praise.”

He grunts. “I can see how that could be enjoyable.”

“If I have to give up Halloween to stay with you, then I can. But if I can get you to try it out, even just a little and meet me halfway, I’d be forever grateful.”

He nods in acceptance.

A secret smile widens across my face.

A FEW HOURS later a shirtless Whelan is chopping wood outside with his hair tied into a sexy man bun.

The sun starts to lower in the sky and I take the opportunity to dress up both babies in their cute pumpkin outfits. I have a great time getting them ready and take lots of pictures to send to Amelia. By the time Whelan returns, looking sexy and sweaty, I’m posing on the couch, wearing a witch hat and both babies are propped in their bouncers in their orange costumes kicking their feet with excitement.

“What is this?” he exclaims.

“Surprise! Come on, you have to admit they’re adorable.”

He chuckles. “Yes, they are.”

“Halloween doesn’t have to be about anything scary if you don’t want. It can just be dress up and candies. Or, it can be about making scary things, not so scary anymore.”

He bends down to examine each costume and he even touches the brim of my hat and smiles.

“Can we order pizza?” I question. “It’s something I like to eat on

Halloween night. If we're not going to have trick or treaters at least we can eat pizza and candy."

"I'm never eaten pizza."

"What?" I gasp. "This is a travesty I will correct immediately. First, can you hold Bran and Owen so I can take a picture of the three of you?"

"Let me take a fast shower."

While he's gone, I order pizza from the nearest town, which is an hour away.

Whelan returns in his normal outfit of unbuttoned plaid shirt, dark pants and boots. His hair is damp and around his shoulders. I can't get enough of this powerful orc striding through doorways with barely enough head clearance for his sharp horns.

I take a whole series of pictures of the two pumpkin-orc babies in his lap. He takes pictures of me with the babies. And then we're all four sitting together on the couch and I manage a quick selfie of all of us.

"How about some Halloween candy?" I dump my giant bag of every fun size candy imaginable into several bowls on the table. There's so much it spills out and simply covers the tabletop.

"Crazy," Whelan chuckles as he reaches for a Kit Kat.

I turn on a spooky movie on Netflix for some background Halloween atmosphere. And we stuff our faces with too much chocolate and each give a baby a bottle of breast milk. Eventually the sun has set and it's dark outside. Urdan and Kelt arrive on a golf cart with the pizzas. Luckily I ordered a huge stack of large pizzas, as well as many liters of soda, so I'm able to offer them some too.

Kelt laughs so hard at me in my witch hat and the babies in pumpkin outfits. "Maybe Halloween isn't so bad," he admits.

"It's fun!"

Another golf cart arrives. Whelan walks out front, proudly holding both babies and greets our guests. I'm tearing up because Rogan has arrived and he's brought Miranda and Whelan's brother Even with him—to meet Bran and Owen, but also to meet me.

I meet Rogan's gaze and he winks at me and nods.

I'm quickly introduced to Miranda who is fifteen years older than me. She's tiny and petite, blond with blue eyes and has a darling hint of a southern accent. We talk for a short time and start exchanging names of our favorite authors and book recs, confirming we're like people and instant

friends.

“Thank you for being so bold and kicking off Halloween,” she whispers. “There are some of us here who miss it a lot but didn’t want to push it. We’ve already been battling to get a nondenominational Christmas, Easter, et cetera from our mates. You should’ve seen the commotion over Thanksgiving. Plus, there are a few orc festivals you’ll learn about that are fun. I guess Halloween was down on the list after all of that,” she chuckles. “But I think we’re ready to upgrade.”

Suddenly a young orc boy is in front of me. “Are you really staying or are you just visiting?” he questions.

“Don’t be so rude,” Miranda gasps. “Sorry, Drew, this is my son Even, who can be a little forward sometimes.” She gives me a quick glance and responds. “Of course she’s staying. That’s why we’re meeting her.”

Suddenly the voices around me still. I look around and see Whelan, Rogan, Urdan and Kelt staring at me too, waiting for an answer. Jeez. Orcs must have serious generational PTSD from being left behind by human women. “Yes, I’m staying,” I confirm for everyone’s benefit. “I like it here.” I turn and look right at Even. “And I’m hoping that you and I can become friends.”

“Are you going to be my aunt?”

“No, I’m...I’m going to be your sister-in-law.” I’m even shocked, thinking about this. By staying here I’m essentially marrying Whelan. I glance over at him. Are we married already?

He looks away to answer a question posed by Urdan.

“I want to try out Halloween, but I didn’t wear a costume tonight because I don’t have one,” Even tells me.

“I’m already in costume,” Whelan quips.

“No worries,” I say to the boy. “This year is just a starter Halloween. Next year we can do it for reals and then you’ll be ready.”

I invite everyone inside for pizza and candy. The orcs are immediately smitten with the food I offer.

I stand next to Whelan as he tentatively tries his very first bite of pizza. He chews and swallows and then a huge smile brightens his features. “This is amazing,” he shouts.

Soon Rogan is on the couch, holding Bran in his arms, and Whelan in on the couch with Owen in his arms and Even sits between them. I take pictures because it’s a wonderful scene. Whelan and Rogan both beam with pride. It’s

adorable. Family really does mean a lot to these orcs.

Miranda pulls me into the kitchen. “Listen. Now that you’ve told Whelan verbally you’re his Bride and you’ve told Rogan, the leader of the commune the same, and you’ve given birth to two sons—this gives you status here. You might not know this, but this cabin is yours now.”

“What?”

“Yes,” she laughs. “In reality, you could kick Whelan out at any time and he’d have to build a new cabin to live in on the other side of the commune. He stays here at your pleasure. He built this for you and your sons.”

“Oh, I like that.”

“Yes. Don’t think of living here as a place where women are treated as less than and we lose all our rights. That’s not true at all. I mean it is an orc society and there are much less of us than them, but we are important.”

“What about everything I own on the outside? I have a business that I can run from here and want to continue. How is that going to work?”

She winks at me. “I have a great accountant that knows all the legality of merging orc and human financial law. I’ll give you her contact info.”

“Thank you.”

Miranda gets pulled away by Rogan and Even to watch a scary movie on the TV. I turn around and spy Whelan sitting on the couch, eating yet another slice of pizza. Urdan and Kelt sit nearby, each holding a baby, complaining of being full. I laugh because I have a feeling we’re going to order pizza often.

And that’s when it hits me hard why I want so very much to stay at this commune. It’s not just that my attraction to Whelan is off the chart. Yes, Bran and Owen need to live here with him and I’m not leaving them. But I enjoy Whelan’s family. And I know he’ll continue to take such good care of our boys and any others we might have. He’ll never cheat on me or leave me. If I take him on, he’ll be mine, forever.

I love him.

Oh my gosh, I’ve fallen in love with the father of my babies. And it’s crazy how quick it happened.

Chapter 10

Whelan

Drew watches me from the kitchen.

I pause and look at her too. She has no idea how beautiful she looks with that funny hat on her head. Love shines bright in her sparkling blue eyes as she gazes at me. What is this? I've witnessed lust and arousal on her features, friendship and caring in her gaze, but this is a first.

My female loves me?

Love?

I feel as if struck by lightning.

Drew gives me a secret smile and I watch as she moves and sits down beside Miranda. The two females have become fast friends. My Bride appears comfortable in our small cabin with Kelt, Urdan, my father, and my brother crowding the space. She thought nothing of inviting them all inside and sharing our food with them. Warmth flares in my chest at my animated female, surrounded by the beings I care most about in the world. She fits here perfectly.

My Bride is a human without family. She tried to tell me this, but I wasn't properly listening. Her best friend lived across the country and lots of the humans she was friendly with were on the internet, but no one lived close. Community was what she craved all along.

And it's obvious she isn't afraid of orcs or holds any resentment towards my species. In fact I think she finds orcs fascinating and enjoys learning more about our culture and customs. And she truly loves our offspring and I suspect if she were pregnant again with another son, she'd be thrilled to expand our family.

Images flash in my mind of the both of us in bed naked at the hotel. I'd

finished in her for the last time and held her tight. The crush of her breasts against my chest and her soft legs between mine were intoxicating, as well as the knowledge that she was covered in my scent. I'd found my Bride and wasn't letting go. And I remember getting hotter and more and more agitated. Growls rumbled in my chest and I held her tighter—too tight—becoming fearful that I'd lose this amazing female. I'd given her my seed and I knew my son was growing in her womb that very moment and instincts kicked in hard. Suddenly I see it so clearly. I did begin a half-awake litany of how I'd kidnap her, toss her in my truck and drive her to the commune and keep her locked away in my cabin until she chose to stay. It had seemed the only way. Then I must've passed out and not remembered any of that until now.

Dammit. I did scare her and push her away. I did. I'm a wild orc with primitive instincts barely restrained, of course I threatened to kidnap her when I was half asleep and under the influence of the initial rush of her pheromones. It's all my fault she felt compelled to leave and I've been blaming her solely for our separation. I'm lucky she's been this patient with me and didn't kick me out of the cabin three days ago.

I let out a roar of frustration.

Drew glances my way from across the room and her brow furrows. "Whelan, what's wrong?"

I blink. "Father, I need to be alone with my Bride. I have suddenly realized I made a monumental error and I need to fix it right away."

He chuckles. "Finally. It's about time." He stands and motions for his Bride and they start talking and make plans.

Urdan shuts off the TV. "We're leaving," he announces.

Kelt turns off the music.

"But I want more candy," Even whines.

Rogan and Miranda take the babies from a confused Drew. "What's happening?"

I walk toward my female on the way to the kitchen. "Go and pack a bag for the twins, they're leaving for a few nights."

"Why?"

"Do it," I order.

"Jeez, what's wrong with him?" I hear Drew question from behind me as I march over to the fridge and begin packing a cooler with bottles of breast milk. I will need a few days alone with her to get this all out. The babies have to go and will need their supplies while I am busy pleasuring their mother.

It's takes longer than I'd like, but soon everyone is out in front of the cabin, loading into the carts. Bags of baby supplies are piled in the back of each cart as well as a folded mobile crib. Bran is carried by Miranda in one cart and Kelt and Urdan follow behind with Owen. Even is now content with a large bag of candy in his arms. They pull away and wave goodbye.

And then we are alone.

Drew stamps a foot on the ground in frustration. "What is this all about? Why are the boys staying with your father and Miranda? What was so important that we had to end Halloween early?"

I grab both of her hands and look deep into her eyes. "I've realized that you were right. I did threaten to kidnap you. I was half awake and losing my mind and I would never have carried out those plans, but you didn't know that. I can see why you left. You felt you needed to leave to remain safe from me."

She squeezes my hands. "You finally remember?"

"I do, and I'm sorry I didn't believe you. That was wrong but it was hard for me to believe I would do such a thing, but I did. Again, I am sorry that I behaved that way. It was never my intention."

"And remember, Whelan, it wasn't my intention to take the boys from you. I thought my birth control was going to work. I thought we were having a human one-night stand. I want to apologize to you again for putting you through all that heartache, not knowing what was happening to Bran and Owen for a whole year. That night with you was important to me, but..."

I lift one of her hands and give it a kiss. "It is over now. I will leave it behind and I hope you will too. I thought that night was the best night of my life. That's what I'm going to focus on. I lost my virginity that night. I fell in love. And I started my sons with the woman I love."

"You fell in love? Oh, Whelan. I love you too. I love you so much. I wasn't ready at first for any of that commitment to a stranger and it took time for me to come around. My commitment to you was slow to build but now that it's there, it's rock solid. You've got me, forever. Earlier tonight I was thinking to myself that I'd like to ask you to be my husband."

"I would be honored to be your husband, Drew. Will you stay with me at the commune, living with me at my hearth as Drew Overlook, raising our sons together?"

"Yes."

I sweep her into my arms and carry her inside our cabin, to our bedroom.

I pluck off her witch hat and start stripping out of my own clothes. “I will take care of your needs,” I inform her, because the scent of her arousal is so very strong.

Soon I’m entirely naked. I look up and see that she’s been watching me with rapt attention, her gaze seeming focused on my shaft. I reach down and stroke my thick, leaking cock so she can see what I have ready for her.

“Oh Whelan,” she moans. “I’ve missed you so much. Only you.”

I grin, loving the idea that after our one encounter I ruined her for anyone else.

I reach forward to remove her clothes.

“No,” she exclaims. “I’m worried you’ll tear something. Give me a second and I’ll take it all off.”

Then it’s my turn to watch in wonder as my gorgeous Bride removes every bit of clothing. She was wearing tight black leggings, a dark t-shirt and shoes she referred to as “Uggs.” Now it is all gone, down to lacy black underwear. I growl in appreciation. The flare of her hips, the perfect softness of her flat stomach and the curve and heft of her breasts are all on display. Her ass is utter perfection. And I want it all in my hands and under my tongue.

Then she removes the underwear and she’s entirely naked. The dark tuft of hair between her thighs is visible and highly erotic.

She giggles as I toss her onto the bed. I push her thighs wide and my head is at her core in moments. I remember everything she likes. I know exactly how to touch her already to bring the most pleasure. My tongue licks her wet heat and then finds her clit and I’m on it like never before, reminding her of what we had before.

“Oh my god,” she cries out and grabs onto my horns, “right there, just like that. You’re amazing, Whelan. Amazing.”

I chuckle and work harder.

In a surprisingly short amount of time she’s writhing on the bed and screaming out her release. Then she falls back onto the bed. “I need you inside of me.”

I cover her with my body and my hips are between her splayed thighs. I don’t even need to move my cock, it’s so hard it finds its home immediately. “Drew,” I moan. “This time when I fill you with my seed, if you become pregnant you are staying.”

She scratches my back. “Of course, I’m staying.”

“Do you want more orc sons? I’m not on anything, which means we’re breeding. Are you sure?”

“I am. I want you and another son.”

And then I sink inside of her and we both cry out in pleasure, loving the feel neither of us have experienced in a year. I move all the way, filling her balls deep. And then I pause with my forehead on hers, letting her get used to the invasion.

She kicks me in the ass. “More. Don’t hold back.”

I love this female. This is what I remember about her—her boldness and sexual stamina. I hold onto the headboard and her leg and soon I’m snorting and groaning, fucking her hard. This is what she wants and I’m giving it to her. She cries out, her voice rising. And then I manage to reach a hand between us and thrum on her clit.

In a moment she’s clamping down on me and screaming out another release.

And I feel my own end moving up my spine. “I’m about to cum,” I rasp. I move both my hands on either side of her torso and bury my release inside of her. The pleasure is so intense and hits me so hard I think I black out for a moment. There’s so much seed it’s leaking down the inside of her thighs.

Finally, I blink awake and feel my cock twitch inside of her. “Again,” I say, like last time.

She laughs. “I swear you went seventeen times last time.”

“This time, eighteen,” I vow. “I’m not always going to be that much. It’s just that when we first met I was a virgin. And this time I haven’t seen you in over a year and I need you.”

She nods. “Let’s do it.”

The first three times are on our bed. Then we run to the front room naked, for more pizza. So I take her on the table. Then we use the shower and I cum inside of her there. We sleep for awhile and when she rises I take her two more times in a row. The next day I spent time helping her to express her extra breast milk. Then we have sex again and I cum in her two more times in a row. She holds up very well, only complaining of a small amount of soreness, but still eagerly wanting more of my large, green cock. She’s amazing.

“Eighteen,” I finally groan that afternoon, as I cum for the last time on her chest. It sprays on her breasts, dripping from her nipples and landing on her chin and nose. And she doesn’t seem to mind in the least. I almost die from

pleasure as I watch her use a finger to wipe some from her chin and lick it with her tongue, smiling at the taste.

“I love you,” she pants.

“I love you too female, until days turn into time.”

I spent a few moments, rubbing my seed into her skin on her stomach. Then I rise and prepare a wet washcloth and wipe her clean. And then pass out in her welcoming embrace, this time without ridiculous mumbled words of kidnapping—only words of love are between us.

And we sleep in each other’s arms in the home we’ve created, together.

Epilogue

Drew

*F*ive years later...

“MOM, MOM, HELP ME WITH THIS.”

I smile and help Bran with his backpack.

Then I stand back and take pictures of my boys on their first day of orc kindergarten and preschool. Their horns are a little taller now and they’ve started growing tiny tusks and they look so very adorable standing together. Our younger son, Friant, is starting preschool today too and stands next to them.

My three boys.

How did I get so lucky?

Our commune has grown enough that we’ve upgraded from only homeschooling to a little school on the edge of the commune. And we’ve hired actual teachers. Well, the teachers are Brides who were once teachers or worked in education in the outside world prior to falling in love with an orc and deciding to move to the commune. The classes are very small at the school. It’s nice to see our little community growing enough for a school and library that holds books written in ancient orc.

Rogan and Miranda stand nearby with many other parents, ready to see their grandchildren and son’s first day of school. Seventeen-year-old Even is entering the small high school room next door. It’s an exciting day for the whole community.

I feel a bit like the growth in the commune—more women giving

marriage with orcs a try and wanting to move to the commune—is because five years ago I wrote an adventure fantasy romance book about an orc and the human female he falls in love with. It isn't our exact life, but it is based upon real orc lore. I sent it to my agent and she eagerly shopped it around and sold it to a major New York publisher. And now I'm still writing a new series that's selling better than anything I've ever written before. I've even recently learned that Netflix wants to turn it into a series. This is wonderful because the whole purpose of the book is to show everyone the real lives of orcs. In my author bio I show a picture of me with Whelan and our sons, letting everyone know I'm authentically writing this story and showing them how proud I am of my family.

I love posting pictures of my life on the commune and readers love that I share.

Because of this, all orcs and orc communes have become more interesting to humans. We live in Maine closest to human civilization, so our commune has grown the most. But it's a nice amount of growth—not too much and not too little. It's lively with more women and happy, formerly single orcs who have found their Brides.

Finally, school starts and the pictures and hugs end. My big boys walk inside their classroom and I stand outside and watch the door close behind them with tears in my eyes. “My babies.”

Whelan gives me a hug and we climb into our utility cart and drive together, back across the busy commune to our own cabin. We park out front and I step out and can't believe how quiet it suddenly is. “They're gone.”

Whelan grins. “I know.”

He pulls me inside and shuts the door behind us. Then he pushes me back against the door and reaches down to lift both my legs off the floor and around his hips.

“Ooh, great idea,” I purr. How perfect that I'm wearing a skirt today. You'd think I'd planned this, but I didn't.

He tears off my panties and tosses them over his shoulder.

“I want one more,” I tell him.

We have unprotected sex all the time but we've been able to take a break between babies because orcs can take an herbal combination that only they know about that causes the seed of orc males to not cause pregnancy, but when it's stopped the potency immediately resumes. He's been taking it diligently since the birth of our third son, which I appreciate. But now I want

him to throw it out.

“Another son?” he smiles. “Are you certain?”

Our cabin has grown. Whelan added on another room so he and I would both have room to work from home. And he added an extra bedroom. All the rooms are small, but we make do. “Yes, one more son. I want a baby in our life again. He can share a room with Friant. It will be perfect. Do you want this too?”

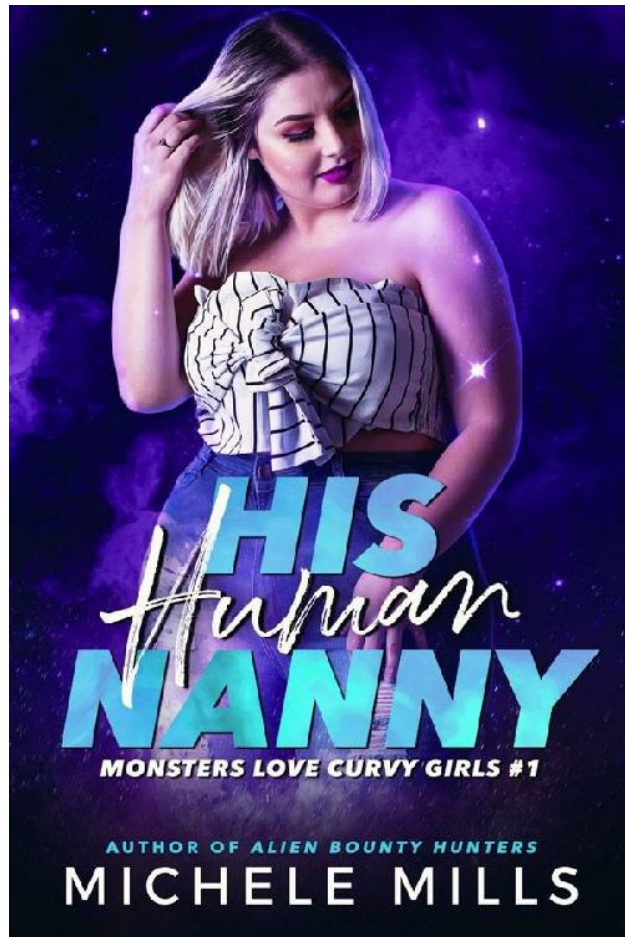
“I’m always ready to breed my Bride.” He notches his hard cock at my wet core. “You’re ready?” he asks like he always does because of his girth.

“Ready...please,” I pant.

And then he sinks inside of me and we both moan with pleasure.

I love this man so much. Picking him up in a hotel bar was the smartest move I ever made. Moving across the country to track him down was the second smartest moment.

I HOPE you enjoyed Whelan and Drew’s HEA! Want another story of mine with similar feels? Try [His Human Nanny!](#)



MY INDENTURED SERVITUDE is almost over and freedom is a heartbeat away!

Until some alien guy buys me because he needs a nanny, quick. What? I'm not even good with kids. I've never changed a diaper in my life. But the beings at the employment agency won't listen. "Hew-mans are hot right now. Everyone wants a hew-man nanny." Great. And since there isn't another human available...I'm hired on the spot.

Yay, me.

And on day one of my new job I'm having a panic attack because I finally meet my new boss and he looks like Satan himself. No lie. Black horns, red skin and glinting silver-tipped claws. He even has a barbed tail, a forked tongue, and he breathes fire. This guy is terrifying, and his children look exactly like him.

heart palpitations *hyperventilating*

And yet, as I'm caring for these strangely adorable infants and gazing longingly at my crazy-rich boss as he cradles his twin babies in his huge, muscular arms...my traitorous heart goes pitter-patter and my body heats up like lava.

Oh no.

And I begin to wonder—have I sold my soul to the devil?