

PARA-
NORMAL
BITES

UNFORGIVEN COUNTRY

A FORBIDDEN

Mating

JENIKA SNOW
JORDAN MARIE

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHORS

A FORBIDDEN MATING

JORDAN MARIE

JENIKA SNOW

JORDAN MARIE & JENIKA SNOW

A Forbidden Mating (Unforgiven Country, 2)

By Jenika Snow and Jordan Marie

www.JordanMarieRomance.com

support@jordanmarieromance.com

www.JenikaSnow.com

Jenika_Snow@yahoo.com

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Cover Designer: Robin Harper

Editor: Kasi Alexander

Proofreader: Read by Rose

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I'm a shifter. We have our own rules, customs.

At least we're supposed to.

When my father went against tradition and arranged a mating for me—one he said would better the pack, I did the only thing I could. I ran.

I want to choose who I love, who I mate.

But my fleeing has me stranded in Unforgiven ... face to face with my fated mate. A wolf who refuses to let me go.

And I don't want him to.

I don't want to deny either of us what comes naturally ... being together in every conceivable way.

But what happens when my father and betrothed mate find me? Will it start an all-out war? Or can they see I'm finally happy, finally where I'm supposed to be?

PROLOGUE

COLT

He is the Alpha.
He's found his mate.

I should obey his every word.

But I won't.

I can't.

Wyatt has every fucking thing in the world, and here I am with nothing but shit in my hand.

I lean against the railing on the deck, staring at the acres of woods behind my cabin. I'm holding onto my coffee mug a little too tightly and I have to force myself to loosen my grip, for fear of shattering the ceramic.

I am tense, every bone in my body threatening to break, my wolf wanting to shift.

Staying in my animal form sounds like a good retreat, a safe haven from my torrential emotions.

I'm pissed. Really fucking angry if I am being honest. The shit with Wyatt only intensifies those emotions, bringing out the worst in me.

But our past isn't an easy one.

I push away from the railing and head back inside. My gaze instantly lands on the framed photo I have sitting on the

mantle. I don't know why I keep the damn thing out, maybe a memory of everything I've lost.

I find myself walking up to that picture, taking hold of it and looking down at the four people smiling back at me.

It's an image of Wyatt and me when we were children, our fathers standing on either side of us, their hands on our shoulders. We're all smiling, brothers by bond, family by choice. Our fathers were best friends, his father the Alpha of the pack, mine next in line. We were training to take over, deciding to rule the pack together, as a team.

It was always the plan.

But everything changes with time, I suppose.

And right before Wyatt's father passed, he elevated Wyatt to Alpha, totally disregarding my father's rightful place in line. Then he passed away, and Wyatt became Alpha. There was a pull of power between him and my dad. It was one I never anticipated, but one that happened nonetheless.

It put a strain between us, this wedge that stripped friends apart, almost making us enemies. And then, when my father passed things got worse. There was no talk of us rolling together, the bitterness that had festered in both of us too much to smooth over, too deep to even repair.

And that is why I am thinking of leaving Unforgiven, just packing up my shit and starting over somewhere else. I am a lone wolf by nature anyway, so maybe this is what fate has always had in store for me.

JASINDA

The thought of starting over scares the shit out of me, but with where I'm at in my life, it is exactly what needs to be done.

The few boxes I have in the trunk of my car, the two suitcases in my backseat, and a wallet filled with not nearly enough money, is all I have.

So, on a whim, I closed my eyes and pointed to a map.

It brought me to Unforgiven Country, a mountain town. I'd researched and found out it is mainly shifters living in the middle of nowhere.

Good. That's exactly what I need.

Being out in the middle of nowhere is exactly what a wolf shifting runaway desires.

My cell vibrates and I know who it is without even looking at it.

My father.

The Alpha of our pack.

The person who promised me to another member of our pack, the next Alpha in line.

And although any female would have loved to be mated to Stark, a male with power and strength, good looks and status, he is not for me. He is not my mate.

And that's why I fled. That's why I am running away from my family, from my pack.

COLT

I'm too keyed up. Too much anger, too much frustration and, if I'm honest, too much damn loneliness boiling inside of me. I strip out of my clothes as I make my way to my back door, letting the change, the shift, overtake me. Tonight of all nights my wolf needs to run free. I need the calming effect of the moon, to feel the wind ruffle my fur and center myself with nature. I barely throw my shirt over my shoulder to join the rest of my clothes when my paws hit the hard ground and I take off running.

I let the beast take over, let him howl as my human side retreats. I'm conscious of what's going on, but definitely letting my inner animal dominate. He runs for miles; when we began the moon was just starting to rise. Now it's high in the middle of the sky, shining its light down upon us. My wolf is breathing hard and makes his way to a small stream and drinks. The wind picks that moment to kick up and I can feel it drifting through my fur.

As a wolf, my senses are more alert, more precise and each breath of wind feels like a caress. I can scent the evening dew, the crush of leaves, the freshness of air with just a hint of coming rain. It all runs through me and soothes my anger, my wild energy. Still, even with the anger gone there is an emptiness, a sadness that I can't quite let go of. I'm beginning to fear it's become a part of me, a piece that has woven so deep inside that it will forever color who I am, how I react. It'll poison me with time.

A wolf is not meant to live on anger, to survive being a shell. It will eventually turn them feral. I've never seen it, but I've heard whispers of it my entire life. Supposedly, a wolf in our pack named Dakota turned feral after losing his son. I don't remember it. It happened at a time I was gone from Unforgiven to see some of the world before settling down and preparing myself to help my father and Wyatt's... *to help Wyatt.*

I slam the door on my past memories. I don't need those, it defeats the purpose of me letting my wolf run.

Another gust of wind rises up and with it a scent that slides into me like warm liquid. It melds in me, seems to infuse with my veins, my very cells, blending with my blood and running through my heart, causing it to beat harder, to beat... *fiercer.* My wolf whines, as an all-over body shudder moves through me. It feels like the earth tilts on its axis and it settles inside of me.

One word rings clear, vibrating in my brain. My wolf howls in victory.

Mate.

Mine.

My wolf leaps through the brush, pounding through the forest at breakneck speed intent only on getting to her. I can smell her sweet scent, a mixture of wild honeysuckle and jasmine. It's odd how defined those scents are, overriding everything else. I begin to try and wrangle my wolf. I don't want him to scare her with the intensity of need that is hitting both me and my animal.

And, as much as I love my wolf being a part of me, the first time I meet my mate I prefer to be in human form.

I want to feel her with my hands, kiss her lips with mine, memorize her body and get her used to my touch. There will be time for my wolf to bond with her later.

It feels like it takes me forever to get control of my animal side. We're almost at the edge of the forest when I finally do. As I break through the tree line, bones begin breaking and

realigning, features begin changing and my eyesight begins to adjust. I look down and slowly see my paws change into hands. To the outsider it would look painful, but it's not. It feels natural.

The problem is that now I'm standing at the edge of the clearing out by the old county road twenty-one and I'm naked. There's a car pulled to the side of the road. Standing beside it is a woman dressed in faded jeans and a white T-shirt. She's got hair the color of midnight, the locks long and falling in soft waves that cascade all the way down her back. Her face is soft and pale, reminding me of the moonlight I love. Her eyes are big, bright and with my vision, even with the small distance between us, I can tell are green.

I can hear her heart beating a frantic rhythm, and I can smell her fear. I don't want that. It's to be expected. We might be mates, but there's an air of innocence in her scent. I look around frantically for something to cover myself with.

There's nothing.

I can't meet her like this. My wolf whines in argument, but I shut him down. The woman is looking in my direction.

She's not human and my wolf can sense her inner animal at the surface, ready to fight, to protect.

She can sense me, but she's scared—way too scared to meet me like this. Right now, I want to push her down against her car and fuck her raw as I bite into her soft skin and mark her as mine. I can't do that. Her scent is thick with innocence. She's untouched.

Virginal and scared.

I let my mind open, reaching out to touch hers. If we had that connection, I would mate with her now. I wouldn't give her a choice, couldn't control myself. Her thoughts are rapid and definitely laced with fear. She's afraid of me. My wolf hurts, not wanting that any more than I do. She may be a shifter, but somehow, she's been kept away from our baser instincts. That fact is a puzzle to me, one I cannot wait to piece together.

She has but one thought that rings out over and over.

Cornerstone Motel.

She's headed there, I can feel it. Satisfied that I know where she'll be, I drag one last breath deep in my chest, taking in her scent, memorizing it. I'll track her, find her easily, and when I do, I'll never let her go.

JASINDA

They found me.

There is no other explanation to what I felt out there in the middle of nowhere, my car broken down, the feeling I was being watched strong.

Then again, I knew they would.

I left, escaped my duties, turned my back on my pack, my father, and the man I am betrothed to. But I can't go back. I refuse.

My life isn't something my father can buy and sell, not something he can give away. It is my choice, my decision who I marry, who I love. When I fled, I knew the repercussions, I knew that what I was doing was a betrayal to my pack ... to my family.

My father, the other wolves, they would have never understood how I felt, where I was coming from. All they've ever seen is obligation, duty.

And maybe that's why I feel like I just don't belong there.

I close the motel door, lock it, and toss my bag onto the bed. I immediately go to the window and pull down the blinds, looking outside. I can put this off to my nerves being shot, my paranoia taking root. But my wolf has risen up, and when she does that, I know this isn't just me being worried.

I can't stay here. I have to keep moving.

I hate this, having to leave my family, having to start over because they just don't understand, don't realize that I'm not a pawn.

And then there is Stark, the strongest wolf in our pack aside from my father, the Alpha. He is a good male, just not for me. My life would have been his, in every sense of the word. Being betrothed to a wolf means he calls the shots.

We wouldn't have been truly mated. We wouldn't have that fated tether that would keep us together.

And that what I want.

I won't be a vessel, a female to produce his heirs. No, that's not me, that's not my life.

I should've just kept going, driving to the next town because I felt a presence here, following me, but I am tired, so damn tired that I don't think I could've driven further anyway.

Not to mention my car overheated and I had to drop it off at a garage, the estimated fixed date tomorrow afternoon.

Even if I want to leave, I'm stuck, hiding in this motel because I have no other means of transportation.

I move away from the window and sit on the edge of the bed, my body aching. I want to run free, to shift, to get some of this nervous energy out, but it's not safe for me out there. So, I'll hole up here, rest and try to relax.

Easier said than done.

I let myself fall back on the mattress, my arms spread out, my body sinking into the bed. I stare at the popcorn-style ceiling, a few water stains in the corner. Light from the setting sun washes the room in different shades of color, and I find myself closing my eyes.

I'll just rest for a little bit, just close my eyes for a moment. And I do that, feeling myself drift off.

The sound of someone banging on the door wakes me with a start. The room is dark, pitch black. *How long have I been sleeping for?*

My vision adjusts instantly, my shifter senses acute and clear. I sit up quickly, my wolf right at the surface now, pacing, ready to shift and protect if need be. The hairs on my arms stand on end, my heart racing, my hands starting to shake.

I push myself off the bed and walk toward the door, the small peephole allowing me to look through. There's a man standing on the other side, his back to me, his short, dark hair a haphazard mess on his head.

If he thinks I'm going to open the door, he is fucking insane. Most likely he has been sent by my father. But then again, my father is the type of male that would come and bust the door down himself, not have his henchman knock on it like he is housekeeping.

And then the man turns around and everything in my body tightens, grows alert and alive. He can't see me, I know that, but he stares right at me through the door, the sound of him growling low piercing every single cell in my body, seeping right down into my very marrow.

I take a step back, but not before I reach out and unlock the door. I didn't plan to do it. It happens subconsciously, as if my wolf knows, is taking over. But before I can lock it again, knowing that opening this part of my life will only cost me more trouble, I find myself moving backward.

My mate.

He's right outside the door.

He's here.

Those words play over in my head, like a broken record, repeating until I'm drowning in them. As everything happens in slow motion, I watch the handle to the motel room turn, the door push open. And then he's standing on the other side, this big, muscular wolf shifter staring right at me with half-lidded eyes, the growl coming from him one of possession.

I'm shaking my head as I take a step back, but the bed stops my retreat, has me sitting down abruptly.

And as I tip my head back and look into his face, I know one thing for certain.

Now that he's found me, he won't let me go.

COLT

Fuck.
She's even more beautiful than I first realized. She's tiny, probably only standing around five-foot-five. Her green eyes are shining like emeralds and have a liquid quality to them. Her dark hair is long and falls in waves. I can't resist reaching out to touch it.

She is perfection.

"Your name," I growl, the sound thick from the beast within me. I'm barely controlling the change. I can't even form a complete sentence, proving I'm definitely more beast than man right now.

"Jasinda," she responds and her voice pours over me, soothing me and my beast in ways I've never known before. I can smell how nervous she is, the shock of finding her mate resonating within her.

"I'm Colt."

"This can't be happening," she murmurs, her head shaking no, strands of her hair moving against my fingers.

I frown in confusion, tilting my head to watch the myriad emotions on her face. I inhale deeply and even as her scent of jasmine and honeysuckle wash over me, I can smell her innocence and something much stronger.

Desperation.

"You can't deny the mating bond."

My voice is softer now that I'm calming. Still threaded with my animal, but also seductive. I move my fingers from her hair to her face, touching her delicate skin and memorizing the feel of it.

"It would be easier if I could...for both of us."

"We were meant to be together, Jasinda. There can be no changing that. You belong to me."

Her eyes narrow and she jerks her face away from my touch.

"I belong to no man," she all but growls.

"You do," I correct her. "You belong to me."

"No—"

"And I, sweet Jasinda, belong to you."

She starts to deny it, but my words stop her. I watch as her tongue darts out to wet her bottom lip. I can hear her heartbeat slamming wildly in her chest. My little mate is a mystery. She stands up to me, and yet I can smell her fear, sense her anguish. I don't understand it, but it's there.

Does she not know that I will never let anything hurt her ever again?

If she doesn't now, I'll soon show her. The days for my mate to worry are long gone.

"You would give yourself to me?"

"We're mates. That's how it's done, little one."

"Not all packs are this way. They form relationships built on alliances and gain," she says.

"Then they're fools."

"Yes," she says, her voice full of sadness.

I frown, not liking that emotion coming from her. I stare at her mouth, which I need to taste. I let my thumb brush absently over her glistening lip and bend down slowly.

"What are you doing?" she whispers.

“Kissing you, my little mate,” I respond with a smile just as my mouth touches hers. As my eyes close and my tongue slides between her lips to explore her, I can only think of one word to describe Jasinda.

Ambrosia.

She is my heaven.

I take my time, exploring her mouth leisurely, our tongues mating, dancing with one another, my hand rubbing up and down her side, doing my best to help her to relax and just enjoy the sensations. I’m pleased she’s into this just as much as I am, her inner wolf not allowing her to deny this, to deny me. The scent of her arousal fills my head, making me drunk from it all.

Slowly, her body eases against mine, her tongue becoming hungrier.

Our kiss becomes impatient. It’s so good, but yet does nothing to satisfy the need in us both. My hands slide under her shirt, pushing it up, needing her exposed to me.

Jasinda breaks away, her hands going over the top of mine, stilling my progress.

“Wait. We can’t do this.”

“But we can. I’m going to have you beneath me, begging me for my cock and I’ll give it to you, inch by inch.”

“I... we can’t... because...”

“Because what, Jasinda?”

“I’m not free, Colt. I’ve been promised to another,” she confesses.

Two simple sentences, but they ignite anger and hate so deeply inside of me that my wolf howls out, making Jasinda’s whimper.

She will not belong to someone else. I’ll kill anyone who tries to claim her.

She’s mine.

JASINDA

This is insane, and something I should put a stop to it. But as I stare at Colt, feel the mating heat claim me, pushing away all other worries and fears, I know where this will lead.

I'm helpless to stop it.

"I'm yours," he says in that deep, animalistic voice that sends shivers through my body.

It was those words that had something changing in me, that fear of mating, of being found, of being forced to be with someone, vanishing. Although mating is unavoidable, it isn't like being betrothed as I was. It is something powerful and right, as if I'd been missing Colt my entire life, and now that I've found him everything in the world makes sense.

"We can go slow," he growls out, but I can hear the need in his voice. It's the same rising inferno I feel within me. "You hold the cards, little mate."

I'm starting to breathe harder, faster. I can't control it, can't stop this. But I should. I don't know Colt, yet I do. He's a stranger, yet he's not.

He's my mate and all I want to do is give myself over to him in all ways because then I'll know what perfection is.

I need to take this one day at a time. I am on the run, yet here I am with my mate, about to give myself to him because there's no way I can stop it.

"Tell me, mate. Tell me what you want and it's yours."

I open my mouth, not sure what to say, how to explain any of this. The flavor of him is still on my lips and tongue, already having me addicted, already having me crave more.

“You,” I whisper. “I want you.” There is no taking it back now.

I hear him growl low, his animal flashing to the surface, causing my wolf to do the same in need, in desperation. He has me in his arms a second later, the feeling of his erection digging into my belly making me moan.

I could have gotten off right then from the intense pleasure that slams into me.

“I need you. I need my mate.” The words spill from me before I can even censor them, before I even know what the hell is going on.

And before I know what is happening, Colt steps a foot away and has my clothes all but torn away, this animalistic growl coming from him, his nails now claws as he shreds the fabric in his haste to get to me.

I feel the chill in the air brush along my now naked, overheated body.

I’m about to tell him to get his clothes off, too, but he’s in the process of doing that before the words spill from my lips. His focus is on me the entire time, his eyes flashing with his inner animal.

His wolf wants out. It wants me.

When he’s naked all I can do is stare at his body uncovered. Colt is hard, toned. As a shifter, he’s huge, with defined muscle and raw male prowess. The danger and power pour from him in waves, causing me to get even wetter, more aroused.

He’s big and hard, with a light sprinkling of chest hair covering his pectoral muscles, and another dark trail starting below his navel and going right to the monstrous cock that is hard and pointing right at me.

My mouth dries at the sight.

“The way you’re looking at me has me barely hanging on, little mate.”

Good, because that’s where I’m at right now.

I can’t tear my gaze from his dick, or his balls hanging right below the massive length. There’s a dot of pre-cum on the slit at the tip of his shaft, and my heart races.

God, will he even fit?

Being a virgin means this is all new territory for me, but because we’re mates this is all so right, so perfect. I may be inexperienced but the mating heat will handle all of that. We’ll fit together perfectly.

My mouth dries as I watch him grab his cock and start to stroke himself from root to tip. I certainly didn’t see my night ending his way, but I’m not going to stop it either. I need it like I need to breathe.

My throat constricts while watching as he jerks himself off, the feeling of him watching me intense and arousing, the mating heat strong between both of us. I lift my gaze to his face and see the powerful look of desire covering his expression.

“You want foreplay, little mate?”

“God. No.” I don’t think I’ll last if we do foreplay.

He groans deeply. “Good, because I can’t handle that shit right now. I need you too damn badly.” He has me in his arms a second later, and is striding toward the wall, pressing my back up against it. His hard, hot, long cock presses right into my belly. God, he’s hard ... and huge.

He has his hand between my thighs a second later, and a gasp leaves me at the contact, at the heat of his touch. His fingers are so big, and my pussy is so wet that the digits slide right through my soaked cleft.

“Where do you want me?” he asks right by my ear. “Show me, mate.”

I grab his wrist, keeping him right on my pussy, but slide it lower until I feel his fingers brush my entrance.

“Right there, baby?”

I nod. “I want you here.”

He slips his thick finger in me, and I groan at the instant pleasure. He starts finger-fucking me in slow, steady motions, and I bite my lip at how good it feels.

“Yes.”

“You want me to fill you with my cum, mark you from the inside?”

I nod, not trusting my voice. I gasp when he picks up his speed, fucking me with that digit until my toes curl on their own.

I can't help the sound that leaves me.

“You know what I am to you. You know we belong together.”

“Yes,” I moan. I bite my lip when I feel him remove his finger from my pussy, but he doesn't wipe the cream off that covers the digit. Instead, he lifts it to his mouth to suck the glossiness from it.

My mouth parts in response to how erotic it is.

“You taste like mine,” he growls out. His voice is distorted from his wolf rising up. I can see the flash of his human and animal alternating before me.

Before I know what is going on, he turns me around, has his hand on the center of my back, and presses me to the wall fully. I look over my shoulder to watch him.

God, I need to, need to see what he's doing, what he'll do to me.

“Spread for me, Jasinda. Show your mate what you're offering.”

I'm breathing frantically.

“Let me smell the sweetness that drips from your tight little cunt and will soon be covering my cock.” He shifts us so

he can look me in the eyes, the pupils now eating up the irises, his animal right at the surface, just like mine.

And then, I do what he says because I need to do it as well.

The sound he makes goes through my entire core, settling on my engorged clit, making it tingle. I need him to touch me ... desperately.

He holds on to my hip with one hand, and I rest my head on the wall, waiting for the ecstasy I know is coming. And then I feel the tip of his dick align with my pussy hole.

A moan spills from me.

“I need to feel all of you, mate. I need to mark you, need to have my cum deep in your body so you smell like me, so all other males know who you belong to, who I belong to.”

I whimper in need.

He digs his fingers into my hips, and I know there will be bruises.

I want those blue and purple marks, because then they'll remind me of what I did with my mate, of how me marked me in more ways than one.

God, this might be a mistake, but I want to lose myself with Colt in every way that counts.

Fuck being on the run, at least for right now. I can worry about leaving afterward.

COLT

I can't fucking believe I have her.
My mate.

She's right here in front of me, dripping with desire and waiting for me to claim her. It's like every dream I've ever had come true, only better. Jasinda is beautiful, much more than I could have ever imagined. Perfection.

I push just the tip of my cock against her entrance, sliding in just an inch and tearing through her hymen, her virginity. She gasps and I can smell her discomfort lingering in the air, but I also scent her desire, her arousal.

Her muscles try to suck me in deeper, but I resist. The need to be inside of her wars with the need to memorize this moment and make it last.

"You're mine," I groan as I allow myself to sink into her another inch.

"Yours," she whispers.

With her acceptance, I thrust my cock deep inside of her, sinking to my balls. My wolf howls in pride and my heart thuds while echoing with the pleasure of knowing that she has given me her innocence.

My hand is wrapped in her hair and I pull it, causing her head to fall back against me.

Nothing has ever felt better.

I don't move once I'm buried in her. I feel her body give way around my hard cock and I know that I'm stretching her to the point of pain. I'm dying to move, to thrust in and out of her and empty myself deep inside of her body, but I don't. I need to give her time. As it is, I can feel her pussy fluttering around me as her juices envelop me. My eyes close as I drink the moment in and try to memorize every second of it.

"Are you okay, Jasinda?" I ask, my voice definitely more animal than man.

"Colt," she whimpers and hearing her moan my name makes my body vibrate with hunger.

"I'm right here. I'll give you what you want," I vow, as I begin moving inside of her.

I move slowly at first, feeling my cock slide in and out of her tight depths, thrusting deeper and deeper with each stroke. Soon our bodies have begun a rhythm that is as old as time, but with Jasinda—with my mate—everything is new. Fuck, even the air around us smells better, cleaner, fresher.

I feel alive in ways I never have before.

I can feel my orgasm approaching. Being inside her tight pussy is too fucking good to hold it off. I reach around her warm body, loving the feel of her pressed tightly against me. My hands palm her tits. They're large and overfill my hand. I squeeze them, my eyes closing at the dual sensation of gripping her while my cock is owning her pussy. She's mine, all of her, and from this moment on I'll never be without her. I'll kill anyone who tries to part us.

I tease one of her nipples, pulling on it as my other hand drifts down her stomach in search of her pussy. My fingers slip between the lips of her cunt, framing my cock where it's lodged deep inside of her. Her juices instantly cover my digits.

"You're so fucking wet," I growl as I seek her swollen clit.

"Colt, I need..." She whimpers the last word, breaking off into a moan as I massage her throbbing clit and trap it between my fingers.

I'm dying to taste her. To suck her clit into my mouth, to eat out her pussy while I make her shatter and come so hard that it will take her days to recover. And I'll do that, soon, but right now I need her getting off all over my cock as I unload my cum and shoot it so deep in her it paints her womb.

Will I give her my child tonight?

That thought makes my dick go impossibly harder and causes me to thrust so deeply that Jasinda's body trembles under me.

"I know what my mate desires," I growl, my wolf bleeding through my voice. "I'll give you exactly what you need."

My hand tightens on her breast. I'll probably leave a bruise, but I like that.

"I'm going to come, Colt," she cries and I can feel the way her pussy is fluttering against my shaft, tightening and vibrating. I can feel her climax thundering through her.

"That's it, my little mate. Come for me. Climax for your male," I command, still working her clit and ramming in and out of her, my animal demanding her submission and my release.

I nuzzle Jasinda's neck, the scent of her sex so strong now that it's like a drug and I'm intoxicated by it. Her climax tears through her body, causing her inner walls to clamp down on my cock, demanding my cum. My canines extend and I let them dance over her tender skin. My vision alters, becoming monotone and sharper, so much clearer that I can see her pulse throb under the skin at her neck. I can smell her blood, her essence, and I can hear her heart beating furiously.

"Do it," Jasinda orders, her voice shaking with her orgasm, her wolf right at the surface. She tilts her head, giving me the space I need and inviting me to complete our bond.

A feeling of rightness pours over me. This is it. This is my woman, my purpose in life...*my everything*.

I bite into her shoulder, allowing my wolf to claim her, marking her as ours. The moment I do, my cock jerks, shooting jet after jet of cum deep inside of her body, and our

hearts stutter in time, and then the beats slow so they match each other. We are one.

Two halves forming the perfect whole.

Mated.

JASINDA

I'm exhausted but I can't sleep, not with Colt wrapped around me, the very knowledge that I am now mated running through my head like a broken record.

My father and the rest of the pack will come for me. I know that, and as much as that scares me, Colt needs to know the truth. He needs to know what he's getting himself into.

I shift on the bed so I'm facing him. He has his eyes closed, his big, powerful chest rising up and down slowly as he sleeps. I reach my hand out and move my fingers along his short dark hair, brushing it away from his forehead.

He stirs slightly, slowly opening his eyes. The blue is startling, the dark pupils eating up the color as he looks at me. This low growl leaves him and he leans in and kisses me, taking away any words I might've said.

"My mate," he grumbles against my mouth, his tongue moving along the seam of my lips.

I wrap my arms around him and he rolls onto his back, taking me with him so I'm straddling his waist, my chest against his.

This isn't just some random fling, two people hooking up after just meeting each other. This is two souls becoming one, a mate finding their other half. This is real and unavoidable, consuming and intense.

So I break the kiss and rise up, knowing my expression is serious as I look down at him. He looks concerned, and I know

he can read me even though I don't say anything.

I don't want to prolong this. He needs to know what he's getting into.

"I want you to know, I need you to know, that my father and my pack are coming after me." My chest tightens at those words.

He has ahold of my hips and gently lifts me off of him, pushing himself up so he's now leaning against the headboard. His face looks hard, set in stone. He looks brutal and savage, ready to take on anyone or anything.

I swallow and lick my lips, my heart racing, my wolf pacing inside of me. "I'm betrothed to another, and so I ran because that's not the life I want. But I know they won't stop until they find me."

I hear his growl, the noise increasing as the seconds move by. His wolf is right at the surface, this ferocity causing the hairs on my neck to stand on end.

"My father won't stop. That's why I ran. I wanted to find my mate, to find love. Being all but sold off to another wolf to strengthen our pack, to form some kind of alliance, is not how I see my life. It's not how I'm going to live my life." I feel tears start to track down my cheeks and Colt lifts his hands and rubs his fingers along the wetness, wiping them away.

"Mark my fucking words. No one is going to take you from me. No one is going to make you do anything you don't want to. You're mine, baby, my mate, my other half. If they want you, they're going to have to go through me." Colt shakes his head slowly. "And going through me isn't fucking easy, especially not when it concerns my mate."

* * *

"YOU SURE ABOUT THIS?" I ask as I shove my clothes in the bag and look up at Colt. He's leaning against the wall, his arms crossed, this smug smile on his face. I straighten. "What?"

“Nothing, except you’re looking pretty fucking hot right now.” He pushes away from the wall and strides toward me. “I mean, look at you, all gorgeous and fucking primed for me.” I see the way his nostrils flare, knowing he scents my desire, knowing there is no hiding the fact I am wet and needy.

“You’re insatiable,” I whisper and hear him growl in response.

“Only for you. Only for my mate.” He kisses me passionately, possessively, and I melt against him.

I want nothing more than to say screw everything I’m going through and just be with Colt, right here, right now.

“Baby, I could mate with you all over again,” he all but growls against the side of my throat.

I can feel how hard he is, his stiff cock pressing against my belly. A fresh gush of moisture leaves me and I moan.

“But keeping you safe is more important.” He kisses the side of my throat and pulls away, and I don’t stop myself from whimpering in disappointment. “Later, baby. Later I’m going to fuck you so hard you won’t be able to walk comfortably.”

A flush steals over me.

He pulls back and winks, and if not for the fact I am a wolf and being mated is the one thing we all want, this reaction to Colt might scare the shit out of me. It’s just so intense, so consuming.

We grab our things and head out to where his car is parked beside mine. He said something about having a cabin out in the middle of nowhere, a place we can be alone, where no one will find us. It sounds like heaven to me.

Just as we are about to get in the car, the sound of an approaching vehicle has me looking up. My heart stalls when I see my father’s SUV, followed closely by two more dark vehicles.

“My father and the pack are here,” I say softly and Colt is in front of me a second later, keeping his arm behind him and his hand on my waist.

“They want you, they’ll have to come through me, Jasinda, and that’s not going to fucking happen.”

COLT

“Jasinda, it’s time for you to come home. You’ve embarrassed your family long enough.”

I look at the older man who stepped out of the front vehicle. Even if he hadn’t spoken, I would have known he was Jasinda’s father. Their features are strikingly similar from the color of their hair and eyes to the shape of their faces. Although Jasinda is softer and beautiful, where her father comes off cold and hardened.

Then again, that’s usually how an Alpha is. She may look like him, but that is where the similarities end.

“You are trespassing on Unforgiven Territory,” I say in a deep growl.

“Are you the pack leader?” he asks, and that familiar burn returns, but if this scruff thinks the fact that I don’t rule my own pack will stop me from defending and claiming my mate, he needs to think again. I will not allow him to give my female to another man.

I’ll die first.

“I’m not.”

“Then you’re of no subsequence to me, pup,” he responds, waving me off and showing blatant disrespect.

“I am the pack leader of the Unforgiven.”

Wyatt steps out into the clearing, several of my brothers with him and they flank me, Wyatt standing tall beside me.

“What are you doing here?” I ask, talking to him through our mind link, but staring straight at Jasinda’s father as his own men get out to gather around him.

“Your mate’s fear, along with your aggression, alerted the pack. You’ve claimed her. She is one of ours now and we’ll protect her no matter what.”

Wyatt’s words ring in my head and cause a burning in my chest. It’s been a while since I felt a part of my own pack. The fact that despite our issues, Wyatt has shown up now means a hell of a lot.

“Jasinda belongs to me now,” I tell her father, and I see his expression grow even harder.

“Daughter, let’s go,” he orders without responding to what I said.

I feel the quiver of fear that runs through her, but she beats it down. She moves from behind me and faces her father, her shoulders pulled back, her chin tipped up in defiance.

“My place is here with Colt now. We’re mated.”

“You’re promised to Stark,” her father says in response, his voice laced with anger.

“As Alpha of the Unforgiven and ruler of this territory, I’m ordering you to leave. Jasinda has chosen her mate’s clan over you and she is now under our protection,” Wyatt declares and something else slips back in place. Something that has been missing for a long time. I feel part of my brothers again. I feel my link with my Alpha slowly thread back together. “Under shifter fate and law, when a mating and claiming has occurred, there is no discussion of fighting. It’s set in stone. You have no power in these parts, and I’m demanding you leave.”

“She’s my daughter,” he growls.

“She’s my mate. I won’t let her go. She belongs with me now.”

“She’s been promised to me. I have claim to her,” another male says, standing beside Jasinda’s father, his face a mask of anger.

My wolf growls and I feel my eyes begin to change as my vision sharpens. It's all I can do to hold him back. I'm a hair's breadth from shifting.

"Why do you want me, Stark? We're not in love. I've found my one true mate. You should be happy for me. I hope that one day you'll find your mate, too," Jasinda says and I snarl. I don't like my mate talking to another male. I smell the want he has for her. He may not be her mate, but he covets what's mine.

He reeks of envy.

"You were promised to me, as well as being Alpha of your clan one day. I will not step aside for that, Jasinda."

"I'm mated. That can't be undone."

"But it can. If I kill your male, the bond will be broken."

"No! I won't let you harm him," Jasinda growls.

"What say you, *Beta?*" Stark snarls, thinking his use of words degrades me. He wishes to mock me and have me react in anger, make myself vulnerable.

He doesn't realize that Jasinda is much too important for me to be stupid. He'll soon find that out, though.

"*Wyatt, protect my woman, please.*" I reach out to him in my mind. I ask him in a way that I thought I never would again. The word please does not come easy to a strong shifter, and it shouldn't.

But my mate is all that matters. I need to make sure she's safe.

"*Kendra,*" Wyatt calls out and I sense Kendra behind me, her arms going around Jasinda.

"Let's go to the edge of the clearing with the others," Kendra murmurs softly.

"My place is beside Colt," Jasinda argues, and pride thrums through my body, my cock growing heavy with desire and the need to claim her again. She has such fire and spirit. She makes me proud to call her mine.

“We’ll only distract them. You don’t want to be the reason Colt is hurt,” the wold named Kendra says, and I must admit in that moment I misjudged her. She’s not weak, she’s not even afraid of Jasinda and even I know my mate’s wolf is ready to attack.

I turn to my mate, confident in ways that I haven’t been in years that Wyatt is guarding my back. I look deeply into my female’s eyes, my fingers softly caressing the side of her face.

I let them trail down the line of her neck, moving over my mating mark.

“All will be well, my beautiful little mate. I’ll take care of Stark and then you and I will go to my cabin like we planned.”

“You promise you’ll be okay?” she asks stubbornly.

“Don’t you have faith in your male, sweetheart?” I ask her softly, a smile sliding on my face as I fill with peace.

“You are, aren’t you?” she asks softly, stepping into me.

“I am what?” I ask, slightly confused, but that’s probably because I’m getting lost in her beautiful eyes. If I could have dreamed the perfect mate, it would be Jasinda.

There’s not one thing about her that I would change. The only thing that would make her better is if she was heavy with my child. But perhaps that seed has already been planted. If it hasn’t yet, it will be by the time this night is over.

“My male,” she responds and I can’t stop myself from leaning down to taste her lips. It’s not the kiss I long to give her, but it’s a small one full of promise.

“I am, sweet Jasinda. Completely yours. Have faith, sweetheart. I’m not giving you up now that I just found you,” I vow.

“Then go kick some ass,” she says with a smile, most of the worry fading from her face and confidence now in its place.

She believes in me.

That’s all I need.

“I accept your challenge, Stark. Come try to take me, if you think you can,” I taunt him, stepping into the clearing away from Wyatt and the others as I take my shirt off and throw it on the ground.

Next, I kick off my boots as my wolf bleeds through the surface.

My vision shifts as Stark steps up and begins undressing. We shift almost simultaneously and as my paws hit the ground, I let the aggression I feel in my body take over.

I will end this quickly. I have a woman who needs me now.

JASINDA

I can't watch, not when my mate shifts, not when I feel the air electrically charged, or the rush of emotion and aggression fill the air. Two waging packs, standing on either side of the males, ready to see who becomes the victor.

Although this won't be a death match, I still can't watch, still can't see if Colt gets hurt, which undoubtedly, he will since I know Stark is a fierce fighter.

I have my hands covering my mouth and I'm shaking my head, wanting to go to them, to tell Colt this isn't how it has to be. I'm a grown woman. I can make my own decisions, decide who I mate with.

Kendra has her hand wrapped tightly around mine, gently pulling me away. It's probably for the best. I don't think I could've controlled myself if and when it started.

We're walking through the woods now, the sound of the fight loud, intense. I look up at her with wide eyes, shaking my head, tears streaming down my cheeks. She gives me a small, sympathetic smile.

"It'll be okay," she says and a part of me knows that that's true. But another part of me screams for me to go back, to make sure things end the way they should.

Because even if Stark comes out the victor, I know Colt won't let me go. He won't stop until he's dead.

"Stark won't win," Kendra says and I realize I've said that out loud. "Is this your first time seeing a dominance fight?"

I'm nodding but my focus is where we've just left, where the fight is going strong, where the growls are echoing off trees.

"I feel so out of it."

"It'll be okay. Colt is strong. I can see that in him, smell it in the air. It's why Stark wanted to fight. He wants that strength, wants everyone to know that he can best the best."

I let go of her hand and take a step toward the fight when I hear a loud roar rip through the air. I'm shaking my head, my heart racing.

No, I will not be weak. I will not be pulled away and hope for the best.

I'm running through the woods, back to my mate. I see the wolves fighting for dominance, their big bodies going after one another, the iron tang of blood coating the air. I can't control myself, can't control my emotions. They're too strong.

I feel the shift coming over me. I feel my bones breaking and realigning, my hands turning into paws, my nails into claws. My face elongates, my snout forming, my teeth popping out, fangs emerging.

I drop onto all fours and tip my head back, howling out in anguish, in anger. I'm not going to let anyone take this from me. I'm not going to let anyone, least of all my father, take my mate from me.

Without thinking, I jump into the fight, my teeth digging into the back of Stark's neck, my claws defending myself and my mate. Colt snaps at Stark, a warning for me to go, his voice in my head urging me to leave, that if I got hurt he couldn't live with himself.

Stop!

Enough!

The sound of the two Alphas rang through all of our heads, stopping us, causing the fight to cease.

My father steps into the clearing, the three of us shifting back to our human form. Kendra is by my side instantly,

giving me her jacket to cover up.

Colt is right beside me, his hand on my waist, keeping me close, trying to pull me back behind him, to protect me even now.

The silence stretches.

“You’d risk your life for him?” my father asks in a hard voice.

I look at Colt, smiling, crying. “I’d die for my mate.” I look back at my father. “Surely you know the feeling? Didn’t you feel that way with Mother, before she died?” I see this pain flash over my father’s face, know that bringing up my mother was hard on him.

But I need him to know, to remember, that a mate is worth everything.

A shifter who found their mate, but then had them taken away, is not something most survive. But my father did. He had to be strong, had to rule the pack and take care of his child.

I see the memories flash across his face, know that this was painful for him, but that he knows I am right.

“Remember how you felt for Mom. That’s the love I have for Colt, the connection. A mated shifter is unbreakable. You know this.”

He closes his eyes and nods. “And I tried to take you from that.” He opens his eyes. “I’m sorry,” my father says and cups my cheek. “I’m so sorry for forcing you. That wasn’t right of me, and seeing what you’d go through for your mate reminds me of that unbreakable bond.” He lets go of me. For a moment he says nothing, just stares at me, but then he looks around. “My daughter has found her mate and we have no right to change that.” He looks at Stark. “Let’s go.”

Stark looks at Colt, the intensity of his expression speaking volumes. He doesn’t want to leave, but the Alpha of his pack has spoken, and when that happens you listen.

They turn and leave, but I know my father won't be gone for long. We're family. I love him and he loves me. No matter what has happened, family is family.

Colt pulls me into an embrace immediately and I rest my head on his chest, listening to his heart beating, smelling the blood drying on his skin. His wounds will heal by tomorrow, and for that I'm thankful.

"Don't ever do that again, mate," he says softly. "I can't lose you. I've only just found you."

"I couldn't let you get hurt. I can't lose you either."

He cups my face and leans down to kiss me. "Let's go, mate."

And those words are exactly what I need to hear.

COLT

“I can’t believe it’s finally over,” Jasinda says with a sigh when we make it back to my cabin.

“That might be over, but we’re just beginning,” I remind her, coming up behind her, wrapping my arms around her, pulling her back into me, and nuzzling her neck.

“I can’t believe it, Colt. I never knew I could be so happy.”

“I’m going to spend the rest of my life making you happy, Jasinda.”

“You do make me happy. Just being with you like this brings me more joy than I ever knew was possible, Colt.”

“Wyatt and Kendra want to have a dinner formally welcoming you into our pack tomorrow. Are you up for that, mate?”

“I’d like that, Wyatt. I feel at home here. My place is here, by your side.”

I can’t wait another moment. I pick her up in my arms and carry her to the bed. I can feel my wolf panting with his pleasure. Always in times of great emotion the urge to shift is near. Just because it’s happiness doesn’t mean the urge is any less now.

I allow just my hand to begin to change, my fingers sliding out into razor-sharp claws. I grin down at Jasinda. Her eyes are dilated and filled with heat and passion. Her lips have formed a perfect “o” in surprise.

I lightly slide my claw down her shirt and then deepen it just enough to slice her bra open too.

“What if I really liked that shirt?” she mumbles.

“I’ll buy you a new one,” I laugh.

Before I can get to her pants, Jasinda is already undoing them, sliding them down her legs.

“I’m not giving you the chance to ruin my pants, Colt,” she laughs, shaking her head.

I let my claw retract and tamp my wolf back down. Then I slowly undress as my mate watches me.

“You’re beautiful.”

“Men aren’t beautiful,” I joke. “Besides, I’m staring at beauty,” I tell her, bending down to let my hand slide against her flat stomach and then up higher to squeeze her breast, loving the weight of it in my hand.

“That feels so good,” she murmurs.

I get on the bed, angling myself over her. I move my fingers between her legs, wanting to prepare her body for mine. When my fingers glide against the lips of her pussy, I realize she’s already dripping wet for me. I inhale deeply, taking the scent of her hunger into my lungs.

My hand goes down to my cock and I position myself at her entrance, then let the tip of my cock slide through her slick depths to grind against her swollen clit.

“Tell me you want me, Jasinda.”

“I want you, Colt,” she gasps as I tease her clit some more. “I’ll always want you.”

When she gives me that vow, I thrust deep inside of her growling one word...

Mine.

And she is. I’ve found my mate and I’m never letting her go.

EPILOGUE

JASINDA

Five years later

“M ommy! Look what Grandpa gave us!”

The twins, Ava and Grace, come running into the kitchen, each holding a new baby doll. I look at them and then look at my father and Colt, who are walking into the house together. I go to my father and hug him close, before half-heartedly scolding him.

“You’re spoiling them.”

“That’s what a grandpa does. We spoil. I’ll be doing the same to your son when you have him next month,” he says, his hand patting my swollen stomach with love and pride. He kisses my cheek and then backs away to find the girls.

He adores them and they do him.

They hate to see him leave, but luckily this visit he’s here to stay a couple of days. I’m glad because I miss him, too. Plus, having him here means Colt will quit hovering over me as badly and let my father distract him.

I’m doing great and I didn’t have a problem giving birth before, but Colt stays a nervous wreck. He says he can’t help but worry and just needs to make sure I’m okay. I may complain about it, but I know I’m lucky to have him love me so deeply.

I love him the same way.

I never truly knew it was possible to love someone as much as I love Colt.

Colt comes up behind me and hugs me, placing a kiss on my neck while the girls attack their Grandpa's leg and demand attention.

"It might not be a boy," I tell my father, totally lying. We're sure it's a boy, although we haven't told anyone.

"He's a boy. I can smell him clearly now. You can fool some of our kind, but I'm old and been around many moons, daughter."

"He's got you there, mate," Colt whispers into my ear.

I look at my father, who is now at the table. He's pulled the girls up into his lap so he has one on each leg.

"Yeah, I guess he does," I murmur, watching my dad.

Colt's hand moves against my stomach, his palm lying flat there and our son kicks against it.

"He's going to be a strong wolf," Colt says proudly.

"Just like his father," I agree.

"And his grandfather," my dad adds and we all laugh.

One thing is for sure. My little boy will be loved.

I watch as my father bends down and kisses the girls on their foreheads, whispering how much he loves them. And during that, Colt is kissing on my neck and whispering in my ear.

There's no shortage of love in our family. I never would have imagined that five years ago when I began my journey to run away from my old pack I would find myself in Unforgiven.

A mate, a wife, and now a mother. And I'm so unbelievably happy.

Completely and utterly happy.

I don't think life could get any better, but I'm anxious to test the theory.

Luckily, Colt will be right by my side the entire time.

* * *

Jasinda

Two years later

I WATCH as the girls run around the backyard, zigzagging through the trees, giggling as they chase each other. I lift my hand and shield my eyes from the sun as I look for Colt. I see him over by the garden holding Adrian on his hip, saying something to our son as he points to the vegetables. I find myself smiling as I wonder what he's saying, if he's giving our two-year-old advice on the proper way to pull up a carrot.

I wrangle up the girls and bring them inside. Once they're seated at the kitchen table with their lunch in front of them, I go out to the porch and call for Colt. He's already making his way toward the cabin, and I can hear Adrian squealing when he sees me. I lift my hand and place it over my heart, feeling so much love in that moment I could cry.

I've become a huge sap, it seems.

I don't even know if I can blame it on hormones anymore, because it feels like my happiness is just so profound, I'll break down at any moment

"Hey, baby," Colt says gruffly as I take Adrian from his arms.

"Hey, you."

Colt leans in and gives me a deep kiss on the mouth, but it's short-lived when Adrian pushes him away. Colt laughs and ruffles his hair.

"Jealous, buddy?"

I give our little boy a kiss on the cheek, and the three of us head inside. I hear the girls fighting over the handful of chips I gave each of them for lunch, and give Colt a look that silently asks him if he can deal with that. He leans in and gives me a quick kiss on the forehead but pulls back before Adrian can push him away again.

I can hear him talking to the girls, not scolding or disciplining, but talking with them so they understand they need to be better, behave more maturely for their age. I go into the kitchen once things have calmed down, put Adrian in the highchair, and give them his food. And then I make Colt and myself some lunch.

Once we're all seated, I just take a minute to look at each piece of my heart.

Colt, my wolf shifter, my unexpected mate, the love of my life.

I look at the girls, the ones who made us completely whole for the first time, started off our family.

And then there is little Adrian, strong like his father, but quiet and observant like his grandfather.

I love each and every one of them more than I could ever explain or imagine, and every day I tell myself how lucky I am to have this life. Because things could've gone so differently if I hadn't fought for what I wanted.

This right here, everything I hold dear.

My family.

CONTACT THE AUTHORS

Jenika and Jordan love to hear from their readers. Be sure to check out their page and feel free to message them!

