



GHOST CATS II

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DANCE OF SOULS

By

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Chapter One

Mason Blackwolf sat in the back booth of the bar he'd stopped at on his way home and watched the patrons closely. His ever vigilant eye had picked up on a number of oddities in the bar. Nothing that would send him running but enough that Mason knew to be on his guard. He sat there, peeling the label off his beer, wadding the moistened paper into tiny balls and depositing them into the ashtray. He took another swig of the dark amber substance, savoring its rich brew but wishing it was stronger than it was.

Why his best friend, Brayen, and his grandfather, Running Elk, had sent him on a wild goose chase was a mystery to him. They had to have known that the rogue werewolf pack in Virginia had been captured and brought to justice. Everyone else seemed to know. They'd come just shy of laughing in Mason's

face when he arrived. Why the hell did they still send him? Sure, a vacation was nice but even he had to admit that he missed being home.

He hated to fly and had opted to drive instead. If the gods had intended him to fly, they'd have made him a werebird of some sort, not a werewolf. With a ridiculous amount of miles under his belt, Mason was ready to climb in his own bed and not look back. Unfortunately, he had a distance to travel before that could happen. The need to stretch his legs and relax had been great. The pull to this particular place had been all consuming--bordering on obsessive. He'd given into it and stopped. Now, he just had to figure out why.

Mason looked around, doing his best to put his finger on the problem. The smell of whiskey filled the air, coating it like a thin blanket of gasoline, no doubt as ignitable as the tempers of the occupants.

Nothing in the bar seemed out of the ordinary. It was the same run of the mill, clean place with a gritty clientele he was used to. Though, his normal hang-out didn't have humans roaming about it. This one did. That didn't surprise him. Ninety-nine point nine percent of the places Mason went when he wasn't home had them in it.

A row of pool tables flanked one side of the bar while a long bar ran the length of the other side. Tables filled the area in between and in his darkened back corner, sat several booths. The place wasn't bad. It wasn't extraordinary either. Mason couldn't understand why he'd had the urge to stop here.

"Come on, baby. Give daddy some of that sweet ass," a drunk called out from a table full of men.

Mason watched the brunette waitress who had caught his eye earlier as she did her best to ignore the heckling that had been going on since he'd first arrived. The bartender seemed to be leery about the group of men that had pushed several tables together and were taking up a large portion of the center of the bar. If he had any clue what the hell the guys truly were, he'd have kicked their asses out long ago.

With a rifle loaded with silver bullets in his hands no less.

The music, pumping out of a jukebox up near the stage, varied from country to classic rock. It served to drown out some of the ruckus. Unfortunately, not enough to give Mason the peace he so desperately sought. Was it too much to ask for a break?

Apparently so.

“Jeanie, you okay?” the bartender asked as he served an older man at the bar a beer.

Of course she’s not all right. The woman is being harassed by shifters, jackass!

The woman nodded as she went to collect dirty glasses and empty bottles from the table full of rowdy men. “I’m fine.”

“Yes, you certainly are fine,” a man with short, sandy brown hair said as he reached out and grabbed her ass. “Mmm, come on, sugar.”

She pushed away from him and scurried towards the bar. Mason groaned as he set his beer down. As much as he wanted to enjoy his time off, he wasn’t about to let a woman be manhandled by a group of drunken assholes. Shifters or not. The fact they were supernaturals only meant he could fight them head on and not have to hold as much back.

It’d be a real shame to kill one of these assholes. He snorted. *A real shame.*

The bartender put his palms down on the bar top and glared at the group of men. It was clear to see the man would attempt to protect his waitress; he was just playing it smart-avoiding a conflict if at all possible. It’s what Mason had been trying to do but suspected his attempts were in vain. He smiled.

Oh, well, kicking the shit out of someone will help me sleep better.

The door to the bar opened and Mason’s heart stopped for a fraction of a second as his gaze ran over the most beautiful creature he’d ever seen. The woman had to be at least five-eight and at six foot two he liked to avoid having to bend nonstop to kiss them if at all possible. She’d work just fine.

The low-rise, boot-cut jeans she had on caught his attention immediately. Her toned abdomen showed, revealing a silver bellybutton ring. It was perfect. She was perfect.

Gathering her up in his arms and spending the remainder of the night and most of the next day fucking her senseless chased his homesick blues away, replacing them with a rather optimistic outlook.

Long, shiny blonde hair stopped just before the small of her back. It was hair that a man would pay money just to be allowed the opportunity to run his fingers through and see it fanned out on the bed while sliding in and out of her. The very thought made Mason's dick hard.

She smiled, making her classically beautiful face even more appealing. Her high cheekbones, narrow, slightly upturned nose and full rose-colored lips made his body throb with need. As his cock began to dig painfully into his black jeans, he instantly regretted not shacking up with the last hottie he'd crossed paths with. She'd been easy on the eyes and more than willing to have some fun but he felt compelled to get on the road and head home. That wasn't something he normally passed on.

The bizarre urge to get on the road and head home had stayed with him and gotten stronger and stronger until he'd neared here. He'd given in to the compulsion to pull off, find a bite to eat and grab a beer. Somehow, he'd ended up here. It wasn't as though the bar was close to the highway. No. Mason had driven a good distance off course before stopping. It wasn't like he even had a choice. Something here had called to him. If he was right, it was the blonde.

"Hot damn," the man at the table full of assholes said. "Take a look at the legs on that one. The rack isn't bad either. How you doin', sugar?"

Instantly, Mason found himself fighting the beast within, doing his best to keep the wolf caged. The urge to kill every one of the men for daring to look in the woman's direction was so strong it shocked him. He clenched his fist, digging tiny crescent-shaped wounds into the palm of his hand and not caring in the least.

Jeanie went to the blonde quickly and Mason made sure he utilized every ounce of his supernatural gifts. First up, his ultrasensitive hearing. "Chan, you're here! Ohmygod, I can't believe it. When did you get in? Hey, I thought you weren't coming until ten."

The blonde smiled and his stomach did a flip-flop. If her flashing her pearly whites had that effect on him, he was screwed. Hopefully, in the literal sense if he played his cards right.

The blonde winked at her friend. “Hon, it’s eleven now. Don’t worry. I thought I’d head down and see if you needed a lift home or a little help?”

Her voice was every bit as smooth and sexy as she was. The need to hear her whispering sweet nothings in his ear while he fucked her left Mason fighting the urge to run to her and toss her over his shoulder. Fucking her was definitely something he would be doing before he left for home.

“Chandra Holbeck, are you telling me that you actually drove here for once?” Jeanie asked, sounding shocked.

Chandra. Chan. Mason let the name roll around in his head, taking more pleasure from it than he should.

Fuck, even her name makes me horny.

She laughed. He cupped his erection, praying for relief. When she spoke, she offered no such thing. “Uhh, please, Jeanie. You know me better than that. I didn’t drive. I walked. It’s gorgeous out. I can’t get enough of the fresh mountain air.”

Mason wanted to jump up and shout at her for being stupid enough to walk around at night, alone with shifters frequenting the area--drunk ones at that. Somehow, he managed to hold back. It wasn’t easy. Maybe the beast within him wanted to be fucking her tonight as bad as the man so it didn’t want to risk the opportunity by opening his mouth and inserting his foot.

Oh, we are so getting a piece of that tonight, my friend.

The woman slipped the jean jacket she had on off, leaving her in a tiny red fitted tee shirt. The cream-colored swells of her breasts showed due to the deep V-cut of it.

Never before had Mason wanted to cover a sexy woman’s body but now he did.

Wrapping her in a blanket and taking her home to peel back the layers and unwrap the prize inside in privacy was all he wanted to do. None of these men deserved to look upon her. She was special.

Special? What the hell am I thinking? She’s just another piece of ass.

Even as the words entered his mind, Mason knew they were a lie. She was more than just a piece of ass--way more and that scared him. Thankfully, the very idea of having his dick sinking into her lush body more than turned him on. It managed to set him on the verge of a full-shift and with his position as alpha male and right hand to Brayen, the guardian of the wolves, that was something that didn't happen to him. He was stronger than that. Or so he'd thought. The blonde before him challenged that at an alarming rate.

Chandra glanced around the room, seeming to soak it all in with a childlike wonderment that made Mason smile. "Man, I missed this place. It's packed." Her brow creased. "Bertin, where's Diane?"

The bartender shifted awkwardly. "She never showed up for work and I haven't been able to get her by phone," Bertin said, sounding anything but pleased. "It's good to have you home, Chan. The place wasn't the same without you."

Something passed over Chandra's face. She walked quickly to the bartender, slid her arm around his waist and sent spikes of jealousy ramming through Mason's body. "If you're worried about Diane, which I can tell you are, go look for her. I'll take care of things here while you're gone. And it's good to see you too, Bertin."

He wouldn't dare leave two women alone to run this bar with those assholes here.

Bertin nodded. "Okay, I'll be back as soon as I can. You sure you'll be okay?"

What? Mason had to fight not to fall out of the booth from sheer shock. There was no way in hell any man in his right mind would leave two women with the likes of the characters in the bar. The man was clearly insane.

Chandra did a rather long, sensual blink that had Mason's entire body reacting to it as if it were hard-core porn. If she could do that to him with no more than a look, imagine what she could do with a touch. The very idea left his cock throbbing.

"Go on, we'll be fine. I promise," she said softly.

Bertin smiled and Mason considered ripping his head off and pinning it to a dartboard. He's noticed several of them on the wall nearest the pool tables on his way in. They'd work nicely.

“Thanks, Chan. Keep an eye on the big group. They’re a bit rambunctious tonight.

Jeanie is nervous dealing with them and I think they know it.”

A bit rambunctious? They’re psychotic.

Chandra nodded and patted Bertin’s shoulder as she walked behind the bar to pick up where he’d left off. Bertin hesitated just a moment before turning and glancing directly at Mason. Their gazes locked. The slight nod the bartender gave him had Mason wondering what the hell was going on. Had the man sensed that Mason wasn’t human? Did he know Mason could and would protect the women at all costs? How could that be? Mason wasn’t even positive about what was going on--why the need to protect the blonde especially was so great. How the hell could some stranger hold the key?

All he knew for sure was if one of those assholes so much as sneezed in the blonde's direction, it would be the last thing he ever did. Mason raked his gaze over them, coming close to daring them to try something. He felt like fucking the blonde until one of them passed out. Considering his legendary stamina, Mason had little fear he'd be the first one to fall asleep.

"Jeanie, how about something a little more upbeat? I really don't want to hear some guy sing about losing his wife, job, dog and pickup truck tonight. It's depressing," Chandra said, as she leaned forward and put her hand over the older man's at the bar. "Hey, Grandpa. How are you doing tonight? You're not getting yourself into any trouble, are you? I've been worried sick that you'd go causing an uproar while I was gone."

Grandpa?

Jeanie headed towards the jukebox quickly and selected a new sequence of songs. The first one that came on was about a young girl having issues fighting the moonlight. Mason couldn't help but smile. Being a werewolf left him having roughly the same problem, though he'd never once thought to write a song about it.

"Yeah, Grandpa," the man who had been hassling Jeanie mocked as he lifted his beer in the air. "Have you been a good boy tonight?"

The old man glanced over his shoulder but said nothing to the group. He simply stared at them with a look that would have been intimidating if it wasn't coming from a man who looked to be pushing ninety.

I'm not exactly a spring chicken. Thank the gods I don't look my age.

"Damn, Fisk, that looked like a challenge to me," a buzz-cut blond said. He sat next to the one called Fisk and grinned from ear to ear.

Mason could no longer hold back. He eased forward in his seat, ready and willing to kill something. If he was lucky it would be a table full of assholes. After he was done with them, he'd take Chandra, get a room, and spend the night fucking her brains out.

His brashness made him cringe. Someone, even thinking about her in terms like that, sickened him. You don't make love to women, idiot. You fuck them. Get over the self-imposed guilt trip.

He locked gazes with the old man at the bar and an unseen force slammed into him. It stole his breath. Mason tried to stand, only to find himself pinned to his seat.

What the hell?

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Chandra glanced at her great-grandfather and shook her head. The man was mischief in the making. Regardless of what he was doing, he seemed to get himself and everyone around him in a jam at a moment's notice. Normally, they were good-natured predicaments that left all included laughing with a string of stories to tell. This didn't feel good-natured in the least. "Way to egg them on, Papa. You just want to watch me kick the crap out of them. You get some sort of sick joy out of me leveling big guys."

Grandpa winked. She laughed. The man would never change. He'd never once backed down from a fight and never would. It was part of who he was, his charm, and she loved him for him that.

"Is that true, old man?" a large man with short light brown hair said as he stood in the middle of the large group Bertin had warned her about. "Are you challenging me?"

"Whoohoo, Fisk, give 'em hell," another man called out, his speech slightly slurred. "Be careful, he might have a cane."

Laughter sounded from all directions.

Yeah, real funny.

Fisk glanced in Jeanie's direction and a slow smile splayed over his face. Chandra wasn't about to allow anything to happen to her friend. "Hey, Jeanie, we're out of lemons. Could you run in the back and find some more? And whatever you do, don't leave me in charge of slicing them again. I'll take a finger off or something."

Jeanie eyed the table full of men cautiously as she headed towards the back. "Call me if you need anything, Chan."

It was so very like Jeanie to think she could help. In truth, she'd only be in the way.

Chandra wrinkled her nose. "Take your time. I'll be fine. I could run the place with my eyes closed. It's a side effect from having spent my life growing up here," she said, winking at her grandfather. It was his bar.

The smile that moved over Jeanie's face was priceless. "Yeah, you may have grown up here but you've seen other places, Chan. You've gone away. I've never been off this mountain and probably never will."

It broke Chandra's heart to hear her best friend speaking the truth. At the rate she was going, Jeanie never would see anywhere else. It was safer for an unmated female werepanther to stay close to her family and protectors.

"Jeanie, I only left to study, nothing earth shattering."

"Did you meet new people? Do new things? See beautiful places?" Jeanie asked, as a faraway look came over her face.

Nodding, Chandra put her hand out to her friend. "Remember the dance I taught you when I got back?"

"The one that some Indian Shaman taught you?"

Chandra sighed. "Native American, but yeah, that one. You learned it right away. I bet you can still do it. I haven't done it since the last time I was home and showed it to you."

Jeanie beamed and Chandra knew her friend had practiced it daily. She'd heard the rhythmic sound that seemed to accompany it as she'd walked past her friend's house many times. Plus, Wesley had told her about it each time they spoke. He was good about keeping her up-to-date on her friends.

As Jeanie took her hand, Chandra smiled and winked at her grandfather. He winked back and the music changed suddenly. It was laced in chants, drums and some sort of a wind instrument she couldn't place. "Would you look at that? The darn thing must have known we wanted to dance."

Jeanie's eyes lit and she twisted a bit, never catching on that Grandpa had used his magik to make the music change to a song that didn't even exist in

the jukebox. “Do you think it really works? Do you think it will bring your,” she glanced around the bar nervously, “one true love to you? Your mate?”

It was hard for Chandra to not be envious of Jeanie in that area. Jeanie had a mate out there somewhere. A man who would love only her. In theory, so did Chandra but it wasn't very likely she'd ever find him. No. Mr. Wonderful wasn't beating down her door. “Yes, it'll work for you.”

“I've been doing it for months and he hasn't shown up yet, hon. And why did you leave out it working for you, too?” Jeanie pressed her lips together. “Hmm?”

“Because,” Chandra said, beginning to move her feet to the steps the Shaman had taught her. “Well, you know why. I'm not like you, Jeanie. I don't think I'm like anyone.” She began to sway her hips just enough to look provocative. Jeanie laughed. Chandra shrugged. “Hey, I know it doesn't belong there but it feels like it should. Doesn't it?”

Grandpa laughed. “What else does it feel as though you should be doing right now, Chan?”

“Honestly?”

He nodded and she didn't hold back. She knew she didn't have to. “It feels like I should be doing this outside under the light of the full moon, around a fire with sleeping bags laid out.”

“Why do you need sleeping bags?” Jeanie asked, dancing along with her.

Chandra laughed. “On the off chance Mr. Right would show it would be nice not to have to lie in the dirt.”

Jeanie giggled and then stared at Grandpa. “She is so much like you, Gildas, that at times it scares me.”

“Thank you. She is more like me than even she wishes to acknowledge.”

Grandpa focused on her with a twinkle in his eye. He was up to something. That much was clear. That was his look of mischief. “Does it feel like you should be doing anything else, Chan?”

Chandra glanced towards the back corner of the bar and began to move her hips even more. Her breath caught as her inner thighs tightened. Suddenly, the air around her felt sexually charged and it wasn't her power that was causing it. It was someone else's. Someone in the back of the bar. The urge to seek out the owner of the power was great.

Fisk picked then to interrupt. "Hey, Pops, I asked you a question. Are you challenging me?"

Jeanie stilled and cast Chandra a wary look. Not wanting her friend exposed to any more violence than she'd already been, Chandra motioned for her to head to the back. "How about those lemons?"

Nodding, Jeanie ran off, knowing that she'd only be underfoot if something big went down. It took years for Chandra to get her friend to understand it was better to be out of the way than hurt while trying to help. Still, Jeanie often tried to voice her need to lend a hand.

Movement from the table full of men caught her attention. Taking a deep, calming breath, Chandra hoped that it wouldn't come to what she knew it would-- someone dying. She moved out from behind the bar and headed straight for the table full of rowdy men. "Anyone need a refill?"

The one called Fisk narrowed his blue eyes on her, making her stomach twist and her blood run cold. "Oh, sugar, I want to fill something all right." He licked his lips. "She's tall, blonde and staring at me from hazel eyes, wanting me to fill her so full of my cum she can't walk straight."

Chandra bit back a laugh. "I'm sorry, but was that a yes on a beer or a no?"

"Where did your friend go?" Fisk asked, glancing towards the back room.

Far away from you.

"Beer? Yes? No? Going once, going twice...?" She didn't give in to him, in hopes he'd lose interest and just go before Bertin got back or any more men she knew showed up. It would be a blood bath. One she didn't want to see happen.

Fisk snickered. "You're scared. I can smell it."

She shrugged. "I'm a little concerned. I'll admit it."

The men all got equally smarmy smiles on their faces as they stared up at her like she was a piece of meat. If she wasn't careful, that was exactly what she'd end up being. She knew exactly what these men were--not human. Neither was she. Fisk tipped his head and eyed her up. "Are you scared of me?"

Grandpa laughed and Chandra cringed. The man caused her more grief at times but she loved him dearly and knew that he always had an ulterior motive that was for the best. At the moment, it was a bit hard to understand why he would provoke these men but she trusted him.

"What's so funny, old man?"

"Nothing," Chandra said quickly, doing her best to head things off but wanting desperately to smash the man's face for talking to her grandfather that way. "Yes, I'm afraid of you. Happy?"

Now, shut up and leave.

"Chan, do not lie to the boy. Tell him the truth that you are afraid for him--for them all."

Great, Grandpa, why don't you go ahead and throw the first punch? Save time, get right to the fight.

Grandpa chuckled. "If one more comment is made that is not acceptable in regards to a woman, I will, young one. I will. And if you are thinking of batting your eyelashes and calling me Papa to get me to stop, it will work but it will not work on the one who watches now. His need to see you safe will outweigh his better judgment. Trust me when I say you do not want him revealed to the others, Chandra."

Whatever her grandfather was trying to tell her, it was big and she knew better than to not trust him. His insight was unrivaled. Any suggestions?

He chuckled again. "Yes. I believe they have no respect for women and should.

Perhaps it is time they learned a valuable life lesson."

That's what she was afraid he'd say. She thrust her thoughts out at her grandfather.

And the other, the one who is watching me? What should I do about him?

"I will see to it he is kept in line. Though, you will have to be the one to calm him down when all is said and done."

I knew you'd say that, too.

"Because you know me well."

The men at the table exchanged confused looks. "The old man is talking to himself. Put the old bastard out his misery, Fisk. He's insane."

Fisk raked his cold gaze over her. "First, I'm gonna teach the blonde a lesson and then I'll teach the old man one. Women shouldn't walk around looking that good unless they want to be fucked."

Chandra felt her grandfather's power move past her fast, heading towards the back corner of the bar. She tried to follow it with her gaze, to see who this mysterious man watching her was but Fisk picked that moment to appear in front of her. Her slight distraction had cost her valuable time and she'd completely missed his approach.

He took a deep breath and laughed. "Ahh, nothing smells better than a scared human. Unless she's soaked with my cum that is."

"Chan," her grandfather warned. "Handle him or I will."

"Papa." She batted her eyes.

Grandpa sighed, never one who was able to resist her when she pulled out the use of the word papa. "Fine. Handle him or I will set the other free. He wished greatly to use a man's head for dart practice only a moment ago. I do think that would be a sight to see."

Chandra glanced at her grandfather. "Huh?"

He winked.

Oh, he's up to something all right.

Knowing that he was dangerously close to stepping in and that the pard, or rather, rest of the group of cat shifters, would sense if he did, Chandra nodded. "I've got it, Grandpa. Keep the other back."

The men all laughed. "Sounds like she's not scared of you at all, Fisk. You gonna let a chick get away with that attitude?"

Reaching out, Fisk stroked her cheek. His hand smelled of blood and it sickened her. As he began to run his finger down her neck, Chandra took a step back, turned and put some distance between her and him. "What have you done? You smell like blood. Who did you hurt?"

"Aren't you a fast human?" Fisk smiled, flashing a set of very inhuman teeth. She gasped, not expecting him to slip into a partial shift as soon as he did. He laughed, letting his teeth return to normal. "Aww, who is afraid of the big bad wolf?"

Chandra continued to back up, wanting to draw Fisk away from the safety of his friends. It would make it so much easier if she didn't have to worry about them attacking instantly, too. She was good but even she had her limits. They didn't know that though and she planned on keeping it that way.

"That's it, run. It only makes me want to pin you under me and fuck you even more."

Backing up, Chandra bumped into a table. Getting stuck in one place wasn't high on her list either. Fisk reached for her and she twisted to the side, only to find him snatching her around the waist. He lifted her off her feet and licked her ear.

"Looks like your hero isn't willing to risk it," Fisk said, pressing his mouth to her.

"My hero?"

I have a hero? News to me.

Fisk seized hold of the back of her hair and held it firm, directing her attention forward. "Yeah, the big tough lookin' human sitting there glaring at me like he wants to slit my throat but not moving a muscle to help you."

Chandra knew instantly it was the mysterious man her grandfather had been talking about. When her gaze flickered over him her breath hitched. His olive complexion, dark brown eyes, thick black lashes and head of chin-length, almost-black hair demanded her attention. Looking away wasn't an option but staring could cost him his life. Still, she found herself letting her gaze trace the hard lines of his face. It would have been too square if it wasn't for his pronounced chin with the slightest of dimples on it.

The all black ensemble he wore, consisting of a snug fitting short-sleeved shirt, jeans and boots screamed badass. The fiery look in his eyes made her hike that assumption up to deadly instantly. There had to be a reason her grandfather was holding him in place, blocking his ability to help. Grandpa had also gone as far as to warn her she wouldn't want the mysterious man revealed to the others. It was clear to see he was straining, fighting her grandfather's hold and that meant he was strong. Stronger than a human for sure.

"Is that your boyfriend, sugar?" Fisk laughed. "How about we have a little fun with him, see how much pain he can take and then make him watch as we do the same to you?"

The mysterious man's muscles all bulged, showing off the fact he was solid, steely perfection. As hard as Chandra tried to fight her body's natural response to him, she couldn't. Her inner thighs moistened as her nipples hardened. The very thought of him wrapping those large arms around her made her pussy quiver in delight.

Fisk took a deep breath. "The idea of me being in you is making you hot, bitch. Will killing your little boyfriend make you even wetter?" He pulled harder on her hair. "Thuc, come handle the bitch's boyfriend."

Chandra's natural instincts kicked in, waking her from her odd fascination with the man in the corner. "No."

"Excuse me?" Fisk asked, sounding floored she would dare to challenge him.

"I said, no. You and your friends will not lay a hand on him." She took a deep breath, preparing herself to do what needed to be done. "Leave now or I can't help you when they come and trust me, buster, they will come."

He laughed hysterically. “We aren’t scared of a bunch of humans. Damn it, Thuc, I told you to get your sorry ass over here and handle this punk who keeps glaring at me.”

Chandra called upon her gifts, letting them run over her, igniting the skills she carried deep within but rarely used to defend others. No, that was generally left up to Wesley and the rest of the men of the pard. She glanced down at the mysterious man before her and could almost feel the rage radiating off him. She winked and he jolted, looking as though she’d struck him upside the head. Some of the rage eased from his eyes and Chandra realized that she’d taken him by surprise. He didn’t seem like a man to be caught off guard.

“Tell me, bitch, is he your boyfriend? Is he the man you run home to, spread your legs and beg for more?” Fisk asked.

She’d completely forgotten he had hold of her and that shocked her. Gathering her wits about her, Chandra accidentally let power out. It went straight for the man her grandfather was pinning to his seat. It eased over him and she could sense his shock. So far, she’d managed to surprise him at least twice in one night. Somehow, she didn’t think that was the norm.

“If I’m lucky enough, he will be the man I wrap my legs around tonight.” It came out before she could stop it. She wasn’t sure who was more taken aback out of the three of them. From the look on the mysterious man’s face, she was going to have to go with him.

Fisk lifted her higher. “Oh, I’m going to love drilling into you while I make him watch. Though, how you could want a weakling like him when you’ve got me is fucked up. He’ll die a slow death just because he’s not man enough to warrant a fast one.”

Chandra merely tipped her head and kept her voice even, unimpressed by Fisk’s threats. “Walk away now or risk not leaving this mountain.”

“Bitch, you got a lot of spirit in you.”

“You have no idea how many spirits I have,” she said, feeling the rising of the spirits that came to her often. They sensed the disturbance and would no doubt come to guide her. “And, Fisk, they aren’t too happy about the situation.”

“They?”

She didn’t answer. Drawing her legs up to her chest, she changed her weight distribution, catching Fisk off guard. He dropped her and she fell to the ground.

Not wasting any time, Chandra kicked out hard, letting the sole of her boot come into contact with his groin. She rolled to her feet and stood in a fighting stance. Fisk clutched himself and growled at her. “You have no idea what you’re messing with, bitch.”

“A guy with his testicles receding would be my first guess but hey, I’ve been wrong before,” she said, sinking lower in her stance, ready and willing to incapacitate him if need be. Anything would be better than letting Ferran and his men get their hands on him. They’d kill him. She’d just leave him permanently maimed.

The hate in Fisk’s eyes told her he wasn’t about to give up but she had to offer him the out. “You need to leave peacefully now because I won’t hold back anymore.”

“Pfft, humans.” Fisk glanced back at his buddies and let out a choked laugh sound. “Come play with your food, boys. We might as well make her run from us. There’s nothing like a good chase.”

They tried to stand, each straining with the effort. “We’re stuck. Something’s holding us to our seat,” Thuc said, desperately trying to rise.

Fisk took another deep breath. “I smell magik.” He eyed Chandra up carefully. “Is it you? Are you hiding something from me? You’re not like us. What are you?”

“Leave now.” There was no way she was going into an in-depth discussion about who or what she was with Fisk. The moron wouldn’t grasp the concept anyways.

He snorted. “Or what, witch? You’ll hold my men in their seats while I have my way with you and then gut you in front of your little boyfriend?”

Chandra couldn't help but laugh. "I dare you to find something little on him. I'm betting you can't. Mmm, I hope he gives me the chance to play later. I'm sure I'll be happy with all I discover." She winked and then smiled wide.

"He'll be dead," Fisk said, glaring at her.

"No, he won't."

Fisk snorted. "What makes you so sure? You gonna use that magik you got holdin' my men in place to protect him?"

"That's not my magik, asshole," she said, rolling her eyes. "If it was, you'd be dead already. I gave you your chance to leave. You didn't take it."

"Do you have any idea what we are?" Fisk asked, licking his lips slowly, baring his wolf teeth once more.

Chandra rolled her eyes. "Grandpa, this hardly seems fair. He's all big and scary with huge teeth and I'm just me. I'm so envious. His muscles are bigger than mine, too. This just doesn't seem right. How can I teach him to respect women like this?"

Grandpa let out a soft laugh and nodded his head. "I suppose you are right. I am sorry, Chan. I still view you as a little girl, not the woman you have become."

Fisk looked confused, just the way she liked her opponent to be.

“I shall even the odds, Chan,” Grandpa said, lifting his magik enough to free three more men from the table Fisk had been at. They looked as confused as Fisk.

“Oh, come on. I can take them. Just let them all go.”

She sensed the mysterious man behind her straining even harder to be free. He probably thought she was crazy.

Fisk and his men laughed. “Sugar, consider yourself fucked.”

He lunged at her. This time Chandra didn’t hold back. She struck out hard, thrusting him backwards. Two of his friends charged at her. Dropping low, she waited until one dove at her before rising fast and driving her shoulder into his stomach. He flipped backwards with ease, gasping as he went. She couldn’t hide her smirk.

The other man swung out hard, narrowly missing her gut as she sidestepped and countered his strike, delivering a direct hit to his neck. The man dropped quickly and rolled away.

Fisk flipped in midair, landed on his feet and put his hands out to his sides. Long claws emerged from them as his eyes began to swirl with black. “Surprise, the big bad wolf is ready to have some fun.”

Fisk charged at her and she kicked out again, this time catching his chin. He slashed out at her. Chandra pulled her head back rapidly as his claws swept past her, so close she could feel the wind they generated. He tried it again and Chandra grabbed his wrist, twisted it hard taking him to his knees. She stomped on his other wrist, holding it to the floor as she snapped his arm with ease. He struggled for breath as she pressed his clawed hand to his throat and held tight.

“No, Fisk, you’re wrong. I’m not the one who is fucked here.” Chandra could almost feel his intentions. She laughed at the man’s stupidity. “Go ahead, do a complete shift and try to bite me. You should probably think about the fact I’m holding your hand and pressing on a point that will not allow you to retract those nasty lil’ things you tried to gut me with so you’ll be slitting your own throat if you do shift fully or move too much.”

It was easy to see the question in his eyes. He didn't believe her. "Go ahead. Retract them if you think you can," she said, daring him.

The hand that was still pinned beneath her boot returned to normal but the one she held to his throat didn't. His eyes widened. "How? What are you? You're not a shifter. What...?"

"I'm someone who offered you a chance to walk away, to save you and your friends' lives but you didn't take it."

They never take it.

The other men moved towards her and she shook her head. "Unless you really want him dead and me pissed, I'd turn around and leave. I suggest you hurry before...."

The door to the bar opened and Chandra knew it was too late for the men. Ferran entered slowly, eyeing up the men at the large table before setting his sights on her. He shook his head. "Tsk, tsk, Chan, such a bad girl showing up in town, not coming to see me and then saving all the fun of killing werewolves for yourself. You know how much I love doing that. Every last one of them should be wiped off the face of the earth."

He pressed his hands together and brought them to his lips. "Oh wait, knowing you, you're trying to do what you can to keep the peace. That's always what you try to do, right? Make us all just get along."

She didn't answer. There was no point. Ferran knew her well enough to know he was right. Chandra didn't need to confirm that for him.

He arched a light brown brow and smiled at what he saw. The situation didn't look good. "How's that working out for you, darlin'?"

"He agreed to take his people and leave, Ferran. He swore to me he'd just go. No one needs to die tonight."

Fisk started to say something and Chandra pressed his clawed hand to his throat more. He shut up.

Ferran shook his head slightly. His spiked light brown hair barely moved as he locked his blue eyes on her. “Now, Chan, you know I can’t let them go. You know how we feel about that type of filth around here.”

She swallowed hard. “Ferran, he swore to go and not return. No one has to die. No more blood needs to be shed. Enough people have died already. The cycle needs to be broken.”

“Chan, I do my best to keep my patience with you, to try to keep in mind you aren’t like us--that you don’t have an inborn need to kill and to protect but you wear my patience down. When I find you clearly in a position you were left to defend yourself, I have to wonder if your opinion even matters here.” He took a few steps in. “He had every intention of spreading his filthy seed, of creating more of them with our women, didn’t he?”

Chandra shook her head no but stayed silent.

“Jeanie!” Ferran called out.

Jeanie came rushing out from the back room and stalled when she saw what was going on. “Ferran?”

“Little sister, kindly tell me if these men were planning on doing something they shouldn’t. Something that involves taking privileges with you and with Chan.”

“I am not one of your women, Ferran,” Chandra said, giving him a hard look.

He narrowed his gaze. “Says you. One little bite and you will be. You’ll be claimed.”

“It doesn’t work like that for me, Ferran, and you know it.” In truth, it did if the person doing the biting was her true mate. Ferran was not. He didn’t seem to understand that though.

Shaking his head, Ferran laughed. “And what makes you so sure, Chandra? How do you know that when you’re accepting my seed and I sink my teeth into your tender skin, you won’t find yourself claimed?”

Standing tall, Chandra smiled. “I know because you will never sink anything into me again, Ferran.”

“Again,” he licked his lower lip, “don’t remind me I missed my chance, Chandra, or I might forget I’m a gentleman.”

“I’ll be sure to remember for the both of us.”

Ferran put his hand out towards Jeanie. “Answer me, little sister. Did these men want to take liberties with either of you?”

Chandra watched as Jeanie glanced towards her, obviously looking for an answer.

Ferran stroked her cheek and smiled. “Don’t look to her for guidance, Jeanie. I’m asking you.” Ferran put his head against hers and huffed. “You don’t have to answer. I already know. I could smell their lust when I entered. Go finish what you were doing. I trust you were a good girl.”

“Stop talking to her like she’s a child, Ferran.” It sickened Chandra how Ferran treated Jeanie.

Ferran smiled. “In my eyes, she will always be a child. Now, you, Chan, you are altogether different. So much younger than me but it doesn’t bother me. Why is that? How can I feel for you when, according to you, you aren’t even one of our women?”

He walked towards her and slowed when he neared her grandfather. Chandra stiffened, unsure what Ferran might try.

“Gildas, old friend, it’s good to see you out and enjoying yourself.” Ferran put his hand on her grandfather’s shoulder and Chandra held her breath. “Do you think that granddaughter of yours will ever stop her humanitarian efforts or is she a lost cause?”

“Oh,” Grandpa said, not seeming the least bit concerned that a man who teetered on the edge of sanity had hold of him. “I think she’ll stop.”

Like hell I will.

Ferran patted her grandfather before walking towards her. He glanced at the jukebox and tipped his head. “Gildas, I find it odd that you’d have the red man’s music playing in your bar.”

“Red man?” Chandra asked, disgusted at Ferran’s derogatory term but not surprised by it in the least. “Even you can’t be that big of an ass. I could make kitty jokes to bring you down a notch or ten. You know what they say about throwing stones, Ferran.”

“What?” He grinned, no doubt fully aware of the fact he was pissing her off. “Do you have a stance on the red men, the Indians, as well? I don’t know why I’m surprised. You seem to have a stance on almost everything. It’s so very human of you, Chan. Your obsession with ancient religions, peace and harmony is sickening.”

“Then why hasn’t it managed to repulse you enough to leave?” she asked, knowing she was pushing her luck with him but not caring. Someone had to stand up to the man while Wesley, her brother, was away.

Ferran put his hand out and motioned around at nothing in particular. “Because, I’m next in line to rule the pard, Chandra. Why would I give that up?”

“Do you really believe what you’re saying? Do you really think you’ll lead anything?”

“Yes, Chan, I do and so should you.” He took another step towards her. “I can’t promise to go easy on you when I do take over. I think you have quite a few things to learn. First and foremost, you need to learn to respect me.”

“Respect is earned,” she bit out. Holding her tongue wasn’t an option at this point. “Do something that shows me you’re more than you’ve let on so far and I might start, but until then, you will not gain respect. You rule through fear. That’s not the making of a great man, Ferran. It’s the start of their downfall.”

Clapping, he tipped his head to her. “Ever the one to speak your mind in the most poetic of ways. I adore that about you, to a point.”

“You weren’t always this way. I can remember a time that you didn’t hate like you do now.” Glancing at the floor, Chandra sighed. “I can remember a time when you had more than my respect, Ferran. You had my love. What happened to you?”

“Well, finding one’s parents, friends and neighbors slaughtered at the hand of

werewolves tends to harden a heart, Chandra. And finding one's soon-to-be wife

beaten, full of claw marks and on the verge of dying doesn't ever help.

Having her wake with no hate for the species responsible, still every bit as concerned about peace as before it happened kills all rational thought." He gave her a knowing look that left emotions she didn't want to have flooding her. "Did you also try to reason with your attackers that night, Chan? Before the wolf-pieces-of-shit ripped you from our bed, did you try negotiating? Or did you go willingly?"

Chandra stiffened, careful to keep her hold on Fisk's hand. Her voice shook as she spoke, "I-I tried to stop them, Ferran. You, of all people, know I did."

"They didn't care about reasoning out our differences, Chandra. They didn't care that they slaughtered innocent women and children--that they attacked a guardian. That's what you are, isn't it? It's what you spent so many years hiding from me and it's why you left to 'study' isn't it?"

She didn't answer. What was the point? He didn't want the truth.

Ferran shrugged. "It doesn't matter, Chandra. You don't have to confess your secrets out loud. I know enough to know that the wolves didn't show you an ounce of mercy, did they?"

"No," she said, not wanting to remember that day.

He nodded. "And they came in such numbers you and your gifts couldn't hold them

back. How is it you don't fear a repeat of that happening? How can you want to do anything but kill every last werewolf you run across, Chan?"

"I was nineteen when they attacked, Ferran. I didn't know what I do now. I didn't fully understand things."

"And disappearing in the middle of the night to travel the world helped you to better understand them, Chan?" he asked, his voice strained. It was obvious he still hurt from her leaving but she didn't have a choice.

"The call came and I had to answer, Ferran. If Wesley summoned you and you didn't answer there would be hell to pay. It was the same for me. They called and I had to go.

I had to learn about who and what I am.” Licking her lower lip, Chandra focused on anything but the tears that wanted to come. “My time away helped me to see that the wolves aren’t all that way, Ferran. Just like every one of your kind aren’t ruthless killers hell-bent on wiping out an entire race of the gods’ creatures. They have bad apples, too. We all do.”

You’re one of them.

Fury showed on his face as he struck his chest. “They ripped you from our bed, Chan! They came in and plucked a sleeping young woman, someone who refused to kill an insect even, from her bed and they forced you to watch as they slaughtered others. As they tried to....” He stopped and swallowed hard.

Chandra bent her head down, not wanting to remember what Ferran was going to force her to think about. It was a nightmare that she’d not only lived but often had to relive during her sleeping hours. It haunted her still and would until she took her last breath. At the rate danger kept finding her that would be sooner rather than later.

“Look at me, Chandra. Tell me that they didn’t sense your power. You hadn’t learned to hide your magik yet and I wasn’t there to mask it from them. Tell me they didn’t try to.... Oh God, I can’t even say it.” Ferran struck his chest again, driving the message home.

The wolves had done horrible things to her. She already knew that. Having him tell everyone around them would accomplish nothing.

“They tortured you before they took you within inches of dying. Had Gildas not sensed your pain, felt his granddaughter’s life force being stripped from this earth, and alerted us to what was going on, you and everyone else would have died. Their intent was to wipe us out. To assure that our mates and future mates were destroyed. They got off to a fucking fine start, Chandra. How is my desire to see to it that we survive a bad thing?”

She tightened her grip on Fisk’s hand. “Because you kill indiscriminately. You don’t kill to protect yourself, Ferran. You kill for pleasure now.”

Staring down at Fisk, Ferran rubbed his stubble covered chin. “Let go of him.”

“He agreed to go in peace. Don’t shed any more blood, Ferran. Please.”

“Very well.” Ferran’s eyes flickered. A sign that his beast lurked just below the surface. “Let go of him.”

Chandra did so reluctantly. Fisk lashed out with his good hand and caught her upper arm, slicing it wide open. Pain radiated through her. She cried out and jerked back. Ferran swept a clawed hand out and left Fisk’s body falling one way and his head falling the other. Blood splattered up, hitting her in the face.

Turning quickly, Chandra covered her mouth as she fought not to be sick. The wound on her upper arm was deep and blood poured forth from it. She did her best to avoid looking at it or thinking about the body that lay in pieces behind her but it was next to impossible.

“Turn around and look at what your attempts at helping got you, Chan. Look at the thing you tried to protect. It tried, and would have succeeded, in killing you if I’d have given it a chance. Hell, it tried to take your arm off.”

She shook her head. “Ferran.”

“I told you to turn around, Chan.”

“The lesson has been successful, Ferran,” her grandfather said, sounding much closer to her than he should. “Holding the dove too tight will kill it. Is that what you desire? There is a reason Wesley forbids killings to take place around her, Ferran. It is not merely his need to spare Chandra from our very violent reality.”

“Gildas, she needs to learn not to interfere in pard business. I gave her the opportunity to have a say, equal to mine, but she refused to take it. Right now she could be telling me not to harm anyone and I’d have to consider her suggestion. Believe or not, I would respect what my wife had to say.” Ferran snarled. “She didn’t take the opportunity, Gildas, and you didn’t make her.”

“One cannot force another to marry, Ferran. To do so would be the same as building your home on quicksand.”

Ferran laughed. When he touched her back, she shivered. Leaning in close, he whispered, “We are far from finished, Chan.”

She drew in a deep breath, fighting the nausea that rode her. “Gawd, Ferran, I can feel his spirit around us. It’s desperate to hang on. It knows its going to

hell.” The nausea intensified and it took all Chandra had to keep it together. “You didn’t have to kill him.”

Ferran cupped the back of her neck. “You’re wrong about this one, Chandra. I did have to. You just can’t admit it’s true. He would have killed you, even Gildas will agree with me. Hell, even another of his own kind would agree.”

She cringed as she felt the dark spirits coming for Fisk’s soul. Their cries, the haunting eerie echo they made sounded so loud in her ears that she shook her head. “Please, no more death.”

Ferran dug his fingernails into the wound on her arm, sending pain radiating through her. “Concentrate on here, Chan. Stop drifting off into your mind. Places I can’t reach.”

“Chandra,” her grandfather said. “Ignore the call of the dark spirits. They will take you with them if they can. The mountain has seen too much death. They are too powerful for one guardian alone. Ferran, you know better than to kill next to her. She has no one to hold her to us. If they decide to take her and she loses the internal battle, she will die.”

Dark shadows spun around her, dancing a slow dance--the dance of souls. It was both captivating and deadly. She followed them, captivated by them even though their cries tore at her ears, sending pain through her skull. Still, she reached out as one moved to her. It whispered to her in a language only a select few living souls could understand. It was the language of the dead.

Come.

The spirits swayed, as did she. The haunting melodies filled her head, chasing away the pain. She had to touch it, touch them. They formed the shape of a large gray wolf and she knew then it was Fisk’s soul trying to lure her but she couldn’t stop herself.

“I have to get to him.” Bucking back hard, she tossed the weight off her back, paying no mind to the fact that it was Ferran and reached out further, trying to make contact.

“What the fuck is she doing?” Ferran’s voice sounded far away.

“The dead call to her, Ferran,” Grandpa said, sounding even farther away than Ferran. “To kill one so evil in her presence has left the gate open for his soul to attempt to capture her own. The fact he was a shifter, a wolf, only

intensifies that for Chan. To guide spirits on earth is part of her destiny. Part of who she has always been. Part of who she will always be. This much you knew yet you chose to ignore it. You also know that she has a severe handicap in comparison to other guardians--she is not a shifter nor is she immortal. This you knew as well.”

“What is she looking at?”

“My guess would be that she sees whatever form the man you killed has chosen to show himself in. So far, it has not attacked.” The need to follow her grandfather’s voice was powerful but the lure of what lay before her was greater.

“How do you know it hasn’t attacked?” Ferran asked.

“You will know when it does. It is not a thing a man who claims to love Chan would wish upon her regardless of how displeased he is with her need for peace. You shall see why she seeks it firsthand. Her inborn need is to see all to safety so she will attempt to still save him from the pits of hell. It matters not that he is evil, for Chan’s destiny does not afford her the opportunity to pick and choose who she guides. She must guide all to their fate.”

The shadow of the wolf continued to draw her attention. “Come on, it’s okay. Follow me. You don’t have to go with them,” she whispered, putting her hand out slowly.

The dark spirits swooped down and struck her hard, sending Chandra hurtling backwards. She did her best to stop herself, but nothing worked. Ferran reached out to stop her, but the spirits thrust him aside. She struck a table hard, rolled off, hit the floor as the table toppled over on her.

“Gildas, I felt something!” Ferran cried out. “It wasn’t Chan. It felt like....”

“Death,” Grandpa answered. “Do you feel like more of a man now, Ferran? Does it please you to know that your need to teach Chandra a lesson has now left her in a battle for not only her soul, but that of all souls present?”

“What?”

“Yes, Ferran, you announce that she is a guardian, thinking that all along she had hidden it from you but she is not the type of guardian you think her to be.

Chandra is not like others that guard a race of shifters and maintain peace, settle disputes and deliver death to those who deserve it.”

Grandpa sighed before continuing on, “Chandra is a spirit guardian. Her greatest battles are fought with things that know no bounds, have no physical limitations. Should they win and destroy Chan prior to her own spirit guides coming to her aid then they will be unleashed upon mankind. It is why Chan will fight to the death--she has no other choice.”

Fisk’s breath caught. “I didn’t mean to ... I didn’t know. I thought she....”

Grandpa huffed. “You have always thought my granddaughter to be a bleeding heart. Weak because she does not carry the gene to shift into an animal like you, like me. Weak because she was terrified of what she saw you turn into, Ferran. And I do not mean your shifted panther form. I mean into a man who shows no mercy.”

“How do I stop it?” Ferran asked.

“You, do not. It is a task that she must endure herself or that another of her kind must help with--another soul guardian. Even I am powerless to help her fight the dark spirits.”

Another dark spirit fell from the air, scoring a direct hit. Chan screamed as pain ripped through her upper back. Scrambling to her feet she stood her ground, waiting for them to strike again. To her surprise, they seemed to fixate on the mystery man in the corner, near where her grandfather and Ferran still remained. That was odd. They never normally tried to steal another’s soul when she was still able to fight freely.

“You will not harm him,” she said, in the language only the dark spirits could understand, the language of the dead. The mystery man’s brown gaze flickered to her and she could see the question in them. Had he understood what she had said? No. He didn’t feel like someone with access to the dead. The spirits loomed over him still. “He is mine. You cannot have him.”

To lay claim to another’s soul was something Chandra had never done before. It was something a guardian would only do to protect their significant other, their spouse. But she didn’t think twice about it. There was no way she would let them have the man.

“Mason will come with us,” they whispered, in their native tongue. “We have waited a long time to take him.”

Mason? Who is Mason and what the hell are they talking about?

“Chan, search your heart and you will find the answers to that which you seek,”

Grandpa said, somehow managing to break through the state of mind she was in when the spirits were near. It was testament to his power.

Search my heart?

“What your eyes and mind refuse to see and acknowledge, your heart already knows to be true.”

Closing her eyes, Chandra concentrated on the name Mason. Instantly, the image of the mysterious man filled her mind. He was Mason, the one the dark spirits wanted to take with them. Another image quickly followed. This one showing Mason above her, dropping down and capturing her mouth with his. It was so vivid it felt real.

The dark spirits moved dangerously close to Mason. Her heart pounded in her chest. She ran full force at them, diving into a handspring and tucking her legs to her chest as she went. Undoing herself, she kicked her foot out, sweeping her leg just over Mason’s head and knocked the dark spirits away from him.

Chandra dropped to her feet on the table before him and stood protectively. “I told you. Mason is mine. You cannot take him,” she said, still speaking the only way she could to the dark spirits.

“You shall die, too.” The dark spirits flickered in and out as they did when she wore at their strength. They had a limited amount of time to either get back to the gates of hell with their soul or kill her.

“I will die to protect him, if need be. But know that I will take you with me when I go.”

She searched the room for sign of Fisk’s soul, but found none. He was hiding, toying with her. Something growled out and struck her upper back with such force it sent her to her knees, teetering on the edge of the table. Blood ran down her shoulder.

Ferran rushed at her. He tried to bat at the nothingness around her but he wasn’t like her, he couldn’t fight them. They hit him hard sending him

hurtling through the air. He landed on a table. It gave under his weight and he hit the floor with a thud.

The dark spirits spiraled back at her. She stood tall and put her hand out. Calling upon her power, her magik, she let it fill her. Something moved up next to her and she went to strike out but stopped the instant she locked eyes with the mysterious stranger named Mason.

“You’re hurt,” he said, reaching out for her. The sound of his voice rolled over her as though it were a power unto itself.

The dark spirits kept coming. Chandra went to push Mason out of the way but found him cradling her to his body. They hit and she released her power. Mason put his hand over hers and held it as the cold energy she held within filled the air.

“We will be back, femgatia,” they whispered with a sickening scream.

Chandra

couldn’t help but shiver. More and more they were referring to her as femgatia. Since there was no literal translation from the language of the dead to any other, the closest thing she could come up with was she-guardian.

Mason held tight to her. “Then it is you who will perish, for she is mine and you will not harm her,” he answered back in the language of the dead.

She gasped a second before Mason brought his lips dangerously close to hers. “Make her sleep, old man. I know you can.”

Chapter Two

Chandra walked out to find breakfast warming on the stovetop. The smell of bacon and eggs had been what had awakened her. She had no idea that she’d find fresh biscuits and a pot of coffee made, too. There was even a jar of homemade jam open on the table, meaning someone had gone down to the cellar and brought it up. Grandpa tended to avoid the place because Chandra’s tools for laying souls to rest also resided down there and he thought it best not to tamper.

Glancing around the orange kitchen, Chandra smiled. It was perfect. After the night she'd had, she would have been happy with corn flakes in a bowl. Finding this treat was divine. It was heaven, pure and simple. The sounds of classic rock began to fill the house cutting into the euphoric feeling. Puzzled as to why, she followed it. Entering the dining room, Chandra glanced around for signs of someone home, but found none. That couldn't be right. Someone had taken the time to make breakfast and someone had turned the music on. Granted, the music could have been turned on by a spirit or ghost which did tend to visit her frequently but they'd never cooked for her before.

As she approached the bathroom she found the door open and the shower running.

"Jeanie, I think I love you. With Wesley gone I eat corn flakes for breakfast." She laughed. "Milk is optional. I also don't normally sleep as well as I did last night." Chandra went to the medicine cabinet and grabbed her toothbrush. One of the extra ones she kept up there for unexpected visitors, like Jeanie, was opened and laying on the sink countertop.

"Aren't you the quiet one this morning." She put a dollop of toothpaste on her toothbrush and turned the cold water on low. "Hey, thanks for staying with me last night. I hate needing to have someone nearby after it happens. I hate the way it drains me. It's probably the only time I'm envious that I can't morph into some superhuman crossbreed and heal instantly. Okay, I was jealous that I couldn't do that when I twisted my ankle when we were seven too, so I guess I have cat-shifter envy."

As she brushed her teeth Chandra swayed her hips and danced around to the music, wearing only an oversized tee shirt and her undies. "Hey," she said, after spitting in the sink and carrying on with her dancing, still brushing her teeth. "How the hell did I get home last night? I remember something taking a bite out of my back and then the sexy guy who wasn't from around here grabbing hold of me."

Dancing around more, Chandra thought about the man in question. "Jeanie, I think he was like me. I think Mason can see and hear the dead. In fact," Chandra exhaled as the realization of it all struck her, "I'm almost positive I heard him speaking the language of the dead. The one I tried to teach you when we were in high school but you opted for German instead." Laughing, she ran her fingers through her hair, trying to get it to do something extraordinary. It wasn't cooperating.

“You know, I always love our one-sided conversations,” Chandra said, sarcastically. “Don’t get me wrong. Your quiet moments are wonderful and all but I could really use a springboard this morning. Plus, I’m rarely the one who has guy issues to discuss. Let me have my turn, will you?”

Chandra glanced at herself in the mirror. “Why don’t I have any blood on me? If you let Ferran get me home and clean me up, I will hang you by your pink painted toenails, Jeanie. That son of a... Never mind. I’m not going there today. I still don’t understand how the two of you could come from the same womb.” She put her hands up and danced with her back to the shower.

When Jeanie didn’t respond, Chandra sighed. “Okay, I’m sorry. I know he’s your brother and I know he wasn’t always like he is now. You know, I hate when he throws what happened in my face like I didn’t live it. I don’t need to be reminded I was almost ripped into little pieces by a pack of werewolves. I was there. I’ll never forget it. I’m not asking Ferran to stand and hold their hands singing campfire songs, Jeanie. I’m just asking him to understand that the ones who came didn’t represent the whole. They weren’t acting out the wishes of all werewolves.”

Chandra finished brushing her teeth and pulled her tee shirt up and over her head, not fully taking it off, merely hooking it in her arms. “Hey, Jeanie, can you peek and see if my back is healed. Grandpa must have stayed late working his magik on me. I woke up feeling the best I’ve felt in years. I honestly thought I’d feel like a punching bag until Wesley got home and handled it for me.”

Her brother had an amazing gift for healing and was the reason she was alive today. He’d been the one to tend to her wounds after the werewolf attack, leaving not so much as a scar on her body. “Speaking of Wesley, you do realize that he’s going to try to kill Ferran if we tell him what went on. I’d rather not have anymore bloodshed and I’m sure you’d rather not have your brother’s head severed.”

Putting her back to the corner of the shower, Chandra waited for Jeanie to check her. “Jeanie, I, unlike you, am not immortal and I can feel myself aging waiting for you to look at my back.” Thoughts of their time together flooded her and immediately a trip they’d shared to a fortune-teller popped into her mind. Chandra couldn’t help but chuckle.

“Until that big strappin’ man with dark hair, dark eyes, similar gifts as me and a tattoo of an eagle on his lush ass shows up and says ‘let’s spend forever together’ I will surely die of old age in this spot.”

Shifting her weight from side to side, Chandra tried her best to patient. “For the record, that fortune-teller you made me go to with you was a quack. She got so detailed for a minute there that she almost had me. But come on, tall, dark, and handsome is a bit vague. Granted, the tattoo thing was a bit different, but it’s not like I’m going to walk up to every good-looking guy with dark hair and ask him to show me some ass. And you are not allowed to do it for me, Jeanie.”

Chandra stopped and thought about what the fortune-teller had said. “Didn’t she tell me that my future husband and my paths would cross many times before he’d come to me? That we’d know the same people but not know each other when we met? That he’d be in grave danger and our ‘love’ would have to overcome some big obstacles, but he wouldn’t bat an eye at it all?”

Her stomach tightened at the thought of any man showing up in her life with everything she had going on. “What the hell made the lady think I’d want to hear that? What would I even say to Mr. Right? Oh, yeah, head on over. Everyone who lives around me, doing their best to control my every movement is a trained, supernatural, killer but hey, don’t worry, if they do manage to kill you, I’ll fight to make sure you don’t end up in the wrong hands once you’re dead.”

She laughed at her own neurosis. “Remember when she told me something about my dream man, my Mr. Right, and a black wolf? Real funny, the cat and dog thing. You fell out of the chair laughing and I sat there looking like she’d just announced I was pregnant with sextuplets.” Chandra shook her head. “Yeah, that was funny too until she told me I really would have six children. Right. I am not having any, let alone six. What the hell was she thinking? Even a supernatural male would have issues knocking his significant other up that many times. I really need to stop talking about sex. I’ve told you before about how horny I get after using my gifts.”

It was true. After using large amounts of power, Chandra generally passed out and then woke with the urge to have sex. The mere thought of it made her entire body tense. “Damn, I shouldn’t have brought it up. I was actually doing okay until I mentioned it. Now I’m going to be biting my lower lip and wishing I had a stiff one between my legs all day.”

“Where’s Mr. Right when I need him?” Shivering as the shower curtain opened and cool flecks of water sprinkled over her, Chandra bunched her shoulders up. “Can you just image my mystery mate’s sperm? They probably have capes or something and the guy probably has like a zillion other kids out there because of it. Uhh, no thanks. I’ll pass. That’s why I don’t want to put any stock in that dance to draw your mate to you. Everyone here, except you and Grandpa, is convinced that I’m free game for the men here to marry. I’m not. I don’t care if I don’t have the genes to shift. I’m not less of a person because of it, Jeanie. If Grandpa wouldn’t have threatened to bring in human law, I’d already be married to Ferran. Not even Wesley could have stopped it from happening.”

She shuddered. “At least you know Ferran would never allow you to be with someone like him--someone who has let the darkness take him over. He loves you too much to do that to you.

“Until last night, I never understood his protectiveness with you but when I saw the dark spirits over the new guy at the bar, the guy who I’m sure could hear and see the dead, Mason, I couldn’t breathe. The thought of the dark spirits hurting him terrified me more than anything ever has. Is that weird or what?”

Chandra shivered as a horrifying thought hit her. “Oh, gods, did Mason get out okay? Grandpa was hiding what Mason was from me and I’m guessing from Ferran and the others too, but I knew the second I laid eyes on Mason and felt him pushing back against the power on him that he wasn’t human. Did they hurt him?” The idea sickened her. Swaying slightly, Chandra did her best to keep her composure. Passing out wouldn’t do Mason any good.

“Tell me now, Jeanie. Tell me Mason made it out and went on his merry way.” Fear like she’d never experienced before consumed her. Covering her mouth, Chandra shook her head.

“Jeanie.” Tears filled her eyes. “Say something. Tell me that Mason made it out, that Ferran and his men didn’t.... Oh, gods, I can’t even say it. Jeanie?”

A large, warm, wet hand ran over her back causing her entire body to respond.

Shocked, Chandra turned fast to find the mysterious man in question staring down at her. “Mason?”

He smiled.

Her gaze instantly began to run over his wet, olive-colored skin. His entire body looked as though it had been chiseled from the finest of marble. The water seemed to run down every path that her tongue wanted to take. She should have been outraged to find him standing there. She wasn't. No. She was horny and he was just the man to solve that problem.

When her gaze reached his groin, her mouth opened wide in disbelief. Sure, she'd assumed he'd be well-off in the 'what he was packin' area but she had no idea he'd be doing that good. His long, thick cock was a shade or two darker than his olive skin. It bobbed obscenely before her, almost touching her stomach as it did. The urge to drop down and take it in her mouth was great. That caught her off guard.

Tracing her way, slowly back up Mason's body, Chandra found him staring at her with a mix of amusement and fascination. Surging forward, she reached for him. The need to feel for herself that he was safe outweighed her better judgment. "They didn't hurt you."

* * * *

Mason stared at Chandra, still unable to believe that he'd not only helped her grandfather get her home but had volunteered to take care of her. He didn't even trust himself to be alone with her, how the old man had was a mystery to him. Now, as he soaked in the sight of her standing before him, one pink nipple showing from behind the slipping garment in her arms and her tiny panties hiding what he'd already seen, a mound with a thin strip of hair on it, he knew he should have run as fast as he could.

She was a temptress to the tenth degree and as much as he swore to himself that he wouldn't touch her, wouldn't risk becoming attached, he found himself reaching out for her. When he'd first heard her enter the bathroom he wasn't sure what to do. Any other woman, he'd have instantly tried to work his 'get laid' magik on them. This one was different. Something about Chandra made his pickup lines, smooth moves and whatever else Lily, his best friend's wife used to describe as his repertoire, seem pointless. Almost embarrassing.

The moment Chandra expressed concern for him, fearing he might have fallen victim to the prejudiced acting head of the pard, Ferran, his heart had melted.

He was left no choice but to touch her. The need was even greater now that he'd seen the hungry way she'd looked at him.

"I thought they.... Oh, gods, you're okay." Chandra cupped her mouth, leaving the tee shirt that had been at least partially covering her breast, slipping more.

Mason took hold of her hand and put his against his chest. Heat flared between them instantly as their powers recognized one another. Never before had he dared to dream he'd meet a woman who would understand the call of the dead. It was something that had been passed down through the generations and even though his mother had not been Native American or a shifter, he'd managed to get the gene and the gifts from his father.

To have someone to share them with, to discuss things and who wouldn't think he was crazy when the spirits came to talk with him was a dream come true. To find out that person was also his mate was something Mason had never expected.

My mate?

He'd spent the entire night guarding Chandra, worried that the dark spirits or the pard would come calling again. Thoughts of her being his mate had plagued him. He wasn't looking for a wife. He wasn't looking for anything beyond a one-night stand, a quick 'pickle tickle' and a good time. Chandra wasn't someone he planned on but he now understood the pull to come to the bar. It had been her. She'd unknowingly summoned him, no doubt with the dance she had half-heartedly done. Running Elk, his great-grandfather and Shaman for his pack, was always teaching it to the females. It looked as though some other man had done the same thing for Chandra.

Running Elk would love knowing the dance had worked. He'd most likely never let
Mason live it down.

The old ways are sacred and shrouded in mystery for a reason. His great-grandfather's voice echoed in his head.

Mason smiled. Yeah, the ways were a mystery for the sole purpose of confusing the hell out of his senses and leaving him wanting to not only bed the beauty before him but to pledge his life to her--for her.

Chandra ran her hand down his chest, causing his breathing to grow shallow. He needed her. His cock ached to be in her and his body burned to be allowed to simply sample her skin. But, she'd been through a horrible ordeal and his intent, for the first time in his long life, was to do the right thing. See to it she was safe. Mason had already done that. Chandra was safe now. He knew he should leave.

Just walk away and make it easy on all parties involved.

Put one foot in front of the other.

Do it.

Take a step.

The only move he made was to run his thumb over Chandra's lower lip. She closed her eyes and tipped her head back. She bit at his thumb, kissing it. They both made choked sounds, expressing the need between them. No woman had ever responded to his touch that quickly. Could she really be the one? There was one way to find out.

Mason took hold of her, lifted her quickly off the ground and captured her mouth with his. The mint flavor of her toothpaste was still heavy but he could make out her natural taste just a bit and it drove his need to a whole new level. Growling, he thrust his tongue in hoping to devour her with the passion that burned through him. The second Chandra wrapped her long legs around his waist, he knew it was working.

He supported her weight with ease. Mason wanted to pull her through him, merge her body with his in ways that weren't even possible. Never before had he wanted to fully possess a woman and that's what he wanted to do to Chandra.

Snap out of it.

His cock dug at her, blocked from entering her by her now drenched panties. It was easy to judge from the smell in the air that her pussy was soaked with cream from her arousal but she was also wet from the lukewarm spray of water from the shower. His supernatural senses were on overdrive and if he wasn't careful, he'd lose control and shape shift. That wasn't something Mason wished to happen his first time with Chandra.

First time? You mean only time.

Mentally chastising himself for continuing to commit to her, he did his best to concentrate on Chandra. It wasn't too hard seeing as how her legs were around his waist and the scent of her arousal filled his head.

Continuing his tortuously slow exploration of her mouth, Mason pressed his cock head into her, knowing he couldn't really enter due to the barrier of material between them but needing to at the very least test her.

Chandra ran her hands through his hair, only serving to spur him on more. He bit at her lower lip gently, moaning from the feel of her body against his. The tee shirt she held fell to the tub floor with a wet smacking sound, leaving her nipples scraping against his chest. The need to touch them, feel them was great. Mason pressed Chandra's back to the tiled wall and slid his hand up her side. She shivered and he knew she was already on the verge of coming. He could smell it, sense it. Cupping her breast gently, Mason ran his thumb over her pebble-like nipple and she bucked against him as her kisses came fast and feverous.

Pushing the head of his cock towards her more, Mason drew in a sharp breath at the same moment she did. Though he could only enter a bit due to the barrier between them, it was enough to feel just how tight and wet she truly was.

Damn, I'm going to take her. She deserves better than this, better than me.

"Don't say that," she whispered between kisses. "I want you."

Mason paused momentarily, knowing he hadn't spoken out loud. She'd read his thoughts, tapping into his mind without thought. Chandra picked then to nip playfully at his collarbone. The wolf within him roared to life, immediately acknowledging what Mason suspected--Chandra was his true mate.

Tell me to go, Chandra.

"No," she whispered, her lips pressed to his. If she realized she'd read his mind again, she didn't let on. "Stay."

Reaching down, Mason let a claw emerge from the tip of his finger and ripped the

crotch of her panties open. They fell free of her body easily. She gasped but didn't pull away, didn't demand he stop. Instead, she slid her hand down and stroked his cock. He almost went to his knees from the sheer pleasure of her caress.

"Condom," she whispered.

Mason nodded, though he wasn't sure why. If he was right, if she was his mate, there was nothing in the world that would stop the beast within him from demanding to feel her, flesh to flesh. He wouldn't have a choice in the matter. He wasn't human, nor was he subject to their diseases. Chandra wasn't human either. Pulling out and not spilling his seed in her was the option he'd have to take because fucking her without the feel of her bare flesh to his would never satisfy the wolf in him--not if she truly was his mate.

"Mmm, I have some under the sink." Chandra kissed his jawline making it incredibly hard for him to concentrate on anything but the need to ram his cock into her wet core. "Condoms are...."

He turned and lost his footing on the slippery tub bottom. Mason pressed his hands to the tiled wall quickly to keep from falling and dropping Chandra. The action left him thrusting so deep into her tight vat that he went to the hilt. She cried out in his arms, put her head back and seized hold of his upper arms, squeezing them tight, letting him know he was too big for her.

Mason tried to withdraw from Chandra only to find her hands and her pussy desperately pulling him back in. She felt too good to give up. So he didn't. Driving into her, he gritted his teeth to keep from coming but the fist-like hold her channel had on his cock made the task almost impossible.

"Mason," she panted. "More."

He did his best to slow his hips but the beast within needed this. It needed to know that its mate, his mate, was good and thoroughly fucked. A burning desire to feel her come all over him and to smell it hit him hard. Shifting his weight a bit, Mason stopped thrusting and pressed himself into her deep. He began to rub, swivel almost, move without actually pulling out at all. The position stimulated her clit while leaving their bodies pressed close to one another. It was as though he were stirring her to her peak. In a sense, he was.

"You like that, don't you?" he asked, knowing the answer but needing to hear her say it out loud.

She nodded, alternating kisses and tiny bites to his jawline and neck. “Yes. I like this.”

“Then prove it.”

Chandra took the lead, accepting his dare, riding him, increasing the sensations soaring through his body. She cried out, held tight to him as her channel contracted on his shaft, squeezing it to the point he knew he wouldn't be able to hold back.

Pull out. Pull out now.

“Mason.”

The whisper of his name from her lips did it. His balls drew up and without thought, he let himself go. His seed shot forth from him, jetting into her, filling her womb. The beast within rose rapidly, threatening to claim the woman he continued to come into.

No, I don't need a mate. I've made it on my own this long.

Even as the argument against claiming her raced through his mind, he felt himself leaning down. His incisors lengthened and came in contact with Chandra's soft skin. He slid his tongue over her pulsing vein, more than able to hear her blood pumping. It excited him. She excited him.

“Chandra,” he growled out in desperation, hoping she'd stop him.

* * * *

Chandra held tight to Mason as she felt him filling her to the brink with his hot cum. Her body seemed to wring every ounce of pleasure it could out of the experience. Suddenly, her power rushed up and out of her, colliding with Mason's, wrapping them both in a blanket of mystical proportions. It was glorious. Sharing this part of herself with another and having it not only returned but no doubt understood was almost too much.

Something pinched her shoulder lightly, but the magik around her quickly swallowed any sort of pain. Mason kept his head down as she ran her hands through his hair, moving her hips as she went, taking pleasure from his still erect cock.

“Mine,” he said, so low she almost didn't hear him.

For a split second it felt as though she'd slipped from her own skin and rushed into Mason's. She could feel his heart beating as if it were her own. Smell the scent of their sex and feel what it felt like to have a beast within. It was odd, feeling the raw animalistic power that Mason held within him as if it were hers. He was struggling to control the beast, fighting to remain in charge.

The idea of Mason taking her savagely, bending her over and mounting her, excited Chandra in ways it shouldn't. Never before had she wanted someone to lose their inhibitions and let what nature intended flow free. Now, she did.

“Let it go, Mason. Set the wolf within free.”

He pummeled into her, fucking her so hard that it should have been painful. It wasn't. It was exactly what she needed. She'd somehow become numb to herself and her desires years ago. Mason was breaking through that invisible wall she'd erected around herself and making her feel again.

The bizarre sensation was gone as fast it came on but the pull to be near Mason, to never let him go remained in its place. Chandra's mind was too satiated from pleasure to know or care what was happening. Her only hope was that it would never end. The feel of Mason licking her neck drew her attention to his face. His dark eyes looked as though they could see through to her soul. Maybe they could.

His jaw dropped as he began to thrust into her widely once more. The feel of the cool tile, the now cold water and Mason's hot body pumping into her was too much. Crying out, she hit her zenith and didn't bother calling her power into her. No. Chandra let it roam free, caressing, toying with her nipples, his balls, anything that could increase the pleasure.

The instant Mason's power joined hers Chandra cried out again, scratching her fingernail over his upper right arm so hard and deep she drew blood. Without thought, she leaned forward and ran her tongue over it, taking his coppery tasting blood into her mouth and swallowing it.

“Mmm, mine.”

Mine? Why in the hell did I say that?

Mason rammed himself in all the way, held firm and began filling her again with his semen. It was as hot as he was and felt wonderful. Everything about him felt wonderful. Too good to be true.

“I don’t want to pull out,” he said, his voice low and his forehead pressed to hers.

“Then don’t.”

A manly chuckle came from him and it left Chandra smiling. “I should shut the water off. It’s ice cold now.”

“Funny,” she ran her hands over his torso, “I was about to comment on how hot you are.”

“Were you now?” The arch of his brow and the curve of his slight smile left Chandra staring at him in awe. He was gorgeous. Twenty-four hours ago she hadn’t even known he existed and now she couldn’t imagine her life without him in it.

Don’t get attached.

“Why?” he asked. Chandra shook her head. “What?”

“Why can’t you get attached to me?”

Oh gods, I said that out loud.

She forced a smile to her face. A change of subject was in order. His cock was still hard and desire still hung in the air. He was as insatiable as Chandra was and that was hard to find. “Are you up for another round?”

Chapter Three

Chandra couldn’t help but stare at Mason’s arms as soap suds dripped off them. It was the slowest form of sensual torture she’d ever been exposed to.

She wanted him between her legs again and seeing his buff body dripping with bubbles didn't help matters any.

Mason dunked a plate into the dishwasher and began scrubbing it as Chandra dried the last one he'd handed her. "Did I thank you yet for that delicious breakfast?"

He chuckled. "Only about a half dozen times but I like hearing it so I won't complain."

"That's good because it was fantastic." Visually tracing his strong profile, Chandra found it hard to concentrate on making small talk while the need to have him between her legs still consumed her. He shifted a bit and rolled his shoulders. "You look tired. Did you sleep at all last night?"

"How are you feeling?" he asked, avoiding her question.

"That's a no on sleeping." Sliding her arm around his waist, Chandra gave him a tight squeeze. "Honey, you need to get some rest. Go lay down. I'm fine here."

Mason stiffened and she realized what she'd just done. She'd not only used a pet name but she was acting like they were lovers. Technically, they had had sex but that in no way entitled her to assume they were lovers in the sense that they were a couple. She didn't want that anyway. Did she? He was just a fling. A one-night stand. Right?

Pulling back, Chandra put her hands on her upper arm and rubbed. It was a nervous habit she developed shortly after the wolf attacks that left the pard numbers low.

"Chandra?"

"Hmm?" She lifted her eyebrows and did her best to play off having hung on him like a needy woman. That wasn't who she was. At least she hadn't been until he'd shown up in her life.

Mason reached out quickly and dabbed her nose with soapsuds. Laughing, she blew on them, sending bubbles up and into the air. Mason seized hold of her waist. His wet hands went up and under the white tank top she wore, seeking out her breasts. Her breathing grew ragged as he tweaked each of her nipples. Her nipples hardened.

“I love how you respond to my touch, Chan.” Instantly, her inner thighs moistened. He chuckled. “See,” he gave her a chaste kiss, “the minute I touch you, your body responds.”

Chandra ran her hand over his smooth, bare chest, down his abs and stopped just before she hit the top of his jeans. Glancing down, she found his cock bulging against the thick material. “It appears to go both ways, Mason.”

He took her hand in his and cupped it over his rock hard erection. “Oh, baby, you have no idea what you do to me.”

Baby?

He called her a pet name, no doubt to make her feel less awkward. He’s too good to be true.

“Funny,” Mason toyed with her nipples, “I was just thinking the same thing about you, Chan. You’re too good to be true.”

Did I say that out loud?

She wanted to melt under his touch but she knew better. Nothing this good ever lasted. Chandra did her best to try to remain emotionally distant from Mason. It was hard. Something about the man called to her on levels she couldn’t begin to understand. Easing her finger down the front of his jeans, Chandra eyed him carefully, doing her best to gauge his reaction. Was it purely physical between them? Would she ever know? Did it really matter?

“You think too much,” he said, backing her up against the kitchen table. “Just feel, Chan.”

Heat flared throughout her body as need pulsed through her veins. Giving into the primal urge to be one with him, she undid his jeans and wrapped her hand around his turgid shaft. “I want to taste you.”

She didn’t wait for an okay. No. Chandra kissed her way down his chest and licked a circle around his navel. The line of dark hair that started there acted as a guide as she ran her tongue down his lower abdomen.

“Chandra.”

The very sound of her name on his lips made her wet. The minute her mouth came into contact with his cock, Mason hissed out in pleasure and laced his

fingers through her hair. Sliding her lips over him, Chandra did her best to take all of him but had to add her hands to the mix.

She stroked the base of his shaft as she took him to the back of her throat. Mason's breathing was shallow and his body tight. She moaned and he did the same. "There, baby, right there. Yeah."

Spurred on by his encouragement, Chandra increased her pace, sucking on him as she went. Mason pulled her free of his cock and exhaled deeply. "Mason?"

His jaw went slack. "I need a minute."

"Mmm," she murmured as she captured his shaft with her mouth once more.

"Baby, no.... I can't hold it. Chan, baby."

She raked her teeth over his flesh gently but that was all that was needed. Mason's balls drew up as his cock twitched a second before he shot hot cum in her mouth. Chandra swallowed it down, careful not to miss a drop of his salty fluid.

Mason bent forward and used the table behind her for support. Shaking his head, he let out a soft laugh. "I can't believe I came that fast. Sorry."

Licking her lips, Chandra winked. "Don't apologize. Not for that. I love knowing I can make you do that."

He arched a brow in a challenging manner. "Oh, really?"

"Really," she said, rising to her feet.

In an instant, Mason had her lifted off the ground and deposited onto the kitchen table. Before she knew it, he had her skirt around her waist and was pulling her panties down her legs. "Mason!"

The mischievous grin he gave her told her she was in for it. "It's payback time, baby." He pushed her legs apart and stared up through hooded lashes. "I love the way you smell." He licked a long line up her slit. "Mmm, and the way you taste."

Tipping her head back, Chandra did her best to stay focused but the feel of Mason's tongue skating over her swollen clit was too much. She wiggled in

an attempt to break free even though there was nowhere else she'd rather be. He pinned her to the table and continued his pleasure-filled torture.

He inserted two fingers into her and pressed upwards while licking her bud. Her inner thighs began to quiver. Chandra clawed at the tabletop, needing something, anything to keep her grounded when all her body wanted to do was soar. It was too much. Too glorious.

“No more ... uhh ... no.”

Mason chuckled into her pussy, not bothering to stop what he was doing. Chandra's orgasm struck with an intensity that left her bucking against him. He thrust his fingers in and began pumping them in and out of her. "Mmm, that's my girl," he whispered, lapping up her cream.

Exhaling, Chandra let her body go limp on the table. Mason rose over her and brought his face down to hers. She could smell her scent on him and for some reason that excited her.

He smiled. "Come home with me." "What?" There was no way she heard him right. "I can't go home with you."

"Why?"

"I hardly know you."

Tipping his head slightly, Mason arched a brow. "Baby, you know me better than most."

"I don't even know your last name."

He kissed her quickly. "Blackwolf."

Her brow furrowed. "Blackwolf? That's an interesting last name. I wouldn't go telling anyone else around here. They're the type that kill anything that reminds them of a wolf. Your last name would get you shot for sure. A friend of my grandfather's has the same last name. I think he's Lakota but I'm not a hundred percent sure."

"You didn't happen to learn that mating dance from him, did you?" Mason asked, looking slightly pained.

Chandra couldn't help but smile. Mason had been watching her at the bar. He'd seen her doing the dance with Jeanie. She nodded. "Yes. Why do you ask?"

"Was his name Running Elk?"

She propped herself up on her elbows and stared at him with wide eyes. “You know Running Elk? How do you know...?” It hit her then as the air rushed from her lungs. “Blackwolf? You’re related to him. You’re a ... no Mason, no.”

He sighed. “I would never hurt you, Chandra. You have to know that.”

“Me? I’m not worried about me getting hurt. I’m worried about you. If Ferran finds out what you are, he and his men will kill you, Mason. I already can’t let him know you spent the night as it is.” She pushed up on him but he didn’t budge.

“He’ll figure it out sooner or later and I’m not about to run from some punk with a chip on his shoulder.”

She snorted. “Ferran won’t figure anything out because you’ll be long gone by the time I see him again.”

“No,” he wagged his brows, “I won’t.”

“Yes,” she pushed on his chest, “you will.”

Bending his head down, he kissed her, careful to trace the edges of her lips with his tongue. She knew he’d done it on purpose to confuse her. It worked. Giving in, Chandra returned his kiss. As he pulled back, he smiled down at her and her chest tightened.

I could love him. It would be so easy to do and it would cost him his life.

“You worry and think too much, Chan.” He kissed the tip of her nose. “If I don’t stand up right now, I’m going to end up fucking you on this table and your grandfather said he’d be stopping by this morning. The last thing I want is for him to find me deep in you.”

“No, that wouldn’t be good,” she said, chuckling as he stood.

He put his hand out to her and helped her up. Fastening his jeans, he winked.

“Could love me or do?”

“What?” she asked, unsure what it was Mason was talking about.

“Nothing.” He flashed his playboy smile. “I’ll finish up the dishes and then I’m taking you away with me. We can take your grandfather, too, if you want. I have a cabin in the mountains. I think you’ll like it. No. I know he’ll like it.”

Narrowing her gaze on him, Chandra licked her lip. “Are you a serial killer or something?”

He snorted. “No. Why?”

“Are you married?” She couldn’t believe she’d never even thought to ask that. When he shifted and rubbed the back of his neck she drew back fast, covering her mouth as she went. “I didn’t know. I wouldn’t have. Oh gods. I can’t...”

“Chandra.”

She shook her head, wiping her palms over the red material of her floor length, slim fitting skirt. “What kind of man are you?”

He drew his lips in tight. “Chandra, listen to me.”

Her temper flared. How dare he make her feel more than any man ever had and be married? How dare he do that to his wife? How dare he try to take her back with him? A sickening thought occurred to her. “Do you have children?”

Mason’s hot gaze raked down the length of her and a slow smile moved over his face. “Maybe.”

“Maybe? What the hell kind of answer is that?” Chandra pointed towards the back door. “Get out! Now.”

“Chandra, there’s no need for you to be upset.”

“No need? Oh, you really are low. Out. Now.”

If she didn’t know better, she’d have sworn that Mason was trying not to laugh. When a tiny snort broke free of him, she knew that was exactly what he was doing. “Oh, this is funny? I’m sorry but I don’t find the humor in it. I, for one, would never cheat on my husband--if I had one.”

He snickered. “Good to know.”

The urge to hit him upside the back of the head was great. She resisted. “How you could have someone sitting at home waiting for you while you stand here, being all sexy with me is disgusting. Get out before I call someone to remove you from the property.”

Mason leaned against the counter and crossed his arms over his impressive chest. “No.”

She couldn't believe her ears. “No? Are you mad? Get out! You saw what Ferran is capable of. If he finds out you're here and that you're a werewolf, his head might explode.”

“Yeah, I did see what he was capable of and I have to say that if he wouldn't have killed the asshole, I would have.” The serious look on his face told her that he was telling the absolute truth and that scared her. The last thing she needed in her life was a married, homicidal maniac. It wasn't as though things weren't eventful enough with a crazed acting head of the pard and the whole talking to dead people thing. She didn't need to add to it.

“Get out.”

“I can't do that,” Mason said, crossing one ankle over the other looking entirely toosmug. The backdoor opened and her grandfather came shuffling through. He took off his fishing cap and held it against his matching fishing vest. When she spotted his waders, Chandra rolled her eyes. “Grandpa, you can't go fishing today. We're supposed to go into town.”

“Going into town for what?” Mason asked, still leaning against the counter.

“You don't need anything. You're coming with me, remember?”

“No, I'm not.” Chandra pointed at Mason not wanting to hear him say another word. “You, get out now.”

“Can't do that.”

“Grandpa, tell him to get out!” She looked to her grandfather for support. That wasn't what she found. Instead, she found Grandpa staring at Mason with questioning eyes. When she peeked back at Mason she caught him nodding with a sly smile on his face.

“Is it done?” Grandpa asked.

“If you’re asking what I think you’re asking, Gildas,” Mason said, “the answer is yes.

It’s done. I’d like to take you both home with me, if you want. I know that Running Elk would love to see you.”

Chandra’s jaw dropped. “Grandpa, tell Mason to leave before I throw him out.”

“Afraid I can’t do that, Chan. Seems to me the man has a right to stay considering what his new position with you is and all,” Grandpa said.

Chandra’s brow furrowed. “Position with me? What do you mean by that?”

Glancing at the floor, Grandpa’s eyebrows raised. Chandra followed his gaze and

spotted her panties lying near the leg of the table. Heat flared through her cheeks.

“Umm, that’s umm, yeah. Sorry.”

Mason looked down and began to laugh. “That is what you think and I’ll be damned if I apologize for making love to my wife.”

“Your what?” Chandra asked, positive she’d heard him wrong.

“Wife.” Mason raked his gaze down her slowly and settled on her abdomen. “I’m not one hundred percent sure if you’re pregnant or not but if you are then the answer to your question about me having children is yes. If you’re not, then it’s a no.”

Grandpa cleared his throat. “She is. I sensed it the moment I walked in.”

Too shocked to move, Chandra just stood there staring at both men. “No. How?”

“Chan,” Grandpa said. “I think you know how babies are made.”

She growled and Mason laughed. “I don’t mean how about that--and you are wrong about that. I am not pregnant. I mean how can I be his wife?”

“You might want him to explain the finer points, darling. I don’t think you want me talking about it. It’s sufficient to say that he claimed you and you accepted, like I knew you would.”

“He did not....” She stopped when she thought back to their time in the shower. Slowly, the realization of it sunk in. Chandra reached out, needing something to steady herself. When she found Mason’s arm, she took hold of it. “He did claim me.”

“Yep. I sure did.”

She glared at him. “Wipe that smirk off your face!”

“No.” Mason licked his lower lip. “I’m your true mate. You know it. Running Elk knows it. Even your grandfather knows it.”

“No. This can’t be happening. There’s no way that you’re my....” Chandra stopped in mid-sentence and thought about Mason. He was like her--a soul guardian. He was a wolf--Mason Blackwolf. All that the fortune-teller had said was coming true. She shook her head, not wanting to believe that she could find her mate. “No. It can’t be. You can’t be my....”

Mason arched his dark brows, turned his back to her and did something Chandra never expected him to do--he mooned her. His tanned, apple-shaped ass was pure perfection, instantly making her wet. When she spotted the tattoo of a bald eagle on his ass cheek, she let out a choked gasp.

“I can’t say I ever expected to have my grandson-in-law flashing his bare arse at me but I think I can rest assured that the two of you will produce fine babies,” Grandpa said, doing his best to hide a laugh. “Now, pull your pants up, boy. We’ve got to get you two on the road before Ferran or his boys show up.” Grandpa put his fishing hat back on, turned and hightailed it out the door.

Chandra headed out after him only to find a large red truck headed up her drive. Her heart went to her throat and she raced back into the kitchen just in time to find Mason walking out.

“Oh, no you don’t,” she said, pushing him backwards. “You can’t leave now.”

“But you just said that I had to get out.” The smirk on his face said it all. He was screwing with her. She wasn’t sure if she wanted to kiss him or smack him. So far, the urge to knock him out was winning. “I want to meet your guest.”

“No. You really don’t.” She narrowed her gaze. “I’m still mad at you. You are a pig.”

“I prefer to be called a wolf but you aren’t the first woman to call me a pig so I guess I can live with it.”

“That’s not hard to believe.” Rolling her eyes, Chandra gave Mason a good shove and shut the door. Mason winked at her through the window and it took everything in her not to call upon her own personal spirit guides to beg them to curse the man, not that they’d do it. If she had more time she would do it herself. As it stood, she had more pressing matters to attend to.

Grandpa glanced at her from across the stone driveway. “He’ll not take this news well.”

Chandra stared at Ferran’s truck as it approached. “That’s why I’m not telling him.”

“Chan,” Grandpa said, in a warning tone.

“I won’t let Mason be harmed. This has all just been a big misunderstanding. I’m not his wife, his mate, his anything and I’m certainly not...” She stopped just short of saying pregnant because she didn’t want to take a chance that Ferran’s supernatural hearing would pick up on her.

The truck skidded to a stop. Ferran locked gazes with Chandra and got out quickly.

“Hey, how are you feeling?”

“I’m fine. What brings you out here?”

He gave her a puzzled look. “I watched you get attacked by something I couldn’t see or stop, Chandra. I came to with one hell of a headache and the need to make sure you were all right.”

Not wanting to alert him to Mason’s presence, Chandra smiled. “Thanks, Ferran. That means a lot to me. I’m fine. Grandpa and I were just discussing how he’s not getting out of going shopping with me.”

Ferran laughed as he glanced at Grandpa. “How are the fish biting, Gildas?”

“Wouldn’t know.” He pointed at Chandra. “She’s trying to get me to give up a prime fishing time.”

“I could run you into town, Chan,” Ferran said. “I need to pick up a few things too and it will give us time to talk.”

Every ounce of Chandra told her to turn him down, that accepting his offer would only give him the wrong idea but the risk of him discovering Mason was too great. Forcing a smile to her face, Chandra nodded. “Grandpa, looks like you get to go fishing after all.”

“Chandra?” Grandpa shook his head. “I don’t mind. Really.”

“Nonsense. Ferran is right. We need to talk, catch up, all that good stuff. Just give me a minute while I grab my sandals.”

“Sure,” Ferran said, eyeing her cautiously.

Chandra wasted no time. She ran into the house and slammed the door shut behind her. She didn’t even need to look up to know how Mason would react. She could feel his rage radiating off him.

“You are not going anywhere with him.”

“Yes, I am.” She squared her shoulders and looked into his dark eyes. “I trust you can see yourself out while I’m gone. I had fun, Mason, and it was nice to meet someone who shares the same gift. Good-bye.”

Chandra pushed past him and headed towards her room. Mason followed hot on her

heels. “What the fuck is this? You don’t really think that I’m just going to leave and never look back, do you?”

“Yes,” she said, grabbing a clean pair of panties from her drawer. She slipped them on and turned to stare at Mason. Her stomach twisted into knots as she thought about what it would be like to come home and have him gone. But she didn’t have a choice. The alternative, him dying, wasn’t an option.

“Chandra, I claimed you. You are my wife--the future mother of my child.” The pain in his voice almost broke her.

Somehow, she managed to maintain her composure. “I’m none of those things, Mason Blackwolf. And you are to be gone by the time I get back.”

“You’re not going anywhere with that psychopath.”

It was clear that Mason had no intention of going and Chandra had no intention of allowing harm come to him. Drawing in a deep breath, she prepared to do what needed to be done--lie to Mason to get him to leave. “He’s not a psychopath. He’s the man I was supposed to marry. He’s the man I’m going to marry.”

Mason growled out and slammed his fist into the wall. “You’re going to have a fucking hell of a time doing that since you’re already married to me!”

“I would rather,” she swallowed hard, “die than be married to a werewolf. Just because I stand up for them doesn’t mean I want to share my life with one.”

He jerked back as if he’d been struck. Snatching her sandals, Chandra ran with them towards the kitchen door. It was cowardly but it was the only guarantee she had that he’d be safe.

Chapter Four

Ferran pulled up outside of her grandfather's bar and stopped the truck.

Chandra

glanced at him, waiting for him to explain his actions. Reaching out, he put his hand on her thigh and squeezed gently. "How's about we head in for a drink?"

She'd already spent the day shopping with him, doing her best to keep on a happy face when all she wanted to do was break down in tears at the thought of having chased Mason away. She almost asked Ferran to use his cell phone to call home and beg her grandfather to stop Mason but he'd been on it most of the day. Not only that, it would have been a dead giveaway that Mason existed.

"I'm kind of tired," she said, putting her head against his seat. "We had a long day."

"Just one drink." He put his hands up in an 'I'm harmless' manner. "A soda even. Just do me this favor."

Nodding, Chandra opened her truck door. "Ferran."

"Yes."

"Thanks for today. It was nice to see you again." She meant every word she said. It was good to see the Ferran she remembered again. He hadn't gone off on any hate tangents or made any sort of snide comments the entire day. Still, she could never love him the way she once had.

"Not a problem," he said, getting out of the truck.

As Chandra stepped out she stilled as an ominous feeling came over her.

Nothing

seemed out of the ordinary. Ferran came around and took her by the elbow. Instinctively, she jerked away from him. The sideways look he cast her set her nerves on edge.

"Ferran, what's going on?"

He shrugged nonchalantly. "We're stopping at your grandpa's bar for a drink. I thought that was obvious."

Ferran opened the door to the bar and music filled the air. It was loud, rhythmic with a definitive Native American vibe to it. Chandra headed in and spotted Grandpa sitting in his usual spot at the bar. He didn't turn to meet her gaze or acknowledge her at all. That was odd.

Walking in further, Chandra noticed that the place wasn't packed with its normal crowd. Instead, it was full of Ferran's buddies. The men who seemed to worship the very ground Ferran walked on. They thought him a savior after the werewolf attacks and agreed with him that the only good werewolf was a dead one.

She licked her lips. Something was off. She just wasn't sure what it was. "Hi, Grandpa. How was fishing?"

"I didn't feel much up to it so I didn't go. Did you have a nice day, Chandra?"

Didn't feel much up to it? The man had been in waders at the crack of dawn. Chandra eyed her grandfather carefully, unsure what was going on. As she glanced at Ferran's friends, it hit her that they were the ones listening to the music. The same music Ferran had been so quick to criticize the night before.

"Grandpa?"

Ferran moved up behind her and wrapped his arms around her waist. She tried to step out of his embrace only to find him pulling her back towards him. "Now, Chan, is that any way to react to my touch?"

"What's going on?"

"We've been over this already, Chandra." He hugged her tight and pressed his lips against her ear. "I forget, did you want a drink or soda? I know they say alcohol is bad for the baby and all but..."

Chandra froze. Baby? The music. Grandpa not wanting to fish. Her mind raced with it all and her stomach dropped out on her. "Did you hurt him?"

"Hurt who?" Ferran asked, kissing her neck and pressing his body to hers.

"Don't play games with me, Ferran." She shoved off him, just barely managing to break his hold on her. "Did you hurt him?"

Lifting his hands in the air, he looked around the bar. "I'm afraid I don't know what you're talking about."

"Did you hurt Mason?" she asked, not bothering to mask her fear.

"You'll have to be more specific," he tipped his head and stared out through narrow eyes, "after all, I'm a monster now. It's hard for me to keep track of who I've hurt."

Frantically, Chandra visually searched the bar and found no sign of Mason. "Grandpa, did they hurt Mason?"

"Gildas," Ferran said, his tone threatening. "I'll do it."

"You won't do a damn thing," Chandra spat. "Answer my question. Did you hurt Mason?"

He chuckled. "No. I didn't lay a hand on him. Why is he so important to you?"

She fought to keep her breathing under control but failed. "Mason! Where are you? Mason!"

Ferran's buddies took turns snickering. Chandra glared at them. "If he's been harmed in any way, I will personally kill each and every one of you."

"Chandra," Grandpa said, finally glancing in her direction. "You can't do that."

"Yes, I can. Where is he? You know. Tell me."

"Gildas." Ferran pointed at him. "If any soul could take hers, it would be mine."

"What are you talking about?" She shook her head. "You aren't dead. I only escort the dead, Ferran. Though, if you harmed Mason, you will beg me for death."

"Now, Chandra." He smiled and took a seat as if nothing was out of sorts. "Is that any way to talk to the man you spent the day with? The man you tried to

keep from finding out you had another man in your house? The man you tried to hide the fact you're mated and with child from?"

"I'm not with...." Reaching down, she ran her hand over her lower abdomen and instantly felt sick to her stomach. "Oh gods, Mason wasn't kidding. I'm ... we're oh gods. What have you done to him?"

Ferran propped his feet up on the table. "The way I see it, you ran out on him the minute you saw an opening. I'm willing to let this go unpunished since it was really just a one-night stand gone horribly wrong. But, I'll need you to do a little something for me."

"I won't let you hurt my baby," she said, so fast it took even her by surprise.

"Gildas was quick to point out on the phone to me, when he was begging me not to slit your throat while we were out today that the likelihood of you carrying the baby through a battle with a dark spirit is slim."

"Mason isn't a dark spirit." She took another step back in an attempt to get all of the bar's occupants in her line of sight. "Where is he?"

Ferran folded his hands on his lap and offered up a smug smile. "Funny, you were so fast to run off and leave this Mason character all alone but now you act like you care. Do you care, Chandra?"

"Yes."

One of Ferran's friends snorted and Chandra made a mental note to kill him the first chance she got.

"How much do you care, Chan?"

She let her power up. "A lot."

"Do you love him?" Ferran asked.

She was about to say no but stopped. It was easy to visualize Mason's brown eyes staring down at her while he smiled. The way he made her feel by simply being in the same room as her was unlike anything she'd ever imagined. He was her Mr. Right--her true mate. "Yes. I love him."

“That’s a real shame then.” Ferran snapped his fingers and the back entrance to the bar opened. “Bring the piece of shit in.”

Turning, Chandra found three men dragging a lifeless body in. When she realized it was indeed Mason and that he was covered in claw marks, she gasped. “No! Mason. Gods no. I’m sorry. I thought I could lead him away and keep you safe. I thought you’d go.”

“He got a taste of that sweet pussy of yours, Chandra,” Ferran said, appearing behind her suddenly. “No man walks away from that. Trust me on this one.”

Rage consumed her. She spun around and thrust her fist out, catching Ferran’s jaw as she went. His head snapped back and he let out a wicked laugh. “Whoohoo, that’s it, Chan. Come on. Show me what you’ve got.”

“Chandra,” Grandpa said. “He’s baiting you.”

“If he wants me to kill him then he’s going to get his wish.” She kicked out and scored a direct hit to Ferran’s gut. When he made no move to counter or protect himself, she paused.

“What’s wrong, Chandra? Don’t you have it in you to hurt me? Sure you do.” He laughed. “Dig deep. You had no problem leaving me to travel the world. You had no problem shacking up with the very thing that drove us apart--a fucking werewolf!”

“Mason had nothing to do with those attacks and you know it.”

“He’s one of them, Chandra. One of the filthy beasts that have no business living, let alone fucking our women.” He swiped his hand over his mouth and came away with blood. “He even had the nerve to fuck my woman. Then he planted his seed in you, thinking you’d actually bring another one of their kind into this world.” He snorted. “He’s worse than the ones who came. He actually thinks he’s good enough for you.”

“He’s more than I deserve, Ferran.” Tears threatened to fall but she held them at bay. “Don’t do this. Call your men off. Hurting him won’t get you in my good graces.”

“Don’t you think I’ve figured that out?” he asked, looking every bit the part of the psychopath Mason had referred to him as.

The door to the bar opened and Bertin rushed in. “This has gone far enough, Ferran. Leave her husband alone.”

“You knew?” Ferran asked, glaring at Bertin. “You did, didn’t you? You probably knew the second the bastard walked in that he was Chandra’s mate.”

Bertin nodded. “I did and I also knew he was a good man. He’ll take care of her and never harm her.”

“He’s an Indian piece of shit werewolf. They don’t come any lower than that.”

Chandra seized hold of a chair and whipped it at Ferran. It cracked over his head and knocked him to the ground. “He is my husband--my mate and the father of my child. You will treat him with respect because he is a better man than you ever were, Ferran!”

She went to finish the job and instantly found herself being wrapped in her grandfather’s magik. It held her in place. “Grandpa, what are you doing? Let go of me. I can’t protect Mason if I’m stuck like this. Let go!”

“Mason is dead, Chandra,” Grandpa said, his voice low. “Do you not feel it?”

“No.” She shook her head. “He’s not dead. I’d know. He’s not dead!”

“Check the bastard for a pulse.” Ferran pushed to his feet and laughed.

“Nothing,” one of his friend’s said as they touched Mason’s neck. “He’s gone. Looks like she was too late to guard his soul.”

“No!” Chandra tried to break free of her grandfather’s hold but couldn’t. Screaming out, she thrust her own power out, calling on the spirits for help. It was dangerous in her current state of mind but there was no way she was about to allow Ferran to get away with what he’d done. “Let go of me!”

“No. I will not allow you to put my great grandchild at risk.”

Ferran charged Grandpa and Chandra was powerless to stop him. Bertin stepped to the side just as a flash of white blond moved in behind him. There was a snarl and then the thunderous sound of the spirits approaching. It took her mind a moment to process what it was seeing.

There, slamming Ferran to the ground was her brother Wesley. His long blond hair

hung just past his shoulders and his normally blue eyes blazed with amber he swept a clawed hand out and over Ferran's throat.

"Wesley, no!" Grandpa shouted as Ferran dropped to the floor.

Panting, Wesley stared at Grandpa. "Are you hurt?"

Grandpa moved off the barstool with a speed Chandra had never seen him use before. He rushed towards her. "Wesley, get your sister out of here, now!" "No, let the dark spirits come," she said, sinking to her knees. "Let them take me. I let him die. I shouldn't have left him. I should have stayed or left with him." She stared at Mason's lifeless body and let the tears she'd been holding in out.

Wesley took hold of her and lifted her off her feet. "Grandpa said go. You go, now."

He took a deep breath in. "You're mated and you're," his eyes widened, "pregnant."

"Get her out of here!" Grandpa yelled. "Mason, she's not going to make it out before they get here!"

"Huh?" She choked back a sob. "He's dead."

"I know. I'm the one who killed him," Grandpa said, staring at her like she was the one spouting insanities.

"You what?" she and Wesley echoed.

"The minute Ferran called and threatened to kill him Mason knew what he was planning. He asked me to do it."

"Wait, let me get this straight," Wesley said, rubbing a hand over his goatee. "Chandra went and got herself mated and knocked up, then you got the okay from the guy to kill him?"

"Yep, that's about it. Now get her out of here."

She felt it then, the dark spirits coming for Ferran's soul. Something else entered the mix. Something warm, bright, full of power and goodness. Mason. Chandra pushed free of her brother's grasp and spun around to find Mason's soul poised and ready to attack.

"Take her and go!" Grandpa shouted. "She can't protect the baby and Ferran knew that. It's why he wanted someone to kill him. He knew he could take Chandra with him and open the gates to hell in the process."

"On that note--" Wesley snatched her up and rushed her towards the door, ignoring her protests on the way.

"Mason! No!"

Epilogue

Rolling over onto her side, Chandra did her best to ride the pain out. The cramping in her stomach worsened. She clawed at the sheets and exhaled slowly. It didn't help. Giving in, she nudged her husband. "Honey, I think it's time."

"Hmm?" he asked, peeking out from one eyelid. "Hey, baby, what's the matter? You didn't have another bad dream, did you? I'm fine. You're fine. We're all fine."

Her stomach tightened again and Chandra bit her lower lip as she took hold of his upper arm. "Mason ... it's ... time."

He jerked awake and touched her swollen belly. "Ohmygods, it's time. The baby's coming? Now?"

"Hopefully not right this very second but soon. We need to call your grandfather."

“Right.” He went to stand and ended up falling off the side of the bed instead.

Chandra rolled her eyes and did her best not to laugh. “You aren’t going to pass out are you?”

Mason got to his feet quickly and shook his head, sending a mop of dark hair flopping around. “I’m good. Are you good? No. You’re having a baby. We’re having a baby. Chan, sweetie, we’re having a baby.”

Another contraction hit as she tried to sit up. Mason was at her side in an instant, helping her to a seated position. “Breathe, sweetie. Breathe.”

Arching a brow, Chandra gave him a hard look. “Get your grandfather or so help me, I will choke the life out of you and I will not allow my grandpa to use his magik to bring you back.”

Mason looked pained. “You’re not still mad about that, are you? I didn’t have a choice, Chan. I knew Gildas was powerful enough to bring me back with ease. I had to fight Ferran and the dark spirits on their plane. It had to be done. You know that it did. I couldn’t risk you or the baby.”

She glared at him. “Running Elk now. Kiss my ass later.”

“I love you,” he said, planting a kiss on her cheek.

“I love you, too.” She took hold of his ear and twisted. “Call your grandfather or the next thing I yank to the point of pain is your penis.”

“Running Elk!” Mason shouted, his eyes wide. Chandra let go of him and he rushed to their bedroom door. The minute he opened it, she spotted her grandfather and Mason’s standing there with identical shit assed grins on their faces. Mason drew back fast. “How did you...? I was just going to call you.”

Running Elk patted Mason’s shoulder. “Gildas sensed Chandra’s pain and called me. We thought it best to come right over and not wait for you to phone.”

“Remind me to yell at you both for having no faith in me later. Right now,”

Mason took a step back, allowing them to enter, “we’ve got a baby coming.”

Grandpa nodded. “Yes, you do. She’ll be here before you know it. Now, go wait at the door to let Wesley and Brayen in.”

“Why are they coming?”

Running Elk winked at Chandra. “Because I called them. We will need them to pick you up when you pass out.”

“Pfft, I’m not going to ... wait, Gildas, did you say ‘she’ just now?”

Grandpa nodded. “Yes. I thought Chan told you that you were having a girl.”

“He wanted it to be a surprise,” she said, preparing for her next contraction.

Mason paled considerably and staggered. “A girl? I’m going to be a daddy--of a little girl.”

“Yes, honey. You need to calm down. You’re the one who wants to have six kids.”

His eyes rolled back in his head a second before he hit the floor. Grandpa and Running Elk laughed as they stepped over him. Chandra just shook her head.

“That’s not funny, you two.”

They chuckled.

Chandra sighed. “Okay, it is funny but it’s not nice. We can’t just leave him there. That’s my husband.”

“We know. But that really is the best place for him at the moment. We’ll wake him in a minute,” Grandpa said, winking at her.

Chandra stared down at Mason and couldn’t stop the swell of emotions that roared through her. “I love him so much.” Another contraction hit. “I’m ... going to kill him. Six more my ass! Let me at him.”

She reached out but was in no condition to move anywhere.

Grandpa nodded. “See, it’s the best place for him because you can’t reach him. He’ll need all his body parts to make the rest of our great grandbabies,” he said, patting Running Elk on the back.