



CHAPTER ONE

Ted Noble sorted through the papers on his old military style desk. The file on the Jasper case had disappeared beneath the massive piles of documents. *It was here earlier.* He lifted his keyboard and checked under it. Only the cheap, wooden desktop stared back at him. Damn it. He shoved the file folders to the center, and sank back in his chair, slamming his knee against the gun metal gray drawer. His hand scrubbed his tired face. He hated desk work. Since his partner, Krystal Maxey, had run off to get married, he'd been left pulling desk duty at the police station.

He stared at the photos on his wall. Pictures of animals he and Krystal had saved over the years, working together on cases nobody else in the department wanted. There were so many it was starting to look like a collage. What once were filthy, skinny bundles of fur and bone were now happy and healthy pets. He was proud of their work together, and damn it, he missed his partner.

"Hey, Noble, come out here. You gotta see this."

He jerked his head up to meet the gaze of Patrol Officer Jensen. The kid's white blond hair accentuated the pale, freckled skin of his face. Freckles lit up with a wide smile. "Carson told me you'd want to come see."

Ted bit back a groan. Carson was forever having him check out single women when they came into the station to file reports. Being resigned to desk duty made it impossible for him to escape. Ted stood, not hiding the snarl of disgust on his face. He may as well get this over with.

"Who is she?"

The young man shrugged, leading the way. They made these cops younger every day. "Got me. I'm just coming to get you, like Carson says. He says you were supposed to be manning the front desk anyway."

"Shit," grumbled Ted. He'd forgotten. Just like he'd forgotten yesterday, when he was supposed to be there too. He hated front desk duty even more than he hated the paperwork piling up in his own office. If he didn't have a need to be in this police station, he'd chunk it and head on out for a little fun. After all, guys needed to enjoy life. Or so he'd been told.

He stepped into the front office. The scent of wild flowers seeped through the room. He'd always loved the scent of naturally grown flowers. He cocked his head, enjoying the sweet fragrance.

A woman stood on the other side of the high counter at the other end of the room, her finger tapping on the surface, giving way to her impatience. Long sweeps of multi shaded brown hair draped down past her shoulders. The locks of hair looked so soft, with small fragments lifting

with the air conditioner blowing down on her. Her tresses were thick. So thick he could picture himself curling his fingers amid the strands, sifting them, holding on to them.

He gave himself a mental shake. Don't even go there. Because once that line was crossed, Carson would never let him live it down.

"Look, I've been waiting for almost twenty minutes. When is someone going to take my complaint?"

Ted stared for long seconds, feeling her voice as it trickled down his spine like a thousand delicate fingers, caressing and teasing every part of him.

Then, as though she felt him watching, the woman turned to meet his gaze. Bright blue eyes stared back at him. Crisp, like on a cold winter's day, brighter than the afternoon summer sky, they drew him in, piercing him through to his soul. For that single instant in time, he wondered if she could read everything about him. For Fae's sake, he hoped not. He shrugged, then stepped forward. If he was going to be stuck in the human realm, he may as well do the job he'd been using as a cover. Besides there wouldn't be any hardship with this lady. She was way too easy on the eyes. And probably just as soft and easy beneath his hands.

Knock it off. He didn't need to be messing with any women in the human realm. He had enough problems with the Fae females, clambering to meet him for what he was, rather than who he was. If he took up with someone other than a Fae, his father would have his head.

"Sorry for the delay," he ground out, surprised at the roughness of his voice. He stepped up to the counter and pulled out a citizen complaint form, spinning it to face her and pulled out a pen. "What can I do for you?"

The woman frowned, her mouth tense. "I need to report a missing person." Her eyes trailed over him, then she stepped back, her face grimacing in distaste. Ted fought the urge to frown in return. Hell, he'd had women not be interested before, usually because they found him too sensual and easy, but none had such a strong reaction as to step away from him.

"Who's missing?"

Unable to resist his nature, he scanned her, his gaze trailing over those delicious feminine curves, her hips and breasts just right for a man with large hands, not too big, and not too small. He fought the urge to smile.

She cleared her throat and he looked up to meet those icy blue eyes.

"Are you finished?" she demanded.

Ted fought the urge to growl the rumble of anger rising in his throat. It was a shame her personality didn't match the rest of her.

“I asked, who’s missing?” He tried to offer her his best concerned look. It didn’t work. She was busy digging into her purse and didn’t even look up. He hoped it wasn’t her husband.

“My brother.”

He bit back his uncharacteristic sigh of relief. What the hell was wrong with him? Normally, if he took up with any non-Fae, it meant he was out for fun, and he didn’t care if she was married, single or even into both sexes. Yet he couldn’t help himself. He glanced at her finger to confirm it was bare. It was. Ignoring the unusual rush of... something... in his gut, he jotted down a few notes.

“And when was the last time you saw him, Mrs. –”

“Miss. Sasha Corwin.”

“Well, Miss Sasha Corwin,” he rolled the name over his tongue, “when was the last time you saw your brother?”

“More than twenty years ago.” She finally found what she searched for in her purse, and pulled out a small photograph.

“And you are just now reporting him missing?”

“No, Barney Fife. I didn’t say he’d been missing twenty years. You asked how long since I’d seen him, and that’s more than twenty years. He’s been missing three or four months.”

Ted ignored the derogatory reference. It came with the territory. That territory being a small North Carolina town not far from the Andy Griffith memorial statue in Raleigh. “All right.” He struggled to keep the conversation going, despite the sudden flush of heat burning inside him. “So he’s been missing three or four months and you are just now reporting it.”

“I didn’t know,” she said, her tone filled with exasperation, as though she thought him insane. He wanted to shake this beautiful woman until her teeth rattled. Or kiss her until she quit staring at him like some back woods hick police officer.

He snatched the photo from her fingers, flipping it around to see a skinny boy about six years old. He stood in the woods, petting a dog. He narrowed his eyes and looked closer. No, that was a wolf. “I take it this is him?”

She nodded. “Yes. We had different mothers, so we lived in different cities. While I haven’t had contact with him since just after that was taken, everyone always kept me updated on how and where he was. About three months ago, the reports stopped. When I checked with his family, it turned out they hadn’t heard from him for some time. The last they heard he was about to end his time in the service and come home. It never happened.”

“And do you have a name for this man?”

“Connell. Damon Connell.”

Ken arched a brow in surprise. He knew a Damon Connell. The guy with the memory problem his partner married. “And you say it’s been several months? Do you have any information about where he lived? Have you been to his home?”

“Of course I have,” she scoffed. “It’s been cleaned out. All of his stuff is gone. No forwarding address.”

“I see.” He couldn’t tell her he knew where Connell was, until he was sure the man he knew was the right one. He slid the complaint form closer to her and handed her a pen. Even if she weren’t Fae, it didn’t serve to get her hopes up only to dash them later. “Write what you know here. Include any points of contact of who may have seen him last. While you’re at it, put the make and model of his vehicle, his age, and a description if you can.” He waved toward the picture she still held. “Something a bit more recent than this.” He held out the picture to her.

Sasha snatched the photo from his hand and stuck it back in her purse, ignoring the pounding of her heart. What the hell was wrong with her? So what if he was hot looking. So what if he had the sexiest green eyes she’d ever seen. He was Fae. It didn’t take a genius to see through the thinly veiled magick he used to hide his ears from the humans. If she’d been human, maybe it would have worked, but as a wolvern, she could see through the most basic of Fae magics. Fae and wolves did not mix, no matter how much she might want to. He smirked when she glanced back up to his face. He was an ass.

Then again, she might want to see that sexy ass without a counter in the way.

Stop that!

"And here I thought cops could do things with old photos, like age them or something using software." She kept her voice sweet, with just a little tart added, so he wouldn't try to flirt. Fae always flirted. It was just in their nature. Though this one hadn't done much more than not get pissed off when she insulted him. Yet she'd seen the way he looked at her. Fae were not the most discriminating of sexual partners, and who knew who he'd been with before.

She would not be swayed by his attraction. Nor would she be swayed by the power she felt rolling off him, or even his rich, luxurious hair which made her want to slide her nails through it. It wasn't too long, just enough to brush the tops of his ears. No, make that hide the tops of his ears.

Combined with his magick, it had taken her a moment to realize his true race.

He shrugged those handsome shoulders that would make an Olympic swimmer jealous. "If we have to, but it takes a long time to get that done. If you like, I'll contact the FBI and see if it can be arranged."

"No, that would take too long. I want him found now. I have this feeling...."

She didn't know how to share her thoughts, but she knew her brother was in trouble. The last time she'd seen him, back about four months ago, he hadn't seemed to remember her. He'd simply nodded, agreeing to anything she said. That worried her. Just because they'd been raised separately didn't mean he didn't care for her. What frightened her was worrying if humans had found out what he was, and were after him. Then he would lie and not acknowledge his sister. And only then.

"What gives you that feeling?"

"I can't explain it, it's just when I spoke to him last, he seemed confused. Edgy."

"Could he have been on drugs?"

Fury ripped through her and Sasha fought the desire to let her teeth drop and rip Ted Noble's perfect face apart. "Of course not! How dare you. My brother's a good man."

"Don't get all huffy," he said, his hands displayed palms out in a placating gesture. "I have to ask these things. It's required."

"I don't care if it is or not. Here's your stupid forms," she said, shoving the complaint form at him. "My number's on top. Call me the instant you hear something."

She stormed out of the door and stalked to the car. Even as she tried to gain control over her temper, the wolf inside her stormed in fury. How dare he think Damon would do drugs. He was her brother.

"Miss Corwin," she turned to see Officer Noble headed her way. "Your copy."

She snatched the sheet from him and turned around, just in time for her heel to catch on a crack in the sidewalk. Her ankle turned in an awkward angle, pain screaming up her shin. She bit back the torrent of curses threatening in her throat. Yanking her heel free, she stormed toward the car. "Thanks," she growled over her shoulder.

A warm hand cupped her elbow and she jerked it away.

"At least let me help you to your car. You almost took a nasty spill."

His fingers burned through her blouse, heating her blood. The wolf inside her stirred, but not in anger. Curiosity.

"I don't need any Fae help," she growled, forcing herself to stay angry. The Fae were good at that, being nice to you until they could get what they wanted. And there was no way this man was going to get what he wanted. Sex. Nope. Nada. Not from her, anyway.

"What did you say?" he growled, jerking her to a halt. He faced her, his green eyes flashing beneath the bright sunlight. Why did he have to be so damned handsome, anyway?

"I said, I don't need a Fae's help."

"How do you know what I am?"

Well the anger in his eyes, for one thing. Fae's eyes twinkled with a special gold fleck when they were angry. But she wasn't about to tell him that. A Fae was powerful, and with that power was danger.

"It's not hard to tell. You think your glamour works on everyone, don't you? Well, it doesn't work on me." She yanked her arm from his grip again, massaging where he'd touched. Not because it hurt, but damn it had felt kind of nice.

"Is something wrong?" another voice echoed in her mind.

She turned to see Jasper, her pack mate, moving toward her. Something akin to relief mixed with frustration.

"Officer Noble was just giving me copies of my report before he got busy on finding my brother." She turned, taking Jasper's arm for support. He wrapped an arm about her waist and helped her to the car. Her ankle really did hurt, and she'd have to shift soon to heal. She stopped and looked over her shoulder. "Don't forget to give me updates as soon as you have them. I want my brother found. And if you can't do it, find an officer who can."

CHAPTER TWO

Ted tossed the pen on his desk. He'd called each of his contacts with the military, checking on Damon, only to find he'd been "loaned" to the GSA prior to being medically discharged from the Army. Curious, he'd asked what was the reason for the medical, only to discover those records were classified. Humans had a way of hiding information unlike any other race in the realm.

He'd hoped when he'd been tasked by the woman to find Damon, he could use her as an "in" into the GSA. He needed to infiltrate them, and fast. If he didn't, the council would snatch his ass back to the Fae court faster than he could sprinkle magic dust on his pointy ears. One thing he didn't want to do, was go back without Tamed, his best friend and body guard.

The trill of the phone echoed in his lonely office. He snatched it wishing, not for the first time, the sounds in this human world weren't quite so sharp and edgy. After all, a Fae's ears are sensitive. "Noble," he grumbled into the phone.

"There's a woman here to see you. Sasha Corwin?"

"Be right there." He slammed the receiver down and was out of his seat in seconds. Maybe she had more information. Maybe something which would help him find the Phouka Tamed had come in search of, and that could lead him to his friend. The shape shifting Fae had made an enemy of the GSA and Tamed had been determined to rescue the man. Now both had disappeared.

Sasha stood on the other side of the front desk, staring at the Most Wanted posters. She was as beautiful as he remembered. Heat swept over him, rushing to his loins. He emotionally clamped down on his libido. Now wasn't the time to let his own desires get in the way. A shame, really, because shifters were known to be very hot in bed, and he had no doubt this woman was a wolf shifter. The photo with her brother had a female wolf standing at his side. A wolf with beautiful ice blue eyes.

He walked around and took her arm. "Let's talk over lunch."

She jerked her arm from him and took a step back. "I'm not hungry," she growled.

Ted fought a smile. Not for food, at least.

One reason the Fae were so feared in the paranormal community was their innate ability to identify pheromones, even faster than shifters. They could detect any mood changes and any underlying fears when all else was

hidden. And this little lady was hiding her emotions physically well. Her pheromones told a different story.

“But I am. Come. There’s a small diner down the road. I have information for you, as well as a few questions.”

She remained quiet on the walk, and he wondered what she was thinking. He hoped it was about him. The scent of her arousal called to him more powerfully than the sparkle of diamonds. And diamonds were a true Fae weakness. It was the only earthly trinket he kept in his coffers. That, and a few pairs of ladies panties from previous conquests.

Inside the diner, he held her chair for her. She glared at him as she dropped into it, but he smiled. He knew how these shifters thought. They fought their arousal with everything they had, unless it was with another shifter. He didn’t care. If he decided he was ready to sleep with her, he’d find a way to seduce her.

When they ordered, she chose coffee. He couldn’t help himself. He ordered her a big slice of apple pie.

“I said, I’m not hungry.”

He shrugged. “And I find I want to feed you.” He glanced over her body, enjoying the subtle curves. “It won’t hurt you.”

The waitress dropped the pie and coffee before each of them, and before she left, she gave Ted the once over. He sensed her casual desire and flashed her a brilliant smile. It was nice to be appreciated.

Sasha curled a lip at the woman, exposing the tip of a fang.

She was jealous. He grinned. He liked that. Then an image of that fang sliding into his flesh sent a delicious wave of heat through his body. The grin faded. He was Fae. The Fae didn’t have fangs. Why the hell would he find a glimpse of hers so sexy?

“I thought you said you had questions for me. It’s been two days and not a word from you. I want answers.”

Clearing his throat, he dived in. “I checked on Damon’s military records. It appears he transferred from the Airborne unit he’d been with, to the GSA. Have you heard of it?”

She frowned, creating the perfect little dimple between her eyes. For the moment he forgot what he was talking about, instead, staring at the perfection of her face. The soft, gentle curve of her cheek and the life glittering in her bright blue eyes grabbed his attention.

“Stop staring,” She growled. “Did you even hear what I said?”

He mentally shook himself. Damn it. This was why the Fae didn’t mix well with humans. He couldn’t seem to carry a conversation without

phasing out. Time just didn't work the same on the earth plane as it did in the Fae plane. And it was so easy to get lost while looking at her.

"No, sorry, I was distracted."

She cut him a sharp look. "I said, I hadn't heard of it."

He forced himself back into the conversation. "The GSA usually stands for the Government Services Agency, a supply agency for the military, but I don't think that's what Damon was transferred to." He held her gaze with his eyes. "I think it's the Government Control of Supernatural Abilities."

He waited, wondering if she would spill her secret so he could better find her brother. She tipped her chin upward and stared down her nose at him. After a long moment of silence her lids dropped, shielding her eyes from his gaze. Her fingers tightened on her coffee cup. "What makes you think that?"

"Damon wasn't the supply type. And rumor mill says there's another organization, hiding under the same acronym, in the hopes no one will notice." When she didn't reply, he continued. "They claim to be an agency designed to monitor and assist anyone who suddenly develops a talent they can't control. But that's not their primary goal. Instead, they take captive any person they believe has special gifts. Does Damon have any special talents?"

He already knew the answer, but he had to get her to acknowledge, so they could get on the same page. He could sense the change in her when she made her decision. The warm scent of arousal was mixed with the sharp scent of concern.

Her eyes narrowed and she glanced around the room, scanning for hidden dangers. At last she focused on him, staring with such intent, he almost squirmed in his chair. Almost. Fae Princes don't squirm. Instead, he stared back.

"He's a shapeshifter."

Sasha expected some kind of response from Noble. A raised eyebrow, a glance that said he thought she was crazy. Anything but what she got. A simple nod. Her eyes narrowed. For a Fae he was very perceptive. He'd already guessed.

"You aren't surprised."

"Of course not. Did you think I would take someone to dinner and research the GSA the way I did if I didn't know about the paranormal community?"

"Why are you here? Why would you leave the Fae realm and come to ours? Fae hate shifters and humans."

He shrugged. "I'm searching for someone. An old friend who has disappeared. He came to town searching for a Phouka."

She rolled her eyes. "All we need around here is a Phouka."

He growled. "Look, the Phouka was captured by the GSA. All the signs point to your brother being captured by the GSA as well. We should work together. It's the best way for us to get the answers we're searching for."

She stared long and hard at him. Was he really asking for her help? "I didn't think the Fae worked well with anyone."

He leaned back in his chair, his fingers playing with his cup. "I'm not like most Fae. Besides, my people have given them both up for dead, and I refuse to believe it."

"Sasha," the male voice drawled at her side. She looked up to see Jasper at her side. "The pack alpha demands your presence."

She sighed. Brennan was a good pack leader. Most of the time, but this was not going to sit well with him. She cut a look at Ted before turning to Jasper. "Fine. Did he say why?"

Jasper glared at Ted. "It seems the company you keep is a big questionable."

Sudden, shocking protective instincts reared inside. How dare Brennan consider Ted beneath her. Sasha didn't bite back the snarl exploding from her chest. The other guests in the diner all looked in her direction before glancing quickly away. "The company I keep is my own damned business." She stood, her chair falling to the floor. Ted stood as well, righting her chair with a smile toward the waitress and dropping cash on the table. Twenty dollars for coffee and pie?

"I'm coming with you," he said, easing between her and Jasper with a grin. "Sasha needs my help and I need hers. I'm not letting you shifters scare her off."

Before she could review her unusual behavior, he'd ushered them from the diner and into his police cruiser.

CHAPTER THREE

"Sasha," growled Brandon, "I can't allow this to continue." Sasha's alpha snarled, rising himself to his full height, towering over everyone there. Including Ted.

"You can't allow what to continue? You're the one who gave me authorization to search for my brother using human methods." She wasn't about to back down when she'd already cleared this with him in the first place. Her brother could be in big trouble, and she wasn't going to leave him to his fate.

"But he's not human," Brandon sniffed the man beside her, then sneezed. If the grimace on his face was anything to go by, he didn't like the smell of the Fae. Funny, she had never noticed anything unpleasant about his odor. In fact, it was downright spicy. A scent that did something unusual to her insides. So unusual she found herself ready to step forward and protect him.

"No, I am not. But that doesn't mean I can't assist her." Ted stepped forward, confidence in broad shoulders and in his eyes. He met the Alpha's gaze without any hesitation.

Admiration rolled through Sasha. Usually any Fae near a pack were on the defensive, the cold war having gone un-fought for centuries, but not forgotten.

"What is your name, Fae?" Spat Brandon.

"Micholaisan, The Third, at your service." Ted gave a sweep of his arm into a low bow before rising, his eyes on her.

Sasha's blood ran cold. The Fae weren't named after their parents. Instead, *The Third* was a title. Shit. He was third in line for the throne. "You lied to me" she muttered, under her breath.

"We just hadn't gotten that far," he murmured back. "Ted is the nickname for The Third, so I didn't lie."

"And what do you, Prince of the Fae, want with Sasha?" Her Alpha wasn't ready to be brushed aside for their conversation.

Ted shrugged. He needed to be careful. Woven dynamics had always interested him, and one thing he knew was how a dressing down by Sasha's pack leader in front of them all would only lead to trouble. For her. And for him.

Tension rose in the small clearing and the other wovlen gathered closer. Lips curled, exposing sharp white fangs. A few of the females looked ready for blood, and he knew what that meant. They wanted her position in the pack.

"I need Sasha's assistance. I have reason to believe her brother, Damon, is alive and well. I also have reason to believe he has been held captive by the same organization who holds a friend of mine captive. Together, we plan to fight the GSA and keep them from bothering your pack again."

Murmurs of surprise echoed through the woods. He knew if they could at least scare the GSA away from both the Fae and the shifter pack, Sasha would keep her position. One he knew she'd earned.

Ted scanned those surrounding them. The eyes and snarls had softened, but not entirely abated. At least none of the males watched her the way a mate would, except maybe Jasper, though there was no possessiveness in his gaze. Just concern.

Sasha stepped beside Ted and took his hand. He almost jerked away in surprise, but caught himself just in time. He smiled down at her, giving her fingers a squeeze.

She stepped forward, dragging him with her. With her eyes her eyes suitably averted, but her body stiff and ready to fight, she stood in front of her Alpha. Then, to the gasps of all those around, she raised her eyes in defiance. "I intend to work with Prince Micholaisan, the Third to find my brother and his friend. If you have problems with this, I'll be happy to take on any takers." She tipped her chin up in defiance, waiting for his ruling.

His lip curled, but he nodded. It was then Ted knew even though she and the alpha were not mated, she was definitely a strong female in this pack hierarchy.

CHAPTER FOUR

Sasha stepped back to Ted's side and whispered, "mind if I keep calling you Ted?"

Ted tried to hide the grin developing on his face, but wasn't very successful. He glanced at the woman at his side, who snarled in return.

"What?"

"You like me." He tried to not to feel smug. Hell, he should be waiting for the massive explosion of anger at having a woman have to stand between him and a male, but he couldn't help himself.

"I do not."

He held up their still joined hands as proof. She jerked her hand away and stalked ahead of him. "That just means I had to put on a good front. You'd know if you understood shifters."

"Ahh, but I do know." He nodded toward the alpha. "He favors you. No other female could ever do what you did back there unless the Alpha thought very highly of her."

"He's my half brother, of course he does."

Sasha ducked into Ted's Patrol car without another word and slammed the door shut, snapping closed the seat belt and folding her arms. Then again, his name wasn't even Ted. What else had he lied to her about?

After he finished buckling up and starting the engine, she glared at him. "You lied to me."

"Not technically. Ted *is* my nickname. Just because it has another connotation doesn't mean it's not what I use. And besides, I don't want everyone to know I'm Fae royalty. It's a pain in the ass, and people think you can do something for them, so they don't act like themselves. I happen to want people to like me for myself."

Sasha pondered his words. "Well, I never said I liked you, but at least I understand your reasons. But you could have said something before embarrassing me in front of my entire pack! And how is it you already know where my brother is?"

"I didn't say I knew where he was right this moment. I said, I know who took him captive."

"And you said you knew the GSA is involved. Isn't that just a little coincidental that the same group who took your friend also took Damon? I know how the Fae work. You aren't interested in helping others. Your people are selfish pranksters. Hell, I don't even know how old you are."

He cursed and pulled the car to the side of the road, putting it in park. He gave her his full attention, and what attention it was. Without the magic to hide his ears, she could see their points reddened in his anger.

And his eyes.

Damn, if his eyes didn't steal her breath away. The scent of anger burned hot in the car, and for a moment, she could almost see him as a shifter. Hot, powerful, masculine, ready to fight for what he believed. Up to now she'd seen his charming side. While the Fae were known for their charm, she'd never heard anything about this sudden hot aggression she saw now. Her body warmed in response, and she swallowed the soft rumble rising in her throat.

"Think about it, Sasha. The GSA pretends to supervise the paranormal community that the rest of the world doesn't even know exists. There's nobody to stop them. Nobody to monitor to make sure they aren't up to something. Tamed came to town in search of the Phouka, it's true. But he got a message to me, said the GSA was doing experiments. On shifters. Now if you don't care about whoever they're playing God with, feel free to get out now, go back to your pack, and let them deal with it. Or, you can stay with me, and we'll find out what's happening. It's your choice."

The spark of emotion in his green eyes did something to her. It made her worry for his friend. If Tamed was at the same place Damon was, then maybe it would be good for the two of them to work together. "How old are you?" The question leapt from her lips before she realized she'd even thought of it.

Ted jolted back a bit, his eyes widening. "How old am I? That has no bearing." He shook his head. "But since you asked, I'm two hundred and fifty."

"Years?"

"No, decades. Of course years." He started the car again and pulled onto the road. "What, you think the Fae live forever? We live longer than most of the races, but not as long as many think."

She shrugged. "I guess that means your mate is your age as well?"

He stared out the windshield and for a moment she thought he wouldn't answer. "When I chose a mate," he said, his voice steady, but soft, "She will have the privilege, or curse, depending on how she looks at it, to sit at my side on the Fae council. If she's Fae, she'll naturally live the same length of time as I do. If she's human, or other," he said, glancing at her, "She'll have the luxury of Fae magick to keep her young."

So he wasn't mated. Sasha tried to ignore the spike in her pulse at the information. The car slowed and he turned to face her, his eyes dark, and held an almost hungry look. No, she had to be imagining it.

"So what's our next step." Because if she didn't change the subject, she was going to get into territory she didn't need to be in. With a Fae, no less.

"Are you good at video games?"

CHAPTER FIVE

Sasha stepped up to the counter of the gaming shop. "I need to use one of the computers."

Ted had tracked the GSA to a computer company located in the center of town. A company who used their gaming store as a cover. For their communication center.

The geek at the front desk glanced around at the available machines. Gamers came to places like this because the systems were usually top notch. The average person couldn't afford the computers most often needed for the top games. That, and World of Warcraft, one of the most popular online games, was as much fun in a group as it was alone. There were entire communities, both online and at gaming centers like this, which thrived because of a single game. And it was one she'd played frequently.

Plus, she'd bet the gaming center was a great recruiting spot for the GSA. So many young kids, with drive and excitement, all ready to fight their first battle. Add their knowledge of computers, and the GSA had fertile ground for their evil. She'd bet none of these kids knew the game was real beneath their feet.

"We're all booked up at the moment," the kid said.

Sasha arched a brow, noting the machines sitting empty, scattered about the room. "Doesn't look that way to me."

The kid glanced back to the main office then back to her. He shrugged. She knew he was covering his butt. "Oh, I get it," she said, loud enough for everyone to hear. "You don't think a woman can play Warcraft, so you don't let them waste time on your precious computer systems. Look buster, rent me a machine and get out of my way or I can kick your ass seven ways till Sunday."

The kid paled, and a man stepped from the office. He wore a company golf style shirt with a collar and a nice pair of jeans. He was no more than 25, but he was definitely in shape. She sniffed. For a human.

"Can I help you?" he asked.

"Yes, your sales clerk told me there are no machines for rent. I see an awful lot of empty hardware sitting there. So rent me a computer."

The man smiled, but his eyes narrowed, looking her over.

Sasha waited, letting the manager look his fill. She could just imagine what Ted was thinking, sitting in his car outside. He'd insisted she wear a pair of earrings, each treated with special Fae magick so not only could he hear what was happening here, she could hear anything he had to say as well. But that hadn't been enough for him. The man was a virtual paragon

of paranoia. He'd also insisted she wear a toe ring. A toe ring, for heaven's sake! He insisted it was a homing beacon, and he'd be able to find her anywhere. When she'd reminded him she was a shifter, and it might not work if she shifted, he'd shrugged and reminded her he was Fae. What the hell did that mean?

"Normally, we don't let people just walk in off the street. There's a process for allowing people to use our computers." He handed her a form to fill out, though his eyes never left her. Only, they weren't looking at her face. They were trained in on her cleavage. The same cleavage Ted had growled about when he saw her choice in blouses. "But, if you fill this out, I'll be happy to re-evaluate our position. Under one condition."

She arched a brow, clearing her throat. He brought his eyes back to her face. "And what is that condition? 'Cause if it has anything to do with where you're looking, then I'm outta here."

The man had the courtesy to flush. Daniel. That's what his nametag read. He cleared his throat, then motioned toward a couple of Computer systems nearby. "You play me, in a game of Werewolf's Courage, and I'll not only let you play World of Warcraft any time you wish, I'll consider you for a job we have here. If," he said, his eyes trained on hers, "You have a need for a job, that is."

"He's made you, get out of there." The voice sounded loud in her ear, but she ignored it. But the sudden wariness in her own body she did not ignore.

"Werewolf's courage? Can't say I've heard of it."

Daniel escorted her to the computers. "Sit. If you've played World of Warcraft, you'll do fine." He held out a chair and she dropped into it. She gave one glance at him over her shoulder before focusing in on the game. It wasn't that different from World of Warcraft and she nodded when she noticed Daniel sitting at the computer beside her.

She didn't miss the fact all the other gamers finished their games, logged out of their computers, and left. Almost as though they knew something was about to happen.

Sasha and Daniel dove in playing with vigor. An hour later, she was still playing, her werewolf character destroying every dhampire and slayer it could find. Daniel played a slayer, and she charged after him with abandon. She had him trapped in an alley, and she lunged. Her teeth closed over his throat just as a sound caught her attention.

CHAPTER SIX

Trey slammed a fist against the dash of his car. She was going to get herself killed. The guy had made her. Why else would he force her to play a game where the Werewolf was the main character? He cursed in her ear, but she ignored him.

He'd been on stakeouts before, and helped setup undercover missions both with the Fae and with human police. He should be calm. Yet this time, his nerves were getting the best of him. He knew, as a werewolf, she could take care of herself, but he also knew as a shifter, she was like the mouse beneath the cat tree. She was stuck. And one wrong move would have her dead.

"There you are. It's about time I found you."

Ted jerked at the sound of the familiar voice. Crap. Another Fae now sat beside him in the police cruiser.

"What does my father's pit bull want now, Sandoven?"

"Did you think you could hide in the human realm, and nobody would be the wiser? Your father wants you. Now."

"He'll have to wait." Ted tried to listen to what was happening in the store, but all he could hear were sounds from the computer game she was playing.

Sandoven materialized in the seat beside Ted. "You'll come with me now. If you know what's good for you, you won't give me a fight. Your brother is missing and that moves you up to second."

He hated Sandoven's talent. It's why he was he called the Fae his father's pit bull. Once given an order, the man never let up, even if he had to use his ability to materialize anywhere. An ability that took years off his life each time he used it. In essence, the man was giving his life for the King of Fae.

"Give me an hour," he grouched. "Then I'll come back with you."

"Now."

Shit. "Sasha," he said, hoping she was at least hearing some of this discussion. "If you need me, all you have to do is ask for your Lucky Charm. Lucky Charm. Got it? If you hear me, say something." Anything. She'd not spoken for more than half an hour, except for occasional grunts or curses, while she played the game.

"Yes!" she shouted.

Her voice sounded rather excited and he hoped her response was for him and not for the game.

A hand closed around his arm, and in an instant, they disappeared from the car.

Sasha yelled at the computer. "Yes!" But the reaction was a lot more than she would normally give for the quick punch she'd given Daniel's character. It was all her now. She was alone. She'd heard the conversation between Ted and the other Fae. The Fae council was known for leaving both humans and shifters to their own devices, no matter what. But she was here to help them, not for herself. Shit. She wondered if Ted could still hear her. Probably not.

It was time to quit playing with Daniel. With a quick spin of her character, she slammed a silver blade she'd stolen from him, into his character's chest.

"Gotcha," she snarled, then scooted her chair back, a sense of accomplishment washing the momentary concern away. That's why she liked computer games. They gave her something else to think about than the evils of life.

"Very nicely done," admitted Daniel. He nodded to a man behind him. "Congratulations."

Sasha caught the look, and stood warily. "Well, thanks for the game. I think I'll be going. I forgot about an appointment I have. With my dentist."

"Oh, I don't think you'll be needing your dentist for a while," said Daniel. Men closed in on her from all sides.

Shit. Where was a cop when you needed him?

Sasha felt the men easing up near her, circling her. She struggled to keep her heart rate under control. She fisted her hands in preparation for a fight.

"Hey, boys. Guess you aren't too used to having a woman win at your little game, are you?"

The men glanced at one another, with cold calculation. There were five of them in all, including Daniel. The wimpy clerk had disappeared from view. Bummer. She couldn't count on him calling the police.

"You've got guts, girl," said Daniel. "A shifter waltzing into our building. Did you think we wouldn't catch on?"

Maybe now was the time to play stupid. Sasha inched in the direction of the door, her eyes wide, her hands out in front of her. "What are you talking about? I just came in for a little game. That's all. It was you who wanted me to play that shifter werewolf game. It's not fair to be pissed if you lose after you invited me to play."

One of the men slid to the side, closing off the path to her escape. Well, shit.

“Do you really think we don’t know what you are? You’re a dog. I can smell the fur from here.” Daniel wrinkled his nose. “Now you can come, peaceably, or you can fight, it’s up to you.” He nodded to the men surrounding her. “But since they love going at it with a little lady, I’d suggest you come without a fight.”

She scanned the small room, while offering a frightened look to the posse in front of her. “I don’t mean any harm, please, don’t hurt me.” Playing the sweet, frightened girl always gave her a few seconds to think, when it came to humans. They were always under the impression women were weak. Even wolverine females. One thing she wasn’t, was weak.

Shifting wouldn’t be a good idea. At least not until she was ready to hightail it out the door. They’d be expecting that. But she knew what they wouldn’t expect. With a quick turn, she gave a snap kick at the man closest to her, slamming her foot into his gut, then dropping down amid a spin, her leg continuing in a circle, swiping into exposed, and unprepared legs. The man she kicked fell backward, crashing into one of the computer systems. Good. Maybe she could make them lose some money at the same time.

Her spin managed to knock one other of the men to the floor. He dropped hard, his head slamming down with a sick thud. She bounced up, settling onto the balls of her feet, and motioned to one of the others. “Don’t be shy, now. I wouldn’t want you to feel left out.”

The man curled one lip, and lunged, his head down. She knew a body slam when she saw it. With a whirl a ballerina would envy, she spun to one side, while punching out at number four who’d also come to play. She caught him hard in the mouth with her fist. She grabbed his arm and spun him around, shoving into the next the man who’d dragged himself from the debris of computers.

She may not be big into Fae Princes, but she could really use Ted right now. No longer caught by surprise, the men didn’t wait their turn, but instead, all charged at once. She ducked, only to be slammed to the floor herself, and the breath whooshed from her lungs. She rolled to the side, just as a chair crashed where she’d been seconds before.

Shit. This was getting serious. She bounced to her feet, and had mere seconds to brace for a fist slamming toward her face. He hit in her in the chin and she jolted backward. She righted herself and grinned, dabbing at the hot blood trickling from her now sore lip. “Now that wasn’t very nice. Didn’t your mother teach you that you should never hit a lady?”

She charged, slamming to a halt when something pierced her neck from behind. Her hand slapped at something bouncing against her flesh. A dart. Shit. They'd sedated her. Already she could feel the drug in her veins. This was embarrassing. What was that word Ted told her to remember? She couldn't think. her vision darkened, and she heard Daniel laugh behind her. The little coward had shot her from behind.

That phrase. Lucky something, wasn't it? Lucky C....

CHAPTER SEVEN

Ted stared into his mother's green eyes. "So you're telling me Father won't let me leave because Sec is missing? Mother, that's asinine. I have a job to do. What I was working on was important."

"Now you know yourself how much you boys mean to your father. But when Sec disappeared, he had to bring you in. Just like Firs, you must be protected at all costs. Besides," She motioned with a delicate hand. "What could possibly be important than the Fae realm? This is our home, not earth."

Ted ran a hand through his hair, fighting back the groan of frustration. His nerves tingled with the need to return to Sasha. "Mother, a woman is in trouble because I'm here. I have to save her." He didn't know how he knew she was in trouble, but he did. The magical bug he'd given her for her earrings wouldn't work on this realm, but that didn't mean he didn't have a gut. And when it came to Sasha, his gut told him she was trouble.

"Why would you think this woman is more important than your crown? Micholaisan, we've taught you better than that. Nothing, and I mean nothing, is more important than your job here."

He paced the floor. "Mother, you know that's not true. Life is precious. Okay, so we haven't always thought so in our history, but now we know better. These shifters aren't animals like we always thought. They're families, just like us. They care for their children, their wives, their sons." He turned to stare at her. "I care for their daughter."

His mother's face paled, and her eyes widened. "What are you trying to tell me?"

"I'm saying this wolverine I was working with, Sasha, she's beautiful, she's kind, and she doesn't deserve what's happening right now. I have to go back." Then he knew his words were true. It wasn't just because he'd put a wolverine in danger. It was because he put Sasha in danger.

Tears sparkled in his mother's eyes and for an instant he felt guilty. But no. He would not. Sasha deserved his loyalty. Every time he thought about her, all he could think of was her smile, or her witty charm. Making her grin was enough to make his stomach take a ride on the dragon pup he'd had as a kid.

His mother shook her head, and moved to the door. "I'm sorry, Micholaisan. I can't let you leave. It's your father's wish. I suggest you refer back to Fae History. Nothing is more important than the throne." And with that, she slipped from his room. He heard the door lock behind her.

He cursed, slamming his fist against the wall. He needed Sandoven. He was the only one who could get to Sasha in time. There were only so many places the average Fae could arrive on earth, and it would take hours for him to reach her from one of those. He didn't have time. The danger twisted and brushed against him, like a dark cloud. It surrounded him in his heart. If it weren't for that damned magical prison his father insisted he be in, he'd be there right now.

For his own good. Bah! For his father's own good, perhaps.

"Sandoven," he shouted. "I know you're out there. Get your ass in here, now!"

CHAPTER EIGHT

Sasha woke slowly, the darkness fighting to keep hold, and not fade into the light. But she fought, determined to remember what happened. Her first thought: Ted. He'd promised to keep her safe when she went inside to find out information for him, but he'd been whisked away by that bastard, Sandoven she thought she'd heard him say. Another Fae, she was sure. But she'd never heard of a Fae being able to teleport. That was reserved for the little people. The Leprechauns.

"Well, awake, I see." The voice echoed in the room. The light was dim, but she didn't need human light bulbs to see. Ted stood opposite her, with something in his hand. He slapped whatever it was against his fist. It looked like a rod of some sort. Funny, she hadn't thought Ted was into that kind of thing.

She moved her arms, only to find her arms were chained to a wall. Just great. Another shake and she realized the metal holding her was silver. Not only could she not break the chains, she couldn't shift right now either.

"What's going on? Ted, let me go."

He laughed, a dark, almost psychotic sound. "Now why would I do that? When you look so pretty?" He traced the edge of the rod against her side. "My brother always did have good taste."

Her senses slowly awoke. This wasn't Ted. It looked like him, but it certainly didn't smell like him. This man was tinged with the sour smell of psychosis. And sugar.

"Who are you?" she demanded.

He chuckled again. "Now isn't it obvious? I'm Ted's brother, Sec."

"What do you want with me?"

"Oh, that's easy. Ted. I want Ted. You see, my brother has been whispering in father's ear about how we should be nice to the shifters." He slid what she could now see looked like a baton down her other side. A deadly, threatening caress. "And with the humans. But I don't agree. Instead, I offered the GSA to help them destroy your kind, leaving the world free to our reign."

"And you think they don't see through you?"

"It doesn't matter. You see, once I rule the Fae realm, I'll have all the power I need to destroy every living creature on this planet. Then, the Fae can enjoy the sweet joy of peace on your world."

"You're insane!" she cried. She couldn't call to Ted now. She was the bait in a trap, and there was no way she'd drag him in to save her. She scanned the room. There had to be a way to get out of here!

"Maybe, but then," he ran the rod up her side. "I'm going to be very powerful. Maybe if you're ice to me, I'll let you live when this is over."

"Nice to you," she growled in disgust. "I'll kill you the first chance I get."

"No, no no," he said, wagging a finger back and forth in front of her face. "We'll have none of that. You wouldn't kill dear, sweet Ted's brother, now would you?"

CHAPTER NINE

Ted paced his bedroom, growling under his breath. His magic wouldn't work so long as the locks were on his room. His father was smart, locking him in the one room designed specifically to keep Ted, and only Ted, from using magick to escape. His childhood bedroom.

He tugged at the door again. Nothing. Damn. Every passing minute he sensed the danger rising or Sasha. Anger burned inside him, the fire sparking with every passing moment. He had to get out of here.

The door unlocked and swung open. His father stood in the hallway, glaring at him. The man looked young for his age. The heavy Fae robes made him look like a child playing king, but there was no doubt of his power. Power which encircled him, stronger than any human or magickal creature deserved. It came with the crown. An ancient, historical jeweled piece sitting upon his father's head. Created by the Fae of old, it bestowed power to the Fae who wore it.

"Your mother tells me you have met a woman."

Ted arched a single brow, studying his father. Would it help or hurt to give him the truth. But, when it came down to it, he'd never been able to lie to his father without getting caught. He sighed. "Yes. I have. And she's in danger. You have to let me out of here."

His father tsked. "That's what your mother said. But your mother is a romantic at heart. I, however, am not. Your mother also says this woman is a shapeshifter. You know I can't let that happen. She will have to die."

A fury unlike anything Ted had experienced to date rolled and twisted inside him. "No," he shouted. His father turned, arching that regal brow of his. "I won't let that happen."

"You have no choice, son." His father turned and stepped into the hallway again, then closed the door.

"Arggh," shouted Ted. He slammed a fist against the wood, but it refused to give. He had to find a way out. He stretched his fingers, wondering if he'd broken something. But somehow, the pain now piercing his knuckles was nothing compared to the guilt and pain he'd feel if something happened to the wolven female. Every passing minute he could feel Sasha's life coming closer to the end. He didn't know how he knew, but he knew she was in mortal danger."

"Sandoven," he roared. "Get your ass in here."

The man appeared in the bedroom, glowering. "How dare you summon me? Just because I owe your father my life doesn't mean I owe the same to you."

"And you are the one who put me in this position. I know about your sister, Sandoven. I know she's kept among the leprachauns. And if you help me, I promise, I'll find a way to release her."

The other man stared for long moments, before responding. "There is no way," Sandoven growled. "She's gone, forever." The steady warrior dropped to Ted's bed, his hands covering his face. "It's my fault. The only person who can save her is me, and I don't have the power."

For a moment, Ted understood. He was the only one who could help Sasha. He stared at the other man, searching his mind for a way to help the other man. The only one able to transport him out of this room was Sandoven. That's because his wasn't from the Fae.

"They gave you your talent, didn't they? They made it so you could transport from anywhere."

He nodded. "They want me to find a golden dwarvian cauldron. It was stolen by the pixies. The little buggers hide the damned thing in a new place every week."

"And why are you to find this?"

Sandoven shrugged. "I helped the pixies hide it once. The Leprechauns found out and stole my youngest sister as payment. They say they won't give her back until I bring them the cauldron."

"And what part does my father play in all this?"

Sandoven sighed. "It was your father who insisted I help the pixie's. They have an agreement of some kind, of protection."

Ted stared at the man he'd thought to be his father's friend for so many years. "Why do you still work for my father if he's to blame?"

Sandoven stared at the pattern on the carpet on the floor. "Because he saved my life once many years ago. And your father keeps a record of where the cauldron is hidden. It's somewhere here in the palace, and if I can find it, I can save my sister."

"Fine. You help me, and I'll make sure you get that entry in the book."

"Not good enough," Sandoven stood, re-energized by Ted's interest. "I need more than an entry. The Pixie's move the damned thing too often. You get me the book and I'll help you."

"I can't get you the damned book now! I'm stuck in here! And why do you need the entire book?"

"Because when they write the location in the book in Pixie realm, it shows up in your father's book. I'll know the minute they move it."

Ted frowned. "Fine. I give you my word as the Prince of Fae, 3rd in line to the throne, I will do everything in my power to ensure you receive the book listing the location of the Leprechaun's cauldron."

Sandoven studied him for long seconds. Ted's heart thundered in his chest, but he did his best to hide it. He didn't have any idea what kettle of worms he'd just opened. But, Pixies were more interested in playful fun than serious danger, so the chances were the book was harmless.

"I'll do it. What do you want?"

Ted didn't hesitate. "Take me to Sasha, now."

CHAPTER TEN

Sasha stared at the ethereal woman moving toward her. Long blond hair draped to her waist and her clothing was so sheer she could almost, but not quite, see every bit of her female charms. This was not what she'd expected of the GSA. It was bad enough the man who looked like Ted had come in. His brother. Shit. who'd have thought Ted's own brother would be her downfall.

Ted would be devastated. He loved his family. When he'd been questioned by the shifter council, he'd practically beamed with pride, not at being the heir to the throne, but being a part of the royal family. And now, another Fae was involved. If this was Ted's sister, Sasha was going to scream.

"Who are you?" she demanded.

The woman looked at her and smiled. Great. She was cuffed to a brick wall while this woman smiled at her like she'd just swallowed the canary. Did Fae like birds? Wait, maybe shifters liked birds too. Sasha shook her head to clear it. The drug they'd given her must be playing with her mind. Focus, she told herself.

"I'm Queen Feodora, Queen of the Fae. And you?" The woman stared her down, as though she was a bug beneath her feet.

Sasha fought the urge to shift into her wolf. That would only bring her a lot of pain, thanks to the silver holding her back. Then again, it might be preferable to the constant barrage of Fae traipsing in and out of her prison. "My name is Sasha. I'm sure you already know. After all, your son seemed quite happy to have me here."

The woman frowned. "No, Ted is very upset right now. I believe he's in the process of working a deal so he can come and save you." The woman gave a secret smile. "I sent Sandoven o him just moments ago. And you think so poorly of him as to blame him for your captivity?" The woman's anger radiated across the room.

This time, Sasha frowned. Was she protecting Ted? Didn't she know her other son was here? "I'm not talking about Ted. He'd never do this to me. I'm talking about his brother, Sec."

The woman paled. "Secora is here?"

"Yes. And he seems quite ready to help in my torture. Or didn't you know that?" Sasha fought the urge to scream at the woman. Then again, maybe the woman had no clue what her own son was up to. Perhaps she'd only come to be here when Ted arrived. Who knew what the Fae wanted.

Most were known for their propensity to manipulate the people in the earth realm.

A man stepped into the cage from behind. "Mother!"

Feodora spun and stared at her second son. "Secora, what are you doing? Why are you holding this woman captive?"

"Mother, you have no business being here," growled Secora. "This is my business. Go home."

"It's not your business. This is your brother's mate and you are to let her go. Now." The command echoed with the power of royalty through the chamber. But it wasn't the sound that shocked Sasha. It was the words.

Mate? Oh hell no, she wasn't about to be labeled any Faery's ANYTHING. She was a shifter. "Wait a second. Who said anything about Mates?" She tugged at the silver cuffs. They were really starting to burn her skin. Maybe she could yank that sorry ass chain right out of the wall if she tried hard enough. The sound of metal ringing against brick startled her out of her struggle.

Secor stood there, a snarl on his face, a longsword in his hand, the blade beside her ear. He didn't look quite as much like his brother as she'd thought. "You aren't going anywhere."

She froze, snarling. The wolf inside her struggled to come out, but the silver on her wrists held her back. "I don't know what the punishment for treason is among the Fae, but we shifters call for death." Venom filled her words. This man was not only willing to turn on a fellow para, he was willing to turn on his own family.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Ted and Sandoven materialized in darkness. With a brush of magick, and a simple breath, light burst from the palm of his hand, illuminating the room. It was an old storage room of some sort. "Where are we?"

"Beneath the GSA. Your woman is that way," he motioned to the right. "I'm out of here."

"Wait," Ted grabbed his arm. "I meant it about your sister. Once this is all over, I'll see you get that book. At least long enough to rescue her."

Sandoven nodded. "And I shall hold you to that promise." In an instant the man's body faded from view and from Ted's grasp.

He shook his head. He'd never get used to that, transporting without the aid of any magickal device. The Leprechauns really wanted that book to give him that talent. Shame they had it set to feed off his soul every time he did.

Ted dimmed the light in his palm and crept through the darkness. He could feel the pull of the Fae toe ring he'd given her. He moved through the darkness with the fluidity of his race.

Voices sounded ahead. One of them sounded like his Mother!

"Thamopor Gartuka Secora, you take your hands off that woman."

He heard a thump and a groan and he rushed forward. His second brother lay crumpled against the wall, and his Mother. His mother, of all people. The Queen sprinkled Fae Dust mixed with what he was sure had to be Nitric Acid, over Sasha's wrists.

"Mother, what are you doing?" He rushed into the room to pull his mother away, surprised to see handcuffs on Sasha's wrists dissolving before his eyes. He cut a look back at his Mother, then at Sasha, gathering her in his arms. Where she belonged. Her body against his brought comfort he hadn't known he needed. She was alive.

For that one moment in time, nobody else mattered. Not his brother, and not his mother.

"I was so worried," he muttered against her neck. "You're Okay?"

His lips moved across the soft expanse of her neck and throat. She smelled like wild honeysuckle. He'd almost forgotten that. Somehow, in the hours they'd been apart, she'd become very important to him. She shifted in his arms, her eyes meeting his.

"What's going on, Ted," she murmured. "Your brother is with the GSA?"

For long seconds he didn't answer, and Sasha lost herself into his embrace. He felt warm and comforting. He felt right. Heat stirred inside her

blood, sweeping through her entire body. If they were somewhere safe, she'd explore that, but right now, they needed to get out of here.

He dropped his forehead to hers. "I don't know. But I'll find—"

Sasha stared in horror as Ted's eyes widened in shock and he dropped to his knees. Secora stood behind, a bitter gleam in his eyes, and a smirk on his face. "There's nothing to find out, brother. The throne is mine, and nothing you or Firkan can do about it."

Sasha roared, her wolf screaming in fury. Power exploded inside her and she shifted. Secora blocked his eyes from the bright flare of her magick, but it did no good. The instant the change was complete, she threw herself over Ted, her teeth clamping on the older brother's throat. Fae blood burst into her mouth, the sweetly coppery taste sliding over her tongue and down her throat. She growled and yanked on the soft flesh as Secora's last breath gurgled from his lips.

A woman screamed, and Sasha released the dead man and turned, snarling at the Fae Queen. Fury burned inside her, the viciousness of Secora's betrayal boiling over in her heart, turning her against the woman. The instant she'd seen Ted drop, she understood the woman's words. Mate. Her *True Mate*. No matter how much she fought it, he was the man for her.

"Sasha," the soft voice broke through her fury.

Ted was still alive. Hope spurred in her heart and she trotted to him. Blood pooled beneath him, and she licked his face. The pain in her heart seeped into her soul and her body, and in an instant, she shimmered back to human form.

"Ted," she cried, rolling him over to see the damage. Darkened blood drained from a long slice along his kidneys. "Oh, God." The wound was mortal.

"Find Tamed," he whispered. His face was so pale. Tears trickled down her cheeks. "I can't leave you like this."

"I'll find him."

"Oh, dear, God."

Sasha turned toward the voice to see Ted's mother staring at her. Though her face had paled, her chin was high, her body rigid. Strength and power poured from the woman. For an instant, Sasha thought how difficult this must be for her. One son stabbing the other, and then she destroyed Secora. But she couldn't feel any guilt. She'd do it again if she had to. She only wished she'd done it sooner. Before his knife found its mark.

"He wants me to find Tamed," Sasha said to the Queen of Fae. "But I can't leave him like this."

The woman shook herself, and it was as though a cloak of royalty shook itself from the top of her head to her toes. "I will stay with my son. Go. Bring Tamed. He can help."

Sasha nodded and ran from the cell. The only problem was, she didn't know what Tamed looked like. Creatures of all sorts stared at her from behind their bars. Wolves, Lions and Tigers. All shifters. There was even what had to be a dwarf, his short, bulky body covered in soot. She ignored her instincts and continued on, though when the wolf howled, she cringed. Where was the missing Fae? The last cell contained a man. He had his back to her, his head in his hands.

"Tamed?" she queried.

He spun around to see her. Bright green eyes, greener than the deepest emerald stared back at her. Long pointed ears rose to almost his eyebrows, which were nothing more than a sharp slash of brown on his pale face.

"What do you want?" he shot back, aggression in every word.

"I'm here with Ted. He sent me to get you." She looked at the cell door and wondered if she could break it with her shifter's strength. It looked pretty strong, and she knew some of the animals contained down the hall were shifters, too. If they couldn't get out, she probably couldn't get in. "Do you have any idea where the key is?"

He shook his head. "If I did, I'd be out of here by now. Where's the prince?"

"He's down the hall." she examined the lock more closely. Shit. She really needed the key.

"Not Ted, Secora."

"Oh, that prince," she said, knowing her voice sounded distracted. That's because it was. She scanned the next cell. "He's dead. I killed him."

Tamed ran to the bars. "You killed him? You killed the second in succession to the crown?"

She shrugged. "He shouldn't have stabbed Ted."

Before he could ask another question, a light exploded beside her. Colors spun, circling like the inside of a tornado, yet there was no wind. Tiny glimmers of gold hypnotized her as she watched. When the light faded, a man stood in its place. He was tall, like all the Fae, but he certainly didn't dress like anything she'd seen before. He wore skin tight leathers, all the way down to his ankles. 80's revisited, she'd guess. A small crown, a masculine looking tiara, sat upon his head. His dark tank Tee snaked along every muscle, as though it owned his body. She tracked upward, meeting his face. Dark blue and furious eyes glared back at her.

"Who are you and why are you holding Tamed prisoner?"

She leapt back, and snarled. She didn't have time to play twenty questions.

"She's not, Your Majesty," said Tamed, who dropped to a bow.

Your Majesty? You know, meeting the parents wasn't supposed to be a lesson in murder and death. Sasha arched a brow and studied the man. Ancient wisdom shown in otherwise young looking eyes. His dark, shoulder length hair brushing past him as though there was a breeze. There wasn't. It was all an illusion. Power rolled off him, tingling over her flesh.

"I'm waiting for an explanation." The King of the Fae gave her an imperious stare, but she gave one in return.

His words snapped her out of her reverie. "And I don't have time for all these questions. Ted sent me to rescue Tamed, but I can't get the door open. Ted is down the hall, with his mother, and in pain. Maybe dying. So either help me, somehow, or get out of my way."

"And Secora?" The anger in the king's face told her he knew of Secora's demise. If she told him what happened, would he kill her now? Or would he let her live long enough to say goodbye to Ted?

She glanced at Tamed, who's head remained bowed. Shit. He was leaving this all to her. "Look, we can talk later," she said, motioning with a frustrated arm. "And I need to get Tamed down there, with your third son. You know, Micholaisan? Ted's Mother, your wife, said Tamed could help. So please, help me save your son."

The King studied her a moment longer before waving his fingers over the lock. Tiny, golden grains of dust flitted from his fingertips, falling on the door. The lock clicked and the door swung open. Tamed didn't move.

"Let's go, Tamed," she said, frustrated. "The King can kill me later, but right now, we have to save Ted!"

She saw Tamed sneak a glance toward the King who gave a regal nod. In a flash the man was up and out of the cell, charging down the hall, leaving her with Ted's father.

"And my other son? Secora?"

The voice was soft, though it held a threat of menace.

She swallowed the hard lump in her throat. "I'll tell you, but you must promise me one thing."

"No, I don't. I make no deals," he stated.

Shit. "Look, all I ask is you let me say goodbye to Ted before you kill me." She peeked up at him from beneath her lashes. He seemed to be considering her offer.

"Done," he said at last.

She took in a steadying breath. "Secora tried to kill Ted, and I shifted, and, well, he's dead."

The King of Fae stared at Sasha, muscles twitching along his jaw. Fury rode hard in his eyes, but Sasha couldn't tell if he was angry at her, or angry at the situation.

"Go," he ordered her.

Sasha spun and ran down the hall, and into the cell where Ted still lay. When she charged around the corner, she gasped. He lay on his stomach, the wound a dark crimson upon the soft green shirt he wore. His mother sat at his head, stroking his brow, murmuring to him in words she couldn't understand. Not that she couldn't hear, because she could. But she didn't understand the Fae language. The Queen looked up, arching one exceptionally queenly brow toward her husband, then turned back to her son.

"How is he?" asked Sasha, rushing to Ted's side. Tamed knelt opposite her, his eyes closed in concentration. His hands touched, cupping just above the wound on Ted's back.

The pain eased and Ted cracked an eye to look at Sasha. Her face was pale, her lips tight with worry. He scanned further down while she watched Tamed use his magick. Tamed was a good one to have around. He'd gotten Ted out of more scrapes than he could count, all because of his healing energy.

Sasha glanced toward his face. "You're awake," she murmured. "You're going to be fine."

He heard his mother's sigh of relief, but it was Sasha he was focused on. "You know, when we get out of this, I think we ought to try spending some time together. Maybe having dinner or something."

She smiled and he felt his entire body awaken. The pain couldn't steal the attraction he felt for her. Maybe nothing would. The idea rippled through his mind and his eyes opened wide. "You're naked," he gasped.

Sasha chuckled, but he didn't find anything funny about Tamed and his father seeing Sasha without clothes.

"Don't worry so much. Woven aren't as prudish as the other races. It doesn't bother me."

"But it bothers me." Though why that was the case he didn't know, and right now wasn't the time to figure it out.

Tamed sat back on his heels. "It's done."

"About damned time," said Ted's father. "Is someone going to tell me what's going on?"

Ted grimaced. His father's glare wasn't just for him, but included Sasha as well. "Dad,-- "

"I'll explain everything," his mother said. "Later. Right now I want to take my sons home with me. Both of them." She lifted her chin and he knew she was fighting the emotions she'd tucked so deep inside. Being a Royal Fae had its advantages. But it's disadvantages as well.

She took her husband's arm.

"I agree," his booming voice carried through the prison cell. We shall return home."

"But I don't," said Ted, rolling to a sit. "I promised Sasha I'd help her find her brother and once that's taken care of, I'll come home." He reached for Sasha's hand and squeezed. The idea of leaving her here, in earth's realm, didn't sit well with him.

His father glared at him, then turned his eyes on Sasha. "Agreed. But once that is complete, you must bring her before me, for her punishment."

"What punishment?" Ted jolted upward, but Sasha pulled him back to the floor.

"The punishment for killing the Second Heir to the throne."

"What?" he stared, horrified at his father. "She saved my life why would she be punished."

His father faced him, his eyes cold as ice. "You heard me, son. I gave her my word she could say goodbye to you before I killed her. I will grant you the opportunity to complete the task you have begun. Then, you will bring her to me. Tamed," said the King, turning to the other Fae. "You will come with me now. Ted will have no need of your assistance for the remainder of this mission."

Ted glanced at Sasha's white face and moved to stand.

She once again grabbed his arm. "I made him promise. I will do what I have to. We'll release the rest of the prisoners here, and then we'll go." She moved to stand. The sound of clanging iron echoed through the cell, and doors flew open.

"It's done," said the King. "Finish your task. He turned to his wife and nodded. Tamed stepped forward and lifted Secora's body and stepped beside them. All three turned, stepping into away, fading from sight.

"Damn," said Sasha. "Can you do that too?"

He couldn't stop the weak chuckle. "Sometimes, but usually only when I'm in certain places. In another fifty years I'll be old enough to come and go from anywhere."

"That's really cool."

“Come,” he said, rolling to his feet. “Let’s get out of here. I don’t think Secora was alone in what he was doing. I’m betting we aren’t safe here for long.”

She nodded and helped him to his feet. He unbuttoned his shirt, then stripped it off. With surprising brusqueness, he wrapped it around her shoulders. “Cover up. We can’t very well go outside with you looking like this. Humans will riot.”

She grinned and colored a pretty pink while shrugging into the shirt.

Their hands clashed when he reached to help her button up. His fingers tingled, sending heat all the way to his groin. Her scent changed, and he cocked his head, their eyes meeting. “Alone at last,” he murmured.

Her eyes darkened and for an instant, she entwined her fingers with his. “Let’s get out of here.” Her voice was low and raspy.

But Ted wasn’t ready to leave just yet. Not until he’d done what he’d wanted to do since the instant he saw her in the police station. The moment she’d turned those eyes on him, and arched a disbelieving brow his way. He fisted his fingers in his shirt and tugged her closer. “In a minute.”

Their lips touched and she opened, as though she’d been waiting for his move. His tongue swept inside, tasting her for the first time. She tasted of honeysuckle. Such a delicate scent for one so powerful. . He groaned, savoring her flavor and drinking her in. Now he knew what he needed from this beautiful woman. His father would just have to deal. Wanted to drag her against him, but he knew if he did, he wouldn’t care where they were. His body burned to feel her touch, hardening at the single thought.

Sasha moaned. He had no idea what he was doing to her. She wanted to grab him, pull him hard against her body as heat swept through her. Instead, she let him control the kiss, afraid if she took control they’d never get out of the room. Her fingers itched with the desire to touch him, to feel those hard muscles he’d shown her when he gave her his shirt.

They stood, inches apart, with only their mouths touching. It was driving her insane, his lips feeding from hers. His taste was dark, sharp, and edgy. It rolled over her, his scent and taste stealing her ability to think. After a moment, she couldn’t remember why she’d resisted.

When he pulled away from the kiss, his bright green eyes glittered with mischief. “We could always get married and then my father wouldn’t kill you.”

CHAPTER TWELVE

“We could always get married and then my father wouldn’t kill you.” Ted heard his own words, and his heart skipped a beat. Marriage? He’d never thought to get married. Hell, his father picked out a wife for him years ago, and he’d not even gone to meet her. He’d had no interest. Yet staring into the ice blue eyes of this beautiful, powerful shifter, made him maybe marriage wasn’t such a bad idea.

He watched those eyes go wide and she pulled away from him. “Right. That’s a reason to get married.” She stared at him for long seconds, he was sure he saw an odd emotion flash for just an instant, but then it was gone. Pain.

“I don’t know,” he shrugged with a grin. “It sounds like a good idea to me. I don’t think my fiancé will mind.”

The instant the words were out of his mouth he knew he’d messed up. Fury burned in her gaze, glittering with power. She fisted his shirt in her hand and snarled her nose against his. “I will not be a pity wife. Let me be perfectly clear about this: when I marry, I will not share.”

Ted arched a brow in surprise. Was she jealous? He tried to hide the sudden surge of pride and joy. She cared about him. She did.

Giving him one last shove in disgust, she released him, spun on her heel, and stormed out of the cell.

Now that was interesting. He followed her with a grin. In less than a minute they were outside in the parking lot. They hadn’t traveled far. Later he’d send someone into the GSA basement and they’d clean it out. No humans were going to take control of the Fae and not pay even if a Fae was partly responsible.

She folded herself into his car, slammed the door and snapped her seatbelt, staring straight ahead. Once he’d joined her, he cut her a look, then faced forward and started the engine. She was almost as powerful as he, though her talents were different. She’d killed a Fae, something quite unusual. Her rage had put her strength over the top. Most shifters couldn’t bite hard enough to destroy a Fae’s tough skin, much less kill him. Yet she’d done it in less than ten seconds, destroying a brother who was more bent on ruling than taking care of anyone.

“So why’d you do it?” he asked, starting the car.

“Do what?” she grumbled.

“Kill my brother. I mean, killing a Prince of the Fae can be dangerous. You would have to know that.”

She cut a look of fury at him. “None of your business.”

Sasha couldn't believe him. He'd thrown out a marriage proposal as if he asked every woman in trouble to marry him. And then he'd said he had a fiancé. Her True Mate had a freakin' fiancé in the wings. Then again, he'd not so much tried to kiss her before today, not that he'd really had the time.

The car stopped and she looked up. They were in her driveway. “Thanks for the ride.” She jumped out of the car and slammed the door, stomping toward her walkway.

Once inside, she turned to slam her front door closed only to find Ted right behind her. “I thought you wanted to go home to Daddy.”

He winced and she knew she'd been a bit acerbic, but the man had a fiancé. He deserved it.

“I still have to tell you about your brother.”

That stopped her. She stepped back and waved him in the house. He stood in her living room, studying her living room and for a moment, she took the time to really look at him. He still looked as good as he had the time she'd met him. His scent filled her living room, marking it. The way she wished he'd mark her.

She threw her house keys on the end table, and crossed her arms. “So what about Damon?”

“He's safe. I don't know where he is at the moment, but he's safe.”

“How do you know?”

He sighed, looking at anything but her for a moment. Her wolveren instincts went on alert. The scents rolling from him were half aroused Fae, and half... Something else. What, she wasn't sure.

“Because I've met him,” he said at last. “He's recently married, and he's on his honeymoon.”

Joy whispered against her heart. Married. Well, shit. “How did you find out? I thought you were trapped in the Fae realm while we were separated.”

His eyes flashed with what looked like guilt. “I didn't find out while I was gone. I had my suspicions all along.” He met her gaze. “He married my partner.”

Partner? “As in your partner at the police station.”

He nodded.

The misery in his eyes did nothing to ease the rising tide of anger. He'd known the entire time? Fury roiled in her gut and she stomped across the room, her fist colliding with his nose before she even realized what she was doing.”

“Ouch, shit,” he grabbed his nose and stared at her in surprise.

“What’s the problem? Think you could lie to me for days and I wouldn’t be angry?” Her fingers itched as hair sprouted on her arms, her nails lengthening. “How dare you lie to me. Me, of all people.” Hell, he shouldn’t have even been able to lie to her. Had he been shifter, he wouldn’t have.

He met her glare and stepped toward her. “I didn’t lie to you. I said I needed to research because I had to find out if he was the same man I thought he was. I didn’t want to get your hopes up.”

“My hopes up? Do you really expect me to believe that?” The spicy scent of anger filled the air. His anger. He didn’t step back from her, but moved closer. So close she could feel his scent. She opened her mouth, inhaling, tasting the seductive tang that was Ted. Like a sudden influx of a drug, it burned inside her, overwhelming her senses. Hunger rose inside her, burning every part of her. It liquefied, melting and softening the hard muscles she worked so hard to maintain. She couldn’t do this. He needed to know he wasn’t going to be able to dismiss her like this again.

He growled, yanking her hard against his body. “I expect you to believe it because it’s true.” She opened her mouth to reply but his lips crashed down hard on hers.

She gasped, stiffening in his arms, but he didn’t stop. He devoured her with hungry, devouring kisses. His taste exploded across her tongue, multiplying with every thrust of his tongue into her mouth. She relaxed, relishing the delicious tart flavor of Ted. Mine. The word swept across her mind, and she panicked. Shoving at his chest, she tried to stop him, but he didn’t release her. His arms were like iron, holding her tight. Then, after another second, she didn’t want to escape. A very feminine whimper escaped her throat.

Ted groaned at her sweet taste, slowing his kiss, teasing and enjoying every sweep of his tongue against hers. He’d felt her push away, but now she relaxed into him, her soft breasts pillowed against his chest, and it took all he had not to rip the cloth away between them. He slid a hand to her hair, losing his fingers in her soft strands. The sweet sound of submission to her emotions rolled over him. At that moment he felt powerful. And at the same time, he felt as though he didn’t deserve her.

With every stroke of his tongue he devoured her, before she came to her senses and punched him again.

His knuckles trailed along her side, tracing the delicate curves of her breasts. She shuddered in his arms, and his fingers shook with the need to take all of her. He forced himself to pull back, and stared into her eyes.

“I meant it when I said we should marry.” The glaze of lust in her eyes disappeared, buried beneath the flash of anger. She stiffened and pulled at his arms, but he held tight.

“Wait. Let me finish,” he said before she could speak. “I don’t really have a fiancé. I was kidding. Shera is just a girl my Dad thought would be good for me. I’ve never even met her, and don’t have any intention of getting to know her. I didn’t understand till I was lying on that floor, bleeding out. I want you. I love you. I don’t know how it’s happened. One minute, I was the Prince of Fae, the next, I was nothing more than a man who loved a woman. And I felt more powerful than ever before.”

Sasha stared at him, her heart beating hard. “You love me?” Her voice didn’t sound right. In fact, it squeaked.

He smiled. “Yes, I love you. And I want to marry you. Not just because it’ll make my father behave himself, but because I want you at my side, forever more.”

When she pulled away, this time he let her. “But, what about the Fae Realm? I’m not Fae.”

“And I’m not a shifter. But we can make do.”

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The King of Fae glared at them both, and Sasha ignored the surge of nervousness. Ted smiled when she glanced at him, and squeezed her hand.

“You think this will save her life, Ted? Is that why you’re doing this?”

Ted stiffened his shoulders. He made Sasha proud. He showed what he was made of. A true Fae Prince, able to rule should the need arise. She straightened her own shoulders. If she was the mate to the Fae Prince, it was high time she started acting the part.

“I’m doing this, Father, because I love her. Saving her life is, of course, a nice little plus. That way I can spend the rest of my life with her.”

The King turned his attention to Sasha. “And you? And don’t lie, wolf, I’ll know.”

Sasha bit back the surge of anger. She did not lie. “I am marrying Ted because he is my *True Mate*. I love him.”

A gasp echoed through the Great Hall. It seemed the Fae knew a bit about *True Mates* as well. She stared straight ahead, refusing to look at Ted, who released her hand. Before this moment she’d never voiced his status as her *True Mate*. She tried not to feel the sudden surge of fear. She’d kept her secret, making sure Ted wanted her for herself, not just to save her life. Maybe that was the wrong thing to do.

“I see,” said the King. “Very well. But there still must be punishment.” He leant toward his wife, the two conversing in low whispers. Had she wanted, Sasha could have heard them, but right now she was more worried about the man standing at her side. At last, his warm fingers linked with hers. Relief washed through her like a hot, summer shower.

The King cleared his throat. “I decree you will be unable to shift for the next twenty years, keeping you from being able to use your fangs on another of my kin.”

Sasha’s heart stilled for a beat. Then two. He was taking her wolf. She stiffened her spine, and blinked back the sting of tears. She was Wolven, even if she couldn’t shift.

“Father, no,” shouted Ted. “You can’t do that.”

“I can, and I will!” he slammed his staff against the floor. “In addition, I sentence you to serve those years here, in the Fae realm. What you do, or how you do it,” he motioned toward Ted, “is up to you. Dismissed.”

His words felt like bricks in her stomach. She couldn’t return to Earth Realm. She had to stay here. In human form.

Warm hands pulled her to the side. Strong arms wrapped around her, tucking her against a powerful and strong chest. She blinked back the tears threatening to spill.

“It’s a good thing,” Ted whispered in her ear, penetrating the shock in her brain. “It’s a gift, Sasha. You can stay here, with me, where you won’t age. If you’ll have me.”

She looked up, staring into those sad, green eyes. She could feel his pain, washing over her, and then she realized he could feel hers. She smiled. “Together, we can do anything.”

He squeezed her tight and smiled, his green eyes sparkling with love. “Together.”