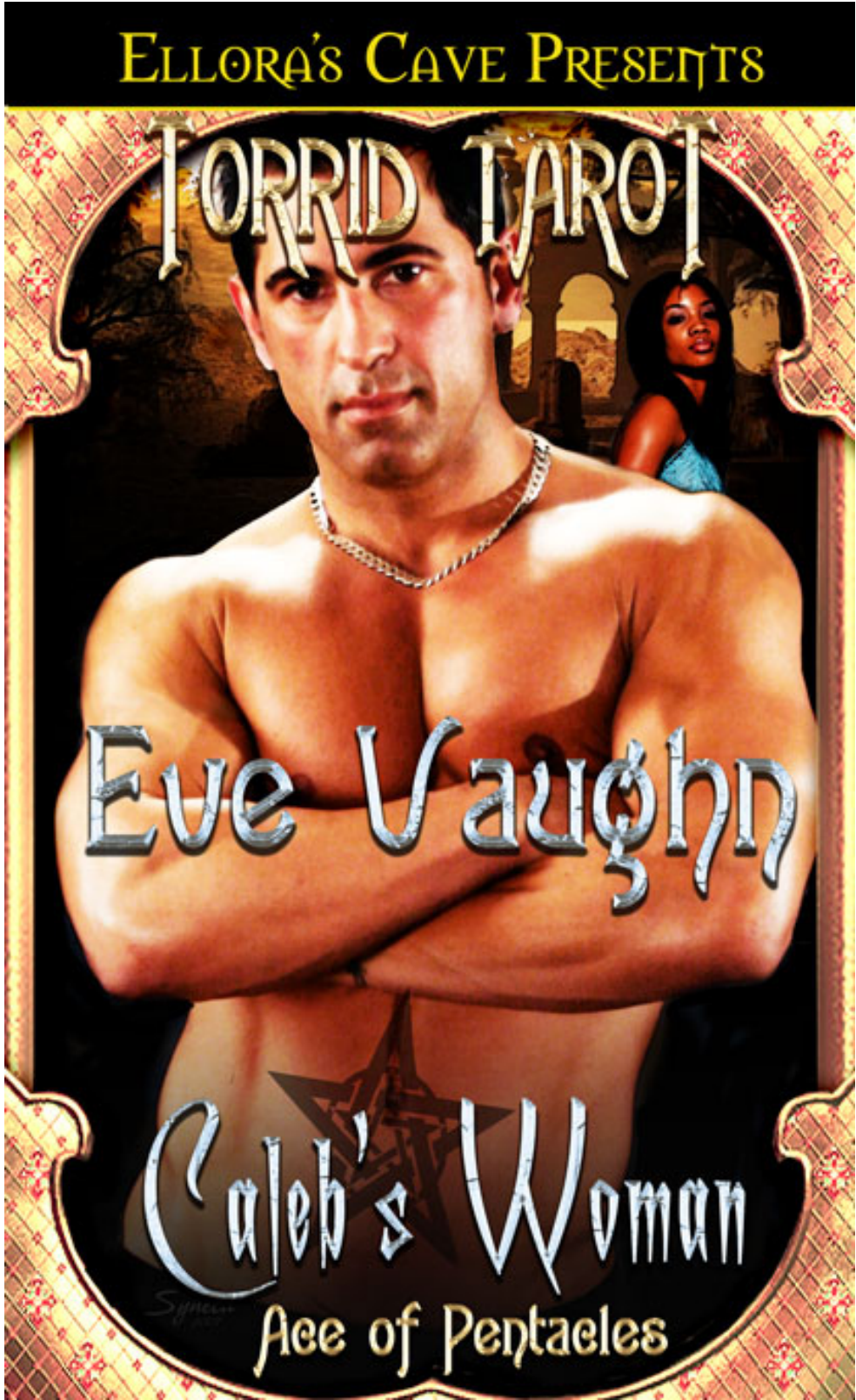


ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS

TORRID TAROT

Eve Vaughn

Caleb's Woman  
Ace of Pentacles



An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



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Caleb's Woman

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# *CALEB'S WOMAN*

**Eve Vaughn**

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### *Ace of Pentacles*

The Ace of Pentacles is a card that represents great wealth and happiness, and new beginnings, although wealth might not necessarily mean monetary riches. Some of the best rewards in life can't be brought. After reading that description, love immediately came to mind.

The reverse meaning of the card was equally as intriguing for me: greed, misery with success, pride and learning money isn't everything. I latched on to the word pride because it fit perfectly with the heroine in this story who wants so badly to succeed in her new venture, her pride won't let her accept help from anyone, including those who love her, and she learns a valuable lesson because of it. This is why I based Caleb's Woman around The Ace of Pentacles.

## Prologue

Seth Masters traveled down the winding, rain-slicked road with a heavy heart. What was the point of being Alpha if there was nothing he could do to make things better for his pack members?

Trevor and Laurel were loyal, caring and two of his best friends. He and Trevor were practically brothers, growing up together, sharing in each other's triumphs in life. He was Beta to Seth's Alpha and there was no one more trusted than Trevor. When Laurel and he married, she too became a fast friend of Seth's. It didn't seem fair they should go through so much and then find out what they desired most was not to be.

Seth thought of his own little one, Caleb, his chest swelling with pride. Almost ten years old and already he was showing signs of being a great leader. Yes, he'd follow in his old man's footsteps and make him proud. It saddened Seth to know the McGregors would never know the joy of parenthood. After her last miscarriage—twins this time—Laurel was informed she'd never conceive again, and if by some miracle she did, she wouldn't carry to term. The couple had been devastated by the news.

The mood had been somber and no words could adequately express how sorry he'd felt at their loss. At times like this, Seth cursed his Alpha status because it fell on his shoulders to seek a resolution...but what? Most couples who couldn't conceive tried adoption, or some looked into the new fertility technology that hadn't quite been perfected.

But for them, the option wasn't something they could explore without bringing attention to what they were—*Wulfen*. They were the descendants of a time when beasts were sentient and walked on hind legs and mated with humans. Over the years, they'd evolved into what they were now, half-human, able to walk in human form, but slaves to the moon, answering its call, changing when the time arose.

They were what some would call werewolves, but not quite. When they shifted, they held on to their identities and sanity, unlike the Hollywood versions of those creatures. They shifted for the hunt, not the kill, although sometimes the kill was necessary for their survival.

The Wulfen numbered in the thousands, close to a million, scattered all over the world. Like wolves, they existed in packs, living in their own communities, registered in a secret database to identify under whose care they belonged. It was an exclusive bunch and rarely did they marry outside of their own kind, and even then, it was only with the consent of the Alpha and the pack elders. They lived like everyone else, working, owning their own businesses, raising families.

For all intents and purposes, they were normal, except they weren't. Each and every one of them could be a deadly entity when crossed. There were twelve Alphas in North America. Seth's territory was along the Northern East Coast of the USA, running from Maine to Virginia. His hours were filled by keeping up with the needs of his pack members.

Of course, he had lots of assistance—a handful of Betas who reported to him and made sure things ran smoothly. When he wasn't tending to his pack, Seth ran his investment firm and doted on his family. Thoughts of Monica and Caleb brought a smile to his face, but then again, that pang of guilt washed over him. Was it right to have so much happiness when there were others who suffered?

"God damn this rain," he muttered, cursing under his breath, wishing he'd left a little earlier. At least then he wouldn't have been caught in this downpour. He could barely see the damn road and it was pitch black to boot.

Seth slowed his Range Rover down another ten miles on the speedometer. As much as he wanted to get home to his wife and son, he wanted to get there in one piece. Something caught his attention, however, ten feet ahead to the left, just off the road.

Blinking red lights.

Had someone gotten stranded? This stretch of road wasn't often used at this time of night because several people had gotten into car accidents on what was called "Dead Man's Curve".

Cautiously, he maneuvered his vehicle to the median not far behind the immobile car and shut off his engine. Not able to make it out completely, something struck him as odd about the way the car rested. He'd need to take a closer look to determine what the problem was.

Not bothering to dig in the back for his umbrella, the stinging rain beat against his skin like sharp needles. It was only when he'd got closer that he saw the car was actually flipped upside down.

He raced forward, silently praying the passengers were okay. Debating on whether to flip the car over or just rip the doors off the sedan, he finally decided on the latter. To actually set the car to rights could cause more damage to the passengers inside than there may already be.

He tore the driver's side door off the hinges, not giving a thought to what the people inside would think about such a feat. *Wulfen* males possessed an inherent superhuman strength, but now wasn't the time to concern himself about being questioned about such abilities.

The foul odor of death hit him immediately. Was it already too late? Seth knelt down, bringing himself level with the passengers. A young African-American couple was inside, neither wearing seat belts. As gently as he could, he pulled out the driver, whose neck hung at an unnatural angle.

He was dead.

Once Seth laid the body along the road, he crawled in to see the woman clutching a tightly wrapped bundle. Her desperate gasps for air greeted his ears, signaling life.

"Miss, are you okay?" he asked.

She turned her bloodied face, her eyes nearly swollen shut. "Please..." she gasped.

“Don’t try to speak. I’ll use my car phone to get us some help.”

“No...too late for me...”

Seth refused to give up on her, but something made him pause.

The pitiful cries of a small baby.

“Please,” she began again, struggling to get out each word.

‘Take...Sommer...take...take the baby...good care of her.’ A string of crimson liquid poured from her mouth before the life seeped out of her eyes.

He didn’t have long to dwell on what had just occurred because the baby’s screams grew louder, as though she’d sensed the loss of her parents. Seth reached over and took the swaddled child from her mother’s arms. In most circumstances, he would have given pause to the enormity of the situation. This baby’s parents had been killed, leaving it orphaned and left without the warmth of their love. However, he didn’t have that luxury. He needed to get the little bundle to a warm, dry place.

Holding the child close to protect her from the rain as best he could, Seth ran back to his vehicle. The infant’s cries were nearly drowned out by the rain slapping furiously against his vehicle.

“Shh, it will be okay,” he whispered to the child, patting her gently on the back.

Seth pulled the blanket back to get a really good look at her and his heart flip-flopped. She was a cute little thing, chubby brown cheeks, large dark eyes and a head full of curly black hair. “You poor baby. What am I going to do with you?”

First he’d have to call the police to take care of the accident, but then his thoughts turned back to Trevor and Laurel...childless. What if...?

He eyed the crying baby. It would be risky for two *Wulfen* to raise a human child, but...how could he turn this little one over to the authorities when she could be the solution he’d been looking for?



## **Chapter One**

"It's official! I'm now a business owner! I'm so excited. For once in my life, I finally have something to call my own!" Sommer McGregor squealed, twirling around with her arms out. She wanted to jump up and down, shout to the world her fantastic news and celebrate.

"I'm happy for you, hun. You've finally done it, and it's all because of a chance meeting with that psychic." Nina's voice was full of smug satisfaction, as if she were really the one responsible for Sommer opening up Afternoon Delights, a catering service specifically created to make corporate lunches and fulfill orders for business functions, and specializing in hand-dipped chocolate confections. Sommer had the foresight to have a store as her main base where she could sell her treats to people off the streets, but her bread and butter would be the catering.

Sommer shook her head at her zany friend's declaration. "Nina, you know I'd had this planned for a while."

"But you were dragging your feet. When Madame Natasha did your tarot card reading, I think it was fate that your card was the Ace of Pentacles."

Twisting her lips to show her disbelief, Sommer could only stare at Nina for a moment before dignifying that claim with an answer. "Oh please. I don't even remember that stupid reading, let alone what the Ace of whatever you just called it is."

Nina sighed with the impatience of one trying to get a point across to someone who just didn't get it. "The Ace of Pentacles. You should study the tarot, you'd learn a lot."

"No thanks. I'll take my chances not knowing. Since it seems that you're dying to tell me what it means though, by all means, knock yourself out."

“It could mean many things such as a new business venture, new beginnings, prosperity and happiness. It certainly points to your success. Isn’t that exciting? It’s in the stars, my friend,” Nina gushed.

Sommer rolled her eyes. God save her from this zany woman. “Fate is what you make of it. The only one who can control my destiny is me. I’ve sent out flyers and contacted people who may be interested in my services to make this a success.” She tapped her chest with her palm. “I did all the leg work. I’m not going to make it because of what some stupid card says. Besides, I already have one client who wants me to take care of a series of business seminars they’re having in a couple weeks. If all goes well, they’ll use me again and I’m sure they’ll recommend me to their associates.”

Nina twirled one of her long braids with her finger. “What about your father’s company? He’s an executive at Masters and Son. They’re huge. It would be a coup if you landed an account with them.”

Sommer groaned, wishing Nina wouldn’t keep badgering her about this particular subject. She’d already made a conscious decision not to use her father’s business. No, that would be the easy way out.

The reason she’d started her venture to begin with was to prove to everyone, and mostly to herself, she could make it on her own without the help of others. All her life she’d been coddled and cosseted, having to fight for every ounce of independence, which she’d come to value.

Her parents meant well, but they were much too overprotective. And it wasn’t just them, but her extended family as well. The pack. Sommer would never be able to explain to any of her human friends what it was like growing up human among the *Wulfen*.

The obvious difference between her and the two people who raised her was their skin color. Her parents were white and she black, but that had never been an issue. They’d made the effort to infuse some culture into her life, making race a trivial matter. It was only outsiders who made a big deal about it.

The *Wulfen* factor was the much bigger issue.

Even her best friend since high school, Nina, who was into the psychic phenomena and anything to do with the occult, would probably laugh in her face if Sommer revealed the truth about her family's heritage.

"No thanks. I'd rather do this without my dad's help. It's bad enough that he wanted to fund the entire thing for me, as if this were some hobby of mine."

Nina gasped her exasperation, plopping down into one of the swivel chairs in Sommer's office with her usual dramatic flair. "You're nuts. Do you know how many people would kill for that? Why struggle if you don't have to?"

Sommer took the seat opposite Nina. "If everything was handed to you, would you really value it as much as something you worked hard for? Would it mean as much? Everything I've tried to do on my own, they've taken over to the point where I stop bothering. I know they mean well, but it gets a little trying sometimes."

"Your parents are sweethearts. I was a little jealous when I met them. My parents gave up on me a long time ago, but here you are with these people who would walk through fire for you and they spoil you like crazy. I'm sure they do so much for you because they love you."

Sommer sighed. She couldn't deny her parents loved her, but that wasn't the problem. "But sometimes their love is suffocating. I don't just have them to contend with, but the Alp—I mean my godfather and his family in addition."

"It can't be so bad."

"You have absolutely no idea." Sommer sighed, gazing at the picture of the smiling couple in a small oak frame on her desk. She reached out, allowing her fingertips to drift along the glass. It wasn't possible for her to love them more than she already did. How could she, after they'd adopted her when she'd lost her birth parents? But sometimes they hindered her independence.

The photograph was of them on her graduation day. They were a handsome pair, both slender, her father tall and dark, her mom petite and blonde. Sometimes she thought they loved her too much.

“Then make me understand.”

“Why is it so important for you to know?”

“Because you always clam up when you talk about them—except for the odd comment here or there. When we were in school together, you never invited me over, as if you were ashamed of them or something. I thought it may have been the race thing, but now I know it’s not the case. And when I finally met them, you seemed edgy. They seem like nice people to me.”

“They are.”

Nina threw her hands up in the air. “Then what’s the problem?”

Sommer knew her friend wouldn’t let go of the matter until she received what she believed was an adequate answer. “For one thing, all my friends were interrogated to the nth degree. It was almost like they were applying for clearance with the CIA or something.”

Nina snorted. “That’s what parents do. Even mine occasionally pretended like they cared and did that. Give me another example of how they smother you.”

“Growing up, they wouldn’t let me do anything for myself. I remember this one instance, I had to do a science fair project and I asked my dad for help. He ended up completing the entire experiment himself, and before you say that’s normal, he did it all the time, when what I really wanted was to sink or swim on my own. Whenever there was a class trip or an after-school activity I wanted to participate in, they’d only allow my involvement if they were chaperoning. I couldn’t go anywhere without my every movement tracked. I couldn’t get a job like most teenagers because Dad didn’t want me being out so late.”

Nina shrugged. “Your parents aren’t exactly in the poorhouse. You didn’t need to work.”

“But that’s just it. I wanted a job and to have my own money to spend, doing normal teenage things. It took weeks for me to build up my courage to tell them I wanted to attend an out-of-state college. You remember that fiasco. Mom wouldn’t stop crying, and Dad tried to bribe me. In the end, I caved and went to Georgetown because I couldn’t take the guilt trip. I’m twenty-six, for goodness sake, and I haven’t done a thing without them somewhere with their fingers in the pot. I’ve scrimped and saved to invest in a business of my own to prove to them and everyone that I’m not a little girl anymore.”

Reaching out to give her a sympathetic pat on the hand, Nina smiled. “I guess that could be a bit of a problem, but they sound sweet. Mine couldn’t wait to see the back of me when I turned eighteen.” Visibly shuddering, a shadow fell across Nina’s face. “I’d still rather be in your shoes.”

“I know I sound like an ungrateful brat, but...it’s one of those you-have-to-be-there-to-understand things. Listen, I have a lot to go over right now. I need to make sure everything runs smoothly for my launch party tomorrow night.”

Nina lifted a brow, a lopsided grin tilting her full lips. “Are you kicking me out?”

“You can stick around if you’d like, but I won’t be very good company while I’m working.”

“Fine.” Nina stood up, brushing the invisible wrinkles out of her linen skirt. She didn’t need to, as she always looked immaculate no matter what she wore. The crisp white top Nina sported created a nice foil to her golden brown skin. “I can take a hint. I just wanted to come by and see the place. Thanks for showing me around. I know you’ll be a success. It’s in the cards, girlfriend.”

Sommer laughed. “Puleeze. Don’t start that again. Thanks for coming by and checking me out. I’ll see you at the party tomorrow?”

They hugged.

“With bells on...and my latest friend, of course.”

“Tyree, right?”

“Oh he was so three weeks ago. I’m seeing Steven now, and can I just say his nickname should be the Energizer Bunny?”

Sommer held up her hands in protest. “Spare me the details.”

Poking out her tongue, Nina ignored Sommer’s plea. “He keeps going and going.”

Sommer scrunched her nose at the information. “Uh, yeah, I figured that much out.”

“Well, you know how it is.”

Actually, she didn’t. Sommer’s one act of rebellion resulted in the loss of her virginity at seventeen to a kid whose name she could barely remember. All she could recall from the incident was it hurt a little and was over quickly. Her next attempt at a liaison was in college with her lab partner. He’d been so nervous, he’d popped three condoms before he was able to get one on properly, and then it was nearly over as fast as the first time. After that, Sommer believed she was better off with her B.O.B.

She decided it was wiser not to answer Nina, because if there was one subject her friend could talk about for hours, it was sex.

Too astute for her own good, Nina squinted her hazel eyes as if scrutinizing a bug under a microscope. “You *do* know what I mean, don’t you?”

“Can we not get into this now? Aren’t you supposed to be leaving?”

“What’s not to get into? You’re opening up your own business, declaring your independence. Don’t you think you should take that extra step and leap into full-blown womanhood?”

“Nina,” Sommer’s voice dropped to a warning tone, but her thick-headed friend continued on.

“Look, I’m simply pointing out that you should take the bull by the cock and –”

God help her. “Don’t you mean the horns?”

“Is that how the saying goes?” Nina said with mock innocence, her eyes twinkling. “I think it’s an excellent time for you to join the rest of us in the sexual revolution.”

"I'm fine with the way things are. Besides, I'll be too busy trying to make Afternoon Delights a success."

"How many times do I have to tell you, it's gonna happen for you? But this all ties in to the Ace of Pentacles."

Sommer's patience was wearing thin with this tarot card mumbo jumbo, but she managed to keep her voice level. "How so? You told me it referred to my company. Which is it?"

"But it can also mean the beginning of pleasure, and if you find the right lover, you'll have lots of it."

"Okay, this conversation is over. I really need to focus on the opening. I'll call you tonight."

"Fine. You can avoid the subject if you'd like, but you and I both know you need to get laid."

Sommer refused to dignify that with a response. Instead she turned her attention to the computer screen and began hitting random keys to give the appearance of being busy, making it clear she wasn't participating in this talk any longer.

With a sigh, Nina left.

Once alone, Sommer couldn't concentrate. Was Nina right? Did she need to take a lover? If she was being completely honest with herself, maybe one of the reasons her foray into sexual exploration hadn't worked out was because she compared everyone to Caleb Masters.

Just the very thought of him sent a shiver racing up her spine. With his broad shoulders, sinewy frame and dreamy dark-lashed sky blue eyes, he was the epitome of sex on two legs. There was only one problem.

He was *Wulfen* and Alpha-in-Waiting. There was no way he could want her. As leader, he'd need a *Wulfen* bitch to govern by his side, not a human who didn't know much about her own heritage.

While the fantasy of being with him made her pussy tingle, that was all it could be, a fantasy. Besides, he treated her like a little sister. It was Caleb she ran to when her parents and his father wouldn't cave on certain issues. He'd been there for her to vent to and give advice and often spoke on her behalf. It was he who'd stood up to the other *Wulfen* children who teased her for being different. He encouraged her in her dreams of starting her own business.

When she thought of him, Sommer smiled. Caleb was the one who'd taught her how to ride a bike, ski and drive a car. She couldn't remember a time when he hadn't been there for her. He had been like the big brother she'd never had, but somewhere along the line, her feelings had developed into much more. Each day she'd learned to suppress them, content to have his friendship.

The shrill ring of the buzzer brought Sommer out of her silent musings. She wasn't expecting any visitors. Her parents had come by earlier to see if they could help out. Perhaps Nina had left something behind. Giving a quick survey of the room, she saw nothing and frowned.

Sommer was shocked to see the object of her affection standing on the other side of the glass door when she stepped into the store section. "Caleb!" With hurried motions, she opened the door for him before throwing herself into his arms. "When did you get back? I thought you'd be in New York until this weekend!"

Chuckling, he bared even white teeth, swinging her around. "And miss the grand opening? Not on your life."

She smacked him playfully on the shoulders. "Put me down, you big ox," her lips said, although she secretly reveled in the feel of being held within the circle of his strong corded arms.

Caleb dropped a kiss on the tip of her nose. "How are you doing?"

Heat suffused her body as she slowly stepped away from him. Why did her heart race so frantically whenever he was near? It wasn't fair for one man to be so damned gorgeous. Resisting the urge to brush the stray black lock off his forehead, Sommer kept



her fists clenched at her side. "Pretty good. I'm excited and nervous at the same time. If you'd like, I can give you a quick tour of the place."

Again he smiled, making her heart do cartwheels. "I'd love that."

Remembering what Nina and she had discussed only moments earlier, she tensed. It wouldn't do to allow her thoughts to wander in that direction.

"Sommer?" He shot her a questioning look, the muscles tightening in his square jaw. "Are you okay?"

"Oh I'm fine." *Only your nearness is driving me crazy*, she wanted to say, but bit her lips to keep the words from coming out.

She showed him around her store. It wasn't big, but it was hers. She'd gotten the loan herself, decorated it and set everything up. While the idea of sinking or swimming was daunting, Sommer wouldn't have it any other way. Once the tour was over, she led him to her tiny office in back. "Would you like something to drink? I have a couple cans of cola and some bottled water in my mini-fridge," she offered, bending down to get herself a beverage.

When he didn't answer, Sommer glanced over her shoulder, only to catch Caleb eyeing her with a strange twinkle in his eyes. A gasp of breath caught in her throat. There was something feral, territorial almost, in that look. Perhaps she was imagining things. Turning back around, as though in deep study of the refrigerator's contents, she cleared her throat. "Would you like something?" she repeated.

"Water would be fine," he finally answered. There was a gravelly quality to his voice that wasn't there before, or maybe she was hearing things that weren't there?

Sommer handed him his water and retreated to the safety of her desk, thankful they were separated by the big teak monstrosity, a present from her parents.

Caleb seemed to be as uneasy as she felt and she didn't know why, couldn't quite put her finger on what had happened in just a matter of seconds. An awkward silence cloaked the room until he spoke. "I thought I saw your friend Nina leaving the shop."

She gratefully grasped onto that safe subject, glad to have something to talk about. "Yes, she came by to check out the new place, like you have. I'm popular today. Mom and Dad were here earlier, and now you. Nina's been spouting on and on about the tarot card reading we attended a few months ago."

He lifted his brow in surprise. "I thought you didn't believe in that stuff."

"I don't, but Nina does. It was just before I set forth my plan for the business. She told me that whenever she's stuck in a rut, she gets a reading. I didn't really want to go, but I went along to humor her."

"And do you think it made a difference?"

"I don't think so, although she won't stop talking about it and one card in particular. The Ace of Pentagrams. No, Pentacles. Yes, that's what it was. Anyway, she seems to think that because I got this card, I'll be a big success."

"I have no doubt about that. You've always been determined."

Feeling reckless, she decided to see what his reaction would be by telling him the other half of the conversation. "Nina seems to think I should also try new avenues as far as my love life goes."

His eyebrows were drawn together in what looked like disbelief. "Oh?"

Something within made her want to push his buttons, and had she been thinking clearly, there was no way Sommer would have said what she did next. "She says I should take a lover, and maybe she's right."

"Like hell you will," he growled suddenly, surprising her.

"Excuse me?" she demanded in a stunned whisper. Why was he so angry? Usually she could tell Caleb anything, but at the moment, she was sorry she brought it up.

"You're not taking a lover!"

Her cheeks grew warm with embarrassment before anger took over. She was tired of being told what she could and couldn't do. Hearing it from Caleb in particular didn't

sit well with her. "I'm twenty-six, not six, old enough to do as I please without your permission."

"Damn right you're old enough. And I'm glad you've finally realized it, because I was getting tired of waiting."

Her jaw dropped. Was he implying what she thought he was? No. That was impossible. She had to be imagining things. "What are you talking about, Caleb?"

"The only lover you're taking is me." A fierce possessive gleam twinkled in his eyes, daring her to contradict him.

Sommer nearly fell out of her chair.

## **Chapter Two**

The minute the words were out of his mouth, Caleb knew there was no turning back. There. He'd said it, and now the ball was firmly in Sommer's court. For years, he'd been watching, wanting and waiting to claim her for his own.

Her mouth hung open and then formed a perfect "O". It took every ounce of willpower inside of his being to not get up at this very moment and take her in his arms. Caleb was in love with Sommer McGregor. Everything about her sent his body into a tailspin from her bright smile and dark brown eyes he often found himself drowning in to those thick bow-shaped lips, gorgeous brown skin and a body that filled his nights with wet dreams.

Often he'd wake up rock-hard and wanting her. Yet he had to pretend to be the big brother figure she'd relegated him to. Not anymore. He'd watched jealously on the sidelines when she began to date, going crazy with the thought of someone else touching her, holding her, kissing her. Nothing angered him more than when some other guy so much as looked in her direction in a lustful way, and she inspired that in a lot of men, much to his dismay.

Biding his time, he knew one day she would be his and he wouldn't rest until that happened. To hear her saying she was considering taking a lover was the final straw. Caleb refused to stand by and watch another man initiate Sommer in the sexual arts. Of course, he didn't kid himself into believing she was a virgin, but it was also apparent to him that she hadn't been satisfied properly. She still had that untouched air about her, but Caleb fully intended to fix that.

He lifted a brow. "Are you going to say something or do you plan on staring at me with your mouth open?"

Sommer blinked a couple times in obvious astonishment. "What am I supposed to say? You were joking, right?"

"I've never been more serious about anything in my life. Shall I repeat myself? Though it's not a habit of mine, I'll do it gladly. The only lover that you'll have is me," he declared through gritted teeth, the beast within roused, making him cagey.

She shook her head, her eyes wide with wonder. "Caleb...we're friends. You're the big brother I've never had."

That was it. Action was definitely needed where words were failing. Moving with a natural grace inherent in his kind, he stood up and stalked toward her with purposeful strides.

Her mouth fell open. "What are you doing?" she squeaked.

Caleb didn't answer. He grabbed Sommer's arm, hauling her out of the leather swivel chair and pulling her into his arms.

She splayed her fingers against his chest, probably to push him away, but his arms tightened around her, bringing Sommer closer still. The accelerated beating of her heart pounded and the softness of her curves molded to his body.

A smile tugged the corners of his mouth. She might feign indifference, but she wanted this as badly as he did. His instincts were rarely wrong and Caleb sensed her arousal – could smell it.

Sommer moistened her lips with the tip of her tongue, panic gleaming in her eyes. "Caleb, this is wrong."

He unclipped the barrette in her hair, watching the thick dark curtain fall to her shoulders. Then he threaded his fingers through the soft strands before giving it a tug in order to expose the lovely line of her neck to his gaze.

Bending his head, he brushed his lips against her throat. "Nothing has ever felt more right." Flicking his tongue against her soft flesh, Caleb absorbed her tangy sweet flavor on his taste buds. "Delicious," he groaned, wanting more.

One taste wasn't enough. Nowhere close to it.

Sommer gasped, shivering. The slight tremble of her bottom lip begged to be captured. Unable to deny its summons, he nipped it between his teeth.

"Caleb," she whispered, still standing rigid but slowly softening to him.

"Don't say anything, just feel."

Sommer twisted her head way from his questing mouth. "No, Caleb. This will change things between us forever. I value your friendship too much to throw it away on a brief fling."

A fling? Is that what she believed he wanted? "Do you think a quick roll in the hay is all I want? Do you know how long I've waited to make my move? Watching you with other men...wanting to kill each and every one of those bastards has been torture."

"But—"

"No buts. You say things will change between us, but that's exactly what I want and I think you want it too."

"I don't," she said, but her body told another story.

"Liar," he countered, before covering her mouth in a savage kiss. His fingers dug deeper into her thick locks, holding her head steady. Slipping his tongue between slightly parted lips, he sampled her essence, exploring, ravaging—claiming. She tasted of honey, mint and a unique flavor all her own.

The heady sensation of having Sommer pressed so tightly against his frame, savoring her beneath his taste buds and inhaling her scent, sent his hormones reeling. His cock grew painfully hard.

Caleb was by no means a novice when it came to sex, but with Sommer he felt like an eager schoolboy. Knowing he needed to go slow or else he'd end up ripping her clothes off, he changed the kiss from one of hunger and need to a subtle invitation to drown with him in a sea of desire.

The hands that had only moments before tried to push him away now clutched his shirt, nearly tearing it. Sommer's tongue pushed forward to meet his, twining, laving and dancing with it in a syncopated rhythm to their beating hearts.

Groaning into his mouth, she rubbed her body against his as if she couldn't get close enough.

He released the grip on her hair, allowing his hands to trail down the curve of her spine before cupping her voluptuous ass in his palms. For having such a slender frame, her rear would have put many women to shame.

On countless nights he'd dreamt about her luscious derriere and how he wanted to ride it. Fantasies of sliding his cock into that tight ass of hers were closer to becoming a reality.

Kneading and shaping her bottom in his hands, Caleb ground his erection at the juncture of her thighs. "I need you," he growled.

"Caleb," she sighed his name against his mouth. He could tell her surrender was close at hand and that within seconds she would succumb to the blistering heat that surrounded them both.

"Yes, that's it, little one," he moaned his arousal. "Give in to what you feel. Give in to me."

This kiss, though wondrous and earth-shattering, no longer satisfied him. Caleb needed more. Craved it. He pulled her down to the floor until he rested on top of her, wedging his knee between her thighs.

Sommer writhed and squirmed beneath him, her small hands running up and down his back. Her touch sent his senses reeling. Just when he'd given up hope of ever having the opportunity to be with Sommer and hold her like this, here they were.

Ten years ago, a few days after her sixteenth birthday, Caleb recognized in Sommer the woman who held his heart—the one who would be his mate.

His epiphany came at her birthday party, which had been celebrated late because she didn't want to have her Sweet Sixteen party without him in attendance, as he'd been out of town on business during her actual birthday. The McGregors had thrown her an elaborate celebration with all the trimmings. When Sommer was introduced to the guests, she'd come down the spiral staircase in a beautiful off-the-shoulder white ball gown. A tiara graced the top of her corkscrew-curved hair. Looking every bit the lady, she had taken his breath away.

She'd sought him out in the crowd and smiled. That was the exact moment of realization. Perhaps he'd known all along, but at that moment, Caleb could deny his feelings for Sommer no longer. He'd fallen for her. Hard. But she was too young for him to make a move. So the waiting game had begun.

Now that he had her beneath him, ready to be loved, sucked and fucked, he could hardly believe it was actually happening. Eager to explore her body, he pulled her blouse open, bypassing the fastenings. Buttons popped, flying everywhere. The sight of brown mounds peaking over the lacy cups of her pink lace bra made his mouth water. His cock ached and his pulse raced. The primal urge to claim her gnawed at his belly.

"Caleb, what are you doing to me?" Sommer caught her bottom lip between her small white teeth, clinging to him like a limpet, her nails digging into him, clawing in frantic motions.

"Turning you on, hopefully."

Her dark brown gaze searched his face. "You are...more than you know. Much, much more. I didn't know it could be like this."

He brushed her cheek with his lips. "We're only just beginning."

With one deft movement, he unclipped the front clasp of her bra, revealing small but beautifully shaped breasts. They were a work of perfection, capped with large areolas and blackberry-tinted nipples.



Dipping his head, he licked one nubbin, making her squirm. He took the puckered bud fully into his mouth and sucked with vigor while he fumbled with the button on her jeans.

He could smell the tangy scent of her pussy and he had to have her now.

“Caleb, I...I can't take this.” Her words came out as breathy gasps for air as she thrashed her head from side to side.

Despite her words, she tugged at his shirt, pulling it from inside his slacks. When her fingers touched his naked skin, a sharp intake of breath filled his lungs. Goddamn, he was horny. Transferring his attention to her other breast, he licked and circled the waiting peak.

Caleb lifted his head for breath. “You're so beautiful.” His gaze locked with her dark lust-filled one as he slipped his hands inside her panties. He grazed her outer dew-soaked labia. “You're wet for me and ready for my cock.”

Sommer opened her mouth, but no words came out. None were needed. If she was feeling half of what he was, then he knew the sensations were damn near overwhelming.

He lowered his head again for a brief kiss and then he eased his middle finger into her damp heat.

Her fingernails dug deeper into him, threatening to break the skin.

Caleb reared himself up just enough to watch her reaction.

Sommer's breath came out in shallow huffs. She lifted her hips against his probing finger, meeting its thrust. Oh yeah. She wanted this just as badly as he wanted to give it to her. Her reaction to his caresses pleased him.

He sank his finger deeper into her cunt. So slick and tight, he wondered how she'd feel around his cock. He'd, of course, have to prepare her, as he was *Wulfen* and she human. His girth and length were larger than the average human's. It would probably

be slightly uncomfortable for her at first, but once they were mated, there would be no problems. Caleb slid his finger deeper still and then pulled back to the tip.

Her heat was scorching and it was driving him crazy.

“Caleb, Caleb, Caleb!” she chanted his name in near incoherence.

On the verge of slipping another finger into her wet channel, her buzzer sounded off, signaling Sommer had a visitor.

Damn.

Though he hadn’t intended their first time to be on the floor of Sommer’s office and had every intention of stopping it once he’d sampled more of her wares, Caleb hadn’t expected this sexual interlude to come to such an abrupt halt either.

Sommer groaned with apparent regret. She placed her hands against his shoulders to give Caleb a shove. “Oh Lord, what did we just do?”

He wasn’t particularly in the mood to roll off her. If Caleb had his way, he’d stay like this until Sommer admitted she belonged to him, but then the bell rang again, cutting off what he wanted to say.

“Please get off me,” Sommer hissed, attempting to wiggle from beneath him.

Reluctantly, he pulled his finger from her pussy. In a deliberate move, he licked her cream from his digit.

Sommer’s jaw dropped and her body shook in reaction. “Don’t do that.”

A smile tugged the corners of his lips. He liked seeing her all hot and bothered. “Why? Because it turns you on?”

“No, because we shouldn’t be doing this.”

His eyes narrowed. “You’d say that after only minutes before you were screaming my name?”

Again the buzzer rang, telling him Sommer’s guest wouldn’t be leaving until someone answered the door.

He'd conceded to her wishes—for the moment—but now that she knew exactly where he stood, there was no way Caleb would allow things to remain as they had been. "This isn't over."

"Oh yes it is. Now get off me."

Caleb rolled away, giving her the opportunity to stand up. "I thought you said you weren't expecting anyone else." Even to his own ears his voice sounded sulky and he didn't like it one bit.

"I don't know who it is." She fumbled with her clothes in an attempt to give herself some semblance of respectability.

He resented the hell out of the way Sommer was able to pretend nothing had just happened between them, although it was clear she was still flustered.

A frown marred her pretty face. "Dammit, why did you have to pop my buttons?"

He shrugged. "You didn't complain earlier."

"Caleb, we can't talk about this right now. I have to see who's at the door." She grabbed the blazer resting on the back of her chair and threw it on before dashing out of the office.

Son of a bitch.

Caleb wanted to kill whoever it was at the door.

"Uncle Seth!" Sommer's squeal of delight made Caleb's ears perk up. Out of all the people it could have been, why did it have to be his father?

"Of course I'd come and check this place out. I'm very proud of you, sweetheart. I saw my son's car outside. Is he here?" Caleb heard his father ask.

"Uh, well...y-yes, he is," Sommer stammered.

Caleb groaned, smoothing out his suit. He'd never hear the end of this if his father figured out what just transpired on the floor of Sommer's office. He squared his shoulders, composing himself, and walked out to the front to face the music.

"Dad, I wasn't expecting to see you here today," Caleb greeted.

Shrewd blue eyes surveyed him up and down. He was thirty-five years old, vice president of a major corporation and Alpha-in-Waiting, yet his father could reduce him to a little boy all over again with one stern look. Seth Masters didn't say a word to indicate one way or the other whether he knew what had happened because his look said it all.

*You fucked up, son.*

Caleb groaned inwardly, knowing he was in for it later.

Sommer broke into the uneasy silence. "Can I show you around, Uncle Seth?"

The wide grin returned to Seth's face for his much-loved goddaughter. "I'd like that very much, sweetheart."

Caleb transferred his weight from one foot to the next impatiently, knowing he wouldn't have the chance to talk to Sommer with his father around. "I have to head out, but I'll see you at the party tomorrow, Sommer."

"Okay," she answered, not quite meeting his eyes. She sounded like continuing where they left off was the last thing she wanted.

If she believed for a second he'd let her forget what they shared, the only person she was fooling was herself. As he headed out the door, his father halted him.

"Don't go far, son, I'd like to talk to you. I won't be long."

"Can't it wait? I need to get back to the office."

Steely blue eyes turned in his direction that brokered no argument. "I said I'd be a moment."

Caleb turned on his heel and walked out, realizing it was pointless to argue. He left the two of them in the shop, but heeding his father's words, he hung out by his car. No matter what was said, he wouldn't be told how to feel and how to act when it came to Sommer.

He knew how protective his father was toward her, but Caleb had vowed not to let anyone stand in the way of claiming his woman. Fortunately, he didn't have to wait long before his father came striding out of Afternoon Delights.

At nearly sixty, Seth Masters was still as spry as men half his age. Except for the liberal strands of gray peppering his dark hair, he could easily pass for a much younger man. Caleb had been told many times he was the spitting image of his father, and that they could pass for brothers rather than father and son.

There was no one he admired more than the man standing before him, but at times when they didn't agree, Seth made no secret of his feelings.

"Dad." Caleb nodded his head in acknowledgement.

"What the hell was going on in there before I arrived?" his father asked without preamble.

Caleb shrugged. Why volunteer information? Besides, the older man was astute enough to figure it out on his own. "I don't know what you mean. Like you, I stopped by to check out Sommer's new shop."

Sky blue eyes, so like his own, went a silver-shimmery color, a sign that his father wasn't happy. "Care to repeat that, Caleb? Because if you lie to me again, I think I might really lose my temper." His tone was ice cold. "I could smell sex the second I walked into the shop. How long has this been going on?"

Caleb lifted his chin in defiance. He wasn't ashamed of what happened. It was probably best his father find out now rather than later. "Today is the first time we were intimate, although we didn't get as far as I would have liked."

"What the hell were you thinking, Caleb? I've put up with your whoring in hopes you'd eventually settle down and have a few cubs of your own. It's about time you made me and your mother grandparents, but I won't sit back and watch you play with Sommer's affections. How could you? She's innocent, and will only get hurt when you tire of her like the other women you mess around with. She isn't the kind of woman to go in for casual affairs and walk away unscathed. I won't stand for it!"

It was Caleb's turn to be angry. It offended him to know his father thought of him as a reckless skirt chaser, and especially, that he'd treat Sommer so callously. "What makes you think this is just a fling? Give me some credit, Dad. I care about her way too much to become involved with her for some random romp." He pounded his fist in his palm, driving the point home. "And furthermore, she's the one I want as my mate and I'm laying claim to Sommer."

Seth crinkled his forehead and folded his arms across his chest. "Do you know what you're saying?"

"Of course I do. I know in my heart she's my mate, and nothing will stop me from making her mine."

Lifting one bushy brow, his father eyed him sternly. "Oh? Have you forgotten that, as my heir, you need my permission to take a mate? I may be your father, but I'm also your Alpha."

Caleb stared his father dead in the eye. "Though it would mean the world to me to have your blessing, it won't matter if you don't grant it. I'd defy you if it came down to it."

"Our laws dictate that you'd be shunned from the pack if you went against me on such an issue. Is this a risk you're willing to take – losing everything?"

"Without her, I would have lost everything anyway. She's worth it. Sommer is special, and I need you to understand, no matter what happens, I won't back down. I love her."

Seth remained silent for several moments, lips pursed and brows knitted together as though he were in deep contemplation. For a moment, Caleb didn't think he'd say anything at all, until he finally sighed. "You've hidden this well. Why have you never said anything about this before? You used to tell me everything." There was a tinge of disappointment in his father's voice.

Caleb shook his head. "Not about this. I know how special she is to you. After all, you've been in her life since she was a baby and have looked on her as your daughter.

Besides, I knew you'd go ballistic when you found out. I won't deny I've screwed around a lot, but those other women didn't mean a thing to me, not like Sommer does."

"I thought your feelings toward her were brotherly."

"In the beginning they were, but then I matured and she grew up. Not a day goes by when I don't ache for her. I can't hold my feelings in for her any longer."

"Why now?"

"Think about it. Sommer needed time to grow and come into her own. Had I worn my heart on my sleeve, it probably would have scared her away. Maybe what we did in there shouldn't have happened when it did, but it was going to occur eventually. I would have seen to it."

Seth tilted his head, studying his son with shrewd eyes. "And what if she doesn't love you back?"

"It's a dilemma I've struggled with for a while, but today, for the first time, I found she's not so indifferent to me. I swear on my life, on my honor as Alpha-in-Waiting, Dad, that I'd never do anything to harm her."

His father grunted. "I guess I won't stand in your way then. I remember how it was when I met your mother. She was eighteen, just blooming into womanhood. Her family moved to our territory and sought your grandfather's protection when their Alpha went mad. I fell hard, but she was reluctant to get involved with me because she thought I was a womanizer. I pursued her relentlessly until she caved." A slow smile crossed the older man's face.

Caleb wanted what his parents had. After nearly forty years of marriage, the two still carried on like a couple of teenagers. Any observer could see how deeply in love they were.

Seth continued, "I suppose if you had to choose a human mate, you couldn't do any better than Sommer. Your mother and I already love her like a daughter and she's in the fold. Your union, at least, should be easier for the other pack members to accept."

That could only mean one thing. Although Sommer had been raised within the pack, there were still some who resented her presence. But because she had the Alpha's support, most of the dissenters kept their opinions to themselves. The Alpha-in-Waiting taking her for a mate would create another uproar, and this time, unlike when her parents took her in, some of the pack would be more vocal.

"Again, it's a chance I have to take."

Seth patted him on the arm. "You have my full support then, Caleb, but good luck telling this to Trevor. If you think I was tough, he'll make me look like a cub."

Caleb nodded solemnly. "I'll break it to him gently. Thanks, Dad."

"The more I think about you two joining, the more I approve. But if you hurt her in any way, I'll break your goddamn neck."

Caleb instinctively knew that was no mere jest.



### Chapter Three

Sommer knew the very second Caleb walked into the party. How could she miss him when his very presence demanded attention? Dressed in a tailored black designer suit that skimmed the fine lines of his hard muscular frame and the wavy locks of his dark hair framing a ruggedly handsome face, he was one of the most handsome men she'd ever seen.

He scanned the room and Sommer instinctively knew he was looking for her. When he caught sight of her, a slight smile tilted the corner of his sensual lips and he strode toward her with the easy, careful steps of a panther stalking its prey.

Caleb was only a few feet away when he was intercepted by another party attendee—Selena Kahn. The tall, willowy brunette wrapped her fingers around Caleb's arm as though they belonged there and gave him one of her patented come-hither smiles.

Sommer didn't know why, but there was something about that woman that put her teeth on edge. Selena was nice enough, she supposed, but Sommer always found herself wondering if there was something behind that brilliant smile the other woman was wont to flash. It didn't help matters knowing that Caleb and Selena had once dated. At one point, there had been speculation of the two joining. Sommer never understood why they hadn't made a go at it. They made a striking pair.

With a heart-shaped face framed by a wave of chestnut that fell to her model-slim waist, Selena Kahn had the kind of exotic looks that made men drool. Possessing clear golden skin with slanted green eyes, pouty, scarlet-painted lips, high cheek bones and a long straight nose, she was easily one of the most beautiful women Sommer had ever seen. If that weren't enough, Selena was self-assured, a successful businesswoman and *Wulfen*. Many members of the pack sought her out as a mate.

She would make the perfect Alpha Fem.

Sommer looked away from the sight of the delectable Selena with her hand cupped behind Caleb's neck and her lips not even an inch away from his ear, whispering something. The intimacy of that pose was like an arrow through Sommer's heart.

She shouldn't care, not even after that lapse in her office yesterday. It had been a mistake. For reasons known only to Caleb, he had taken it into his head that they should be lovers. It was a dream come true for her, but Sommer was well aware of his love-'em-and-leave-'em reputation. Could her heart take the rejection once he decided he was through with her as he had with the others?

"Sweetheart, your party is officially a success." Slender arms wrapped around her waist.

Sommer put her arm around her mother's shoulders, giving her a quick hug. "Thanks, Mom. Yes, I've had an amazing turnout. I can't believe this is all for me."

Laurel McGregor smiled at her daughter, pride shining within the depths of warm hazel eyes. "I knew you'd be a hit."

Sommer sighed. "Let's just hope this garners some business for Afternoon Delights. I've collected quite a few business cards so far and I've even lined up a couple of functions already, but I need to keep this momentum going."

"Your father could mention something to Seth and—"

Sommer shook her head vehemently. "Absolutely not. I need to do this on my own. If Daddy steps in, what would that prove? No, I don't want any help from Dad, you or Seth."

Her mother frowned. "We only offer to help because we love you and want you to be happy."

Sommer leaned over and gave her mother a brief kiss on the cheek. "I know, Mom, and I appreciate it. This party you and Daddy are footing the bill for is help enough."

A slight smile tilted her mother's plum-painted lips. "It's the least we could do, considering how prickly you were about us getting involved otherwise."

"You know how it is, Mom."

"I know, sweetie, but keep in mind that just because you have to ask for help every now and then, it doesn't mean you've failed."

"I know. I hope you don't think I'm ungrateful. It's just..." How could Sommer tell her mother, the most generous woman she knew, that sometimes the help offered by her and Dad could be a bit suffocating at times?

Laurel gave Sommer a quick squeeze before letting go. "You don't have to say it, honey. I know your father and I can be a bit overzealous at times, but you're our little girl. I know you're an adult and quite capable of handling things on your own, but sometimes it's a little hard for us to let go. We just want to feel like we're needed."

"Mom, I'll always need you and Dad."

"Am I interrupting?" Caleb moved closer to them, a smile pinned to his handsome face.

Laurel opened her arms, welcoming Caleb to step into her embrace. "Caleb, when did you arrive? I was just talking to your father a few minutes ago and he wasn't sure when you'd get here."

Caleb returned the hug with enthusiasm. "I had dinner with a client, otherwise, I would have gotten to the party much sooner. Nothing could have kept me away from it." Though he said the words to her mother, Sommer got the distinct impression they were for her benefit.

She fought off the shiver that threatened to rake her body. When Sommer had no idea her crush would ever see fruition, she could remain cool, calm and collected around Caleb. But after what happened, she wasn't sure how to act. She squirmed beneath his penetrating stare. Managing to paste a smile on her face, she tilted her head to meet his gaze. "Thank you for coming. It means a lot." Shyness washed over her all of a sudden.

He lifted a dark, sinister brow. "Don't I get a hug from you as well?"

Sommer froze. Could she risk being in his arms again when they both knew she'd burst into flames from his touch? "Umm, I uh...this dress wrinkles easily," she mumbled. Groaning inwardly, she realized how lame that excuse must have sounded, especially when he'd probably seen Sommer and her mother hug.

Laurel gave her daughter a questioning look but didn't comment.

Caleb, however, didn't seem ready to let go of the subject. "You've never let something like that bother you before, Sommer."

"I've never had a grand opening either." When she would have turned away from him, Caleb caught her elbow.

"You're not going to leave me when I've only just arrived, are you?" he challenged softly.

"Go ask Selena to keep you company," she snapped. Sommer could have kicked herself the moment those words escaped her lips. It wasn't her intention to sound like a jealous lover, but that's exactly how it came out. Damn.

Judging from the smug smile curling Caleb's sensual lips, he'd interpreted it that way as well. Sommer's face grew warm in her embarrassment, and to make matters worse, her mother had probably picked up on the tension between them as well.

"If you don't mind, Laurel, Sommer and I have some things we need to discuss. If you'll please excuse us?" He didn't give the other woman a chance to answer before guiding Sommer outside to the terrace.

Struggling would do her no good because it would draw more attention toward them that she definitely didn't want. Once they were out of earshot of the other partygoers, Sommer was prepared to let him have it.

"You had no right to oomph—"

Caleb cut her off by covering her lips with his.

Sommer placed her hands against his broad chest to push him away, but once she felt the pounding of his heart beneath her fingertips, she found herself grasping clumps of his shirt in her fists, pulling him closer.

She parted her lips under his tender assault with a moan, welcoming the invasion of his questing tongue. Her nipples pebbled against the thin silk material of her blouse, eager to break free, and her pussy tingled with warmth and arousal.

He groaned, wrapping corded arms around her body, holding her tight while he sought out and tasted every crevice within the depths of her mouth.

Just like she knew she would be, Sommer was on fire for him, desperate to give him what he wanted. Why did it seem she lost all reason when she was this close to him?

Caleb's large hands ran down the curves of her spine before cupping her rear and giving it a squeeze. He broke the kiss, pulling back just enough to graze his lips against the side of her face. "You have no idea how much I've thought of kissing you again. Since yesterday, I haven't been able to get you out of my mind."

Sommer was too caught up in a wave of torrential delight to respond. Instead, she pressed her body against his, pleading for more—demanding it.

He chuckled lightly. "I see you're not worried about your dress right now," he murmured before covering her mouth once again with a hungry kiss. Caleb pulled her against him and his erection pressed against the juncture of her thighs. He could probably take her right here and now and Sommer would let it happen. It was as if he'd cast a spell on her, because she couldn't think of one good reason why she shouldn't be with him.

And then something furry grazed her hand that was now resting on the small of his back.

His tail.

Growing up among the *Wulfen*, she was well aware of their mating habits, and the fact that Caleb's tail was out demonstrated how turned on he was. But this gave her the reason she couldn't find earlier to pull away from him. He was *Wulfen* and she human.

The most they could ever have between them was a brief affair, because Caleb would need to settle down with one of his own kind.

Sure, her parents, Caleb and Uncle Seth had shielded her from most of the censure expressed by pack members who felt she had no business being raised among them, but they wouldn't be able to protect her were Caleb to actually take her as his mate. It was foolish for her to even think he'd choose her to be his mate when there were *Wulfen* females more suitable to be the Alpha Fem, governing by his side when Caleb took over for his father. Someone like Selena Kahn.

Sommer tried to step away from him, but his arms were like bands of steel. "No, we can't do this."

For several moments, it seemed like he wouldn't let her go, but finally Caleb sighed, releasing her. "You're right. We can't do this here."

She shook her head vehemently. "We can't do this *ever*."

His eyes narrowed and his ice blue eyes turned cobalt. "What the hell do you mean by that? How can you even imply this wasn't meant to happen when I could have taken you right here on the ground?" he practically yelled at her.

"Lower your damn voice," she hissed, hoping everyone inside was too preoccupied to hear what was going on out here. Among their extraordinary abilities, the *Wulfen* had extra-sensitive hearing.

Caleb raked his fingers through his hair, his frustration evident. His ears morphed into sharpened points, further outlining his agitation. "I'm sorry, but you're so damn infuriating."

"Me? I'm trying to be sensible. This thing between us...I mean, I'm attracted to you, but it's pointless for us to get involved."

"Says who?"

Sommer pointed to her chest. "Says me."

"You can say that after what just happened and what happened yesterday?"

"I wish you wouldn't remind me of that. It was a lapse on both our parts. This isn't supposed to be happening between us. We grew up together. We're friends, that's all."

He advanced on her, and when Sommer took a step back, he moved two closer. "Don't friends make the best lovers? You may be willing to pretend things can remain the same between us, especially after what we shared, but I sure as hell won't."

Sommer shook her head vehemently. The longer they stood out here arguing about the matter, the weaker her resistance became. Yes, she wanted him, more than the air she breathed, but wanting just wasn't enough. If she were to start a relationship with him, eventually she'd want more, and she knew it wasn't possible. "Maybe they do, but not in our case. It would be best if you get it into your head there won't be anything happening between us. For one thing, I need to focus all my attention on making my business a success, and another, I don't see any point in starting something that will only end in a matter of weeks, maybe even days."

"What the hell are you talking about, Sommer?" He clasped her arms, his fingers digging into her bare skin.

"Caleb, you're hurting me. Let go."

"Sommer, I know my own strength and I'm not applying nearly as much pressure as I'd like to right now. What I really want to do is shake you until your teeth rattle. Now tell me what you meant by that comment about us not lasting."

She poked her bottom lip out mutinously and met his gaze with an angry glare. Did he want her blood? Why was he demanding answers when a simple no should have sufficed? How could she pour her feelings out to him without looking like an utter fool? If she were to tell him what was really on her mind, chances were he'd laugh in her face. They stared at each other, neither one backing down.

Sommer was on the verge of cracking beneath the weight of his steely gaze when she was saved.

“There you are, darling. I thought I saw you out here, but I couldn’t imagine what would have kept you out here so long.” Selena Kahn joined them on the terrace, sauntering over to the Sommer and Caleb like a lioness on the prowl.

The subtle dig didn’t escape Sommer. If Selena had seen Caleb go out to the terrace, then she would have also seen he was with Sommer. Selena’s insult underlined what Sommer had known all along, the pack viewed Sommer as insignificant, not worthy of the Alpha-in-Waiting’s attention.

As the daughter of Seth’s Betas, she should have commanded much more respect, but the fact that she was human nullified that. Sommer recognized Selena was not being intentionally rude, it was simply the way most of her kind thought.

Caleb released Sommer but shot her a look that left no doubt in her mind exactly what was on his mind. His expression said it all. *This isn’t over.* Then he turned his attention to the delectable Miss Kahn, in a designer little black dress that showed off her curves to their advantage. “Selena, as you can see, Sommer and I were having a private conversation.”

Sommer saw her opportunity to escape. “It’s okay. I need to mingle among the guests. You two enjoy the rest of the party.” Not giving either of them an opportunity to reply, she dashed away, not stopping until she was once again surrounded by other people.

She looked behind her shoulder to see Caleb coming back inside as well. Sommer scanned the room, looking for someone she could take refuge with. A smile tugged the corners of her lips when she spotted her father on the other side of the room talking to one of his business associates.

She scurried in his direction, raising her hand. “Daddy,” Sommer called out to the tall, broad man whose hair was liberally sprinkled with silver.

Slate gray eyes turned in her direction before a smile twinkled within their depths. “Princess.” He held out his hand to her. “I was wondering where you’d gotten off to.”



Sommer took it gratefully before snuggling beneath the protective crook of his arm. "I had to make the rounds."

"Sommer, you remember Mark Spenser, don't you? He was just complimenting you on the lovely spread tonight."

She smiled at the older gentleman. "Thank you. I thought it would be a good idea to put out samples of what can be expected from my company."

Mr. Spenser patted his rotund belly. "Everything I've tasted has been delicious. Hopefully I get to sample more of your creations at a company function."

Sommer shook her head with a regretful smile. "Actually, Masters and Son won't be one of my clients."

Mr. Spenser frowned, looking at Trevor and then back at Sommer. "Why ever not? Surely that would be quite an account for a start-up company to land. Haven't you asked your father yet?"

Sommer bristled under the assumption. It was on the tip of her tongue to answer, but her father did it for her.

"Seth and I offered to hire her company for some upcoming functions, but Sommer wouldn't hear of it." Trevor looked down with a smile on his face and gave Sommer an affectionate squeeze. "My little girl has an independent streak a mile long, so once she gets something into her head, there's no talking her out of it. But she knows we'll be there for her should she need us."

She rubbed her father's chest, her heart full of love for this man.

The tender moment, however, was broken. "Well, it's lucky for you, Sommer, you have a safety net in case your business fails." The way the words were delivered left no doubt in her mind that's what the other man expected.

Though he wasn't *Wulfen*, Mark Spenser had been with Masters and Son for years. Sommer got the distinct impression that he didn't approve of her for some reason. She couldn't quite put her finger on why. It could have been because he believed she was

spoiled and overly coddled by her parents or possibly her being black. Whatever his problem was, she wouldn't let him take away what she'd already accomplished thus far.

"And it's especially lucky for me that I don't plan on failing." She narrowed her eyes just enough to get her message across, daring him to contradict her.

Mr. Spenser flushed. "Well, of course you won't, my dear. I'm sorry, Trevor, but I see someone I need to speak with."

Her father nodded. "Sure. I will talk to you later."

The other man hurried off without a backward glance.

"Was that rude of me?" Sommer wanted to know.

"Not at all. I think you handled yourself beautifully, Princess." He dropped a kiss on her brow.

From the corner of her eye, Sommer noticed someone fast approaching them. When she turned her head to see who it was, she groaned inwardly. Caleb didn't look like a man who would be easily deterred this time.

## **Chapter Four**

Caleb paced the length of the room, his eyes never leaving Sommer. He waited, his patience threatening to snap at any second. For the better part of the party he'd tried to get Sommer alone, and each time he finally found her, she found a way to elude him, using one excuse after the other. If he wasn't busy chasing her around, he was fending off a very annoying Selena.

She was no doubt a beautiful woman, but for the life of him, he didn't know what he'd been thinking to get involved with her in the first place. If you gave that woman an inch, you could damn well be certain she'd take a mile. After the third time she'd tried to corner him, he'd lost all semblance of trying to be polite. In no uncertain terms, he'd told her to get lost.

Finally, the last guest had left and the only people remaining were Sommer and her parents. There was no escaping him now. He strode over to the three of them. Laurel smiled at him while Trevor shot him an inquisitive look. Sommer, on the other hand, was trying to avoid his gaze.

"Sommer, it's time to leave," Caleb stated without preamble.

This brought her head up sharply. "What are you talking about? I have to stay and clean up. I'd planned on spending the night."

Caleb wouldn't allow Sommer to hide behind her parents this time. "That's funny. Laurel, didn't you tell me you'd hired extra help to do the clean-up for this party? And Trevor, I was certain you had mentioned being worried about your daughter driving back to her place so late at night. Problem solved, I'll take her." He met her scornful stare and knew he'd trumped her.

"That's a good idea, Caleb, although if she wants to spend the night, that's fine with us as well," Laurel offered.

“Then it’s all settled. I’ll take Sommer home so the two of you don’t have to worry. Get your things, Sommer, so we can leave.”

Her nostrils flared, but she didn’t protest as he thought she would. Not that it mattered whether she had or not, because he had been fully prepared to sling her over his shoulder and carry her out of this house caveman style.

He made small talk with Trevor and Laurel while Sommer gathered her belongings. It was only when they were in the car and Caleb had driven a few miles that Sommer exploded.

“You had no right to decide when it was time for me to leave! Besides that, I was quite capable of driving home on my own.”

“Your father didn’t want you driving home so late at night.”

“My father also thinks I’m a little girl, and you played right along, didn’t you? You know how I feel when they do that to me. How could you?” She slammed her hand against the dash.

He grinded his teeth, pushing back the twinge of guilt he felt. He knew her parents could go a bit overboard at times, but had she not spent the night trying to avoid him, things would never have come to this. “You did what you felt you needed to do, and that’s exactly what I’m doing right now.”

“What you had to do? Are you kidding me? Caleb, because of your underhanded tactics, my parents probably suspect there’s something going on between us.”

He shrugged, keeping his eyes on the road. “There isn’t at the moment, but that will soon be changed by the end of the night.”

“You arrogant son of a bitch! Turn around and take me back to my parents’ house.”

“Stop being so melodramatic, Sommer. The next stop I’m making is your place.”

She let out a scream, venting her frustration before slumping in her chair.

Caleb didn't say anything more, deciding it would be best to let her get used to what was going to happen between them once they reached her apartment. The tension during the remainder of the ride was so thick it could have been cut with a knife.

When he finally pulled up in front of her building, he barely had time to park before she unbuckled her seat belt and shot out of the car.

Sommer was just turning the key to her door with shaky hands by the time Caleb caught up with her.

With one deft movement, he pushed her aside and unlocked the door. Opening the door, Caleb gestured toward it, palm up. "After you, my lady."

She stormed past him, a mutinous expression on her face. Her bottom lip poked out and she looked as if she wanted to commit murder. Slinging her purse on the couch, Sommer turned on him then. "You can leave now. Your duty is done."

Caleb shrugged out of his suit jacket and began to loosen his tie.

"What are you doing?" she squawked. "I want you to leave *now!*"

Tossing his tie aside, he sat down on her loveseat and removed his shoes with slow precision, making his intentions very clear.

"Stop that right now. Caleb, put that back on because you're not staying."

He unfastened his cufflinks and then unbuttoned his shirt. Not once did he take his eyes away from her.

Sommer stared at him open-mouthed as though trying to find the right words to say as he continued to undress. Finally, when he was down to his boxers, his fingers on the waistband, she cried out, "Okay! You win. Just, please, not like this." Her shoulders drooped as she fell back on the couch, her head in her hands.

Caleb halted, feeling like a Grade A jackass. This wasn't how he wanted things to be between him and Sommer. He'd envisioned carrying her to the bed like those heroes in the romance books she used to favor. Then he wanted to make sweet love to her until she pleaded his name. The last thing he wanted was for Sommer to be frightened of

him. His feelings for her ran far too deep to have it any other way. With a sigh, he walked over to where she was and sat next to her.

Throwing an arm around her trembling shoulders, he brushed his lips against the side of her head. "I'm sorry, sweetheart. I didn't mean to come off so crass, but these mixed signals you keep throwing at me aren't gonna cut it. You say things will change between us if we take this step, but I'm telling you right now they already have. I don't think there's any going back, and pretend all you'd like, but you want this to happen too."

Sommer lifted her head to stare at him with tear-filled eyes. "I do, Caleb, but—"

He placed his finger against her lip. "No buts." Sliding his hands beneath her rear, Caleb scooped her up and transferred her to his lap. "You looked gorgeous tonight, Sommer."

"Thank you." Her voice was shaky. She moistened her lips with the tip of her tongue. His eyes fastened on the brief movement and his semi-erect cock elongated until it strained painfully against his pants. With a low growl, he captured those lips he'd been dying to taste for the entire night. They were soft and pliant beneath his persistence. "Open your mouth for me, darling."

Her lips parted with a soft sigh, allowing him enough room to press his tongue forward to sample the sweet cavern of her mouth. Goddamn, she was sweet. It was like ambrosia beneath his taste buds. Everything about her titillated his senses, from her beauty to her tangy scent, and the feel of her warm curves pressed so lovingly against him.

Caleb knew she was skittish and would need to go slow. Besides, he wanted to make this night last. With his mouth never breaking contact with hers, he pushed the straps of her dress down her shoulders, loving the way her soft skin felt beneath his fingertips.

Sommer ripped her mouth away from his, panting. Caleb chased her lips, not prepared to end the intimate connection. She turned her head away. "Wait, let me catch my breath."

"I need you, sweetheart." He nuzzled the side of her neck with his nose, inhaling her perfumed skin. "If I don't have you soon, I think I'll explode."

He yanked the bodice of her dress down, revealing her pert, well-shaped tits capped with large areolas and blackberry-colored nipples that were so hard and ready to be suckled.

Sommer released what sounded like a melancholy sigh.

Concern beat within his chest. The last thing he wanted was for her to change her mind when he was so fucking horny. "What's wrong, sweetheart?"

"They're so small," she sighed mournfully.

Caleb knitted his brows together. "You mean these?" He skimmed his knuckles over one puckered tip, eliciting a shiver from her body.

She nodded. "Yes. I wish they were a little bigger."

He cupped the soft mounds in his palms, grazing his thumbs against her nipples. "I don't find a thing wrong with them. In fact, they're perfect. Do you see? They fit in my palms just right. I haven't been able to get the thought of these beauties out of my head since yesterday, and you have no idea how much I've been longing to do this." Dipping his head, he swirled one pert tip with his tongue.

She clasped his shoulders and threw back her head. "Oh Caleb."

Taking the nipple fully into his mouth, he sucked, tugging and nipping at it. The purrs coming from her throat were driving him wild. His tail pushed from the small of his back and his fur lay beneath the surface of his skin, threatening to pop out. She turned him on more than any woman he'd ever been with. But then again, Caleb knew it would be this way. He'd dreamt of nothing else in the past ten years. Having her in his arms far surpassed any of his erotic imaginings.

Though she wouldn't be the first human he'd ever been with, she'd be the first whom he didn't have to hide his true self from. With the others, he'd held back, careful not to reveal what he was. Because of that, he could never fully enjoy himself, which was why most of his lovers were *Wulfen* or vampire fems. Caleb instinctively knew none of those women would compare to Sommer. He had high expectations for their joining and had no doubt his fantasies would be fulfilled.

She wiggled her rear, grinding into his cock. "Caleb, this feels so good."

He released the turgid nub with a pop, a grin splitting his face as he lifted his head. "I can make you feel even better, darling." Giving her no warning, he stood up with Sommer cradled in his arms.

She clung to him. "What are you doing?"

"I'm going to take you to the bedroom so I can fuck you."

Sommer surrendered with the knowledge that protest was futile. Caleb had, after all, proved just how much she wanted him. Why not give him what they both wanted, throw caution to the wind and let him screw her senseless? This would simply be a brief fling, a no-strings-attached affair. It might hurt when he was ready to move on, but at least she would have the memory of the delirious passion she felt in his arms.

She pressed kisses against the side of his neck as he strode toward the bedroom, holding her effortlessly as if she weighed no more than a bag of feathers. The sheer strength emanating from his tight, sculpted frame made her tremble.

Once Caleb made it to his destination, he placed Sommer gently on her feet. The cocktail dress she'd taken such care in selecting for the party was a mess, the front stretched beyond repair.

"God, you have no idea how much I want you, Sommer." His words were a husky caress that sent jolts of titillating sensation up her spine.

"If it's half as much as I want you, then I have an idea," she chuckled.



With forceful tug, he ripped her dress off her body in an act of savagery that took her breath away. Sommer giggled nervously. "Slow down, Caleb, there's no rush."

Grabbing her hand, he placed it over the large erection tenting his pants. "Care to repeat that, sweetheart? As long as I've waited for this, I can't have you fast enough."

"You're so big." Licking her lips, she wrapped her fingers around the stiff rod through the silky material of his black boxers.

Caleb jerked away from her grip. "Don't," he groaned.

She pulled her hand back as if she'd been scalded, a bit hurt that he didn't want her touch.

He shook his head. "I didn't mean I didn't like it, just...if you keep touching me that way, I may not be able to control myself and I want our first time together to be special."

Her heart did a somersault. Just being with him, having his arms around her was enough to make things right for her. Sommer placed her hand against his square jaw. "As long as it's with you, it will be."

Caleb framed her face with his hands and gave her a fierce hungry kiss. When he finally broke it, they were both gasping for breath. "If you keep talking like that, you're going to turn me into a rutting maniac." Bending over slightly, he scooped her into his arms and carried Sommer the short distance to the bed before placing her on the center. Then he stepped back, his gaze sliding along the length of her body, not missing a single detail.

Feeling self-conscious by the intensity of his stare, Sommer crossed her arms across her breasts.

"Don't. Don't ever cover yourself from me. You have no need to ever be ashamed of your body." His voice was a husky plea, full of desire.

She willed herself to keep her arms at her side. "Are you just going to stand there or will you join me? I hope you don't expect me to stay on this big cold lonely bed by myself," Sommer teased.

Sommer trembled in anticipation. Part of her burned with need, while the other half was nervous. There was no going back now. Running the tip of her tongue over her dry lips, she watched as Caleb inserted his thumbs in his waistband and slid them down lean hips.

He was magnificent, all sinewy muscled perfection. A thick mat of hair covered his taut torso, but it wasn't a turn-off, in fact, it only underlined his utter masculinity.

And his cock...

Dear sweet Lord, he was long and thick. From what she'd felt earlier, Sommer knew he was packing, but that thing was a monster. A gasp escaped her lips as he drew near, his cock bobbing with each step he took.

He paused when his thighs hit the edge of the bed. "I smell your fear, despite that brave look on your face. Tell me what's wrong, sweetheart."

"You're huge. How the hell are you going to get that thing inside me?" she squeaked.

Caleb threw back his head and released a loud deep laugh before crawling on the bed beside her and planting a kiss on her forehead. "You're adorable, do you know that?"

"No, I'm just a woman concerned about being split in two."

He planted his hand on her belly and dragged it down until he reached her panties. With one quick tug, he tore away her panties. Then he wedged his hands between her thighs. "Open your legs, Sommer."

She hesitated for a brief moment.

His ice blue eyes locked with hers. "Trust me, sweetheart."

Obedying his command, she parted her thighs, welcoming his caress. A wave of searing heat rippled along her body when his thumb grazed her slick folds. "Caleb," she sighed his name.

"Do you see, darling? You're already nice and wet for me, ready to take me, but I'll make you even wetter, baby." A devilish smile split his face, promising her many delights to come.

Sommer was on fire for him. Never before had she felt such burning need, threatening to consume them both, and he had barely done anything to her yet. She bit her bottom lip, wondering what he had in store for her.

She didn't have to wait long. Never moving his hand, Caleb settled between her thighs with his face mere inches from her sex. He pushed her labia apart and stared at the most private part of her body as no man had ever done before. "You've got a beautiful pussy, sweetheart. I'm going to enjoy tasting every single inch of it."

Sommer's breath caught in her throat. She couldn't respond to save her life. Tentatively, she grazed her nails against his shoulders before urging him closer, lifting her hips. "Please," she moaned, too unsure of herself to vocalize the words she wanted to say most.

Caleb lifted his head, a gleam of amusement in his eyes. "Please what? Please eat your pussy?"

Sommer nodded. "Yes. Don't make me wait."

"I want to hear you say it."

"I...I can't."

He pressed a long, lingering kiss against her clit and lifted his head once more. "Yes, you can. Say it."

"Caleb..." She moistened her lips. "Yes, I want..."

He raised a brow. "Go ahead. You're almost there. Tell me what I want to hear."

"Why are you doing this?"

“Because by the time the night is over, I don’t want there to be any recriminations, no regrets. I want you to tell me exactly what you want me to do to you, now say it, goddammit.” He nearly snarled the words, the fierceness of his passion boiling over to near savagery.

“Please put your mouth on me—”

Caleb shook his head. “If you want the big bad wolf to eat you, darling, you’re going to have to do better than that.”

Sommer gulped. She hadn’t realized how hard this would be. In a way, she almost hated him for what he was making her do, but her body was aching for him so badly, what choice did she have? “I want you to lick my pussy. Eat it, fuck it. Whatever! Just don’t torture me like this anymore. I can’t take it.”

“With pleasure,” he murmured and lowered his head to lap her swollen clit. The texture of his tongue was rougher than she was used to, but it felt heavenly, making blood race to the engorged bud.

“Oh my goodness.” She shook, tossing her head back and forth against the pillow, unable to keep still under his erotic assault.

He licked and laved at her pussy for several strokes before easing his middle finger inside her channel, thrusting knuckle deep. Caleb sucked her labia, pressing them together, which created the most delicious tingling sensation.

Sommer writhed and moaned, letting out a shout of delight when he pushed another digit into her waiting tunnel. She lifted her hips to meet his fervent thrusts. It felt so good, so right. “That’s it, just like that.” Her body shook and she was unable to keep still.

He ravaged her pussy like a starving man. It was obvious to Sommer that Caleb wanted to please her, and he was. And the fact that he was genuinely into what he was doing only made the experience even better.

An explosive shaft of molten desire slammed through her body and Sommer screamed her release. “Oh God! Caleb!” She came hard and fast, her juices gushing

from her pussy and wetting the inside of her thighs. Still Caleb continued finger-fucking and eating her pussy as if his life depended on it.

Threading her fingers through his hair, it was Sommer's intention to pull his head away. She didn't think she could take anymore of the deliriously mind-shattering ecstasy coursing through her body. This was the first orgasm she'd experienced that wasn't by her own hand and there was nothing like it. "Caleb, I... I can't take it...I-I-I..."

He latched onto her clit again with his teeth, nipping at it and slowly eroding her resistance. Just when Sommer believed she was on sensory overload and she couldn't possibly get any hotter, something warm and soft brushed across her nipples.

It was his tail.

The warm brown fur against her heated flesh, tickling and teasing her, drove Sommer crazy. Caleb swished it over her breasts and let it roam over her body—all without lifting his head from her pussy.

Sommer was a boneless heap of nerves by the time he was finished with her. Almost as if he were moving in slow motion, Caleb lifted his head and moved to his knees. He pried her legs apart, farther than they were. Again, his blue gaze roamed her body in a proprietary way.

"You're so beautiful," he murmured. "And you're mine. Every single inch of you belongs to me. You're mine."

His possessiveness frightened her a bit, but deep down, it thrilled her. So long she'd dreamed of him speaking these very same words to her. It didn't matter who they were or that this affair was doomed to come to an end; what did was how they made each other feel in this one beautiful moment.

Her eyes locked with his. "Yes," she whispered.

"Offer yourself to me. Spread your pretty pussy wide, baby."

Without hesitation, Sommer reached between her legs and spread the outer folds of her pussy, ready to accept him, though she was still a bit nervous about whether he'd fit.

Caleb palmed his massive member. "Wider."

Spreading her legs as far as they'd go, she grasped the slick inner folds, pulling, yanking them apart.

"Wider," he demanded with a growl.

Sommer gasped. "I can't open myself anymore."

"Yes, you can and you will, now do as I tell you." His words were spoken softly, but his tone left no room for argument.

Licking her lips, Sommer lifted her hips, and opened herself up, stretching her skin to its very limits. Only then did he seem satisfied.

Caleb palmed his cock and wrapped his fingers around its thickness before giving it a few tugs. "This might sting a little."

Before she could ask him what he was talking about, a creamy substance shot out of his dick and splashed across her pussy and stomach. Sommer was stunned into immobility as he continued to spew the substance over her body. The consistency of the fluid was neither urine nor semen, but something else altogether.

He was marking her.

When she finally found her voice, she let out a sharp cry. "Caleb, you...you shouldn't have done that." She'd learned enough about the mating habits of the *Wulfen* to know that the male marked his bitch so that no other *Wulfen* could have them, which was normally meant for life mates. As she was neither his life mate nor *Wulfen*, Sommer wasn't sure what to make of what he'd just done.

The irises of Caleb's already light eyes were now nearly transparent, and the pupils had elongated, giving them an animal-like appearance. He bared his now-lengthened canine teeth. "Why the hell shouldn't I have? You belong to me."

"But we aren't—ohmygod!" she screamed when Caleb thrust into her. The sheer length and girth of him was more than she could handle. She bucked her hips to unseat him, but it only served to send him deeper. Her pussy was stretched to its limits and she was sure if he moved, he'd tear her in two. A dull throbbing pain sliced along her nerves. "Get off."

"I can't," he groaned. "Please don't ask me that." His face contorted as if he was the one with a barge pole inside him. Caleb bent his head and brushed his lips against hers. "It's okay, sweetheart. I'll make this good for you. I know I'm a bit bigger than you're used to but—"

She snorted. "A bit? That's putting it mildly. Please...I don't think I can take it."

"Relax, Sommer. Just let it happen," he whispered, pressing gentle kisses against her neck and playfully nipping her skin. He ran his hands along her heated flesh, and slowly, her body began to respond to his tender ministrations.

Caleb inserted his hand between their bodies and pressed his thumb against her clit, slowly circling it. "Do you like that?"

Sommer nodded before finding the words. "Yes, that feels wonderful."

He continued to massage the hot little bud until she writhed beneath him from pleasure. "You see, sweetheart? I told you I can make this good for you, but I'm going to need to move soon. I can't remain still any longer."

She realized she was delaying the inevitable if she protested. Besides, Sommer was beginning to experience a sensation between pleasure and pain that made her pussy grow slick for him. "Caleb," she sighed as she adjusted to his size.

"Wrap your legs around me. That's it. Don't be ashamed to give yourself to me."

"Mmm." Doing as she was told, Sommer surrendered to the delirious pleasure swirling throughout her very core.

"Mine," Caleb groaned as he started to move inside her, slow at first and then, as he found a steady rhythm, faster.

She ran her nails down his back and lifted her hips, pushing her pelvis against his. Sommer clenched the walls of her pussy around his cock, sucking him deeper inside her until she didn't know where he ended and she began.

Caleb threw back his dark head and released a howl. "God, you're tight and wet. I've never felt anything like this before." The words came out through gritted teeth and she could tell he struggled to get them out.

Releasing her hips, he placed his hands on either side of her head, his arms holding him braced. When she tilted the lower part of her body to take him deeper, it was all the encouragement he seemed to need.

Sommer grazed her fingers against his hair-roughened chest, accepting each powerful thrust. Nothing beat this feeling of being one with Caleb. How many nights had she dreamt of this moment—just being with him? Her fantasies hadn't prepared her for the reality because this was so much better.

With each thrust, he took her closer to heaven. Perspiration beaded on her skin, her heart beat frantically and a fire burned within her so hot and white that Sommer believed she'd combust.

"So tight...feels...so...good," he grunted, pushing into her harder and deeper.

"Oh God, Caleb, I'm going to come!"

"Then let go, sweetheart. Don't hold back."

Her orgasm came hard and quick, tearing through her body like a tidal wave. She dug her nails deeper into Caleb's skin, tearing flesh in her frenzy. Her pussy gushed with cream, making her even slicker than ever.

Caleb collapsed on top of her, his dick still rock-hard as he continued to pump into her as if he was being driven in an animalist need to claim her.

Again, a primal lust whirled within the pit of her stomach and Sommer found herself mindlessly writhing beneath his muscular body, clinging to him. She



whimpered her pleasure, her body so overwhelmed with desire the words were hard to get out.

When Caleb bared his sharp white incisors, she had no idea what he was up to until the sharp points pricked her skin and sank deep.

She gasped more out of surprise than pain. In a strange way, it only added to the eroticism of the moment. He lifted his head and ran his tongue along the puncture wounds.

“Oh dear God,” she moaned, each of her senses titillated. Everything about him was arousing, from his calloused palms caressing her body, his musky, wild scent and his impossibly large cock spearing into her.

She met him thrust for thrust, the two of them moving in a choreographed dance of lust and eroticism. No words were spoken as they strained and ground against each other. Caleb continued to place kisses and love bites on her exposed skin.

Her next climax was more powerful than the one before, so strong that she nearly passed out. Her pussy clenched around his cock, gripping it in a vise, milking him.

Caleb stiffened as a growl tore from his throat. He began to shudder, shooting his seed deep into her already soaking crotch. “My pussy. This is mine and you are mine,” he said with a ferocity that made her shake. He continued to move in her still, as if driven by some kind of invisible force. Finally, Caleb stilled and rested his head against the curve of her neck, his breathing ragged.

She stroked the back of his sweat-soaked head, not minding his weight pressing into her. So many emotions coursed through her body all at once, joy, love, pleasure, pain and absolute satisfaction. “Caleb, I l—” Sommer stopped herself when she realized what was on the tip of her tongue. There was no way he could know how she really felt about him. Just knowing this affair they’d just embarked on would eventually end was enough to hurt. She didn’t need to add to her misery by confessing her feelings for him on top of that.

He raised his head to meet her gaze, his dark brow lifted. "What were you about to say?"

"I...just that I loved what we did. You were right. This was inevitable."

"Damn right it was," he muttered, kissing her jawline.

There was something she wanted to know, however. "Caleb?"

He traced circles against her arm in a slow lazy motion. "Yes, sweetheart?"

"Why did you mark me? I'm not *Wulfen*. You didn't have to."

"You belong to me now, so why wouldn't I?"

"Because I'm human. It isn't necessary."

"It's very necessary. I don't want anyone else sniffing around my woman as long as we're together."

*As long as we're together.*

Those words cut through her like a sharp blade. In the back of her mind, she'd figured this would simply be a fling for him until he grew tired and moved on to the next woman, but to have it out in the open hurt more than she'd prepared herself for. Closing her eyes briefly to hide her pain, Sommer took a moment to compose herself before answering.

"If you say so, Caleb," she answered for lack of anything better to say.

"Damn right I do." He slid his semi-erect cock from her pussy and rolled off her. Then he pulled Sommer within the steel circle of his arms. "Let's get some sleep. You're going to need it because this night is far from over."

A tight smile curled her lips, but she declined to speak. She should be grateful to at least have this time with him. But no matter what, she must never let him know how she really felt about him.

## Chapter Five

Sommer looked over the figures yet again, despite knowing they wouldn't change. After adding and subtracting, moving a decimal here or there, she came up with the same numbers. Afternoon Delights had been open for business for three months now and her revenue barely made up for the expenses incurred from simply running the business. If she had another couple months like this, she'd be forced to close.

Bottom line, things were not looking good.

This wasn't something she could share with her parents or they'd immediately step in and take over, all in the name of helping her. While she was sure anything they did would be well-intentioned, she didn't want that. She couldn't tell Uncle Seth because he'd do pretty much the same, and there was definitely no chance in hell of her confessing what was happening to Caleb.

Caleb.

That was another dilemma she had to soon come to a decision about. He insisted on spending all their spare time together. He was attentive, considerate, brought her little presents to brighten her day, and the sex between them was red hot. Caleb made her experience sensations she didn't think existed. He only had to look at her and her body grew warm with anticipation. With just one touch, her pussy tingled. In essence, he was the total package.

And that was the problem.

The more time they spent together, the harder it became for her to maintain the nonchalant façade. What she really wanted was to tell him how much she loved him and wanted to be with him, but each time the words threatened to slip out, she'd change the subject.

She found it difficult to open up to him as she used to. In a way, Sommer almost wished they hadn't embarked on this affair, but the other part of her rejoiced every time he took her in his arms. Still, the dynamic between them had changed drastically. Because she was so frightened of revealing too much to him, she no longer shared certain aspects of her life. It was becoming more and more about sex. Sommer acknowledged most of it was her fault.

She rubbed her tired eyes. A headache was beginning to develop from staring at the computer screen for so long.

"Is everything okay, boss?" Jason, one of the teenagers she'd hired to work at the shop in the afternoons, poked his head in.

She pasted a smile on her face, trying to maintain an air of casualness. "Of course. Is there something you needed?"

He scratched his head and gave her a sheepish grin. Sommer knew right away he wanted something. "Well, I was kinda wondering if you'd let me clock out a little early. I've got a date tonight and since it's not that busy..."

Sommer sighed. Jason was a hard worker and always stayed later to help her close without her even asking. Besides, he had a point. It wasn't very busy out there. It rarely was. "No problem, Jason. Have fun."

He shot her a wide grin. "Thanks. I'll sweep up and then head out, if that's okay with you."

Sommer waved her hand, shooing him off. "Don't worry about it. I'll take care of the store, and you have fun tonight. That's an order."

"You're the best." The young man didn't need to be told twice. He waved goodbye and headed out.

She waited for the bell to chime signaling his departure before leaving her office. The place was completely empty. Glancing at her watch, she realized there was an hour left before closing. It was Friday night and there was a pint of chocolate chip cookie dough ice cream in her freezer at home with her name on it.

Caleb was out of town for a couple days with his father to take care of pack business. Nina had plans with her latest boyfriend. And Sommer didn't particularly feel like visiting her parents. They would ask far too many questions and she didn't have the strength to deal with them at the moment, although she was quite sure she'd receive a telephone call from them tonight since she hadn't been by for a couple days.

Sommer definitely needed to re-evaluate what was going on in her life. So much for her friend's belief in that stupid tarot card, because none of it was coming true. Her business wasn't doing as well as she would have liked and her sex life, exciting though it was, was getting much too complicated for her to handle.

Deciding to close early since it looked like she'd have no more customers for the night, she began to wrap the confections that could be redisplayed and tossed everything that had been stocked for too long. She was so engrossed in her task, she didn't hear the bell chime when someone entered her store.

"Ahem." The clearing of someone's throat made their presence known.

Sommer looked up, a ready smile glued to her lips as she was prepared to greet her customer. When she saw who it was, however, she forced herself not to grimace. "Selena. It's nice of you to stop by Afternoon Delights," Sommer greeted, silently congratulating herself for sounding natural.

Selena smiled, showing perfect white teeth. "I couldn't not come by and check out your little...venture."

She didn't know if Selena meant to sound condescending, but Sommer's hackles were raised. "It's more than just a venture. It's my livelihood."

One refined brow shot up. "Oh. My mistake. I was thinking this was simply a hobby."

Sommer folded her arms across her chest, biting the inside of her lip so as not to say something she'd regret. As always, she found herself on the defensive whenever she was around this woman. "Why would you think that? I gave up a well-paid position at

a Fortune 500 accounting firm in order to run my own business. I'd be crazy if I were to treat this as a mere hobby."

Selena shrugged one elegant Donna Karan-clad shoulder, a look of pure indulgence on her face. "I meant no offense, sweetie. After all, one could be forgiven for thinking you wouldn't have as much to risk. Your parents have the wealth to back you up and you seem to have the Alpha wrapped around your little finger. I'm sure a simple phone call from you would produce the funds you'd need to keep this outfit running."

Sommer's nostril's flared. Was this bitch deliberately trying to provoke her? She counted to ten in her head before replying to that remark. "Selena, your family isn't exactly in the poorhouse either. Do you get help from them for your boutiques?"

She threw her head back and released a deep, throaty laugh. "You're so adorable, Sommer. No wonder Caleb seems to be taken with you at the moment. And of course I have my family's backing to some extent, although I am ultimately the boss. That's the way of our kind. We stick together and help each other out, which is why I assumed your family...well, you've always been a bit prickly, haven't you? Anyway, judging from how empty this place is, I think you could benefit from a little help. If you ever need some business advice, even though I work on a much larger scale, I'd be happy to provide it."

As insulting as the other comments were, the mention of Caleb's name set Sommer off, especially when she'd went to such pains to keep their affair under wraps. "Selena, for someone I don't see on a regular basis, you seem to know a lot about what's going in my life—most of which is wrong. I'm sure there was a purpose for your visit, so if you don't mind, please get to the point. As you can see, I'm busy."

Selena's lips tilted slightly, her eyes flashing fire for a brief moment. "You really are a charming child. There's no need to be so defensive. And by the way, you'd be surprised what I know about you. Caleb tells me how sweet you are. Just the other day, when we were having lunch, he mentioned you. It was quite sweet the way he talked about you, actually."

Sommer stiffened. "You had lunch with him?" The moment the words were out of her mouth, she wished she would have been able to take them back. The last thing she wanted was to give this woman ammunition to use against her, and letting Selena see that she was getting under her skin was weapon enough.

"Of course we did. That's what friends do. Caleb and I have an understanding, you see. We may no longer see each other exclusively, but we're still quite close. He confides quite a bit to me, and his latest favorite topic is you. Look, Sommer, I like you, and that's why I'm here today. I don't think I could live with myself if I didn't offer you a little friendly advice."

Sommer's fists clenched and unclenched at her sides. The heat rushed to her face and a vein throbbed in her head. Red hot anger rolled through her body and she didn't know how much longer she'd be able to endure this "friendly" chat. "Say what you have to and leave. I don't have the time to stand around and listen to advice I didn't ask for."

Scarlet-painted lips drooped slightly. "I figured you'd be a poor sport about this, but it's understandable. Caleb is the type of man who would make any woman feel special. When you're with him, he treats you like a queen, and it often gives one a false sense of security. In your case, he'd probably be extra careful, considering who your father is and the role the Alpha has in your life, but at the end of the day, you're just like the rest of the girls he used and eventually discarded. I wanted to make sure you knew what you're getting into, because I'd hate to see you get hurt."

This woman was asking to get smacked. "I'm perfectly capable of taking care of myself," Sommer snapped, narrowing her eyes.

Selena smirked. "Are you sure? I couldn't help but notice the way you were all over Caleb at your little function. And I'm sure if I did, others did as well. Frankly, I was a bit embarrassed for you. Don't mistake Caleb's kindness and temporary interest in you for more than what it is."

That was it. Sommer didn't give a damn if Selena's words were true or not, but there was no way she'd let this woman disrespect or intimidate her. "Selena, cut the bull. We both know you're not here to do me any favors. You're trying to warn me off, which makes me wonder why. Perhaps your understanding isn't as solid as you're letting on, otherwise, why would you bother?" Sommer challenged.

Feline-like eyes narrowed to green slits. The smile that had lingered on Selena's smug face tightened to a thin line. "Surely you don't think he could want you for more than a few rolls in the hay? In case you've forgotten, you're human and he's the Alpha-in-Waiting. There's no way in hell he'd choose you as his life mate."

"You seem pretty sure about that. How do you know he hasn't already asked me to be?" Sommer crossed her fingers behind her back for the little lie she'd just let slip. It was probably something Selena could easily dispute, but simply seeing the other woman lose her cool composure sent a burst of satisfaction soaring through Sommer's chest.

"You're lying," Selena snarled through clenched teeth. Her eyes glittered with evident fury and her now elongated canine teeth bit into her lower lip.

Sommer shrugged. "What you believe won't keep me awake tonight. Now that you've done your good deed for the day, please leave. I can't say it's been pleasant."

Selena tossed a strand of her long dark hair over her shoulder. "Fine. Be stubborn if you'd like, but think about this, even if for some misguided reason Caleb does choose you for a mate, do you think the pack would accept his choice? Seth Masters' protection of you will only extend but so far. The elders won't stand for it and neither will the rest of the pack. Caleb would be ridiculed and possibly challenged by another to take over the leadership reins. He needs someone strong to stand by his side—a leader like him to govern the pack."

Sommer lifted a brow. "Someone like you, I suppose?"

"Exactly like me. You may have grown up among us, but you know nothing about our kind. If you really care about Caleb, which I suspect you do, you won't pursue this



little pipedream of yours. Have your fun and sleep with him if you must, but don't get your hopes up." A malicious smile tilted Selena's lips. "He's killer in the sack, isn't he?"

"Get out." Sommer delivered the words deadpan. She wasn't sure how much longer she'd be able to stand here without scratching that bitch's eyes out.

Selena chuckled. "There's no need to be nasty, sweetie. We girls have to stick together. Good luck with your little shop." Her gaze swept the four corners of Afternoon Delights with a disparaging glance. "From what I can tell, you'll need it." With that, the other woman turned on her Jimmy Choo heels and stalked out of the store with slow, easy strides. It was the walk of a self-assured woman.

Once the door closed, Sommer's shoulders drooped and she bowed her head. Nausea swam through her body, leaving her shaking. As upsetting as the confrontation was, she realized Selena was only voicing what other pack members had probably been saying behind Sommer's back for twenty-six years. She wasn't one of them and would never be completely accepted. Which was why she'd have to end her affair with Caleb sooner rather than later.

\* \* \* \* \*

"A penny for them."

Caleb looked up from his rare filet mignon, his appetite non-existent. He tried to conjure up a smile for his dinner companion, but he didn't much feel like it. With a sigh, he pushed his plate away from him. "You wouldn't understand."

Michael Kazama, an executive at Masters and Son and one of his best friends, placed his eating utensils down. "Try me."

"It's a bit complicated."

A faint smile touched Michael's mouth. "Is it Sommer?"

"How did you guess?"

"I would be dense if I didn't. When you're not talking about her, you have a far-off look in your eyes, so I can only assume you're thinking about her. The only time I see

you is at the office or on business trips now, because you always have to see her about something.”

“I’m sorry. I haven’t been a good friend lately.”

Michael waved his hand dismissively. “It’s okay. I understand. Anyway, I kind of figured something was up when you didn’t want to chase the moon the other night. It’s nearly full and it isn’t like you to pass up a chance of racing through the woods in our second form.”

“Have I been that obvious?”

“I’ve noticed, because I know you so well. Anyway, you’ve loved Sommer a long time, haven’t you?”

There was no point in denying it. If Michael could see his feelings, others probably could as well, and hell, why in the world was he trying to hide it? He wasn’t ashamed of his feelings for her. Caleb was proud of her and wanted everyone to know it. Sommer, on the other hand, was of a different mind.

She didn’t want people to think their relationship was anything other than platonic. Caleb was willing to give her the time she needed to adjust to the change in their relationship, however, he was getting tired of being her dirty little secret. The worst part was that adding sex into the mix wasn’t the only thing that had changed between them. Sommer didn’t share what was going on in her life with him anymore, never laughing at his jokes with the full heartiness she used to or just calling him up for the sake of saying hello.

Whenever he asked her something as simple as how business was doing, she’d clam up. He didn’t know the exact moment it happened, but somehow she’d erected an invisible barrier between them and the easy friendship they’d once had was no longer there. The only time he was sure of her feelings was when they were fucking. She gave herself to him with the same wild abandon as the first time, but that was no longer enough. There were many nights after making love with her when he wanted to tell

Sommer how he felt, but something always held Caleb back. He didn't like this new dynamic.

Not one bit.

Caleb raked his fingers through his hair. "You're right. I'm crazy about her. You have no idea how long I've waited to make my move."

Michael grinned. "I believe I do, but judging from the woe-is-me look on your face, things aren't going well."

"How can it when she basically treats me like a goddamn stud for her amusement?"

Bemusement crossed his friend's face. "Sommer? She doesn't strike me as the type to do that. There must be some explanation."

"I never would have thought it of her either, but she wants to treat what we have as a no-strings-attached type sex thing."

"And that's a bad thing?"

"With Sommer it is. I want more than a convenient fuck buddy. If that were the case, I would have chosen to be with someone else."

"Like Selena? She's made it known in our circles that she's not averse to the idea of getting back with you."

Caleb shrugged. "Not interested."

"She's beautiful."

"So is a mannequin, but I have no desire to rush into bed with one of those either."

"You were very casual about the affair and it ended rather abruptly. I think she had her hopes set on being the Alpha Bitch."

"If that's what she's believed, that's too bad for her. She knew the deal when we were together. She grew a little too clingy for my taste. I'm sure Selena will have no problem finding another lover. Weren't you interested in her at one time?"

"What red-blooded man wouldn't be? She's sexy as hell, but I think she still has her sights set on you. Anyway, I've got my eye on someone else."

“Anyone I know?”

“I think you do. A friend of Sommer’s. The one with the hazel eyes and the legs for days. You should have seen that ass on her.”

He had to be talking about Nina. “She’s human.”

Michael looked unconcerned. “So is Sommer. That hasn’t stopped you.”

“But she grew up among us and knows what we are. Nina doesn’t, as far as I know. Anyway, weren’t you the one who said you were through with human women because you’re tired of holding back?”

A sheepish grin split Michael’s face. “For an ass like hers, I’d give it another chance. It’s not like I’m looking for anything permanent, mind you. I just want to hit it and quit it.” He wiggled his eyebrows.

“Some things never change,” Caleb murmured.

“Enough about me. What do you plan on doing about Sommer?”

Caleb released a deep breath. “That’s the million-dollar question. I want to tell her how I really feel.”

“So what’s stopping you?”

“Weren’t you listening? She shuts me down whenever I try to talk about anything besides fucking. Sommer isn’t acting like the woman I fell for, but I think there’s something deeper, something she isn’t telling me. Maybe if I can find out what it is, we could work things out.”

“Perhaps she’s going through some difficulties she may not be comfortable sharing with you.”

A low growl of frustration tore from Caleb’s throat. “The same thing has occurred to me and it hurts like hell. There was a time when she would tell me anything, and I wish to God she would share what’s bothering her now.”

Michael rubbed his chin. “Do you think it could be work related? I’m sure starting a new business is probably stressful. Maybe she’s worried about doing well.”

It seemed as if a light had gone off in his head. That had to be it! In the few times he'd visited Sommer's shop, it had been empty except for the help she'd hired. Caleb had asked her about it, but she'd brushed it off by simply saying he'd missed the rush. At the time he didn't give it much thought, but in retrospect, he remembered seeing a fleeting gleam of worry in her eyes. He thought he'd imagined it, but now Caleb was sure that was what he'd seen.

"You're on to something, Michael. I have a strong feeling that's exactly what the matter is. What else could it be?"

"Why not shoot some business her way? It may give her the boost she needs."

"That's the problem, man. She wouldn't appreciate my help, or anyone else's for that matter. Sommer is adamant that she not receive any help. It's important to her that she becomes a success because of the hard work she's put into Afternoon Delights, not because she got help from me, her parents or anyone else."

Michael furrowed his brows. "But isn't that what business is all about? There's no shame in networking and using who you know."

"I get it and you get it, but try telling Sommer that. The thing is though, it's a bit more complicated than that." Caleb slammed his fist on the table, making the plates and utensils jump. "I wish I could do something."

"Then why don't you?"

"I already told you, I can't."

"Of course you can. The trick is not letting her find out about it. In my opinion, you want to help her and she needs it, so why not just do it? And with all of your business connections, you could surely throw some clients her way without Sommer finding out."

The more he thought about it, the more the idea began to appeal to him. He would do it! But the thing was if Sommer found out, he could lose her forever.

## **Chapter Six**

“Didn’t I tell you business would take off eventually? The cards don’t lie.” Nina’s grin was full of smug self-righteousness.

Sommer laughed. “We’re not on that again, are we? You really need to let that go.”

“I would if you wouldn’t doubt in their power, but that aside, I know you’ve worked very hard and deserve this success, so here’s to you.” Nina held up her glass of merlot before taking a healthy gulp.

Sommer missed hanging out with her girlfriend like this. Between her business, Caleb and her parents, she hadn’t had a lot of time to spend with Nina. She missed these moments and was glad Nina had dropped by with a bottle of wine to celebrate the recent boom in business Sommer was suddenly experiencing.

It almost seemed too good to be true at first. Suspicious of how she’d suddenly come into so many clients, she’d questioned her father and mother. Their vehemence in their denial finally made her relent in her inquisition of them. Then she’d gone to Uncle Seth, who also claimed not to know what was going on. Sommer knew it couldn’t be Caleb because he was the one who truly understood what her independence meant to her. Besides, most of the businesses that’d contacted her she’d never heard of and had no obvious connection to Masters and Son.

Maybe there was something to that tarot card mumbo jumbo. The cards said she’d be a success, it never said it would happen right away.

“Okay, maybe there is some divine force working here, but I will still reserve judgment.”

“Coming from you, I’ll take it. I’m so happy for you, Sommer. You really deserve this after all the hard work you’ve put into Afternoon Delights.”

“Thanks, girl.” She held up her wineglass in a toast. “Here’s to me.” She giggled.

"To you." Nina echoed and downed the remaining contents of her glass. "Whoa! I think I need to stop now if I want to drive home tonight."

"You can crash here if you'd like. I have the spare bedroom."

"Isn't Caleb coming over later?"

"I don't think so. He's been out of town on business and I'm not expecting him back until tomorrow." Caleb wasn't a subject she wanted to dwell on, considering how complicated things had become with him. "So what's the deal with you and Steven? You haven't mentioned him yet. Dare I ask if things have come to an end?"

Nina quirked a dark arched brow. "Changing the subject?"

Sommer shook her head. "You asked the question. I answered it."

Her friend gave her a long questioning look before sighing. "Yes, Steven and I are through."

"What happened this time? I thought this one was Mister Right."

Nina snorted. "More like Mister Right Now. Just when things were starting to heat up, I opened my big mouth."

"What do you mean? Weren't things getting pretty serious between the two of you?"

"They were, but he turned out to be just like the others."

"You told him about...?"

Nina lowered her lids, but not before Sommer spied the pain within the depths of her eyes. "Yes, I told him. At first he told me it didn't matter and his feelings for me wouldn't change because of it."

"But they did?" Sommer prodded gently.

"In the beginning he actually did seem to be okay with everything, but as the days went by, he began to ask questions but he was never satisfied with the answers. Then he started making excuses to break our dates. I pretty much knew where things were headed after that. When I finally confronted him, he pretended as if everything was

okay, but when I suggested we take a break from each other...I-I s-saw the relief on his face." Nina burst into tears.

"Oh honey." Sommer put her glass down and wrapped her arms around her friend, her heart breaking for her. She was well aware of Nina's past and could only commend her friend for the way she'd turned her life around. Sommer wished people weren't so small-minded.

Nina pulled away, wiping the tears away. "Don't worry about me, I'm just being silly."

"No, you're not. And if Steven couldn't find value in the person you've become, it's his loss, not yours. On the bright side, aren't you glad you found out now before things got any deeper between the two of you? It probably would have hurt a lot more had things gone any further."

Nina sniffed. "You're probably right. But this has taught me a valuable lesson."

"What's that?"

"I'm not the kind of girl guys want to bring home to their mothers and marry. I'm the good-time girl, the one they want to screw and forget about. They may take me out for a while, but when it's time to settle, I get kicked to the curb."

"That isn't true. You simply haven't found the right guy yet."

Nina waved her hand dismissively. "You don't have to offer me any comforting platitudes. I've given this a lot of thought over the past week and have decided to remain single. There may be some lonely nights ahead, but if I need someone to scratch my itch, albeit briefly, I'm sure there are plenty of guys who are willing to have sex with no commitment."

"Don't say that. You're much better than that."

"So are you, but that hasn't stopped you from treating Caleb like some kind of stud."

"I do not!" Sommer protested hotly.



Nina folded her arms. "Aren't you the one who said you and he are having a no-strings-attached affair?"

"Yes, but that hardly constitutes me treating him like a stud, as you so quaintly put it. He's the love-them-and-leave-them type. I'm simply playing by his rules."

"Why? You love him. I know you've never said anything, but it's quite obvious to me by the way you look at him. I saw the way the two of you were at the party, and if I may be frank, I think the feeling is reciprocated."

"I think you're nuts. Caleb may love me, but he's not in love with me."

"How do you know unless you ask?"

"I don't plan on asking because I already know the answer. Look, I don't want to talk about Caleb."

"See. There you go, avoiding the subject. Why is it so hard for you to believe that he could have feelings for you too?"

"Because he can't! He and I are too different and when he does find a permanent mate, it's going to have to be someone like him."

"Someone white?"

"If it were simply a black and white issue, we wouldn't be having this conversation. Caleb doesn't think like that and neither do I."

"So what do you mean by different?"

Sommer sighed. "If I told you, you wouldn't believe me, and even if I wanted to, I couldn't tell you."

"Why not?"

Nina was her best friend and Sommer told her everything, but she couldn't tell her about the *Wulfen*. It was against pack laws. It was up to the individual to reveal themselves, and even then, it had to be under special circumstances. This wasn't her secret to share. "I'm sorry, Nina, I can't say, but please trust me on this."

"But why?"

“I would appreciate it if you didn’t press the issue. You know if I could tell you, I would.”

“Okay, but I’m not really sure what these secret differences can be.” Nina shrugged and then pasted a smile on her face. “That aside, I’m very proud for what you’ve accomplished in such a short period of time.”

It was on the tip of Sommer’s tongue to say thank you when the doorbell rang. She frowned and looked at her watch. It was quarter to nine and she wasn’t expecting company. “I wonder who that is?” She slid off the couch and went to answer the door. To her surprise, Caleb stood on the other side with a bottle of champagne and a big bouquet of roses. “What are you doing here?” she demanded, not intending the words to come out quite so sharp.

The easy grin he’d been sporting fell from his sensual lips. “Is this not a good time?”

“It’s...that’s not it. I wasn’t expecting you. Come in.” She stood back, opening the door just enough to let him through. “I have company at the moment. Nina came by. I thought you were still out of town.”

“My business transaction wrapped up sooner than I thought. I had to see you. I take it you’re not happy to see me?”

Her heart skipped a beat as she stared into his ice blue eyes. How was she ever going to end things, when the very thought caused her pain? She loved this man so much, but for his own good she would have to break things off. And with a realization that broke her heart, it would have to be tonight. “It’s not that, Caleb. I’m just surprised is all. Here, let me take these flowers and put them in some water.” Sommer took the bouquet and was about to turn away from him when he grabbed her and hauled her against his chest.

His mouth swooped down on hers, hungry and seeking. The flowers were crushed between their bodies as his tongue swept past her slightly parted lips. He molded his stiffness against the junction of her thighs.

As with every time she was in his arms, Sommer melted, her body heating up at his mere touch. Her pussy tingled with the need to be filled by his cock and her nipples poked against the material of her blouse, straining to break free of their restraints. If the dampness on her thighs was any indication of how this night was going to end, she knew she was in trouble.

"Ahem," Nina cleared her throat loudly, interrupting the moment.

Sommer broke out of Caleb's slackened hold, her cheeks warm with embarrassment at being caught in such a compromising position. "Uh, we were just..."

Nina shot her a knowing grin. "It's okay. I have eyes. There's no need to explain. Look, I need to get going anyway. I'll leave you two crazy kids alone. Don't do anything I wouldn't do."

Sommer wanted to strangle her. "You can't leave now, you practically just got here."

"It's okay. I only wanted to stop by and congratulate you on your success. Anyway, there's a few errands I need to run before I get to bed tonight."

"Will you be okay to drive? We were drinking."

"I'll be fine. I only had one glass." She turned her hazel gaze toward Caleb. "Hey, Caleb."

"Nina," Caleb said coolly with a nod. "I trust you're doing well." Sommer always got the impression that Caleb didn't particularly care for Nina, although he never said why.

"If I was doing any better, I'd be twins. Did you have a nice business trip?"

"It went well. Thank you for asking. Please don't run off on my account."

Nina shook her head with a regretful smile. "I'm not. I was on my way out shortly anyway. You came in the nick of time. I need to gather my things and I'll be out of your way."

The corners of Caleb lips tilted slightly in a semblance of a smile. "It was nice seeing you again."

Sommer wondered if he really meant it. She and Caleb waited for Nina to collect her belongings and leave before speaking again. Once the door shut behind her friend, Sommer took a deep breath, her nerves starting to get the better of her.

He gave her a wolfish grin. "Alone at last."

"You don't like her much, do you?" Sommer blurted the first thing on her mind.

"I'm not sure what you're talking about. She's your friend. I wasn't aware I was being anything less than cordial to her."

"I don't know what it is, but you seem to disapprove of her for some reason. I've always had that feeling, but I really felt it just now."

Caleb walked farther into the apartment and placed the champagne on the counter. He opened her cabinet and pulled out two glasses. "I think you're imagining things."

"No, I don't think I am, and the more dismissive you are about it, the more it makes me suspicious."

"Are you deliberately trying to pick a fight?"

"I was only asking a question, which you seem to be evading."

"If you must know, maybe it's because I'm a little jealous."

Sommer paused. "Jealous? Of Nina? What for?"

"The truth is I'm jealous of anyone I see you smile at, talk with or open up to. I know you're telling her things about your life you used to share with me. I'm tired of being shut out every time I ask what's going on in your life. What happened to the girl who used to tell me everything? I miss us being able to talk about anything."

Her heart twisted within her chest to hear his impassioned plea for things to be the way they once were, but dare she tell him what she really felt? Caleb truly sounded as if he cared about her as more than just a casual fling, but surely she was reading more into his words than were actually meant?

The time had come. She'd have to end things now. As much as it would break her heart to do so, Sommer realized it would hurt far more if she prolonged this emotional torture.

With a sigh, she walked farther into the living room and gestured to her couch. "Caleb, please have a seat."

He frowned but did as he was told. "From the tone of your voice, I'm not sure if I'll like what you have to say."

Sommer shrugged. "I don't know if you will or not, but I think it needs to be said and I believe it's an eventuality between the two of us."

"I see." He leaned back, spanning the top of the sofa with his long arms. "By all means, share."

The words stuck in her throat. This would be harder than she thought. Sommer had practiced this scene in her mind over and over again, but she didn't count on being mesmerized by the bright blue eyes, a rugged face and lips that curled in the corners, promising nothing but pure sin. His very nearness was doing things to the inner workings of her body that they didn't teach you in health class during sex ed. Her pussy was moist from her carnal imaginings, dampening her thighs and making her squirm.

Though his passive expression gave nothing away, she could tell by the way Caleb tilted his nose in the air that he smelled her essence. It was one of the drawbacks to having a *Wulfen* lover. They would always be able to sense one's arousal.

She pressed her thighs tightly together in hopes of staving off the heat burning within her core. Turning her back to him, she blurted out the words that had been hovering on her tongue for the past few minutes. "Caleb, I think we should stop seeing each other."

Silence greeted her rushed statement. Sommer peeked over her shoulder to gauge Caleb's reaction.

He sat as still as a statue, not moving a muscle, except the one twitching in his jaw. When he still didn't speak, she turned to face him. "Aren't you going to say something?"

"What do you expect me to say?" he asked tight-lipped.

There was absolutely no way she could reveal her true feelings without completely humiliating herself. To reveal how much more she felt for him than he did for her would make things more awkward than they already were. She knew he'd still be in her life simply for the mere fact their parents were friends, but perhaps if he didn't know the truth, they might find their way to having some semblance of the friendship they once had. "I don't know, maybe that you agree. This thing has run its course, hasn't it?" She moistened her suddenly dry lips. "I mean, this thing we have has lasted longer than your usual relationships, hasn't it?"

Caleb remained silent.

"I mean, surely you've grown tired of me, and...frankly, this is getting a little boring for me as well. Don't get me wrong, I love—loved what we did together, but now that business is beginning to pick up for me and Uncle Seth is throwing more pack responsibilities your way, we're both going to be too caught up in our own lives to make time for each other anymore. I-I hope we can still be friends. Maybe things will be a little uneasy between us at first, but—"

"Shut up, Sommer." He moved so quickly, she didn't see him coming.

Before she could so much as gasp his name, he'd crossed the room and hauled her against his rock-hard chest, his ice blue eyes flashing fire. "Care to repeat that, Sommer?"

She couldn't let him intimidate her. Unable to meet his gaze, Sommer looked at her feet. "I'm sorry, Caleb, but I think it's for the best. You have your life to get on with and I have mine. We can't do this anymore. Besides, my—my parents are getting suspicious about the two of us, and I can't keep putting off their questions."

His eyes narrowed. "So you're breaking this off because you're worried about what your folks would say, or is it really because you're bored with this as you so delicately put it?"

Sommer tried to pull away from him, but his fingers tightened on her shoulders, digging into her flesh. His nostrils flared and she could tell he was pissed. She honestly didn't think he'd take it this way. As a matter of fact, she was sure he'd be relieved that she was ending things to save him the trouble.

"I'm not sure why you're so upset, Caleb. You're the one who's into casual affairs. I'm simply playing by your rules. As for my parents, I think it would be kind of awkward explaining to them about us, when there really is no *us*."

"I see. You've got this all figured out, don't you? Now that you've had your say, do I get mine?"

"I-I'm not sure what's left to say."

"I'm not sure if there are any words to describe what's going through my mind right now, but if you're feeling bored about our sex life, then I guess there's something I should do to rectify that."

She stiffened, recognizing that determined gleam in his eyes. It was the same look he'd given Sommer at her shop when he'd first made her aware of his lust for her. Shaking her head vigorously, she renewed the struggle in his arms. "No, Caleb."

"Yes, Sommer. Have you any idea what it does to a man to be told he's boring in bed? Well, if you want to end things between us, let me at least give you a little something more to remember me by." He scooped her up in his arms as if she weighed nothing more than a feather. Despite her kicking and wiggling, Caleb held her steady.

Sommer knew from the angry, determined look in his eyes that she'd said the wrong thing. It had been her intent to be casual about the entire matter, not to inflict pain. She was sure the only person who would be hurt by the end of this would be her and that she would only have herself to blame.

## **Chapter Seven**

Instead of carrying her to the bedroom as she anticipated, he stopped at the dining room table and deposited her back on her feet. Sommer had seen Caleb angry before, but it had never been directed at her. "Please, Caleb, let's be reasonable about this," she pleaded.

"I am being reasonable. In fact, I think for the first time in the past few months, things are finally clear."

"What—"

He ground his teeth together, making the muscle along his jaw twitch in his fury. "Not another word." His hands were on her blouse, pulling it apart, unmindful of the buttons flying everywhere.

She clasped his hands to stop him, but the quelling look he shot her had them falling back to her sides again. Even when he was like this, her body responded to his nearness. Her nipples pressed against the confines of her bra, straining to be free. Something primitive within her welcomed his savagery.

Large, ham-sized hands turned her around to face the table before he unclipped her bra, spilling her breasts forward as he tugged the garment from her body. Instead of turning her back around, he bent her over the table and placed her hands on either side of her, fingers splayed against the wood.

Fear and excitement rushed through her. What was he doing to her? Did she dare ask, or just let him have his way with her? This one last time couldn't hurt.

Caleb reached around to cup her breasts, squeezing and kneading them in his palms none too gently. He pinched her nipples between his thumb and forefinger.

Hard.



Sommer gasped as pleasure mixed with pain raced down her spine. She had the sudden urge to keep his hands clasped against her body, but something told her to hold her position.

"You're so fucking hot, Sommer. I've thought of nothing all day but sampling your tight little body. You want this too, don't you?"

She closed her eyes tight and nodded. "Yes."

"I know you do, baby. Your body is trembling for me." He released her breasts as suddenly as he grabbed them, before pushing her further against the table until her sensitive mounds were pressed against the polished wood. Sommer didn't know how much more of this sexual torture she could take before she collapsed into a pile of quivering nerves. Seeing this side of Caleb was frightening, but dammit, what he was doing to her felt good.

"I'm glad you're wearing a skirt so I can do this," he growled, lifting it to rest on her waist and then ripping off her bikini briefs in one clean tear. His voice was guttural and deep with arousal. He grasped her hips and pulled her rear against the length of his erection. Even with his pants on, she could tell how impossibly hard he was as he ground into her, making her dizzy with passion.

Her breath came out in short huffy gasps. "Caleb, I-I—"

Crack!

The sting of his hand on her bottom didn't register at first because she was too shocked to react.

He lowered his head until his lips were less than an inch away from her ear. "I said not a word, Sommer. You will do as I say or I will paddle this delectable rump of yours until you can't sit for a week."

Her mouth fell open. Since they'd become lovers, there had been nights when Caleb got a little rough, but he'd never displayed such forcefulness and the tenderness had never been absent from their lovemaking before.

“Caleb, you’ve proved your point. It doesn’t have to be —”

Crack!

His palm smacked her other cheek.

“Oww,” she cried out, wondering what kind of woman she was to be turned on by this despite the pain.

“Would you like to test me again?”

She shook her head, not trusting herself to speak.

“Good girl.” He smoothed the heated flesh he’d struck with his palm. “There’s no point in pretending you don’t want this as well, Sommer. Your pussy is so fucking wet, you’re dripping juice down your thighs, aren’t you? You’re hungry for my cock, and I intend to give it to you.” Caleb pressed the heel of his hand against the curve of her ass and pushed two thick fingers inside her pussy.

“Oh!” she cried before biting her bottom lip to hold off any more words.

“Is this exciting enough for you, Sommer? Is this what you wanted? Does this turn you on?”

She nodded.

He shoved yet another finger into her damp passage, stretching her pussy walls to its limits, making the hurt feel so good. “Your cunt is so tight and so ready to be fucked. Do you want my cock?”

Again she nodded her head in the affirmative.

“You have my permission to speak. Tell me you want my cock. Say, Caleb, my cunt wants your cock.”

He was punishing her for what she’d said earlier. She was by no means a prude, but he knew she wasn’t comfortable with such graphic terms. Caleb was getting his pound of flesh by making her speak the graphic words that would have normally made her blush.

Crack!

"I'm waiting, Sommer."

"Don't make me say it, Caleb."

Crack!

His hand came down harder than before. Tears stung the back of her eyes, the result of pain, but the way her body still reacted to him despite the humiliation he was inflicting upon her tore at her heart. This wasn't the Caleb she loved. This was a cold stranger, but damn if he didn't make her body still burst into flames.

"My cunt wants your cock," she whispered.

He rammed his fingers deeper into her wet sex. "Louder, goddamn you! I don't want either one of us to be in any doubt about you being bored."

"I'm sorry," she croaked, hurting more from the pain she knew she'd inflicted on him. If she could, she'd take back the careless words she'd uttered.

Her pussy clenched greedily around his fingers pulsing in and out of her. "I don't want your fucking apology, Sommer. I want you to come for me, over and over again. Now say the goddamn words again! Scream them!" His eyes sparkled with a feral gleam.

"My cunt wants your cock!" she cried out, her surrender complete.

Caleb chuckled as he eased his fingers out of her. He pressed his bulbous cock head against her slit, running it along her entrance, teasing her. "And you're going to get it, baby. Every inch of it."

Sommer wiggled her hips, silently begging for its invasion, needing desperately to be taken by him. How could she still feel this way when Caleb was intentionally treating her like a whore? The answer suddenly came to her. No matter how he handled her, Sommer's body was so in tune with his, she couldn't help but go into flames at his mere touch.

He plunged into her damp heat, sliding balls deep and inhaling deeply. "So tight. So wet," Caleb groaned.

“Oh my God,” she cried out with delirium at the exquisite sensation of her vaginal walls being stretched to their limits. Sommer pushed her rear against his pelvis, wanting to feel him move inside her.

“He can’t help you now, Sommer.” Caleb grasped her hips, his fingers digging into her already tender flesh. He then began to pump in and out of her, slowly at first, and then gradually he picked up the pace.

Fire licked along her nerve endings and spread through her entire body. The heat generated by her body was threatening to consume them both. Caleb thrust into her with wild abandon, pulling his cock out to its head and then slamming back into her.

“Scream my name, Sommer. I want there to be no doubt in your mind who’s doing this to you.”

“Caleb! Oh Caleb!” She braced her upper body against the table, her nails clawing into the varnish. Her knees felt like they’d give out any second, but he continued to ram into her like a man possessed. And she loved every second of it.

His nails, now sharpened to claws, dug deeper into her, breaking skin. Hovering on the threshold of pleasure and pain, Sommer screamed her release as her pussy gushed with juices. “Yes! Oh God yes!” Tears streamed down her face, but this time from the overwhelming sensations coursing through her body. He’d taken her body on a roller coaster ride of lust and uncontrollable passion.

Caleb wasn’t finished with her yet, however. He continued to plow into her pussy, making growling sounds in the back of his throat. “This cunt belongs to me. No one else. It’s mine, isn’t it, Sommer?”

“Yes,” she whispered, too weak to say it in a louder voice.

“Uh!” He grunted with one powerful thrust before filling her with a stream of his come. Caleb held on tight and released a howl from the back of his throat.

Sommer thought he would be done with her then, but Caleb had other ideas. He slowly backed away from her, his cock popping out of her with a wet, slushy sound. Emptiness seared within her core at being separated from him. She missed being one

with him. Sommer didn't have long to ponder on the feeling before his fingers replaced his dick.

Pushing in and out of her for a few brief strokes, he then spread her cheeks and placed his damp digits against the puckered ring of her anus.

Sommer stiffened, instinctively knowing what he wanted. In their time as lovers, there had been ass play, but she had never been completely comfortable with full-on anal. Deep down, she'd known Caleb had wanted it, but he'd never pressed her for it, which was one of the many reasons she loved him. Tonight he wasn't taking no for an answer, and as turned on as she was, Sommer wasn't sure she wanted to stop him.

She inhaled sharply as he shoved a finger knuckle-deep into her rear then pulled out to the fingertip. He moistened her anal cavity with his slick digit, pumping in and out until she was panting with need. Caleb added yet another finger, stretching, lubing and readying her for his dick, making her want him and driving her insane.

"Caleb, please," she whimpered as she clenched her fists, willing herself to remain as immobile as possible. Her body was racked with uncontrollable quivers of passion.

Caleb stilled. "Please what, Sommer? Please fuck your ass?"

She nodded her head.

A throaty laugh tore from his throat. "You're going to have to do better than that, my dear."

She licked her lips, hesitating only a moment before giving him what he wanted. "Please fuck my ass! Fuck me now!"

"Now you're getting it." He removed his fingers from inside of her bottom and placed the tip of her cock against her back entrance.

Sommer tensed, anticipating that it would hurt. To her surprise, Caleb leaned over and gently nipped the back of her neck. "Relax, Sommer." He pressed light kisses on her shoulder blades, sending shivers up and down her spine. Here was the man she

was so desperately in love with, the one she spent years secretly worshiping from afar. She wanted him to take her now – needed it.

“Caleb, please, now.”

Without another word, he straightened up and grasped her waist. With one swift thrust, he drove his cock deep into her ass.

Sommer bit her bottom lip, drawing blood to stop herself from crying out. It almost felt as if he was tearing her apart, but at the core of her ache was a tight ring of pleasure so intense that tumultuous waves of sizzling heat ripped through her very being.

“Easy, Sommer. It’s okay, baby,” he said softly. Caleb slowly began to move within her, sliding back and forth. “That’s it, baby, give over to me.”

She found herself pushing against him, her rear meeting his pelvis. “Caleb,” she sighed his name softly.

He fucked her with vigor, making the table shake and wiggle. “Oh God, Sommer!” He cried out as he came into her again before leaning over and kissing the side of her face and neck. Breathing ragged, he rested on her, whispering romantic words. “You’re so beautiful, so wonderful.”

Caleb lay over her for several minutes and Sommer reveled in the feeling of his heartbeat pressed against her body. She welcomed the weight of him on top of her. A comfortable silence fell between the two of them.

Finally he stood up once again and eased out of her. Then Caleb grasped her shoulders, pulling Sommer upright and then turning her around.

She expected to see some of the anger he’d displayed earlier, but instead, lurking within the depths of his deep blue eyes was tenderness. She wanted to take away all the cruel things she said to him, but did she dare?

“Caleb, I—”

He shook his head. “Shh. Don’t say anything else. If you want this to be over between us, then at least give me this night.” And with that, he lifted her into his arms

and carried her to the bathroom. He placed Sommer back on her feet to turn on the showerhead. He stepped into the stall and held his hand out to her.

Feeling shy all of a sudden, she placed her trembling hand into his. Caleb pulled her against him, crushing her mouth against his. Their tongues danced and swirled around each other's, tasting and reveling in each other's flavor as droplets of water rained over their heads.

Caleb was the one to break off the kiss, leaving her breathless. Taking a step back, his gaze raked the length of her body from head to toe. She shivered from awareness. The appreciative gleam in his hungry stare curled her toes with a wanton need to be taken by him yet again.

Sommer wasn't sure how long they stood still, staring at each other. Finally, Caleb grabbed the body wash and squirted a dollop in his hand and replaced it on the rack. Lathering his hands, he didn't break eye contact with her. Sommer moistened her lips as hunger simmered within her core, as she watched him slide his hands along the length of his rock-hard dick.

He was the epitome of male beauty. There wasn't a single inch of him that she didn't want to touch or run her fingers along. His muscular sinewy flesh tempted her beyond bounds Sommer didn't think would be possible to experience. A faint smile curved his sensual lips. "Do you like what you see, Sommer?"

She could only nod, not trusting herself to speak.

Caleb chuckled in response, grabbing the body wash and pouring another generous portion in his palm. This time, it was her turn.

She shivered when his hands gently smoothed the soap into her body in gentle massaging motions. There wasn't a part of her body where his hands didn't roam.

By the time he had soaped her completely, Sommer's knees were so weak she didn't think she'd be able to stand. Her pussy contracted and was hot with her lust for him.

“You’re so beautiful. Come to me, my darling,” he whispered. “I tried to...dear God, I tried, but I...” She wasn’t sure what he was going to say before he abruptly broke off.

Sommer stepped closer to him, the tips of her soap-slicked breasts touching his chest. She couldn’t stop trembling, she was so overwhelmed with emotion.

Caleb cupped her rear, grinding his erection against her.

She threw her arms around his neck as he lifted her into his arms, fitting her dripping pussy over his cock. She was so slick and wet from her juices and soap that his large member easily slid into her hot passage. Sommer locked her legs around his waist, taking him deeper into her.

This time their joining was tender and sweet. As he moved into her, melding, pressing, holding her, Caleb whispered tender words in her ear. She came swift and hard, her body sagging against his in physical and emotional exhaustion.

Caleb threw back his head and released a primal howl, signaling his coming orgasm. He shot his load into her, grunting.

Sommer tightened her pussy muscles around his cock, milking him for every single drop of his seed. Holding on to him tightly, she rested her head against the crook of his shoulder.

They stood under the spray of the shower for several more minutes before she allowed her feet to touch down again. Caleb leaned over and turned off the shower, then led her out of the stall.

He toweled her body off with such gentle movements, Sommer could no longer take it. Where his anger had firmed her resolve to break things off with him, his softness was her undoing. As he wrapped the fluffy towel around her body, she burst into tears.



## Chapter Eight

Seeing Sommer cry had always been his undoing. When he'd taught her how to ride her bike and she pedaled into a ditch, he remembered holding her as she cried in his arms, his heart breaking with each tear that slid down her cheek. She was tough and generally didn't give in to fits of emotion, but on the rare occasions when she did, it got him every time.

Cupping her face between his palms, he leaned forward and planted a kiss on her forehead. "Sweetheart, what's the matter?"

She sobbed even harder.

Caleb engulfed her within the folds of his arms, rocking her gently back and forth. "It's okay. Whatever is on your mind, you can tell me."

Her body shuddered and then Sommer hiccupped. "That's just it. I-I-I can't talk to you like I used to."

Grasping her chin between his thumb and index finger, he tilted her head up so their gazes could meet. "Sommer, it's me, Caleb. What happened to the Queen of TMI? You used to share every aspect of your life with me...now...there's a wall between us, and no matter how hard I've tried to tear it down, it remains between us. I was an asshole earlier. I shouldn't have treated you that way, but I was so angry. No. That's no excuse. For whatever reason you no longer want to be with me, it gave me no right to manhandle you the way I did."

She shook her head, her expression forlorn. Sommer placed her hand on the side of his face. "Don't apologize. I'm the one who should be begging forgiveness. You see, I...I lied. You could never bore me, Caleb. In fact, these past few months since we've become lovers have been the happiest times of my life."

He tried to make sense of what she was trying to tell him. If anything, he was more confused than ever. One moment she wanted to end things and the next she was expressing how powerful their lovemaking had been. "I'm not understanding this mixed message you're giving me, Sommer. Do you want to be with me or not? What's going on?"

Shaking her head, she shot him a sad little smile. "Caleb, it's not about what I want."

He stroked her hair, wanting desperately for her to reach out to him. "Open up to me, baby."

Sommer pulled away from him then and presented her back to him. "No, don't do that."

Caleb lifted a brow, his confusion growing. "Do what?"

Her shoulders drooped. "Be so tender with me. I can't take it."

"How can I not? I'm nuts about you, and when you told me you wanted us to stop seeing each other, I think I went a little crazy." He took a deep breath. It was time to lay all his cards on the table. This was his mate, the woman he wanted to spend the rest of his days with, the one he wanted to bear his cubs. His every waking thought was connected to her somehow, and he could no longer go on with the way things were. "Sommer, I love you. I think I always have."

Finally, he'd said it and there was no taking the words back.

She turned sharply then, her soulful brown eyes full of bewilderment. Open-mouthed, she stared at him for several moments as though trying to figure out what to say. Just when he thought she'd remain immobile, she shook her head vehemently. "No. You can't love me."

His brows knitted together in his consternation. "Why the hell can't I?" Taking the couple of steps to close the gap between the two of them, he grasped her by the forearms. "I love everything about you, Sommer, your smile, your sweet nature, how your eyes twinkle when you're happy, the way you move, talk and your spirit. You're

the first thought when I wake up and the last before I go to bed. Sometimes I like calling you simply to hear your voice. My soul feels weak when you're not around and my heart races whenever I see you. Baby, if that's not love, I don't know what is."

Her eyes glistened with the suspicious sheen of tears. "Caleb...I...I don't know what to say."

"Say you'll be my mate for life. I love you so much, I ache."

She shut her eyes, bowing her head. "I love you too."

Caleb found himself grinning like an idiot as his heart sped up and a euphoria like he'd never experienced filled his being. "Darling, that's wonderful!" Unable to hold back any longer, he crushed her lips beneath his, sampling her sweetness and molding her against his body. His cock stiffened with need for her. For so long he'd daydreamed of this moment, but the reality far outweighed the fantasy. Caleb could hardly stand still, simply knowing she returned his feeling was indescribable.

Sommer broke the contact of their lips, turning her head away from him. "No, Caleb. This...this isn't right."

"What are you talking about? Nothing has ever felt so right. I love you and you feel the same. What could be more natural than the two of us expressing that emotion together?"

"I...it's because I love you that I can't be with you."

"You're not making sense."

A shiver shook her shoulders. "Do you think I can slip into some clothes before we get to this? It's a little chilly. I'll make us some coffee."

Caleb knew it was a stalling tactic on her part, but decided patience would be the best way to handle the situation. Besides, he had no intention of leaving until he got to the bottom of why she felt they shouldn't be together.

Several moments later, Sommer placed a steaming mug in front of him on her kitchen table and moved to the counter to pour a cup for herself. He couldn't take his

eyes off her. What a lovely sight she made. Her hair, left free to dry naturally, was a riot of waves and tight curls framing and showing off the perfect lines of her fine-boned features. The nightshirt she now wore rested mid-thigh, showing off her well-shaped legs. The pink silk material gently skimmed her curves—curves he'd just spent time caressing, licking and sucking.

His cock stiffened, straining against his pants, aching to break free of its restraints. Caleb wanted her again, but knew he needed to bide his time.

Sommer took the chair across from him, her eyes glued to his bare torso. Red undertones colored the lovely brown skin of her cheeks. Her blush was enough to make him want to throw her on the table and fuck her senseless. Caleb's grip on his coffee mug tightened. It would take every ounce of his self-control not to do just that.

A faint smile curved the corners of his mouth. "Are you going to keep staring at my chest or are we going to talk?"

Her gaze cut away from his. "Sorry," she mumbled before taking a sip of her coffee.

"Don't apologize. I enjoy it when you stare at my body. It turns me on in ways you couldn't imagine."

"Caleb, you're not going to sidetrack me by flirting."

"It's your fault for being so sexy."

"Stop," she laughed.

There it was. That smile he'd missed so much.

"You'd better start talking, sweetheart, because I'm giving you fifteen minutes before I carry you to bed and get some more of that sweet pussy of yours."

"You're not making this any easier for me."

"And you're cutting into your time. I've never been more serious about anything in my life, so you'd better spill it."

She released a deep breath. "I'm not sure where to begin."

"How about starting by saying you love me again."

Sommer smiled, and placed her mug back down. For the first time since they'd entered the kitchen, her gaze met his. "I do love you, Caleb. I can't remember a time when I didn't. When...when I said we should end things, I was scared."

Caleb's brows furrowed together. "Scared of what? Sommer, I've known you to be many things, but scared was never one of them."

"Not when it comes to you. For so long, I've been trying to hide my true feelings for you, in hopes you wouldn't discover how I felt, that it just became a habit. These past several weeks, I didn't want to open up to you about anything for fear of spilling too much."

"But what I'm trying to understand is why? If you would have told me you loved me sooner, I would have been dancing on air. I was pretty sure you figured out how I felt for you a long time ago by the way I looked at you, couldn't stop touching you, wanting to be with you every second of every hour. I called you when I was away on business because I couldn't get through the day without hearing your voice. Surely you knew."

She shook her head. "I didn't have a clue. I was surprised as hell that day in my store when you told me you wanted me. You see, all these years I thought what we had was more of a brother-sister type relationship and I didn't want to rock the boat by confessing my true feelings for you. It knocked me for six to hear you say those words to me, but then when you held me in your arms, it was like heaven."

"Then why were you hesitant about starting a relationship with me?"

"Because I knew your track record. When you start an affair, it's over within weeks. You've dated some of the most beautiful women I've ever seen. There's nothing so special about myself to make me think I would be any different from those other women, so I shut myself off emotionally, content to simply be your lover until you grew tired of me like the rest. But then it got too hard to hold everything in. I wanted to save myself the humiliation of telling you how I felt because I thought things would be awkward if I told you I loved you and you didn't return the sentiment."

Caleb stood up then, walked over and knelt beside her. He took her hand in his, hoping she could read his feeling for her in his facial expression. "None of those women were you, Sommer. They never lasted because you were the one I wanted. While I find it disconcerting you felt I would treat you so callously, I want you to know I would never do anything to hurt you. I mean for you to be my life mate."

She cupped the side of his face, a smile touching her full lips. "That sounds like my wildest dreams come true, Caleb, but I don't think that would be a good idea. We're probably better off simply remaining lovers."

His eyes narrowed. What kind of game was she playing? "Sommer, I'm not in the mood for jokes and I don't find that one bit funny. What the hell do you mean you'd rather us remain lovers?"

"At least until you have to take a mate."

"The only mate I want is you. Didn't you just hear me?"

"I heard you loud and clear. It's because I love you so much that I can't be your lover." When he would have protested, she placed her index finger over his lips, silencing him. "Even if the council approved it, the rest of the pack might not support this union. I'm human and a lot of people haven't let me forget it."

Anger hammered within his chest at the thought of anyone in his pack giving the woman he loved above all else a hard time. "Tell me who they are and I will personally see them exiled."

"Caleb, it's not so much what anyone has done or said, but it's the looks, the vibes I sometimes get. Even when I was a little girl, I felt it. I knew I was different. I don't regret Mom and Dad taking me in and raising me, but it doesn't mean I haven't noticed how others view a human growing up among the *Wulfen*. If you were to take me as your mate, the pack may resent it, leaving you open to be challenged for a position that's rightfully yours. I can't do that to you."

He grasped her face between his palms. "Do you think I haven't given this some thought? Spoken to my father about it?"

Her eyes widened. "Uncle Seth knows about us?"

"Of course he does. He's known from the start – that day in your store."

"Oh no," she groaned. "I can only imagine what he must be thinking of me. He's probably said something to Mom and Dad."

"He hasn't. I made him promise not to say anything. When you're ready, I'm sure you'll tell them yourself. Anyway, my father and mother love you like a daughter. Why wouldn't they be delighted about you and me?"

"Your parents and mine might accept it, but others might not. You should be with a *Wulfen* fem, someone like Selena."

Caleb brushed his lips against hers. "If I wanted Selena, I'd be with her right now."

"But she's so beautiful."

"So are you."

"She's accomplished."

"What's that got to do with the price of tea in China?"

"A lot of people think she should be the Alpha Bitch."

"A lot of people smoke crack, but that's not right either. What's your point?"

"You still see her occasionally, don't you?"

"The last time I saw Selena was for lunch a couple weeks ago on a business matter."

"But she said –" Sommer broke off abruptly, her gaze sliding away from his.

The grip he had on her face tightened. "Look at me, Sommer. What did she say?"

"Nothing. It's not important."

"Sommer," he growled. "If you don't tell me what she said, I'll go to her place right now and drag it out of her, even if I have to wring her conniving little neck. Don't you think there's a reason I don't want to be with her? She may be beautiful on the outside, but on the inside she houses a heart that's black as coal. If you want to call anyone boring, you could certainly pin that description on her."

“Selena Khan? Boring? Are we talking about the same person?”

“The very same. When you’re not talking about her favorite subject, which happens to be herself, by the way, she’s not interested. Sure, her beauty is intriguing, but once you get past the surface, there’s not much else there. Now tell me what she said.”

She sighed as though contemplating whether she should test him on his word. He had every intention of doing what he said if she didn’t tell him what he wanted to know. “She implied there was more than just friendship between the two of you and you would eventually grow tired of me.”

“If she weren’t a woman, I’d punch her for telling you that. Believe me when I say that she holds no interest to me. I love only you. Being Alpha means nothing to me if I can’t have you. If the pack has a problem with me taking you as my mate, then I’ll gladly give up my status to whoever wants it.”

“Uncle Seth would not be happy about that.”

“He wants me to be happy and I’d be happiest with you. Don’t condemn either of us to a life without each other.”

Tears glistened in her beautiful brown eyes as a smile curved her lips. She threw her arms around him. “I love you too, Caleb. I’ve always loved you. I was just so scared of standing in your way of becoming Alpha.”

“You could never do that because you’re more important to me than anything else in the world, including that.” His heart raced and his pulse sped up from all the emotions swirling within his chest. He couldn’t remember a moment when he’d been happier, but having Sommer in his arms made everything around them fade into oblivion. All was right with the world and the woman he loved, loved him back.

“Tell me this isn’t a dream, my darling.”

She pulled away from him with a laugh. “That was my question. You have no idea how long I’ve dreamed of this moment and I can’t believe it’s actually here. Now I’m waiting for that bus to hit me.”



"What do you mean?"

"Everything seems too good too be true. We love each other and things are going swimmingly with my business. Can you believe Afternoon Delights has become such a success? I'm over the moon."

He grinned. "I knew you would be. I was hesitant to make those calls at first, but—"

Shit.

He'd said too much. Why the hell couldn't he keep his big mouth shut?

Sommer stiffened. "What calls?" she demanded.

Caleb shook his head, trying to play off what he'd just let slip. "Nothing. Let's go back to bed and make love."

Her eyes narrowed. "What calls, Caleb?"

"Sweetheart, we'll talk about it later." He tried to take her in his arms, but she shoved him back and stood up.

"We'll talk about it now! What calls are you talking about, Caleb? Do I have you to thank for all the business that's been coming my way lately?"

He slowly wobbled to his feet. "Honey, listen—"

"Don't you honey me. Are you responsible for all the business that's come my way!" she screamed the question.

His head dropped. "Yes," he murmured. "I only made a few calls, but the rest you did on your own. It wouldn't have been a success without you."

"Get out," she said tightly. No yelling, no tearful accusations, just a couple of cold words that sent a chill down his spine.

"Sommer, will you listen to me please?" Caleb reached for her.

"Don't touch me! Don't ever touch me again! Just get out and don't come back."

"Please, Sommer, don't do this to us."

“I didn’t do anything to us. You did.” She shook her head, the hurt on her face speaking louder than any words she could possibly utter. “You know, I expected this from my parents and even your father, but you are the last person who I thought would do this to me. You must have had a good laugh behind my back.”

“No. It wasn’t like that. You were upset because things weren’t going well at your shop. I only wanted to help.”

“And I only want you to get the hell out of here before I scream.”

Seeing her like this, Caleb realized it would do him no good to talk while she was in this mood. He would give her a couple days to cool off, but there was no way he intended on giving up his woman!

## Chapter Nine

She hadn't spoken to Caleb in two weeks. He'd left her alone for the first couple days, but then the calls began, the roses, the chocolates and unannounced visits. The flowers she'd donated to the local hospital, the candy she gave to her employees and when Caleb came knocking on her door, she didn't answer.

Sommer screened her calls and didn't bother to return his messages. Thank God work kept her busy and out of the store most days, otherwise, she'd be forced to face him. She'd been informed that he'd come by a handful of times already. It was only a matter of time before he did catch her while she was in the office.

Work.

The high she'd experienced at all her success didn't quite feel the same knowing what he'd done. By calling in favors for her, he'd taken away the one thing that should have been hers. It hurt because he knew how much it had meant to her to do this by herself.

She wasn't foolish enough to throw in the towel and close down, because she did, after all, have a nice clientele built up now. Still, in the back of her mind, she'd always wonder what would have happened had he not intervened.

Despite this, she missed him like crazy and cried herself to sleep every night as she remembered how good it had felt to be held in his arms. She recalled the good times and how he'd made her laugh and made her body sing with passion. It wasn't that she didn't believe him when he told her he loved her, but now that she knew he was capable of going behind her back all in the name of "helping" her, would he smother her?

She didn't fool herself into believing that their paths wouldn't eventually cross, but she was angry and hurt about what he did. Sommer wasn't sure what she would say

when they did finally see each other again, but until then, she needed this time apart to clear her head.

Sommer took another bite of her breadstick and glanced at her watch with a frown. It wasn't like her father to be late for an appointment. He'd called her a few days ago to set up this lunch date as they hadn't seen each other for a couple weeks. This happened to be one of the few days when she didn't have a lunch client to cater for. She'd been looking forward to this.

Just when she was about to pull out her cell phone and call him up, he strode in. She stood up with a smile and walked into the arms he held out to her. "Hi, Daddy. I was starting to worry. It's not like you to be late."

Trevor kissed her on the forehead and squeezed her tight. "Hello, Princess. I'm sorry. I should have called, but there was something I needed to take care of that held me up."

She pulled out of his embrace with a laugh. "Well, it's about time, I'm starving." They took their seats. "I hope you don't mind, but I took the liberty of ordering your usual."

"New York Strip, extra rare?"

"As bloody as the law allows."

"Great."

"How's Mom?"

"She's been busy organizing a charity fundraiser. And she's wondering why her daughter hasn't called in the past week."

Guilt licked at her insides. She offered him a sheepish grin. "I'm sorry. I meant to come by for a visit these past couple days, but things have been so hectic at work lately I haven't had much energy to do anything other than go home and crash. I promise to come by soon."

"I can't tell you how proud I am of you at all you've accomplished. I knew you could do it, honey."

She snorted before biting into another breadstick. She wanted to get through lunch without the subject of Caleb coming up. "Yeah, sure," she mumbled with her mouth full.

Her father's eyebrow shot. "You mean to tell me you're not ecstatic? The few times I've had a chance to come by, you were busy and those teenagers you hired were actually doing some work."

"Dad, they've been a big help to me."

"The first time I visited, one of them was filing her nails and the other was on his cell phone."

"That's because we weren't busy at the time. They're good kids."

"Just making sure they're doing what you're paying them for."

"I get more than my money's worth."

They were interrupted when their meals came. The conversation resumed when the waiter left them alone again. "Sweetheart, there is something else I wanted to talk to you about."

"What?" she asked before taking a bite of her Cobb salad.

"I know about you and Caleb."

She stiffened and then stuffed a forkful of salad in her mouth, ignoring her father's statement.

"Sommer, you're not going to put me off."

She took a sip of her sparkling water. "I don't want to talk about it, Dad."

"That's where you're wrong, young lady. We both know work isn't the only thing that's been keeping you away. You have bags under your eyes, which tells me you haven't been getting enough sleep. And no matter how busy you've been in the past, you've always managed to give your mother a call. You know she worries about you."

To top it off, when I congratulated you on your success, the light in your eyes when you started your venture wasn't there. Sommer, don't let what Caleb did affect your relationship."

Her head shot up as she held her fork midway to her mouth. "What do you know about Caleb and me?"

"I know the two of you have been dating for the past few months and you haven't bothered to tell me about it."

"Did Caleb or Uncle Seth tell you?"

"No, I figured it out myself weeks ago. Your old man isn't completely out of it."

"How did you know?"

"I had a sneaking suspicion something was going on between the two of you at your launch party. The way Caleb looked at you is the same way I look at your mother. He's loved you for a long time, Sommer. I knew it would only be a matter of time before he made his move."

"You never said anything."

He shrugged. "Sweetheart, I'm sure Caleb wouldn't have appreciated my intervention on his behalf. Sometimes there are things a man has to do on his own, and going after the woman he loves is one of those things."

"But you're intervening for him now."

"Caleb didn't put me up to this, if that's what you're thinking. To be honest, I had to practically threaten him to get him to tell me what was going on. I wanted to find out if he'd done anything to hurt you, but I could see he was hurting, and from the looks of you, you're not faring any better."

Sommer didn't want to hear how bad Caleb was doing or that he was upset. She didn't want to care, because that would lead to letting him back in her life to run roughshod over her. "I suppose you probably applauded what he did."

"Frankly, yes." He said it unapologetically.

"I figured you would. Dad, don't you realize how important my business is to me? Afternoon Delights is my baby. I put in a lot of blood, sweat and tears to make it happen. I realize I got off to a slow start, but when things finally began to look up for me, imagine how I felt when learned that he went behind my back and did the very thing he knew I didn't want. How can you sit there and tell me you're pleased to hear it?"

"Because I'm your father and I care about your happiness."

"I would have been happier if he hadn't interfered."

"Would you have? From what I understand, things weren't going so well for you in the beginning. Had Caleb not stepped in, I would have eventually done it myself. And the fact that he did proves to me that he will do whatever it takes to protect you. That's the kind of a man I would want for you."

"Someone to smother me the way you and Mom do?" She regretted the words the minute they came out of her mouth. Damning her temper, she was quick to apologize. "I'm sorry, Dad. I know you and Mom mean well, but sometimes...I guess it would be nice if you let me sink or swim on my own."

Her father reached across the table and engulfed her hands within his. "Sommer, I only say this because I love you, but you're being stubborn and ungrateful. I think what Caleb did for you was a good thing, and as I've already stated, I would have done the same thing."

"How can you say that, Dad? You know how much my business means to me." She tried to pull her hands out of his grasp, but he held them firmly.

"No, Sommer. You will listen to what I have to say." Trevor shot her that stern look he used to give her when she was a kid and got into some trouble.

"Fine. I'm listening."

"Princess, I understand where you're coming from by wanting to assert your independence. Your mother and I are so proud of all you've accomplished, but don't you think you're taking things a bit too far? I mean, everyone needs help occasionally.

Do you think I've never had to ask for help? Or maybe Seth? He may be our Alpha, but every day he relies on the rest of the pack to ensure everything runs smoothly. That's why there are Betas. I, in turn, rely on others to help me through my tasks. That's what the pack does. We help each other out. Having someone intercede on your behalf doesn't take anything away from all the hard work you've done. It's the way of business."

Sommer lowered her head, unable to meet his green gaze any longer. She saw where he was going with this and she had no argument to give.

He stroked the back of her hand with his thumb. "Sweetheart, before you came along, your mother and I had given up hope of ever having children of our own. For so long, our culture has only allowed us to adopt within the pack. When Seth brought you to us and backed us as we fought to keep you, understandably, you became our world. We tried to shield you from the pack's censure, and social and racial prejudices. We never meant to smother you and I didn't realize how much we did until I had that talk with Caleb. Sommer, why didn't you ever say anything?"

She lifted her head to meet his gaze then. "Daddy, how could I? I know you and Mom meant well, I didn't want to hurt you. I love you two so much. I know that the things you did were out of love."

"Kind of like what Caleb did?" he prompted gently.

Sommer lifted her head to meet her father's gaze, her shame complete. She'd pushed Caleb out of her life, and for what? Pride. When she thought about how much he meant to her, she realized how foolish she'd been. "You're right. He only wanted to help, but I wouldn't listen to him."

"It's not too late to go to him and tell him how you feel. Besides, I think he understands the situation better than you think. In a way, I blame myself for some of this. Had I given you more space growing up, it would be easier for you to accept help from time to time. Saying you can't do something on your own isn't a show of



weakness, Princess. It's a sign of strength, in that you recognize what your shortcomings are without being afraid to seek out someone who could assist you."

"I never thought of it like that," she murmured. Suddenly a terrible possibility crossed her mind. "What if Caleb doesn't want to talk to me? I've been ignoring him for weeks."

One corner of Trevor's mouth tilted to form a half-smile. "He won't turn you away."

"You think so?"

"Let me put it like this, I never thought it was possible for anyone to love you more than your mother and me until I saw that look in Caleb's eyes. Do me a favor and go put the poor guy out of his misery. He's been moping around the office like a guy who looks like he's ready to end it all. Seth tells me Caleb has been doing a lot of baying at the moon lately."

"It's that simple, huh?"

"Do you love him?"

Sommer didn't have to dwell on that question for even a second. "With all my heart."

"Then it is that simple." He gave her hands a gentle squeeze. A brief frown flitted across his lips.

"What's wrong, Daddy?"

"You know, I've dreaded this moment from the day you showed interest in the opposite sex."

"Why?"

"Because I realized there'd come a time when another man would take my Princess away from me and your mom."

Tears sprang to her eyes, her heart overflowing with love. "You and Mom could never lose me. I love you." Sommer was glad she'd had this talk with her father. It was

like an awakening. For the first time, she understood what it truly meant to be a part of the pack. She could finally appreciate better where her parents were coming from and why Caleb had done what he did. He'd only wanted to make her happy. How could she have been angry at him for that?

Sommer only hoped it wasn't too late to tell Caleb exactly how she felt.

\* \* \* \* \*

Caleb had never been more miserable in his life. He skulked back into his house through the sliding glass door he'd left slightly ajar before going for a run in the wood. Walking through the house on padded feet, he shook out his mane to rid himself of all the rain drops that had just started to fall before he came in.

Not even howling at the moon had given him the pleasure it normally did. Nothing seemed right without Sommer. Stretching his body lengthwise, he realigned his organs as his fur retreated into his skin and changed back to a light dusting of human hair along the contours of his body. His paws lengthened and spread out and his legs elongated. It only took a few minutes before he returned to first form.

His body slick with sweat, Caleb headed for the shower. As he stepped under the cool spray of the water, he resolved this would be the last night without Sommer. Even if he had to kick her damn door down, he would not allow her to shut him out any longer.

That talk with Trevor had put things into perspective. He and Sommer belonged together, and there would be times when he did things for her that she would simply have to accept. Yes, that's what he'd do. He'd storm into her house and do whatever it took for her to listen to him, even if he had to screw her into submission.

As he washed, Caleb contemplated what he'd say to her and he wondered why he should wait until tomorrow. He should go over to her apartment now. She would be home by now, and if she wasn't, damn if he wouldn't go to her parents' house and then to her friends'. He'd find her by the time the night was over.

He was so deep in his thought that he was caught off guard when the shower curtain was pulled open. Under most circumstances, he would have heard an intruder. Caleb balled his fist ready to strike, but was surprised to see a very naked Sommer step into the shower stall behind him. She must have used the key he'd given her weeks ago.

Wiping his eyes to make sure he wasn't dreaming, he was lost for words. Unable to speak even if his life depended on it, he stood still as she stepped closer to him, stood on her toes and kissed his jawline. Then she began to rain kisses on his chest, making a downward trail, until she rested on her knees.

Caleb inhaled sharply as his cock came alive in her hand.

"Sommer," he groaned.

"Don't say anything, just enjoy," she whispered with a smile, her eyes twinkling with the love he thought he'd killed. But there it was, shining just for him.

She ran her tongue along his shaft and then circled the sensitive head of his cock, teasing and torturing him. Her warm breath against his skin was nearly more than he could take. The blood pounded in his ears and the coolness of the water raining on them did nothing to pacify the heat coursing through his body.

At her mere touch, he was driven to near insanity. When she wrapped her lips around his dick, he moaned her name. "Oh Sommer. God, yes. I've missed you so much." Grasping her head, he slowly pushed forward until the tip of his cock touched the back of her throat.

Sommer grasped his balls with one hand, fondling them, heightening the sensations flowing through his core. Two weeks was a long time to go without her and he wanted her right now. Caleb doubted he could hold on much longer. He thrust in and out of her mouth, fucking it. Her lips were so tight around his length and it felt like absolute heaven, but he wanted some pussy. Sommer's.

With a growl, he released her head and pulled away. Quickly, Caleb turned off the shower and lifted Sommer off her knees into his arms. He made it to his bedroom within seconds.

When he tossed her onto the bed, he quickly fell on top of her, nudging her thighs apart. They gasped simultaneously as he slid into her hot cunt, so wet and ready for him.

“I missed this so much. I missed you, Sommer,” he groaned, planting his hands on either side of her head and bracing himself on his forearms. He pumped and pushed into her with the savageness of a man denied for too long.

Sommer wiggled and writhed beneath him. “I love you, I love you, I love you,” she chanted and she lifted her hips, meeting each of his thrusts with her own.

They moved, ground and strained together, their bodies working in perfect synchronization. When her pussy muscles clenched around his cock, a powerful explosion tore through his body. Caleb shot his seed deep within her channel.

Sommer screamed her release, opening her arms wide as he collapsed on top of her. She shuddered beneath him, whimpering and moaning with her apparent pleasure.

Caleb placed kisses over her face, lips and neck, unable to believe she was here in his arms and back in his bed.

Finally, when his breathing became normal once again, he captured her face between his palms and kissed her hungrily on the mouth. “You came to me,” he sighed, his heart filled with joy.

“I...I’m sorry, Caleb. I know you did what you did to make me happy. And I appreciate what you’ve done. I overreacted and should have been appreciative instead of giving you a hard time. I’ll never be so stupid again or jeopardize your love for me again.”

“That isn’t possible, because I could never stop loving you. Sommer, one of the reasons why I love you is your fierce independence and your strong will but, honey, don’t push me away again. I want to share in your life, not be an observer on the outside looking in.”

She brushed the side of his face with her hand. "I promise I won't. I love and appreciate you and I'm glad you helped me to become a success. I can't wait to be your mate. Nothing will make me happier."

Caleb could barely believe his good fortune. Words couldn't adequately express how deeply he felt for Sommer. Finally he had the woman he loved right where he wanted her, in his arms. "Nor can I."

Uncertainty crossed her lovely face for a brief moment. "Are you worried about what the rest of the pack will say? You might be challenged for your position because of choosing me as your mate."

"Maybe I will, maybe I won't. But like I said, you're more important to me than being the next Alpha. Anyway, my parents adore you and your parents have given me their blessing. There are fewer people who will take issue with us together than you think, but if we do meet opposition, it's a bridge we'll cross when we get there. Let's not borrow trouble from tomorrow. Instead, tell me how much you love me."

"I do, with all my heart. I can't wait for the rest of our lives." Sommer snuggled beneath him, a large smile on her face. "I know we're going to have a wonderful life."

Caleb grinned. "As long as you're by my side, how could it not be?"

"As long as we have each other, you mean. Anyway, there's another reason why we're going to be happy."

He lifted a brow. "Why is that?"

She gave him a knowing smile. "It's in the cards."

Caleb wasn't exactly sure what that meant, but it sounded wonderful.

## **About the Author**

Eve has enjoyed creating characters and making up stories from an early age. As a child she was always getting into mischief, so when she lost her television and outside privileges (which was often), writing was her outlet. Her stories have gotten quite a bit spicier since then! Eve likes to read, bake, make crafts, volunteer work, travel, and spend time with her family. She lives in the Philadelphia area with her husband. She loves hearing from her readers because they keep her motivated.

Eve welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her author bio page at [www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com).

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