

ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS

ELLORA'S CAVE
Quickies

Running Mate
Jaci Burton

RUNNING MATE

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Jaci Burton

DEDICATION

To Briana St. James and Jennifer Martin. Thank you for your faith in me, and for the opportunities you've given me. I'm honored.

To the management of Ellora's Cave. Thank you for believing in me and for giving me the freedom to let my imagination soar.

And, as always, to Charlie, for traveling down this road with me and holding my hand along the way. Because of you, I know the magic of love.

Chapter One

"Jason Devlin is over there."

Kelsey Harper spun, looking where her father was pointing. Her heart picked up its usual frantic pace whenever Senator Devlin was mentioned.

Leave it to Walter Harper to spot a news story in the making. As owner of *The Washington Oracle*, D.C.'s popular newspaper, her father had a nose for a scoop better than anyone she'd ever seen.

She'd grown up around newspaper publishing and reporting, and wouldn't dream of ever doing anything else. Kelsey lived for digging up a story, especially one related to politics, although she preferred to get the goods on corrupt politicians and what they did behind the scenes.

"I don't see him," she said. Who could find anyone in the packed ballroom? She'd just arrived, so she missed dinner and the Senator's speech and wasn't certain he was still around. When Jason Devlin made an appearance, a sellout was guaranteed. Chances were, he was wherever the biggest crowd was gathered.

The man was simply news, and not only because of his principles. He was the "it" man in politics, and was talked about as a potential Presidential candidate. He was also one of the best looking men she'd ever seen. Six-foot-two and lean, with thick, dark hair and eyes the color of fine whiskey. A gorgeous man with a body to die for and a brain to match. His features screamed 'aristocrat', from his tanned, angular jaw to his straight nose. The most important thing about him was his single status. A perfect package, available for the one woman who could manage to snag him.

Not that Kelsey was interested in snagging him. She just wanted to uncover his secrets.

In Washington, D.C., and especially politics, everybody had a skeleton or two in their closets.

Skeletons sold newspapers. Lots of them.

“He’s looking longingly at the elevators,” her father said. “My guess is he’s hoping for a little privacy.”

“Perfect.” She’d been waiting forever to corner him for an interview. With his rabid, overly protective staff, no way was she getting any one-on-one time with him. At least, not the regular way. “I’m going to get up to his floor before he does, then block his doorway until I get an interview.”

“That’s my girl.” Her father winked and kissed her cheek.

Kelsey grinned and slipped away toward the private elevators leading to the penthouse. She stopped as she saw a security guard escorting an attractive woman off the elevator, a sultry, big-breasted blonde in a tight, short dress that hid none of her assets. From the way she was arguing with the guard about what a huge mistake he was making, she wasn’t one bit happy about being removed, either. Must be another Devlin groupie.

Kelsey waited until security was out of sight, then eased into the elevator and pressed the button for the penthouse. She glanced at her reflection in the mirrored walls of the elevator. The long, strapless black gown hugged her curves like a mummy’s wrapping. Not really her favorite choice of clothing. Shorts and a halter top would have been more to her liking.

She applied some lipstick and tucked her chin-length hair behind her ears, comparing her appearance to the Playboy centerfold who’d just been escorted from the elevator.

Not even close. She had decent-sized breasts, but they certainly weren’t as impressive as the blonde’s. Her waist dipped in nicely, but she had a little more prominent hippage than Miss “I Eat Carrots For Breakfast, Lunch And Dinner”.

At least she had nice green eyes with a little rim of blue around them. Her father had always told her that her eyes were her best feature. She wasn't certain if that was a true compliment or his way of playing down the rest of her, which was, sad to say, only average. From her brown hair to her not-model-sized body, she really was as nondescript as they came.

Then again, when had she ever cared about how she looked? Just because she'd attended these functions for two years and not once had Jason Devlin noticed her. Which didn't mean she should be concerned about her appearance.

After all, she was only planning to interview him, not fuck him.

When she reached the penthouse, she peeked out the elevator door, breathing a sigh of relief that no security guards manned the hallway. She slipped out and positioned herself near the window by the door to Devlin's suite, determined to confront him and refuse to take no for an answer. Tonight, she'd have some one-on-one time with the elusive senator.

The sounds of sirens outside blared in the distance, an everyday occurrence in the nation's capitol. To Kelsey, they were like a comforting lullaby. She'd cut her teeth in a gritty newspaper office and had learned everything about the business from the ground up. After her mother died when she was a toddler, her only influence had been her father, and he knew nothing about raising girls. He'd taught her about journalism instead.

Of course, she'd never tell her father, the award-winning Walter Harper, that her favorite things to read were the gossip rags. He frowned on her exposés about the nation's elite, but always let her print whatever she thought best. Because of his faith in her, she never pushed the envelope between what was news and what was trash. Every story she wrote could be backed up with proof.

Tonight, she hoped to garner a little "truth" about Jason Devlin. If he was feeling generous, maybe he'd invite her into his suite for an interview.

* * * * *

The ballroom was filled to capacity at The Sadler, D.C.'s premier hotel. Senator Jason Devlin had shaken so many hands and smiled for so many cameras, his hand and face hurt.

All he really wanted to do was run through the park until the tension knotting his muscles relaxed. That wouldn't happen for awhile, though. Instead, he was dressed up in his usual monkey suit, smiling, talking and fending off reporters' questions about why the capitol's most eligible bachelor wasn't dating anyone.

They probably thought he was gay. Good. Better than knowing the truth about him. It wasn't like he could date just anyone. Not with his quirks and strange life. Someday, maybe, he'd find a mate. But he'd choose from those among his kind, never a human. Humans couldn't be trusted to keep his secrets.

He searched the crowd for his cousin, Brandon King, who was also his aide and beta. He needed to get out of here and couldn't break through the throng of people following him around as if the very act of taking a sip of champagne was newsworthy. Sometimes he hated this part of his job. Politics was for change, not headlines, but because of his looks and the fact he was thirty-eight years old and single, his love life made more news than his policies.

Brandon approached and sidled beside him. "Need out?"

"Hell yeah. I need some goddamn space."

Brandon nodded and signaled for security to move the crowd aside. Leaning in toward him, Brandon whispered, "I've got someone up at the penthouse waiting to meet you. One of ours. Thought you looked a little high strung tonight and could use a little relief."

"Thanks." Great. Nothing like having his beta pimp for him. But Brandon knew everyone in this town, including their own kind. Despite the fact he was alpha of the pack, he didn't socialize with them that often. There were just too many of them and he was too damned busy.

But his beta was right. He needed a good fuck. It had been too long and the urge was hitting him on a regular basis. Too bad he couldn't just do it the normal way and meet a woman first, get to know her, and then get physical.

There were definitely drawbacks to being a werewolf in a prominent position in politics.

After several handshakes and goodnights, Brandon turned to the crowd and said, "The Senator has some phone calls to make. How about giving him a break and letting him through?"

Leave it to Brandon to give them a smile and a wink and flash the old baby blues. The single women in the room naturally gravitated to Brandon and his California surfer boy good looks, surrounding him like a bunch of ready-to-mate she-wolves. Grateful, Jason slipped through the crowds with the two guards leading the way, breathing a sigh of relief when the elevator doors closed behind them.

When the doors opened, security stepped out, doing their usual search and destroy mission. Jason rolled his eyes, wondering what they'd think if they knew he could kill them both in seconds with his bare hands. He hardly needed their protection.

They motioned him out of the elevators and down the hall to his suite. Sitting in one of the chairs near the windows was a beautiful vision. She stood and smiled as he approached and his heart stopped for one brief second.

Beautiful women were in abundance at these events. But this one was striking. Chin-length sable hair, wide emerald-green eyes, and a curvy body that had his cock twitching to life like a divining rod searching for water in the desert. She looked familiar, too. Maybe he'd seen her with the pack before, but just hadn't noticed. Although how he could miss someone so stunning was incomprehensible. He'd have to remember to thank Brandon.

Later.

"You're not supposed to be here," one of the guards said in a low warning voice.

"It's okay," Jason interrupted. "I was expecting her. She's with me."

Her eyes widened in surprise, but she didn't say anything.

"Come on in." He slipped the key in the lock and pushed the door open, then dismissed the guards, shutting the door behind them.

His eyes immediately adjusted to the lack of light, focusing on the woman's silhouette. Her fragrance permeated his senses—not perfume, but she must use some kind of strawberry-flavored body wash. That sweet smell coupled with her natural, musky scent took his cock from semi-rigid to "get me the fuck out of these pants now!" in an instant.

"Um, Senator, are you going to turn the lights on?" she asked, her voice low and gravelly. His balls tightened.

"In a minute. Call me Jason."

There was something different about this woman. Her scent, the way she stood rigid in front of him. The she-wolves of the pack were always primed and ready for fucking, especially by the alpha. Normally he wouldn't get the door shut before one would be unzipping his pants and wrapping her lips around his shaft. So far, this one hadn't moved. Maybe she was new to the pack and uncertain about his expectations.

"If you're afraid, don't be. I don't have any rules. However this goes is up to you and me."

"I don't think you—"

"Shhhh," he whispered, stroking her bare shoulders and trailing his fingers down her arms. She shuddered, and the wolf in him wanted to howl at her response. He scented the beginnings of her arousal. Though she wasn't aggressive as the she-wolves he was used to fucking, her innocence and hesitance enticed him more than if she'd done a striptease and given him a blowjob in the hallway. Although he really liked the visual that thought conjured up.

"No, really, Senator, what I'm trying to say is—"

He turned her around and slid his fingers into her silken hair. "I don't want to talk any more. I want to kiss you, lick you, taste you all over. Then I want to spend the rest of the night with my cock so deep inside you that we don't know where I end and you begin. And I want that now."

To prove his point, he covered her mouth with his, silencing the words that she was about to say.

Chapter Two

Somewhere in the recesses of her mind, Kelsey knew she should object. She should push Jason Devlin away and slap him soundly. Then, she should hightail it out of there armed with a hot story about how she was nearly assaulted by the senator.

But as his tongue stroked hers intimately, evoking responses she'd never felt before, she knew that wasn't what was happening here at all.

Clearly, he had been expecting someone else. He probably thought Kelsey was that blonde bimchette who'd been escorted out the door. She could have spoken up at any time, yet she hadn't, so she had no one to blame but herself.

Maybe the blonde was a prostitute! Holy hell, did he have to pay for sex?

No, no that couldn't be it. Jason Devlin could have any woman he wanted with a snap of his fingers.

So, who was the blonde?

Oh hell, how could she even think when he was kissing her like this?

Kelsey inhaled Jason's heady fragrance, an earthy scent that made her mouth water. Her mind was awirl with sensation as he stroked his lips over hers and gently assaulted her mouth. He held her tight against him, evidence of his arousal rocking against her sex. Her panties moistened with juices she couldn't control.

Dammit, she didn't want to be turned on by this stranger. She was a journalist. Impartial, uninvolved. She was only here to get a story.

If she didn't stop him, she'd be getting a story all right, but not one she could put into print.

“Your arousal fills the air around me,” he whispered against her ear. His tongue darted out and traced the outline of her ear, his teeth closing over the lobe just enough to make her shiver. “Tell me your name.”

Her name? What the hell was her name, anyway? “Kel...Kelsey,” she managed, the word dragging out of her mouth on a ragged breath as he cupped her breast.

She’d only known Jason Devlin as a poised, cool politician. What she’d seen in press releases and interviews and on television, anyway. The man holding her in his arms was not the cool and calm senator. This was a man whose body was taut with tension, muscles straining under his tux. A man whose touch was hot, burning her from the inside out.

“I’m going to strip that dress off you, Kelsey,” he said, and she knew he wasn’t asking for permission. He reached behind her, found the zipper and slowly tugged it down. His knuckles brushed her spine, sending tingling shots of pleasure to her sex. If ever there was a time for her to put a stop to this, now was it.

But she couldn’t. Her body had stormed to life in a wicked way, demanding satisfaction from an aching need she hadn’t even known she possessed. She’d been lost from the moment she’d laid eyes on Jason walking toward her. Their eyes had met and he’d focused on her as if a hunger possessed him, and she was the meal to satisfy him. In that brief second, his eyes had turned from light whiskey to darkened, golden amber, his movements like the slow, sensual grace of an animal predator.

In that instant, she’d tumbled headlong into a vortex of spiraling sensations that knocked the common sense right out of her.

“Your skin is so soft, like dipping my fingers in cream,” he murmured, palming her buttocks and squeezing gently. When he tugged on her thong, she was afraid she’d pass out.. When he slipped his fingers in the cleft of her ass, her knees buckled.

“Ahh, so you like to be touched there.” To prove he was right, he rubbed the puckered hole with his index finger. “I wonder what else you like, Kelsey.”

She panted into his chest, wanting to rip his clothes off with her teeth and beg him to fuck her. "Jason, please," she pleaded, shock registering her whimpering voice in the foggy recesses of her mind.

"Yes, Kelsey. I'll give you everything you want. But first, I want to get you comfortable."

She shook her head, unable to fathom that they still stood just inside the front door. Before she could move her feet, he swept her into his arms and strode quickly through the darkness.

Did he have night vision? The drapes were closed and she couldn't see a damn thing, yet he walked with a brisk purpose as if he could see clearly.

He laid her on his bed. She sat up, trying to clear the sensual haze that made this seem more a dream than reality, but then he opened the drapes, his body bathed by the moonlight.

With a quick tug, he discarded the bow tie and shrugged out of his tux jacket. Keeping his gaze firmly fixed on her, he unbuttoned his shirt and pulled it off, giving her a tantalizing glimpse of a very fit body. A light dusting of dark hair covered his chest and trailed downward, disappearing over his taut abdomen and reforming again right above the waistband of his pants.

She sucked in a breath, unable to believe this whole night was happening. Later, when logic smacked her in the face like a D.C. winter day, she'd regret this. Now, she wanted it more than anything.

Her gaze fixated on that slowly traveling zipper. He spread the material apart and slipped his pants off.

No underwear. God, was that sexy. His rigid, thick cock jutted forward from the nest of black curls surrounding it. She looked up and met his half-smile, her heart slamming against her ribs.

"Stand up," he commanded.

She slipped off the bed and stood before him, holding her gown up with her hands.

“No,” he said, pulling her hands away. “I want to see.”

The dress fell to her hips. If she’d been the skinny blonde bimbo, it would have fallen gracefully to the floor. Figured.

Jason stepped forward and reached for the dress, sliding his hands over her hips. The dress pooled at her feet. He spanned her waist and pulled her against him, her nipples registering the contact with his chest by pebbling into tight, aching peaks. Threading his fingers through her hair, he gave a light tug that sent a flash of need directly to her sex. Her cunt throbbed, demanding satisfaction.

“You’re beautiful,” he murmured, pressing his lips against hers. His tongue slid inside her mouth and swept alongside hers, making her weak with his tantalizing strokes. He drew back and grinned, then took her hand and led her to the window.

They were in the penthouse, the top floor, and his room didn’t overlook any other hotel, so she knew she wouldn’t be seen. Yet standing there naked in the moonlight made her feel vulnerable, even though Jason stood in front of her.

He cupped her breasts, sliding his thumbs lightly over her nipples. She bit her lip to keep from crying out. When he bent over and took one peak into his mouth and licked it like a lollipop, she thought she might faint. What started out as a slow, seductive laving of her nipple turned harder. He tugged the bud between his teeth, then captured it firmly between his lips, flicking his thumb over the other nipple. She was dying from the myriad sensations threatening to send her into the throes of orgasm before he ever got near her pussy.

Jason released the bud, watching it with rapt interest as it puckered and stood firmly erect. Then he took the other in his mouth and did the same until she threw her head back and moaned.

When he dropped to his knees, her eyes flew open and she looked down, watching him lean forward and nuzzle against the light dusting of fur on her mound.

She inhaled, the heady scent of sex permeating the room.

"I'm wondering if you taste as sweet as you smell." He leaned forward and touched the tip of his tongue to her clit, then lower. She tensed, nearly climaxing on the spot at the feel of his hot tongue stroking along the soft folds of her pussy.

"Mmm, baby, you taste good." His voice was as tight and hot as she felt deep inside.

Kelsey couldn't take much more of this torture. She'd been on the verge of orgasm since the moment she'd watched Jason's approach from the elevator, sensual intent written all over his face.

And now that face was buried between her legs doing delicious things to her body. She tangled her fingers in his hair, wanting his attention but unable to form the words. He looked up at her, his eyes dark, smoky, mysterious. A smile tugged the corners of his lips upward. "Not yet, Kelsey. You have to let go for me. I want to taste it."

She couldn't bear it, needed him to fill her, to fuck her into oblivion. Anything but this slow torture that drove her to the brink. But seeing his dark head buried between her legs, listening to the sounds he made as he lapped up her liquid desire, and experiencing the mind blowing pleasure of his hot tongue, was more than enough to send her over the edge.

Her legs shook with the force of her orgasm. She cried out, burying her fingers in his hair as wave after wave of delicious sensation pummeled her. Her world spun on its axis and she fought for breath, finally able to do no more than pant and tremble.

Jason stood and pulled her into his arms, driving his lips down over hers. She licked her juices from his mouth and held onto him as he lifted her and moved to the bed, lying down next to her on the satin-covered mattress. His cock, still heavy and thick, brushed her thigh, reminding her that there was more to come.

Good lord. If fucking him was as good or better than what she'd just experienced, she might not survive it.

Chapter Three

Jason drew in a long breath, mesmerized by the woman lying next to him.

Kelsey was no lupine. He'd known immediately by her scent and the fact she hadn't at least partially transformed. She had a beguiling innocence that he hadn't seen in a very long time, and that part of her drew him in a way he couldn't understand. Didn't want to understand. But he felt bonded with this stranger, and he'd never felt that connection with another woman.

Ridiculous, since she couldn't be his pack mate. Kelsey was a human.

He didn't know who she was, and damn if fucking her went against every rule of the pack, but she was here, he wanted her, and he was going to have her. He'd deal with the consequences later.

Brushing her hair away from her face, he stared into her luminous eyes. Such awe and curiosity in their depths, he wondered what she was thinking. Probably better not to know.

Her lips were full, yet natural, not like so many of those thin-lipped socialites who paid a plastic surgeon for a mouth like Kelsey's. His balls drew tight at the thought of those prominent lips wrapped around his throbbing cock. He'd bet she was damned talented with a blowjob and made a mental note to find out.

Later.

Right now, he needed her hands on him, needed to be inside her, more than anything else.

"Touch me, Kelsey."

She reached for him without hesitation, a smile curving her lips as she wrapped her warm hand around his cock. He growled and fought back the urge to change. The feral

need to possess, to mark this woman, was almost more than he could bear. His blood stirred and blasted through his veins, centering on all the nerve endings in his cock and demanding his full attention.

“Yes. Stroke it like that.” Her hand moved over his shaft and he gritted his teeth to keep from coming right then. No fucking way was that going to happen.

When she reached underneath and massaged his balls, he sucked in a breath and grabbed her hand. “Unless you want me coming all over that sweet body of yours, you need to stop.”

She grinned. “I wouldn’t mind watching you come.”

His balls drew up tight at the thought of her gaze focused on his spurting cock. “You may yet get your wish, but not right now.”

“Are you sure?” She slipped her fingers underneath the twin sacs and rubbed the sensitized patch of skin between his balls and ass.

“Shit!” God, he loved the feel of her hands on him, but he had to stop her from touching him like that. He grabbed her hand and wound her arm around his neck, then lifted her leg over his hip, positioning his cock against her sweet pussy. Her juices were like molten lava pouring over the head of his shaft, singeing him, compelling him to plunge into her heat.

He wanted to make this last, prolong that first moment, but damn if he could wait. He parted her folds and with one thrust, buried his cock inside her.

Unable to hold back his growl, he snarled and buried his face in her neck, tasting her, scraping his teeth against her skin as her cunt fit itself around his shaft and squeezed. He moved against her, loving the way her pussy grabbed him as he partially withdrew, then drove in deeper.

“Oh, God!” she cried, tangling her fingers in his hair and tugging hard.

Yes, just the way he liked to fuck. A little hard, a little rough, with his woman giving as much as she got. But he purposely held back, not wanting to frighten her. She

was, after all, human, and didn't understand the pack ways of sex. The last thing he needed was word getting out that Senator Jason Devlin liked it a little rough.

It was hard not to pound his cock inside her, to turn her over and place her on all fours so he could enter her from behind and lock onto her neck and shoulder with his teeth. He felt his claws unsheathe and by sheer force of will tucked the beast within him away.

Instead, he concentrated on the sensations of her pussy surrounding his cock, the hot little whimpers she made when he moved a certain way. Her nails dug into his shoulders when he quickened the tempo.

It was music to his ears when she said, "Harder, Jason."

He reached for her buttocks, pulling her tight against him and grinding his pelvis against her clit. She shrieked and sank her teeth into his upper chest in response. Oh, yeah, he liked that.

Wetting his fingers with the nectar pouring from her cunt, he searched the cleft between her buttocks and, sensing her need, slipped one moistened finger inside her puckered hole.

She grunted like an animal, her ass tightening around his finger as he probed deeper. He felt the spasms surround his cock and he plunged with more force. She screamed, flooding his shaft with her climax.

The sensation was so intense it was difficult to hold back. She rocked against him, raking her nails down his arms and crying out his name. Giving her no time to rest, he continued to stroke, listening to her breathing turn to gasps of pleasure as he wound her up again.

When her body tensed, soft whimpers escaping her throat, he knew she was ready to let go again. He sank his finger all the way into her ass and flooded her pussy with his come, taking her over the cliff with him.

For a while, the only sounds were their raspy breaths. Jason stroked Kelsey's hair, kissed her forehead, her pert little nose and her generous mouth, then wrapped his arms around her, more content than he could ever remember being.

Something felt right about holding her in his arms, about the way she fit so perfectly against his body. The moment he'd come in her, she became his.

And that brought about a dilemma of epic proportions. He'd never intended to mate with a human. In his line of work, a human who discovered he was a werewolf could be disastrous. There was no way he could trust someone outside the pack.

He didn't even know anything about her. But it was time he found out, because if his feelings were true, he'd just bedded his pack mate.

* * * * *

Kelsey sighed, content to listen to the sound of Jason's rhythmic heartbeat against her ear. His body was so warm she didn't even need the sheet over her, despite the blast of cold air from the room's air conditioner.

She supposed her theory that the reason D.C.'s most eligible bachelor was unattached was because he was gay had just been thrown right out the window. If Jason was gay, he'd just given her an Oscar-worthy performance in bed.

Her nipples tingled at the thought of what they'd just done, of how he had awakened a wild response that was foreign to her. In his arms, she'd felt untamed. She'd wanted to bite him, scratch him. Hell, she'd wanted to howl at the moon!

Wouldn't he have thought her bizarre if she'd done that?

Then again, he hadn't exactly been gentle with her, either. And she'd had the feeling that he'd been holding back. Perhaps there was more to Jason Devlin than she surmised.

Maybe he was really kinky! Had some bizarre predilection for whips and chains, nipple clamps and floggers.

She grinned at the thought of offering herself up as a research sacrifice. Wouldn't that make interesting press? *Senator Devlin Takes a Walk on the Wild Side*. She couldn't suppress the giggle at the thought of that headline, even though the idea was ludicrous.

"What's so funny?"

"Nothing."

"So, having an orgasm makes you laugh?"

She looked up at him, her heart doing flip-flops as she gazed into eyes the color of dark amber. "You didn't hear me laughing when I was screaming my head off, did you?"

His eyes heated with renewed desire. "No, I didn't."

She resisted the urge to sigh like a lovesick schoolgirl, but truly the man was gorgeous. More than his appearance, he exuded a confident sexuality that most men couldn't possibly carry off. Jason did, though.

"Kelsey?"

"Yeah?"

"Tell me about yourself."

Uh oh. So much for great sex and that warm afterglow. As soon as he found out who she was, she'd be out the door on her ass faster than she could say "hot off the presses".. She pushed away, sat up and faced him, swallowing hard to get the words out. "I'm a reporter for *The Washington Oracle*."

The hand stroking her thigh stilled. "A reporter."

"Yes."

She much preferred the heated looks he'd given her earlier to the cold narrowing of his eyes now.

"I thought you were..."

She waited, but he didn't finish. "You thought I was what?"

“Never mind. I just assumed you were someone else when I saw you waiting for me.”

The blonde, no doubt.

“Did you come here for a story?”

Might as well come out with the truth. “Actually, I snuck up here tonight and waited outside your suite, hoping you’d grant me an interview.”

Jason slipped from the bed and combed his fingers through his hair. “I guess you got that interview, didn’t you?”

She arched a brow and crossed her arms, irritated that he would think she’d trade sex for a story. “That’s rather insulting. Do you see any tape recorders or cameras on me?”

His gaze traveled over her in an insulting manner, but it had the opposite effect on her unruly body. Her nipples hardened to sharp points, a fact that wasn’t lost on him as his gaze focused on her breasts. “Not unless you’ve got some mini-recorder tucked away inside you.”

She rolled her eyes and slid from the bed, pushing past him to search for her dress.

“Where are you going?” he asked.

She got to her knees and grabbed her dress from under the bed. “I’m leaving.”

“Why?”

“Because you think I fucked you for a story.” He refused to budge when she stood, holding her dress up in front of her. “Get out of my way!”

When she tried to move past him, he reached for her hand. “Wait, Kelsey.”

“What?”

“Stay with me.”

“Why?”

He shrugged. “I don’t know. Honestly, I should throw you out of here. A journalist and a politician don’t make good bedfellows.”

Sure hadn't stopped him from taking her to his bed. Then again, he hadn't known she was a reporter. Would it have made any difference? "Then why ask me to stay?"

"Like I said. I don't know. I'd like you to spend the weekend with me. I have a need to get to know you better."

There went her throat again—dry as a desert as she tried to swallow. "The weekend?"

"Yeah. I have a private place in the Poconos. Will you go up there with me?"

This was the chance she'd waited two years for. The opportunity to get to know Jason Devlin.

"But our time together is off the record. You have to agree to that. I don't need a sexposé printed in the next *Oracle*."

Like she'd actually discuss her intimate sex life in the newspaper. Not likely. But could she really spend that much time with him and not report on anything she saw, heard or experienced? How was she supposed to find out what skeletons lurked in his closet if she wasn't allowed to open the closet door?

She'd figure out a way without compromising her integrity. This was too good an opportunity to pass up. She'd had her fun with him. Now the work would begin.

"Sure, I'll go with you," she said, trying to convince herself that the only reason she agreed was to find out more about Jason Devlin, not because she felt anything for him.

Chapter Four

“Are you insane? Do you know what could happen if a human, let alone a reporter, found out about you? About all of us?”

Jason listened to Brandon rant through the cell phone, conscious of the fact that Kelsey sat only a foot away from him in the limo. “I’m aware of the ramifications.”

“And yet you’re still going to Pennsylvania with Kelsey Harper.”

“Yes, as a matter of fact I am.”

With a sigh, Brandon said, “You’re the alpha. I guess you know what you’re doing. But I’m going on record as stating that I think this is a really bad idea.”

“Duly noted.” He ended the call, hoping Brandon wasn’t right.

He glanced over and watched the way Kelsey worried her bottom lip with her teeth. He wanted to do that for her, then lick her lips and move on from there. He shifted as his cock twitched, wondering how he could be turned on by the sight of a woman in jeans and a silk shirt.

A shirt that hugged her breasts and caressed her hips, the same way the jeans fit her. Snug, showcasing her thighs and long legs. He remembered the feel of her skin and wanted to strip her down and fuck her right there in the limo.

It had been twenty-four hours since he’d bedded her, and already he itched to be inside her again. His lust for her was full force now, and nothing could stop it until the alpha drive had been completed. Until she was truly, completely his.

Considering she didn’t even know he was a werewolf, he figured dropping that bomb on her today wasn’t a particularly smart idea.

What would she do when she found out? Run? Stay? Write an article about werewolves in the capitol?

Christ, too many “what ifs” running through his head, and none of them good. He needed this weekend to relax and get Kelsey used to the idea of being with him. Then, very cautiously, he’d let her in on his secret.

After all, she was going to help him build the Devlin dynasty. At least his part of it.

The Devlin werewolves had been in existence for centuries. And they weren’t the only ones. Someday, if he had his way, laws would be passed to protect his kind so they were treated the same as humans. Right now, society wasn’t nearly ready for them to come out.

He wished they had time to stop off at his parents’ house in Boston, but knew now was not the right occasion. They would welcome Kelsey, as would his sister, Chantal. His brothers—Max, Conner and Noah—might be a bit more skeptical. Who knew how they’d react to his selection of a human as pack mate? The Devlins’ goal was to branch out across the United States and unite with other packs. Then mate with other werewolves, not with humans. He’d just blown that directive right out of the water, hadn’t he?

Jason had already done his part in Washington, and he knew Max was getting ready to head to New Orleans and do the same thing. It was going to take time, but they had all the time in the world. None of this was going to happen overnight. It would take time and finesse and more than a little fighting to take their places on top of the packs. Devlins were alphas. Always would be, no matter where they located. They’d set up nationwide, and run the packs the way they should be.

“I’ve never been to the Poconos,” Kelsey mumbled, her gaze focused on their climb into the mountains. “It’s breathtaking.”

Yes, she certainly was. While he enjoyed the seclusion of his private place, he was more interested in catching sight of her breasts, or her creamy thighs, or the way she licked her lips. Adjusting his burgeoning erection, he said, “Yeah, it’s really nice in the fall. I’ll have to bring you up here after summer’s officially over, when the leaves start to change.”

She looked at him, eyes widening. "In the fall?"

"Yeah."

"That's like a month or so away."

"Yes, it is. Your point?"

"Um, I guess I don't really have one." She quickly turned away, but not before he caught the blush staining her cheeks. Kelsey really was an enigma. One he intended to research in depth this weekend.

The limo pulled up to the wrought-iron privacy gates, their driver clicking a button to electronically open them.

No press lurked at the gates. Good. So far, he was fairly certain no one knew what had happened with Kelsey. He wanted some time alone with her before the papers found out and started hounding them.

Reporters would make good wolves. They hunted in packs and surrounded their prey, refusing to let go until they finished the kill.

"Wow. This is impressive."

He followed her gaze to the one-story ranch house. Sitting high atop a green hill, it overlooked the lake on three sides. He loved this place. It was perfect for a private getaway, and he was surrounded by everything he loved. Water, lots of fish, and tall, thick, woodlands to sprint through.

The driver carried their bags into the house, then left them alone. Jason led Kelsey inside, his tension level dropping as soon as he inhaled the fresh mountain air.

"This is stunning, Jason. I love the wood floors and the simplicity of the décor. I'm not one for elaborate furniture or having a lot of 'stuff' clutter a room."

She noticed. He didn't like things ornate or busy, although a lot of women he knew would want to redecorate. "I'm glad you like it. Would you like a drink?"

"Love one."

He led her into the kitchen and opened a bottle of champagne. "Would you like to sit in the hot tub and watch the stars come out?"

Taking a sip, she said, "Okay. Let me unpack and get my suit on."

"You don't need a swimsuit to get in the hot tub with me. I've seen you naked already."

She opened her mouth to say something, then closed it and nodded. "Okay. Let me go put on a cover-up for when we get out."

He grinned and directed her to the master bedroom where he'd had the driver put their luggage. Might as well not give her ideas that she'd be sleeping anywhere this weekend other than with him.

He set the champagne in an ice bucket next to the hot tub, then brought out a bowl of strawberries. The staff did a great job getting everything ready at the spur of the moment, then discreetly disappearing. Of course, he paid them quite well to do so.

After stripping, he slipped into the tub, the steam rising off water that was set at a perfect temperature to counteract the chill in the air tonight.

The slight breeze brought the earthy, woodland scent to him. The urge to shift and run into the woods nearly overpowered him. To smell the fresh pine needles, dig into the soft earth and run as far as he wanted to. That was one of the reasons he loved it here. He had privacy to be himself.

Well, normally he would. But not right now. He forced away his primal needs, knowing he couldn't change right now. Not with Kelsey here. That would have to wait until he figured out a way to break the news to her. He wondered how she'd react, since he knew basically nothing about her. He'd had Brandon run a background check on her. Twenty-five. Daughter of the owner of *The Oracle*. Mother died when she was three. No brothers, sisters or other relatives. Journalism degree. Worked at the newspaper since she was a teen.

Nothing in her background clouded his desire for her. Except maybe the journalism part. He couldn't very well prevent her from doing her job, but he could hope that when she found out about him, she'd keep his secret.

His career depended on it.

He heard Kelsey's footsteps on the wood deck and turned. She wore a thick robe that covered her upper thighs, but gave him a glimpse of long, slender legs. The robe had parted, a tantalizing peek at her generous cleavage his reward.

"Water feels great. Come on in."

She walked toward him and sat on the edge, trailing her fingertips along the surface of the water. "It's cold outside."

"It's hot in here."

She seemed reluctant to move.

"I won't bite." Well, he would, but not 'til later.

"I'm having second thoughts about all this, Jason."

His heart dropped to his feet. "About getting in the hot tub, or about something else?"

"About all of this. You and me. This is all happening so quickly. Why am I here with you?"

"Because you said yes when I asked you to come up here." He felt her hesitation, knew that she was troubled about something.

"I know what I said. But why did you ask? You could bring any one of a thousand women up here. Beautiful women."

"I did ask a beautiful woman to come up here with me. And she said yes. Now get in the hot tub."

A sparkle glinted in her eyes and her cheeks tinged pink, as they seemed to always do when she was embarrassed. Did she not know how stunning she was? A full, curvy body and long legs, she was the epitome of perfect woman in his eyes.

Scooting her legs over the edge of the tub, she dipped them in, then untied the robe and let it fall to the floor of the deck before sliding quickly into the water. He'd caught only a glimpse of her body.

She sat across from him on the other bench. "Come over here, Kelsey."

"I'm fine right here."

She was shy! But why? After what they'd shared last night, she'd have no reason to be coy with him. But uncertainty filled her. He sensed every one of her conflicting emotions.

"You stay there, then." He stood and grabbed their glasses of champagne, handing one to her, then grabbed the bowl of strawberries and sat next to her. Before she could say a word, he grabbed a strawberry and popped it into her open mouth.

She bit down and chewed. He watched the way she licked her lips. After taking a sip of champagne and swallowing, she said, "That's good."

Indeed it was. Jason knew that any movement of her lips was going to forever give him a raging hard-on. "Does kind of explode in your mouth, doesn't it?"

She arched a brow. "Yes, as a matter of fact it does. Very sweet, too, and the champagne gives it an added tanginess. Here, you try." She slipped one into his mouth and he closed his lips over her fingers, tasting her along with the strawberry.

They spent a few minutes feeding each other. Soon, they'd polished off the bowl and the bottle, then laid their heads back and looked up at the sky.

The three-quarter moon pulled at him, making his blood turn hot, his skin tingle with anticipation and his cock hard as the trunk of the woodland trees. In a couple days, the moon would be full and he'd have to announce his mate to his pack. He didn't have nearly enough time.

"Tell me about your job," he asked, wanting nothing more than to sink his cock into Kelsey's tight heat right now, but afraid she'd think all he wanted from her was sex.

“It’s all I’ve ever known, and everything that I love. My dad used to bring me to *The Oracle* offices when I was little. By the time I started school I was already making up stories in my head. When I learned to write, I kept a journal. My dad tells me I was always interviewing someone, and I was pretty darn good at it, even when I was six.”

“Your father thinks very highly of you. That’s admirable.”

“Thanks. I think pretty highly of him, too. He’s been my inspiration, always after me to seek the truth and not be afraid to tell the world about it. That as long as it was true and could be backed up with evidence, then it was our obligation to report it.”

The truth. When he told her about himself, it would be true. When she watched him transform, it would be evidence. Would she tell the world about him, about his family?

Why couldn’t he have chosen someone outside of politics or journalism as his mate? Why did it have to be so instinctual? It wasn’t like he could change his mind about Kelsey. The moment he’d met her the magic had caught hold of him and held, and he knew she was the one. He could no more turn his back on his need for her than he could cut off his own limb.

But he might very well be destroying himself by revealing who and what he was.

“What if you had a friend or relative with a secret, and that secret, while newsworthy, could also devastate their very lives? Because it was true and you had evidence to that fact, would you write about it?”

She sat up and looked at him, curiosity filling her green eyes. “Are you telling me you have a secret?”

Chapter Five

Kelsey wasn't sure she wanted to know the answer, but Jason's thinly veiled "what if" told her he was hiding something. Although she loved her work, sometimes she wished she wasn't a journalist, that she wasn't so consumed with getting a story that it overrode everything else in her life. This was one of those times.

"Me? No. I don't have any secrets to tell."

He was lying. She knew it, felt it, sensed that he wanted to tell her, but didn't trust her.

"Then why did you ask?"

He shrugged. "Curious, I guess. Must be difficult to know where to draw the line between what's newsworthy and what's just plain gossip."

His statement rankled her. "I don't gossip. Everything I print is based on solid evidence."

"Which doesn't necessarily mean it's the public's right to know."

She'd had that argument with critics of the press for years. "I guess it depends on what the public thinks they should know."

"I just think there are too many important things that could be printed. Unfortunately, the press oftentimes think that someone's personal life is more interesting than the good work they do."

Which led her to believe there was something in his personal life he didn't want anyone to know about. And he didn't trust her enough to reveal any of his secrets to her.

Not that she blamed him, but then again, her word was on the line. Her personal interest in him warred with the side of her that smelled a scoop. But a promise was a

promise. "I gave you my word that whatever happens this weekend is off the record. If you have something to say, then say it and I won't put it in print."

He smiled and tucked a stray hair behind her ear. "If I have something to tell you, I will. But right now I want to enjoy the night with you."

The reporter in her wanted to press him for details, to finagle a way to get him to spill whatever secrets he held. The woman in her wanted to kick that reporter's ass right off the property so she could enjoy being with Jason.

Just once she wished she could turn the internal demons off. Couldn't she do that for one weekend? Simply enjoy being a woman in the company of a man who clearly desired her?

Jason moved to the other bench across the spa, pulling her along so that she faced away from him. He sat her between his legs and wrapped his arms around her middle.

"I like sitting here and looking at the lake. You can see the moon reflected in the water," he said.

She nodded, trying to focus on the clear lake in front of her, but her body was more tuned in to the brush of his arms along the underside of her breasts. "It's lovely."

Nuzzling her neck, he licked her gently. "Yes, you are."

Her nipples hardened and puckered as she shivered under his hot tongue. When he lightly nibbled her shoulder, she shuddered her next breath. His cock rose and pressed against her buttocks, hard, urgent as he rocked gently against her. She swallowed and licked her lips, feeling every movement he made as if it were the first time a man had touched her.

"Your body entices me, Kelsey. Soft skin, perfectly formed breasts and hips that make me want to dig my fingers into that sweet flesh while I pump my cock hard and furious inside you."

His words made her dizzy, his sensual teasing making her pussy quake with need for him. She moved her hands over his thighs, the crisp hairs there tickling her palms.

But there was so much more of him she wanted to touch, to taste. It might be her only chance to get this close to a man who so obviously hit all the right buttons for her, and she didn't want to regret a lost opportunity. Shifting to face him, she pressed her lips against his, tasting the sweetness of strawberries on his tongue. She entwined her tongue around his and suckled it, rewarded with his groan.

In turn, he gave her a passion-filled kiss that curled her toes, moving his hands over her breasts to gently pluck at her nipples. She whimpered as the sensation shot straight to her cunt.

She slipped off his lap and knelt on the floor of the hot tub, resting her hands on his outstretched legs. His thick cock was outlined in the water below, and she wanted to taste him. "Stand up, Jason."

He looked at her, his eyes dark as the woodland forests, but did as she asked, rising out of the water to stand in front of her.

Perfect. His cock stood inches from her mouth. She tilted her head back to make sure he was watching her. He smiled down at her, his eyes half closed, and watched as she enveloped his shaft between her lips.

"Christ, Kelsey, that's good." His hips jutted forward as he fed her his thick cock inch by inch. She wound her tongue around the head and licked the salty fluid from the tip, then drew him in deeper.

Cradling his balls in her hands, she massaged them lightly, pumping her mouth over his shaft and drawing him nearly out of her mouth, only to greedily suck him inside again. She laved every ridge of his shaft, enjoying the taste of him as much as she'd enjoyed the strawberries he'd fed her earlier.

A sense of power overcame her. She controlled him right now, with every swipe of her tongue, every suckle of her mouth, she was in charge of his pleasure. He rewarded her with his sharp intake of breath and the whispered words that told her he enjoyed what she was doing to him.

"Enough," he finally said, his voice husky and ragged. "I have to fuck you."

She smiled up at him. "Later."

He shook his head and dragged her to a standing position. "No. Now!" Without waiting for her response, he turned her around, pushed her toward the opposite bench. She reached for the edge of the hot tub, Jason positioning the front of his thighs against the back of hers. He nestled his cock near her sex, pushed her forward so her ass was up in the air, and slipped his hand between her legs, parting her folds and sinking two fingers inside her.

She cried out at the sweet invasion as he probed her cunt. Her juices poured from her.

"I want to make love to you slow and easy, Kelsey. I want to look into your eyes and stroke my cock inside you for hours on end. And I will. But not now. I've waited too long and I want to fuck you. Hard. Really damn hard. If that's not what you want, then tell me now."

She shuddered at the ferocity of his desire, relief washing over her that he wanted her as desperately as she wanted him. She craned her neck around to meet his hungry gaze and said, "Fuck me, Jason. Take it, just the way you want it."

With a low growl, he turned her around, dug his fingers into her hips and drove hard inside her. She screamed at the invasion of his thick cock and pushed back to meet his thrusts. Her pussy quivered and squeezed him as if determined to receive his life force.

Jason leaned over her, licking the middle of her spine and up, inch by inch, not once stopping the punishing momentum of his cock. She felt the rumbling growls in his chest as he pressed against her back, knowing then that he had changed from a cool, poised senator to an animal driven by primal lust and need.

She welcomed him this way, overjoyed that he trusted her enough to show her this side of him. And she revealed herself to him, demanding him to plunge harder, to hurt her. He offered up a deep, husky laugh and sank his teeth into her shoulder, his fingers piercing the tender flesh of her hips.

The pain drove her higher. A fierce howl tore from her lips as a blistering orgasm knifed through her. She couldn't move except to shudder and cry out, as Jason had pinned her in place with his teeth, refusing to give her ground. Tears welled and spilled from her eyes as the painful pleasure continued. She'd no more relaxed from the quaking climax than another came upon her. And still, he drove relentlessly within her, refusing to stop.

Her legs trembled with the effort to remain upright as the second wave arced within her. This time, he released her shoulder and howled into the night, pouring his seed deep inside her. His body shook as he rode out his orgasm, then collapsed against her. He continued to caress her, running his hands over her thighs and between her legs, tenderly stroking her pussy until desire sparked again.

Jason lifted her into his arms and stepped from the hot tub, carrying her upstairs to his bedroom. She was still trying to catch her breath when he yanked the covers back and laid her on the bed, then crawled in beside her and pulled her against him.

Exhaustion claimed her, and for what seemed like only a few minutes, she slumbered. She awoke to the feel of Jason's fingers probing between her legs. She thought she had no more to give him, but she was wrong. Her sex dampened with each of his gentle strokes against her clit. He lazily caressed her, leaning on his elbow and watching her as she twisted and turned under his questing fingers.

"Look at me when you come, Kelsey. I want to see your face."

No, she couldn't. It was too intimate. And yet his gaze held hers as if by some unknown force and she let him have what he wanted. Her eyes widened as he slipped his fingers inside her and thrummed her clit with his thumb. She reached for his hand and drove his fingers deeper as she climaxed, watching the dark smile on his face as she cried out her fulfillment

He continued to gently stroke her, long past the time she had finally relaxed. She looked down at his hard cock, shocked to find her body responding once again.

"I can't," she whispered, afraid she was giving up her soul to him.

“You can, and you will. When I ask you for it, you’ll give it to me. Every single time. Not because I demand it, but because you want to. The choice is yours, Kelsey. It’s your will, not mine. You want this. You want me. You’re mine.”

She wanted to object, to scream at him that she belonged to no one but herself. But damn him, he was right. As Jason brought her to life yet again with his coaxing strokes along her aching slit, she knew that she’d fallen hopelessly in love with him.

Although she hardly knew him, no matter what skeletons he hid in his closet, she wanted him. As he took her again and again throughout the night, she gave herself willingly.

No man would ever elicit the same kind of response from her. Never had before, and never would again. She couldn’t change her mind, couldn’t walk away from him, and she’d never be the same person she was before she’d walked into his hotel suite that night.

It was already too late for her.

Chapter Six

After spending the weekend with Kelsey, Jason didn't want to let her go. By the time they'd reached Baltimore, he'd convinced her to spend the night with him at his place, determined not to let her out of his sight until he told her the truth.

She slept peacefully beside him after a wild night of lovemaking. He smiled and stroked her silken hair, amazed that he'd found a woman whose passions matched his own. Now he just had to figure out how to keep her.

He slipped out of bed and moved to the door leading to the porch. Compelled by the full moon, he knew he'd have to leave and meet the pack. They'd expect their leader to hunt with them. Already his body felt the impending change, the pull of the moon a force too strong to resist. Slipping on jeans and a T-shirt, he tiptoed out the back door, grateful that the park adjoined his property, one of the main reasons he'd bought this place.

Privacy assured them safety tonight. No one wandered outside in the middle of the night, especially in a deserted park, unless they were looking for trouble. Those hunting trouble tonight would find it.

Besides, wolfen magic allowed them to meet, make all the ruckus they wanted within the confines of the area, and no one could wander in after they started.

Exhilaration fired his blood. Not only did he look forward to the change, but he'd also met the woman he wanted to spend his life with. Their weekend together had been more than he'd hoped for. Kelsey wasn't just beautiful and sexy, she was smart, and not afraid to voice her opinions. He loved her sassiness. Arguing with her had been the second greatest thing about their weekend.

The greatest thing had been that, no matter what they'd been arguing about, as soon as he pulled her into his arms and fit his mouth over hers, the argument was over.

She would crawl into his arms and kiss him back, pouring out the kind of desire that he'd never thought to find with a woman. Their lovemaking was powerful, intense, both rough and achingly tender. He'd never realized that being with one's mate could be this fulfilling.

He loved her. The only thing left to do was to work through the details of telling her what he was, and hope that she was as open minded about his secret as she'd been about every other subject they'd discussed this weekend.

She had to accept him, because he couldn't imagine life without her now.

No way was he going to let her go.

* * * * *

Kelsey woke with a start, turning over to reach for Jason. He wasn't there, but his pillow was still warm. She slipped out of bed, wondering if he'd wandered into the kitchen for something to eat. As she passed by the sliding glass door, she stopped, blinking to focus her still-sleepy eyes.

Someone was in the backyard. Her heart slammed against her chest as she recognized that sexy walk. It was Jason, and he was heading towards the park that backed up to his property.

She glanced at the clock. Two a.m. What the hell was he doing?

He surely couldn't be restless. She was damned exhausted from their lovemaking, which had been long, passion-filled and eminently satisfying, as always. She'd slept better this weekend than she had in years.

Even if he couldn't sleep, no one in their right mind would enter the park alone in the middle of the night. But sure as hell, he disappeared into the trees.

Shit. She knew she shouldn't follow him, but dammit, this was just too weird. Curiosity won over caution and she hurriedly threw on her jeans and shirt, sliding her feet into her tennis shoes as she bounded out the door.

The park was a short distance from the back door, but she sprinted anyway, not wanting to lose him in the winding trails and dense woodland. She sucked in a breath of courage as she plunged headlong into the darkened woods. Though the full moon offered enough light, once she'd entered the park the tall trees and dense foliage prevented her from seeing much.

She couldn't hear any sounds to indicate in which direction he might have gone, so she tried to stay on the trail, hoping she'd run into him or at least figure out what he was up to.

A niggling feeling of foreboding came over her. She shouldn't be here. Something bad was going to happen.

Jason, dammit, why are you in here? What could you be doing? Whatever it was, it wasn't something he wanted anyone to know about. Nobody came to the park in the middle of the night. Nobody.

She should turn around and run back to the house and forget she ever saw him heading to the park. She loved him. Shouldn't she trust the man she loved?

A rustling to her left caught her attention. She froze, unable to move an inch for fear that someone would pounce on her. But after a full minute, no one came crashing out of the hedges. Then she heard it again.

Hell. Now what? It wasn't like she'd been smart and brought some kind of weapon with her. What was she going to do if someone jumped her? Kick him in the shin with her Nikes?

Really, Kelsey. You're going to have to learn to think first, react second. This was stupid.

Then she guessed she'd go on being stupid, because she headed left to follow the sound, her heart pounding against her ribs and sweat pouring from her.

She'd never been more scared, nor more curious, as she tiptoed through the hedges, staying low to the ground in case whatever she heard wasn't someone, or something, she wanted to notice her.

When she got to the other side of the thick bushes, she came upon a clearing. It was as if the treetops parted in the middle of the park to reveal the full silver moon overhead. A man stood in the center of the clearing with his back to her. She couldn't tell if it was Jason or not, but the body type was similar.

What was he doing here? He looked as if he was waiting for someone, but who?

Fine. She'd just stay out of sight and wait, too. Damn him, if he'd had something to tell her, he should have done so this past weekend when she'd sworn everything was off the record. Well, they were back in D.C. now, and all bets were off.

Pushing aside the guilt at the thought of writing anything at all about Jason's private life, she straightened and looked around, intent on finding a vantage point a little closer.

But when she started to step out of the bushes, a hand clamped over her mouth and she was drawn against a hard body behind her. Her scream was muffled as the hand held firm to her.

Just as suddenly, she was whirled around to face her attacker.

"Jason!" she cried, smacking him soundly on the chest. "You scared the shit out of me!" Her heart still raced and she felt dizzy and nauseous. She blew in and out slowly to calm the rush of adrenaline.

"What are you doing here?" he hissed.

"Following you. What are *you* doing here?"

"None of your business. Go back to the house."

How dare he tell her what to do? "I don't take orders from you. What are you hiding? Why are you here, Jason?"

"You don't want to know." He jammed his fingers through his hair, frustration evident on his frowning face. "Well, maybe you do want to know. Christ, Kelsey, I didn't want you to find out this way!"

"Find out..." She closed her mouth, looked at the man in the clearing, then back at Jason.

No. No way. It couldn't be true. Not after what she'd experienced with him this weekend. "Oh God. You're gay."

Jason's eyes widened. "Uh, no."

"Yes you are. You're meeting that guy over there for some quickie action or something. You just fucked me for appearances, so that I'd never report the truth about you. I could be your irrefutable evidence." The thought hurt. Way more than she'd wanted to. He'd used her.

"No, Kelsey. You're wrong. I'm not gay. For God's sake, were you there this weekend? You know what we shared."

She crossed her arms, fighting back the tears she refused to shed. "You're a good actor."

Rolling his eyes, he said, "Nobody's *that* good!"

That's what she'd thought, too. She was wrong. "Then tell me what you're doing meeting that man over there. If it's not for sex, what is it?"

"It's not just that guy, Kelsey. There are more here."

She looked around, confused. "More what?"

"More people."

"I don't think so."

"Come with me. I'll show you." He held out his hand and she glared at him, refusing to allow him to touch her again. With a shrug, he walked toward the clearing. Unable to resist, she followed.

The man who'd been waiting for him turned around. She recognized him. It was Brandon King, one of Jason's staffers. But he was the only other person in the park. So what did Jason mean by more people?

When they reached the center of the clearing, Jason stepped toward her, taking her by her upper arms and forcing her to meet his gaze. "Listen to me Kelsey. What you're going to see will shock you. You won't believe it at first, and then it will frighten you. Don't be afraid. No harm will come to you as long as you stay by my side."

His words confused her even more. What the hell was he talking about?

Oh good God. He wasn't part of some satanic cult, was he? Her mind whirled with the possibilities. Some kind of secret organization? Hell, what if he was affiliated with terrorists? Could her feelings have been all wrong about Jason? What if he wasn't the man she'd thought he was?

No. She refused to believe it.

Out of the corner of her eye, she spotted more people entering the clearing. Startled, she sucked in a breath. Where had they been hiding? She hadn't heard or seen them. And yet there had to be over a hundred of them filling the clearing. From young adults to older folks, men and women. She spotted the blonde bimbo from the hotel the other night! They came nearer and nearer to Jason and to her. She found herself sidling closer to Jason, feeling more uncomfortable and claustrophobic as the crowd surrounded them.

Jason grabbed her hand and said something in a language she didn't understand. She turned to him, and then he shouted the words in English as he looked at her.

"This is *mine!*"

He meant her. Dammit, he meant her. What did he mean by that? She wasn't his.

Then a low growl caught her attention and she turned to the crowd. They were snarling at her, their eyes glowing an eerie yellow.

Glowing? She blinked, certain the moon played tricks on her. But when she turned to Jason, his eyes had taken on a golden hue, just as the others.

"Don't be afraid, Kelsey," he said, his voice thicker than it had been before. And he had...hair on his face. Hair that was growing rapidly.

She had to be hallucinating. Sharp cries filled the night air as painful moans and howls surrounded her. Clothes were discarded and bodies sprouted fur. Everyone around her was changing, including Jason!

Chapter Seven

Jason swore under his breath, his body warring with the unavoidable change and his desire to remain human.

Dammit, this wasn't the way he'd wanted to reveal himself to Kelsey. Not during a pack fest. Not when he could barely control them all during the full moon. As it was, he'd have to count on his closest allies to make sure things didn't get out of hand. He had to keep Kelsey safe, and the only way he knew to do that was in wolf form. Or at least partial wolf form. Then, he'd have the strength to fight off any challengers. If he stayed human and they all changed, they might be able to take him down.

Now that he'd staked his claim on Kelsey, he expected challengers. There were a handful of pack members who felt he shouldn't lead them. He hadn't led them very long, so until he firmly established himself as the dominant male, he knew he'd be challenged. During full moon, he always had to defend his right to be alpha.

He'd win, of course, but he'd have to take care of Kelsey too.

Kelsey, who right now regarded him with fear and loathing. Her eyes were wide with horror as she began to back away. She'd no more take a few steps then she'd bump into a changing wolf and scurry forward again.

He had to be in the center of the pack. It was the only way to assert his control. And she had to stay with him.

"Kelsey. Don't run. Stay with me. It's the only way you'll be safe."

"Safe? You call this safe? What the fuck is happening here, Jason?"

Her high-pitched voice told him she was nearly hysterical. He could only imagine what this must be like viewed from a human's eyes. Changing from human to wolf was messy, the sounds of bones shifting and reforming in different positions, muscles

expanding and growing thicker, hair spurting out all over. Snarling, growling, elongating of teeth and salivating.

“We’re werewolves, Kelsey. And there are more of us than you think. We come from all different backgrounds and locations. We don’t hunt and kill like you see in the movies. When in human form, we’re just like everyone else. But we are dominant in wolf form.”

“You don’t even look like a regular wolf. You’re still standing, but you look...strange.”

“We take many forms. Human, half-wolf as I am right now, and we can also take on the full wolf form. In this way, I can still speak to you. In full wolf form I can’t.”

“You have an erection.” He watched her eyes widen as she focused between his legs. Her gaze only made his cock stand out more prominently.

The change was an erotic experience for a werewolf. During the monthly pack meet there would be sex of every kind imaginable. Sounds of lustful howling would sail through the night, going on until right before dawn.

He hadn’t wanted to expose Kelsey to all this yet, but now he had no choice. The best he could do would be to control his own lustful urges. Right now, his blood boiled with the primal urge to take her, throw her to the ground and drive his cock deep into her until she begged for mercy. The need to mate was strong, the lust nearly overpowering. His cock rose between his legs, longer and thicker now than it was in human form. His balls were tight and hot, aching with the need for release.

But he was stronger than the beast. He had to be. Kelsey’s very life could depend on it. “I won’t lie to you, Kelsey. The need to fuck you right now is very strong. But if I take you in this form, I will brand you and make you lupine. Once you are turned, you will be like me.”

She stepped back and raised her hands in front of her. “Don’t touch me. Don’t ever touch me again.”

His heart sank at the revulsion on her face. She wouldn't accept him. Others would know it and would challenge him for her. He didn't want to use force on her, but he had no choice. He reached for her and clasped his hand around her wrist, careful not to scratch her with his claws. His strength in this form was more than enough to keep her next to him.

"Listen carefully. Don't move. Don't try to get away. I am alpha of this pack, which means I'm their leader. I've claimed you as my mate. If you deny that claim in front of them, it makes you fair game for a challenge by those who seek to take over as alpha. They'll run after you. They'll catch you. And when they do, they'll fuck you until you bleed and scream for mercy."

"No. You're saying that to scare me."

"Look around you. I wish I was just trying to scare you, but it's the truth." He held tight to her wrist and drew her against his chest. "I am no different now than I was before. I'm still the man who loves you."

Her fingers curled against her palm. "Don't say that. It's a lie!"

"Don't raise your voice to me!" He hated to sound so harsh, but it was imperative the pack not see how she felt. "You can hate me later. Right now, you need to act as if you want to be by my side. I need to touch you, to stake my claim on you in front of everyone. I won't fuck you, but I'm going to come damn close to it. Trust me on this. If you don't, you could die tonight."

Kelsey fought the emotions warring inside her. She didn't know what to do. Shock made coherent thought impossible. She wanted to be revolted by Jason's appearance. He looked so different, with his glowing eyes and facial hair, his chest huge and barrel-like and his cock so goddamn big she wanted to faint.

Lust filled her. Her panties were soaked, her body on fire as if some strange spell had been cast on her.

Hell, maybe it had.

She didn't want to desire Jason. Not like this. Not now that she knew what he was. And yet, she couldn't help herself. She was still drawn to him.

Somewhere deep inside, past the hurt and anger, she knew he told her the truth. If she didn't do exactly as he said, the others would take her. She glanced around at the half-dozen males sniffing the air around her, their faces more like a wolves than men. They were so close she could reach out and touch them. They licked their long teeth, their eyes glowing as they kept their focus on her and her alone.

She had to trust Jason. She stepped into his arms, winding her fingers into the thick pelt on his chest. "I hate this. I want you to know I hate this. And I hate you."

He hissed but nodded. "Fine. Hate me. I just want to get you out of this alive, so just go along with me. And for God's sake, at least pretend you're enjoying it."

That wouldn't be a problem. Her body screamed for his touch, his tongue, his cock. She wanted him to possess her. Hell, she wanted him to fuck her, right in front of this crowd. She might hate him, but she wanted him.

"Undress," he commanded. "And be quick about it or I'll tear your clothes off."

Before she could think about what she was doing, she stripped off her shoes and clothes and stood there naked, feeling more exposed and vulnerable than she'd ever felt before. Even though everyone else was naked, they at least had fur covering parts of their bodies.

Jason turned her around so her back was to him. He ran his hands over her breasts, her traitorous nipples responding to the scrape of his palms. He cupped her, and she noticed he didn't touch her with his long claws. Moving his hands down over her abdomen, he brushed her sex with two long fingers. Her legs trembled and he wrapped his free arm around her middle to hold her steady.

"I could sink my teeth into the nape of your neck right now and fuck you, Kelsey. Do you know how much I want my cock inside you?"

She wondered if he had any idea how much she wanted the same thing.

“But if I take your pussy and shoot my come into your womb, you become lupine. I won’t do that to you without your consent.”

She was grateful for that, at least.

As he stroked her moist slit and flicked his thumb over her clit, he whispered harshly in her ear. “But if I take your ass, you stay human.”

Oh God. Her pussy quaked at the thought of that huge cock buried in her ass. She wanted to scream “No!” as loud as she could. But she didn’t. She wanted to think the reason she didn’t was to protect herself. But that wasn’t true. The real reason was because she wanted him to fuck her that way.

This would be the last time she’d be with him. Damn her soul to hell, she wanted him to fuck her! “Take me that way, Jason. Take my ass.”

His hot breath sailed across her cheeks as his tongue snaked out and licked her neck. His rumbling growl reverberated against her back. “Get down on your knees.”

She did as he commanded, nearly falling to the soft ground. Jason covered her immediately, snarling at the other wolves who hovered nearby. “This bitch is mine!” he said in a voice that didn’t sound like him. “Watch me fuck her.”

They were all going to watch. Their cocks jutted out from their hairy bodies, glistening with drops of pre-come. Heaven help her, but the sight of their shafts only added to her excitement. The thought that Jason’s possession of her would be witnessed by all of them, while they could do nothing but stand by and watch, nearly had her climaxing on the spot.

She heard Jason’s sniffing noises behind her as he moved down her back, licking and scraping his teeth lightly against her skin. She moaned when he moved his mouth between her legs and licked her nectar, then wound his tongue around her clit and lapped her until she whimpered. He snaked his tongue into the crevice of her buttocks, licking the puckered hole until sparks of lightning-like pleasure shot to her pussy.

When she thought she couldn't bear it any longer, he moved over her back, positioning his cock between her buttocks. He probed the small entrance with the head and slid partway in.

She stilled, waiting for him to plunge in hard and deep. But he was gentle, taking it inch by inch until he pushed past the tight barrier, then thrust all the way inside her.

Unable to contain her cries, she let them out, tears rolling down her cheeks at the pleasurable pain of being so filled by Jason's cock. He moved back, then drove harder. Instinctively she reached for her clit and massaged the ache that was making her mad.

"Fuck your pussy for me, Kelsey," he said, his voice straining. She knew he held back for her, because he didn't want to hurt her. As she slipped two fingers into her dripping cunt, she no longer wanted safety or a gentle touch.

"Give it to me, Jason. Fuck my ass hard."

He snarled and grabbed her neck with his teeth, holding her in place as he reared back and drove deep. Sliding her fingers into her pussy, she matched his tempo as he pounded his cock in her ass. When she felt the first strains of her orgasm approach, she cried out into the already lust-filled night and dove over the edge, taking Jason with her.

His howls rent the night air. The others watched him climax. His hot seed filled her ass, pouring down her legs and over her pussy. She took his cream and rubbed it over her still-spasming clit. Jason collapsed over her back, panting as hard as she was.

She felt as if she were in a dream-like state, unable to even focus on the others any longer, not caring what happened to them, or to herself. She was exhausted, mentally and physically. Jason picked her up and carried her back to the house. She felt safe cradled in his strong arms and snuggled closer to his warmth.

When they returned, he bathed her, then gently tucked her into his bed and pulled up a chair next to her. The last things she saw were dawn breaking over the tops of the trees and Jason's silhouette as he continued to sit next to her and stroke her hair.

Then she gave up and closed her eyes, letting the bliss of sleep overtake her.

* * * * *

Kelsey sat in front of the laptop, staring at a blank page.

After what happened last night, Jason had let her sleep. When she woke, she dressed while he waited silently, then made arrangements for his limo to take her home. Before she walked out the door, he reached for her hand.

“I never meant for this to happen. I won’t apologize for who and what I am, because I was born this way. But you have all the choices here. What you decide to do with the information you have is up to you. What you choose to do with the fact that I love you is also up to you.”

She’d walked away without giving him an answer, because frankly, she didn’t know what to do.

She loved him. But she loved Jason the man, not Jason the werewolf.

Didn’t she? Right now she was having a hard time separating the two.

This whole thing was simply too bizarre to comprehend. She had what amounted to the story of the century. Revealing the fact that werewolves were not the subject of folklore and cinema, but in fact lived among humans, had to be a Pulitzer Prize winning story in the making

She’d be rich. And famous.

And Jason would be ruined. No doubt hunted down and used for research. And what of the others? The ones who looked like normal people before they changed. People she ran into at the grocery store or at work. Hell, she could work with some of them for all she knew.

Frustrated, she closed the laptop and paced her apartment, her mind no clearer now than it had been when the limo had brought her home.

What would happen if she exposed Jason and the others? She would be responsible for not only the downfall of his political career, but no doubt the rounding up and persecution of his entire family.

Face it, Kelsey. The world just isn't ready for people who fall outside the norm.

The man she loved was a werewolf. But he was also a wonderful senator, a passionate man and she was crazy in love with him.

She knew what she had to do.

* * * * *

Jason refused to get the newspaper. It had been two days since Kelsey had left his house. No one had arrived yesterday morning to take him away. No reporters hounded him for proof that he was a werewolf.

Maybe she'd needed a day to get it together and it would be in this morning's paper. How could she walk away from a story like this?

He stared down into his coffee, hoping the black brew would provide the answers he sought. When the doorbell rang, he jumped and glanced at the clock.

Christ, it was five a.m. Dread filled him. The newspapers were out now. He felt incredible sorrow for what was about to happen to his family, to the people who'd loved him and protected the family secret for centuries. He'd let them down. He'd ruined them.

With a sigh, he rose from the table and went to face his accusers.

But when he opened the door, there were no reporters.

Just Kelsey, holding out his morning paper. "It's a little wet. Your sprinklers just came on."

He took it from her hands, too dumbfounded to even speak.

"You gonna let me in?"

"Yeah. Sorry." He watched her walk into the kitchen and grab a cup, pouring herself some coffee and sliding into a chair.

"Mmm, I needed this," she said, holding the cup with both hands.

"Kelsey, why are you here?"

"I have questions. Lots of them."

"Okay." What did that mean? That she was going to wait to write her story until she got more details?

"Like what it means when I become lupine. And pups. Do we really have pups or will our kids be human?"

"Huh?"

"Jason! Wake up! I have too many questions for you to have your head in the clouds."

"Did you just say 'when' you become lupine?" He had to be dreaming this.

"Yes. And don't forget the part about pups. That I really want to know about because I love kids."

"Me too." He stepped toward her and kneeled, almost afraid to touch her in case she was an hallucination. "I love you, Kelsey."

He didn't misread the warmth in her eyes. "I love you too, Jason. Werewolf or not, I can't live without you."

His heart nearly burst from his chest at the realization that she was not only going to keep his secret, but that she wanted to be with him. He stood and pulled her up, then kissed her with all the love he felt. And what he received in return convinced him that he'd made the right choice in his mate.

Her eyes had darkened and her lips curled into a sexy smile. "Now, about my questions."

"Later. Right now, I need to properly propose to you. In bed." He swooped her into his arms and took the stairs two at a time.

"Someday, Jason, I'm going to write this story," she said as he laid her on the bed and began to peel her clothes off.

"Someday Kelsey, we'll *want* the world to know all about it."

But not today. Today, it was enough that she knew, that she accepted, and that she loved him.

About the author:

Jaci Burton has been a dreamer and lover of romance her entire life. Consumed with stories of passion, love and happily ever afters, she finally pulled her fantasy characters out of her head and put them on paper. Writing allows her to showcase the rainbow of emotions that result from falling in love.

Jaci lives in Oklahoma with her husband (her fiercest writing critic and sexy inspiration), stepdaughter and three wild and crazy dogs. Her sons are grown and live on opposite coasts and don't bother her nearly as often as she'd like them to. When she isn't writing stories of passion and romance, she can usually be found at the gym, reading a great book, or working on her computer, trying to figure out how she can pull more than twenty-four hours out of a single day.

Jaci welcomes mail from readers. You can write to her c/o Ellora's Cave Publishing at P.O. Box 787, Hudson, Ohio 44236-0787.

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