

ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS

Elizabeth Lapthorne

RUTLEDGE WEREWOLVES III

The Mating Game



THE MATING GAME

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RUTLEDGE WEREWOLVES:

THE MATING GAME

Elizabeth Lapthorne

*For my very own Mar, who loved Dom first
Liz*

Chapter One

From: samuel@rutledgesecurity.com

To: artemais@rutledgesecurity.com; william@rutledgesecurity.com; dominic@rutledgesecurity.com

Subject: Our brother – the budding writer!

Attach: (Untitled doc.)

Hey there, brothers mine.

Seems the youngest of us is trying to become a budding writer. I found this, left ever-so-stupidly, on an unsecured part of the computer while I was doing the routine security check on the work files.

See you tonight, wolf boy. Can't wait to start ribbing you about this. Just had to share with our loving family.

Samuel

<Attachment included>

I feel her pull on me as She shines on my face through the open curtains. Even though it's the night before She is Full, She retains this immense hold over me. After all these years, I still can't figure out if Her hold on me is good or bad. She calls to me no matter how hard I try to hide. When I finally give in to Her embrace I receive indescribable joy, passion, and freedom. I wonder again why I resist her call. Is it simply my desire to rule my own destiny? Or do I fight Her so hard each month simply from my own stubbornness? If so, then why would I always give in as She rises at dusk, full and rounded and far more beautiful than any woman I have ever come across?

Maybe my melancholy is from my weariness of the constant fucking. Seeing Artemais and William so sickeningly happy makes me wonder if there is more to women than simply bedding and shedding them the next morning. Yet the few times I tried forging deeper relationships they ended with female tears and recriminations. It makes one wonder what really does go on in the female mind.

The Mistress of the Moon I can understand. One night a month She compels my siblings and I, along with our pack, for her devotion, to worship her. Merely sitting here and thinking of the freedom, the scents, the hunt, and wild runs in the forest is enough to make my meat stand up at attention. While I might fuck in my other form occasionally, this boner isn't a sexual one, it's more standing to attention in respect for the One whom I must follow, the One whom I can't resist. Why can't I meet a woman like that? One I truly can't resist.

Goddess knows I enjoy women. I love their hair, their scent, a million small things about them from their taste to their texture. Yet when I look at my mated brothers, have I ever truly felt that level of devotion, of adoration to anyone except the moon? It must be thoughts like this that make me wake restless and frustrated next to forgettable women each and every night. The eternal question, "Would I be upset if I never saw this woman again?" rocks around my head.

Both Art and Wills have told me separately that they would die a million deaths if anything happened to their mates. The fact I can wallow and momentarily forget my frustration in my casual women doesn't answer the fact that they are all the same to me. All forgettable.

I care about them; I care that they reach their pleasure and enjoy their short time with me. But there have been so very many that they blur, much like those few seconds when I change from man to wolf.

I'm waiting for the punch line – when I wake up one morning beside a woman I realize I couldn't possibly leave or let go of. Much like, resist as I do the desirable, full moon, I feel a constant ache in my heart when She finally falls beyond the horizon and dawn breaks, and I am once again left alone, to my endless fucking and searching. Tending to my rampant cock alone merely exasperates this loneliness, this frustration. As I pump myself to a heady release, the loss and frustration levels inside me mount.

I can tell it is the night before the full moon because I feel so melancholy tonight. My desire, even after spending three hours with the lusty brunette in my bed, Shawna I think her name is...even now, minutes after the attention of my own hand, my rampant cock is aroused again merely from the thoughts of tomorrow night, when I can run wild and free. Maybe I should go back to Shawna and –

Mary snapped back to attention. She turned quickly to double-check her young cousin, Matthew, still paced on the other side of the room by the large window, and wasn't reading the incredibly sexy, erotic, private thoughts she had stumbled onto over her shoulder.

Noting her attention on him, he halted a moment. "Have you untangled me yet?"

Typing a few quick keystrokes, Mary closed the email she had accidentally opened. Thinking it one of the portal exits she was searching for, she had at first been surprised to realize it was a saved email. Initially confused, she had quickly begun to scan the email. The depth of feeling in the email's words, the true and uncensored thoughts of the man who had written them had instantly snared her attention, capturing her as securely as her young cousin had been caught in the tricky trap laid out by the Security Company.

Thankfully, before she invaded Dominic Rutledge's privacy too much, she had been recalled to her surroundings. She was not in some decadent bedroom, listening to that man whisper his secrets in her ear. She was here in her home office, trying to untangle her wretched cousin from his idiocy.

"Nearly. What the hell were you doing, hacking into a security company of all things, Matthew? *Honestly*. How many times do I have to tell you this isn't some stupid game with no repercussions?"

Mary returned her attention back to the computer. Despite the hot feeling thrumming through her body, she forced her mind back to the task at hand. She must extract her eighteen-year-old cousin from the quagmire he'd created.

Matthew resumed his restless pacing, and Mary entered a few more keystrokes, silently cursing her overenthusiastic cousin. The virus scan finished ten minutes later and she switched off the computer. She leaned back in her chair with a sigh.

"I swear, next time you use my computer, it had better be for those blasted killing games of yours, not this dumb hacker joke your friends keep on goading you into. It won't be *them* sitting in the jail cell I'll have to bail out." She held up her hand as Matthew opened his mouth to protest.

"And no, the nice police officers aren't going to care for the excuse 'But they dared me!' Matthew, you're eighteen. I know you kick ass in the computer industry, but frankly a jail record will kill any hopes you have for *ever* getting a decent job."

Matthew scuffed one foot into her carpet, much like he had when caught stealing cookies from the jar when he was eight.

"I'm sorry, Mary. I'll try not to let them goad me again. I proved I wasn't good enough to get out. I could tell they were tracking me, though. Show me how you got us out."

"What's this 'us' business, buddy? You got yourself in; you can learn next time to get yourself out." At Matthew's pleading look, Mary relented.

Matthew and his older sister, Chloe, might technically be her cousins, but they were as close as siblings. Having been raised together, even annoyed as she was at Matthew's delve into hacking, she knew she would eventually show him how she escaped the fierce clutches of the Rutledge Security Company. Flashing his most charming grin, Matthew sent her a cheerfully pleading look.

"Later, buddy. But no more hacking. You want to test out your skills, you wait for your college course to start, or better yet, get a *job*."

"Tonight, then?" At Mary's raised eyebrow Matthew grumbled his assent. "Oh, all right. Thanks again."

Mary returned his kiss on the cheek, and sat back in her chair as Matthew left her small home office. She thought back to the email she'd discovered accidentally.

Surely it was some sort of joke? It had to be some idiotic male prank? Switching her computer back on, she logged on the Internet and did a quick search.

Well shit, there really is a Rutledge Security company! And in Montana of all places!

She lived on the border between Montana and North Dakota. From the look of things, Rutledge Security was situated up the northwest corner of Montana.

Mary searched a little deeper, and found the founders of the company were a group of four brothers. Artemais, William, Samuel, and Dominic Rutledge. *Not good, not good at all for my peace of mind.*

It seemed as if Artemais, the eldest, pretty much ran the company, with a bit of help

from his brothers. The picture under the “About Us” link showed four drop-dead gorgeous men. The men shown as Artemais and William appeared happily married with a number of kids between them. There were a lot of happy family snaps showing the beaming men with strong arms wrapped around very satisfied looking women.

Other photos showed the same men and women with happy, healthy-looking kids. Samuel and Dominic, while shown playing with the kids, still cheekily winked out from the pictures, obviously single.

Surely if they were werewolves they couldn’t be happily married? Mary thought back to Dominic’s comments about Art and Wills being “happily mated” and “dying a thousand deaths if anything happened to their mates”.

For what felt like the first time ever, Mary had no idea what she wanted to do. Her initial impulse was to jump in her car and drive over to their company, beat down their door, and ask if her conclusions were accurate.

Sanity, however, remained to question that impulse. She couldn’t possibly appear on their doorstep and demand they tell her the “truth” purely to sate her curiosity.

Mary switched the screen of her computer off, to not distract her, and picked up her phone. She pressed the memory one button, and waited for Chloe to pick up.

Just as she started to wonder if her cousin had stepped out, Chloe answered. “Hello?”

Mary frowned, her cousin sounded distracted. “Hey, it’s me. Am I interrupting?”

“You’re welcome to. I’m trying my hand at painting, and –”

“Painting? I thought you had that job as a mechanic down at the garage?”

“Oh, I do. It’s just so unfeminine I wanted to try something else today. So I started this picture. It’s supposed to be a seascape – but it looks like a four-year-old’s finger-painting session. I was just trying to think of what I’m missing when you called. What’s up?”

Briefly, Mary explained about Matthew’s foray into the world of hacking, and her subsequent rescue.

“Thank goodness he asked you to help. You know how terrible I am with computers. I would have made the mess worse. Are you hoping to get me to yell at him? I could, but I doubt he’d listen to me.”

“No, no. It’s something totally different. I accidentally opened an email. Matthew was stuck in a web and I mistook it for something else.”

“Yes? What about this email?”

“The email was from one of the four brothers who run the company. It was sent to the other brothers, and it was a section of one of their journals. It talked about the moon and its pull on him. About how they were all werewolves.”

There was a short pause on the other end.

“Are you sure it wasn’t creative writing? Sometimes when I’m trying to get into a character’s head I write stuff down as if I really were them, to set the mood and help me

see things from their perspective better, you know?"

The fact that Chloe occasionally wrote came as no surprise to Mary. Chloe was a multitasking girl who had never settled in one area. She was smart—she just hadn't found where her passion lay. Instead, she did whatever took her fancy, whenever the urge struck her. By no means was she selfish; she had a huge heart and was always there for those she loved. She just had a tendency to pick and discard working jobs with the ease some people chose hot dinners.

Mary shook herself and returned to the problem at hand.

"I don't think so. Samuel sent the email out to his brothers with the object of teasing the youngest brother. He made a huge joke out of it, stating Dominic was keeping a journal, and then called him Wolf Boy. If it was make-believe, why would Samuel tease him like that? If it weren't true, surely it wouldn't be humorous?"

Mary chewed her lip thoughtfully. What she had told Chloe made perfect sense. The thought that the four of them really were werewolves made her nervous. Surely it was all just fairy tales to frighten children on stormy nights?

"You're not going to be able to rest until you figure this out, are you?"

Mary smiled wryly. No one had ever accused Chloe of not being able to see through those she cared about. "Probably not."

"Then go out there and see them for yourself. You mentioned this guy was complaining about the number of bed partners he slept with and then discarded, right?"

Mary furrowed her brow, not following Chloe's train of thought. "Right."

"Then go out there and seduce him."

Mary's eyes widened. "What?!"

She could practically see Chloe shrug her shoulders.

"You want some answers, and he sleeps with a different woman every night. Why not seduce him, sleep with him, and ask him those questions and get your answers? It'll be a normal give and take. He gets extraordinary sex, you find out whether werewolves really exist. Seems like a fair trade to me."

Mary blinked, totally stunned. Was this her little twenty-six-year-old cousin, giving her, a mature thirty-five, *sexual advice*?

"Chloe, you are *not* giving me sex tips are you?"

"Of course not!" Mary wondered how Chloe seemed to appear both laughing at her and offended simply by the tone of her voice. "I'm just pointing out your options here. You called to ask for my advice, and now I'm giving it to you."

Mary wondered when her young cousin had become so wise; the kid was twenty-six, for heaven's sake. Mary rubbed her forehead, a headache beginning to pound.

"So let me get this straight. You, my baby cousin, think I should drive for hours on end, to the other side of the state, to seduce a man and blow his mind with orgasmic sex, then casually turn over afterwards and instead of playing with the usual post-coital

bliss and teasing, I should just ask him if he's a werewolf?"

Chloe laughed.

"You know, when you put it like that, it sounds stupid. I'm saying go with the flow, cousin. Maybe he'll be the sort of guy you *can* just look in the eye and say, 'Hey, I heard you turn furry once a month. Any truth to that?' or maybe you can kinda search his pockets or something for a Werewolves Anonymous card. I have no idea. All I know is you will sit out here and stew for months if you don't go and do something. So go out and search for your answers."

Mary smiled. Trust Chloe to make something as stupid as driving to the other side of the state seem simple and straightforward.

"You'd better keep an eye on that crazy brother of yours then. No telling what mess he'll get into next time."

"No problem. It's about time someone other than me got itchy feet and decided to break out and try something new around here. Heaven knows Matthew will be glued to that computer of yours forever if we don't pry him away, and it's about time you went off and did something daring too."

Mary rolled her eyes. "I do not need advice from a woman who refuses to hold a job for more than six months."

Chloe laughed.

"At least I'm living my life. You just stay holed up in your office, doing your coding stuff and chatting to your online friends. I think it's a good time for you to go on a personal road trip and explore what life has to offer. I was beginning to wonder if you had any life outside those IM rooms you stay in all night."

Mary mulled it over. She wanted to go out there, so what was holding her back? Why *not* just go with the flow for once? Making up her mind, Mary decided to act on her thoughts before she could talk herself out of them again. With that thought she decided to pack straight away.

"Okay. See you, Chloe. Keep an eye on Matthew. I'll probably call you tomorrow before I leave."

"No problem, hon. See you around."

Mary hung up the phone with a feeling of total unreality. Somehow her cousin made it sound as if sleeping with a man and then asking him if he was a werewolf would be a rational course of action.

Turning back to her lowly humming computer, she turned the screen back on, determined to dig up as much information about the brothers as she could. Dominic in particular.

As she sifted through their website, this time at a much slower and more careful pace, she found interesting little pieces of information scattered through the text. She found it amazing how much information could be left in such blasé comments one would usually overlook on a first, more casual read-through.

In their descriptions of themselves, Mary found with a bit of careful reading and piecing together, that the brothers all lived on the same piece of land on the edge of Glacier National Park. Exactly where around the enormous parkland she had no idea, but even having the Park as a reference point would be helpful.

Mary wrinkled her nose. The park was truly huge, so sifting through it looking for the right house, or houses, was totally out of the question. She smiled at the mental picture of herself knocking on each and every door asking if the Rutledge studs lived here. The police would arrest her – or the men in white coats would come for her before she had covered even a tenth of the Park.

The time passed quickly, and while Mary gathered a fair amount of detail, she couldn't find anything concrete until she came across a fuzzy digital photo of the four brothers playing in a band. It had the title "The Howlers – Our Local Bar".

The Howlers? Either she possessed a more active imagination than she realized, or these Rutledge men had a wicked sense of humor. Mary downloaded the picture, then zoomed in and out of the digital image, determined to find a clue on their location.

Finally she caught sight of a banner, declaring "The Three-Legged Stool Presents *The Howlers*".

Local bar, hmm? Shouldn't be too hard to find that place close to Glacier National Park.

Tomorrow was Friday. She could easily take the weekend off; she could even be able to stretch it to Monday, if she needed. She had plenty of annual leave stored up. The chances of finding Dominic at his local bar might be slim, but four brothers as studly as these should be well-known.

It was possible a heap of people would know where they lived. It seemed like the next logical step into finding out about Dominic Rutledge.

Mary wrinkled her nose at her desperate thoughts. Maybe she was losing her mind. Calling out to Matthew that the computer was free, she left her study and climbed upstairs to her small bedroom.

Packing a light bag, making notes about groceries and last minute errands she didn't want to forget, Mary felt strangely nervous and excited at the same time. Chloe was right, it *had* been far too long since she had struck out and done something for herself simply for the fun of it.

She decided it was stupid to worry, when the worst-case scenario was that she'd waste a weekend looking for a man she couldn't find. Or even embarrass herself in front of a man she would never see again. So what if she asked Dominic Rutledge if he was a werewolf and he thought she was insane? More likely than not, she would never see the man again, so who cared if she made a fool of herself?

So other than possible humiliation, or wasting her time, she had absolutely nothing to lose – and a potential weekend of hot sex and traveling through the state to gain.

Seemed like a fair deal to her. Particularly when she thought back to the brooding, sexy man labeled Dominic Rutledge, with the scorching blue eyes and shoulder-length wavy dark brown hair. Even on a digital image, he fairly radiated sexual energy and

allure. Jumping into bed with him would not be a problem, and she certainly wouldn't have to fake anything.

Double-checking her packed bag, Mary determinedly left her room, intent on filling the rest of the day with cleaning until she could collapse in bed and sleep the hours away until she would leave. Even though she had made her decision, she didn't want to lose her nerve by dwelling on what she was doing. Deep inside her something had clicked when she had seen the picture of Dominic.

Something about all the men had seemed feral yet restrained at the same time. As stupid as it seemed, she had no trouble at all believing these men could change into huge wolves once a month.

Her impulse might be bizarre and crazy, but something in Mary knew she would never rest until she had followed this, whatever it was, through. Sure, she might make a fool of herself, but at least she would get her answers and be able to let it rest.

A determined gleam in her eye, she grabbed the polish rag and headed into her living room to do some dusting.

* * * * *

Dominic madly typed at his keyboard, determined to catch the hacker who had been stupid enough to try and break his code. While there were no state or federal secrets inside their website, Rutledge Security *did* pride themselves on having the best, the most up-to-date security and systems on hand. While nothing was hacker-proof, their systems and encryptions were as close as one could get. It was a source of incredible pride to Dominic.

Dominic's instincts warned him that the talented, but obviously gauche, kid who had started hacking into the Rutledge Security files had called in extra firepower. The initial hacker had certainly been talented, but untrained—they hadn't realized the careful snare Dom had set up and they had fallen into it like a ripe plum.

He grinned hugely at the shock and surprise the kid must have felt. The kid was good enough to break in, but not trained enough to know how to get out. Dom felt a momentary spurt of ego to know his personally created system worked.

There had been almost no action after the initial squirming, and then suddenly he was trying to follow a flurry of activity. To his well-trained eye, the new person was obviously a veteran. Slowly and meticulously the new person unwound the kid from the highly tricky snare.

Dominic unwillingly felt a rush of respect for the new person. Not only were they well-trained and quite talented, but patient as well. The confidence mixed with the patience made him wonder if the kid had called in a woman to help him. Many men would have taken the few deeper traps he set, appearing as quick-fix exits. The woman didn't rise to any of his baits.

Dominic had purposely set the trap such, in the hopes of further trapping any hackers. Also, he needed to buy himself as much time as possible to track them down. Somehow it hadn't fully worked this time.

Too busy trying to trace their Internet source and point of connection, Dominic hadn't been fazed by the new arrival trying to un-pry themselves. But the speed with which they were becoming untangling, coupled with the thought it was a woman beating his system, set his teeth on edge.

Dominic tapped his foot impatiently and resisted the urge to pace like a caged animal.

Something about this hacker, this *woman*, tugged at him. She pricked his pride, but more, she pricked his *interest*, as few women ever had.

All the details would be collected on Samuel's main computer back at Artemais' house, so he couldn't even read the data as it was collected and begin to collate it. He gave up his resistance and began to pace—restlessly, anxiously, feeling as if his hands were tied. The lack of control he held over the entire situation grated on him. It was a completely alien, strange feeling to him.

All sorts of scenarios from a kid's prank to a hardened criminal flashed through his mind. The original hacker was almost certainly a kid. The lack of experience was obvious and easy to pick out—even over the web.

It was the new person who worried him. This *woman*.

Dominic could feel himself getting closer and closer. The lady could evidently tell he was getting closer too. She now desperately struggled out of the code. Dominic felt thankful the hackers were far too busy untangling themselves to steal or read any private files. Everything was tightly locked down. Nothing had been tampered with.

The small numbers of files saved onto the communal access were nothing. They hadn't been breeched for the most part, certainly nothing had been copied from what he could tell, but even so, Dominic felt no concern for anything in an insecure area. All the important files were so heavily secured he would certainly know if they were being opened or accessed.

Yet this was mild comfort to him. His precious security setup had been breeched. By a kid, of all people!

Keeping a determined eye on the readouts flashing across his screen, Dominic was startled when an animated, voluptuous woman appeared on his screen. She was naked, with her back turned to him. Long red hair fell down to her shoulder blades, creamy white skin glowed in contrast to the silky-looking locks. Her naked ass swayed slightly as she turned to look at him.

Dominic felt his mouth dry out. *Oh man, the things I could do to that ass...*

Dominic's attention adhered to her rounded ass as it swayed. The animated woman was his every heated wet dream. Femininity incarnate. Dominic wondered if the whole setup was some sort of insane joke from his brothers.

Stunned and completely turned on at the luscious animated figure pouting on his screen, Dominic simply stared at her. Wicked green eyes glinted as the female winked at him. Pouting her lips even more, the red beauty kissed her palm, and blew him the kiss. Then she teasingly slapped her wonderfully rounded ass – a perfect size to hold on to as a man plunged himself up to the balls – winked again, and then she was gone.

Cursing a blue streak, Dominic typed a few commands, and then sat back, grumpy and defeated. Whoever the hacker was, she was long gone. Dominic rubbed his eyes, trying to contain the howl of rage and frustration he felt building up inside himself. He couldn't even explain to himself the fierce desire to catch this hacker. Something about the person who came to rescue the initial hacker had piqued his curiosity.

Now, not only was Dominic truly pissed at the knowledge that his sacred code had been broken into, but he also resented the huge hard-on he wore. The thrill of the chase, of the hunt, had sparked new life into his weary world. Other than his rampant cock, he couldn't explain why this one hacker drew him, taunted him more than any other hacker wannabe ever had.

He shut down his main computer, pounding the desk in his frustration and picked up the phone. Dialing a number without even glancing at the number pad, he turned back to his totally secure laptop, and continued to save, and make backups of all the data he had collected.

"Yo," came the answer from the other end.

"Sam? What the hell are you doing there?"

"Well, Dom, darling, tomorrow is the big birthday bash. We're *all* supposed to be down here. I presume you're still off fucking your way through the town, hmm?"

"No such luck, brother dear, I've been defending the innocence of Rutledge Security. Can you log on to Art's computer and save all the info I've sent over? We had a hacking attempt."

"No shit? Hang on."

Dominic smiled at the instant attention Samuel gave him. The surprise in his brother's tone made Dominic smile. His grin stayed on his face as he double-saved his information by burning them onto CDs, determined not to lose even a micron of his information.

"I stand corrected, brother mine. Looks like a kid, probably trying to prove his balls to his buddies. What do you think?"

"Probably, it's the second hacker that came in to rescue him I wouldn't mind speaking to. Patience of a saint, and obviously a pro. The character was hanging around somewhere, and the kid probably called him when he realized he was stuck. Maybe it was even his computer the kid was using, testing himself. Whatever, I'll want to do the coordinates and double-checks tomorrow at the party. Can you just double-save everything, in case the power goes down overnight?"

"No problem. You better not spend too much time in here, checking the details. Wills and Josie might castrate you if you're not paying proper attention."

Not only was this Sunday the full moon, but the weekend was his niece and nephew's birthday party. Alexander and Samantha, his brother William and sister-in-law Josephine's children were turning four. Plus Sophie, Art's wife, was due any day now with their third child, and he wanted to be present at the birth again.

Sophie had been swearing up and down that she was having a break after this baby was born. Christiana, their oldest, was just over four and Theodore, their second child, had recently turned two. Sophie had been constantly grumbling throughout this third pregnancy that she had spent more than half of her marriage pregnant and sick, and she had had enough of it.

Art's head was so swollen he could barely walk through the doors of the old house, and between raising and taking care of Christiana and Theodore, not to mention Alexander, Samantha Monique, and baby Julian, William's kids, the house was never quiet, never clean, but always a lot of fun.

Dominic, as always, looked forward to returning home, not only to his small cabin on the edge of the Rutledge land, but also to his forest and family. Storing one copy of the disks safely in his desk, he carried the other set of disks into his bedroom, ready to pack for his weekend back home.

The house might always be a mess and loud, but it was still home. Art and Wills, their gorgeous wives and kids might often exasperate his loneliness, but this time would be different. This time he had a purpose, a quest, to find the hacker and hopefully the pro who not only set his teeth on edge, but also piqued his curiosity and interest as almost no one had in the last few years.

He loved his siblings and nieces and nephews, he loved his home, but the ache and frustration he often felt back there had driven him into the town on more than one occasion. This time, however, would be different. This time he had a puzzle to mull over and keep him happy and occupied.

He could hardly wait to get going.

Chapter Two

Friday Morning

Dominic struggled, but managed to ignore the shrieking children playing in the next room. Christiana was playing “Chase” with Alexander and Samantha Monique. As with any game the children played in the rambling old house, it required much shrieking, laughter, and name-calling. The pounding of little feet on the floor meant one could track all three sets of feet, if one had that insane desire.

Christiana’s little brother, Theodore, played cars and trains with his baby cousin, Julian. Julian, however, had merely wanted to eat the toy cars, boats, and trains, and thus had been banished to sit in Dominic’s lap in front of the computer. After a few minutes of coddling the infant, Julian had promptly fallen asleep.

A year ago, finally driven mad by the growing hordes of their brothers’ families, both Samuel and Dominic had renovated the two gamekeepers’ cabins less than a mile away from the main house. A small driveway that split from the main road led up to the two cabins. Dominic’s cabin was nestled fully in the woods, mostly hidden from view unless one knew where it was. He loved it as it afforded him the privacy he seemed to be growing as a need, not just a luxury he wished for. Samuel’s cabin was quite a bit closer to the house, just within view of the backyard.

Both Sophie and Josephine, their sisters-in-law, valiantly tried to convince them to stay in the main house—but after watching years of marital bliss, both he and Samuel had needed their own space. Neither, however, had wanted to move from the land and forest they both loved. Therefore, they had renovated the cabins and had been living there for the last year. Most meals were an extended family deal, and everyone knew they were only a phone call, or five-minute walk, away.

For now, Julian slept peacefully on his lap. The main thing Dominic had learned about babies and kids in the last four years was the only time they were truly angelic was when they slept. Dominic shook off his musings and began typing at the laptop again. Cradling Julian in his arm, he concentrated on the code and details he was following.

Not long afterwards, Samuel entered the small study.

“Hey Dom, find anything?”

Dominic merely nodded at the sleeping infant, and smiled as Samuel shook his head. He bent his huge frame down and picked up the small boy.

“I’ll put him to bed. William and Josephine are having a much needed drink. I think they’re almost as exhausted as Sophie and Art after that long labor. Josephine was a big help to Sophie though—wish we’d had her around the first time Sophie was threatening to castrate us all. Be back in a minute.”

Dominic merely nodded, busy scanning the details he had been looking for.

“Give little Robyn a kiss from her Uncle Dom.”

Samuel snorted as he left the room.

Artemais, who had started the security firm, had always been interested in keeping his security system as beefed up as possible. As well as that, the many years he had spent in the system meant he had lots of connections with the new and upcoming technology. Samuel loved his gadgets and was often tinkering with a new toy. Between the lot of them, and William’s police connections to keep them up-to-date on what was legal and what was technically illegal, their security was top-of-the-line and practically perfect.

The problem was nothing was truly perfect, and even though they all tried to keep a low profile, some of the more clever hackers knew if they wanted a *real* challenge they should try breaking the Rutledge security. Dominic’s gut told him this was what they were facing—not a criminal who wanted some of their files or information. Even though his gut instincts were rarely proved wrong, only a fool would ignore a breached system and not react.

Dominic worked the computers for both Artemais’ Security and Samuel’s PI firm, keeping him more than busy during the day. He had always enjoyed sifting through code, working out what was happening, and fixing problems. That’s why it had been he, and not Art, who had been alerted when yesterday’s hacker had penetrated their security.

After spending nearly two hours, tracking down the internet connection and different ISP’s, he finally found the address he had been searching so diligently for.

Samuel reentered the room. “Found him yet?”

“Yep, just now.”

“Well?”

Dominic turned to stare at his brother. Usually calm and in control, Samuel was fairly bristling with outrage and worry. Outrage that someone would dare be better than his toys and technology, worry that it was a criminal and not the curious hacker Dominic kept soothing him with.

“You’re not going to believe this, but the Internet provider for the computer the hacking was coming from belongs in the name of one Ms. Mary Dennison. Address supplied,” he clicked a few strokes on the keyboard. “Hmm...that’s interesting, she lives just outside of Bismarck...”

Samuel frowned.

“That’s just on the state’s border—right? We could drive down there and make it within ten hours. Should we cancel tonight’s gig and go down there?”

Dominic shook his head. He wanted time to think this through. His gut was certain this Mary was his veteran computer woman. Now armed with a name, his brain went into overdrive fantasizing the real woman behind the animated image. He still grew

hard when he remembered that luscious figure, her delectable ass, and pouting lips. Despite his annoyance at having her escape his virtual clutches, a small sense of pride also welled deep inside him.

She hadn't *beaten* him—but she certainly seemed to be a formidable opponent. The curiosity mingled with the outrage and pride at her hacking out of his traps and system made him more than interested in meeting this woman.

He particularly wanted to see if she was as luscious as that damned animated redhead. While he never had a partiality to redheads, Dominic had seduced more than his fair share. The mere thought of this particular redhead had him panting and drooling like a teenage virgin trying for his first lay.

Resisting the impulse to head into one of his brothers' bedrooms, lock the door and jerk himself off, Dominic controlled his rising lust—barely. He could feel the near-fullness of the moon calling him to the mating game he so loved. It heated his blood, set his cock rampant.

Dominic swallowed. *Man, I must need a run outside more than I realized. Get a grip, Dom. Likely this Mary is sixty and wrinkled. A hag of a woman and a red herring.*

Dominic was not naïve enough to have overlooked the possibility a false trail may have been left. The thought niggled at him. If Mary Dennison wasn't the woman he was looking for, it indicated a level of criminal activity and possible malicious intent.

"I can't tell if these details are forged or true. It could be a fake address, which worries me, but we might be jumping at shadows. Let's just let it ride for a bit, check this Mary character out quietly. We can take next weekend off, and move from there. I'll scrounge up a few old contacts and do a quiet Internet search on her."

Samuel nodded. The sound of a walking cane entering the kitchen around the back of the house could be heard.

"Where are my birthday twins?" an old, well-known voice shouted from the back entryway.

Three pairs of feet came thumping down the hall. Childish shrieks echoed through the hallway and muffled grunts and strained noises could be heard as Christiana and the twins evidently hurled themselves into their great-grandfather's still strong arms.

"Grampa! Grampa!"

"What did you bring us?"

"Did you make us more wooden trains?"

"Mom! We wanna open the presents!"

"Edward's here!"

Samuel and Dominic rolled their eyes at each other as Christiana's voice could be heard over the twins' squeals of delight. If their grandfather had arrived, evidently so had Roland, his wife Helene and their seven-year-old son, Edward.

Roland had only recently returned from a long period of healing time with his wife and their grandfather. The brothers only knew a small amount of what had happened

to the young man. Zachariah Rutledge could keep secrets like no other man alive, and in regards to Roland, he had decided to keep his own council.

All the brothers knew was that their grandfather had thought it imperative that Roland heal, be reunited with his True Mate and their young son. They had married in a small ceremony nearly three years ago and been living in the middle of the woods with the Old Man until recently.

When Edward and Christiana had met they had instantly become close friends, a strange bond none of them seemed to question, yet one none of them really seemed to understand, either.

As Dominic and Samuel made faces at each other, the thumping of little feet could be heard heading their way. Within seconds, four bundles of pure energy came crashing through the door.

“Uncle Sam! Uncle Dom! Grampa’s here!”

“So is Edward!”

“They brought presents!”

“All wrapped pretty!”

Dominic smiled. At least some things were easy to see and solve. Pushing aside thoughts of the luscious redhead, and his own doubts and questions, he bent down to welcome Edward and attempt to calm his excited nieces and nephew.

Solemnly shaking the young man’s hand, he welcomed him. “Nice to see you again young man. You’re well?”

Edward nodded, his black curls bobbing.

“Yes, Dom. Mom and Dad have moved into a house just on the other side of town. They said we needed to be close to Grampa Zach.”

Dominic smiled at the solemn little boy. Crouching down, he grinned at the young face. When Christiana started pulling at his arm, he turned his attention to his niece.

“Come on, Uncle Dom! We need to get Mom and Dad and everyone else. I wanna start eating that cake!”

“Sure thing, sweetheart. What’s say we go and say hello to Grandpa first? Make him comfortable. We can put the twins’ presents on the table with everyone else’s gifts.”

Taking a hand of each twin, he calmly led the children from the study and herded them towards the main living room. Greeting his grandfather, who looked remarkably handsome and healthy for his advanced years, he braced himself for a long, energetic afternoon.

With luck it would help him forget that damned redhead animated woman, though deep inside the pit of his chest, he knew nothing much would help. Silently, he counted the hours until the nearly full moon would rise.

* * * * *

As dusk arrives

Dominic stood on the very edge of his piece of land. Deep inside the forest, he could sense he was all alone.

At last.

Strangely, neither Art nor William had teased him over his pensive mood. Dominic didn't want to dwell on whether they could read mystical signs of what ailed him, or whether they were simply too embedded in their own marital bliss to realize he had been so silent over the course of the birthday dinner.

Only Samuel had teased and jeered at him as he excused himself early to go for a run. The kids had all been too bloated on party pies, junk food and birthday cake to want to come with him.

And so here he stood, surrounded by the dark, towering trees, letting the peace and scents of the forest he had loved all his life seep into his soul, sooth his aching pride and emotions.

Closing his eyes, he felt his form shimmer, felt the change begin to overtake him as the almost full moon rose above the horizon.

Even though he could change at will, with or without his mistress the moon, something tonight compelled him to pay homage to her once more. Maybe it was because he knew he would have to pay homage on Sunday, when she was truly full, or maybe it was simply trying to not think of Mary, or the hacker. Whatever, he knew with a strange sense of innate intuition – he needed this run and needed to clear his head.

Or maybe he just wanted to turn to his animal side for a moment, to clear his thoughts and change his perspective.

In that moment between being a man and a wolf, Dominic smiled, a large, completely masculine, toothy grin.

In the blink of an eye, he felt himself change to his wolf form.

He closed his eyes and inhaled deeply, as he always did in that first moment of being a wolf and gathering his bearings.

He could smell the dampness of the earth, the rich scent and tone of the soil and life beneath his paws.

He could hear the moon shimmering and calling to him, heating his blood and filling his soul with music only She could create.

He heard each insect and pad of animal footfalls on the soil. He heard the crickets chirping and the birds humming.

The earth spoke volumes to him, and he could read it all in the manner the human side of his mind could not comprehend.

Even so, he could detect the faint scent of the humans, and a small part of his mind mulled still over the conundrum of his female hacker.

His ears pricked at the sound of a rabbit crossing his path. His interest diverted, he pounced after the animal, determined to play and maybe forget his problems for a while. The earth soothed him and the moon urged him on.

Life didn't get much better than this.

Chapter Three

Saturday evening

Mary sat on the edge of the bar's dance floor, playing with her light beer.

For what felt like the millionth time, she forced her doubts away. This whole escapade seemed almost too easy. The long drive had flown by, her thoughts centered on different fantasies and scenarios. In one, Dominic merely took one look at her and swept her off her feet, carrying her back to his apartment and seducing the hell out of her. In another, she could somehow magically tell by one look that he *was* a werewolf and could then seduce *him* with a clear conscience.

Overlying all of these emotions sat the eager, almost girlish anticipation of seeing Dominic in the flesh. Mary refused to think of those hours she had sat in front of her computer monitor, reading and rereading the details she found on Dominic Rutledge. She blindly ignored the restless night's sleep, the tossing and turning. The images of that cheeky, gorgeous, smiling face, and wickedly laughing blue eyes burned into her mind and deep in her soul.

She couldn't clearly remember the last time she had been so overcome by lust for a man. Her past was littered with lovers, yet Dominic was different. He seemed like a fever in her blood, a craving she could not deny.

Listening to his music, watching him, his brother, and a friend make music and seduce every woman in the bar, taught her much. The music was jazzy, soulful...bluesy tunes with huskily crooned lyrics that reached out and touched every woman present.

The choice of songs, the style of the music, and the depth and emotion the three men created showed Mary a small portion of his soul. Both it and the sexy man were too tempting to ignore.

While not precisely losing her nerve, Mary entertained doubts on the wisdom of her quest. Safely back at home, her thought of indulging in white-hot sex with Dominic, blending into his hundreds of other lovers and somehow finding out if he really was a werewolf, had seemed strange, but not unmanageable.

Now however, watching how every woman drooled over him, shrieked and cried out at his every movement, Mary had to wonder at her wisdom. It seemed insane to simply waltz up to him, smile at him, and offer him a night of no-holds-barred sex.

She took another sip of her beer to ease the dryness of her throat. Waiting for the right moment to approach him and offer her dare for one night of raunchy sex, Mary smiled as Samuel came back onto the stage.

While he was handsome and sexy, he didn't ring her bell like Dominic did. He did, however, have the lustiest, most husky, sexy, singing voice she had ever heard. His

crooning words swirled around the small bar, enticing and seducing every female present.

Mary was surprised when he walked past the microphone to pick up Dominic's saxophone instead. Mary blinked, surprised, until she noticed Dominic walking up to take the microphone.

He was going to sing!

While Dominic had mostly played the saxophone, he had swapped to the guitar for a few songs. Samuel had stayed singing, until now, the last song of the night.

Lee Scott, their friend and bass guitarist for the evening, took up his spot, with Dominic taking the microphone. Drunken patrons cheered and rushed back onto the dance floor, expecting more of the quality blues and jazz they had played all evening.

Without any words or introduction, and with none really being needed, Lee stepped into the spotlight and started the instrumental. There were a few feminine cheers and shrieks – with one woman in the back screaming out “*I love you, Lee!*”

Without missing a single beat he grinned wickedly into the audience in general, his cocky grin and confident manner earning him more whistles and shrieks, and continued the introduction. Mary recognized the tune instantly as *Night Prowler* – one of her favorite songs – and tried to stifle the sudden giggles that threatened her.

As Dominic's lusty croon washed over her, her eyes constantly met with his. The irony of the words wasn't lost on her. She couldn't put her finger on how, why or when; but with the innate intuition and wisdom only a woman could have, she realized she *knew* the truth to her question.

Maybe it was in their smiles, or the way they held themselves. Maybe it was simply the raw, earthy, completely masculine animal magnetism both men had. But in that moment, Mary knew she alone in this room understood the two brothers were *true* Night Prowlers. They were werewolves.

*“Somewhere a clock strikes midnight,
And there's a full moon in the sky,
You hear a dog bark in the distance,
And you hear someone's baby cry.*

*“A rat runs down the alley,
And the chill runs down your spine,
And someone walks across your grave,
And you wish the sun would shine.”*

Mary could feel the intensity in the song, in the truth and conviction in Dominic's words. Here was the real deal. She could so easily see him slipping into the role of

Night Prowler. Of stalking prey, whether animal or woman. Watching them, following them.

It was an intensely sexual image she had flash across her brain – one that seared her and simply would not leave. It was incredibly sexy and slightly scary at the same time. The mix of fear and sexiness hit the exact right note with her, making her damp and excited.

She and every other woman in the bar.

*"I'm your night prowler, asleep in the day,
Yeah, I'm your night prowler – get out of my way,
Look out for the night prowler; watching you tonight,
Yes, I'm your night prowler, when you turn out the light.*

*"Too scared to turn your light out,
'Cos there's something on your mind.
Was it a noise outside the window?
Was there a shadow on the blind?
As you lie there naked; like a body in a tomb,
Suspended animation, as I slip into your room."*

Mary shivered. Dominic was watching her, and suddenly she felt like a rabbit caught in a snare. She could feel the passion in his words, feel the man's wicked intent in his seductive croon.

With the intense way he watched her, looked at her, sought out her eyes with his, she wondered if Dominic had chosen this song purposely. To prepare her, to warn her.

The electricity, the intense connection flooded between them, snapped between them as strong as any rope or silken cord could. Mary could feel her heartbeat accelerate, could feel herself growing damper and short of breath.

An image entered her mind, herself in her small but cozy bedroom, lying naked under the covers, while Dominic crept like a shadow, sliding into her room to seduce her. Seduce her with his words and wicked deeds. His hands, his tongue, his cock. She felt enticed, scared and enthralled all at once.

Somehow Dominic managed to dare her with this song. His eyes glinting in the dark bar, he grinned as he crooned the words to her. Despite his bad boy demeanor, despite his self-proclamation in that email of having a different woman every night, Mary could feel the intensity radiating from him. This was not a man she would want to fall on the bad side of.

Mary half-listened to the spectacular guitar instrumental by Lee, and before she realized, it was over and the saxophone was wailing its final notes. Samuel came

forward and thanked the bar and its patrons. Mary blinked, and Dominic began to cross the dance floor, making a beeline for her.

Women left and right were throwing themselves at him, as more than a dozen scantily clad, clinging women converged on Samuel and Lee. None of the three men would have even the faintest problem of acquiring a bed partner—or three—tonight.

Mary dug in her purse for a tip. She couldn't put her finger on any one thing that had given the two brothers away—but she was now *convinced* they really were werewolves, stupid as it sounded.

Something, maybe her intuition, readily accepted these men turned into huge beasts during the full moon. While she didn't believe they became mindless, ravaging beasts, something inside her clicked when she looked deep into Dominic's eyes. She wanted to think this through more thoroughly.

"Can I buy you a drink? My name is Dominic."

The simple, husky words effectively froze her and muddled her thoughts. She didn't need to turn around to work out who was standing half-behind her. She could feel the heat of his body, even without the contact.

Taking a deep breath—this is, after all, what she had come for—she looked up into Dominic's face. His hair was all shaggy from running his hands through it over and over during his breaks on the saxophone. He looked ruffled and sexy, as if he had just stepped out of bed.

Mary smiled. Now that the moment had arrived, all her nerves fled. *Go with the flow*, Chloe had insisted. Well, here she was, going with the flow.

"Sure, thanks. I'm Mary."

Placing the strap of her bag back over her shoulder, she waved to the seat on the other side of her table. Dominic ordered a Scotch for himself, and a refill of her light beer. As he sat down, his legs brushed hers. A thrill of electric current passed between them. Mary had never reacted so strongly physically to a man before.

For just a moment, she worried about the wisdom of a one-night stand. Barely had the thought crossed her mind than her confidence returned. Dominic seemed like a nice enough guy. He certainly wasn't interested in anything permanent. Why not have one night of ecstatic sex while she was here? One night would surely be enough after it was over.

Mary smiled as she raised her glass in a silent toast to Dominic. He smiled and returned the toast with one of his huge, charming grins. Mary felt her heart accelerate and a warm flush spread over her body.

The night had just begun.

Chapter Four

Dominic did his best not to stare at the woman seated across from him. He had to remind himself constantly that she might be an enemy. Her musky, womanly scent teased and tormented him—hinting at how she would smell when creaming and open fully to him.

As this woman had such a naturally musky scent, the thought of the tang her desire could add to that musk had him nearly rabid with the need to open her to him, to have her taste on his lips and tongue. The question of whether she would indeed merely smell and taste better when aroused had left him with a permanent boner during all the sets.

He desperately tried to remind himself this woman might be conspiring against him and his brothers—to ignore the immense heat and sexual chemistry she brought to life in his body with a mere glance.

When he first entered the bar to take the stage, he had smelled her. From clear across the room the musky, taunting scent of her body reached him and grabbed his libido and guts in a fierce clench. When he finally got a clear view of her, his knees had threatened to buckle underneath him.

A pint-sized package of sex and temptation, that's exactly what Ms. Mary Dennison was. It was hard to tell exactly what height she was, sitting down at the table, but Dominic guessed she reached around five-foot-two or three.

Just like the animated woman he still dreamed about, she had long red hair that caught the lights and glinted with temptation. Even across the bar he could see her wicked green eyes that changed colors, from blue-green to the deepest of emerald greens, like the sea.

For possibly the first time ever, Dominic was trying desperately hard to control his sexual urgings. The mating game, as he liked to call the complex sexual rituals a man and woman danced through, had never seemed so challenging and interesting.

He kept reminding himself he needed to pump her for information, but his rampant cock kept insisting on another form of pumping altogether. Through all of this, the back of his brain insisted this woman had no criminal motives. Yet Dominic refused to be ruled by his cock, however lovely the outcome of following his desires might be.

The tiny part of his brain still working, the intellectual side of him insisted there must be a reason this woman sought him out here. The fact she had found him in such a short period of time proved to him she was indeed clever, and thus he needed to be wary.

Pity the thinking part of him was so small. The rest of him, hormones, cock and

body were all interested in a completely different agenda. One that included getting naked and very frisky in the quickest time possible.

His lust-crazed hormones desperately wanted to pick her up, carry her out of the bar and back to his apartment. He craved to slowly show her each and every fantasy he had ever written about, ever dreamed in the heat of the night.

The longer he looked at her, sought out teasing glimpses of her, he found her even more beautiful than the animated cartoon she had used to tease him. Her breasts were a decent handful, her hair looked as soft as silk, her skin was the pale, creamy shade of a true redhead.

But her eyes...her eyes were pure temptation. They held laughter and secrets; carnal urgings and a womanly confidence in her own sexual skills were all hidden within those emerald green eyes.

Dominic smiled. Here, finally, was a woman who would challenge him. He merely hoped he could hold his lust in check long enough to find out what she really wanted from him. There had to be a reason for her visit, and he needed to know before he seduced her silly and thrust himself deeply inside her.

Everything tonight was a new spin on a previously well-worn concept of the mating rituals he underwent most nights of the week. Mary, though she obviously didn't realize it, was adding spice into his life. He merely had to remind himself she might be an enemy and to keep on his toes and his thoughts out of the gutter.

Never had the thought of questioning a woman sounded so sweet. Never had the complexities of life he adored seemed quite so enticing and arousing.

Taking a sip of his Scotch, he felt the warm amber liquid burn down his throat. With luck, he could question her in his favorite manner. He had often fantasized about teasing a helpless captive. Driving a sexy woman mad with desire and tease her to her breaking point. Never being given the opportunity, Dominic had played out other fantasies instead, following the more normal strictures of the mating game.

Yet here was his perfect opportunity.

Wondering how quickly he could lead her back to his apartment, she surprised him with her candor and boldness.

"Much as I'd love to sit here with you and have a few more drinks—what say we head back to your place?"

Usually, Dominic loved having women take control at this stage. It showed that not only were they mature enough to know what they wanted and go for it, but it also showed a confidence in themselves that was an instant turn-on for him. Amazingly, his cock hardened even more and he smiled.

"One question first, Mary; are you a criminal?"

Surprise flared in her eyes. *Fantastic*, he had caught her off-guard.

"No, I'm not. Is that a common question you ask potential bedmates?"

Dominic carefully and slowly took another sip of his Scotch. "Not usually, no. Yet

it's not usual that someone who had been inside my brothers' security files tracks me down looking like sin and temptation incarnate, either."

Dominic carefully studied his quarry. She seemed reluctant, surprised.

"A very dear friend of mine—a young acquaintance—took a stupid dare. He got stuck. I got him out. It won't happen again. End of story."

Dominic really looked at Mary. His intuition told him she was speaking the truth—just as he had hoped. Deeper questioning could come later in the evening, when his cock was sated and when he had the time and privacy to indulge in some of his harder fantasies—Mary seemed confident enough and bold enough to be willing to follow along.

Even if she weren't willing, she didn't seem like the kind of woman who would go along with something she wasn't comfortable with. She would tell him if he pushed her too far.

He nodded, his mind made up and his cock bursting from his pants. "Fine. Shall we leave?"

He stopped when Mary put a hand on his arm.

"If you can be blunt, may I?"

Dominic paused, curious. "Of course, my dear, ask away."

When Mary leaned forward, bent her head for more privacy, looking around to make sure no one could listen in, his curiosity piqued. What on earth was she going to say?

"Are you and your brothers really werewolves?"

She asked with such caution, such sincerity he felt a smile broaden his face. He raised an eyebrow. His macho, male show of arrogance obviously unsettled her. She rushed on, "I found an old email, quite by accident. I came here because I simply had to know, would go insane if I didn't find out for sure."

"And so you came here dressed as tempting as sin to seduce the information out of me?"

Dominic could barely believe the very faint flush that rose to her cheeks. Mary certainly wasn't some virginal miss, yet he had flustered her. He idly wondered if that flush went all the way down her neck to her delectable breasts. He resolved to find out later tonight.

Taking pity on her and her strange show of bravado and awkwardness, he bent toward her and brushed a kiss along her cheek.

"Yes, love. We are werewolves. Do you still want to come back to my place?"

Dominic held still, patiently, as Mary looked carefully over him. He tried to rein in his impatience. He felt a thrill go through him as she placed her hand in his.

The electric connection between them had merely grown with their urgent questions answered. He knew Mary would want a deeper explanation and he would be happy to give her one later. Just as he wanted a deeper explanation of this very dear

friend who had hacked into Art's security files.

Time enough for all those deeper explanations later. His hard-on was making him dizzy. All the blood had rushed south a number of hours ago when he first smelled Mary. He had been hard so long, he could barely walk straight.

"Let me just say goodnight to my brother, then we can be on our way."

As she nodded, Dominic stood up, still clutching her hand. He indulged himself, bent over and kissed her soft lips. The heady, musky scent nearly brought him to his knees, begging for more right there in the bar.

Taking a firm grip on himself, he made do with the simple, far too chaste kiss, and headed over to the huge crowd surrounding his brother and good friend.

Samuel and Lee were holding court among fully half the women in the crowded bar. As Samuel saw him approach, he disentangled himself from a particularly busty, clinging blonde, and started to meet him halfway.

Lee, however, with an arm around a busty redhead clinging to his neck stringing kisses along his half-bared chest, and another arm around a willowy blonde, seemed to be enjoying himself too much to do more than nod and wink.

Pulling Samuel aside, he explained he was taking Mary home with him to question her. Samuel laughed.

"Need some help, Dom? I would love to assist you. It's been a while since we...double-teamed."

Once in a while, Dominic and Samuel would both desire the same girl. If she was experienced enough, and they were in the mood, the thought of taking both brothers appealed to the girl. As a casual thing, the brothers enjoyed sharing in a threesome.

While Dominic had never minded sharing his women with Samuel, something about Mary cautioned him that he wouldn't feel so casual about sharing her. He felt a sardonic smile cross his face. Samuel seemed perplexed and Dom couldn't find the words to explain how he felt without having his brother howl with laughter and keep him hanging around even longer.

Dominic was amused to find he seemed to have a streak of possessiveness and jealousy he had never before possessed when it came to this particular woman. Explaining this to Samuel, however, would bring brotherly jeers and waste more time than he felt prepared to give.

He quickly pushed down and ignored the flare of masculine possessiveness. He was merely curious about her. She was gorgeous and he had been entertaining fantasies about her since he saw that damn animated picture of her.

He was interested in satisfying his curiosity, and having some brilliant sex with a hot woman. After he had slaked his desire somewhat, he could then ask the rest of his questions, and find out what she wanted with the records. This he could all achieve by himself – Samuel wouldn't be needed.

Sure, buddy. This has nothing to do with the fact she's hot and you're horny for her and

don't wanna share.

He ignored the mocking laughter that reverberated inside his head.

"No thanks, Sam. I think I can handle her myself."

When Samuel raised an eyebrow, he felt himself flush.

"I don't think I've ever heard you turn down one of my offers for that. She special?"

"Of course not," he bristled. "I just thought that you have enough women here, I'd spare you the effort of taking so many numbers and trying to call them later on. I can handle one tiny woman all by myself."

Samuel snickered and Dominic felt himself bristle again.

"Just don't leave me the only unmated brother, okay? I'm already sick of Sophie and Josephine setting me up with every female in shouting distance. I don't need three women around in my life pushing me to mate and settle down."

Dominic raised an eyebrow.

"I'll merely be questioning her as to why her friend hacked into our security, and how she managed to get out of it. That's all."

"Friend?"

Dominic shut his mouth and glared at his brother.

Rolling his eyes and sighing, Samuel let it slide. "Whatever. Just call if you need a hand, okay?"

Nodding, Dominic returned to Mary. She was standing by their table, watching the other patrons and slowly sipping her beer. Dominic felt a large grin spread across his face. All night, heated images of ways he would question his unknowing captive had been torturing him, keeping his cock as hard as steel. With the myriad of naughty images flicking around his brain, and the huge toothy grin on his face, Dominic had never felt so much like the Big Bad Wolf.

Now and then, when a partner had broached the subject, he had dabbled in bondage. There was little in the right circumstance that he wouldn't do, and even less that wouldn't turn him on. As he drew closer to Mary, he noticed her ass was as delectable as that of the animated figure, maybe better, for this ass he could grab and use as he plunged himself into her.

She was shorter than he had expected. At six-foot even, he was the shortest of his brothers, and used to privately lament that inch or two he lacked—while publicly ribbing his brothers about the extra inch or two he had on them in *other* areas.

Drawing up next to Mary, he relished the feeling of power he felt towering over her. He felt like a conquering hero, like a warlord about to ravish the spoils of his war.

Dominic silently shook his head. His brain really needed a challenge. He had no idea just how wild his imagination could be. Maybe it was simply Mary bringing it out in him. Hastily, he discarded the thought.

Wrapping an arm around Mary, he bent down and nipped at her neck. She jumped,

startled, but then melted into his embrace.

She was incredibly responsive to him. He felt his cock harden even more. This was certainly his lucky night.

“Did you drive?”

She nodded, tried to clear her throat.

“Come on, then. I hitched a lift with Sam. I’ll give you directions to my apartment.”

Leading them both out the door, he ignored the few women who tried vainly to catch his attention. Lost in Mary’s musky scent, enjoying the faintest whiff of tang he had been sure would become more and more present as he worked on her during the coming night, Dominic barely even registered the seductive smiles and pouts of the other women.

He only had eyes for Mary as she led him to her small car parked on the street.

Giving her the easy directions, within minutes they were again pulling up to park on the street. Neither of them had said anything much beyond the directions, and he was glad for it. Feeling as though he were drowning in her scent, Dominic wasn’t sure he could have coherently carried on a conversation.

Locking the car, he led her up into his den...apartment.

Chapter Five

Mary tried to control her excitedly racing heart as she waited impatiently for Dominic to unlock his apartment door. She could barely believe how eager she was to have sex with this man.

She wasn't exactly a nun and had never pretended to be. Yet, when she thought back through her past encounters with men, her average record of uninspiring lovers didn't make her Little Miss Slut-Puppy either.

With her most important question answered – kind of – the knowledge that he was a werewolf seemed rather secondary to the night of screaming, heart-pounding intense sex she intended to indulge in.

She was determined to wallow and enjoy tonight, make a million memories that could burn in her mind for the next few months. Stories she could repeat and wickedly tell her grandchildren when she was old and alone. Stories of how she was seduced by a werewolf, stories of how *she* seduced a werewolf and had one incredible night of screaming-to-the-rooftop, excellent sex.

As Dominic opened the door, stepping gallantly aside to let her enter first, she brushed her curvy body against his much harder, muscled frame. He froze, eyes widening. Mary felt that rush of sexual energy spread across them both again. Grinning, she stepped into his neat apartment.

Dominic flicked the lights on, and Mary took a quick look around. Neat and compact, it was obvious this was not his primary place of residence. The comfy place had the feel of a summer home, or winter residence, not that of a permanent home.

Turning back to Dominic, she watched him shut and lock the door behind them. When he turned and leaned against the door, smiling sexily, she decided to take the lead. Better to be the seductress. A part of her mind considered if she could take control sexually, it would be far easier for her to leave in the morning.

She sashayed up to him and pressed her body against his lean muscles. She felt her pelvis press against his hips, aligning his iron-hard erection with her eager pussy. Just as she imagined, his cock was long and thick, definitely eager to start. Stretching up to him, she pulled his head down to meet hers.

Gently at first, she pressed her lips to his. They were soft, she found, surprised. His lips were so soft they stole her breath. Dominic uttered a low moan, heating her blood.

Eagerly, she pried his lips open and slipped her tongue inside his mouth. He was so hot inside! The damp, wet heat of his mouth beckoned to her, drew her deeper inside him. She swept her tongue over his, enjoying the slightly rough texture.

Mary wanted more. Still stretching up to kiss him, to explore his mouth, she ran one

palm down his shirt, enjoying the hardness of his chest muscles, even through the thin fabric. Unsnapping his buttons, one by one, she soon had a small window of space to slip her hand inside.

“Are you the sort of girl to half finish a task?” he huskily murmured.

“Not at all.” She continued touching his heated skin, teasing and taunting him. “I’m merely a girl who likes to take her time and smell the roses as I pass by. Besides,” she teased him as she flicked one of his nipples, causing him to groan, “it’s not as if we’re in a rush, we *do* have all night, and I intend to enjoy my time, not rush blindly through it.”

Mary quivered at the appreciative laugh rumbling in Dominic’s chest. With her hand pressed against his warm skin, she could feel the chuckles, the muscle contractions along his pecs right down to his flat abdomen.

Mary’s curiosity suddenly overwhelmed her. She needed to see this man, not just pockets of his bare flesh. She finished unbuttoning his shirt. Pulling it from his shoulders, she carelessly let it fall to the floor in a crumpled heap.

As Mary found her breath leave her body, she reminded herself she was a mature woman of thirty-five, not an eager virgin of eighteen. Dominic had broad shoulders, easily enough to bear the weight and worries of the world. His large, deep chest was perfectly muscled, not overly so like on many men who worked out too much at the gym.

His chest, just like his gorgeous face, was perfectly tanned. The deep brown sun-kissed skin flowed from his neck down over his chest all the way to his lean hips. His pants covered his body from the hips down, but Mary felt her mouth water at the thought of the continuance of both the tan and this man’s splendid body. The light dusting of practically black hair over his chest made him seem more masculine—not overly hairy.

As his wicked eyes and cheeky grin proclaimed, this was certainly a model of male perfection. If the glint of laughter in his eyes were any indication, he could certainly live up to the reputation his body was declaring.

Mary firmly held the notion in her head not to drool. She didn’t want to embarrass herself before her first taste of that skin, or before she could hold his rigid cock in her hands.

“Like what you see, love?”

Mary glared at him. “You know good and well any female with a pulse is attracted to your body. You’re lucky you don’t raise the dead with that tan and chest.”

“I think you’re being unfair.”

“How so?” she asked, still lost in the magnificence of his body.

Dominic grinned, confusing Mary even more, for an instant. “Here I am—shirtless and bare before you—whereas you are still fully clothed.”

Mary grinned and started unbuckling his belt. “Tell you what, big boy. I’ll undress you and seduce you senseless, and then you can undress and seduce me. We can take

turns and cooperate.”

Dominic’s grin deepened, and Mary could swear she saw something wicked glint in his eye. What had he just thought of?

“Promise?”

Mary laughed, surprised at how easy it was to convince him. “Of course!”

“Then go for it, love. Just don’t forget your promise when it comes to my turn.”

Mary paused for a moment and then cast her doubts aside. After all, she was here voluntarily. She desperately wanted to seduce this man, to hold him in the palm of her hand and then deep in her mouth.

Hell, she wanted it all, and to do it right now. What could he possibly do to her except make her scream as she came?

Growing damp at *those* sorts of thoughts, she returned back to the task at hand. She had boasted she could seduce him, and damned if she would stand here drooling with so much beefcake standing half-naked in front of her!

Slowly, letting her hands caress each inch of beautiful bare skin they came into contact with, she began to unsnap Dominic’s pants. Ever so slowly, snap-by-snap, she released his body from the cumbersome clothes. She had to grin in smug satisfaction as Dominic quickly toed his shoes off, more than eager for her ministrations.

The tan does indeed extend all the way down, she mused. His flat abdomen, his slim hips, all perfect and divine.

So very carefully, Mary pulled the pants down his long legs, revealing vivid, fire engine red boxer shorts. Unexpectedly, there were no lewd suggestions on the shorts. If she had to guess, she would have expected something like “I’ll hose you down” or “Firemen leave ‘em wet” printed on the sexy shorts. Yet there was nothing on the shorts. Merely a taunting bulk proving it’s what is *in* the shorts that counts.

As Mary bent down lower to remove his shoes and help him step out of the pants, she looked up the length of his body to stare at his face.

His face had flushed, his eyes looked wild, and Mary had a sudden image of how she must look to him. With her red hair falling around her shoulders and her breasts trussed up in a black lace bra and very low-cut red top, he would have a perfect view down the depths of her cleavage.

She grinned wickedly, enjoying the momentary vision of how he must see her, practically kneeling in front of him in the supplicant’s position, breasts up in offering, her face right in front of his huge cock.

As Dominic hastily kicked aside the pants, Mary revised her plans. She had been going to drag him into his bedroom and have her wicked way with him, but something about the heat and glitter in his eyes had her rethinking her plans.

She knelt fully on the carpeted floor, catching her balance by grabbing the back of his thighs. She felt a momentary spurt of pride as surprise flared in his eyes. Surprise and heat. Having one up on this man was fun, but more, a challenge she adored.

“Mary –”

“Shhh...” she soothed, carefully pulling down the elastic waistband of his boxer shorts.

With barely a whisper of sound, they fell to the floor. They were a surprising, bright splash of color against the blackness of his pants and shirt.

Mary tried hard not to gape as his cock sprang free. Heavy and thick, it exceeded all her midnight fantasies and dreams. He stood proudly at attention, declaring for all the world to see how she affected him. For just a second she wallowed in the knowledge that *she* could turn him on, that *she* had brought this reaction to him—not some other skinny bimbo whom he would screw senseless and forget the next morning.

Teasingly, she puffed her hot breath over him, enjoying the slight twitches her heat brought to his cock. She could swear he was still growing thicker and longer, but up so close it could just be a part of her imagination.

“Mary –” he groaned, obviously reaching the point of no return.

Mary smiled. “Yes?” she panted, letting the heat of that one word flow over his cock. She licked her lips, moistening them as she looked up into Dominic’s eyes.

He could tell she was letting him watch her prepare herself to take him deep inside her mouth.

Drawing out that last moment until she knew he was about to drag her head closer to him, she smiled. “Are you safe?” she inquired, half listening but too eager for him to be truly worried.

“Yes, totally, will show you the doctor’s certificate later if you want. Just *please* –”

Quickly, she leaned forward, swallowing as much of him as she could without gagging. The hoarse shout from Dominic spurred her on. Sucking hard, she bobbed her head, taking more of him. Arching her eyebrows, she watched the play of emotions cross his face.

Surprise, pleasure – and then a fierce restraint.

Mary swiped the tip of his cock with her tongue. Reaching her hands up, she began to fondle his balls.

“Oh, shit –” he choked, clasping his hands to the back of her head.

Mary gently rolled his balls with one hand, while stroking the little bit of his shaft she couldn’t swallow with her other. Fisting him, pumping him, she worked him into a wild, reckless frenzy. Quicker and quicker she moved on him, pleased to feel him cant his hips so he thrust deeper into her mouth.

As she worked, the sounds of his moans and that unique slurping sound that only oral sex can produce filled the air. Mary constantly looked up to Dominic’s face, eager to see his pleasure radiating from him, enveloping him as she sucked on him.

She swirled her tongue over his tip, enjoying the salty tang of his pre-cum. As she felt his balls tighten and rise slightly, Mary continued to pump him, wanting to thrust him over the orgasm that sat just out of reach for him.

As Dominic started to cry out, he tightened his hands in her curls. His head thrown back, eyes closed in ecstasy, he grabbed the back of her head, pulling her even lower down his shaft. His hips pressed forward, desperate to thrust deeper inside her. She smiled and relaxed her throat muscles, as eager to swallow him as he was to be swallowed.

Still gently rolling his balls, she could feel the hardness grow in them until he finally cried out, spewing jet after jet of scalding hot cum down her throat. She easily swallowed the familiar, slightly bitter taste of cum, gently sucking him as his thrusts became less urgent and less deep.

When she had wrung him dry, she licked his tip a few more times, just to tease.

Pulling away from him, she sat back on her haunches and grinned. Still fully clothed, she enjoyed the sight of his masculine beauty, the slight sheen of sweat covering his tanned body.

Feeling a bit like the cat who swallowed the cream, both literally and figuratively, Mary grinned up at her lover. He grinned back at her, a wicked, evil, devil-may-care grin that promised untold passion in the night to come.

“Well, that was a pleasant, surprising appetizer, love. What say I carry you into the bedroom and we can begin the entrée? I do believe it’s my turn to undress and seduce you, now that you have so kindly released the worst of my pressure.”

Mary grinned. It seemed like Dominic was serious about a tit-for-tat system. Now that she had pleased him, it was his turn to pleasure her.

While she had no worries at all about them both giving and receiving pleasure, she was still determined to ultimately stay in control of tonight’s sexual odyssey. She had no desire to leave tomorrow morning with a broken heart. She was a well-versed, experienced woman. She was sure she could hold her own against this stud muffin of a werewolf.

Chapter Six

Dominic tried not to grin with delight as he helped Mary to her feet. He looked at himself, amused at how his flaccid, totally blown away cock desperately tried to raise its head. Mary had certainly surprised him with her impromptu blowjob.

He had, of course, received more blowjobs than he could possibly count over the years; but something about having Mary kneeling at his feet, in the age-old posture of supplication, sucking away at his meat, got him harder than he had ever been before.

With everything she did, every gesture she performed, his Mary seemed to up the stakes in this delicate dance, this mating game they were playing.

With her musky scent enveloping him, and that tangy smell of her cream mixing with her scent, she drove him wild. It made him feel as free as he did while running in the woods, paying homage to his mistress the moon. It shattered him and blew his mind away.

With the edge off, he could now start his plans, albeit a tad later in this game than he had intended.

Something about this woman drove him nuts, made him forget all his carefully laid plans and throw caution to the wind. While being reckless was nothing precisely new to him, Mary seemed to bring an element of the unknown into every situation with her. She was a conundrum, a wild card. And he loved it.

Life would certainly be more than interesting with her around.

His mouth watered at the thought of how he would stretch her, fit so snugly within her tight passage he could feel their hearts beating in sync with each other. He relished the challenge of her, the questions he would ask, and the new and surprisingly important mating game he would begin tonight.

The way she had taken him within her mouth, had relished sucking him, showed his beleaguered brain that she liked being in control. He could tell she liked calling the shots. He grinned in pure masculine delight. It was always far more fun to dominate someone who enjoyed the feeling of security control gave them.

Not only was it far more of a challenge to dominate a strong-minded female, but the surprising and uninhibited responses one got from these women were far richer and deeper than that of a normal submissive partner.

Smiling wickedly, Dominic resisted the impulse to strip her there in his living room. Gently leading her with his firm grip on her arm, he took her through into his big bedroom.

Shutting the door behind them, he leaned back against it. "Go over to the bed."

He struggled desperately not to laugh at Mary's mockingly raised eyebrow. He

wondered for a moment if he would need to remind her of their deal—tit-for-tat. He hadn't questioned anything she did to him, now it was time for her to follow his lead.

He watched Mary quietly; let her look him up and down in his naked state, proving to her how he had followed her lead. With a short nod of her head, she followed his command and walked over to the enormous king-sized bed.

She paused saucily beside its edge, only following his literal command. Obviously she intended to make him work for every inch he could get.

Ah, the challenges she presented. *Let the mating game begin*, his brain mocked. The night stretched before him, taunting him with how much he could share with Mary, with the pleasure they could both get. Never had a woman appealed and challenged him like this one.

He pushed aside the very rampant male part of him that wanted to brand her here and now, mark her as his, and take her in every conceivable way. Dominic halted that train of thought.

One only marked one's mate...she couldn't possibly be that woman for him! Forcefully, Dominic cast aside the thoughts, willing himself to wallow in the game as he always had.

"Remove your shirt."

Slowly, inch-by-inch, she lifted her arms to the hem of the midriff top. Raising the shirt an inch at a time, she teased and taunted him with the exposure of her pale flesh. Dominic licked his lips, his control starting to slip.

Since being a teenager he had recognized his weakness for female flesh. He was a dedicated breasts man—but he loved every inch of every woman he met. Breasts, soft stomachs, thighs—particularly when they were spread for him and he could rest between them—necks and shoulders, backs and always, *always* he was up for a luscious ass. He enjoyed licking, nibbling and simply exploring every inch of a woman's form.

"The bra..."

Clearing his throat, Dominic hoped he didn't sound too much like a dying man. Mary grinned, and bent her arms back to unclasp the scrap of black lace some devious salesperson had convinced his Mary passed for a bra.

Even as she unveiled her beautiful, full breasts to his gaze, Dominic inhaled her scent deeply. There was just something about Mary's musky scent that drove him wild; something about her silky soft hair and pale, satin-soft skin that he couldn't resist. Deep inside himself, he knew she would be branded into his heart and soul forever.

As Mary teasingly exposed her bountiful breasts, removing the black lace and spilling her creamy mounds into her own small hands, Dominic knew one night simply wouldn't be enough—for the first time in more years than he cared to think about.

He paid no attention to the cheeky top, nor the black lacy scrap that had fallen crumpled to his floor. Too busy concentrating on the skin he desperately craved like a drug, the scraps of clothes were forgotten the instant they were removed from her

luscious body.

“Now the pants.”

Dominic cursed his stupidity as Mary bent down to unbuckle her shoes, to kick them off before removing her black hipsters. The action of her bending down squeezed her breasts even closer together, deepening the already impressive cleavage to his view and swinging enticingly.

Dominic’s cock stood up straight at attention—more than ready for some action.

Buck naked, he knew as soon as Mary righted herself to slip the hipsters over her hips and ass she would see his state. When that knowing, feminine grin came to her face Dominic reminded himself he needed some answers. He had planned to take his time here—to tease her, to taunt her. He had wanted to drive her to a fever pitch, ask her questions about who and why she had helped a petty criminal out of their system.

Yet all he could think about was his hungry cock, about thrusting balls deep into her tight, wet flesh. If he took her here and now, just like his imagination showed him in vivid detail, if he thrust himself into her over and over until they both fell asleep from the exhaustion, he would never find the answers he sought.

So he restrained himself and cursed his unruly cock. Never had he needed to hold himself back. All three of his brothers had teased him, saying he needed more restraint—more control over himself and his urges. Now wouldn’t they laugh to see him eager as a schoolboy, practically spilling his seed on the carpet in his desperation to enter this particular woman?

Taking her own sweet time—obviously knowing exactly the reaction her stripping caused him—after what felt like an age Mary stood up. Clad only in her wispy set of panties she looked like his favorite wet dream. The high cut made him wonder if it were actually a thong.

Shit. He loved thongs.

“Turn—” He cleared his throat, wishing for a glass of water. “Turn around, show me your back.”

With a saucy grin, showing she knew exactly the predictability of his thoughts, she obligingly turned around, showing him her luscious, perfectly rounded ass. Taunting him even further, just like her animated image from their computer play, she wiggled her ass at him.

Swaying gently from side to side, he felt as if she hypnotized him. When she looked back over her shoulder, her hair a fiery mass of curls, her ass so delightfully rounded, encased in the skimpy black thong, he worried his cock would burst.

Damn. A thong. The Goddess has got to be smiling on me tonight.

Even with the tiny scrap of lace, the thong framed her ass to his view. The teasing bit of material nestled happily between her cheeks, taunting him with how soft and tender her flesh would be, how sweet and hot her ass was. He could imagine sinking his teeth so gently, yet firmly, into that soft flesh. He could smell the tangy musk

emanating from her weeping cunt. He felt his mouth water at the thought of lapping up those juices.

Closing his eyes a moment, Dominic mentally brought up his and Samuel's concerns about the security of their site. She was somehow involved with a hacker. He needed to know about her association with the kid who had made it into their system. Hell, for all he knew it could have been her son! He glanced once more at her hands. No band circled her finger.

Not even the thought of her with another man's children could deplete his lust for her. His cock couldn't care less. She was a delicious female with an ass he could happily sink his teeth into, breasts he could barely restrain himself from suckling, and a mane of long red hair he wanted running all over his body.

Reining in his control, swearing someone would pay for the restraint he had to employ to function even at this base level, Dominic attempted to calm himself down.

"Climb on to the bed," he croaked and wished to hell he could clear his throat without seeming like an eager virgin about to spill his seed for the first time.

Huge grin in place, Mary climbed onto the bed – on all fours. Shit, how could she know that was one of his favorite positions?

Again, mental images danced in front of his eyes. Mary, bound on his bed, up on all fours. Him, naked and hot, behind her, holding her ass in his huge hands. He could see himself thrusting into her over and over until they both collapsed from exhaustion, or had fucked themselves raw. Either way it didn't matter.

She would be wet, tight. He could smell her musky scent; taste her juices as they covered them both. He would plunge into her over and over and over...

Get a grip!

Dominic blinked and tried to focus. The scarves were under his pillows, the toys were in the large chest of drawers next to the bed. Somehow a scene that, previous to tonight, had slightly repulsed him now had his mouth watering in anticipation, had him hard as a rock and hoping to make it through without losing control.

By now, Mary had posed herself in one of the classic centerfold positions. Legs tucked half underneath her ass, lying back amongst the pillows, arms crooked behind her head as if she hadn't a care in the world. In the scanty black lace, red hair softly falling around her, pale skin shining, she could easily be gracing any number of magazine covers come to life.

Dominic swallowed and swore he would feast on every inch of that delectable flesh – after he had his answers. He loved Samuel to bits and couldn't possibly face him if he didn't have the answers they both sought. Playtime could come after he had satisfied his curiosity.

Wishing to hell his cock was as reasonable as his brain, Dominic prayed harder to the Goddess than he could ever remember doing.

Oh mistress, he pleaded, give me strength.

Chapter Seven

Mary lay back in the huge bed, thinking furiously. *You schmuck! Why the hell didn't you ask him about being a werewolf when you had the chance?*

Mary took a deep breath. Being honest with herself, she knew not a single thought of asking questions had crossed her mind. She had enjoyed sucking him, touching his hot skin, fondling him so much all thoughts of asking him questions had flown from her mind.

Even if she *had* thought to ask questions, with her mouth so deliciously full of his cock, how could she have managed it? Anyway, she *did* know he thought he was a werewolf, it's just knowing that brought up a million other questions.

Being even more honest with herself, would she have *chosen* to ask questions if it meant taking her mouth away from that huge cock?

Mary squirmed. From the heat of her skin, dampness of her pussy, the desire rolling through her blood like a wave, she worried the answer would be a resounding "no"!

She did, however, feel a measure of relief seeing the intensity of heat and desire coursing through Dominic's eyes. By the look of things, he was just as helpless in his lust as she was in hers. Even though Dominic had answered her major question, admitting he was a werewolf, so many smaller things needed clarifying. Did he become a raving killer when he changed? Could silver bullets really harm him? Did he heal fast like werewolves of myth?

Despite the multitude of questions rolling through her mind, a few things she simply knew from instinct. The werewolves of myth held nothing when compared with reality.

She grinned.

Dominic and his brothers were all studs. No overly hairy, half-mad men here. While Dominic had a nice amount of hair on his chest, it was lightly sprinkled, arrowing cheekily down to his huge, erect cock. His eyes were smiling, wickedly glinting deep blue, not a wide, mad flaming red.

No, this was not the slobbering, raving madness of the old movie werewolf. This was an intelligent, sexy man, who somehow became a wolf. Even from the small snippet of journal she had accidentally read, Mary knew Dominic was fully conscious of his thoughts and decisions while in wolf form.

Hadn't he mentioned paying homage to his mistress the moon? Of feeling wild and free? Of scenting the forest and rich night air? None of that added up to a deranged, deluded killer beast.

As Dominic took a step toward her, she felt a thrill of lust course through her pussy.

Beautifully naked, hugely erect, he was every woman's fantasy incarnate. His deep blue eyes held wicked secrets of hot nights and hotter acts. His smile was smug and full of male knowledge. He *knew* he could satisfy her, knew a million ways to bring her to climax. Mary licked her dry lips. She hoped they could make it through a number of those ways before they both fainted from exhaustion and sexual satiation.

Dominic rested one bent knee on the edge of the bed. Mary held her centerfold position, grinning her encouragement. He leaned over to her, pulled her legs out to lay them flat. She wiggled, enjoyed the feeling of blood circulating back in her limbs.

Mary caught her breath as Dominic came over her, caging her with his huge body. His weight rested on his arms and legs, yet she could feel his presence, feel the heat pouring from his body. Mary opened her mouth slightly, silently asking for a kiss. Wanting to feel his soft lips against hers again.

When he bent down, she felt a thrill of pleasure course through her. Maybe she *could* stay in control and still act submissive. When she felt Dominic's lips press oh-so-softly against hers, she wound her arms around his neck in glee. Arching up into him, she pressed her breasts into his warm chest.

Vaguely, she noted his hands fisted and thrust under the pillows near her head.

"Now, now, little Mary. Did I tell you to move your arms?"

Mary groaned at the removal of his warm, soft lips. She lifted up, determined to kiss him just one more time, but Dominic backed away.

"For that, I think a punishment is deserved."

Mary frowned.

"Punishment? I don't do pain, Dom. Not for you, not for anyone."

"Who said anything about pain, love? I was thinking more of delayed pleasure."

Mary blinked as he pulled out a satin scarf from under the pillow.

"Uh..."

"Tit-for-tat, love. I have a few questions I must answer before I let myself go and forget everything in your delightful body."

Mary blushed slightly, but removed her arms from his neck. She might have forgotten to ask what was on her mind, yet it didn't appear Dominic would have the same problem.

Seeing the amusement in his eyes, Mary firmly resolved not to be so besotted next time. For now, she could answer his questions, and hope he could rebuild the all-consuming fire that moments ago had been burning inside her. For her part, once Dominic had had his fun, the tables would turn once more.

Mary pressed her lips together to stop the pout she could feel forming. Next time she would ask questions first, and take her pleasure second. Let's see how the big stud felt when it was her turn to give *him* a little "delayed pleasure"!

Annoying beast, she huffed silently to herself as she deigned to let him tie her wrists in the silky scarf and attach her to his headboard.

Chapter Eight

Taking surprising care, Dominic began to wrap the length of silk around Mary's wrists. After instructing her to hold onto the metal bed frame, he wound the length in a cross fashion around her wrists, taking particular care not to cut off her circulation. Now knowing how long this particular fantasy might take for him to play out, her care and wellbeing was utmost in his mind.

Having never actually played serious bondage games before, Dominic felt his excitement rise a little, even as a part of his brain wondered at his sanity. This was something new, something fresh. Yet it also was something that before tonight he had only idly wondered about, not felt this burning need to try.

It didn't take a rocket scientist to work out how these sorts of games were played, yet it brought a thrill to his chest, and more importantly his cock, to be so fully in control of his partner. He found it amusing that Fate had played him such tonight.

He had been determined to try and find a woman to pick up, with whom he felt even a modicum of curiosity about, and to begin his dabbling with such games tonight. Seconds after smelling and finding Mary, he knew he not only had incredible luck in having her arrive tonight, but also his urgent *demanding* desire to attempt such games with her burned and throbbed inside him.

He couldn't believe his luck when he had not only found Mary, but found such a desirable, delicious bed and play partner for the night.

The physical reaction Mary showed him proved she wasn't entirely opposed to this game either. There was a very faint flush over her chest, her nipples looked painfully hard. Her eyes had that half-glazed look most women got when seriously aroused. Her cheeks were flushed and the very faintest sheen of sweat shone on her forehead.

Oh yeah, Mary was hot. Dominic rested above her, his weight distributed on his arms and legs as he crouched above her. Taking his own sweet time, he closed his eyes. Surprised, he found his mouth watering in anticipation.

Giving himself a minute, he let his senses adjust to the lack of visual stimulation. When his hearing clearly picked up the difference between his own steady breaths, and Mary's slightly accelerated breaths, he let his other senses wander.

The sheets beneath him were slightly warm and crisp. The heady scent of musk and desire filled the room. He lowered his head, eyes still firmly shut, and paused, a few inches away from Mary's delectable skin.

Feeling his mouth truly start to water, afraid he would disgrace himself and begin to drool, he reined in his control.

Taking a deep breath, he fully took Mary's scent into his body. The myriad of

different scents and textures that added up to pure her. The musk, the salty tang of her slick skin, the dewy scent and flavor of her juice. The plain but wonderful scent of her soap, her herbal shampoo. Everything that together, added up into Mary.

He took her scents deep into his heart, into his very soul. She was perfect, delicious, and he would enjoy every second of eating her all up, literally and figuratively.

Letting his eyes open partially, enough to see her, yet not enough for the brightly burning lamp to hurt his eyes, he slid his glance over her flushed face. Her eyes were bright with lust and excitement. Slowly, taking his time, he moved his body downwards, until he could stare at her thong-covered pussy. Taking his time, he drew the thong down her hips and off her legs, tossing it behind him.

Her fiery red curls partially hid her from his heated view. With one finger, he gently parted her lower lips, slicking her juice around her opening and exposing her soft inner flesh.

Down here she was delightfully pink, an interesting contrast to her very pale skin. Her opening tightened, sucking at his finger as he gently inserted it into her. He stroked her walls, enjoying the damp heat of her inner self. He had to grin at the sucking, slurping noise as he removed his finger, nearly drowned out by Mary's moan of disappointment.

"Dom..." she panted.

Now that his eyes had adjusted back to the light, Dominic looked back at his bound captive, his lover, his *woman*. Suppressing the possessive, totally non-him thought, Dominic returned to his perusal of Mary.

With her arms raised above her head, her breasts thrust temptingly out, begging him to be suckled and nibbled on, Mary looked positively divine. Her eyes were closed, her head resting back on the pillows. Her legs shuffled, trying to ease the tension growing between her thighs.

Dominic grinned. She hadn't seen anything just yet.

Turning back to her luscious, weeping pussy, he gave in to his own temptation, and took a long, long, luscious lick. Mary's thighs shuddered. Her muscles clenched, and she pushed her hips up, trying to get closer, silently begging for more.

Dominic knew the slight roughness of his tongue would enhance the wet pleasure she felt. He slowly, teasingly, started to lap at her juices, careful to avoid her clit and the very sensitive outer edges of her lips.

Licking and sucking up her sweet yet salty nectar, Dominic took his own time and allowed himself to wallow in the pleasure her taste and scent brought him. He found the more he tasted her essence, the more he craved it. Like the worst addict, he had to tighten his hold on his own hunger, his own selfish desire, and concentrate on bringing Mary some pleasure too.

Slowly, he began to build the pace. His licks grew longer. Encompassing her whole opening, he began to tease her clit with the rough edge of his tongue. Slowly but surely, he built Mary into a desperate frenzy.

When she was pushing up onto his face with all her leverage, when her moans grew deep and frantic, he finally speared his whole tongue into her.

Mary cried out.

Dominic reached up, and spread her legs even further apart with his large hands. Pushing them far to each side, he lifted her legs to cant her hips even higher.

He began to eat her in earnest. Nibbling on her so-soft flesh, running his tongue over her throbbing, erect clit, Dominic gave her true pleasure. Bringing one hand away from her leg, Dominic thrust two fingers easily inside her, crooked his finger and rubbed her G-spot as he growled against her clit.

The stimulation against her previously unfound G-spot along with the vibration against her clit threw her over the edge.

Mary threw her head back deeper into the pillows, moaned deep in her throat and let loose a cry of release.

Dominic enjoyed her shudders, briefly wished it was his cock, instead of his fingers, being gripped so tightly by her sweet cunt, and lapped up the juices flowing freely from her.

He waited until her contractions ceased and she shied away from his lapping at her clit, showing her oversensitivity in her post-climactic state. He pulled his fingers from her, and slowly licked them clean. Closing his eyes, he focused on her breathing. Not as deep as when she climaxed, though still fairly rapid, he decided she had properly come down from her climax.

Ignoring the burning ache in his own cock, he promised himself full satisfaction after the questions and the next joy for her he had planned.

Reaching up, he double-checked she hadn't hurt or chafed her wrists pulling against the restraint. While he had made sure it was a silky satin scarf, it wasn't really a weak, easily torn material, as he wanted it strong enough to restrain her.

He ran his smallest finger underneath the bind, making sure there was a little moving room for circulation. Mary smiled up at him, dazed.

"That was lovely. Is it my turn?"

He kissed the tip of her nose.

"Oh no, not yet. That was only Part One of my plan."

Mary frowned.

"What happened to tit-for-tat?"

"Well, my dear, I figure once I let you out of those restraints I won't easily get you back in them. Don't fret. You'll love this even more."

Mary pouted, but he moved away from her before she could start to argue.

Scooting across the large bed, he bent down to open the chest of drawers. Rummaging around amongst the furry handcuffs, assorted dildos, tins and packages, he finally found the bottle he had been searching for.

Dr. Dare's Womanly Sensitizing Liquid.

Samuel had bought it for his last birthday and given it to him with a huge feral grin. Artemais and William had nearly choked laughing. Dominic had merely thrown it in with all the other toys and paraphernalia he had collected over the years, thinking that maybe one day he would find a use for the liquid.

He made a mental note to thank Samuel for aiding his cause with Mary.

With his back still to Mary – no point in giving his whole game away before he was ready – he unscrewed the lid and broke the safety seal. He felt Mary stiffen next to him as the unmistakable sound of breaking plastic echoed in the room.

“Uh... I did mention I don't like pain – didn't I?”

Dominic turned around and showed her the gaudy red and yellow label.

“You certainly did, my dear. I also pointed out I wasn't into it either, that I prefer delayed pleasure.” He tried to hide his grin at Mary's skeptical look at the bottle.

“Sensitizing liquid? Where on earth did you find that, a kid's joke shop?”

Dominic laughed. “No such luck, darling. Samuel bought it for me, from a very expensive adult catalogue. It might look childish and garish, but one really mustn't judge a book by its cover. I'm sure you've heard of anesthetic cream?”

He paused, waiting for Mary to nod.

“Well, this is similar, but it's edible, quite tasty from what Samuel said, and instead of anaesthetizing your...body parts, it sensitizes them, prepares them. It will heighten your own arousal, and make even the gentlest of my touches that much hotter.”

Desperate to begin, Dominic nevertheless spared a brief moment for safety's sake. Squirting a small amount onto his inner wrist, he tested the cream on himself.

Having helped feed his numerous nephews and nieces, he knew how important it was to test bottles against his inner wrist before a feeding. While he trusted Samuel with his life, and knew he would never knowingly give him something dangerous to try on a lady, neither did he want to blindly assume there was no hidden catch Samuel hadn't warned him of.

After a few seconds, the patch of skin felt warm. Dominic could feel his own blood pumping under his skin, could feel the tingling sensation of his skin becoming more sensitive. There was a very faint burning sensation, but it was a heat style of burning, not an itchy or irritating style of burning.

The cream was perfect for what he intended for Mary.

He let Mary look at the small patch of skin on his inner wrist – to prove it was safe.

“No irritation, no harmful burning sensation. You know I wouldn't knowingly do anything to hurt you, love.”

At Mary's cautious nod, he squirted a dollop of the cream onto her still-peaked nipple. He stared at the cream as it slowly slid down her nipple and over her rounded breast. Unable to merely watch, he reached out and gently massaged it into her soft skin.

Mary arched her back and moaned – at the gentle massage, or the warm heat of the cream he was unsure. The spot on his inner wrist still tingled. It seemed to soak up the heat of his skin, seemed to feel the heat radiating from Mary's breast.

Dominic upturned the bottle again, to anoint her other nipple. Flicking the cap back on, he let the bottle rest beside their bodies for a moment. Idly, he glanced down at the truly garish label.

600 ml – Extra Large bottle, for more fun! he read. Fantastic. More fun for everyone.

Grinning happily, he set to work with his hands, now covered in the sensitizing cream. The heat seemed to radiate between them, from his hands through to her breasts and back to him again. He intended to massage her until neither of them could cope anymore.

He had always been good with his hands.

Chapter Nine

Mary tried her best not to squirm. The aching hunger growing inside her was astounding. She'd had lovers before. Many lovers, though never more than one at a time, and somehow never falling down the slippery slope of slutdom, or becoming uncaring of whom she shared herself with. She even knew how to pleasure herself, when the run between lovers grew too long. She preferred the heated thrusts of a man between her thighs, but upon occasion when she simply couldn't bear it, she knew how to wield a vibrator quite decently.

Yet never before had she *burned* like this. Never had she felt every ripple of rough skin against her own much smoother skin. Never had the friction between herself and said lover been so unbearably sweet and desperate.

Dominic seemed to know instinctively when to be rough and when to be gentle. When the cool bedroom air on her heated flesh would make her burn hotter, and when his own hot breaths puffed across her sensitized skin would be most effective.

When he took her aching nipple into his mouth she screamed with the pleasure.

There was much to be said for Dominic Rutledge's sexual skills. Here was definitely a man who knew his sexual games.

Mary moaned, twisted, pleaded and begged. Higher and higher Dominic worked her, touching, caressing, teasing her body and senses with everything he could. And just as Mary knew she could take no more, just when she instinctively knew she would have to climax or explode – he pulled back.

"What the...? Dom, finish this!"

"Now, now, my dear. How about you answer a few very simple questions?"

Mary tried to focus. Through the haze of her thoughts, her lust-crazed mind, she recalled vaguely not only that her hands were tied, but that she was at Dominic's mercy. The thought that he would repeat his teasing, drive her even further up to that peak without giving her release was enough to make her whimper. Whether in desire or frustration she had no idea.

"Whaddya wanna know?" she mumbled, happy to answer anything to feel the release her body craved.

"Who hacked into our site?" he breathed into her ear. He was so close to her she could feel the heat of his skin, smell her own tangy juices on his lips. It was incredibly erotic and frustrating at the same time.

"M'cousin...jus' a kid...dared by friends...sex now?"

Mary held her tongue. She would *not* beg and she would certainly not whimper...or not any more than she already had.

“Your cousin, hmm? I suppose when he got caught in my snare he called you in to get him out?”

She simply nodded.

“Do you think he’ll be tempted to do it again? With someone else instead of us?”

Mary shrugged. “He’s bored.” She cleared her throat—determined to stop sounding like a drunk kid testing herself with a first drink of beer.

She tried to continue. “He’s just a kid on school break. He’s good, very good, but bored. I’ve been trying to bully him to get a job, but no one will treat him seriously when he hasn’t even started college. So he lets his friends dare him into doing stupid stuff. He’s not a criminal; he’s simply a talented, bored kid. Is that all?”

“One more thing. How did you find out about us being werewolves?”

“I opened an email by accident. Thought it was a portal. Was from Samuel to you and your brothers. A teasing note about a journal entry of yours he’d found. Evidently someone had saved it outside your firewalls.”

Dominic nodded. He seemed to know exactly what she was talking of. “I’ll fix it Monday. Thank you for answering my questions, love.”

When Dominic put his hands back on her excruciatingly sensitive nipples, Mary nearly screeched.

“I’m sorry if I offended you with my timing by stopping. If I had let us continue much further I wouldn’t have been able to stop, and we’d be back to your turn. My curiosity is sated, for now. It’s more...physical cravings I wish to satisfy right now.”

Mary moaned, unable to articulate the *about* frickin’ time, mental comment she wanted to verbalize, as his hot lips took her nipple deep into his wet mouth. With a fierce determination, he continued rubbing the sensitizing liquid all over her breasts, her soft stomach and up her shoulders.

Within moments she was climaxing fiercely.

Without even a pause to let her catch her breath Dominic was starting all over again. Over and over he brought her to release. Sobbing, she demanded he fuck her.

“I want to feel your thick cock riding inside me! Please, Dom!”

“Yes!” he growled fiercely, sheathing himself deep inside her with one fierce thrust to his balls.

Yet again, Mary felt the urgency start deep in her stomach. It grew and grew, as if it had a mind of its own. A huge bundle of energy, a fierce longing and shaking, nestled deep inside her stomach and womb.

When Dominic ever-so-lightly flicked her clit, thrusting his cock so deeply inside her she marveled he fit, she felt the huge bundle erupt inside her.

Screaming her pleasure, crying and digging her nails into her hands with the desire to hold him close, Mary came for the last time. She felt Dominic’s hot seed spurt deep inside her, filling her and branding her.

As the intense feelings simmered down, she fell back into the pillows, sweating and shaking. Her eyes closed, she vaguely felt Dominic reach up to untie her hands. Subconsciously, she felt him lie beside her and pull the covers up over them, but in reality she was deeply asleep.

So this is what it feels like to be fucked to exhaustion, she dimly thought.

Mary thought she was smiling, but whether it was her dream self or her thoroughly fucked self, she had no idea. She sensed herself falling down, down into the bed, or maybe it was into the earth?

Dreams rolled past her, one after the other until they seemed to merge into an almost kaleidoscope of moving pictures. Somehow they all managed to be different, yet the same.

A wide-open forest, the darkest green and brown, star-strung night sky a brilliant midnight blue, somehow the same blue as Dominic's eyes just before he came inside her. The scent of the damp earth overpowered everything and even as she enjoyed walking in the night, exploring the forest like a child, Dominic seemed to be beside her, yet not visible the whole time.

The dreams were strange, yet so homey and comforting Mary had never slept so well in her whole life.

Chapter Ten

Dominic slowly, reluctantly felt himself waking up. He had been having the most magnificent dream. Thrusting in and out of his dream woman—Mary. She smelled so wonderful, tasted divine. Yet something was odd.

Frowning, keeping his eyes firmly shut, he desperately tried to stay in the dream.

Redhead. Luscious breasts. Delightful ass. *Sensitizing liquid.*

His eyes snapped open to stare at the darkened ceiling.

It hadn't been a dream. Mary had found him at the bar, after the gig with Sam and Lee. She had come home with him. He had fucked her thoroughly and she had practically fainted from sexual exhaustion.

He tried to turn onto his side to spoon her warm body closer to his and maybe start their antics once more.

Oh shit.

While from the waist down he turned onto his side. Something disturbingly familiar held his arms tied upright.

Craning his neck he looked up and saw the gag fluorescent pink fluffy handcuffs.

Well damn. His little Mary had been snooping while he slept.

Dominic grinned, wondering what to expect. Even though it was still night, the faint light outside his bedroom window showed it was only a few hours before dawn. He could hear water running down the sink in the bathroom, so he knew where Mary was. Fidgeting, he got himself comfortable, eagerly awaiting Mary's return.

After a few minutes, his patience was rewarded. The water turned off, and after a very brief pause the connecting door opened. His hungry gaze fell on the breathtaking sight of a naked Mary.

He felt his mouth water again.

She still looked as deliciously rounded as he remembered. Still as sexy and edible. He impatiently tugged on the cuffs, wondering if he should give away the secret. They had a catch in them that, if one knew where to flick, would unsnap the cuffs right away.

When Mary paused, ran a heated glance over his naked, and now fully aroused body, he decided to let her play with him a little longer. There was a far higher chance of them *both* enjoying themselves that way.

"Like what you see, love?"

"Oooh yeah. I can't wait to play with you. Tell me, do you really like chocolate mousse?"

Dominic frowned for a moment, and then remembered the huge dish of chocolate

mousse Josephine had given him before he left the main house mid-afternoon Saturday.

“Oh. You found that. My sister-in-law gave it to me. Don’t worry if you’ve eaten some for breakfast. There’s enough to feed an army. I enjoy chocolate, but she and William are always making up huge batches of the stuff. They seem to have this private thing for chocolate.”

“Oh no. I haven’t eaten any. Yet.”

With that, she walked out of the room. Dominic cocked his head to one side, to better hear her footsteps. When he heard her soft feet padding over into the small kitchen, and then the fridge door open, he knew what she was doing.

Hell, who was he to argue if a woman wanted to tie him up and feed him spoonfuls of chocolate mousse for breakfast? He didn’t need to be home until later tonight. An al fresco breakfast with this immensely sexy woman would be the perfect way to start the morning.

He frowned at the thought of returning home without Mary. He felt sincerely attached to her, didn’t feel his usual itchiness to shed her once the sun rose. Maybe he could convince her to come back with him, meet his siblings. If she had so many questions about him and his status as a werewolf, what better way to teach her than bring her home with him?

Still thinking through his options, he only half paid attention as Mary sat on the bed, cradling the huge bowl of mousse between her legs.

“You ready to answer some questions, big boy?”

Snapping back from his fantasies, he smiled teasingly up at her. “Sure thing, baby. Fire away.”

“Okay. First up, is there much truth to those old ‘40s and ‘50s movies about werewolves? Do you turn into some slobbering, raving lunatic who eats fair maidens?”

Dominic laughed. He couldn’t help it. Finally calming down, he managed to answer.

“Uh, no. While I don’t think exactly the same as I do in human form, I am fully aware of everything I do, and retain pretty much full control of myself. I might get sidetracked by interesting scents, or chase some rabbits or squirrels, but I don’t turn into a raving lunatic.”

Mary nodded. She seemed as if she had already reached that conclusion for herself, which made him feel much happier.

“Does it hurt?”

Dominic frowned. “Does what hurt?”

“Changing, from a man to a wolf.”

Dominic thought for a moment. “Not in a painful way, no. It’s like...re-forming...returning back home...both ways. When I change into a wolf, I feel free, I sense so much more. Yet when I change back into human form, I feel...larger, smarter. It’s hard to describe. It’s as if I exist in both states semi-permanently. Both states offer

me something different. We, my brothers and I, were raised to embrace both our selves. The animalistic side, who loves to hunt and run free, but also to enjoy our thinking, feeling human forms. How can it possibly hurt to return to one aspect of yourself?"

Mary nodded, her eyes far away, seeing something else.

"That must be so very nice. No wonder you can't settle down. I don't think I could either, given that opportunity. Oh, before you twist a finger trying to unsnap those handcuffs, I really ought to warn you I've taped them shut with some electrical tape. The release latch on the side won't work."

Dominic felt his eyes widen with shock. He was really stuck in these damn things?

Twisting his head back uncomfortably, he just barely saw a dark stretch of sticky black electrical tape. *Well damn!* "How the hell did you know to do that?"

Mary shrugged.

"Chloe, my other cousin, studied lock picking a few years back. She bought a trick set of handcuffs, teaching herself to get out of them. I learned a few things myself. Plus, I didn't really think you were the sort to have a *real* pair of handcuffs. Any set you had bought would obviously have a quick release."

Shuffling herself closer, Dominic eyed her warily.

"What are you doing?"

"Well first, I'm going to tie down your legs, so you don't think to kick me."

Dominic watched her tie his legs spread out to the footboard.

"Why would I want to kick you?"

"Patience, darling. You'll see soon enough."

When she had securely tied his legs to the footboard, she took a third satin strip and tied a rather large bow around his painfully erect shaft. Dominic didn't say anything – he merely raised an eyebrow. After surveying her work and nodding her satisfaction, she bent down and picked up the large bowl of mousse from the floor.

Dominic eyed the mousse. "Tell me you're going to feed it to me."

Mary merely grinned. Offering him a spoonful, he took it into his mouth, enjoying the light, fluffy chocolate melting on his tongue.

"Are you hungry? Or can you wait a while before I finish feeding you?"

Dominic's eyes rested on her full breasts.

"I think I have a different sort of hunger altogether."

Mary grinned. "Fantastic. Same here."

Carefully placing the heavy bowl next to his prone stomach, she straddled his hips. Dipping one finger into the nearly full bowl, she began to smear the mousse onto his stomach and abs.

Lifting his head, Dominic tried to see what she was drawing.

After a moment, Mary stopped. "Very pretty."

“You’ve just drawn your initials on me?”

Mary smiled.

“MD, what makes you think I haven’t bestowed a Doctorate of Sex on you?”

“You’ve given a Doctorate of Sex to my *stomach*? Woman, evidently you’ve received the wrong impression about me. Maybe I need to be released and teach you a few more important things about myself.”

Mary laughed and carefully placed the heavy bowl on the floor. Climbing back up onto the bed, she sat herself between Dominic’s legs.

It was a strange feeling for him. Usually he took control of the sexual games. Almost always *he* was between the legs of a pretty lady, not the other way around. The reversal of roles made his cock harden even more. It was a strange feeling. Strange, but wonderful.

Deciding to enjoy this time, he relaxed back into the soft bed and comfortable pillows.

“So, little Mary, you’re going to cover me with chocolate mousse and let it dry all sticky? We could shower together, I know a few good moves in the shower.”

“I’m sure you do, stud. But it would be an incredible waste of such a lovely mousse to let you do that. Anyway, this is *my* turn. My turn for control and to initiate the fun. I don’t think you’ve quite learned to share.”

Dominic smiled, a wide, toothy grin. “Ah, darling, trust me. You can take your turn and have all the control you want. Just as long as you make it worth my while.”

Mary crept forward, her breasts and stomach pressing intimately against his iron-hard shaft. Oh-so-very-slowly, she stuck her tongue out and swiped a small amount of mousse from his abdomen.

Taking a lick of dessert into her mouth, she moaned softly. Dominic felt his mouth dry. Since when had chocolate mousse been the ultimate sexual toy and aphrodisiac? In that instant, he knew *exactly* what William and Josephine did with all that mousse they made.

Dominic swallowed, tried to get some moisture in his mouth. With that simple lick, Mary had bound him to her with chains of steel. He *needed* her now, craved her with a fire in his blood.

“Uh...Mary, love...”

Mary totally ignored him, too keen to have another taste of the mousse on his stomach.

As she took another lick into her delicate mouth, she sat back up, eyes closed, blissfully rolling the mousse around in her mouth.

“Did you know...” she started, swallowed, and then opened her eyes. “Did you know, those deliciously flat abdominal muscles of yours make the perfect table for chocolate mousse?”

Dominic suppressed a whimper of need. His cock was about to burst. Considering

the number of times he had come, both inside and outside this beautiful woman in the last eight hours or so, he found it scary and marvelous that he *still* needed to come with the desperation and intensity of a man who had abstained for *years*.

“Uh...” he cleared his throat, unable to form a coherent thought.

“Don’t worry,” Mary grinned down at him, her nipples only just out of reach. If his hands were free he could...Dominic firmly brought his mind away from the multitude of things he would do if his hands were free.

When he felt Mary’s tongue on his stomach again, he couldn’t help himself. His hips rose by themselves and he thrust his body up, desperately begging her to do more.

“Down boy,” she chided laughingly. “Impatient men only get teased longer with me. And don’t pout or do that sad-puppy-dog-eyes thing with me either. That won’t work.”

Dominic laughed and shut his eyes. His body craved release, craved being lodged inside her to the hilt. Intuitively, he knew the more he pleaded and begged, the longer Mary would draw this out. Not that he could fake disinterest. His breath caught with every smooth-rough sweep of her tongue on his skin. His cock had begun to leak pre-cum. Each muscle in his stomach and legs twitched with excitement and repressed energy with every gentle caress of her hair and skin.

Nope. He didn’t think he had a chance in hell of convincing her he wasn’t fully focused and interested in what she was doing.

When the underside of Mary’s soft chin bumped the fully aroused and blood-bloated head of his shaft, electric currents jolted through him, made him moan and cry out.

When Mary merely winked at him, kissed the swollen head better, and returned to her torturous licking of the mousse, he fell back into the pillows with a cry.

He was in serious trouble.

Chapter Eleven

Mary felt the light, fluffy chocolate melt inside her mouth. Now this was heaven. A delicious stud—both literally and figuratively—laid out in front of her, totally at her mercy.

Wet dreams were made out of scenarios just like this.

As she finished the last of the mousse, and continued to lick the last remains of the chocolate dessert from his body, she seriously considered what to do.

Initially, she had planned to get dressed and leave when she woke up. She didn't want to hang around for the inevitable "It's-been-fun-but-let's-call-it-a-day-I'll-give-you-a-call" conversation. Certainly, Dominic would be well versed in that particular speech, yet even though she knew it was coming, she still didn't want to hear it from his lips.

She wasn't stupid. She knew it was one night of mind-blowing, absolutely fantastic sex. Yet deep inside, in a place she would never admit to, Dominic had touched her. He wasn't some selfish, arrogant stud, who fucked for his own pleasure and not that of his partner.

He was a caring, sharing man who delighted in bringing pleasure to his partner. The fact that he was a Class A fuck merely made it that much better. Reality, however, was her small office and home back across the state. This sexual odyssey was more fantasy than reality. Very soon she would have to leave, before the polite but detached "It's been fun" lecture came around.

Feeling sad, yet relieved at the same time, Mary continued licking Dominic's now-sensitive skin. She clung to that relieved feeling. If they had decided on two nights, Sunday as well as Saturday, then she might have been fool enough to fall in love with the hunk.

She had no intention of joining the ranks of millions to give her heart to this man only to have it broken. Knowing Dominic as she now did, she knew he would never intentionally hurt a woman, but as her mother used to say, "hurt is hurt", whether it was intentional or not.

Thrusting the somber thoughts aside—there would be plenty of time to wallow in self-pity when she got back home—Mary lightly traced her hands back up his chest. Reaching his nipples, her destination, she lightly flicked them.

"Oh shit, love. Do that again," he moaned.

As requested, Mary toyed with his sensitive nipples as she nibbled and licked her way over his stomach, abs and up his chest.

Rubbing her lightly furred pussy over his straining erection, she gently kissed his

mouth, relished the so-soft lips she was coming to crave.

Suddenly unsure whether to ask for what she was about to take, Mary gently continued to kiss him as she thought.

Should one ask a bound man for sex? Or simply take? What the hell is the etiquette in this sort of situation?

Thankfully, before she could think herself in circles, Dominic solved the problem for her.

"Shit, love. You're killing me. If you don't fuck me *right* now then my cock is going to explode all over you and you'll have to start again."

Mary laughed. "You know," she started, breathlessly, "I was just wondering if I should ask, or simply take."

"You can't rape the willing, love. And let me assure you, I'm so willing I'm likely to burst the instant your sweet pussy closes around me."

Mary smiled, far too busy lifting herself up over his large frame to bother with a reply.

With one smooth motion, she thrust herself down on him, sheathing him and giving herself the exquisite pleasure of feeling her walls stretched to the limit.

They both cried out.

Mary noticed Dominic clenching his fists in their cuffs, desperately controlling his breathing.

"Do...oh my, you feel wonderful..." Realizing talk was beyond her capabilities, Mary simply reached up, stretching them both into new positions, and she fumbled with the cuffs.

"Hurry, love. With you stretched over me like this I think I'm about to lose what little control I've kept."

With fingers that simply wouldn't do what she requested of them, Mary finally unwrapped the electrical tape, and flicked the quick release lever. With a *snap* the cuffs opened and fell down unnoticed behind the headboard. Mary turned carefully to reach his feet.

Released from his bondage, both hands and feet, Dominic turned into a true pagan. Wild, excited beyond belief, he became sexy and grumpy at the same time.

"You, woman, will pay for that later. Be grateful I don't chain you to my bed for a year's worth of servitude for that."

Mary laughed, as Dominic rolled her beneath him.

"Hey!" she protested, laughingly, "it's my turn to be on top! Why else would I have to chain you down?"

Dominic grinned sexily. Running his palms up and down her sides, palming her large breasts, with just a few strokes he catalogued her every asset all over again. Thrusting even deeper into her, she squirmed as the silky scarf tied around his cock

stopped him from penetrating her as deeply as possible.

Cursing a blue streak, Dominic literally ripped the thin silk from himself and spread her legs wider as he lodged himself so deeply into her she moaned and arched her back. Craving him even more deeply, Mary tried to drag his ass closer to her, to thrust himself even more deeply as he set a quick, hard pace between them.

"You can be on top," he panted, "in maybe a year or two when I've fully sated myself in you."

Mary blinked. *A year or two?* Just a manner of speaking, she assured herself. There was absolutely no point in raising her hopes. This man was the classic bad boy, the love 'em and leave 'em king. He was just being horny.

They both groaned as Dominic's pace grew more frenzied, wilder, even more pagan. He thrust into her faster and faster, with an almost blurring speed that had Mary's head spinning. His thick cock sent spirals of friction and pleasure shooting through her, arching her back with the pleasure. Surely one could die from sex as delicious as this?

Just when she felt certain she would explode from the immense feelings building inside her, Dominic lifted one of her hips, rotating to let himself penetrate her deeper. With the new angle, his heavy, engorged cock rubbed her G-spot, and she screamed.

The electric currents of pleasure she had been feeling were intensified a thousand-fold. Somewhere deep inside her, something broke apart and she felt a huge rush of emotions flow over her body.

The orgasm hit her with a startling, slightly scary velocity, and somewhere in the very back of her mind, she registered that she was screaming really loudly.

Mixed in with all these glorious feelings was the sharp nip of teeth. Dominic had bitten her neck! She giggled when she remembered only vampires were supposed to bite screaming virgins on the neck.

Mary giggled breathlessly. The bite didn't sting exactly, but she could feel it there, even when Dominic merely laved it with his tongue. The strange way it stung without hurting made her wonder if, for the first time in more years than she could count, she would have a hickey-like bruise when she woke up in the morning.

She frowned at the time he was taking over the bite. Throughout the whole, he continued thrusting wildly inside her, claiming her with his cock as well as his mouth.

"Rabies shots up to date?" she panted.

"Don't get rabies, or any other human disease," he returned, just as breathless.

Mary nodded, and let the immense feelings wash over her.

Before she could think or question any further, Dominic was coming. Shooting hot loads of his seed deep in her body, he shuddered and pulled her so closely into his body she felt as if parts of them merged into the other.

Hugging him back, just as tightly, she relished the feeling of her sweaty body pressed deeply into his sweaty body.

Finally, he collapsed onto her, panting, his muscles shaking slightly. She curled up into his body, enjoying the heat, and that special closeness one always experiences after a particularly wonderful bout of sex.

As the minutes ticked by, her body cooled, and she shivered. Dominic groaned a little, sat up and pulled the coverlet up to cover them both. He then settled back as close to her body he could possibly be, and still be able to breathe.

He held her firmly, keeping her in place beside him, one arm around her back, pulling her breasts flush against his chest, the other arm possessively cupping her ass.

His legs tangled around hers making sure that practically every point along their bodies touched, skin on skin. Smiling down at her face, he drew her closer into the circle of his arms as he sleepily closed his eyes, a sated look on his face.

"We needta talk..." he murmured.

Mary felt a shaft of pain go through her. Suddenly wide-awake, she hoped to placate him. Obviously on the verge of sleep, she decided to soothe him, hoping he would fall asleep, not talk. Stroking his cheek softly, she reached up to switch off the bedside lamp.

"That's okay, Dom. I understand. Just go to sleep, I can pack and go later."

"No..." he huskily protested. "Too tired now. Explain later. Want you to stay."

"Shhh...just sleep now."

Dominic continued murmuring, but it was the drowsy, half-asleep nonsense of a small child as it fights off sleep. Mary had been feeling pretty damn tired herself after such an explosive climax. Yet now she simply wanted to start the long trek home.

She didn't think she could make the ten-hour trip after so little sleep and such a long night and day, but she could certainly get an hour or two's worth of driving in and crash at a motel before finishing the journey.

Indulging herself, she stroked Dominic's cheek for a few more minutes, until she was certain he was fully asleep, still murmuring nonsense. She enjoyed every second of the safe feeling lying cradled in his arms gave her. She enjoyed feeling the heat radiate from his body, and the subtle yet completely masculine possessiveness of his muscled legs pressed between her own, claiming her even while he slept.

Mary braced herself, assuring herself once more he was fully and deeply asleep, and climbed slowly, carefully from the giant bed.

The chilly morning air brought her back to her senses and helped wake her up a little. Scampering around the small apartment, she found her clothes and dressed without the light. There was a lightening of the sky, showing dawn did indeed draw closer, even when one didn't want it to.

Mentally checking each item she had arrived with, she crossed over to the desk. Scrambling around in the near dark, she wrote a brief, succinct note.

Thank you for an unbelievable night. I didn't want to hang around for the morning-after speech. Hope you don't mind. You will always be in my thoughts, and I will remember you

whenever I hear Night Prowler. Mary.

Refusing to feel either guilt for leaving the cowardly way, or a pang at the thought of never sharing such mind-blowing sex with this man again, Mary picked up her purse and left the apartment.

Chapter Twelve

Early Wednesday morning

"*Dominic!* I swear if you don't stop pacing I'm gonna have to get up and pound you! You're giving me a headache."

Dominic ignored his brother and continued to pace in front of the huge windows overlooking the large house's backyard. The kids were all playing a mixture of Chase, and Hide and Seek, depending on who was winning.

"How can I be giving you a headache when you're supposed to be updating the latest security measures?"

"Rather easily, bro. You're a large presence, remember? With you stalking back and forth like a caged wolf it's quite hard to miss you. Why don't you just admit you love the girl and go mate with her? I thought you were this legendary seducer – so go seduce her and convince her to marry you."

Dominic ran a hand through his shoulder-length hair, mussing it further. "It's not that easy."

"Really. Why not?"

Dominic resumed his pacing. "She only wanted to find out about my werewolf side. I was a novelty. She was curious. We both got our questions answered and some unspeakably good sex. End of story."

Samuel leaned back in his chair, a huge grin on his face.

"Oh, how the mighty have fallen. So unspeakably good sex is no longer enough?"

"No, damn you! It's not enough. Not for one night."

Samuel leaned forward, a devilish gleam in his eye.

"Wow, bro. If the sex is really that good, maybe I should –"

"Don't you *dare!*"

Dominic paused, realized his beloved brother had set him up and caught him like some gauche youth.

"Har-har. Very funny. Fine, I love the girl. Happy?"

Throwing himself into the over-padded armchair, he pouted as Samuel clutched his heart as if he were having an attack.

"Oh, the shock! The surprise! You love the girl. Finally! How long did it take you to admit it?"

"This isn't funny, Sam."

Sighing, Dominic ran a hand through his already messy hair and idly scratched his two days worth of stubble. Samuel typed in a few keystrokes, only half paying

attention. He knew in a moment or two...

"Well...what the hell do *you* think I should do, seeing as you're so smug about the whole thing?" Dominic grumpily asked, obviously hating the fact he needed help in this of all areas.

Samuel looked at him as if he had lost his mind. "Why, little brother, I do believe you should chase after her, get down on your knees, and beg for her to stay with you."

Dominic raised one eyebrow arrogantly.

Samuel shrugged. "Or seduce her senseless and wring promises out of her, then bully her to keep them until she's fool enough to love you in return."

Dominic stared out the window, mulling over his choices, his brain ticking away for the first time since he had woken up, cold and alone in his large bed.

"You still okay with me offering the kid a summer job in the company?"

"Sure! Anyone good enough to crack your code is welcome to come work for us. We can use kids that skilled."

Dominic nodded. "I might start with that. At least I'll have some balm to soothe my pride if she turns me down flat."

"You're sure she's the 'One'?"

Dominic turned to his brother, hearing him uncertain for the first time in what felt like years.

"Yeah. I'm sure. I marked her, I dream of her, *crave* her worse than any sort of drug. I can't really explain it. I feel like there's this piece missing out of me. I've been in a shitty mood since she left—"

Samuel rolled his eyes comically.

"You don't say! Sounds to me more like a case of the flu than true love. You can count me out on love if this is the sort of moron it produces!"

Dominic swiped him, catching him on the shoulder.

"Enough outta *you*! You realize you're next! With the rest of us mated, you have no hope. Soph and Josie will be focusing on you. You, my dearest brother, are as good as mated! I can't wait to give *you* love advice! Hopefully it'll be a spitfire just like my Mary, and *then* we'll see who's such a hopeless case."

Samuel scoffed.

"No way, man. With Art and Wills reproducing like rabbits, and you won't be so far behind, there's no need for me to mate. I think I'll stay the happy bachelor uncle. Art and Wills are touched in the head now that they're getting regular spectacular sex and have a ton of kids to look out for. Christiana will start dating soon enough. *Woo-whee*, I can't wait to see how Art will react to *that*! I'm perfectly happy to sit back and watch."

Dominic merely smiled. "Sure, Sam. Whatever. I should probably tape this with one of your gadgets and have it replayed nightly once you fall like a ton of bricks. It really isn't so bad once you get used to it."

With that, he stood up and stretched, happy for the first time all week.

“In fact, it feels quite refreshing. I don’t feel this insane urge to fuck every sexy woman I meet, anymore. I don’t feel like going out and picking anyone up. I just want my Mary. I might head out. The sooner I get this over with, the happier I’ll be.”

Samuel rose and hugged his brother.

“Just make sure you shower and shave first, girls like that sort of thing apparently. Man, you’re a goner, Dom. Remember what I said about your knees and begging. If your famous seduction technique doesn’t work, then think of that silver tongue of yours and how much women like men to be on their knees groveling.”

Dominic tried to get him in a headlock. The brothers scuffled for a few moments, bumping into chairs, knocking a lamp over. They were both so involved in getting one up on the other they didn’t hear the door open until a young high-pitched voice cried out.

“Mom! Uncle Dom and Uncle Sam are fighting in Dad’s study again! They’ve knocked over the lamp you gave him, too! They need a time-out!”

Both men hastily unlocked themselves and glared fiercely at Edward and Christiana, who stared at them from the doorway as if they were a pair of naughty six-year-olds.

Christiana waggled her finger, a perfect imitation of Sophie when she was riled.

“Fighting is to remain outside. You’ll put holes in the rugs and walls again. You know the rules!”

Edward looked at the men, surprisingly mature for his seven years. Christiana, only four, enjoyed the thought of her mom chastising her huge uncles.

“Don’t be a tattletale, Christi,” Edward chastised quietly.

Christiana pouted. “But—”

Edward continued as if she hadn’t even interrupted, sure in that way only kids have, that his words would be heeded. “They were only playing. And anyway, Dominic is going to go get his mate. Aren’t you?”

Surprised by the astuteness of the young lad, Dominic nodded solemnly.

“Sure am, Edward. Now if you’ll excuse me, I need to go pack before your Aunt Sophie comes to read me a lecture and lock me in my bedroom for an hour of time-out.”

Christiana turned to Edward.

“How could Mom *read* him a lecture? She just waggles her finger and talks lots.”

“Come on, hotshot. I’ll tell you out back.”

Samuel laughed as Edward dragged Christiana out into the backyard, and began to talk quickly to her. The men found it amusing that she hung on his every word.

As they quickly left the study, they noticed Zachariah staring after the two kids, a proud, happy look in his eyes.

“You okay, Grandpa?”

Zachariah snapped back to reality. "Sure am, Dom. I hear you're off to pick up your mate? Congratulations, son."

Dominic rolled his eyes. "It's not a done deal, Gramps. She's gotta accept me first."

Zachariah snorted. "The day one of you men can't twist a decent female around your left paw is the day I take you out back and thump your hide raw! You've had the ladies drooling over you since before you were a teen. I'm sure you'll manage."

The old man turned to Samuel. "And you had better look out for yourself, my boy. You think you won't settle down. Let me warn you, lad. You're gonna meet her right when you don't want to, don't expect to, and she'll lead you a merry dance, just like all the other boys. So don't get too cocky, you hear?"

Samuel merely grinned. "Me? Cocky? Grandpa, I'm shattered!"

The old man snorted, and turned around muttering. "Damned youth of today. No idea! No respect!"

The two men laughed, certain that their grandfather had a large grin across his features. They headed out the back, Dominic plotting how to tame his redhead.

* * * * *

Later Wednesday afternoon

"Mary! Please stop that pacing, you're giving me the most horrendous headache."

Mary ignored her cousin and continued to pace in front of her office window. "How can I possibly be giving you a headache when you're supposed to be practicing your touch typing?"

"Rather easily, hon. With you swinging back and forth like a pendulum behind the monitor, I'm beginning to feel seasick!"

Mary stopped pacing to stare out the window into her small green backyard. With a squeak of the chair, Chloe stood up and came over to her cousin.

"Why don't you go back, hon? It's obvious you've left stuff undone with Dominic."

Mary shook her head.

"He's a one-night stand man. There's no way he wants a meaningful relationship, and there's no way at this stage I'd settle for anything less."

Chloe rolled her eyes. "You convinced him to have a one-night stand, why not seduce him into an affair? From there you can move into a relationship."

Mary shook her head. "He's not like that. He's a love 'em and leave 'em man. I'd just end up getting hurt."

"Sure," Chloe scoffed, "and like you're not hurt now."

Mary pressed her lips together. She *was* hurt, but it was so much more than that.

Through the past three nights since she'd been with Dominic, she had been

dreaming the most erotic dreams. Far more heated and desperate than any other erotic night journey in the past.

She woke each morning, the small hickey he had given her throbbing with a desperate need that pounded just as demandingly in her pussy.

She had already worn out two sets of vibrator batteries. Nothing seemed to compare with her Dominic, and she was getting worried. How could a girl get over a one-night stand, when one relived each and every moment nightly? When one's dreams *added* the fantasies to one's memory?

"I think I need to go shopping. Want to come watch me splurge on a new pair of shoes?"

Chloe sighed and went to shut off the computer. "Why not? Matthew is still reading that new coding book, isn't he? He'll be fine for a few more hours at least. We might as well pick up the makings for dinner, too. How that boy manages to eat twice as much as the two of us combined is beyond me."

Mary hugged her cousin. "We can check on him on the way out. And apparently growing young men eat like crazy. Next thing we'll know he'll be not only taller than us, but bigger and stronger. The days when we could scold him and tower over him telling him he was to do what we said are unfortunately long gone. We should have enjoyed them more when we had them."

"I hear you, sweetie. Let's go spend some money. I have the latest Victoria's Secret catalogue in my bag somewhere..."

Mary laughed as she and Chloe left her small study. Nothing like spending a bundle of money on sexy lingerie, shoes and tops to cheer a girl up.

Arm-in-arm, the cousins went in search of their young man, and to soothe themselves with an afternoon of shopping.

Chapter Thirteen

Dominic studied the small but neatly kept front garden. A great expanse of neatly trimmed grass had some surrounding flowers and foliage, but still retained its simplicity and overall green feeling.

Double-checking the address he had copied from his files before leaving, he made sure he wasn't about to scare some innocent stranger. He wasn't sure what his infamous plan was, but he knew something would come to him. It always did.

He switched off the ignition of his large motorcycle and removed his helmet. Shaking out his sweaty hair, he let the wind blow through it for a moment. He had made the long drive in record time. Looking at the almost-set sun, he cringed slightly as he prayed silently in grateful gratitude to have not racked up speeding fines along the long highways.

Removing his leather gloves, he ran his hands through his shoulder-length waves in the futile attempt to bring some order to his locks.

Deciding nothing earth-shattering would come to him procrastinating outside Mary's home, he climbed off the huge machine. Just like him, it was dark, powerful and full of thrust.

Grinning at the wicked thought, he stalked up the front path. Passing the neatly weeded flowers, he smiled at the similar wildflowers growing haphazardly as were in his own backyard. He liked the garden. It was neat, yet unrestrained. Much like his Mary.

Ringling the doorbell, thoughts of what he could do to Mary as she opened the door flitted through his mind. Foremost in his fantasies was backing her up against the wall and kissing her senseless. A very close second was ripping her clothes off, tearing off his own, and plunging balls deep into her without any preliminaries or words.

With a large grin on his face, he felt his cock lengthen and become painfully erect beneath his leather pants as he heard light footfalls coming down the hall towards the closed door.

He felt an incredible spurt of disappointment as a tall, lanky teenage boy opened the door, looking vaguely suspicious.

"Who the hell are you?" he demanded rudely.

"You must be Matthew Dennison. I'm a friend of your cousin Mary."

Much of the hostility seeped out of the boy, but the wariness and caution remained.

"She's not home. I can leave her a message that you dropped by. What's your name?"

Dominic grinned. "Oh, I'll stick around. You and I have a few things to talk about."

Some of the teen's hostility returned. "Talk about? Huh?"

Dominic leaned forwards, slightly intimidating. It wouldn't do to really scare the kid. Mary would be pissed if he did that. But intimidating him a little wouldn't hurt, particularly seeing as like most teenagers he seemed to talk in monosyllables. If the kid were to grow up with a decent job, he might as well start learning now.

"It's polite and hospitable to let a guest enter one's home when they have business to discuss."

Matthew bit his lip as he obviously contemplated the wisdom of letting him in.

"Business?" he questioned, more politely than he so far had acted.

Dominic nodded. "A little matter from Rutledge Security Company. My name is Dominic Rutledge."

The boy whitened considerably. Dominic cursed himself. He hadn't truly meant to scare the kid, just shake a bit of the cockiness out of him.

"Mary had nothing to do with that! It was just me! You can't touch her on that!"

Dominic sighed. "Look, Matthew. The thing is, I know it was you, and your cousin merely got you untangled. I've talked to my brothers and we want to offer you a traineeship on strict conditions. You're skilled. You know you are, and we want to drag you onto the straight and narrow, away from your idiot friends. Can we chat about this inside, or do you want your nosy next-door neighbor – who is currently peering at us through the curtains, by the way – to listen to every word?"

The boy stepped aside to let him enter surprisingly quickly. Dominic entered, prepared to put forward his best spiel.

At least the kid didn't seem so hostile anymore, he had probably only been defensive of his cousin's home. That was a good thing, in Dominic's mind. Anyone prepared to care for and protect his Mary gained points in his estimation.

* * * * *

Mary let herself and Chloe into her house, pleased and surprised when they entered to the smell of meat simmering. She sniffed. Smelled a little like tacos. The large black motorcycle parked outside their house, on the other hand, had her worried. If one of Matthew's dropkick friends had stopped by to dare him into something else illegal and stupid she'd have a hissy fit.

"Matthew?"

"In here, Mar. We're cooking dinner."

Mary blinked, her heart sinking. *We?* Not good, not good at all.

Chloe picked up on it too. "Matthew Dennison, you better not have invited a horde of your friends over for dinner. Mary and I have just spent a fortune on shoes and girls' stuff and can't afford to feed your mass of thousands!"

“Oh no! Oof—”

Mary sighed and set down her two shoeboxes, three shopping bags crammed full of naughty Victoria’s Secret gear, and two new low-cut tops on the side table. She had better find out whom Matthew was entertaining.

“I’ve had a rough day, Matthew. I swear if you’re in trouble again—”

Mary felt her throat tighten and her head go light as she entered her kitchen to find Dominic in black leathers standing over her stove in her grandmother’s white frilled apron stirring meat and tomatoes.

He took a quick look over his shoulder, grinned boldly at her and continued to stir the simmering mixture.

“Matt, can you please continue slicing the lettuce and tomato and grating the cheese? We wanted this done by the time your family arrived home, right?”

“Sure thing, Dominic. So you’re sure your brothers aren’t pissed at me for that hacking stunt?”

“Language, boy!” Mary choked out, still trying to believe what her eyes were showing her. Dominic was happy to wear a white ancient frilly *apron*?

“Yeah, watch those words, sport. And yeah, they were...upset. But once we realized we could use your skills to test the holes in our security, and use your youth and...uh...enthusiasm, they were happy to bring you on board. But like I said, there are strict conditions. Any brushes with the law, for *anything*, means we review not only your work with us, but also that whole pressing charges issue. You’ll also need to be honest and up front with us. Anyone offering you money or asking you to do dodgy stuff you need to come to us straight away. We don’t hire and keep on people we don’t trust.”

“Sure, man. I can deal with that. So you’d, like, teach me shi...uh... stuff? Like more complex coding and firewalls and stuff?”

“Sure will. You can teach us stuff too, like where you found our holes, and how you go about doing that without setting off the alarms. It’ll be the normal give-and-take.”

“Neat! Can I tell my friends what I’m doing?”

“In part, you obviously can’t give them details of the systems we show you, but you can tell them that you’re working for us and helping us beef up and constantly upgrade our security measures. That should be enough to impress your buddies.”

“Way cool!”

“Um. Excuse this feminine interruption, but what the hell is going on?”

Dominic frowned at her, a grin tugging at the corner of his mouth. “Language, Mary! What will the boy think?”

Mary crossed her arms over her chest and started tapping a foot, clearly picturing in her mind strangling Dominic. He might look like sex and sin in black leather and her apron, but that wouldn’t excuse him for butting into her cousin’s life.

“I’m offering Matthew a decent job. You did say he was starting college next term

and was looking for interim work to keep himself out of mischief." He ignored the cry of protest from Matthew at his declaration. "Samuel and I talked about his obvious skill and decided to use him as an asset to the company. Art and Wills agreed."

"Yeah," Matthew interjected, "and then Dominic suggested we start dinner for you and Chloe, 'cos we weren't sure when you'd get back and we were getting hungry."

Mary rolled her eyes. Obviously he had a conquest in Matthew. She wondered what his plans for her were. Remembering his hospitality with her, she decided she might as well seal the deal.

"Do you have a place to stay?"

Gleaming blue eyes looked back at her. Wicked mischief and a very faint wariness lay within the deep blueness of his eyes. As if he were scared of her rejection, but determined all the same.

"No."

She nodded, resigned. "You can bunk here in the spare room. Chloe and Matthew live close by but will stay for dinner. I'm having a shower."

Hoping he caught the warning and faint promise she had delivered him, she stalked out of the room without looking back. Earlier in the day she'd have given anything to have him here. Now she wasn't so sure.

What the hell would she do if he was only here for another single night, before taking Matthew back with him? Closing the door to her bedroom firmly shut, she started stripping as she headed into her bathroom. Turning the water on very hot and strong, she stepped into the shower and let the hot spray pour down on her.

There was no point in worrying and fretting. She would find out what Dominic wanted soon enough.

Chapter Fourteen

Dominic mentally congratulated himself. After cleaning and putting away all the dishes they had used, Matthew finally dragged Chloe back home to tell her all about his new job. Now he finally had Mary all to himself.

As she sat in her exceedingly comfortable recliner, sipping on her mug of Earl Grey tea, she nervously gazed at him over the rim of her cup. He grinned, a happy, possessive, truly wolfish grin.

She quickly lowered her eyes and returned to sipping her hot tea. Dominic perched on the edge of the couch, content to wait her out. They both knew there was unfinished business between them, and for the moment, Dominic allowed Mary to stall him.

“So you’re really offering him work until the term starts?”

“Sure am. If the little joker is good enough to get into the system, Sam and I think he could be an asset. Artemais and William are prepared to trust us. If he wants, and can help us out, Matthew is even welcome to stay on part-time while at college. It’s up to him and what he can do for us. Either way, it will certainly keep him out of trouble for a while.”

Dominic stared at his love. She boldly stared back at him, stiffening her spine.

“I don’t want an affair with you,” she stated, setting the mug down on the small table. She rose and started to pace. Dominic grinned.

He hadn’t know she paced when anxious or thinking heavily. Same as him. The knowledge made him happier than he’d been all week, since awakening to that damned note and a cold, empty bed.

“Who said anything of an affair, Mary love?”

“I don’t want another freakin’ one-night stand either! What the hell do you call a two-night stand? How juvenile and stupid does that sound? Two-night stand indeed!”

Dominic struggled to keep a straight face. “What *do* you want, Mary?”

She whirled on him, her hair flying out of its ponytail, green eyes snapping angrily. She was so small, the fact she was certain she could take him on made him want to laugh. At five-foot-two, she was pretty damn short when compared to him. Even so, the innate knowledge inside her that he would never hurt her made him relieved.

She stormed up to him, so he kept still, not wanting to interrupt her. She came right up to his chest, so her nipples nearly brushed his shirt. She poked him, angrily punctuating her words.

“You want to know what I want? I want you to stay with me. I want you to go to sleep curled next to me every night and wake up next to me every morning. I want you to *commit* to me. I know you have no concept of the word, but it’s a nice one—you can

get used to it. No more floozies, no more indiscriminate fucking. Just us.”

She paused, her eyes widening slightly with the shock of what she had just said. Immediately, she started to back away.

Dominic reached out and grabbed the wrist of the hand that had been poking him.

“I can deal with that, as long as the conditions are the same for you. If you expect faithfulness from me, I demand the same in return. Tit-for-tat after all, Mary love.”

If anything, her eyes widened more. He had surprised her. He found he liked the warmth that stole through him, making him desperately want to laugh.

“You’d do that? You’d commit to me. I’m not talking for a short time, Dom. I’m taking long-term here.”

Dominic reached into the pocket of his pants, withdrew a small velvet box. Holding it out, he offered it to Mary.

She looked from it to him and back again, her mouth open and her eyes wide. He felt like laughing and puking from nerves at the same time. She wasn’t the only one surprised and off-kilter here.

Smiling mischievously, enjoying her shock and surprise if nothing else, he caught only a glimpse of the tear lodged in her sparkling eye.

“Aren’t you supposed to be down on your knees, begging?” she asked huskily.

Dominic laughed outright. “Samuel warned me the ladies like to see men on their knees begging. For once, he was right.”

He fell down to his knees, still holding one of her wrists. He looked up into the face that had captured his heart, into the eyes full of laughter and intelligence.

“Mary, love. Will you marry me?”

Her face split into a grin.

“What happened to flowers and music? I’m sure there’s supposed to be candy and declarations of undying love.” She sobered up for a moment. “I do love you, you know. Chloe can tell you I’ve been like a wounded bear the past few days.”

Dominic smiled back at her. “Samuel could give you a similar accounting. I love you too. You should know that. What the hell else could get me down on my knees?”

Mary nodded. Dominic opened the box, showing her a gleaming emerald in a platinum setting. The emerald had the same fire and depth as her eyes. Mary thought it perfect.

Dominic slid it on her finger, a thrill of possession and happiness going through him. Rising quickly, he scooped her up into his arms.

“Hey! That begging thing didn’t last long!” she laughed, squashed against his chest.

Dominic nipped at her neck, muffling his laughter as he stalked through the room, down the hall, and into her small bedroom.

“You should have enjoyed it while it lasted. I can promise that won’t be happening too often, love.”

Mary laughed as he gently dropped her on the bed. Bouncing once, she rolled onto her back to look up at him. She watched him tug impatiently at his shirt.

"In a rush, darling?"

"To get naked, yes. To fuck you mindless, oh no. No, I think I'll take my time with that particular task. I need to relearn every inch of your skin, to re-lick every inch of you."

Mary kicked off her sneakers and started tugging at her jeans. "May I try to tempt you to change your mind?"

Dominic laughed as he began to unbuckle his jeans. "Mary, love. You can try to tempt me to anything. Just a warning, I intend to take my time this go-around. Maybe next time you can set the pace."

Dominic stepped out of his leather pants just as Mary cleared her jeans from her ankles. She tried to hold him off with her feet, but he simply dodged around them and crashed down onto her on the bed.

"Hey!" she protested, trying not to laugh, "I'm not naked yet!"

"Don't worry, love, I'll start down at your feet. We can work our way up."

"But my panties..."

"Are made of extra thin lace and won't pose even a minute barrier. Trust me."

"I do. Trust you, I mean."

Dominic looked deep into her eyes and kissed her hard. Pulling away with difficulty, he grinned down at her.

"Same here, love. But I am determined to do this slow. I've missed you the past few days. I need to make up that lost time. Starting with a foot massage."

Mary groaned, as he started to expertly massage her feet. Peppering kisses along her sole and ankle, he spiced up what would have been a fantastic massage anyway.

She laughed as he muttered where the different parts of her sole led to pulse points. As he pressed one side of the ball of her foot, massaging it and sending an electric current of pleasure through her, he would mutter "headaches" or "dizziness" and other tidbits of information.

Laughing, she finally pulled her foot from his grasp, and straddled him.

"My turn," she laughed.

Tearing his shirt from him, she watched with glee as his buttons popped from the shirt.

Bending down, she nibbled happily at his chest, licking and enjoying the taste of his skin. She shrieked when she was rolled underneath him again.

"No fair!" she cried out, trying hard not to start laughing again.

"My turn," he teased.

"But I hadn't finished!"

He pressed his lips against hers, sealing off her complaints. Touching her

everywhere, Dominic enjoyed her body as he had longed to do these last few days. He ran his hands all over her, starting with her breasts, then moving to her hungry nipples down the smooth line of her torso down to her waist, and then her hips.

Mary panted, arching into his soft touch. When she spread her legs in wanton invitation, he simply couldn't resist.

Lodging himself just barely inside her, he looked into her eyes, lost himself in her heated gaze.

"This is forever," he warned her. He felt his heart overflow with happiness as she merely smiled and canted her hips, nudging him further inside her heat. He thrust into her, feeling himself bathed in her heat, her love, in their mingled desire and hunger for each other.

Quickly, they both reached for that peak, that perfect moment only the best of lovers ever truly find. Crying out into each other's mouths, lost for breath or words, they collapsed together, sweaty and content.

Long into the night they touched and caressed, relearning and discovering each other. They both panted, screamed and groaned, the sheer ecstasy washing over them until they merged completely, totally as one over and over.

They whispered secret words, lover's words and promises. Dominic could barely believe how happy and sated he felt. He knew he would never again feel the melancholy dissolution he used to feel after his forgettable women. Eventually, they both fell asleep, entwined together, loving every moment they had spent in each other's embrace.

Epilogue

A few months later

“So you have to add the chocolate chips in *after* you’ve mixed the cookie dough and only just before you throw them on the tray?”

“Sure do, otherwise you tend to eat more chocolate than you put into the dough.”

Chloe nodded solemnly and continued to scribble down instructions.

“And you say that’s enough cookie dough for twelve children – so a class of twenty thirteen-year-olds we should – what? – double it just to be safe?”

Mary fiddled nervously with her hem. Her stupid veil – which had been Chloe’s damn idea, not hers anyway – was touching the roof of the tiny beat-up Ford Escort and was driving her nuts.

Sophie was driving Chloe’s car, dressed in a casual, flirty summer dress. Chloe was sitting in the passenger seat, madly scrawling notes on a napkin she had found among the mess in the glove box.

Mary smiled and looked outside the window. She felt like throwing up, again, and refused to give in to her nerves.

Chloe continued to grill Mary’s soon-to-be sister-in-law on simple, effective recipes. She would be filling in for a friend’s Home Economics class for a semester and needed quick, easy recipes to teach a bunch of overenthusiastic thirteen-year-olds.

After what felt like forever, they finally pulled into the small chapel. Nestled amongst the trees of the National Park, it was a tiny, rustic little thing.

It was beautiful.

Matthew paced out front, obviously as agitated as Mary felt. He would walk her down the aisle. Chloe came around to the back to help her get her enormous dress – had she *really* thought such a huge white wedding dress would be fun? – and veil out of the car still intact.

Finished with straightening her dress and veil, Chloe automatically moved her hand to push the now-crumpled note-ridden napkin in what would have been her jeans pocket. If she hadn’t been wearing a short, brightly colored summery dress.

“Damn. Why couldn’t I have worn my jeans, Mar? I’d be so much more comfortable in them.”

“Bridesmaids *don’t* wear jeans.”

Chloe grumbled under her breath and pushed the napkin into the cup of her bra.

“If I ever get married, which I never will, remind me of how uncomfortable these damn shoes are and how much I hate dresses. I promise *you* can wear jeans to my

wedding.”

Mary laughed, forgetting for a moment how nauseous she felt. Surely the time for bridal jitters was over? When would her stomach settle down?

“Mar? Are you okay? You look like you’re about to puke.”

Mary vaguely felt Chloe place a worried hand to her forehead. “Mar? You okay?”

Swallowing down the nausea, she nodded.

“What is it? You can’t possibly be having doubts?”

“No. I’m not, it’s just my stomach.”

Chloe crunched her head in thought. “Hey, when was your last period?”

Mary blinked. The dots in her mind connected, and she felt a huge weight lift from her shoulders. Strange how Chloe was often one of the most perceptive people she knew. How could she have *not* worked something so simple out?

“Oh, man. He’s going to flip. We’ve been trying for months now.”

Matthew cleared his throat, obviously not wanting to butt in, but taking his duties rather seriously. He had become far more mature in the short time working for the Rutledges’. Both Mary and Chloe were happy but surprised at the changes in their little relative.

“Much as this is amusing and exciting, I really should point out Dominic is probably pacing a hole in the floor in there. Chloe, set up her skirts, or whatever it is you should do. Let’s get moving.”

Mary felt so relieved she was in a daze. As if floating on clouds, she completely ignored her slight nausea and followed her cousin into the foyer of the small chapel. Happily holding Matthew’s arm, she smiled as the theme to *St. Elmo’s Fire* started and with an enthusiastic wink and thumbs-up, Chloe began to tread down the aisle in front.

Mary tried not to snicker at the ginger way Chloe placed one foot solidly in front of the other. Except for her senior prom, she had never worn heels before, and even then she had removed her shoes on the dance floor.

Mary had warned her to practice in the new shoes, but if the waver in her ankles and tender way she placed each foot in front of the other, she’d bet money on her cousin not practicing at all.

Then again, Chloe had ducked out of all but two of her supposed “fittings”, insisting only the bride needed to be in the form-fitting dress. It had taken bribes, threats, and finally tearful pleadings to get Chloe to fall in line. Even if the tears had been fake, Mary was glad they had worked. Chloe looked fantastic.

There were only a handful of guests, whom she smiled at as she began to walk down the aisle with Matthew carefully counting the beats of the music under his breath.

Zachariah was seated between Christiana and Edward – both waving merrily and throwing rose petals already. Mary grinned at a few of her work buddies and extended family members she recognized.

The flowers decorating the pews were wild and gorgeous, Mary felt glad she had left the wildlife parts to Dom. The sun shone through the small stained glass windows, and made the whole setting surreal and perfect.

Mary frowned slightly when she noticed Chloe had paused in her progression down the aisle. She only halted a moment, and then jerkily moved forward to her place near the priest. Mary looked around, wondering what had upset her cousin.

Dominic stood right there, beaming his pride and love. Only the electric feelings emanating from Chloe made Mary continue to look. Samuel stood next to Dominic, standing up for him as Chloe stood up for her.

For just a moment, Mary wondered...then cast aside all thoughts of her cousin. Chloe could wait a day or two.

She smiled as Matthew placed a chaste kiss on her cheek, and handed her proudly over to Dominic. He bent over, and only because she stood so close to them, she overheard her young cousin whisper, "Now she's your problem – one down, one to go!" to her soon-to-be-husband.

Dominic grinned wickedly and winked.

Mary clutched her True Mate's hands – his words, not hers, but the label strangely seemed to suit them. As the priest spoke the words to unite them forever, she stared into eyes as deep and blue as the ocean. She could feel his pulse burning through his wrist, feel the simmering lust and energy inside his body, waiting to spring free and consume her.

She knew her eyes twinkled with the secret knowledge she held inside her. Dominic had insisted on having a large family. They were still cajoling and bribing each other on exactly how many children they wanted. Mary wanted three; Dominic insisted on eight.

With number one safely tucked away inside her, she was sure they could reach some mutually satisfying arrangement.

Mary looked into the eyes she would always come home to. She couldn't wait to get back to their cabin. She had a feeling this would be one night neither she nor Dominic would ever forget.

About the author:

Elizabeth Lapthorne is the eldest of four children. She grew up with lots of noise, fights and tale-telling. Her mother, a reporter and book reviewer, instilled in her a great appreciation of reading with the intrigues of a good plot.

Elizabeth studied Science at school, and whilst between jobs complained bitterly to a good friend about the lack of current literature to pass away the hours. While they both were looking up websites for new publishers, she stumbled onto Ellora's Cave. Jumping head-first into this doubly new site (both the first e-book site she had ever visited, as well as her first taste of Romantica) they both devoured over half of EC's titles in less than a month. While waiting for more titles to be published (as well as that ever-elusive science job) Elizabeth started dabbling again in her writing.

Elizabeth has always loved to read, it will always be her favorite pass-time, (she is constantly buying new books and bookshelves to fill), but she also loves going to the beach, sitting in the sun, having coffee (or better yet, CHOCOLATE and coffee) with her friends and generally enjoying life. She is extremely curious, which is why she studied science, and often tells "interesting" stories, loving a good laugh. She is a self-confessed email junkie, loving to read what other people on the EC board think and have to say, she laughs often at their tales and ideas. She recently has developed a taste for the gym. She's sure she read somewhere it was good for her, but she is reserving judgment to see how long it lasts.

Elizabeth welcomes mail from readers. You can write to her c/o Ellora's Cave Publishing at 1337 Commerce Drive, #13, Stow, Ohio 44224.

Also by Elizabeth Lapthorne:

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