

# Wolf Bound



Sierra Dafoe

Changeling Press

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## **Wolf Bound**

### **Sierra Dafoe**

**Jenna knows romance -- she should; it's what she writes for a living. But why can't love ever be as simple and magical as the stories she creates? When her latest book sells for a huge advance, Klaus, her lover, becomes threatened by her success, and strands her on a ski slope during a vacation in the Canadian Rockies.**

**Hiking down, Jenna becomes lost in a blizzard, and wakes to find herself in a snowed-in cave, rescued from certain death by an enigmatic lone wolf. When the wolf transforms before her eyes into a naked, stunningly sexy man, Jenna finds herself in a romance hotter and more fantastic than any best seller she's ever written!**

**But she can't possibly survive in Wolf's vast, untamed world, any more than he could join her in hers. Now Jenna is faced with a bitter dilemma: if she stays, she'll be putting his life at risk. If she leaves, it's his heart she'll be destroying...**

## Chapter One

*Damn Klaus, anyway! This is all his fault.*

Jenna stumbled forward, squinting against the fat, puffy snowflakes that drifted around her, confusing her eyes and getting caught on her lashes. The sky was an alarming gunmetal gray -- not dark yet, not really, but it was hard to keep any sense of direction in the gloom.

It didn't matter. All she had to do was keep heading downhill, and she'd be fine. *Fine, damn it!*

She jabbed her ski poles into the snow, took a step, and jarred her spine as she slipped in the deep powder and fetched up hard against a stunted pine tree.

*Heading downhill's not going to be the problem, she thought sourly as she gasped for air. The problem's going to be staying on my own two feet in the process.*

At least she'd made it down to the tree line; that was something. Wiping the sweat from her face with a snow-smear'd glove, Jenna looked back up at Goat's Eye Mountain.

The slope Klaus had brought her up two hours earlier was so steep she'd frozen in terror, staring down the precipitous slope, feeling as if all she'd have to do would be to lean forward slightly and, like a rock dislodged from a cliff, she'd be tumbling, turning over and over as she fell through open space...

"Come on, Jenna! Don't be such a coward," Klaus had called as he'd flashed past, white teeth gleaming in his tanned face, his heavy Germanic features spread in a broad, mocking grin. With a flick of his ski poles, he'd charged the slope -- which was marked, *clearly* marked with double black diamonds all the way down. Hunkering expertly into the curves, he'd sent sprays of powder shooting into the air and disappeared over the ridge.

*Bastard.*

Jenna gritted her teeth and leaned against the tree, trying to ease the abominable ache in her calves. Hiking down a mountain -- *this* mountain -- in any situation would have been a feat; doing it in ski boots was well nigh impossible.

Not that she was exactly in fabulous shape to begin with. Klaus, on the other hand, was perfect; ruggedly athletic, his broad, toned body fairly rolling with muscle. In addition, he was handsome, wealthy, successful...

*But not as successful as me. Not this year, anyway.*

And that, of course, had been the entire problem.

She'd gotten the call Friday afternoon, just as they'd arrived in Banff for Klaus's vacation -- five days of skiing in the Canadian Rockies. After two modestly successful novels, and a third which had hit the top of the USA Today Bestseller List and stayed there for a dizzying twenty-seven weeks, her agent had gotten her a flat million-dollar advance for her fourth -- and to Jenna's mind, best -- book.

"You got me *how* much?" she'd asked in amazement. Suddenly she'd been convinced that every word of *Love's Buried Treasures* was trash. What would happen when somebody realized it? She'd be over, finished, washed out before she'd fairly begun; she *knew* it.

Her agent had laughed and repeated the number.

Klaus had taken her out to celebrate, of course -- *filet mignon* and a three-hundred-dollar bottle of wine. But then he'd spent the entire meal sniping at her -- and sniping was *exactly* what it had been.

"You know, Jenna, your hair..."

She'd brushed it back self-consciously. "What about it?"

He'd shrugged, in that dismissively European way of his. "It's just not, perhaps, the best look. For a *million-dollar* novelist, I mean." And then he'd smiled -- but his eyes had been full of a cool, mocking anger.

The snow was getting thicker. Forcing her hands to let go of the tree trunk, Jenna studied the terrain below her. She was heading for Eagle Ridge, a low saddle between

Goat's Eye Mountain and the next peak over. Once she hit it, all she had to do was follow the crevasse downward and it would land her square in the middle of the resort.

The murk was deepening at an alarming rate, but she could see where the slope flattened out, just a little way below, and then rose again in the distance. That had to be the ridge. It *had* to. Jenna peered through the snow, hoping for a glimmer of streetlights, a radio tower, *anything* to pierce the endless gray.

There was nothing. Nothing but the wind gusting through the scrawny, struggling pines, the swirl of snow, the numbing cold.

She didn't belong up here -- and Klaus, by far the more experienced skier, had known it. She didn't belong anywhere near these jagged, treacherous heights. She didn't have the edge for it, the drive, the determination...

Suddenly, Jenna wasn't sure if she was talking about the mountain or her life.

*Don't be such a coward.*

She knew full well what Klaus had expected her to do -- grit her teeth and make her halting way down, her skis spread in the squat, awkward snowplow of the novice, blushing furiously at the contempt of the skiers whizzing by her, laughing at her ineptitude. And then, as she'd finally limp her way to the base hut, he'd meet her, his charming smile rueful, artificially apologetic. *I'm sorry, Jenna*, he'd have said, sounding oh so sincere and contrite. *I'm sorry, I wasn't thinking.*

*Oh, yes you were, you prick*, she thought spitefully. But she had to admit, with the clarity of hindsight, that swallowing her pride and skiing down -- however slowly, however clumsily -- would probably have been the smarter decision.

Hot, angry tears blurred her vision. She blinked them back fiercely. Bracing herself with her ski poles -- she'd abandoned her skis hours ago, shortly before the snow had started falling -- she started down the slope, one heavy, laborious step at a time. She'd get there, God damn it. One way or another.

Twenty yards later, she fell.

Scrabbling helplessly at the deep, yielding snow, Jenna tumbled, powder spraying around her, filling her mouth, her ears, her hair. Her hat was torn off. One ski

pole ripped away. The other bruised her ribs as she rolled across it, clutched it to her, and slammed into the base of a tree.

White sparks burst behind her eyes and she lay there, gasping, feeling the snow burn against her skin where it had been forced up the back of her parka, her ski pants, down into her boots. When she could breathe again, she sobbed uncontrollably.

Why hadn't she simply lied, told Klaus a hundred grand instead of a million? That would have been acceptable, not such a threat. Why hadn't she just skied down, taken her dose of humiliation, and gotten it over with? She could have been in Klaus's arms right now, and all would have been forgiven. Having reasserted once again that *he* was the man and *she*, no matter how successful, was only a woman, he would be charming and sweet and protective and oh, how that had made her feel all these months they'd been together!

And the lovemaking afterward would have been fantastic -- she *knew* that. When he wanted to be, Klaus was as skilled a lover as he was a skier, able to gauge her reactions to a nicety, more than capable of bringing her, over and over, to a shuddering, ecstatic peak.

When he wanted to. When he bothered.

Closing her eyes, Jenna imagined the heat of his mouth pressed against her mons, and sobbed even harder.

*That's enough, Jen. Get your ass up. You could lose a lot more than your pride up here.* The voice cut, cold and stern, through her self-pity. She knew that voice; it was the same no-nonsense tone that goaded her when she'd been dithering on a manuscript, spending days and days tinkering with it instead of finishing the damn thing up. It was the voice that told her, in no uncertain terms, *no one's going to finish it for you, Jen. No one's going to come along and do it for you.*

No. Nobody was. And even though she was facing a mountainside instead of a manuscript, it was still true. She could *die* out here -- and no one was going to rescue her.

Slowly, carefully, Jenna climbed to her feet.



She was much lower now, she could see that -- but it was a lot darker, too. Trees reared around her, blocking what little light remained. The wind gusted, and the falling snow was no longer fat and fluffy but small, sharp, stinging against her wind-chafed face as she bent her head against it.

Planting her remaining ski pole in the snow ahead of her, Jenna took one cautious step, then another. Her left knee blazed with agony at every step, and her teeth were chattering so hard her whole body shook, but she could go on.

She could do this. She was going to make it down.

Relief flooded through her so strongly it made her head swim. She clutched herself tight till the giddiness passed, waited till her arms stopped trembling. Then she carefully jabbed her pole into the snow and started down the slope.

That's when the howling broke out behind her.

Jenna thrust herself forward so hard she nearly fell. Running in ski boots simply wasn't possible -- it was like trying to run with casts on your legs. Overstrained muscles screamed in protest as she hobbled and skidded her way down a slope she could barely see. Vast, skeletal shapes loomed out of the darkness, slapped her with their prickly arms, and disappeared back into a world of whirling, moaning gray.

*The wind, it was just the wind. You're panicking, Jen! You're going to break your leg, twist your ankle, and then you really will die out here. Slow down!*

She couldn't.

Somehow she kept her feet under her, kept her grip on the pole, using it alternately as a rudder and a brake as she careened downhill, feeling the wind beating at her, the snow like shards of glass savaging her exposed skin. She paused for a second, panting, and a long, wavering wail cut through the darkness behind her.

That wasn't the wind -- no *way* was that the wind. She knew that sound. On some deep, atavistic level she suspected every human alive, from the fattest Manhattan banker to the Bedouin in the desert, knew that sound.

It was the call of the hunter. The predator.

The wolf.

Staggering forward, she felt the pitch of the slope grow shallower. The trees opened out around her, and suddenly she was fumbling her way through snow that came up almost to her crotch.

She was sobbing again, with rage and helplessness, feeling an ancient bitterness well in her breast -- *no fair! No fair!* Her blood roared in her ears, her chest burned with each gasping breath. Her legs dragged like leaden weights. Spots -- or was it snow? -- swam before her eyes. She could hear light, almost soundless footfalls, a low, ominous snarl...

Blindly, she whirled, swinging the ski pole like a club, thrashing at the snow furiously as she shrieked, "Leave me alone! Leave me alone! Fuck you, do you hear me? *Fuck you!*"

Nothing. Her pole flailed against nothing, against air, against snow. The silence was broken only by the low, moaning wind, the tiny, metallic ping of snow hitting snow, her own gasping breaths. The darkness was so complete she could barely see the trees behind her.

She staggered forward again, one step, two. Then the world was whirling away, disintegrating into countless specks that swirled and danced, spinning around her, faster, faster...

Her legs crumpled under her and Jenna went down. The snow reached up to meet her, as soft and welcoming as any lover -- but so very, very cold.

For a long moment, the wolf merely watched the woman. She lay outspread, her lank brown hair fanning across the snow. The wind tugged it with each gust, this way and that.

The woman didn't move.

Finally, like a shadow against the night, the wolf glided out from the cover of the trees, loped to her, and closed his jaws gently around one outstretched arm.

## Chapter Two

She was trapped in a black, icy void. She could feel her body distantly, shivering so hard her muscles ached, but her mind was somewhere else, floating...

Something was touching her, something damp and warm, gently chafing her frozen cheeks. Pain seared through her, knifelike, as that soft, persistent stroking urged the blood back to her face. Her skin throbbed. Outraged nerves screamed with agony. She tried to pull away, but couldn't command her limbs.

She was *so* cold.

Jenna whimpered, protesting, but the sensations simply moved. Something nudged her arms firmly away from her chest, then nuzzled her fingers, licking them lightly, over and over, till the frigid fire in them began to ease. It rolled her onto her back, and she felt that damp, caressing warmth move over her shoulders, her belly, her breasts...

It scraped across one hard, puckered nipple, and Jenna gasped.

The touch disappeared from her body, as if suddenly withdrawn. Paradoxically, she missed it. It had seemed the only thing anchoring her in this strange, floating blackness.

Then she felt it again at her frozen feet. Slowly, it laved her ankles, her bruised arches, delicately lapping at each frozen toe. Dimly, she felt a trickle of warmth deep inside her belly, as if the very core of her was defrosting. Her heart beat more firmly, sending a fresh wave of blood pulsing through her veins. Her hands were swollen, itchy. The stabbing sensations in her feet made her moan in mingled pain and relief.

The gentle pressure continued up her legs, tickling her kneecaps, working slowly over her cold, bloodless thighs. Distantly, Jenna realized her tremors were increasing,

contracting like an earthquake around the epicenter of her crotch, around the one spot on her body which fairly glowed with heat.

And the persistent, unseen touch was moving inexorably toward it.

She was dreaming, hallucinating... How else could she explain the sudden heat that filled her, even as she shivered? That was what hypothermia was like, she'd read about it -- you felt warmth, illusory and seductive, even as you froze to death.

The ghost-touch slid over her clit, and a jolt of fire sprang through her. Moaning, Jenna let her thighs fall open, and a soft, damp caress swiped hungrily between her folds. Then it slid over the hard, raised nub of her clit.

She was panting now; her entire body quivering so hard it was like a knot in her stomach, drawing tighter and tighter... The touch bore down harder, faster, flicking at her clit with a steadily increasing intensity. Jenna quivered, her body shaking with desire, aware of nothing but the aching in her pussy and the firm, insistent rubbing right on her most sensitive spot.

Heat spiraled up inside her and she whimpered, lifting her hips toward the eager tongue lashing her. It snaked down again, thrusting between her furred, swollen lips, penetrating her so deep she gasped in delirium. Over and over, it plunged into her, lapping her juices as she writhed beneath it, her head tossing wantonly. Then it returned to her clit, swirling over her swollen nub, teasing it till the need inside her was unstoppable.

Gasping, shuddering, Jenna pushed down against it, and felt the ice inside her shatter as her climax burst through her, washing through her body in wave after wave of molten ecstasy until she thought she might faint.

Oh, she was warm, *warm!* She was conscious of nothing else. Her body slowly relaxed, and a bone-deep lassitude wrapped her as completely and inarguably as a cocoon. Somewhere, very far away, she could hear the wind shrieking furiously like a predator deprived of its prey. But everything around her was still, silent, utterly dark.

*If this is dying, she thought muzzily, I'll take it. She couldn't seem to feel a thing.*

No -- she *could* feel something. A warm breath of air against her cheek. And a sensation of something luxuriously soft, like mink or ermine, all along her side. Smiling, Jenna turned her face toward it, and let the world slip away.

\* \* \*

There was a light in the darkness -- a reddish, flickering illumination that bloomed and grew, casting more shadows than it dispelled.

A fire? Jenna turned her head, trying to focus. Sweat poured off her in rivulets, stinging her eyes. She saw flames dancing, saw the blurred outline of a shape squatting by a small, smoking fire, broad shoulders hunched, face turned away from her.

*Klaus!* He'd found her! Somehow, impossibly, he'd come, he'd rescued her...

She tried to call out, to say his name, but her voice was little more than a broken whisper. He must have heard her anyway, because he moved, his head swinging toward her -- but the effort had exhausted her depleted strength and, even as he turned, everything was fading again, going black...

Just before she fainted, though, Jenna saw, where Klaus's clear blue eyes should be, a sudden flash of yellow.

\* \* \*

She awoke again slowly, aware first of an excruciating soreness in every muscle of her body. Even her jaw ached. Even her sides. She tried to think where she was, how she'd gotten there, but the past was a blur with huge gaps of blackness in it.

Jenna opened her eyes. The light was dim and strangely luminous, like watery light seeping through storm clouds. She blinked a few times, and sat up cautiously. A dry, crackling sound rustled around her, and she realized she was naked, half-buried under a pile of dead leaves.

Bit by bit, she made out details in the dimness. A low roof. Jagged rock walls. A cave, then. She was in a cave. The scanty illumination came from a crooked arch, like an inverted V, perhaps three feet high.

It was choked with snow. She was snowbound.

Jenna could feel panic wanting to seize her, and ruthlessly fought it back. *No more of that*, she told herself sternly, and gritted her teeth till the panic receded. Obviously, someone had brought her to this cave. Therefore someone knew she was here. Klaus? She could vaguely remember the flicker of fire, a shape crouched before it... No. Not Klaus. But *somebody*.

Seeking confirmation, she turned away from the snow bank, saw her clothes neatly hung on projections in the craggy rock walls above the ashes of a fire. Yes. That had happened. Somebody *had* rescued her, brought her here, undressed her. Jenna blushed. It was a little unnerving, knowing some man had stripped you naked, had seen you sprawled before him, unconscious, helpless...

*Oh, stop it, Jen! He saved your life!* Nevertheless, she reached for her clothes quickly, relieved to find them no more than damp, and pulled them on.

So far, so good.

Turning to the snow-blocked entrance, she crawled toward it. Maybe the snow wasn't that deep. Maybe she could dig her way out. She raised her hand toward the faintly gleaming snow -- and heard a low, warning growl, practically in her ear.

Jenna scuttled backward, flattening herself against the wall, her heart pounding wildly. Frantically, she searched the shadows, and then she saw it. A wolf. Sprawled in the shadows to the right of the entrance, its golden-yellow eyes gleaming in the dimness.

*Christ!* Had it been there all along? It must have been. It must have wandered in to take shelter and been snowed in, just as she had. She stared at it warily. It raised its head, looked at her, then dropped its muzzle back to its paws.

It hadn't touched her. For hours and hours she'd lain there, helpless -- and it hadn't touched her. Jenna didn't know much about wolves, really, but that struck her as decidedly odd.

And what would happen when the wolf got hungry? What if they were stuck in here till the snow melted? She'd be dead long before then, wolf or no.

But no. Someone had rescued her. Had popped her into the cave, made a fire, left to get help...

*In the middle of a blizzard?*

Jenna stared again at the snow clotting the entrance. She was no outdoorswoman, but it didn't take Sherlock Holmes to figure out that the undisturbed snow meant that, whoever he was, he'd left long before the storm had stopped.

*Sure, he just hiked over the Canadian Rockies in a blizzard. Probably does it all the time. Maybe he wanted a Molson.* She tried to grin at her own joke, but her stomach was icy with apprehension. Something about this wasn't right.

She flicked a glance at the wolf, hoping it didn't notice. She'd read something once, how wolves considered eye contact a challenge. Or maybe that was tigers.

Maybe if she didn't move fast, didn't frighten it...

Carefully, she crawled back toward the entrance. The wolf growled again, rolling its lip back to show its white teeth. Hastily, Jenna retreated.

*So much for that. Now what?*

Lacking any better ideas, she scraped together the pile of leaves, pushing it as far away from the wolf as she could. It watched suspiciously, but didn't move as Jenna crawled into her nest and sat cross-legged, her back propped against the rough stone wall of the cave. Covertly, she studied the wolf.

He was a handsome animal, she had to admit. And yes, it was most definitely a he -- she could see the swell of his scrotal sac, half-hidden by the sweep of his tail. He was long, and extremely lean. Even at rest, Jenna could clearly see the powerful muscles of his shoulders and haunches like rolling bands of iron underneath the thick, lush fur.

His muzzle was broader than she'd have expected, and his yellow eyes were ringed with black, like kohl. With those heavily-lined eyes and their steady, watchful expression, he made her think of a sheik, an Arabian prince, silent and mysterious and exotic...

*Oh, stop it, Jen! This isn't a story!*

She'd written a scene once, in one of her earlier books, in which the heroine had mistaken a wolf for a dog. Well, that was one conceit she'd never use again. The animal before her was *nothing* like a dog. He was too damned big, for starters -- he had to be well over six feet long, muzzle to tail. And his legs were too long, his body too thin...

*And he'll rip your throat out in a heartbeat.*

Yes. She rather suspected he would. Jenna sighed and settled back against the wall, trying to find a position where the jagged rock didn't stab her shoulder blades. The wolf watched her, his smoky yellow gaze never leaving her face.

She dozed lightly, her thoughts straying back over events -- the flight here, the phone call, that damned dinner... They were going to have to talk about that. She could actually understand Klaus's reaction, sort of. Klaus was very traditional. The man was the breadwinner; the woman was his responsibility. If you thought about it, it was really kind of sweet in a Neanderthal-ish way.

He was just going to have to learn to accept her success, she thought sleepily, learn not to see it as a threat -- she didn't need Klaus to support her, after all, but she *did* need him. Didn't she?

A low growl intruded on her musings, and Jenna sat bolt upright. The wolf's ears were pricked forward, his eyes narrow and alert. Listening, she made out a sound, a distinctive *whump-whump-whump*, and leapt to her feet.

The wolf's lips curled back in a snarl, but she didn't care. Her heart was suddenly pounding in her chest, her limbs trembling with adrenaline and relief. It was a helicopter, coming closer. For her. It was coming for her, it *had* to be!

Heedlessly, she sprang for the entrance. Instantly, the wolf was on his feet, his head slung low between his broad, tensed shoulders. He growled at her murderously, his eyes narrowed to slits.

Damn him! She *had* to get out! She lunged, but the wolf dove in front of her, snapping and snarling, pinning her back against the wall. The helicopter roared overhead. Jenna cowered beneath his bristling fury, angry, helpless tears rolling down her cheeks. "Let me go! Damn you, let me go!"



Outside, the helicopter circled, retreated, came back. The wolf, his yellow eyes inscrutable, towered over her, that deadly growl rumbling deep in his throat.

Defeated, she sobbed as the sound of the helicopter drew slowly away. When it finally faded altogether, she wailed aloud.

The wolf standing over her whined lightly, a high, almost questioning sound. He stepped back hesitantly and watched her, his eyes strangely luminous. Then he went and stretched again along the wall by the entrance.

Jenna's sobs turned into a hard, angry laugh. Snowbound? She wasn't snowbound.

She was *wolf bound*.

## Chapter Three

Something was tickling her face, something soft. Jenna brushed at it sleepily, and felt the warm lushness of fur beneath her fingers. Jerking awake, she froze as she realized the wolf was curled close beside her, his slow, even breaths sighing lightly in the stillness. His back was against her belly, and she eased away cautiously, trying not to wake him.

She glanced at the translucent snow blocking the entrance. It had grown brighter for a while, before she'd fallen asleep, but now that brightness was starting to fade. It was afternoon, at least -- maybe late afternoon. She couldn't tell.

She crept toward it softly, but before she'd gone three feet the wolf roused behind her and growled.

That noise was really starting to piss her off. She turned, glaring. "Look, fuzzface, I have to pee." She did, too. Her bladder was so full it ached. "And I am *not* peeing in here. But I am going out and --" she pointed sternly at the entrance, "-- you are going to let me. You got that?"

The wolf studied her, his yellow eyes unreadable. Firmly, Jenna turned away and moved toward the entrance. The wolf growled -- but the sound was soft, more reminder than threat. She ignored it and squatted down by the cleft.

The snow was like concrete. The inner face of the bank had melted where the cave's warmth had touched it, and refrozen to an almost ice-like hardness. She scabbled at it uselessly. The wolf, watching her, appeared to grin.

Jenna scowled. "Don't count your chickens, bub. I'm not licked yet." Grimly, she pulled on her ski gloves and felt around for a rock. She attacked the wall, hammering away at the compacted surface, sending icy chips flying into the cave. The wolf backed away quickly. Jenna snorted with amusement.

Finally, with a last, solid blow, she broke through the crust to the softer, unfrozen stuff behind. The rock flew from her hands, disappearing into the hole.

"Well," she said, "at least we're through the hard part. You gonna help?" She glanced at the wolf, who cocked his head and whined. "I didn't think so."

Shoveling with her hands, she widened the hole, then wormed quickly into the bank, thrusting the snow ahead of her. After about five feet, she burst through the outer face and dragged herself out, half-blinded by the radiance of the late afternoon sunlight. Getting her feet under her, Jenna stood shakily, lifted her head, and gasped.

Pristine peaks surrounded her, their high, snow-capped ridges sharp as razors against the endless sky. They circled her like a ring, marching into the distance, so breathtaking in their beauty that for a moment she didn't realize how completely they hemmed her in. They were vast, magnificent, utterly wild, rising above the broad, snow-locked plain. Something inside her responded to that enormity, exulting at their purity, their emptiness, all that wide, untrammelled *space*...

Then the reality of what she was seeing sank home. With a cry, she spun in a circle, looking from wall to wall of the mountains that enclosed the plain. It was utterly white, absolutely smooth. Nothing moved in all that immensity except a couple of ravens hopping across the crusted snow, and a bird -- an eagle, maybe -- circling lazily against the sunset-washed sky.

She was utterly alone.

Jenna swore. It had seemed so simple yesterday -- at least she *thought* it had been yesterday. Follow the ridge to the ravine, then follow the ravine down to the resort...

*Simple*, she thought, staring in dismay at the peaks around her. *Sure, in broad daylight, with good visibility*. But not in a blizzard, or in darkness, and certainly not with wolves on your trail -- or *a* wolf, anyway.

"Hey!" Her voice seemed hardly to dent the silence around her. Sucking icy air deep into her lungs, Jenna shouted again. "Hey! Hello! Is anybody there?"

Her call bounced back from the cliff-face above her, echoed in the distance, and faded. She heard a scrabbling behind her, and turned to see the wolf emerging from the tunnel she'd dug. "Yeah, yeah," she said crossly. "I know *you're* there."

Turning her back on him, she strode away, and somehow wasn't surprised when he loped in front of her and narrowed his eyes. Glaring, she turned and went the other way. Ten paces. Twenty. Twenty-one. Twenty-two.

The wolf growled behind her.

"All right, all right! I just want to pee." The look the wolf gave her said he wasn't fooled. She sighed. "Fine."

Unzipping her ski pants, she turned away from the wolf, oddly uncomfortable with the idea of peeing in front of him. As if sensing her reluctance, or perhaps merely confident that she'd learned the boundaries of her freedom, he loped away and disappeared into the trees.

"That," Jenna murmured quietly, "is the only dumb thing you've done yet."

Quickly, she turned in the opposite direction and started walking.

Which, she had to admit twenty minutes later, hadn't been exactly brilliant on *her* part, either. She'd reached the edge of the plain, wading through snow that came up over her thighs, but it was already getting dark. Glancing back, she could still see the cave -- no more than a black hole in the snow at the base of the cliff -- but ahead of her, under the trees, the shadows pooled and deepened.

Stubbornly, Jenna started up the slope before her.

Halfway up, something caught her eye, off to the left. She peered through the trees, trying to make it out. It looked like mist, or a thin wisp of fog. She blinked her eyes, and it was gone.

But she hadn't imagined it, she was certain. Curious, she worked across the face of the slope, clinging to the thin trunks of aspens as she went. After twenty steps, she paused, catching her breath, feeling her chest heave and sweat trickle down her back. One thing for sure, she was going to be in better shape than she'd been in years.

It couldn't be far, whatever it was. She should be almost on top of it. But where was it? Her eyes searched the gloom.

Finally, sighing, she pushed off from the tree she'd been holding on to, took a step forward... and the ground collapsed. Snow tumbled down and Jenna fell with it, pelted with dirt and pebbles, as a chunk of the slope seemed to evaporate away from a dark, gaping crevice. She landed hard, her mouth filling with snow...

And something *huffed* in the shadows, like an irate old man.

She sprang to her feet and backed away hastily as something -- something *big* -- lurched out of the exposed cave. It bared its teeth, growling, and Jenna froze in terror.

*Grizzly! Oh shit, it's a motherfucking --*

She turned to run, but her ski boot caught in the snow and she fell onto her butt. The grizzly lunged toward her, its massive shoulders rolling as it came, and Jenna scrambled backward, knowing even as she did that it was hopeless. She couldn't run, she couldn't possibly get away...

The grizzly reared onto its hind legs, looking ten feet tall -- twelve -- it was *huge*. It seemed to fill the entire world as it towered over her, jaws spread wide. Its breath plumed from its mouth in the frigid air. Horrified, Jenna realized, *That's what you saw, you dumb cluck, you saw its breath!*

The bear dropped, raking at her with its sharp, sturdy claws. She rolled desperately, knowing this was it, she was dead, this was it --

Something snarled behind her and sprang straight at the grizzly. The bear roared in answer, swiping at the wolf as he shot past. He landed lightly and spun, quicker than lightning, as the bear lumbered around to face him. Again, the wolf sprang, his claws raking.

Roaring in fury, the bear lunged, but the wolf landed in front of Jenna, bristling as he crouched between her and the bear, ears back, head slung low. The grizzly reared again, and the wolf leaped to the attack. This time, the bear slapped him out of the air like a bug. Jenna heard something snap, and the wolf slammed to the ground. A short,

agonized whine burst from him as he hit, but immediately he was back on his feet, turning. Almost contemptuously, the grizzly bowled him over.

They spun, snarled, collided, fell away, no more than shadows in the deepening night. Jenna heard the small, horrible sound of teeth ripping through fur, a pained yip, an enraged roar...

"Stop it! Stop it, you're killing him!" Jenna sprang to her feet, and then froze as the bear swung around, its tiny eyes glinting. Behind it, the wolf whimpered, scrabbling with his paws as he tried desperately to stand.

The grizzly reared again, letting out a bellow. Then it dropped heavily to all fours and ramped back and forth, snorting like a bull, shaking its huge head -- but it didn't attack.

Jenna stayed absolutely still, too terrified to move. The bear's pacing slowed. It sniffed the air and peered at her suspiciously. Then, with a final grunt, it tossed its head and lumbered away. Jenna turned, every fiber in her body yearning to run... but she didn't. She couldn't. She couldn't just leave the wolf.

Slowly, she turned back to the broken, bloody shape sprawled on the snow. He lay on his side, his chest heaving in short, painful breaths. As she approached, he growled weakly, lifting his head. The sound tapered off to an agonized whine, and he dropped his head back and lay motionless, his yellow eyes watching her.

She could see blood staining the snow. God, how badly was he hurt? Clapping her gloved hands to her frozen cheeks, she rocked in indecision. She couldn't just *leave* him! But what would he do if she tried to touch him? She remembered the way he'd snapped at the bear...

To save her. He'd been trying to save her.

Dropping to her knees, Jenna pleaded, "Get up, wolf. Please. You *have* to get up." Whimpering, the wolf tried. He made it halfway to his feet, lurched forward, and collapsed again. This time, he didn't move.

Crawling closer, Jenna saw that his eyes were closed. He was unconscious.

Unconscious... or dead? With her heart trembling in her chest, she moved next to him, keeping as far away as she could get from those sharp, bloodstained teeth. Then she reached out and gingerly placed her hand on his side.

Through the curve of his ribs, she could feel, faint but steady, the beating of his heart.

\* \* \*

By the time she made it back to the cave, Jenna was quivering with exhaustion. She'd finally resorted to making a sort of travois from her parka, shoving two sturdy branches through the sleeves. Grunting, she'd rolled the wolf onto it and then, laboriously, had propped the branches on her hips and hauled him back to the cave, staggering against his weight and grateful for the sweat that rolled off her body, warming her.

Now she gazed down at the wolf, still unconscious on her makeshift travois. His fur was matted with blood, and there was a nasty slash across one side of his face, where the bear had clawed him.

He might die without her. He needed her.

Squatting beside him, Jenna used a handful of snow to clean the gash as best she could, and tried to clean some of the blood from his coat. Then, eyeing the hole in the snowbank, she said wearily, "You know, wolf, this'd be a great time to wake up."

Sighing, she pulled one of the poles out of a sleeve and set about widening the entrance to their cave.

After tugging the wolf through the low entrance, she crawled back out and stood looking out across the plain. The moon had risen, drenching the scene in silvery light. Jenna scooped up a handful of snow and munched at it thoughtfully.

Water wasn't a problem, obviously. But food... How was she going to feed an injured wolf? Maybe she could make traps, or something. Slipknots, she'd read about those. It wasn't exactly the same as having *done* it. But she'd have to try.

Then the plain itself caught her eye. Her tracks cut back and forth across it, as obvious as a railway in the desert. If the helicopter came back, they'd see them.

She could make them even more obvious, though. She could go out there, stamp out H-E-L-P in letters twenty feet high...

She didn't. Instead, she simply stood, looking out over the vast white plain. It glimmered in the moonlight, sparks of white and icy blue from the snow crystals shining here and there and then disappearing as clouds rolled by overhead.

It was so quiet. The mountains gleamed in silvery, serrated rows, surrounding her like sentinels. She'd never known a silence like this before, a solitude so profound it made her feel both tiny and acutely alive -- just one more small creature in the face of all that immensity. No different than a tree, or a bird...

*Or a wolf.*

Jenna almost smiled at the thought.

Turning, she stumbled back toward the cave, and stopped short as she saw the carcass of a snowshoe hare, dropped on the snowbank next to the hole. She raised a gloved hand to her mouth, feeling her lips tremble against the cold nylon fabric.

*That's where he went, before. He went to find food.*

*For me.*

And what had she done in return? She'd almost cost him his life.

Tears sprang to her eyes, but even in the midst of her guilt, she felt an exultation she'd never before experienced. He'd been willing to fight, to *die*...

For her.

Reaching for the hare -- not that she was hungry enough to eat frozen rabbit yet, thank you, but the wolf might -- Jenna crawled back through the tunnel into the cave and sat, listening to his shallow, painful breaths. Moonlight filtered in through the tunnel, silvering the tips of his lustrous fur. Over and over, she kept seeing how he'd stood between her and the grizzly, his hackles bristling, his snarl low and murderous.

None of it made any sense.

Finally, she crawled next to him and lay down, scooping dried leaves over them both like a blanket. The wolf shivered convulsively, and she curled up beside him, hugging his lean frame close and resting her cheek against his thick, soft fur.



“Don’t die, wolf,” she whispered. “Please, please don’t die.”

## Chapter Four

A low crackling sound roused her, and she opened her eyes, suddenly aware of warmth and light. A small fire burned nearby, sending feeble gleams dancing over the cave walls. Surprised, Jenna lifted her head, looked down at the wolf, and froze.

The wolf was gone. Where he had lain, with her arms wrapped around him, was a man.

Jenna jerked away in shock, sending leaves scattering as she sprang to her feet. He didn't move. He lay on his side, facing away from her, apparently asleep -- and completely naked.

Slowly, she squatted next to him. Shaggy, silver-black hair hid his features, and Jenna stared at him. Where had he come from? How? When? Then another question occurred to her and she spun, scanning the cave. Except for the two of them, it was empty.

"Wolf?" Jenna scrambled to the entrance. The clouds had closed in, completely blocking the moon's light, and she could make out nothing in the blackness. "Wolf? Wolf!" She whirled back to the inexplicable man. If he'd driven Wolf out, wounded, maybe dying...

She shook his shoulder roughly. "Where's the wolf?" she demanded. "Hey! Where's the wolf?"

He rolled onto his back, and she realized he was shivering, his broad shoulders shaking with cold or illness. Something about the way he kept his arm clamped tight to his muscular side gave her the impression he'd been injured.

"Hey!" She shook him again, hard. His shaggy hair slid back from his face, and Jenna shrank back. One high, ivory cheekbone was scored with red, inflamed claw marks.

*No. No, that's not possible. That's not...*

Then he opened his eyes -- yellow eyes. Predator's eyes. Wolf's eyes.

Jenna screamed.

His pale face clenched at her reaction. He rolled away, curling up onto his side, his broad shoulders hunched like an unhappy child's. Jenna turned, wanting to bolt from the cave -- but where could she go? She didn't even have her coat, for God's sake. It was still under the man...

*Under the wolf.*

*No!*

The man shifted, rolling to his feet, and Jenna scrambled back, bracing herself against the wall of the cave. But he merely moved to the fire, crouched down by it, and added another chunk of wood to the flames.

As he studied the fire, she studied him -- the long, silver-black hair, the rippling torso, the broad shoulders with their hard planes of muscle... Everything about him was lean, corded, powerful. She found her gaze dwelling on the firm curves of his ass, and quickly averted her eyes.

He hunkered on his haunches easily, as if he'd never even seen a chair. His arm was still clenched against his side -- but when he shifted, reaching for her parka, she gasped at the sight of the gash that curved down his abdomen.

It wasn't possible. It wasn't...

Jenna moved slightly, and the man glanced over at her, pulling her coat closer around his shaking shoulders. His face was pale, angular, the well-molded jaw leading up to broad, prominent cheekbones. His lashes, so thick and black they looked almost kohled, curved against his ivory skin. Behind his thick, shaggy hair, his yellow eyes gleamed, feral and intent.

There was such *force* to his features, such a wildness...

"Wolf?" she whispered. His eyes burned into hers.

No, it wasn't possible. But there was no other explanation.

He shivered again, and turned back to the fire. Moving softly forward, Jenna reached out and touched his arm. He whirled, so quickly it took her breath away. Jesus, he was fast!

*Yeah -- fast as a wolf.* The thought sent a quiver through her, but she took his arm gently, tried to pull it back from the gash across his ribs. He clamped it closer, his full, firm lips curling back in a snarl.

"Stop that!" she snapped. For a wonder, he did, watching her warily as she eased his arm away from the wound. It was long, curving along the outside of his ribcage, still seeping blood. It hadn't pierced past the ribs, though, she didn't think. And it didn't look infected, thank God. "All right." She let go of his arm, and he shifted away uneasily, pulling his knees close to his chest and wrapping her coat even tighter around himself. He leaned his head back against the wall, and closed his eyes. A spasm of pain rippled along his jaw.

Well, she couldn't do anything about that... wait. Yes, she could. She crawled toward him, pausing as he jerked away at her approach. "Easy. Easy there, fella. I just... want to..." Carefully, she slid her hand into the inside pocket of the parka. Even through the fabric, she could feel the heat radiating off him like a furnace.

*Fever.* The realization frightened her. How sick *was* he?

Then her fingers closed over something small, flat and metal, and she withdrew her hand. *Well, it's not antibiotics,* Jenna thought wryly, looking down at the rectangular yellow tin, *but thank God for Bayer.*

"Okay, I want you to take this." She opened the tin and held out two aspirins. He watched her intently, but didn't move. Jenna stared at him, nonplussed. "Can you talk? Can you understand me?"

His gaze seemed to turn inward, as if he were trying to recall something long forgotten. He twitched his head, then shook it. *No.*

"No, what? You can't talk?"

*No.*

"But you do understand me. At least some of it." Jenna sighed in relief, and crawled toward the entrance. He growled behind her. "Calm down, lover boy, I'm just getting some snow." Scooping up a handful, she squatted back by him. Opening the tin, she took out two aspirin. "Now, open up." She mimed for him -- *aah* -- and finally he copied her.

Quickly, she popped the aspirin in his mouth, followed it with the snow, and clamped her hands over his lips to keep him from spitting it back out. He choked, snarled, gagged, and finally swallowed, then hunched back away from her, panting and glaring. Jenna let out a gust of breath, and pushed her lank hair out of her face. "I know, I know -- but it's for your own good. Now, come here."

She crawled to the leaves, patted them invitingly. Slowly, he uncoiled and moved toward her, and Jenna eased him onto his back, trying not to stare at his cock, nestled in the thick, sable curls of his crotch.

Christ, he was beautiful. His chest rose in a solid curve, banded with muscle. His torso tapered smoothly down to lean, powerful hips. His legs were long, the thighs like steel. It seemed as if there wasn't a single ounce on him that wasn't muscle.

The gash in his side wasn't as deep as she'd feared, but it would have to be bandaged. Jenna peeled off her sweater, then her turtleneck. Underneath she wore a white cotton T-shirt, and her bra.

Well, the T-shirt would have to do. Tugging it off, she tore it into strips. She was uncomfortably aware of his yellow eyes watching her, and of her cold-hardened nipples poking at the silky fabric of her bra. Hurriedly, she pulled her turtleneck back on.

Crawling to the entrance, she scooped up a handful of snow, wrapped it in one of the strips and held it near the fire till it melted. Then, using the damp cloth, she gently dabbed at his wound. He hissed in pain, but didn't move.

*I can't just keep calling him "he,"* Jenna thought as she slowly wiped away the dried, crusted blood. "What's your name?" she asked. "You know, your name?"

Those yellow eyes watched her inscrutably.

"Let's try this again. I'm Jenna." She paused and patted her chest. "Jenna. And you are..."

No answer. Jenna sighed. "Me Tarzan, you Jane," she muttered. "Roll over."

He did, and Jenna snorted, half in amusement, half in frustration. He understood *that*, at least. Carefully, she wrapped the strips around his broad chest, trying to ignore the way his skin felt gliding under her fingers. It was as smooth as velvet, taut and warm over his iron-hard muscles. Briskly, she tied off the bandage, and he rolled onto his back and looked up at her. His gaze burned into hers, and suddenly Jenna felt like a rabbit, small, defenseless, pinned under the alien heat of those yellow eyes. But she wasn't afraid -- or at least, not exactly. Whatever the emotion was that caught at her lungs, tightening her throat and making it hard to breathe, it wasn't fear.

Gently, she reached up and smoothed his hair back from his forehead. How old *was* he? Despite the silver in his hair, his face was unlined. He didn't even have the small, incipient wrinkles that had started appearing around her own eyes in the past year and a half. She'd have put him at twenty-three, maybe twenty-four, if he was human...

Only he wasn't.

What must it be like for him, out here? Did he have a family? A pack? He seemed so solitary, so fundamentally alone...

"Oh, Wolf." She stroked his cheek softly. He watched her, his eyes wide and somehow innocent, like a child's. Hesitantly, he reached up and copied her caress.

His fingers were warm, and gentle against her face. She leaned her cheek against his palm and closed her eyes.

Why couldn't Klaus ever touch her like this? So tenderly, as if she were as precious and miraculous as a snowflake, or a butterfly. Even Klaus's rare moments of gentleness seemed rough and unthinking next to the childlike purity of that hesitant touch.

But there was nothing childlike about the broad, callused palm under her cheek, or the firm swell of muscle under her stroking hand...

Jenna jerked away abruptly, yanking her face from his grasp, pulling her hand from the warm plane of his chest as if it might burn her. God, what was she doing? He wasn't even *human!*

His eyes darkened again as she stared at him, panting. He lifted his hand and, involuntarily, she flinched. A spasm of pain or unhappiness knotted his jaw, and for a moment he looked older, so much more grim...

And so lonely. Even as she watched, his body seemed to ripple, becoming denser, darker, more compact. In the time it took for her to gasp, the man had gone.

Only the wolf remained.

"Wolf..."

The wolf turned away from her.

Jenna hugged her knees to her chest, longing to reach out, to stroke him, gather him close as she'd done before. "Oh, Wolf, I'm sorry," she whispered. "I'm so sorry."

\* \* \*

The next morning, Jenna awoke to the smell of roasting meat. Wolf was hunkered by the fire, roasting the skinned hare on a stick. The bandages she'd put on him sagged now around his lean waist, and she sighed. *Well, so much for that.* But he seemed to move more easily, this morning, and the ragged gash across his ribs was already healing.

She could see the way his shoulders hunched, though, and the way his back tightened as she moved slightly, making the leaves rustle.

"Wolf?" she said softly. "Wolf, I'm sorry about last night."

His shoulders tightened, and Jenna chuckled mirthlessly. God, did she really think he'd understand an apology? He didn't even understand the concept of names, for Christ's sake!

*He might not get "I'm sorry," Jenna, but even a dog has feelings.* Chastened, she got up and squatted next to him, her ski pants lightly brushing against his bare thigh.

He glanced at her, startled, and she smiled gently. His eyes seemed to lighten, and he ducked his head. Lifting the hare from the fire, he ripped it unceremoniously in

two. Then, almost shyly, he placed half of it in front of her. When she looked at him, he nudged it closer, a strange urging in his eyes.

*Eat.* That was clear enough. After more than forty hours with nothing but a handful of snow, the smell of cooked meat was intoxicating, and she tore into it with no hesitation, not even minding the charred bits. Her companion made his half disappear in six rending, tearing bites. She watched in amused horror as he cracked the bones between his strong white teeth, gnawing them down almost to nothing.

*And what he can't eat in human form, I'm sure he'll finish later.* She shook her head, both amazed and appalled. "You really are something, Wolf, you know that?"

He glanced at her again, and this time *he* grinned, looking in that moment so thoroughly wolf-like that Jenna tossed her head back and laughed aloud -- she couldn't help it. It was way too easy to imagine his tongue, lolling from one side of his mouth.

Then she jerked her head toward the entrance, and couldn't resist saying mischievously, "So, you want to go out, Wolf? Out?"

He bounded to his feet, and Jenna rolled her eyes.

When she crawled out of the cave, she saw that he'd transformed again. She chuckled at the sight of him, rolling in the snow, wriggling, his paws in the air. When he saw her he sprang up, dashed to her, then turned and raced, sleek and silver-gray, toward the trees as she plodded along behind.

*Well, it's only fair, I guess. He doesn't have clothes. But he's not wearing ski boots, either, damn it.* Her calves were going to be as taut as his, if this went on much longer.

That thought made her glance at the sky. It was overcast, but it didn't look like snow. If the helicopter came back searching, they'd have no trouble finding her -- not with her tracks crisscrossing the whole plain.

Suddenly, Jenna wasn't so sure she wanted to be found.

The air was milder this morning, still chill enough to make her breath plume before her, but not so cold that it seared her lungs. She laughed as Wolf bounded before her, hopping and scuffling in the snow, then stopped abruptly as she saw him flip a mouse into the air and swallow it. Her stomach twisted queasily.



*This is going to take some getting used to.*

When they reached the tree line, Jenna watched, amazed, as he seemed to shudder and draw himself upright, changing back into a man as easily as breathing. It was almost like that drawing she'd seen as a kid -- the one where you looked at it once, and it was a vase; you looked at it again and it was two faces in profile. Like that.

He stood naked, not even seeming to feel the cold, and Jenna couldn't stop herself from watching the line of his back as he reached for a dead branch and tore it off, or the flex of his biceps as he snapped it into chunks. When he turned toward her, she almost gasped aloud at the sheer, masculine beauty of him, standing barefoot in the snow. He was like some arctic god, striding toward her, tall and rippling with lean, hard muscle.

And she wanted him. Jenna brushed her hair back from her sweating forehead, and stared at the truth of that.

It was useless to deny it -- she could feel her heartbeat stuttering up a notch as he towered over her, could feel her knees go weak at the heat of his body, so near to hers, his long hair tickling her face as he reached down, took her arms and raised them before her, and laid the wood he'd gathered across them.

Entranced, she followed him as he moved through the trees, watching his ass, his thighs, the tensing of his calves as he reached up and snapped off dead wood and branches. Each time he turned to pile more wood in her arms, her breath caught in her throat.

But he never touched her.

*Of course, she thought mordantly, I wouldn't touch me, either.* She stank, and she knew it. How come he didn't stink? He smelled musky, and warm, and utterly masculine -- his scent was almost intoxicating.

Jenna felt a telltale wetness slick her crotch.

God! What if he could smell it? What if he could tell she was aroused, the way dogs could when a female went into heat? Blushing furiously, she looked anywhere but

at him as he added a last piece to her load, took her gently by the shoulders, and pointed her back toward the cave.

As she slogged back out onto the valley floor, she saw him from the corner of her eye, racing through the trees in wolf form again, and wondered what he'd bring home for dinner. That hare had really been pretty tasty.

Finally, with a sigh of relief, Jenna reached the cave and dumped her armload of wood on the floor inside. In the close confines, she was doubly aware of her own stench, and she stared at the smoldering ashes of the fire, then placed a few twigs carefully and blew till flames licked up. Adding a couple of larger pieces, she huddled over the fire and thought.

She couldn't melt snow; she had nothing to melt it *in*. And obviously, he wasn't carrying a bathtub around -- so how was he staying clean? Then she remembered the way he'd rolled in the snow, thrashing, and shuddered. *Oh God, maybe I'll just stay icky.*

She lifted her arm, sniffed, and recoiled. *Okay, okay.* She could smell herself even through her ruined parka.

Building up the fire till the cave fairly blazed with heat, she peeled off her clothes. Then, grimacing, she gritted her jaw and dashed outside. Not daring to hesitate -- if she hesitated, she'd chicken out and she knew it -- she threw herself headlong and shrieked at the soft, icy touch of the snow.

Shivering, gasping, she rolled rapidly and sprang to her feet. Then, immediately, she did it again.

This time, it wasn't as bad, and she was able to brace herself long enough to scoop up handfuls of snow and scrub rapidly at her face, her hair, her armpits, before running back into the cave and practically crawling into the fire. After her teeth had stopped chattering, she gathered up her clothes and took them outside, squatting in nothing but her ski boots as she scrubbed snow over her sweat-caked ski pants, her long johns, her turtleneck.

Then, as her wolf had done before her, she hung them near the fire to dry and crawled into the leaf-bed in nothing but her bra.

\* \* \*

A strange grunting roused her from an exhausted sleep. It was growing dark out, but firelight flickered across the walls of the cave, making it seem almost cozy. Lifting her head, she saw Wolf by the fire, roasting some animal or other over the flames. He was making a soft, nasally, monosyllabic noise over and over, like an autistic child.

“N-n-n-n. N-n-n-n.” Then he’d give a sort of gasp, and do it again.

Jenna lay back quietly, hoping he wouldn’t realize she was awake. She felt as if she’d intruded somehow, stumbled onto something shameful and embarrassing. When he moved to take the meat from the fire, she shut her eyes quickly and pretended to be asleep.

He nudged her shoulder, and she yawned ostentatiously as she sat up. He pushed the meat toward her -- whatever it was, it was larger than the hare had been -- and made that queer grunting noise again. “N-n-n-ah.”

He peered at her hopefully, his yellow eyes bright under that silver-black hair, then leaned forward, touched her chest, and said it again. “N-n-n-ah!”

En-na. *Jenna*.

He was trying to say her name.

Jenna clapped her hands to her mouth, unable to contain the sobs that spilled out around her fingers. His face grew still, apprehensive, but before his beautiful features could flicker into disappointment she reached out, slid her arms around his strong neck and hugged him fiercely.

He stiffened, surprised, then slowly relaxed. Cautiously, hesitantly, he slid his arms around her and gathered her close, holding her with her head pillowed on his broad, massive shoulder, her thighs draped across his lap. Bending his head, he rested his cheek against her forehead as she cried. “Enna,” he breathed. “Enna.”

And she’d thought him somehow less than human. He wasn’t.

He was *more*.

The cave was so quiet. The only sounds were the crackle of the fire, and their breathing. Jenna could feel her heart thudding in her chest. Every place their bodies

touched seemed to impress themselves on her awareness -- the firm, solid curve of his shoulder under his cheek, the soft brush of his face against her own... His arms around her were like a nest, like the cave itself -- warm and sheltering and so very, very strong. She ran her hands up them, her fingers curving around the swell of his biceps.

She was wrapped in the scent of him, in the wild, tangy odor of his body. Lifting her head, she brushed her cheek against his. He turned his face to nuzzle her, his warm lips caressing her neck as he inhaled, drawing in her scent just as she had his.

"Enna." He breathed her name again, softly, and Jenna closed her eyes, feeling her heart contract painfully in her chest, as if it were both breaking and opening outward like a flower unfurling.

"Oh, Wolf," she said.

His hair brushed against her face like silk, and she stroked it where it fell over his broad chest, over the muscles that flowed and shifted just beneath his velvet skin. Opening her eyes, she saw that his were closed. He leaned his head back, and she saw the great muscles of his throat work as he swallowed.

His hands slid down her spine, as lightly as a feather's touch. She arched into it, feeling her breasts brush against his chest, her nipples hard and erect beneath the silky fabric of her bra. They ached, longing to be fondled, kissed, stroked, sucked...

She was panting, she realized, her cunt so wet she could feel her juices slicking her folds. He shifted slightly, and his cock pressed against her hip, pulsing and hot.

*Oh, God, Jenna thought. God, he's huge.*

His head was tilted back, his eyes still closed. His face, always pale, was now almost white, his jaw slightly open, his features lax with arousal. He swallowed again, and Jenna watched the bob of his Adam's apple, fascinated by the play of muscles in the firm column of his neck. Jesus, had he ever even *touched* a woman before?

No. She didn't know how she knew that, but she *knew*. It was there in the way his fingers trembled against her back, his hesitant, delicate stroking. Any other man -- Klaus, for example -- would have already tumbled her onto her back, her thighs spread, her lips parted...

At the thought of Wolf above her, covering her body with his own, a spike of pure lust slammed through her groin, and she gasped.

Wolf's eyes opened, and he gazed down at her, the yellow of his irises darkening to a rich, gleaming gold as she reached back and unhooked her bra. His eyes widened as she pulled it off. His hands tightened around her waist, pulling her closer, and she could feel the heat of his rigid shaft pressing against her side, teasing the ache inside her into a firestorm.

Burying her hands in his hair, she dragged his face down to hers and kissed him fiercely.

For a moment, his lips stayed still under hers, his body tense as if he didn't know what she expected of him. Then, as she pulled back, his mouth softened, opening slightly. Curiously, he returned her kiss, his lips brushing across hers, exploring them, sucking them lightly. Hesitantly, she extended her tongue, and felt a rush of saliva in her mouth as it touched his.

Groaning, he hugged her to him, swallowing against the sudden arousal that shook his huge frame. His cock beat insistently against the softness of her hip, flexing in time with his thundering heartbeats. Hungrily, his lips closed over hers, and his tongue snaked past her teeth, diving into her mouth with an urgency she burned to answer.

Without releasing his mouth, she turned so she was facing him, her thighs straddling his, his cock brushing against the swell of her mons. His eyelids drooped heavily, and his arms tightened around her, his hands sliding down to cup her ass. With a sound that was half growl, half groan, he pressed his massive erection against her, and his forearms bunched as he dragged her up and down the length of it, pressing it against the small, hard ridge of her clit.

Jenna's eyes fell shut, and she wrapped her arms about his neck and leaned her cheek against his as he did it again, his groan rumbling in his throat. She felt as if she were floating, held aloft by the grip of his hands on her ass. The taut muscles of his shoulders flexed under her arms as he lifted her again, forcing her cunt even tighter against his straining shaft. He pressed his hips forward, grinding that enormous cock

right against her clit. Jenna whimpered, feeling the simmer within her building swiftly toward a boil, and pressed back.

Clinging together, they rocked against each other, their motions growing more and more frantic. Wolf's breath was hot and heavy against her neck, and she could feel his teeth gritting as he pistoned forward, teasing her clit unmercifully. She lifted her head, leaning back into the hard grip of his arms, and his eyes darkened with lust as he looked down her body to where his cock, red and gleaming, slid between her curls. Then he leaned forward, spearing his tongue into her mouth, teasing hers out into his. Wrapping his lips about it, he sucked lightly, and Jenna felt the tightness inside her snap like a twig.

Her juices gushed out, slicking his shaft, and she moaned into his mouth, clinging to him as her body shuddered and shook.

Gently, he held her until her shudders eased, then moved her backward, his massive torso knotting as he lowered her to the ground. He slid over her, his hips brushing against hers, his chest sliding against her nipples. Burying her hands in his long, lustrous hair, Jenna tugged his face to hers and wrapped her thighs around his ass. His cock pressed against her furred lips, gliding through the slickness of her orgasm, but still he held back. Lifting his head, he gazed down at her, his yellow eyes shadowed with a question she couldn't interpret, and therefore didn't know how to answer.

She knew one thing, though -- she knew she wanted him inside her. Wanted it with an urgency she'd never felt before. She could feel the swell of his erection, prodding gently at her, then withdrawing to nudge at her still throbbing clit.

"Enna?" he asked.

"Yes," she groaned. "Oh yes, Wolf, yes."

## Chapter Five

Slowly, so slowly she thought she might faint from longing, he pushed himself into her. She could feel the hard thickness of his cockhead penetrating her passage, muscling its way into her inch by inch. His shaft was huge inside her, stretching her open, and Jenna whimpered in delight.

He paused, perhaps thinking that he was hurting her. Gripping his waist, she pulled him closer. Tilting her hips, she thrust up hungrily, wanting all of him, every inch. With a groan, he let himself sink into her heat, plunging up to the hilt, and Jenna gasped.

God! She was speared on him, split open to her very core, impaled on the thick, throbbing fire of his shaft. It was everything she'd ever dreamed of -- *no*, she realized hazily, *it's more*. She'd never even dreamed of feeling something like this.

She could feel his hot, swollen balls, hard and heavy against the curve of her ass as he pressed down harder, his pubic bone grinding against hers. It was as if he couldn't get deep enough, couldn't get close enough, as if he could never have enough of her. His breath rasped in her ear, and she could feel his entire body shaking.

*My God*, she thought, *I'm going to come again. Right now.*

Her passage clamped around him as his groin pressed against hers, rubbing her clit. She writhed below him, pushing him even deeper, and then suddenly he was groaning in her arms, his body wrapped against hers as his cock bucked inside her. Clinging to him, she let his shudders seep into her, become her own, and then she was crying out, arching up to meet him as he pulled back and slammed into her, once, twice, again, moaning into her open mouth as they shuddered together, his semen filling her cunt, his balls pulsing against her ass, their breaths hot and ragged in each other's mouths.

His heart beat so loudly she could feel it in her very bones, and with a sigh he dropped his head to her shoulder, panting. Her cunt was still spasming, tightening and releasing around his enormous shaft, and Jenna felt as if she could have stayed like this, right like this, with his cock inside her and the force of her orgasm still tensing her body, forever.

Then he moved, flexing his hips, driving his cock deeper and she realized with a shock that he was still stone-hard.

*Oh, sweet Jesus. Wolf, you're gonna kill me!*

But what a way to die. Eagerly, she wrapped her thighs about him, urging him on, and gasped as he lowered his head to her breast and flicked her nipple with his tongue. When she moaned, she felt him smile, his cheek curving against her breast. Then he closed his lips around her breast and drew it deep into his mouth.

He didn't tease, didn't toy with it -- he didn't know those techniques; how could he? He simply suckled it, like a hungry infant, the pressure of his mouth as he swallowed and tugged making her gasp again with pleasure. She buried her hands in his hair, holding him there, feeling the ache in her nipples spiral up into fire as his lips pulled at her full, heavy breasts.

His back bowed as he pushed his hips forward, burying his cock inside her. He was so huge she could feel the pressure of his shaft all the way into her belly. Over and over, he thrust into her until she was shuddering and gasping, feeling like her body was melting away, like there was nothing holding her together but the ravenous tug of his mouth at her breast and the hard, pulsing throb of his cock spearing her cunt.

And that was enough. That was more than enough -- nothing she had ever felt could begin to compare to this moment. She could almost feel herself shimmering, there in the darkness, a creature not of flesh and blood but of fire and moonlight, joyfully trapped under the demands of his body.

His thrusts were growing harder now, more urgent, and she released his head, letting him raise himself on his arms above her, letting him stare down at her with those molten-gold eyes, drinking her in.



Spreading her legs wide, she pulled her thighs up against her chest, and he groaned as he looked down, watching his cock work in and out of her hot, wet, tight pussy. His head jerked up like a startled horse's, and his nostrils flared as he threw his head back and slammed down into her, so hard Jenna thought she might die from pleasure.

"Oh, *God*, Wolf, yes! Now! Please..."

And he did, pounding into her, his hips pushing her thighs even farther apart as he hammered that huge, rock-hard cock into her. Jenna mewled like a wild thing and clung to him, her fingernails raking his back as she thrust upward, feeling his orgasm building, gathering, driving him even harder...

Twisting below him, she reached beneath their entwined thighs, found his balls, and curled her fingers around their taut hardness. They were so distended they overflowed her palm, and she could almost *feel* the molten lust inside him, the primal need that rumbled in his throat with an urgency she shared.

She could feel the pressure of his cockhead as it dragged back and forth, tugging beneath her pubic bone as he withdrew to his very tip and, quivering, held himself there, feeling her spread wide before him, hungry for his fullness, his heat...

The fire inside her raged outward, and his shaft swelled even further as he plunged back down into her, spreading her open till her entire body, from the soles of her feet to the back of her head, seemed to clench around the ecstasy in her cunt, building higher and higher like a tidal wave, curling, cresting...

It crashed inside her, flooding her body as he rammed in to the hilt, his balls throbbing beneath her fingers, his hips bucking as they both came. For a moment Jenna could see nothing, hear nothing but the roar of her pulse in her ears, *feel* nothing but those golden bands of ecstasy searing through her body, sending waves of heat rippling through her very core.

Gasping, she fell back, dragging him down on top of her, and heard him growl as his balls contracted in her grip, still shooting his seed into her in hot, liquid spurts. He moaned harsh and low in her ear as his body flexed, over and over, pumping every

drop of his need into her creamy tightness. Thrusting deep, he held himself there, quivering, until at last he slumped, dropping his weight down upon her.

She couldn't move. Every muscle in her body was wrung out, as limp as wet, freshly washed laundry. She felt like she had barely enough energy left to breathe. Languidly, Jenna tried to raise her arms, wrap them across Wolf's broad, warm back -- but she couldn't do it. Laughing in surrender, she simply lay there, feeling the heat of his body above her like a blanket.

*Congratulations, Jenna. I think you just deflowered a virgin werewolf.*

She laughed again, and this time Wolf raised his head, looking down at her with a puzzled grin.

*Well, even if he could understand, I wouldn't explain that one.*

Hugging him to her, she kissed him. "That's a kiss." In response, he pressed his lips to hers.

"Iss."

She chuckled. "Close enough." Emphatically, he shook his head. "No?"

He shook his head again and Jenna stared at him, bemused, until she felt the renewed hardness of his cock as he pushed into her again. *Oh, dear sweet God, she thought dizzily, I have died and gone to heaven.*

"*Now oss enuf,*" he said, and grinned. Then he lowered his mouth to hers and murmured emphatically, "Iss. Iss, Enna."

He didn't have to ask twice.

\* \* \*

In the middle of the night, Jenna lurched out of sleep, her heart thudding in her chest.

*The tracks!*

She could see them in her mind's eye, cutting back and forth across the valley floor, pointing like an arrow straight to their cave.

They would find her. More importantly, they would find Wolf.

He was asleep beside her, so sound asleep not even her sudden motion had disturbed him. In fact, he was snoring slightly. Dim, reflected moonlight trickled into the cave -- the fire had long since gone out, and the air was icy cold. By its soft light, Jenna studied Wolf. She trailed a finger along his jaw, reveling in the bony hardness of it, the broad, high planes of his cheekbones, the curve of his lower lip. His breath plumed between them, and she snuggled close against his warmth.

They couldn't make her leave, after all -- could they? She could just stay here, with him. It wouldn't be such a bad life, really...

*What do you think they'll do when they find him, Jenna? Do you think they'll simply let him stay here, running around naked in the middle of a National Park? And what about when they learn what he is?*

But they hadn't found him. Not yet. And what was there to find? One more wolf, running wild through the Canadian Rockies. He'd been safe here for years, for decades...

*Yes, but not while you're with him. And what about you? How long can you keep wearing ski boots for footwear?*

"As long as I have to," she muttered sullenly, wrapping her arms tighter around the warm, steady rise and fall of Wolf's chest.

*How long do you think you'll be happy here? Yes, Wolf is wonderful. Yes, the sex is phenomenal. But what are you going to do with the other twenty-two hours of each day?*

That one sank home -- at least a little. Lying there in the cave, hearing the leaves rustle under her as she shifted even closer to Wolf, she had to admit that part of her was hungry for her laptop, for the clatter of keys under her fingers. How strange was that? Here she was in the middle of a reality more fantastic than any story she'd ever penned, and yet that *need* to write, to create, was beginning to tug at her again.

"It's habit, that's all it is. I can live without it."

The voice inside her was silent. It didn't need to tell her she was lying.

And what *would* happen, if the helicopter came back tonight? Right now? If Klaus found her here, curled in Wolf's arms? How much would Wolf understand? Would he simply see Klaus as a threat to her, Jenna? What if he...

Jenna swallowed against the sudden ice in her gut.

What if he *changed*?

She glanced toward the cave's entrance, suddenly terrified she'd hear the sound of beating rotors, see searchlights stabbing down across the plain outside...

"Wolf." She shook his shoulder gently, then harder. "Wolf!"

He blinked awake, grumbling, then rose and went to the fire. She could hear the rustle of leaves, the snap of small twigs, then a strange, rhythmic scraping sound. Sparks bloomed in the darkness, flickered, went out.

Rolling onto her side, Jenna watched as he scraped two rocks together. This time, the sparks dropped into the tinder, and he blew on it gently, teasing the sparks into flame.

*So that's how he does it. With the -- oh, I should know what that is. I've read about it...*

She'd read about werewolves too, and seen movies. Who hadn't? But Wolf was nothing like the depictions she'd seen, any more than *Young Guns* bore any resemblance to the true Wild West.

"Wolf?"

He looked at her, smiling, and Jenna tried to keep the urgency from her voice. "Wolf, how do you change? I mean, when you --" God! This was difficult. How could she even ask what she needed to know? "Does anything, you know, *make* you change? Or do you just..."

He glanced at her quizzically, then rolled to his feet. Suddenly, with a ripple of motion, the wolf was standing before her, his yellow eyes gleaming. Then he was gone, and it was Wolf who stood there, his bent head brushing the roof of the cave. He squatted again and shrugged his broad shoulders.

“So you just *choose* to do it?” Relief flooded through her, and she threw herself at him, laughing happily. He grinned as her arms wrapped tightly around his neck. “Oh, Wolf! You could come *with* me! You could be human all the time!”

She felt his shoulders stiffen, and Jenna paused, drawing back enough to look into his strong, handsome face. His grin was gone.

“Wolf? Couldn’t you?”

His eyes, studying her, were suddenly dark. He nodded, but his face looked grim.

Jenna shook her head, confused. “But we could... We could be together. Don’t you see?”

Slowly, he unwrapped her arms from his neck. “Enna,” he said. “Enna, I...”

He broke off in frustration, his heavy sigh almost a growl. He shook his head sharply, then reached out, taking her hand between his and raising it to his chest. Placing it flat against the swell of his pecs, he whispered, “Enna.” His eyes were haunted as he gazed at her. Beneath her palm, she could feel the thudding of his great heart. Then he started to change under her hand.

The sensation was almost like sand trickling through her fingers -- only instead of sand, it was flesh and fur, shifting under her grip like mist. “Wolf!” she cried, trying to grasp him, to hold him. “Wolf, no!” But he slipped from her hands and slid out of the cave. Throwing herself after him, Jenna screamed, “Wolf!”

Moonlight poured down, flooding the plain. It glimmered in the tears that suddenly sprang to her eyes, and through their blur she saw Wolf racing across the snow, a gray, sleek shadow beneath crystal-white mountains, so beautiful, so graceful, so impossibly *free*...

“Oh, Wolf,” she whispered, letting the tears cascade down her cheeks. “Wolf, I love you.”

\* \* \*

It was hours before he returned. During that time Jenna paced restlessly, increasingly aware of the confines of their quarters. Every so often she’d crawl to the

mouth of the tunnel and sit, watching for him. Outside, the world was a wonderland of silver, the mountains stretching away into the distance, the fat, cotton-candy clouds above them radiant with moonlight, the stars peeping between them like diamonds, hard and gleaming and brighter than she'd ever seen.

It was beautiful. As beautiful as Wolf. Vast, untamed, utterly silent... She sat there, shivering and entranced, until the moon went behind the clouds and the cold finally drove her back into the cave. Building up the fire, she crawled back into the leaf-bed and curled into a ball, listening for his return.

*Did she love him? Did she really?*

*What was love, anyway? Was it being willing to give up half of who you were?*

She couldn't ask him to leave here. She knew that now. What she'd be asking him to sacrifice was deeper and more fundamental than even her urge to write.

*And you can't stay, Jenna. You know that, deep down. If nothing else, they will find you -- and what will happen then?*

It was impossible -- the whole thing was impossible. If she'd been thinking clearly, she'd have seen that from the start. She should never even have *let* it start. Now...

Now it wasn't only her own heart she'd be breaking.

At last she heard the sound she'd been waiting for -- the nearly noiseless pad of paws in the darkness outside. She lay still, waiting, holding her breath, and then sobbed with relief as Wolf curled close beside her, his cold nose resting against her neck. Crying, she wrapped her arms around him, burying her face in his thick, silky ruff.

He lifted his head, pulling back a bit, and stared at her out of those yellow eyes. Then, slowly, gently, he leaned forward and licked the tears from her cheek.

Holding herself desperately still, Jenna closed her eyes. Every muscle in her body tensed as an atavistic reaction burned along her nerves -- *Wolf! Wolf!* She could feel the light scrape of his teeth against her chin, and quivered, fighting down panic. She wished he would change, would take her in his arms, but instead the soft lapping

stopped, and she looked up to see him watching her, his golden gaze smoky in the dying light of the fire.

Then he lowered his head and laved his tongue over her breast.

Jenna stiffened, her chest heaving, as fear and arousal flared up inside her, twined together like ivy around an oak tree, almost inseparable. But she *had* to separate them, she *had* to.

If she loved him, she had to love all of him.

Slowly, she made her body relax. Spreading her hands flat against the floor of the cave, she gazed up at the wolf standing over her. Purposefully, holding his gaze, she pushed the leaves that covered her torso off to one side, shivering a little as the cool air struck her. She didn't move as he lowered his great head, and a small moan burst from her as he snaked his tongue out and lapped at her mons. In response, he nudged her thighs open and licked delicately at the damp, exposed folds.

The sensation was so familiar somehow. Panting, she spread her legs wider, trembling as his long, nubbly tongue flicked at her entrance, and then moved to her clit. As he swirled it across her hardening nub, Jenna gasped. The vague, shadowy memory of her first night in the cave poured back into her mind; the way he'd licked her, warming her body, forcing back frostbite with his hot, wet tongue. The way he'd plunged it inside her, bringing her to climax...

"Oh, Wolf," she whispered, her voice hoarse with longing. "Oh, Wolf, *yes*."

Yes. Yes, she loved him. All of him. The warm, caring man; the wild, graceful wolf...

*Oh God*, she thought frantically, reaching out, her hands sliding deep into thick silken fur as she pulled him to her. She clung to him with every ounce of strength she had as he thrust into her, desperately, urgently.

*Oh God, what am I going to do?*

## Chapter Six

Lying sleepily with her arms around Wolf, Jenna gazed toward the entrance. Outside, the night was slowly graying toward dawn, and in that pale, charcoal dimness, she saw something moving. Floating. Dropping as gently as a blessing past the tunnel's opening.

Snow. It was snowing.

Smiling, she dropped her head against Wolf's warm fur, watching the miracle as it fell, silently coating the world outside, covering her tracks.

They wouldn't find her. Not now. Maybe not ever.

Jenna lay, hearing the warm, firm thud of Wolf's heartbeat underneath her cheek. She felt so safe, curled against him, listening to the tiny, steady hiss of the snow falling outside. Then he shifted beneath her, soft fur sliding like magic into warm, soft skin as he rolled onto his back, his arms coming up to clasp her close, holding her with her head tucked just under his chin. She could feel his jaw line soften as he smiled, still half asleep.

Smoothly, she slid on top of him, wincing a little as she lowered herself down onto his hardening shaft. But as his cock slid into her and his hands found her breasts, her soreness faded beneath the gentle ache unfolding in her belly. Rocking slowly, she pressed her breasts more firmly against his palms, dragging her nipples back and forth above his caressing fingers.

His eyes gleamed up at her from between heavy, half-closed lids, watching her with a feral amusement. She flushed underneath that alien gaze, feeling suddenly overeager, unbecomingly wanton... Then Wolf pressed up into her, raising his hips off the floor as his magnificent shaft penetrated her. Jenna cried out, gasping, her muscles turning to water. Tossing her head back, she stared down into his eyes.



*I don't care, she thought wildly. I don't care what anyone thinks. Only love me, Wolf! Love me!*

The gold of his eyes deepened and he groaned deep in his throat, the sound a hoarse, eager echo of a wolf's plaintive call. Hearing it, Jenna pushed down against him, taking him in till she felt his balls snugged tight against her. Lifting his hands from her breasts, she slid them downward till he cupped her ass. His long, powerful fingers tightened, digging into her cheeks, and she moaned as he lifted her, his biceps bulging. He moved her, dragging her up and down his jutting cock, and Jenna realized breathlessly exactly how strong he was.

His movements quickened, gliding her faster and faster over his rock-hard shaft, and Jenna relaxed into it, letting her head loll as he rocked her. The soft black curls that covered his groin tangled in hers, tugging delectably at her swollen clit. Arching her back, she increased the friction, panting as the heat inside her flared up further. Tightening the muscles of his ass, Wolf drove up into her, rubbing harder against that hot, aching spot.

"Enna," he growled, his gaze locked on hers, watching her hungrily.

Her face was flushed, she knew, her lips parted. She didn't care. She gasped as her passage tightened around him. Skin against skin, they rocked harder, faster, eagerly reaching for the ecstasy shimmering, calling them on. His balls tensed under her ass, and he roared in her ear, slamming up into her as he ejaculated, flooding her cunt, driving deeper and deeper as if desperate to savor every second of delight. He strained up against her, his hands closing again on her breasts, savaging them as she cried out in bliss and went rigid above him. Almost keening, she pressed downward, wanting every inch of him, every flex of his cock, every pulse, every drop...

At last, satiated, she slumped down against his chest, and he held her there, tenderly, their heartbeats thundering together in the cool, peaceful silence.

Outside, the snow fell.

"Iss," Wolf murmured softly, his muscles already relaxing back toward sleep.  
"Enna, iss."

*Yes, Enna iss, she thought, raising her head to fulfill that sleepy request. Enna is happy.*

\* \* \*

Later, when she awoke alone with a still-warm space beside her where Wolf had been, Jenna felt a sense of peace so profound it was almost spiritual. Outside, the world was wrapped in a silence broken only by the twittering of small winter birds, and the occasional *thud* of snow sliding from the trees.

That peace extended inward, filling her with a calm, clear light, and she stretched, smiling to herself. It was more than their lovemaking. More, even, than just the snow. Some enormous weight had slipped off her, falling from her heart.

*What?*

Then she knew. It was Wednesday. The day she was supposed to have left with Klaus.

Squinting at the light falling outside the cave, she estimated the time. Ten a.m., maybe. Ten a.m. at least. Klaus would already be in the air, on the return flight to La Guardia...

She felt a pang of guilt at that. Oh, he hadn't loved her, not really -- not the way Wolf loved her. But he wasn't a monster. He must have been frantic at her disappearance. She flushed at the thought of him tearing himself up inside, wondering, always wondering what had become of her...

*Well, I'll let him know. Some day.*

And he'd get over it. That, she was sure of. Klaus wasn't the kind of man to dwell on the past. He'd have done everything he could, tried everything he could to locate her, and now...

Now there'd be nobody looking for her. She was safe. She was free.

Stretching luxuriously, she reached for her jeans and dressed quickly. Where was Wolf? Out hunting, probably. But she wanted him here, *here*, right this instant so she could tell him. Tell him...

*Tell him I'm staying.*

The words trembled in her mind, miraculous, luminous, shimmering like a rainbow on the edge of her consciousness. She barely dared to breathe them, even to herself, terrified that simply saying it would somehow break the spell.

Instead, grinning broadly, she zipped up her parka and stomped into her ski boots. Crawling outside, she gasped at the pure, sparkling glory before her. Snow coated everything like a thick layer of icing, cushioning the jagged ridges and sharp, upthrust peaks to a soft, pillowed whiteness.

*A blank page, she thought, wonderingly. Like a vast, empty canvas. And I can write anything I want on it. Anything at all. An adventure, a survival story...*

A romance. Oh, yes.

She saw him then, racing across the snow, his lean, muscled form flowing with grace and power. Wolf. *Her* Wolf. Grinning, she slogged out to meet him, hobbling awkwardly in her heavy plastic boots. She didn't care -- he was hers. He loved her. He needed her. And she needed him. His fire, his wildness, his passion...

His heart.

She felt her own thudding as she struggled through the snow, laughing as he bounded to her and leaped up, knocking her down. Together, they rolled deliriously in the snow, wrestling and playing, his tongue hanging out in a huge canine grin as he dashed away and she fumbled after him. "Wolf! Wolf, that's not fair!"

Coming back to her, he licked her face, and Jenna, remembering the way that long agile tongue had felt in her cunt, felt a stab of heat so strong she could have fucked him right there on the snow. Her nipples drew into hot, hard peaks as she felt him glide against her chest, his fur teasing her neck, then bounded away again. Laughing, she gave chase until she staggered to a halt, gasping, and simply fell onto her back in the cold, embracing whiteness.

Panting, she glared at Wolf as he padded up beside her. "Damn it, Wolf, you're gonna be the death of me."

Even in wolf form, she could read the suddenly deepening amber of his eyes. The heat in her belly spiraled up a notch and hesitantly, still feeling awkward, she

reached her hand out, running it down his lean flank, reveling in the muscles that flowed like liquid iron, just beneath the luxurious fur. His eyes gleamed deeper, and she blushed as she remembered the things they'd done in the night, the feel of him shifting from one form to another as he took her and took her with a savagery that had left her breathless, moaning heedlessly, eager for him to possess her again and again...

Wolf nudged at her coat, pushing it upward, nuzzling under her sweater to the warm flesh beneath. Jenna moaned as his tongue flicked out, wrapping around her breast and tormenting her nipple. Then she gasped as he jerked back, letting icy air sweep over the pebbled tip. Yanking her coat down, she protested, "Wolf!"

He wasn't looking at her. His head was tilted back, scanning the sky, his yellow eyes narrowed. An incipient growl rumbled in his throat.

"No. Oh, no." A second later she heard it, too, still faint in the distance -- the buzz of a helicopter. "Oh no, Wolf -- *run!*"

Leaping to her feet, she glanced at the distant cave. Too far, it was too far -- she'd never make it in time. Turning instead for the tree line, she lurched into motion, slipped, fell. The helicopter was closing.

Then Wolf was at her side, tugging at her arm. She shoved back to her feet and hobbled forward, Wolf right at her side. Clinging to his ruff, she staggered on, willing herself to go faster, *faster...*

The 'copter buzzed past, then circled back. Jenna fell again as it dropped, whipping the snow into a miniature blizzard as it came in for a landing. Frantically, Wolf pulled at her sleeve, half dragging her toward the tree line.

They were almost there. They could make it. She staggered to her feet, passed the first outlying saplings. They could hide in the trees, and then --

"Jenna? Jenna!"

Jenna froze. *Klaus.*

Oh, shit.

Wolf dashed deeper into the trees, then stopped and stared back, his yellow eyes beseeching. Jenna clung to an aspen, her lungs already heaving, her calves burning in the attempt to keep up... She couldn't. She couldn't do it.

And it was no good, anyway. Klaus had seen her. He'd never leave now, never stop following her... He would find her. And then, he'd find Wolf.

Loping back to her, Wolf tugged again at her sleeve. She shook her head, sobbing. "Oh, can't you see? I can't! I can't, Wolf. You have to go without me."

He trotted two steps forward and looked back again, whining, urging her to follow. Jenna risked a glance over her shoulder, but could see nothing but a blur as the helicopter settled, surrounded by blowing snow.

"Go! Oh, please, Wolf! They'll hurt you. They'll --"

He padded back toward her, his eyes dark and intent. Then he shifted before her and stood, tall and beautiful, in the shimmering snow. "Enna..."

"I know -- but they'll just follow me and follow me. Please, Wolf, you *have* to!"

Mutely, he shook his head, his face contorted with need, with pain, and Jenna flung herself into his arms. For a moment, she clung to him, sobbing wildly. Then, resolutely, she pulled away, turned her back on him, and slogged toward the plain.

"Enna!" His voice cracked behind her, harsh with longing. She heard it drop to a whisper, a last, desperate plea. "Enna. Enna, iss..."

Barely able to see through the tears blurring her vision, she stumbled forward onto the plain. Klaus was running toward her, a vague, shadowy shape, with something dark in his hands. Something dark, straight and deadly. Jenna blinked back her tears, and then screamed.

"Klaus, no!"

From behind her, she heard a deep, warning growl. Klaus raised the rifle, and Jenna threw herself forward, her arms outspread. Something punched into her shoulder, spinning her around, and she fell headlong into the snow.

Through the haze of pain pulsing through her, she saw Wolf crouched by her shoulder. He whined, lowering his head to lick at her cheek. "Wolf," she begged

desperately. "Oh, please, Wolf... Please, if you love me..." Closing her eyes, she said, "Wolf, go."

With an uneasy whimper, Wolf drew away from her, trotted two yards toward the trees, stopped, and looked back. Somehow, Jenna managed a smile, unaware of her tears as they fell to the snow, melting tiny dimples in its pure white surface.

Then she heard Klaus's heavy, crunching footsteps. He fell to his knees beside her, his face tightening in fury at the sight of her wound. Seizing the rifle, he raised it back up...

"No!"

Shocked, Klaus glanced down at her, lowering the rifle, and Jenna turned her head, her cheek resting on the snow, just in time to catch a last fleeting glimpse of Wolf's yellow eyes. As Klaus bent and gathered her into his arms, he disappeared between the tree trunks like smoke, like a ghost, like a memory...

A long, throaty howl rose in the distance, so full of grief that Jenna squeezed her eyes shut. "Goodbye, Wolf," she whispered as Klaus lifted her gently.

\* \* \*

This time when she awoke, it was to bright, fluorescent lighting and the beep of machines. Jenna stared around, frightened by the noise, by the brightness. It all looked so foreign. Slowly, she realized she was in a hospital -- in Canada, she assumed. A televised voice babbled somewhere down the hallway.

Klaus was sitting by the bed, holding her hand. His face was haggard, his heavy features etched with worry and grief. Shadows marred the skin under his eyes. "Oh, Jenna," he murmured as she looked at him. "Jenna, forgive me."

Reaching out, she touched his cheek lightly. It wasn't really his fault after all. And he hadn't left her -- he hadn't simply flown home. Even in the bruised corridors of her heart, she could feel some compassion for what he must have gone through. "It's all right, Klaus. It's all right. It's over now."

*It's over now.* Her words rang in her ears, and a dull, leaden pain lanced through her heart.

Klaus shook his head, not even noticing her stillness. "How could I have been so stupid? So proud? I almost lost you. Almost *killed* you. Jenna..." His eyes were pleading, desperate. Jenna looked away, feeling a stray tear trickle down the side of her face. How many months had she longed to hear those words, that tone in his voice?

And now it didn't matter. Now the only thing she heard was Wolf, his rough, awkward voice whispering to her, over and over. *Iss. Enna, iss...*

"Jenna, look at me. Please."

She glanced at him, and was startled to see tears on Klaus's cheeks. His expression was yearning, frightened -- *of what?* she wondered. *Of losing me? Or just of losing, period?*

No. That wasn't fair. Klaus wasn't a bad man. Sure, he was self-centered, competitive, a little insecure...

But he wasn't Wolf. No man was. No man ever would be.

Reaching into his pocket, Klaus drew out a small black box. He turned it, over and over, between his strong, square, manicured fingers, his gaze pensive. Then he shrugged lightly, in that European way of his, as if half-dismissing what he was about to do.

"Don't," Jenna murmured hastily, and then flushed. He looked at her, startled. "Oh, Klaus, I'm sorry. But no. I can't. I can't give you any reason for it, I just..."

"What is reason in matters of the heart?" He smiled ruefully and tucked the box back into his pocket. Fleeting, Jenna wondered if he was relieved. "We had good times though, didn't we?"

Jenna nodded. "Yes." She held out her hand in farewell. He took it, turned it upward, and kissed her palm.

For a moment, he held it, as if reluctant to let go. "Jenna..."

She smiled gently, and took back her hand. "Goodbye, Klaus."

## Epilogue

As with most things, the check took longer to arrive than Jenna would have ever guessed. But finally, one day, there it sat on her desk, just a small piece of paper, nothing more. She picked it up, reading the words printed across it.

*One million dollars.*

She hadn't gone back -- what would have been the point? She'd never find Wolf again in the vastness of the Canadian Rockies. She didn't even hope to. It wasn't an issue. He was gone, and she would never see him again.

*Come on, Jenna! Don't be such a coward.*

Klaus's words came back to her suddenly, and for the first time she wondered if they'd had some merit. *Had* she been a coward? Had she simply run away? Maybe so. She didn't know anymore. And it didn't matter, now.

But as the first spring rains began beating at her window, hard and cold, Jenna stared blindly through the glass, seeing not buildings or traffic or tangled city streets, but vast pristine peaks towering to the sky.

She wanted to go back. She wanted it with a hunger that almost frightened her. Not to find him -- she knew better; miracles like that didn't ever happen twice -- but just to stand in the crystalline silence of those mountains, and *remember*.

Turning to her laptop, Jenna closed the manuscript she was working on, booted up the Internet, and tapped "Banff real estate" into a search engine.

\* \* \*

In early May, when even in Alberta the air had softened into something like spring, a wolf began appearing on the back streets of Banff. He could be seen on occasion, slinking through the shadows, pausing near open windows and cocking his head, almost as if listening to the voices inside.



Johann Stein, a retired slalom-racer who now worked tuning skis, lived alone in a small two-bedroom house on a quiet side street. At eighty-seven, Stein was almost stone-deaf, and every night he sat in his lounge by the big picture window, drinking Labatt beer and making pinecone snowmen, completely unaware of the wolf who crouched just outside, ears pricked to the blare of game shows and sitcoms.

\* \* \*

The real-estate agent had done her best -- Banff, she'd explained, wasn't an option. It was a resort town enclosed within a Federal Park, and only resort workers could get year-round residency permits. But less than fifteen miles away, in Canmore, she'd found Jenna exactly what she'd asked for -- a modest single-level contemporary, set on its own six acre parcel right at the very edge of Banff Federal Park.

It was perfect. Standing on her back porch, Jenna stared out at the mountains, thinking of the wolf they hid like a living heart in their stony wastes. For the first time in over eight months, she smiled.

She wrote in the kitchen these days, her laptop propped on the counter, the sliding glass door behind her standing open to the breezes coming down off the peaks. August turned to September, September to October, and slowly the snow crept farther down the mountains. Jenna awoke each morning half expecting to open her curtains onto a glistening world of white.

Then, one morning, the snow *had* fallen, and Jenna, feeling her heart thud in her chest for no reason she could name, ran out into it naked and shivering and threw herself down, sweeping her limbs through the powdery stuff. Climbing carefully to her feet, she looked down at the snow angel she'd made, and smiled.

That night she dreamed of soft, dense fur brushing against her belly, and a low, growling voice whispering in her ear.

*Iss. Enna, iss.*

Jenna rolled over in the king-sized bed, acutely aware of the empty space beside her. She stared out the window at the rising half-moon. Then, restless, she wrapped

herself in a quilt and padded into the kitchen, slid open the glass door, and stood, looking out.

Moonlight poured down, sparkling across the snow. It was so familiar, so evocative, that she could almost see him racing, wild and beautiful, across that luminous landscape.

Yes. She had done the right thing by coming here. Even though she would never see him again, this was home -- here, where her memories were so strong and so clear that she didn't even have to close her eyes to picture him, a lean, graceful shadow twining through the trees. She smiled as her whimsy conjured the shadow closer, making it pad across the smooth white snow toward her. She even imagined a quick gleam of yellow as he gazed at her, his nostrils flaring...

Then her heart was thundering in her chest, filled with a longing so sharp it seared like fire, and she was running, the quilt falling away from her, running through the snow calling out, "Wolf! Wolf!"

He rose before her like a miracle, a dream -- but he was real, *real!* Real as his arms closing tight around her. Real as his broad shoulders, the rolling muscle flexing as he swept her up, crushing her to him. Real as the long, shaggy hair that fell around his face as he bent his head toward her.

"Jenna," he whispered, his voice low and intent. "Jenna, *kiss.*"

## **Sierra Dafoe**

Sierra Dafoe published her first erotic romance with Changeling Press in May of 2006, and hasn't stopped since! Named a Rising Star of Romance in July by Love Romances and More, she received three 2006 CAPA nominations including Favorite Erotic Author (a fact which still has her stunned!)

Sierra lives in northern New Hampshire's White Mountains with her incredibly tolerant hubby, her thoroughly obnoxious cat, and her twelve-year-old puppy. Visit her at [www.sierradafoe.com](http://www.sierradafoe.com) for free stories and monthly contests, and join her yahoogroup at [http://groups.yahoo.com/The\\_Sierra\\_Club](http://groups.yahoo.com/The_Sierra_Club) -- she loves hearing from her readers!