

Secrets



GRACE R. DUNCAN

Table of Contents

Love is an Open Road.....	3
Secrets – Information.....	6
Secrets.....	7
Chapter 1.....	8
Chapter 2.....	12
Chapter 3.....	16
Chapter 4.....	25
Chapter 5.....	29
Chapter 6.....	33
Chapter 7.....	38
Chapter 8.....	45
Chapter 9.....	49
Author Bio.....	54

Love is an Open Road

An M/M Romance series

SECRETS

By Grace R. Duncan

Introduction

The story you are about to read celebrates love, sex and romance between men. It is a product of the *Love is an Open Road* promotion sponsored by the *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* and is published as a gift to you.

What Is Love is an Open Road?

The *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* invited members to choose a photo and pen a letter asking for a short M/M romance story inspired by the image; authors from the group were encouraged to select a letter and write an original tale. The result was an outpouring of creativity that shone a spotlight on the special bond between M/M romance writers and the people who love what these authors do.

A written description of the image that inspired this story is provided along with the original request letter. If you'd like to view the photo, please feel free to join the [Goodreads M/M Romance Group](#) and visit the discussion section: *Love is an Open Road*.

No matter if you are a long-time devotee to M/M Romance, just new to the genre or fall somewhere in between, you are in for a delicious treat.

Words of Caution

This story may contain sexually explicit content and is **intended for adult readers**. It may contain content that is disagreeable or distressing to some readers. The *M/M Romance Group* strongly recommends that each reader review the General Information section before each story for story tags as well as for content warnings.

Each year, a dedicated group of Volunteers from the M/M Romance Group work hard behind the scenes to bring these stories to you. Our Editors, Formatters, Proofreaders, and those working on Quality Assurance, spend many long hours over a course of several months so that each Event is a success. As

each and every author also gives freely of their time and talent, it was decided that all edits suggested may be accepted or rejected by the author at any given time. For this reason, some stories will appear to be more tightly edited than others, depending on the choice of the author.

This story is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

All rights reserved worldwide.

This eBook may be distributed freely in its entirety courtesy of the Goodreads M/M Romance Group. This eBook may not be sold, manipulated or reproduced in any format without the express written permission of the author.

Secrets, Copyright © 2015 Grace R. Duncan

Cover Art by Jess Small

This ebook is published by the *M/M Romance Group* and is not directly endorsed by or affiliated with Goodreads Inc.

SECRETS

By Grace R. Duncan

Photo Description

Two men are on a beach, one carrying the other. Both are barefoot, in shorts and T-shirts, the one face we can see is happy and smiling.

Story Letter

Dear Author,

I love him so much and I hate to watch as he slowly drives himself to the point of exhaustion. Being a lawyer is a stressful job, I get that, but in most cases he just forgets to eat. My cooking can easily fix the problem; after all, he is not dating a chef of 2 star restaurant for nothing. This time is different. He barely eats or sleeps, and if he manages to fall under he wakes up screaming. When asked about it, he constantly says "I'm fine, sweetheart". But I can't help but worry. He was always loving and supportive. When I hit a rock bottom, he helped me get through it. So now is my turn. The last straw was when he got into a full bloody panic attack right in front of me. Now every time I close my eyes, I still see his face so frightened and vulnerable. After insisting and pleading, he finally agreed to go on long overdue vacation. Maybe a change of scenery will help calm his mind and, if I am very optimistic, finally trust me enough to tell me what caused all of it.

No cheating, threesome or BDSM. Otherwise, get as creative as you like.

Sincerely,

Mrzorochoan

Story Info

Genre: paranormal

Tags: shifters, established couple, lawyer, culinary, bareback, interspecies, vacation, soulmates/bonded

Word Count: 16,025

SECRETS

By Grace R. Duncan

Chapter 1

Baxter stared out over the dark ocean, not seeing the way the last of the day's sunlight sparkled on the water. He'd turned his focus inward as he worked through the problem. He'd won a small victory, getting Logan to go on the vacation, but they weren't done yet. He'd won a second minor victory when Logan stumbled up the stairs and fell facedown on the bed in the little loft. Even now, he was sleeping the sleep of the dead, which he hadn't done in way too long.

Something was wrong with Logan, something far beyond the typical stress and exhaustion that comes from being a criminal attorney. Baxter frowned as he tried to remember the last time his partner actually sat down for a meal. He started counting on his fingers, but when he had to stop because he ran out—of those *and* toes—he huffed.

Too long, no doubt about it. Baxter scowled as he remembered Logan had convinced him to leave his cookware at home. "*It's a vacation, Bax, for both of us,*" Logan had said. "*We'll eat out. It's about time you get out of the kitchen for a little while.*"

Well, he couldn't very well argue that. For all Baxter had been annoyed, Logan had been right. He'd been almost as guilty of overworking as Logan.

Almost. At least he'd come home every night.

If he wasn't so secure in Logan's love, he'd have been horribly suspicious. But they'd been through that. He didn't doubt it anymore. If Logan said he was at the office, then Baxter believed him.

But Baxter was still trying to figure out what would keep him at the office *all night*.

It wasn't a case, that much Baxter knew. Logan hadn't had any really bad cases in a while. There was the young guy who'd been accused—and acquitted—of murder. Logan had firmly believed in his client's innocence and, thus, so did Baxter. But that case was over, had been for going on three months now.

Logan didn't always talk about his cases, of course—attorney-client privilege and all that—but he was usually able to give Baxter *some* information. Enough so Baxter wouldn't worry too much, especially if it meant longer hours or time away from home for other reasons.

Baxter sighed. There had to be something going on and it was past time he got to the bottom of it. He was tired of his beautiful kitchen at home going to waste. He and Logan needed to talk things out, come to an agreement and remember what it was to spend time together.

Outside of vacation.

He picked up his wineglass to take another sip and frowned when he saw it empty. That only compounded when he went to pour more out and found the bottle was also empty. With another sigh, he stood up, sent one more look at the ocean and went back inside for more wine.

He stopped on his way to the kitchen to dig into his messenger bag. He pulled out a notepad and pen and dropped them on the island counter, then went over to the bottles of wine they'd brought. He'd been adamant he bring them, even if he wasn't allowed to cook. They also had a few things to nibble on in the fridge—cheese, veggies, and light meats. He wasn't about to depend entirely on the local restaurants. Even *if* they were only three minutes away in Logan's Volvo.

He considered his options and decided on the merlot. He let his mind turn over Logan's problem as he opened the bottle and poured himself a glass. Back at the counter, he stared at the blank page for a moment.

He decided to write everything that came to mind, even if he could cross them off right away.

Work

Family problems

Health problems

Something between us?

As Baxter took a sip, he frowned. The horribly short list didn't help a damned bit. He'd covered the work thing in his head already, so he crossed that one off.

Logan didn't have much in the way of family anymore. He had his mother, who was currently touring Europe, and his sister, who had married a nice dentist and was, even now, about to pop out child number three. Everything he'd heard—up until the day before, in fact—was that both mother and sister were fine.

He crossed "family problems" off the list. The last two possibilities settled in Baxter's gut, twisting his stomach.

Aside from not eating or sleeping much, everything else he'd seen of Logan said he looked healthy. As far as Baxter knew, Logan hadn't even been to the doctor lately—and, since he handled all their insurance paperwork, he would have seen something like that. So, Logan couldn't have anything wrong with him if he hadn't been to a doctor to be diagnosed.

Baxter sighed. That left a problem between them. Except... there hadn't been any other indications that something was wrong between them. When Logan was home, they still touched, still held each other at night—even if Logan didn't sleep. They'd been together for years and still made sure the other one knew they were loved.

In frustration, Baxter threw his pen across the tiny living room. It bounced harmlessly off the big glass window and rolled under the couch. He downed his glass of wine and set it down, then turned toward the stairs, determined to get this out in the open.

He nearly screamed when he saw Logan standing there. “Jesus, Logan!” Baxter put his hand on his heart as if to hold it inside his chest. It certainly seemed to be trying to beat its way out.

“Sorry, sweetheart,” Logan said, giving a sheepish smile. “Uh, I need you to do something for me.”

Baxter blinked at him. “Okay...” he said, slowly.

“Now, hear me out, and don't yell, okay?”

“What? Of course I will,” Baxter said, scowling.

“Well, you do have a habit of overreacting... a little.”

“I do not!” Baxter huffed.

“Sweetheart, you threw a soup ladle at Davis when he put your spatula on the wrong hook.”

“Okay, maybe I do overreact a *tiny* bit,” Baxter allowed. “But in my defense, the old dishwasher told him I was... particular.”

“Particular. Right.” Logan chuckled. “So, I need you to go down the road and get a hotel room for the night.”

Well, whatever it was Baxter had been expecting, that certainly wasn't it. He frowned. “No. We're here together. Logan... what's going on?”

Logan shook his head, brown hair—shaggier now than he usually kept it—flopping into his eyes. “Not now. We'll talk, but you have to *go*.”

Baxter scowled. Logan seemed to be... twitching. “Logan, I am not leaving you to deal with something on your own. That’s what partners are for. Now... tell me what it is.”

“Not—Baxter, *please*. I *will* tell you. *Everything*, but not now. I’m sure the casino has a room for the night. Just go, please!”

Baxter shook his head before Logan even finished. Before he could say anything, though, Logan shook *his* head hard, then grimaced.

Claws grew out of Logan’s fingertips then, sharp canines appeared over Logan’s lower lip, and—Baxter shook his own head, sure he was imagining things. Was that... *fur*? But no, he wasn’t imagining things because as soon as Logan’s skin sprouted fur, he shook, his body did some sort of funky, twisty move...

Then a huge brown wolf stood on the kitchen tile where Logan had just been standing a moment ago.

Baxter stared at it. He blinked, rubbed his eyes, then pinched himself, but no, he was awake and not seeing things. “Well, that wasn’t on the list,” he said, then promptly keeled over.

Chapter 2

Logan sat down with a huff and stared at his mate. *Baxter*, the human told him.

Mate, he said back.

The human snorted in his head. *Wait, why can I understand you now?*

He didn't even bother to reply. He had no idea what the human was going on about. He had bigger problems, as it was. His mate—his human mate—was lying on the floor, passed out.

He sniffed at the man, and was relieved to discover he wasn't dead. He also didn't find anything that indicated his mate was sick. That was good, at least. But his mate didn't have fur and even *with* his fur, Logan could tell it was getting cold in their den.

The human poked him. *Let me out so I can wake him up.*

Can't. He didn't give more than that—not that he understood exactly what the human was trying to say, anyway. He turned his attention back to his mate. *What am I going to do?*

Don't ask me. You're in charge, the human said with yet another snort.

He sighed and nosed at his mate's cheek. He had to stop briefly as his mate's scent inundated him—something warm and sweet that nearly overwhelmed him. He whined a little without meaning to.

Still no response. He tried licking his mate's face instead. He gave great, long slobbery licks over his mate's cheeks.

Baxter, dammit. He has a name.

Logan huffed again. *Fine. Baxter*. He went back to licking Baxter's face.

His mate sputtered and groaned. "What?" He shook his head and sat up, peering at Logan.

Logan huffed, looking at Baxter.

"I didn't dream it?"

Logan shook his head when the human gave him that image.

Baxter frowned. "What are you?"

Logan just stared at his mate. *You really don't know?*

“Well, you look like some sort of... dog. Wolf? Wait!” His eyes widened. “You’re a *werewolf?*”

Baxter, dear, I love you but you can be slow at times, the human said.

Logan chuffed at that. He didn’t quite understand the words, but he got the idea. *Mate not smart?*

No, our mate—Baxter—is very smart. He just doesn’t always think before he speaks.

Logan didn’t understand that either, but again got the general idea. *What do we do?*

Don’t eat him.

Logan didn’t even dignify that with a huff. He instead tilted his head to his mate, who was staring at him. He smelled... fear. He whined and laid his head on his paws.

Baxter stared at him for another long moment, but the smell of fear didn’t seem to fade.

Mate afraid of us. He whined again.

He just doesn’t understand, the human assured him. *As long as you don’t eat him, he’ll figure it out.*

Not eat mate, he grumbled, wondering just how smart the human side of him really was.

Hey! I’m plenty intelligent, thank you very much. Why can I understand you now?

He tried to puzzle out what the human meant. He got images—memories of being locked in that big box, scratching to get out. *That was my office, which you destroyed.*

Locked up. He huffed.

Wait... it was just because you were stuck?

He didn’t quite get that, either. His stomach rumbled in that moment, and now that Mate wasn’t unconscious, he had other things to worry about. He could attempt to answer the human side later. He needed to hunt and feed. He would have liked to fuck, but as his mate was human and he was not, that wouldn’t work.

Instead, he padded across the room and whined at the door, then turned back to his mate. When Baxter didn't move, he whined again, then pawed at it.

“You want... out? Are you going to kill people?”

Logan sighed, drooping.

You're not, are you?

He ignored the human and looked up at his mate, who was crossing the room. Finally, his human prodded him to shake his head again. Baxter seemed satisfied with that and opened the door. Logan licked Baxter's hand, then ran out into the night.

I hope he comes back. Baxter wasn't sure if that was the best thing or not, but if this was what had been wrong with Logan for the last few months, then it was likely he'd turn back into a human at some point. He stood in the doorway, eyes fixed on the... wolf... that was even now running along the path to the sand. Yeah, Logan needed to come back—as a human.

At which time, they needed to *talk*.

Baxter couldn't figure out what to feel first. Fear was still there, lurking under the surface. He had a feeling Logan *wouldn't* hurt him, even in this form, but he couldn't help it. Anger and hurt surfaced next over the fact that Logan didn't tell him. Another kind of fear—of what it would mean for them—made itself known. And if that wasn't enough, he was sad for what Logan must have gone through alone over the last few months.

At least he understood why Logan had stayed away. He'd have bet his favorite Le Creuset skillet Logan had shifted and stayed away, locking himself in his office, afraid he would hurt Baxter.

How had this happened? Baxter didn't need to question when. He had no doubt it was a recent thing. He would have noticed Logan breaking out in fur before. But... how? That was what Baxter found most puzzling. How did it work?

He shook his head. Obviously, he wasn't getting answers until Logan came back and could speak. He closed the door and tried to decide what to do. He didn't want to go up into the loft, just in case Logan came back and needed to come in.

So, he lit a fire in the little wood stove, grabbed the wine bottle, and poured another glass for himself. Then he picked up his laptop and settled in on the couch. He had no doubt that whatever he'd find would be at least half-wrong, but there was no way he'd sleep so the best thing he could do would be to see what he could find out. He pulled the lap blanket down, booted up his computer, then with one more glance out into the night, started typing.

Eight hours later, Baxter had gone through a huge tray of cheese, crackers, and veggies, and more bottles of wine than he cared to admit—they'd need to stop by the store for more wine at some point very soon. Though he'd kept the fire going, he didn't have any idea how many logs he'd fed to the wood stove.

What he did know was that Logan still wasn't back and he was no closer to understanding what was going on than he had been when he'd started. He had a list a mile long of werewolf and shifter movies and books, but he was sure none of them were anywhere near accurate. Though, there were quite a few hot ones in M/M romance he was going to have to read.

Later.

None of what he read that wasn't part of fiction had anything to do with the way Logan had behaved. When he'd been looking into the wolf's eyes, he could have sworn he saw intelligence there—some part that was Logan. But none of the crap he'd read had said anything like that.

Annoyed, he set the laptop aside, and got up to pace. He had been afraid, though he didn't think anyone would blame him. Any sane person would be at least a little afraid. He was pretty sure, though, Logan in that form wouldn't hurt him. He didn't know why Logan would have thought so, but after earlier, he didn't think so anymore.

He continued wandering back and forth—all six or so feet of open floor—trying to sort through things in his head. The problem was, he had very little information to go on. He sighed and threw a glance out the window. It looked like the sky might be starting to lighten. He hoped Logan would come back soon. He didn't think the neighbors—even as few as there were—would want to see a huge wolf walking through the yard.

Chapter 3

Logan prodded the wolf. *Let me take over now?*

He got the same thing he got earlier—one word: *Can't*.

Logan had never been so frustrated in his life. To be stuck inside himself, unable to do anything, he wanted to scream, but of course, he couldn't. Mentally screaming didn't help, either. He wasn't sure if it was better to be aware like this or not. The first couple of times he'd turned into a wolf, he didn't remember much of anything the next morning, except vague impressions of emotion.

He *did* get the impression the wolf was telling the truth. It was more a matter of can't, rather than won't. *Why not?*

The wolf didn't reply with words. What he *did* do, though, was send an image: the moon setting.

Ah. Well, at least he understood now. He should have guessed it was the pull of the moon, but he was still trying to figure all this out. *Why can I understand you now?*

All he got in response to that was a sense of confusion.

The frustration increased. He tried to figure out how to make his idea understood. He tried thinking of himself as unconscious, thought about his own confusion, and added in a good dose of no memory on top of that.

The confusion faded a bit. *Young*, the wolf replied, then gave him an image of a wolf cub.

Logan thought through that reply and finally figured it out. *It's because we're so new?*

The wolf seemed to consider the question, then told him, *Yes. Not used to each other.*

That made more sense. He was going to have to *learn* how to control the wolf, how to be the dominant side.

He felt the agreement, rather than receiving anything concrete. *Will I always be able to control it?*

Yet again, a sense of confusion. He imagined himself changing when he felt like it, rather than when the wolf wanted. What he got back confused *him* for a

moment. He puzzled over the image of the moon in his head before it clicked. He'd always be subject to the moon's pull—the *full* moon. *Guess those werewolf movies got something right.*

The image of the blank stare he got amused him. He pushed the thoughts aside and realized it was starting to get light out. *We should go back.* When all he got was more confusion, he mentally sighed, then tried a different tack. *Mate?*

That, the wolf seemed to understand. In fact, the reaction he got from it would have hardened his cock damned near instantly if he'd had control of his body. They turned and started running immediately.

Logan was relieved to see they hadn't actually gone far. The woods they'd hunted in—and he swore he never remembered rabbit tasting like that before—had been just past the end of the beach. Within only another couple of moments, they were up on the back porch.

Baxter had apparently been watching for him. The door opened right away and Baxter stepped back. “Well, glad you came back. Why aren't you human yet?”

Logan blinked up at Baxter, wondering at the calm tone of voice. He nudged the wolf to tilt their head, showing the confusion they were both feeling. The wolf sniffed and told him the fear was much less. *Mate want us? Not afraid?*

Yeah, he wants us. He knows I'm in here, so no, he's not afraid.

Not hurt mate, the wolf insisted.

I know that, but he doesn't yet. He will, when I can talk to him again.

“Uh, you're still a dog—err wolf. Why are you still a wolf? The sun is coming up.”

Logan looked out the window, then back at Baxter. He nudged the wolf to shake their head.

“You don't know?”

He imagined nodding and the wolf did as well.

“Huh. You really are in there,” Baxter muttered. “Well, I guess all we can do is wait.” He went over and sat on the couch, still staring at them.

Logan padded over, laying his head on Baxter's knee. *Want mate.*

*Not as a wolf, we're not. That'd send Baxter running screaming, for sure.
Mate not want us?*

Logan winced internally. *Not as a wolf. He wants us when we're in human form.* That didn't seem to make the wolf any happier. *I'm sorry. It's just what he knows.*

That seemed to mollify the wolf somewhat, though he still wasn't happy. Logan couldn't really blame him. The wolf didn't seem to understand the difference—or maybe didn't understand why the difference would matter.

Baxter reached out and ran his fingers over Logan's head. The wolf closed his eyes in contentment, moving his head to get Baxter to do more. He seemed to get the idea and gave a full, long stroke over the fur. "It's soft," Baxter murmured.

Logan's eyes were still closed and, despite the fact that he was trapped inside the wolf body, he enjoyed the feel of being petted. Because of the distraction, he wasn't watching the light. But a few minutes later, the wolf prodded *him. Take mate.*

Take ma—oh! He opened his eyes and that's when the shift took over again. It felt... weird. Not really bad, but he didn't like the sensations of his bones moving and muscles reshaping on him. His skin itched, but before he could truly process that, he knelt, human and naked, in front of Baxter. "Hi."

"Logan!" Baxter launched himself forward and Logan caught him easily.

"Hi, sweetheart," he murmured, holding Baxter close. That amazing scent filled him and he buried his face in Baxter's neck. The wolf, despite not having control, was apparently still active in his mind. He nudged Logan, reminding him of the one thing they hadn't been able to do, the one instinct pulling at them that they couldn't fulfill while still in wolf form.

That reminder filled his dick until it hardened almost painfully. He pulled back and caught Baxter's lips in a kiss that could not be misunderstood. "Need you," he muttered when he broke the kiss long enough to suck in a breath.

Baxter's hands went into Logan's hair and he moaned, rocking against Logan's hard cock. "Lube... upstairs," he managed, and Logan stood, picking Baxter up with him. Baxter blinked at him. "When did you get so strong?"

Logan flashed him a grin. "About three months ago. Can't talk," he said, kissing Baxter again. "Need to fuck you."

“Not... arguing,” Baxter said between kisses. “But... why?” He wrapped his legs around Logan’s waist, biting at his neck and shoulder as they moved. Logan groaned at the slight pain.

“He’s pushing me,” Logan answered, focusing on climbing the stairs to the loft without falling. He vaguely noticed Baxter didn’t ask *who*, but didn’t dwell. The wolf pushed too hard, kicking Logan’s arousal even higher.

When they got up to the bed, he tossed Baxter onto it, then yanked at Baxter’s T-shirt. He threw it off the side of the bed and dove in, nipping at the spot where shoulder meets neck.

“Shorts,” Baxter grunted and Logan pulled back just long enough to yank them and Baxter’s underwear off, grateful there were no shoes or socks to worry about. A moment later, he had Baxter as naked as he was.

“God, love you. So hot,” he murmured, grinding his cock into Baxter’s and diving in for another kiss.

Baxter whimpered, hand flailing for the bedside table. “Been a while. Need to be stretched,” he reminded Logan.

Logan regretted the necessity, that it’d been so long since they’d done more than mutual blow jobs or hand jobs because he’d been so worried about what might happen. He took the lube and sat up, tilting his head. “Roll over, sweetheart.” If there was a bit of growl to it, he couldn’t care. Baxter didn’t seem to mind and did as he was asked, arching his back and pushing his ass out. Logan let another soft growl out at the vision and nearly broke the bottle in his hurry to get it open. He coated his fingers as he wrestled with the wolf’s need.

Don’t want to hurt him, he reminded the wolf. *Haven’t done this since before you took over.*

Hurt? Not hurt mate.

Exactly, Logan replied. *Trust me, it’s a human thing.* The wolf quieted just a little and Logan was able to focus long enough to keep from actually hurting Baxter. He didn’t know how long the wolf would put up with the delay though. Before the wolf could get too antsy again, he coated his cock, insanely grateful they’d been committed for a while and didn’t need condoms. Finally, he was pushing his way into Baxter’s incredibly tight ass.

“Oh fuck, that’s good,” he moaned.

“You can... say that... again,” Baxter panted.

But Logan was too focused on the tight heat surrounding his dick to answer. His wolf prodded him again, pushing him to forget this slow thing and *take*.

Not hurt mate, Logan reminded him, and the wolf huffed in his head. He did push a little more, focusing on filling Baxter a bit faster. When he was finally buried completely, he paused, panting to find some sort of control.

He would *not* hurt this man, no matter how much animal instinct was pushing him to take and mate. He gave in enough to grip Baxter's hips hard, pull back and thrust.

"Oh, fuck, Logan!" Baxter shouted.

That pleased the wolf, and the echoing thrill prompted Logan to do it again. In no time, he was thrusting hard and fast, lost to need and heat and the primal instinct to *fuck*. Logan grabbed Baxter's shoulder to anchor himself, nearly pounding into his ass, setting a punishing pace.

Baxter's shouts turned wordless as he rocked against Logan, meeting each thrust with almost equal power. He eased down onto an elbow and reached under himself. Logan moaned, thrilling in the evidence of Baxter's need—that he was so far gone, he *had* to stroke himself.

Logan wasn't going to be able to make this the long fuck he wanted. Between the fact that it'd been more than three months since he'd been inside Baxter, and with the wolf pushing at him, he was going to go off very soon.

"Bax..." he moaned in warning. After all the time they'd been together, he knew his partner would recognize it.

"Close too, baby," Baxter replied. A moan, another grunt, and Baxter nearly slammed back onto Logan's cock. "Oh fuck, oh fuck, oh *fuck!*"

Baxter's muscles flexed and that, on top of Baxter's shouts—knowing his lover was coming—was all Logan needed. He threw his head back and made a sound he'd never have recognized before but now *knew* was part him, part the wolf. His orgasm hit, with pleasure so intense it stole sound and sight. It yanked the cum from his balls to fill Baxter's ass and he shook a little with the force of the climax.

Then the oddest thing happened. His cock swelled, then pulsed, and it felt like Baxter's ass got *tighter* around him. Logan blinked down at where he and Baxter were joined, but couldn't see anything right away. He tried to pull out, but... couldn't.

What? he asked the wolf.

Mate, the wolf replied.

That was singularly unhelpful. The wolf must have sensed his confusion, though, and tried to help.

Mate, he said again, then provided a picture of a pup.

Uh, our mate is a man. That doesn't work, he told the wolf.

He swore the wolf was *exasperated* with him and he got the feeling his intelligence was being questioned again. *Know that. Body doesn't.*

It took him another few seconds for that to make sense; then he got it. He snorted.

“Something funny, baby?” Baxter asked, still sounding breathless.

Logan kissed one of Baxter's shoulders. “In a way. My, uh, human body apparently went through some changes, as well as becoming a wolf.”

“Oh?” Baxter asked.

“Yeah, uh, I can't pull out yet.”

Baxter was silent for a full minute. “You can't?”

Logan chuckled. “No. The wolf says I'm trying to mate you.”

“*What?*”

Logan laughed. “Apparently, my body doesn't get that you can't get pregnant.”

“I can't, right?” Baxter asked.

Logan snorted. “No, no you can't. You're still quite human, remember? Besides, I'm pretty sure even male wolves can't get pregnant.”

Baxter snorted. “Well, I'd hope not. That'd be weird.”

“And me turning into a huge wolf once a month isn't?” Logan asked.

“Point,” Baxter replied. “Uh, how long is this going to take?”

“I have no idea and neither does the wolf. He doesn't think in time like we do.”

“How do you know?”

Logan pondered how to explain as he eased them onto their sides and pulled the quilt up over them. “We... well, it's not... it's not like there's a separate

being, but it's almost like another... consciousness. Like a wolf version of me in my head. His understanding and mine are *not* the same. He doesn't get human things, which I guess is fair since I don't get wolf things."

"Wolf things?"

"Well, like this," Logan said, rocking to indicate his still-swollen dick.

"Ah. So, uh... how did this happen, Logan?"

"I'm not entirely sure. I *think* it was that guy I defended a few months back. We were wrapping things up, and I was trying to finish up some paperwork, and he started getting really antsy. I get it now—the full moon was close to rising—and I reached out to touch his arm, see if he was all right. Well, apparently, he wasn't. He was trying to get away, so I did a stupid thing and grabbed him. Apparently, his wolf didn't like that and bit me."

"Huh. So, uh... when did you shift the first time?" Baxter asked, settling closer into Logan's arms.

"I shifted the first time right after that. I don't remember a thing about it. I was at the office, finishing some things up. When I woke up the next morning, my suit was in shreds, there were claw marks all over my door, and the bite was gone." He sighed. "Luckily, I had a spare suit there. But I had no idea. Aside from taking in another suit, I didn't know what to do. So... when I started feeling off again, I locked the door and... didn't remember anything until the next morning again."

"That's why you stayed away."

Logan kissed Baxter's shoulder. "I was terrified I'd hurt you. All those claw marks scared the shit out of me."

"Is that why you haven't been eating or sleeping?" Baxter looked over his shoulder.

"Well, it's why I haven't been sleeping except when I just get too tired and pass out." Logan sighed. "I was afraid I'd hurt you. I didn't know if falling asleep would bring it on or what. You have to understand, I had *no* idea what was happening. Last night I didn't, either. It was the first time I understood the wolf—knew what I even turned into."

"Huh. So... what about eating?"

Logan smiled sheepishly. "Uh, I've been really hungry for steak. Or, well, meat in general. A lot of your stuff just, uh, well, isn't very meaty."

Baxter burst out laughing. “That’s it? Really? It’s not my cooking?”

Logan nodded. “Well, that and I have a really sensitive nose now. I don’t know why, but everything has a strong smell.”

“Oh, and I bet some of the French dishes I make at work wouldn’t sit too well with a strong nose,” Baxter murmured. “Sorry.”

Logan shrugged. “You didn’t know. Hell, *I* didn’t know.”

“So, uh, what now?”

Logan shook his head. “I don’t know. Uh, according to the wolf, on full moons, I have no choice but to shift. I have no idea if I can or will any other time, but at least on those nights, I have to.”

“And you can’t be stuck in our condo when you do,” Baxter suggested.

“Probably not a good idea, no. And I definitely shouldn’t be at work.”

“Okay, well, we’ll... figure something out,” Baxter said, sighing. “And I guess I’m cooking more meat.”

Logan laughed, feeling lighter and better than he had in months. “I love you.”

“I love you too. That doesn’t mean I’m suddenly into bestiality,” Baxter warned.

“Aww, not into puppy love?” Logan joked.

Baxter snorted. “No. And I’m still mad at you. How *could* you, Logan? Why didn’t you tell me?”

“Should we maybe wait to talk about this more when I’m *not* locked in your ass?” Logan asked.

Baxter glared over his shoulder. “Might as well talk now. You can’t get away.” He shook his head. “Why?”

Logan sighed but recognized the truth in what Baxter was saying. He *had* partially been avoiding telling Baxter, more than a little afraid of his reaction. “I didn’t know what it was. I didn’t understand. What could I tell you? And...” He frowned, but knew Baxter was right. He needed to lay it all out. “And I was afraid of your reaction.”

Baxter shook his head. “You shouldn’t have kept this from me. I love you, remember? After all the shit we’ve been through, nothing’s going to make me not want you. Unless, like, you eat me.”

Logan sighed. “You’re right. I shouldn’t have kept it from you. I’m sorry.” He kissed Baxter’s temple. “And I promise not to eat you—” Logan paused when the wolf prodded him. *Not eat mate*. “And, apparently, so does the wolf.”

Baxter laughed. “I’m glad for that.”

With another kiss, Logan said, “Listen... How about we clean up when I can finally pull out—I need a shower, desperately—then go get some pancakes at the Pig ’N Pancake?”

“The Pig ’N Pancake?” Baxter asked. Logan didn’t think he could sound any more offended if he tried.

“I realize it’s not the be-all end-all of culinary experiences, but we *are* in a tiny seaside town in Oregon,” Logan said, laughing.

Baxter rolled his eyes. “True. I thought you needed meat?”

“Pig,” Logan pointed out, making Baxter laugh.

“Right. Okay, the Pig ’N Pancake. But you owe me something a little less... uh, greasy spoon... for dinner.”

Logan laughed. “That’s fair.” His cock chose then to soften and slip out of Baxter. He eased back, kissing Baxter’s shoulder. “I really am sorry,” he murmured.

“Don’t do it again, yeah?” Baxter asked, turning over.

Logan nodded. “I promise.” With a soft kiss to Baxter’s lips, he pulled back. “We should probably shower separately or we’ll never get food.”

Baxter sighed dramatically. “If you insist.”

Logan laughed and climbed out of bed. “Besides, I don’t think we’ll both fit in that little stall.”

They didn’t, much to Baxter’s very vocal displeasure. Logan’s wolf wasn’t any more pleased, but they did manage to get clean, even if it was alone. When Logan went to get dressed, he was annoyed to find his shorts and T-shirt from the night before in shreds. He’d have to remember to take them off when he started feeling the wolf surfacing.

Chapter 4

As they were heading for the door, Baxter cleared his throat. “Um, by the way, we need to stop at the grocery store on the way back.”

Logan raised an eyebrow. “Oh?”

“Yes, well, while you were out... uh, doing whatever it was you were doing... I drank a few... bottles... of wine.”

Logan stopped and blinked at Baxter. “*Bottles?*”

Baxter scowled even though his cheeks heated. “I’d just seen my life partner turn into a wolf in front of my eyes. I think that qualifies as a good reason to drink a bit of wine.”

Logan’s lips twitched. “I suppose I can give you that.”

Baxter sniffed and straightened his already straightened shirt. “Thank you. Now, I’m hungry.” He marched toward the door and pulled it open but stopped dead when the way was blocked by a very *tall*, very broad man of obvious Native American heritage with his hand raised as if to knock. Something about him made the hairs on the back of Baxter’s neck stand up. He involuntarily took a step back. “Uh, hello? Can... I help you?”

The man stared at him for a moment, then sniffed. He shook his head. “Not you.” His gaze darted over Baxter’s shoulder to Logan. “*You*, on the other hand, I need a word with.”

Baxter looked back at Logan then at the man then back at Logan once again. “Logan, do you know him?”

Logan shook his head, but his nostrils flared. “No. But I know what he is.”

Baxter had no idea what was going on, but didn’t have time to ask. Logan stepped forward, putting himself between Baxter and the new guy. “I’m sorry,” Baxter said, peeking around Logan. “I didn’t catch your name.”

“I didn’t give it,” the man said with a half smile. “But it’s Keller. I’m leader of my local... group. I need to speak with him.” He pointed at Logan. “Does he know?” he asked, looking at Logan.

Logan nodded. “I shifted in front of him last night. Didn’t mean to.” Logan glanced at Baxter then to the other guy. “Perhaps we should take this inside?”

Keller looked over his shoulder and waved. That's when Baxter noticed four more men who looked a lot like Keller, waiting on the other side of the fence surrounding their rental cottage. The four waved back and Keller turned back to them. "Yes, I think that might be a good idea."

Baxter scrambled to back up. The entrance hall was narrow and did not afford a lot of space, especially since neither Logan nor Keller were short or skinny. "Uh, how about I make some coffee?" Baxter asked, not sure what else to do.

Keller flashed him a smile. "That would be very much appreciated."

Logan scowled. "Mine," he growled.

Keller raised his eyebrows at the same time Baxter did. "When did you turn Neanderthal?" Baxter snapped.

Logan stared for a few seconds then both he and Keller laughed. "Sorry, sweetheart. That wasn't me."

Baxter rolled his eyes. "Nuts. Everyone's gone nuts," he muttered as he marched into the little kitchen.

"Mate?" Baxter overheard Keller ask.

"That's what he calls him," Logan replied. Both men came out of the hallway then and Logan waved a hand at the sofa. "Please, have a seat."

Baxter busied himself with coffee grounds—he really wished Logan had allowed him to bring a *few* things, like his coffee press—and water. He kept his ear bent, though, not wishing to miss anything.

"You have a problem," Keller began.

"Oh?" Logan asked.

"Yes. I'd initially come by to ask you why you didn't notify us you'd be on our pack's lands, but this—" He nodded in Baxter's direction. "—is more important. Humans aren't allowed to know about us. How do you not know that? Didn't your pack tell you?"

"Pack?" Logan asked.

"Uh, yeah," Keller replied, tone tacking the *duh* onto the end.

Logan was silent for a moment, then, "I don't have a pack. I'm actually quite new to this."

Baxter turned around in time to see Keller's eyebrows go up. "New?"

Logan nodded. "Yes. I was bitten three months ago."

Keller blinked. "And you have control already?"

Logan shook his head. "No, I don't. It's the reason I shifted in front of him. And... how did you know I was here?"

Keller pointed at his nose. "We were in the woods last night and caught your scent."

The coffeemaker gurgled, and Baxter was reminded of what he was doing. He pulled down three mugs and assembled them on a tray.

"Well, regardless of whether it was intentional or not, it's against wolf law for a human—any human, mate or not—to know about us." Keller really did sound regretful.

"Is this a national issue? Do all wolf packs have the same rules?"

"It is universal, yes," Keller said.

Logan was silent and Baxter glanced over to see him rubbing his face. "They didn't teach us this at Stanford Law School." Logan sighed. "What are the consequences?" That was his Logan, always getting down to the facts. Baxter would have been proud if the whole situation wasn't so bizarre.

Keller sighed. "You do have a choice, but it's not one you'll like." Logan remained silent as Baxter picked up the coffeepot. "He either has to be changed, or he'll be killed."

Baxter went cold, his stomach dropped out, and he froze. The coffeepot fell from his numb fingers and shattered on the floor, but he couldn't seem to register that beyond the shatter and the feel of hot liquid splashing his legs.

Logan jumped up and ran over to him, scooping him up. "Bax? Baxter? Sweetheart?"

Baxter wanted to reply, but Logan seemed so far away, he didn't think he'd be heard. He was set down on the couch, though he didn't remember moving. Logan squatted in front of him, slapping his face lightly.

"Bax! Baxter Halloway!" Logan slapped him hard.

"Ow!" Baxter scowled at Logan for a moment, then reality sank in. "I... what?"

He looked over at Keller, who was frowning. “I’m afraid you can’t be human and know about us. You’ll have to be changed... or killed.”

Baxter blinked, then frowned, shaking his head to clear it of the buzz still going in his ears. “So... I get changed, right?”

He looked from Keller to Logan and back. Logan didn’t look happy, but didn’t seem all that upset.

“It’s not that simple,” Keller said. “Very few survive a bite.”

Chapter 5

“How do you manage to keep it from all the humans? I mean, you can’t possibly kill everyone who knows you, can you? How do you keep something like that secret?” Logan asked, shaking his head. He stood up and started pacing the tiny space between the kitchen and living room.

Keller shrugged. “Most of us are raised as wolves. We start shifting from an early age around our own kind. So, we learn how to hide it well. It’s rare, in fact, that humans find out about us. Technically, making a wolf is illegal. I have no idea how the one who bit you got away with it.”

“I... I don’t know. I’m pretty sure it was his wolf pushing at him. I was his attorney. We were finishing some paperwork—I know now it was a full moon—and I grabbed him when I shouldn’t have. I think his wolf reacted because the full moon was so close. Anyway... I’ve survived fine, but Baxter... I mean, if *I* survived, and it’s so rare for someone to survive a bite... well, the odds are much greater that one would kill Baxter, aren’t they?” Logan shook his head.

Keller frowned. “I’m not a statistician—that would be my brother. But I’d have to guess it would be more likely he’d die, yes.”

Logan paced the other way. The space wasn’t very big. He only got a few steps before turning around. “What if he were to sign something—an affidavit or nondisclosure agreement—promising he wouldn’t say anything?”

“I’m sorry, counselor, there’s no loophole to this,” Keller said, shaking his head.

Logan stopped and shook his head as well. “Is there no place that would allow Baxter to be left alone?”

Keller shook his head again. “No. This is international wolf law. Every pack in the world has the same rule. And that’s another thing. You’ll need to contact the pack when you get back to Portland. At least, I’m assuming that’s where you’re from. Anyway, lone wolves are also not allowed.”

Logan dropped onto the couch and buried his face in his hands. He’d deal with the pack issue later, assuming things worked out, and he and Baxter were both still alive the next day. “Can we have a little time, at least? Just in case... he doesn’t...”

“I can give you twenty-four hours, but that’s all. I especially can’t break the law. As alpha of my pack, if I do, then I could be challenged. I’m sorry.”

Logan looked up. “Alpha? I thought all that about alphas and stuff with wolves was bullshit.”

Keller grinned. “Who do you think said it was bullshit?”

Logan blinked. “Really?”

“Yes. And, well, some of it isn’t, but the alpha/beta thing is. We’re not just wolves, though, we’re human too and that means we have the same need for structure and hierarchy as any other group. Like our tribal organization, we have a pack organization, as well. We just tend to borrow that because it’s easy.”

“That makes a weird sort of sense,” Baxter said. “Wait, tribal? You’re Native American? Are all of your wolves native?”

Keller nodded. “Yes. Part of the Siletz, why?”

“I thought that kind of thing was just for sparkly vampires,” Baxter said, completely deadpan.

Keller laughed, shaking his head. “I swear, I’d love to wipe that from the public consciousness. I’m sure there are plenty of nonnative wolves out there—we *are* all over the world.”

Baxter cracked a smile. “I’m, um, sorry I didn’t get the coffee.”

Keller laughed. “I think that’s understandable.” He looked up at the clock. “It’s ten now. I can give you until noon tomorrow.”

“Um... how does it work? If he’s bitten?” Logan asked.

“Much the same as it was for you.”

Logan frowned. “I don’t remember much right after the bite.”

“Well, basically, it’ll hurt, of course, but if it heals like it did for you, he’ll survive it—most likely. There’s still a chance of a delayed reaction, but that is *really* rare.”

“What is the difference? Why do some survive and others don’t?” Logan asked.

Keller pursed his lips. “I don’t know, actually. I don’t understand physiology, I’m afraid. I just know it *is*.”

Logan nodded. “Okay. Well, um...”

Keller leaned forward and pulled out his wallet, taking out a business card. He handed it over to Logan, then sat back. The plain white card had a phone number, a physical address, a web address in number format, and Keller’s name on the front, but that was all. “Be there by noon tomorrow. The web address is secure, you’ll have to log in.” Logan flipped it over to see what looked like a username and password handwritten on the back. Somehow, it made him feel slightly better to know there was at least a little bit of research he could do. “For obvious reasons, we can’t let that information out entirely. Despite the security and the fact that it’s not even a registered domain, people will find it. So, it’s deliberately made to look like something from a conspiracy theory. You’d be surprised how many people see what they want to see.”

Logan chuckled. “Maybe not. I’m a criminal attorney.”

Keller cracked a smile at that. “You probably wouldn’t be, then. Look, I know you’ll do your research, and I don’t blame you. If you want to call and talk to someone, the website has numbers for the national and international wolf headquarters. Give them my name. Tell them it’s the Siletz pack, and give them a phone number to call you back. They’ll call me and verify before they talk to you, but then they will answer your questions. Any and all of them.”

Logan nodded and swallowed. “Thank you.”

Keller inclined his head. “Tomorrow, I’ll have my beta, Trent, as well as a few others of my pack to witness. I’ll be the one to bite him, if that’s what you choose to do.”

“Why wouldn’t we choose that?” Baxter asked, blinking.

“If you die that way, it’s excruciating, or so I’ve been told. A bad reaction to a wolf bite doesn’t kill right away,” Keller said. “It poisons first, which is really what you die of. I’d prefer to not put you through that, to be honest. I’m not a monster.”

“I don’t think you are,” Baxter said, quietly.

“If he’s... killed?” Logan asked.

“We can make it fast and humane,” Keller replied, standing. “I’ll leave you to talk. Until tomorrow.”

Logan walked him to the door. “Is there... somewhere I can contact you if I need to?”

Keller nodded. “The number on that card is my personal line and for wolf business.”

“Thank you for the time.”

Keller held his hand out. Logan shook it. “One more thing. You can’t run. I’m sure you’re thinking it—I would be. I’d do anything to protect my mate. She’s my world. But we’re everywhere. You can’t pass one of us without us knowing. And if we recognize you, we’ll know two things immediately, just by your scent: that you’re lone and that you have a human.”

Logan nodded. “Noted.”

When he closed the door on Keller, his mind whirled with the problem. Baxter was in the kitchen, cleaning up the broken carafe. “Let me do that,” he murmured, squatting to pick up the glass.

“I can clean up my own messes, Logan,” Baxter said, shaking his head.

Logan looked up. “Yeah, but if you cut yourself, you’ll bleed for hours. I’ll heal in a minute.”

Baxter raised an eyebrow. “When did you learn this?”

“I cut myself on the printer at the office one day. Before I could get to the Band-Aids, it was healed.” Logan shrugged a shoulder. “Anyway, I’ll get the big stuff. You can sweep and get the coffee, okay?”

Baxter nodded and Logan turned his focus to the glass. It didn’t take long to clean up and when they were done, Logan grabbed his laptop and put it on the counter.

“I’m going to find the closest Starbucks since I’ve broken the coffeepot.” Baxter leaned over and kissed Logan softly.

Logan yanked him in and hugged him tightly. “I love you.”

“I’m just going for coffee, Logan,” Baxter said, chuckling.

He pulled back, but frowned when he saw Logan’s face. “Sorry, I just...” He shrugged a shoulder.

“I love you too. Do your research. I’ll be back in a few.” With another quick kiss, he was gone.

Chapter 6

Logan forced his attention to his computer, determined to find *something* to help them. He typed in the website and almost winced when he saw just how bad it was. It did the job, though, from what Keller had said they were going for.

He found the legal section and started reading through the laws, most of which made sense. Even the secrecy code made sense, he just didn't like that there was nothing they could do about it. It didn't seem fair in the slightest that someone who had not done anything deliberately could still be punished.

Keller had been right, though, and there were *no* loopholes to be found. Logan followed up with calls, though, doing as Keller had suggested. Baxter came back while he was waiting on the call back from the international office—it was, apparently, in London—and handed over the coffee. Logan sucked it down while making notes on what he'd found, stopping only long enough to kiss Baxter quickly.

The national and international offices said the same thing as the website and Keller. Baxter had to either be changed or killed. They both expressed their sympathies but told them there was nothing that could be done. The only comfort they could offer was that for Baxter to be changed by an alpha gave him the best possible chances outside of being born a wolf.

It wasn't much comfort, but Logan would take all he could get. He still didn't like it. And based on what he'd read and heard, he didn't like any of their options. He closed the laptop and set the phone aside.

With a sigh, Logan led Baxter to the couch and they sat, facing each other. "We're going to have to run," Logan said without preamble.

Baxter was shaking his head before Logan finished. "You heard him. We can't. They'll just find us. They'll probably go looking for us, in fact."

Logan shook his head. "I have enough connections to get new identities for us in a very short amount of time. I'm owed a few favors. We can hide pretty damned well."

"Logan... what are we going to do even if we did run? You can't take your degree or license with you. My entire career is based on reputation. If I can't take it with me, I'll be cooking in Mike's Greasy Spoon, if I'm lucky."

“We’ll figure something out. We have to.” Logan sighed. “I can’t take the chance, Bax. God, what if you don’t survive it?”

“We *have* to take that chance. Forget figuring out jobs for a moment. He’s right, Logan. I saw the way he smelled us at first. One tiny sniff and any wolf we pass will know.” Baxter frowned down at their hands. Logan tightened his around Baxter’s shaky ones.

Logan pulled him in, wrapping both arms around him. He buried his face in Baxter’s hair and took a deep inhale. He didn’t know what to do. What was the choice here?

Mate hurt? the wolf asked.

Not yet. But maybe. Logan couldn’t even begin to figure out how to make the primal side of him understand this.

“There has to be a way,” he murmured, kissing Baxter’s temple.

“There isn’t, Logan. It’s change or be killed. Frankly, I’d prefer to take my chances with the change.”

“I don’t buy that there’s no way to avoid this. How is this even fair?” He shook his head.

Baxter chuckled, though there was no humor in it. “Since when is life fair, Logan?”

Logan tightened his arms. “If we start driving now, we could be in Mexico before tomorrow morning.”

“No, Logan. We can’t run. It’s not going to work. We let him bite me and hope for the best.”

“How can you be so damned calm about this, Baxter? I can’t lose you! God, I’ve been driving myself nuts for three months over it!” He closed his eyes, resting his forehead against Baxter’s. “I just... I’ve been *terrified* of hurting you all this time. And... I’m supposed to stand by and watch someone kill you? I don’t think *he’ll* let me do that!”

Baxter looked up and caught Logan’s lips in a hard kiss. “They’re not going to kill me. I’m going to survive this.”

Logan blinked at him. “How do you know this?”

“I’ve just decided I refuse to die. I’m not about to let someone else take over my kitchen.” He shrugged a shoulder.

Despite himself, Logan laughed. “Davis won’t know what to do when he’s not beaned with a soup ladle.”

“See? I can’t let them get lazy. Next thing you know, they’ll be hanging the spatulas with the tongs and putting the measuring cups next to the pans. It’ll be chaos. No one will be able to find anything.”

Logan had to laugh again. If he didn’t, he was afraid he’d actually cry and that wasn’t happening. He took a deep breath. “You’re set on this.”

Baxter nodded. “Hey, look at it this way, maybe your wolf will be happy if I’m one too.”

Logan swallowed. *If you survive*. “Um... So, then, what do you want to do today?”

“I’m trying to decide if I want you to call him and tell him we’re coming right now or not.”

“Let’s, uh, let’s have some time together? Please,” Logan asked, kissing Baxter’s cheek then temple.

Baxter considered him, then nodded. “Okay. Why don’t we go to the store, hmm? Let me cook something, please?”

Logan nodded. “Okay, sweetheart.” He understood Baxter’s need to cook. Stress always did that—it was one way to know something was wrong. If Baxter was cooking a lot, then something was on his mind.

When they got to the grocery store, he stood back and simply waited for orders. He loved watching Baxter in full chef mode. He grinned at the faces Baxter made over the meat selections. “If it wasn’t so far away, I’d drive back to Portland just for the selection,” he grumbled. “I suppose this will have to do.” He sighed and waved for the butcher.

He clucked his tongue over the vegetables, muttered curses over the spice and herb selection—or lack thereof—and actually stomped his foot when the wine he wanted wasn’t there. “I’m going to have to rethink the entire meal!”

Logan took his hand and pulled him close. “Normally, I would tell you to do that. Or go somewhere else to look for the wine. But we’ve been here over an hour already and while I want you to cook, I also want to spend time with you before tomorrow.”

Baxter frowned, but nodded. “You’re right. I would have preferred the Pinot Noir, but the Cabernet will work too. I’m sorry.”

“It’s okay, sweetheart. I know how important it is to you. I just...” He shrugged helplessly.

Baxter smiled. “It’ll be okay. Just wait and see.”

After that, Baxter zoomed through the rest of the store. Logan had a feeling he’d be going back for something or other, but he didn’t mind too much, especially since it was just a couple of minutes down the road.

When they got back to the cottage and he’d helped unload the car, he did something he never would have considered doing under other circumstances. “Can I help with something?”

Baxter blinked at him, then down at his feet, then back up at him. “You’re in the kitchen.”

Logan smirked, but nodded. “Yes, I am. This isn’t North Korea—that’s at home.”

Baxter rolled his eyes. “*You’re* the one that named the kitchen North Korea.”

“You won’t let me cross the threshold!”

“Because I like things how they are!”

Logan held his hands up. “Just thought I’d offer. I... you know.” He swallowed and turned around, but before he could take a step, Baxter caught his arm.

“I’m sorry. I’m sorry. You’re right.” He paused and kissed Logan for a long moment. “How about chopping?” He pointed to the counter island. “Sit there and let me get some things organized, okay?”

Logan swallowed and nodded, then leaned in and kissed Baxter again. “Thank you,” he murmured, then did as he was told.

Baxter let him chop herbs and veggies, and he was pretty sure he did a decent job. It turned out, he didn’t need to go back to the store, for which he was grateful. He didn’t want to waste time, didn’t want to miss *any* time with Baxter, if he could help it.

Every time he thought about what could happen, his heart pounded, stomach twisted, and his throat dried up. He was glad Baxter had bought the extra wine.

He went through a bottle by himself. The thought of losing this man, especially after some of the crap they'd already been through, made him want to curl into a little ball. The wolf did it for him, in his head, whining softly. Apparently, he understood enough.

"I love you," Logan said, leaning on his hand and watching Baxter move around the kitchen. It was like a dance, how smoothly he moved from one thing to the other. Taking just the tiniest of tastes to know if he needed more of something, the lightest of smells to decide if it was ready. He set a bowl in the refrigerator, a knife in the sink, checked the oven again, then crossed over to Logan.

"I love you too. I'm not going anywhere. I'll survive this, I swear it. If I don't, you can kill me." He shrugged a shoulder.

Logan suppressed the growl. "It's not something to joke about."

"It's *precisely* the thing to joke about. I want to be happy. If I'm just going to run around here being nuts for the next—" He turned to look at the clock. "—twenty-one hours, then I'm going to call him and tell him we're coming over now. I'd rather be happy, spend this time with you, enjoying things, yeah?"

Logan sighed and nodded. "As usual, you're right."

Baxter grinned cheekily. "I'll remember you said that." He leaned forward and kissed Logan softly. "Now, why don't you pick out one of the movies we brought along. I'm thinking after we eat, we'll watch one. Then we'll go out to the beach for a while, maybe spend some time in the hot tub. After that? I think I'd like to see how much of the lube we can use up."

Logan swallowed and nodded. "I like that idea."

"Good." He kissed Logan again, then went back to the stove. "Go on!"

Logan watched him stir for another moment then happily went to follow orders.

Chapter 7

Baxter listened to Logan's heart as the beat changed and sped up a little. He snuggled a little closer, rubbing his face over Logan's chest hair, savoring the way it slid over his skin. Logan moved just a little, pulling him in a bit tighter, erasing the tiny distance that was left between them.

He'd put on a brave face all day yesterday, but the truth of it was, he was terrified. He didn't like pain. He didn't like blood, except in a rare piece of meat. And he most *definitely* wasn't ready to die.

He swallowed, trying to ease the fear and savored the feel of Logan's arms around him. Sunlight already filled the loft, telling him just how late it was. He closed his eyes tighter, willing time to slow down.

They'd spent the most amazing afternoon and evening with each other. He couldn't remember the last time they'd had a meal together like that. He found he'd enjoyed having Logan chopping ingredients for him and just being close. If he survived this, they were going to do that a lot more.

After the meal, they'd watched *Underworld*. He'd laughed at that, but it'd been fun. Then the sunset walk on the beach followed by the time in the hot tub had set things up nicely for the rest of the night.

He didn't know how late they were up, exactly. The last time he'd checked the clock—after they'd had to dig out the second bottle of lube from the toiletry bag—had been after four. His ass was still a little sore, but he didn't care.

In fact, he wondered if Logan might be willing to go one more time. He refused to look at the clock, determined to not think about that until he absolutely had to. He could later. After.

Baxter looked up to see the deep blue eyes focused on him. "Hi," he whispered.

"Hi, sweetheart," Logan murmured. "How are you feeling?"

Baxter smiled, happy, at least, they were on the same page. "Hmm. I think it wouldn't matter, if I got you one more time."

Logan chuckled and brought their mouths together. The soft, slow kiss soaked into Baxter's bones, warming him from the inside out. He slid over onto Logan, straddling him and deepening the kiss as he moved.

He braced himself over Logan, slipping his hand under the pillow to look for the tube he'd left there. When he surfaced with it, he handed it off to Logan without even breaking the kiss.

He gasped, though, when Logan's fingers slid into him. "Easy," he said, grunting. "Sore."

"Do you—"

"Please don't stop, baby," Baxter said, shaking his head. "Need you inside me." He let the slightest bit of his fear leak into his eyes. "Please."

"Okay, sweetheart. Of course," Logan said, kissing him again. He worked quickly, added a lot more lube, then his fingers were gone.

Baxter dove in, nipping at Logan's neck, nibbling along his ear, then tracing the shell with his tongue. He thrilled in Logan's moans, the way his lover moved under him as the pleasure grew. He slid slowly along Logan's skin, kissing and lightly biting as he knew Logan liked.

He paused long enough to tease each nipple, then sat up. Meeting Logan's eyes, he reached back and found the slicked cock, lifting it and steadying it. Then he lowered himself slowly onto it, never breaking eye contact. He loved that, the feel of first penetration, the slow filling from Logan.

"God, you feel so good, baby," Baxter whispered when he was seated completely.

Logan took his free hand, threading their fingers together. "Nothing's ever felt as good as you," he said, kissing Baxter's hand. "Nothing ever will."

Baxter swallowed, seeing all his fear, all his worry so openly displayed on Logan's face. "Baby, you can't... if I don't... you have to..." He couldn't say it. He wanted to, he knew he should, but he couldn't spit it out.

"No, don't," Logan said, shaking his head. "Don't say it. We're going to come back here together this afternoon."

Baxter took a deep breath, recognizing Logan's need to say it—to believe it—and nodded. "Yeah, okay, we will."

"Good."

He lifted up then, keeping it slow, intending to savor every tiny sensation, every spark of pleasure. He flexed his muscles, doing what he could to make it feel as good as he could for Logan too. He stopped when just the tip of Logan's

cock stretched the ring, then he eased back down again, not moving any faster than he had before.

Logan moaned, his free hand gripping Baxter's hip. He rocked, thrusting up into Baxter as he lowered himself. Baxter's own moans came out then and he lost his ability to tease. He needed to feel, needed to hear more from Logan, to *see* the pleasure he was giving his lover.

He set a rhythm, faster, but not too fast, harder but not too hard, still almost desperate to stretch it out as long as he could. He braced himself on Logan's thighs, knowing how much Logan liked the way that felt. He was rewarded with a long groan and Logan's hand tightening on his hips.

He let go of the other hand to better steady himself. Logan gripped both of his hips then and started thrusting, meeting Baxter's movements. Need colored generously by desperation filled the air between them. Baxter bit his lip as he rode Logan, grateful their bodies were taking over. He didn't want to, couldn't think right then. All he wanted, all he could handle was the feel of Logan inside him, the sounds of their moans, the smell of the lube and their sex in the air.

Logan wrapped a hand around Baxter's cock and began stroking it. There was no rhythm, but it didn't matter. Just the fact that Logan was doing it was enough. Baxter gritted his teeth, trying to hold on, not ready for it to be over.

"Please... oh God, Logan, please..." he begged, though he didn't know if he was begging Logan to stop—and let it stretch out—or push him over the edge.

It didn't matter because on the heels of that, his balls drew up and before he could so much as moan, his orgasm crashed into him. He shouted Logan's name as the pleasure hit, yanking the cum from him to coat Logan's chest and hand.

Logan calling his name and thrusting hard into him sent another ripple of pleasure through him. Gripping his hips hard, Logan's cock twitched as it unloaded into Baxter, filling him.

Baxter slumped forward, groaning when he realized he was stuck, locked to Logan again. He didn't mind, though, too happy to keep the connection for a little while longer. He buried his face in Logan's neck, inhaling the spice and scent that was all Logan's.

"Love you," he murmured. "So much, baby."

Logan's arms came around him and held him tight. "Love you too."

Baxter looked up and their lips met, the kiss soft and light. They didn't speak, simply lay there, Logan's arms around Baxter, who was as tight against Logan in as many places as he could be with the awkward position.

"Marry me."

Baxter looked up, eyebrows going up. "What?"

"When we get back. Marry me."

Baxter swallowed, his heart pounding. "Logan... I... I'm not... You have to know I—"

Logan put a finger over Baxter's lips. "I don't want to hear that. I'm not going to listen to that. Instead, you're going to say, 'Yes, Logan, I'll marry you,' okay?"

Baxter blinked at him, then nodded. Logan took the finger off his mouth. "Yes, Logan, I'll marry you."

"I think we'll keep it small," he mused, tightening his arms again. "The ceremony itself with just a few people—my mom and sister, your parents, a few of our friends. I'm thinking you might prefer a dinner party."

Baxter swallowed, closing his eyes. Despite his best attempts, a tear leaked out. "I'd like that, yes," he whispered.

"Good. The dining room at home holds... ten?"

"Twelve," Baxter corrected him. "I can easily put something together for that many."

Logan nodded. "That's what I thought. What do you want to do about a cake?"

Baxter had to fight to firm his voice. "Uh, let's get Sara to make it? She'd be thrilled to be able to do that for us."

"I agree." Logan ran his hands slowly over Baxter's back. "I don't want to go, but we have to get up."

Baxter nodded and wiped his eyes before sitting up and easing himself off Logan's now-soft cock.

He refused to let go of Logan, so they squeezed into the tiny shower stall together. As Baxter scrubbed Logan, he frowned. "If you clean me, will they still be able to smell you on me?"

Logan nodded. “Yeah. It takes a lot to get rid of a scent entirely. Why?”

“I want to smell like you to them. I want them to know I belong to you.” He shrugged a shoulder. “Silly maybe, but...”

Logan kissed his forehead. “Not silly. I’m glad for it. It makes the wolf happy too.”

Baxter smiled. “What does he call me? Mate?”

“Yes. You’re our mate, to him.”

“I wonder... can you try to shift one more time before we go? I’d... like to see you again.”

Logan focused on washing Baxter for a while, looking thoughtful then nodded. “I can try. He seems to think I can do it.”

They spent the rest of the shower in silence, content to touch and be touched. After they dried off, they stopped in the living room and Logan stepped back. He closed his eyes and it looked for the longest time like nothing was happening.

Then the claws grew, the teeth dropped, and the fur sprouted. A moment later, Logan stood on all fours as a large, brown wolf. Baxter knelt and reached out and Logan padded over. He wrapped his arms around Logan’s neck. “You’re beautiful, you know. I love you too.”

The wolf whined softly and pulled back, tilting his head. Baxter ran his hand over the soft fur.

“Yeah, I do. It’s all part of you, the same you that’s in the human body. Just a little more... furry.”

The wolf chuffed and nosed at Baxter’s neck. He inhaled and Baxter wondered what he smelled like to the wolf.

“Thank you,” he murmured, petting him one more time. “Can you shift back?”

Stepping back, the wolf shook a little, and his fur almost rippled. Baxter watched in fascination as muscles and bones realigned and moved then Logan squatted, fully human once again, in front of him. “Hello again.”

Baxter smiled. “Does it get easier?”

Logan nodded. “Yes. At least, it is so far. Come on, let’s see what you’ll look like as a wolf.”

Baxter wished he could believe that was how things would turn out. He kept his fear to himself, though, ever aware Logan didn't want to hear it. As he pulled jeans and a button-down shirt on, however, something occurred to him. He pondered it the whole way through socks and shoes.

"Do you want to get food?" Logan asked as they headed for the door.

Baxter shook his head. "I couldn't eat right now."

Logan nodded and took his hand as they stepped through the door. He opened Baxter's car door for him and kissed him before he got in.

On the drive over, Baxter turned the thought over and over in his head, but he couldn't let it go. "Logan... I need you to promise me something."

"What's that, sweetheart?"

Baxter took a deep breath. "Promise me that if... if it doesn't work, if I don't make it, that you won't, uh do anything stupid."

Logan frowned and glanced over at him, then back at the road. "What do you mean?"

"I think you know what I mean, Logan. Don't go attacking the alpha or anything. Don't do anything that'll get you killed."

By the way Logan's jaw tightened, Baxter knew he was right. "Baxter, I don't know how I'd handle it."

"You have to. I can't... I can't do this if I think you'll do something stupid."

"We don't have to. We can still run, Bax."

"No, Logan, we can't." He took a deep breath. "Please, just promise me."

Logan didn't speak for a long time as he took this turn and that when the GPS told him to. Finally, he sighed. "I promise."

"Thank you. Look... maybe... maybe you could figure out how to convince them to change that law. So it doesn't happen to someone else, yeah?"

Logan looked over at him. "I plan to, no matter what happens. I won't do anything stupid. I don't want to be without you but... I promise."

Baxter let out a sigh of relief. "Thank you," he said, voice choking him. He turned his head, looking out the window in the hopes Logan wouldn't see him crying—again. He swiped at his face, but he was apparently too late. Logan rested a hand on his leg, squeezing it.

When they approached the long, low log house, he was tempted, for the briefest of moments, to tell Logan to keep driving. Instead, he took a deep breath and wiped his face once more as Logan pulled to a stop in front of the short set of stairs leading to the porch. He closed his eyes and forced himself to breathe slowly.

“Are you sure?” Logan asked.

Baxter opened his eyes again, meeting Logan’s, took another full, deep breath, and nodded. “Yes. Let’s go.”

Chapter 8

As they stepped up onto the porch, Logan couldn't decide who was more terrified: him or Baxter. He imagined it was pretty damned bad for Baxter; the possibility he could be dead shortly was very real.

On the other hand, he was facing a life without Baxter.

It had annoyed him that Baxter made him promise what he had. His partner—fiancé—knew him too well. If he couldn't get Keller to agree to kill him outright, he'd planned to provoke the man.

But no, Baxter had figured it out, and now he had a promise to keep.

Logan knocked on the simple wooden door and held tight to Baxter's hand. They didn't have to wait long, and Logan had the stray thought things were moving *way* too fast. He wasn't *ready* to lose Baxter yet! Wouldn't *ever* be ready.

He took a deep breath and tilted his head at Keller, showing his neck in respect. He hoped somehow showing he'd read about the customs would help, though he didn't know what it might do.

Keller reached out and touched his neck, then nodded. "Welcome. I wish I could welcome you under other circumstances."

"Alpha," Logan said, unable to force more out, then stepped into the house behind Baxter.

"I have to admit, I'm a little surprised to see you," Keller said as he led them through the hallway and into a huge room. It opened up to the roof, two floors above. A stone fireplace dominated one wall, and groupings of chairs made spots for quiet conversation around the room.

The center, however, was quite empty, and Logan had *no* doubt what it was intended for.

His heart started pounding and his wolf whined. *Mate!*

I know, I know. He tried to think calming thoughts, but the wolf wasn't fooled. Instead, he gave up and focused on Baxter's shaking hand, tightening his around it.

"I will admit I considered not showing," Logan said to answer Keller. He looked the alpha dead in the eye. "I wanted to run. I still do."

Keller nodded. “Then it says a lot that you’re here.”

“That’s mostly me, actually,” Baxter piped up.

Logan couldn’t help but chuckle though it sounded as strained as it felt. “It’s true. He wouldn’t let us.”

“It’s okay. I said yesterday I understand. And I do.” He turned and motioned to a tall, slender woman in a chair by the fireplace. “My mate, Sylvia. And next to her, Trent, my beta.”

Both stood and crossed the room. After handshakes, Keller turned to the rest of the room. “My elders—Lea, Adair, Niles, and Vaughn.” He pointed and each one nodded as they were introduced.

Logan nodded in return. “It is nice to meet you, despite the situation.” They all smiled, though none widely.

He turned back to Keller, who looked to Baxter. “Have you made your decision?”

Baxter nodded. “Yes. I’m not going out without a fight. I’ll be changed.”

Keller gave a small smile at that. “Keep that attitude.” He turned to Logan. “It’s probably best to get to it.”

Logan battled the panic that bubbled up. The wolf threw himself at their consciousness, trying to get out, needing to protect their mate. *No*, he told him firmly. *This is a human thing. We can’t stop it.*

Mate! Mate hurt! The whine alone tore a hole in Logan’s heart.

Baxter turned to Logan and reached up, cupping his cheek. “I’ll be okay,” he whispered, nodding. “I will.”

Logan didn’t have to be able to smell the lie to know it. He could see it written all over Baxter’s face. The white lines around his mouth, the way his color was almost gone; the terror could not be missed.

He couldn’t breathe. His lungs stopped working, his throat closed, and his heart pounded a thousand beats a second. He yanked Baxter into his arms, burying his face in the sweet scent. “I love you. Oh God,” he whispered, “Baxter.” The name came out on a whimper, and he couldn’t care in that moment who heard it.

Baxter didn’t reply, and Logan appreciated the honesty. He simply tightened his arms and held on.

“I’m sorry, Bax. So, so sorry. This is all my fault,” he murmured. “Please, please forgive me.”

“Hey, hey.” Baxter pulled back and cupped a cheek again. “There’s nothing to forgive. This is *not* your fault.”

Before he was even finished, Logan was shaking his head. “It is. It’s because of me, even if I didn’t directly do it.” He swallowed again, trying to dislodge the lump in his throat. “Please, just say you forgive me.”

Baxter brushed his thumb over Logan’s cheek. “Okay, Logan, okay. It’s okay.”

Logan yanked him in again, and held tight, but Keller spoke. “It’s time. I’m sorry.”

Logan let go but still held onto Baxter’s hand. Baxter let go long enough to take his shirt off. Sylvia took it and laid it over a chair, and Logan had the absurd urge to laugh at that. Who was going to need it in a moment?

Baxter took his hand again and, eyes glued to Logan’s, nodded. “I’m ready.”

I’m not. Logan wanted to shout it, but Baxter knew it, knew he’d *never* be ready.

Mate. Save mate. Not hurt mate. The wolf paced, and Logan knew it was going to be the biggest struggle of his life to keep the wolf contained when it happened.

We promised mate. You have to stay calm. He hoped playing it like that would help.

Promised mate?

Yes.

“Okay,” he croaked.

Keller stepped up behind Baxter and put his hands on Baxter’s shoulders. It took everything Logan had to stand still when Keller’s fangs dropped and eyes bled black. He kept his gaze locked to Baxter’s, though, and as Keller bent to Baxter’s neck, whispered, “I love you.”

As Keller’s teeth sank into Baxter’s neck, his hands tightened in Logan’s, and he grunted, his jaw clenching, obviously fighting the pain. Blood ran down Baxter’s chest, the wound ragged and ugly. Keller pulled back, and Baxter groaned, falling forward.

Logan caught him and sat right there, cradling him carefully. “Come on, Bax, stay with me.”

Baxter looked up at him, and his already pale face drained further of color. He grunted again, clenching his jaw, and sweat beaded on his forehead. He gripped Logan’s shirt, panting hard. “I think... Ahhh!” he cried out, back arching. He shook hard, and Logan held him tighter.

“Bax! Baxter, please, stay with me!” Logan didn’t notice when the tears started to fall, but they splashed down onto Baxter’s chest. The wolf howled their pain in his head. “Bax, please...”

Baxter went limp briefly and panted hard. “I think... I may have—” He paused to grunt. “—made a mistake, Logan. I...” He cried out again, shaking more, and Logan was pretty sure he’d never seen Baxter’s skin quite that white. “Remember your promise,” he managed.

“No. No no no no no. No, oh God, Baxter,” Logan groaned, rocking him.

“Remember,” Baxter whispered before his eyes closed.

“Don’t, Bax, please. Don’t leave me here alone.” He dragged Baxter even closer and buried his face in Baxter’s neck. He found the faintest pulse and breathed a sigh of relief. He wasn’t dead. He wasn’t dead!

But then that faded too.

Logan couldn’t put a name to the sound he let out. He held Baxter tight against him, rocking them. His chest split open, he was sure of it, because he’d never felt like that before. It hurt too damned bad to be anything else.

The wolf slammed himself against Logan’s control. *Mate mate mate mate...* he chanted in their head.

“Bax, come back,” he moaned. “You have to come back, Bax...”

Chapter 9

He was drowning. He didn't remember getting into the ocean, which would have been a foolish thing to do, since he didn't swim. So he didn't understand why he was drowning now.

But he couldn't breathe, and pain he didn't remember ever having before filled his chest. It weighed him down, pulling on him, and he struggled against it, trying to find his way to the surface. No matter which way he turned, however, he couldn't find anything that looked or felt like *up*.

The pulling got harder, and he fought it, determined not to give in. He kicked, twisting this way and that, but whatever it was had more strength than he did. *Goddammit! I am not leaving Logan like this!*

Follow.

He didn't know where the voice in his head came from, but some instinct deep inside him told him to trust it. Normally, he'd run screaming from voices in his head, but this one sounded a lot like... him. Rougher, deeper, but him, nonetheless.

Since his struggles weren't getting him anywhere, he decided to trust it and let go. The current—or whatever it was—swept him along, dragging him farther into the darkness. He wanted to panic; it bubbled up, clawing at his insides. His chest hurt more the longer he tried and failed to breathe.

Calm. Be okay.

The voice again, easing him back from panic, this time. He tried not to think about not breathing—if he hadn't for this long, it obviously wasn't the bigger problem, right then. Instead he cautiously poked at the voice. *What do I do?*

Follow, it said again, and Baxter forced himself to relax. The pull got stronger, and he felt like he was being squeezed from all directions. Pain flared from his chest outward, filling him brightly once more.

Before he could panic again, though, the voice, once more spoke. *Calm. Be okay.*

He let the voice wash over him, and the pain faded again. As it did, the sense of drowning eased, and light flickered behind his eyelids. He gasped in a breath, then finally forced his eyes open.

He looked up to see Logan standing over him. That seemed... odd. He *was* shorter than Logan, but he'd never been that short. Was he sitting?

But when he looked down at himself, he didn't see his legs. He didn't see jeans and feet. He saw... paws.

Mate?

That voice. Was that... *Wolf?*

Yes. Mate? The wolf forced their attention to Logan.

Yes, mate, Baxter told him.

Logan dropped to his knees in front of Baxter and reached out. The wolf rushed forward, nearly knocking Logan over. Logan wrapped his arms around Baxter's neck, burying his face in the fur.

"Oh God, Bax, I thought I'd lost you."

Baxter nudged his wolf. *Need to be human again.*

The wolf didn't seem to like that very much. It wanted to keep control. *Mate needs the human me,* he told the wolf.

But that didn't seem to help, either.

"Bax, sweetheart, can you shift back? Show me you're in there and okay?"

See. Our mate needs the human side.

The wolf still didn't like it, but reluctantly stepped back. Baxter had no idea what he was doing, but with control of their body, at least, he could whine at Logan and lick his face.

Logan tilted his head, looking entirely wolfish in that moment. Baxter chuffed and nudged him, then looked down at his paws and tilted his head again. He didn't know how to get his point across.

"I think he doesn't know how to force the shift," Keller said.

Baxter turned around and looked up, nodding.

Keller knelt in front of him. "Will you recognize me as your alpha?"

Baxter had to think about that for a moment, but he guessed if he'd submit to anyone, it might as well be Keller. He nodded again. The wolf prodded him to tilt his head, showing Keller his neck.

"Very well," Keller said, putting his hand on Baxter's head. "*Shift.*"

The power in the command couldn't be missed. Something pulled at Baxter's center and the oddest sensations went through him. His bones moved, his muscles felt like jelly; then his skin itched. But a moment later, he looked down to see his naked *human* legs under him as he crouched in front of Keller.

"Oh, thank God," Logan groaned, then snatched Baxter into his arms.

Baxter wrapped his arms around Logan and clung. "Logan," he whispered.

"Um," Logan looked over Baxter's shoulder. "Does anyone have a blanket? My wolf isn't too happy with everyone looking at his ass."

This got a round of laughter, but Sylvia brought a throw over and helped tuck it around Baxter's waist.

"You scared the absolute shit out of me," Logan said.

Baxter frowned. "I'm sorry. I had no idea what was going on."

"Your heart stopped."

Baxter's eyes widened. "It did?"

Logan nodded. "Yeah. I thought I'd lost you."

"Well, I'm here. You're apparently not getting rid of me that easily."

Logan burst out laughing. "I'd hardly call that easy."

Baxter sniffed. "Well, I suppose I have been called difficult on occasion. Ask Davis."

Logan grinned. "I can't imagine anyone calling you difficult."

Baxter rolled his eyes. "Um, could we maybe... go get me some clothes?"

Keller laughed. "We usually have no modesty as wolves. You either learn to strip around others or go through a lot of clothes."

"Yeah, I've lost two suits and two pair of jeans already," Logan said.

"That's where those went!" Baxter smacked his forehead. "I should have guessed. Well, I guess we'll have to get used to it too. I don't imagine either of us want to go shopping for new clothes all the time."

Logan shook his head. "No, not really." He looked over at Keller, then held out his hand. "Thank you."

Keller shook it. "I'm really glad it worked out this way. I don't relish these sorts of things."

“I don’t envy your position. I do want to talk to some people, though. This... this isn’t right. Something needs to change.”

Keller smiled. “I’ll leave that up to you, counselor.”

Baxter grinned. “He’ll do it.”

Logan turned to Baxter. “Ready to go plan that wedding?”

“You were serious?”

Logan nodded. “Yes. And you said yes, so... now you’re stuck.”

“You’re getting married?” Keller asked.

“Apparently he was serious, so... Yes, I guess so.”

“We wish you a long and happy life. You do realize just *how* long, right?”
Sylvia stepped forward.

Baxter raised his eyebrows. “No?”

She grinned. “Well, I just celebrated my two hundred and forty-fifth birthday.”

“Well, you don’t look a day over two hundred,” Baxter said, without missing a beat.

Sylvia threw her head back and laughed. “Thank you.”

As they drove back to the cottage, Logan looked over at him. “So... how did it feel?”

“Weird. I don’t even remember much beyond that. It was just... weird. I heard my wolf, that’s about it.”

“Would you like to run tonight?”

Baxter raised his eyebrows. “Run?”

Logan nodded. “Run, hunt, spend some time as our wolves, together.”

Baxter prodded his wolf. *Hunt?*

Well, that got an enthusiastic response. *Now?*

Baxter chuckled. *Later. Tonight.*

“Something funny?”

“My wolf likes the idea.” He grinned over at Logan. “So... wedding, huh?”

“Yep. I figure we’ll pick rings out as soon as we get back. I don’t want to let it go too long.”

“Logan... we have, apparently, centuries.”

Logan didn’t answer at first. “I almost lost you today, Baxter. I want a ring on your finger and to make you a promise.”

“A promise?” Baxter blinked at him. “You mean like our vows?”

“Well, those too. But also... no more secrets. I’d have found a way to keep you from this, if I’d known. If I’d told *you*, we could have handled it better.”

Baxter took Logan’s hand. “We might still have. But... it could have been handled better, I’ll give you that. So... I’ll take that promise. No more secrets.”

The End

Author Bio

Grace Duncan grew up with a wild imagination. She told stories from an early age—many of which got her into trouble. Eventually, she learned to channel that imagination into less troublesome areas, including fanfiction, which is what has led her to writing male/male erotica.

A gypsy in her own right, Grace has lived all over the United States. She has currently set up camp in East Texas with her husband and children—both the human and furry kind.

As one of those rare creatures who loves research, Grace can get lost for hours on the internet, reading up on any number of strange and different topics. She can also be found writing fanfiction, reading fantasy, crime, suspense, romance and other erotica or even dabbling in art.

Contact & Media Info

[Email](#) | [Website](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#)