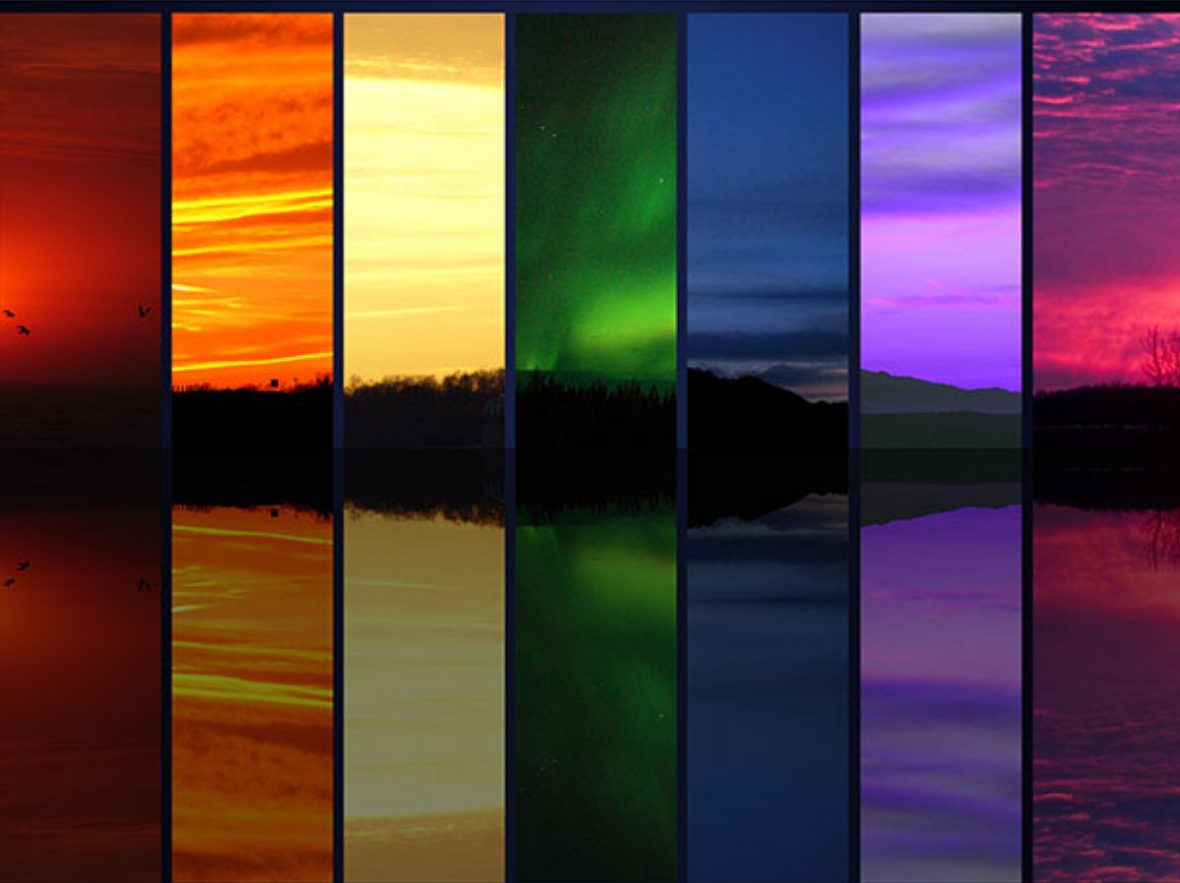


LOVE'S LANDSCAPES



Don't Read in the Closet 2014

GET OFF MY CASE

Lisa Oliver

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Love's Landscapes

An M/M Romance series

GET OFF MY CASE

By Lisa Oliver

Introduction

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

What Is Love's Landscapes?

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's Landscapes*.

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.

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.

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GET OFF MY CASE

By Lisa Oliver

Photo Description

Two naked men lying on a bed; the smaller one on top of the bigger one, his head resting on the other man's chest. The man underneath has his arms up around his lover. There is the hint of a white fluffy rug covering them from the hips down. The two are obviously lovers and are at peace with each other.

Story Letter

Dear Author,

He was my nemesis all through school. I was the gay kid who he treated as contagious. Now I'm a successful detective, and he has just transferred in to my Police Department. Everyone knows I'm gay, but I'm a damn good detective so no one says anything. I refuse to be bullied again, and I'm not giving up the career I've fought so hard for.

Thanks,

Isla

P.S. How did they go from the above to the picture? I'm looking for GFY and enemies to lovers. Hot sex and a HEA is a must!

Story Info

Genre: paranormal

Tags: detectives, law enforcement, wolf shifters, gay for you, enemies to lovers, first time, bonded/mates, mystery

Content Warning: death of a secondary character

Word Count: 22,515

Dedication

Thank you to the M/M Romance Group at Goodreads for putting this event together. A huge thank you also to Isla for her lovely letter and to Stephanie for her skills as beta reader and editor.

GET OFF MY CASE

By Lisa Oliver

Prologue

Eight years ago

Shane was running as fast as he could, the sound of his pursuers' feet ringing in his ears. He was sweating bullets, his heart was pounding, and his lungs felt as though they were going to burst right out of his rib cage. But he didn't stop. He knew if he could get through to the school's cafeteria he would be safe, at least from a physical beating. Sure, the taunts and name calling would still continue, and he would probably be humiliated in front of the entire school, but he wouldn't be touched. All he had to do was duck down the alleyway coming up, run about another hundred feet or so after that, and the cafeteria building would be in sight. Shane ran faster.

As soon as he turned into the alley he realized his mistake. There, leaning against the wall, was his biggest nemesis—Dimitri Polst. Tall, dark, and too fucking good looking for his own good, he had been tormenting Shane for as long as Shane could remember. Shane had heard that Dimitri had gone through his first shift on the last full moon, so he'd actually thought the male had left school already. Seemed Shane couldn't be so lucky especially as he saw the narrowed glare of pure hatred in the other shifter's eyes.

"There you are, little pretty boy," Dimitri snarled. "I was hoping to get one more crack at you before I left."

Shane skidded to a halt and looked behind him. Three of Dimitri's friends, humans, but big jocks all the same, were blocking the entrance to the alley. The only way out for Shane was past Dimitri. If Shane had shifted before, he would have probably taken on his human predators, but Shane was two years younger than Dimitri, and although his shift could come at any time, it wasn't likely to happen in the next five minutes. Besides, it was against pack law to shift in front of humans. Much like it was against his pack's law to be gay, or apparently, to look gay.

Taking a deep breath Shane adjusted his weight on his feet and then without warning, took off running again—his plan simply to get past Dimitri and hopefully to safety. Shane was a fast runner, one of the fastest in the pack, but Dimitri had quick reflexes on his side. Before he even had a chance to get away, Dimitri had grabbed him, snagging him around the waist with one strong arm and pulling him towards his chest. Shane cringed, and raised his arms above his head in the hopes of forestalling the inevitable blow.

The blow never came.

Daring to peek at his attacker, Shane could see an absolutely stunned look on Dimitri's face. It was like he was seeing Shane for the first time. Then without warning Dimitri pushed his face into Shane's neck and sniffed him, really sniffed him. Shane thought he imagined a little groan escape Dimitri's mouth although it was more likely to be a growl, but before he could process what was happening Shane heard the catcalling from Dimitri's friends.

"What you trying to do, D?"

"Gonna play smoochy face with the fag?"

"Gonna give him a hickey?"

Shane felt Dimitri push him away with a snarl, and he landed in a heap on the ground.

"Course not. I'm more inclined to rip his throat out with my teeth," Shane heard Dimitri say, "but I can't be bothered with this shit. Don't want to get blood on my jacket. Come on, let's get a beer." With that, Dimitri walked away, gathering his friends as they left Shane alone in the alley.

What the fuck had just happened? Had Dimitri Polst just saved him from a beating? Why on earth would he do that?

Dimitri had been Shane's nemesis since Shane had started kindergarten. It seemed wherever Shane went, Dimitri and his inevitable gang of friends were always there—calling him names, stealing his lunch money, making him cry, stuffing him in lockers, throwing his shoes in the dumpster.

As Shane got older the threats became more physically violent, and many times Shane had gone home from school with a black eye or worse. While his mother fussed over him, his father refused to say anything to the Alpha about it. In his father's opinion, Shane just needed to toughen up, and cut his hair. Shane lived for the day when he would go through his first shift, because the first thing he was going to do once he knew he could access his wolf form successfully, was get the hell out of his pack, and as far away from Dimitri Polst, and the others like him, as possible.

And that is what he did. When Shane was seventeen, he went through his first shift and became a full wolf. He went home, packed his bag, told his mom and dad he was gay, and walked out of the house as the shouting started. He had never gone back.

Chapter One

“So did you have a hot date last night?”

Shane heard his very pregnant partner's whispered comment even as he tried to slip unobtrusively into his seat. The regular Monday morning meeting had already started, and Shane was more than five minutes late. He had been out in the park the night before having a well-needed run in his wolf form. There had been squirrels, and rabbits, and time got away from him. He hadn't crawled home until well after three in the morning. The last place Shane wanted to be was at an early morning meeting listening to his lieutenant drone on about statistics and the need for the police to present a caring face to the public.

Handing a large cup of hot chocolate to his partner, Ruby, Shane waggled his eyebrows at her, but didn't say anything. He was too busy trying to inhale his own jumbo cup of coffee. That was the only thing he needed—well that and a couple of cigarettes, but as smoking had been banned in the precinct building for a while now, that would have to wait until after the meeting had finished.

Leaning back in his chair, Shane half closed his eyes and let the drone of his lieutenant's voice wash over him. Really, the man never said anything new, and Shane was sure the only reason for these mandatory meetings was so that the lieutenant could hear the sound of his own voice. He was almost asleep when he heard a loud, brusque voice yell out, “Listen up, people.”

Shit, when had Captain Reynolds come into the investigations room—the captain never attended these meetings. Shane sat up a bit straighter in his chair and took another long sip of his coffee. He looked up over his cup to see what the captain was doing, and stared straight into the eyes of Dimitri Polst.

Hell no, what was that man doing here?

Vaguely Shane heard the captain introduce Dimitri as a new detective to the precinct, starting immediately. He registered that the captain was waffling on about making the man feel welcome and all of that shit. But his mind couldn't get past the fact that after eight years, Dimitri Polst was not only in his fucking precinct, but he was coming here to work. Shane was just astounded.

“Hey, you look like you've seen a ghost.” Ruby smacked his arm, and Shane looked around, noting that the meeting was over.

“Yeah, it's nothing,” Shane mumbled, “late night last night and all that, you know.”

“I don’t know, pretty boy. I’m pregnant—didn’t you notice?—and haven’t done anything exciting for months. So tell me, did you have a date?”

Shane laughed and shook his head. Ruby Pearl was a fine detective and a really good partner. She was a short little thing and perps often underestimated her fighting ability, her smart mouth and quick wit. Before she had gotten pregnant, she could almost outrun Shane, and that was saying something. Shane was going to miss her when she went on leave at the end of the week.

“You know I don’t date, Rubes. I just fuck, often,” he commented wryly, opening his drawer and pulling out his case files. They currently had three open homicides, and Shane wanted to go over the material to see if he could come up with anymore leads. All three of the victims were young gay men, who had all been out clubbing when they were apparently intercepted on their way home and brutally beaten to death.

Despite the amount of carnage on the bodies, not one drop of evidence pointing to a possible killer had been found yet. While Shane wanted the cases brought together as a possible serial killer, so far the department, or rather his lieutenant, had been reluctant to do it. But as Shane went over his files again, he realized what he actually wanted to do was anything he could in the hopes he would forget that Dimitri fucking Polst was going to be working in his department.

“Come on, pretty boy,” Ruby coaxed, “you can tell me. You know I live vicariously through your exploits.”

“I can’t think why,” Shane replied as he started reading. “You know darn well I’m gay. Not as though you would be doing any of the things I like to do anyway.”

“I’m not doing much of anything lately,” Ruby said with a pout in her voice. The phone beside her rang and she picked it up. Seconds later she put the phone down and tapped on Shane’s arm.

“Come on, pretty boy, the boss wants to see us.”

“Who, the lieutenant?”

“Nope, you’d better put your jacket on, ’cos it’s the captain that wants to see us both, right away. What have you done this time, Shane?”

“I haven’t done anything,” Shane hissed, even as he ran his mind over his recent busts. Because his senses were that much sharper than humans, Shane would usually scent out more in a scene than humans could. Unfortunately that

also meant there had been occasions where Shane hadn't wanted to wait for back up, or he had taken what some might consider unacceptable risks when collaring a perp. Those occasions had seen Shane and Ruby pulled up in front of the captain for a lecture on teamwork and acting in a responsible manner.

Shane knew it was only because of his exemplary arrest record that he hadn't been fired before today, although he had been suspended on full pay a few times. He always made sure the captain knew that Ruby wasn't responsible for his actions, but as his partner, she still had to suffer through any lecture they might get. Following his partner out through the Investigations Unit and down the corridor to the captain's office, Shane was certain there wasn't anything he had done lately to cause his boss to have another go at him.

Maybe the captain wanted an update on the three open cases he and Ruby had. No, that couldn't be it. All updates had to go through the lieutenant first. That's why no one had recognized the fact that a serial killer was on the loose. But as Shane and Ruby went into the captain's office, Shane was surprised to see the lieutenant was in the office as well. That was unusual.

Shane turned to close the door behind him, and all of a sudden his senses were bombarded by the most amazing smell—jasmine, rain on a summer day, a hint of citrus and the underlying throb of wolf. Forcing himself *not* to groan out loud even as his cock rose and throbbed in his pants, he was hit with the overwhelming urge to just find the source of that scent and wallow in it. Shane resisted banging his head on the door he was closing, and instead turned to face the others in the room. Captain Reynolds, the lieutenant, Ruby of course and Dimitri Polst.

For a moment, all Shane could do was stand there, staring at the man who had been the source of so much of the bullying that Shane endured growing up. Dimitri hadn't changed much since Shane had met him in that alley all those years ago. He still had dark hair, now cut short enough at the back to conform to police policies but long enough on the top for Shane to fist if he ever got to fuck the man's delicious mouth. A man who could be the central character in Shane's wet dreams from now on with his height, his well-formed chest and shoulders, trim waist, long legs and edible ass. Dimitri, who had the face of an angel with his dark eyes, straight nose, sinfully full lips, and a scent that Shane knew was going to drive him to hell, every single day. Dimitri—the straight man who should be his fucking mate! Oh hell no.

As Shane looked into those deep chocolate eyes, he could see the amusement in the man's face. The sneaky fucking wolf already knew. He knew

that Shane was his mate and he obviously thought the whole situation was hilarious. Well Shane didn't think it was funny at all. He was so angry he could spit.

What the hell was the man doing here, and how in hell did a straight homophobe become his mate? Were the Fates having an off day or something?

Shane didn't have time to consider those questions, although he would as soon as he could get some time to himself, but he noticed the captain and Ruby looking at him with concerned expressions on their faces. Shane drew on the years of experience he had of keeping his feelings to himself and slapped a questioning look on his face, saying quietly, "You wanted to see us, Captain?"

"Yes, West, I want you to meet your new partner. Polst here will be taking over from Ruby at the end of the week, and I thought it would be a good idea for the three of you to work together this week so that Polst is up to speed with your cases and how we do things here before he starts his job officially on Friday."

The captain looked as professional and calm as ever. The man had no idea he had just officially thrown Shane's life into a living hell.

Refusing to look at Dimitri's smug face, Shane concentrated on Captain Reynolds.

"Respectfully, sir, I thought we had agreed that the department couldn't afford to replace Ruby while she was on leave, and that I would be working my cases solo from now on. I have no problem doing that, as I explained at the time. I totally understand the department's need to make budget cuts." Shane added the last bit because he knew that would appeal to the lieutenant, who so far hadn't said a word.

The same lieutenant who was now looking more than a little bit uncomfortable. "I understand what you are saying, West, and I appreciate your concern about the department's budget," he said curtly. The lieutenant was one of the few men in the Investigations Unit who blatantly didn't approve of Shane's sexual orientation and he made his distaste for Shane abundantly clear. The feeling was mutual.

"However," the lieutenant went on, "I have been informed that taking Polst here into the department will be a positive move given his skills, and as he specifically requested a transfer here, we would be foolish not to take him up on his offer."

In other words, Dimitri was prepared to work cheap. But Shane's head was reeling—what skills? Since when was Dimitri even a detective? And why the hell did he request a transfer to the very station where Shane had established himself? Totally unsure about what was going on, Shane decided the best defense was a good offense and he decided to fight with the one weapon he knew would put Dimitri off—the gay card. There was absolutely no fucking way he wanted to work with Dimitri, and once Dimitri was aware that he was out at work, then Dimitri wouldn't want to work with him either.

“Sirs,” Shane included the captain and the lieutenant in his sweeping gaze, although he steadfastly refused to acknowledge Dimitri. “You are aware of my sexual orientation, and the fact that many of the cases I work on and the informants I deal with are mostly related to the gay community. I remember Polst from school, and I think it would be unfair to put a man like him, with the skills you tell me he has, in a situation that he might find difficult or unpleasant to handle. Ruby, here,” Shane nodded to his partner who was looking at him like he had grown three heads in the past five minutes, “has never had a problem working with me, the cases we deal with, or the informants and places we go to chase leads. I doubt I would be able to have the same sort of working relationship with a man like Polst given his *conservative* views.”

Captain Reynolds glared at Shane. “There is nothing in this man's resume to suggest that he has a problem with homosexuals. I'm sure regardless of his personal viewpoint on the subject, that Polst is capable of conducting himself in a professional manner regardless of the environment. Isn't that right Polst?” Both the captain and Shane turned to look at Dimitri who still had that smirk on his face.

“I have to confess I don't have a lot of experience in that type of lifestyle choice, Captain,” Dimitri said in a deep sexy drawl. “We don't have many gay people in Jacobs Lake. However I am confident that I can work with West here without any problems. I am sure he can show me the ropes.”

When the fuck did that man's voice get so deep and downright sexy? All Shane could ever remember about Dimitri's voice in the past had been his snarling and the hate that poured off that delectable tongue. Damn it, Shane thought his cock would just explode and he needed to get out of the office and away from Dimitri fucking Polst as quickly as possible.

It was that need that made Shane swallow his pride and accept the inevitable. There was no way he was going to point out what a homophobic bully Dimitri was because to do that would mean admitting his own past

weaknesses. “My apologies, Captain. Polst. I had no right to judge a person without assessing their experience in an environment in person. Is that all now, Captain?” Shane spoke directly to Reynolds. “Only if it is, I do have some leads I need to follow up. I am sure Polst won’t mind if Ruby shows him our case files, and gets him set up on the computer. I can fill in both Ruby and Polst on any information I get later today.”

Captain Reynolds looked at Shane with that knowing bloody stare of his that always made Shane feel about ten inches tall. It was that look that suggested that Reynolds knew every single thing that was going on in Shane’s head, and it took all of Shane’s willpower not to flinch. Reynolds knew that Shane had never played the gay card in the office before. Sure everyone knew of his sexual orientation but Shane never spoke about it, never complained that most of the cases he dealt with were gay related, and never did he bring it up as a means of trying to get out of what was essentially a direct order from his boss. Shane had a sinking feeling that he was going to be called into the captain’s office again before the week was over.

But for now Reynolds simply nodded his head. Shane leaned down close to Ruby’s ear and said, “I’ll call you for your lunch order, okay?”

Ruby looked confused, but she said, “Yes, sure, see you at lunch.”

Shane nodded curtly at Polst and then fled the office. He grabbed his keys from his desk along with his notepad—he always preferred to write things down rather than record them on any of the plethora of electronic devices available, and headed out. He needed fresh air in his lungs and fast if he had a hope in hell of getting his cock under control.

Back in the office Captain Reynolds looked at Dimitri. “Is West going to have a problem with you, Polst? I have to tell you he is one of our best detectives and he does have innumerable contacts in the gay community that have been invaluable to our office.”

“No sir, no problem at all,” Dimitri said firmly. “I’m sure West and I will get along just fine.”

Of course at the moment the captain had no idea just how fine the two of them would be getting along. Dimitri hadn’t left his home, his pack and his job for nothing. He was going to get Shane in his bed and in his life if it was the last thing he did. At the moment he didn’t have a clue what he would do with

him once he got him there, but hey that was what the internet was for, and if there was one thing Dimitri was really good at doing, it was research. So he plastered a smile on his face and decided that for now he would make an ally out of Ruby. He had waited eight years to claim his mate—he could wait a little longer.

Chapter Two

"I'm just not making any headway," Dimitri whined down the phone line.

"Well what did you expect, sweetie? You made the man's life a living hell while he was at school. He's not going to come running just because you have turned up, is he?" Angela's laughing voice mocked him over the phone.

"But he should," Dimitri persisted. "This 'thing' between us should make him want to be around me, not run out of the office every time I show up."

Dimitri was as frustrated as all get out. For an entire week, Shane had flitted in and out of the office, leaving Dimitri with Ruby to go over case notes, files, office procedures, and a host of other stuff that not only bored the hell out of Dimitri, but made him more and more agitated. Every time Shane came near him, Dimitri felt his body respond. It didn't matter how many times he beat off in the shower or in bed at night, one whiff of Shane's scent was enough to set his cock off again—hard, leaking and so damn needy.

"Well, have you told him you want to go out on some of his enquiries with him?" Angela asked. "You know, do some interviewing yourself, meet some of the local informants; that type of thing?"

"Yes, I've suggested it—every freaking day. But he always has some excuse and takes off on his own."

"Well why don't you do your wolf thingy, and track him down at night?"

"Grrr..." Dimitri said, "Because he reckons he works at night as well. He comes in for morning roll call, then goes out. Comes back at lunch and fills me and Ruby in on anything he has found. Then he goes off and says he needs to rest so that he can hit the streets at night. Ruby tells me that has been his routine for like, forever, and until she got too pregnant, she used to do the same thing."

"And he goes out at night without backup? Didn't you tell me he was a pretty little thing?"

Dimitri sighed. Angela knew all about Shane because Shane was the reason that he couldn't commit to Angela in the first place. The two of them had gone out for three years but when Angela said she wanted more, Dimitri was forced to tell her he actually had a mate and it wasn't of the female persuasion.

After laughing her head off, Angela made it her mission to get the two men together. Although she was human, she knew all about Dimitri's wolf side and

the whole concept of mates—thanks to Dimitri getting really drunk one night and telling her. Now Dimitri considered Angela one of his very best friends—she was definitely the only person he had told about his male mate.

His parents, his brother and sister, his pack, and his other human friends that he had grown up with, all thought that Dimitri was off in Stockton being the same womanizing asshole he used to be before he met Angela. None of them knew that Shane was in Stockton either. It seemed that when Shane had shifted and then left the pack, he left them entirely, and no one in the pack ever spoke of him.

Dimitri had heard a few unsubstantiated rumors that Shane had come out to his parents before he left, and that could account for the fact that the man was no longer welcome in the pack. Dimitri had used Social Security and DMV records to find out where he had gone.

“Yes, he was a pretty little thing, but damn Angela, he has grown up to be a fine-looking man. He has lost weight and packed on the muscle. There is not an ounce of fat on him. His long hair is now short as fuck but that just highlights his amazing green eyes—and cheek bones to die for. Oh shit, I’m mooning over him again, aren’t I?” It wasn’t the first time in the past week that Dimitri had waxed lyrical about how awesome he thought Shane looked now that he had grown up.

“Yup,” Angela said without a trace of rancor in her voice.

“It’s not just his looks. He smells like sex. All. The. Time. It’s driving me nuts and I have the worst case of blue balls I’ve ever had.”

“Do you even know what you are going to do with him when you do get him in bed?”

“Well,” Dimitri drawled out, “not exactly. I... er... watched some porn but it didn’t do anything for me. I think I know the mechanics, but watching two guys get off on each other really doesn’t get me hot or anything. I simply tried to view it like an academic exercise and took notes.”

“You took notes!” Angela was laughing so hard Dimitri thought she would have a coronary.

“I’m not gay, okay? I don’t know how I’m meant to learn about this shit.” Now Dimitri was getting pissed off. He had been a sexually confident, straight man since he was fourteen. He didn’t need to be mocked because he didn’t have a freaking clue what he was going to do with his male mate.

“Dimitri, hon, are you doing the right thing here?” Angela’s voice had softened now. “If you get together with Shane, mate or whatever you call it, then people are going to think you are gay even if you only get hard for the one man. If you can’t handle that then maybe it would be better to come back here and marry some female. She won’t be your special one, but you stayed with me long enough for me to know you can fake it.”

“Shit, Ang, I’m sorry. How many times do I have to tell you I’m sorry? If it was going to work with any woman, then it would have been you.” Dimitri’s voice was tinged with regret. He did love Angela in his own way and for the longest time he thought he could marry her and have the kids his parents were expecting. But the closer he got to making that commitment, the more he remembered the absolutely delicious way that Shane had smelled when he had tackled him that last time in the alley back at school.

After eight years apart from Shane, the memory was still fresh in his mind and it got to the point where he avoided having sex with Angela because it felt *wrong*. Dimitri knew it was his wolf signaling him that it was time to get his mate. The fact that Shane was totally the wrong gender, at least from Dimitri’s human perspective, was nothing to his wolf. His wolf didn’t care about discrimination or labels about sexuality. His wolf knew his mate existed. His wolf had smelled him, and damn near tasted him, and the older Dimitri got, the stronger that urge to claim his mate became.

“I’m not worrying about that now,” Dimitri said forcefully. “I don’t care what other people call me—that’s their labeling system, not mine. Shane copes with it, and anything he can do, I can do as well.”

Angela sighed down the phone. “Okay then sweetie, where is Shane supposed to be tonight? You said that Ruby left today so you are now *officially* the man’s partner. Why don’t you head off, find him, and offer him some backup?”

Dimitri thought about what Shane had said at lunchtime. Shane was convinced the three unsolved homicide cases they had were the result of a serial killer, and Shane mentioned going to a gay club in town to do some looking around, and talk to some people he knew. He did mention the name of the club, and Dimitri had written it down somewhere so that he could do some research on the place.

“Thanks Ang, you’re the best, you know,” he said to his friend fondly. “I guess I’m off to a gay club.”

“Don't forget to wear tight jeans, and phone me tomorrow to let me know how you get on.” Angela laughed as she hung up.

Chapter Three

Shane couldn't decide if he was in heaven or hell. On the one hand, dancing at Club Trucker was heaven. Surrounded by hot, sleek, masculine bodies; feeling and moving to a thumping beat; being caressed and stroked by more than one interested hand. Yep, this was gay heaven. But it was also hell in a big way. Because no matter who stroked him, or who pressed a solid cock against his back, Shane automatically moved away. His wolf knew he had a mate, and he didn't want anyone touching the human side of Shane unless it was said mate.

Which, Shane figured as he danced and kept an eye out for his contact, actually put him in a type of purgatory. A sexual limbo, and one that he would probably continue to be in for the rest of his life unless his mate had a change of heart and decided to embrace the rainbow side of life. Like that was ever going to happen. *Fuck*, Shane thought, his life couldn't get any worse.

Every day brought delicious torment. Every day Shane's wolf pined to see his mate—Shane refused to consider that his human side might want to as well. Every day for the past week, Shane had gone into the office, made small talk with Dimitri and Ruby. He filled them in on what he was doing, and set them routine tasks to follow up on any leads that he had found. Dimitri seemed good at that sort of thing, and he had solid research skills. Not that Shane had noticed. Well maybe a little.

Every afternoon had found Shane desperately doing chores around his small house—anything to get rid of the tension that came from having a perpetually hard cock. Yes, he was supposed to be getting some sleep because he had been out at the clubs and on the street every night for the past week. But he couldn't sleep, was having trouble eating, and he was feeling so strung out he was starting to think he wouldn't be able to wait until Sunday night to have his weekly run.

As of today, he really couldn't stop Dimitri from coming out with him while he went about his work. Ruby had phoned him a couple of times through the week going on about how unusual it was for him to go out alone. Shane and Ruby had been almost inseparable at work, going everywhere together. Ruby had a good instinct for people, and she was invaluable in talking to people that might be nervous around Shane. His wolf nature, although hidden, seemed to leak out sometimes, and humans, especially those trying to hide something,

seemed to pick up on it. Her perky nature combined with her small stature encouraged interview subjects to trust her, and they often let on more than they might have simply because of her charm.

So, starting on Monday, Shane was going to be in permanent purgatory, because how the hell was he going to be able to keep his hands off his mate when the guy would be in his car, walking with him on the streets, and coming with him to clubs just like this one. Okay, well that might be amusing. Shane couldn't imagine that Dimitri had ever been in a club like Truckers, and it would be kinda funny to see just how professional the homophobe could be when faced with so much blatant male sexuality.

Shane spotted his informant on the edge of the dance floor, and quickly wove his way through the throbbing bodies to meet him. CJ was a cute little twink with bright blond hair and sweet blue eyes. Shane had met him when the young guy was homeless on the streets. After stopping CJ from getting a hell of a beating from a couple of much larger men, CJ had become a friend. He was also an incurable gossip, and seemed to know everything that was going on on the streets, even though he was no longer homeless, having quickly taken up the offer of help with an apartment when Shane offered it to him.

"Hey CJ, how's it going?" Shane asked quietly as he quickly slipped the young man into his arms, and pressed into him, much as he would if he was looking for a hookup.

"All good, boss man," CJ breathed in his ear as he slid his body along the detective's muscled frame. "Got some news, if you're interested."

"Always interested, little man." Shane glanced around. There were too many people around for them to talk in private. For a second he frowned. He could have sworn he had seen Dimitri's head across the room, but then Shane shook himself. There was no way that wolf would be in a gay club unless he had to be.

"Want to head out the back?" CJ cupped his hand suggestively over Shane's cock, which of course was hard again, because he had been thinking about Dimitri. "Looks like you might have something there for me to work with."

Shane gritted his teeth to stop the urge to bat CJ's hand away from his crotch. This was a game they played when they were at the club. Shane had never and would never take CJ up on his sexual offers, even if he hadn't met Dimitri. The boy was too young, too pretty, and he was a friend—not a fuck

buddy. But he had never reacted so negatively to having his cock stroked before. Damn mating bond.

“You know that’s not on the table, blondie, but let’s just play it like it is until we get out of here, okay?” Shane whispered in CJ’s ear as he led him through the club and down a hallway to the back entrance. The door was supposed to be alarmed but it never was. Too many people used the alley beyond for their quick blow jobs and even full-fledged fucks.

Shane found a spot on the wall, deep in the shadows, and leaned against the bricks, encouraging CJ to climb his body. CJ wrapped his legs around Shane’s waist and buried his face in Shane’s neck. To any casual onlooker it would look like the two men were necking, but Shane had found it was one of the most effective ways of getting information without making CJ out to be an informant.

CJ rubbed his hard little cock against Shane’s abs and groaned appreciatively into Shane’s neck.

“I could get off on this, you know,” he whispered.

“Don’t you fucking dare,” Shane growled. “Tell me what you’ve got and let’s get this over and done with as quickly as possible. I have other people to see tonight.”

“Ever impatient aren’t you, big boy,” CJ mumbled even as he continued to rub himself against Shane. “Okay, here’s what I heard…”

Dimitri had found Shane at the second club he went into. He hadn’t been able to find the piece of paper he had written the name of the club on, so he did a Google search for gay clubs in the area and found three possible venues. As he entered the club, Dimitri spotted the wolf dancing in the middle of the dance floor, but from where Dimitri was watching he could see that Shane was keeping an eye out for someone. Just a few minutes later—just enough time to appreciate how well Shane filled out his tight black jeans, Dimitri saw Shane cross the dance floor and latch onto a small, pretty, young man with a shock of blond hair. The way the blond was clinging onto Shane made it clear that they were more than casual acquaintances, and when Dimitri’s enhanced eyesight picked out the way the little blond brazenly cupped Shane’s cock through his jeans, his anger started to burn. It only increased when he saw Shane lead the smaller man out the back of the club.

“No fucking way,” Dimitri snarled to himself as he forced his way through the Friday night crowds. The look on his face was enough to make most people get out of his way, although it might have also had something to do with the fact that he couldn't stop growling. He might not have claimed Shane yet, hell, he hadn't even really talked to him about their mating bond, or the issues between them, but that didn't mean that Shane could just go off and let any young blond thing play with what belonged to his mate.

By the time Dimitri got to the back door of the club, he knew his wolf was close to the surface. He could feel his eyes changing and the hair on his arms start to tingle. It was only through sheer force of will that he stopped the change completely. Must not shift in front of humans, he tried to remind himself as he searched the dark alley, sniffing for his mate's unique scent. There, deep in the shadows. The young blond was wrapped around Shane's waist and neck like he belonged there.

Growling loudly Dimitri strode over to where the two men were hidden, his hands changing into claws as he itched to grab the little interloper and tear his body to inch-sized bloody pieces. He couldn't and wouldn't hurt his mate, but he could and definitely would shred the little blond until he wasn't a threat to Dimitri's mating again.

“Dimitri, stop damn it!” Shane called out in a low voice as he carefully unwound the young blond's arms from his neck. “This is not what you think.”

Dimitri stopped himself, just, and watched as Shane spoke in a low voice in CJ's ear and then gave him some money. CJ looked up at Dimitri, and scowled at him, then took off back into the club. Shane flung out his arm, and grabbed Dimitri by his belt loops, and smashed him into the same wall he had been leaning on while he was entangled with his blond. But Shane's eyes weren't full of passion, Dimitri noticed. His mate was pissed off with him, big time.

“You just cost me some valuable information, fuckwit. Now what the hell did you think you were doing?” Shane snarled at him in a low voice.

“Is that how you get all of your information, officer,” Dimitri snarled right back. “By giving sexual favors to your tipsters?” Fuck, with Shane so close Dimitri could barely breathe. His cock was so hard in his jeans that it hurt, and he couldn't break his stare with his mate. Man, this guy was awesome when he was angry.

Shane tipped his head to the side and then took in a deep breath, obviously smelling Dimitri's arousal. For a moment he looked confused, but that

expression was gone in an instant and Shane's angry gaze was back again. He leaned in flush against Dimitri's body and growled softly in his ear, "CJ is an informant of mine. He's been beaten before for talking to the wrong people, and I don't want to see my friend in the hospital. We act like a hookup so he will be safe, asshole. So don't go judging what you don't understand."

"But you've fucked him, right?" Dimitri regretted the words the instant they came out of his mouth as he watched a flash of pure murderous intent race across his mate's hard face.

"Not that it's any of your business, fuckwit, but I have never done anything sexually with CJ, or any of my informants. Unlike you, I have standards." Dimitri knew Shane was referring to the fact that when Dimitri was still in school, he used to fuck anything in a skirt regardless of who it was. With his jock reputation, and good looks, he never lacked for girls willing to lift those skirts and give him what he wanted.

But right now Dimitri didn't care that Shane was angry with him, or that he might have fucked up an investigation. Shane was leaning on him, chest to chest, but had kept his groin area away from Dimitri. And Dimitri was so turned on he couldn't think. He needed friction on his cock and he needed it now. He reached out, grabbed Shane by his hips, and pulled the man's groin into his. Both men groaned as their erections nudged each other, and Dimitri rocked into Shane looking for more.

"What the fuck do you think you are doing?" Shane snarled. Dimitri could see Shane's eyes were blown with lust and the man was panting softly. Against his cock, Shane's sizable erection nudged his, and for the first time in his life, Dimitri wanted to see another man's cock. But not just any cock—Shane's.

"I haven't got a clue," Dimitri said honestly, his own deep voice raspy with lust, "but I know I like it."

Chapter Four

Shane decided his brain was on the fritz. In one respect, this was his dream, his mate wanting him as badly as he wanted his mate. But this was Dimitri, someone who Shane had pegged a long time ago as a bullying homophobe. The fact that this man was now rubbing his hard dick into Shane's like a cat in heat would be laughable, if it wasn't for the fact that Shane was so damned aroused he could barely keep his control.

Looking up at Dimitri's face, Shane thought he had never seen anything so beautiful. Even in the dark of the alley, Shane's eyes could pick out the lust in Dimitri's shining gaze, the flared nostrils, and the smell of arousal that was threatening to overwhelm the pair of them. Dimitri hadn't lied, he did like this, and if the rubbing was any indication, he wanted a lot more.

Without a thought for consequences, Shane did what he had wanted to do since the first time he'd seen Dimitri in his captain's office. He ran a hand up to Dimitri's neck and pulled the man closer, crushing the man's lips beneath his own. Oh fuck, sweet heaven, one taste and Shane knew he was never going to be able to get enough of this man.

Dimitri didn't know what to think when Shane's lips hit his, but he quickly decided it didn't matter. Kissing Shane, because yes damn it, he was going to kiss the man back while he had the chance, was nothing like the thousands of kisses he'd shared with girls. Shane's lips were soft, but they were applied with precision and confidence. The man knew what he was doing, and he played Dimitri's lips like a finely tuned instrument.

As the kiss went on, Dimitri noticed other subtle differences. There was no goopy lip gloss for one thing, which was a nice change. And stubble. Who would have thought that the faint rasp of Shane's stubble against his chin would feel so erotic? Every rasp sent tingles down Dimitri's spine and reverberated through his cock.

It wasn't just the facial thing that was different. Shane's body was plastered against Dimitri's and there wasn't anything soft about the man, at all. Shane's chest pushed into Dimitri's in a way Dimitri found intoxicating. The hips that Dimitri still held in his large hands just fit, perfectly. Taut with controlled power, Shane rocked against him, their erections urgently seeking release as the

kiss started, blossomed, and then swiftly moved both men to the point of no return.

Shane had forced his lips from Dimitri's and was nibbling up the man's neck. "What do you want?" he rasped quietly against Dimitri's ear, and Dimitri shuddered.

"You. Everything." It was all he could say and he knew it to be true. Whatever misgivings Dimitri might have had about mating with a man were gone the moment Shane's lips touched his—his need for his mate was so intense, and Shane's body against his felt so perfect, that he didn't want the man to ever stop. If that made him gay, then who cared. No one had ever made him feel this good, so alive and so full of want. The Fates weren't wrong—Shane was perfect for him.

"Have you ever done anything with a man?" Shane asked quietly as his assault on Dimitri's neck and chin continued. Dimitri shook his head. There was no way he would have ever considered doing anything remotely sexual with anyone from Jacobs Lake—that would have been enough to get him shot, beaten, or at the very least expelled from the pack.

"So you've never known what it's like to have another man handle your cock." It wasn't a question this time but Shane's hand was working its way between their bodies, and seconds later Dimitri felt Shane's quick hands deftly undo Dimitri's jeans. The cold air hitting his cock was a relief, and Dimitri groaned as his hard length was wrapped firmly in Shane's grasp.

Shane's hand explored Dimitri's length before gathering the pre-come, using it to smooth his way up and down over Dimitri's shaft. Unable to help himself, Dimitri groaned again as he thrust himself up into the channel created by his mate's hand. The tension was so perfect. The calluses on Shane's hand added to the friction, and Dimitri knew he had never felt anything so exquisite in his life.

"I bet you taste delicious. When I get you in my bed," Shane promised as his hand continued its magic, "I am going to strip you down and take you apart. My mouth will be the first man's mouth you've shot your spunk into. I will lick you, suck you, and drive you to distraction before I roll you over, and rim the hell out of your ass. I'm going to tongue you, finger fuck you, and spread you wide to get you ready for my big cock."

Dimitri groaned as he pictured the things that Shane was saying. He had never been so turned on in his life. Shane's hand's pressure and speed on his cock had increased, and Dimitri knew he was close to coming.

“And then, when you are positively begging for it,” Shane continued in his ear, “I’m going to slide my fat cock straight in your willing hole. I’m going to fill you up so far you will feel me in your throat. I’m going to pound into you so hard, so deeply that you won’t be able to think of anything but me, and the way I am making you feel. You’re going to feel what it’s like to be possessed, to be owned, and when I shoot my spunk deep into your ass, I’m going to make you *mine*.”

Shane growled his last words, and it was that growl, combined with the vivid imagery that Shane had given him, that drove Dimitri over the edge. He came groaning Shane’s name as his semen pulsed out of his cock as it never had before. Shane kept working him until he was done, kissing his neck softly, and nipping at the joint between his neck and shoulder.

Dimitri slowly came down from his orgasmic high. He became aware of the fact that they were still in the dark alley, and Shane’s covered erection was still pressed against his thigh. Dimitri thought he should offer to do something about that, but all of a sudden, he felt strangely shy and unsure of himself.

He looked at Shane who had a small smile on his face.

“What do we do now?” he rumbled quietly as he gave into the temptation of touching Shane’s face. Damn, the man had perfect cheekbones.

“Now,” said Shane as he tucked Dimitri’s cock back into his jeans and zipped him up, “you go home, and I go back to work. I’m still on the clock you know.”

“Can I come with you?” Dimitri asked, unwilling to let Shane out of his sight just now. His nerves felt jumbled and he knew he was tired. He also assumed he had a lot of thinking to do about this whole gay sex thing, but right now he needed the reassurance of Shane’s presence. Shane made him feel complete, both man and wolf, and Dimitri knew this was what he had been missing his whole life.

Shane looked at him in the darkness and Dimitri couldn’t read the look on his face. Then he nodded, stepped back, and headed out of the alley, indicating for Dimitri to follow him. As Dimitri watched Shane’s tight ass rolling in the man’s jeans, he couldn’t help but note to himself that if he felt this amazing after one hand job, how on earth was he going to feel after Shane had fucked him.

Chapter Five

Shane let himself into his small house a little after four a.m. After he had dropped Dimitri back at his car, he had driven around to see if he could catch sight of CJ, but he couldn't find the little man, and could only presume that his friend had gotten lucky. Which was more than could be said for himself, he thought wryly. Dimitri might have gotten off in a spectacular fashion, but Shane's cock was still rock solid in his jeans, and Shane quickly made his way to the shower, dropping his clothes as he went.

Once the water was piping hot, Shane stepped in and allowed himself to get completely soaked. The hot water pounding away at his muscles helped him to relax for the first time in days. As he soaked himself and started to get himself clean, his mind drifted until he was thinking about Dimitri again. Like he could ever stop thinking about him.

The man had looked amazing in that alley. First, his jealous anger when he caught Shane with CJ, and then the way he had been so open and honest. Dimitri hadn't been with a man before, that was clearly obvious, but the way he had kissed Shane back, after just one small moment of hesitation, and then responded to Shane's touch—the memory was enough to make Shane groan.

And when Shane was talking dirty to him. Spelling out how he was going to go down on him, rim his ass, and then fuck him. Dimitri didn't falter, didn't look shocked. In fact, if anything he got more aroused, if the solidness of his cock and the increased thrust of his hips was anything to go by. But for Shane, the most spectacular part was when he had growled the word "mine" and Dimitri flew apart.

Dimitri's face as he threw himself into his orgasm was a joy to behold. The scrunched eyes, the flared nostrils, the slack jaw, and the way he said Shane's name as though it was a benediction. Shane had loved every minute of it, and the only thing he would have changed was their location. Because if they had been in Shane's bed, then Shane wouldn't have stopped there.

Shane's hand dropped to his own cock as he thought about the muscles Dimitri hid under his shirt. Dimitri was solid, like most wolves, and Shane had caught a hint of a definite eight-pack as he had trailed his hand down Dimitri's chest and abs, hell bent on getting to the man's zipper. What would it be like to be clasped in those big arms, to be allowed to run his hands, fuck that, his

mouth, over all of those muscles and warm skin. Shane's hand on his cock sped up as he dreamed of exploring Dimitri's body from one end to the other.

As he reached the point, in his mind, where he had circled his lips over that divine cock, Shane came with a roar, his come showering the walls until he had to lean on the tiles to catch his breath. Fucking hell. If thinking about being with Dimitri in a bed made him come so hard, the real event would probably kill him.

But, as it does when you have had a spectacular orgasm on your own, when the endorphins slow down and the heart rate goes back to normal, reality sets in. Rinsing himself off, Shane shut off the water and stepped out, grabbing a towel. If he thought about it logically, Dimitri was probably just impacted by the double blow of jealousy and the mating bond. As the two men had gone around, seen a couple of Shane's other contacts, and checked on a couple of gay prostitutes who worked on the streets, Dimitri had been professional and polite. He hadn't touched Shane in any way, nor said anything inappropriate for an officer.

Shane was pleased that Dimitri seemed to agree on the serial killer theory for the murders—that was supportive in its own way. But Shane didn't think that Dimitri was doing it to be supportive. He just had a good eye for details, and there were too many similarities between the three murders for it to be coincidence. Of course, the biggest problem with trying to solve the murders is that there was not one shred of physical evidence at any of the crime scenes that could be used against anyone they might bring in for the crime. Basically, unless they caught the guy in the act, or a person confessed during a police interview, they were screwed.

And as for Dimitri and him being mates? Yes, well if they didn't consummate their affair soon the pair of them were going to be really snappy wolves. Unclaimed mates could end up going feral if the situation got bad enough, and given that Shane and Dimitri worked together, their attraction cycle would heat up, fast. It was Fate's way of ensuring that a matched pair became a matched pair in every sense of the word. But what happens if one of the pair wants but can't trust, and the other part of the pair isn't even gay?

Tossing his towel on the floor, Shane climbed into bed naked. He was just too tired to think about any of this now—he'd worry about his serial killer, and why Dimitri had actively sought Shane out after all of this time apart, in the morning.

Dimitri woke up with a hard on from hell and his nose filled with the scent of his mate, thanks to his shirt that he had dropped by his pillow the night before. He groaned as he rolled over onto his back, and stared at the ceiling of his motel room. Thoughts of the night before ran through his brain like a slide show along with a gamut of emotions.

The jealousy, the anger, the kiss, the passion, and man, oh man, the orgasm. They were all really positive things. But afterwards, when Shane had walked out of the alley and the two of them entered the real world, so to speak, Dimitri just couldn't shut off his fear of being exposed as gay. The deep-rooted hatred his father had for gay men had been as much a part of Dimitri's upbringing as his mother's apple pies.

Taking a deep breath, Dimitri calmed his nerves as he thought about what his father would say if he knew that his son had taken a gay mate. If... no... when, Dimitri went through with this then he would have to leave his family and his pack forever—just like Shane had done. From watching Shane as he grew up, Dimitri knew the man didn't have a good relationship with his family, although as a boy Shane had been close to his mother. How Shane had the strength to walk away after his first shift amazed Dimitri.

Unable to think clearly, Dimitri reached over and picked up his phone, calling Angela. She was the only one who could help him think about this with a cool head.

“Hey, lover boy.” Angela's happy voice rang out over the phone. “How did your night mission go?”

“It had its good points and its bad points,” Dimitri said cryptically.

“Oh goody, tell me the good points first, and don't leave out any details.”

Dimitri explained about the night's events—finding Shane, the anger about CJ, the kiss, and the hand job. Okay, he skimmed on the details about how amazing the hand job had felt, but he did allude to sexual activity, and how he and Shane had then gone on to speak to some informants before Shane dropped him back at the club's parking lot so he could get his car.

“Wait, wait,” Angela said when he was finished, “there's some holes in your story. You did get the guy off in return, right? And you did at least kiss him goodnight when he dropped you off, yes?”

“Er... that would be a no, on both counts.”

“Well, aren't you a selfish date,” Angela spat out. “If you had treated me like that, I wouldn't go out with you a second time.”

“Well what was I expected to do? I’ve never touched a guy sexually before. Should I have just undone his pants and pulled his cock out?” Dimitri was getting angry because he was feeling defensive.

“What did Shane do to you?”

Thinking for a moment, Dimitri got it. “He... er... opened my pants and pulled my cock out.”

“Right, well that doesn’t sound that hard to me. You know how the zipper on a pair of jeans works, and I’m sure you’ve given yourself enough hand jobs to know what feels good. So you really slacked off there. Why didn’t you kiss him when he dropped you off? You had already kissed him by that point.”

“We were in a parking lot for goodness sake.”

“So?”

“Someone could have seen us.”

To his surprise, Angela started to laugh and at that moment Dimitri was really starting to hate his best friend.

“Er, Dimitri sweetie, don’t you remember the last game of the season? In the parking lot? In the back of your car to be precise? I don’t remember you being worried about people seeing us then.”

Okay it was official—he did hate his best friend. He did remember that evening. Dimitri had been playing and had scored a winning touchdown. He was flush with success, and had taken Angela rather roughly in the back of the car without any thought to who might have seen them. It wasn’t the first time he and Angela had engaged in risqué sexual activities, and even before Angela, Dimitri hadn’t cared if people had seen him when he kissed and fondled the girl of the week.

“But if I had done that, and someone had seen us, then they would have thought...”

“They would have thought that you were gay,” Angela finished for him. “Which you are.”

“You know I can’t be gay. I mean, shit, I watched all that gay porn and that didn’t do anything for me at all.”

“Yet you are sexually attracted to Shane. You can’t stop thinking about him. You think he’s amazing to look at. You can obviously get off from what he does to you. That, my friend, makes you gay, at least with Shane.”

"I can't be. I've never been attracted to any guy, only Shane." Dimitri could be stubborn when he wanted to be.

"Listen to me, Dimitri. If an alcoholic goes six years without a drink and then has just one, then he is an alcoholic. Okay, not the best analogy because once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic. If a smoker gives up and doesn't smoke for a year, but then has a cigarette then he is still a smoker. If you think about Shane all the time, are sexually attracted to him, want to go to bed with the man, and spend your life with him, then, given that he is the same sex as you, you are gay."

"I don't think either of your analogies work. Maybe my wolf is gay," Dimitri said sullenly.

"Or maybe your wolf doesn't care," Angela shot back. "From what you've told me about mating, the animal side of you doesn't care what your mate is actually like. He just knows what he wants, who he is drawn to, and gets on with it. Besides didn't you hash over all of this stuff before you pulled up stakes and moved, and made your decision to be with him?"

Dimitri said, "Yeah, you're right. I did, and I do want to be with him." Dimitri heard a ping to indicate he had a text message. "Hey, look Ang, I've got to go. I've got someone trying to get in touch with me."

"Okay, sweets, phone me when you can." With that Angela hung up.

Checking his text messages Dimitri saw it was from Shane.

There's been another murder, will pick you up as soon as you text me your address.

Quickly Dimitri texted back the details of the motel, and jumped out of bed. He didn't have time for a shower, or for coffee for that matter, and as he pulled on his suit pants and buttoned his shirt, he hoped that he could convince Shane to pull into a drive-thru so he could get the coffee at least. Because as much as he wanted to see Shane again, Dimitri could feel the flutter of butterflies in his stomach. Hopefully, the coffee would help calm his nerves at seeing his mate again.

Chapter Six

Shane was surprised that Dimitri had given his address as a motel complex, but as he pulled into the parking lot beside the unit, he reasoned with himself that the man had not been in town long, and probably hadn't had the time to find a place of his own yet. Of course, if he and Dimitri completed the mating bond, the pair of them would live together. Shane allowed one brief image of what it would be like to wake up with Dimitri every day, before he firmly squashed that notion on its head. Dimitri didn't want forever with a man; he was just caught up in the mating bond.

Sitting in his car, Shane flicked off a quick text to Dimitri to let him know he'd arrived. Yes, he could have gone to the room. Yes, he could have gone inside the room if Dimitri had asked him too, but he didn't. Because if he did that, then he would want to kiss the man senseless and Dimitri wouldn't want that in the cold light of day. So Shane kept his face neutral and stayed in the car. And if he groaned at the sight of Dimitri opening the door to his place and stepping out into the cool sun-washed day, then only Shane would know about it.

"Did you sleep well?" Dimitri asked as Shane navigated the car out of the motel lot and headed into town.

"Nope," Shane replied shortly. Then realizing he must sound like maybe he couldn't sleep because of Dimitri, he added, "I went looking for CJ after I dropped you off, but couldn't find him. I'm a bit worried about him."

Dimitri sat and stared out of the window, and didn't seem to have any response to what Shane had said. The look on his face suggested the man had plenty to say, and Shane quickly realized that maybe Dimitri was still jealous. After all, Shane didn't get off the night before, so maybe Dimitri thought he went looking for a hookup. Shane decided it was too much fun to not disabuse the man of his thoughts and left Dimitri to sit in silence.

"Any chance of getting coffee before we get to the scene? I didn't have a chance to grab any before you texted me," Dimitri said suddenly, his voice jolting Shane out of his own thoughts about the night before.

"It's the first thing I do every morning when I head out," Shane said. "I can't live without my coffee."

"I'm the same," Dimitri replied, but he didn't say anything more.

God, the tension in the car was unbearable. It wasn't just the sexual angst, although that was there in spades, but there was something else. Dimitri had something to say, Shane could sense it. But whatever it was, Dimitri wasn't talking. Reminding himself he had a job to do, Shane resolutely put all thoughts of mating, relationships, and all that other shit in the back of his head as he got them coffee, and then headed to the crime scene. Apart from thanking him for his coffee—black, Shane noted—Dimitri didn't say a word.

The crime scene was a lot like the others Shane had been to. Yellow tape protected the area across both ends of a darkened alley. A body was still lying on the hard ground, partially covered by a tarp. Nodding to the two officers waiting for him, Shane bypassed the tape, and headed straight for the body, a feeling of dread settling in his bones. As he got closer, all Shane could see was a mop of blond hair, and even as he prayed, *fuck no*, his fingers twitched aside the tarp to reveal CJ's battered face.

Forcing himself upright, Shane moved to the edge of the alley. Behind him, he could hear Dimitri make enquiries of the two officers at the scene, and Shane knew he had a job to do. But right now he wanted to remember how amazing his little friend had been. CJ, with his bright hair and flashing smile. The sexy body and the outrageous personality. The man who had been beaten more than once for being gay, and for knowing too much, talking to the wrong people. The man didn't deserve this type of end. He deserved to be happy, with someone to love him and care for him for the rest of a long life. Now CJ would never have any of that, and it was up to Shane to find this killer once and for all and put him down. This was more than a job now; this was personal.

Had CJ known more about the killer than Shane had realized? Is that what he was going to tell Shane before Dimitri interrupted them? Had someone seen CJ with Shane at the club, and taken out CJ before he could reveal what he knew? If that was the case then that person had to have been following them, and Shane couldn't think of anyone who had been in the alley with them the night before, except Dimitri. Shane briefly considered the idea that Dimitri could have killed CJ, but quickly dismissed it. The markings on CJ's face, the way he had been killed in the alley, were all the hallmarks of the same man who had murdered the previous three victims, and Dimitri hadn't been in town during that time.

Lost in his thoughts, Shane didn't hear Dimitri approach, but as his smell tantalized Shane's nose, Shane stifled a groan. He couldn't deal with the man right now. He had to get his shit together. Find this killer and stop him before

any more innocent lives were being taken purely and simply because they were gay.

“Hey Shane, are you okay?” Dimitri asked softly.

Shane nodded.

“That’s the guy, isn’t it? Your friend, CJ?”

Shane nodded again. He felt if he spoke, he would just explode. He was so angry and yet he was on the verge of tears. He knew as long as he lived, he would never forget the sight of CJ’s battered face.

“Could you smell anything?” Dimitri said, stepping even closer and dropping his voice so they wouldn’t be overheard.

Shane shook his head, embarrassed that he hadn’t even thought to sniff for clues. Usually the victims weren’t found until they had been dead for a few days, and there hadn’t been anything for Shane to find. But CJ had been alive the night before, so even without time of death, Shane knew this kill was recent. It was also the first time the killer had left the victim out where the body would be found quickly. The other three victims had been found in dumpsters.

Looking around quickly, Shane noted two dumpsters lined along the alley. The leaving of the body out in the open had to be deliberate, because CJ’s body could have been stashed in either one of the open garbage containers.

“I think I might have found something,” Dimitri said. “Or smelled it at least. Come over here.”

He led Shane to the corner of the alley, beside one of the uncovered dumpsters. The two men stood in a huddle like they were still talking while Shane took a surreptitious sniff. Decay, rotten food, garbage and yes, there amongst the stench, the tiniest hint of expensive cologne. Shane recognized it immediately. He had treated himself to a bottle of the stuff the Christmas before.

“Clive Christian’s X Factor,” he said quietly.

“What?” Dimitri looked stunned.

“It’s a men’s cologne. I bought myself some last Christmas as a treat.” Shane explained hurriedly. “Real expensive, and totally out of place in this alley. I barely ever wear it because my wolf doesn’t like it much even though I do.”

“So a clue for us, then, even if it’s not something we can use officially,” Dimitri said.

“Yes,” Shane said. “Did you find out anything else from the...” he took a deep breath, “body.”

Dimitri shook his head. “Nothing I could see. From what I’d read about the other killings, I’m guessing this is the same MO except CJ wasn’t put in the dumpster. Someone wanted this one to be found quickly.”

“My thoughts exactly. The question is why?”

By this time, the two men were walking back up to where the body was now being looked over by the medical examiner and his team. Shane and Dimitri would wait for the preliminary findings and then start looking for clues. For Shane, that meant finding out what CJ had done after he went back into the Truckers Club. Looking around the alley, Shane saw the huge sign advertising the club just a few blocks over. CJ hadn’t gone very far at all.

His thoughts were derailed by the over-the-top entrance of his lieutenant. The man’s car came flying down the road, stopped with a squealing flourish, and the man himself got out, flanked by two other men from the precinct. Shane recognized Jones and Parker from the Internal Affairs department. What were they doing here—at a murder scene no less? The lieutenant never came out into the field, not for anything.

Lieutenant Anthony Green was a big man, but most of it was fat. At six foot tall, and appearing just as wide, the man was the picture of overindulgence. His face, currently wearing a sneer, was pudgy and without form. Shane would have hated him even if the man didn’t make his position on Shane’s sexuality abundantly clear every chance he got. The man personified a mean spirit and a narrow-minded attitude.

Ignoring Dimitri, the lieutenant spoke to Shane. “West, I understand you knew the victim, is that right?”

Frowning, Shane stood taller as he answered, “Yes, CJ was a friend.” What the hell did the man want, or more to the point what was he trying to imply? He found out soon enough.

“We received a tip that you were seen leaving with the victim from the Truckers Club last night. I’m here to take you in for questioning.” The man positively gloated as he spoke the words almost guaranteed to drum Shane straight out of the police force.

“You have got to be kidding me.” Shane was stunned. He didn’t realize the lieutenant hated him quite that much.

“Now, Detective, it’s just routine, you know that. Can anyone verify that CJ was alive after you left him? After you had finished your sordid little interlude?”

Shane felt Dimitri stiffen beside him. Yes, of course, Dimitri could certainly clear Shane with one well-placed word, but the lieutenant obviously didn’t know that Dimitri had even been in the area. And Shane wasn’t going to give the lieutenant any ammunition on Dimitri. Dimitri wasn’t gay. He could play at being straight with the best of them, even after he had come apart in Shane’s hands. No matter how Shane might feel about Dimitri’s presence in his life, the man was his mate, and must be protected at all costs. That protection wasn’t just from rogue wolves and fights. It meant protecting his integrity and honor as well. The lieutenant was on a gay vendetta, and Shane wasn’t going to have Dimitri caught up in it.

“No, sir,” he said, even though it twisted his gut to say the words.

Smirking at him, the lieutenant indicated to the two men beside him to handcuff Shane, and lead him to the car. Shane got in without a fight, and steadfastly refused to look at Dimitri. He didn’t want to know what his mate thought about him protecting his ass. He needed to find a way to protect his own without giving up anything about Dimitri.

Standing in the alley, Dimitri was stunned beyond belief. He couldn’t understand why Shane hadn’t said anything about him being in the alley at the same time as CJ and Shane. He could tell the lieutenant hated Shane with a vengeance, and he guessed from the lieutenant’s comment that it was because Shane was openly gay.

For one brief second, Dimitri considered the idea that Shane was the killer. After all, Shane had said that he owned a bottle of the cologne that the two men had smelled in the alley. Shane had also told him that he had gone looking for CJ after he had dropped Dimitri back at his car. Just as quickly, Dimitri dismissed the idea. Shane had done his best to protect CJ from Dimitri when he had threatened to go all wolfy in anger. Plus Shane was gay—openly so. There is just no way he would kill other gay men. He had no reason to.

Shane wasn’t a killer. Dimitri knew he didn’t know his mate very well, but he knew *that* about the man. Shane was decent, honest, and he worked bloody

hard to do his job in an unfriendly environment. Aside from a couple of men in the department who obviously had a problem with Shane being gay, most of the department treated Shane with friendliness and respect.

Okay, so why didn't Shane clear himself before he was taken away in handcuffs? Dimitri kept thinking to himself even as he cleared the scene, took the ME's report and headed out to Shane's truck. Shane had left the keys in it, which was a good thing because Dimitri hadn't thought to ask him for them before the man was taken away.

When the answer came to him, as he was sitting in the truck wondering what the hell he was going to do, he hit his head on the steering wheel to punish himself for his stupidity. Shane was protecting his mate. This slur on Shane's character could cost him his job, even if the police couldn't prove that Shane was the killer. Simply being a suspect was bad enough unless he was cleared outright. If the police came up with enough circumstantial evidence against Shane, and Shane was actually booked for the crime, his life as a detective would be over the moment he hit the cell block. Dimitri had to do something and fast.

Driving into the precinct, Dimitri didn't have a definite plan in mind. He knew there was a possibility that he would have to lie, and there was also a strong possibility that even if he didn't out himself as gay, the suggestion would be enough to tar him with that brush for life. At least in the eyes of the police force. That was what Shane was protecting him from. If anyone knew how hard it was to be a gay officer, it was Shane. And Shane worked hard every single day just to prove he was as good as the next man.

All of a sudden, Dimitri was hit with how unfair the situation was for Shane and men like him. Sure Dimitri had been one of the bullies that had made Shane's life hell at school. But no one knew for sure then that the man was gay. Dimitri probably knew before Shane did, when he realized Shane was his mate all those years before. Shane hadn't shifted—and as wolves didn't get a handle on their sexuality until after they had their first shift—he couldn't have known for sure. Shane had been picked on at school because he *looked* gay. He had been small, with long hair, and a beautiful face. A natural target for bullies like Dimitri and his friends.

Not for the first time, Dimitri regretted his actions as a youth. He could have protected Shane the way a mate should, as soon as he realized that was what Shane was to him. But instead, Dimitri had left school, and gone to work at the local police department because that was what his family wanted him to do. It

was a sheer fluke that when Dimitri had decided to search for Shane, the man had taken the same career path. Or maybe the Fates were working behind the scenes after all.

Regardless, Dimitri knew now was the time to either put up or shut up. Arriving at the precinct, Dimitri strode straight to the captain's office. Knocking once, he entered without waiting for the captain's invitation. Reynolds was sitting behind his desk, and looked up in surprise when Dimitri just marched in.

"What do you want, Polst?"

"West is innocent, sir, and I can prove it," Dimitri said in a rush.

Captain Reynolds raised an eyebrow at Dimitri's words, but he stood up nonetheless, picked up a piece of paper from his desk, and grabbed his jacket off the back of his chair.

"Come on then, let's go see what this is all about. The ME's report has just come through giving time of death as between four-thirty a.m. and five-thirty a.m.. Well after West was seen with the victim."

"I see, well I can still clear him," Dimitri said. "Sir, what's your policy on people in a relationship working together in the department?"

Reynolds led Dimitri down to the first interview room and entered without knocking, Dimitri directly behind him. Shane was sitting on one side of a table, still in handcuffs, while the lieutenant and the two men from the IA department were on the other. Dimitri's heart broke over the dejected look on Shane's face. The man was prepared to give up his career, damn near his whole life to protect Dimitri. And Dimitri hadn't even claimed him as a mate yet.

"Why is this man in cuffs?" Captain Reynolds barked. "He is a material witness, not a bloody suspect."

"Sir," the lieutenant said, obviously surprised to see both Reynolds and Dimitri in the room. "We have a witness statement that shows that West here was probably the last man to see the victim alive. That means he is a suspect until he's cleared."

"I was with West and the victim," Dimitri blurted out, "and I can vouch that the victim was alive when he left the alley."

Chapter Seven

As Shane was being driven back to the station, he figured the best thing he could do for himself and Dimitri was to say as little as possible. Shane knew it could be easily proven that he was in the Truckers Club—the place had excellent video surveillance. The video may or may not show that Shane had gone out the back with CJ, but there would have been enough people in the club that night, who knew both Shane and CJ, that it wouldn't be hard to confirm that they left together.

The fact that they left by the back door did imply a sexual liaison. That is why Shane and CJ had established that very system of passing information about a year before. CJ had been beaten by a couple of gang members that he had offered to testify against. He had been seen talking to the police, and it had damn near cost him his life.

So Shane and CJ pretended to hook up every time CJ had information to pass on. They had done it before countless times and never had any trouble. Shane was known at the clubs in town as a man who liked a quick rough fuck or a blow job, and it was nearly always in some alley behind the establishment he was in. The fact that Shane was good at pleasuring the men he hooked up with meant he never had a shortage of partners, despite the fact that most of the patrons knew he was a detective. As far as anyone was concerned, CJ was one of those hookups.

If the time of death came back to the time when he and Dimitri were interviewing other informants then he could be cleared of the murder. There was no way he could hide Dimitri's involvement there, because too many people saw them together, but the two of them had maintained professional standards from the moment they left the alley. It was perfectly plausible that Shane had called Dimitri in after he had seen CJ, and that they had interviewed informants together. That wouldn't do anything to blow Dimitri's cover as a straight man.

Unfortunately determining the exact time of death would take a little bit of time given that it was over the weekend. Shane knew the ME would put in a preliminary report before the end of the day, which would establish time, and possible cause of death. So all he had to do was stall the bozos who would be questioning him long enough for that report to come through. The less information he offered, the better it would be for both him and Dimitri.

As expected, once he was put in an interview room after being paraded right through the investigations department, the taunts began. The lieutenant refused to take the handcuffs off Shane's wrists, which were starting to hurt, but he refused to be goaded. All he would admit to was that yes, he had been at Truckers. Yes, he had seen CJ, and yes, he did leave with CJ by the back entrance of the club.

"And what were you doing in the alley behind the club, West? Exchanging crochet tips?"

"What do you think I was doing, Green?" said Shane, refusing to give the repugnant piece of shit any respect whatsoever. If he was going to be treated like a criminal, then he wasn't going to make it easy on the man.

"I imagine you were having sex with the victim, West, so I don't see why you won't admit it. I am sure the ME's report will show evidence of anal intercourse when it's done."

Shane certainly hoped not. Not because he had sex with CJ, but because it would mean that the man was probably raped as well as murdered, and that was just too horrific to think about. Keeping a bland look on his face, he said smartly, "Not if he gave me a blow job."

"What?" Lieutenant Green looked outraged. His face was so red that Shane thought he might have a coronary. "So you admit you were having sexual relations with the victim?"

"No," Shane said quietly. "I said that if CJ had given me a blow job there would be no indication of anal assault. Likewise, if he had fucked me there would be little, if any evidence of that, in CJ's autopsy report. I didn't say that he had done any of those things. I was simply pointing out a flaw in your logic. You were the one who admitted to imagining me having sexual relations with the victim."

Shane thought he saw Parker hide a grin behind his hand, but he couldn't be sure. He was too busy watching the lieutenant getting closer to his heart attack.

The lieutenant leaned over the desk and sneered at Shane. "What were you doing in the alley with the victim," he snarled, flicking spittle all over Shane's face. Shane leaned back in his chair and made no secret of wiping his hands over his face.

"I was talking to him, Green. He was a friend of mine. I talked to him. He talked to me. He left. End of story."

"I don't believe you," the lieutenant sneered.

"Look, Green," Shane said with an exaggerated patience he didn't feel, "just because two gay men get together doesn't mean they are having sex. Gay men are just like straight men. We have friends. We talk to each other. Being gay isn't all about sex. It's also about being supportive of each other when someone is having problems."

The lieutenant shook his head and pulled out a piece of paper that was in a folder on the table. "The eye witness we spoke to said, and I quote, 'the victim was all over the cop in the club, rubbing on him, groping his crotch, and whispering to him. It seemed the cop enjoyed it. Then they left the club together out the back door,' end quote."

"CJ was affectionate," Shane said.

The pudgy piece of shit had the audacity to laugh, and Shane fumed silently, although none of it showed on his face.

"I can be affectionate too, West, but I don't go around groping men's crotch area," the lieutenant said, the sneer in his tone evident.

"No, I imagine you don't," Shane said, "but then you don't know what you're missing. CJ was just appreciating the package. Didn't mean he planned on doing anything about it, nor does it mean that I would have let him." Shane sat up, he'd had enough of this already, and he really hoped the ME's report came through soon. Shane didn't want to share anything else about his night until he knew time of death.

"Face it, Green, you have nothing except that I was seen with the victim before his death. But I wasn't the last person to see him alive. The killer was. Now give me the time of death. I will tell you where I was, and this can all be cleared up," Shane said with more strength than he felt. If CJ was killed any time after three a.m. when he dropped Dimitri off at his car, then Shane was screwed. He'd spent an hour driving around looking for CJ before going home and there was no one to verify his whereabouts during that time.

"The time of death hasn't come through yet, West, and you know it. And if you think I'm going to believe a fairy tale like two gay men just talking in a dark alley, then you are ridiculing the years I've spent as a police officer. I know what you perverts get up too," the lieutenant said with a smug look on his face.

Shane raised a single eyebrow at the man, but didn't say anything. Instead, he slumped back in his chair, determined to say nothing more until he had more

information. He knew the lieutenant was fishing, and Shane couldn't stop him. But Shane wasn't going to out his partner, and he would just put up with the shit that Green threw at him until more details came to hand.

The door to the interview room opened, and in walked Captain Reynolds, with Dimitri behind him. Shane barely heard the captain's comments about his handcuffs, although he was happy when Parker came forward and took them off. He was too busy trying to catch Dimitri's eye. God the man was infuriating, especially when Shane was working so hard to protect him.

Then he heard it. Dimitri's statement, "I was with West, and the victim, and I can vouch that the victim was alive when he left us."

"You weren't in the club," the lieutenant blustered.

"Check the video surveillance tapes," Dimitri said. "West called me, and said he was meeting a friend at the Club. I got there a bit late, and saw West and his friend head out the back. I followed them out, was introduced to CJ, and was there during the conversation. CJ left after about ten minutes and headed off back into the club."

"What were you all talking about, Polst? West here seems to think it was personal, and doesn't want to share," the lieutenant said.

Dimitri smirked, and Shane couldn't believe the bolt of lust that shot through to his groin. He didn't know what his mate was doing, but damn he looked real good doing it.

"Penis size," Dimitri lied with a straight face. Parker and Jones weren't being as professional, and were both hiding their grins behind their hands, while Captain Reynolds laughed outright.

"It seems..." Dimitri made as if to go on but Captain Reynolds stopped him.

"That's quite alright, Polst, we get the gist. It was a personal conversation."

"Yes, sir."

"Unfortunately," the captain said, "I'm still going to need to know your whereabouts for the rest of the evening, West. The victim was killed between four-thirty and five-thirty this morning. So what happened after you left the alley."

Fuck, now Shane knew for a fact, he was screwed. He had no verifiable alibi for that time of day, and with the lieutenant hell bent on reaming his ass

one way or the other, he knew he wasn't going anywhere anytime soon except a jail cell. Shane didn't have a clue what he was going to say.

But it seemed that Dimitri did. "He was with me, sir."

"What, all night?" The lieutenant again.

"Yes, sir," Dimitri lied. "After CJ went back in the club, we went and spoke to some informants. We checked on a couple of gay prostitutes who work the streets, then West took me around and showed me some of the town hot spots. After that we went back to pick up my car from the Trucker's parking lot, and I followed him back to his place. I've been staying in a motel and it is not very comfortable. We were there from about three a.m. until we got the call about the murder this morning. We dropped my car back at the motel and then headed out to the crime scene."

Now everyone was looking at the lieutenant who had gone purple in the face, and there was a large vein pulsing in the top of his head. The man was obviously thinking hard enough to generate steam.

"It doesn't mean that West didn't do it," he said triumphantly. "You weren't actually together in the same room all night. West could have sneaked out, found the victim, killed him, and got back before you noticed."

The idea was plausible although really weak by anybody's standards. Shane looked at Dimitri pleading with him not to say any more.

Dimitri just shook his head slightly and said, "Nope, lieutenant, that wouldn't have been possible at all. You see..." He leaned down and whispered in the lieutenant's ear. The lieutenant's eyes just got bigger and bigger, then all of a sudden he pushed away from Dimitri, and hurried out of the door. "You're freaks," he yelled back through the door, "you and West both, freaks."

The captain frowned at the sight of the lieutenant's back heading down the hall, but then he shrugged, and turned looked at Parker and Jones. "As far as I am concerned this interview is over. Did you two have anything else you need to know?"

"No, captain, we didn't think that Detective West here had anything to do with the murder of his friend in the first place. But the lieutenant was rather insistent," Jones said.

"Good," said the captain, "then let's get out of here. It's the weekend and I'm sure you guys have other things you would rather be doing. West, I can't

have you investigating your friend's murder. You know that, but I'll put Trent and Mace on it so that they can keep you in the loop, unofficially of course. On Monday I want to see what evidence you have connecting this murder to your other three outstanding cases."

The captain smiled at Shane's look of shock. "Yes, West. The lieutenant did tell me your theory, but he was extremely unflattering about it, and I have to confess I did dismiss the idea at the time. But if there is a serial killer in our city then I want him found. So I will expect you and Polst in my office after the Monday morning meeting." Nodding at Parker and Jones, Captain Reynolds left the room.

Parker and Jones went to leave too, but at the door, Jones turned back and said, "You know, West, that Green really has it in for you. I'd watch your back if I were you."

"Yeah, I know, Jones. That's why I didn't want my partner involved in all of this," Shane said. All of a sudden, he felt dead tired.

"It seems your partner can take care of himself." Jones laughed. "Hey Polst, what did you tell the lieutenant to make him run out of the room like that?"

"Not telling you, Jones," Dimitri drawled. "I'm not the kiss and tell type." Jones and Parker were still laughing as they went out the door.

Shane looked up at Dimitri who was still standing by the door, looking so fine in his grey suit and the smirk on his face.

"Why'd you do it, Dimitri?" Shane asked softly. "I know you aren't gay, and I don't want you tarred with the same brush I am. I was trying to protect you from the likes of the lieutenant."

"You are mine," Dimitri said firmly. "Yes, you are my partner, but you are also my mate, and I guess in the eyes of the department that means you are going to be my boyfriend until we can get married. I checked with the captain before I spoke up, about interoffice relationships, and he said he was fine with it so long as it doesn't interfere with our work, and we both know it won't. I figured I was going to have to come out sooner or later, and given what you were going through, sooner seemed better."

Shane shook his head, and got up from the table. He wandered over to Dimitri and leaned on his chest, saying softly, "I'm never going to be able to thank you enough. You know that, right?"

“Oh yes, you will,” Dimitri said confidently as he led them out of the room, down the hall and out to the car. As he went to get into the truck Shane said, “So are you going to tell me what you said that freaked the lieutenant out so much?”

“Nope,” said Dimitri. “I’m going to take you out for lunch, and then home to rest. And when you have been fed for the second time, I’m going to get you to show me what I said in graphic detail. I don’t want you making a liar out of me.” The grin he gave Shane over the top of the truck was positively feral, and Shane felt a shiver of excitement run down his spine and lodge firmly in his groin. Somehow he didn’t feel so tired anymore.

Chapter Eight

Lunch was excellent. Shane directed Dimitri to a small diner he knew of on the edge of town where they could eat good food in relative private. After they had ordered, Dimitri looked down at his hands, and then up at Shane.

“You know I never did apologize for the way I treated you growing up,” he said quietly.

“There’s nothing to apologize for,” Shane said. “You were doing what you were programmed to do by your parents, the school social system, and the pack. I know I was small and too pretty for my own good.” He smiled. “If it hadn’t been you and your friends, it would have been someone else.”

“How can you not be upset about it?”

Shane shrugged. “It happened a long time ago as far as I’m concerned. Once I ‘grew up’, I got the hell out of town and I don’t plan on ever going back. The negative thoughts, and any hurt I might have felt at the time have long gone. You know, in a way, you guys did me a favor. I mean, look at me now. I’m bigger, stronger, and a lot less pretty. I doubt I would have made those changes, which incidentally have worked really well for me, especially with the men I attract, if it hadn’t been for what I went through at school. So don’t worry about it, okay?”

“There’s more,” Dimitri admitted.

“What more can there be?” Shane said. Then his face darkened. “You didn’t tell anybody I was out here, did you? Anyone back at Jacobs Lake?”

Dimitri shook his head. “No, Shane, I wouldn’t do that to you, although I may have to tell my mother when I let her know you and I are mated. I owe her a phone call at least.”

“How did you leave things with your pack and your family?” Shane asked.

“I didn’t really tell them anything,” Dimitri said as he fiddled with his napkin. “Look, I knew you were my mate that last time we met up in the alley at school, and I admit it, I ran for it. I couldn’t get away from you fast enough. I kinda figured you wouldn’t have felt the same pull because you hadn’t shifted yet, but I did, and I freaked the fuck out. I feel awful about it now, but at the time all I could think about was fitting in with the pack, living up to the expectations of my family, and getting a job.”

“You knew and you left?” Shane couldn’t begin to describe the hurt that punctured his heart at the moment. He struggled to put things into perspective. He had only been sixteen years old at the time, while Dimitri had been eighteen. They both would have been too young to cope with the pressures of mating, even if same-sex partnerships were accepted in their pack. But the fact that Dimitri knew they were mates, and had left him to the mercies of school bullies for the next two years was really hard to take. A mate was to be cherished and protected—not abandoned.

Shane could feel Dimitri watching his face which no doubt betrayed the range of emotions he was feeling. Taking a deep breath, he deliberately configured his face into the bland, professional expression he used at work.

“That would have included getting married and having kids then,” he said calmly.

“Yes or at least it would have, if I had gone through with it,” Dimitri admitted. “I was with this girl, Angela. She was human but she had accepted my wolf. We were together for three years. She was pushing for a commitment, but I just couldn’t do it.”

Dimitri looked Shane straight in the eye. “Angela is the only one who knows about you, what you mean to me, and why I sought you out after all of these years. In fact, she encouraged me to come here. My parents simply think I got offered a better job, and they expect me back for pack meetings and holidays. Of course, once I tell my mom we’re mated, I will be as cut off from my family and the pack as you are. But I know that, and I accept it.”

Now the pain Shane was feeling was for his mate. Dimitri was going to lose everything. But this was something he had actively chosen for himself. No matter what had happened in the past, Dimitri cared enough about them being mates to give up his whole life and move to a new place, without even knowing what type of a welcome he would get.

It really wasn’t easy for a wolf to give up his pack. Shane had been able to do it relatively easily because he had never been one hundred percent accepted by the other pack members. Despite his problems with the pack, his wolf still missed the company and sense of belonging that any wolf craves. Dimitri had been with the pack a lot longer, and unlike Shane, he had been an accepted member. He had friends and colleagues, and he could have had a mate, if not a true mate. But anyone of the single female wolves in the pack would have taken Dimitri in a heartbeat.

“Why didn’t you try for a pack female? Surely that would have been easier for you, rather than a human, and the pack would have been more accepting,” Shane asked.

“I couldn’t do it,” Dimitri admitted. “I did try with a couple after I found out about you, but my wolf just wouldn’t let another wolf close to me. He was kinda accepting of Angela, in that I didn’t get an instant droop every time I went near her, but as I got older, and she got more insistent about a commitment from me, my wolf got more and more adamant that he wanted his mate.”

“So this wasn’t really a choice you wanted then,” Shane persisted, although he really didn’t know why he was saying these things. Especially not when Dimitri looked a damn sight more edible than the food on his plate.

Dimitri shocked him by putting his hand over Shane’s as it sat on the table. There, out in the open for anyone to see.

“I do want you, Shane,” Dimitri said, his voice low and ringing with honesty. “I want you more than you could ever know. Not just in my bed, or up my ass, but in my life, forever. You have all of the qualities I want in a mate—honesty, integrity, strength, not to mention the desire to protect me. You work hard, and you care about your job, and the people you serve. You’re a good man, and one I will be proud to call mine. I know you might have doubts, and I know it might take you some time to trust me after what I put you through in the past. But I will wait as long as it takes for you to be my mate.”

Wow, okay, Shane could safely say he never expected anything like that to come out of Dimitri’s mouth. He knew the wolf was pulled by the mating bond, but Dimitri’s little speech showed that the man had thought long and hard about what it meant to take a mate like Shane.

Suddenly the past really didn’t matter anymore. Sure, Shane had been hurt by his past, but through the years, he had been determined not to let his past dictate his future actions. If Dimitri could go out of his way to give up everything just to be with his mate, then Shane could let down the walls in his heart and give this man his forever.

Dimitri had grown up too. Yes, he had become even better looking, but that wasn’t the main selling point for Shane. By his actions that very day, Dimitri had shown that he could be counted on. He could be trusted. Hell, he could even be counted on to lie to anyone just to save his mate. That took a lot of guts, and a commitment that Shane had never experienced from another person before in his life.

Shane looked up into those steely eyes that had captivated him from that day, just a week ago in the captain's office.

"I have been so mixed up this week," he confessed shakily. "Wanting you and telling myself time and time again it could never happen between us. I needed you to show me that you wanted me before I could trust you. And today..."

Shane couldn't speak for a moment. He was so overwhelmed. First, CJ's death, and now Dimitri accepting him as his mate. He wanted to laugh, and cry, but most of all he wanted Dimitri in his bed with his teeth firmly embedded in his mate's neck as he fucked the man who had haunted his dreams for the last week. Once mated, the two men would be together forever. Dimitri would never be able to lie to him, would never hurt him, and would always be there, just for him. Faced with all that, the past really didn't matter at all. They would face whatever the future brought together.

"Today you gave me every reason to trust again," he continued. "Every barrier I have put up to this, you have torn down, without even trying. By being yourself. I have never wanted anyone the way I want you. And like you, it's not just in my bed, although I want that really badly. You are a decent man, Dimitri. You gave up everything to come here and be with me. How could I not want you? I don't need to wait. I don't need anything else to be sure. I want you in my bed and in my life. But being gay is not easy, and no matter if you and I both know the only man you will ever get hot for is me, those who don't know about us, and about what being mates is all about, will assume that you are gay. Are you really sure about this?"

"I've had eight years to think about this, Shane. I have never been more sure about anything in my life," Dimitri said simply.

When it came down to it, for wolves it really was that simple. Mates wanted each other regardless of the labels outsiders might put on their relationship. That want, that desire, and that passion would never die. And when life was put into perspective like that—where one man would remain steadfast to another regardless of what life threw at them, then there honestly wasn't any reason not to jump right in and hold on tight.

"You know I'm not going to want to rest when we get home, don't you," Shane said quietly.

"I'm counting on it," Dimitri said as he signaled the waitress for the check.

Chapter Nine

Shane didn't know how he managed to contain himself on the drive back to his place, but he did, barely. But the moment the two men were inside his door, he turned and had Dimitri up against the door. Reaching up, he cupped Dimitri's neck and pulled the man down so that he could fasten his lips on the mouth that had plagued his thoughts throughout their meal.

Dimitri didn't hold back either. The moment their mouths touched, Dimitri kissed right back, his big arms coming around and cradling Shane as though he was the most precious person in the world. Lost in their passion for each other, time stood still. Together they stood, their bodies perfectly fitted to each other, their mouths fused as the kiss went from sheer relief in coming together, to soft and searching and then as the need between them grew, the passion returned with vengeance as both men dueled for dominance. Hands flew as both men tried to touch as much of each other as they could reach, clothes frustrating their way.

His hands fisted in the top of Dimitri's hair, Shane pulled the man off his mouth so he could speak.

"I need you in my bed and naked, Dimitri. I'm not having your first time in a fucking doorway."

Shane could see that Dimitri's eyes were blown with lust and his lips were swollen. Dimitri nodded, and Shane led him upstairs to his large open bedroom. The room was dominated by a huge bed with head and foot boards of solid wood, and covered in white linens. Shane loved the faux fur throw on the foot of the bed, loved how it felt on his skin, and he wondered what Dimitri would look like splayed out across it, and if he would enjoy the same sensations. But for now it was more important to get the man naked, and Shane skillfully pulled off Dimitri's jacket and started working on the buttons of his shirt. Dimitri obviously had the same idea, and was tugging at Shane's clothing.

Of course, they both got in the way of each other; clothes do not magically fall off. By unspoken accord both men stepped back and worked on their own clothes, stripping down without any embarrassment. Shifters were used to nudity, but this was something more. Something far more powerful and intimate.

When they were both naked, Shane stepped forward and pushed Dimitri on the bed. Scooting along the bed until he was in the center of it, Dimitri settled back and let Shane look at him, his gaze possessive and full of lust.

Shit, Shane thought, he is so beautiful. Shane had never seen Dimitri naked. He hadn't shifted when Dimitri had, and the first time he had shifted himself he was on his family's land, not on the pack grounds. Now Shane was really glad he hadn't set eyes on Dimitri at that time. His lust for the man would have been really hard to hide. He was all broad shoulders, lean muscle lines and tattoos. When the hell had Dimitri gotten those tattoos?

There was a yin/yang symbol on one shoulder, with a gorgeous wolf head beneath it. Underneath that was a tribal cuff, and down his forearms Dimitri wore a combination of characters and letters. There were two more tattoos on his pectoral muscles, and damn Shane just wanted to take the time to trace every single one with his tongue. The only tattoo he had ever gotten was a series of paw prints that he wore as a cuff around his bicep—a reminder to him of the fact that he had walked away from his pack. One day he would get Dimitri to tell the story of his tattoos, but that could wait, because aside from the fascinating ink, the man had the most amazing body.

Growling his appreciation Shane stalked toward the bed. Grabbing a bottle of lube off the side dresser, he climbed up and straddled Dimitri's slim hips, the man's hard cock pulsating under his balls as he sat. Dropping the lube on the bed beside him, he leaned forward, grabbing Dimitri's hands with his and holding them fast on the bed.

"You need to tell me what you want," he said softly as he watched a play of emotions run over his mate's face.

Dimitri had never been so turned on in all his life. His cock was so hard it hurt, and looking at his mate, so self-assured and sexy sitting above him, it was all he could do not to flip Shane over and plunge his cock deep into the nearest orifice he could reach.

But he wasn't going to do that, although he couldn't help but rock up into Shane where he was pressed down over his hips. Hmm, the friction on his cock felt so good, so he did it again. He groaned at the sensation of Shane's balls rolling over his cock as he considered his answer.

In most situations during the mating, the more dominant wolf would fuck the lesser one. Dimitri was the stronger and bigger wolf. But as far as male-on-

male sex went, he was also the least experienced; hell, he was a virgin, and Dimitri didn't want to hurt his mate by doing the wrong thing. He figured it would be better to let Shane be the top. He could learn by following what Shane was doing and hopefully get to be the giver the next time.

Besides, if anything was going to test this whole gay thing in Dimitri's mind, then getting fucked was the right way to do it. Although Dimitri didn't have any doubts in his head that he could tell, he had no way of knowing just how deep-rooted his family and pack prejudices went in his psyche. The other thing was that Dimitri had fucked before—heaps of women, none of whom had a place in this bed. What he hadn't done was given himself to another person, and he wanted that person to be his mate.

“What you said last night,” he said roughly, rocking again into Shane's touch. “I want you to give me what you promised me last night in the alley. What I told the lieutenant you had done.”

Shane groaned then, and let go of Dimitri's hands. Leaning over he murmured against Dimitri's lips, “Are you sure?”

“Yes,” Dimitri breathed against Shane's lips before closing the distance between them. Their lips met and this time Dimitri let Shane take over. Shane played him, beautifully, expertly. Kissing him firmly, he gently encouraged Dimitri to open his mouth and slipped his tongue inside. He mapped out every part of Dimitri's mouth, spending a lot of time running his tongue over Dimitri's fangs, which Dimitri found to be a huge turn on.

When Shane seemed satisfied that Dimitri had been kissed within an inch of climaxing—because damn, the man was still sitting on him, and the feel of Shane's cock against his abs, and the man's balls teasing his cock kept Dimitri on the fine edge of coming—Shane allowed his lips to move lower, kissing over his chin and jawbone and then down his skin-covered jugular vein. Dimitri lifted his chin to give Shane more access—his submission not a gift given lightly, and he knew that Shane was aware of that. The soft growl he heard reinforced his belief that he was doing the right thing.

Shane kissed, licked, and nibbled his way deliriously slowly over Dimitri's collar bone, his pectoral muscles, giving particular attention to Dimitri's stiff brown nipples. Dimitri growled as Shane bit him, nipping the nub sharply, but Dimitri grabbed hold of Shane's head and held him there. Dimitri had never thought his nipples would have a direct line to his dick, but having Shane nip and lave his way over his chest had Dimitri writhing hard against Shane, begging for more.

Finally, Shane headed south again, down Dimitri's body. He mapped out the solid muscles that formed Dimitri's eight-pack, licking along each groove. Dimitri groaned, and shifted beneath Shane's explorations, causing his cock to bump Shane on the chin. Shane looked up at him then and grinned, his eyes almost black, before moving down, bypassing the needy cock in his face, and nuzzling Dimitri's balls. Carefully he licked over each one before taking them gently in his mouth and tonguing them. Dimitri arched his back in pleasure. No one had ever done that to him before, and fuck it felt so good.

"Shane, please," Dimitri begged, his low voice raspy with lust. If he didn't get some attention to his cock soon, he was going to burst. Shane chuckled around Dimitri's balls, and damn it all if that didn't make Dimitri want to come even more. But Shane must have taken pity on the man because finally his mouth encircled Dimitri's cock, and Dimitri couldn't help himself. He thrust upward into that enticing wet warmth, shaking with pleasure as he felt Shane's tongue map out the sensitive skin under the head of his cock, before swirling down the vein that ran the length of Dimitri's shaft.

Dimitri felt the head of his cock hit the back of Shane's throat, and Dimitri expected the man to stop there. But seconds later Shane relaxed and swallowed, taking the man deeper than he had ever been in a mouth before. He was going to come if Shane kept this up—he didn't know how he could stop himself.

"Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. Shane, you're killing me here," Dimitri cried out.

Shane nodded, which felt slightly strange because he still had Dimitri's cock deep in his mouth, but he eased back a bit. Dimitri panted hard, praying that Shane would understand how close he was. It seemed that Shane did, because moments later, after bobbing up and down Dimitri's cock for just a little bit more, he let the cock slide from his mouth. Dimitri groaned at the loss, but then inhaled sharply as Shane's wicked mouth went below Dimitri's balls and started licking along his perineum.

Almost howling in delight, because damn it, that tongue on that sensitive piece of skin did feel that good, Dimitri slid his feet up the mattress and opened his legs wide to give Shane more access. Using his devastating combination of sucks, licks, and nibbles, Shane moved closer to Dimitri's anus. Dimitri tensed for just one second when Shane's tongue flicked across it, but then he relaxed into the faint touch. It felt foreign, strange, but not unpleasant.

Encouraged, Shane pressed closer, using his broad tongue to soften the tight muscles protecting Dimitri's most private space. But Dimitri's butt was still too

close to the bed for Shane to get decent access, and Shane raised his head long enough to ask for a pillow.

Arranging Dimitri with the pillow now firmly under his ass, tilting it to give Shane better access. Shane looked up at his mate who was flushed and sweaty, his cock hard and solid against his stomach.

“You okay up there,” Shane asked softly.

“More than,” Dimitri rasped out, “but please Shane, please can you speed things along just a little bit. I am hanging onto my control with a thread here—a very tiny thread.”

“I could make you come right now if you like, lover. But then it would make it even harder for me to penetrate you because your delicious ass muscles would tighten up even more,” Shane explained. “Can you hold on just a little while longer?”

Dimitri nodded, pleased that his mate was trying to be so careful.

“And,” Shane said, as he bent his head again, “don’t be worried if your impressive erection here flags a bit as I prepare you, I’ll get you back up again in no time.”

Considering Dimitri didn’t think anything would make his cock go down in the foreseeable future except a mind-blowing orgasm, Dimitri just nodded that he understood. His body tingled all over. His nose was filled with the scent of his mate. He knew he needed something, he just didn’t know what. He just felt this need and it was driving him insane.

When Dimitri felt the tip of Shane’s tongue actually enter him just a little bit, he damn near shot off the bed. Shane soothed, and petted his thighs and belly before dipping his head down, and repeating his actions. This time Dimitri was better prepared and he relaxed into the touch. The fingers Shane had lightly running up and down his cock certainly helped.

Soon Shane pushed his tongue deeper, and before he knew what he was doing, Dimitri pushed back into the touch. There was no pain so far, just a wickedly sinful sensuality that appealed to Dimitri on a level he had never experienced before. Soon Dimitri was rocking onto the touch, pushing his ass at Shane’s face as Shane eagerly ate him out. If the man’s moans and growls were any indication, Shane was really enjoying himself, and Dimitri realized he was close to coming again.

Almost as though he was a mind reader, Shane slowed up his actions, and then Dimitri felt the soft push of a harder digit—Shane's finger eased into Dimitri alongside his tongue. Dimitri groaned, but he didn't stop rocking against Shane's face—it honestly felt so good. When Shane pulled his head back, Dimitri actually whimpered, but he was soothed again as Shane petted him, stroked his cock, and murmured softly, "Shush my lover, it's coming. I need to use the lube now, because the spit is just not enough. I don't want to hurt you. and your virgin ass is so fucking tight."

Quickly, Shane lubed up his fingers, three of them Dimitri noticed. Then he slid one of those fingers inside of Dimitri, taking the head of his cock in his mouth at the same time. Dimitri didn't know which way to move. The finger felt good, especially with the added glide of the lube, but the mouth on his cock was a known entity, and Dimitri loved getting a blow job.

As Dimitri allowed himself to get lost in the sensation of Shane licking and sucking the head of his cock, he felt Shane slip another finger inside his tight muscles. This time there was a slight bit of discomfort, but it eased quickly as Shane kept sucking his cock, and moving his fingers in and out of his ass. Suddenly Shane's fingers angled slightly and Dimitri groaned as a bolt of pleasure shot through his system.

"What the hell was that?" Dimitri asked, his voice quivering even as his ass sought out that sensation again.

Shane dropped his cock long enough to answer with a grin, "The reason gay men have sex," before he went back to what he was doing.

"Do it again," Dimitri demanded. Shane obliged and Dimitri moved into the touch, forcing more. Fuck. That just felt so amazing Dimitri knew he could come from that stimulation without anything else. Who knew his ass could feel so fucking good?

Shane had widened the gap in his fingers now, and Dimitri could feel the stretch, but it wasn't anything he couldn't handle. By the time Shane had added a third finger, Dimitri was fucking himself on Shane's hand in earnest, too lost in the pleasure to care that he actually had part of someone's hand up his ass. Dimitri just let himself feel. He could smell his mate, and that comforted, and aroused him all in one go. As the fingers moved in and out of him, he quickly got to the point where it wasn't enough.

Letting Dimitri's cock fall out of his mouth, Shane said quietly, "Sorry, can't wait anymore. I'm going to fuck you now, lover. It would be easier for

you if you were on your hands and knees for the first time, but I think your wolf will handle it better if you can see me when we do this. Is that okay?"

Dimitri took in the lines of tension on Shane's face, and noticed for the first time how hard and leaking Shane's cock was. The man had been so very patient, but it was clear his control was damn near shattered. And so was Dimitri's. He wanted this. He wanted Shane inside him so badly he ached.

"Please Shane, fill me. Fuck me, mate with me, and claim me. I'm yours," Dimitri said, the truth of his words shining in his eyes.

Growling possessively, Shane removed his fingers, and inching forward on his knees, he raised Dimitri's legs, putting them on his shoulders. Dimitri could feel the blunt head of Shane's cock push up against his anus, and for a moment Dimitri tensed, worried that it wouldn't fit. But Shane had done a good job of stretching him as much as he could, and with a sharp little thrust, the head of Shane's cock pushed past Dimitri's muscles and into the heat inside.

Okay, damn! Dimitri could feel that. He tightened up as felt the burn race through his nerve endings. Shit. Shit. Shit. Above him Shane had stilled completely simply letting Dimitri adjust to his size. Shane's cock wasn't huge by wolf standards, but all shifters were well endowed, and Shane was bigger than most humans.

"Relax, hon," Shane soothed, "breathe out and try and relax."

Dimitri didn't even realize he had been holding his breath. He let out a long exhale and consciously tried to relax his anal passage. As he pushed out, he could feel his body accepting more of Shane's length and Shane pushed in a bit more. Trying hard not to tense up, Dimitri breathed, and pushed out again, and Shane gained even more ground.

Together the two men worked until Shane was balls deep inside of his mate. He stilled completely again—a sexy-as-fuck shifter statue with a body so perfect Dimitri knew he was going to spend a lot of hours exploring his mate. But for now he had a more pressing need—he needed Shane to fuck him, and fuck him deep.

Reaching his hands out, Dimitri grabbed Shane's hips and pulled him as close as he could with his legs still on the man's shoulders. The action caused Shane's cock to sink even deeper into Dimitri, and they both moaned. Looking deep into his mate's eyes, Dimitri growled, "Move mate. Make me yours."

His wicked grin lighting up his face, Shawn rocked against Dimitri, setting a shallow rhythm to get Dimitri used to the sensation. As his strokes became

longer, Dimitri could feel the need escalate between them. Within minutes Shane was pounding in and out of his mate's ass with Dimitri begging him to go harder and faster.

Yes, Dimitri knew he was acting like a prize slut but he really didn't care. Shane felt so good inside of him, so very right, and when the man tilted his angle slightly so that his cock was brushing across Dimitri's prostate, Dimitri knew he wasn't going to last much longer. Releasing one hand from Shane's hip, Dimitri fisted his own cock, desperate to come.

Still keeping up his punishing rhythm, Shane let Dimitri's legs drop as he moved his chest up over Dimitri's.

"Ready to be mine," Shane growled at him.

"Fuck yes," Dimitri yelled as he felt the beginning of his orgasm hit him. Shane bit down hard on the juncture between Dimitri's shoulder and neck muscles, and Dimitri howled as his orgasm overtook him. And he was lost to it. Dimly Dimitri realized that his own wolf had come out to play, and as he sunk his teeth into Shane's neck his cock burst again, his orgasm stretching on and on, bathing Dimitri in unimagined pleasure. Seconds later Dimitri heard Shane howl as his orgasm overtook him, and Dimitri moaned long and low as he felt Shane's hot spunk bathe his inner channel.

Around them the mating bond swirled—two wolf souls joining just as the human bodies had—meeting and then coming together. Two wolves forever entwined; their mating bond permanently in place. A bond that could only be broken in death.

Shane went to move off of Dimitri, but Dimitri held him close, pulling him against his chest. He felt satiated, complete in every way. He didn't care what anyone else thought. This was too perfect to be wrong, no matter what society, his family, or his pack thought. The ache that had manifested in Dimitri's chest the day he pushed Shane away eight years ago was finally filled.

Sure there may be problems at work. Yes, they still had a murderer to find. And Dimitri was going to have to phone his mother at some stage. But for now he had his mate in his arms. A mate who was snuggling into his neck, breathing in his scent.

Unbelievably, Dimitri felt his cock start to rise again, and he wanted nothing more than to push Shane on his back and start exploring. Filled with a confidence he hadn't felt until now, Dimitri did just that. The men's problems

weren't going to go away overnight, but they had forever to solve them. But for a while the rest of the world could just damn well wait until Dimitri had shown his mate just how precious he was.

To Be Continued...

Author Bio

Lisa Oliver had been writing non-fiction books for years when visions of half-dressed, buff men started invading her dreams. Unable to resist the lure of her stories, Lisa decided to switch to fiction books, and now stories about her men clamor to get out from under her fingertips.

When Lisa is not writing she is usually reading with a cup of tea always at hand. Her grown children and grandchildren sometimes try and pry her away from the computer, and have found that the best way to do it is to promise her chocolate. Lisa will do anything for chocolate.

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