

# ~ Chance ~

## by Zee and Windstar

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Blah, blah, blah. Usual disclaimer, blood, sex, violence not necessarily in that order.

This story is completely my fault I merely dragged Windstar along for the ride. This is our Halloween offering, even though the word Halloween is never used. I hope you enjoy the yarn we've spun for you. If you hate it my name is Windy, if you liked it, my name is Zee. Happy Halloween!

Please send all feedback to [Zeeamy@Gmail.com](mailto:Zeeamy@Gmail.com) and [Adarkbow@yahoo.com](mailto:Adarkbow@yahoo.com)

A big thank you to Re and Packer for beta reading for us

Thanks

Zee

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The double doors of the small clinic burst open. Two women covered in blood rushed through the doors. Once inside, they stood dazed for a moment by the bright florescent lights.

"I need help here!" the more upright of the two women shouted. Her blue eyes flashed with anger and her hair looked even whiter under the harsh lights.

The other woman remained silent, her blue-eyes glassy, one hand on her stomach trying to keep the hole there plugged.

From somewhere, the sounds of running feet could be heard. Two nurses came into the room already in gore-stained scrubs.

"Jesus!" one blurted out.

The other shouted back down the hall. "We need a gurney! And hurry up, it's Agent Pavel, she's been shot."

The two moved to take Agent Pavel, only to be met with a growl from the white-haired woman.

One nurse halted and the other quickly bowed and exposed her neck. After a beat, she said softly, "Zoya, we need to take her, so we can stop the bleeding."

The white-haired woman blinked feral blue eyes, and then nodded. "Sorry, it's been a long night."

The two nurses relaxed a bit and nodded. "It always is on a full moon night."

As gently as they could, they took Agent Pavel from her grasp and started checking her over. The agent whined for a moment and looked for her sister.

"I'll stay right here and wait for you, Chance, I won't leave you. Okay? I'll be right here."

Chance blinked tired dark blue eyes and nodded. Then she was being lowered onto a gurney, her guts feeling like they were on fire.

There was a voice speaking over her head, and then a brief sting of a needle in her arm. "Gunshot to the lower abdomen, most likely silver, considering it's a full moon night."

Another voice chimed in, "Fucking humans, they already have us reduced to this reservation in the middle of fucking nowhere. And then on the one night the Weres have to run in their animal forms, they sneak over here and hunt. We should be hunting them."

"Adam, shush, you don't want to make Agent Pavel here have to arrest you."

"How can she fucking betray us like that by working for the Government... Human-Werewolf Affairs Bureau, my ass? Now her sister is a hero..."

The voices trailed off as whatever they gave her started to work, and Chance wondered at the venom in the male nurse's voice, if she would ever wake up. Her sister... her sister... she wouldn't ask what Zoya had done to the men that shot her. She knew, without knowing, that their bodies were food for the desert creatures. Her sister was the hero of her people like some sort of night stalking vigilante, while she had chosen to work with the humans to make things better. How could one night so long ago create two totally different people?

She remembered that night, dreamed about it, woke up in a sweat, a scream locked in her throat over it.

*They were running. Her family pack was running, at night, it was her father, her pack mother, Zoya, Ivan, and her. She was the smallest, still a gangly pup. Her father and pack mother had separated briefly for two years, and she had been the result. Born to a human mother who had wanted one night on the wild side... Her family pack was large Siberian wolves, made for hunting in the cold and snow. They had beautiful white fur that stood out starkly in the warm desert climate that all the Weres had been regulated to after the war. It didn't matter they were designed for cold and snow; they were placed here with all the others.*

*Chance was smaller and her fur was black, helping her blend in more with the night. Then out of nowhere came the first 'bang', which was like thunder rolling over the night, and her father fell, blood spraying the rest of them as the top of his head crumbled away.*

*Then her pack mother...*

*She yipped and was crushed under her pack mother's body and came to a tumbling, wrenching*

*stop. There was more gunfire and then silence.*

*She tasted blood and death. It stung her nose. Then her ears came up with the sounds of booted feet crunching on the desert floor. Laughter coated the wind. Words like 'Monster' and 'Killer' and such were bantered around.*

*Her heart pounded in her chest as the footsteps got closer. She whimpered and growled, trying to get free of her pack mother's greater bulk. And then came the sounds of screams and bones crunching, and then Zoya was there, covered in blood.*

That was the night that shaped both of them, setting each sister on a different path. Her with the humans, and her sister against them, both wanting better things for their people.

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The humming was definitely off tune. In fact, it was so very off tune that it almost sounded like someone was doing their darnedest to hum very loudly as far off tune as possible. It wasn't a particularly good song to hum even, although that didn't seem to bother the person humming it as loudly as she could.

The humming stopped when the door to the room banged open. "Ah, there's my lovely nightingale," the voice that belonged to the humming person said.

"If you keep humming, I swear to God I'm going to slit your throat and string you from the roof!" the newcomer growled, which was followed by the sound of a metal tray being slammed down on something.

"There, dinner!" The door to the room opened and slammed shut again.

"I love you too, dearest one!" the hummer called after the nurse then laughed and set to humming again as she cheerfully started to investigate the sloppy contents of the dish.

Chance's forehead wrinkled into a frown, dipping black eyebrows into a sharp V. The slam of a tray caused blue eyes to crack open. The room was blurry, and her mouth tasted of nasty things. As things focused a bit more, she realized she was, yet again, in the recovery room at the clinic.

The hospital was a sad state of affairs with the government funding only allowing for so much. Public opinion was that they were Shifters, and Shifters had inhuman healing powers. That caused another bitter thought, yeah like those healing powers had done her family a lot of good when they had been shot in the head.

Weakly, she tried to reach the glass of water next to her bed, which was tempting her, all ready to be drunk, it even had a bendy straw.

The humming cut off in mid note, which was probably a blessing. "Hey, super agent, you're alive

over there?" The woman sounded surprised at that. "Well damn, I think I just lost my bet with nightingale."

Chance wanted to say 'Fuck off!' but it came out more like a raspy death rattle. She stayed focused on her hand, which was making slow progress to the cup.

"Hey, least you could do is be neighborly and say hi back." There was rustling and a muffled curse from the next curtained-off area. A second later, said curtain was shoved aside to reveal a gangly looking woman with shaggy, unkempt brown hair and a mischievous look in her eyes.

Hobbling on a cast foot, she moved over to the bed.

"Ah, the water crawl, I've done that before. Usually after a bender though." Using the tip of a finger, she pushed the water cup closer to Chance's hand, slowly.

Chance looked up with a glare, her blue eyes flashing like stormy skies. "Wh...who...who...the hell...are you?" she rasped out.

Tsking, the woman pushed the cup of lukewarm water closer. "You should really drink some water. Then you can yell at me. Or I could sing for you. Would you like that?" Without waiting for an answer, she dove into a truly horrible rendition of Bird on a Wire.

Chance tried to growl, but she just hurt too much. Finally, she snagged the water and took a healthy drink, nearly choking on it. "Shut up!" she rasped out then promptly vomited over the rail of her bed, her empty stomach unable to handle that much water.

The shaggy woman held up a hand, suddenly stopping her singing and dodging vomit. "Hold that thought!"

She hobbled quickly back to her side of the room, jumping up onto the bed just as the door from the hallway slammed open.

"Ah, nightingale!"

The disgruntled old nurse in the door glared at the woman.

"I'd like to lodge a complaint. Super agent is disturbing my restful slumber by singing horribly off key. I think you should transfer me to a private room." She smiled, hopefully. When the nurse continued to glare, she sighed. "And she vomited." That got the nurse moving, towards Chance.

The nurse helped the agent to lean back on the bed and whisked the curtain closed. "You really shouldn't drink that much water, Agent Paral," the old woman admonished, stepping around the vomit as she checked vitals.

Chance flopped back onto her bed, groaning and holding her stomach, where a shattered silver

bullet and all its remains had been dug out.

"Pavel, it's Agent Pavel," she croaked out.

"Well, Agent Pavel, you should know better than to drink so much water after a stomach wound." The gray-haired nurse shook her head and took away the glass. "I'll let the doctor know that you're awake and send someone to clean up the mess."

"Goodbye, fairest nightingale, until you come again to brighten this room and shine a ray of sunshine into my very heart!" the woman closest to the door called out as the nurse left, receiving a one-fingered salute from said nurse.

"She loves me dearly, can't you tell?" the woman laughed.

"Thanks?" Chance said to the nurse as she left, before turning to the woman next to her. "Who are you?"

"A law abiding citizen who has the privilege, no...wait, the honor of being in the same room with super agent Pavel, sister of the great and merciless Zoya!" The woman seemed to find that quite funny and laughed until she looked over at the expression on the agent's face, and sobered. "But before you go looking up my social security number, which I don't really think I have, but anyway, name's Kehpri."

The bit about her sister immediately had her on edge. "Kehpri..?" She sat up and set her feet on the ground, testing her balance. Already she was doing much better. "What kind of name is that?" She reached over and switched off the extremely out of date monitor then pulled various needles and tubes from her body.

"Chance..? What kind of name is that?" Kehpri snickered then made a face as she saw what the agent was doing. "Not that I really care, but shouldn't you be in bed, you were just puking all over the floor a minute ago?"

"Chance is a name I haven't given you," she grumbled out. "And I have work to do." Kehpri was bugging the shit out of her, and since she felt like shit, she wasn't in the mood to stay here, no matter how hot Dr. Miller was.

Lacing her hands behind her head, Kehpri whistled a few bars of something that wasn't recognizable as a song. "So you're out of here, with a hole in your stomach? Wow, so those stories about how stubborn you are were actually telling the truth."

Chance managed a somewhat decent growl. "No, but I'm sure it's more having to do with the stubbornness of Federal Agents."

"Yeah, about that, where are all your fellow agents. Aren't all the boys in blue supposed to swarm

the place when one of their own gets hurt?" Kehpri sat up in her bed, watching curiously as the last of the needles hit the floor.

"The few agents are probably out swamped with all sorts of shit storms. It is a full moon night." Which answered her own question, Kupie doll here wasn't a Were, because obviously she wasn't all furry.

"Oh, right, I got so caught up with auditioning for American idol that I forgot all about that moon thing. Huh, pesky moon..." She swung her feet out over the floor and stood up, leaning against the bed to take some weight off the cast on one leg. "So, you going to turn all furry?"

"American what..?" She shook her head and took a step, ignoring the pain that came with each step. "I'm not talking to you about my personal life."

She hobbled to the end of the bed looking for her clothes, which normally should be in a bag at the end of the bed. She bent over to pick them up, grunting at the pain that radiated up from the stitches in her stomach.

"You know, even people who can heal quickly have a hard time with a bullet to the stomach. Even worse if it's silver." Kehpri grinned, leaning closer to the door so that she could peer out the small window into the dim corridor beyond.

"Woops, gotta go to the bathroom." She hurriedly shuffled her way into the small toilette and locked the door behind her.

"What the fuck?" Chance mumbled out as the other woman disappeared. Slowly, she straightened up, but she could smell blood coming strongly from the clothes in the bag.

The sound of arguing came from the hallway, followed a moment later by the door to the hospital room opening fast enough to bounce off the other wall.

Her eyes turned towards the door, and her sister's menacing frame filling it. The hospital clinic wasn't that big, and she was surprised Zoya waited as long as she had. Zoya was the spitting image of their parents.

Strong Russian ancestry radiated out of her: white blonde hair, blue eyes, and every other dip and curve of her body.

Chance, other than the blue eyes and height, looked every bit like her birth mother, with her black hair and dusky skin.

"I know you think you're the Alpha of these parts, Ms. Pavel, but you can't just burst in without waiting for us, it causes trauma for the patients," the nurse bit out, already on her last nerve because of the loony in her ward.

"I told you when I dropped her off that I would be back for her," Zoya snarled over a shoulder then slammed the door shut in the nurse's face.

"I'm going to get the doctor!" was heard from the other side.

Zoya snorted, dragging the lone chair in the room with her over to where Chance stood. "Here, you look like you're going to fall over," she shoved the chair towards her sister.

Chance felt like she was a child again. But unlike when she was a child, she wasn't trailing after her bigger sister hoping for approval. "Zoya, I'm fine. I just need to get dressed and get back to work. I can't afford this, not tonight."

Not on a full moon night when humans and Shapeshifters were out doing all sorts of stupid shit to each other.

"As if you're in any shape to do anything about it," Zoya countered, going over to the small barred window in the wall and peering outside. At one time the hospital had been part of a military base, and it retained all of its charm from those past days. "Why do you have to be so difficult about this, Chance? Just sit down and heal without dashing off and getting shot at again. You know my pack and I can handle it tonight."

Chance stiffened, and before she could stop herself, she blurted out, "Handle it, like the men who shot me." And she wanted to take it back, 'cause she didn't want to know how Zoya had handled it. Didn't want to know because as she had lain bleeding out into the sand and dirt of the high desert floor, she had fumbled for her cell phone and called Zoya, called her and said, "I'm dying. I'm dying with the moon and the stars pointing at Orion, with the wind blowing from the east where the rabbits and the badger make their nests together."

She called her sister because she had known, without a doubt, Zoya would find her and make it right, and her fellow agents would still be lost in the scrub.

"I handled it exactly like they tried to handle it for you," Zoya shot back, stiffening as well. This was a familiar fight for the two of them. "Your fellow 'agents' haven't even noticed you're gone yet! They're still out there trying to track down the hunters. Now you tell me which one of us is more effective?"

She raised a hand and lowered her head. "I'm sorry. Please don't say anything else." Anymore down this slippery slope and a line would be crossed. She sat, suddenly tired, and noticed a small stain of red on the hospital gown; she'd popped the stitches. "That's not fair. We do the best that we can. And, and we've made so many changes to the policies that used to surround this shit hole."

Zoya was spared from giving a caustic answer that would have helped neither of them by the hospital room door opening again. The woman who stepped inside was as different from the dour and rather large old nurse as was possible.

Dr. Miller exuded an unconscious aura of sexuality around herself. Her straight blonde hair, sparkling blue eyes, and model-like complexion only strengthened it and helped explain why almost the entire hospital staff was in love with her.

"Zoya, you have to stop coming in here and terrorizing my nurses." Even her voice had a smoky quality to it. The older sister's posture immediately changed as she smiled.

"Sorry, Dr. Miller, I'll try to be nicer next time."

"Oh, I'm sure you're plenty nice when you want to be," the good doctor answered as they locked gazes, leaving Chance sitting there.

Chance bristled as she felt she wasn't even in the same room with those two. Jealous feelings rose in her and she wondered just for a moment why her sister couldn't be straight, leaving her a more fair advantage with the fairer sex.

Seeing her sister standing next to the doctor only made her realize what ungodly beautiful children they'd have if Zoya were capable. And the way Zoya bragged sometimes; who knew, maybe some of the pups running around were hers.

"Hello, remember me? I'm the one with the bullet wound: and a badge and gun."

"Agent Parel..." Dr. Miller switched the full force of that personality to the wounded woman in the chair. "I'm glad you're looking better than earlier."

Zoya gave her sister a dirty look and went back to stand by the window. The good doctor picked up the medical chart at the end of the bed and started to flip through pages, frowning briefly.

"Been going through your own records, Agent? I didn't know you knew how to read these." She rearranged the records into the order she liked and kept reading.

"It's Pavel, not Parel, just the same as Zoya." She sighed and glared at her sister, who just stuck her tongue out. "Of course I went through my records, that bullet will be evidence."

"Hmmm...well, for some reason, you were checked in as Agent Parel." The doctor scribbled something on the paper. "How are you feeling now?"

"I'm fine. Just need to get dressed and get back out in the field." She crossed her arms over her stomach to hide the slightly larger red stain.

"She broke a stitch or something, she's bleeding again," Zoya happily betrayed her sister.

The doctor sighed and went to get a pair of gloves. "Agent, you were told to stay in bed, exactly to avoid hurting yourself."



Chance threw the bag she had picked up with her bloodied clothes at her sister in frustration. "I hate you." But they both knew she didn't.

"I'll just leave you to the doctor's care," Zoya smiled and headed for the door. "I look forward to seeing you around later, Doctor Miller." The doctor met her eyes and smiled as they both stared at one another for entirely too long. Zoya gave a rakish grin and headed out into the hall, where members of her pack were waiting.

"Zoya, wait! Doctor, can I have a minute with my sister?"

"As long as you promise to get back into the bed after?" the doctor demanded, masking it as a polite request.

"Yeah, fine. I need my cell phone..." She paused at the look. "Or a phone of some sort to report what happened. I promise I'll stay here until the morning."

"Good enough," Dr. Miller agreed. On purpose, Zoya lingered in the door so that the doctor had to squeeze past her to get out of the room. Grinning, the older sister closed the door and looked at her sister. "I think I should come back with a splinter or something and get the doctor to examine me."

"Please don't rub it in my face that women will always prefer you to me, even though I have a badge and handcuffs." She sighed and looked everywhere but her sometimes painful, estranged sister.

She cleared her throat then quietly said. "Thank you, for coming for me when I needed you. I know you don't agree with me or my choices in life, but you were there when I needed you."

Zoya studied her sister seriously. "I'm your sister, what else was I supposed to do?" She smiled quickly though, the seriousness fading. "Besides, now you owe me big time. I'll see you later, got to go see to the pack." With a mock salute, she was off.

Chance made a face that could have gone better. "Well, that blows," she muttered, running a hand through her hair.

"What blows?" Khepri asked, easing open the door cautiously. When the room looked empty, she stepped out of the small bathroom and closed the door quickly. "You might not want to go in there anytime soon." She waved her hands back and forth at the air in front of it as if blowing away a bad smell.

The dark-haired woman developed a tic in her right eye and buried her face in her hands. "I'm stuck in the hospital over night with an insane person."

"Really..? There's someone else here?" The wild-haired woman peered out the window into the hallway. "Wow, your sister and that doctor would make such beautiful children."

"Shut up," Chance bit out between clenched teeth.

She didn't look, not wanting to see her sister intimately invading the hot Dr Miller's personal space.

"I thought she was supposed to come back here to fix those stitches for you," Kehpri ignored the command, still watching the hall. "Guess she's going on break or something. Hmm...on break with your sister."

"Shut up," she said again, only this time there was a little more bite in her tone.

"Ok, ok, shutting up," Kehpri muttered, hobbling back over to her bed and hopping up onto it. She stayed quiet for about two minutes. "So...seen any interesting movies lately?"

Chance groaned and desperately pressed the button to summon the nurses.

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It was long past lights out for the hospital. Only a dim light shown in from the hallway and then there was a stray beam or two from the moon through the thin curtains. Kehpri cursed as she tripped over something and moved towards the bed that super agent was sleeping on. "Hey, you awake?"

"Unfortunately... Please stay away from me; they've already had to re-stitch me twice now." Chance was almost to the point she wanted her gun.

"Well, that wouldn't have happened if you hadn't thrown that vase at me." Kehpri sounded amused by the entire thing.

The dark-haired woman rolled on to her side. "You are insane."

"Probably," she chuckled, leaving the agent's side and hobbling towards the small closet where her personal things were. "But I'm an insane person with a pickup truck. Want to get out of here?"

She looked for a clock, but there wasn't one. It was after midnight, things would be settling down and it would be another month until the full moon. She should check on the agents under her, and start paperwork. Being involved in a shooting would hamstring them for a while.

On the other hand, Kupie doll, or whatever the hell her name was, didn't seem to be that sane. "Yeah, okay," she found herself saying.

A pair of pants went sailing through the air to land on the wounded woman's bed. "Here, your clothes are all bloody." The woman stripped off the annoying hospital gown and started rummaging for her clothes naked.

"I can't use them; they won't fit over my cast," she grumbled.

Chance mumbled something about insanity being contagious and picked up the pants. Rolling over she paused, having no problems seeing the other woman in the dark. She pulled the pants up, finding them slightly short in the legs and baggy.

She eyed the other woman again in confusion then noticed how she could count Kehpri's ribs and the woman's malnourished state.

A pale blue dress shirt was pulled on, hiding the woman's ribs from view and draping down to her upper thighs. Kehpri hummed off tune as she found her sneakers and shoved them on over bare feet.

"You ready?" she asked, not able to see as well in the dark.

"Yeah..." She stuffed her feet into her hiking boots. "Fuck," she moaned, realizing she had no idea where her gun and badge were. Probably still with her car in the middle of nowhere, next to the hunter who had shot her just as she shot him, and heard his friends run off.

"You all right..?" That was an actual note of concern. "You tear open stitches again? I thought you would have healed that by now."

Chance left her stuff covered in blood, not wanting to ruin the chain of custody. "No, I haven't healed, and what makes you think I would have healed, you don't know anything about me. I was moaning because I have no idea where my gun and badge are. Well, I have an idea, but...never mind let's go."

Kehpri sneaked to the door, something that would have been more effective if every other step wasn't followed by the thud of her cast. "Shhh...be very, very quiet, we're hunting rabbits," she whispered with a funny accent and then creaked open the door and peered out into the hall. Making sure no one was in eyesight, she went out.

Chance pinched her nose. "We're what? Never mind..." She pushed ahead and started down the hallway to the backdoor. Her, Ivan, and Zoya use to play in here, before it had been converted to a clinic.

"Hey! Wait up," Kehpri hissed, thudding along as she tried to catch up with the fast moving woman. Damn those long legs moved fast.

Chance paused, waiting for the other woman to catch up. "Hurry up, gimpy."

"Now you're just being mean," the brown-haired woman huffed, already out of breath. The heavy steel door opened surprisingly easily. Kehpri squinted in the darkness trying to make out her truck. "Ah, there it is. Over there, near the far wall."

"I'm a federal agent, I don't think people associate us with nice." She bit her lip for a moment, weighing her options of letting Kupie doll make her way to the truck or helping. While it was sure to be a laugh riot, it would take fucking forever. "Here." She wrapped an arm around the woman's waist then put Kehpri's arm around her shoulders.

"Yeah, you're a real mean one. Just like your sister, right?" Kehpri huffed glad for the support. It was certainly faster this way, as they crossed the mostly empty parking lot to the far side.

A rusting hulk of a pickup truck was parked under a flickering streetlight. Most of the original paint was impossible to see, as the body seemed to be one large piece of rust. The back bed was rusted through and a sheet of plywood had been bolted in to replace the missing metal.

Chance stiffened then swung the other woman around to face her. "How in the hell do you know about me or my sister? How do you even know she's my sister?" A burst of paranoia caused her heart to pump faster and eyes to dilate in the dark.

Kehpri eeped in surprise at the sudden move, "Because you told called her your sister while I was in the bathroom!" she stammered, quickly.

"No. You knew before that, when I woke up in the recovery room. And for your information, I'm a lot nicer than my sister, and I have a gun and handcuffs." Belatedly she realized how tightly she had grabbed the other woman and let her go. "What is this magic power you have to get under my skin and piss me off?"

"My winning personality," Kehpri rubbed the arm, certain that by tomorrow there would be a hand-shaped bruise there. Ignoring the question, she hobbled to the truck and opened the unlocked door.

Ducking her head under the seat she grabbed a set of wires and sparked them together until the truck's engine turned over. "You coming?"

"Yes, but you can't drive. So go get in the passenger seat...please." The please hurt her.

"Fine," Kehpri gave in easily. "Just watch out for that rust spot in the middle of the floor. I don't think it would hold you." The woman climbed over the bench seat to the passenger side.

"I'm not being controlling; you can't drive with your leg in a cast." She said a prayer that the truck wouldn't fall apart and got in. "Where am I taking you?"

Slamming her door shut, Kehpri put her cast leg up on the dashboard. "You know where Painted Rock is?"

"Yeah, I know where it is?" She backed the truck out.

"Good, drive that way. I'll tell you where to go." The gears ground horribly as she backed out, but it settled down when the agent put it into first and then second. "And you are being controlling."

Chance smiled. "The title Agent before my name kind of gives away the controlling part." She frowned as she realized she was smiling and joking around with the annoying insane woman.

"Aha! I saw that, you smiled."

Chance's frown got deeper, and she decided to concentrate on the road. After a while, of minutes slowly ticking away as they drove along the flat dusty road to what looked like nowhere, Chance cleared her throat, "So how'd you break your foot?"

"It's not broken." Kehpri began fiddling with the radio, trying to find one of the two stations that came in clear on the antique radio system. Finding a country and western channel, she started in on her finest twang singing.

"Then..." As the singing started up, Chance gritted her teeth and slowly counted to ten, trying to resist the urge to put her fist through the radio faceplate. "...why are you wearing a cast?"

Only when there was a pause in the singing to indulge in some soulful guitar did the other woman twist in her seat to look at the driver. "It a nice sort of accessory, don't you think?" She hefted the cast and let it thud back down on the dashboard. "Besides, for some reason, you need to be sick to get into a hospital."

The tic returned to Chance's eye. "Why would you fake a broken foot to hang out in a hospital, which, I might add, I'm fairly certain is a crime?"

"I should probably take it off soon; hard to drive stick shift with this on." Kehpri turned back towards the windshield, singing until another pause in the deep, sorrowful lyrics. "Because I meet the most interesting people in hospitals..."

She flashed a white-toothed smile in the darkness. "Oops, turn here!"

Hands gripped the steering wheel tighter, until knuckles turned white. She turned sharply, the truck fishtailing, and for a moment, Chance imagined the rust bucket breaking apart, but it held together.

"Good driving," the brunette applauded. "They teach you that in super agent school?"

The tic got worse, and Chance feared a migraine was coming on. "Yes," she bit out in a clipped tone.

"Cool." Kehpri pointed towards what looked like a dirt path off the seldom-used road that they were already on, "That way. You have to put it in low gear, it's a steep climb."

Chance did as she was directed and shifted the gears. Again she lamented on her mouth's answer of yes. She should have stayed in the hospital and soaked up Dr. Miller's bedside manner.

As the pickup truck rumbled up over the hilltop, Kehpri pointed out the window. "Ah, home sweet home." The silver Gulf Stream trailer was parked off to the edge of a cleared out area. White plastic picket fencing had been placed around it to form a sort of yard populated with bright pink plastic flamingos.

Chance made a face at the garish pink of all the damn plastic flamingos. Then it dawned on her. "Why the hell didn't you tell me your foot wasn't broken? I just drove you out into the middle of buttfuckingEgypt for no damn reason. You could have just dropped me off at the bureau office."

Kehpri rolled her eyes and got out of the truck as soon as it had come to a stop in what was more or less its parking space, "Because I couldn't take off the cast at the hospital. Then they'd know I was lying." She shook her head, hobbling towards the Gulf Stream.

Chance got out of the truck, slamming the door, her hands itching for her gun that wasn't there. "I-you-GODDAMNIT!" she howled out and kicked a large rock then groaned and doubled over in pain.

She'd probably popped her stitches again.

She straightened out and stared at Mother Moon, wondering if the universe was laughing at her.

"You probably shouldn't kick things when you're still recovering," Kehpri said helpfully, hobbling back towards the agent. "You coming in?"

Holding a hand to her abdomen, she eyed the trail fearfully. "I don't know, are there more flamingos inside?"

"You think I'm insane? They need to live outside." Putting an arm around the taller woman's waist, she helped her towards the trailer. "Come in, rest, and I'll drive you wherever you want me to in the morning. Sound good?"

"You know, there are laws against kidnapping a federal agent?" she muttered out. God she'd been outsmarted by an insane one, nobody would ever find her body.

"Ha! If I wanted to kidnap you, I would have drugged you while you were sleeping." There wasn't anything resembling a lock on the door, a swift kick opened it.

Chance frowned again as she noticed the lack of lock. As she sat down, she asked hesitantly,

"Um...is it just you out here?"

"Hold on a second." Kephri stepped outside and cursed a few times, pulling on something. Another kick, with the cast foot, and a little portable generator kicked over and started rumbling. The lights inside the trailer gradually became bright enough to see by.

A lone human female in the middle of the reservation, that probably wasn't really all that safe...especially on full moon nights, or if Kephri went into heat. Some of the more wild shifters, who went feral, could smell that for miles and track down a female and rape her, not being any the wiser that his attention was very much not wanted.

Then others would just rape a lone female because she was alone and human, and then others might just hunt her as prey. And the list of things that could go wrong with Kephri out here in the middle of nowhere continued on in Chance's brain.

Kephri thudded her way up the stairs and into the trailer. "See, better than that hospital room, isn't it?" The inside of the trailer had seen better days back when the truck had been brand new. Grabbing a fishing tackle box that now served as a toolbox, the slim woman pulled out a saw blade. "Help me with this, will you? This thing itches like crazy."

Chance sighed and got up. "What do you want me to do?"

The hacksaw blade was thrust towards her. "Saw."

"I thought you'd never ask," Chance muttered out and took the saw and started to cut.

"Hey, you're good at that. If the super agent job falls through, I'm sure you could make a great nurse." She paused. "Or mass murderer, I guess." The skinny woman flexed her leg, grinning at the sensation of not having the cast on. "Next time I'll just say I have a sprained ankle or something."

"They didn't x-ray it?" She sniffed and didn't smell any pooling of blood under the skin. Judging from Kephri's temperament, the outdated x-ray had probably been in use and the nurses had put it on to get the woman to shut up.

"Nurse Nightingale fell in love with my charming personality and was putty in my fingers," she proclaimed happily, tossing aside the remnants of the cast. "So, you want food? I've got Spam, and probably some more Spam."

Chance's stomach rolled over and died at the mention of Spam. "No thanks. Look, if you have a phone, I'll just call one of my agents and have them come pick me up."

Kephri laughed as she walked over to the corner of the room that served as a kitchen and grabbed one of the two cans of Spam that were left in the cupboard. "Does it look like there's a phone here?"

Blue eyes darted around hopefully. "No, it doesn't." ... Which brought her back to the question of safety. "Don't you think this is kind of risky? Being out here in the middle of nowhere by yourself, a human female."

"Why? Are you offering to protect me?" She mock leered and started to rummage for a can opener. "Besides, it's safer out here. No electronics, no credit cards, no web, no computer access, nothing to draw attention to me."

"And why wouldn't you want attention drawn to you?"

The Spam came out of the can with a wet, slurping noise that even made Kehpri wrinkle her lips at it. That didn't stop her from finding a fork and starting to eat like she hadn't eaten in days. "Because," she mumbled around a piece of what was kind of meat, "they're out to get me."

"Right, and who is they?" Chance drummed her fingers and wondered what the fuck she had gotten herself into.

"Them, all of them... You sure you don't want any of this?" The mass actually quivered a little as Kehpri shoved it towards the agent.

Chance turned green as she got a whiff of it and bolted for the door.

"Aw crap, now she's probably going to pull more stitches," Kehpri sighed. Stuffing her face with what was left, she went to find the medical kit.

Outside, Chance was fighting hard not to vomit. She was on her hands and knees, her forehead resting against the cool ground.

"Hate her, hate her, hate, hate, hate, hate her," she mumbled over and over.

"You don't hate me, you like me, actually." Kehpri took a seat on the edge of the door, watching the rocking woman. A rather large red case propped up on the door jam next to her.

Chance laughed hollowly, "Don't flatter yourself." She sat back on her knees, groaning as the healing muscles of her stomach protested the treatment it had received today.

"You should probably rest so that you can finish healing." Kehpri stretched out her legs, staring up at the sky above. "It's amazing how many stars there are out here... worth everything just for the view."

"You have a needle and thread in there?"

Holding up the kit with the red cross on it, she responded, "Yup. What do you need it for?"



"You made me pull open my stitches again." She stepped over Kehpri and went to the sink that was in the living room/kitchen. She pulled up the hospital gown she was wearing as a shirt and looked down, where blood was dribbling down to her belly button.

"Explain to me why you aren't healing?" Plopping the kit down on the small counter top, she opened it and snapped on some exam gloves expertly.

Chance made a face, and her jaw took on a stubborn angle, "Again, I'm not talking about my personal life. Just 'cause my sister is a Were, doesn't mean...never mind." But she was healing. Any human that had taken a gut shot wouldn't even be up and walking around.

"Doesn't mean you are also? Sure it does. You have the genes, just maybe not all of them." Kehpri doused a pad with an anesthetic disinfectant and started to carefully clean the area around the split stitches.

Chance gritted her teeth, at the sting of disinfectant. "Zoya and I only share one parent, so no, I don't have the genes."

"Uh huh... That's why you're standing right now after getting shot in the stomach." Wiping away the last of the blood, she took out a smaller pack and started to thread a needle, humming again while she did. "I'm going to have to stitch this again."

"Erm..." Chance turned, staring at the gloved hands and the needle. She pursed her lips and wondered how to phrase what she wanted to say.

"Why should I let you come anywhere near me with a sharp object?"

"Oh, don't be a baby." Then she moved remarkably fast and pushed the needle through the first part of the wound.

Chance released a hiss of pain. "Shit!" she barked out. "That better be fucking sterile," she grunted out and just gritted her teeth.

"It was when I stole it." Kehpri squinted in the bad light and pulled the rest of the thread through the wound, pulling the two pieces of flesh closed. Expertly tying it off, she moved down an inch and started again.

"Don't move, you don't want a scar, do you?"

"You do realize you just told a federal agent that you have stolen goods." But Chance stood absolutely still. Her brain was picking up cues and processing them. She saw how focused and steady Kehpri was, how her personality seemed to change. She cataloged that she'd probably worked in the medical field at one point.

Snipping off the last bit of stitching after tying it, Kehpri gave her a crooked grin. "You do

realize I could be joking." The needle was tossed in the trash bin and the case zipped back up. "There, and I probably didn't even give you hepatitis."

"Thanks," Chance said tersely. She crossed her arms over her chest and asked, "You have an extra shirt I can borrow?" Again she wondered why she hadn't stayed in the hospital.

"Maybe," Kehpri waggled her eyebrows. "Why?"

Chance rolled her eyes and sat down. "Because I don't have one, and I don't know you well enough to be naked in front of you."

"Really..? Because I'm pretty sure you know me more than most people I've seen naked." But she went to the small bed in the back and pulled a drawer out from under it. Finding a t-shirt that had been snug on her before, and now hung off her frame, she tossed it to the other woman.

Chance struggled a bit and finally got it on. "Thanks."

It definitely looked better on the tall agent. Unfortunately, the day was catching up to her, and she was in no shape to try what her libido wanted her to do, besides all of the obvious reasons that it was an awful idea. "The couch is all yours," she said suddenly.

Chance grunted, looking around the small room for the couch, and found it being used as the table, "Night."

"Yeah..." Kehpri got up and brushed the shirt she was using as a skirt, "Night."

#####

It was a few hours before sunrise, when even nocturnal animals were starting to slow down and before any hint of the coming sunrise lightened the horizon. From the other side of the trailer whimpers started, followed by thrashing as the woman on the bed started to struggle.

A blue eye cracked open, and the first thing Chance realized, was despite her best efforts, she had succumbed to sleep. The next thing she picked up was the sounds of someone in distress. She uncurled herself from the ball she had somehow managed to get herself into on the couch and stood.

She unconsciously made a face and wondered, since there was only one other person in the trailer, if she really wanted to put herself in Kupie doll's shit. She sighed, ran a hand through her hair, and slapped herself a couple of times. She was a federal agent, that's what she did, help people. She was a fucking idealistic civil servant. She chuckled at that one. Maybe she'd have it put on her business card.

Unconsciously silent, she padded over to the door that she had seen Kewpie doll disappear into

this morning. She tapped on the door. "Kewpie...err, Kehpri, you okay?"

When there was no answer, Chance cracked the door, easily seeing the thrashing figure wrapped up in her sheets. Chance made the face again, the one she made when she really didn't want to do something, but did it anyways. She opened the door wider and stepped inside the room.

"Hey, Kehpri, it's me, Chance. Um, super agent." Standing hopefully out of fist swinging distance, she reached out and tapped a shoulder, "Kehpri!"

Kehpri came away with a scream and swinging. A fist lashed out as she screamed at the top of her lungs, scrambling backwards and blindly lashing out at anything near her.

"Whoa, whoa, hey now, no assaulting the federal agent," Chance easily caught both failing fists.

"No!!!" Kehpri kept struggling, trying to get free from the hands holding her. On the fourth tug she realized who it was and collapsed forward, against the agent's shoulder, shaking.

Chance was stunned for a moment, and awkwardly wrapped her arms around the skinny frame. Her victim sensitivity training going right out the window, "Hey, hey, hey...hey...now, it's okay."

"No it isn't," the shaking woman whimpered. "So don't patronize me by telling me it is." Skinny arms wrapped around the dark-haired woman's mid section as Kehpri shifted closer. "Stay here," she whispered, "just until light."

"Okay? It's not okay," Chance readily agreed. God above, maybe she had burnout, she had to wonder, because when her day started, she never envisioned this. "You want me to stay here, with you, in this tiny bed?" She just wanted to clarify.

"Unless you prefer the floor," the muffled response came as the shaking slowed to mild tremors.

Chance reflected on all the times she had woken up, with the nightmare of the death of her family, alone, shaking, and wanting just someone to be there for her. "Yeah, I'll stay, but no funny stuff. And I better not get hauled in for a sexual harassment charge."

A laugh that was half a sob caught Kehpri by surprise. "No wonder you're single." Shifting, Kehpri pulled the thin blanket up over them both and found a comfortable position.

"I never said I was single. For all you know, I have a husband or wife who's really pissed at me right now." Fuck yeah, that was a pipedream. Maybe normal agents got partners and family life, not the ones who worked the Reservation; they just got burnt out and killed.

The woman tucked into her shoulder using it as a pillow made a disbelieving sound, "As if you would ever cheat on someone. You're so full of moral fiber it hurts to look at."

Chance just made a face. "I try, but it's really hard sometimes. This, however, is not one of those

times, so...yeah...just to be clear."

Kehpri was silent for a bit before she shoved herself up enough to see the other woman's face in the dim light, brushing curly hair out of her face. The generator had run out of gas a few hours ago, so the night was quiet once again.

"Are you saying I'm not attractive?" she demanded.

"What? Shit, I'm not answering that. I know better."

"Humph." Kehpri settled back down. "You suck," she mumbled.

"Like I haven't heard that before," Chance muttered then wrapped hands in safe places on the woman's body, holding her securely. "Okay, loony, go back to sleep, I'm here, and I'll keep you safe from whatever haunts your brain."

"You better. If they kill me in my sleep, I'm coming back to haunt you," the other woman mumbled, yawning and throwing a leg over the other woman's hips and fading off.

"Can't have that," Chance said as she stared up into the black, inky ceiling of the trailer. She was awake now, having more sleep than she normally got. It figured a woman hit on her, and she was fairly certain Kehpri was hitting on her, and the woman was insane.

#####

She stayed good to her word and watched over the crazy woman until night gave way to dawn. Her thoughts had already typed up various reports, and figured out where the remote was for her stereo, not that she'd been home in a week to look for it.

As daylight poked through the blinds, she poked the malnourished woman attached to her side and was currently drooling on her shoulder in a disgusting manner.

"Hey, you need to get up and take me to work now," she whispered.

Kehpri mumbled something and held on tighter, turning her head so that she could shut out the light.

"Come on, Kewpie doll, I'm already in enough shit. Please don't get me in deeper by being late."

"Hmmm...don't want to get up," she mumbled, stretching slowly. That had been the best sleep she'd gotten in months. Feeling good and enjoying the slow wake up, she started to press her lips to the warm skin near her lips.

Chance jumped and croaked out, "Please don't! You promised no funny stuff." She quickly started unwrapping the woman from her body, trying to get out of the bed.

"Party pooper," Kehpri grumbled, yawning and stretching. Still half asleep, she stumbled up out of the bed, past the other woman, and towards the closet-sized bathroom.

"Whatever. Hurry up. I'm going to miss the morning brief."

"Ah, I should have known, you're married to your job." Using a wet washcloth, she finished cleaning up and did a quick tooth brushing. Not really caring that she was naked from the waist upwards, she emerged and rummaged through the clothes piled near the bed for something to wear.

"Yes, I'm faithfully married. So put those away, I'm not tempted at all." ... Which was mainly true. Chance liked her women with more meat than bones, and Kehpri would have been plenty attractive if she would eat a gallon of cheeseburgers or something.

The woman was too skinny to be considered healthy. Chance shook her head, her shoulder length black hair moving, as she tried to get any ideas of caring or concern for the idiot woman out of her head.

Finding a red t-shirt that had seen better days several years ago, Kehpri pulled it on and grabbed a threadbare backpack from next to the bed. "All right, oh annoying one, I'm ready. Let's go."

Chance said nothing, just happily followed like a puppy dog. Now that they were moving, that meant that this would soon be behind her.

Patting the head of a pink flamingo that was near the path on the way out to the pickup truck, Kehpri pointed to the passenger side. "I'm driving."

Chance made a face. "But if I drive I don't have to bother giving you directions."

"It's my truck." Yanking open the driver's side door, she ducked under the dash to spark wires together until the engine decided to start.

Somehow, Chance doubted it was her truck. More than likely, the woman had found it deserted on the side of the road, but she really didn't want to get into that. "Okay, fine. Can we stop at my apartment so I can change? Then you can drop me off at the office and we never have to see each other again."

"Wow, did you just wake up a bitch or were you like that last night and I missed it?" Hurt by the words, Kehpri slammed her door shut and barely waited for Chance to get in before shoving the shifter into gear and spinning the tires.

"What?" Chance blinked at the outburst. "What did I say?"

"You know what, how about we just don't talk? If I'm so annoying to you, just sit there and point

at where I have to go." Kehpri turned on the radio and raised the volume annoyingly high.

"Fine," Chance said grumpily, and rubbed her stomach.

It was a quiet ride down the dusty washed-out path to the main road. Kehpri glared out the cracked windshield at the dirt road. "I'm not insane," she finally said as they pulled out onto the larger road.

Chance said nothing. She just stared out the window. In the distance she could see the old military housing of Fort Nelson that the Pack Zoya now ran lived. It was one of the better towns on the reservation.

"I'm not!" Kehpri shouted, nearly sending the truck fishtailing off the road as she glared over at the dark-haired woman.

Overcorrecting, she managed to get the truck back under control, knuckles white on the steering wheel as she focused on the driving again. "Sorry. I just have this thing about being called insane."

Chance looked over at the other woman, opened her mouth, thought better of it, and then went back to looking out the window.

The silent treatment was really starting to get to Kehpri, and the woman tapped her fingers against the steering wheel, fidgeting. Ten miles down the road, she broke. "Could you say something?"

She almost said, 'you told me not to talk', but then changed her mind. "If you're not insane," which she doubted, "then why act like it?"

"I like the term strange, instead of insane." She tried a little smile, but when the other woman continued to look at her, she sighed. "It makes people underestimate you. Also, people tend to stay away if they think you're insane."

"If you want people to stay away, why did you kidnap me? That makes no sense."

"Had to get you out of the hospital somehow..." The entire truck bucked as she drove it up onto the paved road. The springs were in as good a shape as the rest of the truck, and Kehpri nearly hit her head on the roof.

"It's a hospital. It's not like I was in any danger in there." Chance's fingers started drumming against the glass of the window.

"Ha! That's what you think. Hospitals are dangerous places." The first signs of civilization were starting to appear around the edges of the road.

Chance pointed to the right then whipped her head around as they passed the road she wanted. "I clearly pointed for you to turn."

"Fuck." The tires screeched as she did a completely illegal u-turn in the middle of the street to get back to where they should have turned. "I thought we weren't pointing anymore."

"We weren't? Why didn't you tell me?"

Kehpri did a respectable growl of her own, "Which way now?"

"Follow it until you see the sign for the Old Grove Apartments." More and more buildings were popping up, most of it the uniform pattern of military housing.

"Apartments..? I thought I was taking you to work?" Not that she really relished that idea, in fact, now that she was thinking about it. Reaching around into the space behind the bucket seat, she got out a beat-up ball cap and an old style pair of sunglasses.

"I can't show up to work like this," she pulled at her shirt. "Just drop me off at my apartment and I'll have Quinton come and pick me up and take me in to work."

"Oh, right." Kehpri relaxed. Not driving up to a federal building was a good thing. The apartments looked like they were cheap buildings even for prefab buildings. "Eww, you live in one of these?"

"It's cheap, and well, this is where all non-shifters tend to live, safety in numbers and all that. You can park in spot 312."

Making a wide turn, she parked in the spot marked by the pale white spray paint. "A lot of people live here?" She peered up out the windshield at the cement monstrosity in front of her.

"No, only a handful, most humans don't want anything to do with the Reservation. You get a few bleeding hearts, hippie back to nature types, college kids writing thesis on Weres or Reservation life. A few mix-breeds, those who have one human parent and one Were parent, they tend to feel really lost in the world. The only regulars that stay here are the agents." To say she lived here was stretching it, more like stored her stuff here and lived out of a work jeep and the office.

Shoving down on the parking brake, Kehpri turned towards the federal agent. "I'm serious. Stay out of the hospital. Bad things happen there."

Chance chuckled. "I think the people who work there took an oath to help mankind, or something." She got out of the truck and started up the three flights of stairs to the top floor. Fishing around in her pocket, she realized with a groan her keys were in the middle of nowhere with her gun and badge, probably having a fucking tea party.

As she reached her door, she jumped up, grabbed the lip of the roof, hauled herself up and walked across to the flimsy balcony on the other side. She dropped down and entered through the balcony door she never locked.

Her apartment wasn't much to look at, but she was never home. It was fairly large for a one bedroom. Truth was though, she hardly slept in here.

There was an overstuffed couch, a tiny TV on a huge TV stand, a punching bag, and a sickly plant she called Tree.

"Hey, Tree," she grunted out as she slid the balcony door shut. In a continuing pattern of normalcy, the plant didn't talk back. She pulled the borrowed t-shirt off and walked into the bathroom and grabbed her toothbrush.

Furiously brushing her teeth, she went over to a closet, opened it up, and grabbed dark blue slacks and a white buttoned down shirt, and then started looking for the jacket that went with the slacks. It was a standard suit for all agents, although when she was out in the field, she shucked it for jeans and a T-shirt, especially in the summer around here.

She frowned when someone knocked on her door. "Just a moment," she gurgled out, her mouth full of toothpaste. She slipped on the shirt and walked over, stopping to spit toothpaste in the sink before ending up at the door. "Yeah?" she said, opening the door. She sighed seeing Kehpri, assuming their time together was over.

"What?"

The brunette ducked her head to one side, looking around the irritated agent to get a peek at the apartment. "Huh. Not bad, kind of empty looking though. Don't they pay you enough to buy furniture?"

"Um...did I forget something?" Chance tried to block the doorway, but Kehpri was slippery to stop.

"To invite me up," was the blithe reply as the skinny woman slipped past and started to poke around, investigating the rooms.

Chance made a face as the woman slipped past her. "No, I didn't." She turned around and barked out, "Put that down!" She walked over and ripped the framed photo out of the woman's skinny fingers. The photo showed three kids, two girls and one boy, rough housing with a large white canine.

"Is that you as a child?" Kehpri tried to get a better look, even as Chance held it out of her reach.

She looked at the photo as if it had changed suddenly. "It's a family picture."



"Oh." Kehpri stopped her attempts to look, but watched with interest as the agent put the picture back down. "Where's your bathroom?" she asked suddenly.

"Over there," she pointed out the door in the wall.

"Thanks. I can give you a ride to work after, if you want, since you don't have a car here," Kehpri called out. She nearly whined with envy when she saw the full sized shower and bath. A second later, the shower started.

Blue eyes tracked back to the photo. You couldn't really see her face, but she was certain that she was happy and smiling. Her dark-haired head standing out next to her sister and brother's white blonde, and her father was huge in his animal form. Sadly, it was the only picture she had of him and...and she couldn't see him. Now she couldn't even remember what he looked like.

Her head whipped up as the shower started, and she huffed and rolled her eyes.

Stalking over to the closet, she finished getting dressed. She snagged a ring of keys from a hook and pulled down her extra gun and unlocked the case it was inside.

"Don't worry, you're already late anyway!" Kehpri yelled from the bathroom. The hot shower, after weeks of sponge baths, was orgasmic in its pleasure. Shuddering, she started to scrub clean.

Disgusted that the first few minutes of water ran brown down the drain, Kehpri spent a bit longer in the shower than she'd expected. It was more than just a couple minutes by the time she emerged from the shower and helped herself to one of Agent Pavel's towels.

Chance was feeling almost back to normal as the shower turned off. She started to button up the shirt, but paused for a moment, checking out her stitches. They didn't seem to be seeping anymore, and even now, she was questioning if she had been hurt as bad as she thought she had been.

She finished buttoning up and tucked her shirt in. Frowning at her closet, she wondered yet again where the hell the blazer was that matched the pants she was wearing.

The bathroom door cracked open enough to let a cloud of steam billow out into the hallway. "Hey, do you have some clothes I can borrow?"

"I got the stuff you let me borrow yesterday."

Kehpri muttered something that sounded like a curse and stepped out of the bathroom with the towel wrapped around her. "Where are they?"

"I got 'em, one sec." She scooped the pants off the floor and the shirt off the couch. Then felt a pang of pity or guilt or something like guilt. "Hey, I'll get you something clean."

Kehpri appeared in the door of the bedroom, wet hair dangling down her face and back. "No, no. I'm not good enough to wear super agent's clothes. Just give me mine."

"Jesus...I was trying to be nice," she threw the clothes at Kehpri.

"Don't strain yourself." Grabbing for the clothes let part of the towel slip, but Kehpri was proud of herself for keeping up her affronted anger, and stalked back to the bathroom to change

"I won't!" she huffed out then slammed over to her dresser and pulled out an old shirt and some shorts. Then still in a snit for some reason she couldn't even fathom, she pulled open the bathroom door. "Goddamn it, I'm being nice here. Take the fucking clothes...." she trailed off.

"Err, um, you're naked."

"That's what happens when I get changed." The skinny woman stepped into her pants and pulled them up. When there was no comment, she raised an eyebrow and looked at the woman in the doorway. "Are you going to tip me for the show?"

The dark-haired woman reached up and rubbed her nose. "No, I'm not tipping...arghhh." She shut the door, stomping off to her kitchen that was separated from the rest of the place by a counter, and pulled a box down from on top of the fridge and grabbed some power bars.

Feeling better with herself after getting the better of the last exchange and being clean, Kehpri emerged from the bathroom in her clothes. "I borrowed some of your soap and shampoo. You ready to go?"

Chance grunted and threw a snack bar at the woman, and followed her to the door.

#####

Chance stepped out of the rusty piece of shit Kehpri called a truck, and gave a half assed wave as she walked up the steps into the small two-story building that was the local FBI.

She opened the door and saw all her fellow agents sitting around. Six, including her, had been out in the field following up on what little leads and hunches they had. Three others had the night off, to work the morning shift or to receive a call to come out and follow up if need be. It was a rotating shift for the full moon coverage.

The over pumped up ultra dick Halstead turned around first, and noticing her.

"Hey, nice of you to join us, Super Agent," he smirked at her, getting everybody else in the room to turn and look over at her.

She bristled but said nothing; just happy she'd had the presence of mind to have Kehpri stop at

her crappy studio apartment so she could change.

The local branch director frowned at her, his eyebrows looking like a fat fuzzy caterpillar dancing on his forehead. "Agent Pavel, debriefing starts at 9 sharp, it is now, 9:09. You're late."

"Sorry, sir, I was shot last night..."

"Yes, I know. I received a phone call from Doctor Miller when you disappeared from the hospital with another woman."

"Alright, Chance! Getting so desperate you have to steal the warm bodies from the clinic?"

"Halstead!" the director barked out before Chance could. "I know we give a certain amount of latitude, on all sorts of things, for agents who choose the Human-Werewolf Affairs posts, but one more outburst like that and you'll be off duty and seeing a shrink."

The bulky man's face went stony and he turned back around.

Everyone there knew he had only stayed in the FBI program because he had agreed to be posted here; anywhere else and they would have booted him out.

"So, Agent Pavel, I understand you were in a shooting. Your first since you've been here with us. Jeremy is still the winner at four bullets removed."

The agents cheered for a moment as the short, stocky man stood and gave a small bow.

"Now that you are officially one of the boys, I will need to see your weapon, take a statement, and we will have to go out to the site and do the usual processing of the scene." He held out his hand.

Chance looked sheepish. "I don't know where my weapon is. I think it may still be at the scene."

"You think," the director made an annoyed face. "And do I want to know why you called your sister to get you, opposed to protocol and calling in?"

"Well, at the time, I thought I was dying, and knew she could find me a lot quicker than you all...err, sir."

"Mule," someone coughed under their breath, and Chance's face started turning red in anger. The director either didn't hear it or ignored it.

"Whatever. Chance, we got you a new partner, finally. Say hello to Donald Gibbons," the director swept his arm out and a young man stood up, barely topping Chance's own 5'10" by a couple of inches.

*God he's young...* was the first thought to enter her brain. He was still bright-eyed and happy. The world of the Reservation hadn't crushed him yet. Chance stepped forward and shook his hand with a quietly spoken, "Donald".

"Okay, with that out of the way, we'll finish reporting in of the shit from last night and then everyone can get on assignments. As always, those of you who worked last night have the day off...except for Pavel and Gibbons. You two get to go process the scene of the shooting. If in anyway it looks like there will be any sniffing of Internal Affairs, give me a call. And Pavel can come back and start on paperwork. Alright, people," he clapped his hands together, "let's start the healing."

Chance hated that joke.

#####

"Video conference initiated," said the computerized voice, and the screen blinked into life.

On the screen was an old, white male with eyes that carried dark black bags under them. "What's happened?" he barked out, running a hand through his wispy white hair.

"I was in the middle of a test run on the new batch of WH3435, so this had better be important."

"Of course it's important, Bob," the voice purred out.

"Doctor Stetler," the man corrected sternly.

"Of course, Doctor." The woman barely resisted rolling her eyes.

"So, what's so important?"

"Well," she started, a huge grin forming on her face, "I was finally able to use Subject 122. And I must say...the initial results were fantastic."

"Subject 122..." The older doctor turned from the screen and the sounds of papers being moved around could be heard.

"Yes. She was brought to the clinic with a gunshot wound to the lower abdomen, considerable loss of blood. During the operation to remove the bullet and stop the bleeding, I was able to inject her with WH3434. I have to say it was like she started to heal on the table. When she woke up a few hours later, you could barely tell she had been shot at all. She was up and moving..."

Stetler cut her off as he came back into view, a file in his hands. "Agent Pavel," he threw the file down with disgust. "That's if she's not already a Were to start with."

"Sir, I think it's time to let those hunches of yours go. She went under a full belly of testing to see

if she was a Were, and passed all the tests with flying colors. Never once were they able to trigger the change. And from my notes here, you went above and beyond in the test scenarios on her."

"Yes, well..." he grumped, "I just have my reservations as using her as a test subject. In my opinion, she should be in one of my cells."

"Yes, well, you know the ruling of 1962. All children of mixed heritage with one Were and one human parent shall be considered a human and given all rights and privileges as such, pending the passage of two full moon nights supervised without change. Agent Pavel is for all purposes a human. All be it, a special one."

"Yes, yes, Dr. Miller, I am aware of the Carolian study of mixed breed children; how they hardly get sick, how they tend to be superior athletes, and heal more quickly from minor injuries. Although nothing compared to their full-blooded Were cousins. That is why I think Agent Pavel should not be in the study, she isn't a full human to start with."

"Well, she's hardly been in the study at all. She never comes to the hospital."

"I thought all agents on the Reservation were supposed to come in once a year for a physical?"

"They are, but Agent Pavel has only been out here for two years, and so far she's managed to get out of it. But that doesn't matter. She sustained a serious life-threatening wound that, from what little is known of mixed-breed children, the rate she healed at was not normal."

"Yes, but it would have been normal for a Were."

Dr. Miller closed her eyes for a moment, wishing Bob would get over this fixation he had with Chance Pavel.

"Perhaps, Dr. Miller, if you could get me a blood sample of her sister, then I could be more convinced she is what..."

"Everybody, and all the scientific data, points to a mixed-breed child," Miller cut in. "And while Zoya is more than willing to share other fluids with me, she is way too smart to give me any blood. And trust me, Bob, I like my lungs and liver right were they are."

"Fine, fine...if you think it's necessary keep tabs on Chance. But I'm telling you, her results will skew the final measurement of the testing."

"I realize I'm not your precious Dr. Madison, but I worked just as hard to get into the program and..." She was cut off as Dr. Stetler ended the video feed.

"Uptight asshole," the doctor cursed.

#####

It was awkward in the jeep, driving out into the middle of nowhere. She hadn't had a partner for almost nine months now. Alexa Stevens, a grumpy African-American woman, had been her partner when she'd first taken the assignment here. Alexa was good, a wealth of information that Chance readily soaked up, but the woman had been here for six years, and was in the deep stages of burnout.

The Reservation had that effect on people. Despite all the noble intentions an agent had when coming out here, they burned up rather quickly under the assault of reality. The reality was... Weres resented being taken away from their native territories and shoved on to the Reservation. They resented the fact they had sided with the humans during the Vampire Rebellion of 1899 and their thanks was to be classified as a hostile, rounded up and shoved on to a piece of land no bigger than Rhode Island. Reality was... local law enforcement couldn't enforce the laws on humans on the Reservation. So a human drove across the border, walked into a store and then walked out with a case of beer without paying. Law enforcement couldn't do squat. A human comes across the border and rapes a woman, the local LEO couldn't do shit. That was where the Federal Agents came in. But up until recently, there was maybe one agent stationed on the reservation as a liaison. And normally, he was there because he was one more fuck up from being kicked out.

Things changed a bit in 1965, when Weres went from being hospital animals to Para-humans. It was the time of civil rights and advanced technology, like cameras, were able to show the horror of Reservation life. Things changed a bit, and from then on out, things started to slowly change in the minds of the people. But on the Reservation, the Weres didn't change; they stayed regulated to separate packs. Most packs distrustful of other packs. Zoya's territory was on the upscale of change, but honestly, her sister was more progressive than other packs. Zoya was the Alpha, dictator supreme; there was no doubt about that. But she had shifted the territory into more of a town, allowed some industry in, and started a town council. She allowed other Weres to join her pack, not just wolves.

But that didn't change the fact that there was still a lot of distrust and anger deeply entrenched between the humans and the Weres. And there were a total of ten Agents out here to follow up on all the shit people did to each other. All that shit wore her old partner down. Chance, in retrospect thought that maybe Alexa had wanted to die, she had certainly gotten sloppy the weeks leading up to the accident. In the end, Chance's first and only partner had her leg chewed off by a Were-cougar doped up on meth. It had taken months, but Chance didn't have nightmares about that one anymore.

"So..." she said to break the silence.

Gibbons just looked at her with trusting brown eyes, that weren't yet shuttered to holding the horrors of life at bay.

"Why the Reservation..?"

He smiled, showing dimples. "Well, my wife wanted to move closer to the family, and there is a signing bonus now, if you sign up for Reservation work."

"No shit, a bonus?" Well, fuck, she'd missed out on that. "So where's you're wife's family?"

"They own the Blackwater Ranch, up north just into Nevada."

"Huh, really...you're married to a Were?" Well, didn't that beat all?

Gibbons' face took on sort of a stony look.

"Oh, hey, I don't mean it to be an asshole, just surprised. The Blackwater family is good people. Their ranch gives a lot of jobs and money into the community." Truth was...the beef was considered some of the best, but until recently, nobody in the US would buy, it was all shipped overseas. Japanese and Russian politicians and wealthy elite loved it. She had no idea how they ran the ranch, considering that Cattle and Weres probably shouldn't mix. Somehow they made it work.

"Well, Justine can't, well..." Gibbons looked uncomfortable.

"Whoa, whoa, don't be putting me in the middle of the family secrets here. We haven't been partners that long." She took the jeep off road and they bounced along inside.

"Nah, the Blackwater family has a genetic defect; about 2% of the kids born in the family are non-shifters. Justine's one of those. Shit, I don't know why I shared that with you."

Chance made a face, "You did it 'cause I might sympathize. You heard Halstead's comments about my mixed race."

The agent looked uncomfortable for a moment. "Yeah, maybe." he hedged.

"Don't worry about it. But the moment you start telling me how lousy your sex life is, I'm kicking you out of the car."

Gibbons just threw back his crew cut head and laughed. "No worries, there is no problems there."

And Chance felt like kicking him out of the car for that too.

They pulled to a stop in the middle of nowhere.

Getting out of the car, Gibbons looked around. "Jeeze, how can you remember this was the spot?"

"I got shot, not going to forget it anytime soon."

"Point..."

"And that's my car," she pointed to the crappy, late model, compact hidden behind some boulders.

"So why here? What made you think hunters would be up here," he asked his young face eager.

Chance had to wonder if this was what Alexa felt like with her.

"Natural blind of rocks to hide the hunters, and it looks down on that pond, a water source for predators and prey."

They paused awkwardly as they found where she'd been shot. There was a decomposing body on the ground and blood soaked the dirt floor. "That's an awful lot of blood."

"Yeah, it is," she agreed, and started looking around for her gun. "I'll leave you to process the body."

She found her gun where his buddies had kicked it into the scrub along with her badge. She snapped gloves on, took a couple of pictures then picked up her stuff and put them in a bag.

Gibbons looked a lot green as he asked, "Should you even be here?"

Chance snorted and looked over at him. "Kid, you got a lot to learn about working on the Reservation. First thing, is that the Weres don't like us, and the humans don't like us, and Halstead's a first rate asshole. No one will help you, and nobody but that guy's family is going to care he's dead. And nobody but me cares that I was shot." That wasn't true, she was sure Zoya cared.

"That's a bit jaded," Gibbons shot out as he processed the body.

"And you're still green, but you'll learn. If you're in a tight spot with hunters, pull out your gun and use it. If you're in a tight spot with Weres, pull out your gun and use it. 'Cause, kid, they all want you dead."

Gibbons just shook his head but stayed silent, though he was getting a little tired of being called kid.

Chance just grinned and tossed her badge and gun over to Gibbons. "I'm going to go see if I can find where his buddies ended up. Or at least get some tire treads."

Gibbons nodded, but he'd gone pale. It looked like a fox or coyote had gotten the dead guy's eyes



during the night.

She walked down the hill weaving in and out of the squat and sparse conifers, bent with lack of water. She remembered seeing the flash of something in the night, and coming up to investigate. She'd gotten out of her car and walked over to where the three yahoos were making a hunting blind, although they were being way too loud and drinking. But it was only sunset at this point, with dusk dripping down and starting to coat the landscape. No moon, yet.

She hadn't really expected them to shoot her; they hadn't done anything yet. But a few more hours and a lot more alcohol later, all sorts of bad shit would happen with these guys.

She'd told them to explain themselves, and a short, squat guy who probably had short man's disease had gotten in her face and pulled a gun on her. She, of course, had pulled her own. Still, she had been surprised when he pulled the trigger, and only managed to fire out of self-preservation. All this time out here and she'd never been shot. Plenty of other bad stuff, but not shot.

She hadn't felt the bullet that pierced her flesh, but she had felt the burning in her gut, as well as a flood of blood exiting her body. She had writhed and screamed on the ground with the remaining two hunters gibbering in a panic.

Jesus she'd probably just lost what was left of her faith in her fellow man. She spotted tire tracks and took a few pictures, as well as bagging a beer can.

She hiked back up to Gibbons, who was sitting on a rock in the shade. "Alright, I found where they parked. Took some pictures and bagged a beer can for DNA." She tossed the jeep keys at him.

He stared at them for a moment. "Are we going somewhere?"

"Nope, but you're going to need a way to get back to the station," she said with a grin. "I'm taking my car back and start filling out the incident paperwork, as well as working on some other stuff. You get to wait for the meat wagon. See you back at the station." She grinned and pulled out her car keys. *Take that, Mister-I-have-a-perfect-sex-life.* Her grin got wider.

Back at the station, she turned on the small fan she had nailed to the window and it weakly moved the hot air around. She stared at the three messages on her desk. Dr. Miller had called her three times already. Jesus...if she'd known the woman would notice her, she would have gotten shot then snuck out of the hospital months ago.

She moved the notes up to her "I'll get around to that soon" pile and looked woefully at her "Get this done right fucking now" pile. Her computer screamed in agony as it booted up. Her ribs were throbbing, but she knew any ice would melt long before she made it back from the fridge.

She studied the map, three more missing Weres last night that they knew of...a mother Werebear

and her cub, then a werewolf from Nightshade, which was a creepy town. They rarely got calls up there. It was sort of like a more intense version of Las Vegas for extreme adult appetites. She wasn't certain her appetite would ever be adult enough for that place. She'd heard rumors of Vamps up there, and maybe a witch or two. So they'd have to go sniff around but... She shuddered just thinking about it.

With a groan, she decided to go make some coffee.

#####

Zoya turned off the shower and stepped out into the thick steam covering the bathroom. She yawned and brushed water-drenched locks out of her face and grabbed a thick towel. Wiping steam off the mirror, she studied her face. She was tired, full moon nights did that to her. Alphas, those with the ability to resist the call of emotion and mood, that so ruled the Were nature, were rare. Most of her full moon nights were spent running herd on her pack. Of course, last night had the unexpected complication of Chance.

She sighed as she vigorously dried her hair. *Fucking Chance...* Her half sister was always a mystery to her, why she had stayed in the human world, joined their ideals, and became a federal agent. Once Chance had turned eighteen, she'd begged her sister to come back to the pack, to rejoin them. But no, Chance wanted to change things from within the system.

She hung the towel back up and stepped out into her luxurious bedroom. The windows were open, letting in the bright afternoon sunlight. She could see the haze of the heat baking the world outside. In the distance she could see the city, her city, spread out, and the garish military complex where she let the humans stay and pretend they had influence in her world.

The comforter on the bed moved, and a blonde head poked out of the covers with a squeak.

Zoya frowned and wondered what the hell she'd been thinking, letting Veronica into her bed. She kicked the bed. "Get your clothes and get out," she said matter-of-factly, turning to her huge closet and pulled out a designer suit and jacket that fit her body very well.

The woman in the bed pouted, "You can't mean that, especially after the fun we had last night."

Zoya chuckled and turned with an evil look on her face. "I've had better. Now get out. I have a meeting, and you're lowering my property value."

There was a small feeling of remorse as the woman sniffing back tears grabbed her clothes and ran out of the room, but then Zoya just shrugged it off. Being a leader of a pack meant not dwelling on the unpleasant things she did sometimes.

She finished getting dressed and pulled her long hair into a ponytail. Opening the door, she found Terry standing outside with her phone and a cup of coffee. She smiled at the old woman and took

both. "Lovely as ever, Terry," she said with a grin.

"Zoya, stop bringing home those bitches, you get yourself a good strong Alpha bitch to help you rule, and things will get better."

"I know, I know. But you know me...I'm just not ready to settle down."

The older woman sighed and swatted Zoya's behind as the woman passed, going down the stairs to her office. She flipped open the phone. "Yes, Bill, I know you have a problem. You have a problem because you tried to screw me. I allow you're company to come in and build a mining rig, and you try to get out of hiring my people and paying fees. So if you want your copper plant and you're fucking copper, you better start meeting our agreement."

She listened to the guy on the other end try to wheedle his way around their agreement.

"Let me see...you thought you could outsmart the stupid animal person. Now listen here, Bill, my land, my mining facility, and oh yeah, jobs for my people. Or you can explain all the arsenic you left in the ground at your other mining sites when they closed down."

There was a stunned silence from the phone.

She grinned, "Yep, I bet you thought you bribed all the right people to make sure that report never saw the light of day. Funny thing there, Bill...my nose alone can detect a plethora of disease and poison, so I didn't need any report to know what you guys buried in those sites when you closed them. You think I was just going to bend over and let you rape my people, think again. So, is it going to be my way, or am I going to be kicking your people out and selling all that copper to somebody else?" She grinned. "Yeah, you have a nice day too."

She might not have a fancy degree like her sister, but that didn't mean she was a stupid animal. It was a wonder what a fake identity and a credit card could get you online now. She had a couple of online degrees in business and other things that caught her fancy. Of course, Zoya Pavel had none of those.

There was a knock at her office door and she leaned back in her leather chair and stared around her. She'd built a good life in the shadow of her father's death. She'd brought the pack here farther than he ever would have, but he'd been stuck on the idea of them being the noble savage. The best of animal and man, and that someday the human race would realize that. She snorted, not likely. She'd brought many of the packs together, opened inroads on the Reservation to industry. And because they were considered their own sovereign nation, she could undercut taxes and prices elsewhere in the US and abroad. Big business didn't see color or the furriness of skin, they saw the bottom line. And she helped them achieve that bottom line quick and easy.

Of course, the big picture was to unite all the rag-tag packs and prides under her, because as the good old American saying went, 'United we stand, divided we fall'. United with hundreds of Werens under her, it'd be best for the humans to start watching their backs. She grinned evilly.

The knock came again, only louder.

She blinked and came out of her daydream of world domination. "Come in."

Duncan stood filling the doorway. "Um, you wanted me to remind you of the two humans in the holding cells."

"Oh, right. Thank you." She got up and followed Duncan into the basement, which smelled strongly of animal musk. She normally held more feral members or teenagers with hormone issues, and the occasional female who was going into heat during a full moon. Regardless, on full moon nights she held pack members who needed help controlling themselves when the moon was high. With a strong Alpha influence, many Weres learned to remain themselves even when they slipped their skin, but it took practice, and many lone wolves went feral in the scrub of the high desert, and true Alphas were hard to find.

However, one cell in the back, still housed two humanoid figures.

Seeing them approach, a raspy voice strained from overuse called out, "You can't keep us here. You don't have any authority to hold us."

Zoya and Duncan stopped in front of the cell. She barely kept her distaste from showing in her winter blue eyes. "You two were found speeding away from a shooting."

"Yeah, so what?" one of the men challenged, his face gaunt and tired, huge dark circles spread out from under his eyes. "You..." he pointed a finger at them, "don't have the authority to hold us. When I get out of here I'm having the feds come in and shoot your freak asses full of sliver."

"Really?" she raised an eyebrow and smirked at Duncan. The big man barely kept his face neutral.

"Jacob, shut up," the other man said from where he sat, a defeated slump to his shoulders.

"What? I know the laws, and the law is only a federal agent can charge us."

"Oh, like the federal agent you shot last night?"

"Ah...what..?"

"Yeah, your buddy shot a federal agent."

"Oh God," his face went pale. "I didn't look too good at that badge. I thought it was just one of your mule local law officers out."

"Wow, and the fact you think it would be okay to shoot anybody boggles my mind. But you see,

it gets worse, that federal agent just happens to be my sister. So now you can understand my level of pissed off."

"Good," the hunter said, getting his steam back. "Freaks are now infecting all levels of the government. You are a disease that needs to be stopped."

The other hunter stood up. "Jacob, shut up." He turned, looking at Zoya. "I'm sorry. I...I'm desperate. I lost my job a month ago, and my little girl, the doctors say there's something wrong with her heart. I needed money and Bobby, he's the guy your sister shot, he said I could get the money I needed coming out here and hunting Weres. I know it's murder, and wrong, but I'd do anything for my little girl. Please, Bobby had some connection for body parts of Weres."

That wasn't the first time she'd heard that. There was a huge black market in Asia for were-animal bodies. The Asian continent didn't really have any Weres left, so to speak, tigers, foxes and the mythical shark hadn't been seen in decades.

"God you are such a fucking whiner," Jacob turned on his fellow hunter.

"Just because I have a family to live for, you bitter old fuckhead."

Zoya let the two men bicker, before she held out a hand and Duncan dutifully placed one of the hunting rifles pulled from the cab of the truck the two men were driving in, in her hand. She made sure it was loaded and pulled the trigger. The silver bullet slammed into the hunter's head, and exited out the back with a splatter of blood and brain.

Jacob, stunned, watched his fellow cellmate slump to the floor dead, "Holy shit!"

"Jacob!" Zoya said, getting the man's attention. "You're probably thinking to yourself that somehow you're the lucky one, right now, at this very moment. But you'd be wrong. I showed him mercy, gave him the quick kill that you'll be begging for six months from now." She turned away from the cell, Duncan following at her heels.

"What do you want me to do with him?" he asked, his Scottish accent slipping out with the smell of fresh blood getting to him a bit.

"Send him on to Nightshade. I'm sure he'll feed somebody's kink up there. Send the instructions he's to survive at least for six months of hell there before somebody better even think of going too far."

The big man nodded.

"The other one...find out if he does, indeed, have a family. And if his story was true, make sure his little girl gets that surgery she needs."

Duncan's stride paused for a moment in surprise, "A human."

"Don't question me on that. He was a desperate man thinking of his family above all things, even right and wrong. I respect that. If he was lying for my sympathy, I want to piss on his remains."

"Yes, boss."

#####

Leaving behind the annoying agent, Kehpri spun the wheels on the truck as she pulled away from the nondescript looking building that housed the FBI offices. Nobody had given her a second look, but just being there was enough to make her uneasy.

She was glad to see the place in her rearview mirror. The brown-haired woman started singing when she couldn't see it anymore at all, after rounding a bend in the road.

With the windows down, the wind causing her hair to fly about unrestrained and the music as loud as the pitiful speakers could handle, she even felt close to normal. The full night's sleep had been wonderful.

"Then she had to go and ruin the moment by jumping out of bed, like I was some sort of crack whore or something," Kehpri frowned, her mood turning dark again. "Fuck her. I don't need her to like me."

It would have been nice to have a friend though. It had been a long time since she'd been able to talk to someone. Even before she'd gone on the run it had been tough to talk to anyone.

"Crap. Pull it together. You don't have time for memories."

Focusing on the road ahead of her and ignoring the memories that clamored for attention again, she headed away from the center of the small town, towards the edge of civilization.

"Time to go to work..." She couldn't let herself she'd fall back into a pit of despair comparing her current work place to the state of the art facility she'd once worked at. The self-storage place was nearly abandoned. Certainly she'd only seen one or two other people using it in the months now that she'd been set up.

"Shit, gotta remember to find some money to cover next month's rental." That was getting harder also. She'd run out of things to sell a while ago. Parking the truck next to the end unit, she hopped out and fished around under her seat for a tightly bundled plastic bag.

Pulling out her keys, she unlocked the heavy padlock on the door. Quickly, she slipped inside, closing the door behind her to keep any possible prying eyes from seeing inside.

Paranoia wasn't something she really joked about anymore.

At least the place had electricity, which was more than she could have said for her current home. The industrial switches hummed as she forced them into the on position. Fluorescent lights flickered and came on, illuminating the workspace she'd made for herself.

Equipment was piled across benches. Most of it was standard biological laboratory fair, centrifuges, computers, and microscopes. All of it had been stolen or bought through far less than legal routes. The plastic bag she was holding was tossed onto one of the benches. The blood-soaked cloth inside, from Agent Pavel, would be analyzed soon enough.

The only thing that was obviously out of place was the bullet reloader setup that she had in one corner of the rental space. Bags of silver powder and pellets rested around it.

Today she ignored the scientific equipment and went to the main computer system and its attached scanner.

Reaching down her pants, she pulled out the photograph she'd smuggled out of Agent Pavel's apartment.

"All right...let's see if I can find out who you are." She put the photo on the scanner and started to work.

A thick bunch of cables ran from the back of her impromptu computer network up to the roof above her. She was sure that the owner of the shit dump would probably be furious if he ever found out about the small satellite receiver she'd drilled onto the roof, but she really didn't care.

As always, she was careful to cover her tracks as best as she could. She'd never been a fantastic hacker, though, and without the programs that friends had given her; this little jaunt into the government computer systems would have been well beyond her abilities. First up, a look into the FBI files that she'd only briefly skimmed through a couple of days prior. This time she made full copies of the personnel files on the ten agents that were stationed on the Reservation.

That would be her bedtime reading later.

Closing down the window, she shifted to the Department of Defense net and pulled up a nifty little program she'd stumbled across. Feeding in the cropped pictures of the faces from the picture she'd borrowed from Agent Pavel's house, she set the program to analyzing them.

"For once this facial recognition software is going to actually help me."

The prospect of using the department of Defense's programs against it always made her smile. Leaving that to run, she considered the experiments she had lined up on the bench.

None of them were possible, since her mission to the hospital had frankly been a failure.

"Well, I did get Chance out of there, before Dr. Miller could do anything else."

It really annoyed Khepri that she hadn't been able to sneak in while they'd been working on the agent during the first few frantic moments. She'd seen the good doctor inject something into the agent, but she hadn't been able to get a sample, or even get the used syringe.

Unfortunately, that meant she was going to have to go back to the hospital and try again.

Hopefully the staff wouldn't just throw her into some psychiatric ward.

"Hmmm..." Picking up a small data recorder, she flipped it on. "It's now been three weeks since I've come to the Were Reservation. I know that there is an answer here, somewhere. The files that Tim got me, along with my mysterious contact from the DoD, show that the tissue and blood samples came from here. My attempt to find out what Dr. Miller is doing here have not been successful yet. Note to self, attempt infiltrating the hospital again, perhaps not as a patient this time."

She clicked off the recorder, staring at the lab bench as she considered her possible plans of action.

"Oh, note to self. I have to return the picture to the Super Agent's place - soon."

Again, the recorder was clicked off. This time she set it aside on the desk.

Since the program was still dutifully sifting through data and trying to match a name to the faces on the faded out picture, she leaned back in the chair and laced her hands behind her head.

There had to be a connection between Dr. Miller's presence here and the disappearing Weres. She was sure of it. Bob had to be involved in it somehow, also, although he was doing a great job of keeping himself clean of any incriminating evidence.

"Goddamn it! Six months now and all I have are fucking rumors!"

It was infuriating. Six months on the run, six months of hiding out and trying to piece together what was going on. And what did she have... a banged up pickup truck, an ancient Gulf Stream trailer, and a lab, of sorts, hidden in a space rental place.

She was alone, utterly alone. No one would care if she died suddenly out here. No one would even miss her. In fact, a few people would be pretty happy if she did.

"Fuck it." Grabbing the photo off of the scanner and leaving the computer to do its thing, she decided to get to work on the blood samples. That would give her something to concentrate on so she wouldn't feel so lonely. There were days when she thought she would go insane from loneliness.



"Maybe I already have."

She laughed, "Talking to myself again."

Sighing, she pulled on some gloves and pulled open the white plastic garbage bag she'd used to stuff the cloth in. Time to find out what Agent Pavel's DNA could tell her.

#####

Chance got out of her car, not as cool as the work vehicle she got to drive and not as many gadgets, but it got her from point A, her house, to point B, her work. The day had been hot, and her shirt was stuck to her back with sweat. She pulled into the local market near her house.

Instead of suffering the food at the Frosty Stand, which she was pretty certain the young punks who worked there spit into her food, she was going to try cooking for herself...which was depressing.

Her day had been full of shit, the kind of human shit and suffering that made her sometimes sit at home with her gun in her mouth, thinking seriously of eating a bullet. A roughneck Were full of attitude coming out of the store slammed into her. She gritted her teeth and attempted to move around him.

"Fucking puppy, go back to your human masters, we don't need no human-loving piece of shit stinking up our territory."

The tic started in her right eye again, and she just gritted her teeth and went inside.

Chance just didn't need this shit today.

She had spent most of her day just across the border following up on a rape charge. The smug asshole who had raped a twelve year old girl would probably never see the inside of a jail, and now she was just feeling filthy and like she'd failed.

Everyone stared at her, and whispered behind her back, and she wondered how Halstead had managed this for five years, and she was nowhere near the asshole he was, although, he did live off the Reservation.

She bought some steaks and a sack of potatoes, just because it was a good buy, and beer. Then feeling guilty, threw in some apple juice, to pretend she was healthy. The cashier rang her up way too high for the steaks, but Chance didn't have it in her to argue. She just kept seeing the beaten and bloody face of that girl and kept thinking about how much she'd failed her.

As she walked out to her car, she cursed when she saw her left back taillight had been kicked in.

She dragged her tired ass up the three flights to her apartment, took one look at the door and

knew someone had broken in. The open door was a big clue. "Fucking great," she muttered, kicking the door shut.

A startled yelp echoed from deeper in the apartment, and Khepri appeared at the door from the bedroom, grinning sheepishly. "Hi."

Chance just stood for a moment, her lips pursed. She thought about an outburst, but gave up the idea it wouldn't do any good. "You...but it's only been a week since last we saw each other."

"What a week though," Khepri grinned, which turned into a smile when she spotted the shopping bags. "Oh, are we having dinner?" She rubbed her hands together hopefully.

"Yeah, why not," Chance said. "'Cause if I asked you to leave, would it do any good?"

"Nope," Khepri said happily, very, very glad that she'd managed to return the picture to its spot in the back before the agent had barged in.

She walked past her to the kitchen, flipping on a light. "If I find any of my underwear gone, I'm shooting you, just so we're clear."

"As if I want anything to do with your underwear..." Khepri trailed along behind her, still fixated on the bags of groceries that the dark-haired agent was carrying. "So what are we having for dinner?"

"You a vegetarian?" Chance asked, setting the bags down.

"Like I could afford to be a vegetarian." She didn't have the finances to be choosy about the things she ate.

"Well then, we're having steak and potatoes." She rubbed her face wondering why she didn't just kick the insane woman out of her place. It wasn't like Khepri weighed anything.

"Steak and potatoes," the other woman almost drooled right there. "That sounds great." She hesitated a moment "Did you want, I mean, is there something I can help with?"

"Yeah, um, you can um... no, not really. Give me a moment to change and I'll start. You want to take another shower?" Chance asked as she walked to her bedroom, un-tucking her shirt from her pants.

Khepri frowned and looked down at herself. "No...I don't think so. Why, are you saying I smell?"

"No," Chance shouted from her bedroom. "You just seemed to enjoy taking one when you were here on Tuesday." She paused, thinking to herself that she really hadn't been home since then, either. "Jesus is it really Friday already?" she muttered and threw her blazer on the floor and started unbuttoning her shirt.

Her stitches were itching like crazy, and maybe she should go in and see Dr Miller to get them removed, the woman had been calling for a follow up.

"It is? Oh, right, yeah it's Friday," the distracted sounding shout came from the other room as Kehpri started to fiddle with the fairly nice stereo system in the living room. "If you're offering, though, I might take you up on the shower thing later."

"Yeah, why not, you already broke into my place." She shucked off her pants and slipped on some well-worn jeans. With her shirt unbuttoned, she wandered to the doorway. "Why are you here?"

"Hhhhhmmmmmmmmmm..?" Kehpri looked over, grinning as she took in the rather interesting fashion statement. "What?" She had to mentally slap herself to get her mind out of the gutter. "Well, your door was open, so I decided to see if you were in."

"My door was open?" She frowned and walked back to her closet. "Well, fuck." She took her shirt off, pulled on a t-shirt, and pulled her hair back in a short ponytail. She grabbed her keys off the key hook, unlocked the gun box and put away her service weapons.

"I know, and I came ready to try and pick the lock. Good thing it was open though, I really suck at lock picking." Finding a channel that she liked, Kehpri flopped down on the couch and listened to the smooth jazz that was being played.

She looked around but didn't see anything missing. "Well, I haven't been home since Tuesday, so God knows how long it's been that way. I don't see anything missing, so I guess that's good." She threw a towel at crazy and went out on the balcony to start her small gas grill. "So what's your week been like? You feeding and watering your flamingos?"

"Of course not, they're plastic." Kehpri wandered after the agent, making sure that the music was loud enough to hear out on the small slab of a balcony. "Besides, I don't have much water. I've been trying to figure out what the hospital people have been doing." The brunette looked so very earnest in answering, that even as her stomach rumbled at the sight of steaks.

"Hospital?" she raised an eyebrow then just shook her head. "And why were you trying to break into my place?" She looked up and sighed, "Never mind."

Happy that the grill was going, she let the rack heat up and went back inside. She popped the steaks out and ripped open the wrapping. She'd been planning on cooking both and eating the other one tomorrow, but she was committed to feeding the crazy lady now. She opened the 5lb bag of potatoes and pulled out two good-sized ones and rinsed them off, popping them in the microwave.

She asked, "How do you like your steak?"

"Medium..." Khepri perched on one of the barstools that seemed to double as kitchen chairs, watching the goings on with great curiosity. "How do you know how to cook?" It wasn't gourmet cooking, but it was more than she herself knew how to do.

"After my parents died, I went to live with my uncle Paul, who was a dick. Women did all the cooking and cleaning, and men sat on the couch and farted - I guess. So I was regulated to the kitchen to learn my womanly duties. Now my uncle Paul is still an ass, but when I went away to college and then joined the FBI, knowing how to cook came in handy, especially living by myself. Do you have any idea the crap they put in fast food?" She stopped massaging the steak-rub into the meat and blinked at Khepri, "Well, that was an intensely personal story I had no intention of sharing." Self-consciously, she went out to the grill and turned the heat almost off, and threw the meat on, leaving Khepri to fidget a bit awkwardly in the kitchen alone.

Not particularly liking the feeling, she jumped down off the stool and went to stand in the doorway to the balcony, watching the woman grill. "My mother always tried to get me to learn how to cook. I never really figured out how to do it without a recipe. She always said it was more of an art." Maybe an exchange of stories would set the other woman at ease.

Chance nodded and sat down on the one dirty, plastic chair out on the balcony. "Well, recipes are good templates, but they're general in a lot of ways. Different altitudes and climates can affect a dish greatly, and then sometimes your palate just craves more than what the recipe says. But that's my opinion."

Unconsciously, she started scratching her ribs where her stitches were driving her nuts.

"What's wrong with your stitches? Don't tell me you tore them again!" Khepri was quickly out of the doorway and kneeling by the chair that the agent was sitting in, pushing up the shirt material to try and see the stitches she'd redone just a few days ago.

"Stop it. They itch, just means they're healing." Chance was a bit bemused to have Khepri kneeling at her side.

"As if you know anything about healing..." The brunette managed to push up the shirt enough to see the wounds. Her eyes widened then narrowed as she studied the stitches. "Well...your stitches have to come out."

"Okay, I'll go see Dr. Miller on Monday. She's been calling me all week to come in for a follow up."

"No!" Khepri's eyes got all wide again. "No Dr. Miller! She's evil. I'll remove them myself."

Confused, Chance sat back. "She's a doctor, they take a Hypothetical Oath or something...you know, to help mankind. You have some sort of hospital phobia?"

"Of course not, I was in the hospital when I met you, wasn't I? Don't move." She got up and dashed inside, going to grab a few things she'd seen in the bathroom on her last visit.

"Um, I think Dr. Miller is a little more qualified to do this. Plus she's hot." She grinned a bit at the thought of being topless in Dr. Miller's hands. That faded though, and she pondered, if that was so appealing why was she putting the good doctor off. That...she didn't have an answer for.

"You think she's hot?" Kehpri asked, emerging with a bottle of peroxide and a nail cleaning kit. "She's evil and demented. She'll use you for one of her demented experiments." So saying, she knelt again and poured a liberal amount of peroxide over the small pair of scissors.

"Don't move," the skinny woman demanded, then gently started to snip off the knotted end of the stitches and pull them out.

This had to be the most interpersonal contact she'd had in a while, barring the guys at work and her sister, how fucking weird was her life. Chance didn't move a muscle. "This couldn't have waited until after dinner?"

"No," was the short answer as Kehpri worked her way down the line of stitches. "Dr. Miller could have done a better job stitching you instead of flirting all the time," she grumbled, not taking any pains to hide her disdain for the good doctor.

"Okay, then. You're jealous of Dr. Miller...which is understandable. She's a doctor with a staff and a hospital and you're not."

The last stitch was removed a touch more roughly than was really called for. "And you are a bitch," Kehpri said, tossing the scissors back into the toiletry kit.

Chance thought about it for a minute. "Yeah, you're right. I'm sorry. Shitty week," she said in her defense. She had to chuckle because they were all shitty weeks. God she was overdue for a vacation.

"Are you always this annoying or only to those people you think are insane?" Kehpri asked, getting up from next to the seat.

"Um, well...is that a trick question?" She blinked then pulled her shirt back down and got up. "It's possible, I suppose, that I am always annoying."

"And this is the best conversation I've had in months," Kehpri grumbled to herself, stowing the toiletry kit aside to watch the grilling that was going on.

She checked the steaks, happy that they were cooking slowly and that they might just been done at the same time as the potatoes. "But you may just be overly sensitive, since you're insane."

"You know, I really don't remember admitting or agreeing to this insane thing." The slim woman

perched on the edge of the dirty plastic chair, trying not to drool as she caught a whiff of the delicious smells of cooking steaks.

"Semantics," Chance muttered out. She walked into the kitchen and grabbed a beer. "You want a beer?"

"You have beer?" Kehpri very nearly leapt off the chair to follow the agent into the kitchen, "Cold beer?" She really had to come around here more often.

"Well, it was cold when I got it at the store thirty minutes ago." She grabbed one and twisted the top off. "It's an amber, I think."

"Oh God, I think I love you." Kehpri snatched the bottle out of the other woman's hands and took a deep drink. The sounds that followed were probably a shoo-in for any porn movie out there.

"Um..." She cleared her throat and felt a little flush. "I'll be right back. I'm just going to go to the bathroom."

Rolling the bottle along her neck, Kehpri made some sort of vague agreeing motion. It had been so long since she'd had actual cold beer, she'd forgotten what it tasted like. "Want me to look after the steaks?"

"Um, yeah, whatever..."

Chance shut the bathroom door and turned the faucet on cold and splashed water on her face. She stared at her reflection. "You need a girlfriend. Okay, you need to get laid...if the crazy lady is making you hot." She slapped more water on her face.

The alcohol was going straight to the brunette's brain. Taking another drink that emptied the bottle almost halfway, she wandered back out to the balcony to watch over the all-important steaks.

"Hey, how do you want your steak?" the shout from the balcony came.

Chance came back out, pulled the potatoes out of the microwave and threw them into the oven.

"You can pull it off now. I like it more on the raw side." She grabbed a beer and started drinking.

"Hope you have more beer too." Kehpri started getting the steaks off the grill and onto the plate. "I need to come here more often for dinner," she grinned widely, as she carried the plate with steaks inside.

"I have a six pack. Erm, well, a four pack now, I guess." She scratched her head in wonder at the domestic scene going on in her apartment.

"Perfect." This was turning into a really good day as far as Kehpri was concerned. "I don't suppose you have ice cream for dessert, do you?" she asked, so very hopefully.

"Dunno, check the freezer." She stared at their dinner. "Jesus I need to eat more vegetables. I'm never going to have another bowel movement again."

The freezer would have to wait. The meat was entirely too tempting right now. Without waiting for permission, she grabbed the largest of the steaks and started right in. "Dinner's great like this," she mumbled around a piece of meat.

Chance watched stunned as the woman grabbed the bigger of the two steaks and started inhaling it. Grumbling about rude, uninvited house guests, she pulled the potatoes out of the oven and opened her fridge, pulling out some butter and tossing the sour cream into the trash without even looking at it.

It was passed its prime by a month.

Juggling her beer and plate, she went back outside where the scorching day had given way to a pleasant evening.

"This is really good," Kehpri called after her, licking her lips in a pause that was dictated by the need to breath.

"Glad you liked it. Come over anytime and sponge off me." She was being sarcastic, but oddly, it had been nice to cook for someone else. She checked that the grill was turned off then swung her feet up onto the railing and started to eat as the sun disappeared.

The last of the meat was carefully gnawed off the bone, and only when it was completely clean did she set it aside and pick up her fork again for the potato. "Thanks for the invitation," the brunette said happily. "I'll bring beer next time." She'd try to bring beer, anyway.

Chance just grunted and cracked the bone of her steak with her teeth and started to suck the marrow out.

There was a moment of silence as Kehpri stared at her dining partner, and then she looked back down to her potatoes. "Sooo...you said you can't change shape, right?"

Chance raised an eyebrow, set the well-gnawed bone down and picked up her beer. She took a long swallow before finally answering. "No. I'm human, I'm FBI, and unless they've changed the wording somewhere, no Para-humans may be in any level of government. Mixed-breeds are considered human."

"Right, right..." She took a bite of potato and studiously watched a car passing down the street below. "So how'd you heal so quickly?" she finally asked, in what she was pretty sure was a

neutral tone.

Shoulders shrugged and Chance got up suddenly, no longer hungry, and stalked inside. "I guess I wasn't hurt as bad as everyone thought." She tossed her food in the garbage.

"Do you enjoy living in denial?" Kehpri called after her, the neutral tone gone and replaced by annoyance.

There was a headache forming behind her eyes, and a whisper of memory wanting to get out. But she wasn't up for dealing with the past, so she pushed it away.

"Look, I've had a shitty day. Some prick raped a twelve year old, and by the time someone thought to call us, the evidence was already corrupted and he'd gotten five of his buddies to swear up and down he was with them. So...yeah..." She finished scrubbing her face. "I'm going to go take a shower then maybe drink myself unconscious, 'cause I have tomorrow off. Help yourself to..." She gazed around her pathetically stocked kitchen. "...stuff."

From the door to the balcony, Kehpri winced, feeling like an ass. "Look, I'm sorry, I just..." She grimaced. "I'm not really good with people," she offered, finally, a bit lamely.

It probably wasn't wise to leave crazy alone in her house, but she'd already broken in and kidnapped her. Chance held up a hand to silence her. "No more talking until I have a shower and another beer. Then you may have a shower and join me in getting drunk."

She pulled her shirt off as she entered her bedroom and stripped off the rest of her clothes. She started the shower, opened the medicine cabinet, grabbed the aspirin and took a handful.

There were only two more beers in the fridge. That would make getting drunk rather hard. Kehpri weighed her options. She did feel bad about making the other woman give her food.

Well, she felt kind of bad about it.

Digging into her torn and dusty jeans, she pulled out the crumpled bills in it and shrugged. She probably had enough time to go get some more cheap beer. Tearing a piece of paper off a takeout order form, she scrawled a note, left it on the table and closed the door after her.

Shower was hot, scalding into her skin, burning away most of the shit, leaving her in a better frame of mind. With her mood considerably better, she turned the shower off and stepped out, grabbing a towel. "Hey, you'd save any beer?"

When silence was her only answer, she stepped out of her room. "Crazy?"

Chance looked around on the off chance Kewpie doll was lying in wait with a sharp knife. Instead, she found a note saying 'BRB with more beer'. She pinched the bridge of her nose. "Jesus. I had hard alcohol in the cabinet above the fridge."



She looked at the time and sighed. Really, how much trouble could the woman get into?  
"Right..." She ran back to her room and pulled on some clothes.

The door to Agent Pavel's apartment banged open and Kehpri leaned against the doorframe, out of breath, a case of the cheapest beer in both hands. "Did you know you live in a really crappy neighborhood?"

Chance skidded to a halt halfway down the hallway. "Jesus...I was almost worried. Yeah, I know, I live in not the best place."

"No, I mean it's really a bad neighborhood. These guys were following me almost all the way back here..." She paused, slowly smiling. "Aw, you were going to come save me! You care!"

"No, not," Chance grumbled and tightened her towel that had come loose. She stood awkwardly for a moment. "Uh, thanks for getting beer. I'll just go get dressed."

"You did care!" the taunting yell came down the hall after the agent. Laughing happily, Kehpri slammed the door shut behind her and started to pile beer in the fridge, singing off tune again.

Now dressed, Chance came back out. "Please don't sing anymore." She wandered over to the stereo and turned off the light jazz station that was driving her nuts and put in a Jimmy Buffett CD. Blushing, she quickly skipped it past 'Why don't we get drunk and screw' to a different song.

The beers safely in the fridge, Kehpri shoved the box next to it to host the inevitable empty bottles. An open one for herself and one for Chance, she said, "You don't like my singing?"

"No, not really..." She took the beer and sat on her overstuffed couch with a happy sigh. "There's a towel and some clothes in the bathroom if you want to shower. And you're sleeping on the couch tonight. Remind me and I'll grab you a pillow and a blanket.

Both eyebrows went up as Kehpri found herself a seat on the opposite side of the couch. "I'm staying here?" She grinned. "Don't I get the bed?"

Chance snorted, "No. You only get the bed if we're sleeping together...which we're not. And you're drinking, so you're not driving, which means, 'cause I'm feeling nice since you braved my shitty neighborhood to get beer, that you get the couch."

"Otherwise, what, you'd make me sleep on the balcony?" That seemed a bit rough to Kehpri. Thankfully, she had beer to down to dull the pain, which she did.

"Um, nah, I'd still let you sleep on the couch. I was just giving you a hard time." She downed her beer and got up to get another one.

"You want another?" she held up a full one, shaking it."

"Better bring two." Kehpri showed no indication of getting up off the couch. In fact, by the fifth beer of the evening, she was pretty certain she was never going to get off the couch again.

Slumped back onto the arm, she stared up at the ceiling above her.

"Your ceiling is really dirty," she said, managing to raise her beer and take a drink without dribbling too much.

"Yeah, well, it's the maid's week off." She brought the beer over, handing it to Kehpri, and sat down. She sipped her beer then pulled her shirt up. She looked down, studying where Kehpri had taken the stitches out. "It's not going to be a horrible scar. You did good work on the stitches, Doc."

"I did great work. I can't believe that hack Miller ever got through medical school." The empty beer bottle joined its pack mates on the floor by the edge of the couch, and she took the new one.

Chance wisely said nothing. She was well aware by now that Kehpri had issues with Doctor Miller, "So why aren't you a doctor anymore?"

"Who said I wasn't?" She managed to lift her head and narrowed her eyes at the other woman.

"On vacation then, to the lovely and scenic Were Reservation?" Chance sat her empty down and started humming to the music.

"Hmph...you can hum to music but I can't." Kehpri let her head fall back and laughed.

"Yeah...vacation. I'm taking a sabbatical. It clears the head."

"Humming is okay, but no singing."

Kehpri snorted, "That's discrimination. I thought you super agents were supposed to be above that sort of thing." She took another drink.

Chance chuckled, "Fucking place to take a vacation." She looked over then reached over, brushing an unruly strand of curly hair behind Kehpri's ear. Her fingers lingered for a moment then she snatched her hand back. Wow, maybe it was time for bed if she was thinking that Crazy was looking sort of cute in a mad doctor way.

"Hmmm...good place for a vacation," Kehpri mumbled, eyes closing. She'd had enough beer to be feeling very nice; maybe she'd even get a good night sleep. "I thought you didn't like me," she mumbled.

"I don't." Chance got up. "Let me get you a pillow and a blanket."

"What a sweet talker you are," Kehpri grumbled, putting down the half empty beer. That was

enough of that, before she said anything really bad.

Chance laughed, a full, rich sound, "You want sweet talk and pretty words, go to Zoya." She returned with an extra pillow off her bed and a blanket.

#####

Chance woke, sitting straight up in bed, the nightmare already receding. Her t-shirt and boxers were soaked with sweat and her panting breath sounded loud in her bedroom. The nightmare had shifted somehow. Normally it ended with the death of her family, with the crack of a rifle, and the smell and taste of blood everywhere. This time it had kept going. Her Uncle Paul had been there with a baseball bat. He was screaming at her, and hitting her over and over again, calling her a freak and a monster.

Jesus she shouldn't drink so much before going to bed.

Her door slid open and she looked over, easily seeing Kephri in the dark room.

"You okay?"

She thought about lying, making Kephri go away, but then she settled for the truth, "No, not really, you?"

"Me neither."

Chance could almost taste the unasked question by the other woman, and she threw back the covers. "Why don't you, sleep in here with me...safety in numbers."

A moment's hesitation and then Kephri was walking over and sliding into the bed. Chance spooned around her and had to wonder if there were two more fucked up people on the planet, or perhaps misery really did like company.

"Don't you wish, sometimes, that you could avoid ever sleeping again?" Kephri's voice sounded lost in the darkness, weary.

"Sometimes, yes, sometimes, no...sometimes...even though it's a nightmare...I get to be with my family again. I can't remember what they look like. It's so clear on waking, but then it fades."

"What happened to them?" Feeling the other woman tense, Kephri stroked the arm around her mid section. "You don't have to tell me, just, you know, sometimes it helps."

"Shot by hunters. It was a clean kill; both of them hit in the head. Weres can't heal that. My brother Ivan wasn't so lucky, glancing wound causing brain damage, and Zoya and I were fine. Well, if you consider being covered in your pack mother's blood and brains okay."

There wasn't really so much that Kehpri could actually say in response to that. Everything that came to mind seemed too trivial and she knew how much she hated it when people said stupid inane things. "I hope they got what they deserved," she said instead.

"Maybe... Zoya was hiding in the shadows of night, and I pissed myself. I was lying under my pack mother's dead body, hearing the footsteps getting closer and closer and then Zoya attacked them. She killed them, ripped their throats out."

Kehpri shuddered at the rawness in the agent's voice. She could almost picture the scene that the dark-haired woman was describing; seeing it in her mind's eye. "Then you decided to join the FBI, to make sure that people like that would get caught?"

"Yeah... I understand why Zoya did it. She was protecting me, her pack. But in the end, the FBI came in, investigated, took me away from Zoya, and sent Zoya to a sort of Juvi for minors. I had to live twelve more years with my birth mother's dick of a brother. I spent all that time thinking, nobody was wrong, but the results were still fucked up, so the system needed changing." Chance unconsciously held on tighter.

"And have you?" The smaller woman turned her head just enough so that she could get a look at the other woman's face in the near darkness. "Changed it?"

"Maybe..." She blew out a breath, "Probably not. I try, I try to do everything I can to help them. I try to prosecute all the crap. Because when I do, it shows the world out there, humans are more than capable of being the bigger monster, sometimes."

"You should keep trying. No matter what, keep trying to change it. Don't let them drive you away, just because you know what you are doing." Kehpri snuggled deeper into the embrace, a topic that they had tacitly chosen to ignore.

"Thanks. You want to talk about your demons tonight?"

"No." The answer was short and to the point and the thin woman nearly convulsed at even thinking of sharing her demons with Chance. "Not tonight." Not ever, she was pretty sure. The good agent wouldn't be likely to be sympathetic. In fact, she was pretty sure that Chance might kill her, or at the very least, turn her in.

Chance stiffened a little at the abrupt response, feeling hurt. "Okay, but just so you know, I'm a horrible listener. Any of my ex's will tell you that," she joked it off.

"Any of them?" Kehpri raised an eyebrow in the darkness. "Are there many of them?"

"Um, no... Not really. I was one of those kids in school who studied all the time. And then at Quantico, it was the gym or the books." Although every once in awhile her roommate had gotten her out, and it was amazing how quick she could get a bed partner for the night.

"I'm sure the girls swooned all over you." Kehpri grinned. "An FBI recruit all full of righteousness." Hell, she would have swooned over that too.

"And a badge, gun, and handcuffs. Some women really dig those handcuffs," she shrugged, not getting the appeal herself.

"And handcuffs..." Kehpri laughed suddenly. "Yes, I bet that led to some interesting games." She closed her eyes, trying to sleep or at least pretend to. It would be best to stop this conversation before it got onto her past.

Chance shrugged, but didn't answer. She yawned, and let her eyes close. As she dozed, her nose burrowed under the hair at the nape of Kehpri's neck, and exhaled soft little puffs of air and breathed in Kehpri's scent.

It was a very long time before the smaller woman managed to slip back into sleep. Once asleep though, she relaxed into the embrace and images of running through the desert sands playing with a pack of wolves played through her dreams.

#####

Chance came instantly awake, her hand grabbing the gun out from under her mattress.

Zoya held her hands up. "Whoa there, champ," she stated, her eyes going cross-eyed as she looked down the barrel of the gun.

"Zoya? What are you doing breaking into my place?"

"You know the lock is busted on the door? That's not safe, not for this place, at any rate. So I thought I'd make sure you were okay." Zoya's blue eyes roved over the other person in her sister's bed. "I see I'm interrupting."

Chance clicked the safety on and placed the gun in her nightstand. "No, its not... You know what, yes you are. Was there something you wanted?"

Zoya looked hurt at that. "Work on your manners, Chance. Do you have to be such a bitch? I'm sorry, I was worried about you. Remember how I had to rush you to the hospital earlier this week."

Chance looked down, feeling bad.

"Yet, not even a phone call, letting me know you were okay."

Feeling guilt, Chance ran a hand through her hair. "I'm sorry. Um, you want to go for a run? We can talk."

Zoya nodded her head at Kehpri, "You want to leave that warming your bed? Sure, she's a little skinny, but not too bad, nice tits."

Chance frowned and shoved her sister out of her bedroom. "Five minutes and I'll be ready for a run."

"Is there a reason your sister came to check up on you at..." Kehpri cracked open an eyelid to double check, "before dawn?" She'd been having such nice dreams for once, and the brunette really would rather still be sleeping.

Chance leaned over and pulled the covers back up. "I've been a bad sister, and she knows it's my day off. Go back to sleep, I'll be back in...ah, forty-five minutes." She went over and pulled a sports bra and some shorts out of a pile on the floor and started changing.

Kehpri made an annoyed sound and snuggled into the blankets, closing her eyes. She really didn't want to get up, and there was no way in hell that she was getting out of the bed within forty-five minutes. "Have fun," she mumbled, already half asleep again.

#####

Chance felt like she was going to hurl up her lung, but stubbornly kept pace with her sister.

They'd been running for a while, and she was highly annoyed that she was feeling the burn.

"Should you even be doing this so soon after being shot?" Zoya asked.

"I have no idea," Chance gasped out. "But I got my stitches out yesterday, so I'll be fine."

The white-haired woman stumbled a bit, "Really? Didn't they dig a sliver bullet out of you?"

"Yeah, I guess it didn't hit anything vital. Just a flesh wound. God it bled though. Maybe I'm just a bleeder."

"It's possible. Probably just the good genes dad passed on to you."

Chance just grunted and swept sweaty bangs out of her face.

"So, who's the piece of tail in your bed?"

"Just a friend... She's having a hard time lately," Chance said vaguely.

"Must be a hell of a time, to be hiding out in the middle of the Reservation, especially since she's human... You need to stop dating those human girls, they're just too breakable, and they always end up freaking out when they meet your family."

"Well, when you shift into your wolf form during dinner...that can be a bit much."

Zoya sniffed. "She didn't think a woman as attractive as me could really be a Were."

Chance nodded and didn't say anything, trying to save her breath. For a while nothing was said, there was just the rhythmic pounding of their feet on the paved street.

"Come on, lil' sis, you really need to take better care of yourself and stop holding back. You should not be this winded."

"Fuck you. I was drinking last night."

"Pussy," Zoya snapped back. "Race you back. And...if get there first, I get to wake you're girlfriend up."

"Asshole... And she's not my girlfriend. She's just a..."

"A friend and a girl, hence girlfriend... And one I get to crawl into bed with and wake up. Later, Chance." Zoya put on a burst of speed and took off down the street.

Chance growled and produced a burst of speed, chasing after her sister.

Five minutes later found both of them gasping for breath on the steps leading up to Chance's apartment.

"Such an asshole," Chance grumbled out, her head between her knees.

"Whatever, and just so you know, I let you beat me."

"Uh huh," Chance said looking up with a smug grin.

"Fine... I'll leave you to wake up your 'friend'. But seriously, Chance, you're not human, so stop training like you're one. You need to push yourself more, or you're going to get lazy."

"Well, it's not like there's a plethora of mixed-breeds around for me to play hoops with."

Zoya snorted and got up, giving her little sister a noogie. "Moron. Come out with the pack, we'll make sure you stay above and beyond FBI fit."

"No thanks, I get enough shit around town. I know everyone thinks I'm a puppy for the government, I don't need a bunch of Weres being nice to me, just 'cause you're my sister."

Zoya's face went white with anger. "Who fucking called you a puppy?"

Annoyed, Chance pushed her sister's hand off her head. "I'm a big girl, I can take it. It's no different from the humans calling me a mule, so I guess that's something you guys have in common."

"I don't condone that, just like I don't condone mixed-breed children being exiled to the human world." In fact, Zoya had found mixed-breeds to be really handy, especially on full moon nights. She'd started sending such kids to college, bringing them back to work in the clinic and in local law enforcement.

"I know. I think that scholarship program you created is the best thing. But it doesn't make all the hurt go away."

"Well, Chance, you're the one that wants to carry the baggage. If you'd put it down and get that stick out of your ass, about one-half of you being werewolf, maybe you'd find your place in the world."

"A fun run as always. See you next week," she said tightly, her blue eyes stormy as she turned going up the stairs.

"Chance..." Zoya started as her sister stormed off.

#####

There was something that maybe, in another dimension, resembled singing going on inside of Chance's apartment. There was also the smell of something being cooked on the stove. The kitchen had been turned into a disaster area; pans and pots covered in what looked like pancake batter everywhere. Kehpri was in front of the stove, studiously watching pancakes cook and trying to improve on her record. So far, three had burned and four hadn't... which was a good record for her.

Chance winced at the singing and opened her apartment door, and stopped, staring in horror at her kitchen. "What, are you doing?"

"Pancakes!" was the delighted reply. "Damn, burned another." She tossed the smoking husk into the trashcan and poured another lump of batter into the still hot frying pan.

"Oh Jesus..." She rushed over to the stove and looked into the skillet. "Go, go, go...I'll finish this."

"Hey!" Kehpri complained as she was shoved out of the way. "I was trying to do something nice here." She crossed her arms over the shirt she'd 'borrowed' from Chance's bedroom and glared.

Chance wiped sweat off her face and turned to look at the other woman. "That was nice, and I appreciated it. But let me finish up, perhaps there will be a few more we can get." She smiled at



Kehpri. "Honestly, it was a nice gesture."

She looked back suspiciously. "Ok. Well, as long as it's appreciated." She perched on a stool to watch. "I really don't understand it. I should be a great cook. I follow the recipe to the second."

"Hmmm, well, you're a doctor, right?" She didn't wait for an answer. "When you look at somebody, do you read off a list to see what's wrong with them, or intuitively do you just know things?"

Kehpri narrowed her eyes and didn't answer for a second. "It depends what's wrong with them." She saw the point though, and grudgingly agreed.

Chance flipped the pancake and reached over, turning down the heat. She looked over then grabbed the box of mix and turned it around, showing the recipe. "This is a guideline, but it's not everything." She flipped the pancake on to a plate then poured on two more.

"Well, I get points for trying," Kehpri grumbled, sitting on the stool in the agent's dress shirt and nothing else. "You and your sister have a good run?"

Chance gave a genuine smile. "Yes, you get major points for trying, and yes, we had an okay run. You're lucky. You know, she almost beat me, and then she would have come up and woken you up."

"Awww... did you get jealous?" Kehpri grinned wickedly.

Startled, Chance flipped the pancake out into the middle of the living room. "Jealous? Why would I be jealous?" She flipped the other pancake onto a plate.

Kehpri leaned out a bit to see where the pancake landed. "Well, I was joking, but maybe I shouldn't be."

Grumbling about crazy people, she shoved a plate into Kehpri's hand and opened her fridge, grabbing a bottled water and the syrup.

"The crazy person didn't throw a pancake into the living room." Kehpri liberally poured syrup over her pancake.

"It was an accident." She tossed a few of the pancakes Kehpri had made onto her plate and then Kehpri's.

"Mmmmm..." Kehpri decided to let it go as she enjoyed the food. "So, are you working today?"

"No, it's my day off," she mumbled, her mouth full.

"Days off..." Sighing fondly, Kehpri finished off her pancakes. "So I guess I should leave you to your day off..." She didn't sound too eager to do that.

"Leave? Um, I guess." It had been kind of nice to have someone around.

Kehpri carried her plate over to the sink and hesitated. "So I guess I should, umm, let you be?" She'd have to find her clothes.

"Well...um..." Chance scratched her head. "We could...um...do something..."

"Really?" Kehpri's eyes lit up. "Road trip! Somewhere out of this town." It was a bit of a depressing place, and she wanted to go somewhere else, where she could pretend things were nice and normal, for at least a little while.

"Uh, sure..." Chance ran a hand through her sweaty hair. The crazy lady had to have used some sort of mind control on her.

Kehpri jumped down off her stool and walked closer to Chance, getting well inside the other woman's comfort zone. "Do you know what I'd like to see again? A lake... Where people picnic and laugh because they have a great life and love one another. Can we go see a place like that?"

"Um, sure..." she said again.

"A lake; let me think. We could go north. It's kind of a hike, I think, two-miles up to Crater Lake. It's in Cougar Territory, but I'll call a buddy."

Kehpri nodded quickly. "Sandwiches...we'll need sandwiches and beer for the picnic." The beer they had, but she was fairly certain that there wasn't anything like sandwich meat that was safe to eat in Chance's refrigerator.

"We can make a stop at a Deli or something." Chance was getting caught up in the idea. On her day off, she normally sat around or slept. When she had first started her post here she masturbated a lot, but as time went on, her libido died.

"Yes! Good." That sounded like a great plan, and Kehpri nearly danced with joy around the small kitchen as she contemplated it, "A day being normal." That would be a novelty.

"Let me get changed, and we can go."

#####

In deference to the driver, Kehpri restrained herself, and instead of singing, settled for merely humming along with the music on the radio. The wind whipped through the car windows, ruffling her curly, long hair.

A pair of ridiculous pink sunglasses was perched on her nose, and both feet were up on the dashboard as she enjoyed the trip. A cooler of beer and sandwiches was safely ensconced in the back seat. "How big is the lake?" she asked, finally.

"Big enough to be a lake... There's also an island in the middle of it," Chance said, her fingers tapping against the steering wheel. She was feeling oddly relaxed as they drove further into the Reservation towards Nevada and the high desert mountains.

There was no badge that was left at home, and she had a gun. But there was always a gun. She didn't feel safe without something to equalize her with the raw power of Weres.

"Nice. Are there boats?"

"No, no boats. No houses, people, or bathrooms. A two-mile hike nearly straight up, but it's worth it for the peace and the beauty. Snow takes forever to melt up there, and it will be cool in the pine trees." She looked over, pushing the straw cowboy hat up on her forehead a bit, and grinned at Khepri.

"Good." The brunette closed her eyes and leaned her head back in the seat, enjoying the feel of wind and sun on her face and even the occasional pothole that they ran over.

Chance turned her eyes back to the road. Her right hand fumbled with an old cassette and plopped it in the outdated cassette player in the car. She started singing with Jimmy, "Wasted away again in Margaritaville, Searchin' for my lost shaker of salt. Some people claim that there's a woman to blame..."

The passenger opened one eye to watch the singing, enjoying the other woman's voice. Only when she was done with the first song on the tape did she interrupt. "What is it with you and Jimmy Buffett?" The road had turned into a dirt path somewhere along the way, and she really wasn't sure how much further they were going to go on it before the hiking was going to start.

"It's Jimmy, what's not to love?" She was wearing her 'It's five o'clock somewhere' t-shirt and well-worn faded jeans. "His songs are fun, and about drinking and being free. Everything we aren't in our culture."

"So, is there a woman?" At the puzzled look, Khepri grinned impishly, "A woman to blame somewhere?" A bounce nearly sent her sunglasses flying, but she managed to save the pink plastic monstrosities that she'd gotten at the deli with the sandwiches.

Chance just sighed and pulled the car over, parking it under a tree. It was hot out, almost stifling. She opened her car door. "It will be better once we get up a little higher."

"Oooh!" Khepri jumped out so that she could watch the agent. "There was a woman!"

There was a flicker of a flash of something dark moving in the trees and the brush. Chance

looked, but didn't see anything, and looked back at Khepri. "There's always a woman. Tell me you aren't hiding out here in the middle of nowhere, because of a woman."

"I'm not hiding out here in the middle of nowhere because of a woman," Khepri answered easily, reaching into the car for the cooler. Slamming her door shut, she looked around.

"After you, super agent."

"Could you not call me that?" Chance said. She hated it when Halstead did it.

"Oh, ok." Khepri hurried to keep up with the longer legged woman. "I'm sure I'll find some other way to annoy you." She perked up. "Want to sing trail songs?"

"No, not really..." Chance grabbed Khepri by the belt loops on a pair of familiar looking shorts and turned her towards the right trail.

"Party pooper," she mumbled, falling into step on the right trail.

There was a crack of a twig, and before Chance could pull the small pistol from the back of her pants where it was hidden, a slim African-American woman was standing on the trail. Her head was cocked in question. "Agent Pavel," she purred out.

Chance grinned. "Katja," she said in greeting, and held out her hand.

"Agent Pavel, we are old friends, what is this?" And then the other woman walked forward like a stalking cat and gave Chance a nearly full body hug.

"I knew there was a woman," Khepri mumbled from behind her.

"Yes." The woman frowned as Chance got loose. "You never call. You come in and save a girl's life and then poof, you're gone."

"Well, I was just doing my job..."

The werecat just sniffed and rolled her eyes. "Agent, it is never a wonder why you are single."

From her spot behind them on the small trail, Khepri narrowed her eyes, watching the feline like woman. "Nice of you to introduce us, Agent," she called out, annoyed at being ignored.

"What? Oh, um, Katja, this is Khepri. Khepri, Katja." She started easing back towards Khepri, as Katja's dark eyes seemed to be undressing her and then some. "Katja here is with the Sierra Cougar clan." Then in a fit of desperation, added, "Honey," and put her hand around Khepri's waist.

Kehpri looked up at her in surprise, then over at the suddenly annoyed looking Katja. "Right...Honey cakes." She smiled widely and slapped Chance on the ass.

Chance glared at Kephri for a moment then just gave a strained smile, "Nice to see you again. Tell your mom hi."

Katja looked at them dubiously. "She's only human, Chance, let me know when you break her and I can show you all sorts of things."

Chance just swallowed.

"We'll let you know if we ever need a threesome." Kehpri was smiling so widely it hurt, but it was a hurt she was fine with.

"What? Threesome...no, don't. No threesomes." The agent's voice had gone up a few octaves. She took the cooler out of Kehpri's hands and started herding them up the path and away from Katja.

"Bye, Katja! Good to meet you!" Kehpri managed to get out before she was bodily shoved ahead of the agent and up the dirt path. "Admirer?" she asked, laughing.

"Her father was a coke head, and went berserk. I and my old partner saved her and her mother. It's just a little misguided hero-worship."

"I'm pretty sure she wanted to do more than just worship." Kehpri pretended to think about it. "Or maybe that's exactly what she wanted to do."

Chance grimaced. "Stop, stop that. Lalala...I did not hear that. She's like seventeen or something."

"Ooooh...you cradle robber!" Kehpri laughed evilly. "I think there's a law or something against dating people below eighteen, isn't there?"

Chance just glared over at Kehpri. "You better start saving your breath, 'cause you still have a two mile hike."

Laughing again evilly, Kehpri did stop talking and started to concentrate on the actual hiking.

Two miles later she was dying, sucking in mouthfuls of air as she scrambled up over a boulder. Leaning against the rock, she had to swallow mouthfuls of air before she could manage to gasp something. "I hate you," she gasped. "You tricked me into this, trying to kill me."

As they got closer to the top, the air did cool off quite a bit, and the trees got thicker. Chance was carrying a backpack, the cooler, and Kehpri.

Even with the help, she wasn't sure she was going to make it. "This lake better be close," Kehpri

gasped, feeling definitely out of shape.

"I did not lie. I told you, at least twice, that it was a two mile hike nearly straight up," she chuckled, feeling only a slight burn with the muscles in her abs, but she figured that was 'cause she just got her stitches out.

"There's no hurry, just rest for a bit. We're almost there."

"Better be." She took a few minutes to rest. After that, she was feeling almost good enough to walk on her own along the trail, which seemed to have leveled out a bit. "Oh thank God." Kehpri trailed along behind the agent. "That wasn't a hike; that was a mountain climb!"

"It's worth it. I promise. We just go around this bend and...whoa!" She shouted the last part as an older African-American woman and two large cougars stood in the path. "Jesus, Kimberly."

The strange woman let her braided hair tilt back and let out a beautiful rich laugh. "Chance, you and your friend sound like drunken grizzly bears coming up the trail."

"Hey, your girlfriend is back," Kehpri wheezed, bending over and bracing her hands on her knees to breath. She was in horrible shape, and she knew it. She probably should actually eat more.

Chance put a hand on her chest and got her breath back. "Kimberly, Kehpri. Kehpri, Kimberly. Kimberly would be Katja's mother, and Pride mother to the Sierra Nevada Cougar clan."

"Oh, sorry, you look a lot like your daughter." Kehpri raised a hand from where she was catching her breath and waved in what she hoped was the right direction.

The African-American woman walked forward and gave Chance and hug then took Kehpri's hand, holding it a moment, "An honor. You must be special. Chance never brings friends with her." The two cougars sat like silent sentinels, their eyes never leaving their Alpha.

"I'm a special pain in her ass." Kehpri smiled at the cougar Alpha, instantly deciding she liked this woman.

Chance rolled her eyes and Kimberly laughed. "Good, she needs that, she gets too melancholy left to her own devices. You've met Katja. I'm sorry, Chance, I know how her crush makes you uncomfortable, but she is so close to eighteen and she thinks this makes her all grown up."

"Oh, don't worry. I'll tease Chance about it incessantly for the next little while." Kehpri smiled at the obviously uncomfortable agent. "So you're pack owns the lake area?"

"Yes, and I didn't mean to intrude. The boys and I were just making sure there was nothing or no one dangerous lurking about for your day. I just didn't expect you so quickly. I will leave you two to your romantic getaway. And don't worry; I'll make sure Katja comes with me."

"Thanks Kimber... What? No, she's just a friend."

"Thanks, Kimberly." Kehpri smiled widely. "My sweetheart and I really have been looking forward to getting away."

"What?" Chance looked between the two women.

Kimberly just laughed again. "Chance, you're too easy. You wear everything on your face for the world to see. A pleasure, Kehpri, take care of Chance, I'm fond of her, even if the blood of dogs runs in her veins." She made a gesture and the two cougars sprung silently to her side.

"Bye, Kimberly, good to meet you." Turning, she laughed as she saw the expression still on the agent's face. "Come on, big dog, I hear there's water nearby."

"Glad you have your wit back, sweetheart," Chance grumbled then started forward, not looking back at Kehpri's laughing face.

This had to be the best she'd felt since... Kehpri's laughter died and she followed along more soberly.

The path dipped down and then the trees thinned out and the lake looked like a huge blue mirror, the small island rising out of the middle was the only thing breaking the illusion of the mirror.

Kehpri was startled out of the beginning of a really good funk by the sight that lay ahead. "It's beautiful!" she yelled, taking off at a run past the taller woman towards the water's edge.

Chance chuckled and followed more slowly behind. She found a good open place and opened the backpack, pulled out a large blanket and spread it out on the ground. She then lay down on the blanket, tilting her cowboy hat down over her eyes.

There was a delighted laugh from the waterside followed a little bit later by the splash as Kehpri waded in then dove further into the water. It was cold, fed by the crystal clear mountain streams, and she came up sputtering, but happy.

A trail of clothes led the way to the edge of the water.

"Aren't you coming in?" she called, floating on her back and kicking her feet to send water splashing around.

"Um, no, cold," Chance said with a yawn.

"Hmph..." Kehpri floated in the lake for a little while longer, but eventually was forced out when she started getting too cold. The sun felt good on her cold skin as she got out.

"Any chance of lunch?" she asked hopefully, picking up clothes as she went.

"Sure." Chance sat up, stretching. She took her hat off and ran her fingers through her hair. Her blue eyes ran over Kehpri's naked, wet body. "You need to eat better."

"Really? The occasional Three Musketeers bar isn't good enough?" was the sarcastic answer.

"Really, now stop being cranky with me. I didn't have to bring you here." She reached in the backpack and tossed a towel at the woman's shivering frame.

"Sorry. You're right. Thank you for bringing me. I just..." She grimaced and quickly put on her clothes, feeling uncomfortable. "Guess I hadn't realized how much weight I'd lost." That wasn't really true, but it was easier to say than the truth. That she'd felt like wasting away, disappearing.

"It's okay. Stick with me. I'll get some meat on your bones. It was kind of nice cooking for more than just me."

"So that means I can come by for dinner more often, right?" Kehpri grinned, sitting down on the edge of the blanket and looking hopefully at the cooler.

Chance nodded, "Yeah, I'm not home a lot, but when I am, sure." She took a long time digging through the cooler. Somehow, Kehpri had changed from being insane to...what...that she didn't know.

"Free dinners." Kehpri flopped back to lie on the blanket to stare up at the sky above. "I like it out here. It's quiet."

"Yeah, some of the cleanest air in the US is right here. It's a nice place to escape to." She pulled out a sandwich from the cooler. "Roast beef or turkey?"

She shrugged, "Whichever you don't want," stretching out. "Why do you live in that crappy apartment complex if you could live out here?"

"Cause this is Cougar territory. I only come up with their permission." She tossed the turkey to Kehpri, and opened the roast beef. "Beer..?"

"Hmmm, sounds good." She propped her head up enough to unwrap the sandwich and start devouring the well-stuffed sandwich. After months of being hungry, she was starving these days. "How'd you save her life...your girlfriend that is?"

"My girlfriend?" Chance asked, frowning, and handed a beer over. "I don't have a girlfriend, married to my job, remember."

"Uh huh... That's not what Katja thinks." She took the beer. "You saved her life? How'd that happen?"



Chance rolled her eyes. "Well, the local sheriff out here called us in desperation. The Pride Alpha had gone berserk. He was too far away, but my old partner and I were out here following up on some leads, so she agreed to check it out on a favor." Chance cracked open her own beer and took a small sip.

The sandwich didn't last long; neither did the beer, as Kehpri waited to hear the rest of it, certain there was more.

"So we come out here. I guess Gregory, the Alpha, had a drug problem, and had, well...freaked out. Kimberly had taken her and Katja and locked them down in the basement of their house. Most Alpha's have holding cages for some of their more out of control members of their packs or prides. Sorry, off topic. Anyway, they'd locked themselves in there to get away from him. We showed up, three pride members had been torn apart. Lots of blood, and well..." She put her sandwich down, not hungry anymore.

"You ever seen a Were freaking out on crack, holy shit," she shivered. "We weren't really prepared for that. He attacked us and we shot him and he didn't drop. I unloaded my entire clip into him and he just kept coming at us. He was in his half-form, huge, claws, blood... Yeah..."

She blew out a breath. "I think I'll go for a swim."

Kehpri nodded slowly. "I'm glad you saved them." She felt bad for bringing it up, and wished she'd just dropped the whole thing earlier. Sometimes she was just too curious for her own good. "I'll watch your sandwich while you swim."

"Thanks. Those roast beef ones can be tricky." She slipped out of her hiking boots, and unbuttoning her pants slipped them off, and then her Buffett t-shirt. "Be back in a bit."

"Take your time." Kehpri didn't even try to keep the leer off her face as she watched the well-built woman go in the water. "Look, but don't touch," she chuckled and snatched up the sandwich, introducing it to her stomach.

Chance stepped into the water, which was cold, causing gooseflesh to rise on her skin. She waded out to deeper water then dived in. She swam, gliding through the water, enjoying the pull of the muscles. After a lap to the island and back, she was able to put the past away.

That night had been horrible and terrifying. Emptying a full clip of sliver into a Were and have him still come at you, yeah, she remembered afterwards, laughing with her partner as she was loaded into an ambulance. That had been the night Alexa had lost her leg.

She swam another lap then checked the blanket where Kehpri was. She wasn't sure, but the woman might have been napping. She frowned a bit and studied the woman's outline. What the hell was going on with them? Why had she allowed this insane woman so deep into her life? Maybe, it was a shared understanding of life-altering pain.

"Your sandwich wandered off, sorry. I couldn't stop it," Kehpri called from where she was lying on the blanket, eyes closed, enjoying the stillness and the feel of the sun on her skin.

Blue eyes blinked and came back from her musing. "It did, huh?" She treaded water close to shore.

"You really should have seen it. It was amazing. I've never seen a sandwich run before." Kehpri grinned, cracking open one eye to watch Chance.

Chance laughed. "That is amazing. And where did it run off too?"

"Into my mouth...I think it committed suicide."

"Huh? Don't that beat all. You know, Kehpri, you are one weird duck." Chance twisted around back into the water, and swam another lap.

"So I've been told," the brunette mumbled, closing her eyes again.

Silently, Chance swam back and crept out of the water. Naked, her bare feet made no noise on the sand and rock up to the blanket. In a quick move, she scooped Kehpri up. "Steal my sandwich, will you."

"AH!" Kehpri squealed in surprise and tried to squirm her way out of the woman's arms. "Put me down!" she laughed, eyes widening as they moved closer to the water. "No! Not with my clothes on!" she yelled.

"Shouldn't have eaten my sandwich then," Chance chuckled. She stopped at the water's edge and rocked her arms back. "One..."

"No!" Kehpri laughed, trying to at the very least get a hold of the taller woman so that she wouldn't be launched.

"Two..."

"I'll get you for this!"

The agent's arms rocked back a third time. "Three..." She launched Kehpri up in the air...then caught her again. Laughing so hard she could hardly get her breath, she gasped out, "You... you... should see your face."

"I hate you," Kehpri sputtered, managing to get her hands free. In desperation, she tried finding out if the agent was ticklish anywhere.

Chance nearly dropped Kehpri. She was not ticklish, but the woman had hit a sensitive spot.

"Whoa. Hands..."

"Why yes, yes, they are." She gave up the search for a ticklish spot and raised an eyebrow, watching the other woman's face. "So, you just going to hold me here all day or do something?" a waggle of eyebrows followed.

Chance sighed then did drop her on the damp sand and rock on the bank. "Way to push the moment too far, crazy lady."

"Oof." Khepri got up, rubbing her butt. "Way to drop me like a sack of potatoes," she grumbled.

Chance just sniffed and went back to the blanket, and stretched out on her front. "You did it to yourself."

"You have a real problem flirting, don't you?" Khepri trailed along behind her. "You know what flirting is, right?"

Chance blushed then rolled over and sat up, reaching for her shirt. "It's a thing people do to gauge sexual interest."

Watching something that was definitely below Chance's face, Khepri smiled. "You've never flirted?"

"Well, um, sure, everybody flirts."

Khepri moved closer, looking skeptical. "So you know how to flirt then, right?"

She pulled her shirt on, feeling silly. "Of course I do."

"Prove it."

"Ah, what..?" Chance turned around.

Crossing her arms, Khepri smiled. "Prove it. Since you know how to flirt, let's hear it. You've never flirted back to anything I've said."

"I don't have to prove anything." Chance was feeling really silly now. She grabbed her pants and stood up to put them back on.

"So you admit that you don't know how to flirt." Khepri sounded victorious.

Chance buttoned her pants then turned around. "No, I don't admit anything."

"Chance doesn't know how to flirt. I can't wait to tell this to..." she paused. She didn't have anyone to tell. "Hmm. Tell this to your coworkers."

Chance snorted then took a couple of steps forward, putting her firmly in Kehpri's personal space. "Flirting is something real people do. People who work 9 to 5 and then go home, eat, fuck, and then sleep like babies. I'm not real. I'm an agent with the federal government. I rarely have meaningful interactions outside those with my coworkers or people I'm arresting."

She reached up, tracing Kehpri's eyebrow, then the finger moved down the side of her face to the woman's lips. She traced them as well. Her head moved forward, coming close, but not touching Kehpri. She smelled, taking in Kehpri's scent, then breathed out so her breath puffed out on the skin of the woman's neck, cheek, and then her ear.

"Uh huh, flirting bad," Kehpri mumbled as every square inch of her skin suddenly came alive. She shivered as the other woman's breath brushed across that suddenly sensitive skin.

"So, want to go back to my place and fuck?" Chance said the words low and breathy.

Kehpri's entire body screamed yes to that proposition. Her mind, on the other hand, reminded her what this woman had just said about normal relationships. "How charming," she shoved away from the taller woman. "So instead of flirting you'd just use me for sex?"

Chance chuckled. "All you wanted me to do was flirt, and I did. Thus proving I can flirt. You're just mad 'cause you liked it."

"That wasn't flirting. That was propositioning." Angry with herself for starting something she didn't want to finish, she went to the blanket and flopped down. "I'm taking a nap."

"Well, maybe that last part was, but before that...admit it, that was flirting." She sat down next to Kehpri.

"Hmph..." Kehpri closed her eyes, her lips curling upwards without her permission. "Yes, that was flirting. Way to take it too far though, crazy woman," she echoed the agent's earlier words.

Chance snickered. "I apologize." She was silent for a moment. "Still friends?"

Both eyes snapped open, "Friends...really? You consider me a friend?" What felt like a lifetime ago; she would have been horrified to hear the pleading note in her voice.

"Well, yeah, I'm not certain how that happened, but we've slept together twice...erm, in a non-sexual friend comforting manner."

"Guess you're right, that means we're friends." Kehpri smiled and bounded up. "That means that as my friend, you're going to take me out to dinner tonight to an actual restaurant, right?"

Chance made a face. "Uh, that sounds more like a date than a friend thing."

"We'll go to a non-date kind of place. No romantic food. Come on, we can find an actual nice restaurant. I bet you haven't gone to a nice place in forever."

"No, and to get good service, we may have to leave the Reservation." It was odd. She couldn't remember the last time she'd been out to eat. Well, with someone other than Zoya.

Immediately, Kehpri started to roll up the blanket and pack things back into the cooler, "Even better. Be good to see the outside world again."

Chance blinked and wondered what had just happened. Her eyes narrowed at Kehpri. The woman had done some sort of mind control thing again, she must have.

Chance shook her head, "Outside world. See, that right there causes a sort of them and us mentality. It should just be an 'us'," she lectured, although her tone was warm as she picked up and repacked the backpack.

"Sure, it should just be an 'us', but it isn't. It's a 'you' and 'them' sort of deal." Kehpri did her part by holding onto the blanket. At least the way back would be downhill.

Chance sighed and put her cowboy hat back on.

Which Kehpri immediately reached over and stole, plopping it on her own head.

"Hey," Chance said as the hat was taken off her head. Kehpri just smirked at her and took off down the mountainside. "Damn it," Chance grumbled good-naturedly and took off after her.

#####

"See, it's not a date restaurant." Kehpri had to talk, loudly, over the country and western that was being played by the band over in the corner stage. The table was piled high with their plates, and she was eagerly eyeing the platter of BBQ ribs that had been brought over by the waitress.

Chance chuckled as she leaned up and over and cut off a couple of meaty ribs from the rack and plopped them on her plate. She pointed her knife with red barbeque sauce dripping off of it over at the dance floor where couples were stepping to the band. "Kehp, this is the romantic restaurant here. Might not have the candle light and the violins you're use to, from wherever you are, but here, this is where you bring a woman when you want to impress her."

Taking her own share, before someone got greedy, Kehpri eyed the dance floor speculatively. There did seem to be an awful lot of couples out there, and she did see a lot of what seemed like dates going on around them.

"Hmmm... I guess it was all the pickup trucks out front that threw me off." It was as far away from a romantic restaurant as she could have pictured, especially the sawdust on the floor, but it

did have a rustic charm, she supposed. Suddenly, she laughed. "Guess I can't judge anything, considering my living accommodations."

Chance snorted.

"Admit it, you like the pink flamingos," Kehpri mumbled, a bit of sauce smeared on her chin as she took a bit of ribs.

"They have a bit of surreal charm. You have some sauce...no...no...would you wait for me to tell you where it is before..." She sighed and leaned over, wiping it off...which earned her a wink.

"You know, you might not know how to flirt, but you can be charming when you forget to be all bitchy." Kehpri started on the next rib, watching the other woman closely to see what sort of reaction that would earn her.

The agent wiped the sauce off her finger and fidgeted for a moment. "Thanks, I think."

"I just call them as I see them. A fringe benefit of being insane, I've been told."

"Uh huh..." Chance busied herself taking some more ribs then snagged a roll. She munched away happily for a moment. "I don't think you're insane, well, I did at first. Something hurt you...here," she reached over and touched Kehpri's temple with a finger, "and here." And she touched the woman's breastbone over her heart. "And when the pain is so bad, sometimes the world and everyone in it goes all wonky."

Kepri's chewing slowed and her eyes watched Chance with a new wariness to them. She knew she'd been letting things slip, but this wasn't good. Sane people had reasons to do what they did. Sane people might be suspicious and warrant a background check.

"Somebody hurt you too."

"Yeah, but I passed the psyche eval to carry a gun." Chance grinned then picked up the last meaty rib on her plate and tore into it.

That was a worrying thought. "It only gets worse, you know. Whatever hurt you, it doesn't just go away because somebody says you're fine to go to work and carry a badge and gun."

She really should stop while she was ahead, but Kehpri had found out that she always pushed further than she should with Chance.

"No, no it doesn't. It gets better when I stop those hunters from making orphans of little boys and girls." She clenched her jaw for a moment and blew out a breath. Her new mantra was not to let Kehpri push her buttons.

"You know, until you're ready to listen to your own advice do not lecture me."

"I am listening to my own advice." Kephri's grin was harsh. "I'm out here having a vacation." She put down the well-picked bone on her plate and shook her head. "I'm sorry. I don't know why I keep pushing. I shouldn't."

Chance stared at the other women for a moment and did something she was probably going to regret. She did something spontaneous. She stood up and grabbed Kephri's hand and said, "Let's two-step."

"Two step?" Kephri let herself get dragged out of her chair, eyes widening as they moved towards the dance area. "I don't know how."

"Just follow my lead," Chance said with a grin. God they were probably going to start a riot or something, two women out on the floor dancing together.

This really didn't seem like a terrifically brilliant idea to Kephri. She was pretty sure that most of the people dancing around them owned shotguns in the back of their trucks parked outside. Of course, she was in the company of an FBI agent.

"All right..."

Chance was laughing as she attempted to show Kephri how the steps went. The other woman seemed to be having a good time, and nobody else on the dance floor seemed to care.

Laughing, Kephri leaned against the other woman, shaking her head. "I've never been a really great dancer."

"You're one of those nerdy, bookworm types. Inside reading some Nancy Drew Mystery while the other kids were playing kickball?" The agent chuckled, her blue eyes lighting up as the weight of the world and the past seemed to ease off her even for a little bit.

"I did not read Nancy Drew." Kephri managed to look affronted for a few minutes before smiling. "It was the Hardy Boys."

Chance made a face. "Eww, the hardly boys is more like it."

"Hey." Mock-punching the agent's shoulder, Kephri shook her head. "Don't you knock my Hardy Boys." Somehow they'd wandered off the dance floor over to the bar and she raised an eyebrow in question, "Beer?"

"Nah, I'm driving." There was a tap on her shoulder and she turned, looking at Halstead. "Hey..." He belched alcohol into her face. "Mind if I take your bitch for a spin."

Chance sighed in frustration, "Halstead, just walk away."

"What's up, Super Agent, afraid your girl might find the thought of being with a real man appealing."

The brunette curled her lip at that. "You mean a real drunk, right? No way am I dancing with you." Kehpri jerked her head towards the door, "Why don't we just go?"

Chance nodded. "I'll get the bill."

"Don't walk away from me, bitch." Halstead went to grab Kehpri, only to find his wrist clutched tightly. Chance's fingers were wrapped tightly around the flesh.

They were starting to attract attention, and Kehpri looked around nervously, "Guys." She placed a hand on the agent's tense arm. "He's drunk, just let the jerk go."

"Hey, is this guy bothering you?" Several large cowboys were now standing behind them.

Chance smiled evilly at Halstead, the man's pickled brain, not really understanding what was going to happen. She looked up and actually batted her eyelashes at the men. "Yes, gentlemen, he is."

It took a lot, but somehow, Kehpri managed to avoid laughing, nodding vigorously in agreement and smiling her best smile at the group of rather large men.

As the cowboys wrestled a kicking and screaming federal agent out the door, Chance got her wallet out and left more than enough for dinner and a healthy tip. "That's why I hate it when you call me super agent."

"Right...no more super agent." She'd have to come up with a new nickname for the agent. "We out of here?"

"Yeah... Sorry about the beer. I still have some at my place if you really want a drink."

"Sounds good..." In fact, sounded really good. She saw a couch in her future again. Smiling happily, she jumped into the car.

For a second night, two nights in a row if you will, Chance found herself on the couch with a woman. In a purely non-romantic way, well, the more she drank, the more she remembered touching and kissing Kehpri's skin...and that probably wasn't healthy.

Because if there were two more fucked up people on the planet who should not have any romantic entanglements with each other, it was them.

The woman who was currently using Chance as a body pillow mumbled something and tried to bury her face in the other woman's cleavage to avoid the sunrise. "Make the sun stop," she



mumbled.

"Huh?" Somehow, Chance had drifted off over the night. She blinked and stared around the room. They had fallen prey, apparently, to the comfy couch. "God what time is it?"

"Don't care," Kehpri mumbled, tightening her arms around the other woman's body, a slow smile forming as she realized exactly where both of those hands had ended up.

Chance grunted and cursed the fact she hadn't called about the blinds over the patio door, which had been broken for seven months now. "Kay, hold on." Her head was pounding, and she wondered how much they had drunk last night. She sat up then stood up, never once letting go of the body in her arms.

She slowly shuffled to the bedroom, and with her eyes open only to little slits, she navigated by memory.

Kehpri let out an, "oof" of surprise as she got picked up without much of a warning. They didn't seem to be hitting anything though, so she kept her eyes closed and smiled when they found a bed. Not that she was going to move her hands anytime soon.

Chance had nice thick curtains over the windows in here, for those occasions she worked all night and needed to sleep during the day. She merely laid them down on the bed and started a light snore, nothing too loud or deep.

It was later, Kehpri didn't know how much later, but it was late enough that she felt rested. Making a little sound in the back of her throat, she stretched, plastering her body against the other woman's body. "Mmmm...morning..." Cracking her eyes open, she judged the light seeping in through the edges of the curtains. "Afternoon, actually, I guess."

"Mmmhuh," Chance mumbled out. Her body was loath to give her back from the realm of sleep, considering she had years of sleep to catch up on.

Without really thinking about it, she slipped her hands under the agent's shirt and rubbed bare skin over that toned stomach. "You're working today, aren't you?" she whispered, nuzzling against the woman's neck.

The stomach muscles tightened slightly, and Chance murmured out, "On call today. One day off, one day sort of off. Back-up if anything bad goes down."

"I know what on call means," Kehpri mumbled, slowly rubbing her hand across that stomach in soothing circles. "More sleep time then."

"Mmmhuh," was Chance's reply. Her arms wrapped around Kehpri and pulled her back into the curve of her body, "Tickles."

"Sorry," was the mumbled answer, and that was the last thing Kehpri remembered for a little while.

The next time she woke up was at the urging of her bladder. "Ugh," she grumbled, getting up out of the bed and trying to find her way to the bathroom without bouncing off too many walls.

Chance snorted and wiped at a sleep-encrusted eye, trying to get it open. Blurrily the numbers of the clock swam into view.

"Two pm, shit, where has my day gone?" she said more to herself than anybody else. She stretched and got up. Scratching her head, she reflected she felt pretty darn good. She'd slept through the night without one nightmare and no calls from work.

She pulled the clothes off that she'd gone to sleep in and rummaged around for the t-shirt and shorts she'd been wearing on Friday, they still had to be clean.

The toilette flushed and a second later, Kehpri emerged from the bathroom, yawning and stretching as she shuffled down the hallway. "Is it breakfast time?" She was ravenous.

Chance pulled a shirt down over her head. "Sure, I might have to run to the store though."

"I don't suppose there's an IHOP around?" She really had a craving for greasy food. "Ugh, why did we drink so much after we got back here?"

Chance belched. "I have no idea. And I can make greasy food, if that's what you want, or we can brave the diner down the street?"

"Diner?" she made a face. "That would involve going outside though." She trailed along after the agent. "Coffee would be good though?" she asked hopefully.

"Beans are in the freezer, and the pot's by the stove. Give me fifteen minutes to run to the store and I'll make you biscuits and gravy, perhaps hash browns too, if you're lucky."

"Mmmm..." She made it as far as the living room before making a beeline for the couch and curling up on it. "I'd marry you if I could, in exchange for you cooking breakfast."

Chance started laughing, dropping her car keys. "I'm much easier to live with if you just come over once in a while for food, ask my two exes."

Covering her eyes with her arm to keep out that pesky light, Kehpri groaned. "You tried to kill me with all that alcohol." The laughing wasn't helping.

Chance scooped up her car keys, still snickering at the thought of her being married, and walked over to the couch. She leaned over Kehpri. "Poor baby, I believe I was right there with

you...drink for drink."

The woman opened an eye to look up at the woman leaning over her. "I thought you were going to get me food?" The urge to reach up and kiss her was hard to avoid.

Chance's eyes seemed to go even bluer, and she swallowed nervously, feeling a whole lot of things she shouldn't be feeling.

Focusing on the lips that were hovering above her, Kehpri licked her own lips. "Unless you had a better idea?" she whispered, once again going from standstill to aroused so quickly it really hurt.

"Um, one..." Chance croaked out, her throat suddenly dry. *But it's a really, really bad one.* "I should go to the store."

"Okay." Kehpri sighed, flopping herself back down onto the couch.

Chance frowned, feeling a little miffed. Kehpri would just give up so easily, "Right, breakfast coming up."

"I'll be waiting." The brunette smiled, "Agent?"

"Uh, yes?" Chance asked.

Taking a risk and fully anticipating being tossed out on her ass, Kehpri leaned up out of the couch. Quickly, so as to avoid getting slapped or worse, she pressed her lips to Chance's. She'd wanted a kiss for far too long, and the sleeping in the same bed had not helped things at all.

Chance was surprised, but not really. For a second she did nothing then she returned the kiss. "You are such a flirt," she said against Kehpri's lips.

"Damn you," Kehpri groaned. "Can you just kiss me back like a normal person?"

Chance chuckled. "Okay, how should I kiss you back? Or should I have not done that?"

Kehpri opened her eyes and frowned. "Are you asking me how to kiss me back? I've never had this much conversation before a return kiss."

Chance rolled her eyes then kissed Kehpri again, doing her best to be very thorough and not leave any part that might be important to the kissing process un-examined.

"Much better," Kehpri whispered against the warm lips that had just very thoroughly kissed her. "Now breakfast." Her stomach gurgled in agreement.

"Fine," Chance sighed. She grabbed her keys and left.

The second the door was closed, Kehpri stood up and started to search for her clothing that she'd changed out of. If she stayed, she was going to throw herself at the federal agent. That was bad news on so many levels she couldn't even start to list all the reasons. Prominent on that list was the fact that she was a wanted fugitive, and the fact that there was a very high probability that Chance was being used by whatever was going on in that hospital.

"Stupid, so stupid..." She found her faded and torn jeans. Leaving her borrowed clothes folded on the bed, she took one last look at the room and left, making sure the door locked behind her.

A little while later, Chance came through her front door juggling bags. "Hey. I decided I liked you and bought some potatoes to turn into hash browns." When there was no answer, she went absolutely still. All her senses took in her apartment and she looked at her plant.

"She left Tree, didn't she?" Tree didn't respond, but Chance knew Kehpri was gone. She put the food in the fridge and grabbed the one beer left in the fridge then went over to the couch, hitting play on her CD player.

#####

Kehpri's hands were shaking again as she sat on the chair in front of her improvised lab bench. She'd raced over to her makeshift lab from Chance's apartment, shaken by the realization that she'd been feeling good, which wasn't a good thing.

She didn't deserve to feel good, didn't deserve the fun time she'd been having. No, she wasn't here to make friends or enjoy herself. She was here on a mission damn it, and she should remember that.

Grabbing the printout that was two days old, she read over results that were anything but surprising. With a grunt she tossed the sheets aside and picked up the voice recorder, clicking it on.

"It's been two days since I was here last. I'm not sure what the date is, but I've had a...nice time, a really nice time with Agent Chance Pavel. I started to write up a list of why this wasn't a good idea, but there are a few counter points that I came up with that are really good. One, she's really hot, two, she's actually kind of funny when you get to know her, three, she's really, really hot."

Kehpri hesitated for a second then continued. "And she helps the nightmares go away." That was a big point as far as she was concerned.

Clearing her throat, she went on, "Now, on to the other news. The genetic test results are back. There's no doubt about it, Chance has markers for both recessive genes. That means there's better than a ninety eight percent chance that she is capable of shape changing." Reaching over to her keyboard, she quickly called up the agent's file that she'd gotten off the federal database.

"Her record very clearly states that she was tested, repeatedly, for shape changing ability and

deemed a normal human, as per Congressional Act 1698.45 sub section ten. I don't know how she managed to hide her ability, but she did. The interesting thing, of course, is that it means that whatever little tests Miller is carrying out, she's going to misinterpret the results. At best, it's going to skew her study. I wonder how many other Weres are out there hiding like this in plain sight."

That raised, again, a troubling question about what she should do with the genetic test. If the wrong people started using it, they could start discriminating a whole new class of people.

"I returned the picture to Super Agent's...I mean, Agent Pavel's place. I don't think she even knows I borrowed it. Hopefully it's going to stay that way."

The recorder clicked off and Kehpri studied the filed picture of Chance on the computer screen in front of her.

Contemplatively, she clicked on the recorder. "I'm going to try to infiltrate the hospital again. I know there's something going on there, but I have to get access to Miller's private records to find it. My best shot is late at night, third shift. The hospital is severely understaffed anyway. It should be easy to get in after Miller goes home."

Pulling open a drawer, she smiled fondly at a picture that was inside. It was too painful to look at often, so she didn't keep it out on the desk. There were three people in that picture, smiling up at the camera from a picnic bench. One had curly, long brown hair and looked like Kehpri, if the woman hadn't been so thin. The younger man had an open, kind face, the type of person who trusted instinctively. The redheaded woman next to them sat straight, stiff, but she was smiling as much as her companions.

"Don't worry, guys, I'll get revenge for what happened to you. Maybe I'll even manage to get forgiveness."

#####

Chance felt annoyance bubbling around in her head as she stood in the living room of the man who was going to get away with raping a little girl. Her blue eyes were shuttered as the wife of the man went on and on about how those filthy monsters were out to get her family and all other good, God-fearing folk.

"So, ma'am, you're saying Weres came and kidnapped your husband?"

The wife's beady little eyes, hard and cold as agates, glared at her partner. "Please, tell me I have not been wasting good breath on your humble ears, boy?" She turned to Chance as if expecting confirmation, but found Chance's face hard and impassive, no help there.

"Of course that's what I've been saying. I didn't want you folks in the first place, since you already came here and accused my Harold of having relations with an...an animal."

"Actually, ma'am, I came here to accuse your husband of forcing a twelve-year-old girl to have sex with him." Chance's voice was as stark and stinging as her words.

"Yes, well, I called the local sheriff. Thomas, such a nice man, but he told me since Harold was already the subject of an ongoing investigation, I had to call you." The woman sniffed and dabbed at her dry eyes, as if they had produced tears of any kind in years.

"Well, ma'am, that is true. So what makes you think Harold was kidnapped?"

Harold's wife just stared at them, as if it was obvious. "Because, Agents, he isn't here. And it is now Monday."

Gibbons and Pavel just stared at each other.

"He missed church yesterday. Since we've been married, Harold has never missed church."

"Oh..." Chance let it go at that, choking back all the snide comments that wanted to come out. "You mind if we look around?"

"Now, it's high past time you started doing real work."

Chance bit her lip for a moment. "So, where was the last place you saw Harold?"

"After dinner Saturday night, he was going out to the garage to work on his stuff."

"You know what that stuff might be?"

"No, it wasn't my place to ask. The garage was his domain, just like the kitchen was mine."

Chance scratched her head and looked in disbelief at Gibbons. Her partner was no help. "Uh, thank you, ma'am, we'll just look around if you don't mind."

They ignored the sharp retort from the woman and went outside.

"So the only reason we're here is because he's already a part of an ongoing investigation?" Gibbons asked, his eyes taking in the landscape.

"Pretty much," Chance confirmed.

"Any chance he was kidnapped?"

"That's a possibility, considering what he did, and how low an opinion the Weres have in us to actually get justice. But before we jump on that bandwagon, why don't we just do a little

old-fashioned looking around." Their steps took them to the old looking barn a few meters from the main house. The barn itself wasn't that large, and probably housed a workshop, since Harold and his wife didn't really look like farmers or ranchers.

"Door's locked," Gibbon's said, letting the padlock drop.

"Could be still in there just hiding from his wife. Let's look around and see if there is another way in." A quick look around found some windows, all either shut or boarded over.

"God I don't want to talk to that woman again," Chance muttered as she went back to see if there was a key for the barn. Grumpily, she returned a few minutes later, key in hand.

The lock opened easily, showing it was well maintained, and she and Gibbons pushed the doors open. There were various workbenches and tools inside, as well as various big game trophies.

Chance's eyes scanned around the room. There were various rifles and guns displayed. There was mold, and a forge for melting and making homemade sliver bullets.

"Ah, jeeze," the muttered curse came from Gibbons, and Chance turned towards him. The blood drained from her face, and for a moment, she thought she might hurl. Along one wall was the mounted heads of various Weres, all in their half-human half animal form. On the ground was the fur rug of a huge wolf.

Dimly she was aware of Gibbons, his all-American boyish face pale with the understanding of what they were seeing, running past her and out the door, back into warm sun of normalcy. All she could do was stand there with all those glass eyes staring coldly back at her, feet frozen for a moment. She fumbled for her phone. Pulling it out, she stared at it dumbly. She couldn't see the numbers, why couldn't she see the numbers. Finally, she made the phone work, but when she spoke, it didn't sound like her.

"Sir, we have a situation at 43 Old Post Rd. Yeah, the rapist. He's missing, but we've found a bunch of Weres heads mounted to his workshop wall." She paused, listening. "Will do..." She hung up the phone. Her fingers felt frozen, and in a daze, her eyes darted around. She turned to follow the path Gibbons had taken out of this maze of horrors. Her eyes caught the reflected flash of light, and she paused, letting her eyes focus on it. Sitting on a table was a picture frame of two men laughing, their faces nearly cheek to cheek, looking almost like twins.

"Gibbons!" she shouted, exiting the barn at a run, "Gibbons!"

The younger man looked up from where he was doubled over. "What, Pavel?" he snapped back.

"He didn't do it!"

"What?"

"He has a brother, a nearly identical brother. He's not our rapist."

"Shit. Then where is he?"

"There are two guns missing. I'm thinking he's out protecting his brother. We have the rape kit. It's only a matter of time before the swab come, back as a close match, and with everyone watching those crime shows any more..."

"It's a matter of time before we haul in the brother. Sneaky bastard..."

They slid into the jeep and Gibbons had it moving before the doors were shut. Chance reached for her phone. "Yeah, it's me. We're looking for a younger brother, he's the rapist. Have someone locate him and pick him up. Were going back out to that little girl's place, I think our guy isn't kidnapped, I think he's buying insurance so his baby brother doesn't go to jail." She ended the call and snapped the cell shut.

Time seemed to crawl, as no one knew how much of a head start Harold had after he made this decision, which was either last night or an hour ago. Either way, he was ahead of them. They made a mad dash to the border town of Cats Paw, which was only a short ways away, but still seemed like forever.

Gibbons slammed on the breaks and they skidded to a halt in the gravel driveway. They were both leaping out of the car, hands going to guns, sprinting up to the house. She nodded to Gibbons and he nodded back, skirting around the house as she knocked on the front door, trying to calm her voice. "Hello, anyone home?"

At first there was silence and then the creak of a floorboard then the turn of the knob. "Yes, can I...Agent Pavel? Is everything okay?" Chance stared down into the caramel eyes of Chrissy, the young victim's mother.

"Is everything okay here? Nothing weird happened lately."

The mother's eyes narrowed. "We are dealing the best we can, considering. You're scaring me. Now, what's going on?"

"I had some concerns about the case..."

Gibbons came back around the house shaking his head.

"...and your safety, we just wanted to follow up with you."

"Honestly, I'd rather you left, seeing you will only upset my daughter more."

"I understand. Still, my partner and I will hangout for a bit, but we will move down the road so as not to disturb your daughter."



The door was slammed in her face, and she and Gibbons, puzzled, made their way back to the car.

"Drive down a ways."

"Where do you think he is?"

"I don't really have a clue."

"Think he's in there, holding them hostage?"

"No, she didn't seem too stressed out, like they were in danger."

Her phone rang and she fumbled for it, "Pavel here." She listened for a moment before replying. "Thank you, sir." And then snapped the cell shut.

"Well?"

"Looks like Harold went to pay his brother a visit. They currently have both of them under arrest. Harold wasn't too pleased Junior dipped his wick in some tainted beast. Guess he was trying to steer him back on the correct path."

"Shall we tell them?" Gibbons pointed back at the house.

She shook her head, "No. Their lives will get complicated enough, might as well give them a moment of peace."

He nodded and started up the car, turning it out onto the road.

#####

The sun was beating down mercilessly from a cloudless blue sky as Chance drove.

She and Agent Gibbons were driving towards the Arizona border, on a tip of kidnapping and perhaps exploitation of a minor. She had opted to skip breakfast. The small town of Wolves Run was just about as brutal and backwater as you could get. She had been there once on a missing persons case, and she had felt like she had stepped back in time, and the time she had stepped back into wasn't a pleasant one.

A couple of hours later, they pulled into the tent village of Wolves Run. Dirty, filthy people stared at them, some sniffing the air as they stepped out of the jeep. Other's openly growled. She wouldn't debase her animal brethren by comparing them to animals. Animals were cleaner than this. This was the worst of animals and humans reflected in this place.

"Holy shit," Gibbons muttered out, staring around them in disgust.

"Agent Gibbons, might I remind you of your training. Please don't make eye-contact, any one of them could take it as a challenge."

The young agent's eyes immediately went to the tires of the jeep, becoming fascinated with the wear of the tread.

Chance slowly reached to her belt and unclipped her badge and held it up. "I'm Agent Pavel. Somebody reported a kidnapping?"

Silence and hostile stares were their only answers.

"Can I please speak to the town Alpha?"

Genetics was a cruel mistress, and these Shapeshifters tied to the middle of nowhere were proof of it. Years of breeding with very little outside genetic material and the simple fact that Shapeshifters of different species could not generally produce children. A werecat and werewolf could have as much sex as they wanted, although pack laws frowned on such a thing, and never produce offspring 99% of the time, but that 1% would get you; and horrible monstrously mutated children were the outcome. It was the same with Shapeshifters and humans, but they were more closely related in the genetic code so 20% of the time the pairing would produce offspring, she was proof of that. Then only 5% of those births would the child be born with the ability to shift skins. Much like Ligers or Mules, all such cross species children were sterile. Some looked human, other's were misshapen, with various defects, some had human bodies and animal heads, some had animal bodies with human heads, and others had variations there of.

There was a parting and a huge bear-like man lumbered forward, and Chance was pretty certain he was the Alpha and a were-bear.

Chance was a good 5'10" and Gibbons topped 6", but the Alpha topped them both and towered over them.

"I'm Urs, leader of Wolves Run. Why does meat demand to speak to me?"

Gibbons mouth pinched into a thin line.

"Urs, I'm a federal agent, not meat. You'd be wise to remember that, or I'll crown a new Alpha here." She met his gaze unflinching.

He growled for a second then his great square jaw twisted into a grin. "You got balls. I'll give you that, girl."

"Agent Pavel," she corrected and watched him stiffen.

"You related to Zoya."

"None of your business, the fact that I'm a Federal Agent investigating a kidnapping should be enough."

Urs continued to frown and rubbed his jaw.

Chance wondered if it helped jumpstart his brain.

"You listen here, meat, there's been no kidnapping. It's harsh out here, regulated to the middle of nowhere. You're sister's pack has lush hunting ground compared to this, we make do however we can."

These villages, in the harshest places, she knew were made up of the dredges of pack society, grandchildren of those kicked out of packs for horrible crimes.

"I want to speak to whoever called this in and then I can be on my way."

Urs laughed and looked out over his people. "Okay, whoever called the pretty meat step up?"

Chance rolled her eyes and pointed to the telephone wire that went into one of the few buildings. Gibbons nodded and followed her.

"Where are you going?" Urs bellowed.

"Investigating," Chance muttered.

"Um, Agent Pavel, not to be overly concerned here, but he's gaining on us," Gibbons said nervously.

"Urs, please don't make me shoot you. We are issued silver bullets."

"Thanks, Ma'am, he's slowed down to just trailing us."

"I think he doesn't want us to investigate, what do you think, Gibbons?"

"I'd have to agree, Ma'am."

They opened the rickety door, and Chance caught the musk of violence and the smell of blood. A woman cowered in a corner.

"Watch the door, Gibbons."

"On it..."

She heard the quite snap as Gibbons undid the strap around his sidearm.

"Miss, Miss, are you alright?"

The woman's face looked like ground-up hamburger, and her eyes were swollen shut. "Please, please, don't hurt me," she gurgled out.

Chance kneeled next to her. "Shh, it's okay. I'm not going to hurt you." She made soothing noises and gently stroked the woman's shoulder and back, letting her know she was here. With the woman's senses being so cut off with her swollen shut eyes and broken nose, Chance had to do what she could to prove she wasn't the one who attacked her.

"Did you call in a kidnapping?"

"Yes..." The woman dissolved into sobs. "My baby, he sold my baby."

"You lying bitch," Urs howled from outside and rammed the door so suddenly Gibbons was taken off guard and thrown into the opposite wall. Chance whirled up quickly, drawing her weapon and firing it into a clawed hand gripping the door jam.

Chance marched over to the howling man whose features kept radically shifting between human and animal. Her right eye ticked with suppressed rage and she shoved her service weapon into the man's screeching maw.

"The he in the statement 'he sold my baby' I assume that's you? No, don't try speaking, just shake your head."

There was a moment where the hulking man just stared at her murderously. Chance just grinned, meeting his gaze, and then slowly stepped on his bleeding hand. "Did you sell a little girl?"

She put more and more force until he howled out again in pain, and frantically nodded.

"Who did you sell her too?" She slowly removed the gun.

"The cub was mine. I had every right to do with it what I wanted. Besides, the bitch needed a lesson, I come first, not some whelp."

Chance gritted her teeth to the point she thought her teeth might crack, and gouged her thumb into his eye. "Focus, Urs. Who..." jab, "Did..." jab, "you sell the girl to?"

"The preacher, he comes up the road from the west once a year and I sell a cub or two to him."

It was casual attitude that burrowed down under her skin and turned her vision red. "You fucking piece of shit...that was a child not a commodity!" she howled out and began to savagely kick the

Alpha of Wolves Run into submission.

"Chance, Chance!" Gibbons shouted. "Stop it! Stop it! You're going to kill him - I think."

There was blood on her pants and boots, and the large man was curled up in a ball, whining and crying. All she could do was stare at him in disgust.

She said nothing until they got in the car. "I'm sorry," she said, finally.

Gibbons shrugged, "For what? He attacked two federal officers. The way I see it, you were protecting us."

Chance just shook her head and rested her hands on the steering wheel. "Where's the woman?"

"She won't leave him, or her home. She wants us to save her baby and bring her back here." Chance bit her lip as she stared out into the depressed town, caught up in its own circle of savagery and tribal laws, with disgust. This is what humans thought they were like, and this was why they needed to be destroyed.

"Fuck," she said wearily, summing everything up.

"Yeah," Gibbons just agreed.

She started the car and turned it down the road leading west.

"Lead?"

"Yeah, Urs, told me he sold the girl to a preacher man. He comes once a year and buys a kid or two."

Gibbons shivered and made a face. "Preacher, yeah right, I'm thinking kiddie porn."

Tiredly, Chance had to agree.

It was late afternoon, and they had just crossed out of Reservation land when they spotted a small, white, gleaming adobe church.

"Preacher?"

"Probably," Gibbons agreed, wiping his tired eyes.

The tires crunched along the gravel road as they pulled to a stop next to a sickly looking tree.

They stepped out into the blistering hot day. Their boots crunched softly against the gravel as they walked towards the church.

"The shit we do to each other, it always amazes me," Gibbons said quietly.

"Yeah," was all Chance said, but it didn't anymore, and maybe it was time to rethink her life.

There was no door on the church, and they walked into the bleak coolness. There were simple wooden pews, all facing an ornate altar and pulpit.

"Seems pretty much straight forward..."

Chance pointed out the stain glass windows depicting Satan in various guises fooling humans into temptation. "That's weird. Not one image of Christ on his Cross."

"Guess it's not one of those churches."

And both agents wondered what kind of church it was.

A noise startled them and both drew their service weapons, pointing them at the noise. A small child was bent over scrubbing the floors.

Chance frowned and motioned Gibbons to cover her. She moved forward. When her shadow loomed over the boy, he frowned and looked up. And Chance fought bile down. The boy's eyes had been burned out. She watched his nose sniff the air.

"Hello?" he rasped out.

"Hi there," Chance forced a cheery tone.

The boy stiffened. "I'm sorry. I'm not supposed to speak to strangers."

"It's okay," she eased out, but didn't get closer to him. "You don't need to speak to me. Is there an adult around who I can speak to?"

The boy paused, looking fearful.

"It's okay, I'm just lost, and need directions," she lied. "Two seconds and I'll be gone."

"I'm sorry, Father Francis is doing a cleansing and can't be disturbed."

"A cleansing?" She didn't like the sound of that.

"Yes, God points the way to souls that can be saved."

"Saved? Saved from what?"

"From the beast..."

"Did you need to be cleansed?"

The boy started to get agitated. "I'm pure now, pure. The beast has been driven from me. It used to look out from my eyes, so the Father had to take them so the beast couldn't use them."

"Shhh, I'm sorry. I'm glad the Father was able to help you."

"Yes, the Father saved me." The boy curled up and began to rock back and forth.

Chance got up and walked back towards Gibbons. "You hear that?" she whispered. "Yeah, real fatherly type we got here."

"Thoughts?"

"He has to be nearby. There's no way he'd leave the boy unattended. The boy is probably safe to be left alone, because he can't see to escape."

"Gibbons, that boy doesn't want to escape."

"Point... I'm thinking there's a basement. Cleansing, I'm thinking, aren't clean and polite things, so underground somewhere, where we can't hear the screams."

They searched the main room. And then beyond that room was a smaller room that was an office. There, they found a trapdoor hidden under a rug with a trunk on top of it. They opened the wide, wooden door and found stone steps leading down.

With each step down, Chance's brain became icy and cold. She didn't want to be here. She didn't want to see where this ended. It was an almost physically real feeling of fear rising up inside of her. When they reached the bottom, there was a string of naked bulbs lining the stooped rocky ceiling.

The stagnant air currents smelled of fear, rage, blood, piss, sex, and rotting flesh. Some of it was decades old. Chance choked and Gibbons stared at her funny.

"What is it?"

"Don't you hear them?"

"Who?"

She drew her weapon and started forward. As they walked down a ways, rusted iron doors began to appear, and Gibbons nearly gagged as he caught a whiff of what was coming from one room. Chance walked over and slid back a small window in the door, gazing inside. The rotting corpse of a young cougar kit laid decomposing in a corner of the room, attached to the wall by a chain.

Her face became grim and tight. She moved faster down the hall, seeing it come to a T. There came the sounds of a child's voice raised in agony, the smack of something heavy hitting bare flesh. Her pace picked up and she could make out a voice speaking.

"In the name of God, I drive the beast from you. Repent in his name and let this unholy taint from the union of beast and man be lifted from you."

Chance felt herself fade, choking in old memories.

*"My sister didn't die giving birth to a freak." Crack of the bat against her knee, and she jerked and cried out in pain.*

*"You're a human, and you'll act like it." The thump and cry wrenched from her lips as the bat was swung and connected between her ribs and hips on her unprotected kidneys.*

*"I don't want to hear about you growling and attacking some boy at school. My sister gave birth to a perfectly normal, human girl. You understand me?" He picked her up and rattled her until she begged and pleaded for him to stop. Then he just threw her back to the floor. "So come on. The moon's full, so you go right ahead and slip your skin. I'm waiting for you to shame my sister's name by proving what kind of freak you are."*

*Chance lay all night burning with the need to answer the call of the moon, but too afraid of her Uncle Paul and what he would do to her if she did. She fought the call with every fiber of her being, sobbing and crying into the floor of her bedroom.*

Shaky and pale, she grasped the cool stonewall next to her. Gibbons was standing next her, but he sounded like he was forever away.

"Pavel? Pavel, are you okay?"

There came the slap of a fist on flesh and the cry of a little girl. Chance ripped her arm out of Gibbons' hand and charged down the hallway. She threw her body at the door and it easily popped off its hinges.

She didn't even see them really.

There was the smell of blood and fear. A small, dirty, brown-haired girl crouched at a man's feet. The man was naked and shaved of all body hair, his eyes had the wide fevered look of a zealot, and an erection to prove either his love of small girls, violence, or both.

She had her gun out, and had him off the girl and pinned to the wall. "She was just a little girl. She hadn't hurt anybody. Why?" she growled out, choking the man as her arm pinned his throat.



"Agent Pavel, Jesus stop!" Gibbons shouted at her.

"Beast's eyes... Beast's eyes..." the preacher gibbered as Chance stared at the man in front of her.

"I'll show you a fucking beast," she snarled out, her teeth long and cruel, suddenly able to rend meat from bone.

"Pavel! What the fuck! Put him down." The other agent crossed over to the enraged woman, never having seen her act like this. She was always cool and professional.

Sensing Gibbons behind her, she turned and knocked him away. "What? Why the fuck should he get away with hurting a little girl whose only crime in life is to be born fucking different?"

"Pavel? I'm not sure what's wrong with you. But he's not going to get away with it, we caught him."

Chance sighed, "Nobody caught him. He got away with it my whole life. Nobody fucking cared."

"Pavel, what the hell are you talking about?"

Chance shut her eyes, feeling overwhelmed and tired. The naked preacher cowering next the wall suddenly stood up and shrieked, "I must take away the devil's eyes!" and lunged away from the wall.

In quick, precise moves, Gibbons and Pavel raised their services weapons and shot him in the chest and the head.

#####

The sun was low in the sky, turning the blue horizon into purples and orange.

The old church was a circus of law enforcement.

Chance just sat in the driver's seat of her jeep, her legs dangling out the open car door to rest on the ground, staring at nothing.

"Chance?"

She looked up, to the pinched, unhappy face of her supervisor. "Quite a little freak show we found inside there. Twenty years of fucked up shit went on in those caves under that church. The little girl is going to be fine."

"But..." she said, sensing a 'but'.

"Somebody worked that dead guy over before you and agent shot him. Gibbons says he was protecting you, and if that's true, I'm going to have to take his badge."

"Sir, stop fucking fishing...I lost it. I worked that lunatic over. And you know what? I don't feel remotely bad about it."

"Agent Pavel, I recommend you keep your voice down."

She blinked in surprise.

"This is what's going to happen. You are going on vacation. Effective as of now, you will keep your head down, and your ass out of the line of fire, until this investigation winds down. I don't want to hear from you for at least a month. You got me?"

"Sir?"

"Get your shit together, Agent Pavel," was all he said as he walked away.

She stared at the chaos going on around them, and then slowly pulled her feet into the jeep and shut the door. She started it up and pulled off down the gravel road. She was aware of the blood caked on her clothes, and the shit churning in her head. She should go see Zoya, she would know what to do, how to help the disquiet inside.

She pulled up in front of Zoya's house, and jumped out of the jeep without even shutting the car door behind her. She marched up the steps and banged on the door of the two-story house. It was getting dark rapidly, the sun now gone from the sky. Her senses felt like they were on overload. Everything she had fought so hard to ignore, or to shove under the blanket of a mixed-breed heritage, was slowly unraveling and she with it.

Terry opened the door, the older woman dressed for bed. Her confused look disappeared into a happy smile, "Chance, nice to see you again."

"Terry, I need to see Zoya."

"She's...well, now is not a good time."

"I don't care that she's with one of her whores. I need to see her."

"I'll see if she's free."

"No need, Terry," came the slightly accented coated words of Duncan, the big man appearing from somewhere. He stopped moving, his bulk blocking the stairs. "Go home and come back in the morning. Your sister has needed you for years, but you turned your back on her and the meaning of pack and family. So now that she's secure in a new family, a new pack, you suddenly want to be a part of that. No fucking way. Come back in the morning."

"Now, Duncan..." the older woman broke in, her tone admonishing.

"Fuck you, Duncan. It's important. Now get out of my way."

The big man laughed and widened his stance. "Move me, Bitch."

Chance growled and he just growled back, his form flickering for a moment and dark hair started to cover his body, and his nose seemed to stretch out.

"Fuck this," Chance muttered and pulled her gun. "Get out of my way or I'll fill your kneecaps full of silver."

The big, hairy werewolf in her way just grinned and seemed to dare her. She decided, at the last minute, to have pity on him, and shot him in the thigh, the nice beefy part, so all it hit was muscle, a clean through and through. Sure, it would hurt like a bitch, now, but he'd get up from it.

The Were crumpled to the ground howling in pain.

Chance strode forward and smacked him once, a full swing, the butt of her gun hitting his temple, and then she started up the stairs. She knocked on Zoya's door. "Thirty seconds to stop what you're doing and then I'm coming in," she shouted. "One, two, three, four, five...28, 29, 30..." She put her hand on the door and found a rather ruffled and pissed-off Zoya staring at her, and a small supermodel-thin blonde thing getting dressed.

She pursed her lips and said, "Is it just my imagination or do they get younger and younger?"

Zoya rolled her eyes, "She's well over eighteen. Weres are just youthful looking, unlike the humans that you love to hang out with."

"And what is it with you and blondes?"

"I don't know, Chance, what is it with you and humans?" the white-blonde woman snapped. Humans had murdered their parents, yet Chance repeatedly chose them over her. Humans could be fun for a good time, on occasion, but that was it.

Chance gritted her teeth and conceded that point, not even wondering how her sister knew so much about what had been going on in her life.

As soon as the bimbo had gone, Chance shut the door, but found herself unsure where to start.

"The beginning is normally a good place," Zoya stated, starting to get concerned. "And put your gun away."

Chance blinked and realized she still had her gun drawn. She put it back in its holster then sat down. "I'm a Were."

Zoya's forehead wrinkled in confusion. "Yes, and?"

"I'm a Were."

"Still not following you, Chance..."

"Until a couple of hours ago, I thought I was human...well, a mixed-breed, but no animal changing for me."

"Ha, ho, wow." Zoya got up and threw on a robe, her face a concert of mixed emotions. "I thought all this time you were just being an asshole. How could you just forget something like that?"

"I don't...Paul..."

"I knew that asshole was doing something to you."

"He...he...he would come in my room on full moon nights and, and if I showed any sign of changing, he'd beat me." Chance was detached from it still. Really...it seemed like it had happened to someone else.

Zoya was stunned. She had always just thought Chance chose to not change and run with them, that her sister had turned her back on her pack. "Do you not remember running with us as a child with father and your pack mother?"

"No," was Chance's quite response.

In truth, Zoya realized that Chance did not remember her pack and pack ties at all. "I'll fucking kill that piece of filth." She'd track him down and gut him. He'd managed, in the twelve years he'd had Chance, to take away who she was.

Chance's mind slid away from Uncle Paul and all the full moon nights hidden in her room praying he wouldn't come. "I don't want to talk about Paul. I want to understand how I'm going to change."

Zoya, laughed, "You're not going to change. You're going to be the same old stubborn, pig-headed person you were before."

"Jesus! I'm not the person I was when I woke this morning, and you're laughing."

"Whoa," Zoya said, feeling Chances distress, and for the first time noticed the blood on her sister's clothes. "Why don't you sleep here and we'll talk some more in the morning, when you're

calmer?"

Chance started pacing. "I don't want to talk in the morning. I want to talk about it now. In one week I'm going to get furry, I don't know anything about that."

"Of course you do, stop being so phobic about your heritage. You're a Were, and if you're a control freak Alpha now, you're still going to be one next week," the white-haired woman snapped

"I don't want to be!" she shouted. The words ripped into the space between them, creating a void of silence.

Zoya looked like she had been slapped, and Chance felt bad, but it was the truth. To be a Were would take away everything in life she had worked for: her job, her ability to help people from within the system, to show that the government wasn't blind to the horrors going on here. As a Were, she could not hold any sort of government job. And if this got out, there would be an outcry of Weres hiding in human society ready to do all sorts of horrible things. She could just see the slippery slope of logic there.

"How dare you!" Zoya shouted, and strode forward. Her hands grabbed the material of Chance's shirt and shook her sister. "So now the truth about how you feel about us comes out."

"No. Jesus...no..."

"You are so lucky to have such a heritage, yet you piss on it. We are not good enough for you, because your life is going so well, Chance?"

"It's my life," she spat back, "one I made without you or Uncle Paul. I did all this on my own, and I'm damn proud of the job I have. I make a difference. I help people, I help your people, and if I'm a Were, it's all gone. Why can't you see that?"

Zoya's eyes flashed sliver and she growled, "I see a rogue wolf, who's been spoiled. You don't help my people, you help your people." She let go and shoved Chance, and the dark-haired woman stumbled and fell through the open bedroom door.

Chance sneered, "No, what you see is someone who isn't charmed by you, and won't be used by you." The blow to her face took her by surprise, the anger and hurt behind it driving her back to the stair railing. Her eyes widened in shock as she lost her balance and her arms wind-milled for a second.

Zoya's went from narrowed slits to surprise as well, and lunged to grab an arm, anything, but was too late.

Chance crashed to the floor and was still for a moment.

The white-haired woman raced to the prone body of her sister, "Chance?"

Stormy blue eyes opened. "Don't touch me!" she hissed out, getting to her feet.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean..." But Chance was ignoring her, storming past Terry and out the front door.

#####

Chance didn't know why she had come here, to Khepri's silver bullet little trailer in the middle of nowhere. She had thought she hated the woman, her acts of near insanity and her disturbing questions. But she had come, and Khepri had let her in without a word, shown her the bathroom with the tiny toilet and sink and handed her a hand towel. She had emerged somewhat physically clean, but her mind still full of the dirt of her day. Khepri had plucked the towel from her hands and kissed her hard, and Chance had kissed her back.

Khepri had shoved the toy into her hands, and she hadn't blinked, just strapped it to her hips. Somehow, and the details were blurry, they had ended up outside, fucking on the clean swept stone warmed all day from the sun, fucking in the pseudo backyard that Khepri had created out of fake white picket fencing, with her plastic pink flamingos and other such oddities.

With the new knowledge of what she was, Chance was feeling more her animal side and had maneuvered Khepri on to her hands and knees and set a rapid pace, plunging in and out. They still hadn't said a word to each other; just the raw wanting noises of sex had passed through their lips.

Chance didn't really care. The near full moon was boiling in her blood, and her eyes were more a slivery blue with its the call than blue. She wanted to keep fucking Khepri forever, she wanted to dominate, and somehow felt Khepri's need to be controlled, to give penance in some way.

She felt Khepri tighten around her then shudder, calling out her cumming into the night. Chance had a sense of mind to go slow and to be gentle for a moment, letting the other woman's body rest. But then the moment was gone, and she went back, forcing Khepri's body back up that slippery slope to another orgasm. Sweat dripped down their bodies, and part of Chance realized she needed to stop, because Khepri was only human, and if she didn't, she would be no better than all those things she fought against.

She leaned her body over Khepri, placing herself deeper inside the woman, shallowing out her thrusts. Khepri moaned at the change in angle. Chance's breasts rubbed against the taut back, and her nose burrowed into the sweaty hair clinging to the back of the woman's neck. Each slick strand smelled of Khepri, and she inhaled it all until she found flesh. Her tongue snaked out, licking the salty flesh. Then she bit. She bit to show her absolute dominance, she did it so, somehow, every Were who met Khepri would know that she was Chance's, and leave her alone. Blood bubbled up from the shallow marks her blunt human teeth had made, and oozed down her

throat. Her desire rose up, washing over her, and she released her teeth, her hips snapping frantically, and she came, howling into Khepri's back.

When her own release was done, she gently kissed the moon-washed back under her lips, and kept rolling her hips, but in a more gentle manner. One hand reached underneath, where their bodies were joined, searching. She found Khepri's clitoris, heavy and swollen, and with a few strokes, she teased a second orgasm from the woman then eased out of her.

For a moment she stared at the passed out form on the ground, wondering what to do. How the fuck had she, Chance Pavel, gotten here, to this point? She pushed it away and gently picked Khepri up and took her inside her gulf stream and placed her on the small bed. She unstrapped the strap-on and tossed it into the bathroom in the tiny sink, not sure what to do with it.

She felt the night call something part of her had refused her to enjoy, but the call would just get worse as the full moon got closer. Why she had never noticed it before, she didn't know. She swallowed nervously, tasting Khepri's blood, wondering if she should leave. But knew she couldn't. She had started this, and had to ride it out until the aftermath of morning. Naked, she crawled into the small bed, spooning around the lanky body.

"I can't believe you bit me," the grumble came from where Khepri's head was nestled against bare skin. "Actually, I can't believe I let you bite me." She nibbled on the tantalizing skin.

Chance's eyes cracked open, not certain what to say. She settled for, "I'm sorry."

"And I swear to God if you decide to freak out and dash out of here after an amazing night of sex, I will track you down and find some way to hurt you." She didn't sound particularly threatening, especially since every few words were punctuated by a kiss.

"Thank God, I thought you might freak out on me," Chance said, waking up even more. "You're the one that ran off after a kiss."

"That was different." Khepri shifted upwards, tossing what was left of the blankets on the floor since she was still overheated.

Chance chuckled and shifted, pulling Khepri over on top of her, trailing her fingers over the warm skin of the woman's back and hip, "A good different or a bad different?"

"That was a freak out. Freaking out is not allowed after the wild sex we just had." Settling into her new spot, which she decided was now her favorite spot, she yawned. The brunette listened to the steady thrumming of the other woman's heart. "What happened?" she asked, finally.

Unconsciously, Chance's fingers stopped wandering and gripped the flesh under them, as she bit her lip, "Work, memories...last night. How did you know what I needed last night?"

Khepri raised her head enough to meet Chance's eyes and raised an eyebrow. "You're kidding,

right? It was pretty much written all over your face. It was, either let you have your way with me or you were going to explode."

"I'm sorry." Chance felt bad.

Kehpri laughed. "Sorry? Why? That was amazing. Don't you dare start going all wounded noble on me. If you say something like that was a mistake, I'm going to have to hate you."

"No, no, no. No sorries..." She grinned rather smugly. "Amazing, huh?"

"I think you've officially ruined me for anyone else." Kehpri didn't sound upset about that, in fact, rather the opposite. As she lay her head back down, she added, "Especially since you marked me. I should probably bandage that," she mumbled.

"Yeah..." Chance was still rather into her own perceived sexual prowess.

That would require getting up and finding her trauma kit, so instead, Kehpri stayed where she was and closed her eyes.

Chance rained a few rather sloppy kisses on all the skin she could get too. "You should have left me dozing."

One eye cracked open and Kehpri groaned as she realized where this was going. "You aren't going to let me sleep, are you?"

"Um...maybe...in a little bit," she growled, and gently flipped them over.

#####

"Ow, ow, ow...Ow!" Chance gave up and followed the direction the hands were pulling on her hair. "Okay, hint taken. You're tired and want to stop." She kissed the trembling thigh next to her cheek.

"I think you're trying to kill me," the mumbled reply came from above. "I should have tried to stop you two hours ago." She was pretty certain she wasn't going to be able to walk straight tomorrow, today, considering that sunrise couldn't be that far off.

Chance kissed her way up Kehpri's body until she got to the woman's lips then gave them a gentle kiss that only ghosted over their overripe redness. She brushed hair out of brown eyes, studying them.

In their depths she saw how tired Kehpri was, and she saw sorrow, and sadness, but the bone weary depression seemed to be lifting. "You probably should have," Chance agreed, "but I think we both needed this."



It was far too late now for Kehpri to even try to pretend she didn't know what the other woman was talking about. Instead, she smiled faintly, and shoved aside all the worries about what this would mean for a later time. Settling in on the small bed, a tangle of naked limbs and skin, she smiled, as she smelled their scent in the air. The bed was going to reek of them if she didn't get the sheets cleaned somehow.

"Probably," she admitted, finally, then laughed as her stomach growled. "Well, my appetite seems to have returned...all of them, actually."

"Hmmm, well, lucky you I've been suspended, so I'm not going to work in three hours. Soooo...I could probably make breakfast." She probably should quit, since she was now a Were. And that made no sense. How had she gotten through every government testing? But Uncle Paul had conditioned her well, to ignore that part of her, to push it down deep and wear a mask of humanity that wasn't hers. She was a lie, everything she thought she was, she wasn't. And now, almost thirty, she'd have to figure out who she was.

"You've been suspended?" That was enough to get Kehpri to shove away sleep for at least a little bit longer. "Are you all right?"

"I think so. It's probably overdue. I've been here two years without a break or a vacation. I've been near burnout for a while. I just lost it dealing with this pervert today, roughed him up then I shot him. Well...my partner and I both shot him." She rolled off of Kehpri onto her back, staring at the ceiling. Her left foot came off the bed and she planted it on the floor.

Kehpri moved with her, readjusting so that she could use the tall agent as a pillow. "So you shot someone and then got suspended?" She hesitated a moment, wondering if she should push. "What else happened?"

The agent sighed and rubbed her face. "We had a call about a kidnapping charge, so we went to some Podunk town in the middle of nowhere. Ever heard of Wolves Run? If you haven't, I'm not surprised. The harsher the town or tent village, in this case, on the Reservation, more than likely it was created by outcast Weres a long time ago. They are scary inbred places."

Kehpri hadn't heard of it, that was true, but then again, she hadn't heard of a lot of places on the Reservation. "Was that where you shot the guy?"

She shook her head. "Things that exist in nightmares breed there. All those genetic anomalies you probably read about and studied in biology class, well, you can see them for yourself live and in person." She chewed on her lower lip for a moment. "Sorry, I'm rambling. Anyway, my partner and I went and checked it out. Found this woman, her face looks like a pot roast, and some psycho Alpha who's been selling kids to some guy once a year. My breakdown, I guess, started there. I beat on the Alpha a bit, but he did charge us."

She took a breath. "So we followed the road he told us the guy took and came to this old church.

It was quiet, no wind, and no noise...just the sun baking down on us. We just knew this was the place. But it didn't really prepare us. You think you know what you'll find when you go into some situations, but this was a whole 'nother freak show."

Kehpri could feel the woman's body start to tighten beneath her, and she started to gently rub her hand over her stomach, doing her best to try to provide wordless support.

Chance shivered a bit, remembering the kid with no eyes. "This guy fancied himself a priest of some god. He would take Were kids and try to cure them of the demonic forces inside them."

"Stupid," Kehpri mumbled, stroking the bare skin of Chance's stomach.

Chance nodded. "We caught him with the girl...I'll spare you the details..." She swallowed roughly, her Uncle Paul rearing up in her head for a moment. "I lost it, just lost it, thought he was my Uncle Paul for a moment. I charged him." She was unaware of the slip. "I hit him a couple of times, and he kept screaming about the beast's eyes."

The slip didn't go unnoticed by Kehpri, and she raised her head, propping herself up on an elbow. She switched her stroking to the agitated woman's face and neck. "Why did you yell about your Uncle Paul?" she whispered

Chance blinked. "My Uncle Paul, he was an asshole. I went to live with him when my parents died."

It was hard to miss the way Chance's heart rate sped up when she talked about him. "What did he do?" she asked, carefully.

Chance went still, and contemplated her options. "He made sure I'd never belong anywhere." It was a weak answer, but Zoya was pissed at her, and she was scared of losing Kehpri. But apparently she wanted to talk to somebody, and she'd brought it up.

"Chance, look at me." She waited until she could see the agent's eyes and gently brushed hair out of her face. "I won't push, but if you want to tell me, I'll listen." That was something along the lines of what they'd told her to say during her psychology rotation in med school...more or less. Of course, she really doubted her teachers had pictured her naked on top of another woman when she said it.

Chance slowly met Kehpri's eyes. "Thanks. It's hard. Literally, I feel like I woke up as one person yesterday and now I'm somebody new. I, ah, I'm not going back to the FBI, I'm going to give notice." She took a shaky breath.

"Are you sure? That's a big change. I thought you liked being in the FBI? Maybe you should just see how things look after your suspension is over?"

"Weres can't hold government jobs," she said quietly, dropping her gaze from Kehpri's.

Kepri was very careful not to move away or give any sign that she wasn't comfortable. "You think you're a Were now?" This would explain her confusion with the genetic test.

"Yeah, well, not suddenly now. I've always been one - I guess. My Uncle Paul made sure there would never be a moment of doubt about his sister, my birth mom's genes. He conditioned me not to change with the full moon."

A million thoughts raced through Kepri's mind at that. That would explain how she got through the FBI tests. That also confirmed Kepri's genetic tests, and made her wonder how many others were out there, hiding. "They don't know though, you wouldn't have to tell them if you didn't want to."

Chance blinked and looked at the woman naked in bed with her, and laughed and laughed, until tears leaked out her eyes.

Smiling, Kepri shook her head. "What?" Not sure what was so funny.

"I was afraid you'd be freaked out about me being a Were, or about full moon beatings by Uncle Paul. Instead, you're concerned about my job."

"Oh." Kepri blinked. "Yeah, I guess a normal person would have been freaked out about that," she shrugged, laying her head back down and yawning. "Good thing I'm not normal. Besides, there isn't enough room for two jobless people in this trailer."

Chance laughed and started to relax again. "Well, now I know. You know, I wondered when I would have that nightmare about my parents' death. I was running on all fours behind them. I thought it was a kid thing." She shook her head to get her thoughts back on track. "Full moon's in a week; and now that I know that I can change, we'll see what happens."

Kepri tossed a leg over the other woman's legs and closed her eyes, "Enough world shattering talk. Sleep time."

Chance grinned. "I love it when you're so adaptable, it's sexy." She nuzzled her nose into Kepri's hair, smelling blood. "Shit, your neck. Let me get something to clean it and some ointment."

Having almost slipped off into sleep, Kepri growled, "If you get up I'm going to have to hurt you."

"Okay, morning then." Chance wasn't tired, but was content to lay there wrapped around Kepri.

#####

Some time after dawn, Chance had unwound herself from Kepri's body.

She had left a note and gone back to her place for some stuff and food. When she got back, as she expected, Kehpri still slept, so she crumpled up her note and tossed it in the garbage.

Then grabbing a beer and her two clubs for golf, she went out through Kephri's backyard, patting the flamingos on the head, and then outside the little vinyl fence with the view that looked into the great outdoors. She gathered some rocks and started working on her drive. Hell, she had nowhere to be.

"I have some golf balls you can use," Kehpri called from the door of the trailer, yawning and running a hand through her hair. Chance's t-shirt that she was wearing rode up high on her thighs.

Chance turned, smiling, "Morning."

"Ugh," was Kehpri's answer to that, yawning and squinting into the bright sunlight. "You didn't bring any coffee with you last night, did you?" she asked hopefully.

"Yep..." She bent over, grabbing her beer, and then made her way back to the trailer. "Hope you don't mind, but I went home and grabbed some stuff and clothes...since I'm on vacation and all."

"I need a bigger trailer," was the muffled response. "Did you sleep at all last night?" Kehpri followed her inside, glad to be out of the bright sun.

"A bit..." She leaned her two clubs against the side of the trailer. "Let me make coffee and I'll clean that, um, love bite." She paused in front of Kehpri. "May I kiss you?"

To tell the truth, Kehpri had forgotten about the bite until Chance mentioned it. "Oh." She smiled and moved closer. "I'd be upset if you didn't."

"Good. I was worried that we might have an awkward morning after." She leaned over, slightly kissing her.

"We will if that's the best you can do for a kiss."

Chance chuckled against Kehpri's lips then leaned in more, so their bodies were flush against each other, and kissed Kehpri again, while her fingertips inched up the t-shirt at Kehpri's thighs.

Kehpri laughed and stepped away after the kiss, "Oh no you don't...I need coffee." She gave her a push towards the small corner kitchen.

"Fine," she pouted, but stepped inside and started the coffee. Once it was brewing, she went looking for the med kit. "Where's the huge medical box of yours?"

"Closet, in the bedroom," Kehpri called from the small closet of a bathroom where she was using the facilities.

"Kay." Her ego puffed up a little, the bedroom still smelled of sex. "Not bad for being out of practice for over a year," she muttered to herself. She opened the closet and saw it right away. But being in law enforcement, she couldn't help but nose around.

There was a folder under some clothes with some pages coming out, and she picked it up then felt bad and went to put it back. A small, white square fell out. She quickly picked it up and found it to be a photo. The photo had a laughing Kephri and some redhead. She frowned, feeling jealous, and felt silly as soon as the jealousy eased.

"Guess we know why you're here. Bad break up. Guess that makes me the rebound girl," she said to herself putting it back.

"Makes you what?" Kephri called from the living room, toweling herself off from the sponge bath.

"Uh, slow," she said, quickly turning around with the red medical box. "You ready?" She held up the box, shaking it slightly.

"You sure you know what to do with that?" Kephri sat down on the kitchen stool and tilted her neck to expose the bite mark. It was crusty from dried blood.

Chance rolled her eyes. "I'm just going to clean it. It's not like I'm a vamp, it's not deep."

"Good thing for me. Vampirism, unlike being a Were, is transmitted through the saliva." She obediently held still for the cleaning.

Chance whistled a bit and got a wet washcloth then gently started cleaning the crusty blood away. "I merely nipped the skin, it's healing already." She was flushed slightly, as certain images popped into her head that were the reason for the bite being there.

Kephri slowly started to smile. Trailing a finger up the length of the agent's chest, she smiled even wider as the other woman shivered. "Maybe you should make it up to me."

"Uh huh..." She sucked in a breath. "And how would you like me to do that? Make it up to you, that is." Still gentle, she rubbed some ointment on the bites. "All good, and I promise I don't have any diseases."

Distracted by the very naughty images running through her head, Kephri whispered, "I know" without thinking as she leaned closer for a kiss.

From somewhere, her cell phone rang, a muffled, desperate noise, which she ignored for the gratification of a kiss.

Kephri had big plans to get Chance back into the bedroom, but those plans died with that kiss.

Instead, she pushed the taller woman to the floor in the living room and started trying to get her clothes off there without breaking the kiss.

Her phone rang again, and Chance sighed. "Can..." kiss, "you..." kiss "hold..." kiss "that thought." She pulled back a bit, looking very sorry. "They'll just keep calling." To prove her point, the now silent phone started ringing again.

The brunette got a wicked look in her eye. "Bet I can keep you distracted longer than they can keep calling." Her fingers found their way into a loose article of clothing.

Chance squirmed as fingers hit a ticklish bit of skin and giggled. "Okay, let's see what you're capable off, crazy lady."

"Oooh...a challenge..." Kehpri pushed the agent back to the ground and slid those fingers further downwards. "I like challenges."

"You may like them, but are you any good at them..." she trailed off, and bit her lip, distantly aware of her phone ringing again.

"Chance, shut up..." Kehpri trailed kisses down the agent's body, pulling and pushing aside clothes as she went.

The advantages of shutting up were really rather obvious. So she shut up and went with the moment, ignoring her phone.

#####

A rather long time later, Kehpri lay with her head on Chance's stomach, smiling as she lazily trailed fingertips up and down the other woman's thighs. "Your phone stopped ringing," she said, pressing a kiss to sweaty skin.

"Yes, yes it did." She smiled up at the ceiling dreamily. "This is the best vacation I've ever had."

Far below the house, a sedan turned onto the rough dirt road that led up to where Kehpri's trailer was parked. It spun its wheels for a minute, but then managed to get traction and haul itself up towards the trailer.

Chance cocked her head to the side. "Are you expecting anybody?"

"I don't know anybody else but you here, why?" Kehpri lifted her head.

"There's a car coming." She sat up, placing lingering kisses on Kehpri's shoulders and neck, and crawled over to the window to peek out.

"A car..?" She climbed up off the floor with her to see, frowning uneasily. "Someone you know?"

she hoped, judging how far it was to the pickup as she scooped up her clothes.

"Yeah... Damn it," she huffed out. "What is that idiot doing out here?" She got up, frowning at Kehpri's tense posture. "It's my partner, relax."

"Oh, well, that's good." She felt dizzy with sudden relief. "Good thing we have coffee."

"You okay?"

"Yeah, just wasn't expecting a visit, you know?" She knew it sounded lame.

Chance started looking for her clothes, not sure if she should push. "You know, I'm a good listener. I know it must not seem like it, but I am. If you ever...uh, you know, want to get something off your chest."

Stopping Chance for a moment, Kehpri gave her a sweet kiss to the lips. "Thank you. That means a lot." Not that she could ever take her up on the offer, but it was sweet.

Chance forced a smile. "No problem." As she slid on her pants, it just kind of confirmed she was the rebound woman. Pulling a shirt over her head, she made her way to the door and opened it. "Gibbons, what the fuck are you doing out here?"

The young crew cut man jumped a little at the greeting. "You weren't answering your phone."

"Maybe there was a reason for that. How did you find me?"

Curious to see this partner who hadn't shown up at the hospital when his partner had been shot in the gut, Kehpri moved over to the door to peer around Chance.

"All our phones have GPS. I just tracked you out here." He shut the car door and blinked a little, really seeing the place. "Are those fake flamingos?"

"No, they're real," Kehpri yelled out the door past Chance.

Gibbons turned his head, looking at the woman next to Chance. "Sorry, ma'am, I didn't see you. Well, if they're real, they are about the best behaved ones I've seen."

Gibbons walked over to the trailer door and held out his hand, "Nice to meet you."

Chance rolled her eyes. "Kehpri, meet my partner Gibbons. Careful, I've only had him a couple of weeks, don't break him."

"So you're the partner who didn't show up at the hospital where your partner was after being shot." Kehpri's smile wasn't that pleasant.

Gibbons looked confused for a moment. "Oh, no, ma'am, I was assigned to her as her partner after that."

"Oh." Kehpri winced. "Sorry about that little snitty thing then. Want to come in?"

"Um, sure, I'd like that. It's already getting warm out here."

It was getting warm inside the trailer too.

"Excuse me." Kehpri shoved past both agents. "I have to start up the generator," she yelled, leaving the two standing there as she scampered past a pink flamingo around the trailer.

Gibbons looked at Kehpri's retreating back for a moment before looking back at Chance, his face one big question.

"Shut up," Chance said and stepped back into the trailer.

She wandered over to the couch, and snagged her beer bottle, sitting down. "So why are you looking for me?"

"Uh...so you and she are..."

The portable generator wheezed then rumbled into life, which powered up the window-mounted air conditioner, and started cooling the room.

"Gibbons, if you go there, I'll call your wife and tell her you told me about all about your sex life the first day we worked together."

"Right... Okay. Well, I'm looking for you because you just disappeared, and you need to do a statement about what happened, and you need to have a psyche eval."

"Did I miss anything fun yet?" Kehpri bounced off the door to the trailer and into the living room, slightly out of breath.

Chance snorted, "No, you haven't missed anything fun."

"Psych eval?" Kehpri raised an eyebrow, leaning against a wall. "That sounds fun."

"Oh, and Dr. Miller keeps calling for you, all the guys are jealous, something about a very out of date physical."

"Uh huh," was all Chance said, taking a swallow of beer. "Why didn't you just leave me a message?"

"Tell Miller to go to hell. She's a quack and dangerous," Kehpri sneered, her smile dropping in an



instant.

Both Gibbons and Chance looked over at Kehpri with their eyebrows raised.

Kehpri crossed her arms over her chest. "She is! Stay away from her."

"Um..." Gibbons said, looking back at Chance. "I did, but you didn't call me back."

"Jesus, Gibbons, it's been like thirty minutes."

"Try more like two hours."

"Oh. You were the one who kept trying to call her." Kehpri leaned back against the wall, trying to avoid smiling.

"Really? Huh...I was busy." She took another sip of beer.

"Very busy," Kehpri echoed.

"I bet," Gibbons muttered. "Look, I'm your partner, what's going on."

That was an interesting question, and Kehpri raised an eyebrow looking towards Chance, wondering how exactly she was going to answer that.

Chance sipped on her beer for a moment. "Gibbons, you're a good kid, but Jesus, it's been like a day. Can you let me enjoy some time off for just a little bit before you waltz in shoving work crap down my throat? I have serious burnout, something you wouldn't know about 'cause you're still wet behind the ears."

That was a bit harsher an answer than Kehpri had expected, and she winced in sympathy.

Gibbons stiffened, but said nothing.

"Look, just go. I'll call you in a couple of days. But please let me enjoy the illusion of being on vacation. Okay?"

He frowned, but nodded, "Fine."

As the door slammed shut, Chance took a drink and said, "Sorry about that."

Kehpri opened the door to call out, "Nice to meet you!" then closed the door behind her, raising an eyebrow at the agent who was still inside, "You always that nice to people?"

Chance shrugged, "You seem to like my people skills well enough."

Hard to argue that, so Kehpri shrugged then smiled. "You owe me breakfast still."

"Okay, but if I make it, you have to stick around and eat it this time," Chance quipped, getting up.

"Sorry about that. I had a little freak out."

"Uh huh... So what do you want for food?"

The brunette trailed along behind her, hopefully. She was suddenly starving after their activities all night, and morning. "What did you bring?"

"Eggs, bread, bacon, butter, milk... You're fridge was kind of empty." Chance made the few steps to the kitchen.

"That's because I don't have electricity often." Watching expectantly, she watched the preparations. "Eggs and bacon sounds great."

"Okay dokey, what kind of eggs?" she said, getting out a skillet and opened a cooler, grabbing out food.

The other woman perked up. "You can make multiple kinds?" She hadn't even thought there was a possibility other than scrambled. "Can you do sunny-side up?"

"Sure. We have bread?"

"Kind of..." Kehpri squeezed past the other woman, taking the opportunity to pat a firm rear as she did, and grabbed the bread. The foldaway stovetop was natural gas, so she turned one burner on so she could toast the bread over the flame.

It was an odd domestic moment. "I know I should have asked, and I'm not going all U-haul moment on you, but I didn't really want to go back and forth. And people would just be bugging me all the time at my place."

"So you want to stay here?" Kehpri's smile was blinding. "That sounds like a great idea." She didn't want this to end. The prospect of going back to being alone was scary.

"Good." Chance beamed and cracked a shell and let the egg plop into the hot skillet.

"It'll be like going camping." The ancient Gulf Stream was fairly good sized for one person, but for two, it was going to get interesting.

Chance snorted, "You're toast is on fire." She started opening cabinets, looking for plates.

"Shit!" Opening a window, she tossed the flaming toast outside.

Chance chuckled and pulled out two plates.

"Stupid toast," Kehpri grumbled, pulling out two more pieces of bread and trying again.

"If you fail at first, try, try again...then order out," Chance quipped as she set the plates down and checked the eggs.

"Ha, ha..." Kehpri put the more burnt of the two pieces of toast next to Chance's plate for that one.

She then started the bacon, and her stomach growled as the meat started to smoke. "So, how long you going to hide out here, on the Reservation?" She was curious, how long they might have together, if there was even a together that they were currently having. She really didn't know that much about Kehpri, and the woman really wasn't sharing. Of course, she could always go run her fingerprints through the database.

Hoping up onto one of the stools, Kehpri watched the goings on over the small stove with interest, shrugging, "As long as it takes. I don't really have any other place to be, and this is where I need to be for now."

She shifted to grab her piece of toast and tore a corner off to butter and munch on while she waited. "How long is your suspension, I mean, vacation?"

"Probably thirty days. I'll call in, in a couple of days, and check in with my Supervisor. I'll probably have to go fill out some reports, boring stuff." Judging the eggs to be ready, she slid them off onto the plates.

"Thirty days." That sounded like a lifetime to Kehpri, and she nodded. "Thirty days, good." The instant the last of the eggs was on her plate, she attacked them, using the bread to sop up the liquid and groaning in pleasure as she ate a piece. "Thirty days of good cooking."

"Um..." Chance watched Kehpri devour her food, which was almost like watching a train wreck. Unable to tear her eyes away, she asked, "You want some bacon?"

If it was possible, Kehpri's eyes lit up even more at that. "Oh yes." She eagerly held out her plate for some of the bacon, licking her lips. "I need my strength, after all," she waggled her eyebrows, grinning.

Chance actually blushed a bit, and slid some bacon on to the other woman's plate, before dishing up a plate for herself.

Shoulders shaking with silent laughter, Kehpri took back her plate and made short work of the bacon as well. "What do you feel like doing today?" There wasn't that much of the day actually left, but she figured she would ask. She had been planning on raiding the hospital, but that could

wait.

Chance blushed again, and went out into the tiny living room three feet from the kitchen and sat down in a chair.

This time Kehpri couldn't contain her laughter and ended up bent over the small kitchen area, laughing until her eyes teared up.

Chance scowled and refused to look at the other woman, finding her food fascinating.

"I don't mind if you want to ravish me all day, but maybe we could do something else as well?" Kehpri had a shit-eating grin on her face as she managed to control her laughing.

Chance mumbled something and took a bite of her burnt toast.

Leaving the empty plate where it was, Kehpri moved over to the other woman. Picking up Chance's plate, she slid onto the woman's lap, and helpfully, she thought, held the plate for her. "What was that? I couldn't hear you over there."

"I said, it's been awhile, and I'm a little over enthusiastic." It was still mumbled out, but allowed Kehpri to slide onto her lap.

"Good thing I'm a fan of enthusiastic then, isn't it?" Judging that the other woman had enjoyed enough of her breakfast, she started to kiss her way down the agent's neck. Who was she kidding, she didn't want to go anywhere today anyway.

"Later," was the only thing that Kehpri mumbled, continuing to explore the exposed skin.

Chance's blue eyes got wide for a moment then almost closed. She moaned, nearly dropping Kehpri.

She stumbled through the bedroom door. "You need a bigger bed," she groaned, placing the woman in her arms onto the rumped bed.

"No place for one," Kehpri grunted, dropping onto the bed and trying, urgently, to get as many clothes out of the way as possible in as short a period of time as she could manage.

As she watched Kehpri, her eyes darkened until it looked like lightning might crash in her eyes. She licked her lips and easily smelled the woman's want and desire. "You are so beautiful," she said quietly. Then crouching over the bed, leaned over, kissing the woman's stomach.

Tangling her hands in the taller woman's hair, Kehpri arched up off the bed into the touch, so suddenly aroused it was painful. "You're the beautiful one, I'm just skinny," she laughed, which turned into a moan as those lips did wonderful things.

Chance smiled and licked upwards from the navel, murmuring into the skin, "Nothing a few cheeseburgers won't fix." She stopped speaking to focus on Kehpri's breasts. Her sister might be a pig in female clothing, but she was right, Kehpri did have a nice rack. Fortunately, Chance was smart enough to keep that thought to herself.

The look in Chance's eyes caused wonderful things to happen in Kehpri's stomach. With a growl of her own, she grabbed ahold of her head, pulling her down for a hard kiss that left them both a little breathless.

"Mmm..." Chance said, a little dreamily. "With a kiss like that, I might just have to keep you."

That caused a chill to go down Kehpri's back. She didn't have any illusions about how this was probably going to end, and it wasn't going to be a fairytale ending. She decided to change the subject, quickly, and kissed her again, thoroughly.

#####

Chance slowly drove the road back into town. She was tired, a good tired, but tired none the less. Her week had flown by in a vague sexual haze, which wasn't a bad thing. She was doing things she probably should have done as a teenager, but hadn't, although, if she had done them then, she would know better than to be doing it now, because it would be out of her system.

Last night they had gone to a movie, a normal date-like activity. They'd even had dinner. Then on the way back, they'd had sex in the car, not the pull the car over and go at it, although Kehpri had let her pull over later, so they could do that too. It had been fun, and as a federal officer, she knew better. But seriously, she was feeling more alive than she had in - forever.

Also, the full moon was coming, and the week was almost up, but she wasn't really feeling all that different, just her usual Chance-like self.

She and Kehpri should probably talk...make a plan, in case she got out of furry control. Instead of thinking about the full moon tonight, she had gone into work. Work always helped her ignore things.

She pulled into work, her mind off in a dirty little corner wondering if she was good, that maybe Kehpri would let her use the toy again.

Locking the car door she strode into the bureau office and was met by Halstead's whine of, "And my week was going so well."

"Fuck you too, asshole," she muttered back.

With some odd sort of homing beacon, her Supervisor opened his door and looked at her. "You're late," was all he said before turning around and going back to his desk. But the door was left open for her follow.

"Something you needed, sir?"

He looked at her over his steepled fingers. "I need your report on the shooting, and then you'll need to see a psychologist."

"Sir?"

"I can probably get you back on in sooner than thirty days, but I'll need a psych eval to do it. As it is, I'm damn pissed about you doing this so close to a full moon, to be down a man on such a night will really suck."

"Uh, yes, sir..." She really wasn't sure what to say.

He stared at her. "Well, get to work, and when you're done with that report, go see Dr Miller. She keeps bugging me, something about being overdue for a physical."

"Yes, sir," she said, getting up and heading to her desk.

Gibbons was there, hunched over his desk pretending not to notice her, but he knew she was there, she could tell by the stiff set of his shoulders.

She focused on the stack of crap on her desk, wondering why she was here and not back at the trailer. She could be getting drunk and working on her golf swing in the expansive piece of desert that was Kehpri's backyard.

She found the form she needed in the stack and pushed her chair over to the typewriter. "So how's the wife?" she asked pleasantly.

"Fine..." was the blunt answer.

Blue eyes rolled in annoyance, and started typing. After about five minutes, she finally thought of something else to ask. "Sex life still good?"

That got a response, as Gibbons' crew cut head shot up and he turned, glaring at her, "Dandy."

"Mine too," Chance said happily, smiling like a maniac.

Gibbons raised an eyebrow then asked, "How are the flamingos?"

"They're plastic, how the hell do you think they are?"

It was such an odd turn in the conversation they busted up laughing.

Stopping when heads shot up in the office, glaring at them, which just reduced them to holding

their breath and giving way to snorts and snickers.

Chance went back to typing. "Ah, I'm sorry about being a dick. You know, when you stopped by."

Gibbons nodded. "I'm your partner and I was worried, but I hadn't realized you'd been out here so long without leave. I guess I'm sorry too."

Chance snorted, "No you're not, you're just gloating 'cause I admitted I was wrong."

"Well, yeah."

An hour later, Chance finished the report and headed out, promising to meet with Gibbons and his wife for dinner next week. She smiled and even did a happy little skip on her way to the car. She really should have taken a vacation earlier, she felt great.

"Chance, you're a hard woman to pin down." The words were low and husky, filled with innuendo.

"Uh..." Her head whipped around. "Ah...Dr. Miller, how are you?"

"Better. A girl could think she was being ignored, the way you haven't returned my phone calls."

"Ah...uh...you see..."

"I see that you're free now, so why don't we just go on down to my clinic and I'll do that physical and all."

"I have to..."

Dr. Miller stalked right up to her, pinning her to the side of her car. The woman's perky boobs were planted firmly against Chance's side.

"...home," she squeaked out.

"This won't take any time at all. If you're good, I'll give you a lollipop."

"Um..." That statement was just dripping in sexual connotation.

"...home," she tried again.

Only to find herself, minutes later, being dragged through the front doors to Miller's clinic.

#####

It had been...Kehpri had to admit, one of the most pleasant weeks of her life so far. She'd never really considered herself a people person, always preferring the solitude of lab work, but the spending so much time with Chance had been enjoyable. She grinned, stretching. Then there had been the daily sex. That had been even better than enjoyable. In fact, it had been damn near perfect. It hadn't taken her long to figure out that once you got Chance going, she went for a while. Speaking of which, the brunette wondered how long it would be before the woman was back from her drive to town. Kehpri hadn't missed how nervous Chance got every time the subject of a full moon came up, which was exactly twice so far.

Considering the full moon was tonight, that was going to make things interesting.

For all her research, she'd never spent a full moon close to a Were, or even seen one change shape before. Her scientific mind wondered if Chance would let her watch. The rest of her was a little uneasy with the idea of the agent turning into a wolf.

Flashes of her childhood came to mind, and she grimly, again, shut those thoughts away. Chance wasn't like that, she knew the other woman better than she knew anyone still alive, and she trusted her.

There was always her insurance policy, in the form of a double barrel shotgun loaded with silver pellets that she kept under her bed. Impatiently, she started clearing up the remnants of breakfast, trying to make the time pass quicker as she waited.

#####

Chance drove along the dirt road to the trailer and bounced down the road. She knew how Kehpri felt about Dr. Miller, and considering that, the woman would more than likely be mad at her.

She stared down at the cotton ball taped to the bend in her elbow, a single dot of red staining the white. Yeah, Kehpri was probably not going to be happy with her. She almost felt like she'd been unfaithful, which was silly.

The sound of tires on the dirt outside caused Kehpri to drop the dishes into the sink and hop over to the door, wiping her hands off on the torn jeans she was wearing. Happily, she yanked the door open, grinning as she spotted the agent. "Hey, thought you'd gotten tired of me and decided to hole up with some other sexy brunette."

"No, no, no, you're the only sexy brunette I want," Chance said, getting out of the car and shutting the door. "Work stuff, my supervisor says he can get my back earlier if I go see a shrink."

"Bah. Why would you want to go back earlier?" She started down the wooden steps, stopping when she came within arms reach of the woman and frowning. "What's that on your arm?"



"Would it do any good to say 'Now don't get mad'?" Chance asked, thinking she probably should have tried to hide her arm in some way.

Grabbing her arm, Kehpri frowned at the gauze taped over what was obviously a needle wound. "That fucking psycho Miller gave you a shot?"

"Well, I'm glad you're not mad. Um, yes, and she took some blood, made a pass at me, and felt me up." And oddly, none of it had remotely turned her on.

Kehpri's eyes narrowed dangerously. "She took some blood? That's it? Didn't give you a shot?" She would deal with the pass and feeling up part in a minute.

"No, she gave me that too." Chance really wanted to have less moral fiber at the moment.

"Fuck!" Kehpri shoved away from Chance. "I told you she was evil, but you let her give you a shot! Goddamn it, Chance, do you listen to anything I say? Fuck!" Kehpri kicked at a rock then cursed and jumped around for a few seconds, having hurt her toe.

Chance stiffened and quietly said, "I do listen to you." Then she made her way to the trailer and went inside, out of the heat, before she did or said something she'd regret.

The cursing continued for a little while outside, until her toe no longer hurt. Then Kehpri sat on the steps, frowning as she considered the last few seconds. "She felt you up?" she finally called into the trailer. "And made a pass?"

"Yes. I think she was under the impression I would be more helpful," Chance shouted back.

Kehpri fiddled with a pebble for a moment, biting her lip. "Did you, umm...you know, she's really pretty, and I wouldn't really blame you if you wanted to...ummm..." She frowned, really hating saying this.

Chance opened the door and just stared at crazy woman. "Don't you dare say anything, but if it makes you feel better, nothing, not even a twitch. I didn't even get a little wet." She slammed the door shut, going back inside

Insane as it was, Kehpri smiled at that door. "Awww, that's the sweetest thing anyone has ever told me!" she yelled at the closed door.

"I don't like you anymore," the muffled reply came.

"I like you though." Kehpri got up and tried to door, very pleased to find it wasn't locked.

Chance grunted and swallowed some beer, "You sure about that, since I don't listen to you."

"Sorry about that." Kehpri crept closer. "I have this thing about people dismissing what I say." It

was a recent thing, and she wasn't that proud about it, but there it was. "I got worried when I saw the needle wound." She still was. God only knew what Miller injected her with.

"I did listen to you. However, my supervisor gave me an order to see her, and then she practically cornered me in the parking lot. It was like she was stalking me." Chance shivered.

"She probably was," Kephri growled, hands twitching. That was it, she wasn't sure how, but she was going to stop Miller's nefarious plans. It would be really great if she had an idea what those plans were though.

Kephri took a deep breath. "Ok. Listen, can we do that over again? I'm sorry I reacted that way." She wasn't going to say she overreacted, because she hadn't. "Hi," she smiled, "I missed you. Welcome back."

Chance looked over at her and set her beer down. "I missed you too."

"I wish I could say I understand, since you've never really told me anything about you and why you may have a bone to pick with Miller." She sighed. "But despite all that, I like you, and forgive you."

That hurt a bit, and Kephri looked away. "I'm sorry I don't talk about my past... I just can't, not yet. Please, just trust me that she's not a good person though."

"I know." She held out an arm towards Kephri, who slid into the embrace with a relieved sigh.

"I'm really trying not to screw things up. I know it doesn't seem like that, but I am."

"It's okay." She kissed the woman's temple, feeling the curly hair tickle her face.

Kephri stayed where she was, eyes closed, enjoying the closeness, and a little shaken by how close things had just come to being bad. "That was our first fight I guess."

"Yeah... Just so you know, I was going to sneak home without seeing her. I know you have...um...reservations about the doctor." Chance kept her face close to Kephri's inhaling her scent.

That was a polite way to put it. "I'm sorry I blew up without finding out what happened." She sighed. "You know what night it is, right?"

Chance stiffened, "Uh, yeah. We should discuss our options for this evening."

"You haven't changed before, right?"

"I have memories of running around on all fours as a child," she supplied.

"Hmm..." Kehpri started to rub the other woman's back. "But then I guess you can keep control if you change or not?"

"Zoya says I'm not any different. If I was a control freak Alpha before then I'm still one, despite what I know now, that I didn't know before." She frowned and examined what she had just said, not sure if it made any sense.

Kehpri wasn't too sure she followed either. "Whatever happens, I know you won't try to hurt me."

Blue eyes blinked. "How...how can you know?"

"Chance..." Kehpri grinned, looking up into her eyes. "I know you better than I know anyone else right now. You take those honor and duty things more seriously than anybody else I know, and I used to know a lot of honor and duty people. You won't hurt me."

"Okay, when you put it like that, it makes me seem boring," Chance said, but she had relaxed a little bit.

"Yeah, that's exactly how I see you, boring. An FBI agent who risks her life all the time out on a reservation full of insane people and angry Were's who, until a few days ago, didn't know she was a Were also. Yup, sounds boring."

Chance snickered. "Okay. I'm not that boring." She set her beer down and wrapped her arms around Kehpri, pulling her more firmly into her lap. "Okay, so no biting tonight, I'll be on my best werewolf behavior."

"I don't mind nipping, but this one was a bit much." She touched the bandaged area on her neck, and arched an eyebrow. "Good thing I don't have coworkers, or they'd be snickering over what sort of hickey I got last night." She smiled, happy that Chance seemed to have relaxed. That was good.

The agent kissed the back of Kehpri's neck. "Sorry about that." She really wasn't.

Kehpri really wasn't that upset about it either, so that worked out well. "So tell me, what do you want to do tonight?"

"Um, I don't know. I could call Zoya, I think we're still speaking. We could lock me up somewhere or chain me, although I'm not sure how chains work with changing shape, probably cut my arm off..." Chance rambled as thoughts popped into her head.

Kehpri twisted around in the other woman's arms so that she could silence her with a kiss. "I don't think that the chains thing is a good idea." She had a sudden, vicious flash of the things kept in the basement of the research facility. Chains had held some of them in place, blood, dark red, oozing from where the manacles cut into flesh. "No, no chains."

"Okay. No chains." She rubbed soothing circles on the tense muscles under her hands. But she didn't ask. She had long since given up trying to get answers about the demons that rode Kehpri's distress.

"Good." That was good. Kehpri relaxed, trying to once again forget those images in her mind. "What do the other Werens do during the full moon?"

"Run around with their pack. Some who get full moon madness get locked up, they hunt, they fuck, and they bond with their pack mates. I'm not really sure. I've never belonged to a pack."

"Maybe you should try it." Although she wasn't too fond of the idea that someone else might try to have Chance.

"Try what? Hunting?" she teased.

"Sure, hunting," Kehpri nodded her head, "whatever you want to do, other than the fucking part, that's reserved for non-pack time."

"Hmm, maybe we should practice that part." She had a leering grin on her face.

Laughing, Kehpri stood up and held out a hand. "Care to retire to the bedroom?"

"That would be lovely," Chance said, taking Kehpri's hand.

Leading the way, Kehpri grinned. "I have to make sure you're all tired out before moon rise, after all, right?"

"Works for me... Maybe I should get you a red cape." She grinned widely, "Yeah, just a red cape, nothing else."

Kehpri narrowed her eyes and pulled the other woman into the bedroom. "Anyone tell you that you talk too much?" she demanded, shoving her towards the bed. She had so many better uses for that mouth.

Chance laughed and let herself be pushed towards the bed, and began to softly sing. "Hey there Little Red Riding Hood, You sure are looking good. You're everything a big bad wolf could want..." trailing off as she forgot the next lyric.

A laughing Kehpri dragged her down to claim her lips. "And you say I'm crazy."

"Yes I do," she murmured against warm lips. "Something that must be catchable, because what I allowed to go on in the car the other night...that was crazy. I'm an officer of the law, I know I know better." She was kicking off her shoes while her hands were busy undoing the buttons on her pants.

"I don't know if catchable is a word," Kehpri countered, her own hands tugging aside the shirt then undoing the other woman's bra. "Contagious you meant, right?" she teased, her fingers sliding across newly revealed breasts.

"You PHD types and you're fancy words." Her breath hitched, and her system thrummed with pleasure, her entire body coming to attention under the woman's touch.

"That's MD, PhD types to you," Kehpri mumbled, her fingers paving the way for her lips to follow.

"My parents would be so proud. I got me a doctor," she joked then squeaked as lips hit a sensitive spot. She wasn't a virgin by any means, but on the flipside, she hadn't had that many girlfriends. But sex with Kehpri was fun.

Kehpri chuckled, the sound vibrating through her lips onto the body part she was currently licking and nibbling on. "Can we avoid talking about parents and family for a little while?"

Chance wasn't certain how Kehpri did it, other than her magical powers of insanity, but the woman just got her going until she turned into a regular old slut puppy. Currently, she was naked, lying on her stomach on the ruffled bed with an equally naked Kehpri lying on top of her. She had no idea what time it was, and she didn't really care.

She felt sated and warm, like there was liquid sunshine in her bones.

That wasn't a normal feeling after sex, and wondered how close to moonrise it was. Then she stopped caring, as she felt Kehpri's warm breath against her neck and the woman's steady heartbeat lull her into a doze.

Kehpri was half dozing on top of the other woman, drifting back and forth, in and out of sleep. She knew that they must be getting close to moonrise now, but she didn't care. It was too nice to move. Finally, she managed to summon enough energy to talk. "We should probably get up." She made no attempt move.

"Is this normal?" She felt her ears turning red. "Um, having this much sex? I mean, I've had sex...not a lot of girlfriends to compare." She gave up, blowing out a breath.

"It's taken some getting used to," Kehpri mumbled, pressing a kiss to the skin beneath her. "You're not wearing me out, if you're asking."

They should get up though. There was no doubt about that. She just really didn't want to and face the night.

"Come on you." She swung her legs over then rolled off of Chance's back.

"Fine," Chance pouted, and rolled over and sat up. Her lanky limbs stretched and her head turned, looking out the small window. Her eyes blinked. "Dusk," she murmured. "And I don't really feel that different."

"Isn't that what Zoya told you, that you'd stay the same?"

Chance ran a hand through her hair then snagged the hair band from the dresser. "You want me to make some food?" Fuck, sleep, eat, and horse around, perhaps she'd found the secret to life.

"Food sounds great. Let me go fire up the generator so we have some lights." Kehpri stood up shakily, grimacing a bit as she moved and grabbed a pair of short shorts and tank top.

"Nah let me do it. I left the cooler in the car. When I was in town I stopped and bought some groceries." Chance snagged the shirt and shorts from the other woman. Grinning at her naked body, she was looking better not as skinny.

Kehpri slapped her arm and shoved her towards the door. "Oh, no you don't. I know that look now, and no more until you feed me at least!" With all the food she'd been eating over the past week, she felt almost human again.

"What? I was just admiring." She slipped the shirt on then stepped into the shorts, pulling them up.

Kehpri had to work hard not to laugh at the sight of Chance in her clothes. The t-shirt came to a stop well above her belly button and the shorts left little to the imagination. "Nice," she grinned.

"Hush. Or I'll go change. I have to have some clothes around here." She normally hated having so much skin exposed, but for that look on Kehpri's face and the fact they were in the middle of nowhere, she'd keep the clothes on, for now.

It was tempting to just push Chance back onto the bed, but her stomach was suddenly rather demanding. "Go on. I'll get the plates set out."

"Okay, back in a jiffy."

She went outside, the door to the trailer banging softly behind her, and looked at the darkening sky. The moon was just starting to make her grand entrance to the party, and there was warmth in her bones and a spark deep in her belly. Automatically, fear came damping the moon's call, a response honed by years of living with her Uncle Paul. She shook it off and stuffed it to the back of her mind, making her way to the car.

There was an odd stillness in the world around them that she only realized as she came to her car.

It was the reflection in the car mirror, the grotesque shadow image reflected back to her that alerted her to the danger. Automatically, she ducked the swing and then pivoted, rocking forward

with a quick jab to the gut, and then another as she launched upright. Then in a finishing move, she grabbed its head in both hands and brought it down rapidly as she brought her knee up. Knee and skull met somewhere in the middle with a soft crunch. Releasing her hands, it fell over and didn't move.

She breathed out harshly, her senses straining, and then she felt them, a nice half dozen. Her lips pulled back and she growled a warning. This was hers, the land, the woman, even the fucking fake flamingos...hers. She slowly started backing up, retracing her steps to the trailer. She needed her gun, and maybe a backup call.

Out of the gathering darkness of night, a figure launched itself, catching Chance and tackling her to the ground. She hooked her fingers around his shoulders and allowed her body to go with the fall, using the momentum to her advantage. She leveraged her knees under him, pressing them against his hipbones. As they hit the ground, she kept going, rolling them over. Pinning him to the ground, her thumbs immediately went into his eyes, pressing until blood and other liquids poured down over her hands. Even if he was a Were, he was a blind Were for at least a while.

She didn't see the kick coming, but it caught her under her ribs, lifted her up, and sent her flying. She staggered to her feet, only to have her head snap back as she caught a fist with her face. She shook herself and jumped back out of the way of the second punch.

As her vision cleared, she looked stunned for a second. "Duncan? What are you doing?"

The large man sneered at her, but didn't say anything. Just came forward, a wall of muscle. A ripping noise came to her ears, and Duncan's skin began to ripple and split, falling off in chunks as fur started sprouting down his chest and arms.

"If this is about shooting you, I'm sorry, really. Come on, I was originally going to shoot your kneecap out. So you see, it could have been worse."

"I've always hated you, Chance. You make Zoya weak. You make her care about those humans, because you care. But you and your lover are about to have an accident. Then Zoya will be free of you and your influence."

"That's messed up," Chance murmured, and ducked a swipe of razor sharp claws. God she wished she had her gun and maybe a few more layers of clothes between her and a charging werewolf. Giving up bravery and valor, she turned to run back to the trailer, where her gun was. Only to be brought up short by the snarling, snapping jaws of a huge wolf. She quickly backpedaled, only to find another wolf that snapped at her with large teeth.

She was screwed, this thought lanced through her head as Duncan's claws ripped through her back. She gasped and staggered away, trying to get away from those claws and teeth. She was picked up by great furred arms, which wrapped around her body, squeezing. Duncan's voice, now horrible from the shift in his larynx from man to his half-form, stated, "Can't shift, can you? The

stink of humanity is too strong, binding you in this weak and paltry form."

Chance cried out as her ribs cracked inside her chest. She struggled, surging forward then back, the back of her head smashing into his snout.

The werewolf howled out and tossed her, his great hands going to his nose.

Airborne for a moment, she crashed into Kehpri's truck. They were on her, the wolves with their fangs and claws, and she cried out, trying to protect her face and neck.

Suddenly, they were gone and Duncan was there, looming over her. She blinked and tried to wipe blood out of her face, only to cry out in pain.

"You know if you shifted you'd heal, but you can't, can you?" He laughed and then jabbed forward, one quick thrust of his claws into her gut.

He stood back up, looking at the ferals he had collected for this little venture. "Go get the other one."

The wolves yipped and headed to the trailer.

"Your lady friend has two hours, for you to find us and save her. If you can, that is. In two hours you'll bleed to death, and to celebrate, I'll start passing her around the boys so they can have a little full moon fun. Never say I didn't give you a chance." He stood up and raised a clawed hand to his muzzle, where his tongue snaked out and cleaned the blood off them.

"Chance?" the questioned call came from the door of the trailer, as Kehpri checked to see what the commotion outside was. It took her eyes longer than the agent's to adjust to the dark, and she sincerely wished she hadn't opened the door when the first monster rushed towards her. She made it halfway to the bed and the shotgun under it before the beast caught her, screaming.

The crowd around became excited by her fear, yipping and hooting, incapable of vocalizing actual words.

She lashed out with her fists, doing little more than annoying the beasts around her. One of them, which more humanoid than the others, picked her up, screaming and kicking, and started to carry her back towards Duncan.

"Stop playing with it and bring her out here. We need to get going." He looked down at Chance. "How you doing there, Super Agent?"

Chance just concentrated on breathing and held her hands over the wounds on her stomach, trying to stem the flow of blood.

As they cleared the trailer and her eyes adjusted, Kehpri got her first good look at the scene from



her position over the shoulder of the Were. Her kicking stopped mid kick when she saw Chance and the dark liquid seeping out through the fingers clenched over her stomach. "You fucking monsters! Let me go help her, you bastards!" She started pummeling the side of the Were's head with her elbow.

Duncan laughed. "If she shifts, she'll live. Too bad she doesn't know how. Two hours, Chance, tic-tock..."

"Don't worry..." Chance grunted out. "I'll find you. But if you could figure out how to save yourself, that would be great too." She grimaced.

"You better fucking find me." Kehpri pounded on the back of the thing that was starting to carry her away. "There's a gun in the bedroom!" she yelled. "And the trauma kit!" she added.

Chance nodded and watched them leave, their mile-eating lope taking them into the night.

She looked up at the moon. "Shift, come on shift." She took a deep breath and focused on making her body change. "Oh fuck me, come on let's get wolfie." Still nothing happened and she started crawling to the trailer.

She made her way inside; they'd been kind enough to leave the door wide open. "Oh God," she groaned. She fumbled with her bag, pulling out her cell phone at the same time she kicked open the trauma kit. She hit Zoya's number, listening to the phone ring. Lifting up her shirt, she groaned again and stuffed gauze into the holes in her gut.

"Full moon, kind of busy," the distracted answer came from the other end.

"You're bully boys attacked me and stole my girlfriend. I think I'm dying again." Chance dropped the needle and cursed. "Fuck!"

This wasn't working, she needed to shift.

"What?" The voice was definitely more attentive this time. "Chance, is that you? Where the hell are you? What happened?"

"Yes, it's me, who else has your cell number! I'm at Kehpri's trailer. I know you know where that is. I didn't miss the girlfriend comment."

The voice on the phone got more distant as Zoya spoke to someone else. "Yeah, get everyone together; we're going for a run." Then the voice got stronger as she spoke into the phone. "I'll be right there. Don't move." The line went dead.

"Ha, ha..." The gauze was soaked through, and Chance felt weakness hit her legs and she sank down to the floor.

#####

*Chance was running on all fours, her father and pack mother running ahead of her. Ivan and Zoya next to her to make sure she didn't fall behind.*

It wasn't quite a half hour later by the time wolf calls sounded close enough that the woman bleeding to death inside the trailer could hear them. Only a few minutes later, Zoya appeared in the doorway, naked, since she'd come all the way here in her wolf form.

"Chance?" She stepped over the trail of blood and went over to the woman slumped up against a wall. "Chance?" she said louder.

Chance blinked and her head shook a little bit then she focused on Zoya's face. "Hey," she grinned. "I tried to stitch myself, but my hands were shaking very badly."

The sister knelt next to her, bending a bit to see the wound in her stomach and wincing. "Too late for that now, Chance, you have to change shape. The wound will heal if you do."

"I don't know how. Help me," she pleaded.

"Chance, of course you know how!" Zoya sounded exasperated. "You changed when you were younger. You must remember that, running along with all of us?"

"I do," Chance said dreamily. "I dream about it then the gunshots ruin my dreams."

"Chance..." When the other woman continued to fade out, Zoya grabbed her shoulders and shook her. "Chance, you have to stay awake!" she stated, letting out sigh of annoyance. "Ok." This was annoying, she'd never had to explain how to shape shift before. "You have to find it inside you. There's a part of you that's the wolf. It's always with you. Do you feel it...your animal side?"

She grinned, remembering the first night she and Kehpri had sex, she'd felt it then. "Marked her," she murmured.

"Oh God, I don't need to know about you marking that thin girl." Zoya made a face. "But that's a start. Go with that feeling."

Chance made a face. "Don't start with me. I've seen some of those blondes that leave your room."

"Can we talk about this later? When you aren't bleeding to death?"

Chance's eyes slid shut and she focused on the feeling she'd had in that moment when she'd marked Kehpri as hers. Her breathing became shallow, her chest rose and fell, then nothing for a moment, then it rose and fell again, and then it went still.

She found the animal part of her curled up, staring at her with dark, stormy eyes. "Where have

you been?"

"I don't know, I dreamed I was human," she said.

The wolf snorted. "Silly, you are the best parts of both, noble and savage."

"I'm dying, can we hurry this up," she grumbled.

"Fine..." The wolf got up, shaking and stretching, dust came off its fur, and then sprang at Chance, falling inside of her.

Chance's eyes sprung open and she sucked in a lungful of air. She smiled at Zoya for a moment before her eyes went wide and her mouth opened in a scream. Her body was on fire, or was under attack by fire ants, which, she wasn't sure.

Prudently, Zoya stepped back, shoving one of the others who had decided to snoop inside out the door with a snarl. This was for family alone.

Skin split, bones lengthened, and blood streamed out of her mouth, Were teeth fell out, only to be replaced by fangs.

After a few minutes, a large, black wolf stood in the middle of the living room, and shook out its fur and sat looking at Zoya.

The blonde just smiled, happy to see her sister as she should be. "Now you are one of us. Welcome back, Chance." Her words were already starting to slur, as she started to change as well. "It always hurts a bit at first." Her own skin splitting opened, bone and muscle rearranging.

The black wolf rolled her eyes then started out the front door, sniffing the ground looking for Duncan's scent.

It was a different experience, the scents nearly overwhelming her. But she focused, sorting through everything quickly until she found the scent she wanted - Duncan's.

A half circle of wolves stood or sat outside the door to the trailer, a few of them getting up as Chance emerged, curious about this new wolf. Zoya padded along behind her, a black and white dappled wolf.

Instinctively, she raised her head and howled, calling out she'd found the scent.

As one, the pack roused from their positions, yipping excitedly as they bounded around. Zoya snarled at one of them who got too close to her, asserting her dominance as alpha.

Chance could care less about pack order, Duncan had taken her mate. Kehpri had been clearly marked. She bound into the night at a less than graceful run, until she figured out how to use her

tail as a rudder.

#####

Duncan was back in his human form, to show his superiority to the other wolves. He could become man and wolf on a full moon night, something only an Alpha could do. He watched the ferals fight for pack status, and show off hunts. He used them when needed to do the dirty work that Zoya couldn't be associated with, and was fully prepared to kill them off if need be, which might be the case, especially once Chance died.

He winced as the human once again started singing.

Since her fists and kicking hadn't been able to do much, Kehpri had resorted to singing at the top of her lungs, even more off key than usual. There was a method to her madness. For starters, it really annoyed the wolves around her, they couldn't seem to bear being too close to her high-pitched warbles. Secondly, it would hopefully give Chance something else to home in on also.

"Shut up!" he snapped, seriously regretting giving her two hours to live.

He was also regretting his superior hearing. Her voice was like an ice pick stabbing into his brain. "No one is looking for you." Studying the moon, he grinned. "She's dead, you know. It's been an hour and a half, and I got her good, one stab to the front and one to the back."

"Fuck you," Kehpri yelled back, taking a brief break in her rousing rendition to 'She'll Be Coming 'Round the Mountain'. "She's stronger than you think. Besides, I'm sure that Zoya's looking for you too. She's going to rip you apart when she finds out you kil...hurt her sister."

He snorted. "Zoya doesn't know, and she won't know. I'm her second. I do all the horrible, repulsive things that are necessary to ruling. All the things her hands can't be stained with. I protect her to death."

"She won't know?" Kehpri laughed at that. "You're an idiot. You think she won't smell you all over my place?" Her grin turned nasty, "Or the markings that these ferals left behind?"

"These poor beasts, these things are disposable? Dozens of these wretched creatures exist in the Reservation. I'll come across the horrible accident at your trailer and track down the murderers and dispose of them, and Zoya will have her revenge."

Kehpri swallowed. That sounded entirely too plausible for her liking. "That's assuming that Chance died from her wounds, which she didn't. She'd find a way to overcome whatever block is in her mind."

"Chance..." he made a face, "the naïve hero, striding out with only a six-shooter at her side to

change the world. Making it safe for humans and monsters, so at night we can all fucking sit around the fire and sing camp songs."

"At least she tries," Kehpri sneered, "unlike you. What a big man you are, sneaking out after dark away from your Alpha, scrounging together these pathetic outcasts and trying to assassinate your alpha's sister, which you screw up. Well done, idiot."

"Chance is a liability to Zoya, she makes the Alpha weak." He looked up at the moon and grinned. "Not that it's your concern anymore. You're two hours are up, and your lover is dead."

*Shit.* That was the first thought that crossed her mind. The second was that Chance had lied, she hadn't found her. "Go to hell!" she yelled, grabbing for a rock and tossing it at him.

Duncan growled as the rock bounced off his chest, "You first, human." He stood up and held out his arms, and the other wolves went silent, giving him their attention. "Two hours have come and gone. The human is up for grabs, who has gone too long without the taste of warm blood from the font of humanity?"

The pack gibbered, yipped and hooted. Some tore into others proving dominance.

Kehpri scabbled for another rock, something... anything that she could use on the first thing that came near her. She was terrifyingly certain about what would ultimately happen, but she was damned if she wasn't going to fight going down.

"Chance, now's a good time to show up!" she yelled.

Then a single gunshot cracked through the chaos and a wolf fell, his head bursting like a rotted fruit, spraying those around him with bone, blood, and brain.

Chance staggered out of the night, holding her gut with one hand and a shotgun in the other. It was her fault they were late, she had remembered the shotgun and had gone back for it. Then had to change back to her human form for the hands to strap it to Zoya, and then turn around and run out here. Damn it, she was going to have to admit her sister had been right, but she'd spent too much time as a human, and she trusted the gun over her own inexperienced wolf self.

"She's mine, Duncan. My mark, my mate, mine! If anyone else touches her, it's over my dead body."

The ferals whined and looked to their Alpha for guidance.

"Ha! Told you she wasn't dead, you stupid moron!" Kehpri yelled, backing towards Chance as fast as she could.

Duncan laughed a horrible roaring noise. "You should have just laid down and died, Chance. You're hurt, and no match for me and mine. I still remember the taste of your blood off my claws.

Sweet was the flavor."

Chance swung the shotgun up and fired at another wolfen creature that was preparing to pounce on Kehpri.

Kehpri screamed as a splatter of blood from the thing's head coated her side. Giving up on the ordered backtracking, she sprinted towards Chance's side.

"You okay?" the agent asked, taking her eyes off the pack for a moment to check Kehpri over.

"Better now," was the short reply. Then she yelled a wordless warning as one of the wolves took the opportunity to pounce towards Chance from the side.

Chance lifted the gun without thought and fired then pulled them back two steps so the now lifeless body could sail past them.

"Duncan, you want my blood so bad, why don't you face me? Just you and me; none of your bullyboys. What do you say? You game?"

The large man laughed. "You've caught you're lover's madness."

"Chance..." Kehpri started, worriedly.

Chance pressed the shotgun into Kehpri's hands and looked at her, brushing the hair out of her face, smiling. Her eyes were moon bright, and her teeth unnaturally large. "Its okay, I'm not really all that hurt," she whispered only for Kehpri to hear.

"Glad you found the shotgun," Kehpri answered, nodding slightly to show that she understood. She worriedly stepped aside, reloading the gun as she went.

She turned away before she gave into a desire to mark Kehpri again. "What's the matter, Duncan, chicken?"

"Hardly," was all Duncan said, charging her.

Chance dropped her hand from her unbloodied side and stood up straight and opened herself to the moon. The sliver stream invaded her, sucking her human and wolf selves together and spiting them back out. Bones cracked and moved, rearranging her form. Skin fell away, crumbling into dust, making way for midnight colored fur. The great black Were took the thicker gray-tipped Were completely off guard. First blood went to Chance, as her claws sliced his muzzle open.

Zoya's pack flowed out of the night, catching the ferals by surprise as well.

One wolf, the one that had dragged her from the trailer, rushed towards Kehpri. With a grim grin, she raised the shotgun and pulled the trigger. "Down, doggie," the brunette whispered as the

corpse tumbled past her.

Despite her nakedness, Zoya strode through the wolves and the Weres every bit a regal queen. She came to a stop next to Kehpri. "Sorry about this. If she would have let me handle this, Duncan would be muzzled, and in a kennel by now. But no, she wanted this elaborate plan. I swear she was dropped on her head as a kid."

Looking towards where the two Weres were slugging it out, nastily, Kehpri winced. "She's been building to this, I think. She probably needs it." Which was sad if she thought about it; which was why she wasn't going to.

"True. I've turned a blind eye to some of the things Duncan's done in my name, because honestly, they fit in with my world plan. But I never officially or unofficially sanctioned this. Please believe me."

She turned, growling at a feral that got too close, and with amazing control, only her arm shifted into wicked claws. And in the blink of an eye, the feral's throat was slit, and Zoya's arm was back to normal.

That was impressive enough to drag Kehpri's gaze from the two fighting. She hadn't known it was possible to only change a portion of the body. The fact was filed away to be thought about later. Reloading the gun, she wished Chance would get away far enough so that she could put a few silver shots into Duncan.

"You're seeing sights tonight that no human has been privy too. I'd beg for your silence, but considering Chance has chosen you as her mate, I know you wouldn't do anything to hurt her." The mark was annoyingly there, and a scent lingered in the air around the woman, which was strong, still proving the depth of commitment between them, even if the two sharing it had no idea.

"Mate?" Kehpri grinned a little. "I think she's just shacking up with me to get away from the world for a bit." She glanced sideways at the sister. "She was upset when she first showed up at my place." It was surreal having such a calm conversation when there was a fight for the death going on in front of them. *Shock*, Kehpri thought, *I must be in shock*.

"Please, this is Chance we're talking about. She hasn't had sex in years 'cause she's been waiting for the right one. Plus, she marked you. That bite on your neck isn't just a hickey. It tells every Were near you to keep hands off. Then she made me promise not to interfere because she had to save you. But you're human. In the end, you'll break her heart." There was no malice in Zoya's voice.

"I'll break her heart?" Kehpri frowned. "She's probably going to break my heart." They both stepped back a few feet as the fight surged in their direction.

Zoya snorted. "Chance, break your heart? Please. She's a fucking boy scout." She stepped in front

of a charging wolf, grabbed it by the ruff, and snapped its neck.

Kehpri grimaced and jerked aside as the dead thing dropped to the ground. This was getting stranger by the second. "She's probably just using me for sex, you know that, right?"

Zoya pulled a face. "I don't need to know that."

The ferals were all dead; in death most shifted back to human forms, others to wolves. Zoya's pack was intently watching the fight between Duncan and Chance.

"Zoya, I like you and all, but this is getting too strange a conversation, even for me." She stepped over one of the dead people, who used to be a wolf, she thought.

"I agree. And I'm only tolerant of you because of Chance." She held out her hand. "Give me the shotgun."

"Tolerant of me?" That earned her a look, even as Kehpri handed over the shotgun. "You really remind me of some army people I used to know."

Zoya shrugged, "I am sort of like a military dictator." Shotgun in hand, she walked toward the fighting Weres. Duncan and Chance were evenly matched, which was impressive, considering Chance was new to her form and what it was capable of. Both had flecks of foam on their muzzles, and their fur was coated with cuts and blood. Up to now, Zoya had been dampening her Alpha control. Now, she unleashed it and her presence washed over the patch of dirt they had fought on. The wolves of her pack crouched or rolled over, exposing their necks and bellies.

Duncan was affected and crouched down onto all fours, his tail ducked between his legs. Chance could have cared less about Zoya's status, and merely shrugged off whatever Zoya was doing and stepped forward to rip out Duncan's throat.

For a moment, Zoya instinctively wanted to raise the rifle and shoot her sister, not liking how her authority was ignored, but shook it off.

"Chance, back off. I know you want his blood for what he did to your...um...girlfriend, but I need to finish this." She wouldn't say please, not in front of her pack.

Kehpri stood off to the side, feeling as if she was watching a scene in which she had no part of. Despite being kidnapped and threatened with death, she had no part of this world. Most scientists in her field would have killed to be where she was.

Chance went still, her powerful legs tense with energy, her lips pulled back in a snarl exposing teeth.

"Chance!" Zoya barked, raising the rifle.



"Chance..." Kephri stepped closer, getting closer to Zoya in case she had to shove the other woman aside.

The werewolf turned, her dark blue eyes focusing on Kephri.

"Please." She looked at the cowering thing on the floor. "He's Zoya's problem."

"Listen to her, Chance. Let me deal with Duncan." Her voice was icy.

Zoya walked forward, passing through her pack and past Chance, pausing for a moment. "I know your blood is hot and you want his death. I need to do this. I need to show my pack I will not tolerate such things. Go to your mate, we'll go running when we finish this."

Kephri stood where she was, not quite brave enough to follow Zoya through the wolves that had parted to let her through. She had no idea if they would do so for her, in fact, she kind of doubted it.

"Please, Chance?" she called.

The Werewolf's tail wagged slightly then she made her way to Kephri.

Zoya let out the breath she was holding then went to the bloody and battered form of Duncan. "My family, my pack, how could you?"

For a moment, it seemed as if the Were wouldn't or couldn't speak, then his bloody and torn muzzle opened and tried to form words. "Because you wouldn't, and she makes you weak with her defiance."

Zoya looked at him for a moment, sadly, then pressed the muzzle of the gun to his head and pulled the trigger.

There was a ripple of sadness through the pack. Duncan had been family, but the Alpha had decided. As one, they lifted their muzzles to the sky and gave a cry of mourning.

From her position outside of the circle of wolves, and how very symbolic that was, Kephri flinched, looking away from the remnants of the Were. What a silver loaded shotgun did to a face at that range wasn't something she cared to look at closely.

Chance stuck her cold nose against Kephri's neck, sniffing her scent, making sure the woman was okay. She didn't smell any wounds or blood.

Tiredly, Kephri brushed a hand along the wolf's fur and smiled. "You probably want to go running, right?"

Zoya didn't like how her sister seemed to beg for permission, but it was jealousy on her part, and she knew it. To have Chance back with her was a wonderful feeling, and if she had to tolerate the human, she would.

The brunette's lips twitched and she gave the wolf a shove in the shoulder. "Go on, you big goof. You've waited to be running ever since you were a kid. I'll be fine."

"Up through the scrub is a car. Jason, my medic, is waiting in case of any casualties. He'll take you home. I'll watch out for her, make sure she doesn't do anything stupid or get moon drunk," Zoya said, pointing up through the scrub and the rocks to the north.

Chance sighed at her sister's words then bumped her shaggy head into Kehpri's shoulder, rubbing her cheek.

"Thank you." She looked down to Chance and smiled. "I'll see you back at the trailer later. Have a fun run."

Zoya rolled her eyes and walked up to Kehpri, handing her the shotgun, before turning and starting to run, flowing seamlessly into her wolf form. The pack stood, and with yips of joy, followed.

Chance took a step then looked back for a second before running after them, and she too flowed from her Were form into wolf.

Kehpri stood there, suddenly alone with the dead, and shivered. Hefting the shotgun, she turned and started walking towards where Zoya had said the car and medic were. She wanted to go home and get a shower.

#####

Dawn was coming, tendrils of light starting to streak the night sky from black to gray. A huge, black wolf sniffed around a pink flamingo that had broken away from the herd, and was lying still on the dirt ground.

Instinctively it knew something was going to happen soon, and had left the pack sleeping miles away to return to where she knew she would be safe. Chance's brain, however, was stuck in an animal level of thought, and couldn't conceptualize what the coming sun meant.

The door to the trailer was only slightly bent out of shape, compared to what it had been before the attack. It still closed, not completely, but it closed.

Kehpri got up from the window she'd been watching out of ever since she'd been dropped off by Jason, and wrenched open the door when she spotted the wolf. "Chance?" The shotgun was within reach, just in case she was wrong.

The wolf's ears perked up, and its head cocked to the side as it heard its name.

The sun was coming, and Kehpri had a good idea of what would happen soon after that. "Come on. Come inside, Chance. It's time to come home." She stepped aside, holding the door open.

Chance's tail tentatively wagged.

The woman in the trailer smiled. "Come on, Chance, come inside. You know you'll feel better changing in here than out there."

The wolf took a few steps then sprinted into the house, brushing past Kehpri.

She just laughed as she shut the door, the hours of being alone, worrying, pacing, gone in that instant. "Good to have you back too, Chance." She had to shove the door shut with her shoulder.

The wolf sat, her pink tongue lolling out in a doggie grin.

"When you change back, you owe me a new door," Kehpri grumbled, moving towards the small kitchen and getting a big bowl of water for said wolf.

The woman was hers in some odd way, odd because she walked on two legs instead four. She yipped playfully, and pranced a bit then butted her head into Kehpri's side.

Kehpri nearly dropped the bowl. As it was, she grumbled as water splashed everywhere. "When you change back, I am going to make fun of you for this like you cannot believe." But she rubbed the wolf's head regardless, grinning as she scratched behind the ears.

That action got a groan from the big animal, and her back leg to start twitching.

"You are really going to hate this when you change." She looked up to check how far along the sunrise was.

Chance huffed and walked over to the couch, hopping up onto it, and laid down. The sky was gray with the first blush of pink in the gray

Kehpri followed, sitting down on the edge of the couch and stroking the wolf's fur as soothingly as she could. She really wasn't sure what was going to happen next, but she wasn't going anywhere.

About fifteen minutes later, the sun broke the landscape and Chance tensed and whined.

"Shhh... it's okay. It's going to be okay." She really hoped she wasn't lying about that.

The change was rapid, the fur dropping off in great clumps, only to rapidly decompose into dust before it hit the floor. Her temperature skyrocketed, and bones broke and knitted themselves back

together. A howl of pain turned into a scream as her vocal chords altered to human.

Between one moment and the next, Kehpri was holding a woman instead of a wolf. Cradling Chance's form, she pressed a kiss to the new skin on her brow. "It's all right. See, it's all right." She petted fine dark hair slick with sweat.

Chance just laid still, panting harshly as she adapted to the change. "Zoya says it gets easier," she grunted out finally.

"I hope so. That looked painful. Are you all right?"

"Yeah...I'm good." Her hands hurt and she had little scars all over her body from her fight with Duncan, but somehow she knew that they'd be gone by the next full moon.

"Good." Kehpri kept up her slow brushing of hair as the tremors subsided in the lanky form draped over the small couch. "You should rest."

"Mmmhmm," Chance murmured out as her eyes closed, soothed by the feel of Kehpri's hands running through her hair.

"Sleep," she whispered, continuing her slow stroking as she yawned. Maybe she'd take a little nap also.

#####

Chance woke up when the afternoon sun can barreling through the window, and sat up with a yawn and a stretch. Her stomach rumbled and she slid out of Kehpri's arms and padded silently to the kitchen.

The woman on the couch grumbled and woke up enough to stretch out on the flat surface, yawning and flinging an arm over her eyes to shield them from the light so she could go back to sleep.

Chance chuckled at Kehpri and started rooting around in the coolers and the small fridge for food. She vaguely remembered catching a rabbit and eating it with the pack. Actually, a lot of her memories from last night were vague.

"You better be fixing some sort of food," the groan came from the couch.

"You betcha," Chance said, happily finding some steaks. For a moment she was tempted to nibble on it raw then made a face.

"Good." Kehpri flung her arm away to squint up at the other woman. "You do realize last night was insane, right?"

She looked up from the plate she was loading the steaks on. "Yeah, about that, are you okay? Duncan didn't...uh...you okay?"

"No, you got there in time. By the way, try not to cut it that close again? I was getting a little worried there."

"Sorry, we would have been there in plenty of time, but then I had the stupid idea to come back for the shotgun. That was stupid, but I was more comfortable with the idea of a gun than being able to take him as a Were. Zoya was right, as usual. She said it would take up time." Chance rubbed some rosemary and garlic into the steaks then went outside to start the small gas grill that was out there.

Grimacing at the light, Kehpri followed, sitting on the outside steps to watch. "You got there in time and everything worked out all right." She fingered the porch, trying to figure out how to tactfully bring up a question that had been bugging her. "Do you have to report your sister...for killing Duncan?"

That wasn't tactful, and she sighed. She really wasn't a people person.

"Um..." Chance frowned, thinking. "I should, but I'd have to explain myself being out there, and then there's the fact Zoya's probably cleaned it up and not left a shred of evidence, other than the shotgun she gave back to you, so it has your prints all over it. You still want me to call that in?"

She hit the igniter on the grill and the flame popped a deep blue, and she waited, letting it warm up the grills.

"Hey, I didn't want you to call it in at all. I was just kind of wondering what sort of position that might put you in."

"An awkward one... If I decide to remain a federal officer, I'll have to transfer. Zoya owns me now, in a manner of speaking. I don't think I can be subjective."

"Oh." Kehpri fiddled with the edge of the step, frowning. This was getting towards dangerous territory. Any talk about a future that they probably weren't going to share was pointless. Proving that she was masochistic though, she found herself asking, "What do you want to do about that? Transfer, stick around here?"

Chance didn't answer right away, just threw the steaks on then looked back up at Kehpri. "I don't know. Ask me in a couple of days, when this all processes." She had wanted to say she wanted to be with Kehpri, but that would have sounded creepy and clingy.

"Sounds good... Forget I asked about what you wanted to do."

She closed the lid on the grill and walked back over to Kehpri, strutting in her naked glory. "How

are you? You saw a lot of things last night...that were probably mind blowing."

Kehpri shrugged, flicking a piece of sand off the edge of the fake stone step, pretending she wasn't watching the statuesque naked woman walk closer. "I'm all right. I guess it probably hasn't hit me yet though." True, last night had been fairly bad, but it wasn't as traumatizing as it would have been in her prior life.

Chance crouched down, took one of Kehpri's hands, raised the knuckles to her lips, and kissed them softly. "Well, I'm glad you haven't run away screaming. Not everyone would be as understanding of a gang fight between Werewolves."

It was really hard to focus on anything else when Chance's breasts were hanging right there in front of Kehpri's face. "Huh?" She blinked and looked up. "Oh. Well, you see a lot of shit on the road, you know?" That was kind of close to the truth.

Chance cocked an eyebrow and stared at Kehpri, her lips slightly pursed. It was a vague, flippant answer that set off her bullshit detector. For a moment she almost went with her instinct to push for answers, but then reminded herself of the redheaded woman in the photo she had found. She was only temporary, the rebound girl, until Kehpri sorted herself out.

"Well, I'm glad you're okay." She got up and went back to the steaks. She opened the grill top and quickly flipped them. "How cooked did you want yours?"

The look she was getting made Kehpri squirm a bit. No wonder Chance had those awards in her file; she was definitely good at interrogating. "Medium would be great." The brunette had to hide a sigh of relief when those devastating eyes were turned away.

"You, umm, want some clothes? Not that I'm objecting to the view or anything."

"Not yet, my skin feels..." She huffed, looking for words to describe what she felt. "It feels a little sensitive yet for clothes. If you're bothered by my au natural look, I'll go put some clothes on though."

"No, no, please, go right ahead with what you were doing, was just wondering if you'd forgotten about clothes after last night." She gave a grin to show she was teasing.

Chance grinned. "It is rather freeing. You could try it yourself."

She took her steak off the grill in the mood for more rare than cooked, and closed the lid for Kehpri's steak to get more cook time.

Kehpri laughed. "What would the neighbors say?"

"Considering your nearest neighbor is miles away, I'm not sure, but we can go ask after lunch." The agent grinned then turned off the grill and put Kehpri's steak onto a plate.

"I have neighbors that close by?" The woman on the steps huffed and got up, dusting off her threadbare pants. "I'm going to have to talk to my realtor. I asked for privacy."

Chance snickered and handed Kehpri a plate of food. She sat down on the next step from Kephri's, tearing into her food. "God...how many calories does shifting burn?" she mused between bites.

"A lot..." Kehpri started in on her food, half wincing as she realized what she'd just said. "I would guess," she finished as smoothly as she could while tearing into the steak.

"Yeah, probably... Is it gross or creepy? Sorry, I'm just curious. It's not like I can see myself, and it's forbidden to be taped. Zoya doesn't want it to be used by the government or end up on YouTube."

It was amazing, Kehpri thought while she took her time chewing on her current mouthful, how a nice conversation could get into dangerous territory so quickly. "It looks..." she paused, not sure how to answer, "...painful. It's over pretty quickly, and I wasn't really grossed out by it, but it really looked like it hurt."

"Um, yeah, I think I'll finish off my unused vacation then turn in my notice. I just can't lie like that and go back to work when..." She trailed off. "Zoya's right, I am a fucking boy scout."

It was hard, but somehow Kehpri managed to avoid laughing out loud at that. Instead, she reached over and patted a well-toned arm, not quite managing to stop herself before she stroked the sun-warmed skin. "You have time to think about it first."

"Well, how can I enforce rules, if I'm not willing to follow them?" She had a full tirade in her head, but it derailed somewhat at the touch of Kehpri's hand on her skin. Her blue eyes darkened, but she controlled her urges. She swallowed and started cutting another piece of steak.

Setting aside the half eaten steak, the other woman shifted closer so that she could run her hand up and down the naked back that was so nicely presented to her. "Of course, you could probably do a lot of good there too."

Chance swallowed, and set down her plate, her hands shaking slightly. "Right now I want to be inside making love to you. If you don't want that, please stop touching me. My skin seems to be one big oversensitive nerve bundle."

"Who said I didn't want that?" Kehpri continued her leisurely kissing across the exposed skin, trailing down well-muscled shoulders and upper back.

Chance shivered and made a noise that sounded kind of like a whine. She cleared her throat. "Okay, let me know when you're ready to go inside." She took a breath and let it out, enjoying Kehpri's exploring, and determined to let Kehpri set the pace. The woman deserved a little

control after last night.

A sound that might have been an evil laugh came from behind Chance, as Kephri widened her exploration. Fingers slowly spiraled out from the other woman's back, to lightly start grazing her side. "When I want to go inside? So I get to decide?"

Chance's stomach muscles tightened in response, but she didn't do anything else. "Yeah, I figure it's fair. I've been kind of a control freak since the start."

"That isn't a bad thing," Kephri whispered, sighing with pleasure as she slid her hands around to cup full breasts.

"Now, how long do you think, that you're going to avoid asking to go inside?" Kephri wondered out loud, her fingers teasing erect nipples and grinning as she felt the other woman tense.

"Until you want to go inside," she responded.

"Really? So you won't ask until I do?" Kephri purred, pushing closer so that she could feel the suddenly hot skin against hers. While one hand stayed where it was, the other slid southwards. The smaller woman groaned in pleasure as she slid fingers into wetness.

Chance really, really hadn't expected that. Kephri had been, for the most part, sort of in the passive roll in their lovemaking. She had sort of subconsciously sensed Kephri's need for someone to free her of the responsibility, of the control. Although as their time together continued, that had shifted.

Her eyes rolled up into her head and she moaned as her hands scrambled for anything to hold onto.

Kephri grinned against the skin of the other woman's back, enjoying the surprised sound. "What was that?" she asked, managing to capture an earlobe with her teeth and lightly biting it.

Chance bit her lip, and her back arched slightly, whimpering. "I have...no... idea. Anything, you want. Just don't stop."

"No stopping," she agreed, enjoying the control she felt over the situation. This was a reversal from their previous times together. "What else do you want?" she whispered, sliding her fingers through the wetness she'd found, but avoiding doing more than just tease.

There was a tingle at the base of her spine, but it wasn't going anywhere. It just pulsed, teasing her with the pleasure yet to come. "Fuck, do something, anything," she begged.

A lone digit slid deeper inside, and they both shared a breath as they gasped in tandem. "Like that?" Kephri whispered, wishing she could free a hand long enough to somehow manage to shed her own clothes.



Chance nodded, sweat beading on her skin. "Yes, oh, yes." Her voice had become huskier, and she would have been shocked to hear it. As it was, she had other things on her mind.

It was surprisingly hard to resist trying to get Chance into the trailer and onto the bed. Leaning more, she pushed another finger into the welcoming wetness, shuddering as Chance thrust up to meet her. "You want to go inside?" She hoped, prayed, that Chance would break.

"Go inside?" She was tempted, but that would mean stopping.

"Yes?" Kehpri hissed, pressing her hips up into Chance's backside, even as she curled her fingers deeper.

Chance whimpered as her senses overloaded. "Shit," she moaned eloquently. "No. That would mean stopping."

*Fuck.* Kehpri had to bite her lip from whimpering in disappointment. Instead, she concentrated on what her hands and lips were doing. The angle was interesting, and she set about seeing how far she could push the agent.

Chance had no idea how long they had been at this, her body dripped with sweat and she had been sitting on the edge for what seem forever, unable to tip over the edge. Finally, she growled and grabbed Kehpri's wrist, stilling it. She pulled all arms that weren't hers from her body and turned, picking up the woman and carrying her inside.

"Inside now!" she barked out in frustration.

Kehpri's laughter was cut off as the door slammed shut behind them on their short trip to the bedroom. The laughter was brief, and instantly replaced by moans and pleading.

#####

The small convoy kicked up a storm of dust as it traveled down the seldom-used roads. Three black SUVs led the way, followed by two large tractor-trailer trucks with nondescript silver trailers hooked up to them. They blew past the small sign that denoted the southern most edge of the Were Reservation without slowing. They continued onwards, driving deeper into the flat, deserted land that was this part of the Reservation.

They hadn't chosen the day after the full moon to arrive by chance. It was the perfect time to arrive without being seen by more prying eyes than they could manage to avoid. Most of the Weres would still be recovering from the night before.

The low, squat looking building was surrounded on all sides by rusting barbwire. The front SUV slid to a stop next to the falling over gate, and two men dressed in pressed blue jeans and plaid

shirts got out. The gate opened with a squeal of protest on rusted hinges.

Once it was open, the rest of the convoy drove into the packed earth area in front of the one story building. The two trucks pulled around to the sides.

Colonel Stetler stepped out of the second SUV, an annoyed look on his face.

"Garret!"

A balding man with a nervous twitch jumped down out of one of the two-tractor trailers.

"Sir?"

"How long to get the facility up and running?"

"We'll have communications up within the hour. The rest will take a while, depending on how bad things are inside."

He grunted, looking around with satisfaction, as his people quickly started carrying large cases into the building.

"Let me know how it goes."

He nodded in satisfaction, and motioned to the two men who were standing near him.

"All right boys. Let's go find the FBI and see if they'll be of any use."

Leaving his underlings to their work, he got back into the SUV. He didn't have much hope of finding anybody competent out here, but it was worth a shot at least.

#####

Chance's week following the full moon was going much like her week before.

Sure, she felt a little different, but mostly she was the same person she was before. Zoya had been annoyingly accurate. She was still the annoyingly, control freaking, boy scout that she was before. Kehpri had been gone all morning doing something. The moment she had returned Chance had meant to be nosey, but had been distracted by how good Kehpri had smelled. And in typical style, they'd had sex most of the afternoon. Currently they were tangled into a sweaty mass on the couch.

"I think my phone rang a couple of times while you were doing that thing that makes my head explode," Chance murmured into Kehpri's sweaty curls, although she wasn't really motivated to go check.

"So?" the other woman mumbled, shifting a little so that she could rest an arm across a well-toned stomach, and smiled. "Aren't you on vacation still? It's probably some marketing firm trying to sell you insurance or something."

"Yeah, but it was my work phone. And well, the Supervisor was trying to get me back as soon as possible. Or it could be Gibbons just checking on me. I probably should have called him after the full moon." She snuggled closer to Kehpri, kissing the skin near her mouth. "So, what were you doing this morning?"

"Went to apply for a job..." That was actually the truth, which was a refreshing way to answer a question for Kehpri. "Figured if I was staying around for a while, I'd need some money." That wasn't so much the truth, but at least she'd given a half-truth. That was better than a full lie, right?

"Really?" Chance couldn't keep the smile off her lips. "How long you thinking on sticking around?"

"A while," Kehpri answered, knowing it was a bit vague, and hurried on with the first thing she could think of to distract Chance. "They seemed keen to have me, not a lot of people willing to work nights at the hospital I guess."

Chance shook her head and chuckled. "Then they must not remember you from the first time we met there."

The brunette snorted. "I didn't see nurse nightingale or your favorite doctor, if that's what you mean."

Chance rolled her eyes. "You want to have another fight? No more talking about Dr. Miller."

It was on the tip of Kehpri's tongue to warn Chance again, but she didn't want to ruin the moment. Instead, she let out the breath she'd taken to argue and nodded. "Fine, not now, anyway." The night janitor job was perfect. She'd be able to snoop around to her heart's content. They hadn't even asked for a background check, they'd been so desperate for people.

"They want you more for the fact you're human. They have a lot of trouble staffing things at night during the full moon. They need non-shifters, especially at the hospital."

"Hmmm," was the noncommittal answer as the woman slowly trailed her fingers up and down the agent's side, enjoying watching the goosebumps that rose as she did so. "I guess. They have me starting in two days. I wasn't sure when to tell them, since I didn't really know when you were going back to work." She was loath to give up this illusion of happiness.

Chance pouted, "I suppose I'll live. I'll be a stay at home trophy wife or something." She was saved from a potentially stupid statement, thankfully, by her phone ringing again. She moaned in annoyance, but untangled herself from Kehpri. "Be right back. Stay naked." She pointed a finger

at the naked woman.

"Since I don't even know where you threw my clothes...that's not going to be hard."

Chance looked at the number on the cell and grumbled. "This better be good, or I'll start telling you about my sex life you're ruining," she barked into the phone. "Uh huh...yeah, we could meet for...wait, let me be a good girlfriend and ask."

Chance looked over at Kehpri, tempted to tell Gibbons to go to hell. "Gibbons wants to know if we want to go over to his place for dinner. You game?"

"Gibbons...your partner Gibbons?" Kehpri propped herself up on one elbow, eyebrows raised.

"Yeah, he's married to a Blackwater, of the "Blackwater Beef and Ranch" Weres. He's a trophy FBI agent husband." She laughed at his outraged squawk.

"Sure," Kehpri shrugged, laying back down and ignoring the uneasy feeling that agreeing to go see another FBI agent brought, "why not?" Another home cooked meal could be fun.

Chance beamed. "Cool. You hear that, we'll be over. What time?" She waited as Gibbons checked with his wife. "7:30ish, it is. Yes, I'm an FBI agent, I can find things."

"She's really good at finding things," Kehpri yelled from her position, grinning evilly, "especially naked things!"

She closed the phone, not waiting for his witty comeback. "You are in for a treat, Ms..." She frowned. "All this sex and I don't even know you're last name."

Kehpri went still for a moment, opening her mouth then trying to smoothly cover over the surprise and brief instant of terror that innocent question brought. "Wyland..." She used the fake last name she'd given at the hospital.

Chance paused, feeling the syllables of Kehpri's last name. It felt wrong, not fitting the woman. "Well, Ms. Wyland, you are in for a treat. Gibbon's wife is a Blackwater, of Blackwater Ranch. They raise the best beef in the US."

"Mmm..." Kehpri could imagine the dinner to come. "What time do we have to be there?"

"Whenever, 7ish." She stretched and looked around. "I really want to take a real shower. Can we head to my apartment?"

A real shower, as always, sounded like a good idea to Kehpri, and she bounced on her feet, "Great idea. Let me see what sort of clothes I can bring. It's not formal, is it?" If it was, her one sole pair of unholy jeans wouldn't cut it.

"It's a working ranch. Probably not that fancy. I'm just wearing jeans and nice shirt."

"Good, that's all I have." Actually, she didn't have a nice shirt. But she had a clean one, so that would have to do.

"Tree probably wants some water and conversation anyways." She slipped on a t-shirt and sweatpants.

"Tree?" Kehpri stepped out, wearing a black t-shirt and a clean pair of washed-out jeans.

"Tree, he's my plant. I really didn't have a lifestyle for a pet." She tied the drawstring and looked over at Kehpri. "Two days, 'til you start work" She grinned. "Well, we can relax and have a nice time until then."

Two days then. That would be how long she would have to enjoy this thing between them. After that, there were no guarantees. "Shall we?"

"Let's..." Chance held out her arm.

Taking the offered arm, Kehpri laughed. "You do have a gallant side, no matter what you do."

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Chance drove up to the gates of the Blackwater Ranch. There wasn't anything unusual about the place, it just looked and smelled like a ranch. Besides, of course, the disturbing shadows running in the tree line following the car.

"Wow. They build them big out here, don't they?" The ranch house itself was impressively large, at least to Kehpri. From the driveway, she could see at least two barns, as well as a silo.

"Most people in the US won't eat the beef. But people in Canada, Europe, and Japan spend huge amounts of money on importing it."

Kehpri started to say something then paused and peered closer to a line of trees. "Umm, is there something following us?" She wasn't sure about it, but she could have sworn there had been something there.

"Uh, yeah, I spotted them as soon as we hit their property. The entire family is Were's, although they have a weird genetic quirk. About 2% of the children born to werewolf parents are unable to shift. Which works out, I guess. on full moon nights these non-shifters make sure nobody goes and snacks on the cattle."

"Two percent?" That was strange indeed, and the scientist from Kehpri's past perked up with interest. Grimly reminding herself that her days of research were over with, Kehpri shook her

head. "Anyway, I forgot to ask, how many people are in this family that we're having dinner with?"

"A lot, they are their own pack, really. But I think we're only having dinner with Gibbon's and his wife...eh...I think her name is Jessica, Jasmine, or something like that."

"Oh, ok." That sounded good. She wasn't sure if she was ready for a dinner with a huge number of people after her months of self-exile. Her personal skills at the best of times weren't that great.

The sky was ablaze with the setting sun, and along the gravel road a few motion detector lights came on, highlighting the main house.

The air had that sweet smell of cut grass and the usual smells from the nearby barns. As soon as she stepped out of the car when they stopped near the side of the house, Kehpri closed her eyes and took in a deep breath, savoring the smell. "It's nice here. How long have you been partners?" she asked, even though she knew the answer to that question.

"When did we meet?" Chance countered, her hackles rising slightly as she sensed a few Weres out of sight watching them.

"That recently?" Kehpri blinked in surprise, turning to face the dark-haired woman. "You okay?" she inquired, noticing her expression.

"Yeah, he's a good kid. God it feels like forever since I was that green." She stepped behind Kehpri, putting a hand on the woman's hip.

Raising an eyebrow at the non-response, Kehpri let Chance direct them towards the door of the house, wondering what was going on that had Chance tense.

The door opened and Gibbons looked out. "Hey, you're here." He stepped out onto the porch.

"Hey, nice place," Kehpri made a vague motion to the house and the surrounding buildings. "Hadn't figured you for a cowboy though," she grinned.

Gibbons laughed, "Oh, I'm not. Born and bred in LA...city kid."

"Thank God. At least that makes two of us." She bumped Chance with her shoulder as they climbed the steps.

"Is the security always so tight for dinner?" Chance tried to joke it off, but her voice was still somewhat strained.

"What?" Gibbons blinked and looked out. "Justine's family is always out patrolling. It's hard to have a successful business around cattle with all the skinwalkers around."

That was a point that Kehpri hadn't thought about. This place must be a tempting target for any lone wolf out there on the full moon. She could understand their willingness to keep a close eye on anybody they didn't know nearby. "Come on, Tex," she patted Chance on the arm, "stop getting all territorial."

"Wha...I'm not being territorial," she grumped, but let Kephri lead her into the house.

"If you had hackles, they'd be raised right now," Kehpri whispered as they followed Gibbons inside. She had to bite her tongue to keep from even grinning at the expression on the dark-haired agent's face. "Don't worry, it's cute."

Chance just smiled and pinched her ass.

Kehpri yelped in surprise.

The home was nice, southwest art and warm paint on the wall.

Gibbons paused and looked back at the two women.

"Sorry, I umm...tripped on the door step," Kehpri awkwardly explained. And when he had turned away, she tried to elbow Chance in the side.

Chuckling, Chance moved out of the way of the elbow.

"If you want to have a seat, I'll check on the wife and get you some drinks. Wine, ok?" He brought them to the living room.

Chance flopped down and looked around. "How many folks live out here?"

"Wine sounds good." It had been a long time since Kehpri had enjoyed a nice glass. She took a seat, a bit slower, next to Chance on the couch.

"Uh, there's about forty running around. There's a couple of ranch hand bunk buildings, and a few actual shotgun houses like this. One glass of wine coming up... Chance, anything?"

"Um, wine too."

Kehpri watched him go with a slight frown. There was something just a little odd going on here. She shook her head and turned to look at Chance. "Any other large compounds like this out here? No wonder the government gets twitchy when they talk about the Reservation."

"Zoya hates them too. She's trying to unify the packs and the Blackwaters keep telling her to fuck off. They're happy raising cattle and living their lives."

"Someone telling the mighty Zoya to fuck off? That must really rile her up." Kehpri had not

forgotten or forgiven Chance's sister for what she had pieced together had happened between them.

Chance snickered. "Yeah, it's a beautiful thing. Sometimes she's too uppity for her own good."

"Sooo...why did your partner, of only a couple weeks, just suddenly decide to have you over for dinner?" She wasn't too sure what was bothering her, but something was making Kehpri a bit puzzled.

"Probably because his wife wants to meet his new female partner and make sure I'm not encroaching on her territory." Chance looked over and Kehpri ran a finger over the top of the woman's slightly smaller hands.

That made sense, and Kehpri relaxed with a smile. "Good thing you're taken so she won't have to worry," she bantered back.

Chance laughed, "Why, Ms. Wyland, are you marking some territory?"

The other woman blushed a little. "I wouldn't dream of it," she murmured, glad for Gibbon's return before the discussion got into any more potentially embarrassing areas.

Gibbons returned, with his hands full of wine and food, a handsome looking woman following behind him. She had a defiant Native American appearance, her long, black hair braided, and Chance had to admit they made a lovely couple.

Chance accepted the drinks, handing one to Kehpri.

"Thank you." Kehpri was on her very best behavior, feeling a little like the scruffy kid who had just been invited in to play at a rich relative's.

"Justine, this is Chance and her..." he stumbled for a minute, "girlfriend, ah, Kehpri?"

Smiling, Kehpri shrugged, "sure, girlfriend works. You could also say..." she paused, wincing as she mentally edited the words 'sex toy' out of what she was about to say. She really shouldn't be allowed to deal with people. "Umm...good friend," she finished instead, lamely.

Justine rolled her eyes. "Being from LA, he sure can be a conservative stick in the mud."

Gibbons huffed a little and Justine patted his ass. "But you are cute."

Kehpri laughed and got up, offering her hand to the other woman. "Good to meet you. I'm Kehpri." She motioned to the taller woman, who was smirking at her partner. "That's Chance."

Chance waved, "Nice to meet you."



"Do you want any help with anything?" Kehpri offered, feeling strangely on edge in this pleasant house. It wasn't even the fact that a clan of Were's called the place home.

Justine shook the offered hand, "Nice to meet you both. No, everything's done."

She sat down. "We're going to eat in here, it's a little more relaxed and it's less likely my brothers will sneak in and try to join us. They're a little grumpy Zoya's sister is here."

Chance glared at Gibbons. "Why did you invite me if it was going to cause issues?"

The only man in the room looked flustered. "'Cause I wanted to show off my home and my amazing wife."

Justine laughed quietly. "Good answer, honey."

"Oh, good points there, Gibbons." Kehpri grinned. "We'll have to work on your answers, Chance."

"My answers? What did I say?" Chance looked puzzled, trying to figure out when she had been an ass.

She didn't have to look at the other woman to feel the look she was getting. "How many brothers do you have?"

Justine looked sympathetically at Kehpri before switching her gaze to her husband, who was about to sit himself. "You need to go get the appetizers, there, mister."

He paused, and looked at her on the off chance she was kidding. With a sigh, he went to the kitchen.

She smiled at Kehpri. "I have four brothers, one sister, and ten cousins. They all work on the ranch."

"They all have houses here?" Chance blurted out, wondering how big this ranch was.

"Most of them... The boys aren't married, so they share the bunk house." She smiled up at her husband as he brought in the shrimp and crab cakes.

"I didn't want to overwhelm you with beef, so I thought we'd start with a little seafood."

That still made for quite a few houses, and Kehpri, again, increased her estimate of how big the ranch was. "Thank you, it looks delicious." Kehpri's mouth was watering at the sight of them.

Dinner was a fun affair. Justine was witty, and funny, and Gibbons had a good sense of humor to be the butt of most of his wife's jokes.

As Gibbon's cleared off the coffee table, he looked at Chance. "Can I borrow Chance for a moment? I have some work things I need to go over with her."

Chance frowned and looked at Kehpri.

Still laughing from the story that Justine had just finished telling about her days as a teenager working on the ranch, Kehpri just waved at Chance. "Go, be adults, talk work things."

"Okay," Chance said with a suffering sigh, and followed her partner into the kitchen.

"Want a beer?" Her partner went over to the large stainless-steel fridge.

"No, I've had enough wine. Water's fine." She leaned up against a counter.

Gibbons helped himself to a beer and tossed a bottle of water to her. "Chance, how well do you know your girlfriend?" he asked, taking a swig of beer, eyes never leaving her face.

Chance twisted off the top. "I know her biblically. Not that it's any of your business."

"Not what I meant. How well do you know her? You know where she comes from? What her past is?" He leaned against the other counter top, casually.

"I...she doesn't talk about it. What is this about? I thought you wanted to talk about work stuff."

He had to shake his head to get the image of Chance and Kehpri biblically involved out of his mind. "It is. This army spook came in with a warrant for her. She's apparently a wanted terrorist by agencies so top secret he couldn't tell us about them."

"What?" Chance sucked in some water down the wrong pipe.

He waited for the coughing to subside, serious. "She's a wanted fugitive, Chance. I wanted to tell you first, as a sign of respect, before I arrest her and bring her in."

"What? No!" She started pacing. She had known, known, Kehpri was lying to her, or at least keeping things from her.

"Let me see the file."

"There is no file. They wouldn't give us one. It's a warrant." He withdrew the heavily blacked-out piece of paper from his pocket and unfolded it to show her. "It's national security, Chance. We have to hand her over."

"This is for Tyler Madison. Her name is Kehpri Wyland."

Silently, he pulled out a photograph and slid it across to her. "It's her, Chance. She lied to you about her name." He was tactful enough not to add on, like she lied to you about everything else.

Chance didn't want to look at the photo, but she did, and felt her entire world crumble.

"No, no, no." It was Kehpri...Tyler. She hid her face in her hands for a moment to get herself back together.

He looked away, uncomfortable with the obvious pain in his partner's eyes. "I'm sorry, Chance."

"I've never felt happier and more settled than these past few weeks. And I seriously hate you as much as I've ever hated anybody, right now."

Gibbons nodded, still not meeting her eyes. "I'm sorry," he repeated. "I really am. I wish I wasn't the one to tell you." God how he wished he could just sweep this under his desk somewhere, but his sense of loyalty and duty wouldn't let him. "They're accusing her of doing some awful things, Chance."

"Like what?" she yelled.

He cast a nervous look towards the door, but when his wife didn't emerge from the living room, he relaxed a little. "Murder...treason...sedition. They say they've been looking for her for a long time."

Chance went silent, her jaw clenched stubbornly.

After a while, she looked at him. "Give me twenty-four hours. That's all I ask. And I'll bring her in myself. And if I don't, you can bring us both in. I promise."

"Chance..." He paused, sighing at the stubborn look on his partner's face. That had been the look she wore when they barged into the church without backup. "Twenty four hours. Then I have to tell them about her."

"Thanks." She got up and rested a hand on his shoulder for a moment, before letting it drop.

"I mean it, Chance." Gibbons straightened up, frowning. "Twenty four hours and then I'll have to report her or try to take her in myself."

"I think we'll leave now." Her face was tight, trying so hard to keep emotion at bay.

He nodded, slowly. He had kept the news until the end of dinner for a reason, although he had expected to be arresting someone by now. "Be careful, Chance. If they're right, she's a murderer."

She walked past him back out into the living room. Pausing, she looked at Kehpri and the odd

thought came to her. *She looks more like a Tyler.*

"Ah...hey...I think we'll be going. You're husband gave me some bad news, and well, I'm not feeling very much like good company." Well, it wasn't a lie.

"Oh, all right." Kehpri frowned, worriedly, and stood up. The expression on Chance's face, the look in her eyes, spoke of something very bad having happened. A shiver of uncertainty ran up the brunette's spine as she forced a smile and gave Justine a hug.

"Thank you for having us over."

Justine looked uncertain. "Well, that was a shitty thing for him to do. Invite you over and then be a jerk. I'm going to give him a piece of my mind. You two drive safe. It was nice to meet you both."

Chance nodded, but she was already easing for the door, fingering her car keys.

Waving goodbye to the confused looking hostess, Kehpri had to hurry to keep up with the taller woman as she stalked towards her car. "Hey, hold up, are we in a rush?" She jogged.

"Ye... no... I just want to get away from here, or I might punch Gibbons." Her shoulders slumped. What the hell was she doing?

"Was he being a jerk?" Kehpri frowned, sliding into the passenger side of the car, looking confused. "I thought he seemed like a nice guy."

"He just set up a nice evening to give me crappy news." She started the car and peeled off down the gravel road.

"Well, at least it was a nice dinner." Kehpri tried a smile, which faded when she got nothing but a stony look from the FBI agent. "Okay, so it was really bad news."

Her jaw was clenched, tight. She knew she needed to say something, start peeling back the layers of lies Tyler had woven. But she really didn't believe for a moment Tyler had done even half the horrible things listed. Or maybe she was just being naïve.

As they took a turn faster than was probably completely safe, the woman in the passenger seat grabbed onto the 'oh shit' bar and hung on. Giving Chance a wide-eyed look, she winced as they bounced along the road, "Chance, where are we going?"

"My apartment, I need to get some stuff."

Her knuckles were white on the steering wheel.

"Okay." Kehpri kept her hand wrapped around the bar, alternating between watching Chance and

the road, worriedly. She wanted to ask what Gibbons had told her, but that little kernel of fear kept her silent.

Finally, Chance had to say something, anything, or she'd blow. "Did you care about me at all? Or was everything, everything a lie...Tyler."

Tyler opened her mouth; eyes wide, as that kernel of fear blossomed, filling her with dread. For a very brief instant she considered trying to toss herself out of the car door. It would be a painful way to go, but it would get her out of the car. "I... Who?" she stumbled, shocked.

"Apparently Homeland Security knows you're here, somewhere, and has come to the local FBI looking for help. Gibbons recognized your picture. Quite the rap sheet you have going on. Guess it was a fun game fucking with the naïve FBI agent." She took another corner fast, and through luck or skill, they stayed on the road.

"It wasn't like that!" Tyler yelled, clutching to the bar as they fishtailed. "Slow down! Jesus you're going to get us killed." ... Which actually, wasn't as appealing as she would have thought, considering the current subject. "I didn't do anything! They framed me."

She knew it sounded paranoid.

"If I had a dollar for every time I heard that," Chance muttered, but she did slow down.

"I'm not lying." It didn't sound very convincing to Tyler either.

"I really liked you." She barked out a bitter laugh, and focused on the road as they hit the town limits.

"Goddamn it, Chance, will you listen to me? I didn't get involved with you because you're an FBI agent. Well, I met you because you were. Fuck, I'm not explaining this right." Tyler was flustered, confused, she hadn't expected this right now.

Chance looked over. "I'm listening. I've always been ready to listen, to whatever caused your nightmares. But you never talked to me, so stop asking me to listen if you aren't going to say anything."

That hurt, and Tyler looked away, well aware that Chance was right. She had avoided the truth. "Ha, like I could tell you anything? You're an FBI agent; you'd have to haul me in. Besides, I didn't dare dream we'd actually get involved."

"Well, were pretty fucking involved now. We're you ever going to tell me anything that was true?"

"What we've had for the past few days...that was true." She hesitated. "I didn't know if we'd have enough time for me to tell you everything."

Chance pulled into her parking spot and got out of the car. She went around the car and opened Tyler's door. "Come on, Tyler, let's go water Tree."

"Is that code for arresting me?" Tyler got out slowly, eyeing Chance worriedly.

Chance rolled her eyes. "I might if you don't start telling me what the fuck is going on." She grabbed tightly on to Tyler's arm and started upstairs.

"Hey, ouch, come on, that hurts." Tyler got dragged along, protesting, scrubbing a hand angrily across her eyes to wipe away the moisture there.

Chance unlocked her door and pushed the woman inside, shutting the door behind her. She looked at Tyler angry, "Talk. Stop evading and talk to me."

"And what...you'll believe me?" Kehpri rubbed her arm, facing the other woman from across the living room. She didn't want to tell Chance about what had happened. Didn't want to admit to what she'd been involved in. To think that only a few hours ago they'd been making love in her trailer.

Chance sighed and rubbed her head then stepped forward, lightly touching Tyler's face. "No, you need to believe in me. Trust me. I know you're not a terrorist or a murderer. If I thought you were, do you seriously think I'd bring you to my house? I'd have your ass in lock up."

The kindness was the last thing that Tyler had expected. It very nearly undid her and she jerked her head to the side, clenching her eyes closed to stop any sign of tears. She took a deep breath. "Maybe you should arrest me. I helped people do bad, evil, things."

"Starting at the beginning is sometimes best. So what did you do and how did you help people do mean, evil things?" Chance asked.

"You're not going to believe me," Tyler muttered, rubbing her hand through her hair. "I was a MD scientist, was going to change the world, you know?" She laughed, bitterly. "I thought I was, at first. Then things changed." Tyler paced, knowing she was dancing around the issue, skirting it.

"What changed?" she asked watching the other woman pace.

"I got security clearance." The other woman stopped, closing her eyes as some of the images raced back. "Friends of mine showed me what they were doing with my research. What they'd done to people, to Weres. They'd made monsters."

Chance blew out a breath. This was a little more than she was expecting. "So you were a scientist working with the government to make monsters...out of Weres?"

"No. That's not what it was for!" Tyler whirled, eyes blazing. "We were going to cure diseases! Make people heal. Don't you see how much good it could have done?" She stopped, the intensity suddenly leaving her, and the still thin woman seemed to shrink even more into herself. "But they wanted something else. Soldiers, I guess. I don't know. But they used the serum before it was ready. It turned people into..." she shuddered, remembering the human eyes looking back at her out of faces that were neither animal nor human, "into monsters."

"I-I-I..." She was still confused. "I'm having a hard time following."

"It doesn't matter. They found me." She paused then looked up. "But I can still stop Miller."

"What does Miller have to do with anything?"

"She's working for them." Tyler smiled, sadly. "She always has, I guess, probably why she took the position out here in the first place."

"You can't stop Miller. Are you nuts! You need to get out of here. I don't understand what's going on. I do know the government is looking for you. Gibbons gave me twenty-four hours, then he and everybody else is going to come looking for you." She got up and went to her room. In the closet, she pulled down a locked case and dialed the numbers to pop the case lid.

She pulled the lid open and pulled out a small, unregistered handgun then went to her bed and crouching down, grabbed something. Taped under her bed was a plastic bag of cash.

"Chance..." Tyler followed along behind her, frowning as she took in the pistol and the bag of cash. "What are you doing?" This didn't look like placing her under arrest.

Standing up, she handed the bag to Tyler. "I think there's like 200 dollars in there." She shrugged. "Beer money."

"Chance... what are you doing?" She didn't understand, didn't dare hope.

"The gun is unregistered, so they can't trace it. Take it, the cash, and my car. You just drive and keep driving. I'll think of something."

"You're just letting me go?" Tyler stood there, looking lost and uncertain. A part of her had been almost relieved that the long days of running were finally over. "They'll blame you."

"They will, but Zoya will protect me."

"You don't understand. Bob won't just blame you. He'll destroy you for letting me go. He did things to Tim, and he killed MaryAnn." It hurt...the memories of what happened still hurt. She'd tried to bury them so deep she would never think of them again, but now, she'd actually said their names and the memories were impossible to ignore.

"Again Zoya...as long as I never leave the Reservation, I'll be fine. She'll..." She went silent.  
"You need to go."

"Why? What is it?" She grabbed the pistol and bag of money though.

"We're wasting time, you need to get going. I'll try and sow chaos, so you have more time." She blinked and looked at Tyler, realizing that they were probably never going to see each other again.

The brunette stayed where she was, realizing the same thing. The smile she gave the other woman was full of as much emotion as she could manage. "The last few days have been the best time of my life, no matter what name I used."

"I...same here..." She smiled then frowned as she saw the red dot on Tyler's stomach. "Shit!" She tackled Tyler as the glass on her balcony door shattered.

Blood sprayed out from her back as the bullet slammed into her.

Tyler screamed in surprise as she went tumbling to the ground, Chance, a solid weight on top of her. She tried to push and drag them out of the way of the balcony doors, afraid of what would come through them next. "You're bleeding." She pressed against the wound, feeling blood well up from it. "Chance, we have to run, both of us!"

Chance rolled over, groaning. "Shit. I'm going to fucking hit Gibbons, the little bastard lied to me."

"Gibbons?" Tyler tried to put pressure on the wound. "You think he'd lie about giving you time?"

"Who else knew about you? Well, knew you and I were together?" she hissed out between clenched teeth. "I think it's lodged next to my spine."

"Can you feel your legs?" Tyler asked doing her best not to sound panicked. There wasn't much she could do to help in the middle of the agent's apartment...maybe if she had her full kit, but that was back at the trailer.

"No... yeah I can. Cause it hurts like a son of a bitch." She crawled to her hands and needs. "We need to get moving."

"You're bleeding, with a bullet next to your spine! We can't move you!" Tyler yelled, eyeing her incredulously, and raising just a bit too high from the floor. A bullet blew apart one of the framed photographs on the nearby wall, and the brunette hit the floor again so quickly she grunted.

Chance started crawling, toward the door. "Come on. We are dead ducks in here."



Cursing and swearing under her breath, Tyler followed the bloody trail across the floor after Chance. "Can we get to your car?"

"I hope so...or at hotwire somebody else's." She grabbed the doorknob and pulled herself up.

"You're bleeding a lot," Tyler said, worriedly, helping Chance to stand upright and holding onto her when the taller woman swayed. "We have to get you to a hospital."

"Zoya's, we'll go to Zoya's. She'll have a doctor," Chance replied, opening the door. She froze, staring out the door, "Halstead?"

"I'm a fucking doctor, why do we need another..." Tyler paused, seeing the man outside in the hallway with the rather impressive looking gun aimed at Chance's midsection.

Her fellow agent stood outside her door on the landing, gun in hand. "Consorting with a known terrorist, Super Agent? Guess you thought I'd be too drunk to remember your girlfriend there. Like I'd forget that rack," he leered at Tyler.

Tyler had the instant urge to try and shoot the man, even started to gauge her chances of raising the pistol Chance had given her without getting killed. "Oh, look, it's the idiot redneck from the bar. Hope you had fun getting thrown out of it."

While he was staring, Chance lunged and slapped the gun out of his hand and punched him.

If there had been any doubt if Chance was merely human, those would have been dispelled by that display. Nobody shot by a high-powered rifle should have been able to lunge like that, or punch the FBI agent hard enough to send him back into the wall.

Tyler smiled, tightly, and without much amusement, raised her gun and pointed it at the suddenly disarmed Agent Halstead. "Be a good boy and get on your knees, now."

Halstead covered his bleeding nose and blinked from Chance to the other woman. "You're not going to get away. The military is here with me; they're here for your little fuck-buddy," he snarled out, but slowly got to his knees.

Tyler wavered, eyes widening and taking a step backwards. "They're here?" she whispered, feeling the familiar terror starting. They had to go, go fast...run as far as they could, as quickly as they could.

Halstead saw the gun waver off him, and he surged up his left hand, releasing the silver hunting knife he always carried in case of problems taking in a Were. Chance grabbed him and they fought for the knife. "Tyler, run."

The doctor wavered, eyes flicking to the door at the end of the hallway. Everything in her, everything that had kept her alive for a year on the run, screamed at her to go. She couldn't just

leave Chance though. Turning her back on the door, she raised the gun, aiming at the man. "I'm not leaving with you." She tightened her finger on the trigger, swearing when she couldn't get a shot without hitting Chance.

Halstead blocked Chance and hit her squarely in the back. She cried out in pain. He brought the knife up, stabbing at her head. She blocked, but they fought back and forth, the knife scraping against her forehead, cutting a small, bloody furrow. "Seriously, Tyler, if you don't run now, I have a bad feeling you're never getting away."

"How fucking touching... Why don't you just give up and die, Chance? They're going to lock you up and throw away the key, and you know how well federal agents do in prison."

"And just leave you with psycho man?" Tyler asked incredulously, trying to figure out how to get a shot at the bastard without hitting Chance.

Halstead had leverage and the silver blade lowered, slicing into her eye. Chance screamed. Halstead stood over Chance, trying to force the knife in deeper through the soft tissue into the brain.

"Just shoot him!" Chance screamed.

Now that they weren't moving much, Tyler reacted to the scream and pulled the trigger, wincing and closing her eyes as she did so. The bullet missed Halstead's head, which she had been aiming for, but hit him squarely in the shoulder. The bullet blew through the joint and out the back. The knife dropped from suddenly numb hands, and he screamed, a high-pitched sound that went on and on as he clutched at the ruined shoulder.

Chance slumped backwards. "Shit. He's fucking stronger than he looks."

"You're eye..." Tyler was pale, her hand shaking as she tried not to look at the blood sprayed across the wall or the man still shrieking in pain.

Chance kicked out, hitting the screaming man in the face until he stopped screaming.

"You don't need to tell me. It's probably as bad as it feels." She held a hand over her ruined eye.

Lights flashed in the window, and distantly, they could both hear the sound of a helicopter getting closer now that Halstead wasn't screaming anymore. "We have to go, can you keep going?" Tyler tucked away the gun, moving to help Chance.

"I really don't have a choice." She held up a hand. "Help me up."

Tyler grabbed the blood-slicked hand and helped her up, trying to get them moving towards the door and the stairs down to the parking lot. "Just a little longer... we'll get there," she promised, worried about how much blood Chance was losing.

They stumbled down the stairs to the apartment parking lot. Only to be met by several serious looking people in camouflaged military clothing.

"Wow, that camo is just not working. I can clearly see them, they aren't hidden at all," Chance quipped, feeling kind of floaty at the moment.

"Stay where you are!" a voice over a loudspeaker from further back called, and Tyler stopped, holding onto Chance. "Hi, Bob," she yelled back, glancing right then left to see how bad the situation was. It was really bad.

"We're boned, aren't we?" Chance whispered. Her head wobbled around as she tried to track everything with her one good eye.

"It's not good," she agreed, listening as orders were being shouted from place to place ahead of them. "It's really not good." She took a step in front of the bleeding woman. "Can you get back into the building?" she whispered, shielding her eyes from the bright light.

"Why would I do that? I think you should hand me the gun and start running."

"Shut up. I can't outrun these guys. You can. Go get help, will you? Zoya and her band of misfits would be great." She gave the other woman a small shove.

Chance staggered a bit, and looked back for a second, wondering how she was going to sprint with a bullet in her back. Vaguely, she was aware at someone shouting at them to get down on the ground. She held up her hands then started running.

"Get down! Get down on the ground!" A warning shot sprang off the door next to Chance's head.

Tyler tried to get in the way of the swarm of military personnel who sprinted after the fleeing woman. For her troubles, she got a tazer to the stomach, which hurt a lot more than she expected.

Digging deep, Chance pushed herself to keep going and go faster. Car windows shattered as bullets slammed into them.

"Get her! I want her alive!" the person behind the loudspeaker yelled, clearly furious.

"Shot clear, taking it," a voice over the radio of the man standing over Tyler came. There was no sound, but Chance spun and went down as a bullet slammed into her chest.

"Target terminated," the radio clicked then went silent.

"Alive! I said alive, you idiot," Bob cursed, tossing the megaphone aside. Cursing, the Colonel

moved over to the still twitching Tyler. "Dr. Madison, how good to see you again," he smiled, thinly. "Take her to the facility. We have to finish wrapping this up."

Two men ran up, their boot heels sound loud on the cement. "Sir, the other target is gone. We went to retrieve the body and she'd slipped away."

"Incompetent idiots," the colonel muttered, shaking his head and turning his back on the two. There would be time to make certain they were punished for their idiocy later. For now, he needed every pair of hands he had. When they had dragged the still spasming doctor into one of the waiting SUVs, he motioned to the nearest soldier. "Get Dr. Miller. Escort her to the base. She should be there for this."

He got into the lead SUV, slamming the door shut. They pulled away from the apartment complex, accelerating off into the desert.

#####

Chance burst through Zoya's front door, not really concerned with knocking. Her shirt was heavy and soggy with blood. Terri came shuffling out of the kitchen, her face and hands dusted with flour.

"Hello?" She paused blinking. "Oh my, let me get a doctor for you, Ms. Chance."

"No, I'll be fine, where's Zoya?"

"Zoya's indisposed," another voice came from up the stairs. It wasn't unfriendly, but more like forced neutrality. "Let Terri call the doctor for you."

Chance looked up, where the voice was coming from. The woman wasn't as tall as her and Zoya, but she had a presence. Her skin was black, not black like African-American black; no, it was charred black, like trees after a forest fire or lightning strike. The eyes staring back at her were indifferent, caramel colored, and her hair was short, curling just under her ears.

"I need to see Zoya, my bullet holes can wait." Her chin set at a stubborn angle, she started up the stairs. The woman didn't move. Chance wavered a bit as she got closer, but kept walking. The woman was even more impressive as she got closer. The nose had been broken and reset wrong, and there were fine, pale scar lines on one side of her face.

Chance kept walking all the time, expecting the woman to try and stop her. But to her surprise, the woman did nothing, only turned and followed as she made her way to Zoya's office and shoved the door open.

"Zoya..." She would have been embarrassed if the rest of her evening hadn't been so shitty. As it was, the military had shot her and stolen her girlfriend, for whatever nefarious thing they were plotting. "Could you put it in your pants for a second?" she said in exasperation.

Zoya looked up from the cute blonde she was fucking on her desk with a sigh. "Damn it, Chance, could you come back... Oh fuck! What happened?" She pushed away from the desk and struggled for a moment with her pants. "Uh...get dressed and get out," she said absently to the woman on the desk.

The dark woman came in as well, and flopped down on the sofa with a small quirk to her lips.

Zoya got her pants zipped and with a sigh grabbed the slowly dressing woman by the arm and all but threw her and her clothes out the door and shut it. She turned, brushing pale blonde hair out of her face, frowning at the woman at the couch. "Could you at least call the doctor?"

"Done," the woman said with a stretch.

Zoya frowned, "Could you even pretend to show me a little respect."

"When you do something worth respecting, I'll let you know."

Chance had to chuckle a little at that. She eased down into an overstuffed chair and sat down. "Where did you get her?"

"I won her in a card game. I'm seriously wondering if it was an even match to the 20,000 euros I put in," the leader of the Reservation Weres said, glowering as she crossed from the door to her desk. "Chance, this is my new Second-in-Command Bones, Bones, my sister Chance."

The black woman waved.

"Zoya, you can't win people in card games. That's not remotely legal," Chance said, hopeful Zoya was joking.

"You're right, she is a fucking boy scout," the woman remarked.

"It's legal to win anything in Nightshade. But can we not focus on my gambling issues and instead focus on why you are bleeding on my new highly expensive leather chair."

"The military shot me and stole Tyler."

Both women went very still.

"Military?"

"Who's Tyler?" the two women asked at the same time.

"Tyler my girlfriend..."

"Last I checked her name was Kehpri, which I think is Egyptian, but it wasn't Tyler."

"Well, apparently she was lying about a whole lot of things, even her name. And her real name is Tyler, and she used to work for the military as a research scientist until she realized they were doing horrible things with her work. And then she had a nervous breakdown and came out here to hide. Oh, and some friends died..." She removed her hand from her still oozing eye and both women flinched.

"Um, right... Could you not do that again? That's really, really gross," Bones said casually as she got up and went to the bathroom. The sink ran then she tossed a towel to Chance, "Silver knife?"

Chance nodded, "I think so. It's not healing, and I feel funny, sort of lightheaded and itchy."

Ignoring the silver knife question for the moment, Zoya finished pulling on her shirt. "What military?" she demanded.

"The US military... They were making super-soldiers and doing experiments with Weres and humans." Chance wanted to add 'duh' for good measure, what other government would she be talking about.

"Don't say it," she warned the amused looking woman in the corner. Damn it, why had she bet on that game to begin with? Frustrated, Zoya belted her pants. "And they're on the reservation?"

Chance nodded. "They attacked us at my apartment. Tyler told me to run, to get help. They want her bad. Showed up at my work with all this shit about being a terrorist, but they want something from her. I think she has the key to their super-soldier experiment." Chance itched, her forehead, her skin, burning around her eye.

Bones looked over at Zoya. "There are a few old military bunkers that were abandoned when they handed over this shithole to the Weres."

Zoya flinched away from looking at her sister's face and the spot where her other eye should have been. "Jesus, Chance, can you put an eye patch on or something?" Thinking for a moment, she shrugged. "Well, if they're on the Reservation, that means we can handle them. I hope you aren't going to tell me that we should let the government deal with this, Chance?"

The dark-haired woman just flipped her sister off. "No, I take it somewhat personal when I get shot in my own home then they take my mate, er, girlfriend...whatever." She sighed. "I don't think the government is all bad, and I think most humans would be horrified to know what was going on within their own government, but I'm feeling really anti-government at the moment."

"Good." Zoya's smile was predatory and she motioned to Bones. "Go round up the troops; we have some people to teach a lesson to."

Bones nodded and stood up to leave.

Chance smiled. "It's illegal for you to have troops, but I'm glad you do."

"Illegal for me to have troops!" Zoya laughed. "Sure it is. Like it's illegal to be a Were and in the government, right?" She grinned. "Come on, sis, we'll get your mate back for you." She smiled toothily, looking forward to the fight.

Bones opened the door just as Terri and the doctor reached the top landing. The older woman nodded her head. "Zoya, the doctor has arrived to take a look at Chance's injuries."

Bones slid past them and disappeared down the stairs.

"Right after we do something about that eye of yours," Zoya grimaced, not sure what the doctor, a local shaman, was going to do about that.

The man nodded to them and tsked as he studied Chance's face. "The eye, she is gone, silver burns in the nerves and in the blood stream. We will stop the poisoning then see what else we can do." He hummed and poked at Chance's flesh. "I'm surprised you are still standing, with the amount of damage you took, as well as the fact the silver is not spreading. How long ago were you attacked?"

"About forty-five minutes ago. It took me a while to run here." She slapped his hands away as he poked her bullet wound in her shoulder.

Getting a good look at the wound, Zoya sucked in a surprised breath. That wound was awful looking, worse than she'd thought. "You should be on the ground dying with a silver bullet wound like that."

Terri gently grabbed Zoya by the arm and dragged her out of the room as soon as she saw Chance's face go pale. "Why don't we let the doctor do his business and we can attend to the matter of invaders on our soil."

"What? What did I say? I was just telling her how it looked," the Alpha grumbled, letting herself get pulled away. Terri was right, of course, she had other things to take care of. Like the first in what would be a long line of cars and pickup trucks pulling into the yard.

#####

Everything hurt when Tyler started to wake up. She'd never been tazered before, and it wasn't something she wanted to experience again...ever. She'd started to wake up on the way back to the compound. Vaguely, she remembered being inside a car or truck of some sort, bouncing across the desert. Then she'd made a sound and the man next to her punched her, and she'd known nothing but darkness afterwards. Groaning, she shifted onto her side, pressing fingers to the side of her head and hissing at the lump she felt there. A little bit of crusted blood attested to

how hard he'd hit her. Whimpering, she managed to get her knees under her and opened her eyes. There was nothing, only darkness. For a second she panicked, until she realized there was a thin line of light from under a door.

Licking dry lips, she pushed her way to the door, reaching out and touching cold metal. That was it then, they'd tossed her into a cell of some sort, deep and dark. She curled up on herself, crying. The last sound she'd heard replaying in her mind was of the man over her saying target eliminated.

Sometime later, she wasn't sure how much later, the sound of movement came from outside the cell. She winced and turned away from the light, as the metal door was slammed open. "Get her up," a man commanded. Rough hands grabbed her and hauled her to her feet.

"What do you..." She got backhanded.

"Shut up. The old man wants to see her. Get her up to the med center."

She didn't move fast enough, and the two men dragged her out of the cell, hauling her up the stairs and into brightly lit corridors that made her eyes water. A door opened somewhere, and then she was thrown into a chair and strapped down. A brief struggle earned her another backhand, and then the last of the straps were tightened.

"I told you my serum was working. She already survived a gut wound, which healed within hours. You really think a couple of gun shots were going to slow her down?" Miller's voice came from across the room, where she was in a heated discussion. "I need her caught and brought here. She's my patient zero. Her body is actually producing the serum now, I need to test her."

"Chance is alive?" Tyler whispered, smiling despite the pain of a split lip. Everything seemed better with that simple revelation, despite being strapped down on the chair in the middle of the army base.

The voices stopped.

Tyler really wished she could see anything other than the spotlight that was aimed in her face from above. "Miller...that you? I hope you eat shit and die, you scum! I knew you were using them for tests!" She didn't have much to lose she figured.

"Ah, Dr. Madison, so good of you to join us, you've been quite the pain in my ass," Miller said cattily, not happy at all about the shadow of Tyler Madison she had lived under.

"Oh, poor baby, did I make your life hard? I'm so sorry," she quipped, hiding behind the sarcastic tone.

"Now, ladies, I have exactly one month to present a Super-Soldier to the pentagon. Either get me my results or I'll make sure you reach a rather messy end."



Miller glared at the man behind her. "I had results, your men shot her."

"Bob?" Tyler blanched, shifting in the chair to try and see. There was nothing but bright light though, and she gave up, dropping her head back. "Hi, Colonel, how's it going?"

He ignored her, walking closer to the chair. "Life isn't looking good for you. You're a terrorist now, and you know how well our government treats terrorists...especially those sleeping on American soil. I can make that disappear. Of course, you'll be my little indentured servant until you die. But trust me, that's a fate less worse than that of your traitorous friends."

If she'd had enough moisture in her mouth, she would have spit at him. As it was, she had to content herself with a feeble gesture of the hand that conveyed her feelings pretty well. "Go to hell. I'm not helping you. Not after what you did, the people you've killed."

"People... Those people knew the risks when they volunteered, so don't insult their memories. Since the Weres won't serve with us anymore, insisting they have the same rights we do. We need soldiers with the ability to withstand the Vampires and other demonic forces in the world." He was studying her with cool, calculating eyes.

"Insult their memories?" She laughed. "And they say I'm crazy! You murdered those people, Bob, just as surely as if you put a gun to their heads and pulled the trigger. God forgive me, I helped you do it, too. But I won't again...never again."

"You'll help. Either of your free will or after I break your will. Somewhere in that head of yours are the answers I want. Think on that." He turned, walking towards Miller.

"I need results, Doctor. I have to show certain high officials something for all that money they gave me."

"Don't worry, Colonel, I'll get them for you." Dr. Miller looked past him to the tied down woman on the chair and smiled coldly. She would enjoy getting them for him. "I'll need some privacy, of course. And once I have results, a transfer out of this Godforsaken shit hole of a hospital."

"Now, Doctor, the work you've done here with our other volunteers has been fruitful. Plus I think if you and Dr. Madison collaborate on your theory of the hybrids, we may be able to create the kind of soldiers we need." He paused. "I'm sorry about Chance, but I do have men out looking for your guinea pig."

"There's no way I'm collaborating with either of you!" Tyler yelled from her seat, struggling vainly against the restraints.

Dr. Miller ignored her, scowling. "I don't need to collaborate with her. I can get you the results you need by myself."

Bob's face showed nothing. "I'm not certain I made that optional. I know you're bright, Miller, but I highly doubt you can get me a working prototype in one month. Now do as I asked or I can bring in another chair."

Flinching away from the not so subtle threat, the good doctor nodded. "I'll have answers for you soon." She made a motion to the equipment she'd brought with her from the hospital. "She'll just need a little convincing."

That really didn't sound good to Tyler, and she tried, again, to slip out of her bonds.

"I trust you to do what needs to be done. I'm going to go see what we can do about tracking down your Patient Zero. I'll be back when I have news." Abruptly, he headed out.

"Prick," Miller muttered under her breath, though only when the doors had safely closed behind him.

Then she picked up the first of the row of syringes laid out across the counter top and smiled to where Tyler was squirming on the chair. "Well, time to get to work, isn't it? I really hope you hold out for a long time."

#####

Chance woke with a start, sitting up in the bed she was in. She didn't remember lying down, let alone going to sleep. The doctor must have given her a shot of something.

Bones was standing in front of the window. "You're healing amazingly well, even for a Were. The doctor thinks that in a few years, your eye might even heal back and you'll have full vision."

Chance shook her head, trying to catch up, "Doesn't mean I don't feel like shit now. How long have I been out?"

"It's a little after noon. Zoya has hunters out sniffing for our military friends. I'll let Zoya know you're up."

She disappeared out the door.

Zoya made her typical entrance into a room, barging in with an almost arrogant air about her, acting as if she owned everything in her sight. "Good to see you awake again, lazy," she grinned. "Doc said he was going to make sure you rested a while before charging off after your mate."

Chance flushed a little. "Have we located her...them?"

"One of the felines found a track. They were going to go check it out. They're laying low, so it's a little harder than I thought it would be. Usually the military is all about making big noises and showing off." Zoya flopped down in the old chair that was the only other piece of furniture in the

room. "You feeling better?"

"Yeah... My eye still itches, but I feel better." She got up slowly, frowning slightly as she noticed the 'Hooters' shirt she was wearing. She raised an eyebrow in question at Zoya, "Yours?"

"Nope," Zoya waggled her eyebrows, "trophy. But you needed something to wear, so I made a sacrifice. Oh, speaking of which." She dug into her pocket and pulled out a patch of tooled leather with leather strop and tossed it over. "Eye patch for the pirate."

"You're really enjoying the pirate thing, aren't you?" she said with a huff, but slid the eye-patch over her eye.

"Yup... It's even guilt-free, now that the doc said you might even be able to regenerate the eye, which really shouldn't be possible as far as he knows." She eyed her sister suspiciously, as if there was something she wasn't telling her.

Chance shrugged then paused. "Miller... Kehp... Tyler kept ranting about how she was evil. She gave me a shot of something."

"Miller...hot Miller?" Zoya frowned. "Huh, well, she was a great lay, but I guess she could be doing bad things too."

Chance gave her sister a dirty look. "Great, she probably has your DNA on file. They could be cloning you for all we know." She thought about that statement and shivered at the thought of hundreds of Zoya's running around.

"Just think how great a world that would be!" Zoya bared her teeth in a smile as she considered what she could do if there were more than one of her. "One of me could stay in bed all day long with whatever woman I wanted."

Bones' head peeked through the doorway. "Boss, could you and one-eye hurry it up, the Were-kitty is getting anxious."

"Yeah, yeah, we're coming." She started out the door, not really trying to hide her snicker. "Come on, one-eye. Don't want the kitty to get nervous."

Chance said nothing, just pursed her lips in a tight frown and stood up. "Just keep laughing it up. You'll get yours."

"Probably... I also, probably, won't grow mine back, so don't mind your poor sister if she enjoys the moment of humility for her federal agent sibling," Zoya called, already hurrying down the stairs, away from any potential thrown objects.

A slim, African-American man stood in the living room. He would pace back and forth before

standing stock still, listening. He looked at Terri, "I do as the Dog's bid because Kimberly commands it, but I don't like leaving her side for too long."

Terri made a comforting noise. "Zoya's on her way."

"We don't do this for Zoya; she's done nothing for us but push her bullying weight around. The other one, she helps puts her life on the line for those not kit or kin."

"I'm so glad you think fondly of me," Zoya quipped, emerging into the small living room. "What did you find?" She wanted good news, wanted to be able to go out and hurt something for the damage done to her sister. Bloodying the nose of the US government would be a nice addition too.

Chance followed, stumbling slightly, having a hard time navigating when half her vision was gone.

She smiled. "Jeffery, how are you?"

"Me and mine are good, but you and yours not so good?" he responded.

"No, not really, I've had better days."

"It's really nice to touch bases and all, but could you tell us what you found?" Zoya asked impatiently, instinctively not liking the way this Jeffery seemed to respond to Chance instead of her.

He nodded in understanding "We found an old depot the military used and abandoned years ago. Only, the military seems to be back. Not more than thirty people, from what we can tell. They've sent out a few packs of soldiers. They seem to be looking for something or someone."

"That's them, has to be. How far away is it?"

"Em, an hour or two as the Dog runs."

Ignoring the implied slight, Zoya nodded. "Good enough. Bones, tell everyone to gather up, we'll rendezvous not far away." She turned to look at Chance, raising an eyebrow. "You ready for this?"

"As ready as I can be. Got a gun?" was her response. She ran a hand through her hair, in frustration, not sure how much use she'd be with her missing eye. She hadn't had enough time to get used to limited range she now had.

"A gun..?" Zoya snorted. She didn't think much of guns. "Yeah, somewhere I think." She nodded to Terri, and the other woman rummaged around in a desk, coming up with an ancient looking pistol that she offered Chance.

Chance snorted, but shoved it in her waistband.

"Hope that things still works," Terri mumbled, tossing a box of bullets to the federal agent that were made probably before the Second World War.

#####

Halstead was screaming on the gurney they had him strapped too, as Doctor Miller stood over him, having just injected him with something.

"Fuck! Goddamn bitch! I do you guys a favor and this is how you treat me."

From nearby, Tyler watched the show that Miller had so nicely set up for her. They'd even taken her out of the chair so she could see it all. She hated Halstead, but even she didn't like to see this.

Miller looked over at Tyler, who had two shadows following her with guns. "He, Chance, and Jeremy are the only three to show any sort of response to the drug. Chance and Jeremy responded without aggression, while Halstead here seems to be turning into an animal."

"Holy shit that burns!" the man on the gurney screamed.

"Better start giving me what you know, Tyler, or you can see what happens with test subject after subject."

"Guess you didn't pick your subjects very well, did you?" Tyler winced, looking away for a second as Halstead's scream turned almost inhuman. "Why should I help you? So you can go on and do this to more people? Fuck off, Miller. I'm not doing anything."

"This is your unfinished work. I'm trying to improve it so we don't get these mistakes. Because your work caused all this, you need to fix it. Instead, we've been cleaning your mess."

That struck a chord and Tyler winced as Halstead screamed again. She imagined she could hear bones groaning as his entire body arched against the pain. "At least give him something for the pain!" she snapped, shuddering as he clenched down so tightly on his teeth one snapped.

"Help me, and I'll give him a shot of morphine," Miller countered.

Another tooth shattered and she closed her eyes, listening to the man scream on and on. She'd never seen the effects of her first generation serum on a patient, only what was to come later. It was as horrible as anything that had haunted her nightmares since she'd been on the run. "As much morphine as it takes to make him comfortable?" she heard herself ask.

Miller thought about it. "Yes." She looked over at her assistant. "Prep a drip for Mr. Halstead." The man nodded.

"Fine..." Tyler took a step towards the bench, stopping when the two gun totting men stiffened, "You going to let me work or not?"

Miller waved the men back.

Looking over her shoulder to make sure that the two guards stayed where they were, Tyler reached for the instruments set out across the bench.

"You're using my latest version of the serum. It's not really a serum, of course, more of a viral protein cocktail, full of reverse transcriptases to reactivate genes for healing in humans," she laughed, shaking her head. "It really works well. Too bad it keeps going, keeps reactivating genes that we don't need anymore." She flipped through drawers, looking at what she had to work with.

Miller nodded, following what the other woman was saying. She gestured for her assistant to start the morphine drip. In a few moments, his screams had silenced.

That was a relief.

"I took parts of every virus I could find that would be useful. It had to infect the entire body, you see. I couldn't just infect part of it, or some of the cells. No...it had to be the entire thing." She paused, picking up vials and setting them on the counter top, pleased that her hands didn't shake anymore. "You should have realized that Chance was a full Were."

The young military doctor debated with herself before pulling open the freezer door and pulled out a test tube. She fumbled it, almost dropping it, the smug smile falling from her face as she heard Tyler. "What? Sh-sh-she can't be? She was tested."

"She faked it. I don't know how. I might know why, but that doesn't matter. It's recessive sometimes, you know, the genes, the chances are really low, but it happens." She grinned at her own joke, and pulled out two syringes.

"Damn it!" Miller swore and tossed the vial at Tyler. "Not that it does you any good now, but that was serum I had made with Chance's blood."

The brunette caught it, fighting, so very hard, to avoid grinning as she held up the vial. "So it has the recessive characters in it then?" That was interesting. She set it aside on the tabletop. "Too bad it won't help you. No super-soldiers from that." She started to fill the syringes. "No big promotion for you I guess, Miller. What the hell is your first name anyway?"

"It's Helen, Helen Miller." She sat down heavily in a chair. "Bob recruited me away from John Hopkins. Now I think I should have stayed. How about you?"

"Yale. I'd just finished my PhD. He knew I wouldn't pass up a chance to join the program. I wouldn't ask too many questions, and I'd do anything to find a cure." Tyler laughed at her own

naiveté. It seemed like a different lifetime, a different person back then. Carefully, she started to fill the syringes from each bottle in turn, measuring the doses.

"You should have stayed. You'd have been a hit with the old men in the geriatric wards," Tyler grinned, filling the last bit of syringe.

"My family is all military. To work for Bob on this program, my dad couldn't have been more proud. Now I just want to give Bob his super-soldier and get out of this place." ...Out of this situation. She was never going to go anywhere, never win awards.

"Don't worry. You'll give it to Bob." Tyler pulled off the syringe shield, baring the long, large gauge needle, and walked towards Halstead. The morphine was doing its job, he wasn't screaming, but she could see the changes starting. It wouldn't be long until he was nothing more than the twisted horrors she'd seen before.

Miller watched, trying to keep hope from overwhelming her.

The veins were bulging on Halstead's arm, and it wasn't hard to find one and slip the needle under the skin. Then only a second's work to push the plunger home and send the mixture shooting through him.

The agent gave a sound like a moan, and his eyes fluttered open then closed as his entire body went limp. A look at the monitors showed that his vital signs were slowly returning towards something like normal. "You just have to stop the virus from going any further." She jerked her head towards the counter top and the vials of anti-virals.

Miller stood up and scrambled over Tyler, grabbing the syringe, and motioning for her assistant to check Halstead.

The brunette let her have the empty syringe, smiling faintly as she watched them scramble about the body, poking and prodding like excited medical students with their first patient. "He'll have to take the cocktail for the rest of his life. If not..." she trailed off, shrugging.

"What? Why? There's no way to stop it?" Miller asked.

"Sure, if you give me the same budget they give for AIDs or Cancer research. Have you looked around you? We're in the middle of the desert, with a half-assed lab set up. You should be happy I did that much." She hadn't really known if it would work. The idea was sound, but reality sometimes differed from the theoretical.

Miller nodded then looked at one of the guards. "Terminate subject 26."

In a quick, precise move, the man moved, fired the rifle then trained it back on Tyler, leaving only the aftermath of sound and smell. "Take blood and tissue samples and get us a guinea pig."

Her brain frantically working, Miller muttered to herself, "Well, we are certainly in a better place than an hour ago, but what we need is a subject that's not reliant on injections every couple of hours. That's just not feasible in certain enemy combatant situations."

Tyler flinched as a spray of blood arched across her shirt from what had been Halstead's head. Gagging, she turned away, blinking away tears. "I take it back, Helen. The old men would have been terrified of you."

"I've studied you, read your file. I'm glad to see you're not as big a wuss as I've come to expect. I expected you to start crying and asking my why, in a woefully choked up voice."

"I try not to ask too many questions to psychopathic bitches. The answers I get aren't worth the trouble." Tyler braced herself against the counter tops, not looking behind her as one of the guards dragged off the body of what had been Halstead. Her left hand curled around the remaining syringe.

Miller laughed. "Trust me...that was a mercy. Bob would have started dissecting while he was still alive, just to see the response patterns."

"Yeah, you did him a favor by injecting him with an experimental serum that would have turned him into a monster and then shot him in the head when I found a way to stop him from turning into a monster."

Miller stared at Tyler angrily for a minute. "He's been getting injections before I even started on this project. Look at yourself first before assigning blame. Besides, I wasn't kidding about Bob. A soldier who has to keep taking injections to stay sane does him no good in the field. He would have cut Halstead open while he was still alive just to time how long it took him to heal. Then maybe he would have taken him out to the firing range and let some of the other soldiers take shots. I did him a kindness."

Tyler turned around, slipping the syringe up her sleeve as she did so. "I know I share blame here, but let's not delude ourselves about who actually killed him." Screaming came from down the hallway, she assumed from the next victim.

"I killed him, Tyler. I don't deny that. But I really can't live through another one of Bob's hands-on moods." She went pale remembering the last subject she thought she had been close on the super-soldier serum.

She refused to feel pity for the other woman, but she nodded slowly. "All right, no more hands-on things from Bob." That, she could agree to. "I think it's the vector then. We have to change it."

Miller nodded, moving over to the table. "I still think Chance is the key, there's something about her."



"There certainly is," Tyler mumbled, but turned to look at the table. "Do you have more of her sample?"

"Two more... She really didn't seem to want to let me take the blood in the first place." She pondered the change in the agent's attitude. "So you and her..." She shook her head and let it drop.

"Repeatedly," Tyler mumbled, picking up the first set of tubes and frowning. "She's special," she whispered to herself. "Special." She blinked then smiled slowly, "Yeah. Ok, Dr. Helen Miller. Let's see about making you a serum that won't kill."

#####

Zoya stared out of the trees. "Shit, they have that thing locked down. I bet all those guns are full of silver." She looked over at Chance. "There's a hole on your left, watch out, one-eye."

Chance jumped and looked over, turning her head to get the piece of offending ground in her limited sight. "Asshole," she muttered under her breath.

"Love you too, Sister," Zoya grinned. "You know, this is going to be messy. That's a lot more people than I thought would be here." The base was definitely bigger than she'd thought it would be, more trucks, more guards...more barbed wire.

"You know, it would be a lot easier to open those gates from the inside," Bones said, brushing dirt off her leather jacket.

"No." The Alpha slid down a bit so that she was out of sight from anyone looking from the base. "We aren't doing that."

"Come on, they're looking for the one-eyed pirate here. I'll go with her...we'll get captured...I'll unleash hell on earth inside...and open the gates...piece of cake," Bones said with a shrug.

"No," Zoya said, again. "Didn't you hear me the first time? I'm not letting my sister be captured by the army just so we can get inside. We'll find another way."

Chance frowned. "How many people are going to die if we try an assault? Bones is right, they don't know I'm a Were. Right now they just think I'm one of Miller's guinea pigs. It's the best way...as long as your new second is as big and bad as she swaggers."

Bones smiled, her teeth a bright white against her dark skin. "You have no idea."

"You," she pointed at Bones, "keep her safe. This isn't a good idea." She motioned the others who were nearby backwards. "But I guess it's the best one we have. The first sign of something going wrong we're coming in after you."

Chance nodded. "I'd appreciate that." She hesitated a moment then hugged Zoya tightly.

Bones looked at the two of them wistfully before making her expression once again sardonic.

A little awkwardly, Zoya returned the hug. "You be careful," she whispered then stepped back.

Chance nodded before she and Bones melted into the night.

#####

She still wasn't sure this was a good idea, and lately, she'd had to admit, most of Zoya's ideas and thoughts had been better than her own. But she really hated this to be the moment she turned out to be wrong.

Currently, she was marching with her hands tied behind her back, which had opened the stitches on her upper chest from where the doctor had sewn her up. Bones was marching along next to her, hands tied as well. The smirk was gone from her lips, and her face was almost scary in its intensity. Chance was almost certain Bones wasn't a Were, but the answer had yet to be confirmed.

It was the middle of the night, but the base was up and running. People hurried from point A to point B, looking very busy.

They were slammed inside an elevator, four guards joining them.

Again the guard glared at her and gave her the warning. "These guns all have silver in 'em, just try something, freak."

Chance said nothing, but Bones just gave a tight-lipped smile. "Thanks for the refresher."

One guard slammed the stock of his rifle into her face. Bones just shook her head and smiled. Blood ran down over her white teeth and she spat it on to the floor. The guard closest to the splatter jumped a little.

Chance frowned when she saw the blood flare up like fire, and then leave nothing but a scorch mark.

She looked over at the other woman, but Bones just shrugged.

The elevator started its decent. Happily, the two women noted it only went down three floors.

"Move," the guard shoved Chance forward, "time for you to go where you belong." He raised his gun at Bones as she tightened. "Try it."

Bones shrugged. "So, did you like blowing your psychologist so he'd fudge your psyche eval?"

The guard hit her in the stomach with the butt of his rifle.

"I'll take that as a yes, you did like it. Men get so defensive about certain things, especially if they're true," Bones chuckled and stood up.

"Where the hell are you taking us? I am a Federal Agent, you have no right..." She shut up as the butt of the rifle smashed into the back of her head. She never saw it coming. The next thing she knew, she was being dragged down the hallway.

Bones whispered to her. "Just be quiet from now on and let me do the talking."

They dragged them down a hallway full of crumbling cement into an obviously newly renovated and freshly installed cell. The bars gleamed in the dim lighting, silver. They slammed the door shut behind the two of them and locked it.

She looked at Bones. "What now?"

"I'll think of something."

"What?"

#####

Miller picked up the phone. "This is Dr. Miller." A smile broke out over her face. "Excellent! That has to be the best news I've had in a while. Where are they?"

Her face morphed into a thundercloud. "What the fuck are they doing in lock up? I want them up here ASAP. Or I may just have a new volunteer, got me!"

Tyler looked up from the work she was studying and raised an eyebrow. "What is it?" she asked, shifting her left hand carefully, in case the syringe hidden up her sleeve would fall out.

"They've caught your friend. Agent Pavel has decided to join us, and she brought a friend."

All Tyler could do was stare at her, in slowly dawning horror. "No," she whispered, licking her lips. That wasn't good, not good at all.

"I'm surprised. I doubt Zoya would try to break into a government facility to save...well, anybody she was sleeping with." Miller had to ponder maybe she'd chased after the wrong sister then had to frown at the absurdity of that thought.

"Zoya..?" They'd caught both Zoya and Chance? That really wasn't good. That meant there wasn't anyone out there to come rescue them. "You can't expect me to help you do anything to either of

them," she said faintly, gripping the arm of the chair to keep herself upright.

"What? No, I wasn't saying they'd caught Zoya," she laughed, a sad sound. "Zoya wouldn't risk her wolves for a lowly human. Zoya's just the Werewolf equivalent of Bob. I'm not sure who the other woman is." She stared at Tyler for a moment then smiled. "Oh, Tyler, you don't have to do anything to them, just Chance's blood."

Tyler opened her mouth to tell Miller to go fuck herself in the corner. A thought stopped her though, and she closed her mouth slowly, blinking as she considered the idea. "In exchange for you guaranteeing nothing happens to either of them."

Miller thought about lying to Tyler. "You know, I can't guarantee that. Bob controls everything. But...I...I...can keep the knowledge that Chance is a Werewolf from Bob."

That would be something at least. "I have your word on that?" For what that was worth.

"Yeah, there's no proof anywhere that she is."

It didn't take much thought. "All right," Tyler sealed her deal with the devil. "I'll help you take her blood and process it."

"Deal..." The young doctor changed her lab coat for one that didn't have Halstead's blood splattered on it. "So do you know how she managed to avoid detection? Those government tests are brutal in telling nonhumans from humans?"

This was dangerous territory, and Tyler chose her words very carefully. "I don't know how she managed to avoid being detected as a Were." Which was the truth, she didn't. She knew how to tell if someone was a Were, but there was no way she would ever tell Helen Miller that.

Miller studied her for a moment then shrugged, "Too bad. I bet Zoya put her up to it."

Tyler snorted and pulled out several syringes, getting ready for the job ahead. *As if Zoya could put Chance up to anything she didn't want to do.*

There came a buzz from the door then it opened. Four heavily armed men came in, sandwiching Chance and another woman.

"Ms. Pavel on the examination table please; the other one in the cage," Miller said in a cold, detached fashion.

From her spot next to the lab bench, Tyler tried to catch Chance's eye, worried as she catalogued a few new bruises and a slight limp in her lover's walk.

Chance blinked, confused when she saw Tyler standing next to Dr. Miller. "Tyler, what's going

on?" It really didn't seem to her that Tyler needed any rescue.

"Dr. Madison is helping me create a super-soldier from Werewolf DNA. On the table please," she ordered.

"Hey, Chance." She glanced sideways, frowning as Miller talked over her.

Chance's jaw snapped shut and she gave both women an angry glare. "You bitch! I tried to save you." She tried to lunge at them, but two of the soldiers held her back and wrestled her to the table.

"Well, that was a pointless effort in femme fatale rescuing. Next time let's just go get beer and nachos," the dark-skinned woman joked as the other two soldiers shoved her into a cage with silver bars. "Wow, our government is in how much debt, yet you can make cages out of silver?"

Tyler jerked in surprise, wishing she could say something, anything, to reassure the other woman. Instead, she turned her back, making sure that the required syringe was ready. If what she was considering was going to work, they'd only have one shot at it. There wouldn't be another opportunity.

"I was hoping you weren't going to try anything stupid," Tyler answered, instead.

Once the two hostiles had been secured, the soldiers looked at the doctor, "Ma'am?"

"You may leave. They're not going anywhere," she said absently, gathering what she would need to draw more blood.

They nodded and headed out, leaving the two original soldiers who were watching Dr. Madison.

She looked at her assistant. "Remove the patch and cut her shirt off. I can see blood seeping through at the shoulder."

The man nodded and got to work.

"I'm a human being. You can't just treat me like some animal," Chance shouted, straining at her restraints.

Miller ignored the outburst. "Interesting," she murmured. "I think this wound is silver based, judging from the blackened, diseased-looking flesh around the wound. But even more interesting is that it isn't spreading. It should be in your blood stream rushing through your body, killing you by degrees. I think I may have accidentally made a Super-Were." She frowned. That would piss Bob off.

"It probably has nothing to do with you injecting her with your serum," Tyler spoke up, tearing her eyes away from the look on Chance's face. She didn't want to look at the disbelief there, the

betrayal that was evident on the agent's face. If the cost of keeping her safe was their relationship, then she would do what she had to.

"You think she comes by it naturally?" Miller asked, looking over at the other doctor.

"It's part of what makes her special. She isn't a typical Were, you know that already." Tyler glanced towards the cage in the corner where the other Were had been shoved. She wouldn't be able to get to Chance and free her, but maybe she could get to the cage instead.

Bones stared over at Chance. "So are we doing a rescue scene here or can I just go for wholesale carnage?"

Miller looked over and blinked as if noticing the woman for the first time. "Right, what the hell are you going to do? Those bars are pure silver."

"Really silver, huh?" the black woman reached out and grabbed the bar, smirking. "Uh, it burns, the pain, the pain," she mocked.

Tyler laughed at the shocked look on Helen's face. "Oops. Looks like you made another mistake. You assumed she was a Were. Too bad...looks like you were wrong."

"You know the best thing about silver, its low melting point." Unseen tattoos on her skin, hidden by the leather jacket, flared to life, turning a dark, angry red.

Flames danced along her fingers, and the bar started to change color.

"Fuck." Tyler didn't know what was about to happen, but she was really sure that it wasn't going to be good. Whatever the woman behind the bars was, she wasn't a Were, that was clear. Shoving away from the lab bench, she threw herself towards Chance.

Chance let out an uff, as air whooshed out her lungs as Tyler landed on her. The gurney slid backwards, crashing into the wall. Chance winced as IVs ripped out of her flesh.

"What are you waiting for? Shoot her!" Miller yelled at the guards who had frozen, staring in surprise at the fire that now wretched the woman in the cell.

The guards shook off their shock and raised their rifles.

Bones' eyes glowed bright gold, until they erupted in red. Horns sprouted out of her forehead, hard, cold, bone shards curling back. Clothes melted away, turning into hard, black scales, and dark fur. She looked vaguely like a werewolf, only a hell of a lot scarier.

"Shit," one of the guards yelled.

Casting a look behind her at the screaming going on, Tyler gulped and shifted so she could start

trying to undo the straps that were holding down Chance. "What the hell is she?" That didn't look like any Were she'd ever heard about. "Are you ok?" She pulled the first strap loose.

Chance blinked at the woman on top of her, trying to turn her head so she could see her with her good eye. "Are you still on my side here? 'Cause it looked like you were against me when I was shoved in here?"

"Are you serious?" Tyler stopped what she was doing, staring down at the one-eyed woman and frowning. "How could you ever think that? You got yourself shot to get me out of there!" Biting her lip, she gently touched the eye patch. "What happened to your eye?"

Behind them, the first of the guards finally found his balls and pulled the trigger, then pulled it again when the silver bullet did exactly no evident damage to the thing inside the cage. Miller kept yelling at them to shoot her, and the other guard looked like he was ready to piss his pants as the flames kept growing.

"Halstead's knife was silver, its poisoned the nerves and tissue. Zoya's doctor says it's not spreading. He didn't have to give me an injection for silver poisoning. He thinks I might regenerate in time." She looked around then back at Tyler. "I'm sorry."

"You should be," she gave the woman a light punch on the arm. "I can't believe you thought I might be on any other side than yours! Do you know what I had to go through with Dr. Insane over there?" Tyler looked over at the ranting woman who was now just screaming things at the soldier who hadn't started shooting.

The silver bars were melting away, but Bones didn't wait for them to dissolve. She tore through them and leapt at the guard currently shooting her.

"Ugh." Tyler looked away, quickly, from what was going on, grimacing at the sound of something tearing through meat. Quickly, she started working on the bonds, cursing at how difficult they were to get loose.

Chance sat up once the strap across her chest was undone then leaned over and kissed Tyler's cheek. "Let's get out of here. Bones said something about chaos and causing hell on earth. Now I don't think she was kidding.

Tyler took a look at the thing that she could just kind of make out through the waves of flames and the body it flung aside. "Jesus." Miller had decided enough was enough apparently, and was currently sprinting for the door also, leaving the lone soldier alone to babble incoherently. Tyler almost felt sorry for him. Grabbing Chance's arm, she helped her up.

"Wait." She ran over to the counter and grabbed the vial she wanted, shoving it in her pocket. "Let's go!"

Chance rolled her eyes. "So, did she tell you what she injected me with?"

"Yeah," Tyler grimaced, holding the door open for Chance and wishing they could get further away from the thing that was on flames. "Um, it was a derivative of a serum I helped make."

"So, in English?" Chance said, pulling Tyler along after her.

"She was testing out a super-soldier serum on you. But that's because she thought you were human." Behind them, there was a dull explosion and flames burst through the doors they had just left. Tyler started running a bit faster.

"So the thing she injected me with didn't do anything to me?" Chance was confused.

"Welllll..." Tyler drew out the word, trying to buy a little bit of time as they kept running, trying to keep up with Chance. How long was this hallway? It had to end somewhere, didn't it? "It did something to you, just not the same as it would have done if you were human."

"Okay, my brain is hurting. This isn't making things any clearer." She came to a skidding halt as alarms started going and soldiers in various states of dress came flooding out of doors. She pulled Tyler down another hallway.

Smoke and fire started pouring down the hallway they had come from.

"Damn it, that's a lot of guys with guns. Tell me Zoya is out there somewhere ready to rescue us?" Tyler huffed as she sprinted down the dingy corridor, aware of people yelling behind them.

"She's out there," Chance said, looking around.

Bones came sprinting down the hallway in her full Hellhound form. She could have been mistaken for wolf or a large dog, except all four paws ended in wicked claws, and her belly was covered in thick, shiny, black scales. Dark fur covered the rest, and horns sprouted out of her head.

Some of the soldiers took one look and started running the other way.

Tyler risked a glance over her shoulder as they ran and grinned at the chaos behind them. Bones had promised hell on earth, and she sure seemed to be delivering on that. Everywhere she touched burst into flames, and the smoke and flames added to the already chaotic situation. Some soldiers were shooting wildly, others were frozen where they stood, while a few others were running away, weapons dropped, and screaming.

"You sure know how to set up a party," she gasped to Chance, lungs starting to burn. If they got out of this, she promised she'd start jogging every day.

#####



Zoya's head perked up at the sound of alarms going off. "I believe that's our cue." She shifted her form and started running to the gates, her pack at her back.

#####

"That would be Zoya. She apparently won Bones in a card game. I don't have a clue what she is, but she scares the piss out of me." She was desperately looking for exit signs.

If Tyler let her mind dwell on it too long, it would do more than scare the piss out of her. Instead, she pointed as she saw a door with what looked like a small rectangular window showing sunlight through it. "There!" An exit sign was lacking, but it was better than nothing.

Chance slammed through door and froze. The courtyard was a mass of death and dying. Zoya and her wolves had ripped through the fence and were taking care of the remaining soldiers.

A man had his head ripped off his body so close by that Tyler felt the blood splatter hit the side of her face. Ducking behind Chance, she looked away from the mayhem and screaming.

"Chance, it's Bob!" she pointed towards one of the two massive trucks that were parked on the far side of the compound entrance. A bald headed man was opening the door to one of them and climbing inside.

Chance swung her head around, trying to see where Tyler was pointing. "Okay, what do you want me to do?"

"I don't know! Can't you arrest him or something?"

It was a completely absurd statement, and she turned, looking at Tyler. "Sure, I'll run right over there where he's in a truck with a machine gun on top of it and arrest them. Can we just stick with my original plan? Rescue you and run away."

"You don't understand. That man," she pointed at the truck, having to yell to be heard over the chaos, "is the head of the research project. It will never stop as long as he is around. He will not give up!"

"Fuck," Chance muttered. She turned, looking for her sister.

"Zoya, the man in that truck is responsible for all of this!"

She bent over, grabbing the gore-splattered automatic out of the dead soldier's hand and opened fire on the tires of the trucks. She cursed, as her aim was off, and tried to compensate for her crippled vision.

"Give me that," Zoya jerked the rifle out of her sisters' hands, wiping blood off her face as she finished changing back into her human shape. The fighting was starting to calm down, with most

of the remaining soldiers making a run for it. "You can't shoot worth shit with one eye."

Raising it to her shoulder, she aimed at the truck, smiling ferally. "I was thinking, Chance. You should run for Sheriff or something." Pulling the trigger, she grunted in pleasure as she hit the first tire.

"Yes I can. I just need to get my bearings. I am actually trained to do this, went through school and everything, top of my class." She left, 'asshole', unsaid. "Do I get free donuts?"

"Sure," Zoya tossed aside the empty rifle, "why not."

"And I thought guys were bad with their pissing contests," Tyler mumbled, rolling her eyes. When Zoya had shot out all of the tires on that side of the truck she started walking towards it, quite certain it wasn't going anywhere.

Chance caught the rifle. "Tyler, could you stay over here, I'd feel better, safety in numbers and all that."

"That son of a bitch ruined my life! I have months of aggression to get out. Couldn't we just go grab him, drag him out of the truck, and do something to him?" She stopped walking though.

Chance looked over at Zoya, "Um, sure."

Zoya just shrugged, "Don't look at me. You're the representative of the law."

Behind them, the army outpost was burning. Clouds of smoke rose in a pillar in the sky.

Chance sighed and grabbed another gun and started towards the truck. There was a prickling of unease along her spine. Why hadn't anyone come out of the trucks? "Come out with your hands above your head!" she shouted.

"Why, if it isn't Agent Pavel, I was hoping you'd stick around for the main event," Bob's voice came out, amplified over external speakers. Tyler looked over at Chance, a little worried. That didn't sound like a man who was cowering in fear.

Chance tightened her grip on the gun and looked from Tyler to Zoya. "Bob, you're kind of out of options. Your super secret base is on fire, and your research is going up in smoke. Just give it up."

"Actually, Agent Pavel, this is a perfect opportunity to test out a byproduct of Dr. Madison's research." Mechanical locks at the back of the truck clanked as they were sprung open.

Tyler slowed her walk then stopped, frowning. What byproducts was he talking about?

"This can't be good," Chance muttered as the doors on the back of the truck started to open.

"No. This is really bad," Tyler agreed, backing up, one step after another, eyes wide as she stared at the truck. The back ramp slammed down to the ground hard enough that it bounced once then settled among the dust. Everyone watched...the wolves and humans who were left in the courtyard.

"I take it back, Chance, we should go." Tyler kept backing up afraid she knew what was inside that truck.

Chance, not sure what was going on, started to back up as well. Her gun was trained ahead of her, never wavering.

A dim shape stirred inside the shadows, larger and hulking. Then another and another, moving until the inside was shifting back and forth. Then, at once, they erupted from that opening. They were neither human nor animal, horrible mixtures of both that should never have seen the light of day. They moved fast, screaming in rage and their own pain.

"What the hell are those?" Zoya yelled.

"Mistakes!" Tyler yelled back.

"Shit!" Chance shouted, backing up even faster. She aimed at the first one out of the back of the truck and fired.

Bullets sprayed into its torso, which seemed to only make it angrier as the thing leapt twelve feet from one spot to another.

Then it was running on all fours, clawing the ground as it came towards Chance, fast.

Chance stopped retreating, and held her ground. She was already compensating now for her limited sight. She watched the thing charge her. Down the sight, she lined up the barrel with its head then squeezed out a few shots, watching its head snap back. Then she dropped her sight down to its joints, and started shredding its joints, moving from limb to limb until it stopped moving.

It wasn't dead, just immobile, and that scared the fuck out of her, because there were more of those things coming out of the truck, and it had taken all the bullets she had to bring it down.

"We're going to have a problem here!" Zoya yelled, jumping up and to the side away from a misshapen clawed hand that tried to rip her head off. The pack was reforming, doing what it did best, bringing down a creature with sheer numbers. It was, Tyler thought, like wolves taking down a bear. It was costing them too. Even as she watched, a wolf went flying with a yelp of pain.

"How do we stop them?" Chance shouted, jumping back as jaws snapped at her, and swung her

gun as a club in retaliation.

"I don't know!" Tyler yelled, looking around wildly for something, anything, to help. Even as she did, the first of the misshapen creatures that Chance had shot stirred, tissue starting to knit itself again. Her gaze stopped at the trailer. "I'll be back!" she shouted, sprinting across the battlefield that was the courtyard.

"Tyler!" Chance shouted as the woman ran off. She ducked a swing of claws, but then a backhand sent her flying.

Zoya landed near her, wiping blood from her mouth with a hand that was fully clawed. "We can't hold them for very long."

She got up, growling, which was harder than on a full moon night, but the anger and fear for her sister and Tyler sent the extra jolt of adrenaline, triggering her change. "We do what we can. Because if we don't, they'll get out and wipe out the only place we have. He's fucking not going to stop them," Chance growled out as her skin split and fur began sprouting out.

Despite the situation, Zoya grinned, happy at that moment. No matter what happened, it was good that this had happened if it brought her sister back to her. "Good to have you back, Chance." The last words were growls as she, too, shifted shape.

Ducking around through the fighting, Tyler sprinted through the melee to the side of the truck. Barely pausing, she grabbed the handle and yanked, thanking whoever was up there when it wasn't locked.

#####

The doors to the building exploded out, dark red flames poured out as well as oily dark smoke. After the fire died down, Bones appeared in the doorway. She was back in her human form. Her eyes narrowed when she saw the chaos going on in the courtyard. Her eyes were bright like heated copper, and fire ran up and down her fingertips.

Tyler took one last look behind her, at Chance and Zoya fighting. Zoya was easy to spot, all white fur, but she didn't know how she recognized Chance in the chaos, especially since she wasn't in her human form, but she did. Swallowing, she swung herself up into the cab of the truck, eyes wide and scanning for any sign of Bob. The cab was empty though, and she carefully stepped through the door to the rear.

The trailer was filled with scientific equipment, a full stocked laboratory on wheels. Along the right were empty cages that had housed the beasts that now fought outside. Still no sign of Bob though, and she crept quietly to the lab benches, searching for something useful.

Chance locked her jaws around the twisted arm of the monstrosity and held on as it roared and

tried to shake her off.

The thing swung at her, trying to bat at her, and roared again as it failed to tear her from its flesh. It went down to one leg, bleeding from the wounds of a half dozen different Weres that had tried to stop it before it got to Chance. An eye that was entirely too human looked at her as it snarled, spittle and blood mixing together as it mangled words together. "Kill me," it demanded, slamming Chance against a wall with what was left of its strength.

Chance grabbed on to the arms slamming her back into the wall and crunched together, and she raised her back paws and clawed into its unprotected belly. Her claws easily tore it open.

"Kill me!" it roared, screaming in her face, guts spilling out as it slammed its head into hers, hard, again and again.

Inside the truck, Tyler tossed things aside as she rummaged for something useful, anything that could help. Then her fingers paused, as she stared down into the large drawer she'd opened. The canisters inside were simple enough looking, but she knew the numbered codes that were printed across the tops. "That could work," she mumbled, picking one up and nodding. "Yes, that could work."

Bones stepped slowly down the steps, to the ground. The fire around her fingers began to spin faster and faster, gaining mass, until large balls of fire writhed and rolled in her palms.

The first one was launched at the monster attacking Zoya. After looking around again, she sent one at the one on Chance.

The thing shrieked, burning and collapsing to the ground, going still as it kept burning. "Thanks," the white-haired Were that was Zoya growled through a muzzle that was not meant to pronounce human words.

Chance yelped and rolled on the ground trying to put her fur out. "Thanks," she grumped.

Bones' eyes dimmed, going back to a now dull caramel color, and she staggered, going down to one knee, exhausted.

"Chance!" Tyler yelled from the door of the truck, holding what looked like an air gun in one hand.

A dark-furred head turned at the sound of Tyler's voice, and loped over to her side. While two of the beasts were down, three more were still causing death and destruction.

"I found this in the truck," the brunette yelled, waving the rifle above her as she watched Chance come closer. "It has a fast acting nerve agent in it. I'm betting it's Bob's security blanket in case they turned on him."

Chance came to a stop, towering over the other woman in her Were form. Her body trembled as she shifted, slightly becoming less wolf-like and more human. "Good job," she rasped out.

"I'm here to help." She offered the air gun, smiling into the face she had come to know so well over the past few weeks. It felt longer than that. A lifetime now had come and gone.

Chance smiled, her lips pulling back, exposing sharp teeth. She shifted back even more, looking even more human. Naked, she was still covered in a fine dark fur. She held out her hand for the gun.

The sight was really unsettling, and Tyler blinked a few times to clear her sight and focused on the agent's face. "There's a box full of darts. Enough for all of them, I think," she smiled. "Good news, right?"

"Great news..."

She handed over the gun and darts, letting her hand linger on Chance's, savoring the small contact. The sound was a small popping noise, nothing too loud sounding, at least to Tyler's ears. The smile faltered and she blinked in confusion, swallowing against a suddenly dry throat.

"What?" she mumbled, looking down, puzzled at the redness seeping across the front of her shirt.

Chance winced and looked down. There was a bullet hole weeping blood in her abdomen. She followed its trajectory to Tyler's chest. At first, she couldn't comprehend what she was seeing. The gun fell from her hands and she grabbed Tyler as her knees gave out.

"No. No, no, no. Nooooooooooooo!" she howled, feeling as if her heart had been ripped out.

"That stings..." Tyler mumbled, collapsing into Chance's arms out of the door of the truck. Behind her, Bob stood, pistol raised and a faint smile on his face as if he had just seen something ever so slightly amusing. "Good bye, Dr. Madison."

Then he shifted aim just a bit at Chance, and pulled the trigger again.

The bullet missed, because she was falling with Tyler in her arms. Cursing, he moved closer to the door of the truck. "Agent Pavel, you've been an annoyance to me almost as long as Dr. Madison has been."

"Forgive me," Chance whispered as she dropped Tyler and lunged at Bob, shifting completely.

He jerked back, pulling the trigger as he did, bullet bouncing off the door to the cab and spinning within a hairsbreadth of Chance's head. Yelling, he dodged backwards, slamming the door to the rear of the truck shut.

Tyler lay on the ground, gasping as blood pooled around her, pumping out of the wound in her

front and back. Ever so slowly, she wormed a hand into her pocket and pulled out the syringe inside. She tasted blood in her mouth, more was coming. She knew what would come after that. With what was left of her strength, she flicked the cap off and jabbed it into her side, shoving the plunger home.

Gasping, her arms went limp and she blinked up at the sky above. Her vision grayed then grew dark. The gasping slowed and stopped, and her sightless eyes stared upwards.

Chance saw only red. Her claws ripped the door off the hinges, not even feeling as two of her claws were broken off. The prey was old and weak, and needed to be cut from the herd.

He was in the back, running for the back door, trying to get to the row of cabinets that were back there. If he could get to them in time, he had a shot. His fingers were actually on the lock of the door when Chance ripped the reinforced steel door right off the hinges.

She never slowed, just came at him with pure hatred pouring out of her eyes. She rushed to the back of the truck, teeth exposed, and all she wanted was the blood of the man who had killed her mate.

He died screaming, his blood painting the walls as she tore through him far easier than she had torn through the reinforced steel door.

His death didn't end the pain. She let the body drop then made her way back to the broken door of the truck, leaving bloody footprints in her wake. As she got to the lip and stared down at Tyler's unmoving form, covered in blood, her body shrank in on itself and spat her out a lonely, naked human. She could care less about Zoya or the monsters, her mate was dead.

Unsteadily, she jumped down and collapsed on her knees at Tyler's side, and sobbed.

#####

Incoming helicopters forced them from the base. She hadn't wanted to leave Tyler, but Zoya had Bones pick her up and carry her away. There were too many incoming military, and the monstrosities that Bob had created had cut their numbers dangerously.

The sweeper team came in and cleaned up, destroying any evidence of Bob's research. The bodies were loaded up onto trucks to be disposed of, Were and human alike, all equal in death.

#####

The back of the large army truck bounced up and down as the truck hurtled down the pothole-filled road. In the front cab two soldiers talked, laughing at each other's jokes as they followed the convoy through the darkness. They were happy to be away from the work at the Reservation and the Weres that inhabited it. None of them had been really happy at the idea of staying there for too long.

The back of the truck was piled high with body bags. Humans, Weres, and monsters, were all going to the same place, and all of them earned a body bag and a toe tag. The night drive was a long one, and the soldiers purposefully ignored the shifting bags behind them. It was a grim cargo that they carried. One of those black, rubberized body bags shifted without the help of a pothole or turn in the road. A few minutes later, it shifted again, rustling from inside.

A pinky finger worked its way through the zipper at the top, and the zipper rasped downwards, the sound hidden by the laughing in the front seat. Inside, a pale-skinned woman with brown hair lay. She stayed where she was, not moving for a few miles until she gasped, eyes snapping open to stare upwards.

Tyler woke to the sound of laughter from the front of the truck and lying in a pile of body bags. She couldn't remember anything other than the taste of blood on her lips and the horrified look on Chance's face. Slowly, she rolled sideways and started to worm out of the bag. The truck again rumbled over bumps, and the men in the front laughed over another crude joke.

#####

Zoya sat at her desk, just staring blankly into space.

There were dark circles under her eyes, and her left wrist was in a splint. Under her clothes were various cuts and bruises. Things weren't going well with Chance. Maybe it was her fault, she didn't really understand the whole mate thing, and maybe she should have been a little more tactful about the little two-sided bitch's death. But come on, the woman had lied about, well...everything. This whole thing was just strengthening her resolve to never, ever, fall in love. Nope, she would be a bachelor into death.

It had been three months since the attack in her territory. The military had come in and done what the military does. Sweep death and destruction under the rug. There had been no news stories, nobody had issued her an apology, and the bodies of her dead were being used for God only knew what. That was hard, going to the families of those who had died in that attack and explaining why there was no body to bury.

Outside her window, it was snowing again, and she briefly wondered how Chance was doing. Her sister had moved into Kimberly's territory, a god-awful two-mile hike straight up. She had helped her sister build herself, what Zoya considered, a shack, and moved what was left of Kehp, er, Tyler's stuff. And to top that off, Chance had started spending more and more time in her animal form. That wasn't good. It was only a matter of time before Chance forgot who she was. Of course, that also meant her sister would forget the pain of Tyler's passing, and be only a simple animal.

She had talked to Kimberly a couple of times, and she was thankful the woman's pride was looking out for Chance when they could, but it was frustrating. She had her sister back, and in



her pack, only to lose her again. When she did try to nose in, they only ended up fighting, which accounted for her current state.

With a frustrated sigh, she slumped in her chair and ran her fingers roughly through her thick locks.

There was a knock on the door, and Zoya's head snapped up. "Come in," she mumbled. After a few seconds of nothing, she shouted, "Enter!"

Bones opened the door, peeking in to make sure Zoya wasn't entertaining.

"What?"

"Um..." Bones said then stopped, frowning, not sure how to phrase what she wanted to say.

"Before I get old," Zoya snapped again.

"Well, I have a surprise for you," she finally said.

The woman behind Bones had shorter brown hair than Tyler, but other than that, she looked an awfully lot alike. "Hey, Zoya," she called, giving a small smile as she stepped out from behind Bones.

Zoya's face went blank in surprise. "Um..."

"Thanks, Bones," Tyler patted the woman, who could make flames on the shoulder.

Bones cracked up laughing. "Oh my...that was priceless...the look on your face."

Striving really hard not to laugh, Tyler gently pushed her out of the room and closed the door. "Sorry to drop in unannounced," she gave a wry grin.

"Um...you're dead," Zoya said, not sure if this was an elaborate joke.

"Yup, so it said on my toe tag. Want to see?" She rummaged into a pocket and pulled out the yellow tag with a mischievous look.

Zoya's eyes narrowed, "Is this some sort of joke?"

"Ha!" Tyler gave a short, bitter laugh before grabbing a chair and sitting down across from her.

"Sure, big joke, it's a big cosmic joke. Where's Chance?" That was why she was here after all, why she had bailed out of the back of a truck going fifty miles an hour and hiked back to the Reservation. A trip that had taken her longer than she'd wanted, but considering she'd been naked at the start...

Zoya pushed her chair away from her desk and stood up, limping slightly. "Chance is none of your business. She doesn't need a liar in her life. Is this another government trick?" Her eyes were flashing silver in their light blue depths.

"Do I look like a government trick?" Tyler kept going before Zoya could answer. "Wait, don't answer that." She sighed, looking away. This was harder than she'd pictured, although it was nice to finally be here. "I didn't know it snowed here in the winter," she mused, watching flakes fall outside the window, then shook her head. "I'm not a government trick." She managed to cut off a few curse words, figuring they wouldn't help. "I...woke up in the back of the morgue truck." She shivered a bit, remembering all those body bags.

"Mountains, cold equals snow," Zoya responded offhand. She shook her head a little bit, "You what?"

"Woke up in the back of the truck," the doctor responded, slowly, in case Zoya was having hearing problems, "in a body bag." She grimaced.

The door opened and Bones came in with a tray with tea and several teacups. It was an odd juxtaposition to her jeans and black leather jacket. "So what did I miss? Did she tell you how she came back from the dead?"

"I woke up," Tyler repeated, annoyed at having to repeat it so many times, but happy to see the tea. She could do with some of the warmth after the long trek back.

Bones set the tea down, "A body bag, sweet. That happened to me once." She poured three cups of tea, handing one to Tyler, who gave her a strange look before carefully accepting the teacup.

"You're really strange, you know that, right? I mean, you burst into flames."

Bones nodded. "Hellhound," she said in answer.

Zoya was mimicking a fish out of water. "Hello...weird situation...dead person walking. And why didn't you hand me tea?"

Bones and Tyler shared an amused look at that. "I'm not dead, obviously," Tyler said, picking up her cup and sipping gingerly at the hot tea.

Bones rolled her eyes, and handed a cup to Zoya.

"You'll have to forgive her. Chance beat her up yesterday."

"Chance beat you up?" Tyler grinned, "Really?" That was interesting. The grin faded. "Where is she, Zoya?"

Zoya looked at Bones and said, "Hold her."

In the blink of an eye, Bones had Tyler in a death grip.

"What the fuck!" The teacup crashed to the floor as Tyler struggled against the unyielding grip that suddenly had her.

Zoya walked over to the pinned woman and brushed the fine hair up off the back of her neck. The sight there made her frown. With a snarl, Zoya threw her teacup at the wall, and stormed over to the other side of the room.

Bones just let go of Tyler.

"Terri's going to be pissed two of her tea cups got broken."

"Shut up, Bones," Zoya muttered.

"Gee, nice to see you too, Zoya." Tyler brushed her hair back in place, frowning. "What was that all about?"

"I'm guessing Chance's bite mark is still on the back of your neck. Means you're still her mate. Zoya was hoping it was gone," Bones said quietly.

"Oh." Tyler blinked, not sure what to think of that. "So that means you're going to tell me where I can find her, right?"

Zoya turned, looking at Tyler. "Why aren't you dead? IF you hurt her, again, I'll kill you." She ran a hand through her hair. "Bones, take her to Chance."

"What? You know I hate snow." She made a face.

Zoya grinned. "Yeah, I know."

"Asshole," Bones muttered.

"Guess we're going for a hike then, Bones." Tyler stood up, smiling. "Bye, Zoya, it's been fun, again."

"Joy," the hellhound said walking out of Zoya's office.

#####

Bones pulled the jeep off the road and parked at the start of the trailhead with a sigh, staring at the snowdrifts outside the vehicle. She hated the cold.

The hike up the mountains, in the snow, was something that Tyler wouldn't have been able to do before her little trip into death. Instead, she carried along besides Bones, as they waded through the snow past the evergreens that grew at this altitude. "Do you often burst into flames?" she asked, finally, not being able to resist anymore.

"Sure. It's kind of part of being a hellhound." She focused slightly, and a small bit of flame crept down her arms, down to her hands, clothing the flesh there in a thin layer of dark, oily fire. Around her the snow began to melt slowly, and Bones grinned, enjoying being warmer. Although, sadly, she knew she'd have to stop or she'd drain herself.

"Right..." Tyler gave her a look, almost wanting to ask what a hellhound was. The scientist in her wanted to ask, wanted to know more about this thing that was obviously not a Were. There were things, though, that she didn't want to know. She let it go and nodded, looking ahead.

"Have you seen her? Is she all right?" No need for her to say who she was talking about.

Bones chuckled. "It's okay to ask questions. Unlike other people who've owned me, Zoya gives me a high level of autonomy. I rather enjoy it. But you're Chance is...all right. I've seen her a few times. She took your death very hard. Zoya could have handle things better, but I'm afraid she made things worse." Bones went silent for a moment, trying to find a tactful way to put things.

"Zoya doesn't understand love. She understands loss. They lost their parents and an older brother when they were young. But Zoya doesn't get the loss of love, the heartache and damage that it does."

"Bitch," Tyler muttered, frowning into the darkness, and sighed. It wasn't that big a surprise that Zoya hurt Chance. She'd hurt Chance also. "How much farther is it?"

Bones let her fire settle, containing it back inside herself, and started trudging back up the mountain side, shivering. "With the snow slowing us down, I have no idea. Tyler, your Chance is going feral. She spends more and more time in her wolf shape, forgetting that she is human. She attacked Zoya not because she was mad at her sister, but because she saw another wolf invading her territory."

That was something that Tyler hadn't considered in her list of things to worry about. With a puff of white breath on the air, she ran her hands through short, brown hair. "I'll bring her back. I'll find a way," she stated, even though she had no idea how to even start.

Bones nodded, and continued placing one foot in front of the other. She wasn't happy being here, but knew why. Zoya was no match for Chance until she healed. Also, she was very aware of a few Were-cats trailing after them.

"So," she said after some silence. "I'm guessing you're the super-soldier Miller and the poor late Bob were trying to make. Oh, Chance tore him apart, by the way."

"Good. I hope he went to hell screaming." Tyler wasn't sad at all to hear about Bob's death.

"Yeah, guess I managed to fix the serum at the end," she grinned. "All I needed was a sample of Chance's blood." There was a path of sorts now that they were following, every once in a while she could see wolf or cat prints in the snow. "You don't have to keep going if you don't want to. I think I can find her on my own from here."

"Um, I'll just make sure you get there safe," Bones said. "We aren't in Zoya's territory."

"Yeah, big cats and everything...bet they're thrilled to have a hellhound walking around here." She could just make out the shadows in the trees, which reminded her of the only other time she had walked up this mountain, during the summer heat.

"Yeah, well, they're less likely to do anything. Animals in winter, especially predator animals, don't think too wisely, all they see is a meal in lean times."

That was a good point. "I'm glad you're my tour guide then." They weren't far from the lake now, if she remembered correctly. Where exactly had Chance decided to make her new home?

"So, can you change shape?" Bones asked after more minutes of huffing and puffing. Talking made her forget about the cold and the snow.

Tyler laughed. "Nope, no changing shape for me. I'm stuck just like this, which is fine with me. I have enough problems with one body sometimes." She'd tried though, often, to see if she could shape shift. Nothing had happened, no matter how hard she'd concentrated or tried, so she'd accepted that and moved on. "I'll just have to be content with coming back from the dead, right?"

"Yeah, be thankful for that. Second chances are something rare." She grinned at the other woman for a second.

A large, black wolf stepped out from the trees, its teeth exposed and its ruff up.

"Ah, crap," Bones muttered.

Tyler froze, ever so slowly turning her head so that she could see the wolf ahead of them.

"Thanks for the escort this far, Bones. I think you should probably back away and leave me here though."

Bones licked her lips, uncertain. "Are you sure? What if she attacks you?"

"She won't." Tyler was as certain of that as she was of her own heart beating in her chest. "Go on. I need to do this alone."

Bones nodded and slowly backed away.

The wolf didn't move, just kept dark blue eyes on the intruders to its territory.

"Bones?" She didn't move her head, didn't look away from the black wolf for a second. "Thank you. Tell Zoya that also, will you?"

"No problem," the Hellhound said, retreating down the mountainside.

Tyler didn't relax when she left, not now, it would be too dangerous. "Chance, I know you're in there somewhere. I knew it when you changed shape in my little trailer and I had to pet you to come back again." She kept her voice low and as unthreatening as she could, hands held loose at her sides.

The wolf split her attention between the retreating woman and the other one who stood still in the middle of the path. One eye had a milky cloud over its surface, showing blindness. Chance's eye had indeed regenerated, but the sight had not come back. The wolf's ruff stayed up, spiking along her back, but as Bones retreated, her growling slowly stopped.

"That's it. It's just you and me. Bones is gone, don't worry, she won't come back." For her sake, Tyler hoped that was true. Keeping her voice low and calm, she took a very cautious step forward. "You know who I am, Chance. I'm Tyler, remember? Kehpri..?"

If wolves could look puzzled, this one did. There were things and images associated with this woman the wolf didn't want to remember.

"You remember." It wasn't a question, and Tyler felt a little bit of hope at that realization. "You remember me." She let out a breath of thanks. "Chance, please, come back from wherever you are. I need you." She continued her ever so slow advance.

The wolf whined and took a few steps back.

Tyler paused, biting her lip. How could she make Chance remember when she obviously didn't want to? "You remember the trailer, the little Gulf Stream trailer in the middle of the desert that you spent time with me in? We made love all the time, every time we could." She edged a little closer.

The wolf snarled then retreated, disappearing into the trees, leaving nothing but footprints that she'd even been here.

"Well fuck," Tyler groaned. Of course this wasn't going to be easy. Nothing was easy, ever. Letting out a breath that turned white on the air, she looked around trying to figure out where to go from here. With a shrug, she started moving, continuing the way she'd been going with Bones, up the trail towards the lake.

Off the trail, just on the slope of the rise before it dipped down to the lake was a small cabin. There was wood piled up haphazardly on the side, the few windows were dark.

"At least I won't freeze to death." Tyler looked around, trying to spot any dark shadows in the tree line. Odd, she couldn't see her shadows anymore. With a shrug, she headed to the cabin, not entirely surprised to find that the front door was unlocked.

The cabin was sparse. There was a small, wood burning stove, a wood box, the couch from Tyler's trailer, and a few other things.

There were only two rooms, the main room and what looked like it might be a bedroom through another door.

"I was wondering where my things had ended up." Not that she'd had a lot of things, but it was nice to see the couch in here. Ignoring the temptation to sit and feel sad for herself, she set about trying to light a fire, which turned out to be a lot harder than she'd expected. But after a couple tries, she got a small one going.

Hours later, it was dark and cold. The clouds had built up in the night sky, promising more snow. The front door eased open, and the black wolf slunk in, carrying a couple of rabbits in its maw. It sat down on its haunches and seemed to sigh seeing Tyler bundled up in front of the stove.

"You could have made this place a little more insulated," Tyler said, reaching out past the blankets to toss another log on the fire. She'd dragged the couch closer to the fireplace to try and enjoy the warmth.

The wolf dropped the rabbits and its muzzle opened and closed a couple of times, but nothing but a few yips came out.

Picking up a longer stick, the woman reached over to push the door closed with it.

With a sigh, the wolf's eyes closed as if in concentration then slowly, the fur fell away, and bones lengthened and changed until a very human looking Chance stood in place of the wolf. "You look very good for a dead woman." The voice was raspy and quiet, and she padded silently to the other room. She felt stupid now, and angry. Anger was hot and cold, eating away in the pit of her stomach.

She picked up some clothes from on top of a pile in the bedroom. She couldn't remember the last time she'd worn clothes. Of course, she wasn't even sure what day or month it was.

"Yeah, I heard that already from your sister," Tyler let out the breath she'd been holding since she'd realized that Chance was changing form. "You look like you were losing yourself."

"And again you look good for someone I watched die in my arms," she snapped back, exiting the bedroom. She picked up the rabbits and took them into the other corner of the room with a crude skin, and started skinning them. Now that she was human, she wanted them cooked and hot.

Tyler sat back, watching every move, every little gesture that Chance made, drinking in the sight of her. "Then I'm obviously not dead."

"It's been three months. Three goddamn months! You think you could have gotten some message to me you were alive...or was that all just some government act." She was shouting, her anger at the past months bubbling out. She set the knife down and rinsed her hands.

"Chance, I woke up in the back of a moving truck filled with corpses, without anything but the toe tag on my foot. It took me a while to get back here. Besides, I tried getting in touch with you through the FBI. But for some reason, all they promised was to try and give you a message since you were apparently on extended leave?"

Chance frowned. She didn't remember what had happened with her job. Vaguely she remembered arguing with her Supervisor. Him insisting he wasn't taking her notice. She shook her head and clenched her jaw. Walking over to the stove, she grabbed two whip-thin sticks and shoved the rabbits on to them, then wrapped tinfoil around them before shoving them inside the stove.

She was silent for a long time. "What do you want from me? I'm not in a good place right now. I'm so angry at you..." She trailed off, staring at the fire and the cooking rabbits.

"You're angry at me?" Tyler blinked. "That's why you're sulking out here in the middle of nowhere...because you're angry at me?"

Chance growled, and her skin seemed to bubble slightly before it settled down. "I'm fucking mad at everybody!" She got up shouting, and stormed outside, slamming the door.

"What the hell?" Tyler frowned. This really wasn't going as she'd expected. She'd been expecting a lot more naked greeting and kissing, probably in a different order though.

"Well, I'm not too happy right now either!" she yelled at the closed door, and aimed a kick at the only chair in the place. Then yelped as her foot connected and she ended hopping around on one foot, cursing.

#####

Chance snuck back into the house when it was almost dawn. The small cabin was cool, and Tyler was wrapped up, sleeping on the couch where she had pulled it close to the stove. Chance crouched down and watched her sleep. There was snow in her dark hair, slowly melting.

The woman on the couch shivered and pulled the blankets she'd taken off the bed in the backroom up a bit further, trying to get more warmth out of them.

This is what Chance had wanted for the longest time, for the whole nightmare in that military complex three months ago to suddenly disappear, and to be laughing and grilling outside the Gulf



Stream trailer again.

But it had happened, just like her parents had been killed, Tyler had died, and she had failed to save the person she'd loved.

"You're dripping on me," Tyler mumbled, not opening her eyes.

The anger was surprising and she wanted to shift back into her wolf form and let it all disappear. She blinked. She hadn't noticed Tyler's breathing shift into awareness.

One eye opened just a slit, so that the short-haired brunette could make sure that it was, in fact, Chance that was standing over her. "Morning," she whispered.

She didn't say anything, just started to get up to go hide in the bedroom.

Shoving an arm out of the blankets, Tyler grabbed a hold of Chance's arm. "Wait, don't go yet. Please?"

Chance froze, feeling the touch acutely against her skin.

"You're freezing." Tyler frowned; sitting up in the couch and grimacing as her body complained about the odd angle she'd fallen asleep in. She'd arranged the couch as close to the fireplace as she dared, angled so that she could see the front door in the hopes of seeing Chance come back.

"It started snowing," she said lamely.

Tugging on the arm she was still holding onto, Tyler urged her to take a seat on the couch. "Sit?" She lifted up the blankets.

Chance swallowed, wanting to run out of the room, but she sat.

Carefully, Tyler draped the warm blankets over her shoulders and tried to warm up the cold body next to hers. "Where did you go?" she asked, finally, figuring that was a safe question.

She had gone out and let her frustration out on trees, leaving claw marks, until her anger had been spent.

"I let off some steam until it was safe to come back," she said finally.

"I made you that angry, huh?" Tyler gave a wan smile. "I always knew I irritated you."

"Yes...no...I've-I've been...things are too close to the surface, I've been staying too long in my animal form." Being back in her human form was being overwhelming, but Tyler had made her change. She wasn't sure how, but she had called her out of that form back into this one.

Concentrating on getting the woman warmed up, Tyler nodded. "Zoya's worried about you. Even Bones seemed worried, as much as she ever looks worried, I guess."

Chance leaned back, relaxing a little. "I think I attacked her. I vaguely remember another wolf invading my space."

"Yeah, she looked banged up." Tyler slung another blanket up over Chance's lap, happy that the stiffness in the woman's body was slowly leaving. "Do you remember me showing up?"

"I remember confusion, familiarity, and panic. I smelled you and knew you belonged to me, but fear because you were lost." She tried to articulate the thoughts of an animal in human terms.

Staying silent for a moment, Tyler considered how to broach the topic that she was sure had to be talked about and soon. Cautiously, she started talking.

"Were you angry because I came back here?" She wasn't sure what she would do if the answer was yes. Leave, probably. Try to find somewhere else to go, where, she had no idea. But she wouldn't stay here if Chance didn't want her.

"No," she said lightly, resting her hand on Tyler's thigh. "I don't know where the anger's coming from."

"Okay." Tyler could live with that answer for now. "You must be exhausted. Go rest, I'll be here when you wake up, if you want."

"You can have the bed." She wanted to take it back as soon as she'd said it, because then, Tyler would see all the mementos she'd kept from Tyler's trailer.

"Or we can both have the bed." Tyler looked anywhere but Chance's face as she said it. "To keep warm," she hurriedly added on, hating this tension between them.

"I-we...not yet...it's a little too much for me." She squeezed Tyler's thigh where her hand rested. "But stay with me, here. I want to..." She trailed off, wanting a lot of things.

Tyler nodded and slowly got up, moving to the bedroom, not wanting to push the other woman.

Chance let out a sigh, and got up, pacing nervously. It was too much, all the emotions. Anger, elation, joy, fear, it was all too much. Quickly, she shucked her clothing and shifted into her wolf form. It was almost too easy to slip her skin now, and harder and harder to remember how to change back. The lanky black wolf curled up on the floor next to the stove, its ears alert for any noises.

#####

When the beast woke up, the sky was gray and heavy with clouds. A light dusting of snow was falling. It got up, stretching, and made its way to the other room. She nosed the door open, easily seeing the woman asleep on the bed. This human made no sense, but she eased the ache in her heart and called to her. She padded silently into the room, and leapt up onto the end of the bed, again curling up in a ball, ready to protect if need be.

#####

It took a little bit of shifting, but the not so human woman managed to sit up without waking up the large, black wolf curled up on the end of her bed. She considered that a success of sorts, as she watched the room lighten from the rising sun outside. Reaching out, she carefully ran her fingers through that dark fur, smiling sadly. "What am I going to do with you?" she whispered.

The wolf's black furred ears twitched at the words, and it gave a quiet groan and shifted position on the bed.

With a snort, Tyler leaned forward so that she could rub between those ears and down the long spine, feeling the wolf's muscles twitch under her fingertips.

The wolf sleepily opened its eyes then had to shift around until it could see Tyler with its good eye. Its tail wagged, and bumped its head into Tyler's chest when she stopped scratching.

"How dare I stop," she grumbled good-naturedly, resuming her scratching until she looked around the small cabin frowning. "Chance, where's the bathroom?" It just occurred to her she hadn't seen one last night.

The wolf sighed and jumped down off the bed and walked out of the bedroom to the front door.

"An outhouse? You have to be kidding me. Please tell me you're kidding me?" Tyler groaned, pulling on her coat and following.

The wolf seemed to just grin and scratched at the wooden door.

"Chance, I'm going back to my Gulf Stream trailer if I have to go to the bathroom in the snow." She yanked open the door, grumbling.

With a happy enthusiasm, the wolf bound through the snow around the side of the house to two small buildings separated from the main cabin by a foot or three. There was cabling that ran from the main cabin to the smaller buildings. Chance paused before going to a plastic weatherproof box and sat next to it. There was a red sticker on it that said generator and safety tips.

"A generator?" That was more like it. "That better be the bathroom then." She pointed to the second building and was rewarded by a wag of the wolf's tail. "Good. I'm going to use the facilities then you and I are going to talk."

Leaving the wolf where she sat, Tyler went inside. "Gah, it is an outhouse!" Tyler yelled from inside, a little less upset when she realized that there at least was a fan to circulate air, and a heater so it wasn't freezing inside.

Chance, bored, sniffed the air, catching the smell of game slunk across the snowy ground, and disappeared in the trees.

A little while later, Tyler emerged to find the wolf gone. "Damn it, Chance." She glared at the woods, wrapping her arms around herself to hold in some warmth. Grumbling, she left, heading around towards the main cabin.

There was the trumpeting of a Buck and a yelp and something black streaked out of the tree line fifty feet away, followed shortly by a large Buck.

From the door of the cabin, Tyler watched with amusement, shaking her head at the antics. "I'll be here whenever you decide to stop playing!" the doctor yelled then shut the door behind her.

The wolf made it to the door and scabbled at it with its front paws. As the angry deer got closer, Chance forced herself to change so she could turn the knob with five human fingers.

The naked woman, with now a hoof print and blood dripping down her face, entered the cabin.

Her guest looked up from the couch she was sprawled out in watching the newly made fire then looked back to the fireplace. "You're bleeding," she stated, rather unnecessarily.

There was a horrible racket as the buck slammed into the door and Chance stumbled forward. "Do we still have those rabbits from yesterday, or did they burn to a crisp while I was having anger management issues?"

"The things that were on the stove?" Tyler raised an eyebrow at the door, waiting to see if it would cave in. When it didn't, she relaxed. "I found your little cold holding area and put them out there."

"Thanks." The door shook again. She reached up, wiping blood off her upper lip.

"That's one upset deer," Tyler remarked, idly tossing another piece of wood on the fire.

She was trying to remember if she had a gun somewhere. "Bedroom, I think your rifle's in the closet."

"Hmmm?" Tyler blinked. "You're going to resort to shooting the deer that you just went off and infuriated?" She wanted to be clear on this, "As a wolf?"

"I wasn't going after the buck. He was on my blind side, and if he busts this door then we'll need to use it."

"Uh huh... So, you're a werewolf who just got beat up by a deer. That's what happened, right?" Tyler was having a hard time not laughing at that, and a little snicker escaped.

"Hush," Chance said, and started to roll her eyes but winced at the pain.

The bashing of the door subsided and Tyler got up from the couch. "Let me see that." She peered at the hoof-shaped cut on Chance's head. "Good thing you heal fast or you'd be a good candidate for a great concussion."

Chance whined as Tyler touched her face, but didn't move away.

"I guess that's why wolves don't do so well alone. They need a pack." Tenderly, she brushed dark strands of hair out of the other woman's face.

"Yeah, a pack..." Something she didn't have. She could hear the Buck retreating, going back into the woods and his three does. "Is it broken?"

"Your head?" Tyler raised an eyebrow.

Chance made a face. "I suppose you could take that any numbers of ways. I should go put some clothes on."

"Only if you want to..." She retreated back towards the couch. "You know, I'm not going anywhere until we actually talk."

Chance found the clothes she'd shed last night and put them back on then sat down on the couch next to Tyler.

They stared at the fire for a bit, Chance knowing they should talk. Instead, she grabbed a blanket off the back and gently pulled Tyler down on top of her while stretching out length-wise on the couch, and covered them with the blanket.

"When I was eight years old a Were killed my parents," Tyler said quietly, watching the flames, her cheek on Chance's chest, sheltered from the world. "I wanted to tell you so that you knew why I helped Bob at first."

Chance could have puked at the irony. "I'm sorry that happened to you." She reached up and gently stroked Tyler's hair.

She shrugged, fiddling with the blanket with one hand. "He promised me that I'd be helping find a cure, a way to suppress the change. I thought if I could...then somehow it would stop other families from getting killed." She snorted at how naïve that sounded. "Stupid."

"It's not just Weres, people kill too. You need a cure for the urge to murder," she said quietly,

remembering how hunters murdered her parents.

"Yeah, I know. I said stupid already." Tyler shook her head against the other woman's chest. "I thought I could fix it. I thought I could make something in the lab and cure something that's not curable."

"That's why you hid here. The Reservation would be the last place Bob would look for you. But why me, if you hated Weres?"

"Because you were really hot," she laughed. "Well, I really didn't like you at first, but it was fun to annoy you."

Chance snorted and rolled her eyes. "Whatever. You were hitting on me in the hospital while Miller was sewing me up

"I wasn't hitting on you! I was trying to keep an eye on what Miller was doing to you. I was only there to find out what Miller was up to."

"Uh, huh," Chance said teasingly.

"I was," Tyler pouted just a little bit. "And I went through your medical file."

"Anything interesting?" she asked as one of her hands unconsciously rubbed Tyler's back.

"Well, she was using you as a test subject. Other than that you mean?"

"So, is this growing back due to something she injected me with?" she asked, pointing at her blinded eye.

Tyler shrugged. "What? You think I'm some sort of scientist who knows something?" She shoved herself up a bit so that she could see Chance's face. "I'm a broke drifter, remember?" She smiled saying it, though.

"Uh huh... You might know a thing or two." She smiled, enjoying learning all the things Tyler never told her during their brief fling.

"Well, I did pick up a PhD and an MD." She leaned her head back down on the Were's chest. "Think they'd be interested in hiring a washed up doctor down at the hospital?"

"I think there's a good chance. Now that Miller's gone, they're kind of desperate."

"Oh good, job security..." She picked at Chance's shirt. "We're just avoiding talking about it, aren't we?"

Chance frowned. "Probably, but I was enjoying learning all those little things I should have learned when we started sleeping together the first time."

"Oh." She was silent for a moment. "What's your favorite color?" she asked, suddenly.

"Uh...green," Chance responded, puzzled.

"See, little things I didn't know either." She traced a pattern on Chance's stomach, finding gaps in the shirt to touch skin. "Do you still want me to be around?"

"Yes." She didn't have to think about it. "I missed you so much. He shot you. There was nothing I could do to save you. I should have heard him. I should have saved you somehow." Tears were pooling in her eyes.

"Chance, he was behind me, inside the truck, there was no way you could have seen or heard him over the fighting outside. Don't be ridiculous!" She levered herself up enough to see the other woman. "You're serious. You blame yourself for that? I knew the risks when I went in there."

"I was a federal agent, my job was to save people, but I couldn't save the thing most precious to me." She chuckled bitterly. "I know it doesn't make sense."

"You did save me." Tyler reached over to press a kiss to Chance's forehead. "You saved me from myself. I would have died out in that little trailer if you hadn't come along."

Chance wiped her cheeks. "So, what's your favorite color?" she asked to lighten the mood slightly.

"I'm pretty fond of black right now." She twirled a finger through long strands of black hair then wiped an errant tear away. "So what happened to my trailer?"

"The government had been there and tossed it. I scrounged what I could. I needed to get away, I felt like I was coming apart. Kimberly let me build the cabin, and Zoya paid whomever to make it happen. But Zoya just kept saying the wrong thing. She didn't get it. Kimberly was better. She understood where I was at."

She blew out a breath. "So I brought your stuff here with me, and just sort of made a den, I guess."

"So I guess I'm already moved in." Tyler discreetly crossed the fingers on her other hand.

Chance laughed. "Yeah, I guess you are." She leaned forward, resting her forehead against Tyler's. "I'm glad you're back, don't doubt that. And you owe me a story on how you raised yourself from the dead."

"Later," she mumbled, indulging herself in something she'd been dreaming about for months

now, and kissed Chance.

Chance was taken off guard for a second then attacked Tyler's lips, pressing her backwards into the couch. Tyler was here, alive, and real.

This was more along the lines of what Tyler had thought their reunion would be like. It was certainly much more enjoyable than slogging up a mountain in the cold while Were cats shadowed her movements. She moaned her approval, sliding fingers under the taller woman's shirt and up a well-muscled back.

Chance sighed as hands slid across her skin. "Missed you," she murmured over and over again, punctuating the words with kisses, over any piece of Tyler's flesh she could get to.

It was hard, but Tyler slowed the kisses until they were just barely brushing lips together. She pulled back with a pleased sigh. "There. That was what I was dreaming about all the time I was trying to get back to see you."

"Sounds like a nice dream."

"Even better in reality..."

They were both quiet for a while, enjoying the moment and the fire. "What happened with your partner?" Tyler suddenly asked.

"Gibbons...he's fine. Everyone in the office was, last I heard. Worried that Halstead had disappeared. Nobody's seen or heard from him."

Tyler grimaced. "That's probably because Miller had him killed when I couldn't give her the super-soldier formula."

"Which reminds me, any sign of that psychopathic bitch?"

"Got me...I've been playing hermit in the middle of nowhere. You'd have to ask Zoya," she murmured.

"I don't think I want to talk to Zoya right now. Besides, hopefully she died screaming." Tyler grinned, her fingers moving higher up Chance's chest.

"Uh huh," she muttered, enjoying Tyler's attention. It had been too long, and for a while she couldn't even imagine this, it had hurt.

The doctor's fingers dexterously started to undo buttons as they moved down the shirt, her breathing changing as she exposed bare flesh to her sight. "We still have to talk about other things." She'd been so very good about avoiding tackling her so far. But she was, after all, only human.



Well, only mostly human now.

"What things?" That didn't sound good. She opened her eyes and looked at Tyler.

Tyler sighed, resting her fingers where they were. She'd meant to do the talking later on, after they'd reacquainted themselves with each other, "About me being back here with you and you hiding out here going wild."

Chance sat up and buttoned a few buttons on her shirt. "What do you want to know about me, um...hiding out here?"

The other woman whimpered in frustration as she watched her re-button the shirt. "Do you have to get dressed?" The look she got was enough to cause her to sit up. "Fine... What are you doing out here? I know what Zoya thinks you're doing out here, but what are you really doing here?"

"What does Zoya think I'm doing out here?" Chance asked, puzzled. "I just wanted to be away from everybody. Gibbons kept asking uncomfortable questions, like why you suddenly weren't a terrorist but a dead scientist in a botched lab experiment. Zoya just thought I'd meld into her pack and do things the way she wanted. That doesn't work real well, because I'm an Alpha too. And I was so heartsick most days 'cause you were gone it was nearly impossible to get out of bed."

She reached out and took Chance's hand in hers. "I'm not dead." She waited until Chance looked at her. "I wasn't scared, you know. When I realized what had happened, that I'd been shot. But I was terrified when I came here and you didn't realize who I was when you were in your wolf form."

"Some part of me knew. I had to, or I would have attacked you." Her ears turned slightly red. "You're my mate," she mumbled out.

"Really?" Tyler looked perked up, smiling widely. "That's good to know. I wasn't sure if I was just something to pass the time or a fun diversion while you were suspended."

Chance rubbed her face. "I didn't understand what I was doing when I did it. My subconscious brain knew what I wanted." The redness had spread from her ears to her cheeks. "But it's not something wolves take lightly, and both people in the relationship understand what they're going to do. I just sort of took you and made you mine."

"I didn't mind." Tyler tugged her back over to the couch and down to sit. "Come here, you. You do realize I won't let you keep slinking around as a wolf, hiding out here?"

"Yeah... Well, Zoya didn't get it, she just expected me to get over it and move on. Kimberly did. We shot and killed her mate. Yeah, he was being phyco, and we had no other choice, but she had to move on, though it took her awhile. I was doing my own sort of coping and grieving."

Chance slowly moved over into Tyler's embrace.

"I'm kind of glad you didn't get over me." She bit her lip, hesitating for a second. "I was scared you wouldn't want to see me at all when I came back."

"Tyler, I may love you, but that doesn't mean I'm happy about the whole Kephri thing. Sometimes I wondered if you had just been using me."

"I wasn't! You have to believe me! I didn't use you. I wanted to at first. I thought it would be perfect, let me see if the FBI was searching for Tyler Miller, but I didn't." She decided to lay her cards on the table. "I got access to your FBI personnel file."

"You did?" Chance blinked, again feeling like Tyler knew far more about her than she did about Tyler, and that annoyed her. "Was there anything particular you were looking for?"

"I was trying to find out why Miller was so interested in you. Your file said you were completely human, but I doubted that." She looked up at her. "I'm sorry."

"I-I-um, where the hell does Kephri come from?" she asked, diverting her attention to something that had been driving her nuts. "It's not like it's a common name like Sarah."

She laughed. "I know. I always liked Egyptian mythology. Kephri's a bastardization of the Egyptian goddess of secrets. Cute, right?" She made a face at her own little play on words.

Chance grinned a little. "That's terribly ironic." She reached out and pulled Tyler into her lap, facing her.

"I hate how you know more about me than I even know about myself. I hate that I sometimes feel like I hardly know anything about you at all." She kissed her neck, pulling down the shirt a little.

Tyler purred a little at that, sliding her hands through dark hair. "I'll tell you anything you want if you keep that up." She sobered, tugging on that hair until she could search the other woman's eyes. "So what are we doing here, Chance? Are you going to forgive yourself and let me back in?"

"I wish this was a fairy tale and we could live happily ever after, but it's not. Tyler, I want you in my life. I want forever with you. I was miserable when I thought you were dead. But I want to try to be a couple. Is that what you want?"

Tyler slowly nodded, seriously. "I want to stay here, with you, whatever it takes. I'm not leaving." She laughed. "There's nowhere else I want to go. This is the closest to a home I have now."

"I don't want it to be closest, I want it to be home...with maybe more insulation and running water," Chance said, kissing just under Tyler's ear.

"With one condition..." Tyler tilted her head, exposing more skin for the kiss. When Chance paused to listen, she smiled. "No disappearing as a wolf? Go run as much as you want, but warn me?" She grinned. "An indoor bathroom would be nice too."

"I'll see what I can do about indoor plumbing in the spring. I'll try not to hide inside the wolf," Chance agreed.

"Really?" Tyler's eyes brightened. She'd thought this was going to end, with her leaving to find somewhere else to go. She wrapped her arms around Chance, hugging her hard. "Yes!"

"Um, sex now?" Chance mumbled against Tyler's neck.

"That," the brunette pulled back waggling eyebrows, "is the best idea you've had all day." Laughing, she jumped off, undoing her clothes as she headed for the bedroom. "Race you!"

Chance got off the couch with a grin; she could smell Tyler's excitement. Excitement for her, she was wanted with all her flaws and quirks.

A shirt sailed out of the bedroom, followed by a bra. "You're losing!"

#####

There was loud knock at the door. Chance's head sprung up where it had been resting against Tyler's naked back. "Humphf," she mumbled, wiping drool off her chin.

The front door opened and Zoya's blonde head peeked in. "Hello, anybody home?" She stepped inside, knocking snow off her boots. "Well, no blood splatter, that's a good sign." She shivered and picked up some wood out of the wood box. Opening up the stove, she tossed them inside.

A vaguely Tyler-shaped lump under the covers shifted a little bit, and groaned. "Make her go away," she mumbled, trying to curl into a smaller ball to get away from the light and retain more heat.

"She's like a venereal disease on a hooker, she just keeps coming back," Chance mumbled, rubbing gunk out of her eyes.

Tyler groaned, "What does she want?" She tried burrowing into Chance's side, enjoying the warmth.

With about as much grace as a drunken goose, she got out of the bed and staggered out of the small room. She yawned. "Zoya, what do you want, need, desire at this awful inconvenient time?"

"Go away," Tyler shouted her voice hoarse from the activities of the night before, and very little

sleep.

Zoya's eyebrow reached into her hairline as she took in Chance's naked body. "Have a fun night?" A little louder, she said, "I'm hurt, Tyler, I came all this way to make sure you were okay."

"I'm fine." She didn't sound particularly fine or happy, more annoyed and losing her voice.

"Fun morning, afternoon, and night, we're fine. But I'm really grumpy, so why don't you come back in...ah...a day or four."

With a chuckle, Zoya sat down on the couch. "Why don't you go get some more sleep, I'll be here when you wake up, and friendlier."

Chance sighed and went back to the bedroom. Rubbing her hands through her hair, she muttered, "And I can't attack her as a wolf?" She let Tyler pull her into the bed.

"Later, after sleep," she threw a leg over Chance's thighs and held on possessively, yawning, "much later."

"Okay," Chance agreed.

#####

Chance woke up later. She wasn't sure of the time, but she smelled food. "Mmmm, hash browns," she mumbled.

The woman draped over her lifted her head, glaring at the world in general and letting out a little noise as she yawned and stretched a bit. "That must be Zoya's doing, right?" She slid a naked leg between Chance's.

Chance squirmed at the sensation of flesh sliding against her own flesh. "Yeah," her voice came out in a high squeak. She cleared her throat. "Yeah, I think Zoya is still here."

"Too bad," Tyler purred, kissing her way along the naked flesh of the other woman's neck and points south.

"Oh." Eyelids covering blue eyes shot open. "Oh yes, Zoya can just wait."

#####

Some time later, Chance came stumbling out of the bedroom, her t-shirt on backwards. Zoya looked less than amused, and a cold and miserable looking Bones sat as close to the stove as she could get without crawling inside.

"Well, look who designed to come out and see her sister," Zoya grumbled, folding her arms over

her chest and glaring at her entirely too content looking sister.

"I smell hash browns," was Chance's witty response.

"Yeah, she called me and made me come up here with food," Bones grumped. "And God you two are loud. I'm surprised there wasn't an avalanche."

"Yes, hash browns that I made for you, over an hour ago on your stupid ancient fireplace. Could you at least get a decent stove up here?" Zoya growled, reaching around Bones for the cast iron pan of hash browns that had been kept warm near the fire.

"And cheese." Chance made a happy face and grabbed a fork out of some nook. She grabbed the pan from Zoya and sat down, eating out of the pan.

"Hey, save some for me," Tyler called from the other room, where she was rummaging around to try and figure out what she could wear.

"Chance, if you're going to lurk out here in the middle of Cat country, could you at least get a working stove?" Zoya repeated herself, not really accustomed to having to repeat herself.

"You should have clothes. Chance only made us drag everything that smelled of you up here. Look in that tiny thing she calls a closet," Bones called out.

"In the spring, I'll redo everything," Chance mumbled out, answering Zoya.

A delighted sound came from the bedroom, "My favorite jeans!"

"So, did she tell you how she came back from the dead? That's pretty cool. She's the super-soldier. Better watch your ass, Chance," Bones said, smirking.

Chance stopped chewing. "No, we hadn't gotten to that yet."

"You hadn't gotten to that yet!" Zoya threw up her hands. "You've been up here almost a full day with her. It's kind of important, don't you think? What if the army is on the way back here to get her again?"

"Two days. I'm fairly certain it's been two days. One day I spent pissed off. The second day she convinced me to have sex and work at having a future, which involved more sex."

"Two days, even worse!" Zoya dragged out a chair and flung herself into it, grumbling. "I'm all happy for you having your mate back and everything, but you have to think about the pack also."

"Zoya, I can be your sister, but I can't be part of your pack. We're both too dominant. I can't bow down to you, and that just makes you look bad. But..." She held up a finger, stopping Zoya's tirade before it could start. "I will be the local sheriff for you. I'm good at law enforcement and I

still have connections with the FBI. So it should really be helpful dealing with issues on the Reservation." She scooted over on the couch when she saw Tyler come out of the bedroom.

Tyler paused when she spotted Bones by the fireplace. That one still kind of scared her, to be honest. She gave a wave to everyone, dropped down onto the couch and grabbed a spoonful of the hash browns. "Mmmmm, is good," she mumbled, grabbing another.

Zoya narrowed her eyes, staring at her sister contemplatively. "You'll actually uphold the laws of the Reservation? You'll have to do better than the useless wastes of space we have now."

"They're your wastes of space. The government can't force you to put your current law enforcement officers into those jobs. They only control the FBI agents who get placed here. But yeah, I think I can do the job, but can you handle it if I do something you don't like?"

"Bah," Zoya waved a hand. "You'll always be doing things I won't like." She didn't quite look over at Tyler. "Better you be doing something useful at the same time." The white-haired Were grinned suddenly. "I can't wait to throw out the sheriff and his deputies."

Chance snorted and took another forkful of cheesy, gooey hash brown goodness.

Finishing a good quarter of the hash browns, Tyler slowed enough to raise an eyebrow at Chance, "Sheriff, huh? When were you going to tell me about that?"

"Well..." She paused and swallowed. "It came to me when you were lecturing me on how I couldn't hide in the wolf. But my two main issues spiraling me into madness was losing you and losing my job. They'd find out I was a Were eventually, and I'd rather not be thrown into prison for it. So, it came to me that Zoya had offered me a job as the sheriff. Then you distracted me by being all hot and sitting in my lap so..." Her ears turned red.

"Oh yeah..." Tyler licked her lips, remembering where that had gone. "I think that's great." She turned, to find Zoya staring at her in a way that made her decidedly uneasy. "What?"

Zoya jerked her head at Chance. "You need to find out what happened, Chance."

"What?" She looked back at Tyler. "What do I need to know?" Her gut clenched in worry.

"Why she likes pizza... what the hell do you think you need to know?!" Zoya demanded, exasperated. "Why she's not dead!"

"Yeah, why aren't you dead? You promised to tell me, before the sex-a-thon. Bones said something about super-soldier?"

The not quite human sighed and finished her mouthful of hash browns. She'd been hoping to have this discussion with Chance alone, but judging by Zoya's intent stare, that wasn't going to happen. "When I was in the clinic, after Miller killed Halstead, I swiped one of the syringes full of a serum that was derived from your blood." She smiled a little bitterly. "I always thought it had

to be genetic material from a full Were, but the recessive traits were..."

She paused, noting the glazed over look on Zoya's face. "Never mind... I injected myself with it after Bob shot me." Lifting up her shirt, she showed off the bullet wound scar. "I still have the scar. Neat, huh?"

"So what does this mean, exactly?" Chance reached up and gently touched the scar with her fingertips. A slight shudder went through her shoulders as she remembered all that blood as Tyler laid cold and dead on the ground. She looked at Zoya and Bones. "What does this mean?"

"It means I'm not really human anymore." Tyler caught her fingers and laced their hands together. "I don't know what else it means, but anybody who would want to come after me is dead or on the run. The army isn't going to show up searching for me."

Chance nodded, feeling the knot untie in her gut as relief flooded her system. "No weird side-affects. Do you get furry on the full moon? You would have gone through two or three of them by now."

"Nope..." Tyler grinned crookedly. "Just think, if I sold this stuff, I'd be rich, probably get a Nobel Prize, too." She laughed at the alarmed, horrified look on Zoya's face. "Don't worry. I have no intention of doing anything other than going back to medical work. I think I'm done with research for a while. I hear there are openings at the hospital."

Chance raised their intertwined fingers to her lips and kissed them. "Thank you for living. I'm sorry this happened. Not what you had in mind for the rest of your life, I'm sure."

Tyler smiled. "Don't worry. As long as I'm with you, the rest doesn't matter too much. Besides, now I can keep up with you," she leered.

"Oh God," Zoya said. "Just stop it."

"I think it's cute," Bones said, her face had a look of concentration that she lost the moment Zoya got up.

"Bye, Zoya." Tyler's grin was full of mischief.

Bones gave a long-suffering sigh as she stepped out into the snow and the cold.

Chance smiled and stretched out on the couch, setting the pan on the floor. "Care to share my den for the winter? I promise to see what I can do about plumbing and electricity once the spring thaw comes."

"How can I say no to such a wonderful offer?" Tyler gave a look at the cabin. It wasn't much better than her trailer, but it was just fine as long as Chance was there. "As long as we find a way

to get to work..." She jumped up, holding out her hand. "For now, though, want to find a way to keep ourselves warm?"

"Warm? But Bones has the old stove practically glowing she put so much wood..." She paused at the look Tyler was giving her. "Oh...oh... uh, yeah, warm." She got up, pulling Tyler to the bedroom.

**The End**

**PS don't forget the feedback [zeeamy@gmail.com](mailto:zeeamy@gmail.com) and [adarkbow@yahoo.com](mailto:adarkbow@yahoo.com)**

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