

Chapter Two – Lucy

Detective Lucy Gerritsen stared at her shell-shocked expression in the mirror, hardly believing what she had just done. Her stinking, sweaty body was a testament to her actions, but she still didn't want to believe it. She leaned heavily on the sink, trying to think of how she had gotten here.

She had just been assigned to an undercover assignment among the Coyote pack, to find evidence that their Alpha was pushing drugs among the human population. She went to the café to just get a feel for the humans who lived near Coyote territory to see if they were part of the problem.

And then when Levi Bennet showed up, she, of course, recognized him... and then they were kissing and there were uniforms arresting him and she saw her chance to get in good with the pack. So she had flashed them her badge and told the uniforms she was on an important mission and to leave her and her 'boyfriend' alone. It had worked.

But then she invited him back to the apartment the force had given her. Just to get an inside view of what was going on with the Coyote pack, and maybe get an invitation to learn more about the pack. But then when they got there, he had started kissing her. His mouth was hot and hungry on hers. Shivers of pleasure ran down her spine...

She lost track of her thoughts at that point. She remembered thinking that maybe she should stop him, and then she was taking off her clothes, thinking that she was glad she made it a policy to always keep condoms in her nightstand.

Every other thought in her head had been a blur. The actions, however, stood out starkly and even now had blood rushing through her body. She ran a hand through her tangled hair as Levi sauntered into the bathroom.

"Hey there, sexy lady," he purred, moving up behind her.

Lucy ducked her head. As if this assignment wasn't hard enough, now she had to go and do something like *this*? She felt her cheeks redden. This wasn't her. At all. Maybe it was the high of getting her first assignment, or maybe it was the frustrations with being sent out there with almost no forewarning... But here she was, naked, with the second-in-command of the pack she was meant to be investigating.

What is wrong with me?

Guilt twisted in her stomach. She knew other detectives that had gotten romantically entangled with people while working undercover. They always

seemed to come back without a trace of guilt for using their mark. But how could they do that? Because it felt wrong. Even if she hadn't intended on using him when they were rolling in the sheets, of course she was. There was no two ways about it.

And looking at his handsome face and sparkling eyes made it worse.

"What's wrong?" Levi asked her.

"Nothing. Just... I've never done this before." Lucy chewed on her lip. "So... um, that was nice."

Levi nodded. "It was. Except, uh... well, something may have broken."

Lucy's stomach dropped out. Her heart seized and she pushed away from the sink, whirling on him. There was no apology on his face as he tossed the ruined condom into the garbage can. Lucy clutched at the sink behind her.

"Hey, no need to look so panicked," the Coyote said, sliding his arms around her waist.

"Uh, actually, there is!" Lucy pushed him away, covering her mouth with her hands. "I don't want to get pregnant by a one-night stand! Or day stand, whatever this was. I don't actually ever *do* this."

"You've said that. Although, for a woman who has never done this before, you do have quite the stash of condoms. No judgment."

Levi held up his hands and grinned at her as she opened her mouth to protest. He wrapped his arms around her again, and despite the fact that her heart was still somewhere down at her feet, Lucy felt herself relaxing. *Sheesh*. Apparently, it had been too long since she'd had great sex. Everything in her body tingled, a leftover from the rather aerobic experience she had just had.

"I don't do this," she said. "I just keep those for... emergencies."

"If you're really worried about being pregnant, rest assured. The chances of that are very low."

With my luck, I'll end up pregnant alright, she thought. *And it serves me right, too*. She didn't say that aloud, though. "How can you tell?"

"I know what an ovulating woman smells like."

He moved to kiss her neck and Lucy *almost* forgot why this should never have happened in the first place... and why it shouldn't be happening now. She squirmed out of his grasp and shook her head, flustered.

Levi sighed. "You're not going to get pregnant. Trust me on this one."

"Because you didn't smell my ovulation?" She tried her best to sound disbelieving. "What are you, some sort of shifter?"

Levi grinned casually. "Yep. I'm the Beta of the local pack. Beta means I'm second in charge. If anything happened to the Alpha, my brother, I'd be the new Alpha. Pretty neat, eh?"

Lucy forced herself to smile at him, although her heart was pounding again. The panic about the broken condom was receding, pulling the guilt back to center stage. She tried to shove it aside. She was a detective. And hadn't her captain told her to do anything necessary to root out the drug dealers? They were getting rich off of other people's misfortunes. Ruining lives. She couldn't let guilt get in the way of that. Not when lives were on the line.

As she studied Levi, she couldn't help but wonder if he was involved. The Beta of the pack... It was a high position of authority. He could very well be right in the middle of it.

Well, that was what she was here for. To find out what was going on. In the meantime, she couldn't act suspiciously.

"You're a Coyote? You didn't tell me that."

The grin on Levi's face faltered. "Does it matter? I wouldn't tell you if I was Irish or Texan."

"Um..."

"Um?" he repeated.

He actually looked crestfallen. Lucy stared at him, a new surge of guilt rising up her throat. He'd been completely honest with her about why he came here. Yes, things took a... passionate turn that she hadn't been expecting, but that wasn't Levi's fault. *She* was the one who kept saying yes, even when he teasingly stopped and said it was time to read a book or watch TV. And from the moment they'd stepped into her apartment, she had done nothing but lie to him and use him.

There had to be other ways to get information than to do something like this. She wrapped her arms around her middle, afraid all her emotions were written over her face.

"You're right," she choked passed the guilt choking her. "It shouldn't matter at all. I just don't..."

"You don't do this often?" he supplied. His expression relaxed again. "Honestly, though. You *won't* get pregnant."

She hoped he was right. Given the captain's reluctance to even put her on this case, she couldn't imagine the blow up it would cause if he found out she'd slept with a suspect, let alone if that suspect had gotten her pregnant.

The precinct didn't exactly have a great track record when it came to dealing with pregnant employees. More often than not, they weren't just transferred to paperwork or traffic, they were transferred to other precincts. That was the absolute worst thing that could happen. Lucy hadn't scraped her way up from the bottom just to be busted back down to the opening levels. She was a detective and proud of it. She was finally in a position where she could actually help people, and if her hormones had blown it for her...

Hopefully, he's right about the whole ovulation thing, she thought, although she was uncomfortably aware that pregnancy could happen whether ovulation was occurring or not. She tried to think back to her last period, but it was so sparse that she couldn't remember. That helped relax her a little more. Chances of pregnancy were slim to none.

"Want to come back to bed?" Levi asked her.

"Actually, I have a meeting with somebody." She was meant to be working with another undercover cop, to coordinate their investigation. She had to meet him in an hour. "Business. I should shower and dress."

Levi sighed. "Business? I hate business."

Was she letting a great opportunity slip through her fingers? She had the Beta of the Coyote pack with her. She had helped him get out of a pickle with some other cops, and they had slept together. And she was investigating him. What was it that Captain Smith always said to her?

"In the law, there is no room for personal entanglements. If you were a man, you'd understand that."

So, basically, he'd think her guilt in this situation was a proof of her sex's weakness. She took a deep breath and tried to shove it away. The investigation was the only thing that was important. If Levi was a criminal, he didn't deserve her sympathy. And if he was innocent? She could only hope that this was worth it.

But it wasn't like they were developing a connection. Or were they? Should she make arrangements for another date? Or was that breaking the protocol of casual sex? This was why she had never done this before – not only was it confusing, but

she didn't want to be the kind of girl who just walked away from a situation like this without looking back.

"Maybe we can get together another time?" she suggested awkwardly. "We could catch a movie or get drinks."

"Or something more aerobic..." Levi winked at her.

Her cheeks heated again. Dammit, what was wrong with her body? Had it really been so long since she had had sex that she was going to jump into bed with the first sexy guy who winked at her? Well, the obvious answer was yes.

But then, maybe part of the reason why she was reacting this way was because nobody quite as sexy as Levi had ever given her the time of day before. He was tall and muscular in the attractive-but-not-pure-muscle way she liked. He definitely looked after himself, but having his arms around her wasn't like cuddling a rock. And she was... well...

When people looked at her, they didn't think there was any way she could actually be a detective. She had gotten more than one 'too many donuts' comments in her career. It didn't matter that she could still complete every physical task that was thrown at her. Her thighs rubbed, bags hung under her biceps, and her stomach had a curve to it that no amount of flattering clothes could hide. Guys that looked like Levi rarely went after girls like Lucy.

"I'll call you," the Coyote said. "I just need your number."

She gave it to him, and he made a big show of putting it into his phone. Despite the situation, her heart still sunk. He wasn't going to call. It was probably for the best, though. The way her heart worked, she wouldn't be able to keep up her undercover ruse for more than a month.

No, I am not going to fall for a suspect. Now that was just ridiculous.

"Well, goodbye, Lucy. I have some business to take care of myself."

"Goodbye."

Watching him leave really shouldn't have been as disappointing as it was...

There was no time to think about that – or the broken condom –right now. She was going to be late. She quickly showered and redressed. Images of Levi's grin changing into a look of horror when he found out who she really was kept popping into her mind. To distract herself, she mentally recited her cover. She was looking to start a bakery in this area of town and was meeting with a realtor to go over a few possible properties she could rent.

Bakery. Lucy snorted. It was the 'too many donuts' comment again, just under a different guise. She shook the thought away as she headed out.

She didn't know the man's real name, but the name Aaron Knox was emblazoned across his door. Lucy entered, holding the portfolio of bakery plans she had been given as part of her cover. Aaron, a cop she vaguely recognized from another department, sat at a desk, typing at his computer. He looked up with a smile.

"Greetings. Beautiful day, isn't it?"

Lucy nodded. "Too bad it's going to rain later."

"Yes, I hate rain. It drowns my petunias."

Lucy had to roll her eyes at the code. What were the chances that somebody besides her contact was going to be here? And as for her walking in... well, maybe there was a point as far as that was concerned. She closed the door behind her and sat down opposite Aaron.

"Give me what you got," she said.

"Here's a list of all the Coyotes I've met, and the possible connections they have to drug runners. I haven't been able to get a good foot in the door, though. That's your job."

Lucy thought of Levi. Guilt rose again. He was her way into the heart of the pack, to get the inside scoop on what was happening, and what sort of laws they were breaking. Great. So even if he didn't call back, she had to play the pathetic star-struck girl and seek him out. Could this situation get any worse?

"Anything I need to know?" she asked him.

Aaron shook his head. "I'm on the verge of something big. I just need a little time. And if you could get the pack's Beta, a Coyote named Levi Bennet, out of my hair, that would be appreciated. I think he's getting suspicious."

Lucy struggled to keep her face neutral. Her stomach twisted. Apparently, yes, the day could get worse. "I'll do my best."

"Good. Now, about this bakery you need: I've got the perfect place for you to set up shop. If you'll just give me a minute, we can go check it out."

Lucy nodded. "I'll go put this stuff in my car and wait for you."

She left the office, taking a quick glance at the list of names before she tucked it into the portfolio. When she got to her car, she tucked everything into her glove

box and sat back to wait. Everything was quite bleak outside her window, reminding her of the neighborhood she had grown up in. Maybe she should have joined some sort of outreach program instead of becoming a cop...

An explosion jerked her from her thoughts. She was thrown from side to side as black and red flames burst from the building where Aaron's office was. Chunks of debris rained down on her car. She instinctively ducked, shielding her face from anything that might hurtle through the windshield.

When everything went still, flames licked at the windows of Aaron's office. Lucy stared in horror, scrambling for her cell phone. Black smoke filled the air.

There was no way Aaron had survived that.