

Chapter Nine

Garrett

Staring down at my beautiful mate, I can hardly believe my luck. Ava's dark hair is fanned out over the table like liquid obsidian, and her rosy nipples are peaked with desire. The insides of her thighs are sticky with cream, and her belly is swollen with my seed.

Mine.

My wolf's growl is loud and clear. He wants me to claim her — to give her my mark. He wants me to sink my fangs into her tender flesh and embed my scent in her forever.

I know I have to wait. Ava has so much on her mind already. I won't add to her troubles by telling her what I am.

After all the searching, all the regret, fate has given me a second chance — one night to make her mine.

Hooking an arm under Ava's knees, I scoop her off the dining-room table and carry her up the stairs. All the while, I can't stop staring. She's got these emerald eyes that seem to see right through me, swollen pink lips, and that tiny black beauty mark that makes me want to ravage her on the stairs.

Somehow, I make it to my room and lay her down on the bed. I unhook her bra from behind, freeing her heavy breasts and tossing it onto the floor.

I take my time licking and kissing her perfect tits, making slow circles around each nipple with my tongue until her whole body is quivering beneath me.

I kiss my way down her gorgeous body, marveling at every curve and the velvety texture of her skin. I pause for a moment to cup her round stomach and plant a reverent kiss just below her belly button.

When I finally reach her soft slippery mound, my wolf rises to the surface. Ava has this delicious earthy musk that drives my animal wild.

I open my mouth to taste her sweetness, but the bitter hint of venom coats my tongue. I can feel the burn of my fangs trying to descend, but I swallow down the urge to mark her.

Parting her blushing wet lips with my fingers, I make slow circles over her clit until she starts to move against me. A soft moan rises from her throat, and I bury my face in her folds.

I slip one finger inside her, and then another, watching her face carefully for any signs of discomfort.

I might have taken Ava's cherry, but she's still practically a virgin. While I'm dying to sink inside her and fuck her hard, I also want to take my time. If tonight goes well, I'll have every opportunity to claim her sweet pussy over and over again.

Making my way up her channel, I find that soft spot just behind her navel and stroke her there until her whole body starts to tremble and her walls clamp down around me.

"Garrett . . ."

God, I love the way she says my name. "Yes, angel?"

"I . . . need you inside me."

That bold declaration sends an unimaginable thrill through me, but I take a careful pause as I continue to caress her insides. "Mmm, I told you," I murmur, lazily spreading her folds again so I can study her perfect pink cunt. "I'm making you pay in orgasms."

"Please," she whispers. It's a question and a plea, and the needy tremor in her voice undoes me.

Ava doesn't know it yet, but there's nothing I could refuse her.

I rip off my pants and climb onto the bed, gripping her around the waist and hauling her naked into my lap. Her skin is velvety soft against mine, and I long to taste every inch of it.

"Fuck me however you want, angel," I growl. "I'm yours."

Ava's lips part in surprise, and her reaction makes my cock twitch with delight.

As alpha, I'm used to dominating every room I walk into. Every word and gesture is a subtle power play designed to keep my siblings and pack members in check. It's in my nature to take charge in the bedroom, as well, but there's no greater kink in the world than letting Ava take control.

Straddling my lap, Ava fumbles as she tries to find a comfortable position. Her breasts are heavy from the pregnancy, and her whole body has this glow that makes her look as though she really did drop straight from heaven.

Gripping her around the waist, I lift her up and guide her down onto my cock. A cute little crease appears between her brows as she seats herself down on my length, stopping with me just a few inches inside her and biting her lower lip.

“Fuuuuuck,” I whisper, squeezing my eyes shut before opening them again. I need to fuck her so badly.

Gripping my shoulders for support, Ava slides down my throbbing shaft, taking every inch of me inside her. I let out a low groan, watching her mouth form a tantalizing “O” as she adjusts to my girth.

Ava starts to move up and down along my length. Her movements are tentative and awkward at first, but that just turns me on even more.

“That’s it, angel,” I whisper in her ear. “Fuck me however you want.”

Something in my words seems to stoke her fire, because she lets out a needy little moan and rolls her hips into mine.

I feel it when she begins to move on instinct, grinding her clit against my pelvis and taking her pleasure from my body. She reaches up to stroke her own nipples, and the sight nearly makes me blow my load.

I distract myself by exploring every inch of her I can reach, cupping her breasts in my hands and squeezing her juicy ass.

When she closes her eyes and rises up on her knees, only to slam back down on my shaft, I feel an explosive heat tingling at the base of my spine.

“I’m gonna come for you, angel,” I whisper, grabbing the side of her head and capturing her mouth with mine.

Ava moans against me and bucks her hips. As her tight heat clenches around me, I explode inside her — filling her with my seed.

She slows her movements to languid thrusts, and I pull her against me as that delirious sense of release overtakes my body. “So sexy,” I whisper, keeping my eyes half closed as I trail kisses down her neck.

“Even pregnant?”

“Especially pregnant.” I open my eyes fully and meet her gaze so she can see just how much I want her. “I can’t wait to see you full and ripe with my seed.”

Ava swallows, and that adorable flush creeps up her neck. I know she’s not used to dirty talk, but I also know it turns her on.

Shifting onto my knees, I lay her down on the bed and curl myself around her, breathing in her scent. I can’t wait to see what else turns her on.

Ava rests her head on my biceps, and I reach around to run my hand over the bump that is our growing pup.

“Baby’s kicking,” Ava whispers. “You should be able to feel her soon.”

“Her?” I ask, my voice breaking as I raise my head off the pillow. “I thought you didn’t know —”

She shakes her head. “I don’t. It’s . . . just a feeling. It could still be a boy.”

A wide grin spreads across my face, and my chest feels as though it might burst. Ava and a pup — our own little family.

“You’re smiling,” she whispers, her mouth breaking into a goofy grin to match my own.

“I’m just happy,” I say with a shrug. “I . . . didn’t have the greatest childhood, so this sort of feels like a second chance at a family.”

I can count the number of special memories I have with my own family on one hand. Mostly, I spent my early years wishing I was someone else.

Ava’s expression softens, but she isn’t looking at me with pity. She’s patiently waiting for me to continue.

I sigh. “I spent most of my childhood at one boarding school or another.” I flash a humorless grin. “My parents would call every Saturday at two o’clock, and we’d talk about the weather and my classes until my father felt that he’d fulfilled his obligation.”

“I’m sorry,” Ava murmurs.

I shake my head. “Don’t be. It could have been worse.”

I fucking hated boarding school — all those entitled little dickheads jockeying for position. My father said it was good character-building for a dominant male shifter — that it taught discipline and restraint — but the longer I stayed there, the more restless my animal became.

Summer breaks and holidays were usually spent in an empty house while my parents vacationed in Ibiza or Switzerland. They left gifts and food and the rest of my surly siblings behind.

“Maybe so,” says Ava, gently stroking my face. “But that doesn’t make it any less significant.”

Warmth and love swell in my chest, and I carefully take her fingers in mine and kiss the back of her hand. I make a silent vow to be a good husband to her and a great dad to this kid — the type of parent I never had.

On the rare instances that my family was all together, my father used the time to berate me for my many inadequacies. Even at the age of twelve, it was clear to him that I was not the obedient blue-blooded son he'd paid to have raised. And yet I was still expected to uphold my duties as a Von Horton, including making appearances in front of the press and at corporate functions.

When our pack's alpha died and it became clear that I was to take over as alpha, my siblings couldn't stand it. They've been circling like vultures ever since, which is the only reason they've turned up here. They're all eager to take over the company when our father retires, and they want to be here when I self-destruct.

I never thought I'd have pups of my own, but now that Ava's pregnant, I'm determined to do this right.

"Could I come to the next appointment?" I ask, my voice shaking a little.

"Yeah," she says, sounding surprised but . . . happy.

I tug her closer and pull the covers over us, delighting in the feeling of her naked skin against mine.

Though I feel more content than I've ever felt in my life, my wolf isn't letting me sleep. He wants me to give Ava my brand and mark her as my own.

I can feel the burn of my fangs descending and the steady drip of venom down my throat. Ava's warmth burns my sensitive skin, and her scent is suddenly too much.

I have to get out of here.

Slipping out of bed, I pull the duvet up to cover Ava's bare shoulders and plant a kiss on her forehead. I have to run, or I'll go crazy, but I'll be back before she wakes up.

I pull on some sweats and hop in the car, zipping onto the highway. There are no other cars on the road this time of night, and it's still pitch black when I pull up at the trailhead.

One of the reasons I hate staying in Denver is that there's nowhere to run without the possibility of being seen. Even in the dead of night, you risk running into a pair of teenagers having sex in the bushes or tweakers near the trails and open spaces.

Just to be safe, I jog half a mile up the trail in human form before shedding my clothes and succumbing to the change.

As the sweet agony of the shift overtakes my body, my thoughts become less coherent — less frantic. Less human.

I give myself over to the sensations moving through me, savoring the escape of pain. My bones snap as my spine bends, and I howl as my muscles reshape themselves. Fresh raw skin stretches over my wolf's skeleton, and a patchwork of gray, black, and tawny fur sprouts over the sensitive flesh.

My senses come alive as my hands shorten into paws. I hear a rabbit scampering into the bushes and a car alarm blaring in the distance. The earthy scent of decaying branches fills my nostrils, and my vision adjusts to the dark.

As a wolf, I'm a creature of impulse. Hunt. Kill. Fight. Fuck. There is no gray area — no pesky nuances or exceptions. Everything is black and white.

Every fiber of my being is pulling me back toward the city — back to Ava — but I take off up the trail, determined to enjoy the run.

My muscles burn as I dart over the hill, savoring the feel of the soft dirt between the pads of my paws and the cool wind stinging my wet nose. Usually, the run helps distract me from whatever human problem I'm facing. I'll catch the scent of a rabbit or a chipmunk and lose myself in the hunt.

But tonight, things are different. A single urge is coursing through my body — stronger than the allure of fresh game.

My mate is waiting for me in our bed, and she's carrying my pup. I have to go back and give her my mark. I have to claim Ava as my own.