

Chapter 23

Ace's rush of emotions, raw and overwhelming, flooded through the mate bond. Relief, love, worry, desperation—they hit me all at once.

I gasped, my body shaking with the intensity of it all.

Had I always been this attuned to how he felt? I couldn't remember being aware of it before now.

Maybe it was our time apart or my new knowledge about how the mate bond worked that made me so much more aware of our connection.

Whatever it was, I had never felt anything quite like it. It was incredible.

I felt him sifting through my own emotions just as I sifted through his, his overwhelming worry easing the slightest bit once he knew I was okay and wasn't in trouble.

Knowing he was probably struggling with his wolf, I tried to keep my mood stable so as not to scare him, but it was hard. Feeling our mate bond again made his absence feel like a punch in the chest.

I braced myself for Ace's anger. I assumed he would immediately try to mind-link with me and demand to know where I was, berating me for running from him.

But that wasn't what happened at all. Instead, I felt something completely different—love.

I'm not sure how he did it, but a warm sensation filled my chest, so comforting and wonderful that I nearly started to cry.

He was sending his love and a action down the bond.

He was letting me know that he wasn't mad. He was just worried about me. He wanted to know I was okay.

"Ace," I whispered miserably into the empty room, my heart pounding in my chest as the yearning for him intensified tenfold.

I grabbed one of his sweatshirts that I had lying against my pillow and brought it to my nose.

My bed was covered in several items of his clothing that I had stolen from him throughout the years. Having something of his to hold on to and smell was the only way I was able to get any sleep.

I studied the thick fabric against my nose and inhaled deeply. His scent was faint but still there.

The heat between my legs arched, burning hotter, and I moaned. I couldn't think, couldn't do anything other than writhe against the bed and raise my hips as if Ace's were there to meet them.

"Help," I whimpered. "I need you, Ace. Please."

I wasn't sure if he heard me, but I assumed so when his warm pleasure filled my chest. He liked that I needed him, that I had to ask him for help to get myself o .

In fact, I was hit with a shot of his own erce arousal, which only intensified my own.

"Touch yourself."

Holy fuck, his voice.

Even though his voice was quiet in my mind, it caused my spine to tingle and my pussy to clench.

"Now, Doe," he mind-linked to me again, his words clearer now, harsher.

My hands followed his orders on their own accord, more liquid pooling from me, soaking the comforter beneath me. I gently rubbed my slit and teased myself open with one nger.

"Good girl," Ace rumbled in my mind.

I realized that my pleasure was so intense that he could sense it through the bond.

His approval spurred me on even further. I carefully circled my throbbing nub and gasped. It felt different this time. Better.

"Dip your ngers inside your tight hole. Get them wet for me," Ace ordered. *"Then keep petting that pretty clit."*

His presence in my mind and encouragement pulled me deeper into my haze. My touch slithered down, and I pushed two digits inside of me, my overexcited pussy clenching and gushing at the slight stretch.

I wanted more. I wanted Ace's thick cock buried deep inside me, slamming in and out, in and out.

Before I knew what I was doing, I started thrusting my ngers and lifting my hips, fucking myself with my own hand.

So. Fucking. Good.

"Get those ngers back on your clit, mate," Ace suddenly barked in my mind, making me freeze. *"That sweet pussy hole belongs to me and me alone. Only I get to touch it."*

I hesitated, whimpering into the silence around me. Some distant part of me knew it was my suppressed heat pushing me to crave that full feeling that only a hard cock could supply.

It was a disturbing and out-of-control sensation, but I couldn't care at that point. I would do anything to defuse the ache inside me.

"If you want me to help, you'll do as I say, little mate."

Perhaps I should've been upset that he was ordering me around, but the bedroom was the one place I didn't mind him being in control. I craved it.

With one mournful whimper, I removed my ngers and placed them back on the little nub at the top of my slit. I rubbed in small circles and sunk back into the bedding beneath me, sighing in bliss.

"That's better, baby," Ace rumbled. *"Now just close your eyes and feel. Pretend it's me touching you."*

I squeezed my eyes shut and parted my legs further.

I imagined him kneeling over me, his strong body blanketing mine, while he kissed my neck and sucked on my mating gland. I imagined it was his rough hands, his tongue, and his mouth.

He worked me harder and harder, faster and faster, until the room wasn't just spinning. It was sparkling and shattering.

I was right on the edge of orgasm, my inner muscles starting to spasm and clench, but I couldn't quite get there. I knew this was going to happen. I needed... I needed...

"Cum for me," Ace commanded.

White-hot heat seared into my skin, and I fell into the most incredible state of bliss, stealing my breath, along with my sanity.

My climax almost hurt; it came on so swiftly and with such intensity. I could only arch my back and let it happen. Ecstasy exploded through me and took over my senses.

"Oh. Oh, God!"

So *that* was what I needed.

The climax brought with it instant and overwhelming relief. I was left panting, my body weightless and tingling as I stared up at the domed windows above me.

"Thank you," I whispered, unsure whether he could hear me, but needing to speak the words anyway.

My eyelids started to utter and close, so heavy.

Slowly, I pulled my hand from my pajama bottoms and rolled onto my side, nuzzling my nose into Ace's sweatshirt, wishing his hard chest was beneath it.

"Sleep now, Doe," Ace's deep voice sounded in my head. *"I know that took it out of you."*

I shook my head, even as my heart rate began to slow and my breaths began to even. "Don't leave...", I mumbled.

"I'm not going anywhere. I'm always with you."

Letting that comfort me, my mind drifted o to dreamland.