



BirthRight

Book *one* of the La Patron Series

By Sydney Addae

BirthRight: Book one of the La Patron Series

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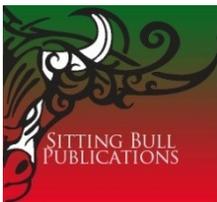
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BirthRight

The Patron, the Alphas Alpha

When you're the top wolf on the continent with the backing of the Goddess, how does an enemy topple your kingdom? By challenging you to a fight? No. By changing the rules.

After three hundred years of fighting and service to the Goddess, Silas Knight is the Patron, Alpha to the Alphas on the North American continent. As the top wolf, he fears little and has seen most things. But when he discovers someone or something has been quietly disturbing the natural order of things, he's surprised. Certain human women have the ability to birth fully functioning wolves, and that's a major problem.

Jasmine Bennett has no idea her deceased husband was a wolf shifter or that her twin sons are shifters. Her life changes when she rushes to her son's bedside after he's wounded in Afghanistan and returned stateside. Now her life's in danger because of her ability to give birth to a breed of beings she never knew existed.

BirthRight



Chapter 1

Tight-lipped, Silas Knight stepped off the private jet. Security was tight, as it should be. A costly mistake had occurred. Cameron, his godson, should not be in *this* military facility. Worse, the officers in charge refused to release him to the shifter hospital in the same area.

His anger buffeted everyone within close proximity. Alphas, who had come from multiple states, bowed in respect as he strode toward the car that would transport him to the hospital.

“La Patron,” the local Alpha, Jayden Knight, murmured, head bowed. “Welcome to Bethesda. A car is prepared to take you to the Hospital where a shifter doctor has taken over the case. Cameron’s papers are drawn and his transfer is awaiting your inspection.”

“Good, thank you.” He turned and gazed at all those who had come in deference to his visit and nodded. “I will be here for a few days. We will meet and discuss matters of importance to you soon. I look forward to talking with you.”

The somber faces smiled graciously. Their excitement tangible in the stale air of the hangar. In spite of his godson’s condition, life went on, and these men had pressing concerns to discuss with him. Keeping his face neutral, he waited until his security detail gave him a nod, and entered the car. Under normal conditions he would have bought his own car. But appearances needed to be maintained.

At least for now.

“I apologize for the mix-up, your Honor,” the doctor said in low tones. “It appears the commander in Afghanistan who normally handles these transfers was in the field. Your godson departed with a few other injured soldiers to Germany instead of France. Later, they shipped him here. The attending physicians did not have a chance to look at him. I took over within an hour of his arrival. The head physician wanted to have a team examine him before approving the transfer to the specialty hospital,” the smaller man said as he walked alongside Silas.

At the last comment, Silas stopped and raised his brow.

“None of them did,” the doctor rushed to say. “I brought in another team who approved the change of venue.”

“I am disappointed over such a break-down in the system. We have people in place all over the world to prevent these incidents. Now, I must decide if this happens often. The military notified me because I am listed as his next of kin. Otherwise, I would have had no knowledge of the fuck-up.”

The doctor swallowed hard and followed Silas down the hall. Security checked and

approved the safety of the hospital floor. Employees glanced in his direction, but quickly averted their eyes. His long-legged stride through the sterile space signaled his frustration. His aides walked a few feet behind him, waiting for a sign to come forward. The door to his godson's room opened as he approached.

His heart stuttered at the sight of bandages and machinery attached to the young man who was like a son to him. One of his greatest sorrows in his long life was his inability to reproduce. Cameron's parents had been his closest friends before his rise as Patron, and he'd promised to look after their son before they died in a tragic hunting accident

"Cameron," he lowered his voice as he spoke, not wanting to frighten the younger man.

At first there was no response. Then a slight movement of his hand signaled he'd heard.

"Son, I am here. We will take you where you can recuperate faster. You need special care, Doctor Fields has already made the arrangements, you will be leaving soon." He moved closer and touched the young man's hand. The slight flinching beneath his confirmed Cameron heard and knew someone, if not him in particular, was with him. For the moment he had to be satisfied with that.

"We will discuss this attraction you have with dangerous situations when you are able. You promised to focus on a family, that means a mate, kids," whispering, he leaned forward. "Pups." He pulled a chair near the bed and sat, hand on top of the injured man's hand and waited.

Within minutes, a gurney entered the room, and the transfer process started. "La Patron, may I have a word with you?" Dr. Fields asked with some hesitation and stepped backward.

Silas nodded.

"There is another case here that has caught my attention. I think you need to know about this one, there is an unregistered shifter –"

"He dies." Silas retorted. "You know the rules."

"I understand, but this is different. The shifter is unusual, he's a hybrid."

"A hybrid?" His brow rose, but his voice remained neutral.

"Yes Sir, I'm not sure what all the components are. Wolf shifter for sure, his mother and aunt are here. They are human, but their scents are not right. I've had their blood tested, and it's positive, she's his mother. What do you suggest I do?"

From the corner of his eye, Silas watched them load Cameron on the gurney while his mind latched onto the comments from the doctor. After living three centuries, a puzzle of any type was too difficult to ignore. "Let me see him, I should be able to identify his bloodline."

"Thank you, Sir," the doctor said, walking behind him and pointing to the room with the wounded man.

Cameron had received a private room. This soldier shared his space with other injured comrades. The stench of suffering and pain assailed Silas' sensitive nostrils, leaving a distinct metallic taste on his tongue. With little effort he blocked out the other scents and focused on the lone male. As he stood near the door, the doctor spoke to the women and gestured to the male on the bed.

The doctor nodded and walked toward him. Together they left the room.

"He is wolf, with a hint of another shifter. It's too small to determine the nature. What is his

condition?”

“He has fractures in his legs and arms, took a hit to his head and back. They’d pronounced him dead in Germany. He revived, and is now here. He has had surgery on his arms and legs. They are trying to decide the next step for his head.”

Silas shook his head. The possibility of discovery was too great. He wondered how much the human part of the young wolf had kept his dual nature from discovery so far. “Take him with you,” he said.

The doctor nodded and left.

“Excuse me Sir, excuse me.” A small hand touched his arm before his guards could reach them. He stopped and looked at the brazen human woman. His brow lifted until she removed her hand. Things were becoming more and more interesting.

She stood around five seven, weighed around one hundred forty-five pounds, with large breasts and wide, round hips. Her dark brown eyes and full lips were prominent features in her oval-shaped face. Her flawless creamy complexion, long, thick, black hair covered a side of her face and gave her air of mystery. She was pretty in a willowy kind of way; unfortunately she had no interest in men.

“I watched you talk to the doctor who’s dealing with my nephew. Now the doctor wants to move him to another hospital. Why now? Why should my sister agree to this? Who are you?”

Silas couldn’t remember anyone ever speaking to him in such an accusatory manner. His first remark would have been cutting. However, he remembered his recent pain at his godson’s condition and decided to be civil. At least his version of civil.

He looked down at the woman and spoke in a clipped tone. “According to the doctor, he has a similar condition to my godson who’s being transferred for special treatment. Who I am is not important. And it’s up to the military to decide what’s in that soldier’s best interest, not his mother. Don’t forget, they own him.” He turned and left her standing.

“Smug bastard,” the woman whispered.

He waved his hand and kept moving.



Chapter 2

Jasmine Bennett walked down the hallway to her son, Tyrone's, room in the new facility. It was bigger, cleaner, and less crowded. When they'd arrived a couple of days ago, the sheer beauty of the facility had impressed her. The manicured lawn and what appeared to be acres of trees surrounded the red-bricked building with tall glass windows. Overall, the outside of the hospital offered a feeling of hominess. That impression lessened once you stepped inside. Modern equipment, doctors, nurses, and general hospital personnel filled the halls and rooms.

"Did you get any rest?" Renee, her older sister, asked, falling in step with her.

"About as much as you," she teased her sister. Neither had rested much since following the ambulance to this location. The nurse had offered them beds and a place to clean up, which they'd both utilized. Now, they waited while Tyrone underwent a series of tests.

"That much huh? Worried?" Renee asked as they turned a corner.

"Yeah, I know the doctor said he had slight brain damage, but Rone didn't seem too out of it to me yesterday. What did you think?" Jasmine asked as they entered his empty room.

Before Renee could say more, two huge orderlies wheeled Tyrone into the room. Both women stood and watched them transfer Tyrone from gurney to bed. The nurses checked the equipment and left with slight smiles.

"Rone, how you feeling sweetie?" Jasmine asked while gently touching his swollen face. She ached seeing him like this and cursed the military that kept taking from her. Her baby was too young to fight.

He moistened his tongue. Renee picked up his cup and placed an ice chip on his lips.

"Umm thanks Aunty." His voice was just above a whisper.

"You're welcome. Now answer your mom. How are you feeling?"

"Like I've been blown up." He grimaced and chuckled.

Jasmine's hand flew to her chest as water filled her eyes. "Baby boy, I'm so sorry you're going through this. What —"

"Ma," he interrupted. "That was... horrible bedside humor on my part." His voice sounded stronger. "Actually, I am feeling somewhat better. They have been treating me with meds that seem to be working. The nerve endings in my fingers and toes are healing." He moved the digits as proof. "All in all, seems I will be around for a little while longer."

Jasmine broke down. Loud gushing sobs tore from her throat, her body shook as the fear of losing her son overcame her.

A nurse rushed into the room, checked the equipment, the patient, and then turned to Jasmine. Renee stroked her back as tears rolled down her face unchecked. The dam had broken with Tyrone's words. He looked better, but he had been on death's door just a few days earlier.

"She'll be okay," Renee said, her voice cracking. "She's just grateful he's recovering."

The nurse nodded, looked at them askance, and left the room.

"Mom... mom, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to worry you. I know you hate Rese and I joined the military after what happened to daddy. I can see this is too much for you." He paused as if to

gain strength. “Aunty, why don’t you take her for a ride, maybe she needs to get away from here for a little while.”

“I’m not going anywhere,” Jasmine countered, steel in her voice as she wiped her face with the back of her hand. “Yes, I hate the danger you and Tyrese are under in your line of work. As a mother, a part of my job description is to worry over my children. Your father loved what he did, and that made him who he was. I don’t begrudge him that. But never think for one second that because I disagree with your choices, I love you any less. It hurts me to see you in pain. You and your brother are my heart. That will never change, Rone. Never.”

He nodded. A slight smile on his face. “Okay. The doctor should be here soon. I want to know his diagnosis. And you haven’t called me baby boy since I was seven, thanks.” He winked at her.

Her heart lifted as the small gesture. He was trying hard to convince her he was okay. She couldn’t accept it, not after seeing him all bandaged up a couple of days ago. Granted, he looked much better now, but he *had* almost died. Had died and then revived. She was too grateful to take his recovery for granted.

Doctor Fields walked into the room looking over papers attached to a clipboard. “Someone wants answers I hear, let me see what we have.” He paused, flipping the pages and reading. “Well, there’s good news and not so good news here. First you, young man, are responding to the medications I have prescribed and are progressing very well. There is no apparent damage to your brain. Your back needs more work to insure no skeletal or nerve damage. If all goes well, we will start your treatment and therapy in three days. By then your legs and arms should be functioning enough to determine the extent of the damage to your back.” He lifted kind eyes to Jasmine and then Tyrone.

“How long will all of this take, Doc?” Tyrone asked.

“It all depends on your arms and legs. If everything is the way I think, then about six to eight weeks. Maybe less.”

“How is he healing so fast? What are you treating him with?” Renee, the skeptic, asked.

Jasmine hadn’t thought about it before, but one of the doctors at the VA had said Rone would be down for months. They had been here for a couple of days and Tyrone showed remarkable signs of improvement.

“You aren’t giving him experimental drugs are you?” Jasmine asked, voicing a new fear.

The doctor walked over to the IV, and glanced at the writing before answering them. “No Ma’am, this hospital specializes in severe trauma cases, we have fewer patients and place all our energies on them getting better. Your son is in good hands.” His soft-spoken words offered the comfort she desperately needed.

“Thank you,” she murmured as he left the room.

“I’m glad you’re doing better,” Renee said while bending down to kiss his forehead.

“I’m glad you came, Aunty. It’s good seeing you. Tell Mandy hi for me when you talk to her.”

“You bet, speaking of which, I need to call her to check and see how the business is going. I’ll be right back.” She left the room, cell phone in hand.

“Mom, how long are you going to be here?” He looked out into the hall and then back at her.

“Until you’re much better.” She eyed him with determination. “Much better, so don’t count on me leaving anytime soon.”

He grinned.

His boyish smile wrenched at her heart. She longed to take him in her arms, hold tight and rock him like she’d done when he was little.

His smile fell away as he looked into the hall. She noticed and turned to look in the hall. It was empty. Frowning, she turned back to him.

The contemplative look on his face concerned her. “What is it?” She didn’t mean to sound worried, it was just hard to sit back, helpless.

Shaking his head, he smiled. But this one didn’t meet his eyes. “Nothing, just thinking about things. Have you heard from Rese?”

Recognizing the change of subject, she let it pass and answered. “Not yet. I left him a message and so did your Aunt. I hope to hear from him sometime today.” A chill skittered down her back and she pulled her sweater closer. “Are you cold?”

“No, Ma’am. I’m warm.” He picked up the remote.

Sitting back in the large, comfortable chair, she picked up her purse and pulled out her electronic reader. The earphones came out next. She didn’t bother hiding her grin when he zeroed in on a drama television program. Slipping the ear buds into her ears, she turned on her reader and tuned out the noise in the room.

Engrossed in the story, she felt a chill down her arms. She glanced at Tyrone. He’d straightened on the bed and appeared to be at attention even though he lay on the bed. She frowned. Pulling out the ear buds, she started to ask him a question. That’s when she heard someone’s footsteps leaving the room.

Confused, she looked at him again. He stared at the door without blinking. Alarmed, she ran to the bed and shook him. It took a few shakes and yells before he blinked.

“Ma. It’s okay. Don’t cry. I’m okay.” His voice lowered into a crooning sound. She had no idea she was crying. “I’m fine, just a little tired.”

“But... but you didn’t respond. It was like... like you didn’t hear me.” She sucked in a breath, hoping her trembling would stop. Her heartbeat wouldn’t slow down and she tried not to become hysterical. But she’d never before seen him in a trance or whatever it was he’d been in.

He placed his hand over hers, looked her in the eyes and spoke. “Mom, you’re overreacting. I’m fine. It was nothing.”

She jerked back as though he slapped her. “Are you... are you kidding?” She snatched her hand from his. “You must be joking. How the hell...” She stood up and walked off to the wall. *This boy just told me I was overreacting. He’s lost his mind. Calm down? Where was Renee?*

“Ma?”

Without looking at him, she threw her arm back and held up her hand.

He remained quiet.

Closing her eyes, she inhaled and exhaled to slow her heartbeat. She visualized the boys when they were small. The twins had been a loving handful, but they’d filled her long days and

nights. Now they were grown, and she was *overreacting*. She pushed down the anger that threatened to choke her.

Renee was right.

She needed to do something with her life. Maybe go back to school, take up a hobby, do something so she wouldn't overreact. Damn it.

She spun and stared at him. "I can't believe you said I overreacted."

He squirmed beneath the sheet. "Maybe that was the wrong word, but Ma, I'm okay. See?" He sat straighter.

"How the hell does that prove anything?" She hadn't meant to raise her voice, but he pissed her off and in a few minutes she *would* be overreacting.

The devilish grin he sprouted was reminiscent from when he was a young boy trying to escape a punishment. "It doesn't. I just didn't know what else to say to keep you from going off on me."

She stared at him and started laughing. "You were close to the line. Don't do that. I want you to get well, not make you worse."

"Yes, Ma'am," he said in a meek tone.

"So what happened?" She returned to the side of the bed just in time to see his face shutter closed.

"Nothing. Just a daydream." He didn't look at her.

"Tyrone Bennett."

"Yes, Ma'am."

"You know the penalty for lying to your mama, right?"

He released a long, drawn out sigh. "Yes. But I can't tell you."

"Why didn't you just say that? You think I'd try to make you tell me everything? You're grown and entitled to your secrets. Everybody got secrets. I'm concerned that's all."

"I'm sorry. I'm not up to par. Could you get the nurse in here, I need something for pain."

Her stomach dropped. "If I left you alone for a while would you still need the pain medication?" she asked in a soft voice.

"No." His voice rose, and then he gave her a sheepish grin as if afraid to admit he wanted his mama. "I'm glad you're here. My side is sore and I want to sleep. I can't do that without the drugs. Have you eaten?"

The change in topics threw her for a loop. "What?"

"Have you had anything to eat? You or Aunt Renee?"

She thought back and realized she hadn't had anything since early that morning. "I can't remember and I don't know about Renee. I'll ask her when she comes back."

A few moments later, Renee and the nurse strode into the room.

The nurse stuck a needle into his IV and checked a few things. Jasmine noticed the nurse bend down and talk in a low voice with Tyrone. When they finished, the nurse turned, smiled at her and Renee, and left the room.

Jasmine itched to ask what the nurse said, but remembered her earlier remarks. "Is everything okay?" She stepped close to the bed and looked him over with a critical eye.

“Yeah, she wanted to know how bad the pain was.” His eyelids drooped.

She gave into the urge to touch him, to reassure herself he was okay. The back of her hand stroked the side of his face. He sighed as he fell under the dominion of the medication.

“He’s asleep?” Renee asked, coming to stand next to her.

Jasmine nodded, leaned down and placed a kiss on his forehead. “Hungry?” she asked her sister.

“Yeah. You?”

Jasmine nodded as she backed away from the bed. “I am. Is there some place here where we can eat?”

“I think I overheard someone mention a cafeteria. I’ll ask the nurse, and we can grab a bite before he wakes. Have you talked to the doctor about Tyrone’s next step? It’s good to see him healing, but what happens next?”

Jasmine hadn’t asked that many questions because the doctor had been so forthcoming about Tyrone’s condition. Before she could answer, Renee had walked off and was speaking to the nurse behind the counter.

“Thanks,” Renee said to the nurse as she waved for Jasmine to meet her.

“There’s a place here?” Jasmine asked as she caught up with her sister.

Renee nodded. “Yeah, a couple of floors down. Stairs or elevator?”

Jasmine looked toward the stairs, but didn’t feel up to it. “Elevator.” Following the signs, they took the elevator and walked into the cafeteria. Scents teased her nostrils, her stomach growled. “I didn’t realize how hungry I was before,” Jasmine said, heading toward the line for the grill. There were steaks, burgers, and prime rib on the menu. Her brows rose at the choices. *No chicken or fish?*

Renee picked up a pre-made salad and waited for her.

“I’d like a steak, medium rare. There needs to be a little pink in the middle. But I don’t want a big steak.”

The chef never spoke, he held up a raw piece of meat.

“Do you have anything smaller?”

He cut the steak in half and held it high.

Smiling, she nodded. “That’s perfect, thank you.” Jasmine stepped to the side and grabbed a small salad and garlic toast while waiting for her steak.

“What do you want to drink?” her sister asked.

“Water. A bottle, so I can take it back to the room.”

“Good idea.” Renee grabbed two bottles and picked up a large brownie.

“A salad and a brownie? How does that work out for you?” Jasmine teased as she accepted the plate with her steak from the chef. She slipped a tip in his jar and headed for the cashier. When they’d walked in the cafeteria earlier, it had seemed empty, but during the time they’d taken to grab their food, most of the tables had filled.

“Wanna sit outside in the sun?” Renee asked.

A table near the exit opened and Jasmine headed for it. The idea of swatting flies while trying to cut her steak held no appeal. “No, here’s one.” They each took a seat and looked out the

large window. It was a beautiful day, maybe after they ate, she'd take a quick walk to stretch her legs.

"Jazz?"

"Hmmm?" She swallowed the garlic bread and took a deep breath.

"Have you noticed there's a football convention going on here?"

"What?" She looked up at Renee.

"I mean, have you noticed how frigging big all the men are in this place? Even the women are tall. Plus there aren't any black people working here. We're in Maryland, how the hell can there not be any blacks working in a hospital."

Jasmine hadn't noticed the shape, size, or color of anyone. Her sole focus had been on Tyrone. She didn't care if the people were zebras. Tyrone was better, and that's all that mattered to her. But Renee was different. She was an anthropology professor back in St. Louis. Noticing people were her stock in trade.

"No. I hadn't noticed. I'm just glad Rone is getting better. Have you heard from Reese?"

Her sister cut her eyes at her. "No, I would've told you. And I'm glad they're taking good care of Rone, too. I owe them more than I can say. It's just weird being in a place so... so sterile. There's no diversity. Everyone's the same. Big men, tall women. All pale." Renee shivered. "It's just strange."

Jasmine looked out the window. Her eyes locked with a pair of turbulent bluish-green eyes. A chill snaked down her spine chased by a flash of heat. Her heartbeat stuttered and then picked up in speed. Warmth radiated through her and settled in her belly. A tingling started between her thighs. The alien feelings surprised her.

"See, they're big." Her sister tugged at her attention.

With reluctance, Jasmine pulled away from the fascinating eyes. "Huh?" A curl of warmth fluttered lower, tempting, and teasing.

"That guy you were looking at, did you see how big he was?"

She hadn't noticed anything but his eyes. "No, not really."

Renee sat back in her chair and stared at her. "That conversation we had back at the house a few days ago, you thinking about it?"

Jasmine fought through the fog clouding her mind. "No. Give me a minute to remember."

Renee chuckled. "Okay. What time do you want to head back to the room?"

"I'm not sure, Rone was in pain and the medicine helps him sleep." She finished eating and slid back from the table. "You want to take the scenic route back upstairs?"

Renee nodded as she joined Jasmine at the waste bin to dump their trash. Renee linked her arm in Jasmine's and headed toward the glass door leading to the gardens.

For the first time, Jasmine took note of the people in the room. The men were huge. It could've been a linebacker convention. She was glad when they walked out into the sun, but the clarity of those turquoise eyes haunted her.



Chapter 3

Silas watched the humans in the building walk arm in arm through the gardens. With half an ear he listened to another Alpha discuss plans for his pack. The Alpha was building a school on their land and was trying to find a way to keep it limited to just pack.

“Make it private,” one Alpha suggested.

“We did that and still had outsiders apply for enrollment,” another Alpha said. “We found ourselves in a discrimination lawsuit and settled out of court. The laws are changing and it’s harder and harder to be exclusive.”

“But we have to allow a little interaction among humans. The problem is once that happens, friendships develop and all kinds of other things.”

The Alphas mumbled their agreement.

Silas understood their dilemma. As their Patron, or lead Alpha, he required each of them to stay current with the times. Pups were to be provided the best education, which spawned superior companies. Each pack had to invest in real estate, and own their land. The members of the pack were to be trained in either a trade or continue to college. Bottom line - all had to use their skills for the advancement of the pack.

Unfortunately, there was a downside. The packs under his leadership were vast, wealthy and powerful. Their schools had the best academic programs, which provided the top test scores in their respective states. Humans wanted their children to attend those schools, but they couldn’t allow the interaction.

“Why not say the schools are for the descendants of... your original Alpha, that would stop the lawsuits,” Silas said into the silence.

“Yeah, that should work,” Alpha Lyle, one of the attorneys present, said. “If the schools are built for a den, and it specified that purpose, it might work. But you may not be able to take part in state competitions.”

“How many schools do we have in this country?” Silas asked.

“Over three hundred that comes to mind,” Lyle said.

“Then plan our own academic competitions. Start at the state level, then regional, and then national. This way the barometer of academic excellence has greater meaning. Let’s face it, the public schools offer no competition and the private schools are not that much better. But to pit a shifter school against another for scientific or mathematical excellence, that is a real contest. And I would judge on the national level,” Silas said, knowing his involvement would settle the matter.

“That would be great. We can have all those who win your scholarships attend as well. That way they can extend their thanks as a collective voice,” another Alpha said.

Pleased, Silas nodded as they discussed the change in the educational trajectory of their packs. Their energy and excitement was a tangible thing. For the most part, Silas acted as moderator, giving input when ideas became stalled. Each Alpha was responsible for his pack, and Silas was responsible for the Alphas who wore his insignia and carried his last name. Once the room quieted, Silas waited for the men to bring up what he felt was an obvious, urgent issue.

Instead, they began discussing dinner destinations and frivolous pursuits for later that evening. Withholding a sigh, he reminded himself that these men concerned themselves with their individual packs. He bore the weight of broader issues affecting all wolves and had to bring them to the table.

“I wonder why no one has mentioned the humans on the grounds of this hospital,” Silas said, looking around the room. The shocked expressions on the faces of the men who were responsible for thousands of lives were comical. He’d bet they still didn’t see or understand his concern.

“What have I missed, La Patron?” Jadyen, the Alpha for Maryland asked. The other Alphas sat forward with intense looks, prepared to remove any threat.

He looked at them and then spoke, sad that they still had not seen the challenge. “The mother of the shifter is human.” He watched, waiting for them to get it. Some did, most did not. “The young wolf-shifter was not in our system and is an adult wolf who has changed on many occasions. In fact, he has a great relationship with his wolf. He has a twin, who is also a wolf. His mother is not, and she does not know her son is wolf.”

The silence in the room was deafening. Frowns furrowed the brows of his Alphas. He could hear unspoken questions through their links.

“How is that possible?” One Alpha asked. “Wolves cannot mate with humans.”

Silas nodded. “And yet a man lays in this facility. He is wolf. I have talked with him. His wolf acknowledges me. His father was a wolf, but not in a pack. It was his father who taught him and his brother how to change, and how to keep their wolf side hidden. The father was a military man and his sons followed in his steps. But the woman did give birth to them. This is not an adoption scenario; her blood runs in his veins.”

No one spoke. Silas wondered how long before the importance of this discovery hit the Alphas.

“Well, damn,” Jadyen said.

“That about sums it up,” another Alpha said.

“Could there be more?”

“Don’t they need a pack? How did they survive without a pack?”

“Do they breed true?”

“Have they turned anyone?”

“Can they turn someone?”

“If we kill them, will that solve the problem?”

Questions swirled around the room, which was good for healthy discussion, but they had no answers. And that’s what they needed.

Silas held up his hand. “Tomorrow at ten, schedule a test for the young wolf. Lyle will ask these questions and we will know more. It’s important that we separate him from his mother, she is over-protective and will take issue if we go to his room.” He paused and met their gazes. “Indeed destroying the wolf, his twin, and his mother would solve a temporary problem, but how did it happen? I want answers, and so far, the young wolf and his family are the only ones who can give them. They die by my order alone.”

The Alphas nodded.

Silas stood, and the Alphas stood, bowed and filed out of the room. He sensed their disquiet and hoped for all their sakes the young man's answers filled in most of the blanks. But there was one question he couldn't answer. How had his mother carried not one, but two, pups to full term. She was an enigma, and even now his assistants performed a thorough background check on Jasmine Bennett and her family.

"A word, Sir?"

Silas turned and nodded to Lyle.

"Are there specific questions you want me to ask the young wolf?"

Silas nodded. "I will give you with a list of questions in the morning."

Lyle nodded. "What is your opinion of him?"

Silas hesitated. His thoughts returned to the conversation he'd had with the young man earlier. His mother had sat in the chair listening with ear-buds to whatever was playing on her tablet. He was certain that was the only reason he'd been able to talk with the young wolf as long as he had.

"He has training, not pack training, so he might not be able to hunt with a pack. His father was in charge, but since his death, he and his brother have not chosen a pack. His father made sure they stayed on neutral territory and never had to declare an allegiance to anyone."

"Do you think he's open to having an Alpha?"

Silas shrugged. "I don't know. This one has Alpha potential, although he hasn't acted on it."

"That's good to know." Lyle bowed. "I will see you in the morning." He turned and left Silas alone with his thoughts. While he'd been with the young wolf, he'd tried to discover if there was something special about his mother. He hadn't been able to pick up anything. Was she a rare treasured gift from the Goddess, or was she the first of many who could destroy his people? Her sons should not have been able to survive without pack. He could tell from her actions that she and her sons were very close. Even while he'd held the young man under compulsion, the thought of his mother being in danger threatened to break their connection. It wasn't correct to say the young wolf had no pack. A better interpretation was he had no wolf-pack.

Silas sat behind the glass window in the training auditorium surrounded by at least thirty Alphas. Testosterone ran high in the small classroom, but it provided them the opportunity to watch Lyle ask the young wolf questions.

Once the young wolf understood he wasn't in the room for tests he'd sat up, hopped off the gurney, and sat in a chair. Silas silently applauded the young man's actions.

"My name is Tyrone Bennett, and I was born this way. My dad said it was because he and my mom had sex when he was just coming into his wolf. She got pregnant and had us." He shrugged as though it was no big deal.

"What's the name of your father's pack?"

"I don't know, he never said. He had gotten a bad deal or something. We never met his

parents or spent time with them. He didn't have anything good to say about packs or his family."

"How did you keep this a secret from your mother? Or does she know you're a wolf?" Lyle asked.

The young man tensed. Silas could tell the question bothered him. "Dad made us swear never to tell anyone, including my mom. He said there were others out there who would hurt us or hurt her." His eyes narrowed. "No one hurts my mama." He paused. "Sometimes I think she suspects something is off a bit. Like during the full moon, my brother and I always left the house for camping trips or to hang with friends. Over time our excuses got real lame. She's smart, but she let it slide."

Silas nodded, taking a liking to the young man. He answered each question with open honesty. When Lyle finished, he asked the Alphas through their link if they were satisfied.

"I have a request," the young wolf said, startling everyone.

Lyle nodded.

"I want to see all the men who listened to our conversation, if you don't mind."

Silas spoke through their link. "*That is fair.*" All the men exited to the small classroom. Silas was the last to enter. He met the young man's eyes and nodded.

"I understand this discussion was necessary. But I would like you to understand my mother and my aunt are here to make sure I'm okay. I have never told her about this part of my life. She's going to be pissed when I do." He shook his head and closed his eyes as though he dreaded that day. "But she loves me and I have to believe she'll forgive me. I don't want anything happening to her or my aunt. My mom's a special woman with a large heart. My dad told me she had to be kept away from others like us because they would try to take her. I can tell all of you," he stopped and shook his head. "Well not all, but most of you are mated, and that's not a problem, but some of the men working here have been giving her the eye and I can't protect her right now."

Silas frowned. The idea that this woman had to be protected from his males was a problem, and one that shouldn't be on the table. "Are you saying she attracts unmated wolves?"

"That's what my dad said. Claimed he'd gotten into way too many fights. Although I suspect it was because his mate was a man and he seldom touched my mom."

Silas felt the jolt of disbelief flow through the Alphas. He straightened. "Your father married your mother, had pups, and then turned her away to be with his mate?" *How was that possible?* Wolves bred with their mates; it had always been that way. This situation had serious repercussions.

The young man frowned in concentration. "I think mom and dad met in high school. My dad had just hit his change and was out of it for a while. I don't know about his relationship with his father, or why my dad was even around my mom at that time. They were just talking, nothing serious, but he lost control, they had sex and mom got pregnant. She was real young, sixteen. That's where things get blurry. My mom's parents were angry, but since both my mom and dad were underage, there wasn't a lot they could do. But my dad's parents disowned him or something drastic like that. He stayed in town, graduated early and as soon as he was old enough, he joined the military and married mom."

There wasn't a sound after that bizarre tale. Silas could imagine how the wolf's family had responded to the information that a human girl was pregnant by their son. They wouldn't have believed it, but they should have reported it. That situation should never have been swept under the rug. He made a mental note to look into the life of this young man's father to discover the name of his pack.

"That is not normal," one Alpha said. Although his voice was gruff, he looked at the young wolf with compassion.

"No, it's not. What if this young wolf is not alone? What if more human women are capable of bearing our young?"

"What if these women can be mates?" The silence stretched unanswered.

Silas walked over to the young wolf. "Tyrone Bennett, your mother and aunt are under my protection until you are well enough to reclaim that honor yourself. It speaks well of you to concern yourself of your female kin first. I will come by later today and you will introduce me. I ask that you hold off telling her of your dual nature, give us time to discover more about this unique situation. Also, continue to hold it close to yourself, tell no one of your father's concerns over his wife." Silas paused. "You said your father connected with his mate before his death?"

"When my father returned stateside, he took my brother and I hunting like he often did. Except this time, he introduced Matt as his mate. My brother took offense and fought both Matt and my father. I don't think either man expected that. After my brother wounded both men, he left. I stayed to help them get back to their car. My father begged me to understand the mate bond, but I had no point of reference. All I saw was my father cheating on my mom who had been faithful all those years. Everything changed after that. Whether it was guilt or what, I don't know. But my dad stayed away from home more and more. He gave the lamest excuses. Mom put on a brave front, but I could feel her pain and embarrassment. Tyrese, my brother, hated what my dad was doing and lost all respect for him. Matt and dad got a place in the next county. For a while, he tried to be a husband and a mate."

"Impossible, his wolf would never allow it," one of the Alpha's said.

"True, in the end he lost it. He didn't want to hurt mom and he couldn't leave his mate. He never returned from his last tour."

Silas eyed the young man. "Do you think he lives? Perhaps he lives somewhere alone with his mate?"

The young wolf removed his hands from his head and crossed his arms. "Yeah. Yeah, I do. I guess he feels he's lived for everyone else, now it's his turn to live for himself."

Silas nodded, appreciating the young man's honesty, although he had to know they would have been able to smell a lie. "He left his wife's care to her sons. Under the circumstances that was probably for the best. She is free to continue her life without a man who is committed to another."

Although Silas had never heard of such a bizarre situation, he felt a pang of sympathy for them all. A mated pair had to be together or go insane. But the wife should've been taken care of, especially if she'd never agreed to become the wife of an unmated shifter. The boys had divided loyalties and that should never be the case. It was a mess that should have never occurred.

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