



**Save
Me
T'night**

MP Wallace

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Love is an Open Road

An M/M Romance series

SAVE ME TONIGHT

By MP Wallace

Introduction

The story you are about to read celebrates love, sex and romance between men. It is a product of the *Love is an Open Road* promotion sponsored by the *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* and is published as a gift to you.

What Is Love is an Open Road?

The *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* invited members to choose a photo and pen a letter asking for a short M/M romance story inspired by the image; authors from the group were encouraged to select a letter and write an original tale. The result was an outpouring of creativity that shone a spotlight on the special bond between M/M romance writers and the people who love what these authors do.

A written description of the image that inspired this story is provided along with the original request letter. If you'd like to view the photo, please feel free to join the [Goodreads M/M Romance Group](#) and visit the discussion section: *Love is an Open Road*.

No matter if you are a long-time devotee to M/M Romance, just new to the genre or fall somewhere in between, you are in for a delicious treat.

Words of Caution

This story may contain sexually explicit content and is **intended for adult readers**. It may contain content that is disagreeable or distressing to some readers. The *M/M Romance Group* strongly recommends that each reader review the General Information section before each story for story tags as well as for content warnings.

Each year, a dedicated group of Volunteers from the M/M Romance Group work hard behind the scenes to bring these stories to you. Our Editors, Formatters, Proofreaders, and those working on Quality Assurance, spend many long hours over a course of several months so that each Event is a success. As

each and every author also gives freely of their time and talent, it was decided that all edits suggested may be accepted or rejected by the author at any given time. For this reason, some stories will appear to be more tightly edited than others, depending on the choice of the author.

This story is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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Photo Description

Two men in the middle of hardcore doggy style sex in a bushland setting, both fully naked, and the sex looks angry. There is another set of men's legs there in the frame, but not a part of the sex.

Story Letter

Dear Author,

MC1: Stupid, arrogant son of a bitch. And I mean that in both the figurative and literal sense. Because if I could have laid my hands on his mother, I'd have skinned the bitch alive, and worn her as a fur coat. And this fool obviously takes after her. What did he think he'd get? Demanding an alliance. Forcing me into this goddamned mate bond. I may not have a choice, but I'll make damn sure he regrets taking my freedom, bargaining for my dick like it's something he could own. I'll give it to him till he screams. And then give him more.

MC2: He never knew it, but he saved me from her when I was a child. From the monster, my mother. Saved me and gave me hope. And now I need this alliance to save my pack from her legacy. But it's not just for the pack. I know it's wrong, forcing him to bond with me, giving him this insatiable craving to breed with someone he despises, someone he could never love. I am tainted. Her son. But I've been in love with him since I was a child. If this is all I can have of him, I'm taking it. I know he'll be brutal. I just hope he doesn't kill me.

Sincerely,

Mary

Story Info

Genre: contemporary, paranormal

Tags: shifters, revenge, enemies to lovers, public activity, dubious consent, first time, implied m-preg, men with children, fated mates

Word Count: 21,318

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And special heartfelt thanks to Anna, Raevyn, Sue, and Shaz.

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Excerpts from the Shifter Accords

Part 1 Sec 20

Infinitum Mate (IM)

A shifter has no control over who their Infinitum is. The mark appears on IM's after sex where they each bite each other whilst orgasm and ejaculation occur. In the ensuing six to twelve hours, the infinity mark, ∞ , will appear in matching places, anywhere on their bodies and is usually measured no more than 20cm and no less than 5. It is unique to each couple.

Chapter 1

Dear Alpha Wilder,

I am writing to you today with an offer to expedite your planned “Animal Sanctuary”. My apologies for the first offer made by our Pack Primus, as she was not in possession of all the information, the offer she made you was not lawful. This offer however, is very legal, and, with our agreement, and once contracts are signed and witnessed, quite binding.

As per the enclosed contract, I would like to offer you and the Dawson Rapids Pack, all of the Jackson Valley land and holdings, in exchange for a merger of our packs, sealed with a Mate Bond between you and I. You of course would retain the status of Alpha of the newly combined pack. My only wish would be to have the members of my pack wholly integrated and not in any way discriminated against once the ceremony was complete.

Please understand that this is the only offer I am willing to consider, and if agreeable to you, it needs to be finalised by the end of the week. I would also like most of the members of our packs to think that we are at least amenable to this joining if not excited by it, as I believe it would go a long way toward unity and accord within the ranks. In order to facilitate this, I also offer my assistance and considerable connections to advance your Government applications and permissions.

I look forward to hearing from you, and, if needed, discussing this further, but I am also assured that you will find everything in order and in your favour. Thank you in anticipation of your consideration.

Yours truly,

Seth Adams

Jackson Valley Alpha

“What the fuck? That stupid son of a bitch wants what to... Are you fucking kidding me? Is that bitch behind this? If she is I will skin her alive and use her to wipe my fucking boots on. Both of them... Fuck!”

Maddox Wilder kicked up and out of his chair after reading what had turned out to be a marriage proposal. Well, okay, no it was more of a clinical way of cutting his balls off. He started pacing around his office, running his hand through his deep auburn hair, agitation showing with every step. He read the letter again, his eyes scanning the page quickly. He could feel his claws threatening to make an appearance, and his jaw hurt from fighting to keep his fangs from descending. His body ached to let the wolf take over and rip apart the two people he hated the most in the world right now.

“I don’t know what’s worse... the yelling or the silent fuming. The upside of course is that you scared the rabble away.” Kobee, Maddox’s brother and Beta, grinned at him.

Maddox looked around the room and realised that except for the two of them, everyone had scarpered. Even the slow revolving of one of the now-vacant chairs couldn’t make him smile. Instead he glared at his brother, strode over to him and threw the letter and package at him.

“That bitch has been blocking me at every turn. I was sure that the hassle we were getting from the human government was due to her and now I know it is. He has all but admitted that the Jackson’s are behind it. Shit... dammit...”

“Weeeeeellll... Again on the upside this is giving you everything in one nice neat package. Actually what he is offering is more than you are asking for.” Kobee paused, looking at his brother, his green eyes so like Maddox’s, dancing with barely concealed mirth. “Aaaannnd if truth be told, he didn’t actually admit to blocking you, just that he could clear the obstacles in the way.”

“What the actual fuck, Kobes!” Maddox shouted, rounding on his brother, “Why don’t you read between the lines? Fuck... Don’t try and talk me down right now.”

His frenetic pacing started up again, and luckily for him, Kobee settled in to watch, and flick through the contracts whilst he flipped out.

“He wants the Mate Bond. Not just marriage, but the Bond. Fuck... why would he want to be tied down like that?” Maddox’s ranting became incoherent muttering that contained the occasional loud expletive as he worked through his

anger and frustration. Kobee largely ignored him, absorbed in the contract that had accompanied the letter.

When Kobee next looked up it was to stare into the questioning glare of his Alpha. Maddox raised an eyebrow at him.

“This is a good deal.” He started and continued straight over the inelegant harrumph that fell involuntarily from his brother’s mouth, “Even with my limited contract law knowledge this crosses all the t’s and dots all the i’s. Not to mention that the only thing that Alpha Adams gets out of this is your arrogant ass. I would recommend sending them to Jethro to go over, but it’s fairly straightforward. As of the end of the Mating Ceremony it’s all yours.”

Maddox was quiet as Kobee finished. The Beta Select watched him carefully, his peripheral vision eying up the distance to the door in case Maddox needed to vent physically. He was lost in thought, awash with many emotions warring for supremacy. Finally, he heaved a huge sigh and slumped back into the couch they were sitting on.

“Mad... it all comes down to losing the possibility of getting your Infinitum, in order to gain ‘The Sanctuary’ ...Can you really do that?” Kobee asked him quietly.

Could he? Your Infinitum was your heart, your soul, and your true mate, picked by the gods or fates to be your best possible match forever. He bowed his head, and his shoulders slumped, the weight of his secret a heavy burden.

“I was sixteen when I met him...” Maddox started, oh so quietly. Kobee moved closer to him, so as not to miss a word, whilst Maddox lifted his head to stare at the charcoal drawing of a child that hung in between the two windows of his office, sorrow covering him like a blanket.

“He was running away from *Her*. I was at the little lake right on the border of the two properties, and he came barreling into me, wringing wet, from nowhere. He was scared out of his mind, only six years old; he climbed me like a tree. I just wrapped him into my arms and held him.

“We hid when we heard her voice, from across the lake, screaming for him. He either didn’t or couldn’t talk, but he wouldn’t let me go. His hair was like liquid gold and soft, and when he looked at me with those huge melting chocolate eyes...” His breath hitched. “He was beyond exhausted, so I spent the whole day holding him, watching him sleep. God, it was like he hadn’t slept properly... ever. At one point, he woke up from a nightmare and bit me on the wrist.”

As he talked, Maddox unfastened the wide leather cuff he always wore, showing Kobbie the marks which were somehow still there. He had added a small tattooed infinity mark with the bite mark in one circle and a date in the other, as a present to himself on his twenty-first, as a reminder.

“Never before or since have I felt such peace, such possessiveness, such tenderness. He was mine. He was meant to be mine, and she killed him.”

As Kobbie looked at him, he realised how close he was to breaking down. In this moment, Maddox could see clearly what was going through his brother’s head. He saw when the light bulb moment hit Kobbie as he realised that this was the reason and answer behind almost all of Maddox’s behaviour in the last ten years. From the almost frenetic desire to better himself and become the alpha that their uncle had seen in him, to his nineteenth birthday when he seemed to lose the will to live, followed by the anger that seemed to drive him from then on.

Maddox returned his gaze to the drawing, unable to see the pity in his brother’s face anymore.

“I fell asleep holding him. It was a beautiful mild night with no moon out, so the stars were out in force. He must have woken and left before dawn because I woke up alone. Everything I did from then on was for him. I became the man he would have wanted, the alpha and partner he deserved. I tried to find out about him, tried to get a glimpse of him, but I never saw him again. I didn’t know his name. I found out on my nineteenth birthday that he was gone. That she had taken him from me. I know he was my Infinitum. Even though we were both too young to feel the mate pull, there was still a connection. And oh my God... his scent. Even now it stays with me. The shirt I had on that day, I never washed, so I could continue to at least smell him. I scented it at odd times, or at least a version of it.”

They fell into a short silence, which Maddox again broke.

“So the short answer to your question is yes I can do that. My Infinitum is no longer with us so that does not matter to me. It just galls me to be indebted to anyone in that woman’s family.”

After a brief pause Kobbie asked a question, which seemed to have him troubled. “Why did you never tell me, Mad? Why go through that all alone?”

He gave his brother a small sad smile. “It never seemed the right time until now.”

A knock on his office door interrupted their discussion. Maddox stood up and went over to his desk, his back to the door as he called for whomever it was to enter.

Jethro Perry strode into the office, followed by another of Maddox's enforcers, Sofia Woodham. Both alpha's by birth classification, they couldn't have been more different in looks as night was to day. Jethro was short, but solid with dark-brown hair and sharp, miss-nothing hazel eyes. He was their pack lawyer and as alpha wolves go, in his human form, he was one of the shortest. At five-foot-six, Jethro would have to crane his neck to take in all of Sofia's six-foot-one Nordic goddessness. Maddox snorted a laugh at that thought, as if that was even a word. White-blonde and pale-blue eyes, she was third in command and also his self-appointed PA.

Jethro seated himself at the desk and held out his hand. "Let me see the contract."

Maddox bit back a grin and used his signature single eyebrow lift. Jethro had the decency to blush a little, and quickly amended his demand, though his hand stayed poised in the air ready for the paperwork...

"Good afternoon, Alpha. I hear you have a contract I need to review?"

Maddox sat behind his desk as Kobee put the contract and letter in the stocky lawyer's hand before returning to the couch. Sofia made to leave, but Maddox waved her to the place next to Kobee and the three of them sat quietly, waiting for Jethro.

Who, as it turned out, didn't take very long at all.

"This is a remarkably generous offer, Maddox. Everything is skewed in your favour, even down to the protection for the Jackson Valley members. *I* couldn't have written this any more favourably myself. The only thing you personally need to be worried about is the Mate Bond. I don't want to seem indelicate, but I need to clarify that you understand exactly what this means. The minute you bite each other that's it. As far as sex goes, it's only the two of you for the rest of your lives. Neither of you will get a chance to find your Infinitum."

Maddox glanced at Kobee, and he knew his brother could see the pain in his heart. Still, when he turned to Jethro, he steeled himself, silently repeating that this was for the good of the pack. "I can live with that."

Jethro watched him like a hawk as he made to reiterate the importance of this decision. But with a sharp stare and a curt shake of his head Maddox halted him. “I understand the import, Jethro. Leave it.”

Jethro nodded and started collecting the paperwork as he got up to leave. “Just let me know when you have decided whether or not to accept this, Alpha.”

Maddox sighed and, with a look at the drawing, he said, “I *am* going to accept this. Do what needs to be done to merge the packs and make everything all nice and tight, legally speaking. I want to hold the ceremony on the next full moon, which is just over a week from now.”

He spoke to Kobee and Sofia next, “You two talk to the Pack Council and advise them to start the preparations. He has asked that this be as friendly as possible, so make sure everyone knows that whilst there is no...” He grimaced. “Love... yet... we have a good start of a friendship and the wish to build on it. That’s about the best I can do. I’ll send a reply letter and instruct him to get the two lawyers together to hash the rest out.”

The three wolves stared at him, varying degrees of understanding showing in their faces, but none of them moving. He growled softly, not wanting to battle with them as well as himself, and Kobee went into action ushering them all out and closing the door behind himself.

Alone at last, he let the sadness and despair wash over him as he thought of the promise of a future that the young man he used to be, and the boy he’d met so briefly, had had for such a short time. He didn’t cry, couldn’t, even with no one there, just stared out the window, allowing himself a short time to dream of what could have been, before he set out on the path that life had thrown at him.

Chapter 2

Alpha Adams,

Thank you for your generous offer, which I will accept. Please be advised that the date for the ceremony is set for Friday week.

I have directed our pack lawyer, Jethro Perry of Perry and Associates, to contact your pack lawyer to finalise any details. You will find his contact information attached.

I would propose that we meet for coffee on Saturday morning 9a.m. at the Cracked Pot on Oak St.

Maddox Wilder

Alpha

Dawson Rapids Pack

Seth closed the door to his room and sat on the end of his bed. He unfolded the printed email again and reread it. Not exactly full of hearts and flowers, he winced. He supposed he couldn't really expect anything more, but Maddox wanted to meet before the ceremony and that had to be good, didn't it?

He fell back onto the bed and stared at the ceiling. He was so glad he had found a way to save his people, even though the Jackson Valley Pack would technically cease to exist, its members being absorbed into the Dawson Rapids Pack once the ceremony was done. God, his ancestors must be spinning in their graves, but he could honestly see no alternative to save the people he protected from the bitch that was his mother and her crappy legacy.

In her tenure as Alpha, she had run both the finances and her people into the ground. Creative accounting and outright theft had her living a luxurious life as Pack Primus, serving on the Shifter Council. Even though he had untangled most of her machinations, and they weren't living hand to mouth anymore, they were still legally bound to send tithe to her. And that burned more than anything else.

Seth smiled again when he thought of this merger. Legally she did not have a leg to stand on, and the tithe would cease to exist just as the pack would. His

smile slipped at that last thought. He wished he could have come up with a better solution, one that would keep his people autonomous and maybe even rebuild the pack, but it was not meant to be.

Too many families and youth had left under his mother's dictatorship. Hell, even he and his father had been hidden away for a while, so as to not remind her that he was still alive, even though she had tried to kill him on more than one occasion. The pack was now left with a couple of families living on the property and the older members, who all now lived in the main house. His niece, Sunny, was another indication of how much of a monster that bitch actually was.

He closed his eyes, trying to will himself back in time to *that* day. The day that had changed him, the day that had saved him, the day that had given hope back to a six-year-old child. He could feel the warmth and the serenity that he'd felt that day, the safety he'd felt in the young man's arms.

Guilt weighed heavily on Seth. It was so wrong to force this Mate Bond onto the man he owed so much to. To tie him down to a mate who could never give him a family or the Infinitum Bond, who Maddox would never love. God, he knew of Maddox's reputed temper although it had never been directed at someone who didn't deserve it; Seth was more than a bit apprehensive that, at least in Maddox's eyes, he *would* deserve it. Well, Seth would love him enough for both of them.

He wasn't stupid, he knew that love was something that built up over time, but for him it had been infatuation, admiration, and when he got older, total lust for Maddox. Except for that one and only day and night, it had all been from afar. If all he could have of Maddox was this, then he would take it and make the best of it. He would make this work, he *had* to make this work.

He was so wrapped up in his thoughts, the first he knew of Sunny's presence in their rooms was when she jumped on him yelling that she'd got the big bad wolf.

"That's way too much three little pigs story for you, missy," he teased her, getting purchase, then tickling her into submission.

"Stop! Oh please... I give... up..." She giggled, unconsciously baring her neck in the wolf way of showing her submission.

Seth gathered her close and hugged her, kissing the top of her head. She melted against him, wrapping skinny arms around his chest. They sat that way for a while, saying nothing.

“Is that a letter from my new Da?” she asked timidly.

Seth pulled back, his heart beating a mile a minute, lifting his niece’s face so he could look into her eyes. Her beautiful deep-brown eyes, so much like his own, gazed at him with such trust. In him. He schooled his emotions knowing that she could feel them, which was probably why he saw hesitation in her right now.

“It’s a letter from Maddox, my future mate, accepting the contract,” he answered carefully, not confirming or denying her supposition. “Why do you call him Da, sweetie? And how did you know that it was Maddox who had written?”

They had talked about what was happening in as far as an eight year old could comprehend. She was aware of his offer of the Mate Bond and the proposed pack merger.

“Well, you feel the same way when you talk about him... all happy at first, then sad, and then it gets all mixed up. He is going to be my Da, isn’t he?” Her eyes were wide, and Seth could detect a sheen that was the forerunner to tears. “Nana Sarah says that you will be my daddy and Alpha Maddox will be Da. Can I call you Daddy... please?”

She stopped abruptly, and Seth watched her face as he was still lost for words and reeling from everything she had just said. “Papa wouldn’t be mad would he? If I have a Da and a Daddy, does that mean I can’t have him in my heart too?”

Seth scooped her up and hugged her partly so she wouldn’t be able to see him crying, and partly because he needed to hug her and comfort her. “Oh baby, your Papa would never be angry at you, and he will always be in your heart... and if you want to call me Daddy then that’s more than okay with me,” he murmured reassuringly while rocking her.

“I’m sure Alpha Maddox would love for you to call him Da. I’ll ask him when I see him tomorrow. Now my beautiful, gorgeous girl, it’s time for you to get ready for bed. So scoot, and if you hurry I’ll tell you a story.”

She scrambled off his lap and ran into her room, which was his old walk-in closet. When everyone had moved into the alpha’s house to save money, Seth had claimed the master suite for himself and Sunny.

He got up and moved around the antique divider into the part of his room that he used for his home and pack office. He placed the letter in a file that he

had on his desk, along with the packet that had come addressed to him, but for his legal counsel, which was him as well.

Inside was a letter advising him that the contract he was offering was too good to be passed up and if it was on the level then it was a go for things to proceed. Mr Perry had been very thorough in pointing out all the ways in which his client benefited and that maybe he, as alpha, should really get a second legal opinion... to be absolutely sure.

Seth snorted a laugh and proceeded to glance quickly over the contract that had been sent back. Then, finding an email address, he shot off a reply to Jethro Perry explaining that Seth was the legal counsel, being the person who had drafted up the contract, so he was fine going ahead as it was. He closed his computer as a beautiful redheaded woman walked in. She looked in her midfifties, though she was considerably older than that.

“Where’s my granddaughter?” she asked, smiling at Seth as they hugged. They were on par height-wise, both standing about five-foot-ten, Sarah Cullinane was Sunny’s maternal grandmother and the closest thing Seth had ever had to a real mother.

“Getting ready for bed.” He raised his voice slightly so she would hear him. “I hope that teeth have been brushed and toilet has been done, or else no story!”

Sarah chuckled as she headed around to the bathroom, helping Sunny finish up. Seth followed slowly and watched as his two favourite women fussed over Sunny’s hair. But with Sarah there, it wasn’t too long before Sunny was tucked up and waiting for her story.

“Okay, munchkin, which story did you want?” he asked, settling on the bed beside her whilst Sarah took up the chair near the bed.

“The Big Prince... Daddy...” She smiled at him.

He smiled back and gave her a big kiss on the forehead and started.

“Once upon a time there lived an evil Queen, who had two sons. She ruled her people with an iron fist whilst the two Princes tried to make life better for their subjects behind her back. When he was six, the Little Prince was taken away for his own safety, and even though the Big Prince saw him often he missed him very much.

“A beautiful Princess lived in the kingdom, and as he got older the Big Prince came to realise that the Princess was his Infinitum. Together they smoothed the way for their people, undoing as much as they could.” Sarah

settled in her chair a bit more with a sad smile on her face, watching the two of them on the bed.

“Then came the joyous day when they found out that the Princess was going to have a baby. The Little Prince was so very happy for his brother and the Princess, and they had a joyous feast along with the Princess’ mother and father that lasted long into the night. The Little Prince was very surprised when they named him Den Father, so that if anything should happen to them, then their child would be taken care of, and loved.

“The Evil Queen did not like that her son was happy and made the Big Prince and the Princess’ lives horrible.” Sunny shivered, watching him with her eyes wide as she did every time he told this story.

“The only time they were happy was when they were with the Little Prince and the Princess’ mother and father, in the Forest. It was one of those visits when they all realised the happy day had arrived, and the Baby would be born. And sure enough, their daughter, Princess Sunset, came into the world kicking and screaming at the end of the day. It was said that the last rays of the day bathed the child in light in the first moments of her life and that was why the Big Prince called her his own personal sunset.

“In that first year, Princess Sunset grew and prospered and all seemed well. The Queen seemed to be proud that her son had had a baby as if she had had something to do with it. All was well until just after Princess Sunset’s first birthday when she became sick. The Princess and the two Princes and her grandparents were worried, but no one seemed to understand what was happening.

“Finally, the Big Prince and the Princess decided that they needed help outside their kingdom, but the wicked Queen didn’t want anyone to know that her family, her royal line was not right so she went to see an evil man and paid him to stop the two from getting out of the land.

“Things went wrong, and the Big Prince and his Beautiful Princess were hurt very badly. By the time the Little Prince could get to them, the Princess had died in her Prince’s arms. The Big Prince made sure to tell the Little Prince how much he loved him. He made him promise that Princess Sunset would always know how much her Papa and Mama loved her and that they would always be with her in her heart. Then, as is the way with Infinitum mates, he faded away to be with his love forever.

“The Little Prince was overcome with grief, but took the baby Princess with him to take care of her. A few years later, he avenged the Big Prince and

Princess' death and took over as the King. And he and Princess Sunset lived happily until it came time for her to fall in love and have babies of her own."

Sunny yawned, her eyes were all but closed. "Little Prince now," she mumbled.

She always tried to hang on until the very end of the Prince stories. Seth scooted down the bed and kissed her, whispering goodnight in her ear. She turned and with a sigh snuggled into the pillow, asleep before he had even gotten off the bed. Sarah bent over and kissed Sunny on the temple, and together they left the room, turning off the light.

"You know she knows who you are talking about don't you?" Sarah said softly as they went out to the kitchen. "Admittedly, not who the Evil Queen is, she's still a bit too young to put that one together, thank the fates!"

She sat down at the breakfast bar and watched as Seth made them both a tea.

"Yeah I do know that. She has to know the story of her parents, and she needs to know that not everyone is to be trusted." He ran his hand through his hair, messing up the short style he seemed to prefer these days. "Christ, if Helaine ever found out Sunny was an Omega True, she would steal her and use her healing powers for her own benefit. I hate lying to Sunny and making her hide her ability, but I don't know what else to do."

Sarah sighed, agreeing with her Alpha. They had told no one else, not trusting that even inadvertently, it would get back to Helaine Jackson's ears, and then a sly grin crossed her face. "Please tell me that soon it won't matter if she knows or not. Please tell me he said yes."

Seth grinned and nodded.

She let out a whoop of pure joy and danced around the floor. He kept grinning from behind his teacup at her antics, only stopping when five faces appeared at the door with varying degrees of curiosity plastered on their faces.

Ezra Heller, Joshua Beckett, Henry and Millie O'Day, and Adela (Addie) Peters were close friends, elders in the Pack Council and most importantly people that Seth trusted.

"Good news I take it?" Addie asked

"Alpha Maddox accepted my offer," Seth supplied

Another four explosions of sound joined Sarah's, and Seth found himself apprehensively looking at Ezra. As Ezra caught his expression, he sighed and came over to shake Seth's hand.

"I am still against this, Alpha, for the reasons we have talked about, but if this is the way you want to go then... congratulations. When will the ceremony take place?"

Seth gulped and briefly closed his eyes. "Next Friday over at his Pack Circle."

Abruptly there was silence and stillness and with a grimace Seth faced Sarah.

"One week! That's all the time you give me to plan and get everything ready? Oh my God! He must really want you if he's pushing so hard for this. I've got so much to plan. Who are we inviting? What are we..."

"Whoa there Sarah, just hold onto your horses. All you need to worry about right this very minute is Sunny and my ceremonial robes. I am meeting him tomorrow, and we will organise what we have to organise." He turned and washed out his mug, getting himself under control, so they couldn't see how unsure he really was.

"Now I am going to watch a movie and decompress a bit. You are all welcome to join me." He turned and put on some microwave popcorn. He heard some giggling and swung around in time to see Sarah, Millie, and Addie moving fast out to the living room.

"Oh God," he muttered then yelled at their retreating backs, "*Not* that Sparkly Vampire crap. You do *not* get to choose the movie, you three!"

Hell if he knew how those three could laugh so evilly.

It was 8:52 a.m. and he was approaching the Cracked Pot for his meeting. Maddox was enjoying the morning, even though he was dreading this upcoming meeting. He had parked near the coffee shop about an hour or so ago and had taken himself off on a wander of the streets and parklands. It was a clean, crisp morning, the kind of day that had you feeling good about everything.

As he got closer to the shop, he could see that some early morning risers had ventured out to the park down from the Cracked Pot. There was a couple

sitting on a bench watching a gorgeous redheaded woman push an angelic looking red-haired child on the swing. A deep breath, and he knew that these were shifters and probably from the Jackson Valley Pack. He also caught that tantalising almost scent of his dead mate. Life it seemed, was always cruelly reminding him of what he had lost.

Goddammit, there went his good mood. He pushed open the door with a bit more force than he should have, giving vent to a tiny smidgeon of what he was feeling, but more than enough to set into motion a chain of mishaps that led to a caramel iced coffee being spilled on a man who had been sitting in the middle of the shop, sipping his own coffee and reading his tablet. Luckily he bore the brunt of the liquid, his tablet coming off clean as a whistle.

“Oh sir, I’m so sorry,” the poor waitress wailed as she tried desperately to help him clean himself up.

Maddox rushed over and both he and the manager seemed to get to the table at the same time. The guy was talking soothingly to the agitated girl, assuring her it was okay and there was no real damage done. Maddox had a few seconds to appreciate the man’s physique.

Coffee stains aside, he was gorgeous, only a few inches shorter than Maddox’s own six-foot-three, but slimmer, a body that fit his tight jeans and shirt and made Maddox’s mouth water for a taste. He wished he could scent him, but the spilled coffee and the general smell of the coffee shop made that impossible. The whole package was topped off with dark-blond hair that Maddox wished were longer so he had something to grab hold of. His voice was like liquid solace, and was calming more than just the waitress.

“Oh God, Katie what have you done?” fussed the manager.

Maddox interjected quickly before things got too out of hand in the blame game. “It wasn’t her fault. I wasn’t watching as I came through the front door, and I was a bit too forceful. Please let me pay for the two drinks. To show how sorry I am.”

The waitress, Katie, smiled at him in relief and the manager acquiesced without too much more fuss, sending Katie off to get the cleaning things and showing the man to a booth, settling him in before rushing off to remake the two lost drinks.

Maddox smiled down at the guy, wishing he was not about to do this meeting and had time to at least flirt with this man.

“I’d love to ask if you would share a coffee with me, but I am actually here to meet someone for a business meeting.” He smiled and sighed quietly when the man turned his dark-brown eyes and stared up at him.

“Well, I was going to say a similar thing, but I think I should just ask... ummm...” He tentatively held out his hand. “Maddox Wilder?”

Maddox’s heart skipped a beat then sank, as he realised that this was Seth Adams, the man he was meeting, the man he was determined to *not* like. Fuck... did he have to be attracted to him? This was gonna make holding onto the anger very problematic.

He smiled even though he knew it wouldn’t reach his eyes, but sat when Seth indicated the other side of the booth. They were silent until after the manager had delivered Seth’s coffee and taken Maddox’s order.

“Well... judging from the feeling I am getting from you, this was not something you wanted in your life?” The other man smiled, rubbing the back of his neck and looking up at Maddox through his long dark-blond lashes. Maddox fought to keep his anger, fought to not be charmed by the man.

“Being prostituted for land is not the way I envisaged meeting the person whom I would be spending my life with.”

Seth reared back as if he had been struck. Maddox’s snarl became a smirk as he watched the other wolf process what had just been said. Not giving him any breathing space he continued, “I have taken your deal, and I agree to the terms in regards to keeping the true nature of my feelings about you under wraps for the good of our packs, not for you. The invitations are being sent out as we speak, and I have it on good authority that you will receive an email with a copy of it for those you want to invite. We will take care of the catering and the logistics, you just have to be there.

“You will move in the day after the ceremony, and I understand that you have a daughter and her grandmother who will be coming with you. They can come at that time too. If you have any logistical questions just contact Sofia Woodham.

“I think that just about covers everything. Unless you have any questions?”

Maddox quirked one eyebrow, by now tasting the acridness of Seth’s anger, which had been rising as he spoke. Katie, the waitress, picked that moment to bring over Maddox’s coffee, depositing it on the table, looked at each of them, and then scurried away. Seth took a deep breath.

“Well, at least I know that it’s not my gender you object to. I had hoped that even given this... start... to our relationship that maybe we could get to know each other and at least be friends, but I can see that’s not in the cards.”

Gritting his teeth Maddox hissed, “What we have is not a relationship, not even the start of one. It’s a business deal, one that I don’t appreciate having been forced into. I cannot be friends with the son of the woman who caused the death of my... someone very close to me, so just get that out of your head. This will be impersonal and any *intimate* moments will be on a needs basis, that’s it.”

He got up, pulled out his wallet, and threw some money on the table. “I will see you Friday. Brunch will be served at ten a.m. and you and your family can get ready at the house.”

He turned abruptly needing desperately to get out into the air and get away from this place. He slammed open the door and strode off down the street, refusing to admit that his heart had lurched at the defeated look on Seth’s face that he had caught by accident, as he walked passed the last window.

Chapter 3

The Dawson River and Jackson Valley Packs

Kindly invite you to the

Mating Ceremony

of

Alpha Maddox Wilder and Alpha Seth Adams

At the Pack Circle at Dawson Run

At 1p.m. on the Friday of the Next Full Moon

The two packs will merge during the ceremony

As our Alphas become one couple,

Alpha and Omni of the Dawson River Pack.

Seth rolled his shoulders, letting the robe settle around his body. He looked at himself in the mirror. Everything he wanted in his life was about to be permanently out of his reach, and he had no one to blame but himself. He closed his eyes and slowly released the breath he had taken. They would all be safe and, more importantly, out of his mother's reach. He could make it work, he would make it work for Maddox. He owed him so much... more than Maddox would ever know.

He was so angry with himself for causing the man extra hurt. Finding out Maddox's mate had died before they could claim each other *and* that it was his mother's fault, was a hard blow for him to get up from. But he had to. He had to try and make it right. He smirked to himself that at least they had something in common, a deep and abiding hatred for Helaine. He could work with that.

He took one last look at himself in the mirror and headed out the door before he lost his nerve. He was so glad that everything was going so fast because he wasn't quite sure he would ever be able to do this if he had had too much time to think about it. Kobe was outside the door ready to *escort* him to the Pack Circle. Seth walked straight by, leading the way, the deep green of his dad's ceremonial robe gently swaying around his legs.

As he entered the clearing where the circle was, he looked around and the first thing he saw was Sunny smiling at him surrounded by most of his pack's

elders. He gave them all a small smile then looked into the centre of the ring where Maddox and the two Pack Council elders were.

His heart stuttered as he took in how beautiful Maddox looked in his black ceremonial robes. Seth let go just for a second and pretended this was because they were madly in love and Infinitum mates. Maddox's scent was everywhere, and he could almost deceive himself into believing it was love and lust he could see and scent. That was until the definite smell of anger and arousal permeated the clearing. Suddenly shy, he looked away from Maddox and that was when he saw her.

What the fuck was she doing here? And she was watching him so she would have caught his surprise. Way to go Seth! Way to come into this on the back foot and give his bitch of a dam any power or extra knowledge at all.

His eyes went straight back to Maddox who was watching him with almost feral glee. He glared at Maddox, who confirmed with a look that he had been the one to invite her here and wanting nothing more than to strangle the man. Jesus he had to get his head in the game or he was going to run.

Well, with all these players here, he could tell that this had all the makings of a royal clusterfuck. How did he get here again? He continued to stare at Maddox and was just about to turn and leave when his hand was taken into a smaller one. Startled, he looked down and there was Sunny smiling up at him, looking healthier and happier than she had in a long time, and beautiful in her own green ceremonial robes that had been his at one stage. Yep that was why. Okay... he could do this.

Sunny pulled at his hand, gently leading him into the circle. She pulled at his hand, motioning him to lean down to her.

"Everything will be alright Daddy," she whispered to him.

He reared up looking at her with wide eyes. She had called him Daddy again. His insides warmed, putting a smile on his face. A glance at his soon-to-be mate, and those good feelings settled like a rock. He felt nauseous. He glanced at the two elders ready to perform the ceremony and nodded. Robert, from Maddox's pack stepped forward and addressed all present.

"We come here today to witness the merger of two packs. With this pact, we bring the wealth of both and join them together to make all within better and stronger than they were before."

Sarah smiled at him and continued, "We are also witnessing a mating bound by love and cemented by ties. Ties to family, ties to pack and new blood. With

the signing of this accord, Jackson Valley Pack are now, and forever more, Dawson Rapids Pack members. With the love and submission that Alpha Seth Adams shows to his intended mate, Alpha Maddox Wilder, all will call him Alpha.”

The pact was brought out and placed on the largest stone in the very centre of the circle, already open and ready to sign. Seth and Maddox stepped up on opposite sides of the stone in preparation for the next part. Sarah and Robert moved as well, whilst Sunny gave his hand a squeeze then let go, heading back to Joshua and Harry. Out of the corner of his eye Seth saw Ezra move forward with a few other people.

“Under the auspices of the Shifter Accord and as indicated in the Bylaws therein, we claim on behalf of both packs the right to witness the Lex Coniugium.”

In the unnatural silence that followed the soft but hellishly clear voice, Seth’s heart went into overdrive and his knees went weak, and he would have buckled if not for Sarah holding onto him. The four inside the circle turned to the group now separated from the rest of the crowd. Seth felt the tug of betrayal in his stomach and heart as he confirmed that the speaker was one of his close advisors, fuck he considered him a friend. Ezra glared at him, finally it seemed, able to vent his true feelings. Standing with him, their faces varying masks of hatred, were it seemed the last of the pack, truly in his bitch of a mother’s hand, and a few that were obviously Maddox’s people.

“L-l-l... Lex Coniugium... Ezra... what... why?” he stuttered to a stop, and Sarah squeezed his arm.

Maddox moved toward the group, and Seth got the distinct impression from the set of his shoulders that this was as much a surprise to him. Seth looked dazedly over Maddox’s shoulders, and his eyes fell on Helaine at the back of the group. She was smirking as she watched Ezra and Maddox face off. His heart lurched, and his stomach churned as he realised that more than likely she was behind this new development.

“You realise what you’re asking?” Maddox’s voice cut through his thoughts.

Ezra sneered, his face twisted in hatred.

“Yes I do. And if this travesty is to continue then it needs to be done with witnesses, and I want to see you both branded. This is a legitimate and legal

demand and due to the lack of any other stipulation in both the contract and any correspondence, by our laws, this *will* be done.”

He handed over the formal written request duly signed by two members from each pack.

“If either of you refuse to go through with the Lex Coniugium then the contract is null and void, and Alpha Adams loses his status, reverting leadership back to the next in line.”

Ezra smiled then at both of them, the dare obvious in his eyes. Seth barely glanced at his former advisor and friend, his eyes riveted on the woman that had apparently given birth to him. She was watching him now. He shook his head at her trying to plead silently to stop this. She smiled at him, a greedy look in her eye. Fuck, she did not think he would go through with it, and he had been just considering that very thing.

He mentally shook himself and smiling nastily back at her, he said to the gathering in general, but never taking his eyes from hers.

“If that is what the packs want then yes I am willing.” A growl made him glance at Maddox who was swinging his gaze from Helaine to himself, and Seth realised that both of them were smiling at each other, and the look on Maddox face clearly said he had the wrong idea.

Shit, this was going to be brutal, hopefully he could survive.

Chapter 4

Ceremonial Addendum to a Mating Contract

This document is in reference to a contract agreement between Maddox Wilder of the Dawson Rapids Pack and Seth Adams of the Jackson Valley Pack.

May it be known that under the auspices of the Infinitum Act, we the undersigned parties, for good consideration, do hereby call for the Lex Coniugium.

This amendment shall be made valid as if it is included in the original stated contract. Failure to comply and proceed with the ceremony under these conditions will mean the invalidation of this contract, and the forfeiture of Alpha Seth Adams' position within the Jackson Valley Pack as the petitioner.

No other terms or conditions of the above-mentioned contract shall be negated or changed as a result of this here stated addendum.

Jackson Valley Pack

Signature: *E Heller*

Signature: *George McElroy*

Print Name: *Ezra Heller*

Print Name: *George McElroy*

Dawson Rapids Pack

Signature: *C Hudson*

Signature: *McGM*

Print Name: *Charlene Hudson*

Print Name: *Nero Madison*

Maddox saw red. He was totally livid. The smiles on that bitch and her son's face made his blood boil. He could feel the change want to overtake his body, his jaw ached, and claws broke through skin. Kobee's hand on his shoulder grounded him, gave him the calmness to hold back the change. Two could play this game.

"Let's do this then," he growled out.

Sarah and Robert stepped forward, helpless to do much else, but preside over the ceremony.

“The Lex Coniugium has been called for and in accordance to the law the representative Council member should at this time hand over the ceremonial instruments,” Robert said, keeping his voice as flat as possible.

Helaine Jackson approached them with a small wooden chest in her hands. She held it out to the two elders who took it from her and with a smirk at both Maddox and Seth, his soon-to-be mother-in-law returned to her spot at the back. Sarah and Robert busied themselves with setting up the brand and the special salves that were needed to both ease the burn and make the brand permanent.

The five-centimetre-across infinity brand went into the fire, the metal heating up fast. Sarah opened the containers of salve and held onto them and a cloth. And as Maddox watched, Seth undid his ceremonial robes and slipped out of them and knelt, naked at the stone facing the majority of their audience.

Robert took hold of the handle of the brand, pulling it out of the fire. He stood near to Seth and held up the brand.

“These two have found each other and what fate has not seen fit to bestow upon them, they have agreed to give to each other. The binding of these two lives serves the greater good for themselves, their families and their packs. The marks they receive today show their commitment to each other.”

Robert stood before Seth, whose blond head was bowed, and as Maddox watched, the small brand came down on his chest just above his heart. With a count of five Robert lifted it, and allowed Sarah in to swab it first with the ointment to assist with the permanence then with the salve for the pain. Through this all Seth had made only one tiny noise, his head stayed bowed, but Maddox could see the tension in his body until Sarah applied the salve.

Oddly enough Maddox found that he was holding himself back from rushing forward to offer support. That was until he caught Helaine watching with undisguised glee at her own son’s pain. That alone made him remember, why he was here and what they were doing to him. As the brand went back into the fire, Maddox moved forward as well, shedding his robe and kneeling next to Seth who continued to look at the ground.

Maddox could smell the burnt flesh underneath the clean and fresh odour of the balm, as he watched Robert and Sarah swap the roles. His stomach flipped,

and he felt slightly nauseous, but with the thought that Seth had made it without breaking down, he figured it really couldn't be that bad.

Sarah retrieved the brand, and turning back to the couple kneeling, she repeated the words that Robert had just said. The brand came down on his chest in the identical place to Seth's. And at first he only felt the pressure. Then holy motherfucking *God!* He grunted involuntarily as the count of five seemed to take on the veneer of never-ending torment. As Sarah was stepping back and Robert was about to apply the gels, he felt a hand cover his fist and immediately felt better. The pain subsided, and he barely felt Robert's ministrations.

The hand slipped away as Robert moved back. The two elders stood in front of the stone addressing the packs.

"In the time-honoured tradition of the hunt, Maddox and Seth will participate in the chase, running the gauntlet back to this circle where consummation of the ceremony will be witnessed by those calling for the Lex Coniugium and those who of necessity have to observe."

Robert continued, handing Maddox a pen, "Signing the contracts now, sealing their lives in the eyes of the law." Both of them signed. "We as the Elders of Note sign as witnesses."

Straightening up the two of them intoned, "So, as conduits of the fates and representatives of the law, we order Maddox and Seth to shift."

Maddox was bemused as his shift, for the first time in a long time happened at the compulsion of another. He shook out his coat, then froze as he got his first glimpse of Seth in wolf form. His mate was a gorgeous blond wolf. He watched as Seth took off, and for a second he was confused? Why was he running away from him? His wolf, however, got with the program fast, taking off after the slightly smaller wolf.

He followed the trail, the wonderful scent so close to the scent that had been teasing him for years, enjoying the chase. The scent was driving his wolf a little crazy. He had never felt this horny in his wolf form. He just needed to get to the other wolf. He chased. He weaved. He scented. He howled. And as they drew near the circle again he pounced, and the two wolves tumbled back into the circle.

Both changed immediately. Maddox could feel Seth's arousal pushing against his stomach as he rolled so that the other man was on top. His erection

was pressing into the other man's thigh. He grabbed the back of Seth's neck and forced him down to meet his mouth. Their first kiss was full of lust and need. Seth opened his mouth and met his tongue thrust for thrust.

Maddox could hear the small noises coming from the man above him as he devoured him. Their combined scent was off-the-charts arousing, scrambling his head and flooding the clearing that held the circle. Maddox growled as Seth rubbed against his body. He broke the kiss to suck and nip down to his neck. He felt something touching his hand, and he opened his eyes.

Abruptly brought back to the present, he gazed into the eyes of his brother. The very worried eyes of his brother. Grabbing hold of the body currently writhing on him, he jumped to his feet, causing Seth to slide down across the front of his body. Maddox growled at the people around him, his wolf not caring what the human part of him had planned to do, only seeing a need to protect his very naked mate from everyone.

And just that quickly, Maddox pulled back realising what he had just been thinking. He looked down into the dazed eyes of the man he had been determined to hate. His grip strengthened around Seth's biceps as he forcibly reminded himself of the manipulation, made easier when he caught immediate sight of Helaine and her smirking face, and gathered his anger back. He leaned back in and hissed in Seth's ear "Let's get this over with shall we, *Mate*. I would hate to disappoint Mommy Dearest."

Maddox spun him around to face the few people left and grabbed hold of Seth's impressive erection. His other hand held the sachet of lube that his brother had passed to him which he opened using a quick claw change. He squeezed as much lube as he could onto his hand then let the packet go. He ran his hand a couple of times over his own dick, coating it liberally. Then not so gently, whilst still jacking Seth off, ran one finger down Seth's crease, noting the shiver that went through the man, then pushed into the other man's tight channel.

Seth's inner muscles tightened around Maddox's digit, and he closed his eyes to avoid the others seeing his eyes roll back into his head at the luxuriously silky feel. As quickly as Seth got used to the single finger, Maddox added another one, then another working at opening him up.

He opened his eyes and at the same time pushed Seth forward onto the stone, lining his cock up and entering him on one powerful stroke. Seth screamed, and Maddox watched as he scabbled at the rock trying to get

purchase and leaving behind claw marks. He held still, allowing Seth vital seconds to get used to his size.

They both heard the low derisive chuckles coming from Helaine. Maddox felt Seth tense and was hit with a wave of rage coming from the man in front of him. The smell of it was acrid in his lungs. He leaned forward and grabbed hold of the man's cock, which was showing a serious lapse in arousal. Sliding his hand up and down, the anger soon gave way to arousal, and Seth started to push into Maddox's hand and back onto his cock.

Okay now, this was more like it. He needed this. He needed release. He needed to hear Seth scream, in pleasure now it seemed, and then make him scream some more. He pulled back so that only the tip of his cock was just inside the entrance to Seth's chute, then plunged back in. Seth whimpered and then moaned, noises that were driving Maddox crazy with the need to hear more of them.

It was a fight in Maddox's brain, one part wanting to stay angry, but the part that just wanted to get lost in the pleasure and the overwhelming sensations of fucking the man under him, was winning. He was pounding into Seth, giving in to the adrenaline and the pheromones that were coursing through his body.

He changed the angle of his hips slightly and knew his aim was just shy of the mark when Seth's back arched, and he hissed long and loud. Another slight adjustment and Seth screamed as Maddox pegged him hard on his prostate. Maddox curled down over Seth's body, unable to resist the call of his smooth flesh. He kissed across Seth's shoulder blades as he spread his own legs, encompassing his lover's thighs for better leverage and kicked the pace up. The sound of flesh hitting flesh was spurring him to greater effort.

Maddox could feel Seth's heartbeat through their chest-to-back connection.

"Fuck... Guuh... So. Fucking. Tight." He punctuated each word with a hard stroke, murmuring softly into Seth's ear before nipping down hard on it.

Seth moaned long and loud. He was making incoherent sounds of need as he pushed back onto Maddox's dick, meeting him stroke for stroke. Maddox could feel his balls start to tighten and knew that he wouldn't be able to hold back much longer. Seth wailed trying to push back when he pulled all the way out.

He also let out a startled yelp when he was flipped onto his back, the stone smooth from years of ceremonial use, but still cool on his heated flesh. Maddox

quickly lined himself back up and plunged into Seth, who howled out his pleasure. Seth quickly wrapped himself around Maddox, his legs pulling Maddox closer, his arms forcing Maddox to be chest-to-chest with him and his engorged cock between them, revelling in the friction, precum flowing freely.

Maddox bowed his head, fitting it in the crook of Seth's neck where he proceeded to suck up a fairly impressive bruise. His hips continued thrusting, going a little bit faster and harder with every plunge. Seth's head was flung back a little, his eyes closed and his face awash with pleasure. As if he could feel Maddox looking at him, Seth opened his eyes. His voice, like smooth whiskey, whispered roughly, "Fuck me. Oh God, please... Maddox..." That last one was drawn out until it was a hiss.

Maddox felt his cock swell and his balls draw up, and the familiar tingle start somewhere near his spine. Seth was moaning and mouthing at his neck, sucking up bruises, and making Maddox feel like his cock was connected to his neck, then he felt it. Felt the signs and Maddox's orgasm hit him like a freight train. He could feel himself swell even more and knew, from the cursing that was coming from Seth, that his cock was continually rubbing or pressing his squirming partner's prostate.

Maddox felt his teeth lengthen as his body was hit by the first of many violently earth-shattering tremors that had his toes curling. He bit down on Seth's exposed neck and shoulder joint only a second before he felt Seth's teeth mirror his. In that same instant, it felt like the head of his cock had exploded, his hot cum spurting into Seth, forever marking the other man as Maddox's.

Maddox groaned, drawing sweet blood into himself, finally having some of this man in him. Seth's body bowed upward, his own cock pulsing out a stream of cum covering both of them. Seth let go with his teeth as his orgasm took hold, jerking his muscles wildly. Maddox held on, his teeth still firmly embedded, holding Seth as still as possible whilst he emptied his balls into the writhing man.

He slowly let go when he felt Seth's orgasm release its hold. He lapped at the mark he had made, sealing the wound and ensuring it would be permanent. He kissed and sucked down Seth's sternum lapping at the cum that was currently sticking them together. Above all else, he knew he wouldn't be able to move as his cock was still so swollen they would be joined for a while.

He pulled back slightly. Seth pulled their bodies closer, but watched Maddox's face. Maddox gave him a small smile then looked up at their

“witnesses”. Sarah and Robert were standing with their backs to the circle. Koebe was also not facing them. Rather he was watching the watchers, standing close, but not enough to arouse Maddox’s anger.

Only a few were left, mainly the people who had called for the Lex Coniugium. Maddox was darkly pleased and only a bit surprised that their audience, willing or not, were all in various states of arousal, which he could see and smell.

He growled as his look took them all in. “It’s done,” he said, his voice hoarse. “Now leave. I’ll deal with all of you later.”

He watched as Koebe ushered them all out whilst Sarah and Robert brought their discarded robes over. They averted their eyes and mumbled out their congratulations and then left the two men alone. They both stayed silent until they could hear no more noise from the shifters who had left.

“Well... that’s something to tell the grandkids about, heh?” Seth said quietly with a derisive chuckle, his face averted.

Maddox looked down at him, trying to summon the anger that fuelled him. His chest felt constricted as he thought about what had just happened. He carefully grabbed a firm hold of Seth, and lifting them both up, he turned and sat on the stone, the gorgeous man still firmly wrapped around him.

“Look at me, Seth,” Maddox commanded gently waiting a beat before continuing. “I am so sorry this had to happen this way. I had hoped we could gently ease into this and get to know each other better before... well... ummmm... before getting to know each other better.” Shit he was making a botch of this.

“I’m screwing this up, why don’t we talk after the reception, a little more comfortably and just the two of us?” Maddox tilted Seth’s chin up to get him to look at him. When he spotted Seth’s eyes, he was shocked to see the chocolate depths swimming in unshed tears, and he felt about two inches tall. He started to move, but Seth brought him back to the reality of their situation with a gasp and a sexy wriggle.

“Fuck... Are we tied? Because you are still huge.” He looked into Maddox’s eyes hesitantly, a charming blush sneaking up onto his cheeks.

“Well... not in the traditional knotted sense, but my cock swelled a lot in the last minute there soooooo...” Maddox trailed off, this could get awkward real fast.

Seth smiled through the shimmering that made his eyes look liquid, but quickly changed to a teasing glimmer when he gently rolled his hips as he leaned in for a kiss. “S okay, Maddox. I can wait, and it feels wonderful still.”

Maddox stared at Seth, his emotions all over the place. He just couldn't reconcile the asshole controlling bastard with the man in his arms.

“While I have you captive, so to speak.” Seth pulled back and looked Maddox in the eye. “Anything you think you feel toward Helaine Jackson, any hatred you might carry is nothing at all compared to the loathing and anger and hatred that I feel toward her. She has in every way, shape and form made my life a living hell and tried on numerous times to end me. She has taken almost everything and everyone I have ever loved, and I hope and pray every single day that I am nothing at all like her.” He took a deep breath and continued.

“I know you probably don't believe me, and I know what you think you saw back there, but I need you to trust me on this, I never want to see her again and whilst I don't want to be the one to end her life, if she died tomorrow, if I *did* have to kill her, I would not mourn her, I would be relieved to never have to deal with her again.”

Silence once again filled the clearing, as Maddox struggled with what his body and mind were telling him. That maybe, just maybe, they might have a chance at building some sort of normal life. This last week had taught him that someone to share his life with was important to him; something that he hadn't realised he desperately wanted until he felt like it had been taken away.

The decision settled easily on him. He would stop and look and trust in what he was beginning to feel. He really had nothing to lose and everything to gain. And besides even with the stress of the Lex Coniugium and the audience, the sex had been fantastic, and if he was completely honest with himself, he wanted to try it again to see if it was a fluke.

He grinned. “Okay, I want to try. We do need to talk more, but we can leave that 'til tomorrow.” He leaned in but stopped just before their lips joined. “I think maybe we should seal this deal with a kiss? Yes?”

With a small nod from Seth, they met in the middle and softly kissed. It took his breath away. He pulled back just as his cock finally shrank enough to be able to gently pull out.

“Let's go do this reception thing, shall we?” Maddox kissed him quickly again.

Maddox promised silently to thank his brother, when he found the small pack of baby wipes on top of the robes, along with his phone. They cleaned and dressed, and in silence, made their way to the main house.

Chapter 5

Outgoing Messages

Betas

Kobes: *U ok? Rcptn going well.*

4 LC signers in sm conference rm.

???

Alpha: *B there soon.*

Is BIL still there?

Sofia: *BIL???*

Alpha: *Bitch-in-law!*

Kobes: *cant c her but didn't c her leave.*

Alpha: *U 2 deal with 4.*

6mth probation unless they want out

then help them pack.

Kobes: good as done.

U ☺ or ☹?

Alpha: ☺ x2 explain L8r.

Seth gripped Maddox's hand as they entered the large room the pack obviously used for get-togethers. A cheer went up from the majority of both packs as they made their way across to the food table. Maddox squeezed Seth's hand as they both smiled back at various groups. Seth noticed the questioning look that Kobee sent Maddox as he made his way over to them, but neither of them remarked on it. That would be another discussion for later.

Maddox only let go of his hand when they got to the table and grabbed a plate each. As they each grabbed some of the food, they found themselves surrounded by well-wishers and slowly but firmly separated.

It was only after about half an hour when he found himself over by the French doors that led to a patio area taking in some air and momentarily alone.

He watched Maddox, who was currently chatting with Kobe, Sarah, Henry, and Millie. They were smiling and talking, everyone looked like they were having a good time, so he ducked out into the garden, letting the peace and stillness of the night wash over him.

“You know this doesn’t absolve you of your fiscal obligations toward your mother.”

Helaine’s voice felt like nails on a chalkboard. His shoulders drooped, and he let out a big sigh as he faced her.

“Oh and how do you figure that?” his voice sounded weary even to his own ears. “The pack has not merged so much as disbanded, and all the members are now Dawson Rapids Pack. You don’t have a leg to stand on. Please go and leave us all the hell alone.”

She grinned genuinely enjoying herself. “Oh no, son. I am having way too much fun watching you squirm. How do you think he is going to react when he hears how your father died? How you and your niece are defective wastes of breathing space.” She got up and slowly stalked around him. “What will he say when he gets nothing of any value from this mating? Pack members who are old and or useless. What do you think his reaction will be once he realises that he should have taken my first offer? At least he wouldn’t have been saddled with you for the rest of his life.”

His skin was crawling, and he repressed his instinct to shudder and protect his neck, when she stopped behind him. He could feel the waves of her dominance trying to influence him, but he had his own weapons.

“How is he going to look at you when he realises that you planned this ever since the day you met? That the man...” And she mock-shuddered at using the word. “He has mated to, has manipulated his way into his bed. Don’t think I won’t show him the proof. The notes you thought you threw away; the doodles you left all over the house for just anyone to pick up.” She paused, and he could feel her frustration now at not being able to get a rise from him. “What about the proof of the way you have blocked him and manipulated him into this sham of a mating by offering him the very things you have been withholding from him from the start. I am sure I can... get... that together for him.”

Seth rounded on her taking her by surprise.

“Listen to me bitch and listen well. Everything that is on that contract is in response to your manipulations. The dismantling of the Jackson Valley Pack is

so you would get nothing. The land and everything else was the pack's, not yours, and every t was crossed and every i dotted, so that you are finally out of our lives for good. Whatever you have now, and the stipend that Maddox generously agreed to take over is all you will get.

“Whatever evidence you think you have will come to nothing except make my life unbearable so have at it, my people are safe from you and from becoming destitute. We both know who has been blocking Maddox at every turn, and I will undo all the knots you have done so this sanctuary not only goes ahead but also thrives.

“You got your cheap porno show when you used Ezra and those others to call for the LC Ceremony. Did it make you happy to watch your only living son's first time? Did it make you all warm and fuzzy inside when you tried to ensure that it could have ended in rape and pain, except for the fact that Maddox is a kind man even through his anger?”

He drew in a deep breath and kept going, running over the top of her, “Let me tell you a few things now that I have your undivided attention, and before I ask for the only thing I am going to ever want from my new mate; to make sure that you never come near us again.

“In that paperwork was the official adoption paperwork for Sunny. She is now Maddox's and my child only, so I feel safe in telling you that she is an Omega True, that's why she was so sick. She got better and powerful, and you threw away two lives and your granddaughter for nothing.”

Helaine found her voice finally. “What would you know about anything? You have no proof I did anything to your brother or his mate. If what you say is true then I will get her back. She will be a great asset for me... and the Council. You can't possibly fight me on this, I'll make sure that you don't have a legal leg to stand on.” She laughed at him.

Both of them started when someone started clapping, slowly, and out of the shadows came Sarah. Still clapping and looking disdainfully at Helaine. “That was a wonderful performance Helaine, simply wonderful.

“Just a couple of things that Seth forgot to tell you. He knows that the contract and the papers are watertight because he was the one who put them together. He has worked tirelessly to ensure that what little was left to the pack was used for us. He worked his way through law school on scholarship and work and graduated top of his class.

“He had many offers, which I tried to make him take, but he decided to stay here and get a job in town, and since you left, he has been the best Alpha that anyone could ask for even with the mess you left behind. He has legally, both in the human world and in the shifter world, ensured that everything that has happened here today is legal and above board, and Sunny will grow up strong and healthy and free to choose her own way in the Dawson Rapids pack and the world.

“It’s such a relief to finally be able to throw that in your face. We are finally rid of you for good, and you will not be able to touch my granddaughter or Seth ever again.” She stood shoulder to shoulder with Seth by this time, and he was warmed by her presence and defence of him.

Helaine’s face turned bright red and she vibrated with barely suppressed anger. She took a few steps toward the two, but stopped when her gaze fixed on something behind them.

“Oh please, bitch, you need to make a move on my mate so I have a reason to take you out.” Maddox’s growly voice went through Seth and straight to his cock. He found himself short of breath and panting when he felt the strong arms of his mate enfold him, drawing him back to the warmth of his chest. Kobe also came forward and moved in front of Sarah.

“Now, if you don’t mind, I am inclined to grant Seth’s one wish as a mating gift.” He paused. “Leave now and never come back. This is your one warning. If you set one foot on Dawson Rapids Pack land, which now includes all of Jackson Valley’s land, you will be hunted and killed on sight. If you approach my mate, our daughter, her grandmother, or anyone else in my family anywhere at any time, I will make it my personal business to hunt you down and eliminate you. Do I make myself crystal clear?”

Seth shivered at the undisguised hatred evident in Maddox’s voice. He watched with muted glee at the submission and fear that his biological mother was exuding, and a smile broke out as he watched her scurry back through the door and out of the house with Ezra in her wake.

“Is the evil Queen really gone?” whispered a voice from behind a hedge.

“Sunny?” Seth glanced at Sarah and they shared a horrified look. She rushed over from her hiding place and jumped into Seth’s arms.

“I’m sorry I hid and listened, but it was boring inside and the sky is so pretty, then you came out and she did and she said all those horrible things.

She's the Evil Queen isn't she, Daddy? She's the one who hurt my Papa and Mama. She's the one who made you so sad all the time? I don't want to see her again!" She was sobbing by now, her head buried in Seth's shoulder, and her body firmly wrapped around his.

Seth hugged her tightly to him, rocking her gently and letting her cry for a bit before he answered.

"Sweetie, I never meant for you to find out yet, but yes she is the one. I can't lie to you anymore, but this will be such a long talk and we have had such a big day. Can we talk about this tomorrow?" Seth crooned to her, soothing her. He looked beseechingly at Maddox.

"C'mon, little one, let's get you to bed," Maddox suggested softly. He put his arm around Seth's shoulders and led them through the hall and up to Sunny's new room.

Sarah took her into her bathroom and got her changed and ready for bed whilst Seth fussed making the room as comfortable for Sunny as possible. Sarah tucked her into bed, and kissing her on the forehead, left the two men to finish up.

"Daddy, can I have some warm milk please?" she pleaded gently with him.

He smiled. "Be back in a second, baby girl."

As he left the room he heard her quiet question, which halted him in his tracks. "Can I call you Da?"

There was silence; they must have been staring at each other. *Oh God, please let him not break a tiny girl's heart*, he prayed.

"I would be honoured if you called me Da, Sunset Jackson, yes."

Seth let out the breath he had been holding and continued on his mission to get warm milk. As he approached the room again he slowed to try and figure out what they were doing. As he got closer, he could hear Sunny's voice. She was talking softly and it sounded like she wasn't far off sleeping, so he ventured in only to stop when he realised that she was telling Maddox a story.

"And the Little Prince kissed his Wolf King's cheek softly as he left to go and fight the Evil Queen." Sunny paused and whispered in Maddox's ear then, "That's the lady you told to never bother us again, don't you know?" Then louder, "With the hope that one day they could be together forever... I think that maybe Daddy could tell me the rest of the story soon. I wanna find out why

the Wolf King never came back to help the Little Prince, and if he did, did the Little Prince and the Wolf King live Happily Ever After? Daddy said that when I am older he will tell me the rest of it, but you know what?"

"No, Pup, what?"

"I don't think he knows the ending yet."

Maddox softly laughed and then kissed her forehead and Seth, deciding this was a good time to interrupt, came in farther. "Did someone order warm milk?"

Both sets of eyes, one green and one brown, turned to him. She sat up, taking her milk, whilst Seth avoided Maddox's stare. They both left, turning off the lights, and leaving the door slightly ajar.

"She's a good pup. How long have you been raising her?" Maddox asked as they started to go back to the reception.

"The last two years. Ever since my brother and his mate passed."

Seth could not look at Maddox. How much of that story had Sunny gotten right and told Maddox? How was he, Seth, feeling now that Maddox might know of the most important event of his life, one that Maddox probably didn't even remember being a part of. His stomach did a slow roll, and he felt like he was going to throw up.

Spotting a bathroom door he ran to it, barely making it to the toilet before bringing up everything he had eaten. He jumped when he felt hands on his back.

"Whoa, it's okay. 'S only me."

Seth glanced up with watery eyes, and he could see the concern on Maddox's face.

He sat back against the wall and sighed as he tried to find the right words, the right thing to tell him. Maddox passed him a cup of mouthwash, which he swished around vigorously, spitting out into the bowl. Then a cup of water appeared, and Seth greedily drank.

"Are you the Little Prince?" Maddox asked quietly and Seth nodded, gulping the last of the water.

"Am I the Wolf King?"

Again Seth nodded.

"She told me you were dead. I didn't even realise you were her son until just now."

“You asked after me?” He was stunned, his thoughts running a mile a minute. Maybe, just maybe Maddox was as affected by their first encounter as he was.

“You changed my life. How could I not ask after you? I didn’t even know your name, I could feel you were my mate. I have a drawing that I made of you in my study. As the years have gone by the feeling hasn’t waned. But having you here and alive I am confused.” He undid the leather band on his wrist showing Seth the tattoo. “But I was so sure back then. This is where you bit me during a nightmare, that night. It was my only tangible thing of you. It kept me focused. It was like I knew that I had to be a man worthy of you.” Maddox ran his hands through his hair looking intently at Seth.

“I watched you from afar. I was so afraid that if I showed the least bit of interest in you, she would do something to take you away from me. Then a few years after the lake it was like you changed overni...” he paused, a horror-stricken look crossing his face, “That was when she told you. Oh my God, I always wondered why my dad got me to Sarah’s to live after that. She... You... Fuck!”

They sat and stared at each other, the faint noises from downstairs the only thing disturbing the silence between them until Maddox shuffled over, sitting next to Seth, extending the quiet for a bit more.

“I’m so sorry for everything she has put you through. I should have forced the issue and come for you,” Maddox said quietly.

“Oh God, no! Do *not* take the blame away from her. You did nothing wrong. There was nothing you could do.” He climbed onto Maddox’s lap and grabbed his face. “This is all on her, *not* you, never you.”

He bowed to the overwhelming impulse to kiss Maddox. Seth gave him a soft, loving kiss, pushing every emotion he was feeling gently into it. He flicked his tongue across Maddox’s lips tenderly coaxing him to open up to him. As he gained entry he didn’t escalate the kiss, just kept a slow exploration that felt wonderful.

He broke the kiss unhurriedly and reluctantly.

“You gave me hope, when I had none. You gave me a reason to keep going. You saved me. You. And I only found out your name later. *You* are who I have dreamed of. *You* are who set the bar for me. I couldn’t date or even feel attraction to someone else because no one ever measured up to you. All the

horrible evil things that she has done has led me here, to you, to your arms. And I can't help but be thankful for that."

Maddox's gaze was unfathomable as he stared at Seth. Maddox closed the small distance and kissed him, this time it was his tongue gently probing for entrance. They kissed for a while, it wasn't demanding just peaceful until Maddox abruptly threw back his head severing their contact.

"Fuck me sideways."

"I could get with that program," Seth murmured back trying to re-engage in their kiss.

"No. No seriously, Seth. I have to ask you an important question." Seth settled back, backing off a bit from Maddox's lips.

"Okay, what is it?"

"Was tonight... ummmm... tonight when we... ummm... Jesus this is hard. Just have to say it... was tonight your first time?"

Seth looked at him weighing up lying to him versus the truth. It took all of five seconds to realise that they needed to be honest from the get go. Helaine had done enough damage with her lies, he would *not* follow suit.

"Yes." And he watched as warring feelings played across Maddox's face. Guilt seemed to be the most predominant, with a good dose of anger and anxiety.

"Talk to me, Maddox. What is going on in your mind?" he implored softly.

After a short pause and a long breath. "It didn't even cross my mind to ask. Your first time should have been special, not in front of others, and not part of that travesty of a mating ceremony. God, I am so sorry. How can you even look at me? I was so angry with you and your mother, at first I didn't care if I hurt you. In fact, I wanted to hurt you. I wanted to make you scream the way I was screaming on the inside." Maddox's eyes were watery, and his voice had gone hoarse with emotion.

"But you didn't hurt me. Okay, you made me scream—a couple of times—but they weren't in pain. My God, if I had to go through that with anyone, you are the one I would choose, angry or not. I can't absolve you of any guilt you have except to say there is nothing to feel bad about. You saved me tonight, saved my family, saved my pack." He stopped and took a breath.

"We both did the best we could with the information we had at the time. You need to take that on board. We have both done things we shouldn't have

and probably regret, but please, please don't come down on yourself so hard, I want us to start—if not new, then at least with a clean slate.”

He leaned into Maddox and kissed him. It was hard and fast and left them both gasping for air and panting from tension. Maddox butted his forehead against Seth's and smiled at him.

“I think we can do that. I believe we can try and see how we go. But first we need to get back down to the party and get these people gone so we can start all over again.” A small peck on the lips, and he picked them both up from the floor setting Seth on his feet and straightening himself up then waiting for Seth to do the same.

Maddox grabbed his hand as they left the bathroom and with a smile they made their way back hand in hand.

Chapter 6

Further Excerpts from the Shifter Accords

Part 1 Sec 27

By birth the shifter is designated into three classifications, Alpha, Delta and Omega. (see full details in Part 1 Sec 10).

Two other classifications happen after birth.

1. An Omega True comes into their healing powers in line with their first shift, which is usually earlier than normal. Mark is the omega symbol, which appears around the hip/groin area.

2. A Theta shifter comes into their powers and mark when they mate their Infinitum. Can be ANY of the other three types until and unless HE finds his Infinitum (true/soul/heart mate). The mark itself varies in size and design but always contains the theta symbol. At the time they receive their marking they come into their power of being able to affect the mood of anyone in their family or the whole pack.

2.1.1 Thetas can also reproduce but only when Dragon genes are present (mix is acceptable)

Part 2 Sec 18

Within the structure of a recognized grouping there are designations, include the following:

<i>Designation</i>	<i>Classification (Type)</i>
<i>Alpha</i>	<i>Alpha</i>
<i>Omni</i>	<i>The Omni is the Alpha Mate</i>
<i>Beta Select (#2)</i>	<i>Alpha</i>
<i>Betas</i>	<i>Alpha</i>
<i>Enforcers</i>	<i>Alpha or Delta</i>
<i>General pack</i>	<i>Alpha Delta Omega Theta</i>

<i>Pack Council</i>	<i>All</i>
<i>Elders, Juveniles</i>	<i>All – age indication only</i>
<i>Primus</i>	<i>Pack Representative to Shifter Council</i>

Hot.

He was so hot.

Why couldn't he get cool?

Burning up. Why couldn't he wake himself up?

Push through the pain. Wake up. Wake up. Wake up. Fuck. Wake the fuck up.

Seth rocketed up in the strange bed. He gasped and started panting, his eyes wildly looking for why he had woken up, his body supplying him an answer. He was still hot. Sweat was pouring off of him. He stumbled out of the bed, barely registering Maddox's restless sleep as well.

Without turning on any of the lights, he lurched toward the bathroom, knocking over the letter packet that Sarah had given him before they left for bed. He picked it up returning it to his bedside table, continuing on he turned on the incredibly bracing shower to cold and got in, moving to target his neck and back in the coolness.

Slowly his heartbeat settled back, and he felt himself return to his normal temperature. He turned off the water, but stayed in the shower recess for a little bit longer getting his breathing under control. Grabbing the huge soft towel from his earlier shower, he wrapped himself up to soak up the water and stood there leaning against the glass, with his eyes closed almost falling back to sleep.

And it seemed he did nod off for a short bit because his heart missed a beat and then raced like it was trying to come out of his chest when the light came on in the bathroom. Thankfully it was the mood wall sconces near the bath so he was not blinded. He blinked madly anyway trying to calm yet again.

“Seth. You okay?” Maddox asked quietly.

“Yeah, just needed to cool off for some reason,” he admitted.

“Well, don't fall asleep in there will you?”

“Again?” Seth chuckled and got out of the shower.

Maddox came in and used the toilet and was washing his hands as Seth towelled himself off. He turned to hang his towel, but dropped it when Maddox startled him.

“Holy Fuck what is that? I mean when did...? Ummmm... where? Fuck!”

Looking over his shoulder Seth’s eyes went wide, his heart again racing, as Maddox advanced on him, his gaze firmly focused on Seth’s back.

“What? Maddox, what is it? You’re scaring me.” Seth started to turn around, trying to see what Maddox had seen, but a hand shot out and stopped him.

“S okay Seth. It’s not bad, just... it’s gorgeous in fact, but... how?” Maddox stumbled trying to explain.

Seth could hear the wonder in his voice. So he turned his head to watch Maddox’s face as he lifted his hand and started tracing a pattern across shoulder blades and down his spine. All the while, Seth wondered when his balls and back had become so intimately connected. His cock had also gotten instantaneously hard. So fast in fact that he swayed, feeling lightheaded. Maddox gripped his arm harder.

“What is it?” Seth whispered hoarsely, opening his eyes. Shit when had he closed them?

“You have a tattoo on your back.” The reverence in Maddox’s hushed voice was easily heard. “It’s beautiful, Seth. Why did you cover it up? God... how did you cover it up? It wasn’t there after your shift?”

“What are you talking about? I don’t have a tattoo. Whaa...?”

He turned his back toward the mirror, and his eyes went wide. There, on his back, in black, graceful, and interweaving Celtic tribal lines, was a stylised dragon, wings spread across his shoulders, body trailing down his spine ending with its tail wrapped and interwoven with another Celtic design of two wolves’ heads forming the top of a love heart. Nestled at the bottom, in the small of his back, was the Theta symbol, which looked like a backwards calligraphic e. It was delicately interconnected with the wolves and the dragon.

“Maddox... Am I seeing things or is that the Theta symbol...? There, right at the bottom?”

“Fuck. You’re not seeing things. You’re a Theta?” Maddox straightened and stared at him in awe.

“But the mark never appears unless...” Seth turned around slowly.

“Fuck.”

“Oh my God!”

They stared at each other for the longest time. Seth’s eyes were drawn to Maddox’s throat where the infinity symbol with the word *J’adore* woven into it rested just below his Adam’s apple, and on either side forming a choker-type effect was a Celtic-styled band of interwoven lines and symbols. He touched Maddox’s mark at the same time that his touch was reciprocated.

Not a word was spoken between the two of them, Seth could only gaze into his Infinitum’s eyes. Maddox pulled him close and they clung to each other.

“Well, you were right about me at least. I was your mate... umm... am your mate.” Seth ventured softly.

“I never thought I would get this moment. I thought I had lost everything when I was told you were dead. I almost died because I didn’t care anymore.” He stopped and held Seth closer, his arms becoming vicelike. Seth relaxed into him nuzzling his neck, supporting him as they came to terms with the fact that one lie could cause so much trouble and pain.

“I don’t expect you to jump up and declare your undying love for me, Maddox. I just want us to have a chance. A chance that others deemed we should not get.” He chuckled a little bit, feeling clichéd as he went on, “I would like us to have a chance at our own happily ever after.”

Maddox pulled back and looked into Seth’s face. Seth really hoped that everything he was feeling was showing in his eyes. He leaned up and into Maddox, initiating a kiss that started out gentle and questing, but turned into hot and heavy as soon as Maddox gripped his ass cheeks and proceeded to grind their bodies together.

Maddox took charge of their kiss almost straight away, but not to be outdone, Seth climbed him like a tree, a big gorgeously naked tree. Nakedness that Seth took advantage of, touching whatever he could reach, pinching Maddox’s nipples, scraping his nails down his back, all whilst he devoured his mouth. Seth’s lust fogged mind barely registered the sound of a drawer being opened as their tongues dueled, but it seemed his cock, which hardened to the point of pain, was on a Pavlovian response mode, realising what that sound meant.

Snick.

Seth wrapped his legs around Maddox, grinding his cock against Maddox's abs, leaving a trail of precum. Maddox moved back until the back of his legs hit the stool they had in the bathroom. He sat, keeping Seth firmly wrapped around him. Seth continued to kiss and nibble and suck bringing up bruises and marks across Maddox's chest, neck, and collarbone.

He was lost in a haze of lust, he wanted nothing more than to get Maddox inside him. "Please," he whimpered as he tried to get friction against his incredibly hard cock. It hurt and he needed. He just needed.

"Mad... dox... need... now..." Between nips and kisses, he couldn't believe his voice sounded so needy. God the need.

He sighed when he felt Maddox breach him with two fingers, spreading lube and stretching him even though he was sure he didn't need it.

"God please... Just. Fuck. Me. Ready now." He licked up Maddox's neck and into his ear, biting on the lobe to try and hurry him up. He just couldn't think straight, but then he felt Maddox breach him with his cock. There was no finesse, he was grabbed by the hips and Maddox thrust up, at the same time he forced Seth's hips down so that they smashed together.

"Aaaagghhhh. Fuck." Seth opened his eyes wide and cupped Maddox's face as he unwound his legs, putting them down on each side of Maddox's thighs. He leaned back slightly and working his legs, he lifted himself up and rolled his hips as he fucked himself on his mate's cock. As he rode, he kept Maddox's eyes on his, not holding himself back at all.

He rolled his hips and rocked back and forth as he rose up and down. He built up speed, coming in for a kiss and transferring his hands to Maddox's shoulders for better leverage. His eyes rolled back in his head, and he moaned as he found his sweet spot and focused his energy on hitting it every time. Maddox focused on his neck, sucking along the Infinitum mark, building an unbelievable tension in Seth.

His muscles and the base of his spine started to tingle, and he could feel a powerful climax approaching. He relaxed and contracted his inner muscles, milking Maddox's cock as he slammed down taking in all of Maddox over and over. He could feel his dick swelling, and he knew he wouldn't last much longer. He whimpered and swore and dug his fingernails into Maddox's shoulders.

"God, Mad, I'm gonna come."

He needed Maddox to come.

“Ride me, baby, ride me hard.” Maddox voice came out hoarsely as he gripped Seth’s hips and thrust up to meet his downward slide. Bracing himself against the wall Maddox took over pounding up into Seth, which took Seth into another stratosphere.

“Oh fuuuck. Yes. Yes.” Seth cried out, throwing his head back exposing his neck, and snapping his hips in time with Maddox’s thrusting.

He yelled as he felt Maddox’s cock expand to those almost painful proportions again, and he ground down, using Maddox’s dick to rub against his prostate, making him gasp and trying to find breath to take into his body. Maddox pulled him closer, and his lips connected with Seth’s neck, causing Seth to shout.

“Oh fuck, Mad, I’m coming,” he howled the last word. His body convulsing with the force of his orgasm, his inner walls clamping down, forcing Maddox to bite down on Seth’s shoulder as his own orgasm ripped through him. Seth was making whimpering noises as he came down from his orgasmic high.

They stayed there wrapped around each other until Maddox softened enough to come out. Not talking, just being. Seth was the one who reluctantly pulled apart, cringing at the way the drying cum stuck to their bodies. He got up and helped Maddox to stand, leading him into the shower.

“I could really get behind making a clean start,” Maddox rumbled, ogling his mate’s ass. “Except for the fact that the sex we have had so far has been unbelievably good. I don’t think I wanna forget.”

Seth turned in the shower and drew him in. “Have we talked about shower sex yet?” He grinned wickedly.

“No, I don’t believe we have.” Maddox dove in for a kiss.

Chapter 7

Niall and Seth, my beautiful boys,

If you are reading this then I am not with you anymore. I just need you both to know how much I truly love you. I know I might not have seemed the strongest or most switched on Dad and I also know that I was not always all there, but I only want the best for you both.

Hopefully, seeing as you are reading this, you have found your Infinitum and are both happy. I have included in a packet along with this letter, some further information and contact names for you to use if needed. I wish only the best for you both no matter what happens. I just need to let you know about your heritage; tell you a bit about me that could affect you both or any children you might have.

I am a dragon. Years ago my clan came under attack by a rival clan, and after a particularly brutal battle in which we lost most of our members it was decided by the remaining members to scatter. There were children in amongst them, for the most part orphaned so my father, your grandfather decided to bind the children's powers so we could be hidden effectively.

Not long after, all the children were left with various packs, prides, clans and flocks. It was just my father and me. When he placed me with the Jackson Valley Pack, he left a letter telling me all this and a list of all the children and where they were placed. I was able to contact everyone, but I had to tell them there was no way of unbinding their powers, as my father had died not long after leaving me.

You are half-dragon, my boys, and as such should come into your dragon powers at about twenty-five. Embrace what your father never could, find a dragon to teach you what it means to live with such a magnificent creature if you are lucky to have one.

It has been hard for me all these years. I can feel the animal inside me, but the nature of the spell is such that we can't

communicate. I would not wish the hell of this life on anyone. You two boys have been the reason that I have hung on as long as I have. You are the lights of my life, and I will love you forever.

Your father,

Hunter Adams.

“Babe, you have to stop and rest for a minute or you are going to run yourself ragged before Zeke even gets here. That packet from your dad, that Sarah gave you, was never intended to put you in a mental ward, and your dad himself gave you Zeke’s name,” Maddox drawled from the doorway of yet another room that Seth was manically cleaning. “And besides, you saw the crusty old dragon’s house. I don’t think cleanliness is a priority.”

Seth smiled ruefully remembering the state of Zeke’s house, but finished fixing up the cushions anyway. He stood abruptly and blinked, swaying slightly. Maddox shot over and grabbed him, steadying him.

“Whoa. Remind me not to get up so fast.” He chuckled self-deprecatingly, and then glanced around at the room then at Maddox. “I’m going a bit nuts, aren’t I?”

“Ya think?” snorted Kobee, coming into the room and taking a seat, with Sofia right on his heels. “Zeke Jones does not strike me as a shifter with OCD, and the way you have been in the last few days has been nothing short of manic. Even Jethro rang, singing your praises for organising his filing system, and sorting out caseloads, and for clearing a couple of nasty cling-ons. All in just the two days per week that you have been going in for the last two months. He wanted to make sure you weren’t going to burn out before you had been there a year.”

Sofia took over the narrative then, “Everyone in the pack has been by to see you at one time or another, and I sometimes have a hard time keeping up with you.” She waited until Maddox pulled the man down onto his lap to finish up. “You are our Omni, Seth, and most of us know you will make an awesome one. You obviously care for Maddox, you have his back as the Alpha, you have taken on the responsibilities and duties of the Alpha’s Mate, the mantle of the Omni. Remember you have the rest of your lives together to perfect it, you don’t have to do everything today.”

Maddox could feel, and by this time, hear the thoughts and emotions racing around inside his mate. He ran his hand up and down Seth's spine, listening to his heartbeat slow down and his thoughts start to come back into order.

"I know some people are getting worried about me, but I have to tell you I feel fine. I have this excess energy that I need to channel, and rather than driving everyone else nuts, I have tried to use it... dramatic pause... for the betterment of man, or just this pack." He snorted, trying to hold in his laughter.

Maddox took a moment and reached out with all his senses, studying Seth critically.

Seth smiled at him knowing what he was doing. "*I really am fine, see?*" he projected with a smile.

"*Yes you are... very very fi-i-ine,*" Maddox projected back lasciviously, moving his hand down under underneath his belt and slowly toward Seth's ass.

Kobee faked a dry heaving noise. "Well, we can see that this conversation has taken a turn for the Oh My God, get a room! So let me just say... not fair, mind-talking in the middle of a serious discussion, and Sarah texted that they are ten minutes out."

Seth jumped out of Maddox's lap, swatting his brother-in-law hard as he passed him. He gathered up all the cleaning supplies he had out and dashed to put them away, yelling at Kobee that he could have led with that information.

Maddox was still chuckling when he greeted Sarah and Zeke at the door. He told Seth through their link that Zeke was here and laughed again when he got an answering growl from his mate. The old dragon actually looked only sixtyish in human years, his black hair only greying a bit at the temples. He stood as tall as Sarah, but was powerfully built, and his silver-grey eyes seemed to miss nothing.

Dinner was a noisy affair, which Zeke seemed to relish and add to at every opportunity, and Maddox had to smile. Even though they still had no idea why the man had changed his mind suddenly, neither he nor Seth were going to look a gift horse, or in this case dragon, in the mouth. After they had finished eating and Sunny had been put to bed with the usual stories, Maddox, Seth, Zeke, Sarah, Kobee, and Sofia all settled into the smaller, less formal drawing room.

Zeke gave Seth some old looking books, explaining as he went. "These books are what every young dragon receives from his or her parents as they are growing up. It explains things in ways that each stage can understand. For

instance—” he gestured to the first book on the pile “—that one is a child’s book and it has stories that keep the dragon culture alive and flourishing, even with us being so scattered.”

Maddox settled back as Zeke continued to generally outline what they were going to do. Finally, Seth relaxed, leaning into him, Maddox’s arms coming around to cradle him. The conversation flowed easily and freely, and the evening sped by.

“So we will take it at a comfortable pace,” Zeke outlined. “I am sure we are bound to get annoyed with each other, but I am making a commitment to you, Seth, and to Sunny and any children you might have, to help them to embrace their dragon within.”

He yawned then, a huge one that sounded like it cracked his jaw. He laughed and excused himself. “Sorry folks, but I have been travelling all day and I think it’s just started to catch up with me.” He got up from his chair and stretched as everyone around him did the same.

After saying goodnight, Zeke asked Maddox and Seth to walk with him, to his room.

“I need to ask you to do something before we begin, tomorrow. I need some information about you and about your ancestry. All I need is a small blood sample to run an ancestry DNA test.”

Seth nodded and looked at Maddox, who could see the excitement and nerves, he put his hands on Seth’s shoulders and the man leaned into him, unconsciously rubbing his head gently across Maddox’s chin, scenting them both. They followed Zeke into his room and quickly got it over with. Zeke turned to them both as they made to leave.

“Tonight, before anything else.” He grinned at them. “I need you both to read the first, second, and fifth chapters of Dragon Mine. We need to discuss some stuff in detail and depth tomorrow so, please do this.”

Maddox held out his hand and as they shook he replied, “Thank you for coming, Zeke. It means the world to both of us.”

He smiled as he closed the door and Seth and Maddox walked hand in hand to their room. Seth taking hardly any time to get ready for bed, then jumping in and regaling Maddox with all kinds of facts about dragons, whilst he saw to his own needs.

“Oh my God, listen to this! ‘There are only male dragons, there have never been female dragons.’ Wow, the full-blooded baby dragons get born from a

type of egg that acts like a womb. Maddox are you listening? I wanna find out more about this, it's fascinating—Oh crap!”

Maddox spat out the toothpaste he had in his mouth and bounded to the door to the bedroom to see Seth as pale as a ghost, with the book in a hand that had gone limp. Seth turned disbelieving eyes to him.

“What?”

“Men have babies. The male dragons can have babies,” Seth whispered.

“What? Hang on a minute I wanna see that.” Maddox turned and rinsed his mouth. He jumped onto the bed beside Seth and grabbed the book. Reading the page Seth was on and quickly flicking back to get a picture of what was being said, he breathed out a sigh.

“Babe, this is a book about full dragons not half-bloods, and besides, you had a father and a mother, now didn't you?” He pulled Seth into a hug, holding him close. With his enhanced hearing he could tell that Seth's heartbeat was returning to normal, and his breathing was evening out as he listened to Maddox.

“Oh God, Maddox, I honestly don't know how I feel about this,” he softly said. “On one hand I am freaked out by the thought of men giving birth, and me being pregnant, and another tiny part of me is sad that this is not about me. Damn there goes my man card.” He dashed away a few tears.

They both laughed softly. Maddox's whole body clenched at the thought of Seth being sad. So he held him close and went in for a gentle soft kiss that was all about togetherness rather than passion. Maddox maneuvered them both beneath the covers and drew Seth close to him, understanding without words that his mate needed this more than anything else right now.

Maddox gently drew him in and held him close, as he realised something very important. They had gotten to know each other, going out on some formal dates and even some impromptu outings. They had been fucking each other stupid, exploring each other's kinkier side, gentler side, downright almost exhibitionist side. They had taken it slow and sensual, hard and fast, and quite a lot in between.

They had talked about movies and books and pack business, politics and renovations and what Helaine might do next. They had fought and argued, agreed and discussed, and Maddox was finally, irrevocably able to agree that the fates had gotten it right. He was head over heels totally in love with this man in his arms.

He watched Seth sleep until his eyes grew heavy and his blinks became longer and finally, he fell asleep. He woke up to the most wonderful sensation of his cock being sucked.

“Fuck... Oh Go-ungh... Baby, I’m comi... uuuuunngh...” Maddox felt the cum blast through his body and out the head of his dick, and he came hard, his body bucking up and indiscriminate needy noises being pulled from him.

Seth kept sucking and licking making sure every drop was cleaned up, whilst Maddox lay boneless, trying to see if he could get his brain cells working again. He pulled the man up from where Seth was wrapped around his legs, into a slow and languorous kiss, tasting himself on the other’s lips.

“Good morning, baby. That was incredible. I want to taste you now.”

He was slightly puzzled when Seth resisted his gentle tugs to move farther up so Maddox could get at his gorgeous uncut cock. His face also turned an adorable shade of pink, which Maddox noticed just before Seth ducked his head.

“What?” With one finger under his chin, he tipped Seth’s head back.

Seth’s face went an even deeper shade of pink as he mumbled softly and fast, “SokayIcamesuckingyouoff.”

Maddox scrunched his face, trying to figure out what Seth had just admitted. Realisation dawned along with a huge satisfied smile across his face.

“Oh babe, that just shows me how much I turn you on and that is beautiful. Shit, don’t get embarrassed. I love that I can do that to you and that you have the power over me to make me forget my name. Seth, look at me.”

Seth lifted his head, his eyes showing a hesitant curiosity.

“Seth, I came to a realisation last night whilst watching you sleep. Ummm, okay, that sounded creepy.”

Seth laughed at him. The sound went straight to Maddox’s heart. He wanted to be able to make his lover, his mate, laugh like that forever.

“I love you,” he simply said.

It felt like Seth’s entire existence, his body, his mind, his very soul all shrank down into a microscopic black hole, which he was nonplussed to admit felt very comforting, as his brain processed what Maddox had just said.

Oh my God, he loves me. For some unknown and unfathomable reason, the man he had been infatuated with, crushed on, admired from afar and finally fell head over heels in love with was giving him those three words that sent his spirit flying. And fuck it all if he was caught staring with his mouth hanging...

“Oh good Lord, I love you too. Head over heels, hope the honeymoon never ends, even want you if you eat cookies in the bed, love you.” He stopped himself as he could hear he was babbling, but started planting kisses all over Maddox’s face, punctuating each with a word.

“I.” Peck.

“Love.” Peck.

“You.” Peck.

Which is how Sunny found them. Maddox drew the sheet up to their waists, as she bounced on the bed.

“Da! I love you too!” And she giggled as Maddox tickled her whilst she was trying to kiss him as well.

“Breakfast, you three,” Sarah called as she passed their room.

“Coming, Nana Sarah,” they all chorused. Seth jumped out of the bed and threw on some sweats and an old T-shirt, and on his way out the door grabbed Sunny and swung her up in the air.

“I’m gonna have my eggs Sunny side up.” He laughed at the old joke, then put Sunny down and they raced to the kitchen. His heart was light and so full from Maddox’s declaration of love.

He turned the radio on, and he and Sunny danced around the kitchen fixing breakfast. He saw Maddox coming toward the kitchen deep in conversation with Zeke. He watched Maddox’s face as they stopped outside the small study; he laughed at something that the older man said.

He watched as Maddox asked Zeke a question and then paled at the answer. Zeke quickly led him into the room they were outside of and a sense of dread came over Seth. He started moving toward where the men had disappeared, but was waylaid by Sunny twirling round him singing about being happy and dropping the juice bottle on the table before climbing into the chair.

“C’mon, Daddy. Let’s have breakfast.”

Seth shook his head and looked over at the table and smiled at his two favourite women. He pushed his worries to the side and they tucked into their substantial breakfast.

Zeke came out and joined them as Sarah was teasing Seth for drinking chocolate milk instead of coffee. He pouted, pretending that her dissing his beverage choice upset him.

“Help me here, Zeke. Tell these two that chocolate milk is a manly drink. Although why I have suddenly taken a liking for it at breakfast I’ll never understand.” He grinned at the dragon.

“Chocolate milk is very manly, Seth,” he replied good-naturedly. Although from the corner of his vision he could see Zeke shaking his head and Sarah and Sunny were laughing at them.

Zeke helped himself to a big plate of sausages, bacon, eggs, and pancakes and sat down at the table. Seth looked over at the door a little worried that Maddox still hadn’t put in an appearance, but shrugged. He would take him a cup of coffee after if he didn’t turn up before they had finished.

“So Zeke what’s on the schedule for today?” he asked, genuinely curious.

“Well, we will probably end up going through some of the basics of dragon lore and getting to know about your heritage. It’s the stuff we tell the kids over years, so that by the time they are Sunny’s age they have the basics and history. But before we do that I have a few things I need to discuss with you.” Zeke paused. “Alone.”

“Ooookay then.” He turned a quizzical expression toward Sarah who jumped in knowing as always what to do.

“Come on, Sunny baby, we need to get you ready for the day.”

The two took their plates and cups to the counter leaving them there before hurrying off to get dressed. Zeke jumped straight in.

“I understand that you and Maddox read some of that book last night? Well I think some clarification probably should be in order before I show you something. Yes these books are old, and yes they were more than likely written with pure dragons in mind, but we have since found out more about dragon hybrids and we have found that it doesn’t matter the dilution the same applies to all of dragon blood.”

“Oh... okay... Ummmmm... what does that mean for me?” Seth felt a weird disconnect happening inside his mind. Like he was seeing everything through a tunnel, but it all came rushing back into reality with Zeke’s next comment.

“Well, I’m not sure what else you have read, but I think what you really want to know is that, as a theta, when you are in heat, which thankfully happens about once every two years, you and Maddox will have to take precautions unless you want to get pregnant.” Seth went pale and slumped into his chair.

“When does this heat start?” Even to his ears his voice sounded small.

“Well, that right there is the good news. Your next heat does not hit until about two to three years from now, so we have plenty of time to go through what we need to before then. But there is some other news that I think you need to see first.”

He pulled a slip of paper out of his pocket and pushed it across the table to Seth, who took it cautiously, like it was going to explode. He opened and read it, then reread it.

“Maddox Wilder, you are a dead man!”

The sound of pounding footsteps alerted Maddox to the fact that he had better get the hell out of Dodge while the getting was good.

He was at the French doors, and slipping out when his mate’s face appeared all flushed and angry. He grinned at the man, and as he went out he called back, “I love you, Seth Wilder. Remember that.”

Seth laughed only slightly hysterically at Maddox’s declaration. Chasing him across the room he yelled after his Infinitum’s retreating back, “Yeah, and I love you too. You cowardly... Inconsiderate... aaaagggghhhh. Maddox, you are so far in the doghouse you cannot see the light. How could you get me pregnant?”

Finis

Author Bio

MP Wallace has always been a reader, devouring her first Enid Blyton novel at the tender age of 7 (she actually got about 7 of them for her birthday and read them many, many times). Later in school, one of her teachers had the audacity to say she had shocking handwriting and should practice at least two pages of longhand writing a night. Whatever she wanted to do, copy a novel, write her own stuff just as long as she practiced.

Well two pages grew and ideas flowed and her handwriting never got better, but she discovered a love of writing, and finally the voices found her. Through the years the voices have been at times loud and clamouring or soft and loving, but always there in the background.

Romance / erotica has always been a love of hers and even if people make her sad when they disparage or don't appreciate a genre that she has loved for a long, long time, she has also never allowed it to dim her own enthusiasm or love for it. So it is with great trepidation and a whole lot of hope, she puts her baby in your hands and hopes that you enjoy reading it as much as she has had writing it.

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