

Wolf or Love Chapter 5 - CHAPTER 5

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It was like there was this huge constriction around her chest that tightened with each step she took.

“He was a good kid,” stated Ben.

“Yeah.”

“He won’t hate you for mating with Cody, you know. He wouldn’t want you living your life alone. And Cody is not a bad guy.”

Deciding that arguing would only make Ben more likely to watch her more closely, she continued with her ‘I’m pissed but resigned’ act.

Knowing that she would never again see the graves of the two most important people to her, Danica would have spent the next few hours in a gloomy mood if it hadn’t been for her dad’s fantastic news. Cody was due to arrive the morning after tomorrow for another visit. That put her thoughts back in order like nothing else could have. Not only did it remind her why exactly she was doing this, but it helped her shove the guilt aside – guilt which had been heightened by how her body and her wolf reacted to Gio Wright.

It wasn’t that she had never desired a guy before, but the desire had never been this intense before. If Danica had met him under different circumstances she would have most likely ran far and fast from that desire.

As much as she had always told herself that she would one day mate, whenever she had gotten involved with a guy she had found herself involuntarily holding back. Although she craved safety, protection, and the type of connection that only mates had made her hate herself, because she felt as though she was betraying Zan. A part of her knew that wasn’t the case but it didn’t change how she felt. If she ever particularly liked a guy, her instinct was to stay the hell away from him.

Therein lay the problem with Gio...she wouldn’t be able to stay clear of him. Not only because they needed to spend time together to pull off the true mate stuff, but because they would be mated. It wouldn’t matter that what brought them together wasn’t love or even a desire to be mated, the second he marked her and she accepted him, they would be classed as mates and their wolves would make it damn difficult for them to keep a physical distance.

She was pretty sure she wouldn’t need to work hard to keep an emotional gulf between them, because neither she nor Gio wanted to imprint on each other. Still, the idea of being around someone who could so easily prime her body with just a look was, to say the least, disconcerting. It didn’t help that her wolf had such a big thing for him. Figuring

it was important that Gio knew, she sent him a text message around midday to warn him about her dad having her followed. The whole

claiming might work out better if his men were aware that they might have to either distract or fight off two of her dad's men.

It was eight - thirty when Suza and Rick finally came knocking on her bedroom door. Since they were kids they had all been best friends. Zan had been the leader of their little group and it had hit every one of them hard when he died. These two people had seen how badly Danica had dealt with Zan's death. They would remember how Zan was so protective and possessive of her. As such, they would be the most difficult to convince that Gio was her true mate. Hell, she might not be able to convince them at all.

She would feel a little guilty lying to them like that, betraying their friendship.

It's to act well or mate with Cody.

"You ready to go?" asked Rick as he fiddled with the collar of his shirt.

"Yep," she replied.

"Hey you look great," remarked Suza in her usual giddy voice as she took in Danica's silk, sapphire blue dress and matching heels.

Rick nodded his agreement. "I'm not sure Cody will like that you're going out looking like that without him around to keep other wolves away."

As they began walking down the stairs, he added, "I still can't believe you put him on his ass at dinner the other night."

Suza shrugged. "Looked to me like he kind of liked it. It's only what he should expect if he picks a dominant female."

"Danica, I wanted to ask," began Rick, "do you seriously not want him, or is this some big thing that dominant females do? Do they make the males really work for it?"

Deciding it was best not to launch into how much she detested Cody right before apparently stumbling upon her true mate, she bit her lip. "It's our way of testing if the male's a worthy mate." That wasn't a lie. Alpha females didn't submit without the male proving their dominance. It was just that, in this case, that didn't apply, because Roscoe had never been a consideration. "Oh I think he's definitely worthy," said Suza with a smirk. "I'd do him."

Danica rolled her eyes, smiling. "There aren't many people you wouldn't do."

Suza jiggled her head as she conceded that, making her short auburn tresses dance around. She talked a lot about other people she would do as Danica drove them to the shifter club in her Lamborghini. Rick then criticised each one of her choices purely to annoy her. Danica laughed when she was supposed to and spoke wherever necessary, but mainly she was concentrating on keeping herself and her wolf calm. How could she, though, when her nerves were shot?

When Danica finally pulled up outside The PH her dad's men parked their own car two spaces behind. She prayed – literally – that they would follow her inside. If it came to her needing to resort to plan B then she couldn't exactly sneak off in her car if they were outside watching over it. Relief swept over her when they began following at a discrete distance.

A nervous sigh escaped Danica as she entered The PH. Although some clubs allowed both humans and shifters to enter, this club was open only to shifters. Her wolf picked up on her anxiety, but didn't understand what was really happening. Confused and frustrated, her wolf was pacing within her, clawing at her. In addition to that, as a creature with the most basic instincts, her wolf wanted to investigate some of the male scents and also hiss at some of the female scents. Yeah, her wolf could be a right bitch when she was all worked up.

"You okay?" asked Rick as he halted behind her. Great, he'd sensed something was off.

"My wolf's not having a good day. She's practically clawing at my insides in an effort to get out. Sometimes I think my being latent is harder for her than it is for me." Suza shot her a smile of sympathy. "The feeling of being trapped must drive her wild."

Danica nodded. "Come on, let's go get a drink." And try to stay near the bar so Gio could easily find her. She sidled through the incredibly tight crowd on her way to the bar. The incidental social touches soothed her wolf a little.

The owner of the club and Head Barman, Sam, looked up as they reached the bar. In greeting he nodded at her, Rick and Suza. "What can I get you all?"

A Vodka, maybe? "The usual for me please, Sam." Being constantly on call, she mostly stuck to Coca Cola when she went on a night out.

Depressing, but a drunken healer wasn't a good one.

As Rick ordered a beer and Suza ordered some weird cocktail, Danica discretely searched for her dad's men, Matt and Ben. They stood at the other end of the bar, chatting while still alert. At least there was a decent distance between them all. She had to resist the urge to scan for any sign of Gio.

She, Rick, and Suza found some vacant stools by the bar and got comfortable as they drank and chatted. Although she was fully part of their conversation, it was always at

the forefront of her mind that her life was about to change. She was about to enter a temporary mating with the wolf shifter equivalent of a wild wild lion and had a worryingly overwhelming effect on her body. To add to that, she would never be returning to her dad's pack and this could even be the very last time she saw her two best friends.

"Thank God you're here! I need your help badly."

A curse flew out of Danica's mouth as she looked up to see Derek, one of her pack mates. She had run over everything in her head before coming, but she hadn't once accounted for someone needing her for her healing skills right in the middle of her fake claiming. Crap. As the pack healer, it wasn't

like she could refuse to help and nor did she want to. "It's Medulla," explained Ariel as she took Danica's hand, pulled her from the stool, and began to lead her through the tight throngs of people.

Suza and Rick followed closely behind them. The combination of the brushing of bodies against her and strange hands occasionally fondling her as

she went by further soothed Danica's wolf while simultaneously rousing her.

"What's wrong with her?" asked Danica.

"She's barely conscious. I guess she must have taken something, but Danica you know Medulla doesn't do drugs."

Ariel abruptly stopped. Not because they had reached Medulla, but because there was such a large crowd of shifters huddled together that it was like coming up against a wall. Clearly there was a very powerful alpha male somewhere within that crowd who was being both protected and harassed.

She wondered if it was Gio. A shudder rippled down her spine as she thought of what was to come – if he found her, that was.

Advancing further involved a lot of foot squashing and elbow clashing, but eventually they stopped before a chair where Ariel's boyfriend, Marcus, stood as though on guard. He gave them all a nod in greeting. In the chair was Medulla, slouched, pale, and limp.

Ariel crouched before her and rubbed her forearm. "Medulla?"

The small red head opened her eyes slightly, but her expression was pretty vacant. Yep, she'd been drugged alright. Ariel, worrying her lower lip, rose and turned to Danica. "Can you help?" She knew that Danica didn't have to help anyone who had been dumb enough to drug themselves into a practically catatonic state, but she had to agree with Ariel. Medulla wasn't the type of person who would do drugs.

“You think Sam will let us use his office? I can’t heal her here.”

“I’ll go ask him,” said Rick. Before she could say a word, his tall form had disappeared in the crowd.

“Do you think someone spiked her drink?” asked Suza.

“She was fine up until those hyenas were sniffing around her,” said Ariel in a panicky voice, twirling a blond curl around her finger.

Marcus nodded. “They looked like a bad bunch, so I chased them off.”

Danica puffed. “Sam’s going to be so pissed off. Not only is someone using drugs in his establishment, but they’re using them to spike people’s drinks.”

“You not with Cody tonight?”

“It’s only a few days until the mating ceremony,” said Ariel. “You must be pretty excited.”

“Hey it was really cool when you knocked him out of his chair,” said Marcus with a grin. Clearly Ariel had been one of the females staring at Cody, pissing Richie off.

“What had he done?”

Danica ran a hand through her hair, hoping she didn’t look as stressed out as she was feeling. “You know how it is with alpha females and making sure their mates are worthy.” Feeling a tap on her shoulder, Danica swerved to find Rick. “Sam said it was okay?” Rick nodded. “He’s waiting by the door with the key. He likes to keep it locked.”

“Come on then people, let’s get Medulla moved.”

Danica grabbed Medulla’s purse as Marcus and Rick each draped one of Medulla’s arms over their shoulders and lifted her from the chair. She didn’t react other than to let out a low whiny moan. With Ariel and Suza on either side of her, Danica led the way to the office, making room through the crowds for the guys to carry Medulla through without dropping her on her ass.