

## Prologue

Brisk wind brushed back their fur as they raced down the mountain and onto the plateau just above the valley. The alpha wolf in the lead paused, surveying a copse of trees shrouded in darkness. An antelope, lay hidden just a head. Silvery moonlight played on the dense foliage, but not enough to break the darkness into recognizable shapes. Used to his werewolf night vision being at his command, Dwayne Roy scanned the area, bothered by the fact that something was wrong in the trees ahead. His acute sense of smell identified nothing, not even the antelope they were chasing. Behind him, the other wolves barked, not understanding his hesitation. The human side of him struggled to control the alpha wolf's instinct. It needed to close in for the kill.

One barely discernible figure moved in the darkness. Lightning flashed illuminating the trees, but his eyes made no sense of just what he saw. A jagged bolt zinged through the darkness, outlining a large wolf with glowing golden fur. Like a match igniting a flame, the light from its coat intensified, and spread, till it nearly blinded him.

Dwayne sniffed the air. The hot, acrid smell of magic caused his nose to itch. The wolf part of him eagerly anticipated the challenge posed by the golden wolf that stepped into the clearing. Dwayne urged caution, but it was

something alpha werewolves seldom used when confronted by a rival.

The golden wolf growled, an eerie, challenging sound that reverberated deep in its throat. It filled the area with the promise of its power.

The growl from Dwayne's wolf answered with eminent threat. He surged forward, on the attack. Flanking him, the pack spread out to meet the pack of dark wolves flanking the golden one.

Jaws snapping, claws and teeth violently ripping through flesh and fur, they clashed in the open. Quick, brutal, and unimaginably vicious carnage ruled the clash. Dwayne, a strong alpha in his prime, and veteran of many battles, found himself summarily seized in the golden wolf's powerful jaws and tossed about like a rabbit. He sailed through the air to slam into the trunk of a tree. Momentarily stunned, he lumbered to his feet, the adrenalin pumping through his veins so hard it denied his pain.

Circling the other wolf Dwayne looked for an opening. In the background he sensed that his pack was fighting just as well as the wolves who ran with this golden wolf. Blood from the other wolf oozed and matted Dwayne's fur. Lunging, he quickly opened his jaws to seize on the golden wolf's throat. Dwayne's teeth snapped on empty air. He regrouped. Inexplicably, the golden wolf was above him, bearing down.

Mentally shaking himself, Dwayne tried to reassess. Had he momentarily blacked out? His opponent's reflexes

were lightening fast. Too fast. There was something else at work here. Drawing on the combined metaphysical strength of his pack, Dwayne attacked again, fighting for his life...

## Chapter One

Kellie knew she was dying. Razor sharp claws had ripped her body to shreds. Remnants of her organs littered the ground as a merciless cold seeped into her bones. She marveled that with all the damage to her body she could still see. Despite the legendary werewolf ability to heal fast, her life was slipping away in rivulets of blood. Groaning, Kellie tossed and turned on the bed, gasping for life and struggling to free herself from the invisible bonds tightening around her.

"Kellie! Kellie wake up!" Edgy with alarm and concern, Garen's voice shattered her dream.

Stunned, Kellie tried to reconcile Garen's voice with the scene at the copse. Straining to break free, she realized that she was confined within the circle of his arms. She felt the warmth of his naked chest. Freeing herself, she sat up in bed to clear her head.

"Kellie! Wake up!" Garen pulled her into his arms once more, stroking her, calming her with his hands.

"Yes." The word came out on a pant. She felt the warmth of his breath behind his soft lips at her temple. His fingers combed through her tangled hair. Blinking, she opened her eyes to what had become their bedroom in his

house in the mountains outside of Las Vegas. The room's traditional furniture and warm colors comforted her too.

Despite the darkness, she saw that his heated cognac eyes glittered in his handsome face. Swallowing against the rawness in her throat, she drew a calming breath and told him. "Dwayne's in trouble. We've got to get to him fast. He's on the Slattery Trail."

Garen's gaze caught hers and held. She'd never done this before. "This from a dream? A vision?"

Kellie nodded, already pushing back the covers to get dressed. "Dream, vision, I don't know what to call it but I know it's real." With a barely murmured prayer, she stopped short of telling him that Dwayne was dying.

Garen lifted the telephone receiver and began pushing buttons. He waited for long, interminable seconds. Kellie guessed that he had called Dwayne's cell phone. Ending the call, he dialed once more. After a short pause, he spoke in short staccato tones. "This is Garen. Where's Dwayne? He what? Get everyone and meet me on the Slattery trail."

"We'll need a good healer," she interjected before he could end the call.

He nodded, glitter in his eyes becoming more pronounced as he repeated her words into the telephone receiver. As he finished his call, she bent over to pull on her shoes. "Is he dead?" Garen asked in a strangled tone.

"No," she admitted, reaching for her purse, "But let me call Peyton."

Garen hesitated, his forehead wrinkling in grim anticipation of what was to come. The glitter in his eyes heated to become more of a glow.

Kellie knew that he didn't trust the witches, especially Peyton, who had come to Nana's funeral and tried to enlist Kellie in her coven. Despite that, even Garen knew that Peyton's healing skills were among the best.

"It's bad." Garen's voice lowered, confirming that he was already shifting into the wolf.

Kellie nodded, afraid to give him more details. She knew how close Garen was to Dwayne. He loved his father and Dwayne had been the strong and well-loved leader of the Roy Clan for some time. "I'll call Peyton while you dress," she added, blinking back tears. Having lost Nana only a month ago, she knew all too well the pain of losing a loved one.

Stopping in the large, modern kitchen, Kellie dialed Peyton's number.

Peyton answered the phone immediately. "Kellie, I've been waiting for your call."

"Then you know about Dwayne," Kellie said, refusing to let this shake her.

"I told Fern I would watch over you. I shared your visions. Dwayne can be saved, but recovery will be slow." Deliberately skipping over the creepy part about Peyton watching over her for Nana, Kellie felt almost giddy with relief. "Meet us at the Slattery trail in five minutes," she said breathlessly.