Wolf Flight

Vivian Arend

# Chapter 1

September, Whistler, British Columbia

The Whistler pack house was crowded after dinner, with small groups gathered around the room talking amongst themselves. Conversations quieted for a moment as laughter burst out from where the Alpha and his cronies sat in the prime seats before the huge stone fireplace. An icy warning trickled up Missy’s spine, and she gave up on the discussion in front of her. She rose from her chair and headed quietly toward the exit, weaving between the couches and recliners that filled the meeting and relaxation area for the pack.

Missy had no illusions about the precariousness of her position. As the widow of a high-ranking wolf, even one whose position had come from his family relationship instead of his power, she was an obvious target for any of the wolves looking to improve their standing in the pack.

Which would be, oh, pretty much everyone. Only she wasn’t worried about all of them, just one very dangerous individual.

It could have been worse. It *would* have been worse if she hadn’t managed to keep her secret. Hidden her developing skills away not only from her late husband but the rest of them.

Even now her Alpha’s gaze burned as she walked with her head down, attempting to remain small and unnoticeable as she slipped through the common area toward her apartment at the back of the complex.

“Missy,” Doug called. “Come here.”

She turned toward him, the hair on the back of her neck standing upright as a shiver of disgust raced over her skin. She had hoped to avoid this summons for far longer. Stopping a polite distance away to stand before the massive fireplace, Missy clutched her fingers together and averted her eyes at the last second.

“Jeff has been gone for a month now,” he noted, his long well-groomed fingers tapping on the arm of the overstuffed leather chair. His stylish business suit, clean-shaven chin and immaculately groomed hair sharply contrasted with what she knew of his personality. She’d seen his wolf kill more often than necessary, even for an Alpha trying to maintain order in a large pack.

Missy rocked on her feet uneasily. Doug rose from his seat to tower over her petite frame, the heat from his body close enough to overwhelm the fire’s warmth. She stared away from him, looking over the heads of the wolves sprawled on the couch immediately in front of them. *Don’t let him know how much you loathe him. Don’t show any sign of disrespect*. Others in the room looked on with curiosity for a minute before turning back to their own conversations. Only the wolf enforcers she spotted scattered inconspicuously throughout the room tensed, ready to spring into action if needed.

The level of paranoia her Alpha encouraged among his warriors shocked her. Did they really think she would challenge Doug? It seemed few pack members were aware he was less than the honorable businessman he pretended to be. Missy wondered how much the Alpha shared with his closest allies, how many of his wrongdoings the other leaders of the pack approved. Or were the Beta and the rest ignorant victims as well?

“Does it bother you to hear me talk about my brother? Do you miss him that much?” Doug’s refined voice prickled in her ears. “I didn’t think you pined for his conversation or longed for his arms to hold you at night.”

He laughed softly and the sound grated on her nerves like nails on a blackboard. Over the past couple years Missy had become aware of slow changes in her abilities, including an increased sense of others’ motivations. The evil Doug delved into permeated every fiber of his being, and Missy turned her head away to avoid showing her disgust. She swallowed hard and forced down the emotions that threatened to engulf her. Her anger, her fear. The almost overwhelming desire to turn and flee from his presence.

She couldn’t run, not yet. She needed more time. Time to find an escape from the trap she knew closed around her as each day passed.

Doug ran a finger down her cheek, plucking at a blond curl, and her gorge rose. Missy concentrated on presenting a calm façade, forcing her eyes to blink naturally as she slowed her pulse, her breathing.

Calming all the telltale signs that could alert this powerful werewolf of her intentions.

He was her brother-in-law, her Alpha, but she refused to let him control her. The finger continued a slow path down her body as she stood stock-still.

“Jeff never did know what a treasure he had, did he?” Doug asked, his dark voice dirty like an oily slick over her skin. He leaned close to whisper in her ear. “My sweet Omega.”

Her eyes flickered for a split second before she tamped down the surprise. How could he have discovered what she had worked so hard to hide? She was still learning to control her untrained skills, including the ability to read and manipulate others’ emotions, to calm and ease them. Omegas were rare and highly desired among the shifter community. With appropriate guidance, she would be a blessing to a pack. Under the wrong influence, her skills could be deadly.

There were no doubts in Missy’s mind what kind of leadership headed her pack at the present time.

Doug chuckled, a light sound that nevertheless made her skin crawl. “Oh, yes, I know. I’ve always known. You can’t hide potential ability from an Alpha who’s looking for it.” He flicked a finger over his head and the wolves seated around them dispersed, conversations fading away to leave them intimately alone. Missy’s fear tripled and icy fingers crawled up her spine in spite of the fire blazing at her back.

Doug lifted her chin with a thick finger, tilting her face as if he were examining a side of beef at the butcher’s. He snorted and spoke softly, his words for her alone. “When I blackmailed your family into your marriage to my brother, I hoped you would end up permanently linked with him. With a mate connection between you, I would have mastered you both. But like everything else Jeff touched, he ruined my plans. He wasn’t even strong enough to trap you with a false FirstMate.”

Missy shuddered inside at the thought. Like every wolf she longed to find her mate, the one who matched her not only physically but emotionally. Being forced into a loveless marriage to save her family had been bad enough, but it would have been far worse to imagine herself belonging body, mind and soul to Jeff simply because of overactive pheromones.

A strong hand wrapped around her neck, pulling her closer as Doug stared, his nostrils flaring as he examined her face minutely. “He was woefully delinquent in training you to be obedient. But he’s gone now, that unfortunate incident, you know.”

Missy’s heart thumped harder as the truth of the accident flowed involuntarily from Doug’s mind to hers.

Images flashed—ropes cut by knives, a falling body, triggered rock falls—she blinked slowly, carefully.

The information transferred between them as clearly as if he had spoken, the knowledge a gift and curse of being an Omega wolf.

His own brother had killed her husband. Closing her eyes to shut out the pain, she forced her tears to remain hidden. She may not have loved Jeff, but he hadn’t deserved to die in that manner. The crackle of the fire sounded loud and eerie as she searched for something to concentrate on to clear her mind of Doug’s filthy touch.

Doug grunted. “Hmmm, you are good. So much potential, so much I’ll be able to do with you once you’re properly trained.” Doug loosened his grip for a second and slipped his fingers into her hair, tugging it hard enough to bring tears to her eyes.

Her blood pounded, her mouth suddenly gone dry, and she focused on making Doug forget her. She was nothing, she was nondescript. Reaching deep into the part of herself she had hidden away for years, she attempted to calm her Alpha. The ripping pull in her hair faded as he dropped his hands to his side and released her.

She kept her gaze on his face and continued to pour out calming emotions from her core, being sure to make them nonthreatening, noninteresting. Above all nonsexual because if Doug decided to claim her physically she’d be lost. She would shatter in a million pieces and never be free from him.

He turned away from her and her panic lightened, fear relaxing as he reacted to her stimulus. She drew in an uneven breath, preparing to step back and retreat from his presence. Suddenly, his hand shot out and wrapped around her throat, squeezing tight enough to hurt and she froze, physically and mentally. He snarled quietly. “Don’t attempt your tricks, little girl. You’re strong, much stronger than my brother was, so you were able to control him. Don’t make the mistake of assuming you can use your skills on me. I *will* kill you if you try that again.” He squeezed a final time before releasing her, his hand moving to cup her face as she frantically dragged in air.

His voice was a mere whisper, menacing in its softness, the polite trappings of civilization hiding the monster. “I’m a patient man, Missy. I waited until the opportune moment to take over the pack. I have maneuvered tirelessly to arrange deals that will soon bring in the financial resources I desire. I can wait for you until the timing is right. Since appearances are so important to wolves, I wouldn’t dream of taking you yet. I don’t want to draw any attention from the council. Even though you obviously are hurting, missing your mate.” His fingers trailed along her cheek and she shivered involuntarily. “Poor thing, everyone knows how devastating it is to lose a mate. It is fortunate I’m without a partner. As both Alpha and your brother-in-law, I’m the only one who can replace him for you.”

He dropped his hand away, sliding it intimately down her body.

If she had truly been mated, Doug’s words would have been true. The loss of a mate ripped something from within, and many never recovered. With the genetic similarities between brothers, and Doug’s strength as an Alpha, the pack would expect him to take Missy under his protection.

And into his bed.

Only she and Jeff hadn’t been mates. There had been no true connection between them other than a shared zeal to stay alive under the tyranny of an Alpha who controlled and conquered as he pleased. Jeff hadn’t survived.

She stiffened her spine, glancing into the common room to see if there was anyone nearby even watching the discussion that she might turn to for assistance. No one paid them any attention. A log popped and shifted at her back, a rush of heat flaring out and she took a deep breath. It was up to her alone.

Missy was desperate to escape, but Doug still held power over her. Still held her in check with the one thing that guaranteed her cooperation. She needed time to find a way to get out of this mess. “I’m scheduled to leave the pack for an extended period of time. My position with the research team has been—”

Doug waved a hand in front of her face. “I know. You’ll be traveling with the Lauren Group setting up weather stations. I believe the timeframe is four to five months for the work to be completed, correct?”

Missy swore inside. How could the bastard know the details of a personal contract she’d signed only days ago? She’d attempted to be extremely careful in keeping her information secretive, but his fingers were in everything.

“I will expect you by the end of February.” His dark eyes flashed at her. “Don’t make the mistake of delaying your return, Missy, or there will be consequences your sister will not enjoy.”

She stood rigid under his glare. “Leave Margaret out of this. She’s attending university in Vancouver, she’s not a part of this pack anymore.”

Doug shook his head. “No one is truly ever out from the protective watch of the pack, you should know that. I’m sure Maggie will be just fine as long as you remember your place in the overall scheme of things.” He leaned close and brushed his lips against her cheek, whispering in her ear, “Six months, my little Omega. I’ll give you six months as the code states. Then I’m taking you as mine and our combined skills will be the making of this pack.” He dismissed her abruptly, turning away to reclaim his chair, glittering eyes staring into the fire.

The enforcers gathered around Doug again as Missy backed away, eager to leave the sweltering heat that had nothing to do with the blaze in the fireplace. She forced herself to walk, not run, head held high.

No indication that the devil himself had just announced she was to be his queen.

There was no way she would willingly join him in hell.

# Chapter 2

February, Haines Junction, Yukon

Tad leaned against the cold exterior wall as he watched the company helicopter settle on the runway.

Loose snow flew around the large metal-clad building they used as a hangar for both the chopper and the small bush plane. He waved briefly at his business partner, Shaun, before hurrying back indoors. There wasn’t much time left and he had a ton of preparations to complete before the afternoon flight.

Maxwell’s Silver Hammer had landed a major contract to transport researchers to and from a camp at the base of Mount Logan. The money was great but the timing sucked. As he hurried through his checklist his mind wandered, concern for his sister distracting him. What the *hell* was he thinking, letting a deaf girl head into the backcountry alone? He was supposed to take care of her, not throw her to the wolves. He should have refused the contract and gone with her like they originally planned. He was lost in thought when a solid touch to his shoulder startled him.

“Holy shit, Shaun, warn a guy will you?” Tad cursed, his heart racing.

“You’re a fucking werewolf. Why the hell can’t you learn to scent another wolf approaching?” Shaun peeled off his flight jacket and threw it onto one of the chairs at the side of the shop. His cocky grin did little to relax the knot in Tad’s stomach.

“Piss off.” So his ability to smell sucked. There were more important things to worry about as far as he was concerned. “Robyn get away okay? Crap, I can’t believe I let her go on the trip without me. What if something happens to her?”

Shaun laughed, slapping him on the back roughly. “You’re too damn possessive about your sister. She’s fine. She’s a great skier and experienced in the bush. Plus she’s so freaking powerful that being stuck in close quarters with her nearly kills me.” He paused for a second, flicking a concerned glance at Tad.

“You’ve got to tell her soon. I mean, you’ve known about having werewolf genes for a couple of years now. She needs to know so she can move on with her life, learn about her other side. She’s going to be the most gorgeous wolf when she gets her genes triggered.”

Tad grit his teeth together, his face suddenly hot, muscles tense. *Not this conversation again*. “Yeah, and I suppose you want the privilege of triggering her, right?”

Shaun wiggled his eyebrows a few times and grinned. “Well, it wouldn’t be a chore by any stretch.”

Tad slammed a hand into his friend’s chest, hooked his fingers into his shirt and lifted him off his feet.

Blood pounded in his ears and Tad looked out through a sea of red. Shaun’s toes dangled off the ground, kicking a few times as Tad held him high in the air, arm stretched at full length.

“Shit, Tad, I’m kidding around. Put me down.” Shaun wiggled, his face suddenly gone white.

*Fuck*.

Tad dropped Shaun to the ground and reached up to pinch the bridge of his nose. “Sorry, I’m feeling a little stressed. Between Robyn and the booking and my skin itching like it’s going to crawl off and walk on its own…”

Shaun moved away cautiously, tugging his clothes straight. “For an untriggered wolf, you’re too damn strong. I don’t know which is worse, your bark or your bite. The itching is your wolf trying to get out. You need to get triggered soon because you and Robyn are both missing a huge part of your lives—”

“Are you her mate?”

“No, but—”

“Then keep your fucking hands off her.”

Shaun backed down, keeping his body language submissive. “Maybe you should give her the choice. Tell her she’s got werewolf genes and let her decide what to do about it.”

Tad collapsed into a chair, his body sprawled back in a messy heap. Discovering werewolves existed had been like crossing into the Twilight Zone. Finding out both he and his adopted sister had the genes necessary to be able to turn into wolves had been even more of a surprise. But the rest of the details drove him insane. “Shit, I’ve started to tell her a dozen times but just thinking about it makes me sweat. Why the heck does it have to be sex that triggers the gene in adults? Like I want to tell my sister to go fuck someone. Robyn has enough on her plate being deaf. She doesn’t need the drama of trying to find a mate as well. Plus I can’t shift to prove anything until I get triggered myself.”

He closed his eyes and scrubbed at his face in frustration. “You were lucky. My parents don’t know anything about wolves. My grandpa must have provided the genes and then died before telling anyone his secret. You were born into a full-blood family and got triggered from your mom’s milk, so it wasn’t like you had a dire need for sex.”

Shaun snorted. “Not a dire need? Shit, don’t you remember what it’s like to be a teenager?”

“Horny bastard. And you wonder why I want you to stay away from Robyn,” Tad complained, his anger slipping away although his frustration remained high. Shaun didn’t seem to understand how aggravating it was for Tad as a half-blood. He needed a hormone trigger too, only his would be released the first time he had sex with a female wolf. Tad liked sex as much as the next guy, but the human females he’d been with didn’t count. There was one final catch kicking him in the ass, making it damn near impossible to get triggered.

*Bloody wolf hormones*.

“Doesn’t it bother you?” Tad asked. “Being out of control of your own destiny?”

“What are you talking about?”

“The wolf. The way being a wolf changes your whole life.” Tad stared into space, his fingers fidgeting with the arms of his chair.

Shaun scrunched up his face. “Uh, no… I mean, so I can change into a wolf. It’s no big deal. It’s not like I have uncontrollable urges to howl or shift involuntarily when the moon is full. My wolf is just a part of who I am. An amazing, completely honest part of me.”

Tad snorted. “You’ve never been so poetic in your life. Damn it, I’m talking about the stupid wolf hormones. Don’t try to tell me they don’t dictate your life. They sure as hell do mine. We can’t even decide who to marry without our wolves approving.”

His partner laughed as he leaned back on the table. “Mates? You’re worried about finding a mate again. Tad? Holy crap, you need to get laid.”

“I know that, you asshole.”

Shaun shook his head. “Not just to trigger your genes, brainiac. To relax. Find yourself a nice human girl and have at it. You haven’t gone out with anyone for months. You need to let your wolf out to play.” He nabbed a picture off the wall behind him and waved it at Tad, his grin growing larger by the second.

“What about your dream girl? She’ll be in town soon, won’t she?”

Tad leapt up and snatched the photo away. “Leave Missy out of this. She’s special.” Shaun rocked his eyebrows up and down, and Tad flipped him the bird as he replaced the picture, tracing the edge with a finger. “She’s not a wolf, so I refuse to mess around with her.”

“Holy shit, are you telling me you’ve only fucked women you might marry?”

“No, but… crap! See, this is what I mean. I like Missy. I really like her and always have. If I wasn’t a wolf I’d be interested in spending time with her to see if something develops between us. But since my damn wolf decides my partner, I have no bloody choice in the matter. I don’t think it’s fair to string along a human woman.”

Tad waved a hand in frustration at Shaun and returned to his preparations. It was quiet in the hangar, both of them working silently, deep in thought. He did like Missy. It had been a complete surprise when she’d contacted him by email. Over the past four months, they’d been corresponding back and forth about life in general, catching up on the years they’d been apart.

The day she wrote about her husband and his death, Tad had gone for a long run, pushing himself to the point of exhaustion. He wondered why it pissed him off so much to discover she’d cared enough for someone else to make a lifetime commitment with him. Heck, he and Missy had never been lovers.

They’d barely held hands as teenagers back in high school before she’d moved south.

Shaun leaned on the side of the plane next to where Tad was working, his dark eyes crinkled up with concern. “I’m sorry things haven’t worked out faster for you. It’ll be worth it in the end, really it will.”

Tad sighed and thumped his partner’s shoulder. Shaun’s heart was in the right place. “It’s just I’ve tried for two years to follow wolf rules and it’s gotten me nowhere. As much as I want to be able to shift, I don’t know if I can live like this much longer. I can’t change my morals to turn wolf.”

Shaun nodded sadly. “I understand. But you’re not going to be really happy until you get triggered.”

Tad returned to his adjustments. “Yeah, well, in the meantime I’ve got you to piss me off and help me let off steam.” He stared hard at his friend. “I want forever someday. I believe in true love and finding my other half. I know it’s romantic shit, but I still believe in it.”

“Yeah, I hear you, but until you find Ms. Right, I really think you should consider Ms. Right Now.”

\* \* \*

Missy took a deep breath, looking around the small airfield with interest while she let the butterflies settle. Her journey over the past months had led her in a full circle, returning her to old stomping grounds.

She’d grown up in Whitehorse, lived in the north until she was sixteen. How strange the solution to the horror hanging over her head might be found here.

She stared at the doors to the shop.

Ten years.

Ten years since she’d seen Tad, one of the most intriguing boys she’d ever met. He’d been a grade above her in high school and she’d liked him intensely, even though her father had insisted half-blood Tad be avoided and not informed of his wolf heritage. Missy had reluctantly followed her father’s rules and never let herself be alone with Tad. Never accepted any of his hesitant physical advances beyond public hugs and cuddles during movie marathons. Only participated in group activities.

Something had always felt missing. She’d longed for more.

Slipping in the door, Missy took in the neat and tidy waiting area, the newspaper clippings taped to the wall. She moved closer to examine the articles about Maxwell’s Silver Hammer, providers of “custom sightseeing flights, fishing charters and all-around *you want to get lost in the wilderness, we’ll get you there* services.” Pictures accompanying the articles showed the helicopter she’d seen outside and a small plane outfitted with skis or water floats.

A brightly-colored strip of paper caught her eye and she bent to examine it.

A metallic clang hit the floor behind her, and she spun around to see a tall, wiry hunk staring with lust in his eyes. Confusion clouded the dark orbs for a moment before recognition hit.

“Missy?”

Her heart leapt. His tone of voice made her very glad she’d decided to deal with her problem by seeking him out.

She beamed at him. “Hello, Tad.” She tilted her head toward the articles. “You told me business was going well but you didn’t say how well. Glowing reports from what I see here.”

She held out her hand, and when he clasped it, she tucked herself under his arm and hugged him tightly, his body cradling hers carefully. She took a cautious sniff as she held him. His scent was familiar yet somehow his wolf was muted, which was curious. She didn’t smell any females on him and that was a good thing.

A very good thing, considering what she had in mind.

“It really is wonderful to see you again.” She clung to him for another second, relaxing in his strong arms.

It felt so right to be held by another wolf, especially one not threatening to kill her. She hadn’t dared raise the issue during their email correspondence, but she needed to know. Was he aware of his wolf heritage?

Opening her mind, she reached out tentatively to brush his emotions. Images jumped back—her face during a high school event, sliding down a snow-covered hill together, the view of her butt as she bent over moments earlier by the door—and she smiled. Nothing but memories filled his mind. Tad gave a final squeeze before extending her to an arm’s distance.

“Damn, you look incredible. I mean, I got the picture you sent but you’re so…” Tad stared, his gaze trailing over her face in amazement.

Missy sighed. The petite thing didn’t help. “I know. I look like a teenager. I’m twenty-six and I still get IDed every time I order a drink.”

Tad led her to the customer waiting area and gestured toward the couch. He hesitated for a second before slipping into the chair across from her. Missy dropped her head to keep her smile hidden. She couldn’t help noticing his arousal. Both his body and his scent gave him away.

“It’s great to see you, but I wasn’t expecting you until next week.” He slid a hand through his hair leaving the dark spikes a mess. Missy wanted to drag her own fingers through the strands and wondered what he would do if she reached out and gave in to temptation. He glanced at his watch and fidgeted. “I don’t want to be rude. I mean, I’ve been looking forward to your visit, but I’ve got a customer this afternoon and I’m not finished prepping. Do you mind if I slip out back for a bit? It should only take ten minutes.”

Missy frowned. Hadn’t he figured it out? She was sure she’d told him the reason she’d come north. Or while trying to be secretive about other things, had she forgotten? “Tad, I have an appointment.”

He let out a big sigh, sounding relieved as he pulled her to her feet and gently tugged her back toward the door. “That’s great! Why don’t you go get your stuff done first and then come back and meet me in half an hour? We can visit until my customers get here.”

“But—” She was out the door, back into the bright and cool February day.

“Looking forward to it. Sorry, I’ve got to hustle. See you later.”

Tad closed the door behind her and Missy stared in shock. She burst out laughing as she made her way back to her truck. *That had gone splendidly. Not!* She giggled, delighted at the lightness of her mood.

There had been little to laugh about over the past months and this mixed-up situation was her fault. She’d dressed to impress. It obviously worked based on his physical reaction, but he was a little too distracted.

She reached into the cab of the truck and grabbed her work clothes. It looked like her excuse for coming to the Yukon would be needed after all.