



Bear With Me

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A Halle Shifters
Holiday eBook Freebie

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Prologue

Alexander “Bunny” Bunsun grinned as his mate Tabby glared at him from across the room, her lime green hair standing out against the deeper evergreen shade of the Christmas tree. His mother had cornered her, cooing at Tabby’s vaguely rounded stomach like a lunatic.

Tabby wouldn’t admit it out loud, but she was in heaven. She still hadn’t reconciled with her own parents, their actions when she’d been kicked out of her Pack still haunting her. Her old Pack’s new Alpha had invited her home for the holidays, but she’d adamantly refused. She wanted very little to do with her old Pack, and for the most part they’d chosen to obey her wishes.

So having Bunny’s parents hover over her protectively had been both a blessing and a strain. She needed this, needed family around her while she carried their child. Maybe he’d get her to agree to speak with her parents now that the holidays were here.

Tis the season, after all.

“I’m tickled they get along so well.” William Bunsun, Bunny’s father, picked up Bunny’s glass of spiked egg nog and downed it.

“Thanks, Dad.”

“No problem.” He patted his stomach. “Anything I can do to help keep you in shape.”

Bunny shook his head at his father’s antics. The man was insane. “I have no idea how you got Mom to agree to go out with you.” He shot Will a fond, annoyed look. “All things considered.”

“Hey, now.” Will shook his finger at him. “I will have you know I was hot back then.”

“You still are, baby.” Barb winked at them, her deep brown eyes sparkling with happiness.

Will blew a kiss at Barb, making Bunny's brother Eric twitch. "Ugh. Knock it off, you two. I don't want to watch old people kiss."

Barbra Bunsun slapped her son upside the head hard enough to nearly knock him off his feet. "Who are you calling old?"

Eric rubbed the back of his head and whimpered. He was still on their mom's shit list for being mean to Cyn and scaring their cousin Heather. Considering Barb had declared Julian and Cyn family, that was a huge no-no. "Ow."

Tabby placed another ornament on the tree. She'd insisted on having Christmas Eve at their new home, and his family had insisted on helping her decorate. So here they were, spending a Saturday night with his parents and brother, decorating their new home and scarfing down pizza, cupcakes and egg nog. "You know, I've been dying to ask. Every time I do, Uncle Steven and Aunt Laura laugh and refuse to tell me."

Uh-oh. Bunny poured himself another cup of spiked egg nog. He knew what was coming, and he was going to need a little fortification for this family story.

Maybe he should add some more whiskey. His parents had a tendency toward TMI that was going to make this painful.

"How did you two get together?" Tabby tilted her head and snuggled up against him, his own personal super-heroine.

Shit. Bunny finished the glass in one long swallow. *Here we go.*

Eric groaned. His brother knew what was coming. Poor Tabby had no clue, and wasn't allowed alcohol to dull the horror.

Barb began to laugh as Will hugged his mate, cuddling her close. "Now *that's* a hell of a tale..."

Chapter One

He hid in the bushes, waiting for his prey, positive that *this* time he'd catch her.

The first time he saw Barbra Browne had been the first time he truly understood why his father still growled over his mother. Barb had been walking across campus, her smile brighter than the sun, her dark hair teased around her in a shining halo of riotous curls. She'd been an angel, beautiful and perfect, taking a gloomy day and making it the best one ever.

He hadn't been able to take his eyes off her.

When she laughed he'd sworn his heart started beating for the first time. Then the wind had shifted, and he'd known immediately why he'd been so fascinated by her. Her scent, dear God above her *scent*, had almost driven him to his knees. She smelled of cinnamon and spice and everything nice. He could spend the rest of his life just breathing the air around her and die a happy man.

She was his.

He'd turned around, cutting his cousin Steve off mid-sentence, to follow the small, luscious creature all the way back to her dorm, studying her like the predator he was. Her bronze skin glowed with health, her startling hazel eyes full of laughter and a love of life he'd found infinitely appealing. He'd wanted that gaze turned on him, wanted her to *see* him.

He'd gone home to let his family know he'd found his mate, and that he'd be claiming her within the week.

That was months ago.

It was almost Christmas break. If she left before he got to mark her he didn't know what he'd do. He had to bite her, make her his in every way before someone else came along and stole her away from him. There was no way his Bear would allow anyone else to claim the luscious woman meant just for him.

There! That warm cinnamon scent wafted toward him. Everyone was excited for the holiday break, but none more so than his mate. He could see her now, heading down the path, her cheeks were bright with cold, her eyes sparkling as she took in the campus holiday decorations. Her acid wash jeans hugged her body, the winter parka not even hiding her incredible ass. She wore a headband today, holding those curls at bay, and bright green earmuffs that matched her earrings.

God. She was so beautiful his heart ached.

His Bear wanted out as yet another male friend hugged her for far too long. Will was having a hard time keeping him contained. They were on campus and he did *not* need his furry ass tranqed and carted off to the zoo.

She was closer now, her cinnamon scent wrapping around him, filling him with warmth. He could hear her, chatting away with her best friend and roommate, laughing as if she didn't have a care in the world. She'd go past the bush he was hiding behind as she always did, and when she did, he would pounce. Today, their game of Bear and Honey-pot would come to an end.

This time he would catch her, and Barbra Browne would be his.

Barb shook her head and tried desperately not to laugh. "Stacy?"

"Hmm?"

"I spy with my little eye something that begins with W."

Stacy grinned, her teeth white against her dark skin. "Oh! I know! I know! White boy." She shook her head and tsk'd. "Damn, that's the third time this week he's hidden behind that bush."

"Too bad he isn't all there, because he sure is hot." The man had the whole John Cusack vibe going, with his long, dark hair and quirky ways. The only thing different was his strange, blue-green eyes. Vibrant and colorful, his eyes changed with his moods, sometimes blue, sometimes green, sometimes both. They were stunning, and Barb had found herself gazing into them more than once before common sense kicked in and she got away from the crazy.

Barb inched closer to the opposite side of the path. When the time came, and she knew it would, she'd need to be able to duck out of the way.

Stacy giggled. "Sure, if you like 'em pasty."

“Hmm.” Barb wasn’t about to admit it, but it was looking more and more like she did like them a little paler than her family would be comfortable with, especially her father. There was something about Will that tugged at her, made her trust him despite his goofy ways.

“Those eyes of his are pretty, I’ll give you that. All swirly blues and greens.”

Barb nodded. They were his most stunning feature, one she... “Wait. When did you get close enough to see his eyes?”

Stacy and Barb ducked, ignoring William Bunsun as he sailed over their heads.

“Oh fuck.” He landed hard in the bush on the opposite side of the path, his feet twitching on the concrete.

It really was a shame the man had the brains of a sparrow, because otherwise she’d totally tap that.

“He always overshoots us.” Stacy sighed as if she really gave a crap.

Barb nodded. “Too much bounce in his jump.”

“Sort of like Tigger, but without the stripes.”

“Or the theme song.”

“Barb, Stacey. A little help, please?” His warbly baritone shivered through her even as his goofy antics made her laugh. The man was a nut, but he was a good-natured one.

The girls continued down the path, ignoring the man’s pained groan. They knew from experience he would be back later, hunting Barb with a single-minded determination that she would have found scary if the man hadn’t been so sweet.

At first she’d been afraid of him. William Bunsun acted like a crazy stalker, hunting her all over campus. He hid behind garbage cans in the cafeteria, stalked her on the paths between classes, and in general acted like an idiot. She’d almost called campus police on his ass more than once.

Almost.

Sometimes she still questioned why she hadn’t, but she knew why she would never turn Will in to campus police. And it wasn’t because of a pair of pretty eyes and a tight ass in tighter jeans, either.

About two months after school started, when she’d been considering calling the cops on his ass, Will saved her from a *real* stalker.

The relief on some of the faces of her dorm mates when that man had been kicked out of school had told her exactly what William Bunsun had protected her from that night. He'd decimated the creep following her, beating him bloody and chasing him off before turning to Barb. For all he was awkward and geeky, that night he'd been her guardian angel. It was the first time she'd realized what power resided in the man who watched over her, and she'd been intrigued.

He'd stared at her, his blue-green eyes dark and troubled. "You all right?"

She hadn't been able to speak, so she'd shrugged instead. Apparently he'd understood, because he'd disappeared into the bushes once more.

He'd followed her home that night, and every night since. He'd guarded her, kept her safe when she worked late, and made sure she never had a damn thing to worry about when it came to the things that went bump in the night.

So she'd let him continue to chase her, feeling safer than she ever had before thanks to the white man who couldn't jump.

Over time it had become a game to them both, one they enjoyed immensely. It was a strange hide and seek he played with her. She knew when he was with her and when he wasn't. When the gifts and notes started showing up she'd finally known what he was doing.

He was wooing her, in his own freaky way.

Too bad for him, though. Barbra Browne did not plan to go down easy, especially for the Great White Hunter. He might have managed to wiggle his way into her heart, but it would take more than that to wiggle into her pants.

"Guess what? There's a party tonight at Brian's place."

Barb groaned. Stacey sounded way too excited. "Please don't tell me you told him I'd be there." Brian had been trying to get into her pants for months, but the man just didn't know when to take no for an answer. She'd been holding him off for so long her arms were starting to get tired.

Stacy hunched her shoulders and tried to hide behind her books. "Sorry."

"Stacy!"

"Afternoon, ladies." The women nodded hello to Steven Williams, a smaller, paler version of his cousin Will. He didn't have the same midnight hair or odd swirly eyes. His were a normal dark blue, his hair a lighter shade of brown. "He fly over you again?"

“He’s eating dirt back there.” Barb gestured with her thumb. “Is he on a sports scholarship?”

Steven laughed so hard he had to stop walking.

Barb waited until the hyena was done laughing. Seriously, there was something wrong with these Bunsun-Williams boys. “You going to Brian’s party tonight?”

“Nope, but be careful, okay? I’ve been hearing rumors around campus about Brian and his parties. I’d hate it if anything happened to you two.”

Barb smiled. Steven was such a nice guy, but he couldn’t hold a candle to his cousin. “Thanks.”

“Shit, I’m late for class. See ya.” Steve sauntered off, no doubt to dig up his cousin. Or fertilize him. You could never tell with Steven.

“One of these days that guy’s going to catch you.”

Barb snorted even as she shivered. The need to let Will catch her had been growing steadily. “Hell no. I’ll get caught when I want to be caught.” She darted a glance over her shoulder to see Steven laughing as Will brushed off, shooting his cousin a dirty look.

It took everything in her not to laugh. God, he was *such* a dork. But maybe...

Maybe he was *her* dork.

The two women entered the dorm, arguing about Brian’s party. “Aw, c’mon, Barb. Brian’s got some pot.”

“No.”

“Yes.”

“No.”

Stacey crossed her arms over her chest. “I’m going, and I’m smoking.”

Barb grimaced. Damn it. Stacy went nuts when she got high, and if she did, she’d get in trouble. “Fine.”

Stacey squealed. “Yay!”

Shit. There went her plans for a nice, quiet evening.

Chapter Two

“Damn it.” Will watched the woman of his dreams walk away, again.

Hell. At least she was amused. He had that going for him. And it was always a bonus when the love of your life didn’t call the cops on you.

“Why don’t you just ask her out?”

He glared at his cousin. “Where’s the fun in that?”

“You’re acting like an ass.”

Will sighed. “She’s just so…” His hands moved, forming curves. “And she’s got…” He patted the air the way he wanted to pat her pert ass.

“Yup. Where I come, we call that…” Steven leaned in close. “A *girl*.”

“Fuck you.” Will took the hand his cousin held out for him and let Steve pull him to his feet. “You’ve claimed your mate, let me claim mine.”

“Speaking of mates, yours is going to that party tonight, the one I forbade Laura from going to.”

Will bit back a curse and stared down the path Barb had taken. Laura was Steve’s new mate. A cuter little Fox he’d never seen, but the family had been startled when Steve brought her home. They’d expected him to mate either another Bear or a human, the way most of them did. But Steve had taken one look at the tiny little redhead and known where his destiny lay. He’d mated her that night and they hadn’t looked back since.

If Steve was keeping his mate away from the party it had to be bad. The young couple was known around campus for enjoying the college lifestyle. They were frequent partiers, yet still managed to keep their grades high enough to satisfy both sets of parents.

Will hated them sometimes. Since seeing Barb his grades had plummeted. Keeping her safe was far more important to him than any grade could ever be, and after that stalker incident, he’d been unable to leave her alone.

But if he wanted to take over his father's business some day and make it shine he'd need the dual degrees in business and landscape architecture he was pursuing. Will loved the work his father did, but he planned on being a little more hands-on. He loved digging in the dirt, planting new life and watching it grow. It soothed his Bear, kept him calm.

"There's more."

Will braced himself. He had the feeling he wasn't going to like what Steve had to say.

"The party is at Brian's."

Will snarled. That jerk had been harassing Barb for months, trying to push her into a sexual relationship she didn't want. Will had tried to warn the guy off, but he'd just laughed at Will.

Brian would get the surprise of his life when Will finally claimed his mate. Barb was going to eat his face off if he tried anything. And if he still didn't get the hint, Will knew exactly where he'd bury the body parts.

"Easy." Steve plunked some damp, partially frozen soil in his hands.

Will stared at the clod of dirt. "What the hell, man?"

Steve shrugged. "You always seem to feel better after making mud pies."

Will glared at him and stepped back onto the pathway, dropping the mud back where it belonged. "I was twelve."

"You shoved it down my pants." The two men began walking back towards the center of campus.

"You're right. You were annoying the shit out of me, and I did feel better after that."

"Jerk."

Will laughed as they entered the student center.

Steve immediately began scanning the area for his mate. "Do you know what you're going to do about Barb?"

Will smiled, and three people backed away from him. "What do you think?"

Steven took one look at his face and grimaced. "I think I'm going to a party so you don't go to jail."

Will sniffed and wiped the corner of his eye. "I love you too, cuz."

Steven stomped off, muttering about insanity and bloodlines and crap Will didn't really care about. He headed for his dorm room. He was a Bear on a mission.

He had a party to crash, and a woman to mark.

She was giggling so hard into her pillow she could barely breathe, but the book was so damn good she just couldn't put it down.

"What the hell are you doing?"

Barb jumped and hid the book she'd been reading. "Nothing."

"Gimme that." Stacy snatched the book out of her hands and frowned. "What the hell is a Regency romance?"

Barb tried to get her book back before it got torn. "Stop!"

"Joan Smith's *Escapade*? Miss Prattle? What the hell?"

"I like it." Barb sighed and slumped on the bed. "She's damn funny, and instead of fainting away or letting the man get away with crap she gives as good as she gets."

Now Stacy looked intrigued instead of disgusted. "Yeah?" She eyed the cover for a moment before grinning. "The hero kinda looks like Will."

Barb grabbed the book. "Shut up."

"But with a better haircut."

"Shut. Up." Barb hit her roommate with her pillow. "What time is the party?"

"In half an hour."

"Damn." Barb scrambled up from the bed. "Why didn't you remind me?"

"I did, but you had your nose buried in that book." Stacy opened the paperback and began reading while Barb hustled around, changing her clothes. The jean skirt and tights would keep her warm, as would her checked Converse sneakers and two pairs of socks, one lime green, the other turquoise. She quickly changed to her favorite sweater, the turquoise one that matched Will's eyes. She slicked some color on her lips and grabbed her parka, ready to roll. "C'mon!"

"Yes! Par-ty! Par-ty! Par-ty!" Stacy crowed.

"She's gonna get our asses kicked," Barb sighed. She followed her crazy roommate out of the dorm and into the night.

Chapter Three

Will watched the two women head towards the apartments lining either side of the campus and began following them. There was no way in hell he was leaving Barb to the tender mercies of the drug addicted Brian. He had to make sure she was safe.

He might not be invited to one of Brian's parties, but he knew without a doubt he'd be let in. If Brian wanted to fuss about Will showing up uninvited, well.

He'd just have to see to it that Brian met with an unfortunate Bear mauling.

The two women slipped into the party, smiling and laughing. Will was right behind them, nodding hello to the person holding the door open. Will didn't know him, and apparently the guy didn't know Will because he just smiled and waved him in. "Happy holidays."

"Thanks." Will scanned the room for his mate. She wasn't in the living room, but he could smell her somewhere nearby. He caught sight of Steve and Laura, leaning against a wall and ignoring the dancers around them.

Steve pointed toward the kitchen, so Will pushed past the throng dancing in the middle of the floor. He narrowly missed having beer spilled all over him, but he managed to make his way to the tiny kitchen without too much trouble. It helped to be tall and broad shouldered.

There she was, her back to the cabinets, her coat over her arm. Brian was leaning way to close to her for Will's comfort. "C'mon, baby. Have some. It will make you feel good."

Barb pushed the joint away from her face. "No thanks. I feel fine."

She tried to wiggle away but Brian, the dickhead, clamped an arm around her waist and held her tight. "I can give you something that will make you feel even better." He ground his hips against Will's mate, and Will saw red. He was moving before he realized it, pulling Brian's arm away from Barb with a growl.

"Whoa. Will. Put him down, big guy."

Will blinked, only then realizing he was looking Brian in the eye. Brian was a good six inches shorter than Will.

A soft hand caressed his arm. “He isn’t worth it.”

Will smiled down at Barb and dropped Brian. He cleared his throat nervously. This was his best chance at finally speaking to her without breaking into a cold sweat. “Hi.”

She shook her head at him. “Hello to you, too.”

He held out his arm, ignoring the man behind him. Brian had just become a non-issue, the fists pounding on Will’s back barely registering. Barb was smiling, directing all that sunshine at him, and that was all that mattered. “Want to dance?”

“I’d love to.”

He led her out into the living room and the music, ignoring the...whatever that annoying pounding had been. He was so excited he thought he might be sick.

He was finally going to hold his mate in his arms.

Oh damn. Will didn’t even notice when Brian started hitting him. Was the man made of stone?

Will pulled her into his arms just as *Forget About Me* started on the radio. His gaze stayed on her face, as if no one else in the whole world existed for him but her. He didn’t even flinch when Brian threw a beer can at his head.

A full one.

Will danced like a dream, neither forcing her to move nor holding back. He just curled that big body of his around her and, God help her, she’d been right. She’d never felt safer. She stayed right where she was as Duran Duran came on, enjoying his embrace in a way she never had with anyone else.

Will Bunsun felt...right. Like he was meant to be hers.

That didn’t mean she wasn’t going to tease the hell out of him, though. “So. About that whole jumping at me from bushes thing.”

He blushed. “Ah. Yeah. Sorry about that. It’s just... I didn’t know how to talk to you.”

She raised her brows. “We’re talking now.”

For the first time since they started dancing his gaze darted away. “Because I had to save you from Brian. You’re so beautiful, and I’m so...” He made a goofy face.

“Spaztastic?”

His expression was full of amusement, but she understood he wasn't laughing at her. He was laughing at himself. “I would have said dorkish, but that works too.”

She stumbled as one of the other dancers bumped into them, but Will's arms kept her upright. “Tell me about yourself. I know you're getting a degree in business management, and you're fond of bushes, but that's about it.”

He laughed, the sound deep, rich. “Yeah. I'm also studying landscape architecture.”

The man was going for two degrees? Holy shit. “Really.”

That grin of his turned wicked. “I promise, I'm not an idiot. I swear. Look, I can even match my socks all by myself.”

She couldn't help it. She looked down.

He laughed again. She'd need to make sure he did that more often. It light up his face, taking him from handsome to breathtaking.

“Sorry.”

“It's okay. It's not like I went out of my way to prove I was brainy.” He shook his head ruefully. “Besides, you've outsmarted me every single day.”

“Because you hide behind the same damn bush every day, dumbass.”

He snorted and tugged her closer. “I know you'll be walking that way every day.” His hand drifted down to her ass.

For once in her life Barb was not interested in removing a roving man's hand at the wrist. He felt so good against her, so warm. Even his scent called to her, woodsy and male. He held her tenderly, like she was already precious to him.

When his lips brushed against her ear she shivered. “There are a lot of things you don't know about me, things I'd love to share with you if you'll let me.”

Her hands to drift down to that fine ass of his. After all, men weren't the only ones who could cop a feel. “Mm-hm.” She squeezed, remarkably pleased both at the firmness of the really remarkable rear she was groping and the shocked gasp her new man gave. This one was definitely a keeper after all. “I am all ears.”

If he couldn't win her over tonight he'd be back behind that bush tomorrow, stalking her for the rest of her life. They'd have to lock him in a zoo to keep him away from her.

She squeezed his butt, her brown eyes sparkling with laughter. "Will?"

A zoo in Siberia. "C'mon. We're out of here." He reached behind him and pulled her hands off his ass with a great deal of reluctance. He'd really liked the feel of her groping him.

"I have to take care of Stacy."

Will grinned. "I don't think you need to worry about that." He nodded towards her roommate. Stacey was busy fending off a very determined Wolf named Ross. Will had met the Wolf once or twice before, and rumor had it he was not only honorable but strong enough to protect Barb's friend.

The two men exchanged a quick glance. Ross would protect Stacy, and let Stacy know where Barb had gone. "Ross is a good guy, and he'll make sure your friend is safe." He tugged her towards the door. "Trust me."

He watched as she shot a look over at Stacy. Stacy rolled her eyes but gave her two thumbs' up.

Will didn't wait to see any more. He snagged his coat and tugged his mate out the door, glad to get away from the increasingly strong smell of pot. He just hoped Ross managed to get Stacy out of there before things turned bad.

He kept a firm grip on Barb's hand, terrified she'd try and get away. "So. I'm an only child, my father runs Bunsun Exteriors, my mother is going to *love* you and I think I'm going the wrong way." He paused, ignoring her choked laughter. "Why am I going to your dorm instead of mine?"

"Because you're a gentleman and you're seeing me safely home."

He rolled his eyes. He'd done it so many times his brain had gone on autopilot. "Fuck that. I want you in *my* de... uh, room." He turned around and began walking the other way. "What about you? Any brothers or sisters?"

"I have two brothers who are going to try and kick your ass simply because you're white. My father works in construction, my mother is a waitress and you're squeezing all the blood out of my fingers."

Oops. "Sorry." Will eased up a little on his grip.

"Thanks."

“You’re welcome.” He paused and looked down at her. He wanted to let her know he’d never hurt her or her family. “Just so you know, they can *try* and kick my ass. I promise not to hurt them too much when they do.”

She just shook her head. “Why do I have the feeling you’re not just saying that to impress me?”

He shrugged. He couldn’t help it if it was the truth. He might be a dork, but he was still a Bear.

“Anything else you want to tell me?”

Yup. I’m a Bear and you’re my mate. In about two seconds I’m going to bite you and mark you so no other shifter tries to steal you from me. Then I’m going to fuck you stupid.

He had the feeling that it was just better to show her, so he did.

Chapter Four

Will had stopped dead in his tracks. He looked down at her, a strange gleam in his eye, and she swore she could hear the spooky music from *The Exorcist*. “Will? Is this where you kill me and eat me?”

“No and yes.” His sweet smile didn’t reassure her in the least. “Bear with me for a second, I have something I need to do.”

Will picked her up, gently pushed her jacket down her arms and (dear God where those *fangs*?) bit into her shoulder.

Barb shrieked. Piercing, blinding pain was swiftly followed by the best orgasm she’d ever had, bar none. She shuddered in his arms, the feel of his whiskers against her skin driving her insane. She wanted to grab hold of his head and keep him there, keep the sensations moving through her body.

Hell, if he could make her feel like this with just a bite she couldn’t wait to see what happened when they got naked.

The orgasm faded and Will lowered her to the ground. His expression was full of masculine satisfaction. “All done. Let’s go home.”

Barb blinked. “You bit me.”

“Uh-huh.” Will sighed happily and tugged on her arm.

“You had fangs.”

“Um. Yup.” Will hefted her over his shoulder. “You know, I get the feeling you’re about to freak out on me.”

“You think?” She pounded his ass with her fists. “You’re a vampire, aren’t you?”

“I am not!”

How could the man sound offended? “You have fangs and you drank my blood. That makes you a vampire, asshole.”

“Pfft. Please. Vampires don’t exist.”

“They do if someone grows fangs and drinks your blood.”

Her mighty fists of fury didn’t seem to be having any effect on him. *So much for my love of Bruce Lee movies.* Apparently she hadn’t learned enough from the Mighty Bruce, because Will was completely ignoring her efforts to get free. “How come you don’t fry in the sun?”

“Because I’m not a vampire.”

He carried her into his dorm and started to jog up the steps, knocking the breath out of her. “Oof.”

“Sorry.” He opened his door and stepped inside, dumping her on the twin bed. He snagged the back of her jean skirt and dumped her back on the bed when she made a break for it. Will shut the door and leaned back against it, effectively caging her. “I’m not a vampire.”

Barb held up her fingers and counted. “Fangs. Blood drinking. Raging orgasm.” She ignored his pleased grin. “Did you hypnotize me with your eyes?”

He rolled them, obviously fighting a laugh. “I’m not a vampire. I’m a Bear.”

She wiggled her finger in her ear. “A what now?”

“I’m a Bear. A wereBear, if you like.”

She smiled sweetly. “Oh. Is that all.”

He had the gall to look relieved, like *she* was the crazy monster vampire instead of him. “Yup. That’s it.”

She screamed her head off. No way was the freaky vampire dude keeping her locked in with him, no matter how hot he was.

Will dove for the bed and slapped his hand across her mouth. The bedframe collapsed under his bulk, but somehow he managed to keep from hurting her. “Shh! You’ll make the dorm monitor come check on us.”

That was the plan. “Mmf nmph.”

“What?” Will lifted her hand a fraction of an inch from her mouth.

“I said I know.” She took a deep breath, but his hand was across her mouth again before she could blink.

“If I can prove to you that I’m a Bear and you’re my mate, will you promise not to scream?” He grinned down at her, the look full of sexual heat. “Except in the good way.”

She could feel him, hard and hot against her, and knew her time was running out. He had to be using his freaky vampire powers to seduce her. That *had* to be it. She nodded, sure he wouldn't be able to prove a damn thing.

“Okay. You promise, no screaming. You're a woman of your word, right?”

She was. She nodded and eyed the door.

“And no running away either. Promise.”

She nodded reluctantly.

He eyed her suspiciously. “Are your fingers crossed?”

She held up her hands, showing her uncrossed fingers.

“Good.” He eased off of her and stripped off his vest. “Before you freak, I have to take my clothes off.”

She eased towards the door.

“Uh-uh! You promised.” The white shirt was whipped over his head, and Barb felt herself drooling again. The boy had a solid six-pack on him. Dear God, she'd love to run her tongue down *that* treasure trail.

She bit her lip. What the hell was she thinking? Hello! Vampire!

The belt dropped to the floor, and the boots soon followed. His hands paused on his pants zipper, but at that point Barb was still debating whether to make a run for it or see where that trail led. Did it go straight to Nirvana or Munchkin Land?

Please let it be Nirvana.

The pants came off and William Bunsun stood in front of her in all his aroused glory, hallelujah. Barb licked her lips, all thoughts of fleeing gone at the stunning sight before her.

“Whoa.” He had more than enough to keep a woman—

Interlude the First

Bunny slapped his hands over his ears and lalala'd at the top of his lungs. Next to him, Eric looked nauseous.

There was no way he was listening to a tale of his parents getting their freak on.

No.

Way.

“Aw, c'mon.” Will poked Bunny in the side. “Don't you want to hear how your mom jingled my bells?”

Eric gagged.

Bunny was horrified. “No. No, I do not.” There weren't enough yoga and deep breathing exercises in the freakin' world. God, he hated it when his parents did this shit. Just because he was an adult and knew what his penis was really for, they thought it was okay to talk about...

About...

He shuddered. The egg nog was going to curdle in his stomach, he just knew it.

Barb winked at Tabby, who looked utterly fascinated. “We didn't have sex until *after* he showed me his Bear.”

“You really thought he was a vampire?” Tabby was grinning so hard he thought her face might split.

“I was human.” Barb shrugged. “Sue me.”

As Will picked up the tale, Bunny prayed his father would keep the, er, *tail* out of it.

Chapter Five

“Now watch.”

She stared, amazed, as Will began to sprout fur. He grew at least three feet, his arms shortening, black claws replacing his fingers. Within seconds a huge-ass grizzly bear sat in front of her, scratching behind one ear with a hind paw.

Barb lay down on the broken bed, terrified she'd pass out or wind up Pooh's honey-covered snack. She closed her eyes and began to mutter to herself. “Play dead. Play dead. They don't eat dead people.”

Will's rich laugh filled the room. “You're right. I'm not into necrophilia.” He was suddenly on top of her, all six foot two inches of gloriously naked male, and licked the bite mark he'd left on her. “Now. Where were we?”

When his hips hunched forward, pressing his dick into her thigh, she knew exactly where he hoped to be.

Interlude the Second

“Oh, no.” Eric was waving his hands around like a maniac. “No dicks. This is a PG show, people.” He pointed to Tabby’s stomach. “You are *not* traumatizing my unborn niece or nephew. You know the cub can hear you, right?”

Tabby was laughing her ass off as his brother freaked. Not that Bunny could blame him.

Why couldn’t his parents have told him they found him under a cabbage patch like *normal* parents?

Will and Barb exchanged a look. “I think we can leave that part of the story out, just this once...”

Chapter Six

Will reached over to his radio and flipped it on. The sweet strains of *West End Girls* drifted quietly through the room as he started to take Barb's jacket off. "You need to know the rest of it."

"Rest of what?"

"When I bit you, I started the change in you."

That brow rose again, arrogant and demanding. It was hot as hell. "Oh?"

"You'll be a Bear like me inside of a week. Maybe two."

She freaking growled at him, the tiny little thing. Like he'd be intimidated by that.

Okay, when she grabbed his nut hairs and yanked he had to admit he was a little bit intimidated. "Say what now?"

"There's an upside to this." He winced as she pulled some of the hairs out. "You'll be able to drop-kick guys like Brian across a football field."

Her eyes narrowed, but she didn't let go. "Tell me more."

He kissed the side of her neck, letting his five o'clock shadow scrap across her skin. He'd noticed she liked that when he marked her. "You won't feel any pain during childbirth unless you want to."

Her hand eased up on his balls, thank God. "Really?"

"Mm-hmm. Menstrual cramps are a thing of the past."

"This is sounding better and better." She caressed his prick and he moaned. "Tell me more."

"Bears are born healers. You'll be able to heal minor injuries on your friends, your family, and your children. And Bear will protect your dreams."

"Children?"

Of course she would latch onto that. He grinned down at her, prepared to negotiate. He knew what he wanted, but he also knew where to start from. "I want at least four."

"Four? I don't think so." She sniffed, but he noticed she wasn't pulling away from him. "I'm thinking no more than one."

Yes! She was bargaining. Perfect. "Three."

She glared up at him, her and beginning to tighten once more around him. "Two."

Which was what he wanted in the first place. "Done."

Her eyes went wide. "Wait—"

Will was done waiting. He'd marked her, and she was his. He shut her mouth in the next best possible way, kissing her until they were both breathless.

"Mine."

She wrapped her arms around his neck and grinned at him, and for the first time since he'd caught her scent he knew everything was going to work out fine. "I'll think about it."

Epilogue

“And that’s how I bagged your mother.”

Will was grinning at his wife like he’d won the lottery. Bunny never doubted that his parents adored one another. He was just grateful the man hadn’t said *banged*.

He was still planning on sending Will the therapy bills.

“Aw, that’s so sweet.” Tabby got up, crossed the room and bussed his dad on the cheek. “You can tell you really love her.”

Will beamed as his wife laughed. “I wouldn’t pounce on just anyone.”

And even though they’d been together for years now, Bunny knew that just one glance from his mom could have his big father blushing and stammering within seconds. There was still a bit of that shy, dorky college student in the strong, confident man who’d raised him. Claiming his mother had just been the beginning. They’d had to fight her family, who hadn’t wanted a white son-in-law, and his mother had to learn how to be a Bear.

They’d made a wonderful life together, and Bunny hoped his mating went just as well as theirs.

“Hey, sugar.”

Without thought he tucked Tabby under his arm, holding her close. There was nothing he wouldn’t do for his mate...except listen to the sex life of his parents. He watched as Will and Barb roped his brother into helping with the garland Tabby wanted strung on their front porch.

They might embarrass the hell out of him, but he loved them.

Bunny rested his hand on Tabby’s swollen stomach as his family stood around him, bitching about the cold. He rested his forehead against hers, wondering how in the hell he’d gotten so lucky. “Merry Christmas, baby.”

“Merry Christmas, Alex.”