
Chapter 1

*January – Wednesday
Southern Maryland*

Melody

I'm putting the sandwich I was making in the toaster oven when the hair on the back of my neck stands on end. "Hey, BB is behind you," Sam whispers next to me with a wink before she walks to the other end of the deli counter.

"BB" is short for "Big Bad" or "Big Bad Wolf" and is what we call the six-foot two-inch smoldering police officer who I know is now standing behind me, at the counter, waiting for me to turn around. I take a deep breath and let it out slowly as I close the toaster and turn. *Fuck!* That is all I want to do when I see him. My eyes meet his, and I brace myself against the counter as my knees go weak. I get lost for a moment in his deep brown eyes and pouty lips. Internally, I roll my eyes at my own

stupidity for being weak in the knees over the man standing across from me.

“Hi,” I breathe out all airy and flirtatiously, ending with my bottom lip caught between my teeth as I smile.

“Hey,” he replies with his typical response, as he leans his elbows on the counter and crosses his bulky arms with a seductive smirk. Butterflies turn over in my stomach, and I imagine running my hands through his short hair, feeling the buzz cut on the sides tickle my palms as I massage his head. I shake my head, bringing myself out of my daydream.

We have been having these one-word conversations for almost a year now. I glance towards Sam, and I see her snicker as she works on the orders on her screen. The oven behind me beeps, and I turn back around. This time I’m literally rolling my eyes at myself as I take the sandwich out of the oven.

I finish the order I was working on and call out the number. He doesn’t move to take it but continues staring directly into my eyes over the counter and smiles. I move farther down the deli counter to deliver the order. I try to slow my breathing as Sam walks up behind me, reaches out, and places a sandwich in front of me. “This one is for BB,” she whispers in my ear, “go ahead and take it to him.” I pick up the sub and steady myself as I walk the length of the deli to take his order to him. We talked about this before he got here. I’m going to stick to the plan. I’m going to grow a pair and speak to this man today.

So now I’m standing in front of him with a sub and absolutely nothing to say. Feeling like a complete idiot. “So, what’s your name?” I ask quietly and slowly look up to meet his eyes. He chuckles as he points to the name tag on the front of his uniform.

“It’s right here,” he says with a voice like velvet as he chuckles again. I look closely at the name “Caomhanach” embroidered there.

“Exactly,” I say dryly, “and how the hell do you say that?” Pointing at his name tag myself. “Plus, I meant your *first* name.”

I'm typically a pretty bratty person, and his attempt to make me look like a fool has my hackles up. I know that came out with way more sass than I intended.

He smiles, and the hair on the back of my neck stands up again. "That's *not* what you asked," he says with as much sass in his response as I put in mine. "It's pronounced Cav-i-nAw." He smiles, then says, "Finn, my name's Finn," reaching his hand out to grab mine, he lifts and gently shakes it in his. I feel a roughness from calluses on his hands as he runs his thumb across my knuckles. *Mmm, my inner Goddess moans at the thought of his rough hands on my body.*

"It's nice to meet you, Melody," he says, squeezing my hand gently. The electricity I can feel shooting up my arm gives me goosebumps, and I slowly take a deep breath in through my nose. I try not to go all weak in the knees, like a swooning ninny again, but in an instant, my panties are wet.

"You too." I smile. *Damn, how can he have this effect on me?* "So? Um, I'm a sub... I-I mean, I have a sub." *Shit shit, WTF am I saying?* I scream inside my head as I smile again. "Here's your sub!" My eyes widen, and my brows go up as I feel my face flush, I press my lips together to keep these awkward thoughts from pouring out of my mouth.

"Really?" he asks with a wry smile.

"Have a great day!" I chirp, shove the sandwich into his hand, and practically run to the breakroom. "I'm an idiot!" I say, my back against the door. I'm banging the back of my head against it repeatedly, trying to numb the embarrassing memory that's quickly being engraved permanently on my brain.

"So?" Sam asks.

"Oh my god! Don't say anything! Don't ask!"

"Why not? I think it was smooth. Come on, Mel, you have got to have more than a one-line conversation with this guy. What's his name?"

"Finn." I sigh as I sink onto one of the plastic chairs and

shift, trying to get comfortable. “Finn Caomhanach,” I say again dreamily, looking up at the ceiling as I remember the way his velvet voice and firm hands felt on my senses, squeezing my thighs together against the wetness that has built up between them. “But trust me, I said way more than one word to him this time and looked like a complete idiot.”

“Whoa, down, girl. Take it easy on yourself,” Sam tells me.

“I can’t help it! I don’t know how to explain what he does to me. It’s like I’m on fire from the inside.” I catch her rolling her eyes at me in the mirror when I tell her this.

“I’m serious, Sam. I get wet just looking at him and that voice, mmm. Yum!”

“I don’t get you, Melody!” She spins to face me as she raises her voice. “You say all of this shit, but you have spent the past eleven months running to the break room every day when he comes in. I can’t deal with it anymore. Shit or get off the pot.” She is clearly frustrated.

“I know, Sam. I’m sorry.” I drop my head and focus on the ground in front of me.

“Don’t be like that, Mel, I get it. Every time I look at the guy, I’m ready to jump his bones too. I wish he would look at me the way he looks at you.” She winks at me. I can feel the heat rush to my cheeks, and I know I’m blushing bright red. “That’s my point, though, the way he looks at you. It’s like he wants to eat you up.”

“Please stop.” I slide down in my chair and pull my hat down over my face.

We finish up the lunch rush, and the last few hours of the day go smoothly. But I can’t help thinking I missed my chance this time and that Sam is right.

I'm packing up my purse and lunch box when she bursts through the door so quickly it slams against the wall, and I jump out of my skin. "Holy shit, Sam! Where's the fire? Slow down!"

"He's back, Mel. Your Big Bad Wolf is back! He is out there looking for you. He asked me if you had left yet for the day and wanted me to come get you! This is it! He is going to ask you out! I know it. I can just feel it. I feel it in my bones, Mel! But just wait because you're gonna feel his big ol' bone soon!" She gushes so fast I have a hard time following her. She is buzzing and bouncing up and down on the balls of her feet as she exclaims, "I told you!"

Oh my god, he's back? Today? He came back?

I notice her pink hair is sticking out from under the side of her hat. She must have knocked it loose with all of her excitement. I try to focus on that as I calm myself down over the fact that Finn came back for a second time today. Watching her curls bounce, I take a few deep breaths and focus on her face again.

"Yuck, stop it. Why are you so excited? You would think that he is about to ask you out. Is that what you want?" I wink at her. "I can put in a good word for you with Finn." Then go back to digging through my locker.

"No, Mel, I'm serious. Now go out there and hope he hasn't left the store yet. This has to stop today, we decided this morning, remember? Now go!" She pulls me by the arms and pushes me out the door before I can protest, and as I turn to go back into the room, she closes the door in my face. "Go!" I hear a muffled shout from the other side of the door.

"Hey, Melody!" I freeze when I hear him say my name and turn to face him.

"Finn! What's up?"

I sounded like a normal person just then, until I see his eyes, and instantly I'm throbbing again. I am ready to go. My heart is racing, I can hear the blood rushing in my ears, and I know my

cheeks are bright red because they're on fire. My stomach tightens in anticipation, thinking of all the things I want him to do to me. He is standing right outside of the breakroom door, and my embarrassment only rises as I realize that he could probably hear everything Sam said as she gushed about him and his damn Big Bad Wolf bone.

"Do you have a minute? I wanted to know if I could ask you something outside," Finn steps towards me and points over his shoulder with his thumb.

"I'm off in a few minutes. I just need to pack up my stuff and then I can meet you out front. Does that work for you?" I shift nervously from foot to foot, waiting for his response.

"Sure thing. I'll see you outside."

I watch him turn to leave and I head back into the room Sam locked me out of a few moments before. Grabbing my purse, I pull off my ball cap and straighten my hair in the mirror. As I slip into my coat, Sam says, "It's now or never, girly. You got this." Then she smacks my ass. "Go get 'em."

I finish applying a fresh layer of lip gloss, that and mascara are the only makeup I waste my time on at work. I fidget in the mirror with my hair for a few more seconds, then turn to Sam.

"Don't worry. You look great! He wouldn't be coming in here every day to see you if he didn't already think you were a super-hot hottie."

I start to protest at her words, and she puts her hands up to stop me. "He did come in here to get his coffee and food, but he is coming to see you too, Mel. Trust me. Go close the deal and get the Big Bad Wolf to follow you home like a little puppy." I take a deep breath and head out front. *You've got this, Mel.* I try giving myself a pep talk.

Finn is leaning against the hood of his truck in the parking lot. The January air is cold, but Finn is wearing a tight black t-shirt that pulls across his biceps as he crosses his arms over his

chest. He's sporting jeans and a pair of black combat boots. I thought the Big Bad Wolf could not be any sexier at this point, honestly. I think Sam was right. I need to ease up, or I'm going to be drooling in a second. I take a breath and walk over.

"Hey, Finn. What are you doing back here?" I ask casually. At least, I think it's casual. I hope it's casual.

"I'm here for my sub," he replies charmingly. I freeze, but my panties are soaked, and I'm almost positive he can tell what he just did to me. Then he takes a deep breath, and I'm convinced he is sniffing me in the air.

"You're what? Did you forget..." I trail off because he is looking at me so seriously. *For his sub? He didn't forget his sub. He is looking for a sub. Is he a Dom?*

"Let's not keep playing this game, Mel. You heard me." He drops his arms to his sides and steps towards me. I watch his muscular thighs flex as he moves. "You know what I mean and why I'm here. I've spent the past eleven months trying to decide if I was wrong about you." Slowly, tilting his head to one side, he winks at me and licks his lower lip. I try focusing on anything other than the idea of what it would be like to take that lip between my teeth as I kiss him. I squeeze my eyes closed and they shoot open as I feel his hand brush my jaw. "But I don't think I am, and I'm tired of trying to stay away from you. So tell me, do you have any plans this weekend?" He drops his hand from my face, and gives me a shy smile as he waits for my answer.

"I do. My birthday is tomorrow, and one of my friends is taking me out Friday. We're going to a concert in the city. But what about Saturday? I'm free then... I'd love to... would you... are you free? Uh, I mean..." *Stop rambling, Mel. Just shut up.*

"I have to work Saturday, but I'm free next weekend. Friday night? Say five o'clock? I can pick you up, we can do dinner and a movie?" Finn smiles then, and I melt.

"Yes! I am free next Friday!"

He pulls out his phone, and I quickly rattle off my number then give him the address where he can pick me up. I slowly walk to my car and watch him leave the parking lot. *A date with Big Bad?*