
A SHIFT IN CIARA

Her Unexpected Mate

Book 4

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This book contains fantasy themes appropriate for mature readers only. Nothing in this book should be interpreted as Blushing Books' or the author's advocating any non-consensual sexual activity.

HP – Seriously, we’re going to have to get you some pom-poms. My cheerleader, I couldn’t keep going without you.

SP – My macaroni projects shine because of you.

DD – You’re my light in the darkness. This one is for you.

Chapter 1

KILDARE, *Ireland - Sunday*

Ciara

I sit crouched in the wood line, watching the doe out in the field picking away at the grass. When I catch movement on the other side of the clearing at the same time as she does, she blows and takes off in my direction. I crouch lower, still undiscovered by my prey. My gut tells me not to show myself, however. The massive black wolf creeping toward me is not one I recognize, not a member of my family.

I melt lower into the ground, watching my dinner flee and keeping one eye on the approaching stranger. No natural wolf would be that size, or that shade of ebony, his eyes glint red as he pads toward me. I've clearly been discovered, my heart races as he closes the gap between us.

Deciding it is better to meet him head-on rather than

have him approach me in my current hiding place, I rise. Stretching my paws and digging my claws into the dry leaves at my feet I make my way out of the woods toward him. I refuse to shift back to my human form, refuse to meet this stranger in a weaker state. I stride out to meet him, and we standoff in the field.

He surveys me, tilting his head to one side, and a shudder runs down my spine. Who he is and where he has come from, I do not know. But he is on my family's lands, my lands, and I do not trust strangers. He stands before me on two legs when he shifts, and it is my turn to survey him. Trying not to get caught looking at how well-endowed he is, as my eyes hitch over his length, I quickly bring them back up to meet his.

Tousled brown hair, eyes the color of caramel, olive-toned skin, he is one hell of a specimen of a man. I have to keep from licking my lips at the thoughts running through my mind. A sly smile spreads across his face, and I know he has interpreted them anyway.

"Hello there, gorgeous." When he speaks, my insides clench at the beauty of his voice, and I wonder, briefly, if it is merely the effect seeing his naked body is having on me or if I am about to go into heat. I don't move, not a muscle, no shifting from foot to foot, no displaying signs of nervousness. No doubt he will be able to smell the arousal on me, and there is not a damn thing I can do about that. I continue to stare him down, waiting for him to speak again.

"I'm Rian." Motioning to himself, he steps back from me, giving me my space. I let out a low warning growl at him, unhappy with his decision to move. "Down girl. I'm just trying to make you feel more comfortable by putting space between us. Are you from around here?"

I roll my eyes at him, obviously, he is not going to take a hint. Not wanting to turn my back to him, but refusing to shift and stand in front of this stranger naked, I hesitate for a moment more. Turning, I make my way into the woods and back to the patch of trees I was crouched in before he arrived. My clothes lay folded in a neat pile at the base of a white oak. I shift and dress quickly, still keeping an eye on him. My long black hair is matted with leaves from hunting. Attempting to look decent I pull it back the best I can into a high ponytail. Securing it and stepping out from the cropping of trees.

“What are you doing on my lands?” I ask him, getting straight to the point, hoping to show more bluster than I am feeling. Barefoot and prepared to shift and run in an instant if I must. My cut-off shorts and spaghetti strap tank top cover me, but barely. Wishing I had worn a bra I cross my arms over my large breasts. My eyes pass over him again, and I notice that he is now sporting one hell of an erection. Biting my lip, I hold back my gasp.

“I was just passing through. I’m from the County Clare.” Motioning over his shoulder in the direction of his home, I know he isn’t far from it.

“I wasn’t aware of a pack in Clare.” My eyes flick down of their own accord to his groin, again. “Rian?” I ask. “Rian, who?”

“Rian O’Sullivan.” Stepping toward me, he holds out his hand, amongst other things pointed in my direction.

I step back, still wary of him.

“Ciara Caomhanach.” I offer him my name and nothing more. In this county my name means something. Our packs rule Kildare and Wicklow. The name Caomhanach has ruled here for over five hundred years. My father is the leader of our pack, Alpha, and his name

protects me now. Obviously recognizing the danger in who I am, Rian steps back from me. After all, being the daughter of the Alpha, of the strongest pack in Ireland is not to be taken lightly.

“Ah. Finn Caomhanach is your father?” His eyebrows climb his forehead when he asks. He looks down and blushes as if just now realizing he is naked. “My apologies. I-I... was just passing through.” Now that he is no longer posturing for me, a pretty peacock with his feathers puffed out for his mate, I realize he is rather cute. *Down girl.* I tell myself.

“He is,” I tell him matter-of-factly, letting a small giggle escape my lips at his blush spreading over his cheeks.

Nodding his head, he points at himself. “I’m sorry for my state. I don’t... I didn’t bring clothes with me on my trip. I was out for a hunt and picked up your scent after finding the doe. Sorry, I lost you your meal. I... well... I *had* to meet you.”

I blink at him a few times, always the freak show for being the female werewolf in the pack. It has been this way all twenty-five years of my life. My twin brother Edmund giving me the most flack. At the same time I have this thought. I realize that this is the first time I am meeting a werewolf who is not already married or a part of my family. This is the only eligible man of my kind I have ever met. Assuming he is eligible.

I balk at my own thoughts, realizing that I am jumping the gun and again blame my hormones. So close to being in heat I should have reconsidered coming out, but again, this is the first time I have ever come across someone not a part of our two packs. So why would I have thought to avoid him?

“Well, I have to get going.” I interrupt my own musings and ignore his statement about needing to meet me. Turn-

ing, I head off into the woods, walking as fast as I can in my bare feet, picking over fallen branches and sticks. I would prefer to make my getaway in my other form, but I don't want to ruin my good tank top.

"Wait! Ciara!" he calls after me.

"What, Rian?" I call back to him, not turning, unable to look at him again. Fear of what I might do if I see him naked again, creeping through my body. I realized when I turned to walk away just how wet I was at the sight of him. Just because I've never done it before doesn't mean that I don't have an idea about it, and by the looks of him, the time he could show me is better than anything I've done on my own.

"Damn it. Stop." I curse myself for letting my mind wander that way again and keep storming through the woods. When the wolf jumps out in front of me, blocking my path, I stop and stare up at him.

He nudges me with his nose, nuzzling into my shoulder. The plea in his eyes is evident. I sigh. Maybe I need to give this a chance, I never considered a pack in Clare that may not be related to us, and I can't die a shriveled up old maid, virgin until the end.

"Look, come back tomorrow. I'll meet you here at dawn. But for heaven's sake, bring some clothes next time!" Rian nods at me and pushes his nose into my shoulder again. I smile, unable to help myself. "Nice to meet you too," I tell him, rubbing my hand along the top of his head. Stepping around him I watch as he leaves my woods and heads back in the direction of County Clare.

Slipping out of my clothes, I stash them back under rocks in the patch of trees and head home.

Rian

As I run home, I think about the woman I just met. Her gorgeous green eyes and jet-black hair pulled high into a ponytail on her head, full of leaves and sticks from crouching in the brush. She looked adorable. Her body, perfectly curved in all the right places. I picture her in my mind while I run.

I'm not here looking for a mate. I am supposed to be looking for my father. This is the last place he was heard from or seen. But the moment I smelled her, saw her, I couldn't turn and walk away. I needed to be closer to her, needed to meet her. I toy with the idea of going back tomorrow. She is the daughter of the Alpha of the most powerful pack of wolves in the region. I don't want to bring his wrath down on me, but I can't deny what I feel.

Her beauty as a wolf was incredible, her human form astounding. The horror I felt at my growing erection in front of her was awful. My stomach swirls now, just thinking about it and thinking about her, taking her, and mating with her. Again, my erection makes itself known as I run. Uncomfortable, I slow my pace. I need to get it together; I can't meet her at dawn and have a hard-on the entire time.

The Burren, Ireland

Rian

. . .

Arriving back at the castle I call home in The Burren, I shift and quickly dress. Sitting down, I think through the information I have gathered on my father and my plans to find him. I try to put Ciara out of my mind.

The longer I sit and think, the more I see her face in my mind and the urge to go back to Kildare and track her down grows inside me. I can't. I need to keep a steady mind and focus on my goal. I am here to find my father and confront him for leaving my mother and me so many years ago. I wonder for a moment if Ciara and her father would be able to help me in my search. No doubt she was not here, but her father would have been when mine was last seen in this region. Perhaps he could shed some light on what happened.

I lie and watch the sunset over the water and then fall asleep under the stars. I have lived this way for years now since I was a teen and discovered who and what I am. My mother, a human, was not able to handle a shapeshifter. Without my father to teach her and me what I was, I had to rely on figuring it out on my own.

I did the best I could with what I had, and now at thirty, I am able to control my forms. My mind turns back to Ciara and her dark hair cascading down her back. I close my eyes and picture her naked under me. I'm behind her and pushing forward into her. "Mmm." I groan out my pleasure at the images in my mind. My cock alerting me to its desire to take her.

When I finally fall asleep, I dream of the first time I shifted back in my mother's home in Dublin. She knew what I was, had known what my father was. But since he left when I was five, she had no way to teach me, as a sixteen-year-old boy, how to handle it. When I wake, the anger towards my father has bubbled up to the surface

again. I consider blowing off Ciara to go and do more research.

I was on my way back from Wicklow when I met her yesterday, and there was no help there. The pack in that county refused to entertain my questions. I shift in my makeshift bed and try to get back to sleep, needing to be well-rested for my trip back to see her at dawn.