

*Wolf On Wheels* by Layne Macadam

Caleb Grayson's fur spiked and his tail swished with anger as without a thought or a care, Nora bounded off down the street, leapt over the suburban fence and was lost from sight. His orders to the pack had been clear. Bare minimum—travel in pairs. Stay together at all times. Watch each other's back. The lure of fresh rabbit must have overridden duty and common sense.

The growl he released was feral as he took off after her. The rules were put in place to keep his pack safe. Hunters were on the warpath and they were after wolf shifters with deadly intent. He'd already lost one member to their violence and would not lose another. Humans, he made a derisive sound. They were uncaring and self-centered. He'd yet to meet one he liked. He pulled his muzzle into a sneer and bared his teeth at the thought of that race.

One giant leap had him over the fence and landing smoothly on all fours on the other side. Nora was farther up the yard edging closer to her goal, but she was not alone.

Frozen to the spot he couldn't move had his life depended on it. It was as if he'd stepped into a trough of rapid dry cement and was stuck fast. His heartbeat had ramped up and his tail twitched at the sight of the divine human before him. Awestruck, he snarled at the smaller gray wolf beside him. They'd talk about her transgression later. Nora was an adolescent and still in the playful stage of wanting to hunt live prey. Fresh meat was tempting but no excuse for defying his orders. She pawed the ground waiting for him to speak telepathically, but he was speechless. The female human had him dumbstruck and transfixed.

She was a good head shorter than he, athletically built with dips and curves in all the right places, and her spiral curls were the color of marmalade and looked every bit as rich and glossy in the lunar light.

It came to him in a flash then, this human with her emerald eyes sparkling like gemstones was his mate. He'd waited centuries to find her, had given up hope, and now, like a bolt from the blue there she was. Not even Lycan, but human. It was cruel, preposterous, but true. He had little tolerance for the species, but he ached to carry her home, cherish her, breed with her, howl with elation, but he quashed the instinct as his homosapien side surged to the fore—*tread carefully, do not rush this—she may not understand.*

*"Caleb, what is it?"* Nora's telepathic voice quivered with unease.

He didn't answer, couldn't answer, so consumed was he with the human before him. Her shape was visible through the silk of her gown. The night breeze had molded the thin white material to her womanly form. She was a vision. He was grateful it was a she-wolf beside him and not a male from his pack.

As he continued to stare, mouth agape and tongue lolling, the breeze picked up and she shivered. Her nipples punched out against the flimsy fabric. He

whimpered. His heart pounded faster now as if he'd run for miles at top speed over the rugged terrain around his Black Mountain home.

*"Caleb what's wrong, can't you hear me?"* Nora's voice was high-pitched now and sharper than normal.

Before he could speak the woman took a small tentative step toward Nora's midnight snack. She reacted on natural impulse. Her fur stood on end, a menacing growl emanated from lips drawn back in a savage snarl baring sharp teeth. Crouched low and ready to spring, it was enough to have him recover his voice.

*"Stay. The human is my mate. Threaten her and you threaten me."* As he sent the telepathic message, Nora dropped to her haunches, and with a whimper assumed a submissive position—she would not dare challenge him.

The command was issued with his sight still glued to his female. The stiffening breeze had whipped the ginger ringlets around her face giving a halo effect, but when her eyes widened and she trembled, it pierced his heart like a blade. He hated seeing her frightened, smelling her fear, but at this point there was little he could do.