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Tangle of Need: Book 11



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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurAdria, wolf changeling and resilient soldier, has made a break with the past. Now comes a new territory, and a devastating new complication: Riaz, a SnowDancer lieutenant already sworn to someone else.For Riaz, the primal attraction he feels for Adria is a staggering betrayal. For Adria, his dangerous lone-wolf appeal is beyond sexual. It consumes her. It terrifies her. It threatens to undermine everything she has built of her new life. But fighting their wild compulsion toward one another proves a losing battle.Their coming together is an inferno ... and a melding of two wounded souls who promise each other no commitment, no ties, no bonds. Only pleasure. Too late, they realise that they have more to lose

than they ever imagined. Drawn into a cataclysmic Psy war that may alter the fate of the world itself, they must make a decision that might just break them both. Extrait Chapter 1 Riaz caught a flash of midnight hair and a long-legged stride and called out, Indigo! However, he realized his mistake the instant he turned the corner. Adria. Eyes of deepest blue-violet met his, the frost in them threatening to give him hypothermia. Indigos in her office. The words were helpful, but the tone might as well have been a serrated blade. That did it. Did I kill your dog? Frown lines marred her smooth forehead. Excuse me? God, that tone. Its the only reason, he said, holding on to his temper by a very thin thread, I can think of to explain why youre so damn pissy with me. Adria had been pulled into den territory during the hostilities with Councilor Henry Scott and his Pure Psy army a month ago and had remained behind to take up a permanent position as a senior soldier.

Shed fought with focused determination by Riazs side, followed his orders on the field without hesitation. However, off the field? Ice. Absolute. Unrelenting. Glacial enough to bite. Folding his arms when she didnt reply, he stepped into her personal space, caught the subtle scent of crushed berries and frost. A strangely delicate scent for this hard-ass of a woman, he thought, before his wolfs anger overrode all else.

You havent answered my question. It came out a growl. Eyes narrowed, she stepped closer with a slow deliberation that was pure, calculated provocation. She was a tall woman, but he was taller. That didnt seem to stop her from looking down her nose at him. I didnt realize, she said in a voice so polite it drew blood, that fawning over you was part of the job requirement. Now I know where Indigo learned her mean face from. But where his fellow lieutenants heart beat warm and generous beneath that tough exterior, he wasnt sure Adria had any emotions that registered above zero on the thermometer. Adrias response was scalpel sharp. I dont know what she ever saw in you, but I suppose every woman has mistakes in her past. The

slightest change in her expression, the tiniest fracture, before it was sealed up again, her face an impenetrable mask. Scowling, Riaz was about to tell her exactly what he thought of her and her judgmental gaze when his cell phone rang. He answered without moving an inch away from the woman who was sandpaper across his temper, rubbing him raw with her mere presence. Yeah? My office, Hawke said. Need you to head out, do a pickup. Be there in two. Snapping the phone shut, he closed the remaining distance between him and Adria, forcing her to tip back her head. We will, he said, realizing those striking blue eyes with an edge of purple had streaks of gold running through them, beautiful and exotic, continue this later. That was when Adrias cell phone rang. Yes? she answered, without breaking eye-contact with the big, muscled wolf who thought he could intimidate her. In my office, Hawke ordered. On my way. Hanging up, she raised an eyebrow at Riaz in a consciously insolent action. My alpha has requested my presence, so get out of my fucking way, she said with utmost sweetness. Eyes of beaten gold narrowed again. Guess well be walking together. Not giving an inch until he stepped back and turned to head to Hawkes office, she walked in silence beside him, though her wolf bared its teeth, hungry to draw blood, to bite and claw and mark.

Damn him. Damn him. Shed been doing fine, coping after her final separation from Martin. That had been a bloody battle, too. Youll come crawling back to me. Maybe Ill be waiting. Maybe I wont. Adria stifled a raw laugh. Martin didnt understand that it was over. Done. It had been over the night a year ago when hed stormed out of their home, not to return for four months. The truly stunning thing was that hed had the gall to be shocked when shed told him to find someplace else to sleep and slammed the door in his face. Cat got your tongue? An acerbic comment made in a deep male voice that ruffled her fur the wrong way. Go bite yourself, she muttered, in no mood to play games. Her skin felt too sensitive, as if shed lost a protective layer, her blood too hot. Someone should bite you, Riaz responded in a near snarl. Pull that stick out of your ass at the same time. Adria growled just as they reached the open door to Hawkes office. The alpha looked up at their entrance, open speculation in blue eyes so pale, they were those of a wolf given human form.

However, when he spoke, his words were pragmatic. You two free to go for a drive? Adria nodded, saw Riaz do the same beside her. What do you need done? he asked, his tone far calmer than the one hed leveled at her. Mack and one of his trainee techs went up to do a routine service of the hydro station, Hawke told them, shoving back strands of hair the silver-gold of his pelt in wolf form, but their vehicles not starting, and theyve got components that need to be brought back to the den for repairs. No problem, Riaz said. Ill take one of the SUVs, pick them up. Even as Adria was thinking the task was a one-person job, Hawke turned to her. Youre now one of the most senior people in the den. His dominance was staggering, demanding her wolfs absolute attention. Id like you to get reacquainted with the region, given that you havent spent an extended period of time here since you turned eighteen. She nodded. Ill ask Riley and Eli to work some time into my shift schedule. It was a necessary detour from her normal duties falling just below the lieutenants in the hierarchy, senior soldiers were often called upon to lead, and as a leader she had to know every inch of

this land, not only the section shed been assigned to during the battle. It'd be better if I do it on foot. Shed see, scent, so much more. You can explore in detail later on. I want you to have a good working knowledge of the area as soon as possible. He handed her a thin plas map. The trip up to the hydro station will take you through some critical sections and you have certification in auto mechanics, correct? Yes. It had been an interest shed turned into the secondary qualification all soldiers were required to possess. Later, it had kept her sane, the ability to fix broken things and make them whole again. Ill take a look at the vehicle. What about the replanting? Riaz asked, his voice clawing over her skin like nails on one of those old-fashioned chalkboards the pups liked to draw on. Felix's team have enough security? They're fine. Walking to the territorial map on the stone wall of his office, Hawke tapped the large crosshatched section where the battle with Pure Psy had taken place. Felix's volunteers and conscripts a sharp grin are planting the area with fast-growing natives, but for now, it's so open it's easy to monitor, especially with the cats sharing the watch. Adria thought of what shed seen on that battlefield filled with the screams of wounded SnowDancers; the cold amber and red of a flame so hypnotic and deadly, and wondered at the cost paid by the young Psy woman who held all that power and their alpha's heart. What are the chances of another serious Pure Psy attack? she asked, intrigued on the innermost level by a relationship that appeared so very unbalanced on the outside, and yet one that her wolf sensed was as solid as the stone of the den. It was Riaz who answered. According to Judd's sources, close to nil. They've got worse problems. Civil war, Hawke said, shaking his head. If he's right, all hell is going to break loose so we make sure we're prepared to weather any storms. The irritation hits? Riaz asked, and Adria knew he was referring to the sporadic attempts to lay booby traps in den territory. Yeah, Hawke agreed with a scowl. Scent trails point to the perpetrators being a number of the Pure Psy survivors who just can't let it go. They're disorganized and their traps are laughable. Still, I have all the sentries taking care not to accidentally fall into a hole. A hole for crissakes! Adria's wolf nodded in disgusted agreement. It really was time to retreat when you had to resort to digging holes and covering them up with leaves in the hope that SnowDancers people wouldn't sniff them out a mile away. They'll get tired sooner or later, but it might be an idea to make finding these traps a bit of a joke contest between the sentries. Riaz angled his head toward her in a very wolfish way, even as Hawke's frustrated expression turned to one of interest. From what I've seen, she said, keeping her eyes resolutely away from the man to her right, the amount of time they have to waste neutralizing the traps is starting to frustrate the soldiers who patrol the borders, and it's the kind of thing that can grow into anger. That's not good for our people, especially coming off the stress of the battle. But if you make it so the sentry with the most sightings gets a prize at the end of each week it becomes a game, Riaz completed with a thoughtful nod. That's very good. Hands behind her back, Adria squeezed the wrist of one hand with the other to keep from snapping back that she didn't need his endorsement. The response was so far from her usual even-tempered nature that she bit down on the inside of her lip to snap herself out of it, her gaze focused straight ahead. Except the stranger who'd taken over her body couldn't simply shut up. Thank you. Honey sweet. I'm so glad you approve. A growl tangled up the air currents. Wolves do like a game, Hawke said, his face suspiciously bland. I think Drew's the best person to organize it. Ill get that in motion. He glanced at the time projected on the wall. You two better head out so you can get back before dinner. Walking out of the office with the man whose very scent—dark, of the forest, with an edgy undertone of citrus and a brush of woodsmoke—made her skin itch, she said, We should get some food. The drive wouldn't be quick, plus Mack and his tech hadn't planned to be up there this long and would be hungry. Should be something in here, Riaz said, entering the senior soldiers break room. They worked with honed efficiency to slap together some sandwiches, and were ready to go ten minutes later. Clenching her abdominal muscles as she got into the vehicle with Riaz, Adria told herself to concentrate on the route, the geography, anything but the potent masculine scent of the man in the driver's seat . . . because she knew full well why he incited such violence in her. Riaz drove them out of the garage and into the mountains, very aware of the arctic silence from the passenger seat. The more time he spent with Adria, the more he realized how unlike Indigo she was, in spite of the superficial similarity of their looks. One of the reasons he'd always enjoyed the other woman's company was her upfront nature. Adria, by comparison, was a closed box, with Do Not Enter signs pasted on every surface. He understood that. Hell, he had his own no-go zones, but with Adria, it was armor of broken glass that drew blood. This track, he said, doing his job because, personality clash or not, he knew his responsibilities, is the most direct route to the hydro station. Not according to the map Hawke gave me. A quick, penetrating glance. So what's wrong with the other road? Reining in his wolf when it bared its teeth at what it read as a challenge, though the rational part of him knew he was just revved up for a fight after her earlier provocation, he said, Sheer cliff face right in

the middle. As a lieutenant who had her under his command on the field, he appreciated her intelligence and determination to learn regardless of how often she used that sharp mind to slice into him with verbal claws. Making two tight turns, he continued onward through the mountains that seemed to touch the sky. Meant to delay any aggressors if they ever get that far. Adria didn't say anything for several long minutes, studying the map and their passage into the mountains. I'll need to request another senior soldier go with me on some of my exploratory trips. Her naturally husky voice low in thought. So I don't miss things like that. I didn't have reason to memorize or even know all this as a teenager, and I'm sure security details have been changed in the meantime anyway. I'll take you, Riaz said, because damn it, he was a lieutenant, even when it came to a prickly piece of cactus like Adria. Indigo made sure I was familiar with the details after I came back from my posting in Europe. He'd been away long enough for many of the subtle security precautions to have been altered. It'll be good for me to review the knowledge. Adria blinked, fingertips tightening on the sides of the plas map. I appreciate it. It was the only thing she could say without giving everything away. Riaz snorted, his hands strong and competent on the manual steering wheel as he navigated a particularly steep embankment, his bronzed arms dusted with a sprinkling of fine black hair. About as much as you appreciate a root canal, he said, thrusting the vehicle into hover drive, but whatever your problem with me, we have to work together. Setting her jaw, she focused on the view beyond the window of the most magnificent scenery on this earth. Summer had faded, fall a crisp promise in the air, but here the land was swathed in dark green, the peaks in the distance touched with white. She'd grown up on this land, and even now, after she'd been away for so long, it sang to her wolf, as it did to every SnowDancer. Den territory had a way of being home to all of them, no matter if they'd given the name to another place. I can heal here. It was a thought deep in her heart, one that almost managed to unknot the tension within. Who's that? She jerked forward as a big tan-colored wolf raced across a verdant meadow to their left, chasing a sleek silver wolf she immediately recognized. He's being rough with Evie. Fury boiled in her blood. Stop the car. Riaz's chuckle held pure male amusement, fuel to her temper. That's Tai, and Evie won't appreciate the interruption, Aunt Adria. Biting back her harsh response, Adria glanced at the two wolves again, saw what she'd missed at first glance. They were playing, all teeth and claws, but with no real aggression to it. Just as Riaz turned a corner, cutting off the view, the two wolves nuzzled one another and Adria realized Tai and Evie weren't playing, they were courting. She's too young. While Indigo was very close to Adria in age, Tarah had borne Evie later in life. The little girl had toddled around after her older sister and Adria when they'd been in their teens, sweet natured and stubborn and beloved. Adria couldn't imagine her submissive niece was in any way ready to handle a dominant and having met Tai, she knew he was a hell of a lot stronger and more dangerous than Evie. She's still a wolf, Riaz said, his deep voice a rumble that vibrated uncomfortably against her aching tight nipples, an adult female wolf. You might have forgotten, Ms. Frost, but touch is necessary for most of our kind. Her hand fisted, that nerve far too close to the surface. A year. It had been a year since she'd shared intimate skin privileges, a rawly painful kind of isolation for a predatory changeling in the prime of her life. Even before then, things had been fragmenting for a long time, her wolf starved of affection. But she'd been handling it, handling the broken pieces inside of her, until Riaz and the raging storm of a sudden, visceral sexual attraction that gripped her in its claws and shook, until she could barely think. If we're throwing stones, she said, protecting herself by going on the offensive, I'm not the only one who prefers a cold bed. Riaz was a highly eligible male. The fact he'd taken no lovers was a point of irritation with the SnowDancer women who wanted nothing better than to tussle with him. Maybe that's why you're such a prick. Riaz's snarl was low, rolling over her skin with the power of his dominance. Wrenching the wheel, he brought the SUV to a stop on the side of the road. I've had it. He pinned her with his gaze. What the hell is your problem with me? *Revue de presse* "The alpha author of paranormal romance."