Wedding Night Excerpt from Wolf’s Oath by Maddy Barone

*Des and Connie were married that afternoon and are spending their wedding night at the den.*

The bedroom door opened to admit her new husband. Handsome, amazing Des. She tried to not stare hungrily at him. It wouldn’t be fair to deny him sex and then openly lust for his body.

“Toothbrush,” he said, holding the hand-carved wooden toothbrush out to her.

“Thanks.” She stood up to take it. “Where do I brush my teeth?”

Des picked up the lantern from the floor and carried it to the door beside the closet. “The bathroom is here. The water will be ice cold.” He sounded apologetic. “Tomorrow, if you want, I’ll see that water is heated for a bath.”

Since landing in this post-apocalyptic world, baths had been few and far between. Without electricity or modern plumbing, water had to be pumped and then heated on a stove. Connie had gotten used to washing up in a bucket of lukewarm water in the kitchen, but she didn’t like it. “It’s locked.”

He gave the knob a vigorous twist. “No, it’s just tricky to open,” he said, still sounding apologetic as he swung the door wide.

She peeked past Des into the bathroom and sucked in a breath. It looked like a real bathroom from home. There was a toilet, and a sink with a mirror above it, and a tub.

“Does the toilet work?” she asked, almost trembling with hope. Hope wilted when she saw the bucket of water sitting on the floor beside the toilet. *There’s no such thing as running water,* she chided herself, but Des surprised her.

“Yes. Push the lever down and pour half of this bucket of water into the bowl to flush it. Turn the faucet to run water into the sink. Don’t forget the water will be cold.” He stepped into the bathroom to set the oil lamp on the top of the toilet tank. “Here’s a towel for you. Soap is there, and here is a box of tooth powder. I’ll wait outside for you.”

When he closed her inside the bathroom, Connie turned the faucet and did a little dance when water came out. True, it wasn’t huge rush of water, merely a steady trickle, but it came out without having to use a pump. After she’d brushed her teeth, used the toilet, and washed her face and hands, she admitted he was right about the water temperature. If it was any colder, the water would be slush. Even so, she was flooded with dark envy that the den had running water.

She dried her cold-stung hands on the towel, hung it neatly over the rack above the toilet, picked up the lantern, and went back out to the bedroom. “You know, we need to get…”

She trailed off as she saw Des peel off his unbuttoned shirt. He dropped it carelessly on A muscular person with long hair

Description automatically generated with low confidence the floor and stretched his impressively muscled torso. With his hands behind his neck, each sculpted abdominal muscle was outlined in the lamplight. Lord, he was beautiful. Was his hair as satiny smooth as it looked?

“Pick up your shirt,” she said, instead of launching herself at him. “It’s going to get wrinkled on the floor.”

One of his long, level eyebrows lifted before he bent to pick up the shirt and strode over to the closet to cram it carelessly inside. He turned to survey her. “You’re cold. Get into bed and cover up. We can talk for a while before we sleep.”

She was cold. The iciness of the floor had gone through the wool socks to bite her toes. It would be stupid to argue with him just to prove a point. She carried the lamp across the room to set on the floor and sat on the edge of the bed. “Okay, what do you want to talk about?”

He startled her by swooping in to lift her with one arm while throwing the covers back with the other and placing her sitting up in the middle of the bed against the headboard. Then he swept the blankets and quilts back over her lap. He stepped back to eye her with satisfaction. “That’s warmer.”

It was, especially with him standing over her like a burnished statue of a sex god. A sex god who casually unbuttoned his low-slung jeans and peeled them down his legs with no sign of embarrassment. He was neither a boxers nor briefs kind of guy; Des went commando. Connie clenched her teeth to keep back a whistle of appreciation. Just to prove to herself that she had complete control and wouldn’t jump him like a sex starved groupie, she plumped a pillow behind her back for a more comfortable viewing position. She started her view with his handsome face. She wasn’t sure which she liked more, his dark eyes, those high cheekbones, or that sensuous mouth. The hair was a swath of shiny black that hung like a sheet of heavy silk over his shoulders nearly to his navel. There was no question about how much she liked his broad chest. She could look at the taut curve of those pecs and the six-pack abs for hours, but her eyes were drawn lower. Some well-muscled men were big everywhere except where it counted, but not Des. Yowza! Des was hung like the proverbial horse. A slow burn started low in Connie’s belly.

He noticed her examining him and presented her with a half smile. “I don’t wear clothes to bed.”

“If you’re sleeping in here, you’re wearing clothes, Mister.”

His half-smile didn’t die. He lifted one shoulder in a careless shrug. “Okay.”

He turned to the closet, showing her an ass she could have bounced a quarter off of. The way the muscles in that perfect ass bunched as he stepped into a pair of sweatpants stoked the burn inside her even hotter. Holy crap, how was she going to keep her hands to herself tonight?

Dressed in sweatpants, he climbed on the bed and settled himself facing her with his legs crossed. Their knees brushed. “Now we can be comfortable and get to know each other.”

Maybe he was comfortable, but she wasn’t. He smelled so good. She swallowed. And he looked better. “So, uh, what kind of music do you like?” she blurted, and instantly slapped a hand to her forehead. What a stupid question. He didn’t have a collection of favorite CDs or a preferred radio station.

His long straight brows pulled slightly together. “Don’t hurt yourself.”

“Yeah. I mean, no, I didn’t. I won’t. Geez.” She rolled her eyes at her own babbling. “So tell me what you do. What exactly is a beta?”

“Hm.” He settled an elbow on one knee and rested his chin on his fist. “A beta is an alpha wolf who is just below the Pack Alpha in rank. I support Taye, help him keep the younger wolves disciplined. I hunt, and help guard the den, and train the Pack in fighting.”

“Hold on,” she interrupted. “What is the difference between an alpha wolf and the others?”

“An alpha is someone whose wolf is very strong but has learned to dominate him. My wolf first came when I was twelve.” He looked down, rubbing his thumb over the corner of his mouth. “He forced the change and I was in wolf form for two months straight. He took us hundreds of miles from the Clan. I was scared. I thought I’d never be human again.” His lashes lifted and he looked right at her, his eyes so dark she couldn’t see the line between pupil and iris. “Eventually, I became angry. I fought him and forced him back. My breechcloth and moccasins were long gone, so I was naked. I had no food or weapons. I walked for a month to find my family again.”

She stared at him. “You were twelve?”

“Twelve. When I found the clan, I was skin and bones. My mother was so proud. Mato took me out of camp for my vision quest. Do you remember Mato? Maybe you heard him called Kills Bears.”

“Yeah, the medicine man, right?”

“Right. Twelve is a little young for a vision quest, but I had proven myself an adult.” He hesitated, looking down again and smoothing his thumb over his lower lip. “I was given a vision, and an adult name.”

Levity probably wasn’t appropriate, so she tried to force it back. “Shiny Rock?”

The glance he flashed her was reproachful. “That was my boyhood name. I can’t speak my adult name. It’s sacred. Only Mato knows it.”

Connie arranged her face into a more sober expression. That sounded like religion, and she never wanted to make fun of anyone’s religion. “But what about Snake and Jumping Stag? Are those their boyhood names or adult names? Aren’t they sacred too?”

He shook his head with a small smile. “Not all names are so sacred.”

She admired the way the light gleamed on his hair as it moved over his chest. “Where did Desmond come from?”

He shrugged. “My mother’s father. Almost all of us have English names too. Many of us have mothers from the towns and their children are named for their white relatives. Since my adult name is private, I use my English name.”

She blinked, realizing she had not only a husband, but a father- and mother-in-law too. “Is your mom white?”

Something in his face changed. A wave of sadness darkened it. “My mother and father were both Lakota.”

“They’re both gone?”

His hand reached and brushed over her knee, as if he needed to touch her. “My mother was one of those captured and killed by townsmen fifteen years ago. My thirteen year old sister was killed too.”

“Oh, my God.” Connie’s heart jumped in her chest. She had heard about that. On a hot summer day most of the Lakota women went to a stream outside camp to cool off. They were captured and carried away by white men, and when the women’s fathers and husbands caught up there was a fight. Instead of giving up the women, the thieves murdered them. Connie touched Des’ hand, trying to offer comfort. “I am so sorry. How old were you?”

“Twenty-two.” His eyes went hard and flat. “I killed at least three of those women thieves myself.”

“They deserved it.”

“My wolf loved my sister and my mother. He went crazy when he smelled their blood. He’d do worse if anything happened to you.”

Looking at his face, as hard as bronze and as grim as death, she believed him. “Nothing will happen to me, but if it does, you have my permission to tear the perpetrators limb from limb.”

As she’d intended, a slight smile curved his lips, but it died quickly. “My father just stopped living after that. He died less than a year later. A few years after that, Taye’s mother was widowed and she brought Taye to live here, to be closer to her family. A bunch of us came with her. We were not going to let a woman of the Clan be unprotected.”

“Is this the Clan too?” Connie asked.

“Yes. This is Taye’s Pack, but the Pack and the Clan are one. Taye is the Alpha of this Pack, and Muddy Wolf is Alpha of the Clan, but we visit back and forth regularly and the young men of the Clan come to live here for a year or so to learn how to live close to townspeople. I have three younger brothers with the Clan. This summer I’ll take you to meet them.”

She wondered if her brothers-in-law were as hot as her husband. They were discussing serious things; she shouldn’t be drooling over the way the lamp highlighted the curve of his biceps. “That would be nice.”

He leaned forward. “Let’s talk about you now. You drove planes?”

“Flew planes,” she corrected. “It was all I ever wanted to do. My dad was career military. Marines. He was so happy and proud when I received my commission.” By the look on his face she could tell Des had no idea what she was talking about. Things had changed in fifty years, and without mass media, or the internet, or even schools, what was commonplace for her was now unheard of. “Never mind. My mom was proud too, but maybe a little disappointed. She liked girly-girls and I was always a tomboy. Luckily, my little sister was girly enough for both of us.” An arrow of pain went through her. Where was Stephanie now? What happened to her when the nukes went off fifty years ago? “It hurts to talk about them. They’re all dead now, probably.”

Connie forced back tears. He cupped her cheek with a hand so tender she didn’t even notice the calluses on his fingers. “We’re both orphans,” he said, his voice a low rumble. “We’ll have to be each other’s family now. I can lean on you, and you can lean on me. Now we’ll each have someone to weep with and rejoice with.”

There! That was what she’d been looking for ever since Paul’s death. Someone she could care about, who cared about her in return. Connie stared at his earnest face, searching for the truth and finding quiet strength threaded with open gentleness. He was a harsh man who had killed to defend his family and friends, but he was gentle with her.

“That’s what I want, Des. I’m not a teenager. I don’t need to see pink hearts dancing in your eyes, or fireworks exploding every time we kiss. I just want someone to be there for me.”

“I’ll always be there for you. I swear it.” He slid his hand from her cheek down her arm to clasp her fingers and raise them to his lips. “As for the fireworks, speak for yourself. I’m expecting big explosions when we kiss.”

She’d always thought him handsome. He’d starred in some of her most erotic dreams. She couldn’t say she knew him, not really. But she knew him more now than she had this morning, and what she knew, she liked.

“Promise you’ll never leave me.”

A tiny flare of shock lit his eyes. “I’ll never leave you.”

He could die, just like Paul. She forced that thought back. “Des, I’m cold.”

His brows puckered. “I’ve kept you up too late talking in this cold room. Scoot under the covers. I’ll tuck you in.”

She ran her gaze over his wide shoulders to his burnished brown skin stretching smoothly over taut pectoral muscles. His nipples were the color of dark rosewood. She wanted to lick them. “I’d be warmer if you were under the covers with me.”

He froze. “I don’t think I can. Not without touching you, and if I touch you, I’ll want more.”

“That’s good. I want more too. I want to see fireworks.”

Somehow he went even more still, and spoke in a hushed voice. “If we start, I won’t be able to stop at a kiss.”

Now she knew another thing about him: he was principled. He’d promised to never take anything from her she didn’t willingly give. “I don’t want you to stop. I want everything. You, kissing me. You, touching me everywhere. You, moving inside me.”

His nostrils flared when he inhaled deeply. “Don’t tease.”

“I’m not teasing.” She braced herself against the cold air in the room and ripped the T-shirt over her head. “Des, I’m cold,” she said again.

Her nipples furled into tight points, partly because of the cold air, but mostly because Des was staring at them. He murmured something she didn’t catch, maybe in Lakota, but she understood awe and greed well enough. His sweatpants went flying, then she was flat on her back and he was under the covers lying over her, his long, long black hair a curtain enclosing them in heart-pounding intimacy.

Des had never seen anything as perfect as his mate’s white breasts crowned with nipples the color of raspberries. Would they taste as sweet? He had to know. He dipped his head and touched one tight nipple with his tongue. A tiny tremor went through her body. That almost imperceptible movement tore away the leash he had over his lust and he opened his mouth over her breast and sucked in as much of her soft flesh as he could. The tiny tremor in her grew to a full body shudder.

“Oh, Des!”

His head jerked up. “Did I hurt you?”

“No.” When she lifted her head from the pillow her earrings jingled faintly. She stretched her arms over her head with a wicked smile, arching her back to offer herself to him. “Do whatever you want.”

What he wanted to do was rip the sweatpants off her and bury himself deep inside her heat. The way her arched body pressed her groin against his aching cock did nothing to help his control.

“Anything I want?” he growled.

A sliver of caution darkened her pale blue eyes. “Within reason. I don’t like pain very much.”

“Just a little? How much? Is this too much?” He dove back to her breast, sucking it into his mouth with hard pressure, rolling the rigid nipple between his teeth before letting go. “How’s that?”

Her head was thrown back on the pillow, her eyes clenched shut. A frisson of alarm raised him up on his elbows. “Connie, was I too rough? Did I hurt you?”

“Oh, hell, no. I think the fireworks are getting started. Keep going.”

He gave his attention to the other breast. His mouth was demanding on her nipple, but the hand he explored her body with was gentle. He stroked from her collarbone, over the mound of her breast, to her ribs and the curve of her hip. He hesitated at the waist of the sweatpants, but when she lifted against him again he slid his hand past the drawstring. She wore small tight underpants of some slippery material. No one he knew wore underclothes. It was just another thing to take off to make the change to wolf. Imagining these, though, hardened his cock even more. His fingers inched into the underpants and found warm soft hair.

“Moving pretty fast, aren’t you?” Connie said, putting her hands on his shoulders. “We have all night and you haven’t even kissed me yet.”

He chuckled, stroking a finger along the seam he found between her legs. When he lowered his head to her mouth, he teased himself by just brushing his lips back and forth over hers in the same rhythm as his finger between her legs. Connie murmured approval, fisting her hands in his hair. He never liked wearing his hair loose, but he liked having his mate’s hands in it. It was an intimacy he’d never allowed with anyone else, even the woman he’d visited in Omaha. He slid his tongue inside her mouth at the same moment he speared a finger inside the passage between her legs. Wet heat enveloped both, wringing a shudder of delight from him.

“Did you see fireworks?” he whispered in her ear.

“Just little cherry bombs,” she retorted. “Kiss me again.”

Des didn’t know what a cherry bomb was, but from her tone, it was a negligible thing, and he was determined to meet her challenge. He kissed her again, while his finger played with her below.

“Des.” His mate’s voice was a panting sigh against his lips. “Take my pants off.”

“I don’t want to move too fast,” he said, at his most deadpan.

“What?” She looked up at him with confusion in the guttering light of the lamp, then smacked a fist against his arm. “You have a sense of humor! Who knew?”

“It’s a secret,” he said with dignity that dissolved when she began squirming against his erection to pull her pants down.

“Slowly!” he yelped. “Let me.”

She stared up at him for a moment before relaxing and spreading her arms out to the sides. “Okay. I’m waiting.”

He threw back the covers to expose her fully and began drawing the pants down her legs. He was careful to leave her underpants in place because he wanted to see them on her. It was like unwrapping the present the Lupa had given him for Christmas a few days ago, but better. This was his mate. She was accepting his mate claim at last. Her legs were long and white. Her hips and thighs were lusciously padded with feminine softness, and her calves were hard with muscle. Her ankle, the one that had been so grievously injured, was marred with red scars that might never fade. He leaned down to kiss the signs of her bravery.

“Does it hurt right now?” he asked.

“My ankle? No, not right now.”

Finally, he allowed himself to look at her, his mate, lying bare in his bed except for the tiny blue panties she wore. A small triangle of silk hid the place he’d been stroking, and black lace went around the sides of her hips. They must be something from the Times Before. Or maybe not. What did he know about women’s underclothes? They were pretty, though. He didn’t want to damage them, so he was very gentle when he pulled them down her legs. He tossed them on the floor beside the bed just as the lamp died with a sputter.

The darkness didn’t hide the lovely sight of his mate from his wolf-born sight. She was so beautiful to him. The flesh between her spread thighs was flushed with desire. It tempted him to explore, so he did until he realized her skin of her thighs was cold. He quickly drew the covers over them.

“Sorry,” he whispered. “I forgot you’d be cold.”

He shivered when his mate reached for his cock to slide her hand up and down his length. She put her other arm around his neck and pulled him down for a kiss. “What are you going to do to warm me up?”

“I have a few ideas.” He used a knee to part her legs. “This one is my favorite.” And he pressed his cock, inch by slow inch, into her hot, silky body.

Connie trembled, overcome with hot desire. The complete darkness in the room made the sensation of his cock driving into her even more intense. Her moan came out of her as if his cock pushed it out. God, it was good! He felt even thicker than he had looked. His size had both excited her and made her a little nervous. He moved slowly enough to allow her body to adjust for him, though, so there was no discomfort, only a wonderful feeling of fullness. She lifted her knees to hook her ankles together over his ass.

“You feel so good,” she whispered. “I’m ready for fireworks.”

“If my mate wants fireworks, I’ll give her fireworks,” he promised.

It was the flat tone he’d always used, but now she knew he hid dry humor behind it. “Light ’em up!” she invited, using her heels to nudge his ass into action.

“Hold on,” he ordered, and began to move.

Boy, could he move! His first strokes were languorously gentle, but after a few moments she was meeting him thrust for thrust, and he left languor behind. She was sure if the bed frame wasn’t bolted to the floor it would be slamming against the wall. Her earrings chimed in time with Des’ thrusts, a reminder of Paul that she shoved away to focus on Des. The angle of his penetration, or perhaps it was just his size, pushed his cock continually over her g-spot with exquisite pressure. Orgasm was close. So close.

“Des!” she cried, holding on to his long hair for dear life. “The fireworks are coming. Just need a bigger spark, just a little more—Ah!”

Orgasm crashed over her, with waves that seemed to go forever. When her body finally stopped shaking, she was embarrassed by the scream she’d let out, but she remembered his frenzied howl roaring out over her scream. Des was slumped, unmoving, over her, like a heavy bearskin rug oozing male satisfaction with each panting breath. She gave a half-hearted shove at his chest to get him to move.

He shifted a bit so most of his body weight was off her, but his face was still buried in her neck. “I think you scalped me,” he murmured.

Her hands jerked open, releasing his hair. “Sorry!”

“I’m not.” There was no mistaking the smugness in his voice. “Did you see fireworks?”

She forced the inappropriate giggles back. “Oh, yeah. In Technicolor.”

“I don’t know what that is, but it sounds good.”

“It was better than good.” She flexed her toes against the mattress to savor the last rise and ebb of orgasm. “It was amazing.”

“I agree. Amazing.” He brushed his lips over the pulse thundering in her throat. “I love you.”