

Werewolf Asylum (Book Two)

Roxanne Smolen

ONE

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When I shifted into my wolf form that balmy April night, all I wanted was to escape the hassle of the day. You know, romp through the sawgrass, maybe chase a rabbit or two. I never expected to run into a bear. But there it was, up on its hind legs like it wanted to give me a big hug.

I froze, staring, my teeth bared in greeting. I knew there were black bears in Florida. I lived in the northernmost region of the Everglades. We had panthers, gators, pythons, and bears. But I'd never seen one before. All my fur stood on end, trying to make myself appear bigger, but the bear had me on weight alone.

It swatted me with one frying-pan-sized paw, catching my shoulder. I yelped and tumbled. At that point, any sane person would have run. Unfortunately, the wolf in me took offense. With a low-pitched growl, I leaped at it.

Here's the difference between bears and wolves. Bears fight with their claws, and for good reason. They're like a fist-full of daggers. Wolves fight with their teeth. I caught its forearm in my jaws and clamped down. The bear roared. It swung around, trying to shake me off. My backend swished through the air. Blood filled my mouth, hot and slick. I lost my grip and flew against a tree trunk.

Floridian forests aren't like the forests up north. Back home in Massachusetts, I remember feathery grass, carpets of pine needles, and smooth-barked trees. Down here, we have porcupine palms and saw-palmetto. The ground is spiked with spiny cones. I struck an Australian pine, which isn't a true pine tree at all, and slid down the trunk. The bark felt like concrete wrapped with razor wire. Tufts of fur scraped off as I fell—which only served to make me madder.

I launched myself at the bear, my jaws snapping at its throat. It batted me away with the

strength of a major leaguer. I sprang again, this time spinning in mid-air and striking its chest with my hind legs—a move sure to impress any ninja warrior. My attack staggered it, and it came down on all fours. I climbed aboard, biting the back of its neck. My fangs penetrated the heavy fur. The bear rolled to knock me off, exposing its soft underbelly. I dodged its weight and went for its gut. My teeth caught something strange. I pulled back with some sort of belt in my mouth.

As if it were melting, the bear morphed into a kid. My jaw dropped, and the belt hit the ground. The boy scrambled to his feet. His expression went from shock to alarm and then to determination as he took a fighting stance before me.

My wolf chuckled at that, but my human side filled with questions. Who was he? How did he shift into a bear? I couldn't wait to tell Brittany, the girl I secretly loved. I started the change back to human before I even made a decision to do it. My muzzle flattened painfully, sinking into my face. My fangs receded. With a liquid sensation, my ears slid down the sides of my head. My transformation was not as smooth as his, but moments later I got to my feet as a sixteen-year-old boy.

His eyes widened, and he took a step back. He looked like he feared me more as an unarmed kid. Then he squared his shoulders and lifted his chin. He was about my height with a weight lifter's build. Probably had twenty pounds on me. He looked a bit older than I was. We faced each other, and it was weird because we were both naked, yet we weren't in the shower room at PE or anything.

"Hi." I tried to sound nonchalant. "I'm Cody Forester."

"William." The boy eyed me warily. "I never met a werewolf before. I thought your kind only changed on the full moon."

I felt a twinge of panic. True, most werewolves only change with the moon. My ability to change at will made me an oddity. A super wolf, my Uncle Bob called it. And a super danger if it got out. Like gunslingers of the Old West, everyone would want a piece of me.

I shrugged, then motioned at the blood dripping down his arm. "Sorry I hurt you."

Anger flared on the kid's face. "You didn't hurt me."

"Well, you hurt me." I rotated my shoulder, wincing at the score marks. With a grunt, I picked up the bear hide belt and sat on a nearby log. "So, what are you, like a were-bear?"

William gave an indignant snort and raised his chin even higher. "I am a medicine man, like my father before me. We are able to change into many animals."

"With this?" I held out the belt.

His eyes flashed, but then he seemed to deflate. He took the belt and sat at the other end of

the log.

After a few moments, I said, "Medicine man, eh? What tribe? Miccosukee?"

"I am half Navajo," he said as if challenging me to deny it.

A creepy feeling crawled into my stomach. My uncle's best friend was a Navajo medicine man. Without looking at him, I said, "Who's your father?"

"Howard Shebala."

"Garage Sale Howard?" I blurted.

He jumped up, face dark and hands clenched. "My father is a great man."

"Chill," I said. "I just know him, that's all. He's my uncle's best friend."

"Then speak of him with respect."

"Does he realize you're out here turning into a bear?"

William shook his head and slumped back down on the log. "He was voted out of the tribe. An outcast. The tribal council says I cannot see him or make contact."

"That stinks." I knew all about being an outcast. My parents banished me to Loxahatchee the first time I showed fang and fur.

William said, "Now my mother has taken up with another."

"Topknot guy." I met Howard's rival during a trip to the *Miccosukee Indian Village* in the Everglades.

"Joseph Achak," William said with a scowl. "I hate him."

"No doubt," I said. "But why are you here?"

"I left. Wanted to be nearer my father. Sometimes I see him."

"So you live here? In the woods?" I remembered news reports of bear sightings in the city. "Hate to see the media blitz if Child Services finds out."

"Do I look like a child?"

"Okay," I said, "so you get hungry and you turn into a bear to eat. I get it. But where do you sleep? You can't be a bear all the time."

"I found an old fishing cabin in the Glades," he said, then looked sorry he told me. "That's a secret. I don't want anyone to come looking."

I nodded. Now we both knew secrets about each other. "You could stay at my house. I live with my Uncle Bob. Howard stops by pretty often."

"No." He stood. "No contact."

"So you'll defy the tribal council enough to run away from home, but you won't risk seeing your dad?" I rose to face him, royally ticked off. How could he act like that? I would do most anything to see my dad again.

“Don’t comment on what you don’t understand.” With a scowl, William stomped off into the trees.

All I could do was watch him go.

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Amazon Reviews:

***** All of the characters from the first book were back. It was like coming home to old friends.

***** Seriously, everyone should be reading this series!

***** There was a scene where a couple characters surprised me with a show of loyalty that actually made me a bit misty eyed. Don’t tell the other guys...

About Author Roxanne Smolen

Roxanne Smolen became enamored by werewolves after watching the movie Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein when she was a girl. The pathos of the wolfman character touched her even then. As she grew into her author shoes, the idea of a conflicted werewolf character grew as well until she knew his story had to be told. Her wolf boy series takes place in Loxahatchee, Florida, not far from her home. You can connect with her on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [Google+](#).

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Again, thank you for reading.

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