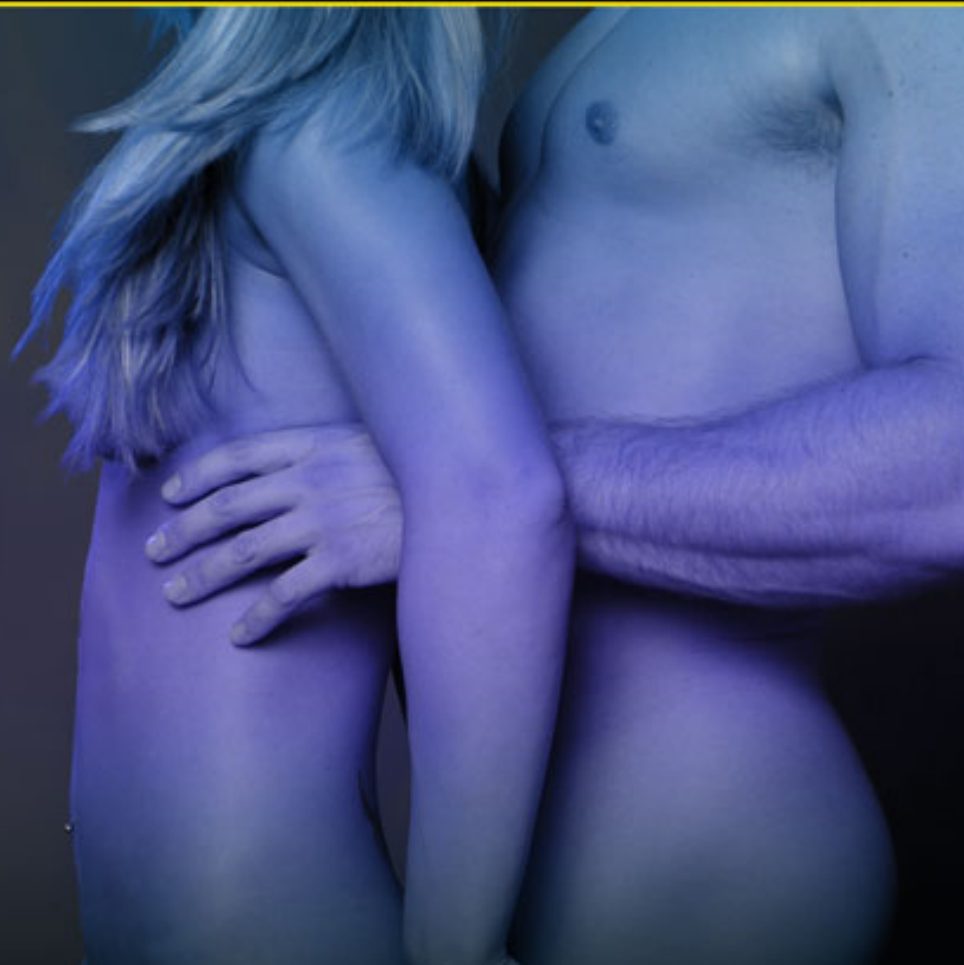


ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS



Jory Strong  
*Spirits*  
SHARED

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



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Spirits Shared

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# *SPIRITS SHARED*

**Jory Strong**

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## Chapter One

Could she really accept this? Jessica North wondered as she looked through the window of the diner. Could she really share Clay with another man?

She twisted her engagement ring around and around on her finger.

Did she want to?

A crack of thunder followed by a flash of lightning punctuated her anguished questions. Outside the diner the wind became more aggressive. Dried leaves whipped down the street. Old-fashioned wooden signs jerked against the chains holding them in place.

Hohoq. Population...three? And that was assuming someone was actually manning the general store across the street where Clay had gone.

Jessica glanced over at the mom and pop who were operating the diner. Their features were Native American but she found it impossible to guess their ages. Sixties? Maybe even seventies.

The woman interpreted Jessica's glance as an indication that she was ready to order. She walked over to the booth and surprised Jessica by saying, "Your man will be here in a minute."

Jessica glanced down at the engagement ring. *Was he really her man? Would he still be if they became a threesome instead of a twosome?*

A comforting hand settled on her shoulder. Jessica looked up into eyes that seemed like they could see all the way down to her soul. "Things have a way of working out if you let them."

Tears formed at the corner of Jessica's eyes. "Am I that obvious?"

The woman chuckled. "When you get to be my age and have raised as many children as I have, then had grandchildren come along to cry on your shoulder and tell you about their troubles with the opposite sex – well, not much gets past you, especially when it comes to matters of the heart." She gave Jessica's shoulder a pat. "Here comes your man now. By the look of him I'd say a double cheeseburger cooked well done with a side of fries." She glanced down at Jessica with twinkling dark eyes. "You're probably a grilled cheese sandwich with tomatoes and you prefer your pickles on the side with your French fries."

Jessica laughed. She felt her spirits lift for the first time since *The Revelation*. "No tomatoes on the grilled cheese, otherwise it's perfect."

The door opened. A blast of cold air barreled into the diner. Clay hurried to get the door closed behind him, then slipped his jacket off his shoulders as he moved toward the booth.

Jessica's breath caught in her throat. Her body tightened as it always did when she saw him. She'd thought he might be too good to be true the very first time she met him.

With his blond looks and fit body he could have been a cover model. Instead he was an outdoorsman who owned his own business. He put together group trips, mainly for companies who wanted their executives to "bond" while whitewater rafting or fly-fishing or mountain climbing, though sometimes he arranged trips for groups of friends who wanted adventure instead of total relaxation when they vacationed.

Clay slid onto the seat opposite her own. "Did you already order?"

Jessica shared a smile with the waitress who most likely was also one of the owners of the diner. "I think we've got it covered."

The woman chuckled. "Except for the drinks." She cocked her head. "Diet coke for you. Bottled water for your man, though I'd recommend drinking what the house serves. The water we've got in Hohoq is straight from the Creator."

Clay laughed. Jessica's heart turned over at the sound of it and the way his blue eyes danced with humor. He could be intense and serious when he had to be, when he

was on the job and people's lives depended on it, but he was quick to laugh and to make others laugh with him. It was one of the things she loved about him.

Her eyes watered. She looked away. She was a mess right now but she didn't want to advertise it.

Clay and their waitress continued to talk. Their conversation was a background noise Jessica couldn't seem to concentrate on. In the scope of a day her entire reality had shifted and her confidence had suffered a blow she'd never seen coming.

She twisted the ring and thought about the quiet wedding they'd agreed on. They'd tentatively planned to have it in two months but they hadn't chosen an exact date yet because Clay's father had been sick and they wanted to make sure he'd be well enough to travel.

It was going to be a small gathering of their families and their closest friends, all people who'd been looking forward to the day as much as they...no, as much as *she* had. Right now she shouldn't assume anything about what Clay felt.

She'd thought he was as happy and content as she was. She'd thought he was as excited about finally getting married as she was. Not that it would change their day-to-day lives. They already lived together. But it was a first step toward one day having a family. They were both traditional in that they wanted to be married before they had children.

Maybe deep down she'd known she didn't satisfy him completely. Maybe that's why it had taken her a while to say yes to marriage and then a while longer before she'd committed to a foreseeable date. Maybe deep down she'd sensed the truth. He was enough for her, but she wasn't enough for him.

Pain moved through her. For long moments she concentrated on breathing, on the simple mechanics of inhaling and exhaling air through a throat that felt sealed up. A masculine hand covered hers where it rested on the battle-scarred tabletop. Jessica sucked in a deep breath and tried to ignore the burn in her chest and eyes.

“We can call the trip off, Jess,” Clay said, his voice husky with pain. “We can turn around and go back to the apartment. We can see where we stand from there.” He rubbed his palm over her engagement ring. “I don’t want to hurt you any more than I already have.”

She wiped the tears from the corner of her eyes before facing him again. She covered his hand with hers. In her heart she knew they would be over if they went back to their everyday life now. “Let’s just keep going, okay?”

“Okay.”

Their food arrived and they began eating in silence. *The Revelation* kept looping through Jessica’s thoughts.

Clay’s heart ached. Guilt shredded his guts. He hadn’t been with another man or another woman since he’d stumbled into a bookstore and fallen head over heels in love—or at least deeply in lust—with the soft-spoken blonde who was reading a book to a group of kids in the children’s section.

They’d meshed right from the start and he’d known that Jess was the one he wanted to share his life with. He loved her. Period. End of story.

*You wish it were the end of the story.*

Clay stabbed a fry into a pool of catsup. He fought the fear that had been threatening to suffocate him since “coming out” while he was driving. Christ! How stupid had that been?

He glanced up from his plate to find her looking out the window again. It hurt to see her like this. It’d kill him if she started crying.

His eyes went to the ring on her finger. At least she hadn’t hurtled it back at him. She hadn’t screamed or cursed or called him names. Not that he would have blamed her, though if she had he probably would have wrecked the car.

Her looks might have caught his attention in the first place but it was everything else about her, especially her innate gentleness, that had completely hooked him. She



could take care of herself but he found he *liked* taking care of her. She could be tough when she needed to be, but she wasn't afraid to be utterly feminine with him.

Fuck. Maybe they could settle this in bed. Maybe he should find out if there was a hotel in this seven-building town and take Jessica there. He could reassure her with his body that he loved and desired her. Hell, not just loved and desired, but desperately needed her in his life.

Clay rubbed his chest in an effort to erase some of the tightness there. Christ, *need* was too tame a word, especially when it came to sex with Jessica.

He craved it like an addict who was always looking for the next fix. He could be whitewater rafting on rough water and he'd still get hard just thinking about the way she yielded and went submissive when he required that from her. Fuck, more than once when he'd been rock climbing he'd gotten a boner he could have used as a chisel when his mind had strayed to how she'd accepted the rougher aspects of his sexuality – not that he'd ever, ever hurt her.

*Yeah right, asshole. Look at her and tell yourself she's one happy camper at the moment.*

Clay risked another glance and wished he knew what she was thinking. What a fucking mess. They'd been engaged for three months. They'd dated for nine before that. He'd have proposed on the first date, that's how sure he was that she was the right *woman* for him. But she was more cautious by nature, a little less quick to grab for the brass ring than he was, so he'd taken the time she needed.

In retrospect he realized he'd also been testing himself. By the time he'd finally popped the question he'd convinced himself that he was mainly hetero. Yeah, he noticed guys and sometimes he fantasized, but mostly he wanted to fuck Jess.

The last group trip he'd led ripped that false sense of security away like it was toilet paper. He'd been tempted, tempted to the point where only his old ironclad rule to never get involved with paying clients or client employees had kept him from doing something stupid.

Clay's heart thundered in his chest just thinking about how close he'd come on his last trip to trashing any hope for a future with Jess. If he betrayed her with either a man or a woman, she would never forgive him. He'd be out of her life permanently.

It'd been a wake-up call, not just for the present but for the future. He broke into a cold sweat whenever he imagined what might happen down the road. It was easy to envision a situation where she was home with their kids and he was on a trip where there were guys who weren't clients. It would happen in a weak moment, maybe after the rush of conquering some span of water or mountain or maybe just because he'd gone years without being with another man.

Christ, he would lose everything that mattered to him. Everything. Her. Their kids. His self-respect. Everything.

It'd be easy if he could see a shrink and get "cured" or take a pill and bingo, no more urge for gay sex. For Jess, he'd do either of those things—he'd give up an inherent part of himself. But one, those options weren't available. And two, she'd never ask it of him anyway.

He knew Jessica had no problem with someone being gay or bi. Hell, that's what had led to his confession in the car.

He'd intended to wait until they'd gotten to the cabin and settled in for the week. He'd imagined himself telling her after they'd made love in front of a roaring fire. But then she'd started talking to him about a book she was thinking of writing, a teen "coming out" book and *he'd* come out. Christ. Seeing her hurt was tearing him up. Somehow he had to convince her they could work this out.

He didn't want an open marriage where they both screwed around like they were dogs with an itch that could be scratched by anyone. It'd kill him to be with her and wonder if she'd been with someone else earlier.

There'd been a time in his life when he'd been quick to fuck anyone who caught his eye. But even before he'd met Jess, he'd slowed down on the casual sex. Not that he'd been a saint, but deep down he was already waiting for the right person—the right

woman. He'd never pictured himself setting up house with another guy. He'd never thought much about what it would mean to be bi and married.

The truth was, he'd never been one to overplan the future. Yeah, he was meticulous about the adventure trips because lives were on the line. But when it came to the big picture of his personal life he trusted that he'd see the brass ring and be ready to grab it when it came along.

He'd seen Jessica and he'd known she was the one. Now he had to hang on to her. The trouble was, the only way he could see that happening was if they were a threesome instead of a twosome.

Clay decided against a hotel room. He'd screwed up by rushing things but he'd have a week alone with Jess to make it right.

Outside the wind gusted even harder than it'd been when he fought his way over from the general store. He knew they'd be better off if they could get ahead of the storm and get to the cabin before the dirt roads leading to it got slick and the danger of mudslides increased. He finished the last of his fries and glanced at Jess's empty plate. "Ready?"

"As soon as I stop by the ladies room."

They both stood. Clay left a tip tucked under the plate then walked to the counter where their waitress stood behind an old-fashioned cash register. Jessica disappeared into the bathroom.

"I'll tell you the same thing I told her," the woman surprised him by saying. "Things have a way of working out if you let them." She took the money he offered and gave him change. Her hand cupped his. "Let the Thunderbird into your lives and you will find happiness."

They left under a sky that continued to darken with gray and black clouds. Thunder pealed in short bursts, the sound moving toward them instead of away. The rain started a short time later.

In the intimacy created by the storm Jessica placed her hand on Clay's thigh and whispered, "I love you."

His hand covered hers. "I love you too." He smoothed his fingers over her engagement ring. "I don't want to lose you, Jess. You're the best thing that's ever happened to me."

Her hand slid upward and found his jeans-covered erection. Clay managed a shaky laugh. "He loves you too. He thinks about you constantly."

When she didn't laugh or make an appreciative comment about his cock as she usually did when he professed its love for her, Clay's chest tightened. He struggled for something else to say, something that would turn back the clock so things were back to normal between them, but there was nothing he could say.

Silence filled the car. He stroked her fingers with his thumb and looked for the turn they were supposed to make.

They were on a dirt road climbing upward before she spoke again. "How many have there been?"

"Male lovers?"

"Yes."

"Not many. Do you really want a number, Jess?" He didn't think she did. Other than a few uncomfortable moments when they'd first started dating and needed to assure themselves they were sexually safe, they'd left previous partners in the past.

She closed her fingers into a fist beneath his hand and rubbed her knuckles against his thigh. "No. I guess what I want to know is if you ever loved any of them."

"Not like I love you. But you're the first woman I've ever felt this way about. The rest were either crushes or fun fucks." Clay glanced at her face but couldn't read her eyes. He struggled with whether or not to let the conversation fade. Finally he said, "I'm done with casual, Jess."

She stayed quiet for long moments before finally whispering, "Somebody could get hurt."

Clay heard the fear that it would be *her* who got hurt. "We'd take it slow, Jess."

Jessica wanted him to say he'd always love her and nothing would change that. She wanted him to promise a threesome would lead only to incredible pleasure and not to unbearable pain. That's what her heart wanted even though her mind knew he couldn't guarantee those things. No one could.

She forced her fingers to unclench and settle back on Clay's thigh. She wasn't sure she could really go through with becoming a threesome. She wasn't sure her heart could handle it. But she wasn't a hypocrite. She'd had fantasies of being with two men at once. She wasn't turned off by the idea of gay sex. In fact, she suspected she'd be turned on watching it if she loved the men involved.

"How would we even find a third person?" she asked and felt the pulse in his leg jump.

Clay's hand nudged hers up and over so she was cupping and rubbing his erection. "I've been so torn up over telling you..." his voice broke. "Christ, I've been so worried about losing you that I haven't gotten past the part where I convince you to keep wearing the engagement ring."

"I'm not sure I can go through with it." This time it was her voice that broke. "I don't want to get hurt."

He glanced over and saw the tears glittering against her cheeks. His throat clogged and burned. "We'll take it slow. Maybe just knowing you accept the need will be enough to keep it manageable. I'd rather cut my dick off than hurt you."

She sniffled and gave a tiny laugh. "I'd rather you not do that. It's one of your best parts and most redeeming features."

Joy surged through Clay at being back on familiar ground. He arched his hips slightly to press his cock into her cupped hand. "He's a big fan of yours too."

Jessica gave Clay's jean-protected penis a little squeeze. "He can show me just how big a fan he is when we get to the cabin."

Clay slowed as they got to a turnoff guarded by totem poles. In the rainy grayness the poles looked surreal, like a moment out of the past.

Jessica could almost hear ancient drums beating. She could almost feel the spirit and promise of the Thunderbirds perched on top of the poles, their wings outstretched as they claimed everything they could see.

"They're beautiful," she said.

"Yeah, they are." Clay's voice contained the awe she felt. He rubbed his thumb against her hand. "We can hike back tomorrow and get a closer look. This turn leads to the local sheriff's house. The next one will take us to our cabin. It's about ten miles from that point." He squeezed her hand before removing his and putting it back on the steering wheel. Jessica missed the contact immediately but compensated by curling her hand around his thigh as she often did when he needed both of his to drive. He chuckled and closed his legs, trapping her fingers there. "I love you, Jess."

"I love you too."

The atmosphere in the car grew tenser as the fury of the storm finally caught up with them. The windshield wipers swiped at water in a frantic pace. The car edged forward at a crawl.

Jessica had the fleeting thought that the storm intended to force them to turn around and retreat from their destination. She jerked in her seat when a crack of thunder was followed by a flash of lightning right above them. A rumbling vibration shook the car and sent instinctive fear rushing through Jessica an instant before Clay hit the gas and they lurched forward.

Something slammed into them and they spun off the road and careened down a steep incline. Jessica screamed as their movement was stopped abruptly and the airbags exploded open then immediately collapsed.

Pure terror filled her when she saw Clay slumped in his seat and not moving. She released her shoulder harness and seat belt and turned into him. She calmed when she saw he was breathing.

Jessica forced the panic from her mind but her hands shook violently as she lightly explored his scalp. There was a knot already forming on the side. He was scraped and the driver side window was a spider-web of cracks where he'd hit it. But none of his bones were at awkward angles and there was only a little bit of blood on the side of his face.

He moaned and the sound lanced through her. His eyes flickered open and she glimpsed uneven pupils before he closed them. She thought *concussion* but her throat tightened and her stomach churned with dread that there might be other injuries she couldn't see.

Clay's hand twitched as though he intended to reach for his seat belt. "Jess?" It came out slurred.

She covered his hand with hers. There was a measure of comfort in the sound of his steady breathing. "I'm right here."

Jessica found her purse and retrieved her cell phone but there was no signal. For a moment she sat perfectly still as her mind raced. She agonized over whether to stay with him a little longer or to go for help.

Clay opened his eyes again and said, "Jess?" His voice was still slurred and confused. She took a deep steadying breath and decided to go for help. The fear he would get worse if she didn't outweighed the fear of leaving him alone.

Jessica found the small tablet of paper she carried in her purse. She left a note in case his confusion cleared, but also in case someone discovered the car while she was gone. She argued with herself about whether to leave him where he was or to try and reposition him on the seat so his head and neck were supported. She cursed herself for not making time to sign up for the first aid class she'd planned on taking when she started going on trips with Clay.

In the end she was afraid she'd do more damage by trying to move him than by leaving him where he was. It almost killed her to get out of the car and walk away from him.



## **Chapter Two**

The totem poles were magnificent up close. They were like great lightning rods serving as both guards and as the focus for a power that sprang from the earth and wind and water. Thunder rumbled as Jessica jogged past the animal faces carved into the wood. The rain eased and she had the oddest sensation that the land itself was aware of her presence.

Her throat tightened as she remembered how often Clay had smiled over her flights of fancy and claimed they were what fed her creativity. "Please let him be okay. Please let me find help," she whispered and the wind picked up as though it was carrying her words away.

Jessica slowed her pace when the stitch in her side returned. She didn't stop moving as she checked her cell phone then put it back in her jacket pocket after seeing only a single bar.

The rain returned in a fierce downpour. It drove against her back as if the storm was targeting her.

Lightning flashed with increasing frequency. Thunder made it hard to hear even the pounding of her own heart.

A cluster of dark clouds twisted and roiled and hurried across the sky in a beautiful, powerful display. The existence of the totem poles and the pureness of her surroundings touched Jessica's artistic soul. For an instant she imagined herself in another life, when survival was a hard struggle and the forces of nature were both a friend and a foe, when a mass of clouds could be a Thunderbird or a spirit guide.

Jessica ducked her head and started jogging again. The stitch was there immediately but she could tolerate it for a little while. The wind against her back made

it feel as though she were moving faster. Or maybe it was because the road was slanted and heading into a valley.

She passed a stand of junipers and their scent reminded her of Christmas with Clay and how they'd spent most of the day making love. The tears came without warning. She wiped at them and tried to regain control.

The rain and the tears nearly blinded her. The storm deafened her. She had no warning that a car was approaching until it swung around a corner and captured her in its headlights.

Tekoa knew he'd find her on the road. The land had called to his spirit and brought it back to his body when she'd passed the totem poles. He'd caught a glimpse of her in passing but the hood of her jacket and his own speed had made it impossible to see her face. Now his heart filled with joy, then uncertainty, and finally alarm.

He eased the car to a stop and opened the door. Every instinct demanded that he take her in his arms and tell her everything was fine. Instead he forced himself into his role of sheriff. He forced himself to show no reaction beyond concern and professionalism though every cell in his body tightened when she told him about her injured fiancé.

Tekoa motioned for her to get in the car. He welcomed the darkness of the interior. It was impossible not to think about what it might mean that she already had another man in her life.

He had yet to get a good look at her but he already knew she was his. As a man he wouldn't have known it, but when his spirit had passed over her in the Thunderbird's form it had recognized her as his mate. As *one* of his mates, Tekoa prayed, hoping that pleasure lay ahead for all three of them, though he feared what they would find when they got to the crash site.

His heart was in turmoil and his gut tense. He was afraid that if the Creator had not chosen both Jessica and Clay as mates for him, then Jessica would endure the grief and pain of losing someone she loved before she found happiness again.

The rain eased as they got to the totem poles. Tekoa could feel her worry and see it in the rigid line of her back as she stared out the passenger window.

"It's just a little further," Jessica said. She was so focused on where the edge of the road dropped and sloped downward, that she didn't see Clay's collapsed form until Tekoa stopped the car and her gaze jerked forward. She had the door open in an instant.

Clay was breathing. That was the first thing she checked. She touched his face and shivered at how cold he was. Somehow he'd managed to get out of the car and climb the mud-slick bank back to the road, but with no jacket on, he was completely soaked.

"Let's get him to the car," Tekoa said. "Go open the back doors."

His authoritative voice was a lifeline. It calmed the chaos of her thoughts. Jessica got to her feet and hurried to the car.

Clay's eyes fluttered open when she returned. "Jess?"

Her stomach lurched with the realization that he was still confused. She took a deep breath and tried to convince herself that his being conscious at all was positive, especially after he'd gotten out of the car and climbed up to the road before collapsing. "I'm here. The sheriff's here." She stroked Clay's cheek.

His hand lifted to cover hers. "What happened?"

"A tree got struck by lightning. Part of it fell and hit the car. We went over the bank." She glanced up at the sheriff.

Tekoa leaned over Clay. "Do you remember your name?"

"Clay." His eyelids started to droop but his lips still curled in a smile. "Think I might have a concussion. Had one before."

Tekoa lightly tapped Clay's cheek and the eyelids lifted. "Do you hurt anywhere?"

Clay didn't answer right away. Jessica leaned down and kissed his forehead. "Clay?"

"I'm okay. Just my head. And cold." He started shivering as if saying the word had suddenly made him feel it.

"Let's get him to the car," Tekoa said.

"I can walk," Clay said and made a failed effort to sit.

They used a two-person carry to get him to the car.

"How far is it to the hospital?" Jessica asked as she buckled her seat belt then turned to look at Clay's shivering figure stretched out on the backseat.

"Mudslides have several roads blocked right now. Detouring around them would take hours. Some of the roads we'd have to take are extremely rough. Traveling over them could make him worse. It'd be better to get him to my cabin and out of his wet clothes."

Tekoa couldn't stop himself from reaching over and taking her hand. His heart raced when Jessica's fingers curled around his. The feel of her engagement ring against his palm made heat unfurl in his gut. He forced thoughts of what might be from his mind in order to concentrate on getting them back to the cabin safely.

They got Clay inside and laid him on a thick handwoven rug in front of a grated fireplace. "Start getting him out of his wet clothes. I'll get the fire going again," Tekoa said.

He turned toward the fireplace and gasped when he saw the two half-full cups balanced on the Thunderbird his younger brother Ukiah had carved into the mantel. The presence of the cups and, more importantly, the drink they contained meant the union of his spirit with Clay's and Jessica's had been blessed by the Creator. Without such a blessing it was impossible to fully join with someone not of The People.

The presence of the cups also meant he didn't need to worry about any injuries Clay and Jessica might have sustained in the crash. The Creator's gift and the sing he would do for them would heal them.

Tekoa offered a silent song of thanks before kneeling and opening the fireplace grate. While his spirit had become Thunderbird, his human shell had rested on the mat where Clay lay. When he'd been called back and seen Jessica on the road as he traveled overhead, he'd taken only long enough to dress and bank the fire before racing out in the night to claim her. Now the flames came readily to life.

Tekoa kept his back to them. He centered himself as he heard Jessica removing Clay's clothing. They might be the lovers who would share his bed and his life, but at the moment they were strangers who needed his help.

"Do you have a washer?" Jessica asked, her voice curling around Tekoa's cock.

"Yes." He steeled himself against showing any reaction to Clay's nakedness. But when he turned around he nearly pitched forward in sudden lightheadedness at his first true look at Jessica.

With her jacket and sweatshirt off he could see not only the gold of her hair but the feminine curves, and delicate vulnerability of her face. Everything about her was exquisite, soft and gentle and heartwrenchingly beautiful.

It took an extreme effort of will to keep from taking her in his arms and molding her against him. He wanted to bury his face in her hair and feel every line of her.

A blush stole into her cheeks and she looked away in sudden discomfort. He cursed himself for what she must have seen in his face. She was engaged and beyond that, Clay lay at their feet in need of care.

Tekoa stood. "I'll take the wet clothes. We can run them through the washer and dryer in the morning. The cabin uses stored energy. It'll drain the batteries to use the machines now."

He reached for the dripping clothing. She released it without meeting his eyes. Tekoa gave a soft sigh and cursed himself again. She'd removed her shoes and socks, but her jeans were soaked and muddy. "You should get out of anything wet too."

Jessica knew he was right, but other than the clothes she'd been wearing, everything else was still in Clay's car. She wanted to argue that her things would dry quickly. Already tendrils of steam were lifting from the fabric due to the fire in the fireplace, but there was still the mud to consider. She couldn't repay his kindness by coating his furniture with dirt.

He was a sheriff even if he was a man. He wasn't going to think of her as anything but a traveler who needed help. She cleared her throat of the nervousness that had formed a knot there. She started to point out that she didn't have any other clothes with her then thought better of it. His solution would be to offer her something of his and that would be too intimate.

"Okay," she said, though it was more of a croak than a word. She didn't want to leave Clay's side long enough to strip in the bathroom so she ducked her head and fumbled with the wet fabric, unbuttoning and unzipping and finally sliding the jeans down her legs. She couldn't bring herself to remove her panties and hand them to a stranger so she left them.

Jessica retrieved her wet socks from where she'd stuffed them in her shoes. She forced herself to meet the sheriff's gaze as she gave him the bundle of wet things. "Thanks."

"You're welcome." His face reflected nothing but professionalism and she relaxed.

Jessica returned to Clay's side as the sheriff left the room. In the glow of the firelight she thought Clay looked battered but otherwise fine. He'd stopped shivering and actually seemed to be resting peacefully.

Pain ripped through Jessica. If she'd lost him...

She placed her hand on his chest and took comfort in the steady beat of his heart. He mumbled something but didn't open his eyes.

The sheriff returned and knelt on the other side of Clay. "When one of my people is sick or injured we perform a healing ceremony for them. If you'd allow it, I would do one for your fiancé."

Jessica's eyes widened with surprise. For the first time she allowed herself to really look at the man across from her. She'd registered that he was Native American, and on some level she'd acknowledged that his features were strong and handsome. But with all her focus on Clay, she hadn't truly *seen* him.

Now that she was looking, she felt nervous and uncertain and guilty. He sent heat curling through her womb and her breasts in a way usually reserved for Clay.

She ducked her head to cover the sudden confusion of emotion. She blurted out the first thing that came to mind. "Is it like one of the ceremonies in the Tony Hillerman stories?"

The sheriff laughed. "No. I'm not like Officer Chee. Nor am I one of the Dineh, the Navajo."

Jessica glanced up and smiled in response to the sheriff's smile. "What are you then?"

"The name wouldn't be familiar to you. But in English you would call us the People of the Thunderbird." He placed his hand over hers where it rested above Clay's heart. "And you would call me Tekoa. Will you allow me to do a healing for him?"

"Yes," Jessica said, unable to look away from where her hand was trapped between Clay's skin and Tekoa's. There was rightness about it, as though it was somehow symbolic.

When Tekoa finally lifted his hand from hers she lifted her eyes to meet his. "Can I watch?"

Her innocent question sent a tremor through Tekoa but he quickly closed his mind to the carnal images it evoked. "You can stay in the room but I'll ask you to close your eyes." He couldn't stop himself from resting his hand on her shoulder when she

frowned. It was killing him to go so slowly, to have so little information about Jessica and Clay. "There will be nothing to see, only to hear."

"Okay. Where do you want me?"

Tekoa glanced away, afraid she might read the answer in his eyes and know he wanted her in bed but he'd take her anywhere. "You're fine where you are. When I begin you won't be able to touch him." He rose to his feet. "I want to change into more traditional clothing. It'll take me a few minutes."

Jessica watched him as he walked to the far end of the cabin and opened a dresser next to the bed. He moved with the same easy confidence that Clay did, like he was a man comfortable in his skin.

Tekoa found the clothing he wanted and crossed to the bathroom. Their eyes met and held until she looked away. He slipped inside and closed the door behind him.

Jessica looked down and caught herself unconsciously rubbing her fingertip over Clay's tiny male nipple. She stilled. Emotion blocked her throat. So much had happened in such a short period of time. "Clay," she whispered, suddenly needing reassurance that he was going to be okay, that *they* were going to be okay.

His eyelids fluttered open. The pupils were still uneven but she didn't think they were worse than they had been.

Jessica leaned over and brushed a kiss against his lips. "How do you feel?"

"Sleepy." He blinked rapidly. "Concussion, right?"

"Yes."

He closed his eyes. She thought he'd gone back to sleep until he mumbled, "Didn't mean to get off to such a bad start."

"We'll be back on track soon." She kissed him lightly again but when he didn't stir Jessica straightened and studied their surroundings.

Tekoa's home was essentially a single large room, though two short walls extended out to form an alcove for a small office, and a counter separated the rest of the cabin



from the kitchen. There were several closed doors beside the one leading to the bathroom, but since his bed was visible, she assumed the other doors led to closets.

Even without the warmth of the fire she thought his home would always feel cozy and welcoming. The furniture was chosen for comfort and the room was adorned with some astonishingly beautiful nature photographs as well as a mix of Native American art and crafts.

There were carved animal figures tucked away in the bookcases and on various other surfaces, including a collection on the kitchen counter. A pair of totem poles stood guard on either side of the door they'd come through when they arrived. She smiled when she saw them and wondered if Tekoa had made them. It would explain why he had so many figurines, unless he collected them, or had a girlfriend who carved them.

Jessica glanced to the bathroom and the door opened. Her breath caught in her throat when Tekoa came out. It was like seeing a warrior step from of the past. The jeans and flannel shirt he'd been wearing were gone, as was the single braid his hair had been confined to.

Now he wore only a loincloth. His hair fell in thick black waves over his shoulders and back. On either side of his face, feathers and beads had been woven into a thin braid. He was man stripped of civilization and returned to his raw, powerful essence.

Despite the wrongness of it, Jessica felt herself respond physically. Her womb fluttered and her cunt lips grew swollen and wet. Her breasts grew heavy and achy the way they did in those first seconds when she saw Clay after being separated from him for more than a few hours.

Their eyes met and held as they'd done earlier. In her imagination there was possessiveness and determination in Tekoa's gaze. She shivered in response.

Unbidden, a picture flashed in her thoughts. She saw herself naked and waiting on a blanket for him to come to her. Her heart rate sped up and Jessica forced the image away in guilt and confusion.

She lowered her gaze but despite a heart that was loyal to Clay and a conscience that demanded she close her eyes, she found herself staring at Tekoa's loincloth and noticing the erection straining against the soft material. She couldn't look away as he closed the distance between them.

Shame and embarrassment swamped her when he said, "If you'll shut your eyes, I'll start now." Added heat rushed to Jessica's face when she realized she'd been stroking Clay's abdomen the entire time she'd been looking at Tekoa. She put her hands in her lap and closed her eyes.

Tekoa's voiced filled the cabin. It started low and slow but grew louder and faster. The words were foreign and unrecognizable, yet they resonated through Jessica, their rhythm timeless, like a chord that linked her soul to not only the past, but to the power that was earth and wind and water and fire.

He hadn't been holding a drum when he knelt on the other side of Clay. But in her mind she could hear one and its beat was a heart growing stronger, louder, returning to health.

Tears rolled down her cheeks in a purging of emotion, called from her as if the song and the drum were reaching into the place left raw by Clay's confession, and trying to heal her. She wiped at the tears without opening her eyes. She willed herself to gain some control over her chaotic emotions.

Tekoa's voice grew low and slow again. It touched her soul and she turned her face away, afraid that even without seeing her eyes he would glimpse her terrible fear of losing Clay and ending up hurt and alone.

The song built and gathered power. It blended and merged with the phantom drum as they raced to a thundering crescendo that left Jessica gasping and opening her eyes.

She looked down at Clay first and found him smiling at her. It took her a second to notice the evenness of his pupils. "You're okay?" she whispered.

"Yeah, I'm okay now. I remember driving past the totem poles, but beyond that, things get fuzzy." He took her hand in his and squeezed.

Jessica knew the exact moment Clay became aware of Tekoa at his other side. He turned his head slightly. She saw him blink in surprise before his hand loosened on hers as if suddenly he'd forgotten she was there.

Clay took in all of Tekoa. His gaze settled for an instant on the loincloth-covered erection and Jessica saw the burning sexual interest in Clay's eyes. He masked it quickly but his cock told the truth by hardening.

She glanced at Tekoa and found his gaze now locked on Clay's as though they were assessing each other as potential lovers. The uncertainty and fear and confusion she'd been battling since Clay's revelation struck in a painful jolt and she knew she couldn't deal with anything more. Not now anyway. She was emotionally and physically drained.

Jessica pulled her hand from Clay's and stood. "I'll be back. I need some fresh air. I'm going to step outside for a few minutes."

Tekoa stood as well. Cop instinct and the ability to read a situation took over where a second before he'd been healer and Thunderbird spirit. His hand grasped Jessica's arm and kept her from escaping the room. He'd let her go in a minute. But even without a discussion between them he knew Clay was bisexual and she was aware of it. He also knew she was physically attracted to him though she was fighting it.

It was a start. But like cracking a witness for a case, he knew if he gave her time to shore up her defenses and rewrite her memories then any progress that might have been made in the short time they'd been together would be lost.

It was a gut read and he didn't stop to question himself. He didn't stop to question whether it was his little head doing the thinking or his big one. He just reacted. The three of them were meant to be together and he wanted to get it out in the open now.

Tekoa tangled his free hand in her hair and leaned in. Her eyes widened but by the time she tried to pull away his lips were on hers.

He didn't force his tongue into her mouth. He didn't coax or tease or try to get her to open for him. He bit and sucked and took control in a possessive kiss that didn't allow her a chance to run away or deny her physical response to him.

Tekoa could feel her hardened nipples through her shirt and bra. He could feel her body yield and knew in a heartbeat that she liked a dominant lover.

A searing wave of lust burned through his cock. He wanted her. Here. Now. With Clay watching.

She shivered as her barriers dropped. She whimpered as she parted her lips under the onslaught of his. It took every ounce of control for him to keep from plunging into the wet heat of her mouth and mimicking what he wanted to do to her with his cock.

He didn't want to push Jessica too far, too fast. He didn't want to back her into an emotional corner where running or fighting became her only options.

Tekoa gentled the kiss. His tongue breached the seam of her lips but only long enough to rub and slide against hers in several slow passes before he lifted his mouth and let her go.

Panic, confusion, desire, guilt, fear. Her emotions were easy for him to read in the seconds before she turned away and escaped to the porch.

## Chapter Three

Clay's heart thundered in his chest as he got to his feet. His hands balled into fists only he didn't know who deserved the punch, him for responding physically to another man in front of Jess, or the other man for coming on to Jess.

Fuck.

Clay's cock jerked in reaction to the word. Christ. He couldn't help it. One minute he'd been completely out of it. The next minute there'd been this incredible warmth. It'd been like a hand stroking over and through his body.

He'd slowly become aware of the singing, and beyond that a drum beating, controlling the rhythm of his heart. As the heat spread in his veins there'd been a sense of coming home, of rightness.

On some level he'd known there was a man there with Jess. Fuck. He'd been half aroused even before he opened his eyes. Then when he did he'd felt trapped in a dream state where it was impossible to lie.

*Tekoa. He is the one you were hoping to find.* The words had whispered through Clay's mind. His cock had hardened as he looked at Tekoa and saw the answering desire in the other man's eyes. He couldn't have turned away in those first few seconds if he'd wanted too. Only Jessica pulling her hand from his had brought reality crashing down on him.

Clay speared his fingers through his hair in frustration and agony. His heart demanded that he go to Jessica even if it meant standing bare-assed naked out in the cold, but his head—the big one that was actually doing the thinking despite what his dick was saying—told him she needed some space.

Clay turned his attention to the man standing less than an arm's distance away. "I owe you, but... Fuck. I don't want Jess hurt. It was a tough day *before* the car went off

the road. So lay off. Okay? Don't push her." Christ, he couldn't believe he was still hard. But he couldn't seem to shake the rightness of it. He couldn't seem to fight the feeling that somehow everything that had happened, starting in the car with Jessica's first mention of writing a teen coming-out book and his subsequent confession about being bi, had led to this place, this man, this moment.

"Fuck," he repeated and was startled into a laugh when Tekoa said, "We'll get to that. But at the moment you need some clothes." He glanced toward the door Jessica had escaped through. "And she's probably ready for some reassurance."

Tekoa reached over and casually picked up a wooden cup from the mantel above the fireplace. He handed it to Clay. "Drink this."

Clay shuddered as the honey-warm liquid slid down his throat. It was so much like what he'd experienced earlier that he had to shut his eyes against the pleasure.

Intense need spiraled through him and he wanted to reach for his cock. He wanted to reach for Tekoa's as well. Instead Clay balled one hand into a fist while the other clenched the mug. Some of the heat faded but the edgy awareness and need remained. "Christ, you just drugged me."

Tekoa's laughed. "Hardly. My constituents wouldn't be happy with me if I did that."

Clay opened his eyes and leaned over to put the empty cup back on the mantel. For a moment he was mesmerized by the Thunderbird carved into the rich wood. "Constituents?"

"I'm sheriff here."

Clay's attention jerked back to Tekoa. His gaze traveled down the hard, tanned body wearing nothing but a loincloth. It took all his control not to linger on the erection pressed against the front of the material. "And healer?"

"Not usually. But for you and Jessica, yes." Tekoa's hand settled on Clay's shoulder. "The land brought the two of you here, but we can take it slow."

Another erotic shudder passed through Clay at hearing both his own thoughts and his earlier words to Jessica come from Tekoa's lips. His cock jerked in warning and this time Clay couldn't keep from taking it in hand to appease the ache. He gritted his teeth and forced himself not to stroke upward over the pulsing, leaking tip. He was afraid of what might happen if he did.

Tekoa's hand fell away. Clay wanted to protest the loss, but didn't. Jess had to come first, literally and figuratively. If she accepted Tekoa on her side of the bed then she would accept Tekoa on *his* side as well.

"I've got some sweats you can wear," Tekoa said, moving to the dresser. His rapid escape made Clay smile. He might be naked and hard but at least he wasn't suffering alone.

He glanced down at where his hand encircled his penis. Yeah, he'd always been one to grab for the brass ring when it presented itself, but right now he felt like he was wearing a cock ring. Christ. It took concentration and willpower. And even then he felt like he was prying his hand away from his dick one finger at a time.

He managed it. Barely.

Tekoa tossed Clay the sweats from several feet away. Clay slipped the pants on and felt his cock leak against the soft fabric. His breath caught as lust surged through him. He'd worn borrowed clothes before but this was intimate, unbearably erotic. A T-shirt followed. "You can take my jacket if you want," Tekoa said, nodding toward where it hung on a peg next to the door. "Jessica didn't stop for hers. She might be ready to come in now." He closed the distance between them and took a second cup from the mantel. "Get her to drink this. She was hurt too, but I could only do so much to heal her during the sing. I'll be dressed when you get back in with her. Maybe we can play cards or something, spend some time getting to know each other."

Clay took the cup. His eyes met Tekoa's and he could read the need there, the same aching desire to feel another man's touch that had Clay's chest and balls and cock

burning. But he also saw something else there, the willingness to wait, to take it slow, because it wasn't just about the two of them, it was about Jessica too.

"Yeah, that's a good idea. Jess likes to play cards." Clay took a deep breath. "She didn't know until today. She's trying to find a way to handle it. And she's still wearing the engagement ring. That's something." His hand tightened on the cup. His gut echoed the words that had come to him earlier, that Tekoa was the one, but his conscience and his love for Jessica wouldn't allow him to move forward without saying, "She's fragile right now. I won't let you near her if you're just looking to fuck a couple of stranded tourists until they head back home."

Tekoa's eyes narrowed. Clay imagined he saw a dark, turbulent sky with flashes of lightning in them but he stood his ground. It'd turned him on to see Jessica's body go soft and yielding as another man took her lips, but it'd pissed him off too. Jess wasn't a casual conquest and he wouldn't share her easily.

The storm in Tekoa's eyes settled. He put his hand on Clay's shoulder again. "You're home now. I'm not looking for a quick meaningless fuck."

Clay exhaled and gave a nod. He felt the truth in Tekoa's words even though he didn't intend to explore the metaphysical stuff that swirled around them like a dense fog. He'd leave that to Jess. Going with his gut instinct had always worked for him. "I'll go check on Jess."

"Give her the cup." Tekoa's eyes bored into his. "It's important that she drink what's in it."

"Sure. First thing."

Clay turned away before he could give in to the urge to lean forward and kiss Tekoa. Christ, he was hard.

Jessica glanced up when he stepped out onto the porch. It was still raining though the storm seemed to have calmed somewhat.



She shivered from the cold and he wished he'd grabbed Tekoa's jacket so he could put it around her. "Drink this, it'll warm you up," he said, passing the cup and watching as she drained the contents.

His cock pulsed when she gave a soft moan as heat spread across her cheeks. "What was that?" she asked and he nearly panted at the husky timbre of her voice.

"Don't know. Something to go with the healing. That was pretty cool, wasn't it? Shades of Tony Hillerman. Maybe you can work it into the next story you write."

Clay took the cup from her hand and placed it on the porch banister. "Jess," he whispered, slowly putting his hands on her sides and pulling her to him so that their bodies were flush.

She stiffened when she felt his erection. Clay was ready for that. He rubbed his cock against her mound. "If I weren't afraid of him catching pneumonia after all he's been through today, I'd pull these sweats down so he could greet you properly." He felt her smile through the thin T-shirt a second before her body relaxed against his with a cold shiver. Clay hugged her more tightly. "Let's go inside, baby, and get to know each other." He paused for a heartbeat before adding, "Or if it'd make you feel better, we could ask Tekoa to take us to the nearest town with a hotel. Hell, maybe there's a place to rent rooms in Hohoq."

Jessica slid her arms around his waist. "You don't really want to leave."

Clay rubbed his cheek against her rain-dampened hair. "No." He nuzzled until he found her ear. She whimpered when he licked into the sensitive canal. "You're attracted to him, Jess. I'm attracted to him. Why not see where it goes and how we feel about it? There's no rush. We're safe, we're dry. It doesn't make sense to try and do anything about the car until tomorrow." He recaptured her earlobe and sucked until her hands pushed up under the T-shirt he was wearing. "And besides that, I feel right about being here." Clay pulled back so he could study at her face. "Do you feel it too?"

When Jessica tried to look away he speared his fingers through her hair and kept her from avoiding the question. "No hiding from the truth, Jess. No secrets. That's the

only way it could work. So I'll go first. It turned me on to see him kissing you. It made me even harder seeing you go soft and submissive the same way you do for me when I need that from you." His free hand fondled her breast. His palm rubbed over the hard point of her shirt-covered nipple. "At least admit you're attracted to him."

Jessica's heart thundered and her cunt clenched as more arousal escaped to coat her swollen labia. Despite the coldness of the air her womb burned and fluttered and ached with a need that was so primal she wanted to push her panties down and beg him to fill her with his cock.

It would be easy to claim it was nothing more than her body's way of handling the fear of losing him. It would be tempting to claim something in the drink he'd given her had heightened the need. Both would be true, but they weren't the only reason she felt so needy, so desperate for Clay to make love to her and reassure her with his body.

She was scared by just how right being here felt and how quickly it had happened. She was nervous and unsettled by the intensity of her response to Tekoa and how easy it was to imagine herself spreading her thighs and letting him push his cock deep inside her.

"Admit it, Jess," Clay whispered. "Admit you're attracted to him."

She shuddered and gave up the battle. "I admit it."

Clay leaned forward and took her mouth in a soft, reassuring kiss. "Good. Now let's get inside before Tekoa has to do another healing ceremony."

Jessica turned slightly, intending to pick up the cup but it was no longer on the railing. Clay grunted and leaned over to peer at the ground. "Must have fallen off and rolled somewhere. I don't see it. Let's get you inside, Jess, then I'll look for it."

They stepped into the cabin. The sheer bliss of the warmth coming from the fireplace made Jessica moan softly as it sank into her and joined the liquid heat that spiraled through her from the drink.

Clay flipped a light switch and turned to go back out. "What's up?" Tekoa asked.

“The cup fell off the porch and rolled. I couldn’t see where it went.”

“Don’t worry about it. Just crash in front of the fire. You guys want something to eat? It’s bachelor cooking but I haven’t died of food poisoning or killed anyone else with it yet.”

Jessica laughed and despite the tightness of her nipples and the fluttering in her cunt she found herself relaxing. “Let me help.”

Tekoa made a sweeping gesture toward the kitchen area. “It’s all yours.”

Clay followed her as far as the counter separating the kitchen from the rest of the cabin. He pulled out one of the bar stools and settled on it.

Tekoa moved to her side. “Canned goods here. Next one over is baking stuff. There’s meat in the freezer, and some ground beef in the fridge. I’ve also got some fresh vegetables in the fridge. I think there’s still a loaf of homemade bread in box next to Clay’s elbow.” Tekoa leaned against the counter. “If there’s something else you think you might need, just ask.”

Jessica’s pussy clenched as her eyes settled on his jeans-covered erection. She licked her lips nervously and his cock flexed against the material. For a second she wondered if he’d meant something else by his offer to give her anything else she might need, but when her gaze lifted to Tekoa’s, his expression didn’t give even a hint of his thoughts.

A blush worked itself across her cheeks. She reached for several of the cans and was pleased at how steady her hands were despite the barrage of emotions that seemed to flare up with only the slightest provocation. It made her remember her first date with Clay. She’d been hopeful and afraid and horny, unsettled then too. Jessica’s lips curved upward. She glanced at Clay. She’d also felt deliciously alive and extremely desirable. It was something she still felt whenever she was with him.

His eyelids lowered and his face tightened. They knew each other so well he’d probably guessed what she was thinking and why she’d been thinking it.

Jessica shivered under his regard. He never bothered to hide what he felt for her. Right now his look said he wanted to strip her out of the shirt and panties and make love to her.

She turned away. This time there was a small tremor in her hand when she reached for another can. She wondered what she'd do if he ordered her to take her remaining clothes off and brace her hands against the counter. Part of her wished Clay would take the decision away from her and simply make her accept Tekoa as a lover. But the part of her that loved and trusted him completely was glad he'd never do something like that. He could be a thoroughly dominating lover, but he was also a sensitive, caring man who treated her as an equal and yet still made her feel incredibly treasured.

"Pots and pan?" she asked and was amazed at how calm her voice sounded.

Tekoa pushed away from the counter. "What do you need?"

"One of each. How does chili with a salad and the homemade bread sound to you guys?"

Tekoa's stomach answered with a grumble before either man could speak. Jessica laughed and threw herself into the refuge of cooking. By the time it was done and the meal eaten, she felt as though the three of them had known each other for years.

"I'll take care of the dirty dishes since the two of you worked on the meal," Clay said, sliding out of his chair and moving to stand behind Jessica's.

Tekoa pushed his chair back but didn't stand. "There's no dishwasher. Uses too much power."

Clay grinned. "I'm used to doing it the old-fashioned way. There never seems to be a dishwasher handy when I'm camping." He leaned down and nuzzled Jessica. "And there's almost never such an edible cook."

His hand settled on her belly and Jessica's nipples tightened. Clay's mouth nibbled around to catch her gasp as his fingers glanced over her clit underneath the table.

Desperate lust flashed through her as if it'd been simmering below the surface and all it took was a single touch to ignite it. She closed her legs in fear that his fingers would discover the slick arousal coating her inner thighs. If he did he'd never be able to resist the urge to slip his hand underneath the elastic of her panties and play with her.

She couldn't afford to let him touch her so intimately. She was already riding a thin emotional edge, already needy and so close to orgasm that his experienced touches would make her lose control.

Clay's tongue forged into Jessica's mouth and rubbed against hers in retaliation for her denying him access to her cunt. Christ, he hadn't meant to start this. Yeah, he had a raging hard-on, but when he leaned down he'd only planned to torture himself with a quick touch of her skin against his.

He'd been thrilled beyond words with how things had gone since he and Jess came inside. She might not realize it yet, but she and Tekoa had slipped into the same easy kitchen routine that the two of them shared at home, with her directing the action, pointing at cans to be opened or onions to be chopped, while he served as assistant. And dinner...Clay didn't see how it could have gone any better. He didn't see how there could ever be a better third for them. The conversation was free flowing, light and serious and everything in between. There were so many points of common interest. There were so many ways they were a good fit. The sexual tension shimmering underneath only amplified that fact.

Clay wanted to force Jess's thighs apart and slide his hand into her panties. He wanted to cup her mound and feel her wet heat. He wanted to fuck her with his fingers and swallow her scream.

She'd come for him if he wanted it. Here. Now. With Tekoa watching. Clay had never had a woman respond to him the way Jess did. When she'd given her heart and her body to him, she'd given him everything, including her complete trust.

He made himself end the kiss. "I'd better get to the dishes. Why don't you two decide what we're going to play? I'm fine with anything, but Tekoa mentioned cards earlier."

Tekoa rose from the table as if he didn't notice Clay's erection or Jessica's flushed features and beaded nipples. It took her several seconds before she followed him to where he stood in front of an opened cabinet next to the television set.

Despite her heightened awareness and aching arousal she marveled at how well Tekoa used what space he had in the cabin. The shelves were built into the wall and housed an impressive collection of board games as well as a rack of poker chips and several decks of cards, both opened and unopened.

She glanced sideways and found him watching her. "What's your preference?"

His smile reached into her chest and stroked her heart. "Lady's choice."

"Don't let her choose Scrabble," Clay said from his position in front of the sink. "Being a writer gives her an unfair advantage. The last time I beat her was six months ago, after she'd been drinking."

Jessica laughed and reached into the cabinet. She picked up a poker chip and studied it. Not all of them were created equal. By the weight and feel of the one in her hand she knew Tekoa wasn't a casual player.

"My purse is still in Clay's car. In all the panic to get help and then to get him taken care of, I forgot about it."

"We can keep the stakes low. I'm sure you're good for the money." Tekoa reached over and pushed a stray tendril of hair away from her face. It was a casual, intimate gesture that made Jessica's heart race and her womb flutter. She had a sudden vision of the three of them playing strip poker.

"Poker it is," she said, turning away before he could read what she was thinking in her eyes.

Tekoa grinned and took the opportunity to boldly survey the long, tanned legs left bare below the shirt he'd loaned her when she'd showered while the chili was cooking. He was making progress with her. Jessica's sudden retreat and the unconscious way she was rubbing the poker chip told him that.

His body tightened with thoughts of how it would feel to have those same fingers stroking his flesh, exploring his sac and his cock. A moan nearly escaped as he thought about having those beautiful legs wrapped around his waist as she clung to him in passion.

Tekoa picked up the chip rack in one hand and the cards in the other in order to keep both hands busy. She was killing him, turning him into one huge erotic ache.

He glanced at the mantel above the fireplace. His heart and cock swelled with sweet emotion and carnal anticipation. The cups had been offered and the contents accepted by Clay and Jessica. Now it was up to the three of them to find their way to intimacy.

They played until well past midnight, only stopping when all the chips were stacked in colorful towers in front of a grinning Clay. "Same time, same place tomorrow?"

"I'm in," Tekoa said. He rose and stretched. His gaze went to the bed. He longed to be at the point where all three of them would settle there and find the ultimate peace of ending one day and beginning the next in each other's arms. If he couldn't have that, then he would at least have the satisfaction of knowing Clay and Jessica were in his bed. "Since there are two of you and only one of me, you take the bed. I'll crash on the sofa."

Jessica made a small sound of protest but before she could verbalize it Clay's arm went around her shoulders. "Sounds good to me," he said. His eyebrows lifted and fell several times in a parody of lasciviousness. "Maybe we can find a way for you to pay off your chip debt, babe."

Jessica's cheeks flushed. Her eyes flashed to Tekoa then back to Clay. In a heartbeat sexual tension replaced the friendly competitiveness that had masked it while they played cards.

For an instant Tekoa was afraid Clay's comment would erase the progress they'd made and cause Jessica to retreat. She surprised him by recovering first.

Jessica slapped Clay's thigh and said, "You were more endearing when you had a concussion."

Clay leaned in and nuzzled her. He started to tell her he was more than willing to lie down and pretend he was helpless again while she kissed him back to health.

He didn't even care where her lips started, as long as they ended up on his cock. His penis jerked. A bead of arousal escaped to wet the tip along with the soft cotton of Tekoa's sweatpants.

Clay closed his eyes and breathed deeply. Jessica's scent was overlaid with the smell of Tekoa's soap and shampoo.

Christ, he wanted them both.

Clay burrowed through her silky hair until his mouth found her earlobe. She shivered and tried to pull away but his arm across her chest prevented it.

From the first moment he'd seen her it'd been like this between them. A look, a touch, sometimes only a single word, and the heat swamped them, the need overpowered them.

He fought against the intense desire to suck her earlobe, to trace the delicate shell of her ear and then slide his tongue into the sensitive canal. Jess would go up in flames if he did that.

She'd spread her legs and welcome his hand between her thighs. She'd whimper as his fingers slipped underneath her panties and glided over her clit before pressing into her hot sheath.

She'd be wet. So, so wet.



He could finger-fuck her until she was begging for his cock. He'd done it often enough since they first became intimate to be completely confident about her response. And once he got her that far she wouldn't fight him if he pulled her panties off and placed her on the table.

She'd take his cock. She'd take Tekoa's cock.

But it wouldn't really be her choice. It wouldn't be the way it needed to be. It wouldn't be taking it slow, like he'd promised they'd do.

"Let's go to bed, Jess," Clay whispered. His voice was husky and hoarse with need. He didn't try to hide his intentions. He was going to fuck her. And even though she would try to be quiet so her moans and whimpers didn't fill the dark cabin, she'd know Tekoa was nearby. She'd know Tekoa was aware of what they were doing and was imagining himself on the bed with them. She'd wonder if Tekoa's fingers were locked around his own cock, gliding up and down in time to the sounds of Clay's body pounding into hers.

"Bed," Clay said, stepping away from her. He took her arm and helped her stand. Victory rushed through him at the way her nipples pressed hard and tight against the front of Tekoa's shirt, at the way her head was tilted so her hair shielded her face.

He let her go so she could hit the bathroom before climbing into bed. As she walked away his attention stayed on her, lingered on the curve of her ass and her long, sleek legs before she disappeared behind a closed door.

Clay turned and found Tekoa near the fireplace. Their eyes met, held, then traveled downward, each noting the muscled firmness and aroused state of the other. When Clay's gaze returned to Tekoa's face, Tekoa's mouth curved upward in a wry smile. "Enjoy the bed. I have a feeling the couch is going to be sheer torture."

Clay moved to stand near Tekoa. They didn't touch though the need radiated off them both.

"I was afraid this would be harder," Clay said. He felt as if a hot wire was leading right from Tekoa's dick to his own.

Tekoa laughed. "If it gets any harder you'll be taking what's left of me to the emergency room. But I know what you mean, despite the painful choice of words."

Another round of cock-jerking lust seared through Clay. He wanted Jess with an intensity that would have become an obsession if she'd left him. But he wanted this too. He wanted to feel masculine hands, masculine lips on his body. He wanted to feel Tekoa's cock penetrating him just as he wanted to thoroughly explore Tekoa's body before sliding into his tight back entrance.

It'd been so long. He craved it. And yet it was more than just the need for sex. Thanks to what he had with Jess, he'd experienced the ultimate and unparalleled pleasure of being intimate with someone he loved completely. The love would come with Tekoa, Clay didn't doubt that for a moment. The respect and friendship were already there. The shared purpose and sexual attraction made it seem like they already *were* together in the most meaningful sense.

Clay knew that once he and Tekoa were lovers, once they were a threesome with Jess, he'd never be tempted again like he'd been on his last trip. He'd never have to live through the gut-wrenching fear of one day losing everything because in a weak moment he'd cheated with another man.

"I'll find a way to leave the two of you alone tomorrow," Clay said.

Tekoa's smile was slow and sensual and made Clay want to slide his hand beneath the borrowed sweatpants in order to take his cock in hand. Or better yet, push the pants off his hips and let Tekoa do it.

The bathroom door began to open. Tekoa's eyes reflected hunger. "I'll turn off the lights once you two are settled. But I'm not in a hurry to get to sleep."

Clay shivered with dark anticipation and primal awareness. Tekoa meant to do more than just listen to what was about to take place on the bed, he intended to watch as well.

## **Chapter Four**

Clay laughed softly as he eased between the sheets. Jessica was still wearing the flannel shirt even though they both knew he wouldn't allow it to stay on for very long.

Even the ultra-sexy nightgowns and teddies she paraded around in at home didn't last once they got to the bedroom. He liked her naked and she liked being that way for him.

Clay rolled up on to one elbow and kicked the sheets and blankets down past their feet. The fire made any kind of covering completely unnecessary. But then he knew that wasn't why she'd pulled them up to begin with.

He didn't intend to let her hide.

"I love you," he said, keeping his voice to a whisper.

His fingers went to the front of her shirt. She made a small murmur of protest. He silenced it by covering her lips with his and forging into the wet heat of her mouth with his tongue.

It took only seconds to dispense with the buttons and push the shirt aside. His hand stroked over her belly and found the elastic of her panties. He jerked them down roughly and tossed them away from the bed in a gesture that said the shirt had been pushing it but the panties were an outrage.

She wasn't going to deny him. They both knew that. She needed him as desperately as he needed her.

For an instant he flashed back to the moment the car had started to slide off the road. Christ, he could have lost her to a rockslide or a tree, or a hundred other things that could have gone wrong. Instead everything had turned out all right, better than all right.

Clay cupped her mound and she whimpered. Her clit stabbed his palm. It was a tight, hard knob that he knew how to handle.

He rubbed over it and she bucked. He did it again and she opened her thighs.

She was wet. So, so wet. Just like he knew she would be.

He fucked her mouth with his tongue. He fucked her cunt with his fingers.

Her soft whimpers always filled him with intense satisfaction. She could never be completely quiet when they made love.

If he lifted his lips from hers she'd say his name. She'd ask him prettily to make love to her. Or she'd beg him to fuck her if that's what he wanted.

Christ. Tekoa didn't have to worry about it being over too soon. Once was never enough with Jess.

Clay's cock pulsed. He could feel Tekoa watching, getting off on the sight of them making love. It turned Clay on, just as he knew that watching Tekoa fuck Jess would have him jacking off and panting and coming all over himself when they came.

Tekoa's hand moved in time to Clay's. The glide of rough palm over soft foreskin was exquisite and at the same time unbearable. The steady pull on his cock, the rhythm as he matched Clay's movements kept Tekoa both in his body and hovering above it in a spirit-place where he was neither fully man nor completely Thunderbird.

Erotic lightning burned in his veins and flickered through his penis. Clouds of lust massed in his chest and crashed together in violent, rapid peels of thunder that served as his heartbeat.

Tomorrow he would mate with her. Tomorrow it would be him eating at her lips as his cock filled her and his hips jerked in a timeless dance of procreation. Tomorrow he would be the one to swallow her sounds of pleasure, to hear his name whispered in a husky voice.

Tekoa panted. He arched and struggled to avoid coming as his spirit-eyes watched Clay's mouth leave Jessica's and move downward.

Her breasts were perfect, as beautiful as the rest of her. He moaned when Clay's mouth captured one dusky nipple. He wanted to capture the other.

It was easy to imagine both of them pleasuring her in perfect sync with one another, suckling at her breasts then moving to her cunt. Their lips and tongues touching, sharing the taste and texture, the wonderful feminine mystery and finding utter ecstasy with each other at the same time they loved Jessica.

Tekoa's balls pulled tight. White-hot shards of sensation spiked through his cock in warning.

Sweat coated his body and he knew that if Jessica and Clay weren't already lost to passion they'd hear his breathing. They'd hear the creaking of the sofa and know by the tempo that he was close to spewing his seed across his abdomen.

There was no way he could look away. Clay's face was above Jessica's pussy. Clay's hands were on her thighs, holding her splayed, open, so it was easy to see her swollen, parted cunt lips. They were bare beneath a tiny triangle of golden pubic hair, flushed, glistening with arousal, so tempting that Tekoa didn't know how Clay withstood the urge to press his mouth against her sweet, wet flesh and consume her.

"Grab the headboard," Clay growled and she obeyed him immediately.

Tekoa tightened his fingers on his cock. He imagined securing her wrists and ankles to the bedframe. He imagined having her love, and with it the complete trust that Clay already possessed.

Clay glanced at the sofa, as though he could sense Tekoa watching. His eyebrows drew together in puzzlement. It lasted only a second, until Jessica's whispered *please* had him lowering his face.

Jessica gasped as Clay's tongue swirled over her knob. She bucked when his lips formed a seal around it and he began sucking. She needed to stay quiet. She fought to stay quiet and yet at the same time it was darkly erotic to know they weren't alone.

Clay's tongue stroked and rubbed aggressively. He growled against her flesh and sucked hungrily.

A cry escaped. Then another.

She was panting. Whimpering.

Jessica tried to get it under control but he wouldn't let her. He never did. He wouldn't stop until she came. *Fair's fair, babe*, he'd told her more than once. *You know how much I like it when you suck my cock.*

She did. When he wasn't away on a trip she'd take him into her mouth almost every day, sometimes twice or three times a day. It was an incredible high knowing she could give him so much pleasure. It made her feel powerful and feminine, adored and completely loved. Clay always gave as good as he got.

Jessica's hips jerked as his tongue flicked back and forth over the bare head of her clit. It was like a small penis, something she'd thought before but never dwelled on. It hadn't seemed important then. But now...

Unbidden pictures came to mind. Of Clay and Tekoa touching each other's cocks. Of Tekoa standing behind Clay and holding Clay's cock in his hand while she sucked and licked until Clay was completely helpless between them, of Clay doing the same as she pleased Tekoa.

Jessica shuddered under an onslaught of need. "No," she whispered, but her cunt clenched viciously and her hips lifted off the mattress.

Clay became savage, as if he sensed what she'd been thinking and wanted to sear the erotic images into her mind. She fought against orgasm but she'd long ago relinquished control of her body to him. It wouldn't be denied. He wouldn't be denied.

Scream after scream filled the cabin as she came. Arousal soaked into the sheet of Tekoa's bed. Jessica trembled, wrung out from pleasure, but the need was like a banked fire ready to explode, waiting only for the correct accelerant. Clay.

He crawled up her body and took her hands in his. He wove their fingers together before pressing the backs of hers to the mattress. "Christ, Jess. I love you so much it hurts."

With a quick, hard thrust, he penetrated her.

That's all it took to make her desperate, needy, ready for him all over again.

She locked her legs around his waist and he grunted.

"I love you too," she said. "It'd kill me to lose you."

"I'm here, baby. You know I'd never willingly leave you."

Clay covered her mouth with his. He couldn't hold back now. Lust and need clawed at him, drove his cock in and out of her tight channel in an unrelenting pistoning of hips.

The bed shook under the force of it. She whimpered and tightened her legs around him as though she was afraid he'd somehow leave the hot wet fist of muscles that made his life worth living. Not a chance. He wasn't going to stop fucking her until he passed out and even then he'd pin her lower body to the bed with his and stay inside her.

"Come for me, Jess," he gasped, lifting his mouth from hers only to turn his head slightly and find her ear. He ensured her obedience by thrusting his tongue into the sensitive ear canal and assaulting it with hot, wet breath and loving strokes.

Fire raced up his spine. He panted and groaned and fought against orgasm until finally she sobbed underneath him.

Her inner walls clamped down on him and it freed him from all restraint. With a shout he poured his seed into her as wave after wave of fiery ecstasy pulsed through his shaft.

Clay thought he heard an echoing shout from Tekoa, but he couldn't turn his head away from Jess. He couldn't do anything other than revel in the exquisite pleasure. He couldn't do anything but rejoice as he worshipped with his body.

They were safe. They were together. They were so close to having it all.

He took her repeatedly through the night. He took her until one final orgasm pushed her into an exhausted sleep. Only then did Clay reach down and pull the sheet over them. He did it for her sake, not for his. Jess would have enough to face in the morning. She was comfortable with her body, at least around him. But he knew she'd feel awkward, embarrassed if she woke up naked and exposed with Tekoa in the room.

Clay rubbed his cheek against her hair. One of the things he loved about Jess was her innate honesty, not just with other people but with herself. She wouldn't claim he'd seduced her or caught her in a weak moment. She wouldn't scream or rage or blame him for taking her when there was another man present to witness it. She wouldn't pretend it hadn't happened or that it didn't change anything.

She was strong enough that if she hadn't wanted and accepted what was going to happen, she wouldn't have gotten into bed. She'd have curled up on a chair or crashed on the floor in front of the fireplace.

Yeah, she'd probably be a little shy around Tekoa in the morning. But that was going to be *his* problem and Clay was a hundred percent positive Tekoa could handle it.

Christ, he knew he had to leave in order to give Tekoa some operating room. That'd make it go a lot smoother and faster with Jessica. But, damn he wished he could stick around and watch as Tekoa made love to her.

Clay pressed a kiss to her forehead and snuggled against her. Tomorrow was going to change things permanently for all of them. There'd be no going back for any of them.

It didn't mean they were home free. He and Tekoa would have to be careful not to do anything Jess wasn't ready for. They'd have to make sure she never, ever thought they were fucking her so they could do each other. He and Tekoa might even have to wait until Jess said or did something to let them know she *wanted* to watch them together sexually.



Clay grinned. Yeah, he could see Jess doing that. Or at least, he could imagine her asking why he and Tekoa weren't intimate, especially since she knew how much he wanted sex with another man.

Jess wasn't afraid of the hard questions and he wasn't afraid to tell her the truth. Hell, now that the brass ring was in their hands, he and Tekoa could even put off kissing if that's what it took for Jess to feel completely secure. She was worth suffering for because life without her would be bleak.

"I love you, baby," Clay whispered before finally allowing sleep to claim him.

Tekoa rose from the couch and padded softly to the bathroom. He slipped into the shower with a wry smile. The saying about being careful what you wish for cascaded through his thoughts as the water struck his chest and abdomen and cock. He was coated with his own seed.

A soft laugh escaped. He wondered if it was the drink he'd passed on to Clay and Jessica that had given them the stamina for a long night of lovemaking, or if this was normal for them. He hoped it was the latter.

Tekoa's penis stirred and he nearly groaned out loud. *Save it for tomorrow* he told himself, smiling at how eager his cock was to recapture the ecstasy.

Jerking off in the same room with his two mates was better than anything he'd ever felt before, including intercourse. Not that he wanted to make a habit of substituting it for the real thing.

He lathered his hands with soap and made a purely functional pass along his shaft and over his balls before moving upward to his belly. *His mates*.

The wry smile returned. When Clay was unknown, unconscious, it was easy to think of him in those terms. But now the word *partner* was a better fit.

Clay's personality was too big, his attitude was too dominant to consider him anything but fully equal. Not that Tekoa thought Jessica was less, she was everything. She was the one who would hold them all together.

He had barely dared to hope that the Creator would hear his heart's deepest desire and answer by granting him two mates instead of one. He'd never known of such a thing happening, though their legends sang of the possibility.

The times he had allowed himself to hope and dream, he'd imagined himself at the center of the relationship. He was born of The People after all, not created as a gift from the Creator.

A chuckle escaped for his earlier arrogance. His reality was so much different than how he'd expected it to be when both cups appeared on the fireplace mantel.

Rather than being the center, he was the outsider who must be welcomed into the nest. Rather than being the dominant one, he found himself sharing the role with another while the gentlest and most submissive of their newly formed family controlled their happiness and pleasure.

Tekoa rinsed the soap off then left the shower to towel dry. As silently as he'd crossed to the bathroom he moved to the bed and looked down on them. Clay's chest was pressed to Jessica's back, his arm was draped possessively over her side.

In the firelight their faces were chiseled perfection. Clay's strong and noble while Jessica's was delicate and timeless.

They were both beautiful. Breathtaking. Their golden hair and skin made Tekoa think of ancient gods and goddesses from foreign lands.

He couldn't resist lightly stroking Jessica's cheek and then Clay's before returning to the couch and offering a final prayer of gratitude for their presence in his cabin and in his life.

He closed his eyes, afraid that anticipation would make it impossible to sleep. Tomorrow he would claim Jessica. He would couple with her and gain the right to

always do so. Then later, when he was sure she accepted it, he and Clay would become lovers.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jessica woke to the wonderful smell of coffee and the feel Clay's warm chest plastered against her back. Both of them made her smile.

It was still raining. She could hear it pounding against the roof in a steady beat.

For a moment she was tempted by work. She loved to write or read to the music of raindrops.

Thunder rolled across the sky and brought memories of the previous day and night with it, along with the realization that they weren't at the apartment or even at the rental cabin. They were in Tekoa's home.

Heat rushed to Jessica's face. She opened her eyes just enough to see Tekoa. He was standing in front of the space that served as his office, apparently engrossed in something either on his computer or on his desk.

Even in profile he stirred her, called to her with his innate strength of character and body. He was a man who could be trusted, counted on. He was a man whose protective nature and sense of duty had led him to become a sheriff. He was a man whose wife and children could count on him to care for them and see to their needs.

Her womb fluttered at the thought of being this man's wife and one day having his children. Her labia became flushed and the liquid evidence of her arousal trickled from her slit.

Jessica closed her eyes but couldn't keep them shut. The temptation to study him while he was unaware of her was too great.

Like the day before he was wearing jeans and a flannel shirt, this one hunter green with black stripes. They made him look rugged, competent.

He was barefoot today. His feet dark against the pale blue of the small area rug he was standing on.

His hair was braided again. It was impossible for her to see it and not imagine undoing the braid and combing her fingers through the long black tresses.

She shivered as more sensual images invaded her mind. Images of his hair draped over her thighs as he explored her hot folds with his tongue and lips. Images of his hair falling on either side of her face and enclosing them in a private world as he kissed her. She pushed the images away only to have the memories of what had happened with Clay assail her.

Next to her Clay stirred and woke. She tried to relax so he'd think she was still sleeping but she was too late.

"Love you," he said, leaning over and kissing the spot where her neck and shoulder met before he left the bed.

Jessica watched from beneath her eyelashes as Tekoa turned. His gaze flickered over Clay's nakedness as though it was an everyday sight for him. "Coffee's ready. I've got cereal and fresh fruit if you like your breakfast light. Most days I have eggs and sausage, either with toast or on biscuits. What's your preference?"

"Real food. Cereal and fruit doesn't cut it for me."

Tekoa laughed. "I'll start cooking then."

Clay glanced at the floor. Alarm rippled through Jessica as she followed his action. Yesterday's borrowed clothes were nowhere in sight.

"Sorry," Tekoa said, "living in such a small place has made me a neat freak. Either that or it comes with being a law-and-order type. I put some clothes for you and Jessica in the bathroom. I figured you'd both want to hit the shower first."

Clay's laugh was utterly masculine and full of carnal satisfaction. "Yeah, you got that right."

He headed for the bathroom, so comfortable and casual with his lack of clothing that Jessica felt like an uptight virgin in comparison. She knew he wasn't doing it as a

come-on, though Tekoa didn't look away or head for the kitchen until Clay had disappeared into the bathroom.

Jessica closed her eyes and listened to the sounds both inside and outside the cabin. She couldn't hide in bed all day. She didn't even want to though she'd be doing great just to meet Tekoa's eyes this morning.

Silky desire coiled in her belly. Need pulsed through her clit. She'd known what would happen when she climbed into bed last night. She'd known what she was agreeing to, that she and Clay would make love with Tekoa only a short distance away.

In the dark it had been easy to lose herself in the passion once the decision was made. In the light of day she wasn't sorry any of it had happened but that didn't mean she was ready to parade around the cabin naked. She'd never been as quick to adapt, to grab for the brass ring, as Clay was.

He stepped out of the bathroom wearing sweats and a T-shirt again. As he walked to the bed he finished toweling his hair dry.

"Here you go, baby, I thought you might want this," he said as he stretched the towel between his two hands so she could slide from beneath the sheets and into the protection it afforded.

It was damp but she was grateful to have something to wear. "Thanks," she whispered.

He nuzzled her overly warm cheek with his. "You okay with what happened?"

She nodded.

"Good. After breakfast I'm going to see if Tekoa will lend me his car. I'm pretty sure with the rain and the mud that mine is a lost cause right now, but I want to get our luggage."

"I'll go with you. I need my purse."

"No." He tempered the refusal by sucking her earlobe into his mouth and stroking down her bare spine until he reached the edge of the towel. "Stay here with Tekoa, Jess.

Give him a chance. Except for finding you on the road, which doesn't count, he's had zero time to be alone with you." Clay traced up her spine and along her shoulder. "I want whatever happens between the two of you to be your choice. I want you to go as fast or as slow as you want without me being here to interfere or make it awkward."

She buried her face in the crook of his neck and shivered. She wanted to deny that anything *would* happen, but her stiff clit and the wetness coating her inner thighs would expose her as a liar.

How could one day make such a difference? How could she go from being terrified of ending up hurt and alone to confident that she could share her life with these two men and accept that they loved each other as well?

Fear twisted through her chest along with the image of Clay in those first seconds after the car crash when she hadn't known whether he was dead or alive. That's how.

"I'll stay," she whispered, nervous and anxious and aroused at the same time. She wasn't sure she was ready to go all the way with Tekoa, but she *was* ready for more. She *did* want the door to intimacy to open and even though she didn't think she was brave enough to do it herself, she didn't doubt that Tekoa was.

Jessica kissed Clay's collarbone and pulled away. "I'd better hurry up and take my shower."

Clay watched her disappear into the bathroom. Pride and love and so many other emotions held him in place until he heard the shower turn on. A grin formed. Tekoa was a man after his own heart. He'd left Jessica a shirt to put on, but nothing else.

Clay joined Tekoa in the kitchen area and between them they got the breakfast prepared and on the table so it was waiting there when Jessica emerged from the bathroom. The telephone rang just as they were sitting down. Tekoa made an unhappy sound and told them to go ahead and start breakfast without him as he reached for a portable phone resting on the counter.

Whoever was calling talked for several minutes before Tekoa said, "They're here with me now. I found them last night. Their car went off the road. I was going to call in and tell you I'm on vacation until further notice."

Jessica heard masculine laughter and risked a glance at Tekoa. He looked like a man talking to a nosy relative.

The laughter on the other end of the phone faded. The caller said something that had Tekoa frowning as his body posture went from relaxed to tense. "You've contacted the others?"

"Good. I'll be here if the situation changes. Don't assume I'm watching TV." There was a burst of laughter through the receiver. Tekoa let it run its course before saying, "Call me if there are important updates."

He hung up a minute later and joined them at the table. Clay said, "Work?"

"One of my deputies. The bad weather caused a bus carrying convicts to crash. The driver and guard were taken to the hospital. Two of the convicts stuck around. The other ten are missing. Most of them are doing time for nonviolent crimes. But a couple of them are considered extremely dangerous and most likely armed by now."

## **Chapter Five**

Jessica rubbed her arms and glanced at Clay. "I'll be fine," he said. "We're a long way from where they're loose."

Clay turned his attention to Tekoa. "Is it okay if I borrow your car and see about retrieving our luggage?" He grinned. "Looks like you're stuck with us for a while."

"Sure. I can't let you have the cruiser, but I've got an old truck parked behind the cabin. It's got a police radio in it if you run into trouble." Tekoa reached over and tucked Jessica's hair back behind her ear. The touch went all the way to her cunt. "By trouble I'm talking about getting stuck in the mud."

She nodded but couldn't quite meet his eyes yet.

Then all too soon breakfast was over and Clay was gone.

Jessica felt like she was plugged into an erotic current. Every nerve ending was strung tight with awareness. Every inch of her skin screamed for Tekoa's touch.

She stood near the door where she'd given Clay a kiss before he left. Her fingers toyed with the edge of the borrowed shirt. A trickle of arousal slid down her inner thigh and past the fabric hem. She wiped at it surreptitiously as additional color flooded her cheeks. She'd counted on Tekoa coming to her. She'd imagined him seducing her. Instead he'd retreated to the space carved out as an office and left the first move up to her.

Clay had been relentless when they'd first started dating. He'd made her crave his touch and want to please him sexually. He'd ruined her for any other man—until now.

Jessica's cunt clenched. Her nipples tightened to the point she wanted to unbutton the flannel shirt and play with them in order to relieve the ache, or beg Tekoa to do it.



She closed her eyes and tried to calm the too-fast beat of her heart. Instead memories of the night flooded in. Her own husky screams and hoarse pleading echoed through her thoughts.

Jessica bit her bottom lip to keep from whimpering as heat flickered in her belly like a small spark ready to flare up and become a wildfire. The sensation reminded her of what she'd experienced when she'd swallowed the contents of the cup Clay had given her on the porch.

For a brief shimmering moment she'd felt as though she was close to something so vast and powerful that it couldn't be truly understood. And yet at the same time the heat that slid through body had been sensuous and welcoming. She'd felt as though she'd found the place she was meant to be. *Home*.

It made no sense to Jessica, but Clay had felt it too. He'd told her that he felt right about being here.

She inhaled on a shaky breath. She needed to do this for them both. She needed to take the first steps toward a threesome.

Tekoa opened a cabinet and exposed a map stuck to the back of the door. It gave her an excuse to go to his side.

The scent of Jessica's arousal nearly dropped Tekoa to his knees. He was trying to be good. He was trying to keep from pouncing when every instinct demanded that he mount her.

She was his mate. She was the one who would bear his young.

Desire lashed through him with the force of a lightning bolt. The Thunderbird's spirit urged him to take her to her hands and knees and breed her.

Tekoa fought the demand though he paid a price for it. His cock burned. His sac was heavy and tight with seed. His heart thundered in his chest.

It took sheer force of will to remain standing next to her in a seemingly unaffected manner. He indicated a blue line on the map. "This is where my territory stops."

Out of the corner of his eye he saw her frown but didn't dare turn to face her. Every time she caught him looking at her she blushed and hid behind her hair or under lowered eyelashes.

She was a fascinating mix of strength and shyness, innocence and unconscious seductiveness. Even if she hadn't been given to him by the Creator she would have drawn him like a moth to fire.

"Isn't that a lot of area for a single sheriff?" Jessica asked, drawing Tekoa's attention back to the map.

Amusement rippled through him along with a small measure of chagrin at forgetting she was both beautiful *and* intelligent. He'd have to be careful until he revealed his true nature.

His finger moved toward the eastern edge of the map, to where Hohoq was marked within a smaller enclosure of jagged, roughly connected red lines. "This is my official jurisdiction. But our people are spread out and where they are I go when called." His finger left that area and settled on another spot. "This is where the bus carrying the convicts crashed. I doubt any of them will get close to us. Criminals have a habit of returning to familiar places."

She chewed at her bottom lip in a worried gesture he found endearing. Tekoa caught himself before he could lean over and chase her concern away with a kiss.

Jessica touched a dark blue line near where his fingers rested. "It's far away from your official territory, but it's close to the area you care about. Will you have to go look for the convicts if they're spotted on this side of the line?"

"There are others to do it."

She glanced at him, a quick look before she turned her head so her glorious blonde hair shielded her face. She was nervous, aroused, still shy from having him witness her passion.

Tekoa's heart turned over. A small measure of his resolve to wait melted. She'd made the first step by coming to his side. He wouldn't insist she do anything more, at least for the moment.

Tekoa turned toward her and cupped her cheek. "Jessica," he whispered, letting her hear the longing in his heart as he gently tipped her face so their eyes met. "Having you and Clay here is the answer to a prayer I barely dared to make for fear of being disappointed. Last night was beyond any ecstasy I've ever known." He brushed his lips across hers. "I loved every sound of pleasure you made. The only thing better would have been for me to join you and Clay in bed."

He didn't give her time to retreat. His mouth lowered to capture hers. His tongue glided past soft feminine lips and found hers.

She whimpered and pressed against him. He wrapped his arm around her waist and pulled her tighter. The feel of her soft curves was exquisite. The scent of her was beyond compare.

Tekoa deepened the kiss. His tongue went from gentle exploration and greeting to that of an aroused male offering a taste of what she would experience once his cock was sheathed inside her.

Jessica melted in his arms. She was so softly submissive that he had to fight against freeing his cock and impaling her where they stood.

With a groan he swept her up in his arms and carried her to the thick pile of woven rugs in front of the fireplace. He stretched her out on them as Clay had been stretched out the previous day, only this time Tekoa lay down too.

He'd thought he couldn't get any harder but he'd been wrong. When he was finally able to shed his jeans he'd find the veins on the underside of his cock pulsing savagely. He'd find his foreskin pulled back and the head of his penis nearly purple with the need to slip inside Jessica's wet slit.

"Jessica," he whispered on a tortured breath when his lungs demanded that he pull his mouth from hers.

She made a small whimpering sound and lifted her head in order to initiate another kiss. He moaned and answered her sweet siren call.

Her body lured his on top of it. Her legs wrapped around his waist. Tekoa knew it was madness to torture himself like this, to lie between her thighs fully clothed. And yet at the same time it heightened the pleasure and the anticipation. It recaptured the wild, heady rush of teenage lust and first love, only those feelings were intensified by experience and maturity. They were made profound by the knowledge that the woman underneath him was his wife, his mate, the female who would be his even after the Creator called their spirits for a final time.

“You’re testing my control, Jessica,” he said when their mouths parted again.

“I don’t want you to have any control.”

He rewarded her honesty with a soft kiss, by sucking at her bottom lip before he forced himself onto his side. He knew she was telling the truth. She wanted him to lose control of himself but take control of her.

He ached to give her what she was asking for. His cock screamed for him to let go and pound into her until they both cried out in release. But he wanted more.

This was their mating day. He wanted to savor her full surrender, not because he’d taken the control but because she’d willingly shared her body, her heart, her soul with him.

His mouth returned to hers. His tongue rubbed and twined and danced with hers. His hand cupped her cheek for a long moment in a gesture of protective desire before trailing down her neck and over the flannel material of the shirt to settle on her bare thigh. He caressed the silken skin with his palm but was careful not to trespass beyond the shirt’s boundary, not to touch anything not willingly exposed.

Spasm after spasm rippled through Jessica’s cunt. Her fingers unbraided Tekoa’s hair as she ate at his mouth. She needed him to touch her. She needed him to fill the horrible aching emptiness between her thighs.

Clay was the only other man who'd ever been capable of doing this to her. Until now he'd been the only one who could make her hunger desperately and reduce her vocabulary to a single word. "Please," she begged, sliding one of her hands down Tekoa's arm until her fingers found his. "Please," she whispered, drawing his hand beneath the shirt and taking it to the hot, wet core of her.

Tekoa groaned and covered her lips with his again. Tension vibrated through every part of him as his fingers explored her slick folds.

In a heartbeat she knew this was what he'd been waiting for. She knew he wouldn't take complete control until she'd consciously shared every part of herself with him.

Jessica shuddered when he found her erect clit. Her hips arched off the thick handmade rugs as his fingers slid back and forth over the tiny, sensitive head. She couldn't contain the whimpers, the tremors, the jerking movements of her body as each one of his touches sent exquisite pleasure burning through her swollen knob and upward to her nipples, her heart.

"No," Jessica cried out when his fingers left her aroused flesh just as she was on the precipice of orgasm. "Please don't stop."

He pressed his fingers into her slit in answer. Her inner muscles clamped down, rippled over them, but it wasn't enough.

His mouth found the delicate shell of her ear. He was struggling for breath just as she was. "I don't want to rush with you, Jessica."

He explored her ear with his tongue. He took the earlobe between his teeth before sucking it in time to the rhythmic thrust and retreat of his fingers in her channel.

Jessica clamped her legs together in an effort to trap his palm against her clit so she could press into it and gain a small release. Tekoa laughed, a purely masculine sound that stroked down her spine and flooded her channel with additional moisture.

"If this wasn't our first time together I might punish you for trying that," he whispered. He bit down on her earlobe in warning. "You know I don't want you to come yet."

His mouth returned to hover above hers. Their eyes met and held. His palm rubbed over the head of her clit in tiny circles that had her hips jerking and her breath coming in small, sharp pants. "You're so incredibly beautiful and desirable, I bet Clay has to punish you sometimes just to remind you who you belong to and who's in charge. Doesn't he, Jessica?"

"Yes." It came out shaky.

"Do you like it when he punishes you?"

"Yes."

"Good, because sometimes I'm going to punish you too."

Her thighs tightened on his hand. Her cunt gripped his fingers as her hips canted and moved. She rubbed her clit against his palm in blatant defiance and temptation. "But not today?" she said.

His smile was dark and very nearly feral. His unbound hair fell on either side of her face as it had done in her fantasy. "Not today. Open your legs, Jessica."

She obeyed immediately, then whimpered when his hand retreated to her inner thigh and left her feeling anxious and bereft. She put her hand on his chest and tentatively undid one of the buttons. His face tightened and the familiar rush of feminine power coiled in her belly and spread through her cunt and breasts. She slowly bared his chest.

"You're incredibly beautiful and desirable to me," she said, repeating the compliment he'd given her.

"I'm glad."

Jessica stroked the smooth bronzed skin of his chest and abdomen. She explored the tiny, dark nipples and reveled in the way he held himself completely still though she knew it cost him not to lose control while she was touching him.

She leaned in and nuzzled a nipple, then lapped it. His breath caught in his throat. The muscles in his arms became rigid. She suckled.

Tekoa's hand went to his erection and squeezed through the denim of his pants. Lust roared through him. His reality telescoped down to the thunderous pounding that made it feel as though his heart now resided in his cock.

Jessica nudged him over and he rolled to his back. When she positioned herself on top of him and he felt the wet heat of her pussy against the back of his hand, Tekoa realized the flaw in his plan.

He'd forbidden himself from taking control because he wanted her to come to him willingly, but that didn't mean she wouldn't turn the tables on him. He should have factored in her relationship with Clay. He should have suspected that she might know exactly how to retaliate and bring a man to his knees—or put him on his back when she wanted to. He should have remembered how intelligent she was and questioned the wisdom of eliminating the threat of punishment.

Her teeth clamped down on his nipple and he bucked as an arc of erotic pain shot straight to his penis. "Jessica." It was a plea and a command, a helpless acknowledgment that she had him at her mercy.

She released the tortured nipple and smiled against his skin before slowly rising so she was straddling him, drenching his hand further as gravity pulled her arousal over the swollen cunt lips now holding his hand to his erection. Nothing could have made him look away as her fingers freed the buttons on the borrowed shirt. His spirit eyes had seen her breasts the night before but now it was his human eyes that were riveted to the beautiful globes with their dusky, pouting tips.

Jessica tossed the shirt aside and gave him a smile that kicked through his gut and made his cock scream for mercy. "Does showing them to you mean you'll touch them?" she teased. "Or do I have to put your hand on them like I had to do with my pussy?"

"Jessica," he warned. But without the threat of punishment to back it up Tekoa saw only feminine amusement in her eyes.

She cupped her breasts as if weighing them to determine their value. Her thumbs brushed over the tips and he groaned. He wondered if she'd lick them, then had to tighten his grip on his penis so that pain chased away the overwhelming urge to come.

"Does Clay like to see you touching your breasts?" Tekoa asked, deciding to fight for control with words since he'd already forfeited the use of his body.

She shuddered in response and he knew he'd won a small victory when he felt her cunt lips contract and release against the back of his hand. But the victory was short-lived.

"Yes, he likes it," she whispered, taking the nipples between her fingers and squeezing them before leaning over so that they were just inches away from his mouth. "But he'd rather touch them himself. Do I have to ask you to touch them? Or is this good enough?" There was a wealth of feminine satisfaction in her voice when she added, "I know you don't want to rush into anything."

Lust flashed through Tekoa. With a growl he pulled her to him and then rolled so that she was underneath him. His hands went to her wrists and pinned them at her sides. His mouth took hers in a savage, punishing kiss before he moved to her breasts.

Jessica arched in pleasure as Tekoa began suckling with hard, hungry pulls. He ravaged her nipples as though he was starving and wanted to nurse. Her womb pulsed with heat as she imagined coming to bed after feeding their son and having Tekoa demonstrate the difference between a child's needs and a man's needs.

"Take your pants off," she begged as she ground her clit against the hard ridge of his jeans-covered erection.

Tekoa slowly lifted his face. Masculine satisfaction was written on every line. "Only if you promise to behave."

"Because you don't want to rush," she said, this time through lowered eyelashes in a show of submission.



His laugh was husky. "Because I want to savor every moment of our first time together, Jessica." He turned his head and captured her other nipple. He pulled on it with the same hungry intensity he'd applied to its twin.

Jessica closed her eyes and gave herself up to the sensation. She loved to be suckled, just as she loved to have a man's mouth between her thighs. Some afternoons she and Clay spent hours kissing and touching each other, loving each other physically.

She shivered as an imagine of having both Clay and Tekoa at her breasts rose in her thoughts, followed by one with Clay thrusting his tongue into her slit as Tekoa alternated his attention between kissing her and sucking her nipples. "Let me touch you," she whispered, tugging against his hands where they still held her wrists shackled to the floor.

Tekoa gave her nipple a final, hard pull then rolled to his side before standing. Jessica couldn't look away as he stripped out of his shirt and jeans.

His cock jutted out, hard and proud. It was darker than Clay's but no less impressive. He was uncircumcised but she'd expected him to be. Clay was the same. She liked it. It satisfied something primitive inside her.

Jessica rose to her knees and put her hands on Tekoa's hips. His penis jerked at the proximity of her mouth.

She looked up at Tekoa through her eyelashes as she slowly leaned forward. His nostrils flared. His body tensed under her hands. The tip of his penis gleamed as additional moisture escaped through the small slit.

"Stop."

Jessica obeyed though a small smile played over her mouth as his cock demonstrated it had a mind of its own by bobbing just enough to brush against her parted lips.

Tekoa speared his hands through her silky hair. Emotion and instinct rioted inside him. He'd never had a female enthrall him so completely. He'd never had one capture him so thoroughly or claim every part of him as Jessica did.

He'd known it would be like this. But intellectual knowledge was nothing against the raw, primitive needs coursing through him.

He wouldn't last once she put her mouth on him. He'd come as quick as a schoolboy with his first girl.

His fingers tightened in her hair. His chest burned as he tried to control his breathing and keep from panting. His buttocks clenched with the effort to keep from thrusting as his cock repeatedly closed the infinitesimal distance between it and Jessica's mouth.

Need and reason merged. He wondered why he was fighting so desperately not to come. Last night had demonstrated just how many times his penis could fill when she served as the inspiration.

Erotic images filtered through the haze of lust. Only instead of Clay's face between her thighs it was his. He already knew how responsive Jessica was. He'd already promised himself that he would press his mouth to her lower lips and explore the sweet feminine mystery of her.

"Lie down," he ordered and experienced a dark thrill when she obeyed him immediately. Before Jessica he'd always kept this part of his nature out of his sex life. He'd never thought to question it and now he didn't have to. He'd been waiting for her.

This was something to experience only with a mate because dominance was a two-edged sword. He would crave her submission while at the same time feel the intense need to protect and care for her.

Tekoa knelt near Jessica's head. His gaze traveled from her lips to her cunt before returning to her face. Her eyes were filled with carnal knowledge. Instinctively he knew that she'd taken Clay's cock in her mouth as Clay had feasted on her cunt.

He leaned down and traced the shell of her ear with his tongue. "You belong to me now."

"And Clay."

“And Clay,” Tekoa agreed before leaving her ear and trailing kisses to her breast.

He grunted when Jessica’s hand found one of his nipples. A bolt of ice-hot lust shot from his nipples to his cock when her mouth found the other one and her bites and sucks mimicked his own.

He worshiped her breasts for as long as he dared, then moved downward, hyperaware of her lips and tongue as they trailed over his chest and then his abdomen. His mouth found her wet folds and stiff clit just as hers found his cock.

Tekoa’s hips bucked in warning but it was too late. He was lost to exquisite sensation and ravenous hunger. There was no separating what he was doing from what was being done to him.

Moans and whimpers blended with grunts and sighs. Bodies writhed to get closer as hands clutched and explored while lips and tongues gave pleasure beyond all measure.

Tekoa came with a shout as the walls of Jessica’s pussy clutched at his tongue in orgasm. He rolled them to their sides so that he could nuzzle her mound as she lapped his cock. Utter happiness and contentment filled him along with the overwhelming urge to care for her. His tongue darted out, capturing the taste of her even as he began thoroughly cleaning the arousal from her heated, swollen flesh.

His cock filled again. His heart rate sped up. At the edge of his consciousness a drum began beating and ancient voices rose from the mists of the past in a prayer for fertility.

Jessica stilled as though she could hear the song. Tekoa fought to deny the primal call.

Her tongue flicked into the slit of his cock head and lust poured into him with the force of a violent storm. He wrenched away from her body and rose to his knees as he tried to stay in control.

He was in a fever to mate with her. Tender. Rough. It no longer mattered as long as he claimed her.

She came to him and wrapped her arms around his neck. There was uncertainty in her expression, fear, a shadow of pain. "Tekoa?"

His arms pulled her tightly against him. "This is permanent, Jessica. Once I come inside you, we'll be considered married among my people. Do you accept that?"

Her eyes widened in surprise. "You've never come inside a woman before?"

He laughed despite the song's rising urgency. "Not under these circumstances."

"What about Clay? I'm engaged to him, Tekoa. I'm going to marry him."

"He will be accepted as both your husband and my lover." She shivered and Tekoa kissed her in reassurance. "It will be a permanent bond with him as well."

He kissed her again and felt her acceptance. She was so soft and submissive now, so totally enchanting that it almost hurt to look at her.

He didn't need her formal words to forge the bond between them and make it permanent. It had already been forged when she drank from the cup.

Tekoa turned her so she was facing the fire. As soon as his lips touched her spine, Jessica went to her elbows and knees. Her thighs were open, her folds parted and glistening with slick invitation.

He gave himself up to the song then. He pierced her with his cock and the Thunderbird's spirit rose within him.

It expanded beyond the limits of his flesh so that a smaller version of its true form enveloped his mortal body and shimmered around him in red and white splendor with splashes of blue woven into phantom feathers.

Its wings were spread in victory and possessiveness. Its energy and magic vibrated through Tekoa so that each stroke of his penis into Jessica's welcoming channel was a profound act of devotion and love, a sharing of everything he was.

## **Chapter Six**

Incredible pleasure knifed through Jessica as Tekoa's cock entered her. She'd thought his cock would feel like Clay's, but now that it was inside her, it felt thicker, longer, as though it had grown beyond what she'd seen with her eyes.

She whimpered and clutched at the rug. Tekoa's hands slid up her back and then around to cup her breasts possessively. "You are my mate."

Jessica heard it with her ears but the message echoed through her mind and lodged in her soul as if another voice was speaking a truth that could never be denied. "Yes," she whispered, acknowledging that truth.

Tekoa's hands left her breasts to glide over her sides and settle on her hips. His cock retreated and she cried out in protest, pushing backward, needing the feel of it inside her.

With a groan, his grip on her hips tightened. He held her where he wanted her as her cunt fisted and unfisted, clutched desperately at his penis as it slid almost completely out, then plunged home.

He retreated again. Filled her again. He did it over and over and over until she was shaking with need. Until reality became a sensual haze.

At the edge of her consciousness she heard a drum. Its beat matched Tekoa's thrusting, slow at first, but gaining in power and speed as his cock filled her, stretched her, became all that mattered to her.

The fire in the fireplace roared and flickered as if feeding on the wild emotion and sexual pleasure taking place in front of it. The flames rose and flared, became so hot they forced Jessica to look away. Up. To the Thunderbird carved into the mantel.

It seemed to hover above her, a real presence that filled the room with ancient, unknowable power. Tekoa's thrusts became more aggressive. Her moans and cries joined the drum. Her voice was added to his.

Lightning flashed in the dark, dark eyes of the Thunderbird. Ecstasy shimmered within her grasp. "Please," she heard herself beg as the drum and song grew in intensity.

Tekoa's hand left her hip and found her mound. "You are my wife now," he said as his fingers caressed her clit.

Orgasm thundered through her and she screamed. Her channel spasmed violently, milking Tekoa's cock and filling with his hot seed. It went on and on and on until she became boneless, weak, completely sated. And yet she still whimpered in protest when he pulled from her body.

Tekoa's spirit felt as though it might take wing. Love filled him along with happiness.

He lay down on his side and pulled Jessica against him, wanting nothing more than to cuddle with her for a few minutes. Clay would be home soon.

Tekoa smiled at the thought and nuzzled Jessica's hair. His hand moved to her breast and she murmured in contentment.

They'd been here less than a day and yet Tekoa knew the cabin would feel empty without them. He'd feel empty without them.

His hand left her breast and settled on her abdomen. He'd prefer to wait but the choice wouldn't necessarily be his to make. She might well be pregnant by the springtime, her womb a welcome nest for two Thunderbird children, Clay's and his.

He rubbed her belly in small circles before slipping lower to feel the wet heat and soft down of her cunt. He wanted to tell Jessica that he loved her but he knew it was too soon. Instead he said, "How'd you meet Clay?"

She laughed and rolled to her back, then to her side so she was facing him. "I was at a local bookstore reading one of my books during story time. The audience was mostly children with a couple of interested moms. He came in, sat right down in the front and I lost my place in the story and started blushing. The kids were old enough to catch on. Some of them giggled and one romantically inclined little girl asked if he was my husband."

Tekoa took her left hand in his and rubbed his thumb over the engagement ring. "What'd you say?"

"Before I could say anything, Clay said, 'Not yet, but I'm going to be'."

Tekoa chuckled. He could easily imagine Clay doing just that. "How long ago was that?"

"A year," she whispered, hiding her expression and thoughts by ducking her head.

Tekoa's fingers played with the engagement ring. He sensed he was on unstable ground which only meant he'd tread more carefully, not abandon it.

"Jessica," he said, placing her hand on his chest so he could cup her cheek and force her to look at him.

His lips covered hers. His tongue pushed into her mouth. There was a tiny resistance, a tiny hesitation, but then she softened in acceptance.

He kept the kiss gentle, reassuring. He already understood her well enough to know she was much more cautious than either he or Clay.

He suspected Clay would have rushed her to Vegas shortly after meeting her, but a year later he probably considered it a victory that she wore his ring and belonged to him in all the ways that mattered, save for a legal document.

When she gave her heart she gave it completely. It was a testament to her love for Clay that she'd allowed another man to touch her. Claim her.

Tekoa's cock filled but it was only an outward show of the desperate need coursing through him, not just for the right to her body, but for everything she had to offer a man. He wanted what Clay had.

With a low moan he pushed Jessica to her back and settled between her open thighs. He lifted his mouth from hers only long enough to say, "Put me inside you."

Fire raced up his spine when her hand found him and guided him to her slick, welcoming heat. It might be too soon to tell her how he felt about her but he showed her with tender touches and long slow strokes.

He worshipped her.

He gave himself to her.

He swallowed her cries of pleasure and release until finally he couldn't hold back any longer. And then he poured his love into her with lava-hot jets of semen and whispered words in his native language.

"What did you say just then?" she asked as they clung to each other afterward.

*You hold my heart within you*, he wanted to say. Instead he laughed and teased, "Maybe if you beat me at poker I'll tell you."

The phone rang and she tensed.

"I'd better get that. It might be one of my deputies calling with an update on the missing convicts." Tekoa pressed a kiss to her forehead before getting to his feet and moving to his office space to answer the phone.

Jessica followed, but moved away from him after he paused from his conversation to tell her it was a citizen calling on another matter. He grinned when she retrieved the discarded shirt before disappearing into the bathroom. Now that he'd gotten her naked he had no intention of letting her hide her beautiful body, especially not with *his* shirt.

The hot water cascading over her skin reminded Jessica of Tekoa's hands and lips. It reminded her of the fluid play of his muscles and the heat that radiated off him.



Her mind was trying to process the reality of what had just taken place with Tekoa. Her heart felt as though she'd stood on the edge of a cliff and jumped, only instead of plunging downward, she was soaring.

*This is permanent, Jessica. Once I come inside you we'll be considered married among my people. Do you accept that?*

She'd never said *I do* and yet she'd answered him all the same. She'd given herself to him and reveled in every moment.

The diamond in her ring glittered accusingly. Uncertainty returned with a vengeance.

Unlike Clay's push-the-limits, grab-for-the-brass ring approach to life, she'd always been more introspective, more cautious, though in her mind the end result was the same. No regrets.

*No regrets.*

Jessica took a deep breath and used the words as a mantra to shore up her confidence. If she'd met and dated Tekoa first, she would have fallen in love with him first. He had the qualities that were important to her in a man—honesty, strength, tenderness, intelligence, and that was just a small sampling of what she'd discovered in him since he found her on the road. Add those to a body that was mouth-wateringly gorgeous and she knew she'd never find a better man to share with Clay.

Her heart rate jumped at the thought. Images crowded in. She wondered if they'd want her to leave for a while. The uncertainty tried to return. Jessica resolutely pushed it away.

Clay and Tekoa might want each other but they also wanted her. She knew that with every fiber of her being. If they needed some "alone time" for their first sexual encounter then she'd go into town. Before Tekoa, she'd felt threatened by the intimacy Clay would have with another man. She'd been so afraid that she'd end up hurt and alone. She wasn't going to worry about that any more.

“Just because you’ve always been cautious doesn’t mean you have to *always* be cautious,” Jessica said as she turned off the water and left the shower. “This is a threesome now. They can do what they want with each other. And you can do whatever you want with *either* of them or *both* of them.”

Heat coiled in her belly. She toweled off then reached for the hair dryer. Thanks to Clay she knew some very wicked games. She could hold her own either *with* them or *against* them.

Jessica half expected to find Clay and Tekoa engaged in sexual activity when she stepped out of the bathroom. But Tekoa was on the phone and there was no sign that Clay had gotten back with their luggage.

Flames flickered invitingly in the fireplace. Her womb fluttered with a flashback of how wonderful it had felt when Tekoa made love to her on the rug.

Her attention went to the Thunderbird carved into the mantel. It was magnificent, and yet as she looked at it, it seemed to be just an extremely beautiful piece of functional art. There was none of the otherworldly power she’d felt as she’d neared climax.

A small laugh escaped. Of course, she wasn’t hearing a drum or an ancient song right now either.

Her gaze shifted away from the Thunderbird and found Tekoa instead. He’d pulled on a pair of sweatpants but hadn’t bothered with a shirt. His black hair was still unbound and flowing over his shoulders. Healer. Lover. Warrior. Was it any wonder that sex with him had been a nearly mystical experience?

She crossed the room and slipped her arms around his bared waist. Contentment filled her when his arm immediately encircled her and pulled her more tightly against him as he continued talking on the phone.

She rested her cheek on his chest and studied the books in his bookcase. There were police-type books, texts about forensic science and criminal profiling, but there was also

a surprising amount of fiction. He favored mysteries and true crime, though she recognized some of the wilderness survival books that Clay enjoyed.

The feeling of rightness wrapped more securely around Jessica. Though she and Clay didn't share the exact same tastes when it came to books, it was important to her that he was a reader like she was. It made her feel closer to him, and on nights when there was nothing they wanted to watch on TV, she loved cuddling up next to him or lying with her head on his lap while they both read. It made her happy to know she could do the same thing with the other important man in her life.

"That was a long conversation," she said when Tekoa hung up the phone.

He chuckled and rubbed his cheek against her hair. "No, you were just in the bathroom for a long time. That's my fifth phone call."

"Everything okay?"

"As of a few minutes ago, seven of the ten convicts have been recaptured."

"That's good."

Jessica nuzzled a tiny male nipple and reveled in the way his body tightened. She licked over the hard nub and smiled when he gasped. Liquid lust coated her swollen cunt lips and slid down her thighs. It was such a heady rush to have him respond to her. She couldn't stop herself from tormenting him.

Tekoa slipped his hands under the shirt and cupped her buttocks. "I'll never get enough of you, Jessica," he whispered as he found her ear with his mouth.

"No fair," she moaned.

"You started this."

His hands moved up and down, palming the globes of her ass. His tongue traced the shell of her ear before flicking into the sensitive canal.

Jessica cried out. Her nipples tightened to hard aching points. "Tekoa," she whimpered, helpless under the onslaught of his tongue.

With easy strength he lifted her and placed her on the edge of his desk. Jessica's thighs splayed automatically and his fingers discovered the wetness between them.

Tekoa's cock filled in a rush that left him lightheaded. She was so sweetly responsive that he was already addicted to her.

He'd planned to cuddle with her on the couch and talk when she finished with her shower, but as soon as she initiated the lovemaking he was lost. His hands left Jessica long enough to push his sweatpants down before going to her hips. He was mesmerized by the sight of her pussy peeking out from beneath the flannel material of the shirt she was wearing.

"I want my shirt back," he said.

"Now?" Her voice was sultry and feminine and tinged with amusement.

"Now," he said, somehow managing to tear his gaze away from her cunt and sound as though he meant the command.

Jessica licked her lips and his penis jerked. Her feline smile told him she'd noticed her effect on his cock.

"Take the shirt off, Jessica."

He knew he should temper his orders or *he'd* be the one paying the price. He didn't doubt for a moment that she remembered his promise not to punish her today. But he couldn't seem to stop himself. She was beyond anything he had ever imagined having in a mate.

The temptation to push him flashed through her eyes in a small hint of defiance. But his promise was a two-edged sword.

He saw the instant when she realized it.

She was smart enough to know he'd retaliate. She was clever enough to guess that his method of teaching her a lesson might leave her hot little pussy empty and her body screaming for his touch.

Jessica unbuttoned the shirt and handed it to him. He tossed it onto the chair then rewarded her obedience by licking over her nipple before slowly sucking it into his mouth.

She arched her back and made a little mewling sound that had his foreskin pulling back in readiness. He covered the other nipple with his palm. Her heart thundered in time to his. The scent of shampoo and arousal swirled off her body and surrounded him. He wanted to kiss downward until he could once again bury his face between her thighs and know the sweet, erotic taste of her. He wanted to hear her scream and feel her sheath spasm against his tongue. He wanted to take her clit in his mouth like a tiny penis and torture it with pleasure.

His cock pulsed in warning. The connection forged by the Creator's drink allowed him to sense Clay's location and know Clay was on the way back to the cabin. His first time alone with Jessica was nearing an end.

Tekoa forced himself away from her breast. "Lean back and brace yourself."

Jessica's eyelids lowered as she obeyed. She tilted her head and her golden hair spilled over the wood of his desk like a silky curtain.

"Watch while I take you," he growled, closing the distance and slowly entering her hot channel.

The command had been for her but Tekoa couldn't take his eyes off the place where their bodies joined, where his darker, harder flesh slid into her dusky, delicate folds. She was so wet, so slick. And yet her sheath clung to him, gripped him.

She whimpered each time he slowly retreated. She moaned each time he pressed all the way in.

It was intoxicating to see her skin flush and her body arch with pleasure. It was exhilarating to hear the sounds of her enjoyment. It was completely and utterly satisfying to know she belonged to him.

For long moments he tortured them both with his slow fucking in and out of her channel. But when her hips began lifting in need with each inward stroke, when she

began begging him to come inside her, Tekoa knew he'd never be able to deny her anything.

"You're perfect for me, Jessica," he said, bracing his hands on the desk and anchoring himself so he could give them both what they wanted. It only took one hard, deep thrust for him to need another, and another, and another.

His world became the hot, tight, sheath of his mate, his wife.

His worth became measured by how thoroughly he could pleasure her, by how much of his seed he could give her.

When they both collapsed, panting and covered in a thin sheen of sweat, Tekoa labeled himself an extremely rich man.

They rinsed off together in the shower before returning to the office area. Jessica reached for the shirt but he stopped her with a hand on her wrist. "No," he said, tempering the command by kissing her.

"Fair's fair, then," Jessica said, her womb fluttering as she recognized this particular game. It always made her feel both extremely vulnerable and deeply desired, though she'd never played it with any man other than Clay. "If I've got to stay naked then so do you."

Tekoa only chuckled and pulled her to him. He was still without a shirt but the sweatpants were back on. "You're beautiful, Jessica. I want to look at you. Stay naked for me."

His hand went to her breast and she couldn't hide the shiver of pleasure. She liked to be touched. She liked to be admired and petted and loved. Clay had taught her to enjoy this game though it always took some coaxing to get her to play it.

"Just until Clay gets back," she said.

Tekoa laughed. His eyebrows rose in disbelief. "Are you telling me that Clay's going to want you to put your clothes on just because he's home?"

Jessica tried to imagine Clay's reaction to walking in and finding her naked while Tekoa wasn't. He'd know right away how thoroughly Tekoa had made love to her.

Heat flushed through Jessica's body. Her heart rate sped up and her cunt lips grew more swollen. She snuggled into Tekoa and buried her face in the crook of his neck. She wanted to hide but she whispered, "Okay."

His arms went around her waist. He nuzzled her cheek before sucking her earlobe into his mouth. It felt so good to be in his arms, so natural. Intellectually she knew they were still strangers in so many ways but that didn't stop her from feeling deeply connected to him.

She'd always believed that for the most part people's choices dictated what their lives were like. But she also believed there were intangibles, luck, fate, higher powers that interceded for reasons of their own. Standing in Tekoa's arms it was easy to believe that one or all of the intangibles had something to do with their coming together.

A small smile played over her lips with thoughts of coming together. He was hard again.

She couldn't resist the temptation of finding a tiny male nipple and rubbing her tongue over it. The sweatpants didn't hide his response. His cock jerked against her belly. His arms tightened around her. "Clay will be here in a few minutes. I have no problem with him walking in and seeing us making love, Jessica."

She stilled. It was raining outside but she thought she heard the sound of an engine. Instinctively she reached for the shirt.

Tekoa captured her wrist again. "No." This time his voice demanded obedience.

The engine noise grew louder. The cautious part of Jessica wanted to cling to Tekoa and avoid seeing Clay's initial expression when he walked in and was confronted with the reality of her accepting another lover. But the part of her that had firmed with resolve and accepted the reality of being in a threesome insisted that she tackle this head-on.

She pressed a kiss to Tekoa's chest then stepped away from him. She moved to the window and watched as the truck drove in.

Clay got out and her heart sang in welcome. She suspected that even when she was eighty she'd still be reacting the same way to the sight him.

He disappeared from view once he got to the porch but she was already turning to greet him as the cabin door opened and he stepped inside. It took him only an instant to take in the situation.

Christ. Clay wasn't sure what he'd expected but it hadn't been this. In the space of a heartbeat every drop of blood had gone straight to his cock. He was surprised his brain could function at all.

His eyes flicked from Jess to Tekoa then back to Jess. There was a little spasm in his chest that *might* have been pain though he didn't allow himself to contemplate it.

Christ. He'd wanted this. He still wanted this. But the reality was a little overwhelming.

Jess had been well and truly fucked. And not only had she given her body, she'd given a piece of her heart as well. Otherwise she'd never play *any* sexual game with Tekoa.

The big head knew this turn of events was a good thing. The little head, where his heart seemed to have lodged, was screaming *mine, mine, mine, mine, mine* and wanting him to prove it with a caveman stunt like tossing her over his shoulder and carrying her away.

Uncertainty settled on Jessica's face, a vulnerability that made Clay's heart and brain and cock finally reach an agreement. When she started to fold her arms over her breasts in order to shield herself, he said, "Oh, no you don't, baby, I'm all for this. I vote that you greet Tekoa and me this way every time we come home. Now come here."



## Chapter Seven

Clay waited for Jess to come to him. Then when she was standing in front of him he took a moment just to look at her and let her see how deeply she affected him.

“I love you so much,” he whispered, kissing her thoroughly. She was everything he’d ever wanted in a woman.

The ache in his chest was back. He wished a woman’s touch was all he’d ever need.

His cock had gotten over the feelings of possessiveness. It was gung ho about having Jess naked. It was primed and ready for sex, any kind of sex as long as it involved Jess or Tekoa.

His heart was having a harder time with it. He knew he was on the verge of screwing this up big-time. Jess was on shaky emotional ground and there was only one way he could give her the solid reassurance she needed. He had to pay the full cost of being a threesome, that meant sharing *all* of Jessica – not just her body.

Clay pulled her tight against him. His tongue rubbed and tangled and caressed hers as he got his emotions under control. He would not screw this up.

Clay took her hand and carried it to his cloth-covered erection. “He’s been all alone and out in the cold. He’s suffering. He needs you.”

Jessica massaged his penis with her thumb. Her nipples were hard points against his chest, her skin flushed and hot.

“He knows I’ll always take care of him,” she said and Clay was tempted to push the sweatpants down and tangle his fingers in her hair so he could guide her mouth to his cock.

Tekoa shifted position and Clay caught the expression of longing on his face. His heart stuttered as he realized how easily he and Jess had slipped into a familiar intimacy that excluded Tekoa.

Clay gave her a quick kiss then gently set her aside. His gaze met Tekoa's. "Great minds think alike. I left the luggage in the car because I didn't want Jess making things difficult with lots of layers of clothing."

Tekoa smiled and Clay's heart responded to it. He felt the rightness and sense of being home settle back into place.

"Just as I was about to cut the engine there was an announcement on the radio that they'd caught the eighth convict," Clay said. He moved into the space that served as Tekoa's office and regretted it almost immediately. Tekoa was too close, too much of a temptation.

He'd told himself he wouldn't act on the attraction right away. He'd give Jess time to get used to it. But Christ, it seemed like the most natural thing in the world to come home and kiss both Jess and Tekoa. He was having a hard time fighting it. It had been so long since he'd known the press of another man's lips, the feel of another man's hands and cock.

Jessica's fingers trailed down Clay's back and his penis jerked in response. "If you'll bring the suitcases in so I have something to wear, I'll go to the grocery store and pick up something special to cook for dinner."

Clay looked at Jess. Her color was still high but her gaze was steady, accepting when it met his. She was willing to give him the same thing he'd given her, time alone with Tekoa.

Tenderness and love flooded his heart. He pulled her back into his arms and showed her with his kisses just how much he adored her.

Tekoa laughed silently as he remembered those first heady moments when he'd known the Creator had given him two mates. Had he really thought it would be easy from there on? Had he truly thought their coming together would be without an

awkwardness that would take effort to overcome? He stepped into their embrace so that his chest touched Jessica's bare back.

Her body shivered in greeting and he responded by brushing her hair to one side so he could kiss her neck and shoulders. Her hips jerked and Clay was the beneficiary as her cunt connected with his cock. His moan made Tekoa smile in anticipation.

Tekoa ran his hands up Jessica's sides, then slid them between her chest and Clay's so he was cupping her breasts, rubbing, squeezing. Her nipples stabbed his palms. Clay's tiny shirt-covered ones stabbed the back of his hands.

Jessica whimpered and Clay panted. Both of them pressed against Tekoa's hands and sent fire straight to his cock.

The heat rose between them, coating the air with the scent of hot arousal. Tekoa crowded closer so his cock was tight against Jessica's buttocks. He fought the urge to push his sweatpants down. There'd be time for that later, when he could afford a threat to his control. He nearly laughed at the thought. He wasn't sure anymore just how much control he had.

Jessica was shivering with need. The small tremors were so erotically intoxicating that he wanted to bite and suck and kiss every inch of her. Visions of the three of them moving over to the bed or to the rug in front of the fireplace tempted him almost beyond bearing.

She'd be so wet. So responsive. She'd welcome both of their touches. She'd let them take her as many times as their cocks could fill to do it.

He lifted his face to suggest they move just as Clay's mouth left Jessica's. Their eyes met. Clarity returned to Tekoa's thoughts. Understanding passed unspoken between them. This was their chance to break through the initial awkwardness of being intimate in front of Jessica.

Clay reclaimed Jessica's mouth as Tekoa's hand slid downward, over her naked belly and between her thighs. She bucked when he found her clit. She whimpered when his fingers filled her channel.

He pumped in and out, the motion rubbing his palm over her swollen knob at the same time the back of his hand glanced over Clay's erection. Clay's hips pumped, letting her know what was happening and how good it felt. His hands moved from Jessica's sides to Tekoa's.

Tekoa whispered, "Free his cock, Jessica. Take it in your hand."

They gave her enough room to obey and she did it willingly. She pushed Clay's sweats down then wrapped the fingers of one hand around his penis while the other hand cupped and stroked his balls.

Clay's eyes closed. His head went back on a moan.

"That's right. Let him know how happy we are that he's home," Tekoa said, brushing a kiss over Jessica's shoulder as his palm rewarded her obedience with slow, hard circles against her engorged clit.

"Please," she whispered, abandoning Clay's balls in order to cover Tekoa's hand and hold it more tightly against her knob in an effort to gain release.

Clay groaned and Tekoa chuckled. "That's bad, Jessica, leaving him to suffer while you do something you know is going to get you in trouble."

It nearly killed Tekoa to do it, but he forced his hand away from her hot, wet flesh and stiffened clit. "Remember what I said earlier about trying to rush?"

"Yes," she said, but her fingers settled on her clit.

A bolt of lust went through Tekoa. He felt an answering shudder go through Clay.

"We can play it that way if you want to, Jessica," Tekoa said, using the same tone he'd use on a hardened criminal. "Get down on your knees. If you want to come then you can do it while you're sucking Clay's cock."

Tekoa's hand chased hers away from Clay's erection. Clay's cock jerked in greeting and Tekoa felt an answering burst of pleasure in his penis.

Jessica made a little sound that might have been protest but Tekoa didn't relent. "I'm not going to tell you twice, Jessica. I said I wouldn't punish you today, but I'm sure Clay would be happy to do it."

She hesitated for only a second before slowly sinking to her knees. Her hand curled around Clay's thigh for support. Her tongue darted out in quick licks but her mouth remained closed when she brushed it against Clay's swollen, throbbing cock.

Tekoa was mesmerized by the sight of her. He loved the way she obeyed and yet still managed a little bit of defiance.

"Jess," Clay growled in warning.

She took him into her mouth, stopping only when her lips touched Tekoa's hand. Then she pulled back, leaving Clay's cock glistening as her lips enclosed only the very tip of him.

It was the most erotic thing Tekoa had ever witnessed.

Clay thrust through Tekoa's closed fingers in an effort to forge all the way back into Jessica's mouth.

"You're going to get a spanking instead of a fucking," Clay said and Tekoa felt Jessica's body tighten with temptation then soften in complete surrender.

She began sucking Clay's cock as her fingers played in the wet, slick place between her thighs. Tekoa groaned. He promised himself that sometime soon he'd put Jessica on the bed or the rug in front of the fireplace and order her to touch herself until she came.

He slid his free hand into his sweats and gripped his penis. Clay's hands slid downward, pushing the sweatpants out of the way.

Tekoa groaned when Clay cupped his balls. He leaned forward and Clay met him.

There was no tentative exploration, no dance of dominance and submission in their first kiss. They ate hungrily at each other's mouths, dueled aggressively with their tongues.

Clay's hand took possession of Tekoa's cock. Tekoa's fingers tangled in Jessica's hair.

One kiss led to another, and another, and another. They parted only for breath, only to shudder and fight against orgasm.

Jessica's sucking controlled the rhythm and neither man could fight it. Her soft hums blended with their moans and pants.

At the edge of his consciousness Tekoa heard a drum begin beating in preparation for the ancient, mystical sing that would bind Clay and him together. He wanted it desperately and yet the feel of Jessica's silky hair made him realize he couldn't open himself fully to the Thunderbird's spirit while she was there.

He'd taken her on her hands and knees so she wouldn't see, wouldn't know all that he was. He'd have to take Clay the same way.

Later he would teach them, help them embrace the Thunderbird's spirit and merge with the storm as both messenger and protector. It was too soon to do it now. Their relationship was new and not completely defined.

The drum grew louder, the song began. Tekoa's hand tightened in Jessica's hair. "Hurry," he said, knowing that only the hot rush of seed through his cock would halt the song.

Jessica obeyed. She used her knowledge of Clay's body to make him come even as Tekoa felt her shudder in release.

Tekoa let go of his control. His cock jerked and spasmed against Clay's fingers. Hot splashes of semen struck his abdomen and chest, reminding him of the night before, only this time the pleasure was shared instead of separate.

They clung to each other afterward, all three of them struggling for breath as their heartbeats slowly calmed. Clay was the first to speak. His hands went to Jessica's hair and then to her face, stroking her in a gentle caress. "Thanks, baby," he said.

Jessica kissed his inner thigh in response before standing. It surprised her how quickly it had all happened, how natural it felt to be pressed against Clay's front while Tekoa was pressed against her back. Had she really doubted that a threesome could work?

The pain of the recent past had been replaced by a happiness of greater measure. It felt so good, so right, so perfect to be with both these men.

It had turned her on to see Tekoa's hand on Clay's cock. It had turned her on when they started kissing, though she could only feel it in the way they pressed closer and their bodies tensed. She hadn't been able to see it, not with Clay's cock in her mouth. She gave a soft laugh. She'd remedy that the next time. But at the moment she felt completely sated and utterly content. She felt like cuddling on the bed or in front of the fireplace. It seemed like she'd been licked, kissed, sucked, petted and fucked since climbing into bed with Clay the night before—not that she was complaining. She wanted to spend time luxuriating in the memories of what had already happened before moving on to create new ones.

That's what she wanted. But she could feel the tension between the two men. She could feel their cocks slowly filling again with the possibility of sex with each other.

Her cunt clenched in reaction. All it took was the feel of their erections—smooth skin over steel desire—to tempt her imagination into picturing them together. She could play the voyeur. She'd *like* to play the voyeur. Or she could participate. She knew without doubt that they'd include her, or pleasure her until she passed out, if she was willing.

All of it appealed to her. And yet...her gaze was drawn to the Thunderbird carved into the fireplace mantel. She remembered the intensity of those moments when Tekoa had taken her on her hands and knees, when he'd filled her so deeply and so fully that she'd felt like the wife he claimed her to be. She'd known without doubt that she was his mate then. She had felt it in her heart and soul. It'd been incredibly intimate,

mystically spiritual, a private, ceremonial moment between the two of them. She wanted the same for Clay though she had no way of knowing if it would be.

Her cheeks heated, wondering which man would be on the top and which would be on the bottom. Would there be tenderness? Or would it be a battle ending only when one of them finally yielded?

Clay liked anal sex. Until he'd come along she'd never considered it erotic. But like so many of the other things he'd taught her when it came to intimacy and pleasure, she'd come to enjoy it, to love the feel of him taking her in such a darkly carnal manner.

Jessica forced her mind away from the heated paths it seemed determined to travel. She pressed a kiss to the spot where Clay's neck met his shoulder. "I think we should go back to my original suggestion, the one where I get dressed and go to the grocery store. I'd like to celebrate tonight with a special dinner." She tilted her head back. Their eyes met and held. She willed him to read her complete acceptance as well as her desire to give him some time alone with Tekoa. "Fair's fair," she murmured.

Tekoa's cheek rubbed against her hair. His arms went around her in a hug. She thought he was going to vote against her idea. Instead he surprised her by saying, "I like the idea of us celebrating this day with a special meal."

Clay leaned in. His mouth settled on hers. His tongue slid against hers in one wet sensuous stroke after another until Tekoa's arms around her waist were the only thing that kept her from melting to the ground. "Are you sure, Jess?" Clay asked.

"Positive."

He nodded and pulled up his sweatpants before retrieving the luggage from the truck. It took her only a few minutes to clean up then kiss them goodbye.

The rain had finally stopped though the clouds remained dark and threatening. It'd been harder to leave than she'd thought it would be.

Jessica rubbed a hand over her heart. *I haven't even made it off the dirt road and I miss them already. Pathetic.*



The totem poles on either side of the road leading to Tekoa's cabin came into view. She'd promised herself she would study them and now seemed like a good time. She wasn't in a hurry to get to the grocery store. She wasn't even sure there was a grocery store in Hohoq.

Jessica stopped the truck and got out. Like the first time she'd seen them, the rain-generated mist gave the totem poles an almost eerie, from-the-past presence. And like before she could almost hear ancient drums beating. She could almost feel the spirit and promise of the Thunderbirds perched on top of the poles, their wings outstretched as they claimed everything they could see.

She looked at the wispy tendrils of gray rolling across Tekoa's road and imagined that the poles stood guard, like sentries placed on either side of a gateway leading to a mystical place. Healer. Lover. Warrior. In her mind she heard Tekoa's voice rising and falling as it had done during the sing for Clay. The words had been foreign and unrecognizable yet they'd resonated through her like a chord that linked her soul not only to the past but to the power that was earth and wind and water and fire.

She'd felt something equally primal when Tekoa had positioned her in front of the fireplace and mounted her. The sounds she'd heard with her ears had been ones of passion instead of healing but she would have sworn she heard a deeper song, an ancient voice accompanied by a drum. Then, just as ecstasy shimmered only a few heartbeats away, the Thunderbird carved into the mantel had seemed so real that she would have sworn lightning flashed in its dark eyes as it filled the room with unknowable power.

Jessica moved closer to the totem poles. They were beautiful awe-inspiring works of art. She wondered if Tekoa's brother Ukiah had also created them. She guessed that he had.

Almost reverently she reached out and traced the figure of a badger carved at shoulder height. Next to it was a raven, below it, a fox. Everywhere she looked, animal faces and birds stared out at her.

She glanced up to where the Thunderbird was poised. Its lower body blended into the wood while its wings stretched wide. The Thunderbird was a part of the traditions and beliefs of many Native American cultures. She knew for some they were deities. For others they were supernatural beings.

In some traditions they were the Creator's messengers. In others they were protectors. In a few cases they lived as men but took the form of a Thunderbird when necessary. In almost all belief systems the beat of their massive wings caused the thunder while lightning shot from their eyes.

Her earlier impression of the poles standing as sentinels returned. She remembered the lines on the map, the red marking Tekoa's official territory as sheriff while the blue designated the wider area he felt compelled to protect.

Tekoa had said his people were known as the People of the Thunderbird. She had nothing to base her assumption on but somehow she felt sure that they viewed themselves as guardians of this land, as the enemy of any evil that would find its way here.

With a self-conscious laugh at her flight of fantasy, Jessica returned to the truck. She'd always had an active imagination. That's what made writing as natural as breathing for her. And yet even as she told herself that her impressions and conclusions had stemmed from her creativity, she couldn't shake the feeling that somehow she'd touched upon a truth of Tekoa and this land.

Jessica headed for Hohoq. When she left the cabin she'd thought of going to the diner and passing some time there. But just as she got to the edge of town she decided to keep going.

She vaguely remembered a larger town not too far away. She hadn't paid much attention to it when she'd passed the exit with Clay, but the extra distance would mean more time for her guys to be alone.

Her guys. Jessica felt a burst of happiness. She was really, really starting to like the sound of that.

She grinned. Maybe she'd even buy a can of whipped cream, though the dessert she was thinking to use it on wouldn't be cake or ice cream.

Her cheeks flushed as she remembered the flavored, edible oils Clay used to bring with him early in their relationship when he was trying to coax her into giving him blowjobs.

A laugh of pure happiness escaped. Since she wasn't pressed for time, maybe a bigger town meant a sex shop she wouldn't be mortified to go into.

She bit her lip an instant later and wondered how closely Tekoa's activities were monitored by the people he served. Would it be a problem if the sheriff's wife were seen entering a sex shop?

Her eyebrows drew together. *Wife*. The word felt so natural even though it shouldn't. She looked at the engagement ring on her finger and felt anxiety begin to swirl in her chest. But as she'd done before, she pushed it away. The reality was that she and Clay and Tekoa were together. They were a threesome. The details of how they presented themselves to the outside world and how they'd find a way to live together could be worked out later.

Jessica leaned forward and switched on the radio in an effort to keep her resolve firm and any worries at bay. Almost immediately there was a news bulletin announcing that another convict had been captured. Only one remained free, a man convicted of assault, rape and murder.

## **Chapter Eight**

Clay rolled his shoulders in an effort to get the tension out of them. He felt Jess' absence in a way that made him want to tell Tekoa to get on the radio and have her turn around. Of course, that was assuming the telephone calls would ever stop. It seemed like there'd been one after another since Jess drove away.

He sighed, a long exhale that made him grimace. Christ, he was wound up. He'd probably be doing both Tekoa and himself a favor if he just disappeared into the bathroom and jerked off while he took a shower. That might help.

Clay sprawled across the sofa and closed his eyes. He placed his hand on his cloth-covered erection. The last couple of hours had been torture.

He'd imagined himself with Tekoa. He'd imagined Jess with Tekoa. He'd imagined all of them together on the bed. He must have stopped himself from hurrying back to the cabin a hundred times. But it'd been worth it.

Clay heard Tekoa end the conversation and hang up. He didn't hear footsteps but he still knew the moment Tekoa was standing over him. Clay opened his eyes but didn't bother to sit or take his hand away from his cock.

"Sorry about that," Tekoa said.

Clay shrugged. "Comes with being a sheriff. You have to go out?"

"Not yet. There are others monitoring the situation."

A spasm of fear surprised Clay. His hand left his cock in order to ease the sudden pressure in his chest. "The situation with the convicts?"

"Convict. All but one has been recaptured. Some of my relatives fear he may be on our lands now."

Clay sat up. "Close to here?"

Tekoa shook his head. "Unlikely." He sat down on the edge of the couch, his hip close to Clay's. "Jessica shouldn't be in any danger."

"You could get on the radio and tell her to come back," Clay said, grimacing even as the words left his mouth. Christ, he was acting like a nervous virgin who wanted a friend there for moral support when he went out on his first date.

Tekoa grinned. "I could. After enduring a night on the couch with only my hand for company while you made love to her on my bed, I've got quite a collection of fantasies I want to explore. The majority of them include her. But not all of them."

Clay's tension slid into anticipation. He smiled. "It worked though. She accepted you."

Tekoa leaned in. His mouth hovered above Clay's. "Yes, she did."

Clay closed the distance between them with a groan. Hard masculine lips pressed together. Tongues forged aggressively into the wet heat of hungry mouths. Clay's moan was echoed by Tekoa's.

Where Jessica liked to tease, to slowly explore tiny male nipples with fingers that were exquisitely feminine and gentle, Tekoa's touch was a bold sweep of rough, sure hands over flesh that craved another man's touch. He didn't linger to explore but went straight to the waistband of Clay's sweats. His hand slipped underneath the elastic and found Clay's engorged penis, its tip already flushed and wet.

Clay's hips bucked. His hand mimicked Tekoa's. His fingers closed over a shaft as hard and hot as his own.

Tongues rubbed, twined, slid against each other in the same rhythm as cocks pushed through closed fists and thumbs glided over slippery, aroused flesh.

Clay allowed himself to be pushed backward so he was once again sprawled on the couch. Tekoa followed him down, both of them feverish with need.

Chests touched. Clay's free hand went to Tekoa's shoulder. In his fantasies it had been his body covering Tekoa's. It'd been his cock finding the tight, dark, forbidden

hole and pressing inside. It'd been his hips pistoning, bringing them both to the point where ropy jets of semen jerked out in nearly unbearable pleasure.

But this felt good too. This felt right. It'd been so long and now he was free to enjoy this without fear or guilt.

Clay opened his mouth wider and the kiss deepened. He couldn't contain the moan or the shiver of need.

Tekoa's hand tangled in his hair and anchored him in place. Tekoa's other hand left his cock long enough to pull Clay's sweats down.

Visions of Tekoa doing what Jess had done, sucking him to a mind-blowing orgasm, had Clay struggling to keep from coming. "Fuck," he panted when Tekoa's mouth lifted from his.

Tekoa grinned. "We will. You have my word on that."

Clay moaned in pleasure when his testicles were cupped, weighed, claimed at the same time Tekoa's fingers smoothed over the skin between his balls and his anus.

"Fuck," Clay said again, jerking, his hips rising off the sofa.

Tekoa chuckled then lowered his mouth for another kiss.

Clay's hand pushed at Tekoa's sweatpants until they were riding his dark, muscular thighs. Cocks bobbed, strained toward one another now that they were both free. Clay didn't protest when Tekoa slid more firmly on top of him, when Tekoa's fingers encircled both cocks and held them in a handmade channel.

It felt so good that Clay almost came.

Hips pumped. Breath grew even shorter.

Clay's heart thundered like a drum beat. If he'd been free of the sweatpants completely, if they'd both been free of them, he would have spread his legs and told Tekoa to fuck him.

He wanted it. He needed it.

"I'm not going to last," he warned when Tekoa's lips lifted from his own.

Satisfaction and lust whipped through Clay at Tekoa's tight features and hungry eyes. He wasn't the only one hurting, needing.

Without a word Tekoa rolled to his feet and kicked off his sweats. Clay sat and did the same. Their eyes met. Then Clay's traveled downward in a slow perusal. Christ. He'd never felt such raw lust for another man.

Yeah, he'd gotten hard-ons and been attracted, but this was different. This was intense, extreme, something that went deep, the same way what he felt for Jessica went – only different, rougher.

Another day, another time, maybe he and Tekoa would slow down, use a softer touch as they explored each other's bodies. Or maybe not. Somehow he didn't see them cuddling unless Jess was between them, gentling them.

Clay's attention settled on Tekoa's cock. It was flushed, leaking, straining. He leaned forward and grasped it, wrapped his fingers around it as his mouth hovered only inches away. A flash of heat had him clenching his buttocks and fighting not to grab himself as well. He used his free hand to cup Tekoa's balls instead.

Tekoa's head went back with a groan. Clay glanced upward. He savored the view of taut, bronzed muscles, of Tekoa's chest rising and falling in short pants, of Tekoa's balled fists as he fought to keep from begging to have his cock sucked.

Clay's mind flashed on those sublime moments when Jessica had knelt and taken him into her mouth as he and Tekoa had kissed for the first time. "Fair's fair," he murmured and Tekoa's hands went to Clay's hair, drawing him in though Clay was already closing the distance between them.

His lips encased the heated, wet tip of Tekoa's cock. Tekoa's moan sent another jerk of lust through Clay's penis. Fuck, he needed this so badly. Clay closed his eyes and began working Tekoa's cock the same way he liked his own to be taken.

Tekoa nearly passed out from the rush of pleasure that whipped from his cock to his brain. His fingers tightened on Clay's hair. His hips bucked in an effort to drive all the way into the mouth that was tormenting him.

Somehow he'd lost control of the situation. Again.

Amusement flickered through him even as his balls pulled tightly against his body. Who was he trying to fool? He'd never been in control when it came to Jessica and Clay.

Tekoa shuddered as Clay's tongue and lips worked his cock. It wasn't something he'd experienced often, either with another man or with a woman. It wasn't something he'd ever craved before, but between Jessica and Clay that had changed.

It had been pure ecstasy to bury his face between her thighs as she took his cock in her mouth. It had been incredibly erotic to hold Clay's cock and feel it pulse with pleasure as Jessica's wet lips slid up and down the thick shaft while Tekoa's tongue battled with Clay's.

Tekoa's heart thundered but its beat was driven by human desire and not by spirit need. White-hot lust curled in his balls. He clenched his buttocks and fought against release.

It was a challenge to both himself and to Clay. It was a challenge Tekoa knew he was destined to lose.

Clay's fingers glanced over the pucker of Tekoa's anus and Tekoa's hips jerked. His chest rose and fell in rapid, shallow pants. Clay's mouth became more aggressive. His tongue became more demanding as it swirled and rubbed and explored.

Tekoa's reality became Clay's hands, Clay's mouth. He fought against closing his eyes. He fought to continue watching as his shaft slid past Clay's lips. He lasted one heartbeat, two—until Clay took his cock all the way to the back of his throat and swallowed.

Tekoa couldn't hold on any longer. His shout was a clap of thunder that heralded his release. Ecstasy ripped and splintered through him like a lightning strike in a discharge that was so raw and violent it took him to his knees and then to his back.

He ended up on the rug in front of the fireplace with Clay's body covering his, with Clay's rigid cock rubbing and sliding against his softened one. When Clay's mouth captured his in a reversal of position, Tekoa hardened again.



For the moment he was still free of the spirit drum and the song he couldn't refuse. He was still only a man in the grip of first passion with a partner who would remain his for life.

Tekoa met Clay's tongue and tasted himself. He yielded to the pressure of Clay's thighs against his own and spread his legs. They both moaned as their sacs touched more intimately.

"My turn to come," Clay said when they parted for breath. His face was taut. His body was slick with sweat, his breathing just as rushed and rough as Tekoa's.

"There's lubricant under the couch cushion at this end," Tekoa said.

Clay laughed despite an overwhelming need to fuck. "You planned ahead?"

"It pays to be prepared."

Clay levered himself to his knees and retrieved the lubricant. His penis pulsed and leaked. He wasn't even sure he needed the lube but he squeezed the bottle and made a show of covering every hard inch of his cock with it.

When he was done he leaned forward and watched with satisfaction as Tekoa's face tightened and his eyes darkened when Clay circled the pucker of Tekoa's anus with lubricant-coated fingers. Tension and resistance greeted Clay's fingers when he slipped the tips inside the dark orifice. A warning flashed in Tekoa's eyes like lightning before a wild storm.

Clay tossed the bottle aside. He'd been willing to let Tekoa take him first but this was better. This was closer to the fantasy and it set the stage for future encounters.

They were equals with Jess. They were equals in this too. He always gave as good as he got.

Clay returned to his earlier position above Tekoa, only this time the tip of his cock pressed against Tekoa's anus. "Be prepared, huh?" he said against Tekoa's lips. "Somehow you're not reminding me of a Boy Scout at the moment."

Tekoa's laugh was swallowed in a kiss that became more carnal as Clay's cock fought its way into the tight fist of hot muscle that was a torturous paradise. Clay nearly came just getting all the way in the first time.

Christ. He loved anal sex with Jess but it wasn't the same as this. It couldn't fill the need this filled.

She didn't have a cock that would rub against his abdomen and coat him with seed when he took a partner from the top. She didn't have a cock that he could slide his hand up and down until it jerked in release as he fucked a partner from behind.

Clay began thrusting. He tried to slow it down, to savor it, but it was impossible. The need was too raw. The passion too urgent. Hands and tongues and bodies strained toward release and found it. Lava-hot semen erupted in jets of sheer ecstasy that had them both grunting, shivering, collapsing in boneless satisfaction.

Clay didn't resist when Tekoa nudged him off and to the side. "Shower," he muttered but didn't have the strength to get to his feet.

"First one there controls the temperature," Tekoa said though he couldn't summon the energy to make it a race.

Next to him Clay grunted and said, "That's assuming I'll share it with you."

"You'll share Jessica but not the shower?"

Clay smiled. "With Jessica I don't have to worry about bending over to get the bar of soap if I drop it."

Tekoa chuckled. "It's a legitimate worry."

"You happen to have a hot tub?"

"No."

Thunder rumbled in the distance. Rain began hitting the cabin roof again.

"We should build one," Clay said. "We could put it under a gazebo so that even on days like this we'd be able to use it. Maybe we could even make the gazebo portable so we could move it out of the way and sit under the stars on good nights."

Warmth flowed into Tekoa. This is what he'd dreamed of, companionship to accompany the sex. "Sounds like a plan," he said, easily imagining the two of them working together on the project, then rewarding themselves with a hot soak and an equally hot woman. "Jessica like hot tubs?"

"I've never been in one with her." Clay turned his head and their eyes met. "But we've camped places where there was shallow water and privacy. I think it's safe to say she'd enjoy a hot tub and we'd enjoy having her in it with us."

Tekoa's cock stirred. His spirit reached for Jessica's and he frowned at how far away she was. She was beyond the range where he could tell her exact location, at least while he remained tied to his human form.

A shiver of uneasiness passed through him. He'd expected her to go to Hohoq and pass time at the diner owned by his great-aunt or at the general store run by his father and grandfather.

He hadn't worried when Jessica left because he knew that as soon as his relatives saw the touch of the Thunderbird on her and realized she was driving his truck they wouldn't let her out of their sight. Tekoa smiled despite his concern. The truth was they'd pump her for information and then when she mentioned her intention to make a celebratory meal, they'd fill the car with food.

He rubbed his chest and Clay picked up on his disquiet. "Something wrong?"

Tekoa shook his head. No doubt Jessica had decided to go to a larger town. In all likelihood she'd assumed that she'd find a better selection of items elsewhere and she'd known a longer trip would mean he and Clay would have more time alone together. Still, he couldn't prevent himself from rolling to his side and propping up on an elbow so he could study Clay's reaction when he asked, "You don't think Jessica would panic and bolt, do you?"

Clay's answer was instantaneous. "No. Not a chance."

The worry eased in Tekoa's chest. He leaned closer to Clay. The lust that had been satisfied only moments earlier flared between them.

Tekoa groaned when Clay's hand tangled in his hair and pulled him down so their lips met. Their kisses were less a battle and more an exploration. The rub of tongue against tongue wasn't a test for dominance and submission but the parry and thrust of two equally matched opponents.

They swallowed each other's moans of pleasure. Their hands roamed, this time seeking out tiny male nipples and sliding over muscled arms and backs.

The flames in the fireplace flickered and danced. In the recesses of Tekoa's soul he felt the ancient song poised, ready to begin. With the single beat of the drum his heart would be commanded by the spirit that was both a part of him and separate from him. With the first words there'd be no stopping until Clay and he were bound together more permanently than any human law or custom could ever dictate.

Tekoa settled more of his weight on Clay. His tongue forged deeper. Their cocks were velvet steel trapped between soft skin and hard muscle.

Clay moaned and Tekoa answered it with moan of his own. The hunger built. It became a howling spirit wind.

Primitive urges flared. The need to position Clay onto his hands and knees became too much to ignore.

Tekoa lifted his mouth from Clay's. He rose to his elbows. But before he could speak thunder filled the air and was followed by the ominous ring of the telephone.

"Fuck," Clay said.

Tekoa rolled to his feet. The sense of uneasiness returned and grew with each step toward the phone.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jessica eyed the pouring rain. It didn't look as though it was going to stop anytime soon.

She glanced at the plastic bags in the grocery cart. There were seven of them, three for each arm and she could hold the seventh. As long as she had her key out she could probably get in the truck before her jeans were totally soaked.

“No time like the present,” she muttered, pulling the hood of her jacket up and retrieving the car key from her pocket before lifting the bags and settling them into place.

Even in the miserable weather, the grocery store she’d found a short distance from the highway had quite a number of shoppers—enough so that she wasn’t parked close. She braced herself for the sting of cold water against her face and left the protective overhang. A blast of wind whipped the hood back. A clap of thunder made her jump. The bolt of lightning that followed made her long for the cabin. She was more than ready to get back and make some hot chocolate with marshmallows. She was more than ready to snuggle up with Tekoa and Clay.

Jessica laughed despite the frigid water soaking her hair. She just hoped the guys had something left for her—two large, hot somethings that could warm her from the inside out.

She darted toward the truck. It was impossible to avoid the puddles. Water splashed up on her jeans and soaked into her socks.

Wet hair and rain in her eyes left her struggling to insert the key and unlock the car. Just as she managed to open the door, water sprayed across the back of her legs as a car pulled in next to her. She was irritated but she didn’t bother turning to glare.

Jessica wrenched the door open against the wind and stepped onto the running board so she could lean in and put the dripping plastic grocery bags onto the passenger-side floor. She was only vaguely aware of the car behind. A door opened and shut. She straightened, started to sit, only to be roughly shoved onto the truck’s bench seat.

\* \* \* \* \*

Tekoa studied the map as his cousin, Tenino, relayed the news. A child arriving home from school had discovered his father beaten, ankles and wrists bound, his mouth taped shut. The family car was missing, as was a gun. The victim had identified his assailant as the convict who was still at large.

A short while ago the stolen car had been found abandoned just inside the boundary of Thunderbird land. An elderly man was discovered unconscious in the trunk of that car. He'd been taken to the hospital. His wife said he'd gone to the store in their now-missing-and-assumed-stolen car.

"There's no reason to think he's heading this way," Tenino said.

"But he's still on our land." Tekoa felt sure of it.

"Several of the elders say yes. The police on the scene have roadblocks in place. If he's still in the area and he stays on the asphalt they'll catch him. If he goes off-road he's likely to get stuck in mud and abandon the car. We'll find him if he takes off on foot. We've got it covered. You're better off staying where you are and taking care of what needs to be taken care of."

His cousin was right. Most likely the escaped felon would get stopped at a roadblock. If he didn't, then one of The People would find him. The storm called to them and they rode the winds in spirit form.

They weren't all that they'd once been in the days before foreign ships brought physical and spiritual and cultural death to the ones whose belief had given life to the Thunderbird. But his people could still sense evil when it walked on Thunderbird lands. They could still protect against it.

A crack of thunder drew Tekoa's attention to the window. Out of the corner of his eye he saw Clay go into the bathroom. The shower was turned on. His cock responded despite the news about the convict and despite his uneasiness that Jessica was out in the storm.

On the other end of the phone a bell chimed as a door was opened and closed. In the background someone ordered coffee.

“Keep me posted,” Tekoa said.

“Will do.”

Tekoa hung up the phone and followed Clay into the bathroom. Need rippled down his spine and through his cock like an erotic current as he stepped into the shower.

## Chapter Nine

Water cascaded over Clay's flesh. It caressed the firm muscles and glistened on smooth tanned skin. He had an athlete's tight, hard body, shoulders that were strong, a waist that narrowed and flowed into taut lean buttocks.

Tekoa's cock ached as his gaze followed the water. He took it in hand as Clay's head tilted back to rinse the soap from his chest and genitals.

"Everything okay?" Clay asked.

"A couple of assaults but no deaths so far. The convict is now armed and jacking cars. There are roadblocks in place and we know where he was last. It's north and west of here. Jessica went south and east."

Clay turned and moved to the side so that some of the water splashed onto Tekoa's chest. His attention flicked to Tekoa's face before moving downward.

Tekoa slid his hand along the length of his penis and palmed the head when Clay's gaze stopped on that part of his anatomy. Between a night of intense masturbation and what he'd already done with both Jessica and Clay, he should be worn out. But if anything, he was even harder, even hungrier than he had been only moments ago when Clay leaned forward and took his cock into his mouth.

Clay grinned. His hand slid between Tekoa's legs and cupped his balls. "Tempting. Maybe I'll go down on my knees in here and you'll go down on your hands *and knees* out there."

Tekoa's hand found Clay's penis. "I don't think so." He stepped into Clay and crowded him against the shower wall.

Their mouths met in a kiss every bit as wet and hot as the water striking their flesh. Tekoa shifted his grip so that one hand held both of their cocks while the other fondled Clay's balls. Clay moaned and bucked.



The temperature of the water turned lukewarm in comparison to the heat they generated. Need roared through Tekoa. His mouth left Clay's and traveled downward. He'd intended to turn Clay toward the wall and fuck him but images of the first kiss they'd shared, with Jessica kneeling at Clay's feet and sucking his cock, drove Tekoa downward.

Jessica and Clay were both too good at oral sex not to do a lot of it. Tekoa wanted to share everything they enjoyed. He wanted to do everything they desired. He wanted to know them as well as they knew each other.

"Christ," Clay said, driving his cock through Tekoa's closed fist as soon as Tekoa's tongue stroked the underside of his penis.

Tekoa looked up the line of Clay's body. Dark eyes met heated blue ones. He licked again.

"Put your fucking mouth on it and keep it there," Clay said, tightening his fingers in Tekoa's hair.

Tekoa grinned and pulled back. Clay's cock jerked in protest. "It may have escaped your notice, but I'm not Jessica. I don't follow orders. I'm too used to giving them."

Clay's lips pulled back in a grimace that doubled as a snarl. "Christ. What do you want?"

Tekoa's tongue darted out and rolled over the tip of Clay's penis. He could feel Clay shudder with pleasure. "You're an addict."

"So blow me."

Tekoa chuckled. "I'm getting to that." He took the head of Clay's cock into his mouth. This time he assaulted it with his tongue as he sealed his lips around it and sucked.

Clay groaned and doubled over. "Oh yeah, like that," he panted. "But take me deeper. Fuck. Take me deeper."

Lust roared through Tekoa at the sound of Clay's neediness. He used his mouth and hands ruthlessly until Clay shouted in ecstasy then slumped against the shower wall with his eyes closed.

Tekoa stood and let the water cascade over him for a moment before redirecting the shower spray so that it struck Clay. When Clay only grunted but didn't have the strength to open his eyes, Tekoa's earlier amusement returned. He stepped into Clay so that his cock was a steel ridge against Clay's belly. "Jessica I'd carry into the other room in order to fuck. You I won't. So either turn around here and now or give me some indication that you can make it out of the bathroom."

Clay laughed. His eyes opened. "Christ, you're a hard case."

Tekoa grinned. "Tell me about it." He pressed closer, his cock an exclamation point between them.

"Fair is fair," Clay said. "Bed?"

A crack of thunder sounded. Its boom was so loud that it felt as though the walls and floor shook. Tekoa reached over and turned off the water. Rain pounded against the roof in a fury that had his spirit wanting to soar.

It was a warning that he heeded. If he was called, he'd need to take Clay with him.

There was no time for explanations or training. There'd be no time for meditation. But orgasm served as well to free the Thunderbird spirit from the body of a mate who didn't yet know the ways of The People—or so his brother Ukiah had told him. Tekoa would have to take Ukiah's word for it since he'd never tried it before himself.

"The rug in front of the fireplace," Tekoa said as he stepped from the shower and quickly toweled dry.

Clay shrugged and followed. He'd have preferred the bed but somehow the rug was fitting.

His cock stirred as he remembered coming out of the concussion and seeing Tekoa for the first time. His eyes appreciated the sight of flowing muscles and bronzed skin as Tekoa crossed the main living area of the cabin.

When Tekoa knelt on the rug in front of the fireplace and reached for the lubricant, Clay couldn't take his eyes off Tekoa's cock. Christ. His own cock began to fill again. He was starting to wonder exactly what was in the cup Tekoa had given him the night before. Not that he was complaining. And not that he couldn't fuck like a rabbit on his own, but this – this was beyond his experience.

"What, no foreplay?" Clay joked as he plopped down next to Tekoa. He stretched out on his side and watched Tekoa coat himself with the lube.

"Roll over," Tekoa bit out but Clay could hear the amusement in his voice.

Clay rolled to his hands and knees. Tekoa's hand grasped Clay's penis and he groaned.

"Okay, this works as foreplay," Clay panted, sucking in his stomach when the lubricated fingers of Tekoa's other hand circled the pucker of his anus.

Heat seared through him. He spread his thighs wider without being asked or told.

His breath caught when Tekoa's fingers pressed in. Clay had a bad feeling the only thing that was going to keep him from coming before Tekoa's cock was inside him was Tekoa's hand gripping his penis.

Clay's hips bucked and his penis began leaking when Tekoa moved behind him. He went down on his elbows when Tekoa's outer thighs touched the insides of his own. The feel of skin against skin, of Tekoa's fingers being replaced by Tekoa's cock had him moaning. He pushed backward and knew intense satisfaction when Tekoa groaned.

Christ. It had been so long. It had been years since he'd known what it was like to be fucked by another man – and that experience was a pale imitation of this one.

Thunder sounded – above the cabin or in his own head. Clay couldn't be sure. His heart was racing, its beat rapid and uncontrollable.

Sweat poured off them both as Tekoa's cock forged deeper and deeper. Clay shivered and moaned. He welcomed the pleasure and pain of being claimed in such a darkly primitive manner.

Tekoa stilled when he was all the way in. Clay gripped the rug to keep from begging in the same way he liked to make Jess beg.

A small sound—too close to a whimper—escaped when Tekoa stroked Clay's cock and fondled the wet tip. Clay clenched his jaw to keep a second sound from escaping.

"This is forever," Tekoa murmured. "You and me and Jessica. There's no changing it now."

It took a second for the words to register with Clay. When they did they only added to the sense of rightness. "That works for me."

"Good."

Tekoa began thrusting and Clay's reality narrowed to the moment, to the intense pleasure of Tekoa's hand stroking his shaft while Tekoa's cock slid in and out of his anus.

The sound of a drum edged into Clay's consciousness, accompanied by a voice. His heart and soul recognized the song even if his mind didn't. He had the fleeting worry that when he came, he'd pass out. But he couldn't hold the thought.

Tekoa became more forceful as orgasm built. Clay's balls were hard and tight and full. He couldn't fight the release building with each stroke, couldn't deny it. When hot jets of semen filled his dark orifice Clay gave himself over to incredible sensation, to an ecstasy unlike any he'd ever known.

The pleasure was followed by a wrenching sensation. By gray, cold nothingness and then by awareness, disbelief and confusion.

*Stay with me!* Tekoa said and his voice felt like it was piercing Clay's mind.

Immense energy rippled through Clay. Power gathered and rolled through a body that was now huge and brightly feathered, the wings outstretched, riding the thermals like a Thunderbird.

Clay's first rational thought was that he'd had a heart attack and died during sex. The idea gained purchase when the gray nothingness blurred at the edges of Clay's vision and he heard Tekoa's voice screaming in his mind. *Stay with me!*

He felt talons on his back, digging in roughly, the sharp ends painful and real. Clay moved his arms in an effort to escape, only it was a pair of wings that cut through the air in a boom of thunder.

*Stay with me!* Tekoa repeated. *Jessica's in trouble.*

Clay felt his heart then. He heard it pounding and racing in his chest.

The confusion returned. His mind struggled to process what was going on. In a horror-filled instant he remembered the car wreck and wondered if he was in a coma and the last day had been an intense erotic fantasy because his brain couldn't cope with reality.

The claws tightened on his back. *This is real, Clay. Accept it. Follow the bond we have with Jessica.*

Clay thought of Jessica and immediately felt her terror. That was all it took for his confusion and disbelief to disappear.

He'd deal with this weirdness later—or not. Jess was more important. He knew without doubt that she was fighting for her life. He even knew where she was—not a location he could pinpoint on a map or even a place he could envision—but a destination he could get to all the same.

Her spirit was linked to his and Tekoa's by long, honey-gold strands that made him think of the two cups Tekoa had taken from the fireplace mantel. *Do you know what's happening to her?*

*No.*

No?

The talons in his back loosened and then disengaged. *Focus* was all Tekoa said.

Clay felt the downward sweep of wings that were as powerful as the ones he now seemed to possess. Tekoa pulled away, leaving the clouds swirling angrily as thunder followed in his wake.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jessica acted on instinct. She reached for the door handle on the passenger side of the truck. Her assailant was faster. He struck her across the face with the cold metal barrel of a gun then pressed it against her temple.

Raw terror coursed through her. She hadn't seen a picture but she knew she was looking at the escaped convict.

"One scream, one word, bitch, and you die right here, right now." He pulled the driver-side door shut.

Even if she'd been able to do it, Jessica didn't think a shout for help would be heard over the pounding rain. She remained motionless, frozen in place with her heartbeat thundering so loudly in her mind that it sent her thoughts skittering wildly, unable to focus on a way to get out of the truck alive.

She had so much to live for, Clay and Tekoa, their new life together, she couldn't die now. Not now.

Tears welled up and escaped. She didn't waste the energy trying to fight them. Instead she drew on the same strength she'd found when Clay was hurt. She'd been scared then, but she'd done what needed to be done. She'd do what needed to be done here too.

He wouldn't kill her right away. With icy clarity she knew he'd rape her first. That's what he'd gone to prison for – assault, rape, murder.

The escaped convict reached over and picked up the keys she'd dropped on the floor. His attention shifted to the police radio on the dash and he smiled. "Well, well,

well. Groceries, a cunt, and an inside track to what the cops are doing. Life just got real good.”

He flicked on the radio. There was a burst of static then nothing. He smiled again before turning his attention back to Jessica. Bile rose in her throat at the look in his eyes. Her fear excited him.

His smile widened. He traced the trail of tears with the tip of the gun. “Do what I say and you might even enjoy the things I’m going to do with you. Cross me and I’ll hurt you real bad before we’re done.”

He switched the gun into his left hand long enough to get the key in the ignition and start the truck. Jessica choked back a sob of terror. She fought desperately to get herself under control. She accepted the fear. But she refused to be paralyzed by it.

She wasn’t bound or restrained – yet. That meant she had a chance to fight or run.

The gun was still pointed at her, but it wasn’t pressed against her forehead any longer. That gave her some room to maneuver.

“You don’t look like a cop,” the convict said as they left the parking lot. “But this is a cop radio. So I’m thinking that makes you a cop’s pussy.” He turned his head slightly and licked his lips. “Open the jacket. Real slow and real careful. If I have to shoot I won’t kill you with the first bullet. As long as you’re breathing and I’ve got a hole to fuck, I don’t care whether you’re bleeding or screaming.”

Jessica’s hands shook as she unzipped the jacket. She wanted to close her eyes and block out the sight of his hand leaving the steering wheel long enough to unzip his pants. She wished she’d taken the time to put a bra and turtleneck on before she left the cabin. She’d started to but at the last minute she’d given in to the desire to keep Tekoa’s soft flannel shirt close to her skin.

The convict shifted in his seat and his cock sprung free. “Unbutton the shirt, bitch.”

A whimper escaped before Jessica could stop it. She closed her eyes and he struck her in the ribs with the gun. “Open your eyes, bitch. You think because some cop shoves his dick into you that you’re too good for mine?”

Jessica opened her eyes. He slammed the butt of the gun down on her mound. Pain screamed through her but she bit her lip to keep from crying out.

“Now unbutton the fucking shirt and show me your tits.”

She had to get out of the car. The thought beat through her as numb fingers fumbled with the buttons.

Slowly she edged into a half-sitting, half-leaning position. The truck was an old, stripped down model without power locks.

They merged onto the main road. If there were other cars they were hidden by the grayness of the day and the sheets of water that made it impossible to see more than a few feet in front of the truck.

The barrel of the gun slammed into her ribs again. “Hurry the fuck up. I want to see some tits then you’re going to crawl over here and suck my cock.”

A part of her mind tried to distance itself from what was happening. Thoughts of the Thunderbird with its outstretched wings came unexpectedly to mind. Thoughts of Clay and Tekoa followed. Staying alive was the important thing. Whatever she had to do to stay alive, the three of them would deal with the fallout later.

Jessica got the last button undone but couldn’t make herself spread the shirt and expose herself to him. If she could just unlock the door and get out of the truck...

He was driving fast, but not that fast. There was water on the road. It might serve as a cushion when she landed. There were ditches on either side of the road, and woods beyond them. She couldn’t see any of it but she knew it from the drive into town.

The radio crackled to life. Jessica tried to position herself to unlock the door while he was distracted.

A voice announced they’d found a stolen car abandoned in the grocery store parking lot and were scrambling to set up new roadblocks while they questioned employees and customers to see if they could account for everyone who’d been in the store. The convict started cursing. He pounded the steering wheel with a fist and swung



the gun so it glanced across Jessica's breasts with a painful sting. "This is your fault, bitch. Your fucking cop probably doesn't even trust you to go to the grocery store alone. Whores. You're all fucking whores that can't be trusted. The only thing you're good for is your pussies."

She cowered against the door and let him see her fear, hoping that the sight of it would keep him from noticing the subtle shifts in her position. If they cornered him, she'd become his hostage.

He slammed on the brakes and sent her crashing into the dashboard. Then he backed up and turned onto a narrow road. Several feet in there was a sign. *Private. No Trespassing. Hunt Club Members Only.*

The graveled road became a dirt road as it sloped upward. There were thick woods on either side but the convict didn't take his eyes off her as they traveled.

Jessica's breath became trapped in her throat when they rounded a corner and she saw a cabin ahead of them. It was dark, abandoned for the winter.

He'd make his stand there and while he was doing it he'd rape her repeatedly. He'd kill her or leave her for dead if he fled again.

It might take hours, possibly even days for the police to investigate the private road. She couldn't let him get her inside the cabin.

Thunder boomed overhead with a violence that seemed to shake the ground. Lightning flashed.

*Now!* The command screamed through her like a howling wind. She reacted impulsively, instinctively, the scene rehearsed in her mind so there was no wild scrabbling to unlock and open the door.

She landed on her knees and heard the gunfire almost simultaneously. *Missed!* her mind screamed in victory an instant before she became aware of the searing heat where the bullet had grazed her back. She scrambled into the woods, not caring whether she used her hands or her knees or her feet to get something between her and the gun.

A bullet ricocheted off a tree. A second one followed. She didn't know how many bullets he had left.

He got out of the car and screamed profanities. She darted forward, dodging the trees, her breath loud and fast.

A sane person would have let her go. But he was incensed, trapped—a man with a great capacity for violence and nothing to lose. He crashed after her, venting his rage with promises about what he'd do to her once he caught her.

She ran and slid and fought to keep from being a target. The clouds gathered and roiled above her as if they were reacting to the life and death struggle taking place beneath them.

The wind picked up. It whipped through the thinning trees, driving her forward and sideways.

Jessica stumbled. Her hands braced her. She kept going, fighting against slick leaves, barely looking up until suddenly confronted with open space. Panic filled her at the sight of the fallow field with its rutted grooves. She'd never make it across before he got close enough to shoot.

He was still behind, closing in on her even as she tried to think. There was no backtracking, no going forward. She ran along the edge of the field and tried to put as much distance as she could between them without having to dodge the trees. She prayed that she was heading in the direction of the paved road and that she'd be able to duck back into the woods before he emerged and saw her.

Lightning flashed, closer now. The air felt charged with power.

Her lungs burned. Pain stabbed through her side.

She risked a glance over her shoulder. Her foot hit a soft muddy spot and she pitched forward.

Even before she scrambled to her feet she knew she was in trouble. The ankle gave. She tried to stand again. She endured excruciating pain for several steps before going to her knees and trying to crawl into the woods.

There was a shout of triumph. A bullet struck a tree in front of her. "Stop right there, bitch, on your hands and knees where you belong." She stopped even though every instinct demanded she run. She braced herself, expecting a bullet to strike her.

Nausea rose in her throat. Sex was the only weapon she had left to fight with. She couldn't outrun him, not now, not when she could barely stand. If he thought he'd won... If she could only endure... There'd be an opportunity when he orgasmed...when he'd be weakened, unfocused...when maybe she could get the gun...

She didn't let herself think about what would happen when he got to her, how badly he'd hurt her before getting down to the business of raping her. She didn't let herself think about anything except the importance of surviving. Whatever happened she'd rather be alive than dead.

Jessica risked getting to her knees. The shirt and jacket she'd undone in the car parted and even through the pounding rain she saw him focus on her exposed breasts. His hand went to his fly though he didn't unzip his pants again.

A downdraft nearly forced her to the ground. She glanced up at the roiling blackness of the clouds as thunder exploded and lightning flashed in one furious thrust after another. It charged the air with its violence. A scream suddenly cut short had the hair standing on her arms.

Disbelief, hope, a wrenching sob, all of them crowded her chest when she saw the escaped convict lying on the ground, his body twitching as though electrical current still flowed through him. She glanced at the sky again. The dark clouds rumbled, parted, and for a moment she could swear she saw two Thunderbirds hovering in the sky, protective spirits who'd come with the storm and saved her life.

Tears flowed freely. Her heart soared, wanting to merge with them, almost feeling as if she could. Her vision blurred and when she blinked there were only dark clouds.

The lingering sense of a powerful storm remained overhead even as there was also the contradictory feeling that a part of it was moving away.

Slowly Jessica got to her feet, careful not to put much weight on her damaged ankle. She was shaking. From fear, from relief, from the frigid rain striking her bare chest and from her soaked clothing. With trembling fingers she rebuttoned the flannel shirt and zipped the jacket.

Her attacker was dead. He had to be.

The body was still now, the eyes open, staring sightlessly into the sky as the rain struck his face. Jessica glanced upward again and found only clouds, and yet she still offered a prayer of thanks.

The logical part of her argued that the Thunderbirds had been a powerful hallucination brought on when two extreme emotions collided—when absolute terror gave way to overwhelming relief. But the part of her that accepted Tekoa's ability to heal Clay through a sing, the part of her that had *felt* the Thunderbird's presence both when Tekoa had made love to her on the rug in front of the fireplace and when she'd been looking at the mist-shrouded totem poles, that part of her believed that somehow, someway, when she'd accepted Tekoa as her "husband" she'd become connected to the Thunderbird's spirit.

Warmth uncoiled and slid through her, reminding her of the drink Clay had given her on Tekoa's porch when she was shivering and cold and frightened by the future. Tears choked her, happy grateful tears that she still had a future to look forward to.

Jessica took a hobbling step forward and whimpered with pain. *I can do this. I will do this.* She needed to check the body. There'd be little point in making the long, painful trip back to the abandoned truck if the keys were here. She could break the window in order to use the radio and call for help, but she'd rather not.

She wanted to go home. She wanted to take a shower and then climb into bed with Clay and Tekoa. She wanted to feel their hot bodies pressed to hers. She wanted to hear

them whisper words of love and tell her everything was okay. She wanted it with an intensity that consumed her.

Jessica forced herself to take another step. This time nausea welled up along with the pain. She looked around for a stick and found one that would work as a crutch.

Thunder rumbled above her like a growled warning. A gust of wind held her in place.

She tried to press forward. This time the thunder was an angry splash of sound accompanied by more forceful winds.

Jessica glanced upward again. Her heart rate spiked. There was no mistaking the Thunderbird this time. It hovered in plain sight for timeless seconds, its gaze fixed on her in a silent command to stay put.

She obeyed.

## **Chapter Ten**

Clay tried to stay in the moment, in the form that was so surreal it might just have blown his mind if Jess' well-being wasn't at stake. Fuck! Even in his wild teen years when he'd blacked-out, passed-out, and done his share of puking his guts out, he'd never even come close to something like this. Then again, back in those days his recreational drug of choice had been alcohol instead of acid or some other stupid-ass thing.

This whole experience would have rivaled a Sixties trip down psychedelic lane—except how could he argue with the sight below him and the aching, wrenching pain in his heart?

Christ. He'd died inside when he'd seen Jessica on her knees with her shirt and jacket hanging open.

Her terror and horror had been like a kick in the gut with a steel-toed boot.

It'd been over in a heartbeat. He'd watched in awe as lightning streaked from Tekoa and slammed into Jess's attacker.

From his trailing position, he hadn't seen the flashes come from Tekoa's eyes, but he knew enough about Native American myths to know that's where the lightning had come from. Fuck! Myth? He'd have to rethink that one, or better yet, let Jess do it. That kind of thing fired her creative cells.

It was all so un-fucking-believable. The thunder, the wind-blown clouds, the lightning.

Amusement rippled through Clay despite his frustration at not being able to do anything other than stand guard over Jess until help that was closer than Tekoa's cabin arrived. He could almost hear Tekoa saying, "Now don't try this at home, you two, especially when I'm not around to guide you."

Clouds filtered in between Clay and Jess. An updraft pushed him higher. The cold seeped in and he found it harder to think. At the edge of his consciousness he saw his human form lying on the rug in front of the fireplace and had the strong sense that his spirit needed to return to the flesh that usually housed it.

Grayness crowded in at the edge of his vision. He felt a tug deep inside, almost like he was a fish on a line. As soon as he thought it he remembered the golden strands he'd followed to Jessica and guessed this pull was Tekoa, reeling him in.

Clay fought the call. He used the sweep of wings to clear away some of the clouds so he could see Jess.

Two men emerged from the woods near where she was sitting with her back against a tree. From a distance one of them could have been Tekoa though Clay knew it wasn't. The second man glanced up and without being told, Clay recognized that both men were whatever the hell he'd become.

He felt the tug again, only now he was ready to follow it. He wanted to get to Jess. He wanted to hold her in his arms and make love to her.

*Focus*, Tekoa had said before leaving. Clay wasn't sure whether he needed to *refocus* or do the opposite of focus.

Christ. He wasn't sure he was cut out for this mystical shit.

The gray coldness began closing in on him, more tightly this time, and though he didn't have lips to grin with, inside the Thunderbird's form his spirit managed it. Hell, who was he kidding? This was the ultimate adventure – or it would be next time, when he could experience it while Jess was safe.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jessica struggled to her feet when two men emerged from the woods. "Tekoa," she whispered, her heart stuttering with happiness and relief.

When the men got closer she realized it wasn't Tekoa, but even that knowledge didn't dampen her spirits. She was safe and someone was here to take her home.

"I'm Ukiah," the first man to get to her said as he swept her up in his arms.

She recognized the name, though his face told the same story. "You're Tekoa's brother."

"Yes. And this is our cousin, Tenino."

"Are you hurt?" Tenino asked.

"My ankle. I can't walk very well on it."

Ukiah crouched on the ground with her on his lap. His fingers lightly brushed the place where the bullet had grazed her back. Tenino crouched beside them and removed her shoe and sock. Heat radiated from his hands as he gently examined her bruised and swollen flesh. Ukiah's warmth seeped into her from where his cheek very nearly rested against hers. It was strangely intimate to be cocooned between two of Tekoa's very masculine relatives, and yet it was also completely nonsexual.

Jessica winced when Tenino's fingers found a tender spot. She jerked when he discovered a second one.

"You up for a sing?" he asked.

Jessica wasn't sure who he was speaking to.

Ukiah said, "What's the damage?"

"Bad sprain. It'd heal in a week or so with rest, but we'd have to carry her out of here and chances are it'd swell a lot more by the time we met up with Tekoa and Clay." He looked up then and grinned, his expression reminding her so much of Clay's playfulness that Jessica felt laughter bubble inside of her just as Tenino added, "Two men, one woman, a scare like this one—even with all the mud she's currently wearing, I'm guessing the windows of the patrol car are going to get all steamed up once we make the handoff. It might be worth some get-out-of-jail-free points if we fix her up before we turn her over to your brother."

Jessica's cheeks flamed. Her heart did an erratic hip-hop in her chest.



*Better get used to everyone knowing it's a threesome*, she told herself. Tekoa had told her that his people would view her as his wife and Clay as both her husband and his lover.

Ukiah gave her a little hug. "You know what we're talking about doing?"

"Yes. Clay had a concussion. Tekoa did a sing for him."

"Good," Ukiah said.

Tenino started to unzip his jacket. Jessica guessed he was planning to place it on the ground in a chivalrous gesture. She shook her head and teased, "Unless you've got to strip down to a loincloth like Tekoa did, don't bother. I'm already soaking wet. A few minutes of lying on the ground aren't going to be worse than these clothes."

Both men chuckled as Tenino did his best to clear the sticks and wet leaves from a small area. Jessica eased off Ukiah's lap and lay down. "Eyes closed?"

"Yes," Ukiah said.

She closed her eyes though almost immediately she was tempted to peek. There was no drum, yet she heard one. Her heart matched its beat. Ukiah's voice then Tenino's joined the drum in a merging of words and sound. The song blurred Jessica's thoughts even as she felt a healing, impossible heat move through her body.

\* \* \* \* \*

"We getting close?" Clay asked.

Tekoa grinned and cut a look over at his companion. "That your version of 'Are we there yet?' because if it is, we're taking separate cars when we go on vacation."

Clay laughed but he didn't lean back in his seat. If anything he'd been getting more and more wound up with each mile they traveled.

Tekoa didn't blame him. Even knowing Jessica was safe, healed, and traveling by car in their direction, they were both going to be strung out until they got her home. And even after they got her back to the cabin, he wasn't sure how long it'd be before they'd let her out of their sight.

He'd been a cop long enough to have experienced some dicey, dangerous situations. But nothing had ever scared him as badly as seeing Jessica defenseless and kneeling as a would-be rapist and murderer walked toward her with a gun in his hand.

A few minutes later...maybe even a few seconds later... Tekoa took a deep breath and closed his mind against bloody, might-have-happened scenarios. She was safe and according to both his brother and cousin, she was handling what had happened well enough to say she'd drive the truck back.

There was no chance of that happening. Ukiah would take the truck to his place and stash the groceries there. Tekoa figured he and Clay and Jessica would get around to collecting them—eventually.

Technically he should go to the crime scene but with the escaped felon dead by natural causes and the carjacked victim soon to be in an even more protective custody than she was currently in, Tekoa was content to let others deal with the body.

His heart raced with anticipation when the radio chirped and Tenino's voice said, "I'm just passing the road to the old Briggs' place. Visibility is almost zero but I think I'm seeing lights. That you up ahead?"

"That's us."

\* \* \* \* \*

Despite Tenino's prediction of steamy windows and wild sex in Tekoa's patrol car, Jessica was bundled in a blanket on Clay's lap with his arms a vise around her waist and Tekoa's hand enfolding hers. After the initial tears and kisses, followed by Clay's terse warning that she wouldn't be going anywhere alone for a long time, they'd settled into muted conversation and a shared longing to get back home where clothes could be shed and bodies merged.

It'd been on the tip of her tongue to tell them about the Thunderbirds, but in the confines of the car those moments seemed more like fantasy than reality. Maybe later, when they snuggled against one another in the aftermath of sex she'd be able to

whisper what she'd seen, what she'd experienced, what she'd guessed. Maybe she'd ask Tekoa about the People of the Thunderbird and what it meant to be married to one of them.

She shivered when they left the paved road. A small whimper escaped as she flashed back to the moment the escaped convict had also turned off the wider road.

Clay's arms tightened on her, as did Tekoa's hand. "Almost home," Clay whispered, brushing a kiss against her forehead.

The totem poles came into view. They stood tall and stark, darkened by water and the fading daylight. Somehow they seemed fiercer than before, as though they would guard not only against real danger but any that might ride in on a nightmare.

Her heart raced in her chest. "You're safe now," Tekoa said, rubbing his thumb over her knuckles.

Clay carried her over the threshold of the cabin within a minute of Tekoa parking. When he would have taken her straight to the bathroom and placed her in the shower himself, she insisted he set her down near her luggage.

"Don't bother," he said, knowing her well enough to guess what she was planning to do, but he relented and turned away when she told him not to hover.

Jessica dug out a pale blue nightgown then escaped to the bathroom. Normally she had to force herself out of a hot shower, but this time the silky feel of the water caressing her skin didn't tempt her to linger, not when she hungered for the heated skin and firm masculine touches that were waiting for her.

She showered quickly and dried her hair. She donned the nightgown, though she doubted she'd be wearing it for long.

Clay and Tekoa were both standing just outside the bathroom. Jessica's womb fluttered at the sight of them. Her breasts tightened and need flared in a hard burst that made her pussy weep.

They'd changed from jeans back into sweatpants. They'd stripped out of their shirts and shoes and socks, but there was nothing casual in their stances.

They closed the distance in the span of heartbeat. Tekoa's mouth captured hers as he pulled her against his chest. Clay's front pressed to her back. His lips chased the strap of her nightgown off her shoulder with hungry, sucking kisses and tiny nips.

She'd expected the heat and passion, but she'd thought it'd be a slow burn instead of an explosive inferno. Clay's hand curled around her thigh. Tekoa's tugged at her nightgown, pulling it up, baring her in the seconds before Clay's fingers played in wet arousal then slipped inside her.

Jessica whimpered into Tekoa's mouth as her sheath clamped down on Clay's invading fingers. Tekoa's tongue answered by sliding and rubbing, tangling with hers, his movements echoing the thrust and retreat, the swirling of slick fingers over an erect clit.

Her fingernails dug into Tekoa's shoulders as she held onto him, desperate to remain on her feet under the onslaught of passion. His hands continued upward, the nightgown flowing over his forearms as he cupped her breasts and palmed the nipples before taking them between his fingers.

They were relentless in their touches and kisses, as if only the sound of her crying out in orgasm would assure them she was all right.

Jessica didn't fight the sweet sensation, the rising need, the soul-searing pleasure that lifted her on wings and made her soar.

She clung and cried out. She shuddered and pressed against them, unashamed to share everything she was with them and to let them know with her body that they were her world.

It was Tekoa who swung her up into his arms and carried her to the bed. The nightgown fluttered to the floor only a second before he followed her down, his chest a welcome, hot weight against her side and breast. Clay stripped off his sweatpants and

joined them. This time he was the one whose lips covered hers, whose tongue rubbed against hers in a sensual dance.

Jessica moaned and arched as Tekoa kissed down to her breast. He laved the nipple, bit it, then pulled it into the wet heat of his mouth. Her hand found Clay's cock and her fingers encircled it, slid up and down in time to Tekoa's suckling.

Clay's tongue became more aggressive. His fingers found her stiffened clitoris.

She bucked under the assault. Her knees rose and her hips lifted off the bed.

Tekoa's fingers found her wet slit and filled her with rough thickness. "Please," she begged when Clay lifted his mouth and allowed her to breathe.

"Not yet."

He kissed her again, a long wet declaration of devotion. Then he left her lips to join Tekoa at her breasts.

She shivered at the feel of them both suckling. Her hands tangled in their hair. Her thighs widened even further in a silent request for them to touch everything, to love her everywhere. She couldn't control the whimpers, the breathless pleas that were more sound than words.

Tekoa's face lifted though he held her nipple until it popped free of his mouth. His eyes met hers and she saw in them the same heartfelt caring she'd seen in Clay's so many times.

Jessica didn't know how it had happened so quickly. She was cautious by nature, fearful of getting hurt emotionally, and yet he'd already claimed her heart and soul, as well as her body.

The fingers tangled in his hair tugged so that once again his mouth hovered above hers. "I love you," she whispered, suddenly needing to give him the same words she gave freely to Clay.

His smile was like the sunshine. His happiness so open and honest that it brought tears to her eyes.

"I love you too," he whispered.

He kissed her gently, tenderly, reverently, as though the kiss was an unspoken covenant. Then he kissed her again, only this time when he lifted his mouth from hers the skin around his eyes was crinkled in amusement. "Clay's going to take a little more effort, but you I already adore."

Jessica laughed but the sound quickly merged into a gasp and then a moan of pleasure as Tekoa's mouth returned to hers and Clay's found the wet, needy place between her thighs. They kissed her deeply, thoroughly. Their tongues probed and stroked, licked and rubbed as their lips ate hungrily at flesh already sensitized, primed for their touch.

She screamed as wave after wave of searing ecstasy pulsed through her. Her body shuddered with the force of her release. Grayness crowded in at the edges of her consciousness and she fought against passing out.

It took effort to open her eyes even partway. Clay's face was above hers now, his eyelids lowered, his mouth a sensual line that begged to be explored. Jessica kissed him and tasted herself. The need that had coalesced into a mind-blowing orgasm returned with a vengeance, only this time she knew she wouldn't truly be satisfied until she felt their cocks inside her.

She became aware of Tekoa's arm then, how it rested across her pelvis so the fingers of his hand could wrap around Clay's cock. Dark fantasies crowded in, images she'd explored while she'd been driving, when she'd been wondering what Clay and Tekoa were doing together.

Jessica wriggled downward and out from underneath Tekoa's arm. He didn't protest when she rose to her knees and removed his sweatpants so he'd be as naked as she and Clay were.

For a long moment she just looked at her two men. They were beyond gorgeous to her. They were everything she'd ever want.

Jessica chased Tekoa's hand away from Clay's cock and replaced it with her own. He was hot, hard steel.

Tekoa's cock pulsed against her palm when she encircled it with her hand. He didn't resist when she used her grip on his heated flesh to maneuver him onto his side and closer to Clay.

She felt their anticipation like a current traveling down her arms and straight to her cunt. They wanted their cocks to touch, they wanted her to see them touching.

She leaned down and licked the head of Clay's cock, then did the same to Tekoa's.

They panted. Their hips jerked in reaction.

She continued teasing, sucking one of them, exploring the slitted tip, then doing the same to the other until they were both straining, quivering, threatening her with punishment and hoarse promises of getting even.

Jessica rubbed the slick, swollen tips together. She loved them with her mouth and tongue, caressed and sucked as their sensitive cocks touched.

The pleasure drove them into each other's arms, into a kiss that was hard and hot and wetly passionate. When it ended their breath was shuddering in and out of their chests. Their eyes glittered with male intention.

Clay rose to his knees. His face was taut, the demand in his eyes so familiar she licked her lips to tease him further. "Suck my cock, Jess, or Tekoa's going to see you get a spanking."

Her cunt clenched in reaction. Liquid arousal leaked from flushed, parted lower lips.

Another day, another time, she'd gladly take the spanking. She wanted it now, but she wanted their cocks inside her more.

She crawled forward on her hands and knees, hyperaware as she did so that Tekoa had positioned himself behind her.

"Now, Jess," Clay said, his hips giving a small thrust toward her mouth.

She obeyed and was immediately rewarded by the feel of Tekoa's hand between her thighs, cupping her mound, pressing his palm to her clit before sliding his fingers over her opening.

"That's good, baby," Clay said, spearing his fingers in her hair as she made love to him with her mouth. "You're so good."

His praise flooded her channel with more arousal. She pressed backward, driving Tekoa's fingers deeper.

"She's so wet," Tekoa said. "She's always so wet and ready."

Jessica's mouth left Clay's hard flesh just long enough to say, "Please, Tekoa. Please put your cock in me."

His fingers retreated and she whimpered. His hands smoothed over her bare buttocks before settling on her hips.

Jessica moaned as his cock found her entrance. It was sweet torture to feel him entering her, stretching her one slow inch at a time. She tried to rush him, to impale herself on him, but his hands on her hips prevented it.

Clay's chuckle made her shiver with anticipation. His fingertips grazed over her scalp and her breast tingled. "Suck me, Jess, take me all the way back while Tekoa fucks that beautiful little pussy of yours."

Jessica couldn't have disobeyed if her life depended on it. She'd worried that Clay's coarse talk would remind her of the convict and have her shying away from his demands before she could stop herself from doing it, but love and trust kept that from happening.

She liked Clay's rough side just as much as she liked the tender side he was always willing to show her. His dominance turned her on as much as his caring did.

"That's right, baby," Clay said, tightening his grip on Jess's hair.

His head tilted back and he couldn't keep his eyes open despite the lust pouring through him at the sight of Tekoa's glistening cock powering in and out of Jess' hot slit.



Christ, she made him feel helpless and powerful at the same time.

He was addicted to her. He'd been completely lost from the first moment he'd seen her reading one of her stories to an audience of children.

"I'm not going to last much longer," he warned when his balls pulled tight and his heart thundered in his chest.

They'd agreed to take her together when they got back to the cabin, to make love to her until she was sated by multiple orgasms, then to give her both their cocks at the same time and push her over the edge of consciousness and into Thunderbird form.

It'd save a hell of a lot of explaining, which Clay was in favor of. Plus he'd be able to experience the Thunderbird again without the fear for Jess' safety.

But at the moment he was having a hard time coming up with a reason why it had to be done *now*.

Ecstasy was Jess' mouth on his cock.

He moaned and leaned forward. "Oh god, Jess, that feels so good. Don't stop. Don't stop."

White-hot shards of pleasure skittered along his backbone. He was close. Almost there.

Jessica whimpered, then he did too when her mouth left him.

Clay's eyelids flew open. He was panting. His hips were pumping, air-fucking where Jessica's mouth had just been.

Tekoa's hand landed on Clay's chest and pushed him backward. "Get on top of him, Jessica," Tekoa ordered. "Put his cock inside you."

She obeyed instantly.

Clay moaned and arched.

The tight muscles of her sheath clamped down on him, every bit as hungry and wet as her mouth had been. *Oh yeah*, he thought, driving himself deeper, *this is better*.

“I love you so much,” he whispered, once again tangling his fingers in her hair, only this time he brought her face to his and melded their lips together so his tongue could mimic what his cock was doing.

Tekoa didn't bother reaching for a bottle of lubricant. His cock was wet. Her back entrance was coated with arousal.

“Easy,” he whispered when she tensed at the feel of his cock against the pucker of her anus. “Let me in, Jessica. Let me share you with Clay.”

She relaxed a little bit and he rewarded her with kisses to her shoulder, her neck, her ear. She whimpered when he sucked her earlobe. She widened her thighs and tilted her pelvis when his tongue explored the sensitive canal.

“Perfect,” Tekoa praised, licking into her ear before leaning back.

Clay's hands swept down her spine. He palmed her buttocks then spread them.

Lust flashed thorough Tekoa, it burned him with a soul-deep need that would only be appeased one way. He placed the head of his cock at her back entrance again. He fought against the tight ring of muscles keeping him from being with both of his mates at the same time.

Inch by inch he joined with them. Ecstasy swamped him. Nothing in his life had prepared him for the feel of another man's cock against his as they were both held deep in a woman's body.

He stayed motionless for as long as he could. He savored the pulse of their shared heartbeat. He offered a prayer of thanks for both Jessica and Clay.

And then he began pumping. Slowly at first. Then faster. His cock in tandem with Clay's. His cock in counterthrust.

Between them Jessica writhed and moaned and whimpered. Her pleasure intensified theirs. Her heated flesh inflamed them, drove them to give everything.

Jessica felt full, not just from the dual penetration of their cocks, but from the emotion swamping her. It was almost too much, as though her body couldn't house the

sensation coursing through her, the feeling of having them both love her so intensely at the same time.

Her heart raced and thundered in her chest. Her muscles tightened on them, as if somehow she could stop the wild rush if she could only hold their cocks still in her depths.

Tekoa's mouth found her ear. "Don't fight it, Jessica. Let go."

Clay's fingers squeezed her nipples and sent erotic pain flashing to her clit. "Come for us, baby. Come for us."

He tightened his fingers again and she lost the battle. Jessica screamed as the hot wash of their seed poured into her and an orgasm unlike any she'd ever experienced cast her into the unknown.

For a split second there was only the gray cold of a scattered mass in the moments before a cloud is born. It was followed by cognizance, a consciousness forming, then by joy as Jessica became fully aware of the Thunderbird spirit now merged with her own, of the brightly feathered body that was myth and reality at the same time.

Tekoa was above her. Clay was beneath. Exhilaration filled her as they soared together over vast tracks of forest and mountain, called by the storm and the land, the drumbeat of their combined hearts singing of spirits shared.

## **About the Author**

Jory has been writing since childhood and has never outgrown being a daydreamer. When she's not hunched over her computer, lost in the muse and conjuring up new heroes and heroines, she can usually be found reading, riding her horses, or hiking with her dogs.

Jory welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her author bio page at [www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com).

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