

ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS



SAPPHIRE  
BLUE

*Devlin's Desire*

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



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Devlin's Desire

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# *DEVLIN'S DESIRE*

**Sapphire Blue**

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## Chapter One

How did he ever let Meryl talk him into this?

Devlin straightened his black tie, smoothing it down then buttoning the single button of his tuxedo jacket and groaned. This was *not* how he planned to spend his evening.

Halloween wasn't one of his favorite holidays. The sight of people dressing up in hideous costumes—he hated the werewolf masks and blood-dripping fang-wearers the most—always made him angry. It was ridiculous, a foolish adage to an old legend. Witches flying through the night, all things devilish roaming the Earth on this one night just didn't make any sense to him. It was commercialism at its best.

And that was the only reason he'd agreed.

Haunted House Candies was a multi-million dollar account. His marketing director Meryl Washington knew this. And so he'd used that as his basis for Decatur International hosting a city-wide costume party. It was Devlin's idea to have it in the ballroom on the ground floor of the Decatur Building. Why pay someone for space he already had? It was bad enough he was putting up a small fortune for the food and entertainment. But if they landed HHC, it would all have been worth it.

So he'd donned his monkey suit, bypassing the starchy white shirt and black bow tie, substituting a black shirt and black silk tie. Everyone attending was supposed to dress up. Casting a wry glance in the mirror of the bathroom in his office, he figured being dressed in black from head to toe, adding his plain black mask and his deep brown complexion, made him look as devilish as his name. So if anybody asked what he was dressed like, he'd surely say the devil.

Which, coincidentally, was what he felt like most of the time.

\* \* \* \* \*

The party was in full swing when Gabriella Kincaid slipped through the glass doors of the Decatur Building. Her plane had landed only three hours earlier. She'd had just enough time to shop for a costume, visit the spa – which she never had time to do back home – and get here on time. Well, she thought, looking down at her watch, mostly on time.

The place was packed with people dressed as everything from cartoon characters to the weird looking person in a space suit that had just bumped into her. A pirate greeted her with a large smile, thrusting a plate filled with glasses in front of her. With a shrug, she lifted a glass and sipped the cool, bubbly liquid. A smile spread across her face and she finished off the glass and reached for another.

She walked around the room, looking for him. The Elder had said he would be here. This was the building owned by his company. She'd read about Stanford Decatur on the plane. He was a very rich and powerful man in the United States. And one day, thirty years ago, he'd taken a trip to the Gungi Rain Forest deep in the regions of South America. There he met and fell in love with a beautiful woman named Larena. When Stanford returned to the States, Larena returned with him. A year later, Larena gave birth to a male child and named him Devlin. Two years after that, Larena returned to the Gungi, without Stanford and without her son.

Now Gabriella was here to bring him back. The fate of their tribe depended on him and his strength.

\* \* \* \* \*

This party was lasting too long. Devlin, for the billionth time that evening, looked down at his watch. It was almost midnight and close enough to the time where he could make a graceful exit. He'd made the required speech, spoken to the proper execs and stood still for pictures for the reporters that would write stories about this party tomorrow. Now it was time for him to go.

He'd always hated crowds of people and longed for the serenity of his house. Truth be told, he longed for something else. All night his skin had itched, the persistent crawling beneath his skin, a constant reminder of his true nature. He needed to get home, to get out of these clothes, to run.

Three steps away from the front door, Devlin remembered the proposals for HHC he needed to look over tonight. Rob Lawrence, HHC's CEO, had spent a great deal of the evening telling Devlin what he expected out of the new advertising campaign. Devlin had to make sure that when they met tomorrow afternoon, his proposal covered everything.

Cursing, he headed back into the crowd, excusing himself and giving brief nods of hellos and goodnights as he headed toward the elevator. Slamming his palm into the "up" button, he impatiently slipped his hands into his pockets.

It was then that he felt it.

The slithery sensation of being watched. His body stilled, but he did not turn. If someone was behind him, they weren't going to act out here in the open. He inhaled, catching a scent that was elusive, yet familiar.

His nose twitched. The scent was female, an aroma he would recognize anywhere. It was the intoxicating smell of pussy. Not the soft, buttery smell of a freshly cleaned crotch, but the heady, musky scent of a woman fully aroused. It was thick and heavy, hovering like a blanket waiting to be dropped. His entire body warmed.

The elevator doors opened and he stepped inside, wondering if she were hungry enough to stalk him – would she continue the chase?

On the ride up, Devlin pulled his tie off and stuffed it into his pocket. All his senses were alert, the smallest sound in the empty elevator magnified like an echo. Unbuttoning the top buttons of his shirt, he smirked. Would the mystery woman be standing outside the elevator doors when they opened? She hadn't joined him on the elevator, but he knew she was still following.

Her scent still lingered and he licked his lips, imagining the taste. She would be dripping wet, the aroma was too strong for her not to be. She would be plump, her vulva thick and aching to be kissed. Her clit would be hard to the point of pleasurable pain.

His cock already hurt with the immediate pressure of his thoughts. So much so that he couldn't resist moving a hand down to grasp the rigid length. With a moan, he inhaled again and thrust once, then twice, through his pants into his open palm. This action did not help. Wherever this pussy was, he wanted it, badly.

Devlin had to admit the slightest twinge of disappointment when he stepped off the elevator to the fifteenth floor and she wasn't there. He walked down the long hallway to his office, angry at himself for being so quickly and totally aroused. Once inside, he made his way to his desk, flicked on the lamp and began collecting the papers for the HHC account. He was tossing the papers into his briefcase when he heard the sound.

Like a whisper in the air, she stepped inside the room. He paused, but did not look up. His heart hammered and his cock lurched. The door clicked shut, the lock sliding into place with a distinctive pop. She walked purposefully toward him, willing him to acknowledge her. With every ounce of strength he could muster, Devlin did not.

"I need a moment of your time," she said in a voice so thick and erotic it matched the heady scent of her essence.

Raising his head slowly, Devlin let his gaze rest on the visitor. She was tall, probably near five ten or eleven. She was stacked. Her hips curved in the shiny black material of her costume. Said material was so slick, so precisely sheathed over her body, that the crevice at her juncture was clearly visible. His gaze instantly rested there. His mouth watered.

Because he was a seasoned playboy, Devlin never rushed, but for the first time felt an overwhelming urge to move quickly. His gaze slowly lifted to her breasts, where again, that black material hugged the heavy globes, pushing them upward so that very pleasant mounds peeked out. From the plunging neckline, he saw that her skin was a



creamy brown tone. Her face was partially covered by the mask over her eyes. But...her eyes...

They were green, a sharp green that glittered in the dimly lit office. A green that didn't seem quite normal.

It was when his gaze fell to her mouth, her full succulent lips, that he remembered she'd said something. "Appointments are made through my administrative assistant."

"Not this type of appointment."

He stood ramrod straight, then slipped his hands into his pockets again. He was experiencing an overpowering urge to reach out and touch her, to feel her inviting curves in his hands. Then he would fuck her hard and fast. "And what type of appointment is this?"

She took a step forward, then with a movement that was as smooth, as natural-looking as if she were born super agile, she lifted a leg and climbed up onto his desk. She was on all fours coming straight at him when she murmured, "This is personal."

## Chapter Two

Again Devlin did not move, even when she reached for the buckle on his pants and undid it. Her fingers were long and warm when they reached into his boxers and wrapped tightly around his swollen cock.

The heat that simmered through his body when he'd first picked up her scent was now an inferno, her hand—which was now moving up and down with firm persistence—stoking the blaze.

"I usually don't take personal meetings at the office," he said tersely.

She lowered her head closer to the head of his cock then looked up at him, those green eyes piercing. "Surely you can make an exception." She extended her tongue, licking the murky remnants of his desire from his tip. "Just this once."

She didn't have to ask twice.

Devlin was going to fuck this woman. There was no question about it. He didn't know her name or where she came from, yet he knew the scent of her pussy was irresistible and could almost feel his cock slipping into her tight creamy walls. His Halloween had suddenly become a little happier.

His hand went immediately to her head. Grasping her by the hair, he guided her head down in silent instruction, then hissed when the moist heat of her mouth surrounded him.

She teased him first with a tentative lick over his head, then a more persistent stroke of her tongue just beneath the glans and along his shaft. Using her saliva, she lubed his rod with silky precision. With her lips taut, she was taking him in inch by excruciating inch, the flat of her tongue rubbing lithely on the underside of his cock. He pulsed inside her mouth, then used his hand to push her head further down onto him. He needed the suction, wanted to feel her suck and suck until his cum shot into her mouth.

Sex had always been that way with him, like a dangerous drug that he had no resistance to. When the head of his cock hit the base of her throat, he threw his head back and moaned. She did the same, humming over his hard cock until his knees began to shake. Then the tongue work began. Up and down the base, around the tip, grazing lightly over his balls, she seemed to be everywhere at once, applying slick, hot pressure to his entire body.

His hands were buried in her hair now, guiding her mouth over his cock, feeding her his massive length. And she took it, in and out, the harder he fucked, the harder she sucked. It was a glorious sensation indeed.

He could come right here and, looking down at her saliva-drenched lips moving vigorously over his cock, he knew she wouldn't complain. But he suddenly had an urge for something more. Tonight was a special night, after all. With a quick motion, Devlin pushed her head back until his cock slipped between her lips like a lollipop. His rod wobbled, pre-cum dripping from its tip. She looked up at him and extended her tongue, licking every drop.

With her hands, she stretched him long, then released, watching with glazed eyes as more pre-cum escaped. He wanted to rip her clothes off, to sink inside that hot pussy, but he loved the feel of her hands on him, her tongue...and the way she looked at him. It was as if they were kindred.

She had his cock in one hand, his balls in the other, tugging and licking on them both. His hands were buried in her hair again and he closed his eyes as she took him into her mouth once more. She sucked him hard and fast, the mixture of her saliva and his juices creating a slippery haven. And when he thought he couldn't take another second of torture, she slipped a finger back beneath his balls. She rubbed gently over the spot between his balls and his anus so pleasingly gently that Devlin began to see stars.

The perineum massage continued, soft and soothing, while her mouth hungrily devoured his now aching cock. Her finger began to slowly work his anus, relaxing the

anal sphincter. Devlin's teeth clenched, as he'd never experienced anal play such as this before. This was something he thought of often and had even tried to introduce to various lovers, but even with instruction, none of them seemed to get it. This woman...he moaned enthusiastically...needed no instruction at all.

With the pad of her finger paused at the tight rim of his anus, she looked up at him again. Her gaze was mesmerizing. Her eyes...for a moment he thought they glowed. Then her finger slipped inside and his focus clouded. With slow and accurate pressure, she moved deeper, brushing past his prostate until he thought his cock would burst.

"Enough!" he roared, then yanked her by the hair until her finger slid from his ass, her mouth away from his cock. He ripped the mask from her face and felt trapped by her intense gaze.

"But I've only just begun," she said, licking her lips lavishly.

Without a word, he pulled her so that she was still kneeling but they were now face to face. He kissed her roughly, his teeth scraping over her lips, biting into the pliant skin. He was deliberately being brutal but sensed there would be no protest. There was something in the way she'd stalked him, the way she'd openly claimed what she wanted. It was...almost primal...and it turned him on.

Devlin ended the kiss, then slipped his hand down the bodice of her skin-tight outfit and ripped the material away. Her breasts spilled out with a jiggle. He tore at the remaining material until she was bare to the waist. He grabbed both globes in his palms, squeezing until he made marks. She chewed on her bottom lip and moaned. Lowering his head, he bit each nipple, felt her tremble and had to put a hand to his cock to soothe the burning ache.

He was creaming and burning to fuck her, yet there was more. More he wanted to touch, to feel, to do. She rose up on her knees and he slipped a hand between her thighs, cupping her juncture. Inhaling deeply, her scent permeated through the air. From someplace deep, he heard a growl. His fingers worked her mound while his tongue toyed with her nipples. She bucked against him, hot and hungry.

He groaned.

She pulled away from him and stood on the desk. Lifting one leg, she extended it toward him. He obliged by slipping off the three-inch heeled boot. She did the same with the other leg, then pulled her bodice down further until it was rolling over her hips and down her thighs. Devlin was more than pleased to find her completely naked beneath, and when she leaned over, placing a hand on his shoulder to balance herself, he dipped his head and gave each breast a quick lick.

She stood again, completely naked and completely open for him. He grasped her hips and buried his face between her legs. Her aroma surrounded him, causing his blood to pump quickly in his veins. That itch beneath his skin increased, scratching just at the surface, threatening to overtake him. The more aroused he became, the more persistent it was.

He pushed her thighs and felt the skin around his cock strain with desire. He was harder than he'd ever been before, her flavor tempting, teasing him. That first lick almost sent him over the edge, but he calmed down, paced himself. Taking her clit between his lips, he sucked lightly, heard her intake of breath and tugged a little harder. His hands slipped around to grab her butt, pulling the cheeks open. In no time, his fingers found the opening he searched for and he pressed a finger there.

That entrance was tight and wet, just as he liked. Damn, her arousal was like a waterfall. He'd known when he first picked up her scent that she was very aroused, now he was positive. Slipping past her anus, he thrust two fingers into her white-hot pussy. Her muscles clamped around him tightly. Pulling his fingers back out, he dragged them to her anus and tried to gain entrance again. Touching that tight hole while tasting her delicious essence was driving Devlin insane.

In a movement that he would later consider rough and inconsiderate, Devlin grasped her legs and laid her on the desk. Taking her by the ankles, he spread her wide and entered her with one vicious stroke. She didn't scream out in pain, but mewled like a kitten with a bowl of cream.

Devlin banged her pussy so hard his balls were slapping against her ass cheeks. Her breasts bobbed and swayed with each movement, making him even harder still.

His spine tingled, the feeling of a thousand fingers crawling up and down. He heard the first tell-tale cracking of bones and growled in protest.

Harder and harder he pumped her, begging his release to come instead. She was so wet, the slick sound of his cock in her pussy was deafening. But it was when she reached up and grabbed his balls, squeezing them none-too-gently as he pumped, that he knew he was home free. Three more pumps and she was yelling his name. One more and his cum was shooting into her like liquid fire.

At the same time, he heard another crack and fell to his knees.

## **Chapter Three**

Gabriella's bones felt like Jell-O. She lay on that desk moments after he'd pulled out of her, still quaking.

She was no stranger to sex, not a newbie to the exquisite sensations derived from a good hot bout with the right mate either. But this left her speechless.

Her plan had been to use her feminine wiles to make Devlin more open to what she wanted him to do. His reputation was that of a womanizer, a connoisseur of sexual affairs. She'd found that exciting, considering how much she enjoyed the primal act herself.

Everything had been going along just fine until he'd touched her. The moment he removed her mask and put his mouth on hers, she'd felt the shift in control. She was not the master of this seduction. From that point on, Devlin had done exactly what he wanted to her and she'd simply agreed.

She almost chuckled. Devlin Decatur was the epitome of tall, dark and handsome. He was taller than her, which meant he had surpassed six feet many moons ago. He was broad as a linebacker and his deep chocolate skin as alluring as any candy bar. His exotic good looks and whopping bank account only added to the package. He was, quite simply, every woman's dream.

But Gabriella did not dream of men. She dreamt of peace in her world, peace among their kind, and Devlin was the key.

Finally feeling strong enough, she lifted to a sitting position and scanned the room. She hadn't heard the door, so he was still here, yet she didn't see him anywhere. Jumping down from the desk, she walked around, resisting the urge to call out to him. A glow in the far corner caught her eye.

It was golden. His eyes were yellow-gold, pinning her to where she stood. She was not afraid, but relieved. This was part of her mission. To get Devlin to accept who and what he was; only then would he be able to help them.

"It's okay, Devlin," she said when she watched him slink back further. "I know."

The couch he was hiding behind moved as he pushed against it. He was restless. He wanted to pace. He wanted to run.

Gabriella knew the feeling well.

Without another thought, she fell to the floor, arching her back until her human spinal cord melded into her animal one. Thick black fur grew until it covered every inch of her body and whiskers grew from her cheeks. With a wide yawn, she licked razor sharp teeth with a long pink tongue, then took the first step toward him.

He stopped moving, glaring at her as if in awe, then the anger returned and he pounced. Tackling her to the floor, he sank his teeth into her back. She yipped and tried to roll him over. Unsuccessful, she turned her head, her teeth nipping at his nose before scraping along his jaw. He growled, then began pawing at her with fierce continuous swipes.

When it seemed as if all the energy was drained from him, he moved away from her. Gabriella had long since ceased fighting back. Devlin was not trying to hurt her. He was lashing out, only she didn't understand why.

The Elders only told her that Devlin had been kept in the States under his father's protection and against Larena's will. About ten years ago, Devlin had made a trip to the forest. He'd stayed in a tent and spoke only with his mother. He left and never came back. Larena never shared what he said. The tribe was only left to believe that Devlin did not readily claim his Topétinian heritage.

And now she'd seen it firsthand.

He hated being a jaguar and a man. It was clear in his stance, the droop of his head as he paced the floor of his office. At the same time, this difference intrigued him. He looked back at her every so often, finally, for once, seeing someone like himself. A part



of Gabriella ached for him. The other part rationalized that the fate of the Topétinia didn't have time for Devlin's indecision.

Gabriella shifted to human form, rising to walk on her feet and sat on the couch. Raking her hands through her hair, she took a deep breath.

"I am Topétinian, just like you. Elder Brock sent me to bring you home."

Devlin rose up on his hind legs, scratching his sharp claws down the wall behind the office door. It was a sickening sound that matched the turmoil she sensed within him.

"The tribe is in danger, Devlin. Your mother is in danger."

He fell to the floor then and roared, an angry, threatening sound that, to any other human, would have meant imminent death. To Gabriella, it meant she'd hit a nerve.

Devlin shifted back so quickly it was nothing more than a blur of fur and flesh. Then he stood before her gloriously naked, cock rigid with arousal. She swallowed hard in an attempt to remain focused.

"Larena said you were handsome." She licked her lips. "She didn't lie."

"Who the hell are you?" he asked through gritted teeth.

"My name is Gabriella Kincaid. My grandfather is Elder Rai Kincaid of the Gungi Topétinia Tribe."

He made a sound, a toss up between chuckle and growl, then dragged a hand over his face. "Tell me what danger my mother is in."

Gabriella looked away. She couldn't think straight with all those rippling muscles glaring at her. "Have you ever heard of the Kirok?"

He swore. "I don't have time to entertain your forest community. I just want to know about my mother."

"The entire tribe is in danger of being wiped out. A human by the name of Kieran Jentsy found out about us and kidnapped a few shifters, then took them back to his lab and experimented with them. He came up with a clone shifter and calls them the Kirok.

They are extremely powerful and are threatening to take over our tribe if we don't join them as terrorists working for Kieran."

"Did my mother know you were coming here?"

Gabriella gave an exasperated sigh. "Stop being so damned selfish!" she yelled, standing to face him head on. "Yes, Larena knew I was coming. She agreed with Elder Brock that you were the only one who could save us. She also said you would never come. Not even to save her."

Devlin turned his back to her and Gabriella moved closer. "Is it true, Devlin? Are you so wrapped up in your human world with expensive suits and big bank accounts that you would let your mother die in the forest?"

"You don't know me," he said without turning.

"I know that you are one of us, yet your differences will be our salvation." She sighed. "It is your scent. You don't share the same scent as the forest Topétinians because you've never lived among us. You are more human than us. That is what makes you our best weapon against Kieran. He'll never suspect you are hunting him."

Devlin shook his head, trying to tune out what she was saying. "You don't know me," he repeated.

"I think I do." Taking a chance, Gabriella lifted a hand to his shoulder. He flinched, but did not jerk away. "I know what it feels like to have you deep inside me. To feel your length growing harder, thicker inside my body."

He turned then, grabbing her by the shoulders and pushing her back against the wall. "You...don't...know...me!" he roared.

She stared him down, feeling the undeniable heat rising between them. "I know you want me. I can feel it."

He shook his head as if he were trying to clear his thoughts or make her disappear, whichever. Gabriella smiled inwardly, it wasn't going to work.

With a sigh, she lifted one leg, wrapping it around his waist. He obediently grasped her bottom, providing the leverage she needed to lift her other leg, wrapping them around his waist, pulling him closer. "Fuck me, Devlin. Fuck me hard and fast like you did before. It's what we both want, what we both need."

Her words were not a lie. She knew she was here on business, but damn if she could stop this total need for him. She'd tried to talk business, to get on with the matter at hand, but she couldn't. She couldn't see past that huge cock and the urge to have it buried deeply inside her again.

Her pussy pulsed with the thought, her essence dripping onto him. Her thighs quivered with need. Between her legs, her tender folds wept with enough wanting that she feared she would soon have to beg. She needed him that badly.

Devlin, despite the look of turmoil on his face, did not let her down. He thrust his thick cock into her throbbing pussy, slamming her forcefully against the wall.

"This means nothing," he said as he bottomed out in her, then bent his head to bite the tender skin at the hollow of her neck.

Her head fell forward, her teeth scraping over his shoulder. "You're wrong. It means everything."

## **Chapter Four**

He'd left her.

Sprawled on the floor, butt naked and limber from a great fucking was where she awakened.

Another woman would have been embarrassed. Gabriella was pissed!

She was pissed with Devlin and even more pissed at herself. Just when she thought she had control of the situation, he'd taken the upper hand. Again. Seduction was a game she knew, one she'd mastered the moment she learned that this was the key to her human heritage. Men did any number of things for a woman that gave them what they needed sexually. And she'd used that leverage to get money and supplies for her village.

It hadn't taken her too long to figure out that she actually liked the sex part. Well, at least most of the time she did. However, as long as the end result brought her people what they needed, she wouldn't let it trouble her. The fact that Topétinians were immune to human diseases because of their unique genetic makeup made Gabrielle's lifestyle possible. Where most viruses were generated through either type of nucleic acid, ribonucleic (RNA) or deoxyribonucleic (DNA), Topétinians possessed only a limited amount of nucleic acid in their bodies—felionucleic acid (FNA)—and it was a strand designated to them alone. Thus a Topétinian did not contract the usual viruses known to humans, but most commonly suffered from debilitating injuries. This worked out well for Gabriella, since her promiscuous sex life would have surely killed the average person.

So there had never been any doubt in her mind that her prowess would work to her advantage with Devlin. Never any doubts, but plenty of underestimating.

Devlin was just as sexual, if not more so, than she was. The fact that they were linked, not only through their desire for good sex, but through the blood lines of the

jaguar people of their village, made him all the more irresistible. And made them, together, combustible.

As she'd stood and slipped into the remnants of her cat outfit, her thighs still trembled, her pussy still ached. She wanted him there again, touching her or tasting her or just plain fucking her.

There was just something about him. His walk—rather, his confident swagger—made her mouth water. While his purely animalistic urges bubbled just beneath the surface of his persona. Gabriella inhaled quickly, smelled her own arousal and craved him more.

Shaking her head, she tried to think straight. Now was not the time to be so focused on her own pleasure or the pleasure this one Topétinian had been fortunate enough to give her.

Concentrate, she willed herself. Where did he go?

Then, with a smile, she realized how easy this really was. It had only taken a moment of concerted effort to figure out where he was, she thought, leaving his office to board the elevator.

Devlin was a creature of habit. All Topétinians were. She'd upset him with mention of his mother and their tribe. He would need to deal with his anger in a place where he was free to shift. Then he would run. In most cases, this was a way for the Topétinian to lick their wounds.

Yes, he would run, Gabriella thought. He would run wild and free, and when he returned, she'd be right there waiting for him.

\* \* \* \* \*

He'd paced the floor. He'd raged and thrown things across the room.

He dropped to his knees and shifted into the very animal that he detested. He'd gone through the patio door in the living room and run hard and fast into his private

forest. Moving from limb to limb with practiced stealth, Devlin traveled under the cloak of darkness. It was invigorating, it was tiring. It wasn't helping.

After the run, he'd returned to the house, shifted, then dropped down onto the couch, his head falling into his hands as his heart raced in his chest.

He didn't want this. Had never wanted this. It wasn't his life, nor his fight.

His mother was the problem. Her and her tainted blood and lies that had destroyed him. His father had never forgiven her for lying about her heritage and, as such, had never truly accepted Devlin as his child. Devlin grew up knowing the differences, struggling to keep the feelings of hurt at bay. His father didn't really want him, yet he would not allow his mother to have him. His mother was half jaguar and chose to live in a forest. What did that make him?

A damn mess.

And just when he thought he'd had a grasp on all that drama. Just when he thought he had proven himself a man and was living the life he was meant to live, the tables turned.

Gabriella Kincaid was a nightmare walking. He should have known it from the tempting smell of her cunt, the blatant invitation in those glowing eyes.

Yet he'd wanted her, needed her. He didn't know her, but that didn't matter. She called to him, the sweet litany of desire, of a woman wanting a man. And he'd answered.

His cock fit inside her pussy like hand in glove. She curved where he curved, creamed when he creamed. It was perfect.

Perfect enough to be insane.

She was one of them, one of the jaguar-people. Or should he say Topétinia? That was their rightful name. And she professed to need his help. He didn't believe that. Didn't want to believe it.

He would chalk it up to a night of good sex and that's all. The talk about the village, computer enhanced jaguar-people and his mother were of no consequence to him.

So why was he sitting here wondering how he could help?

Devlin hated conflict and he hated not being able to deal with conflict even more. So with a stream of curses, he stood and went into his bathroom to take a shower.

\* \* \* \* \*

That was how Gabriella found him; his tall, sleek, ebony body silhouetted through the frosted door of the shower. Steam filled the room as she came inside and stood, watching him lather his hands, then his body.

For the second time that night, Gabriella removed her clothes. She walked quietly across the tiled floor, then slowly opened the door to the shower and stepped inside. From behind, she slipped her hands around his waist, massaging the soap suds over his body.

He was hard, his stomach a rippling of muscles made smooth as silk by the hot water and soap. He tensed but did not pull away, she suspected because he could not deny this basic connection any more than she could.

Pressing her breasts against his back, she let her tongue glide over his shoulder blades, his shoulders and down his left bicep. Her fingers moved sensuously up his torso, over his tight nipples. He put his hands on the wall in front of him, bracing himself.

A part of him was untouchable, Gabriella knew, even as she continued to explore his body with her hands and her mouth. He would not deny her sex, but that didn't mean he would help her. Yet Gabriella would not be deterred.

Her hands wrapped around his stiff cock, jerking him off as the water pounded against their bodies. His breathing hitched but other than that he did not respond. She loved the feel of him in her hands, the control it gave her to masterfully bring him to completion. His hips gave a little jerk and she hastened her movements.

He was going to come. For the third time tonight, this woman was going to cause him to explode. Her hands were magical on him and Devlin tightly clenched his teeth to keep from yelling out in pleasure.

She was persistent, he would give her that much. He hadn't considered that she'd come to his house. But here she was.

He could rationalize that it was just for more of his mind-blowing sex, but knew he'd only be half right. She wanted something more from him, something he didn't have the power to give.

With that in mind, it wasn't a hard decision to give her what he could. And so he moved, turning his back to the spray of water and exhaling as her fingers released his cock. Her brown skin glowed with wetness, her hair plastered to her skull. Her eyes, he noted now, were slanted slightly upward at the corner, their luminescence glowing in the confines of the stall. In his office, dressed in the cat suit, she was a beguiling seductress. In his shower, completely naked, she was an exotic goddess.

"Get on your knees," he commanded.

Without hesitation, she did as he instructed.

"Wrap your lovely mouth around my cock." He cupped her face in his hands and guided her to him. "Not with your hands," he warned when she lifted her hands to grasp his cock. "Just your mouth."

She opened wide and he slipped between her lips. When his balls tapped her chin, he sighed and held her head firmly in place. "Don't move," he grunted, then moved his hips so that he was slowly sliding out of her mouth. When only his tip was left inside, he thrust forward again, quickly, forcefully.

Her mouth tightened around him and he pumped again and again until he was fucking her face with fervor. Her mouth was hot and wet, stroking him as if she were meant solely for that purpose.



Harder and harder Devlin thrust into her mouth, holding her head to keep it from banging against the wall of the shower. Her cheeks hollowed and tightened around him, milking him until his mind roared.

He couldn't be what she wanted, couldn't do what she needed, and yet he couldn't stop wanting her, needing her. Tonight's sex had been different than what he'd experienced in the past. He wasn't blind to that fact. But he didn't want to question it anymore.

He wanted to enjoy the sensations, enjoy the feel of his cock slipping between her lips, the sight of her sucking him off. His hips jerked and his balls tingled. With two more pumps, he knew it was inevitable and cupped her face in his hands. With a guttural moan, he felt his essence spurting into her mouth. Looking down, he watched her tilt her head back and swallow. She was beautiful and what she'd just done had satisfied him on a level he'd never imagined. When he slipped out of her, she licked her lips and he cursed.

Lifting her by the shoulders, he pulled her up and plastered her against the wall. His mouth was on hers quickly, his tongue delving inside until he could taste his essence in her mouth. Strangely, he enjoyed the erotic tingles of knowing that it was himself he was tasting. She kissed him back with the same hunger, the same amazement at their connection.

When he knew they needed to breathe, Devlin pulled away from her, letting his forehead rest against hers.

"I cannot help you," he sighed.

With her hands twined around his neck, she held him close. "Yes, you can. You have to."

\* \* \* \* \*

Half an hour later, Gabriella and Devlin were sitting on the middle of a bed that could easily seat six people.

“Are you afraid of the forest?” she asked, because they’d talked about everything else in the world besides the most important thing.

Devlin visibly tensed. “I am not afraid of anything.”

“Typical male answer.”

“Typical female question,” he retorted.

With an arched brow, she asked, “How so?”

He shrugged. “Whenever there’s something you don’t know the answer to, you blame it on some unknown fear. Fear of commitment? Fear of emotions? I think women have an entire book of male fears they have to master before graduating high school.”

Gabriella stared at him for a moment, then said with indignation, “You’re avoiding the subject.”

Devlin moved quickly, lowering her onto her stomach so that he could admire the sleek curves of her body from the back view. “I’m avoiding what subject?” he asked absently.

Her ass was perfect, there was just no other way to describe it. Plump, succulent mounds that begged to be touched. And so he did. Palming her cheeks, he massaged them between his hands, loving the feel of the soft skin in his rough grasp.

She turned to peer at him over her shoulder. “The subject of you coming back with me to help us fight.”

“I am a businessman, not some jungle warrior as you seem to believe.”

“You are a Topétinian. Defending ourselves is as natural as breathing. I know you feel it, Devlin.”

“All I feel is this,” he said, slipping a finger between her globes. She squirmed a bit, which only made his cock harden more. If he let himself think closely for one minute, he’d realize how comfortable and totally, humanly normal this picture looked. So he didn’t.

"Your denial doesn't change the situation," she sighed, then spread her legs wider, surrendering to his touch.

"It's not my battle," he said, angry that all he wanted to do was explore every nuance of her body and talk of the life he didn't want to accept kept arising.

Her anus was a tight little bud, a tiny mouth opening up to him and he wanted to explore it, to lick her there, touch her there, fuck her there. The urge was real and thick, clogging his lungs as he tried to inhale. He rubbed his finger there.

"It is our heritage. Our line will die if the Kirok gain control."

That had him pausing. "Explain."

"Kieran wants us all to work for him. He wants to use us and sell us like weapons to the military and foreign agents. Our only choice is to kill the Kirok before they kill us."

"And my mother told you to come to me?"

"Your mother knows you are of warrior stock. You are powerful enough to beat the Kirok. She believes it and so do the Elders."

Unable to resist another second, Devlin leaned down and kissed both butt cheeks. Then with his tongue, he traced her tight sphincter. "Do you believe I'm that powerful?"

Gabriella lifted her hips from the bed, thrusting back into his touch. "You've certainly got some power over me."

## **Chapter Five**

Later, after all was said and done, Devlin would say that it was Gabriella's seduction that made him do it. That and the fact that no matter who or what she was, if his mother was in danger, he had no other choice but to help her.

Whatever the reason, it was just after noon when his private jet had been fueled and was taking off, headed for the Gungi Rain Forest in South America.

He'd spent the night with Gabriella in his arms. They'd talked and had sex, more sex in more ways than he'd experienced with any other woman he'd known. Yet that wasn't what warmed him today.

Today, for the first time in his life, he'd felt at ease. Through his teenage years Devlin had never bonded with anyone, his differences were far too real a threat. He always wondered what would happen if he inadvertently shifted and attacked one of the boys in the locker room. They'd always watched him after gym class as if they somehow knew his long, lean body wasn't all that it appeared to be.

One day in particular, he remembered how close he'd come to shifting and quite possibly destroying the life his father had planned for him. It was after a basketball game when he, along with the other eleven members of the team, had gone into the showers. Devlin had taken his faithful spot near the back wall, away from the others. There was laughter and jibing about fouls and missed plays. All the normal teenage guy stuff. But minutes later, when all but two of the other guys had left, the sound of water pounding the cracked cement floor grew louder.

Devlin began washing with faster strokes, as he had heard the rumors about Luke and Jamie, his fellow teammates. They were reportedly lovers. Devlin admitted, only to himself, that there had been times when he wondered what the two young men did together that gave everyone that impression. Today, he would find out.

Initially, he'd thought that they'd forgotten he was there, but when he turned off his nozzle and began to leave, Luke and Jamie turned from their embrace and called to him.

"Join us," Jamie, the tall Caucasian with raven black hair and sea blue eyes, had offered.

Devlin paused. The first question coming to his mind was if Jamie was serious, the second was if he, Devlin, was gay. The third was, why was his cock growing hard looking at the two naked guys embraced?

Luke's mother was from somewhere in Asia, his father a full Cherokee, so his skin was a dark burnt orange color that looked smooth to the touch. He and Jamie were about the same height, so their cocks, now hard and long, were directly aligned as they stood beneath the water.

"I have to go," Devlin remembered saying finally.

"C'mon, stay. Just for a little while," Jamie persisted.

Luke's hands moved down Jamie's back to cup his tight creamy cheeks. "You can just watch if you want."

"No," Devlin began, but had never moved to leave.

In the next moments, Jamie and Luke shared a kiss complete with tongues and teeth and groans. Devlin had been fascinated by their clearly masculine bodies entwined together. They were eighteen then and none of them were virgins, yet Devlin had never seen anything like this before. Jamie and Luke grabbed each other's cocks as they kissed, pulling the swollen lengths hard and roughly.

Devlin's own cock twitched until he'd had no other option but to touch himself. His balls grew heavy, the tip of his cock burning with want. But Devlin would not join in with the twosome. Instead he continued to watch, even when Jamie turned to face the wall of the shower and spread his butt cheeks wide. Luke stood a moment just gazing at what Jamie offered. He licked his lips repeatedly, Devlin remembered. So much so that Devlin had begun doing the same to his own lips.

When Jamie wiggled his ass, then slapped one cheek loudly, Luke grabbed his cock and moved between Jamie's legs. He pushed forward and both Jamie and Luke began to grunt. He pushed again and Jamie hissed through his teeth. With each push, Devlin noted another portion of Luke's cock disappearing into Jamie's anus. His own tight hole stung with jealousy and Devlin rubbed his thumb over his seeping slit. With another thrust and relieved gasps from both of them, Luke's cock finally slid completely into Jamie's ass.

Luke grabbed Jamie's hips and began to pump into him earnestly. And when Jamie turned his head in an attempt to see what Luke was doing to him, Luke roughly pushed Jamie's head down, instructing him to touch his toes and not move.

Devlin's chest constricted, his own hand mimicking the rough cock play he'd seen Jamie and Luke doing. Devlin couldn't believe he was jerking off to two boys fucking in the shower, but when Luke's thick cock pushed into Jamie's ass, he felt like he was going to lose control. His eyes eventually closed, opening his thoughts to his tight fist and how fast he could pump his wet cock into it. His release was pending, bubbling hot and fierce just beyond his taut testicles.

He heard the grunts and moans of Jamie and Luke, but didn't bother to see what they were doing. The smell of sex was heavy in the stall, rising with the steam from the still running water. Devlin pulled and jerked his cock until his wrist threatened to break with the strain. When he heard a low growl that wasn't his own, he opened his eyes to see that Jamie was jerking his cock too, as Luke continued to pound into his ass.

Then Luke howled, grasping Jamie's hips as he shot his cum in his ass. Jamie moaned and gritted his teeth as his release shot into the air, landing on the already wet walls. Devlin's release came in strong spurts that almost made him lose his balance.

And after the release, he'd wanted nothing more than to fall to the floor and shift. To run through the halls of that school to the outside, up and down the road out in the open air. While Jamie and Luke were kissing and sharing their sated state, Devlin's differences once again hit him. Now it seemed those differences were compounded. He

would never be totally human and there was no changing that. But he'd also enjoyed watching Luke and Jamie together, way more than a normal boy should. That caused him to wonder if the animal part of him also made him bisexual.

Now there was Gabriella. She was like him. She'd not only told him but showed him that was true. She was a beautiful jaguar, black and sleek and gorgeous. They'd shifted together last night—early this morning, rather—and run in his makeshift forest. It had been refreshing and rejuvenating and fun as hell to actually have another jaguar running beside him, jumping through the trees and frolicking.

But she wasn't for him to keep. Devlin knew that with as much certainty as he knew his name. She wanted something from him and once it was done she would stay in the forest while he would return to the city because, despite their similarities, he did not live in her world.

"Tell me about the forest," he said when his thoughts were too torturous to continue.

She had been lounging in the seat beside him, the black pantsuit she wore clinging lightly to her body. She had the lazy allure of a cat, complete with the languid movements and sensuous sighs. "It's beautiful. The lush green of the hills just beyond the spring are the best. I run there everyday."

"Do you have a house?"

She looked at him quizzically, then responded. "We all have homes, some of them are huts and others are caves. I prefer my hut, but there is a cave I use as a getaway."

"Are there many," he hesitated, "of you there?"

She placed her hand on top of his and gave him a genuine smile. "There are about sixty of us at present. There are only forty-five Kirok."

"Then what did you need me for? You clearly have them outnumbered."

“Most of the Topétinia are Elders who are now too old to fight. The women will fight, but you are from the strongest line of warriors. You and your mother are the only ones left of that line.”

“My mother will not fight,” Devlin said with an urgency that shocked even him.

“Larena has always done whatever was needed for the tribe. She will continue to do so.”

“She will not fight,” he said again, this time giving her a look that would stand for no argument.

Gabriella took the hint and stared out the window. So Devlin Decatur did have a heart after all. The rumors were that he hated his mother and her kind. Gabriella knew now that was not true. Nobody who hated their mother would travel thousands of miles to save her and her home. And to get so defensive at the thought of Larena participating in the battle, he loved her all right. And he would love the Gungi, Gabriella was sure of it.

Sure, she knew he'd been there before, but he was only a child then and he was seeing it through his father's distorted eyes. Now she would take this opportunity to show him the beauty of her home, of their home.

*That won't make him stay, a little voice reminded her. He is not yours to keep.*

That was fine. She didn't want to keep him. She wanted him to help save them and, yes, she wanted him to continue to do all those tantalizing things he did to her with his teeth and his tongue and his... But she did not want to keep him.

She'd known that was never an option. In his world, Devlin was a womanizer. He chewed women up and spit them out like three meals a day. He did not keep any of them, so why should she be any different? But his allure was strong. He possessed a magnificent body and was a skillful lover. No wonder the women flocked to him regardless of his reputation. For now, she would enjoy the spoils of Devlin Decatur and when this war was over, she would let him go back to his life in the city.



That was what he wanted.

That was what she wanted.

## Chapter Six

The mist was heavy, hovering over the water so that visibility was completely shot. Devlin moved in the raft, hoping he did not appear as uncomfortable as he felt.

Water churned around the small boat in angry spurts that threatened to turn them over completely. He could swim, so that wasn't his concern, but this was such a change from his city life that it would take some time for him to get used to. From the moment they stepped off his jet and into the jeep with the guide he'd hired – against Gabriella's wishes – to lead them through the forest, he'd been feeling very anxious. Almost like a kid on Christmas morning, except he wasn't really sure if what he was expecting was a good or bad thing.

Devlin sat on one side of the boat, stealing a glance at the woman responsible for bringing him here. She was beyond beautiful, he'd discovered in the early morning hours as she'd slept in his arms. Her creamy brown complexion was unmarred, casting a serenity over her that Devlin envied. She was a courageous one, this Gabriella Kincaid, Topétinian from the Gungi. She'd traveled thousands of miles to ask him to fight for her people. He admired her for that strength, that power over who and what she was.

Devlin didn't belong to either world, therefore he held no particular allegiance to anyone. Then why was he returning to the forest? To help the woman who had given birth to him.

That was the only reason. Not because he was becoming accustomed to being in the company of the insatiable Gabriella.

If he inhaled but a little, he could pick up her scent. It was imbedded in his mind as if from the first smelling she'd be forever a part of him. God, he hoped not. This attraction to her needed to wear off soon, before he had to leave her.

She looked out into the mist as if she could see through it perfectly well. And, he thought cynically, she probably could. She'd lived in the forest all her life. When Devlin had questioned how the village survived and what they did for their supplies, she'd given him a brief synopsis of how she made trips into the South American cities to acquire the things needed. There was no use denying the spurt of jealousy he'd felt when she'd mentioned how she repaid some of the merchants for their goods. The thought of another man touching her caused his insides to churn.

He shouldn't be so possessive of her, shouldn't think that once he'd touched her, nobody else could, yet he did.

Jairo, the guide Devlin hired, jumped out of the boat and pulled it the rest of the way until the front half was nestled in a thicket of trees. Gabriella threw Devlin his bag and began walking, glancing over her shoulder as she did.

She had a teasing smile, a come-and-get-me smile, that Devlin was becoming quite used to. He grabbed his stuff and descended behind her, being careful to keep his gaze off her voluptuous ass as he did.

Rain fell steadily, reducing the already low visibility to almost none. As his feet hit what he believed was the ground Devlin stifled a groan. His two hundred dollar hiking boots were sinking into the soggy earth.

"We should head east," Jairo said with authority.

"No," Gabriella responded and began walking in the other direction. "I know the way."

Devlin moved quickly to keep from losing sight of her. "Gabriella, Jairo is a great guide. Hell, he's the best money can buy."

"Then you follow him," she tossed coldly over her shoulder. "I told you before, I know my way home."

With a grim look and a note to kick himself later for not realizing her point, Devlin nodded to Jairo to follow her.

She was stalking along, pushing branches or whatever it was that draped low enough to come swatting back at him as he followed closely behind her. She was angry, he could tell from the square set of her shoulders. And she probably had every right to be. He should have listened to her when she said they didn't need a guide. But the man in him wasn't ready to relinquish control to a woman. No matter how sexy that woman was.

\* \* \* \* \*

They had been walking for what Gabriella was sure Devlin thought was hours. From behind, she could hear the conversation between him and his hired guide. She purposely ignored them both.

How dare he hire someone to guide *her* through *her* forest. She'd lived here all her life and if he hadn't been such a daddy's boy, he'd have lived here too...at least part of the time. Okay, so she wasn't just angry that he'd hired a guide. She was also angry that he'd stayed away so long. That it had taken this catastrophe to bring him back. Each time they'd talked, she'd tried to get him to open up and share the reason why he'd come to the forest only once and never again. Why he'd left his mother without so much as a letter or a telegram. But he hadn't spoken of it.

Yes, she realized from the fact that he had finally agreed to come back with her that buried deep down, under the layers of Armani and Swiss bank accounts, Devlin really did care for his mother. But she wanted to know the why, the reason behind these years of neglect on his part.

Because that's what it was to her, plain and simple. Being Topétinian was a part of his heritage. It was a lineage to be proud of, not run from. At least, it was for her. She'd never known any other life and didn't want to. She was born and raised in this forest and would build her family here, would die here.

The latter was what had her just a little bit shaken.

"We shouldn't go any further," Jairo said.

Gabriella looked back to see that the man had stopped. The mist was lifting just lightly, so that silhouettes, but not details, could be seen of each man following behind her. Devlin had stopped as well, looking from Jairo to her.

"It is through this brush and over the spring," she said slowly to Devlin. She could care less what the hired man did.

To his credit, Devlin only paused another second before following her, leaving Jairo, who had hastily turned back. Gabriella pushed forward, moving over familiar territory, trying like hell not to turn around. He was closer behind her this time, she could almost hear his heartbeat, her senses were so aware of him. He looked delectable in his black jeans and fitted black t-shirt. On the plane she'd valiantly ignored his blatant sexuality, even when she thought it would kill her to do so. And from the moment they hit land, they hadn't been alone, so keeping her mind focused on things other than sex hadn't been too difficult.

But now they were in the thick of the forest, the dense trees and foliage that hid the Topétinian village. Her heart hammered in her chest as she wondered how Devlin would react to the tribe and how they would react to him.

Another few steps and they'd be at the spring; once they swam down to the deepest point and through the tunnel, they'd be in Topétinian territory. Gabriella stopped and turned to Devlin. This might be the last moment they had alone before both their lives changed forever. If she had to acclimate herself to not being able to keep him here, she needed some sort of consolation.

He'd been so close that the moment she turned, he was right there, his warm breath fanning over her forehead. She tilted her head just slightly so that they were now glaring into each other's eyes. His were dark and intense as she tried to read what he was thinking.

His hands instantly came to her hips as if her thoughts had been laid bare for him. He pulled her close, locking their bodies together in the center, his thick erection already probing between her legs.

Gabriella did not hesitate, but rubbed her mons against his groin in open invitation. She should say something intelligent first, make some vain attempt at confirming that this would be their last time. "Devlin..." her words trailed off when his lips came down over hers in a deliciously hot encounter.

His mouth devoured hers in scorchingly wet kisses. His tongue lapped at hers, pulling her bottom lip into his mouth to suckle, then stroking boldly over her teeth. Then he was nipping, no, biting her chin and the line of her jaw. He sucked her earlobe, then moved down to her neck. Her body was on fire for him as she lifted a leg and locked it around his waist.

"Need...you...now!" he growled into her ear as his hand cupped her butt, pressing his hard cock into her dripping cunt.

"Wait," she said, shaking her head as if it would clear her mind of him. That was no use, since the moment she stepped into that building and spotted him from across the room, she'd known he was for her. Whether or not the arrangement was meant to be temporary, she had no clue, but it was a fact.

"No! Now!" His persistent kisses, the tight squeeze he gave her butt and the insistent ramming of his groin into her not only made her stumble, but enunciated his words.

"Over there," she managed to mumble between kisses. Tearing her mouth away from his, she came down on both feet and grabbed his hand, leading him to the place she'd never shared with anyone.

There was no hesitation as Gabriella moved swiftly beneath a tree canopy made of dicotyledons. Although the rain still came in steady sheets, they were no longer getting wet. Their booted feet stamped the soggy layer of humus and fallen leaves as she took Devlin further into her sanctuary. With a swipe of her hand, vines, bromeliads and ferns gave way and the opening to her haven was revealed.

She turned to look at Devlin while overhead monkeys, flying squirrels and sharp-clawed woodpeckers sang a forest litany. His face was tense, his expression focused.

She squeezed his hand and bent down to take the first step into the cave. The dimensions of the cave were somewhere around five feet high and seven feet wide so they ended up on their knees until they reached the back of the cave that spanned out into a fifteen foot clearing.

It was damp and dark, only the sounds of the stream that ran along the clay walls around them echoing throughout. Gabriella watched as Devlin took in his surroundings and waited for his response. When none came, she spoke, "I come here often when I need to be alone."

Still, Devlin did not speak. Instead he moved to the nearest wall and lifted his hands to touch. Gabriella held her breath as she realized what he felt for. "Just like in your office," she said quietly.

He kept his back to her as he spoke. "I have a room in my basement like this. I keep it locked."

"So no one will ever find out what you truly are." It was a statement and not a question. Devlin was ashamed of his Topétinian heritage. That realization never failed to sadden Gabriella.

As if he sensed the pain in her voice, Devlin turned to her. "It is not the same for me. I did not grow up here. I don't have that connection that you do."

On her hands and knees Gabriella crossed to him, her gaze locked with his. She felt like she was in her jaguar form as the muscles in her back bunched, the predatory feel engulfing her. "You have it, Devlin. You just have to be open to receive it."

He came down onto his hands and knees, mimicking her stance until they were face to face. Tilting and leaning slightly forward, he touched his lips to hers. Gabriella eagerly kissed him back, nipping his bottom lip, then dueling her tongue with his.

Low growls rumbled in each of their chests as they remained connected only at the mouth. Devlin pulled away first, glaring at her hungrily, his chest heaving. Gabriella sat back on her knees and removed her backpack and jacket. The t-shirt she wore beneath

the jacket came next. She very rarely wore underwear, even though her heavy breasts probably warranted differently. The cool air hit her nipples and they puckered.

Devlin's gaze had dropped, resting keenly on her breasts. Lifting both hands, Gabriella palmed her magnificent mounds, holding their weight up in invitation. With slow strokes, her thumbs covered the dark brown of her nipples. They were hard now, painfully so, and she pinched them, pulling her hands away, then letting her heaving breasts drop back against her body. Devlin's breathing hitched, his mouth opening slightly.

He looked like a hungry beast about to drool at the sight of his evening meal.

Gabriella let her hand slip seductively down her torso, pausing at the button of her jeans. Quickly undoing them, her hand moved further south until she felt her own damp curls. Pushing further, she sighed at the warm heat engulfing her fingers, then scooped along her thick labia and pulled her hand out. Extending her arm to him, Gabriella offered Devlin her finger, slick with her pussy juices.

And as expected, he pounced.

It was a quick move, a graceful jump from where he stood rock still to where her hand hovered for his enjoyment. Bending his head, he licked each finger, his hot tongue flicking over her skin, causing shards of pleasure to shoot through her body. When he'd licked her clean, Gabriella pulled her hand away from his grasp. He looked up at her in alarm, his lips curling back as he growled.

Her heart pumped at the sight and she sat back to remove her shoes and jeans. Devlin was licking his lips, moving toward her with slow precision. Lying on her back, Gabriella planted her feet firmly on the ground, spread her legs and leaned back on her arms, watching, waiting.

Like the natural predator he was, Devlin growled in victory as he came between her legs. Using his head, he nudged her knees further apart until they were almost flattened on the ground, her pussy open wide for him. Dipping his head again, he extended his



long tongue and licked her languidly from her ass to her clit. She did not move but felt her bones melting at the intense pleasure.

Again and again he licked her as if he thought to drink all of her essence. But with each lick, Gabriella grew damper, her juices flowing steadily like the stream outside the cave. When Devlin finally lifted his head to stare at her, his face shone with her arousal.

“We are connected, Devlin. Don’t you feel it?”

His answer was to tear off his t-shirt and the rest of his clothes until he bent over her, his dark body glistening with sweat. From the thick pulsing veins in his neck to the massive swells of his biceps down to the corded precision of his stomach and thick strength of his thighs, Devlin’s muscles bunched and flexed. As if she could have resisted, Gabriella’s gaze fell to his cock, the long, rigid length that had her pussy pumping more juice.

“I want you to feel it, Devlin. I want you to feel me.”

Devlin gritted his teeth and she watched the war within him. Her heart ached for the indecision, the confusion and swelled with the hope. Lifting her hands, she reached for him and waited with bated breath for him to come to her.

He fell on top of her, kissing her feverishly, his hands moving frantically over her body as if he couldn’t figure out what part to touch and for how long. They kissed hungrily, rolling over the cool, wet ground, numb to everything but the building heat between them.

His muscled thigh slipped between her legs, her juicy pussy sliding along its taut length as Devlin rolled onto his back. He lowered his legs and she straddled him, dropping her wet pussy down onto the spot where corded muscles gave way to dark hair. He grasped her at the hips and watched with clouded eyes as she pulled herself up to a sitting position.

Again she grabbed her tits, biting her bottom lip as she stared down at him. “Tell me what you feel, Devlin. Right now. At this moment, what do you feel?”

He opened his mouth to speak, then pressed his fingers deeply into her flesh. "Never," he grunted. "I've never wanted like this. Never needed like this."

Gabriella sighed with relief. He was opening himself to it, to her, finally. "It is the forest, darling. The sweet, erotic scent of mating in the forest." She rotated her hips as if he were already buried deep inside her.

One of his hands slipped from her hip to the crease of her butt and parted the cushiony flesh, delving between the delectable barriers. "It's raw and..." his words trailed off as his finger found her pussy and dipped inside. "And so fucking wet." He gritted his teeth and thrust another finger into her soaking cunt.

Gabriella moved over his fingers, loving the feel of him scraping against her walls. His long cock tapped against her butt and she squeezed her breasts harder. Devlin's other hand had joined the first one and he now had four fingers deeply embedded in her, two from each hand. Gabriella bounced up and down on his fingers, moaning at myriad sensations coursing through her body from his finger fucking, his cock rubbing enticingly up and down the crease of her ass and her fingers flicking and pinching her breasts.

Her head fell back and she moaned in pleasurable pain. "It could be like this always," she whispered, but didn't register if Devlin heard her or not.

When she thought she couldn't take this blissful ride any longer, Devlin lifted her slightly, holding her pussy wide open over his jutting cock, then eased her down onto its length.

It was a slow torture, him moving into her inch by inch. His cock was thick and stretched her walls to the fullest. And she loved it. Every excruciatingly slow inch of him going deeper and deeper still, she could not have been happier. When he bottomed out and his balls rested against her curly pubic hairs, she sighed.

"I love your ass," he commented, then proceeded to knead her cheeks roughly.

Gabriella did a rotation of her hips and received a hissing sound from him in acknowledgement. He was cupping her ass cheeks, squeezing and molding them with feverish persistence. Her nipples burned as her clit pulsed and she began to ride.

It was slow at first, because she wanted to savor every moment. Small rotations that had her walls grasping his cock, then light up and downs that stretched her wider, creamed her pussy even more.

Then the action picked up. Her slow up and downs switched to her bouncing on his cock so hard her tits flapped and swayed. The squishing sound of his cock moving through her coated walls echoed in the cave.

"Yeah, fuck this cock," he said through gritted teeth.

"Yes!" she yelled, bouncing harder, taking all his cock in at once, then letting it out and slamming down on the swollen rod again and again.

So in tune to riding his cock, Gabriella didn't even feel his fingers slip into her ass, but when he started to pump that hole the way his cock was pumping the other one, her entire body erupted. He was stretching both holes now, creaming her from both ends and she loved it. "Harder!" she heard herself yelling frantically.

She was so close, so desperately close to falling over the edge. She could smell it, the hot, acidic smell of cum rising within, swirling like lava in a volcano, ready to ooze out in sweet satisfaction. And with Devlin's fingers in her ass and his cock in her pussy, she erupted, strong, powerful and potent.

She'd gotten hers, Devlin thought triumphantly, then switched their positions so that he could claim the same prize. Once again Gabriella was on her knees. Damn, he loved her in this position. Her perfectly round ass was upturned for his perusal. With long, luscious licks, he tasted the smooth skin, then smacked each cheek and sat back to watch it shake. His cock jutted with excitement.

He spread her cheeks and salivated at the hole he'd just plundered. "Soon, baby," he whispered as he licked his finger and ran it along the puckered entrance of her ass. "Soon, I'm going to claim you there."

But not right now. Right now his cock ached for release. Grabbing his thick, hot length, he aimed and pushed it into her still dripping pussy. She sighed, then growled. He loved to hear her growl. It was animalistic and sexy and drove him mad. With a palm to the base of her back, he pushed her down until her face was on the ground, her ass rubbing against his stomach as his cock buried deep inside her.

He pumped, felt his bones in his back beginning to crack and pumped again. With fierce, deep strokes, he fucked her. His fingers dug into her skin, his claws burning to extend, to tear into her. Harder he pushed his cock into her, her warmth and wetness clouding his mind. He felt so big inside her, so thick and so intensely good as she clutched him tighter.

Sweat poured from his brow, dripping onto her, the sound of their flesh slapping against each other making him even harder still.

Then she growled. It began low, then grew louder. He knew she was coming again. He heard himself growling with her as he thrust so hard he feared he'd break his hips. His cum tore from him in a steaming explosion, filling her, then seeping out the sides to drip onto her legs.

Devlin could not move. He could not think.

She was right, there was a connection. One that he was deathly afraid he would not be able to break, no matter how strong she thought him to be.

## **Chapter Seven**

Larena Decatur moved about the small hut she called a home with grace and efficiency. She was so focused on her tasks that she barely heard their entrance. But when she sensed a familiar closeness, she turned, her light hazel eyes meeting the dense darkness of her son's.

Her lips quivered into a smile as she tried to figure out if he would accept a hug or if she should keep her distance. He took a step forward and she decided to hell with her uncertainty. With a ragged cry, she threw her arms around this broad man who had once been her precious little boy.

Stunned for a moment, then engulfed by new, nameless emotions, Devlin wrapped his arms around this person who did not have the look of a great warrior jaguar. Instead she appeared in the body of a woman who had seen her share of life's trials and tribulations. Devlin couldn't help but wonder how much of that had come at the hands of his father, or himself, for that matter.

"I didn't think you'd come," Larena whispered as she released him and took a tentative step back.

Devlin smoothed down strands of her dark hair, then pulled his hand away as if he had no right. "Gabriella is very persuasive," he said in an attempt at humor.

From behind, Gabriella smiled, happy that the tiny opening she'd felt in the cave with Devlin only hours before seemed to be spreading. "He is a man who respects duty, Larena. Just as I told you he would."

Larena nodded. "Your father was that way. He was an honorable man."

Devlin noticed the haunted look that entered her eyes as she spoke of his father and wished he could take away all the bad things he was sure Stanford had done or said to her. "He was a hard man who did not understand what could not be easily explained."

Larena only smiled. "I should have told him in the beginning."

Gabriella interjected. "He should have loved you enough to want to understand, no matter when you decided to tell him."

Devlin looked between both women, wondering on which side he should stand. His father had told him how his mother had deceived him and how that deceit had born him. Stanford never made it a secret from Devlin that he was disappointed that his son was not a whole man. And, as such, Devlin had decided to be as whole a man as he could, for his father and for himself. It was the best choice, his father had told him, the only civilized choice. Devlin had wholeheartedly believed him. Until now.

Seeing his mother again was doing something to him. It was attacking feelings and emotions that had long been locked away. At first, when Gabriella had begun to touch on those emotions, he'd known he could lock them away from her, she was just a woman after all. But Larena was his mother and a mother-son bond had no rival. "I am sorry for whatever pain he may have caused you. I should have been strong enough to protect you from him," he finally admitted.

Larena used the edge of her apron to dab away at the tears. "You were only a child. Stanford did what he thought was best to protect you."

"Denying him his heritage was not protecting him," Gabriella spat.

Again Devlin turned to her. In the short time he'd known her, he'd never heard her speak with such vehemence. It both shocked and aroused him.

"Gabriella," a stern voice sounded and all three of them turned to the door. "Leave them for a while. They have a lot to catch up on."

To Devlin's continued amazement, Gabriella gave a brief nod and conceded, "You are right, Elder Brock. I will go." And with only a brief look at Devlin, she slipped through a cloth covering and out of view.

The man she'd addressed as Elder Brock walked toward him. He was a tall man, like Devlin, but his skin was shades lighter, his eyes an intense green that rivaled only Gabriella's.

"He has a good look, Larena."

The man spoke succinctly, looking at Devlin as if he were a piece of merchandise instead of a man. He circled Devlin, then reached out and touched his shoulders as if measuring him up. "He will fight well."

"He is of the Topétinia warrior lineage, Brock. There was never any question about his strength."

"No," Elder Brock agreed, "the question was of his loyalty. I will leave you two to handle those details."

And then he was gone, just like that, through the same door he'd come. Devlin barely had time to register the comings and goings of the last few seconds when his mother touched a hand to his cheek.

"You are a great Topétinian warrior, Devlin. I can see the struggle in your eyes and I know that is partly my fault."

"No," he began, but she shushed him with a wave of her hand.

"Let's sit. Are you hungry?"

"No. I am fine," he said, but noticed that she pulled out a basket of bread and a decanter, then put them both on the table before sitting down and motioning for him to join her.

"Eat something. You must keep up your strength."

Devlin obediently did as he was told.

"When your father took you away, I was devastated. I'd not only lost the love of my life, but I'd lost my only child as well. You don't know how badly I wanted to come for you."

"Why didn't you?" Devlin asked between bites of the freshest, tastiest bread he'd ever had.

"Your father was a powerful man. I could not fight him in his world and he was determined that you be brought up in a human civilization."

Devlin took a swallow of the liquid he now deciphered was very, very strong wine. "This doesn't look uncivilized to me," he said, noting their surroundings.

Larena smiled. "No. On the outside I don't guess it does. But it is what happens at other times that concerned Stanford most."

"I've studied the jaguar people," he admitted almost shyly. "When I first learned to shift, I wanted to know everything I could about them. They date back to the Mayans and the lost city of Tikal. The name Topétinia deriving from the Brazilian Goddess Topétine, the goddess of fire who was represented by the jaguar."

"Yes, *we* do. It is from a very strong and powerful line that we come. And we've managed to survive on this earth when many species have not. That says something about us."

"It says you've been very lucky."

"No. It says we are meant to be."

"Until now. Until this new threat. I did some preliminary research on Kieran Jentsy. He's a rich and powerful man in the US. He's genetically engineered a species of killers. There is a very real possibility that he will win."

Her hands shook visibly as she flattened them on the table. "And that is why you must help us."

"I don't know how I can," he admitted.

"You can defeat them. Without Kieran, the Kirok cannot exist. He feeds them through his computer programs and nobody knows how to do it but him."

"Then why haven't you just killed him to be done with it?"

"He is not that easy to get to. His Kirok protect him well from us. But you, you are different. Your differences can work to our advantage."

Gabriella had told him this as well. "Because I am more human."



"Yes. Kieran does not know you as a Topétinian. Because you never lived here, you were not a part of his study. He knows our hunting strategy, our habits and he is ready for us. You, however, have an advantage. The element of surprise."

Devlin was quickly following her line of thought and could see the possibilities. It should have been strange sitting in this small hut, in the middle of the Gungi Rainforest, speaking to this woman who had given birth to him of killing a man. Back in the states, this would be plotting a murder, a crime which, if successfully carried out, would be punishable by death.

"I've never killed a man."

Larena covered his hand with hers. "It is in your nature to hunt and to kill. I know that is not what you were taught in your father's world, but this is a part of you. A part that has long been denied. You must embrace it or we will all die."

Devlin stood and paced, rubbing a hand down his face as he moved. "This is not what I had planned for my life."

"Really?" Larena asked curiously. "And what did you have planned, Devlin? Did you want to become a rich and important businessman like your father? Did you want to fall in love with a woman, marry her, impregnate her and then leave her the moment you found out she wasn't what you thought? Is that what your goals were?"

"I would always know a woman's difference because I have my own. And no, my life did not include a woman or a child or any of those entanglements that would slowly eat me alive." He sighed heavily.

"That's what you did to him. He was angry all the time. At me, at you, at the hand life had dealt him. He couldn't stand the turmoil and so he worked harder and lived less. Until one day, he just couldn't take it any longer and he died." Devlin felt waves of relief as he said what he'd never been able to tell a soul. Stanford Decatur had died a miserably heartbroken man and Devlin could never have helped him.

Larena sat at the table, quietly crying. "It could have been different. I tried to tell him that."

“How?” Devlin roared. “Was he supposed to come and live in this forest with you? Or were you supposed to remain cooped up in a huge house with only a makeshift forest in your backyard to assuage this primal need that lives within? How could that have possibly worked?” He needed to know, because so far it wasn’t working for him.

“If he’d loved me enough, it would have worked,” she answered quietly. “Because when you love someone that much, when you need them with every fiber of your being, when you just can’t stand to live without them, you make it work. You have no other choice.”

Her words tore at his heart, but his father’s misery remained clear in his mind. “I will always have a choice,” he said, then stalked outside.

\* \* \* \* \*

On the other side of the curtain, in the room where Larena slept, Gabriella wept. Devlin was right, he would always have a choice and Gabriella was painfully aware that one of his choices would be to leave.

Since meeting Devlin, Gabriella had given a lot of thought to her life and what her future held. Devlin was the savior of the Topétinia. She was certain that he would fulfill his destiny.

What she wasn’t so sure about was what she would do when the battle was over. Her feelings for him were much stronger than they should have been, a fact that could only lead to heartache.

Devlin was from the city. He was the CEO of a huge company. He was rich and handsome and sexy. He no doubt had friends and...Gabriella wondered if she could compete with that.

Her home was here in the forest, but she could walk among the humans alongside Devlin in his big-city life, she was sure. The question was, did she really want to? Did she want to give up everything she’d always known and loved to be with this man?

Unfortunately, her brain offered one answer – her heart another.

## Chapter Eight

The forest was now cloaked in darkness. The nocturnal inhabitants singing their praise in welcome.

Devlin, however, was too restless to pay any of it much attention.

After speaking with his mother, he'd walked around the village trying to get a handle on the lifestyle here, the people. A few of the tribe welcomed him, expressing their deepest gratitude that he'd come to help. He hadn't the strength to tell them he wasn't sure he'd be able to do what they wanted.

Tosheva, the granddaughter of Elder Brock, had come to show him to his hut. She was a beauty, her golden skin sun-kissed and perfect along with the yellow-gold coloring of her eyes. Devlin found himself wondering how she looked in her jaguar form. Would her fur be the darkest chocolate color with faint black spots or would it be pitch black like Gabriella's?

Just the thought of Gabriella had his body trembling with need. He hadn't seen her since she'd left him and his mother alone and he missed her. Yes, for the first time in his life, Devlin admitted – albeit only to himself – that he missed a woman. How in such a short time she'd become such an important part of his life he did not know, but his mind was full of too many questions for him to entertain them all at once.

So he lay down on the bed, the thin netting covering its circumference, protecting him from the mosquitoes, he presumed. That was not the only thing he needed protection from.

Kieran and the Kirok were hunting him. They were hunting the Topétinia. Devlin needed to decide how he was going to handle that. His mother and the tribe wanted him to kill Kieran. To hunt him down and kill him in cold blood. To them, this was the answer to the Kirok threat. And as part Topétinian, Devlin could relate to their logic.

But as a human, he was inclined to consider other options. Hunting and killing was not a viable solution in the world in which he chose to live. And while he knew he was on different territory here, he couldn't help but consider that other options were still available. As he'd told his mother, he always had a choice.

So he would arrange a meeting with Kieran. At the root of everything, the man was about business and his business was about making money. Devlin would offer to buy the Kirok from him. That would put an end to the threat.

Certain in the fact that he'd come up with a viable solution to save the Topétinia and not sacrifice his human instincts, Devlin had just settled down to try and get some sleep when something black and sleek came through the window, landing with a thump at the bottom of his bed.

He sat up instantly, only to be pushed back down by heavy paws on his chest. Strong jaws opened, baring sharp canines.

It only took a second for him to recognize her. It was the intense yellow-green eyes that gave her away. That and her scent. Devlin would know the smell of his woman anywhere. With a start, he reconsidered that thought. *Was Gabriella his woman?*

"What is it?" he asked, sensing her tremor. Her chest heaved as she panted. He lifted a hand to her head, brushing past her ears. She was drenched, excited and afraid. "Where have you been?"

Rubbing her head against his palm, Gabriella stretched, shifting into human form with ease. His fingers tangled in her hair and Devlin lifted his other hand to cup her face bringing her closer. "Tell me what's wrong, Gabriella."

"They are here," she whispered. "The Kirok are in the forest near the spring."

"You saw them?"

She nodded.

"You were out there with them alone? Why didn't you tell me you were going? You should not have been alone," he roared.

Gabriella sat up atop him, pushing her hair out of her eyes. "I've been roaming this forest all my life. I don't need a city slicker like you to come along and protect me."

Her words were curt, a little more than was probably necessary, but Devlin decided to chalk it up to the imminent danger he sensed. "If they're near the spring, that doesn't exactly mean they know how to find the village."

She smirked, then climbed off him to walk naked across the floor. "I know you don't believe that. Kieran has studied us for years. He knows exactly how to get to the village. He knows our weaknesses and how to exploit them."

Devlin had turned to sit on the side of the bed, his legs spread wide, his feet on the floor. She was glorious. Her body silhouetted only by the slither of moonlight that was able to peek through the trees. Her hair was long and straight, her breasts high and heavy, her butt...God, he loved her butt. His cock rose to attention without any further coercing.

"They're coming and I need to know what you plan to do. Will you fight for us? Or will you go back to your big mansion and fancy cars?"

Damn, she needed to stop walking. The more he watched her curves in motion, the harder he became. This was a hell of a time to be distracted. He cleared his throat. "I have a plan."

She stopped and turned to him, her hands on her hips. A more alluring pose he couldn't have conjured in his own mind. "What plan? What are you going to do?"

He stood, walked to her and placed his hands on her shoulders. His fingers tingled to touch her in other places. "Don't worry about it. I'll take care of it. You should get some rest."

Gabriella planted her palms on his chest and pushed him away. "Rest? How can you say that? I want to know what's going on so I can help."

"No. I will handle it alone."

“You will not! This is my tribe and my home. If we must depend on an outsider to protect us, that’s one thing, but I will not sit idly by and do nothing.”

Devlin frowned at her words. “Since when did I become an outsider? Weren’t you the one who came to me and said I was one of you?”

“You are, I guess, to some extent,” she stumbled over her words. “But my point is you don’t have to do it alone.”

He was staring at her, but she wouldn’t look directly at him. She looked at his shoulders, at his abs, over his shoulder, to the wall behind him. She never once looked at him. “What’s wrong, Gabriella?”

“I’ve already told you what’s wrong. We need to get prepared. We need to be ready when they come.”

She’d begun pacing again and Devlin hooked her around the waist, bringing her backside up against his front. “Am I making you nervous?” he whispered into her ear when he finally had her still.

“No,” she whispered, then tried to move out of his grasp.

“Do you not want me to touch you anymore?”

“No,” she whimpered. “I mean, yes. I mean...”

One hand held her firmly in place while the other palmed her breast, squeezing until her nipple was trapped between his thumb and forefinger. “What do you want?”

That was a loaded question if she’d ever heard one. But Gabriella was sure that what her traitorous heart desired could never be, so she answered, “I want you to let me go so we can deal with the Kirok.”

If he sensed that she was lying she could not tell and they were interrupted by the wild shrieks and commotion coming from outside.

“What is that?” he asked, but refused to let her go.

“It is a warning. The Kirok are in the village.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Devlin ran alongside Gabriella, who had shifted once more into jaguar form. He did not shift, determined to deal with this situation without killing. She'd told him that the Elders who could not fight, along with the cubs, were being moved to the temple while everyone else prepared to fight. The tribe would handle the Kirok, but Devlin was instructed to go directly to Kieran, to kill the source.

Around him there was pandemonium. There was the incessant rain and a strong breeze that had come from out of nowhere. And then there were the animals; flying squirrels, monkeys, birds, snakes. Any and everything that inhabited the rainforest had been awakened and was either scattering about the ground or screeching through the sky in outrage. Devlin noted that he was the only human among them.

Out of the corner of his eye, he caught a movement. Stopping, he turned toward a dense patch of trees and followed his instinct. Someone was running, a human, not an animal, Devlin noted from the footprints. Kieran. Of course he would want to see the demise of the Topétinia in person. He followed Kieran deeper into the forest with Gabriella beside him. He'd run for what felt like miles, his lungs burned in protest. When he couldn't go another inch he stopped. Bending forward, he struggled to catch his breath. Seconds later, Gabriella had circled back and now nudged him with her sweaty nose.

By all accounts, Kieran seemed to be a smart man. He would not have come out of hiding if it didn't serve a purpose for him. It was a trap.

"We should go back and help the tribe," he said.

Gabriella paused. He looked down into her bright eyes, knowing she was probably arguing with him again.

"You wanted me here to save them. The Kirok are at the village. We'll get Kieran later." He turned in the direction from which he thought he'd come, intending to go back and help the tribe left at the village. But one aspect of the forest looked just like the one he'd turned away from. Twisting in a circle, he swore.

With a growl from behind, Gabriella claimed his attention, then began trotting in the opposite direction. She looked pissed at the change in plan, but saw his logic. He followed behind her.

Devlin was thinking fiercely when he smelled smoke. Inhaling again to make sure, he looked up to the sky. Birds were scattering as thick dark clouds of smoke rose. His gut told him it was the village as he continued to pant, trying to keep up with Gabriella, who had taken to the trees to travel. Dammit, he'd never make it there this way. Without another thought, he stripped off his clothes and shifted, taking to the forest as if he'd always lived there, his keen feline instincts joining with Gabriella's in a union that confused and scared him.

When they arrived in the village, it was to a sight much different than when they'd left it. There were no more scattering creatures and the jaguars he saw were either wounded or tired from the fight. He searched the wounded, pain searing through his chest that his mother might be one of them. Pushing forward when he didn't find Larena, he moved closer to the temple that was now on fire.

He leapt forward without another thought, crashing through a wall engulfed in flames. Ignoring the scorching heat, Devlin searched the building, finding nothing in the wake of the fire. The rain fell in steady sheets, tempering some of the fire, and Devlin finally left the building deflated and confused. Coming down from the steps of the temple, Devlin looked up to see Gabriella running toward him in her human form.

"They're gone. All of them are gone," she said sadly.

He shifted and grabbed her by the shoulders. "Where are they?"

She shivered and he pulled her closer. A tear slipped down her cheek and her lips trembled. "The Kirok took them. They knew they'd be here seeking refuge and they took them. The Elders are the center of our tribe. Without them, we are lost."

"All of the Elders are gone?" Devlin asked, anger at himself for leaving the village growing steadily.



Gabriella could only nod. Then the sobs broke free and she rested her head on his shoulder. "Larena was with them."

His body stiffened.

Gabriella pulled away and looked him in the eye. "They took your mother, Devlin."

## Chapter Nine

Even human instinct warned that death was the only recourse.

Devlin's rage grew with every second that he tracked the Kirok through the forest. His muscles bunched with his movements from branch to branch. Senses that he'd never known to be so keen guided him. The scent of another jaguar was strong, the stench of their computerized genetics was even stronger.

Gabriella was behind him. He'd tried to make her stay, but in the end abandoned that fight for the more important one. He had to find Kieran and he had to kill him. That was not open for negotiation at this point. His mother's life depended on him and he would not let her down the way his father had.

They came across Kieran's camp, two state-of-the-art trailers parked end to end in the large clearing just before the river's bank. From their perch in the trees, Devlin and Gabriella watched. Two jaguars guarded the door of the first trailer. Devlin figured this was where Kieran was keeping the captured Elders and his mother. It wasn't a bright move on Kieran's part, but Devlin wasn't about to complain. The sooner they got this over with, the better.

He looked over to Gabriella, capturing her golden gaze and holding it. They communicated so easily in their jaguar form. He'd noticed that earlier, but refused to give it much thought. Now he needed to tell her to proceed with caution. Though he'd never hunted like this before, his manly instinct was to protect her and rescue the Topétinian Elders.

The thought of Gabriella being hurt, or worse, killed, was more than he wanted to deal with right now. So pushing those thoughts into the back of his mind, Devlin kept staring at her silently, informing her of his plan.

On the branch across from him, Gabriella nodded, then bent her head and sniffed the air. Devlin mimicked her, smelling the strange stench. It was the Kirok, he thought suddenly. This was how you could tell them from the Topétinia—the true jaguar people. It burned his nose, like a chemical or something. Actually, it smelled like gasoline, Devlin thought. But at least this way they would be perfectly sure that the jaguars they killed were not of their tribe.

Without warning, Gabriella leapt from the branch, landing silently on the damp forest floor. Devlin had wanted to strike first, but should have known Gabriella would take whatever chance was offered. She was proud and courageous. Realizing that those were traits he admired in her, Devlin leapt down behind her, watching her back as she stalked her prey.

The first Kirok sat on its haunches, his back facing the door of the trailer. In the distance, a Tamarin screeched in fear. A Great Horned Owl hooted with warning. Devlin instinctively knew the animals were warning the Topétinians and the other forest animals of an ensuing danger. The danger he and Gabriella were undoubtedly approaching.

Hanging back, Devlin watched as Gabriella crouched low to the ground, her dark fur blending seamlessly with the foliage-covered earth. Moving slowly on her stomach, she came within two feet of the Kirok before the other animal turned at a sound. Devlin's back hunched, his teeth bared. He was ready to pounce.

But Gabriella was quick and fierce. Within seconds, she'd leapt onto the Kirok, sinking her teeth viciously into the clone's back. The Kirok jerked and tossed Gabriella to the ground. Devlin came out of his predatory stance instantly, running to her rescue. He was stopped when the second Kirok prepared to join in the battle.

With a precision that to outsiders most likely resembled practiced choreography, Devlin and Gabriella both fought the cloned jaguars, taking them down quickly, then pulling their carcasses into the trees.

The battle hadn't brought any other Kirok from the trailers. Devlin sensed that was due to all the noise the forest inhabitants created as a deterrent.

This had been Devlin's first kill, the coppery taste of blood still lingering on his tongue, but all he could think about now was knocking down that door and snapping Kieran's neck. Gabriella obviously had the same idea, because she was already at the door. He nudged her aside.

After seeing her fight that Kirok, he didn't think his heart could take another round of seeing her in danger. So he ignored her growl of protest, then stood on his haunches and pounded his full weight against the door. The trailer shook against his assault and gunshots rang out. Devlin quickly backed away from the door. Nodding toward Gabriella, they both stood to the side as the door flew open and Kieran stepped out. He held a gun in one hand while dragging Larena by the hair with the other.

Devlin stilled. His mother was in her human form, her eyes wide with fear and acknowledgement. She would die for her tribe. She was proud to be a Topétinian and she would go down with them if he didn't save her. Another courageous female that Devlin couldn't help but admire.

Devlin shifted, grabbing the hand of Kieran's that held the gun and squeezing until he had no choice but to drop it.

"Who the hell are you? Where did you come from?" Kieran glared at Devlin, gripping Larena's hair until she yelped.

Landing a punch to the back of the evil man's head, Devlin watched as Kieran fell to the ground. "I'm your worst nightmare."

Larena scrambled free of his hold and Gabriella stood in front of her, protecting her from Kieran.

Kieran rolled over on the ground. "You're not one of them. I don't know you."

Devlin bent down next to Kieran, grabbing him by his collar. "Yes, I am."

"Then I will kill you too," Kieran spat and reached down to retrieve a knife from his boot. He had just enough time to sink the knife into Devlin's shoulder.

Pain soared through him like white lightning, but Devlin didn't take the time to dwell on it. In a flash, he shifted and sank his sharp teeth into Kieran's neck. Blood spewed in all directions as Devlin held him tightly, squeezing the very life out of him. Kieran's eyes bulged, blood pooled in his mouth and Devlin continued to hold him, to kill him.

The noise finally alerted the remaining Kirok guards, who seemed to appear from out of nowhere. In seconds, the clearing was filled with jaguars, some natural and some cloned.

The stench of blood and gasoline, rain and death, hung in the thick air as roars of agony and anger rippled on the wind. It was an all-out war, one with Devlin front and center as a prime participant.

Never in his wildest dreams would he have thought he'd be killing jaguars, using his teeth to disseminate other living beings. But that was exactly what he was doing.

During the battle, Devlin made a point of finding Gabriella. Eventually they fought side by side, where he could make sure she remained safe. She was a brave warrior, with great skills in battle, but he was stronger. He felt that now with certainty. His power was great and he had fought for his people, had helped them save the life that they love.

Too bad he'd had to become a killer to do such a great deed.

\* \* \* \* \*

"You said you were one of us," Larena smiled at her son, who now sat across the table from her, his arm bandaged from the night before. "I have never been so happy to hear those words."

Devlin nodded. It had taken him surprisingly little time to accept that he'd killed, not once, but twice, and to know that he would probably do so again. He was half man

and half jaguar. Half his father and half his mother. He'd spent years being what his father wanted him to be and now, he decided, it was time to just be what he was.

"I buried the last of the Kirok with help from other tribe members. Kieran's papers and his computer were burned with his body in the trailer. There are no traces left. The Topétinia are safe.

Larena shook her head. "Only until the next curious person stumbles across our little village. That is the way of the world, Devlin. Men are fueled by curiosity and that curiosity breeds fear."

"And fear breeds ignorance," he finished for her. "Kieran wanted to control what he didn't fully understand, thus endangering the entire species. My father feared the Topétinian people because he didn't understand and his choice was to run. I will not run again."

With tears in her eyes, Larena stood and hugged her son close. "Then you will stay here where you belong?"

"I don't know where I belong," he answered and stood to walk toward the door. "I accept that I am a Topétinian, but I don't know that my place is here." His mother was quiet and he sensed he was again letting her down. "You said yourself that it could work. I've proved that I can live among the humans and be just like them. There's no reason why I should pull up my roots and come to live here."

At that precise moment, Gabriella walked in. She wheezed against the pressure his words put on her heart. But she would not show him her pain. If he wanted to go, then let him go. "He's right, Larena. If he feels he fits in better with them, let him go."

She'd been avoiding him all day. He'd embraced his heritage long enough to do what needed to be done. For that she should be grateful. But it was not enough. And her discontent was her fault. She never should have let her emotions get involved. She'd been sent to retrieve him so that he could fight for them. And he'd done that.

She should be able to let him go.

Yet she feared her entire body would break from the pain.

"You don't understand, Gabriella," he said tossing her an impatient look.

A look she neither wanted nor deserved. She'd been nothing but honest with him about her purpose and their connection. The least he could do now was offer the same in return. "Then make me understand. Make me understand why you must leave."

He turned away from her. "I don't owe you an explanation."

"You're right," she said through clenched teeth. "You don't owe me anything."

\* \* \* \* \*

She was wrong.

Devlin realized this hours after she'd left.

He owed Gabriella everything. She'd been the only one bold enough to come and get him, to throw his heritage in his face and demand that he own up to it.

She'd given herself to him willingly and he'd thrown that kindness back in her face.

A long invigorating run throughout the forest cleared his mind. The Gungi had that effect on him. In the city he had a beautiful mansion and the best man-made forest money could buy, but it wasn't the same. The sounds of the animals, the smell of the last fallen rain, the family who were just like him made the Gungi special, made it his home.

Now that he'd accepted that, it was time for him to accept something else. Gabriella had been right when she said they were connected. His heart beat to the same rhythm as hers, his mind working in the same methodical way. They were fated to be together and it was time he told her just that.

His mother had said his father didn't love her enough to try and make it work and he'd just sworn to his mother he wouldn't do the same thing. And yet, when Gabriella appeared, he'd done just that.

Well, if nothing else, Devlin was a man of his word. He said he would not run and he would not. He said he would make it work and he would.

## Chapter Ten

She was in her cave, her secret place.

This is where she went when she wanted to be alone. And this is where he'd found her.

He thought of shifting back to his human form, but changed his mind. If he were going to claim her as his own and start this new life out the right way, it had to be in the purest form.

Moving slowly, his claws were almost soundless on the floor. She lay in a corner on her side, a blanket drawn to her neck. She was asleep.

Settling on his haunches, Devlin used his teeth to pull the blanket down. She was naked. He was pleased.

With his long tongue extended, Devlin licked her nipple, once, then again. She moaned and opened her eyes. For one long excruciating moment, she simply stared at him.

He would have to convince her.

Leaning forward, he licked her breast again until she took the hint and turned over on her back, spreading her legs wide. Even though she was still angry with him and did not truly understand him, the connection between them was too strong for either of them to ignore. With one long lick, his tongue covered her anus to her clit. She moaned. He loved to hear her moan.

Pushing his nose into her pussy, he inhaled and growled as the scent moved throughout his body. She was wet, always so wet for him. He licked her again, his tongue loving her in the most exquisite and natural way.



They were shifters. Humans who turned into big cats, he and the majority of the Topétinia, jaguars. They were of the same species and tonight they would be of the same body, mind and soul.

Her body shivered and his licking moved in quick procession. She was thrashing about, chanting his name like a litany, her nails scraping the ground. Devlin licked on, knowing her release was near and wanting desperately to taste it.

With the flat of his tongue, he licked her quaking cunt until she exploded. Then he lapped the sweet nectar, rubbing his head against her still shaking thighs.

And just like that he shifted. His human cheek rubbed against the soft skin of her inner thigh. His breathing was erratic when he looked up into her eyes.

“You were right, Gabriella,” he began, “this is everything.”

Gabriella reached for him and he rose up to fall into her arms. He cupped her face in his hands, slipping his fingers back to cradle her neck, then kissed her. The kiss was long, languid, emotional and rescuing. In it, Devlin felt her need for him and acknowledged his need for her. He felt his welcome home and knew that there was no turning back.

His hand moved between her legs and his fingers dipped into her opening. She instantly gyrated against his motions.

“I need you, Devlin,” she crooned after he’d been working his fingers deeply inside her for long moments.

She more than needed him. It was like a craving, a deep seated hunger that had lain dormant inside her, waiting for him to come and release her. Sex with others never felt like this. Ever.

The feel of his skin against hers sent shivers down her spine as pleasurable spikes almost consumed her. Her scent lingered in the air, mixing with his to form a thick sexual haze around them.

Then his finger slipped out of her pussy and down to her anus where he massaged and stroked. Her mind cleared of everything but his touch. The gentle probing, the incredible need she felt from him in this instant, in this place. "Devlin," she sighed.

Devlin's heart thumped wildly as he touched her there, his mouth watering, his fingers almost trembling with desire. "I need this, Gabriella," he said, then gritted his teeth. "I need to claim you this way." He needed to make her totally his.

His words were strained as she moved, his fingers momentarily slipping away from her. She turned until she was on her knees in front of him, then reached back and spread her cheeks.

"Take me," she said slowly, sincerely.

And he did.

She was open for him. Her tiny hole looking as sweet and delectable as ever. His cock throbbed, dripping with his growing desire. His entire body was tense with need as he stared down at her. Involuntarily, his tongue stroked his bottom lip and he leaned forward.

With one long stroke, he used the flat of his tongue to taste her there. She moaned and trembled. Again and again he touched his tongue to her tender rim. Moving a hand between her legs, he caught her dripping essence before taking her clit between his thumb and forefinger.

He licked her rim again, squeezing her clit simultaneously and was rewarded with another gush of her essence.

"Such a beautiful ass," Devlin sighed and brought the hand drenched with Gabriella's desire to his cock and coated it. "I can't wait to fuck your pretty ass."

"Yes, Devlin. Fuck my ass," Gabriella begged.

With torturous slowness, Devlin soaked his cock in her juices, then placed his tip at her sphincter muscle. Gabriella tensed in anticipation. While his fingers had been there

and she'd enjoyed the pleasure-pain mixture it evoked, she wasn't so sure about his huge cock.

But she was sure about Devlin, about how much she loved him and wanted him here with her. She trusted him. So when he pushed the head into her slowly, she bit her bottom lip and held as still as she possibly could.

The pain was so intense she wanted to yell. Instead she braced herself and said, "More, Devlin. Give it all to me."

Devlin moved slowly, pushing his thick cock into her inch by excruciating inch. He was stretching her, making her open to accommodate him.

"Relax, Gabriella. Let me make this good for you."

She did what he asked, relaxing against his touch, his command. The further in his cock pushed, the more full she felt. Full of his cock, full of his scent, full of Devlin.

When he was in to the hilt, Devlin moaned, his fingers sinking into the skin of her hips. "My God, Gabriella. You're holding me so tight."

He was completely inside her now and Gabriella's clit throbbed against the pressure, her pussy creaming with insistence. She needed him to fuck her now! "Devlin," she whispered.

And as if he read her mind, he pulled almost completely out of her, then with one quick, hard thrust, completely embedded his cock in her ass again.

Gabriella screamed and bucked back to receive his cock again, anticipating another wave of pleasure as she did. She was not disappointed. The more he moved in and out of her, the more accommodating her body became to his girth. It was sensational, this feeling of fullness and insatiable pleasure. Before long, she was joining in with his strokes, loving the feel of him pounding into her ass.

"Sweet, sweet Gabriella. How I love your ass," he crooned as his thrusts continued.

He'd created a delectable rhythm, moving in and out of her so that his balls slapped against her wet pussy on the downstroke. She moved her ass, loving the feel of him filling her completely. "Is that all you love, Devlin?"

"No, baby," he groaned and slapped her ass cheeks as his pumps grew harder.

He was fucking her ass so hard her pussy was dripping juices down her thighs. "Tell me you love me, Devlin. Say it! Say it!"

"Mmmm, I love you, Gabriella," he moaned and thrust deeply into her, his fingers grasping her hips tightly.

"Say it again," she demanded as her thighs began to shake with her release.

"I love you!" he yelled just as his cum shot into her ass, seeping back out to drip onto the floor.

Gabriella hissed as he pulled his still huge cock from her ass and turned around to take his mouth with hers. "Devlin," she whispered.

"My place is here," he said against her lips, his hands cupping her face. "With you." He pushed in further. "For always."

## **About the Author**

Using creativity and sexuality as her backdrop, Sapphire Blue creates stories to entice and arouse.

An event planner and romance author, Sapphire lives in Maryland with her family. Reading and writing are her passions. She was influenced by veteran romance authors at an early age and with time began to add her own level of spice to the timeless tales. Now, thoroughly convinced that a healthy sex life co-exists with a great love affair, she writes what is in her heart and what some are afraid to even imagine.

Writing has always been her dream. Writing strong, witty and sexy characters a must. Sapphire is the culmination of a happily ever after romance novelist and a desire to push the envelope right into the burning flames of passion! Sapphire has been writing for fifteen years and published in romance for four years. She is determined to bring a new slice of color to the erotic romance realm.

Sapphire 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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