

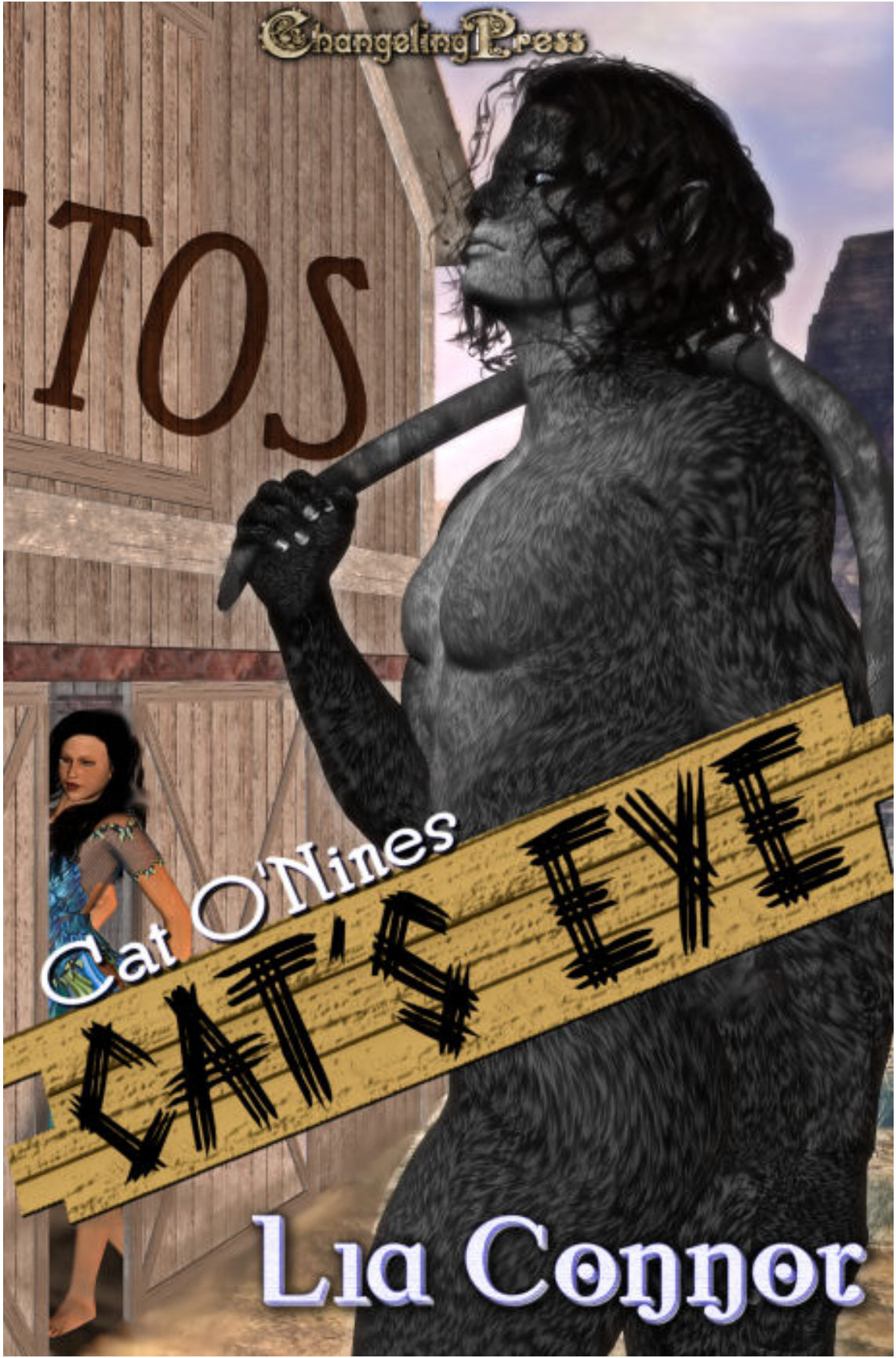
Changeling Press

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Cat O'Nines

LAKE

Lia Connor



Cat O' Nines 2: Cat's Eye

Lia Connor

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Cat O' Nines 2: Cat's Eye

Lia Connor

All Marnie wants is a man who'll treat her right. Instead, she always seems to end up with losers -- like her latest boyfriend, who nearly got her killed. Now her world's turned upside down and inside out. Her rescuer swears to protect her, and she's thinking it's time to take her big sister's advice, and go after what she really wants -- even if he's not human!

A curly-haired prankster of a Catkind Jaguar, Tracey is more than happy to see Marnie gets just what she deserves. Even better, he has a Serval friend, Josh, with a mouth created for sinful delights and a way of making a woman forget all her troubles.

The humans' world? They can keep it. It's Marnie's turn to have some fun.

Chapter One

"Mira la luna," Marnie sang under her breath, gaze fixed on the horizon before them and the red skies of morning. *"Comiendo su tuna; echando las cascarras..."*

Gabriella sighed, letting her tired muscles relax as much as possible without falling off her steed, her Catkind lover, Derek, who was one of her two mates. *"Cómo es, Derek?"* She bent to drop a kiss on the heavier fur on the back of his neck, not exactly a mane but close enough, then nipped his pointed mountain lion ear. *"Es cansado?"*

Derek shook his head. "No, I'm not tired yet. You?"

Gabriella nuzzled her cat's head. "I can go all night long, *caballero*."

"Promises, promises," he chuffed, rolling the powerful muscles in his back to toss her gently up and down. She gasped, laughing, at the spark of hunger for him, so powerful between her legs in both shapes.

"Don't do that unless you want to stop right here and fuck me and mortify *mi hermana*," she teased, although it was mostly the truth. *Madre de Dios*, she loved her little sister, and she would do her best to protect Marnie, but if she and Derek and Benjamin didn't find some private time for her to ride her Catkind men's cocks instead of Derek's back, she thought she might explode.

"Don't tempt me," Derek said, his tone inviting her to tempt him all she wanted, promising he'd deliver.

"Behave." Gabriella leaned forward, and draped her weight along his neck, to scratch his chin. The change in position intensified the pooling heat burning in her pussy. "Derek..."

Derek rumbled, deeply satisfied with himself, the cocky cat. "Your scent fills my head," he told her quietly, bringing the tip of his long tail up to tickle the bare skin between the tied-together shirt and her jeans, reminding her of the wicked things he'd

done before with that long, sinuous tail and what he'd promised to do later until she screamed for him. "You smell like a woman. You smell wonderful."

"Do I really?" She tapped his flanks with her heels. "Flatterer."

"They say flattery will get you everything."

"You want more than you've already gotten?"

"I want it all," he said, smoky tones filling her with hunger for him. "Everything you have to give, body and soul."

"Ay, Derek," she breathed, all of this still so new to her, dazzling her. He lusted after her body, *si*, and the things his rough Catkind tongue could do to her pussy... *delicioso*. But to know he wanted her for the queen of his heart?

And it wasn't too good to be true, because it was real, all of it.

"Bet I know what you're thinking about," he said.

"Mm-hmm. So tell me, smart cat-man."

"You're thinking about my head between your legs," he replied right away, rolling his shoulders to inflame her growing passion. "Maybe like this? Great big mountain lion's muzzle and long rough cat's tongue licking your clit."

Gabriella clenched her fingers tight in his fur and bit her lip. *Madre de Dios*, he was a horny cat, wasn't he? To think of such a thing, and to make her want it so.

"And while I'm licking the cream from your pussy, Benjamin gets to taste your breasts," Derek went on almost dreamily. "Big, broad cat's head between your sweet tits, driving you crazy with his whiskers, rasping across those gorgeous nipples --"

"Derek, I will twist your tail off if you don't quit." Gabriella knew it was an empty threat, spoken in the breathy tones that begged him more than words to throw her off his back, pin her down, and do exactly as he'd promised.

"I think you'd rather do something else with my tail." Derek whipped it lightly on her back. "I'll tease your pussy all night long with this."

"Derek..."

He growled. "All right, all right. *Bruja*."

She slapped him.

"Hey!"

"Both of you, shh," Benjamin warned, turning his dark panther eyes on them with a burning glare.

Gabriella shushed immediately, abashed. Derek snorted. Ignoring him, Benjamin twisted to look over his shoulder at Marnie, who was still singing under her breath and gazing at the horizon. She didn't think her little sister had noticed a thing.

She wondered what was going through Marnie's head. She'd been so quiet since they'd rescued her from her ex's henchmen, *loco* bastards bent on wiping out the Catkind. She was proud of Marnie. Her sister was a good woman and she'd come back like a champ.

Unable to stop touching him, even for a minute, Gabriella patted her Derek's Catkind shoulders, stroked his tawny, roughly-furred jaw, scratching under the fur.

Derek rumbled out a rough mountain lion's purr.

"Oh, you like that, eh?" Gabriella dug in and massaged the Catkind man's muscles. Poor *gato*; brave words or no, he had to be worn out. They'd traveled all night, racing from the fancy hotel and the man who had it in his mind to kill the Catkind... and the women who dared to fall in love with them.

Including Gabriella, and her little sister, Marnie.

"Thank you," she said quietly, stroking the curve of Derek's powerful jaw. So strange and so wonderful to think that this giant cat let her ride him in both shapes, man and beast. Not only Derek, but Benjamin, who had carried Marnie all through the night. She smiled at Benjamin, who chuffed under his breath as if pleased.

She and her two Catkind men, they'd be fine.

And Marnie, too.

"*Aquel caracol que va por el sol,*" Marnie sang on, the lilting lyrics of the old Mexican lullaby taking on a haunting quality.

Her little sister had the voice of an angel, light and sweet. When Marnie sang, the weight of the world she usually carried seemed to lift from her shoulders, making her look young as her years. Beautiful.

Derek turned his muzzle away from Marnie, lightly jostling Gabriella to get her attention. "Why is she singing?" he asked. The question sounded innocent enough, but Gabriella knew her smartass Catkind Derek well enough to understand what he was really asking. *Has she gone crazy?*

Benjamin said nothing, simply looking his kinder version of the question at Gabriella. *Is she all right?*

Gabriella kept her words to a whisper. "She sings when she's got a lot on her mind," she explained. "And when she's making tough choices."

"Not when she's happy?"

"She used to sing when she was happy. All the time." Gabriella bit her lip. "It's been a long, long time since I saw Marnie that happy."

She could feel Benjamin's disapproval.

"So what's the song mean?" Derek pressed.

"It's about saying good-bye to yesterday and looking forward to a better day tomorrow." Gabriella had only half-listened to the words and figured Marnie was prompted by the sunrise. Maybe not. *Mi hermana, mi heridos cordero*. Her lost lamb.

Derek snorted, a purely animal sound. "Sounds like she's tougher than I thought."

Gabriella smacked him. "Don't underestimate my sister. She's not so weak. Just made some bad choices."

"Boyfriend," Derek coughed.

"She's not listening to us," Gabriella decided. Marnie hadn't turned around when Derek spoke, her big dark eyes focused on the rising sun and her pretty dark red lips forming the soft, honey-toned words of the song. She seemed lovelier in the morning light than Gabriella had seen her in years. "I should have done more. Should have protected her."

Benjamin flickered an ear, which she took to mean that she had a second chance to do the right thing now. Gabriella longed to pet him, her second mate, he who was so gentle with her and so fierce a fighter to their enemies.

"*En cada ramita, llevaba una flor, que viva la gala, que viva el amor,*" Marnie sang, sifting her slender fingers through the soft fur on the top of Benjamin's head. "You're wrong, *mi hermana*. I am listening."

Gabriella's cheeks heated. "*Lo siento*, I apologize, Marnie."

Marnie shrugged. "It's okay. Kind of good to know you don't think I'm hopeless, eh?" Half her mouth quirked up in a wry smile. "So maybe if you have a second chance, so do I."

"I think you do," Benjamin offered, his voice rough and raspy but no less courteous. "Start fresh, right?"

"*Si*, that's my plan." Gabriella kept a careful eye out as Marnie sat up straighter, her gaze sweeping the desert. "Where are we going? Can I know, or is it a secret?"

The Catkind exchanged glances. "We'll be there soon, Marnie. Until then, the less said the better," Benjamin replied.

At the moment, she wasn't sure her men fully trusted her sister with the location of their secret hideout. Not that she blamed them, after Marnie's ex had almost gotten them killed. Speaking of which, Gabriella itched to find out exactly how much Marnie knew about this whole mess. She'd said it was all a surprise to her, but Gabriella had her doubts. None so blind as those who would not see... All the same, *familia* looked out for *familia*.

"What'll happen to us now?" Marnie asked, looking away from Gabriella.

Gabriella couldn't help but notice how Marnie kept petting Benjamin, ruffling up the soft fur on the back of his neck. She smiled softly, easily able to imagine Marnie taking good care of her baby -- even if its father was a genocidal maniac. *Idiota*.

Not Marnie, him.

"I don't know," she admitted. "Ask the Catkind."

"We're heading for a place where you can be protected, Lady Marnie."

Marnie stiffened. "*Eres tu loco?* I'm no lady." She half-laughed. "You've been awake too long, Catkind."

Benjamin growled shortly. "Taking care of our queens is my job. I say you're a queen, Derek agrees, and that's final."

Gabriella bubbled over with giggles. "See, Marnie? You don't argue with these two, or else you pick your battles."

"Si." Marnie rolled her slim shoulders. "Safe. Where is safe?"

"Can't tell you. Secrecy is what keeps our hideouts safe," Derek put in. It seemed to be getting easier to understand him as Gabriella heard more and more of the Catkind animal form's way of talking. Either that, or Derek was showing off. She'd believe either explanation.

Gabriella's first thought was to totally disregard the advice she'd handed out and demand to know what he was talking about. Marnie nodded, however, and although it chafed her, Gabriella held her peace. Sort of. "And me?" she nudged Derek. "Do my sister and I stay together?"

Benjamin answered with a sigh. "You don't keep all your eggs in one basket, right? You, your family, they're the royalty we've chosen -- that we need -- for the Catkind. Easier to keep both of you safe if you're not sitting ducks together."

Hot words of protest flooded over Gabriella's tongue, but before she could let them rip, Marnie lifted her chin, shook back her hair, and said, "Si. As you say, I agree." She cut Gabriella a sly look, appearing younger still, more like the sister Gabriella remembered from years ago. "Don't be afraid for me, eh? This is my chance. I'm out of there. Gabriella, I know what you're thinking. I'm not like you, no, but I'm still one of the family. If you're a queen --"

"A little more, actually, in her case. Gabriella is our Empress," Benjamin interrupted.

"Empress," Marnie agreed. "Did you know there's Aztec royalty in our family line?"

Derek and Benjamin exchanged quick looks, seeming both surprised and pleased with themselves. Men! No matter what form or species, they were all the same.

Gabriella tweaked Derek's ear. "So I didn't tell you. Don't get all puffed up, or I'll stick you with a pin and bring you back down to size."

Benjamin roared in amusement. "Oh, yeah, she's woman enough for you, Derek. And for me."

Derek pretended to grumble in complaint. "We know what we're doing," he said firmly. "And we're almost there."

Gabriella looked doubtfully at the horizon. Just looked like more near-desert to her, sandy plains with scrubby brown struggling cacti and the occasional brown lizard ambling along their path. A big chunk of rock loomed ahead, and beyond it the rough edge of an arroyo, a deep valley carved into the barren earth beyond it. She shuddered. The arroyos around here scared her, so deep and so dangerous, no place for anything but ghosts and devils. They flooded up in a flash on the rare occasions when it rained.

She saw all of this and more, but she sure as heck didn't see anything that looked habitable. "What, is this place invisible?"

"Pretty much," Benjamin said. He diverted his path toward the outcrop of sandstone, nosing at the base. "Told you I remembered, Derek. You owe me twenty."

"Double or nothing," Derek offered.

Gabriella twisted his ear. "Are you sun-damaged? There's nothing there. Just rock."

"Shows what you know." Derek curled his tail around to stroke Gabriella's calf. "You and I keep going. Don't look back. Understand?"

Marnie smiled at Gabriella so bravely that Gabriella nearly burst with pride. "*No se preocupe por mí, hermana*. Don't worry. I'll be fine."

A Catkind man -- at least Gabriella thought the beast was male -- appeared as if from nowhere on the other side of the sandstone. His fur was dark, nearly black, although she thought she saw rosettes in his fur. A panther? A jaguar? Not so much like Benjamin. Maybe a cousin.

Benjamin and the new Catkind man trotted close enough to bump noses. Gabriella didn't understand a word of the Catkind language yet and could only guess

at what they were talking about in hisses and rough growls. Whatever they spoke of, they came to an agreement. At his gentle urging, Marnie slipped off Benjamin's back and slowly but confidently put her hand on top of the new Catkind's head.

Her Benjamin loped back. "The arrangements are all solid. He'll take care of Marnie. We'll keep going; we have maybe an hour or two left before we reach our own place to hide you."

Gabriella tugged at her earring, worried. "And she'll be all right?"

"She will." Benjamin head-butted her hip. "Tracey's small, but he's strong. She's safe with him."

"Tracey?" Gabriella flashed on the mental image of the small, pert bellhop at the hotel where Derek and Benjamin had seduced her. "You're kidding me."

Benjamin huffed a laugh. "Catkind, of all people, know not to judge by the outside. Now, hang on tight, my lady. Derek? Let's run."

Derek broke into a smooth, flowing gallop, tossing his head back and roaring. Gabriella squealed and hung on tighter, thrilled. And from behind her, she heard the last lines of the song, sweet and true. "*Que viva la concha, de aquel caracol.*"

It was a love song.

"Eh," she said, sitting upright, remembering what she'd thought when she'd first seen Tracey. "You sly cats," she said with affectionate pride. "Matchmaking, hmm?"

"Who, me?" Derek tossed his head and purred.

She had a feeling Marnie would be just fine with Tracey. Gabriella's laughter rang out over the desert.

Chapter Two

Marnie waited until Derek and Benjamin had carried her sister out of sight. She curled her hands into tight fists, flexing them carefully so as not to alert this new Catkind man to her apprehension.

She'd reminded Gabriella of their proud heritage. So they'd come down in the world since the Aztec queens. So what? They'd rise again. If she was going to be a queen, an empress, whatever, she'd stand up tall and proud, the way she used to before Rafael. What a fool she'd been for him, but no more.

The Catkind jaguar, still in his animal shape, padded close enough to nudge Marnie's fist with his soft muzzle. Marnie looked down at him, wanting to stare in fascination, not sure if she was avoiding it very well.

Who wouldn't stop and look at the Catkind in wonder? *Dios mio*. They were like creatures from the folktales she'd heard when she was little, richly furred from proud heads to long, whippy tails. And that was before they took on their almost human shapes!

"Can I pet you?" she blurted out without thinking, feeling foolish the second the words flew off her lips. "*Lo siento*. I didn't mean to offend." She'd scratched Benjamin's head like he was a tabby cat. He must have wanted to buck her off.

The new Catkind man didn't snarl or show his claws. Instead, he nuzzled the broad, hard top of his head on her hip. Marnie couldn't resist. "*Gracias*." She let herself stroke the Catkind man's head, rubbing under his chin.

He purred!

Marnie giggled. "*Gracias*," she repeated. "What's your name?"

She could have sworn he frowned at her when he backed off. She wasn't sure if he'd talk to her or not, but after a moment he inclined his dignified jaguar head and *changed*.

Ay! Marnie knew she'd never be able to describe the shape-shifting right. One minute he was a long, lean jaguar; the next minute he was a man, standing on both feet. Still furry all over, but with a man's mop of sleek black curls, a man's bright blue eyes, and a man's mouth smiling at her.

He cleared his throat while he ruffled up his hair. *Madre de Dios*, he had lovely curls, silky and thick and abundant, as black as his jaguar fur. "My name is Tracey, miss. I have to say you're surprising me. Didn't really think you'd take this so well." He winked. "I mean, come on, even Gabriella kind of panicked when she fell into our world."

Marnie quirked an eyebrow. "Fell, or was pushed?" She gestured at the path her sister and her two men had taken. "Doesn't seem to me like they take no for an answer."

"You're not wrong," Tracey agreed. "They mean well, and they're strong. If the Catkind are going to take back what we've lost, then we need good, tough leaders and a hell of an Empress. Your sister is the one they've looked for, for a long time now."

She had to ask. "And what about me?"

Tracey bowed at the waist. "You're a lady, miss, and you'll be a queen. It's my honor to keep you safe."

Marnie found herself smiling, totally enchanted. *Quiero a este caballero*. He treated her like a princess, didn't he? It warmed up something deep inside her she thought had gone cold and dead a long time ago.

And more, she realized. Tracey was a fine-looking man, built on compact lines, and even with the cat-like cast to his face, not to mention his lengthy, mobile cat's tail, he could easily make her go weak in the knees. Make her nipples tingle, imagining a Catkind tongue on them, or *ooh*, lower still. Marnie gasped at the shock of desire blooming in her belly.

She might be carrying Rafael's *niño*, but that didn't mean she was blind, and *Madre de Dios*, if there was ever a man to lust after it would be gallant, adorable, piquant Tracey. She hadn't felt this cherished in years. "I'll do my best to make your job easier," she replied, suddenly a little shy about reaching for him. If he knew she was getting damp over him, that would be awkward, eh? "Just show me what to do."

Tracey's beam of approval warmed her heart. "Yes, miss. Follow me, walking exactly where I walk, over to the big rock, all right? It doesn't look like anything, I know, but this is the way to the hideout."

Curious, Marnie walked after him. She winced at the heat already starting to rise from the desert sands, glad she'd be inside somewhere soon. She hoped. Circling around the sandstone rock, careful not to get too close to the edge of the arroyo -- they were deadly -- she looked down and saw a wide mouth in the rock, hidden under scrubby brush. "Ay! Does this go all the way through? Where does it lead?"

"Yes, miss, it goes through. And it goes down."

Marnie's breath caught in her lungs. "The arroyo? That's the hideout?"

"Don't worry. It's safe down there, safe as we Catkind can make it. Who'd look for cats down in a gully?" He twitched his whiskers at her in a Catkind smile. "Honest, the trip through the rock is the worst part." He hesitated. "You're not claustrophobic, are you?"

Marnie eyed the secret passage through the rock. "I don't know. I don't think so," she lied. If Tracey swore the arroyo was safe, well, she'd make the best of it. But the secret entrance... *Dios mio*. She didn't like close spaces. The thought made her heart speed up, and not in a good way. But there was no way she'd let him know. "I'll be all right."

"Thattagirl." Tracey brushed back the spindly vegetative cover. "If it does bother you, well, grab on to me and hang on tight, and I'll get you through."

He would, too, wouldn't he? She barely knew the Catkind man, but Gabriella trusted Benjamin and Derek. They trusted Tracey in turn, and she trusted Gabriella, so it all circled around. But more than that, she thought she might have trusted Tracey

anyway. He called to her somehow, making her like him right away. No way she'd back down and disappoint him, or play the part of the weak, helpless *tonta*. "Lead the way?"

"Yes, miss. I'm your guide as well as your bodyguard." Tracey's tail wound around his calf, the tip idly stroking his ankle, drawing Marnie's fascinated attention. She wondered what else he could do with that tail. It looked as flexible as a hand, and as strong. And soft, so soft... it would feel like heaven stroking over her bare skin.

If she had only met a good man like Tracey first... if he had only been the one to father the child she carried... she'd have such memories of the nights they'd shared, and he would only want to make more...

She gasped, remembering that the Catkind could smell far better than humans. *Ay!* Would Tracey catch the scent of her warming pussy and get disgusted?

He didn't say anything, if he had picked up on her growing arousal. "Just follow me, please. You're safe at my side."

Marnie nodded, her mind made up. "*Gracias*. I trust you. And, Tracey?" she added on the spur of the moment. "Please, call me Marnie."

Tracey's blue eyes warmed to Catkind amber. She got the feeling he approved. "Marnie, then," he said, dropping fluidly to all fours and morphing smoothly back into his animal shape. "Let's go."

"*Vamos*," she agreed, swallowed down her claustrophobia, and followed Tracey's supple, flexing tail down through the secret entrance that would lead them to the arroyo's bottom. *Puedo hacer esto. I can do this.*

* * *

The journey through the dark tunnel dug deep in the sandy earth couldn't have been over too soon for Marnie. All the same, when they finally emerged they'd been underground long enough for her eyes to hurt from the bright burst of sunlight overhead. She squinted and shaded them, fumbling for Tracey's warm flank to keep her steady.

He purred and bumped her hip. "We're here," he said, standing up, shaped like a man again -- as far as she could tell. His voice came from much higher off the ground, anyway. "This is where you'll be safe."

Marnie carefully opened her eyes. She didn't look around yet. One thing at a time, eh? She swallowed down her uneasiness. She could do this. She was a queen, right? "*Gracias*. Thank you."

Tracey chuckled. "I know you don't want to, but familiarize yourself with the surroundings. Trust me. It's safe."

Marnie wanted to doubt him, but the urge to trust him instead was so strong. She swallowed down her nervousness and did as she'd been told.

Asombrar. Hermoso. La sorprendió. Not what she'd half-thought it might be, with guerilla-style assemblage of tumbleweeds and rocks to hide behind. She thought maybe the point was no humans guessing a cat would want to be down in the old flood gullies. And no, just as Tracey had promised, not so bad. Rough, twisted ground, easy to stumble over, high rough-cut walls, not much in the way of comforts, but she didn't need many of those, and it was dry.

Si. A good hideout.

She felt a warming wave of approving pride coming from Tracey. When she looked at him, his broad grin did funny things to her stomach and drew a wave of rolling heat low in her belly. "You'll make a fine queen," he said.

She blushed, but happily. "I'll try."

"That's all we can ask for. I think you'll succeed." He gestured to a washed-up chunk of rock, long and more or less smooth. "Please, sit."

She sat as demurely as she could, wanting to please him with the grace of the Aztec nobility she'd mentioned before. She'd do her ancestors proud.

Tracey gazed thoughtfully at her. "You're quite a woman, Marnie. So brave, but I can still smell your unease," he said, but gently. "You don't like the arroyos any more than other humans, huh?"

"I didn't say that."

"No, you didn't." Tracey's warm, rough hand found Marnie's arm and caressed her skin. She shivered, but from pleasure, thrilled at the light scratch of his claws. "I'm honored to serve you, Lady. There, now you smell more like a queen. And you --" He stopped abruptly.

Marnie squeezed her eyes shut, knowing he had to have picked up the scent of her arousal. *Ay*, she couldn't help herself! It was like being away from that good-for-nothing Rafael reminded her that she was still a woman, not a punching bag. Or maybe it was just something about the Catkind. Her pussy was damp and her nipples aching.

All the same, she swallowed it down. Now was not the time. "*Si*. I'll be worth this. Trust me."

"I already do, my lady."

She giggled. "You sound like a butler in one of those old TV shows."

"You like the classics?" Tracey sounded excited. "*Television en Espanol?*"

"*Si*." Satisfied that she'd distracted both of them, Marnie shook back her hair, combing her fingers through the tangle she'd made of her thick, smooth locks. "What do I do next?"

Tracey took a moment before answering, puzzling Marnie. "How would you like to take a look around?"

"Eh?"

Tracey's pert, sexy grin wreathed his face, drawing her belly into a knot of desire. *Madre de Dios*. What she might have done and regretted later if another something hadn't caught her from behind. She screamed, too startled to stop herself and no time to think about it.

"Shh, shh, it's all right," a deeper, huskier voice murmured in her ear. "I'm Catkind, too. I'm with Tracey."

"Where the hell did you come from?" Marnie demanded, trying to catch her breath.

"I'd tell you, but then he'd hear me," the Catkind murmured against her ear, lips tickling. "You're as bad at this as ever, Tracey. And they're trusting you to take care of a woman?" He tsked. "Sloppy, all around."

Tracey's expression had gone thundercloud-dark. "No one told me you'd be here." He scowled. "I didn't figure I'd ever see you again, unless you were trying to stab me in the back. What *are* you doing here?"

The Catkind man, still holding tight to Marnie, shrugged. "Same as you, I guess. Playing bodyguard."

"I'm not just *playing*, Josh," Tracey warned. "Are you?"

Dios mio, that was all Marnie needed. A pissing match. "Let go of me so I can turn around and look at you," she ordered, more for the sake of distracting them.

Josh's muscles tightened. "I'd rather you didn't, pretty lady."

"Silver-tongued as ever, you bastard, but I don't think this queen is going to fall for your pretty speeches," Tracey bit out.

Well. All right, then. *Ay!* Marnie couldn't help but wonder why these two didn't get along. Weren't the Catkind supposed to be on the same side? It was the idea she'd gotten from listening to Gabriella, Benjamin and Derek. And why had this one approached her from behind? Did he not want to be seen?

Well, she wasn't about to trust her life to someone she couldn't even get a good look at, eh? She'd had enough of trusting people without making up her own mind. "Let go," she repeated, digging in her heels. "I want to see you."

Tracey sneered at the man behind her. "What's the matter, Josh? Afraid?"

Josh snarled. "Fine. Anything for the lady." He didn't wait for Marnie to move on her own, but grabbed her arms and spun her around to face him.

Marnie couldn't restrain a small gasp. *Dios mio!* Josh stood tall, so much higher up than Tracey. His fur was pale gray, so light a hue he was nearly platinum under his small, ebony spots, but she didn't think he was old. No, he couldn't be. His body was strong and supple and he had no wrinkles.

He did have scars, though. Deep, heavy scores through his pelt where no fur grew, mostly in sets of four. The most prominent of all furrowed his face, one bisecting a milky-white eye. He was blind in that eye, wasn't he? Marnie didn't know why, but she reached out to touch him. "So soft," she whispered, stroking the proud angle of his jaw. "*Eres muy guapo.*"

Josh harrumphed and shook off her hand. "Maybe I used to be handsome, but that was a long time and a lot of scars ago. Don't flatter me."

"*Tu habla Espanol?* You speak Spanish?"

"We all do. Doesn't matter." Josh smirked. "What's the matter, Tracey? You don't look too happy."

Marnie looked over her shoulder, startled at the dark distaste in the downward pull of Tracey's lips and the dislike in his pretty blue eyes. What kind of history did these two have? Did she want to know? "Tracey?"

Tracey shook himself, fur that had risen up like hackles settling down. "Truce for the sake of protecting our lady?" he challenged. "If you're man enough, Josh."

A muscle twitched in Josh's cheek. "I'm man enough for any kind of challenge you can bring, Tracey. I won't put the lady at risk. So..." He drew out the word, taunting. "Partners again, huh?"

Tracey gritted his teeth. "Partners. For now."

Marnie wanted to roll her eyes. *Men!* And these two were supposed to keep her safe? *Madre de Dios*, she'd spend half her time trying to keep them from tearing each other apart.

She wondered, just for a second, if that was why Derek and Benjamin had chosen them, to distract her. Hah! Easier to say *bah*, Catkind!

Well... it might be better than spending all her time trying to keep her eager hands off them. If she could rise above the way they melted her panties, she might be okay. She'd make her ancestors proud after all, see if she didn't.

Chapter Three

"You mind if I show the lady around the great Catkind hidey-hole?" Josh took Marnie firmly by the elbow, not giving her the choice as to whether or not she wanted a tour. A big part of her wanted to shake him off, big and sexy or no... yet she did need to get familiar with her sanctuary, right? If they ended up having to run, she wanted to be able to keep up with the Catkind.

And the way she figured it, familiarity might settle her nerves. Backbone alone wasn't going to keep her chin up for much longer.

"Marnie?" Tracey asked, as gentle as or gentler than Benjamin. *Ay*, such a gallant man. Most of the time. "We have our differences, he and I, but you can trust Josh."

"You don't," she pointed out.

Tracey had the grace to look embarrassed. "The problems between us don't have anything to do with how well he can handle this job," he explained, grudging in his assessment. She did like his honesty. "I won't let the bad blood between us screw this up. I promise. Okay?"

Marnie wasn't any too sure. "Josh?" she prodded. "You, too?"

Josh's grip tightened briefly on her arm. "When you get to know me, you'll know that's not the kind of question you have to ask. I don't let anything keep me from doing a job right."

Proud, wasn't he? All stiff-necked and stubborn. Not like her ex-boyfriend Rafael had acted around her, though. Rafael's temper was cruel, and he was far more obsessed with how she ought to treat him. "Fine." Marnie drew in a shallow breath at the light brush of Josh's velvety finger pad sweeping over her arm. Another way Josh was nothing like Rafael -- it'd been months, way before the baby, since Rafael's touch had raised her pulse rate. "Then give me the tour."

She got the sense that Josh liked her backbone; that made her want to keep it up more than ever.

"There isn't much to see. Rocks here, mud there."

Tracey made a grouchy noise. "I did set up a place for the lady. If you've been snooping around, you know where it is."

"I do, and I'm not impressed. This way, Marnie."

Josh led her over and around several dried-out hillocks of cracked mud, all the way to a blind corner through which the arroyo continued. "Around the bend, Lady." He put his hand under her elbow to guide her. "What do you think?"

"It's... nice," Marnie offered, then covered her mouth with her hand to hide her grin. It wasn't hard to tell a bachelor had set this place up. Tumbleweeds were gathered together out of the way. She saw a few rough crates, their sides scarred by claw marks, a fireplace pit choked with the remains of burnt-up charcoal and ashes, and a pile of blankets by the fire that were all heaped together.

Still, except for the fire pit and the tumbleweeds, the arroyo was as orderly as an arroyo could be, no lizards skittering around or snakes. Ugh, snakes! The blankets gave off a whiff of detergent when Tracey poked them with the tip of his tail, and they looked both soft and nearly new. She thought she saw the bright red and shiny yellow of apples in one of the crates.

Not exactly a palace, but what would she need a palace for? Marnie had a growing realization that you didn't need a whole kingdom to be royalty. Now that she'd gotten away from Rafael, didn't she feel like a Queen already?

Only one thing worried her, and more because she didn't trust herself not to do something stupid in her sleep. "Do we..." she tried to find the right way to say this. "Do we all share?" she asked, gesturing at the blankets. The tips of her ears were hot. "Which is okay if we do. I mean..."

Josh chuckled, sounding tickled rather than patronizing. He swept his thumb in circles over her wrist. "Not unless you want us to. We don't go where we're not invited. Speaking of which, there's a privy pit behind the tumbleweeds."

Marnie giggled. "*Gracias*, that's good to know. Don't go where you're not wanted, eh? And you call yourselves cats?" Pleased by Josh's startled grunt and Tracey's broad grin, she stepped easily forward and lowered herself to the blankets. Ooh, they were soft, not nearly as touchable and pettable as Josh's silver fur, but they were lovelier than any she'd ever had the pleasure of lying on.

"They're on a shallow depression in the arroyo floor," Tracey explained. "That's full of straw, so it's all a lot more comfortable than it looks."

She yawned, definitely in agreement, realizing how tired she was. *Dios mio*, when was the last time she'd had a really good night's sleep?

Tracey knelt beside Marnie, guiding her as easily as a professional nurse might. "Do you want to rest for a while?" he asked unnecessarily, seeing as how he was helping her lie down and plumping up a folded fleece blanket for her to use as a pillow. "We'll stand guard."

"*Si*," she mumbled, her eyelids growing heavy. She felt as good as she did after an orgasm, boneless and warm and full of rosy-colored dreams about the man who had made her feel so good. Maybe it wouldn't hurt anything for her to fantasize about the Catkind men while she was falling asleep. If they thought she was already out cold, they couldn't blame her for her actual dreams, could they?

Feeling mischievous, Marnie closed her eyes all the way and sighed. Tension melted away from her body. She thought -- no, she knew -- she could rest easy here. She was safe. The Catkind men would protect her like they'd promised. Now, if only they got along. Marnie sighed slightly. She guessed you couldn't have everything, could you?

In any case, she could dream.

But before she could summon up more than a passing vision of Tracey's warm lips sucking on her breast while Josh kissed his way up her legs, she slipped into a sound sleep and was lost to the world.

* * *

Tracey was proud of himself for not saying anything, and not tearing into Josh the way he wanted to, before Marnie was fast asleep. Such a pretty lady, and so tired. He smoothed down her thick brown hair, sculpting the ends around her lovely face, marveling at the smoothness of her dark skin.

He frowned over the weight it was clear to him she'd lost, and the worry lines around her eyes. Such a lovely lady ought not to have so much weighing her down. He'd heard a little from the Catkind runner, and he'd gleaned a little more from Gabriella in the hotel.

The hotel. Tracey winced. So much for his job among the humans. He doubted management was going to look too kindly on going AWOL for who knew how long.

Well, it'd be worth it for Marnie. She'd already shown him the kind of courage it took to be a Queen of the Catkind, and he just knew that with some time and decent treatment she'd rise up and show the world how classy she really was. And he'd be there every step of the way.

If Josh thought he was going to outshine him, Tracey figured Josh had another trick coming, and he planned to make that clear right away. Tracey refused to think about the way tall, stiff-necked Josh had hunkered down at Marnie's feet, petting her narrow ankles. He didn't acknowledge the older, wiser and slightly sadder lights in Josh's eyes, and he especially didn't take notice of the yearning Josh radiated like waves of heat in the desert.

Mostly because along with the yearning went a healthy dose of lust, and no way in hell was Tracey going to let Josh take advantage of a quality lady like Marnie.

No way he'd ever trust anything to Josh again.

Tracey rose, tail lashing his legs, and cleared his throat. When Josh looked up, his annoyance clear, Tracey nodded toward the direction of the arroyo corner. "Back out in the open."

Josh flashed with annoyance. "I won't leave her alone."

"She'll be fine for a few minutes." Tracey had to wrap his tail tightly around his leg to keep from whipping Josh with it. "Do you want her to hear this?"

Josh's jaw hardened. "No." Standing, Josh made sure to emphasize how much taller and sturdier he was than Tracey, nasty scars notwithstanding. "Fine. Out in the open. But not for long." He sneered at Tracey. "It's not like I don't know what you're going to say anyway."

Marnie stirred in her sleep and made a worried noise. Tracey's heart squeezed under his ribs. "Whatever. Just not here."

"Not here," Josh agreed, stalking out of the blind corner ahead of Tracey.

Following on his heels, Tracey had to use a considerable amount of restraint not to plant his hind paw, claws out, in Josh's proud ass. His firm, finely shaped ass, so tight and toned -- exactly as Tracey remembered -- a man could spend hours biting and licking the tough muscles, and...

Josh chuckled softly. Tracey glared at him. What was the word in Spanish? He couldn't remember how to say "asshole." *Remolino del pellejo*? That would have to do.

* * *

Josh sped up, obviously knowing this arroyo far better than Tracey, who'd only seen it maybe three times. Show-off. By the time Tracey emerged into the open space, blinking in the bright light of the desert sun as it approached noon in the dazzlingly pure blue, Josh had already arranged his long, tall limbs in a lazy slouch, leaning on the gully wall, smoking a cigarette. He stared flatly at Tracey, smoke trickling from his nose. "Want not to do this and say we did?"

Tracey seethed. "No."

"I didn't think so." Josh blew smoke and shrugged. Tracey saw right through Josh's attitude. "Fine. Do you want to start with my face or would you rather talk about my momma?"

"God damn it, Josh." Less than a minute into the fight and Tracey already wanted to tear his hair out by the roots. "How about we start with my breaking your nose for smoking around a pregnant woman?"

Josh blinked. "Excuse me?"

"You heard what I said. You couldn't tell?" Tracey hooted. "You're losing your touch, Josh."

"Screw you," Josh grouched, dropping his cigarette and poking a hole in the sand to bury the stub. He wiped his lips as if to clear away the taste of smoke. Okay, Tracey did have to give him credit for respecting Marnie's needs.

That didn't mean Tracey was going to give him a single inch about anything else.

"I know you're not going to believe me, Tracey," Josh said, kicking dirt over the hole he'd dug, not looking at Tracey. "But I've changed my mind about a few things."

"From the way you were sniffing around Marnie, yeah, I figured you'd changed your stripes." Tracey's claws wanted to spring free. "So is it because she's hot that you're not prejudiced against humans anymore, or is it just that you want to get in her pants?"

He didn't see the punch coming, only registering the hit when he was on his back in the sand, gasping for air. Josh loomed over him, flashing dark with rage. "You watch your mouth," he threatened. "Maybe you've changed too, huh? Talking like that about a lady, you ought to have your tongue scrubbed."

Tracey snarled, trying to scramble to his feet. Two feet or four paws, he didn't care as long as he could get back up in Josh's face and show him that small or not, he didn't take this kind of crap from anyone.

Josh planted a foot on Tracey's chest and pinned him down flat. "I'm only going to say this once, so you'd best listen up. Clear? I've seen some things and I've watched our prides dying out. I still don't trust humans. Not all of them. But I do know if we don't do something, the Catkind are frigging done for."

"So you're trying to save your own hide," Tracey sneered. "Noble, Josh. Really noble."

"Idiot," Josh snapped. "Yeah, I'm trying to keep our race from going extinct. You might not have noticed, but that's the exact same thing your almighty Derek and Benjamin are working for."

"They're not --"

"Not what?" Josh demanded. "You're saying we're not working the same plan for the same reason? If you honestly think so, then you really have been playing human for way too long."

Tracey hissed at him. "And that's why you ran off like someone lit a fire under your tail? Don't lie to me. We're in the real meat now. You didn't have the balls to even let me explain."

Josh glowered. "I woke up next to someone who looked just like a human, Tracey, and I'd never even come within ten miles of one before. Fuck you. No, wait." His lips curved, crafty. "I've already done that."

Tracey's claws sprang free. He lashed at Josh's leg, scoring deep gouges through his pelt. "Go to hell." He pushed Josh off and finally made it to his feet, sinking right away into a position from which he could launch himself at Josh and take the cocky *rule* down. "You left me because I can pass for human and I like it." To mock Josh, he shifted into the form only a handful of Catkind could attain, with almost no fur and lowered ears, human-looking except for his twitching tail.

Josh's lips pulled back from his sharp teeth. "Don't push me, Tracey."

"Or what?" Tracey returned to the natural man-shape of the Catkind, keeping his claws out and his muscles coiled, ready to pounce. "Maybe I want to go too far. Maybe I'd like to see you break your oath and actually lay a finger on me again."

"Already laid down a fist."

"Doesn't count." A peculiar excitement flooded Tracey's limbs with racing adrenaline. The same rush of sexual energy he'd tried to smooth over with Marnie so he wouldn't frighten her demanded to be acknowledged. And he didn't have to worry about scaring Josh off, did he? That'd actually be a *good* thing.

Tracey shifted his weight from foot to foot, curling his fingers in mocking "come and get me" twitches intended to make Josh lose control. The tall, pale Catkind couldn't stand being taunted. "You don't like what I'm saying? You don't like me? Come and do something about it."

Josh's fists clenched. "Do you really want to get your ass kicked in front of Marnie?"

"She's asleep." Tracey was reckless by then, on fire with the need to fight down and dirty. "Let's make it interesting. Unless you're too much of a chickenshit."

"I'll make you eat those words." Josh's ears laid flat against his head. "Beating you down is interesting enough for me."

"And yet you keep on stalling. I'm putting a wager on the action, Josh. If I whomp you into the dirt, then you back off and leave Marnie to me. You don't come near her, you don't talk to her, and you keep your grimy paws off. All you do is guard."

Josh's tail slapped his leg in an angry, staccato beat. "Same goes for you, then. I beat you down and you get to play hands off."

"Why do you care, anyway?" Tracey burst out. "You hate humans."

"Hated."

"Whatever." Tracey could hardly see straight. He hissed, his pelt standing up in spikes. "Let's do this, Josh. Fight me."

"You asked for it," Josh said.

It was on. Tracey launched all his weight at Josh's soft midsection, flying neatly under Josh's mighty swipe, claws out and deadly. He might not have taken Josh down if he hadn't learned long ago to fight dirty. He clawed nasty scratches behind Josh's knee, too fast to be caught.

Josh roared and went down. Tracey moved like lightning and straddled Josh before Josh would have a chance to figure out what was going on. He pinned his enemy with all his body weight and gloated. God, how had he ever loved this schmuck? "Give up?" he taunted.

"Not even close," Josh said. "I don't fight fair, either."

And with that, he wrapped his tail around Tracey's waist. He used his powerful legs to flip them over, pinning Tracey beneath him.

Tracey's lips parted at the sight of Josh looming over him, his cock swelling to hardness with a nearly painful speed. "Not again," was all he could think to whisper.

"I warned you," was all Josh said before he seized Tracey's mouth in a hot, punishing kiss and refused to let go.

Chapter Four

Dolor de cabeza. Marnie's head ached. She shielded her eyes from the brightness of the unforgiving desert sun. Something had woken her, but what? She'd thought she heard raised voice. Men, shouting.

Her heart was beating too fast. She swallowed, wishing she had one of those bottles of water, frosty-cold, to press against her forehead. *Calm down*, she ordered sternly. *Go see what's happening.*

Yes. She'd look for Tracey, for Josh.

Careful to make as little noise as possible, Marnie rose to her feet and tiptoed to the inside of the blind corner of the arroyo. She tucked her hair behind her ears and peeked out at the main canyon.

Her lips parted. *Oh.* She'd found Tracey and Josh, all right, although she doubted they'd wanted her to. They were lying like lovers on the arroyo floor, locked together, struggling for the upper hand. They devoured one another's mouths with open kisses, their agile cat tails whipping around furred limbs and taut asses.

Marnie had never seen two men fuck before and hadn't had any idea how much of a turn-on it would be. But *Dios mio*, the way they grappled, like they were wrestling in a death match. Fists and fur and fangs, wild animals, so raw and purely masculine that it made her pussy grow damp.

She should walk away and give them their privacy, she knew.

Really, really should.

She didn't. Instead, she found herself sliding a hand under her blouse to pinch and roll her nipple and cup her breast while she clenched and released the muscles in her pussy. *This is wrong, to spy. But Dios, they're scorching hot!*

* * *

Tracey snarled filthy obscenities under his breath, half-smothered words hissing out in the split-seconds in which Josh drew his mouth away to bite at Tracey's lips and even his chin. He could barely focus on the hard, proud lines of Josh's face; he didn't have to. Memory filled in the details for him of the Catkind man's fierce feistiness.

Teeth and claws and cock, that was Josh. *Fuck*. He drove Tracey out of his mind. Gargantuan hands, more like paws, grinding his shoulders into the hot desert sand. The sharp hooks on his extended claws barely piercing the skin, the prickle of pain inflaming his nerves.

Josh finally released Tracey long enough for him to gulp greedy lungfuls of scorching, arid air. The desert atmosphere left his throat scraped raw, and the searing sand under his back and ass was like lying on a bed of embers.

For all that, he couldn't stop himself from writhing in Josh's tight hold until he had freed his arms, with which he got a death grip on Josh's tapering waist, scrabbling until he'd worked his hands up to scratch the other Catkind man's broad chest. Josh spat when Tracey unsheathed his claws and drew them down the other Catkind man's taut skin, raking furrows that would leave marks. He knew exactly how to drive Josh crazy. He had plenty of experience.

Tracey bit down his old, familiar hatred for Josh. Just far enough to let himself go with this crazy business, enough to let himself be swallowed by the high-blazing red heat filling his vision.

"Scratch me again, and I'll bite you," Josh threatened, scraping over the join of Tracey's throat and shoulder, leaving his own marks that would soon swell into welts. He seized one of Tracey's nipples between thumb and forefinger and pinched viciously.

Tracey snarled and arched up against Josh. The bastard, he knew what that did to him. Fine, then. Two could play. Tracey bucked his hips until his tail was no longer pinned under his weight and slapped Josh's ass with the agile, sinuous length, then wrapped it around Josh's shin like a clinging vine, all the way down to the ankle. He had more control over the appendage than most Catkind, and he used it to his advantage, keeping it on the move after the manner of a deadly, undulating snake.

Josh's neck arched, fully feline, giving Tracey a look at his lust-twisted grimace and his good eye. He shivered at the sight of Josh's blinded eye, silver and unchanged as ever. The good eye rolled briefly back in Josh's head. He growled. "Doesn't work anymore, kitten."

"Liar." Tracey unwound his tail and wrapped it around Josh's upper thigh. He tickled the tip over Josh's firm ass. Josh swore, turning his face away. "You've got my number, okay, but don't you ever forget --" he bit over Josh's collarbone -- "I've got yours too."

"Like hell you do." Josh seemed to have regained a fraction of control, using it to gloat over Tracey. "Admit I'm dominant to you and I'll let you off easy."

"Who said I wanted anything *easy*?" Tracey demanded. "You're still an idiot, Josh."

"Big words, little man," Josh taunted, and he did hit home there. Tracey hated being smaller than most Catkind. They liked to call him the runt of his litter, and he'd fought his way through life proving that short didn't mean weak. Everyone he knew now had learned to respect him.

Except Josh, damn him, who never let anything go.

With that in mind, Tracey realized he'd always known Josh would come back someday. He just thought he'd stand a better chance of resisting him, given what had passed between them before.

Josh seized Tracey by his pointed chin and shook him, not gentle at all. "Hey," he goaded. "Do you really want to think right now?" He emphasized his point by spreading his legs open, pushing their cocks together.

Tracey spit like the angry cat he was, angling to bite Josh, who caught him by the wrists and held him firm. "Go to hell, Josh."

"Save me a seat."

"Fuck you!" Tracey struggled, though he knew he was weakening, starting to crave Josh like a drug, wondering if Josh was as good as he remembered and, more than that, slaving with need for sleek fur against sleek fur. Barbs. Screeches of triumph.

Damn him.

"Rather fuck you instead." Josh savaged Tracey's mouth with a punishing kiss that seemed to go on forever, leaving him breathless.

Marnie stifled a moan. Once upon a time she might have tried to resist the temptation, but not now. Still drinking in the sight of the two Catkind men, pale as the moon and dark as midnight, so different from her own mocha coloring, she took some much needed action. Her fingers shook, waiting for the moment when -- ah! Perfecto -- Josh roared, giving her the noise she needed to cover the rustling of clothing as she shoved it out of the way, off, whatever worked to give her access.

She didn't stop at her skirt and her dampened panties, shedding her blouse as well, and her bra, feeling so much better once she was completely bared to the hot sun. She ran her hands over her skin, reveling in the knowledge that she was a lush, ripe woman, a daughter of queens, a woman of power. Sex was the ultimate power, no?

And what she'd do if she could be in the middle of those two...

Marnie laughed softly, darkly, and caressed her pussy while she watched the Catkind men fight their way toward fucking.

Somewhere in the back of his mind, Tracey realized he'd freed one hand -- or he'd been let loose -- and had his fingers clenched around a handful of Josh's hair. He hooked his ankles behind the small of Josh's back and started grinding their rigid cocks together. "Shit. Stop, Josh. Quit it." Tracey thrust harder, belying his demand. His vision was blurring out, everything going hazy and blending together. "You want to do this in the desert?"

Josh laughed. "Looks like you do."

"Screw you!" Tracey played dirty and grabbed Josh's ass, pushing between the taut cheeks, scratching his tight hole with the tip of one claw.

Ha, that got him. Josh spasmed, his grip on Tracey going temporarily slack.

Tracey didn't have the body mass to flip Josh over, not with one wrist still clamped as if in a vice of steel, but he made up for it by shoving his finger one knuckle deep in Josh's ass.

Josh's hot, lusty glare snapped back to hone in on Tracey's face. "Don't push me, kitten."

"I'm not a kitten." Tracey rolled his hips, relishing Josh's brief, guttural groan. "You want this? You want me? Say it."

Marnie nodded eagerly. She licked her lips to moisten them as she slid her forefinger deep in her clenching pussy. The tension building up inside was nearly unbearable. She could bring herself off fast and dirty, yes, but that wouldn't be half as much fun as running the race at the pace they set.

She stroked her inner walls in time to Tracey's ragged breathing, silently begging the Catkind men not to stop. Whatever they did, they'd better not stop now!

"You're asking me if I want you? Idiot. What do you think?" Josh pushed his fist between them, his wicked claws raking through Tracey's soft fur and dragging scratches up Tracey's abdomen. "I can make you beg, brat. Make you promise anything to get me to shove my cock up inside you." He gloated. "What, Tracey, did you go into heat or something? Are you a woman now?"

"I'll show you 'woman'," Tracey snarled. He bit Josh's tough shoulder, breaking the skin. Josh roared. Tracey drew back, licking a smear of blood off his lips. "If you want me, you play by my rules." He lifted his chin, trying to look proud and defiant despite his body's insistence on writhing under Josh's weight. "Not out here. Understand?"

Josh snorted. "Afraid you're gonna get sand where it's all itchy?"

Tracey growled. "She'll hear us, you idiot. Marnie will hear us."

"Fuck." Josh stopped his pelvic thrusting, dropping heavily as a stone over Tracey. "Damn it."

Marnie could have cried. No, *tontos*! Keep going!

Tracey didn't know if Josh realized he was running his furred palm over Tracey's hair, almost gentle. The way Tracey remembered he had been, once upon a time, long, long ago... "Jesus, Josh, what happened to us?" he asked quietly, even though he knew the answer. Josh had double-crossed him, breaking away from the renegades, swearing there was another way.

Leaving Tracey behind. Fuck him.

It'd be easier on both of them if Tracey hadn't stayed up at nights full of fever-hot dreams remembering the times when Josh *had* fucked him. Hard, fast, vicious and all through the nights and hot afternoons, not caring what anyone thought, unable to get enough of each other.

He wanted Josh with the same old fire, no matter how much he hated the Catkind otherwise. Damn him, Josh knew it too, but Tracey had known from the second Josh's kisses tore at his mouth, Josh's lust had only been banked, the hot coals kindling up into a blaze that'd burn them from the inside out.

"You really want to talk about that now?" Josh grouched into Tracey's neck. He rippled, pressing each part of his body in turn to Tracey's, returning right away to where their cocks pressed hard against one another. Slippery drops of clear fluid, probably from both of them, slicked up Tracey's stomach.

"No," Tracey gave in. "But not out here."

"Fine!" Josh huffed. "Where, then?"

That left Tracey at a momentary, wildly frustrated state of mind. "Damn it, I don't know. Where else is there?"

"Why not out here?"

Tracey itched to sock him in the jaw. "Because of Marnie, you jackass!"

"I'm no jackass," Josh warned. He bit Tracey's chin. "Bother her, don't bother her, she'll wake up, don't worry because she's asleep... make up your mind, pussycat. We're doing this right here. If you can keep your mouth shut."

Now that was more like it! Marnie pinched her swollen nipple between thumbnail and fingernail, hissing softly at the zing of pleasure and slight sting. She worked another finger in her sopping pussy and began to stroke, pushing in and out, nice and slow.

Show me a little more fight, she encouraged them silently, biting the inside of her cheek so she wouldn't moan and give herself away.

Ah, it looked like they were getting back into the spirit now...

Marnie flicked her clit and sighed with anticipation.

Tracey tried to protest, although his cock had hardened past the point of pain and if he didn't get off within the next thirty seconds he thought he'd burst open. "I'm - I'm not -- the noisy one," he got out between gasps, as Josh had started to teethe over the pulse in the side of his throat. "You're the one who --"

"Fuck. *Enough.*" Josh shifted back and stood, staggering briefly before shaking himself from head to toe. As he got up, he dragged Tracey along by the wrist. "You don't want to roll in the sand? Fine. But like hell you're cock-blocking me."

"So what's your plan?" Tracey couldn't resist taunting.

"This." Josh sheathed his claws and dragged his fingers down Tracey's ass, slipping around to grasp Tracey's erect cock. Josh loosed an appreciative moan -- Tracey knew he didn't have a single thing to compensate for in that department. "Scream and I'll kill you," was Josh's only warning before swallowing Tracey's cock down to the root.

Marnie bent at the waist, pussy clenching around the fingers she fucked herself with, as the first of what she hoped would be many orgasms hit her hard and fast.

Watching Josh suck Tracey, she could almost feel that hot, raspy Catkind tongue scraping over her labia and pushing within.

She picked up the speed of her thrusts inside and used her thumb on her clit. *Dios*, but this was amazing!

Tracey bit back a hoarse yell, but only just. Josh was way better at this than any man had a right to be. Sharp Catkind teeth prickling the silky flesh of his cock, tongue swirling as his head bobbed, one hand covering the base of the shaft once he'd drawn off a few inches and one roughly kneading Tracey's sac, drawn up hard and achingly tight.

Josh unwrapped the hand he'd pinched Tracey's cock with and thrust his fingers toward Tracey's mouth. Tracey didn't think, his body acting for him, sucking Josh's fingers in, getting them good and wet. *Yeah*, he thought, drunk with pleasure. *Yeah, yeah, yeah!*

Josh pulled his fingers free with a loud, perverted *smack* and *pop*. He dragged his teeth up the underside of Tracey's cock at the same time as he parted Tracey's ass cheeks and drove two slick fingers deep inside. The harsh burn and the shocking blast of lust wrenched the orgasm out of him, no time to warn Josh before he flooded the Catkind's mouth with his cum. Josh snarled a garbled curse around his double mouthful and released Tracey's sac to gouge scratches in his ass.

Might have backfired on him. Tracey jackknifed, Josh's head butting his stomach, and spasming, shooting more than he'd thought he had in him. Guess Josh just affected him that way... Always had, damn it.

Marnie tried to catch her breath. *Ay*, to think they hadn't heard her when she'd loosed a short, sharp scream on her climax just then!

Her wrist ached and her fingers were slick. By now, if it was just her all alone, she'd have washed up and rolled over to sleep, boneless from the pleasure and set to dream happy, sexy dreams all night long.

Now, though, she didn't want to stop. Couldn't stop. She needed more.
Come on, boys, give it up for me, she encouraged, stroking herself. Again!

Josh drew free far sooner than Tracey would have liked, dragging his hand across his mouth, smearing come over his gloating lips. "Knew you'd give it up for me."

"Shut up." Tracey fell to his knees, shoving at Josh. Maybe it was surprise alone that knocked Josh over, but Tracey didn't care as long as he had the Catkind man where he wanted him. He was consumed with the need to get at the burning hot, rock-hard cock as fast as he could. He planted one paw firmly on Josh's ribs to make him lie still and pounced, drawing Josh's long, thick cock as deep in his mouth as he could and sucking roughly, his cheeks hollowing.

Josh ground his teeth together, what would have been a full-throated roar mostly swallowed, heels burrowing into the desert sand. He dug his fingers in Tracey's scalp, stinging splinters of pain prickling over the injured skin, not holding anything back with the savage jerks of his hips while he fucked Tracey's mouth.

It was so easy and so damn good to let Josh have his way. Tracey shut his eyes tight in ecstasy, taking everything Josh had to give, forgetting all about the bad blood between them. Who cared about old feuds when you had a mouthful of sexy-as-fuck cock, hard because Josh wanted him?

Tracey worked Josh with his best blow-job tricks, drawing hard lines with the pointed tip of his tongue and slathering on long, wet licks with the flat. He squeezed the base in fluid ripples, scratched over Josh's sac, and bit the bundle of nerves under the head.

"Still," Josh panted, grinding it out, "still hate you."

Tracey drew off far enough to glare at him -- hard to do, both actions -- and blew him a kiss. "Can't stand you either."

"As -- long as we -- got that -- clear," Josh ground out. "Damn it, Tracey!" He roared, hips snapping up. Tracey sealed his lips over Josh's cock, catching the exploding

gush of semen in his mouth. Josh tasted salty, musky, not sweet at all, spicy in the strange way he'd only ever tasted from Josh, and so frigging sexy Tracey's cock spasmed, desperate to rise again.

He swallowed the last drop and pulled off, too worn out to do anything but collapse, head thumping under Josh's ribs. Josh reached down and lightly scratched Tracey's scalp.

Tracey fought hard not to purr. It had been so good between them once, so damn good, and then everything had changed. Fantastic sex or not, it was about to change even more. He could *feel* Marnie's presence back in the arroyo, could sense her in a way he'd never experienced with anyone male or female, Catkind or human. His body was wrung out from fucking Josh but the thought of her sweet, curvy legs wrapped around his waist made him squeeze his eyes shut to combat the shock of lust for what he knew would be her breathtakingly gorgeous pussy, wet and pink and spread for him.

He knew, beyond any shadow of a doubt, Marnie was his human mate, and he'd be her Consort when she was Queen. But Josh...

Josh's breathing had deepened, not shallowed, catching the way it always did when he was too turned-on to turn back. "Marnie," he muttered. "God, I need her." His cock was on the rise, still shiny from Tracey's mouth and the last drops of his come. He shoved past Tracey's head to grip it, stroking. "Marnie's my mate," he ground out. "She's *mine*, Tracey. You have to go."

Tracey lifted up in equal parts shock and anger. Like hell he'd go!

Chapter Five

Marnie's calves burned from the effort of staying upright and her lungs ached from drawing in such rapid breaths of the dry desert air. Despite that, her pussy still throbbed, demanding more attention.

Preferably the direct attention of the Catkind men.

Marnie drank in the sight of both Tracey and Josh sprawled over one another. Their mouths were shiny and swollen, and her own lips tingling when she touched them, unable to stop thinking about what it would be like to be kissed with that much passion. Not like Rafael at all. He'd never been gentle, but this was a different kind of force.

Tracey and Josh had ugly history behind them, any fool could tell as much, and Marnie was putting her days of being *una idiota* behind her. Her eyes were open now. Maybe she'd seen too much. Bad blood or no, Marnie had seen and heard the raw need for one another in the way they fought and fucked, eating each other alive until they'd had all they could take.

Her pussy ached, frantic for the kind of all-consuming, wholly claiming force they'd used on one another slamming into her, burning her up from the inside out. Making her new. *Madre de Dios*, if only!

Tracey sat up, followed fast by Josh, who grabbed him by the back of the neck and forced their mouths together, biting through a brutal kiss. Tracey's shoulders shuddered as he fought, his spine arched when he gave in, grappling to get a better grip on Josh's overpowering arms.

She had a good feeling neither Catkind man would think her ugly, not even after she started showing. They were the kind of men who'd appreciate her. When her fingers slid slickly into her soaking pussy, she had to bite back a scream. Her body

sucked fiercely at the intrusion, demanding more, burning for Tracey's mouth and Josh's cock, or the other way around, or both. *Ay!* Her eyes widened. Two at once? She'd never... but *mierde*, the thought of Tracey burying his cock in her cunt and Josh sliding deep in her ass, taken together they made her muscles clench and her stomach twist with a shock of bliss.

Tracey hung nearly limp in Josh's unyielding arms. "Need you," he rasped, his light tenor husky with need. "Fuck me already, or I'm fucking you."

"Beg for it," Josh gloated, licking a path up Tracey's neck.

Marnie saw Tracy dig his claws in Josh's forearm. "Fuck me."

Por favor! Marnie pumped her fingers in and out of her pussy, chasing the last, biggest orgasm of all, with every drop of its rushing power. If she could only see Josh bending Tracey over... from her memories of the few times Rafael had tried it, which she'd hated, she knew he'd wrench Tracey's ass cheeks apart and push his weighty cock like a battering ram until Tracey's body gave way. That would do it for her, she was sure.

"Hurry," she whispered, almost out of her mind. "Fuck him, Josh."

To think she was talking like this! That she was doing this, and enjoying it. She really was turning into someone new, wasn't she? And she *liked* this new Marnie.

"No," Josh snapped, sending a sick thrill of disappointment through Marnie, one that soared out of the depths in the very next second when he wrestled Tracey onto his hands and knees -- still in her line of sight -- and manhandled the smaller man until his ass was high in the air. "Don't want sand on my cock."

Tracey raged in some tongue Marnie didn't understand. She got the point all the same. *Please*, she begged frantically inside her head. *Please, please, for both of us.*

"Not gonna fuck you," Josh taunted, "but I can do this."

He wrenched Tracey's quivering ass cheeks apart and thrust his face between them. Tracey shrieked, though he bit the cry back fast, gurgling low in his throat. His fingers spread wide, then curled into tight fists; his cock hardened instantly to angry redness and jerked between his legs.

Was he... *Dios mio*, you couldn't mistake those wet, slurping noises Marnie heard even over Tracey's stifled yells of passion. Josh was *licking* him! Laving that nerve-rich pucker of muscle with his tongue, his rough Catkind tongue.

Tracey growled, spitting Catkind curses. He fisted his cock and pumped fiercely, back bowing when ropes of creamy white shot from the head.

Marnie stifled her own scream by biting down on her forearm, bending double and spreading her fingers inside her pussy for as much of a stretch as she could get. She pushed her fist in her mouth as she shoved her thumb roughly against her throbbing clit, keening at the top of her lungs as the climax shocked her like lightning, body and soul, fucking herself with her fingers without stopping no matter how she quivered.

When she came to herself, she'd collapsed backwards, her shoulders protesting at their collision with the hard, dry floor of the arroyo. Getting herself together was hard, drawing her soaking fingers from her nearly-sore pussy, blowing strands of tangled hair out of her eyes, struggling to calm her breathing.

Had they noticed? *Espero que no sea así!* She might die of embarrassment if they'd realized how she watched them. Even more careful than before, Marnie crept closer for a better view and examined them worriedly. No... They hadn't realized she was there. *Gracias a Dios.*

She should get back to the soft bed where they'd laid her, she knew. Just a minute more, though... just to see what two men did when they'd brought each other off so hard they were collapsed like kittens who'd worn themselves out... yet another ripple of need uncoiled in her belly.

She couldn't have forced herself away, then, even if she'd wanted to try -- and she didn't, good sense completely melted in the face of her hunger to watch these two. Who'd have thought ogling two men having sex would turn her on this hard, this fast? *Ay!*

Marnie dragged tendrils of hair off her cheeks, tucking them shakily behind her ears. They were coming out of it now, more was the pity, sitting up on kitten-weak

haunches. The way they stared at each other was so guarded, as if they still didn't trust each other. Men! They were all the same, weren't they?

Well... no. These Catkind, they were better. She could just tell. They'd take care of her as they'd promised. Maybe she could teach them to care for one another as well. The thought excited her in a strange way she'd never known. Like she'd learned, so quickly, to care for each of them, and wanted them to be happy. She barely knew them, but for all that she felt what she felt, and she wasn't wasting any more of her life pretending one thing when her heart ached for more.

She silenced her racing thoughts and tilted her head. They had started to talk, their voices kept low, and she wanted to hear.

"You still think sex solves everything," Tracey said with a ghost of a smile. "If you can't come up with a good answer to a problem, you fuck whoever opposes you until they lay down arms."

"More like they lie down and give me what they want as much as I do." Josh thumbed Tracey's lip. His good eye glowed with sexual satisfaction. "I was here, *gato*, and you got off on all this as much as I did. Maybe more."

Tracey shrugged, looking irritable. "You're the best lay I've ever known. Male, anyway. Is that enough for your ego?"

Josh looked smug. "It's a start."

"I'm still not backing down. Marnie can't be your mate." Tracey stuck out his chin. "Marnie belongs to *me*."

Marnie reared back, breath freezing in her lungs. *What?* Mates? Josh and Tracey both? *Ay...* well, it did make sense, didn't it? How else would she be Queen if she didn't take a Catkind consort... or two? The problem was that she didn't want a man of any kind ruling her life. Rafael had taken her life over and she'd sworn if she ever got free then she'd never again let any man have that kind of power over her.

Yet the thought of sharing her life, her bed, her heart with either of these Catkind... it made her weak in the knees, speeding up the rapid pulse rate of her heart until she thought it would burst through her chest. They were both man enough, real

men, to make giving them what they wanted something she ached for, not dreaded. Mates, *si*. This was what they all needed.

She licked her lips and listened some more, straining for every word.

"She can't be mate to both of us," Josh argued, his thick, pale fur standing on end. "I felt the pull. Right away, the second I saw her, smelled her. God, her fragrance!"

Tracey's hackles rose. "You think it wasn't the same for me?" he demanded. "She's pulling *me*. I'm her Consort. You can go to hell."

Marnie realized she was shaking her head, mouthing the word "no" over and over. A heated comprehension was slowly forming in her thoughts, and although she didn't understand what was dawning on her, she knew she couldn't let either of the Catkind men drive the other away.

Josh stood angrily, looking taller than ever as he towered over the slender Tracey. "Do you think you can beat me in a fight?" he thundered. "I'd love to see you try."

Tracey shot upright, his hands clenched in knotty fists. "What happened to you?" he demanded, bitter as wormwood.

The sound made Marnie's heart ache. Underneath the rage she recognized the "why wasn't I good enough?" she'd cried herself to sleep with so many times.

Josh looked away from Tracey. "Drop it," he ordered flatly. "If you know what's good for you, shut up right now."

"No." Tracey gripped Josh by the wrists, long black jaguar's tail whipping around Josh's leg. "I'm sick of battering down the truth. What happened to you, Josh? You ran away from me because this is *sick*, because it's *wrong*, because it's *not the Catkind way*." His voice rose in volume, jagged with the kind of love that had twisted into wounded hate, but which could still be love again if Josh only gave an inch. "Suddenly you're back and you can't get enough of me. Don't lie. This," he said, loosely fisting Josh's still-half-hard cock, "doesn't fool anyone. You wanted me as much as ever."

"I thought we were fighting over Marnie," Josh insisted, stubborn as a mule. "You and me, we're something else, and we're in the past."

Marnie stifled a snort of laughter. Josh wasn't very good at lying to himself, was he? Tracey didn't buy it either. "Just tell me," he begged, loosing one of Josh's wrists to lay his palm flat over the center of Josh's chest. "All I want is to hear the truth."

Josh regarded Tracey through narrowed eyes. Marnie thought she could see both hunger and need in the way he looked at the darker Catkind man. "I give you the truth, and you walk away from Marnie?"

Tracey reared back. "No way in hell. She's mine."

"She's mine," Josh snarled. He bared his teeth, sharper and deadlier than Marnie had thought they would be, startling her.

The shock, she thought, must be what had brought the coalescing puzzle in her mind to clarity. No longer afraid, neither of being caught or of what the Catkind men would think, Marnie got to her feet. Standing tall and proud, she swept out of the blind corner with the nobility and grace of a Queen coming so naturally to her. She stopped in front of the two Catkind, who'd frozen in place, staring at her.

She smiled at them, her shoulders straight and her heart full. "No more fighting, both of you," she commanded. "You are *mine*, *my* mates. And do you know what? From here on out, you're going to listen to *me*."

Chapter Six

Tracey recovered from the shock first, shuffling around on his knees until he faced Marnie head-on instead of twisting his neck to look at her sidelong. The sight of her took his breath away and made his heart race.

Good God, how could any one woman be so beautiful? Her dark cheeks were flushed, her round, full breasts rising and falling with excitement, their nipples jutting proudly. His mouth watered, a fierce need seizing him to take her breast in his mouth and suck. Her thick, dark hair looked as if a lover had speared his hands through it while he held her down and fucked her raw.

And she smelled... Tracey reeled. She smelled of sex, ripe, earthy sex, like she'd just been taken by a lover she'd remember the rest of her days for the way he'd blown her mind and taken her higher than she'd ever gone before. The small, satiated laziness hiding behind the bright ferociousness of her smile told him, better than any other clue, that here was a woman who'd just seen God.

Beside him, Josh looked equally dumbstruck, his lips parted slightly. "Marnie," he breathed, throat rasping. He turned with greater ease than Tracey had managed, reaching for her with one hand extended, claws safely sheathed. "Come to me."

Marnie lifted one shapely eyebrow. "You'll have to do better than that."

Despite his amazement and nearly overwhelming need for her, Tracey wanted to laugh. This was what had been hiding behind Marnie's timid fear? A Queen? Hell, yes, she was every inch a Queen and she'd rule any man who had eyes to see her with.

Derek and Benjamin might take exception, but even though Tracey had seen Gabriella's lush ripeness for himself, he thought Marnie was the lovelier of the sisters.

"Come to me, then," Tracey tested, wanting to see if she'd treat him with the same arousing high-handedness.

Marnie smiled with one corner of her mouth. He could see the proud Aztec priestess who'd mothered her line in the regal lift of her head. "If you want me, you have to win me." She cocked her hip, thrusting her pussy forward.

Tracey moaned as the move brought her further into the bright desert sunlight, illuminating her gorgeous cunt and making the drops of her own juice sparkle. At his side, Josh looked like someone had struck a hammer's blow between his eyes, utterly dumbfounded -- and to Tracey, who knew the signs, paralyzed with lust.

He licked his lips, suddenly dry as dust despite how he could still taste Josh there, and spoke first. "Win you. How?"

Marnie blew out her breath, sounding satisfied. She exulted in her newfound power, but at the same time she wore it well. She wouldn't be a cruel Queen, Tracey was sure, and that meant he had a shot here.

"Whatever you want," Josh swore. He glared at Tracey. "And may the better Catkind win."

Marnie rolled her eyes. "That's the first thing to go, *que los niños tontos*. No more bickering over whose I am. *Comprende?*"

God, he loved it when this luscious Black Latina spoke her native language, the syllables rolling fluidly and melodiously off her tongue even when, he was pretty sure, she was pissed at them.

Josh had backed down, only a fraction, still considerable for anyone who knew the tall, pale Catkind and his immense pride. "We both have a claim," he said stubbornly. "It's a valid fight."

"No." Marnie laid her hands on her hips, caressing them, gyrating in tiny, tempting swings. Tracey moaned softly, echoed by Josh. "You want me. I can tell."

No doubt she could. For the third time that afternoon, his cock pulsed, angry and needy, curving up toward his stomach. Josh was in the same state, tendons standing out in thick ropes on his neck as he struggled not to beg. Josh didn't beg.

Tracey had a sneaking suspicion he would once Marnie put them through their paces, and he knew that was going to happen. It might be worth fighting for his mate just to see Josh taken down a notch or three.

"What are you grinning at?" Marnie inquired, smiling so sweetly and naughtily that Tracey knew she had some devilish game in mind. She trailed her forefinger along her lips. She looked drunk with excitement and so ripely sexual no woman could ever compare.

He wound his tail around his abdomen and lashed the soft skin, massaging the clenching muscles underneath. "My Queen," he answered. "What do you want us to do?"

"So many things," she replied silkily, crooning out her words. "Let me ask you this, too. What do you want *me* to do?"

Tracey and Josh exchanged glances, Tracey's startled but blooming with excitement at the challenge, and Josh's burning bright with the arousal of his Alpha dominance. "I think," Josh said, "You want men who are strong enough to take you where you stand."

Marnie's cheeks colored dusky red. Her fresh wave of arousal smelled better than any perfume. Tracey had to close his eyes briefly and count to ten when he caught sight of the fresh dew blooming on her soaking pussy.

Josh went on. "You know I'm your mate."

Marnie's lips curled up at the corners. She said nothing.

"I am," Josh insisted.

Tracey wasn't going to let him get away with that. He forced himself to his feet and found a sturdy balance. And, because he didn't see the point in not taking every advantage he could, he loosely fisted his cock and thumbed the head. Marnie's lips parted slightly, her gaze shooting to his erection. *Yes, lovely, that's the way.* "Josh claims he's your mate. I'm telling you different. You're mine."

"Yours, mine, yours, mine," Marnie mocked, albeit kindly, sparkling with naughtiness and excitement. "I say you're mine, both of you, not the other way around." She smiled brilliantly. "What do you think of this, eh?"

Tracey couldn't look away from her as she stretched her arms over her head and, displaying her body without shame. The sight of her full, perfect breasts hit him like a punch in the stomach. Josh grunted, breath knocked out of his lungs. He smelled Josh's musky arousal as well as Marnie's sweet juices now, and something spicy underneath he recognized as his own.

"Let me," he breathed, crossing the gap between them to sweep Marnie into his arms. He nuzzled her hair, inhaling the perfume of her skin and the scent of her shampoo. Cupping one of her breasts, he rolled the nipple between finger and thumb. She moaned. So sensitive.

Ohh. Tracey understood now. He lowered his hand to her soft belly, slightly curved, only full enough to remind him of the truth. He brushed his thumb over the small swell as he kissed the tender spot between throat and ear. "I can be the one you need," he crooned, not questioning why he was so sure, just as it had never crossed his mind to doubt what he felt before. "I can be everything you need."

Marnie combed her fingers through his curls. "Mmm," she agreed lazily, rolling her head on her shoulders, giving him better access. "You could, but I want even more than that."

Tracey didn't want to understand until he sensed her reaching out for Josh. "I want him, too," she purred. "Come to me, Josh. You belong with me."

Josh approached slowly, his paw-steps crunching heavily through the desert sand. "Not both of us," he said, tone flat. "That's not the way things work."

"Oh, no?" Marnie chuckled, low and throaty. If Tracey hadn't known for sure, he would have thought he was holding a completely different woman from the frightened waif Benjamin had warned him to treat with kid gloves.

Showed what Benjamin knew sometimes, didn't it?

"Tell me, then," she ordered imperiously as the Queen she would be, and was fast becoming. "How do things work for the Catkind? Is it 'normal' for the Catkind to want a human woman? That's not how I've heard it works."

Tracey didn't look up to check out Josh's expression, but he heard the pale Catkind man's confusion and rising anger when he spoke. Josh hated being fenced into a corner. "No," he grudged. "Things are changing."

Marnie laughed, triumphant.

"Let me finish!" Josh snarled to punctuate his demand. "The Catkind have to change, to survive. That means human woman and human men, for our females, if any of them were ever in the kind of need we suffer."

Tracey felt the subtle shift in Marnie's body and knew Josh had captured her curiosity. "So why were you and Tracey lovers?" she asked bluntly, awing Tracey with her forthrightness. "Is that something else the Catkind are doing when they can't get their claws on a female?" She purred, sounding almost feline. "I'm not blind. I saw the two of you. No one fucks like you two did each other unless..." She trailed off, though clearly not out of timidity. "Am I right?"

He did look this time, despite his reluctance to leave off tasting the sweet saltiness of Marnie's skin. To his immense satisfaction -- more than he'd expected, actually -- Josh looked both shocked and furious. And he was blushing.

"We were young," Josh prevaricated. "Young men do these things. When they get old enough, *some* of us have enough sense to stop," he added, sparing a dark glare for Tracey, who decided the hell with it, and blew Josh a kiss.

He wanted what he wanted, and he was certain Marnie was on his side in this. He understood her now, as Josh would soon. She wanted both of them as her mates... and she wanted both he and Josh to mate with each other, forming a perfect triangle with three sturdy sides to support them together. The comprehension was crystal-clear in Tracey's mind, and he couldn't understand why he'd never figured this out before.

Now, he'd see if Josh could make the connection too. Tracey waited, heart in his throat, praying to whatever might be listening that Josh would, for once in his stubborn, bullish life, shake off his pride long enough to listen to reason.

Marnie waited, clearly not about to make this any easier on Josh. Tough love, it seemed, and Tracey was fine with that. He figured he'd be in for his own share.

"I don't know what you want me to say!" Josh burst out, frustrated.

Marnie gracefully lifted one slim shoulder. "I want the truth, that's all. The way I see it, you parted ways with Tracey because of 'ought to' and 'I shouldn't' and 'that's not how it's supposed to be' -- which makes you *estupido*, no? *Cabezas* like a brick wall."

"Why does this matter to you?" Josh barked.

"Because I did so many things because I thought there was no other way," Marnie replied simply. "I almost got my sister and her mates killed because I was afraid to say no to a bastard way of life. No more, *comprende?* *Nada mas*. If you want me, you have to win me. To win me, all you have to do is be honest."

"Honest about what?" Josh sounded like he was on the edge, torn between rage and lust. "I've told you no lies."

"Haven't you? You're lying to yourself. And to sweet Tracey." She petted his curls. "All I want to hear is that you still love him. That's all. If you want me to let you in, you have to let him in, too."

Tracey waited, along with Marnie, almost holding his breath. He couldn't lie to himself, not any longer. The pull he felt toward Marnie -- if he was honest, he knew he'd felt the same tug toward Josh always, even at the pale Catkind man's most irritating. They'd fight tooth and nail for the rest of their lives, but they'd wither and die if they walked away from each other a second time.

And if they lost Marnie, their faultless third, it would end all of them.

"This isn't how it works," Josh said quietly. Tracey heard a hint of something familiar in those words, a note he'd heard once before when Josh first came to his side in the dead of night. "Why do I want it?"

"Shh. I'll show you." Marnie opened her free arm to Josh. "Come be with both of us."

Josh took a deep breath, held it, exhaled, and muttered an assent without words. In that moment, Tracey loved him -- and Marnie -- so much that his chest ached.

"Si," Marnie murmured, welcoming Josh to her. She arranged his paw over Tracey's back, where Josh instantly began rubbing the lightly furred skin with his thumb. "That's the way. That's all I wanted."

"All?" Tracey asked slyly, giving Josh a way out of the awkwardness now that he'd taken the most important step -- and, to be frank, because he couldn't wait any longer to taste Marnie deeper and longer. "Don't you want this?"

He bent his head and licked her breast, thrilled both by her gasp and a heady wave of perfumed arousal. Josh groaned, giving in right away, seizing her other breast and wrapping his lips around her dusky nipple.

She cupped both their heads as they suckled on her full breasts. "Si, now you have it right. All for one, one for all, for always."

"Yes." Tracey twined his rough tongue around her already-swollen and tender-looking nipple, drawing a throaty moan from her.

"Josh?" she prompted, tweaking his ear.

"For you, my Queen, yes," Josh rasped. "Let me have you, now?"

"Both of you together." Marnie sighed blissfully. "Both of you can have me, all you want of me. *Ahora*. Now."

Chapter Seven

Marnie wasn't any stranger to getting drunk. She'd had more than one night in which it was just easier to pick up a bottle, pour a golden shot glass full, and not think about Rafael, his fists, his sharp tongue, her falling-down apartment in its bad neighborhood, or the way she was always terrified by sharp, sudden noises in the night...

She hadn't touched a drop of whiskey since she first thought she might be pregnant. Now, she wondered if she might not ever want to crack open a bottle again. Not when she had two of the marvelous Catkind men who made her feel this heady, this high, like she was flying and would never need to touch back down to earth.

"Where do we start?" she crooned, petting Tracey's soft curls. She didn't think she'd ever get tired of touching them. He was pretty, rather than handsome, but not for one moment did she consider him girlish or weak. The idea of all the power of the Catkind coiled up in his wiry muscles made her shiver with anticipation and pleasure. She traced a finger around his lips where they were fastened to her breast, caressing the hollows of his cheeks while he sucked. *Dios mio...* so good!

Words flowed from some hidden, stopped-up source, teasing her with the sudden, intense urge to let them flow over her tongue. She hadn't thought about -- or wanted to -- sing, or to croon the old poems, in far too long. Not since Rafael first backhanded her across the face for being childish. She'd learned to keep her mouth shut, then. If she didn't make a racket, he'd promised she wouldn't make him hit her.

Bastardo. Her stomach churned at the thought of what an idiot she'd been.

Nada mas. She'd sung this morning -- *Ay, Dios mio*, only this morning? -- that didn't seem possible, like it should have been a long, long time instead of less than twenty-four hours. Unless she was totally mistaken, the Catkind had liked her songs.

Benjamin, who she could sense was the gentler of her sister's two mates, though not as tender or loving as Tracey, had even purred, softly, for her ears only. She would sing again, and make the music a gift for the two Catkind men of her own who she was never, ever going to let go.

Marnie parted her lips, both in a shiver of pleasure at the rough, wet raspiness of Josh's tongue laving her sensitive nipple, and the callused finger pads of his paws kneading her breast. She breathed out, her voice high and sweet even in her own ears, releasing the first line on a gasp. "*Sólo tú le das brillo y Amor a mi Corazón,*" she crooned, twining Tracey's curls around her fingers.

She tugged up, a little sharply, testing an idea that had occurred to her. Tracey purred, his lips tightening around her nipple. *Ay!* He liked knowing who was boss. Not a man who enjoyed being pussy-whipped, no, but for all his gentleness he craved some rough treatment to leaven his love-making.

Somehow, it was different to the way Rafael had treated her. Marnie thought she knew why, her mind so clear now. Tracey's tastes were all in play, weren't they? He'd never think of hurting her, and he'd let her take back a few tastes of control.

Gracias, she sent up a thankful prayer. *My second chance. Two second chances.*

She stroked the angled line of Tracey's jaw, trailing her finger around the tight seal of his lips. Tracey purred, raspy and loud like the lion's purrs she'd heard once on a wild animal movie, and pressed the length of his body firmly against her own. He released her breast, drawing a disappointed whimper from her that changed, fast, into a soft exclamation of rapture when his mouth traveled, rough tongue licking in quick flicks over the tender skin of her throat, all the way up to under her ear.

"Keep singing," he murmured, tracing the shell of her ear with his amazing tongue. Marnie swayed momentarily as his long, mobile tail wrapped slowly around her leg. "Keep singing, *senorita.*"

Madre de Dios, what a terrible accent. Marnie laughed under her breath, then gasped again when Tracey, the sly-boots, tickled her pussy with the tip of his tail. Fresh

moisture slicked her cunt, the start of a pulse beating deep inside making her unsteady on her feet.

Josh growled, no doubt at Tracey's cheekiness, and slid his mouth off her other breast. He skimmed his rough hand down the creamy-smooth skin of her belly, all the way down to her wet pussy. There, he flicked Tracey's twitching tail-tip out of the way and slid his finger between her folds to stroke lightly up and down.

Marnie drew in a sharp, shocked breath, very nearly a scream. She wanted to draw this out, to take her time and have as much fun as possible, but who said she couldn't go again... and again? So why bother to play coy? She didn't want to be hard to get. She wanted them, and she needed them to know how much they made her feel like a proud woman again.

"Keep singing," Josh growled, nuzzling his side of her throat. He scraped his rough tongue lightly over the pulse in her neck and spread his huge, long-fingered hand over the middle of her back, right between the shoulder blades. Marnie began to tremble, her breath quickening.

So wicked and so delicious to do this in the outdoors, down in the safety of the arroyo where no one up on the desert above would see them, down in the bright, scorching light of the midday sun!

"Keep singing," Tracey echoed, licking her ear. "So pretty."

Marnie wrestled to regain enough control to croon the next lines for them, her own hands never still, continually sweeping over their muscled arms as far as she could reach and down the hard, solid lines of their backs. Josh had scars, thick, knotty ropes criss-crossed all over.

She didn't feel sorry for him, no. She admired him. He'd been through hell too, eh? Whoever had done this to him, he'd survived. She thought she might love him for that, alone. She knew she had the key to unlock rough, tough Josh and see what lay behind his walls.

"Mmm," Tracey groaned, moving to cup her ass. He squeezed, just this side of too hard. His tail dragged reluctantly slowly away from her pussy and traveled around

her hip to tease over his own hand and then -- *Ay*, the wicked Catkind! -- nudge gently inside the cleft of her bottom.

Marnie lost the melody between one note and the next.

Tracey chuckled against her temple, massaging her hip. "Keep going," he dared. "See if you can sing all the way through."

"You're out of your mind," she retorted through shaky breaths, but with laughter. "Are you trying to make me explode?"

"Oh, yeah," he whispered, his tail tickling over her puckered muscle hidden deep. "Sing for me while I drive you crazy."

Marnie gasped, but in surprised pleasure. When Rafael had insisted, he'd always been so rough, so harsh. Never once had it been anything like good.

Josh moved to kiss the corner of Marnie's mouth, nibbling on her lips, thrilling love bites that made her skin feel as if it sizzled, every nerve ending crackling like lightning had struck her. "Sing." His was an order, not a sweet request. Electric arousal flooded Marnie's limbs and her pussy released another slick rush. "Sing for me."

"For me," Tracey snarled, his tail-tip teasing at Marnie's ass. She squeaked.

"Both of you," she managed to say, drawing in deep enough breaths to talk getting harder and harder to do. *Ay*, if one of them didn't fuck her soon... "Both, or none at all. *Comprende?*" She'd drive that into their thick, feline skulls if it was the last thing she ever did. Greedy, eh, to want both Catkind men or none at all. Greedy, but she wanted to win this challenge.

She licked her lips and sang the next few lines. "*Sólo tú conoces mis secretos...*"

The two Catkind men assaulted the whole of her body with lengthy, lingering sweeps of their agile tails, the fur tickling her skin, which tingled almost unbearably under the brushes of soft fur and hard muscle. Josh found a new hold on her breast, rolling the almost too sensitive nipple between his fingers. Tracey began to kiss his way down her body until -- *Madre de Dios!* -- he hit his knees and -- *Ay!* -- pressed his lips to her pussy.

"You taste like honey," he slurred, as if drunk already on her juices. "Sing while I drink."

Marnie wasn't any too sure she could continue to stand if he licked her pussy, much less sing. She wrested back some control, resisting the urge to pull Josh's ear for his indignant growl at Tracey's nerve. "No," she said, firm despite wondering what the hell was wrong with her to turn down the chance of his mouth on her cunt. *Ay*, the way his tongue would rasp inside --

She cried out, the climax taking her by surprise, bending nearly double. Josh caught her and held her up while Tracey darted in and ran his tongue from the top of her pussy down to her vaginal opening, thrusting the raspy muscle inside and licking her while the muscles inside squeezed and fluttered.

Her eyes had rolled back inside her head long before he'd finished, and she was only still "there" enough to register Josh's ravenous, commanding control of her mouth. He thrust his tongue between her lips, dragging it over the roof of her mouth and prickling her lips with his teeth.

Moaning, she climaxed a second time. Tracey made happy noises and devoured her cream. He grasped her thighs and kneaded them, his claws just barely prickling through her skin.

"Stop," she found enough breath to order when she'd recovered enough to make her lips form words. "Stop."

"You don't want us to," Josh whispered, mouth tickling her ear. He massaged her breast, drawing whimpers from her. "You want us to fuck you until none of us can go again."

Ay, did she ever! And he'd said "we." Now he was getting it.

Good cats deserved rewards, oh, yes. Marnie combed her fingers through Tracey's curls -- an obsession already -- and nodded, her eyes slipping closed. "*Si*," she rasped. "Fuck me. Both of you. Fuck me *now*."

"Who's in here?" Tracey asked, not sounding too together himself, tipping his head back to gaze worshipfully up at her through lust-hazed blue eyes. He fingered her pussy, his fingers firm and fast. "Who takes this pretty cunt?"

"Only one at a time?" she teased.

Josh chuckled, almost startling her. Had she heard him laugh before? "One in your pussy, and one... here." He smacked his tail on her ass cheeks, *flick-flick*, laughing again when she peeped. "Who's where?"

Ay, such a decision! Marnie's head spun. She had to make up her mind fast, she knew -- nothing killed the mood like taking forever, and she didn't want them to think she was afraid. No, not at all.

The Catkind men waited, almost holding their breath -- when they weren't growling sub-vocally at one another -- ready to do whatever she asked of them.

This? This was living.

Marnie made up her mind. "Tracey. I want Tracey to fuck me from behind. You, Josh, I want you in my pussy." Her cheeks warmed, but she didn't care at all. No more time for being ashamed in her life!

Tracey rippled with what looked like excitement. "I'll make it good for you," he swore, rising unsteadily to his feet. He seized her face by the chin and swung her around for a hard, remorseless kiss, eating at her lips until she could barely breathe.

"I'll make it better," Josh boasted, slipping fully in front of her. He wound his tail around her waist. And for all the snarling tension between them that sometimes made it hard to breathe when Tracey and Josh butted heads, Marnie thrilled with ecstasy to realize Tracey had twined his own tail under and around Josh's.

She shivered while Josh lifted her off her feet, high enough that she had to wrap her legs around him and hang on tight, even though she knew his strength wouldn't let her fall. The spread of her legs parted her ass cheeks. She heard Tracey groan.

"Josh," he ground out. "I didn't think I'd get this lucky."

"Hmm?" Josh gloated.

Marnie heard Tracey grind his teeth. "Got protection?" Marnie's back arched as Tracey's firm finger pad pushed at her opening. "If you don't, I'll kill you."

She fixed Josh with the sternest look she could manage under the circumstances, but it wasn't necessary. Josh stifled a groan. "Hold her. I have to -- in the supplies --"

Despite his arousal, Tracey rolled his eyes expressively. "Cock-sure, huh?"

"Doesn't hurt to be prepared, pussycat." Josh leered at him.

Marnie didn't like Josh's rapid retreat, not at all, but it was worth it for the way he came back and passed something to Tracey, a loud plastic slap as if he'd handed over a tube or a bottle... oh. *Dios Mio*. Yes.

For a moment, there was silence. Tracey draped the weight of his body against her back and shoulders, molding his groin to her ass, and Josh slid slickly, smoothly in Marnie's pussy. They met over her shoulder, smashing their mouths together and kissing like the other was wine they'd thirsted after for years in the cruel sun.

Marnie screamed as she climaxed again, her pussy milking Josh's thick cock. She clawed at Josh's back, fingernails digging in, the orgasm never finishing or letting go, each contraction of her cunt around Josh's cock making him grunt. Tracey's slim fingers were gentle at first, then rougher and faster when she remembered how to relax for him.

Some men didn't think women got off on anal sex. Now that Marnie was being treated right, she decided those men were completely *estupido*!

"Ready for me?" Tracey asked softly, his breath tingling on her back of her neck where he'd swept her hair out of the way. "God, you smell so good. All hot and wet where Josh's fucking you."

Josh stiffened and shook, grabbing his cock at the base and pinching hard to keep himself from coming right then. Marnie kissed him, tasting as deep inside his mouth as she could. Oh, he was a keeper!

Tracey chuckled, a low, dark sound. "How much can you take?"

She didn't have to think twice. "All of it," she gasped, pushing her ass back against Tracey's rigid cock. He had to get inside her now. "All you've got."

"Want me to be gentle?" Tracey tormented her by asking.

"*Infierno!* No!" Marnie loosed a long string of curses in Mexican Spanish.

Tracey whistled as if impressed. He bit the back of her neck, hard enough to leave bruises later yet not breaking the skin, lined the head of his cock up to her stretched opening, and slid inside.

Marnie shrieked in short, choppy bursts with each of his short, insistent strokes until she felt his balls slapping against her skin and thought that if he filled her any further, she'd crumble to pieces in their arms.

She hoped she would.

"I can feel you," Josh ground out. Marnie forced her eyes open to meet his, realizing he wasn't talking to her, but to Tracey, staring over her shoulder. "Fuck, I can feel your cock all the way through her. *Fuck!*"

"I can feel you, too." Tracey unwound his tail from Marnie's waist and whipped it around Josh's, long enough to gather them both together.

Josh loosed a guttural groan and did the same, mirror for mirror, binding them tighter than Marnie had ever thought could be possible.

"Move," she demanded, unable to wait another second. "Move!"

Tracey buried his face against one of her shoulders and Josh, the other, their breath hot on her skin while they cursed and swore their love for her, while they finally, at last, began to fuck her.

Too much, too much, but *Madre de Dios*, she'd never stop wanting more! Marnie could no longer see through the red cloud of passion fogging her vision, her entire world narrowed down to the thick cock pounding her ass and the other rigid cock hammering in and out of her pussy.

She shrieked with her next climax and squeezed Josh between her thighs, heels drumming on his back. Tracey roared, short nails digging into her breasts when he grabbed them and kneaded.

He stopped, shaking in every limb. "With me," he ordered, speaking to Josh, she knew. "With me. Need to feel you. When you go."

Josh roared in return. "Yeah. Yeah. Hard? Fast?"

"Yeah," Tracey grunted. "Hang on, Marnie --"

She hung on, losing hearing as well, nothing left but the Catkind cocks thrusting her back and forth. Her orgasm rose and swelled, allowing only the tiniest breaths for air before it reached another summit. She knew she was screaming, the sounds hurting her throat.

Tracey's bite on her shoulder sank deeper, a shock of pain drawing a final, shrill shriek from Marnie. Wet heat flooded the depths of her ass. Whether it was knowing Tracey had come or whether Josh just couldn't hold out any longer, he muffled a howl in Marnie's other shoulder, also breaking the skin, and shot liquid heat, pulse after pulse, painting her.

She was only vaguely aware of the two Catkind holding her between them, blowing like steam engines while they tried to remember how to breathe, but she did register, thrilling to the wickedness, when they loosed their bites on her and angled over her to devour one another's mouths, each removing one hand from her to grope each other.

Dios mio, could this ever be hotter? Or better? No, she decided, drunk with the pleasure. "I'm keeping you," she sobbed out between lusty gulps of air. "You're mine."

"Yes," Josh said, kneading her waist.

"God, yes," Tracey said, massaging her deliciously sore ass.

A loud *crack* was their only warning.

Marnie, who'd barely let it bother her, reached to nuzzle Josh's corded neck. Tracey was the one to figure it out, just in time.

"Down!" he thundered, pushing her over from behind. The sudden thrust of her weight startled Josh into losing his footing. They hit the arroyo floor split-seconds before the BOOM of an explosion shattered the air.

Fire roared up behind Tracey, and blood from tears in his skin streamed down his arms. He gritted his teeth, screwed up his eyes, and hung on like he'd never let go.

The heat of the explosion seared Marnie's skin, and she lost control, sliding down, down, down into the depths of unconsciousness.

Chapter Eight

Josh went down, but Tracey knew he wouldn't stay down long, not with that Catkind's ferocious temper. No sooner had the last echoes of the explosion died away than Josh was roaring in a fit of full, indignant cat rage.

"Don't!" Tracey snapped, not letting himself feel the pain from his slashed back just yet. "Marnie. She's out."

Josh stared at Tracey, his wrath and need to race after their attacker and shred him to ribbons warring with the realization that their third, their beautiful Marnie, lay draped limply over him. Her pretty eyes were shut, the lids slack, and her mouth drooped slightly. "Oh, God," he muttered at last. "Marnie?" He tried shaking her lightly. "Marnie, wake up."

She didn't budge. Terror made Tracey's heart beat faster. At least the adrenaline kept him from screaming as the pain from his wounds intensified. There was only one fix for that, shifting into his full Catkind form. Be damned if he'd do that, though, before he knew for certain that Marnie had only fainted and wasn't hurt.

"We were too rough with her," Josh accused himself as well as Tracey. Cantankerous bastard! "If you hadn't fucked her -- us -- that hard, we'd have heard someone approaching, we'd have --"

Tracey had had enough. "Like hell you'd have heard anything," he bit out. "I know you, Josh, you wouldn't pick up a machine gun going off when you're fucking someone." He remembered that all too well, from the time when he and Josh had been screwing behind a stand of scrubby mesquite trees, not half as well hidden as they'd have liked, and totally missed the lynch mob of outraged, "proper" Catkind out for their hides.

That was when Josh had lost his eye, and Tracey had lost the only life he'd ever known and the only person he'd ever loved, and when what they'd shared between them had ended in scarlet explosions of fury.

Tracey went on, too enraged to stop himself even if he'd wanted to. Josh had to see things as they were, not waste time on fights they could save for later. "And if I hadn't been behind her, this blood would have been *hers*. Is that what you want? Huh? You'd rather she was cut up like this?"

"Blood?" Josh blinked. He sniffed the air rather than looking. "Tracey. My God. Here, help me move her." Between the two of them, although mostly via Josh's efforts, they gently transferred Marnie to rest on the arroyo floor, careful not to jostle her.

As soon as she was safe -- for now -- Josh rolled up onto his haunches, pushing and shoving Tracey around until Tracey had collapsed on hands and knees, his damaged back bared to the unforgiving Mexican sun. Yet Josh's rough, hard hands were gentle as he assessed the damage Tracey had sustained.

"You'll live," he said after a minute or so, barely concealing his deep sigh of relief. "You'll have some fucking ugly scars, even if you shift right now, but you'll live."

Tracey grunted and nodded. He'd expected as much. "Shrapnel?"

"Some glass. You want me to..."

"Yeah." Tracey braced himself. "Do it. Fast, okay?"

"Your funeral," Josh grunted. The next few minutes were as bad as Tracey had feared, but Josh was quick if he wasn't gentle about it, and he knew enough to trust Josh when he indicated that at least the biggest shards of glass were gone.

Tracey switched his tail, sweeping patterns in the desert sand, concentrating the sensors in his body on the distracting movement. "Okay," he said tautly. "You're better at the guerilla warfare crap than I am. Don't smirk, you ass. What was that? Fire bomb?"

Josh lifted his muzzle to scent the air. "No," he said, his lips tightening until he had to spit out the negative. "Molotov cocktail. Can't you smell the alcohol?"

"Not over the fire, no!"

Josh cuffed him. "You want to fight? Fine. But not until we get Marnie somewhere safe."

Josh was accusing him of putting their squabbles over Marnie's safety? Tracey could have punched Josh in the jaw. He choked his anger down. Josh was who he was, a stubborn, mule-headed alpha male, and if he -- they -- wanted this to work, then he'd have to pick his battles.

For example, as soon as they were all safe, he was going to enlist Marnie's help in tying Josh down until he couldn't move an inch and then licking him from head to toe until Josh begged to get fucked. God, yeah. That'd be fan-fucking-tastic.

Tracey stored the image in the back of his mind, then bent to nuzzle Marnie. He licked her throat to reassure himself of the strong, steady pulse beating under her skin. "I think she's okay," he decided. "Probably the shock got her. There isn't any blood."

Josh went paler than usual under his silvery fur. "Jesus, Tracey. Her baby."

"Wait." Tracey laid his ear flat over the faint swell of Marnie's stomach and listened as intently as he could. He sagged in relief, and with gratefulness for his super-sharp hearing, when he picked up the hummingbird-fast heartbeat. Take that, sonogram technology. Catkind did everything better. "They're both all right."

"Maybe not for long." Josh raised up on one knee, ferociously scanning the horizon. "Whoever threw that was enough of a chicken-shit to run away."

"They probably thought they'd killed us," Tracey pointed out bitterly.

"Then why didn't they stick around to cut off our tails and our ears for trophies?" Josh sneered. "No. This was a warning, and if they killed us, then that would have been a bonus. When we catch them, I'll shove a fuse down their throats and light the match myself, swear to God."

"Josh --" Tracey started, infuriated, only to stop when Marnie moaned quietly and shifted, her hand coming up to her eyes. "Marnie!" He fell to his stomach, telling the pain in his back to go to hell, and cupped her cheek, pulling her face to rest on his shoulder. "Marnie, it's okay. You're safe."

Josh's tail switched. "For now," he warned, grim as an oncoming storm. "We have to get out of here." Tracey could tell how much the thought of running away cost Josh, but he felt a surge of hope for their future in Josh's decision to protect Marnie above craving bloody revenge.

"You're stronger," Tracey offered, salving what he could of Josh's pride. "Shift, and carry her on your back. We'll get out of here on four paws instead of two legs. Faster, and if we find the bastards we'll have claws and teeth to tear them apart with."

Josh's mostly-human teeth glittered in the harsh light as he bared them. "I knew I liked you for a reason." He didn't qualify that with "once," spiking Tracey's heartbeat with a flare of lust. "Dress her first."

Tracey grimaced. "Yeah, that would be a good idea. Marnie? Marnie, can you work with me on this?"

She nodded dazedly, offering him a small smile regardless. He made hasty tracks for the blind corner and snatched up her discarded skirt and blouse -- pausing to groan at the ripe smell of female arousal saturating the cloth -- and hurried back. Marnie did her best to help him. It still took longer than he'd have liked, but he knew better than to panic. Panic would only slow them down further.

Josh grunted, satisfied. "Can you get her on my back?"

God, he could love this Catkind so much. Maybe not as much as Marnie, but enough. He'd missed Josh like hell, and he was more than happy to try to make this work.

Josh growled and swiped a paw at Tracey, claws sheathed, the blow aimed to miss. "Quit grinning at me," he griped, although Tracey could have sworn he saw the proud Catkind's cheeks pinken under his fur.

Tracey laughed, still snickering even when Josh shot him a filthy glare and dropped to all fours. He transformed fluidly into full feline shape on the way down, and when he stood foursquare on his paws, sharp tiger teeth bared at Tracey, he was the ghostlike Serval that couldn't fail to get anyone, male or female, human or Catkind, oozing with sexual hunger.

He was gentle with Marnie, but fast, coaxing her into enough of an awareness of her surroundings so that she knew to wind her arms around Josh's neck and hang on tight. She was coming more and more back to herself, he could tell, even smiling at him with pride and a sparking kindle of temper.

Whoever was coming after them, they weren't keeping Marnie down.

Once he was sure Marnie wouldn't fall, Tracey let his body melt into the familiar, easy-riding lines of his jaguar shape. He stretched from head to tail, rolling the muscles in his back as they prickled and rushed through healing to leave deep, furrowed scars.

Where to? he asked with a tilt of his head, his tail thumping the sand.

Marnie understood him, just as he'd known she would. She sat up, shaking a little but stubborn as the very devil, and jerked her chin back in the direction they'd originally come from. "*Gatos*," she said, so firm that they could make no argument.

All the same, Josh tried, stamping his paws. Marnie thumped his ear. "No. We go back to *Gatos*. *No discuta conmigo*."

It's dangerous there, Tracey tried to convey.

She shrugged, reminding him of a warrior queen. "Maybe so, *si*. *Mi familia*, though, they can help. My brother, Tony. He'll fight with us, if we have to. And Lucia, maybe she can make some flaming cocktails of our own." She laughed briefly. "Lucia, she had an interesting childhood, you know?"

Tracey chuffed, tickled half to death despite his worries over Marnie. He trotted to her and head-butted her leg, then licked Josh's flank while he was over there. Josh purred, probably without meaning to, as he stopped abruptly and swiped at Tracey, not intending to miss this time. Marnie laughed louder and nudged her heels in Josh's ribs. "Let's go, Catkind. Back to *Gatos*. Back home, all of us together, and once we gather *mi familia*, we'll get some good revenge together. *Vamos*!"

Taking turns carrying Marnie between them, her hair streaming, her mixed laughter and songs peeling bell-like through the heavy desert air, they ran all the way, ready to face whatever came next so long as they stood side by side.

Cat O' Nines 3: Cat's Cradle

While the cat's away...

Tony likes to think of himself as a good guy. Nothing special, but a decent enough man. He has his kinks and he likes it kinda rough, but outside of the bedroom he treats his women with respect and makes a good buddy to his friends. And his life, as a result, is in serious need of some sizzle.

He's about to get lucky.

With his sisters Gabriella and Marnie carried off by the Catkind to protect them against hostile humans, Tony knows war's coming. He won't be alone in the looming battle. A couple of Catkind -- Samaelle and David -- who have their own agenda have tracked him down and won't be parted from his side. Or stop coming on to him, either of them.

So what's a good guy gonna do when he's saddled with two stubborn, sexy Cats? For one thing, learn how to play when the bigger cats are away...

Lia Connor

Lia Connor supposedly lives in the South, but her job takes her almost everywhere but there. Her laptop is her best friend as she travels. She's thrilled to be working with Changeling Press. She loves to write about BBW's, hot, hot, hot threesomes and were-animals. Lia would love to hear from you. You can contact her at liaconnor@gmail.com.