

Seducing SERENA

Shifting Passions
Book 1



Bonnie Rose Leigh
Gabriella Bradley

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Seducing Serena
Shifting Passions book 1

By

Gabriella Bradley
Bonnie Rose Leigh

Prologue

Huddled within the folds of her tattered windbreaker, the woman leaned against the hood of the beat up Toyota and stared up at the house on the hill. Golden lights glittered through the freezing rain, making the mansion look welcoming. The warm glow shone like a beacon through the night, a beacon she wished she could follow. She needed the warmth she knew she could find there, the gaiety, the feeling of safety that embraced her every time she had ever stepped foot through those doors. She shook her head. It just wasn't meant to be. Not now, and perhaps never again.

Her heart a dark pit of gloom, Serena Patterson turned away from the beckoning light and opened the rusted through door to the twenty year old piece of crap car she'd managed to buy with the last of her own money she'd earned doing odd jobs and got into the driver's seat. With one last glance at the home she once dreamed she would fill with love and laughter, Serena put her seatbelt on, slammed the door shut, turned the key in the

ignition and slowly drove away from the only place she'd ever truly felt loved. Her hands gripped the steering wheel hard, her fingers stiff and sore from cold. Frozen droplets melted and ran down her face, mingling with the salt of her tears that ran freely down her ice cold cheeks.

She drove blindly to the place she remembered so well, the creek where she was abandoned as a child after her parents were killed by those whose sole aim in life was to annihilate those who were considered not human, the place where her brothers had found her and taken her home to their grandmother. This was the place she now chose to die. They were better off without her because all she did was bring danger to their lives.

Driving as far as she could, she stopped the car and turned off the engine. It was nearly out of gas anyway and keeping it running gave her no warmth, the heater hadn't worked from the day she bought it. Then again, it was only a hundred dollar car. What could one expect? Not that it mattered now. She considered driving into the freezing water, but decided to just let the weather do its work. It wouldn't take long for the freezing rain to turn to snow. By morning she'd be dead from hypothermia. She took off her jacket, yanked the handle on the side of the seat and let the back down completely. Lying down, she blanked out all thought and as her teeth started chattering, her

body shaking uncontrollably from cold, all she wished for now was sweet oblivion.

She knew it would soon come and didn't care. If she was gone, it would solve all her problems.

Chapter One

Brady Turner and his brothers watched the small car parked at the bottom of the hill, just near their driveway, the dark figure standing next to it, the face a white blob as the person stared up at the house. Brady knew who it was. Instinct had always told him when Serena was near – the same for his brothers, Asher and Damen. Although they shared no blood, they had been raised as brothers by his grandmother, the bond between the three men almost as intimate as lovers. After a mass killing of many of their kind, his grandmother had taken his two best friends under her wing and brought them up as if they were her own flesh and blood, with the help of her younger brother Uncle Sean. Sean's mate was killed many years ago and they had never had offspring so he welcomed the addition of youngsters to the household.

Brady's grandmother was gone now. One night her soul left her aging body. She'd died peacefully while asleep. His uncle Sean was killed a few

years ago by a contingent of feline hunters. Oh, he'd fought bravely, but his aging body wasn't as strong, and the many wounds they dealt him, caused his death. Brady was the sole heir to the estate and the family business, though after the will was read he gave instructions to the lawyer that he wanted to share everything equally with his two brothers and sister—not that his feelings toward her at that point were at all brotherly. His grandmother had appointed a guardian for the business—a close family member, one whom they'd adopted as an uncle, their Uncle Bernard. He was a baby, taken in by his ever loving and kind grandmother many years before Brady was born. She had included him in her will, left him a considerable amount of money and the custodianship of the business, but the bulk of her estate she'd left to him, Brady, the blood heir. To him, his two adopted brothers and sister he'd grown to love so much, deserved to share that estate. Sure, his grandmother had left them something as well, but to Brady, it wouldn't feel right unless he shared the entire fortune with them.

It wasn't long after that when Serena suddenly disappeared. They had been devastated and had tried to track her scent, but she'd managed to evade them for a very long time. Every now and then they heard news of her, of the dangers she

submitted herself to, causing them to cringe. And now she was here. His heart beat faster at the thought she'd soon walk up that driveway, but she didn't. She just stood there.

He—like his adopted brothers—just wished they knew what stopped Serena from walking through the doors and into their arms. He was about to rush out those doors and run to her when he saw her get into the car. Within seconds the little beaten up vehicle started and drove away.

Brady strained his eyes to watch the car drive away. The slashing, icy rain made visibility bad. One taillight was broken, the other faded from view very fast. Brady sensed his brothers and turned to face them. He didn't have to read their minds to feel their disappointment that she hadn't come inside, come to them for help. In her haste to assert some control over her life, she had cut them out of it completely a long time ago. They sensed she was in danger, but even so, she didn't come to them. How could they have let things go so horribly wrong between them? And what were they to do now?

"If it's any consolation, she hasn't forgotten us, Brady."

"And apparently, she hasn't forgiven us either for not really being there for her when our grandmother died," he replied to Asher, again looking at the distant spot where he could see the

red glow of her retreating lights. "We just didn't understand her feelings, losing her real parents when she was so young, then the only mother she knew all those years passed away."

"We were young, too insensitive to her needs. Well, she's here now," Damen added. "As long as she stays in the area, we can keep an eye on her without it being obvious."

"You think she isn't going to catch on, Damen? She isn't a little girl anymore and whatever naiveté she had when she was a teenager, I suspect has long since disappeared. You know of the dangers she's faced over the last years and she never contacted us once. We read her mind, knew what was happening to her, but not once did she let us in long enough to know where she was exactly. What are the chances of her coming to one of us for help now, never mind the three of us, when she may very well blame us for everything that happened to her?" Brady sighed and ran his hand through his hair in agitation.

"We don't know that, Brady, and making assumptions about her state of mind isn't going to bring her back into our lives. It's time she came home to us. We just need to let her know that she can trust us with not only her life and well-being, but also with her emotions."

Brady scowled at Damen. "And how do you suggest we do that? She wouldn't even come up

the driveway. She just parked at the edge of the property and looked up at the house as though she doesn't belong here, will never belong here. I could feel her pain and loneliness from here. I just wish I knew why she ran off the way she did years ago, whether it was because of our stupidity or something else."

"That's something we'd all like to know, Brady. But for now, we have something else to worry about. The bond between Serena and us is growing stronger the closer she gets to the age of her first transformation. She must take her mates by *Imbolc* if she is to come into her abilities. If she doesn't come back to us soon, before her twenty-fifth birthday, it may be too late." Damen worried his bottom lip, then turned to Ash for inspiration—at least for a way to stop this conversation so they could form a plan to get her back home. Permanently.

It was already nearing the end of January. Her birthday was only a week away. That left the brothers only seven days to tell her of her heritage, let her fight her inner demons *and* protect her from her enemies. She would not only reach her sexual maturity during the pagan holiday, but she would shift to her white tiger form and would immediately seek a permanent bonding. They needed to be nearby, ready to mount her because they'd be damned before allowing other males to

mate with her after waiting years for her to grow up so they could claim her themselves.

“You don’t have to tell me that her time is running out, Brady. She knows that she isn’t exactly human, but she doesn’t know about her upcoming passage into maturity. If only she had been raised completely as one of us, as part of a feline pride, so many things would be different now. But the elders insisted my grandmother not tell her anything until her eighteenth birthday. By then, she was already gone from our lives. There was nothing we could do.”

“We could have disobeyed Uncle Sean and the Elder Council, Damen. Instead, we did nothing.”

Asher stepped between them. “Stop it you two. There is no sense in disagreeing amongst ourselves. The point is, before we found her, she wasn’t raised among our kind so she doesn’t know everything she needs to know. She’s been abandoned too often in her life. It’s time we make her see that she can come to us, no matter what the problem is, and that we’ll stand by her. Until she feels as though she has a safe place to go to in times of trouble and in times of joy, she’s going to keep on running, running from us, from those chasing her, escaping from love, period.”

Brady and Damen looked at each other, then back to Asher. Sometimes they forgot that behind his golden good looks and playboy veneer beat

the heart of a man who would do anything for them. He was always the voice of reason when their passionate personalities demanded action. His first priority was to talk them down so they wouldn't accidentally hurt themselves or innocent bystanders. In this case, calm heads would definitely help their cause in locating her.

Damen straightened, then stepped back. "You're right, Asher. What do you suggest we do?"

"We need to find out where she's staying. If the car she's driving is any indication, it wouldn't surprise me to find she intends to sleep in it on the streets. I have a feeling she's broke."

Brady ran his fingers through his hair in frustration. "She's got to know that she always has a place here, with us. Why wouldn't she come here if she has no other place to go?"

"There are any number of reasons, Brady," Asher stated, his voice calm as ever. "You know how stubborn she is, how proud. We've got to find her so we can keep her safe. There have been entirely too many narrow escapes with her life since she left home. From kidnapping attempts to muggings and attempted hit and runs, someone has been stalking her across the country for the last seven years and we need to find out who and why, and put a stop to it. The point is, until we know where she's staying, we can't keep her safe

from the danger persecuting her."

Damen spoke up. "Then let's stop wasting time with all this talk and go. There are too many back roads around here she could use. We can track her by scent trail, but in this weather we might lose her before even pinpointing the direction she took."

"You're right. Let's take the Land Rover." Brady turned, placing his hands against the cold glass of the frosty window. "The weather looks grim. I especially don't want Serena out there in what could turn into a major snow storm." Brady grimaced, his gaze still riveted out the window. "Alright, I'll gather our coats. Asher, you and Damen can head on out to the car and get it warmed up."

"You got it. Oh, and grab something warm for Serena just in case. It didn't look like that jacket she had on earlier would keep a flea warm."

How long, Brady wondered, had it been since Serena felt warm and safe at night? Years, he imagined. Years she could have spent warm and dry with them. Well, he knew one thing for certain. They wouldn't make the same mistakes they had made in the past. She would know to the depths of her soul that she was meant to be a part of them. She'd never doubt their love for her again. First, they had to find her and convince her to come home.

With an urgent need riding him he didn't understand, Brady headed to the master suite where a wardrobe of clothes awaited their mate. After grabbing the warmest looking coat he could find from her closet and ripping a blanket from her bed, he raced down the stairs and out the front door where his brothers of the heart awaited him.

The three men rode in silence as they searched the roads into town for Serena's rattletrap of a vehicle. Once they arrived in Graton, the small town located at the base of mountain, they drove every single street, stopped at the two motels, but saw no sign of Serena's battered vehicle.

"We've been searching for more than an hour. There's no sign of her car," Brady muttered.

"We can't give up now. She's got to be somewhere. She couldn't have disappeared that fast."

"I suppose. We'll search a while longer."

"Look, it's no use. I don't know where the hell she could have gone," Brady said. "This is turning into a blizzard. All we can do is pray that Serena has found a warm place to hole up until the storm's over." He turned back toward home. The windshield wipers could hardly keep up with the ice pelting against the window. Brady leaned forward to peer at the road. Visibility was bad so he slowed down to a crawl and drove on in silence.

Damen broke the grim stillness. "Ash, Brady, you remember where we first found Serena when she was just a kid? Down by Wolverine Creek?"

"Yeah. What of it?"

"Do you think she'd go there? The creek is about the only place we haven't looked that I can think of."

"There isn't even a level place down there to pitch a tent and she knows of the wolves in the area," added Brady.

"I know, but it's the only place left that we haven't searched, and though you couldn't pitch a tent there, there are plenty of places to park a car. Remember how everyone used to go necking there?"

Ash nodded. "Among other things. The turnoff to Wolverine Creek is only a couple of miles ahead."

Chapter Two

Within a couple of minutes, Brady turned the Land Rover down the narrow trail that led to the swimming hole at the base of the creek. As they rounded the last bend leading to the creek, they spotted Serena's vehicle.

Brady hit the brakes too hard and the Rover slid, almost ramming into Serena's car. They practically fell out of the vehicle in their haste to rush to her aid. Within seconds they were standing beside her car, looking in, barely able to see her. The glass had started to frost over and the engine was turned off, yet Serena only lay huddled beneath the threadbare jacket she'd worn, a jacket wet from her standing out in the pelting frozen rain. A wolf howled in the distance. And again. Brady frowned. "The Weres are on the prowl tonight."

"I hear. We'd better hurry and get her out of this car. The wolf senses an easy kill," Damen muttered.

"What does it say about us that she'd rather sleep out here and face danger than come home to us?" Asher asked, his voice barely a whisper. "This is our fault. We should have been different. Better. Look what we've done to her."

"I have a feeling she didn't just come here to sleep. I think she wants to leave this life," Damen retorted, gloom tainting his voice. He scraped the ice off the side window.

Her usually lush lips were now a thin line of ice blue skin. Her once radiant golden blonde hair now hung limp and dull against her hollow cheeks. She didn't even have a hat to cover her ears or a pair of mittens to warm her fingers. She looked like a starved street urchin instead of a healthy twenty-four year old. It was all the men could do not to rush and carry her away so that they could take care of her.

Even though everything inside of Brady demanded that he jerk open the door and drag her out by force if he needed to, he couldn't do that. He had to give her the chance to respond. Instead, he sucked frigid air into his lungs, letting the cold air burn its way through his airway before gently rapping against the driver's side window. She didn't respond, nor move at all.

There should have been evidence of her breathing, mist coming from her nostrils, her half-open mouth, but there was nothing. Goose bumps

rippled across his skin. He pounded against the window even harder, hoping she was just ignoring him. When he still got no response, he reached for the door handle. Locked.

“Ash, Damen, try the other doors. She isn’t waking up.” Brady knew the men could hear the worry in his voice because they didn’t hesitate before taking action, checking every door and window for a way in. No way were the three of them going to lose her when they finally had her within their grasp again.

Although Serena was on her own and vulnerable, with goddess knows how many people after her, she knew enough to lock every door and seal every window as though that was not the way she wanted to die. The way she wanted to leave this life was of her own choice and apparently freezing to death was her chosen method. Brady sensed it and knew she was still alive, though barely. Unfortunately, the safety precautions she’d taken weren’t making it easy for them to help her either.

Brady’s hands trembled and his knees quaked in fear. She wasn’t going to make it much longer, especially in the frigid temperatures. If they didn’t get her out of her car and warmed up soon, she might never regain consciousness. Just a little over an hour had lapsed since she’d driven away from their home and in that time she’d either passed

out from exhaustion or cold, perhaps both. Either way she needed help and she needed it now.

Unwilling to wait any longer to give her the aid she needed, Brady turned to Asher and Damen. "We need to break the lock. Now!"

Ash ran to the back end of the Rover to fetch the crowbar they usually carried in the trunk. He returned within seconds and wedged it between the door and car frame, but it wouldn't budge. In desperation, he swung it at the side window, shattered the glass, punched it out with his gloved hand and reached inside to unlock the door. Serena didn't stir.

Brady climbed into the car with more speed than caution. All that mattered to him was finding out if she were still alive. What if they were already too late? His heart stuttered in his chest. They just couldn't be.

He searched for the pulse in her neck. All three men held their breath. Tears spilled from the corners of Damen's eyes. Ash kneeled next to the car, his hands together as if in prayer. Brady thought his heart would shatter as grief ravaged his soul. How could they have lost her? "She's alive," Brady said, his voice cracking with emotion. "But if we don't get her warm soon, she'll not make it."

From the other side of the car, Asher's gaze met Damen's. "Then let's take our mate home."

Brady turned his head toward Ash who'd patiently stood behind him as he checked on Serena. "Ash, get the blankets out of the back of the Rover and the cozy one I took from her room, lay them on the seat and turn the heater up full blast. As soon as we get her in the car, we need to strip her bare and wrap her up. Body heat and a warm blanket around her will go a long way toward making sure she doesn't end up with hypothermia."

"You got it."

As Ash rushed to the Land Rover to crank up the heat and dig out the emergency blankets, Brady returned his attention to their unconscious mate. "I want her to wake up sandwiched between us in our bed. She won't be able to run if we're with her and body heat is what she needs right now."

"It's going to be a long night," Damen muttered.

He couldn't agree more.

* * * *

Serena woke feeling blessedly warm. How long had it been since she'd woken so completely comfortable? From the tip of her nose to the bottom of her feet, she felt oh so languorous and toasty.

But even as warm as she was, nothing beat the feeling of safety that flooded her. For the first time in years, she woke without fear. Every morning since she'd turned seventeen—seven endless years—an impending sense of doom had haunted her. In fact, she couldn't remember the last time she had felt this safe—something she never thought to experience again.

Even the part of her soul that seemed to always search for something, appeared oddly quiet and content today, as though whatever it had looked for in the hundreds of towns she passed through, was finally within reach.

In fact, if she didn't know better, she would think she lay snuggled on a feather mattress between the Turner boys. But like every other morning, she knew she would open her eyes and be alone. Only in her most erotic fantasies did she share her bed with the three young men who held her heart, young men who would be real men now, fully matured.

Sighing, Serena snuggled deeper into her purring pillow. By the time she realized pillows couldn't purr, the unmistakable ridge of a rock-hard erection pressed against her belly.

Oh, shit. Oh, shit. Oh, shit. Where was she? Terror seized her. Bile churned in her tummy. Her muscles tensed as she prepared to flee. Before she could move, could even open her eyes to look for

an avenue of escape, a wave of soothing calm washed over her.

“Easy, sweetness. Everything is all right now, Rena. It’s me, Damen, and you’re safe.”

“Damen?” She snorted, recognizing his voice immediately, deeper, sexier, it was unmistakable, even after a seven-year absence. Maybe if she didn’t open her eyes, she could pretend that they hadn’t found her, that even now they were blissfully unaware of her and the danger her presence here would bring them. Then she could pretend this was only one of the many erotic dreams involving them she’d experienced over the years.

“I’ll never be safe and neither will anyone who gets near me.” No matter that she’d wanted to return here every moment of every day since she walked out on the Turners. But she couldn’t tell them, couldn’t let on how much she still loved and missed them or they’d never let her go. No matter how much she wanted to, she couldn’t stay—couldn’t chance that the people who were after her would find out about her men and hunt them down to get to her.

Knowing that now wasn’t the time to dwell on her past, Serena confronted her present instead, opening her eyes for the first time since she woke. “Why am I here, Damen?”

Her breath caught when she got her first good

look at him. It had been so long since she'd seen him or his adopted brothers. When she'd left home, Damen's black hair had been military short because of its tendency to curl. Now the thick mass of raven curls were long enough to be tightly drawn back into a ponytail. His blues eyes were still as deep and mesmerizing as they'd always been. But, his face... His face looked leaner, harder, although still classically beautiful, even with the bump on his nose proving it had been broken at least once since she'd left home. He had full rich brows and lips that made a person want to nibble on them for an hour or two. Add the dimple on his right cheek and the strong chin, and he was definitely drool-worthy. No wonder she spent so much time fantasizing about him when she'd been younger.

"You're here because this is your home, has always been your home and will always *be* your home. By the Goddess, girl, you'd have died last night had we not come in time."

But that's what I wanted. I didn't want to be saved. She whipped her head toward the newcomer's voice. Leaning against the doorframe, wearing nothing but a pair of half-zipped, well-worn jeans and a naughty smile, was Asher Turner. He, too, hadn't changed much in the seven years she'd been gone. Still as gorgeous as ever, he stood well over six feet tall and had the most brilliant green

eyes she'd ever seen in her life. She remembered his green eyes so well but it was almost as if their brilliance had heightened with maturity. With his blonde hair, muscular torso and a perpetual tan, he looked like a surfer, though he'd probably never been to a beach in his life. Altogether, Ash was one yummy man.

Too bad none of the Turner men could see that she wasn't a child any longer. Even at seventeen, she'd been an adult for many years. If only she could have stayed in this place with these men. Her life might have turned out different. If only...

She swallowed past the lump in her throat, willing herself not to cry. "Where is Brady?" Feeling self-conscious, she looked down, only then noticing they'd put her to bed naked. "And where the hell are my clothes?"

Asher shrugged as he made his way toward the bed. Damen ran his hand through her hair. Pulling a strand to his face, he inhaled her scent, distractedly mumbling an answer to her question. "He's fixing breakfast for you." Ash stopped at the foot of the bed.

His eyes glittered with passion, something she'd never thought she'd live to see. Her gaze lowered to his zipper where a telltale bulge pressed prominently against his jeans. Her heart thumped against her chest. Her arms trembled. *Oh, Goddess. This couldn't be happening. Not now,*

when it's still too dangerous to stay with them.

“And after you eat your breakfast, we’re going to bathe you and spend the rest of the day making love to you, showing you exactly how we feel.”

Chapter Three

“I can’t eat another bite.” Serena pushed the tray away, eyeing the delicious fruit dish, but she’d gone without food for so long, her stomach had shrunk. “Thank you, Brady. That was the best food I’ve had in years.”

“Something puzzles me, sweetness.”

“What’s that?”

“You had access to our joint account. Why didn’t you use any of that money to survive? Heaven knows, there’s enough there to last us all several lifetimes. Why starve yourself? Look at you. There’s nothing left but skin and bones.”

“Brady, it didn’t feel right to use the family fortune. I ran away. I had no right to it.”

“Of course you have a right to it. I shared it fairly with the three of you. Now come here and let me give you a hug.”

Ash had already removed the tray. She sat up, hugging the blankets close to her body and moved

toward Brady. When he gathered her into his arms, very carefully as if afraid she'd break, she felt secure, safe. But that safety wouldn't last. She needed to get out of there as fast as she could, lure danger away from the mansion and the three men she cared most for in the world.

Her thoughts were wiped away when Brady scooped her into his arms, blankets and all. "And now off to the Jacuzzi with you, young lady."

"Jacuzzi?"

"Yes, we had one installed a few years ago. It's wonderful."

Serena looked beyond Brady's shoulder and smiled at Ash and Damen who followed close behind. "It feels so good to be home. So right," she said softly.

"And it *is* right. This is where you belong. We'll protect you," Damen said.

"Yes, Ma'am," Ash agreed.

Serena gasped at the beautiful spa the men had built. The Jacuzzi was in-ground. Wisps of steam curled lazily upward to the vaulted windowed ceiling. Tropical plants were scattered all over. The tiled floor resembled fine white beach sand. It was almost as if they'd been transported to the tropics, to a natural heated pool.

Brady set her down and the blankets fell to the ground. He bent and scooped them up, tossing them into a corner.

Automatically, her arm flung across her breasts, her other hand hiding her pubic area.

"Serena, we've seen you naked tons of times. You've grown bashful suddenly? Remember skinny dipping in the creek?" Ash said, laughing loudly.

"I was a little younger then. I've changed."

"Baby, I don't see much of a change except you're too thin. We need to put a little meat on those bones of yours, fill your breasts out to what they used to be."

"See, you're picking on me already."

"Aw, honey, they're not picking on you," Brady said while he forced her arms away from her body.

She saw his gaze raking her from head to toe and felt the heat rise to her face. Yes, they'd gone skinny dipping in the past, but now everything was different. Her feelings were different. How? She'd yearned for them all these years, fantasized about them, they had consumed her dreams. And during those years, she'd realized she loved them. *I love you. I love each one of you.* A shiver ran down her spine.

"Into the water, sister." Ash used his old endearment.

He'd often called her sister, in memory of the sister he'd lost along with his parents. Though if they had any idea how unsisterly she felt about

them, they wouldn't call her that out loud—they wouldn't even think it. What she wanted to do with them—to them—would be a sin if they were blood kin.

Without further preamble, Brady took off his jeans, picked her up and walked into the Jacuzzi with her. The warm bubbling water enveloped her. He sat her down on one of the benches and knelt in front of her. Ash and Damen took their pants off and sat on each side of her. She couldn't help but admire their bodies. They'd always been nicely built, but now they were men, men who had filled out, had become more muscular. Even their cocks had increased in size she noticed, at the same time experiencing a sudden surge of excitement, a tingling between her legs at the thought of touching those cocks. Her gaze caught a shadow on Damen's arm. Peering closer, she saw a tattoo of a wolf with some kind of weapon over it. That was something new. He didn't have a tattoo when she'd left. Closing her eyes briefly, she pictured them naked as she'd just seen them and imagined what size their cocks would be if erect and felt her heart hammer her ribs. Brady left her for a moment and quickly returned with three containers.

"Ash, you shampoo her hair. Damen, you massage her with this oil after I wash her."

"I can wash myself," Serena said firmly.

"No. We want to spoil you, pamper you. Now be quiet and just enjoy."

And she did. Brady's touch was so gentle, so loving and caring as he washed her face, her neck, then her shoulders and arms. Next he washed her chest. Was it her imagination or did he spend more time washing her breasts than any other area? She felt her breasts swell. Her nipples began to ache as he soaped them and rubbed them with his thumbs. By now they'd be hard as little rocks, she knew. By the devilish glint in his eyes, he knew it, too. Next he washed her belly, her bellybutton, then pulling her forward, he washed her back and bottom, his fingers rubbing up and down the crack of her ass.

By now she was on fire, her heart thundering, craving more of his touch. Without realizing, she spread her legs and sighed when his fingers parted her folds, slipping inside as he washed between them. His thumb rested on her clit, for a moment sending shards of sharp pleasure zipping through her body. She was ready to burst. All he had to do was insert a finger and she'd come. But he didn't and she was too proud to beg.

At the same time Ash scrubbed her scalp until it tingled, Brady moved on to wash her legs and feet.

When they were done and she was completely rinsed off, they languished in the water for a while, silently, just enjoying being with each other,

until Brady said, "If we stay in here any longer, we'll turn into prunes."

Damen stood and lifted Serena out of the water. "And now the massage. I took a course, you know."

"I can't wait," Serena murmured.

He carried her to a special bench tucked away behind a three panel decorative room divider and laid her on her tummy. She felt him pour oil on her back, on her buttocks and his hands started to knead and massage. Slowly, all tension left her body. Her arms were folded under her head and she looked sideways at the man administering to her. His cock was hard as steel. Wow, had it ever grown from what she remembered from seven years ago. It pulsed gently against his stomach, a glistening drop of precum ready to dribble down. She was so tempted to reach out or to dip her head forward and taste that heavenly nectar.

Damen spread her legs and his hands were on her thighs, her buttocks, then between her ass cheeks as he rubbed oil on that area. She almost squirmed, felt like begging him to take her right there and then. But she constrained herself. He turned her over on her back. Behind her, Ash pulled her up so that her head was just outside the massage table. She glanced up. His cock was just above her face, tempting her. *Oh, my stars, I can't stand this. Look at it!* It, too, stood to attention. As

big, if not bigger than Damen's, it had a much bigger head and she was so close she could see the veins throbbing beneath the fragile, velvety skin.

Ash started to dry her hair with the hair dryer while brushing it in long luxurious strokes. Oh, she could handle this on a daily basis. With Ash tending her hair and Damen's hands all over her breasts, her belly, her nipples, and finally her thighs and her feminine folds, yes, maybe if she stayed this could become a daily routine. *What am I thinking of? I can enjoy this for the moment, but I can't stay here. It's too dangerous.*

Why, my darling?

That was Brady's voice inside her head. Okay, now she was going crazy as well. Willing her thoughts to stop, she gave herself over to the moment and concentrated instead on the fingers that were massaging her netherlips, touching her clit and her anal passage. She closed her mind to everything but the feeling of contentment running through her and let her thoughts drift as her body relaxed beneath their soothing touch.

* * * *

The next morning she woke up in their arms. Brady behind her, Ash in front of her, Damen behind Brady, his arm casually flung across both their bodies. She stretched and yawned. For the

first time in years, she'd had a full night's rest, a sleep without nightmares. Serena turned her head to gaze into Brady's eyes. She saw the love that shone there, the way he gazed at her spoke volumes. *And I love him. And I love Ash and Damen. I love all of them the same, each for their own qualities, one no more than the other and none any less than the other.* It wasn't the love of a teenager feeling a first crush either, but the full passion of a woman recognizing her mates in a soul deep way.

Serena gasped at her own revelation. How could she not love them? After pinning the sheet beneath her armpits, she slowly moved backward until she found herself pressed against the headboard. She shook her head. Her stomach clenched. Her heart stuttered. Tears leaked from her eyes. "No. No, no, no."

"Serena," Damen said from beside her, "we know what you're thinking. It's time for you to let us take care of you, to love you as you are meant to be loved."

Why now? Why have they finally decided to give me all my hopes and dreams, now when I can't embrace them? Tears pooled in her eyes. She felt like she was dying inside. She had to refuse them, had no choice but to reject what they were offering her. "I can't. I can't stay."

Scooting toward the edge of the bed with the sheet wrapped firmly around her, Serena tried to

make her escape before she broke all the promises she'd made to herself. Until she discovered why an overheard conversation put her and the men she loved at risk, until she could go to the authorities and make sure the danger had passed, she couldn't succumb to them. Even if denying what she wanted most shredded what was left of her heart.

As soon as her feet hit the floor, Ash moved forward, swinging her into his arms, sheet and all. "You didn't think we'd let you go that easily, did you?" he asked. "You escaped us once. Never again."

His rough voice sent shards of pleasure piercing her core. The second she felt herself melt against him in surrender, she remembered exactly why she should fight their seduction. "Put me down, Ash. Now." When he only tightened his arms around her and sat on the bed, his back pressed against the headboard, Serena began to struggle in earnest. She couldn't do this. Couldn't let them make love to her and still walk away afterward. The pain would kill her. She'd barely survived leaving them years ago when she'd only had her girlish dreams and fantasies. How much worse would it be once she experienced the reality of making love with them?

"Please, Ash," she begged. "Don't do this. Just let me go." If they did this thing, she would leave

this house forever branded by their touch. It would surely kill her.

“That’s never going to happen,” he growled. “While Damon and I love you until you know that this is where you’re meant to be, Brady will make you breakfast. Then it will be his turn to convince you. You might as well give in now,” he added.

Almost immediately, Ash’s mouth covered hers hungrily. It was a kiss of pure possession. She wasn’t even shocked at her own eager response to the touch of his lips against hers. Even though it was the dumbest thing she’d ever done, for this one day, she’d surrender to the need she had for them. Just this once, she would give all of herself to her men, knowing that in the morning the memories they created together would be all she’d have left.

His lips seared a path down her neck, her shoulders as he slowly unveiled her body to his gaze. She felt the heady sensation of his lips against her neck and arched her body in response. Her hands gripped his thighs to keep still for his questing mouth. His lips continued their exploration of her neck and shoulders, the hollow of her throat, but she was having none of it. She wanted the taste of his lips against hers. She wanted to take control.

She thrust her fingers through his thick hair and pulled him to her. Her kiss was full of

urgency and need, heat and passion, which only made the kiss that much hotter, that much more powerful.

It wasn't long before kissing wasn't enough for either of them. His lips slowly followed the path of his fingers as he lowered the sheet until her breasts were quivering in his hands. Unable to contain the fires burning deep within her, she arched her back, guiding his mouth to her puckered nipples, desperate to feel his lips against their sensitive peaks.

Not to be left out of the action, Damen moved in, taking her lips in a kiss so soft and tender, it brought tears to her eyes. Ash and Damen worshipped her with their mouths, caressed her with fleeting touches.

Serena was lost in a whirlwind of passion. She tingled everywhere. Even her skin burned with desire. The hair at the nape of her neck stood on end as sensation wracked her quivering body. Never before had she experienced such overwhelming need.

Her whole body literally ached with desire in anticipation of making love with her men. Her pussy clenched in need, desperate to be filled.

Ash's fingers continued their upward trail toward her weeping slit while Damen continued to nibble on her lips, her neck, in biting caresses before laving the pain away with his tongue. Ash

ran his thumb over her clit, sending shards of pleasure-pain coursing through her. She moaned in response, desperate for release. Dammit! How much more did they expect her to take?

Lost in a haze of passion, time slowed to a crawl, every second lasting a minute, every minute an hour. The flames within them burned higher and higher, brighter and brighter, until it threatened to overcome her and still, the threesome rode the hot tide of passion as it raged on and on.

* * * *

Ash was mesmerized by Serena's movements, by her beauty, by the sheer love he felt for her in this moment. His gaze raked boldly over her. Her pale complexion and long blonde hair combined with her sea-green eyes, she was an exotic beauty. Her small, jutting breasts were firm in his hands and her hair was like strands of silk as they wrapped around his hands, his body.

He liked the way she looked in their bed. He couldn't wait until she could take them all at once, until they became a foursome in truth not just in words.

As though the previous minutes had never happened, Damen began a slow exploration of Serena's body, using lips, teeth and tongue,

driving her to the edge, while Ash made his way down her body before settling himself between her thighs. He was a big man and he wanted her well prepared for him. The last thing he wanted to do was hurt her during their joining. Only after they'd made her come again and again, would they finally make love to her.

"Please," she begged.

"Your body's not ready to accept a lover yet—not to mention three lovers—but you will be. I promise."

"What do you mean I'm not ready?" she gasped as his finger pressed against her clit. When she instinctively began to move against his finger, he eased a second inside her and then finally a third, stretching her as much as he could so that when he entered her he wouldn't cause her unnecessary pain.

"I need you," she said in low voice, husky with unspent passion. "Now."

Ash glanced over at Damen, caught his brother's urgent nod. Despite his desire to stay exactly where he was, they both rolled away from her, now desperate to feel skin pressed against skin.

"Don't stop. Please don't stop."

Damen smiled. "You beg so beautifully, sweetness, but we have no plans of stopping. Not now, and definitely not before you come to your

senses about your need to leave us again.”

Moving closer once more, they began to kiss her again. Ash worked his way down her body while Damen worshipped her mouth and breasts. The mixed sensations had her tossing her head. Her hands fisted in the silken sheets as they continued to assault her senses.

Damen nibbled lightly on her breast, his hand working her other nipple to a hardened peak. She groaned when Ash’s tongue slid through her slit. He lapped at her body’s cream, the warm, wet-velvet circling her clit before he suckled the hardened nub into his mouth. She whimpered. Her thighs clamped closed. Her hands reached down to fist in his hair. She’d heard of such a thing, even fantasized about it, but the fantasy was nothing compared to the reality.

Ash brought her to the edge again before inserting his finger into her vagina and pressing upward, massaging what she knew now to be her G-spot. Reading about it, fantasizing about it was nothing compared to living it. She screamed out another orgasm as Damen continued to worship her breasts. When she lay on the bed gasping for air, they each moved away from her again. She wanted to cry, to beg them to stay with her, but the words wouldn’t come.

Standing up, the pair began to strip out of their pajama bottoms, but instead of joining Ash and

Serena in the mating bed, Damen moved to the settee in the corner to watch. It would be his turn soon enough.

Once Damen moved to the couch, Ash rejoined his mate on the bed. She gasped when skin met skin for the first time. Not wanting to give her time to think, he rolled over and drew her astride him as he leaned them back against the headboard. He'd let her set her own pace, get her used to the feel of how hard he was for her. He could feel her wetness against his cock and it about killed him to let her have free reign over his body.

Ash gasped as one hand wrapped around his shaft, lightly squeezing, then releasing while the other softly stroked his heavy sac. He groaned, unable to help himself, he needed her so much. The day Serena disappeared she had taken his heart—and his libido—with her. In fact, none of them had any carnal desires for a mate during her absence. Now it was about time to rectify that. They'd waited seven years to make her theirs and they wouldn't wait any longer.

Ash rolled them over until he was again on top, then growled, "Roll over, honey. Get on your hands and knees. This first time might be a little rough, but I'll be as gentle as I can."

She rolled onto her belly and Ash trailed a finger down her spine, sending shivers up and

down her body. Even her toes were quivering. Then he studied her bottom, taking each cheek in his hands. They, too, were a perfect fit, high and firm. His mouth watered. He couldn't wait any longer to mount her.

Ever so slowly, he entered her from behind, inching forward just a bit and then stopping until her body could adjust. Inch by inch he sank into to her channel. She was so wet, so tight. Nothing had ever felt so exquisite, so absolutely right.

He kept his movements slow and steady until he reached her maidenhead. After a brief pause for the pain he knew she was going to feel, Ash broke through the proof of her virginity and thrust completely inside of her.

He was so deep inside of Serena, he could feel her womb pressed against his shaft. The only thing he could think of at that moment was that it was too bad she wasn't in heat, for then he—he shook his head, no *they*—could get her with child. That time would come soon enough.

* * * *

Serena felt stretched to the limits. He was so large she didn't think she could move and survive. He must have sensed her discomfort, or maybe she winced, because he stopped until the ache between her thighs eased. When the dull

throbbing passed, he began moving in slow, gentle strokes. In and out, until his long slow strokes became faster, sharper, harder, deeper. Urgency gripped her. Something phenomenal was building inside her, she just knew it. Something both painful and pleasant and she didn't know what to do, how to explain that she needed something more.

He drew her to a height of passion and love she never could have imagined existed. How would she ever go back to the lonely streets after this? How would she ever put them out of her mind – forget them? Ever so slowly, in and out, in and out, he moved until she was matching his rhythm, meeting his thrusts halfway, eager to feel his body filling hers. Their pace quickened and Ash bent over her, pinning her shoulders with his teeth.

Gently his hands cupped her breasts and then began teasing her nipples unmercifully as he continued to thrust into her tight channel. "Please," she begged, "I need..." She didn't know how to go on, all she knew was that she was close to something unbelievable, that she couldn't take his teasing of her body anymore.

Trailing his hands down her waist and to her hips, Ash whispered into her ear, "What do you need?"

"More. I need more." Ash gave her more, moving his fingers between her legs and rubbing

her clit until she was bucking beneath him, screaming out her release.

Waves of ecstasy throbbed through her. The pleasure he gave her was pure and explosive. He rubbed the bare skin of her back, her shoulders, gripped her again with his teeth. He began thrusting harder and deeper, faster than before until he, too, reached his climax, jetting his hot seed deep inside her.

Ash collapsed on top of her, his body still joined with hers. They were flesh against flesh, hard plains meeting soft curves, man against woman. Lovers.

Serena sighed in utter satisfaction, not even caring that Ash's limp form still pinned her to the bed. She was too deliriously happy and sated to move.

Ash lay atop her a few moments, then gently eased out of her and rolled to his back, gathering Serena up into his arms, laying her atop his chest. "I didn't hurt you, did I?"

She wanted to be like this, spread all over him, or Brady or Damen—every night for the rest of their lives, connecting them even in sleep. But even as she thought that, Ash rolled to his side, gently easing himself from beneath her sated body. Before she could protest, Ash rose from the bed and placed a tender kiss against her passion-swollen lips.

"I think I'm going to take a shower down the hall, then see what's keeping Brady. Breakfast should have been up here ages ago. Rest, baby."

Before she could say a word, he'd scooped up his sweats and was out the door, leaving her stunned and a bit bewildered. "What in the hell was that all about?"

Chapter Four

Wanting to make their time special, Damen went into the bathroom to gather supplies. After pulling out a stash of aromatic candles from the linen closet and wetting a washcloth with warm water, he made his way back toward his mate's side, carefully placing the candles in various spots around the room.

As he knelt beside the bed, his heart clenched in a painful spasm. They'd come so close to losing her last night and that was something he just wouldn't be able to live through. Damen slowly spread her thighs, anxious to wipe away the evidence of the loss of her virginity, though the thought of covering her with their seed, marking her with their essence, was almost overpowering. Maybe later, after the bonding ceremony on *Imbolc*.

Serena didn't even move as he gently pressed the warm cloth against her swollen mound. In fact, the whole time he bathed her, she didn't so

much as twitch. He smiled. If she was tired now, he couldn't imagine how exhausted she would be after he and Brady got through with her. She wouldn't have the energy to run once they'd all mated with her. *Which is probably why Brady had insisted they seduce her this morning, one at a time, before they spoke to her about her past, about what had her running for her life all these years.*

Only after he cleansed her completely, did Damen move away. After tossing the washcloth in the hamper, he closed the bedroom curtains, blocking the bright morning sun. When the room was sufficiently darkened, he made quick work of lighting the candles. Soon, the room was awash with the ambient light of a dozen candles and the soothing scent of vanilla filling the room. He only wished he had some rose petals to cover her with or some chocolate covered strawberries to feed her.

"Are you just going to stand there and stare at me or are you going to do something with the hard-on you've been walking around with?"

Damen swallowed thickly, then stalked toward the bed. Serena just looked on, wide-eyed, whether from shock or anticipation he really didn't care. He wanted to make love to her, had wanted to for hours—hell, years—and nothing was going to stop him now.

Damen could smell her need as he approached

the bed. Her scent called to him, enticing him to give her all that he was, his heart, body and soul.

* * * *

Serena's heart somersaulted in her chest and a delicious shudder heated up her body. He was so stunningly gorgeous. All that muscle and sinew, moving in perfect rhythm as he stalked toward her, could give a woman heart problems. She couldn't tear her gaze away from his profile. In fact, she had no desire to do so. He was all hers and she intended to revel in it.

She'd almost lost her life countless times since she'd left home, now she wanted to celebrate what time remained before she left again. And what better way could there be to rejoice in life than by making love? She swallowed tightly as he dropped down next to her.

At the base of her throat, a pulse beat and swelled as though her heart had risen from its usual place. She moved toward him, driven involuntarily by her own passion. His sweetly intoxicating scent threatened to overwhelm her.

Gathering her into his arms, he held her snugly against him. She buried her face against the corded muscles of his chest, taking his scent deep into her lungs. She would know this man in the dark amongst a hundred men just by his scent

alone.

His hands explored the hollows of her back, then skimmed her hips, her bottom, before sliding back up and cupping her face in his hands. His lips pressed against hers, gently covering her mouth. His kiss was slow, sweet, and then it changed. His tongue traced the soft fullness of her lips, then demanded entrance. The kiss sent the pit of her stomach into a wild swirl and her heart thudded in her ears. He lifted his mouth from hers and gazed into her eyes. .

“I love you, baby.”

As though unable to help himself, his lips seared a path down her neck, her shoulders, exploring her body with a thoroughness that astounded her. She wished she could say the words back to him, but it wouldn't be fair to either of them. “Damen, if you don't make love to me soon, I'm going to die.”

“I am making love to you. Can't you tell?” he asked as his lips trailed lower. “If not, I must be doing something very wrong.”

His tongue encircled her nipple with tantalizing possessiveness, while his fingers trailed slowly across the other, bringing them both into hard peaks.

He lifted his head only long enough to ask, “Do you know how sweet you taste?”

She just shook her head, mesmerized by the

passion and honesty she heard in his voice. There was such love and devotion behind his words. It was impossible for him to hide his feelings from her and she felt blessed.

His hand left her nipple and trailed down her tummy. His touch was light and painfully teasing as he continued to slowly explore her body. His ardor was surprisingly, touchingly restrained, yet there was no doubt that he was keeping himself tightly leashed.

He took her hands and placed them against his chest, encouraging her to explore his body as he was exploring hers. She couldn't have stopped herself from touching him if her life depended upon it. She let her hands slide down his chest as his body moved to partially cover hers.

"What are you waiting for?" she asked, barely able to form a sentence, her mind was so passion laden. All she had to do was be in the same room with him and she wanted him with a desperation that knew no bounds.

"I want our time together to last. And I want it to last a long, long time."

"Oh." Serena didn't know what else to say. She could go on touching Damen and be touched by him forever.

Parting her lips, she raised herself to meet his kiss. His mouth covered hers hungrily, devouring her, as though he were trying to absorb her taste,

her essence and draw it into himself.

She couldn't get enough of the feel of his skin beneath her hands. Her cheeks colored under the heat of his gaze as her fingers wrapped around his cock, stroked him from base to tip. She wanted her every touch to bring him immeasurable pleasure.

* * * *

Her touch was driving him crazy. He didn't know how much longer he could last. The feel of her hand wrapped around his dick was killing him. He whispered his desires into her ear, felt her pulse skip and jump at his suggestions. She was ready for him and he was more than ready for her.

A sense of urgency drove him. He needed to be one with her now. He lowered himself over her and slid between her open thighs. His hands caressed the smooth skin of her legs, then explored the soft lines of her hips, her waist, her back and finally slid up her arms until he held her hands clasped in his. With casualness he didn't feel, he took her hand and brought it to himself. "Take me into your body and make me yours," he pleaded.

"I have always been yours. Don't you know that?"

A knot formed in his throat, and all he could do was show her how much he loved her, would

always love her. "Wrap your legs around my waist, baby, and guide me home."

* * * *

His lips brushed her nipples as he slowly filled her. Her body melted against his. His tormented groan was a heady invitation so she lifted her hips, allowing him to sink into her fully. This time she groaned. The feel of him inside her almost sent her over the edge and he had yet to move.

She caressed the strong tendons at the nape of his neck, then let her hands slide down his back until she had the luscious cheeks of his ass in her hands. "Move, Damen, before I do you serious bodily harm."

Before she could finish her sentence, he slowly withdrew and thrust with such force he brought her to instant orgasm. Her eyes blurred, her heart pitched and the room began to spin. "Jesus, don't stop," she said when it appeared he was perfectly content to just sit there and watch her reaction.

"If I move now, it'll be all over. Your body gripping mine is more than I can handle it seems."

Taking the decision out of his hands, she arched up, forcing him to thrust inside her.

He lost all semblance of control then, taking her body with a forcefulness that left her gasping. In. Out. In. Out. Over and over he lunged into her,

hitting her womb on every stroke.

"Oh, God," she cried as she felt another orgasm begin to swell inside of her. As though he were waiting for just such a reaction, she felt him tighten and swell inside her.

"Come for me, baby. Now," he demanded.

As if she could do anything but what he asked. Waves of ecstasy washed through her. She lay drowning in a floodtide of warmth and contentment, of bone deep satisfaction and she savored it.

Damen began to move away from her, but Serena would have none of that. Not yet. "Don't move."

"But I'm too heavy to be laying atop you like this, baby."

"I want to feel your skin against mine for just a bit longer. I want this moment to last," she whispered softly against his arm, her lips tracing the tattoo. "Damen?"

"Yes, my lamb?"

"When did you get the tattoo? What does it mean?"

"I'll explain later. Maybe you haven't noticed, but Brady and Ash have one, too."

"You've kept me too busy. Please, don't leave the bed? I don't want you to go."

Damen sighed. "I know, sweetness. But Brady will be bringing up breakfast for you soon. You

need to keep your strength up. Why don't you take a bubble bath while he's downstairs cooking?"

Without waiting for an answer, Damen slowly eased away from her and headed toward the bathroom to fill the tub. Serena was still lying in bed when he reentered the room. "The tub's filling, love."

"But..."

Serena watched as he quickly drew on a pair of faded sweats and headed toward the bedroom door. "I'm going to see what's holding Brady up with that breakfast."

Before she could say a word, he was gone. Sighing, Serena looked down at herself and cringed as the slight movement sent a twinge of pain through her pussy. Damen had a point. She was a sorry, sticky mess and the soak would do her good.

Chapter Five

Brady entered the bedroom, both wary and anxious. Would she accept him as she had his brothers? There was really only one way to find out.

After setting the breakfast tray on the bedside table, he headed toward the bathroom where he could hear the muffled sound of splashing through the closed door. Maybe she'd like her back washed – and anything else he could reach.

Serena was immersed in bubbles when Brady entered the bathroom. She turned her head toward the door the second she heard it open. "Are you coming in to join me?"

"Well, I was going to serve you breakfast in bed, but now that you mention it, I notice there is plenty of room for two in that big old tub. There's no reason for you to feel lonely now, is there?"

Lifting her veiled gaze to his, Serena answered, her voice husky and oozing with sexuality, "No,

there isn't a reason to be lonely. Join me."

He knew she wasn't only talking about joining her in her bath, but joining their bodies. His shaft stood at immediate attention with her blatant come on. In an attempt to draw out the seduction, he slowly lowered his zipper while toeing off his sneakers. He could feel Serena's attention, her regard and her lust. They beat at him without mercy.

Seconds later, he shed his pants, then pulled his T-shirt over his head, tossing it to the floor amongst the rest of his scattered belongings. He could feel Serena's burning gaze roam his body and felt both pride and embarrassment. She was looking at him as if she wanted to eat him for both dinner and dessert. How did he get to be so lucky?

Feeling exposed and needing to be with Serena, Brady slid into the tub, pulling her feet onto his lap. "This is nice," he moaned, as her toes began to stroke his cock beneath the water.

"It is, isn't it?" Serena smirked. She continued to stroke him from beneath the water, running her toes up and down his thickening shaft. "Is there something wrong, Brady? You're breathing awfully heavy right now."

"Not a thing," he croaked.

"Good. I wouldn't want you to strain yourself in any way. I have plans for you."

"Plans?"

"Yes, plans."

"Uhhh...you plan on having your wicked way with me then?"

"Oh, you betcha. That okay with you?"

Brady pretended to think about it for all of thirty seconds, then gave Serena a wide smile and a wink. "That's okay with me. Do you think you can handle the role of seductress?"

"I can handle anything I put my mind to."

"It's not your mind I hope you'll be putting to use."

Serena laughed and splashed Brady with a wave of water that left him sputtering. If she wanted to be in charge of their love play, then he was all for it—this time anyway. Then all bets were off. He had to admit, it was hard to think about the rest of the day ahead when she was working her magic on him right here in the tub. Time to fight fire with fire.

"You know, Serena, they say that the feet are erogenous zones." Slowly, he began to rub her arches, her toes and the balls of her feet until she was moaning in the tub right along with him. He wouldn't be surprised if steam started to rise off the surface of the soapy water.

Within moments, Brady decided he'd made the wrong choice in baiting Serena. Serena was driving him insane with her toes. She'd decided to sit up in the tub, exposing her perky breasts to his

view as they bobbed above the water. "Are you about ready to get out, baby?" asked Brady. If he didn't get out of the tub fast, he just might lose it.

"Aren't you going to wash my back?"

Brady looked up at Serena and caught the gleam in her eyes. Oh yes, she knew exactly what she was doing. "Sure, I'll scrub your back. Turn around, your back facing me." Serena complied all too readily for Brady's piece of mind. What is she planning now?

Instead of just turning around in the tub, she stood, letting the water sluice off her body and then walked the two steps it took to stand in front of him, turned around and lowered herself on his lap. *Dear God, she's trying to drive me insane.* "Ummm, what are you doing, baby?"

"Letting you wash my back, of course."

He didn't buy her innocent act. She was far too quickly becoming a siren. She knew what she wanted and apparently, it was him, and she wanted him now. "How about if I do this instead?" he asked as he lifted her by the waist and slowly lowered her on his engorged shaft. She was so wet and tight and fit him perfectly. She felt so good wrapped around him, he had no desire to move, but she had other ideas.

As though they'd made love in this position a million times, she rode him with both an ease and enthusiasm that made him shudder with joy. Her

slow and steady movements were killing him. Taking her by the waist, Brady took over the pace, thrusting into her on every downward stroke of her hips.

Soon neither was satisfied with the loving. They wanted to touch and be touched, to explore each other with hands, mouths and tongues. With great reluctance, Brady eased himself from Serena's body and stood with her in his arms. "I think it's time we retired, don't you think?" he asked, his voice husky with need.

"I think you might be right about that."

Instead of letting go of his neck and placing her feet on the floor, she turned in his arms like an agile cat and wrapped her legs around his waist. *Yes, she is definitely trying to kill me.* How much patience did she think he had? He could only take so much teasing, so much stimulation. "For God sake's Serena, you're killing me!"

"Oh, my handsome man, you haven't begun to see anything yet. I plan to make you so tired, you'll collapse from exhaustion. In fact, I guarantee we'll both be so busy loving each other neither one of us will be thinking about anything but each other for the rest of the afternoon."

* * * *

Serena was enjoying herself beyond measure. She

loved seeing Brady lose all control. She could feel him shuddering beneath her and smiled inwardly. His shaft was hard and throbbing against her legs.

Every time his gaze met hers, her heart turned over in response. And right now he was looking at her with such love and tenderness it was almost enough to stop her heart from beating. She imagined his arms wrapping her in his embrace and it was enough to make her pulse pound and her tummy tingle with excitement. God, it was going to be so hard to leave him behind—hell, leave them all behind—after what they'd shared today. "Take me to bed," she demanded. She wasn't about to prolong this first bout of lovemaking. She wanted it intense and she wanted it now.

"Your wish is my command."

Brady carried Serena through the double doors and back into the bedroom. The candles had burned down to nubs, the breakfast had grown cold, but she didn't care.

Very carefully, he laid her on the bed. She swallowed tightly as he dropped down next to her. A delightful shiver of want ran through her as she let her gaze roam over his hard muscled body. He was even more stunningly virile than she remembered from her teenage years. The time since she'd left home had obviously been good to him. If it were possible, he was even more

gorgeous today. His dark brown hair was trimmed neatly, he kept it much shorter than his brothers. His steel grey eyes were just as beautiful as ever, though the naughty and knowledgeable twinkle in them was new. How did she get so lucky? What was she going to do during the lonely years ahead? Her heart clenched as she looked at him. How she'd missed him—missed them all. How would she ever find the strength to leave them again?

He pulled her roughly, almost violently, toward him, yet one large hand cradled her face and held it gently. The touch of his hand was almost unbearable in its tenderness. She loved him more in that moment than she thought it possible to love anyone.

With such overwhelming love washing through her, Serena did the only thing she could. She pinned Brady beneath her and mounted him in one smooth motion.

Taking Brady's face in her hands, she made sure to keep eye contact with him as she slowly began her ride. Somehow, she could feel Brady's frustration, feel his desperate desire for her to speed up, to take him deeper. Yet she knew this was their only time together, their only chance to show their love. She wanted it slow for a bit. She wanted to worship him as they had worshipped her.

Eventually, he took the choice out of her hands and grasped her by the waist, lifting her to meet his strokes. Within minutes, they were racing for the stars. He took her mouth with savage intensity just as they reached climax and the world exploded around them.

Chapter Six

Brady knew they weren't going to find a better time to find out just what had driven her away from her home. He looked over at Ash and Damen who had quietly slipped inside the door while he'd made love to their mate, saw the same resolution in their eyes. It was time to finally get some long awaited answers.

After nodding at his brothers, he dropped his gaze to his mate. A sleepy, well-sated smile curved her lips. He hated having to break the mood, but he'd wait no longer getting the answers to questions that had haunted the three men since she'd walked out of their lives. Pinned by his body, as she was, his cock still deep inside her, she wasn't going anywhere. He'd never get a better opportunity. "Baby?"

"Hmm..."

"Baby, you awake?"

"Let me rest a few minutes and I'll see what I

can do."

Brady chuckled, making her pussy ripple around his dick. "Oh Goddess, baby. Don't make me laugh. Besides, as tempting as your offer is, you have got to be sore and there are some matters we really need to discuss."

She must have sensed he had something serious to say, because she opened her eyes and all traces of passion were quickly shut away behind unsmiling eyes. Her body stiffened beneath him.

"We?"

"Yes, we. You, me," he nodded toward his brothers still waiting patiently by the door, "and them."

She looked to the three of them, wariness and even fear flashed across her face, then she slowly nodded, slumping against the bed as if all the tension that had been running through her disappeared. "I guess you all deserve some answers. But after you know, after I tell you everything, I have to leave."

Damen snorted. "I don't think so."

She snapped her gaze toward the doorway where Damen was leaning against the doorjamb, his feet crossed at the ankles, his arms crossed over his chest. "What? You can't keep me here."

Brady held her chin, bringing her gaze back to him. "No, legally we can't. You're right about that, but do you really want to leave us, live your life

alone and on the run?"

"Is that the life you want to live?" added Ash.

As Damen and Ash made their way toward the bed, stripping their clothes along the way, Brady watched as Serena's eyes widened, began to lose focus. He could see the pulse in her throat speed up, feel the quickening of her heartbeat against his chest. If they had to keep her off balance to get some answers, then that's what they'd do. At least he knew how to distract her in the future. And they *would* have a future, no matter what she believed.

When both Damen and Ash crawled onto the bed on either side of Serena, Brady shifted, thrusting his cock deeper into her. Serena gasped, snapped her gaze back to him. Now she was trapped – Ash on her left, Damen on her right and him between her thighs. She wasn't going anywhere until they were good and ready to let her up.

Ash and Damen each took one of her dusky nipples between their lips while he stroked in and out of her pussy, keeping her on edge and pliable to their desires. "Now, why did you run away?"

"I—I..."

"You what? And remember to think before you speak because if you don't give us an honest answer, we'll stop giving you pleasure."

Serena groaned when Ash and Damen

simultaneously bit down on her nipples. After licking her lips, she whispered, "I had to run. If I hadn't, they would have killed us all."

Through their bond, Brady could feel Damen and Ash's dismay. She'd left to keep them all safe?

Pulling away from her swollen nipple, Damen leaned forward to look her in the eyes. "Who would have killed us, sweetness?"

"I don't know."

All three men moved away. Brady pulled out of her clenching pussy, sat up and placed her on his lap before turning around and resting against the headboard.

"No. You can't stop. You can't stop now."

"Then tell us who wants the four of us out of the way."

"I told you the truth," she said in a small voice. "I don't know who they are for sure or why they want us dead. But I couldn't stay here and be the cause of your deaths," she said, her voice quivering. "I just couldn't do that to you three."

Knowing she needed comfort now, more than seduction, the three men moved forward, wrapping their arms around her in support. "Tell us," Ash whispered against her temple. "Tell us everything that happened."

"About a week after our grandmother died, I went to her office to clean it out. I'd spent so much time there when she was alive it always seemed

like my second home. I'd put off gathering her things because it was so hard to let her go in that final way."

Beside her, Damen ran his hands up and down her thighs, doing his best to comfort her. More than Serena's adoptive parent, she had been the closest thing Serena had to a mother once her own parents had died during the attack that had killed many of their elders, including his own mother and father. None of them had known what to say, how to offer her the comfort she needed when their grandmother had quietly slept in one night.

"What happened at the office, Serena?" Ash asked.

"I found a file on a shipment that should have been given to your operation's manager, but because of Nana's death, he'd never received it. It was for a big shipment that was scheduled to go out at the end of that month. There was also a letter."

When she paused, seemingly lost in thought, Brady rubbed her back in large circles. "A letter? Go on, baby. Finish it."

"It was a strange letter. It talked about something that hadn't been shipped—the usual monthly supply of guns. It wasn't addressed to Nana. It was addressed to Uncle Bernard, and maybe I shouldn't have opened it, but I'd handled all the mail since I started to help nana with the

office work. The letter puzzled me, but I shrugged it off and went to see Uncle Bernard. I walked into his office, just like I always had."

Damen snorted. "You mean you ran in his office without even bothering to knock."

She nodded, licking her lips while she gathered her courage to continue. Brady could feel the struggle inside her, the toll this conversation was taking on her. "Do you need a break, baby? We can stop if you have to."

"No, no, I need to tell you. I need to tell someone and the three of you are the most important people in my life."

"Take your time, sweetness. We have all night if we need to get to the bottom of this."

"No, I need to say it all now or I never will."

Ash pressed a kiss against her temple, took her hand in his and squeezed. "Whenever you're ready then, little one."

Snuggling deeper into Brady's arms, she picked up her story where she'd left off. "He had someone in there. Someone I'd never seen before. As soon as I walked through the door, no one spoke. I handed Uncle Bernard the file and told him that I found it in Nana's desk and that the shipment was scheduled to leave the warehouse that weekend, but that it hadn't been assigned to a driver."

"What happened next?" Brady murmured.

"He scowled at me, snatched the file out of my hand, opened it, found the opened letter and then told me I better keep my nose out of places it needn't be."

"Bernard said that?" Damen asked, his voice thick with fury.

"Yes, and it was really weird because I'd been helping Nana schedule the delivery drivers for over a year. Anyway, I quickly turned around and left."

"And you had no idea who was in there with him?"

"No, Ash, I didn't. But I wouldn't have run off just because he had acted odd. It was what happened after I closed the door to his office that forced me to leave."

Brady tightened his arms around her. He knew—just knew—that whatever she was about to say would shatter his belief in his long time operation's manager, a man they called uncle because of his loyalty to their people. If that happened, he'd have no choice but to do something about it. No one threatened his family and got away with it, not even another man he'd long thought of as kin despite the fact he wasn't related by blood—or even species.

"I closed the door but didn't walk away. Some inner voice warned me to stick around, or hell, it could have just been a teenager's curiosity. Who

knows? Anyway, the stranger in the office asked your manager who I was."

"What did Uncle Bernard say, sweetness?"

Serena hesitated, then turned toward Damen. "Some girl my nephews took in off the streets. Don't worry, Mr. Merino, she's not important."

Beside him, Damen stiffened, but Brady had to know the rest. "Then what, baby?"

"The other man said, *She's seen too much, knows too much. Get rid of her.* Then Uncle Bernard told him, *My nephews won't sit quietly by if something happens to her.* Then the stranger told him that he had no choice. If I went running to you three, Uncle Bernard was to do whatever he needed to do to make all of us disappear."

Beside him, Brady could feel both Ash and Damen tense up. He could feel their rage building, threatening to explode. Barely able to contain his own wrath and need to destroy those that had threatened his mate, he knew exactly what they were feeling. To find it was his uncle, the one he'd gone to for help in locating their mate, the one who was in constant contact with their PI as he searched for her was almost more than Brady could stand.

"And so you left?"

Serena squeezed her eyes closed, pressed her head against Brady's chest and nodded. "The very next day. I couldn't let anything happen to you

three. You were all I had left in the world. I took the cash I'd been saving for college and left that night, before the three of you got back from your business trip."

Ash took her by the chin and turned her face toward his, pressed a tender kiss to her lips. "Thank you for trusting us with the truth, little one."

Serena ducked her head and mumbled, "How can you still call me little one, especially after this morning?"

Ash winked, then squeezed her hand again. "You'll always be little one to me as Damen will always call you sweetness and Brady will call you baby. We each have pet names for you."

She smiled sadly. "I can't, Ash. So long as I'm near you, you all are in danger. I just can't do that to you. I'd rather be alone knowing you're alive and safe than be responsible for your deaths." She turned to look at Damen and Brady. "Can't you all understand that?"

Sighing, Brady took her chin in his hand and forced her to look at him. "No. There is something you don't understand. Something we weren't allowed to tell you when you were younger."

Sitting up, Serena pulled out of his arms, then gazed at Damen and Ash, wariness evident in her eyes. "What do you mean?"

Brady could feel her fear. Hear the quiver in her

voice. They all could. Now was the time to lay out all their cards on the table, time to tell her exactly who and what they all were and what she would soon become.

Chapter Seven

“Tell me, dammit.”
Brady nodded, glanced warily at his brothers.

A feeling of unease snaked its way up her spine. What could be so terrible that he couldn’t come out and tell her? The not knowing couldn’t be any worse than what he had to say.

“Maybe it would be best if we showed you instead.”

Frustrated now, Serena ran a trembling hand through her hair. “Well, don’t just lie there. If you have something to show me, then show me already.”

“Ash, show her.” With a hesitant nod, Ash left her side, leaving the warmth of the bed to stand in front of the fireplace on the opposite wall.

Serena watched stupefied as Ash closed his eyes and tipped his head back. “What—”

“It begins in his mind first, the certain knowledge that he needs to change now. Then he

feels the wrenching as bones grow, reshape," Brady whispered.

Serena stared in awe at the scene in front of her.

"The painful stretch of muscles and tissues, and the itchiness as his body hair grows out, happens next," added Damen from beside her. "Finally the last to change will be his face and hands. His ears will change, become feline in nature. His fingernails will grow into claws. His teeth will elongate, curve and then thicken into fangs. A muzzle forms where before he had a nose, a mouth."

As the men continued the running commentary, Serena watched as Ash the man dropped to all fours and shifted into a beautiful white tiger, a huge, awe-inspiring beast. "How, uh...huh?"

Damen snorted. "I think she's speechless, but she isn't running scared. That's something at least."

"I, uh, um..." Serena trembled, frightened by what this meant, but intrigued as well. She'd always had a fascination for big cats, often going to the zoo alone just to watch the lions and the tigers in the manmade habitats, wishing there were more places where the big cats could roam free rather than how they'd been forced to live in cages in order to avoid extinction at man's hands. But this...this was just too much for one woman to

take in. "I have to think about this. I don't know what to think about this." She knew she was babbling, but she just couldn't help it. She'd known that she was different. Had known it even as a child, but when she'd tried to remember, to understand the foreign sensations clamoring inside her, there was nothing there. Her mind filled with empty space where memories should reside. She couldn't even remember what her parents looked like. It was as though her entire life hadn't begun until Brady's grandmother had taken her in as a traumatized seven year old child.

Brady tightened his arms around her. Beneath her his big frame shuddered. Did he fear she would leave them because of this? Then another thought hit her. Turning to face Brady, she raised her questioning gaze to his. "And all of you can do this, not just Ash?"

"Yes, baby. All of us. And that includes you, or should I say, will include you."

"What?" she shrieked, trying to shove herself out of his arms, which only caused him to tighten his hold on her. She knew it was a girly reaction to scream at him like a banshee, but she couldn't help it. "What do you mean I will, too? Did you bite me? Can you even change me by biting me?"

"Sweetness, we don't need to change you and no, you can't be changed at all. You were born this way. The females just can't shift until around their

twenty-fifth year. We would have explained everything when you turned eighteen, the soonest the Council of Elders would allow it, but by then you'd already run off."

Serena stilled, quickly thinking about what all this meant, would mean to the rest of her life. Seeing her men shift was one thing, turning into a cat that would go into heat was something entirely different. *Oh my God, Oh my God, Oh my God...*

"Please tell me there isn't anything else? Please?" She could hear the denial, the fear, even the shock in her own voice. What must they think of her? Oh, God, what was she going to do?

She was still shaking when she felt the soft fur rub against her thigh. She almost screamed at the size of the animal beside her. Closing her eyes, she took a deep breath. *This is Ash. It's only Ash. You love him – you love cats. It's a two for one deal. Just breathe.* Soon enough, the inner dialogue quieted her anxiety and she could open her eyes.

The most beautiful white tiger she'd ever seen stared right back at her. Just as she gathered the courage to reach out and touch the beast, Ash's voice whispered through her mind. And it was most definitely Ash's voice even though the tiger was sitting quietly, panting in front of her, looking as docile as an overgrown housecat.

It's just me, little one. Go ahead and touch me. Even in this form, I would die before I ever hurt you. I love

you.

“Okay, now that is just too freaky.” She looked to Brady and Damen. “Can you hear him, too?”

Damen shook his head. “No, sweetness. Until you complete the binding we can feel each other’s emotions, but won’t be able to speak or hear each other.”

Serena lowered her head, biting her lip. “And how do I do this? Complete the binding I mean?”

Brady shifted her on his lap, pulling her closer to his heart. “There are two ways. Usually, the bond forms when the males mount their woman at the same time, giving her their seed simultaneously. Obviously, we haven’t done that...yet.”

A wave of heat rolled through her. Goddess, to make love to all three of them at the same time was one of her greatest fantasies. Swallowing thickly, she looked from Ash, who had sprawled across the foot of the bed in tiger form, to Damen who abruptly adjusted his thickening cock, to Brady whose eyelids had lowered to half-mast. She could feel his shaft pressing against her ass and knew the thought of having a foursome definitely had him eager for lovemaking. “And the second way?”

“You allow us to bite you. Each of us has placed their mark upon you with our seed and saliva. After we bite you, you’ll be the bridge between all

our minds," Damen answered.

"Though we'd all prefer the foursome method," added Brady.

Damen snorted, his hand slowly stroking his erect cock. "Obviously."

"Though we'd prefer that method, we just don't have the time. You must have completed the bond with us by tomorrow at midnight, the dawning of *Imbolc*."

"Why must it be by then?"

"If you don't bond with us by then, you'll never be able to shift and you'll never be able to have children. There is a ritual ceremony you must perform in order for the Moon Goddess to bestow the gifts of shifting and fertility on you."

Serena ran a trembling hand through her tangled hair. "And if I don't bond with you?"

"Then you'll never be fertile. You'll never feel the exhilaration of the hunt while in tiger form. But if you're asking if we'd stop loving you, leave you and look for another to take to mate, the answer is an unequivocal no."

She glanced at Damen, searched his face for any clue to what he felt, needing to know his thoughts. "And you?"

"Brady is right. Nothing you can say or do, or not do, will ever stop me from loving you."

She turned to the tiger still sprawled at the end of the bed. "And you, Ash? You'll love me even if

I don't go through with the bonding?"

I won't lie to you, little one. I want you to give me – us – cubs to raise, but I'll take you any way I can get you.

"I'm confused. I thought tigers are solitary, preferring to live and hunt alone."

Brady cleared his throat, then reached for her hand, lacing their fingers together. "If we were full tigers we wouldn't need anyone, that's true. It's our human part that needs the bonding, the human part that tells me – us – that if any of you were to die, a part of me would die with you. That includes you, Serena. I need you just as I need air to breathe, water to drink and food to eat. The thought of you coming home is all that's sustained me – us – over the years since you left us."

Tears began to pool in her eyes. How could she deny them, deny the bonding? She'd loved them for years. First she loved them as her closest friends, her new brothers and confidants, then as the men they had become. She had dreamed of making a family with all three brothers.

Swallowing past the lump that seemed lodged in her throat, she nodded. "Yes, I'll do the bonding. But that isn't going to make the danger that's following me go away," she warned.

At the end of the bed, Ash growled and his fur stood on end. *Don't worry about that. We'll make sure that everyone after you pays. By tomorrow, you*

won't have anything to fear.

Serena nodded, still unconvinced that staying was the right thing. But after the morning she'd spent with her men, after hearing their feelings for her, she couldn't just leave them. She couldn't. So, whether selfish or not, she wasn't running away this time. Danger or no danger. Letting out a deep breath, Serena smiled. "So, do I just sit here while you all bite me?"

Damen snickered and Brady outright chuckled. "No, baby, we'll make you come, then bite you. You'll only feel pleasure."

At the end of the bed, Ash began to shift back from tiger to man. She watched, mesmerized, as the tiger receded and the man emerged. "How much pain is involved in this whole shifting thing anyway?" she asked warily. Not that the answer would change her mind, but she'd like to know what to expect tomorrow night. Ash winked, then crawled up the bed, resting his chin on her inner thigh. He wouldn't bother hiding the truth from her and for that, she was grateful.

"The first few times hurt a little bit as the shift takes longer, but once you've done it a few times, the pain lasts but a second or two, then the euphoria of being in your other form overrides everything else."

She nodded. "Okay, then. I'm ready whenever you all are."

The men didn't need to be told twice. Brady turned her so that her back pressed against his chest, then used his hands to spread her thighs open, exposing her to everyone's gaze. Damen licked his lips, Ash groaned and Brady actually purred. She could feel the rumbling vibrate against her back.

Already between her thighs, Serena watched as Ash lowered his mouth to her mound, nuzzling her. She groaned when Ash's tongue tickled her inner thighs, first one and then the other before moving to her slit. His tongue circled her clit, then dipped into her channel and out again. Over and over he teased her before finally suckling the hardened nub into his mouth. She screamed. Her thighs trembled. Damen took one hardened nipple into his mouth while squeezing the other with his fingertips. Behind her, Brady licked and nipped along the column of her throat. It was too much, too much sensation. She'd surely die of the pleasure-pain long before they finished tormenting her.

Ash brought her to the edge again with tongue and teeth before inserting his fingers into her vagina and pressing upward, hitting her G-spot. This time they didn't stop her from coming and, as wave after wave of pleasure washed over her, through her, Brady bit the nape of her neck, Damen marked her breast and Ash placed his

mark on her inner thigh.

Behind her closed eyes, white light blasted through her mind. Feelings and thoughts, a confusing jumble of chaotic impressions rushed through her, making her both dizzy and exhilarated all at once. *Man, this must be the bonding.*

Oh, God, this is wonderful, sweetness.

You complete me, baby. Complete us.

I never thought the rumors were true. But a true-bond with your mates does complete you. Thank you, little one.

I love you all. Thank you for waiting for me.

You are all we've ever wanted, baby. How could we not wait for you? Now, though we'd all like to spend the day in bed, we have a trap to set.

Ash rubbed his mark on her thigh. "And you need your rest. You shift for the first time tomorrow and that takes a lot of energy."

"Energy you don't have to spare right now, sweetness," added Damen before bending down to nuzzle the mark he had left on her breast. "Go to sleep, we'll be here when you wake up."

"Promise?" she asked, already knowing the answer as she drifted off with the knowledge she'd never be alone again.

Chapter Eight

“What do you mean, you and Damen are staying here, Brady? I really want all of you to help me pick out the right dress for tonight. I’m not sure what to even buy.”

“Ash knows what you need and Damen and I have to make some calls to the council, and set up the site for tonight’s ceremony.”

Serena bit her lip, looked up at him beseechingly.

“It’s not going to work, baby. Tell you what, if we get done before you get back, we’ll catch up with you. Okay?”

Serena sighed. “Fine, but just so you know, I’m going to be picking out some naughty undies, so don’t take too long or you might not get any say in what I buy.”

Brady’s cock twitched in his trousers, knowing full well that’s exactly what the little minx wanted—him hot and bothered, and thinking of her all day. Well, if it being away from her for one

afternoon resulted in the four of them getting on with their future, he'd suffer with an aching erection.

"Where is Ash now anyway?" she asked.

I'm in the garage. Come on out when you're ready. We had about seven inches of snow last night and it's still coming down so I wanted to make sure the SUV was warmed up before we head out.

All right. I'm coming.

Now without me being deep inside you, you aren't.

Pervert.

Enough you two, grumbled Damen. I'm in the office trying to make some calls. Have some respect. Go spend some money. Brady and I will see you when you get back. Oh, and don't forget to memorize the ritual words while you're gone.

Yes, Damen.

With his heart in his throat, Brady watched as Serena shrugged, then headed for the garage. Nothing could go wrong today. Nothing.

* * * *

It didn't take Asher long to spot the car tailing him. The navy sedan behind them didn't even try to be inconspicuous.

Careful not to include Serena in their conversation, Ash reached for Brady through their newly formed true-bond. *You were right, Brady. The calls to your uncle announcing our mate's return must*

have shaken the old guy up. We have at least one car tailing us.

Good, then the plan is working. Damen and I have shifted and are heading to the creek where Serena's car is still parked. We have two of the Pride Council Elders with us. Let's just hope that all the players show up or we'll be putting our mate in danger for nothing.

You know this is the only thing Brady could do, Ash. We can't leave a threat to our mate out there.

I know, Damen, but I don't like it.

None of us do. We're right behind you. Watch your backs until we get there.

Will do.

Ash turned toward Serena, placed his hand on her thigh and squeezed to get her attention. "Do you want to stop by your car? I know all of your possessions are in there, I thought you might want to check on it while we're out."

Serena smiled and his gut clenched, hating having to deceive her, but she'd never act naturally if they told her their plan ahead of time. "Thanks, Ash. If you don't mind, that would be great. There's a locket in there you all gave me for my sixteenth birthday that I'd like to wear tonight."

"No problem, little one. Wolverine Creek, here we come."

It didn't take more than a few minutes to reach the cutoff for the narrow path that led to the swimming hole where her car was parked. The

men following in the sedan would have to approach on foot if they didn't want to be seen so they should have a few minutes for Brady, Damen and the others to meet them there. Hopefully, nothing would go wrong.

Beside him, Serena shifted, sitting forward in her seat as her little car came into view. "Man, half the car is buried beneath the snow." She turned toward him. "Are you sure we have enough time to get my locket before the shops close?"

He gave her thigh a quick squeeze before reaching back to turn off the engine. "No worries, little one. There's plenty of time. The stores are open for a few more hours yet."

Reaching over, she placed a tender kiss on his lips. His heart clenched. Goddess, he loved her.

"Thanks for doing this, Ash."

"Don't thank me." Please don't thank me for putting you in danger, he thought to himself. "Let's just get your locket and get out of here. I can't wait to go shopping for your lingerie and even less to see you in it."

Serena smiled, reached for her door handle and jumped out of the SUV and into the snow without a backward glance, slamming the door closed behind her.

"Shit! I hadn't expected that," he muttered as he rushed to join her.

By the time they had the driver's door

unburied, the hair on the back of his neck began to prickle and his inner tiger began to stretch inside him, sensing danger nearby. He jerked open the car door and shoved Serena through the door. "Stay away from the broken window." Reaching beneath his jacket, he pulled out the pistol he'd taught Serena to shoot as a teenager. "Shoot anything that tries to get through that window."

"But —"

"Serena, there is no time to explain, trouble is coming and it's coming fast."

Serena swallowed hard and grabbed the gun. Nodding, she closed and locked the door and moved to the backseat, away from the shattered window.

In the distance the angry snarl of a pissed off tiger drifted on the wind.

Are you and the others near, Brady? Uncle Bernard is on his way and he's not happy.

We're already here, just behind you in the trees. The Goddess herself must have sent this snow. It's perfect camouflage.

Good. Be ready. We don't know how many humans are in the car heading this way, never mind how many Weres.

Understood.

Ash looked in the car, awed by the grim determination in his mate's face. *Are you okay, little one?*

Yes, Ash, but if you knew trouble was coming I wish

you'd have told me. And don't bother telling me this wasn't some sort of trap to lure the baddies out here because I won't believe you.

Oh, love. If we had told you, there is no way you would have been able to act as if you didn't know. You've never been able to lie worth a damn.

She huffed. You're right, which is why I'm not mad. I'm just worried you're going to get hurt. Are Damen and Brady out there?

Of course, we wouldn't leave anything to chance when it comes to your safety.

Serena nodded, then turned her head to face the open window. I won't let anything happen to the three of you either, she added.

Within seconds, Ash could hear the heavy footfall of the approaching assassins from the sedan. Be ready, everyone. Our company has arrived.

Inside the car, Serena nodded.

When two men walked out of the woods, Ash wasn't surprised. What did surprise him—his uncle stood with them. So who's stalking us through the woods?

I don't know, but be prepared for anything.

Ash gave a slight tilt of his head in acknowledgement, then faced his uncle and the three others with him. The heavysset man in the trench coat and five-hundred-dollar loafers could be no other than Mr. Merino, the one who had ordered the hit.

Ash looked each man in the eye before focusing

his attention on his treacherous uncle. "Why, Bernard? Why try to kill our mate? You've known she was ours from the moment we brought her into our home."

Bernard grunted. "It's necessary. I have no choice if I want to live, and I have a lot of good years ahead of me."

"You'd sacrifice the four of us to save your own skin? Why?"

"I'd do whatever I have to in order to ensure my own survival. Besides, I've long awaited the chance to finish off this pride. It's taken eighteen years to see to the downfall of the Graton Pride and now, it's within my grasp. You all should have died with your parents. Every one of you. Once you're gone, my wolves will take over this town, finishing off the rest of your kind."

Shaking his head, fury pumping through his body, Ash trembled. "What are you saying? You had something to do with the slaughter of our families all those years ago?"

Bernard laughed, an evil chuckle that caused his skin to itch as his inner wolf fought for freedom. It wanted to take control, wanted to rip and tear into their enemy's body. "I orchestrated it, boy. How do you think my pack knew your pride had chosen that day to gather here in celebration? I led them here myself and ripped out your grandfather's throat. I only wished I'd

managed to kill all of you. But two of you boys decided to stay home and Serena and her sister had slipped away during the celebration to play in the woods and your brother followed them. But I know where she lives and as soon as I leave here, your deaths at my hand, I'll finish her off as well."

Ash felt Serena's surprise along the mate bond. The same surprise that filled him and his brothers. They had no idea their mate had a sister out there. Why hadn't Serena ever mentioned a sister? His mate's pain slid through his mind, tearing at his control.

I didn't know. How could I not know I had a sister? Why can't I remember her?

Ash had no idea what to say to his mate to comfort her and unfortunately now wasn't the time. But if it took all their resources, they'd find her.

You're damn straight we will, Brady acknowledged.

Your sister is our sister, Serena, Damen added. *We'll bring her home.*

"Enough of this bullshit," the third man muttered. "Let's just kill them, Mr. Merino, and get out of here. My balls are freezing."

Merino turned toward his hired hand, lifted his own gun, and shot the guy in the face. "Now your balls won't freeze, will they?"

Shrugging his shoulders, Merino turned back

toward Ash. "Tell that little lady to get out of the car and join you."

Ash snorted, he just couldn't help it. Did the guy think he was a fool? "I don't think so. Why don't you tell me why you want her eliminated and we'll negotiate from there."

"Let's just say she knows about my sideline or at least she knows of untraceable shipments of arms to the East Coast, that if discovered, would send me away for a very long time and that's just not something I can allow to happen."

"So all this, the years of having her stalked, the attacks, were to prevent the authorities from learning you're a gun runner."

Merino shrugged. "That about sums it up."

"Dammit, Merino. Just shut up and kill them. No one will be the wiser and everyone can get on with their lives. I've waited a long time to see them bleeding at my feet."

"Everyone but the four of us, you mean," Ash clarified.

"Well, of course your brothers have to die, too, but that can't be helped."

Ash nodded then turned toward where he knew his brothers and the council members waited. "Did you hear enough?"

A loud snarl reverberated through the trees seeming to echo across the frozen creek water.

"What—what have you done?"

"Made sure we had enough evidence to issue a—"

Before he could finish, Serena screamed through his mind. *Behind you! Ash, behind you!*

As quickly as he could, Ash ducked, anticipating that his cousins would respond to her cries and attack. He didn't want to be in their way when they did.

Ash darted toward the side. Two shots sounded through the air. He could hear the heavy sounds of thrashing bodies, but his sole focus centered on Serena. She'd taken the shots, not their enemies. *Please Goddess, let her be all right.* When his gaze met hers, she wore a triumphant smile. Thomas, Bernard's son, had shifted into his grey wolf form and now hung half in and half out of the open window, a bullet hole through the head. He'd been in the one stalking his brothers through the woods while his father and the others arrived by car.

Behind him, Brady had Bernard pinned to the snow-covered ground, blood pooling from the mortal wound in his neck. He hadn't even had time to shift before Brady had taken him down. Damen stood crouched over Merino, growling. As the snow beneath him turned yellow with the man's piss, Ash chuckled. "I'd say that you have about two seconds to live, Merino. Any last prayers?"

Before Merino could utter a word, Damen ripped out his throat. Nodding at the council members, Ash turned toward the car, "Come on out, Serena. We have a ceremony to attend."

"What about the bodies?"

"The council will see to it that they are never found."

"I still find it hard to believe that this creature, one we trusted despite being a werewolf, killed so many of the people we love," Brady said, glancing down at the dead, bleeding body of the man he'd regarded as an uncle for so many years. A stab of pain shot through his heart at the blatant betrayal. He thought briefly about the other Weres who dwelled among them, Weres who had been rescued as cubs and raised lovingly. As far as he knew, they were good people, young men and women who didn't abuse their shape shifting powers. But then again, he would never have suspected Bernard either. He sighed and averted his gaze away from the mangled corpses.

"We'll have to be extra careful from now on," Ash said.

Damen nodded. "Yes, we need to watch the other Weres closely and make sure there are no other traitors living among the pride."

Without batting an eye, Serena walked past the four dead bodies and approached her mates. "Yes, let's go shopping. We have a mating to attend and

I have this fantasy I've been dying to fulfill. The sooner we're all officially mated, the better."

* * * *

Midnight, Imbolc Fertility Ceremony

Serena raised her hands and tilted her head up toward the moon. "Goddess of light and love, fertility and new beginnings, I embrace your healing energy. I grasp the new life you offer me and allow myself to take the new direction for which I have waited so long. From this day forward, I embrace my inner self, the tiger within. My body," she turned and smiled at her mates, "our bodies, are energized, exhilarated. We embrace our new lives as we find our true paths. Our entire beings stretch, reaching for the coming dawn."

Burning pain seared its way through her body. Every part of her, from her bones to her muscle tissue and even her skin, felt on fire. Her muscles began to stretch, her skin to itch. Even her face hurt. Tears slid down her cheeks, but she didn't falter, didn't let the pain distract her from her thoughts.

Within seconds, she felt the tiger waking inside her and all the pain disappeared as fierce joy flooded her heart and mind. At last. Finally she

was whole.

With joy in her heart, the newest white tiger of the Turner Pride joined its mates. A quick nip on her hindquarters and the chase was on to see who would be the first to mount her. But that wasn't what she wanted. She wanted to make love to her men together—as a true foursome, as men with their woman, not as tigers.

Chapter Nine

Serena dashed off into the woods. Playfully, she skirted trees, hid beneath shrubs, always glancing back at the three white tigers following her. She burned with longing, wanted them to mount her, but at the same time, she could think like a human and wanted to make love to them as a human. It would be interesting to have them mount her in this form, but in human form, there were so many more possibilities.

Suddenly, as she darted among the tall pines, a voice came to her. A small voice. A child's voice. Digging her paws into the soft bed of pine needles, she came to a halt and listened.

"Serena, Serena..."

Who was that? Then she heard screams. Terrifying screams. The voice of a young boy as he yanked her by the arm and propelled her deeper into the forest. "Run, little girl. Run!"

"Serena, Serena, where are you?" the little girl's voice sounded.

A picture suddenly flitted through her mind. She strained to see it better with her mind's eye, the picture of a little girl, a toddler no more than three with wavy golden blonde hair down to her waist and big blue eyes.

My sister. Oh, my God, I remember my sister. What happened to her? She was in the forest behind me, calling me, looking for me.

Honeycat, are you alright? It was Brady's voice in her mind.

Yes, I'm fine. I just had a memory flash.

I hoped you'd find your memories after the change.

I saw my sister.

And?

The only thing I can do is describe her. I don't know what happened to her, except she was in the forest looking for me when the massacre happened.

Maybe she was saved?

I don't know. Wouldn't I have felt her?

Not necessarily.

Brady, I want to change back. How do I do that?

Just concentrate and it will happen automatically. Here are Ash and Damen. Hey, brothers, our mate wants to return to human form. She had a memory flash and...

Wow, really? Tell us, Serena.

Later. I need some time to absorb all of this.

Sure. C'mon, brothers, let's give her some time.

Serena closed her eyes and concentrated on her human form. She felt her muscles relax, felt and

heard her joints pop as they shaped back into her human skeleton. Before long, she stood naked among the trees, her long pale blonde tresses blowing gently in the wind. All she heard was the whisper of the leaves. The scent of pine hung heavy in the air. A balmy breeze wrapped its arms around her body, stroking, soothing. She folded her arms and twirled around, her face lifted to the sky. "Goddess, my sister, is she alive? If so, where is she?"

A wisp of wind caught her whisper and carried it on its wings up to the heavens.

Open your mind, my daughter. You will hear her and find her.

Was it her imagination, or had she really heard the Goddess speak? Serena twirled around, caught leaves dancing on the wind, felt them stroke her body. *My sister...I have to find her...Jolene...Lene...*

The spell was broken by loud crackling noises, the snapping of twigs broken by hurried feet, the rustling of leaves on the mossy ground. Her mates had returned. They were concerned for her, she caught their thoughts, felt their worries. *I'm fine. I'm coming to you now.*

She ran, the breeze pushing her along to the arms of the men who loved her. They had waited patiently to claim her, to make love to her, for the four of them to become one.

They were waiting even now, she knew, and

she tracked their scent. They stood silent, but their scent was prominent. It didn't take long for her to find them. She came upon them in a glade, a beautiful silent spot in the forest with a sparkling pool, a waterfall supplying it, bubbles rose in the center indicating it was a natural hot spring. Warm steam swirled around her, enveloping her. She smiled and looked toward her men. They stood beside the water, the three of them, holding hands, waiting for her—their mate.

Serena stopped, looked at them, took in their bodies in all their glory, and felt her libido rise. These were her men. And tonight, tonight they would mate, they would become one for real, the four of them, and tomorrow she'd be with child. She felt it, she knew she'd conceive that night. Another surge of heat rocketed through her body at the thought of bearing a child, a baby fathered by three of her mates. Which one? She didn't care and she knew, neither did they. They waited for her to speak, to do something, anything. Serena walked toward them, joined them at the edge of the water lapping at the shore. She held out her arms wide as if to embrace them all.

Their hands disengaged, they stepped toward her and within seconds she was in their arms.

Brady held her from behind. He lowered her to the soft bed of pine needles and sat behind her. Ash spread her legs and knelt between them while

Damon knelt beside her. Ash's fingers parted her folds, then ran them up and down her moist slit. She felt the moisture trickle down, covering his fingers. She opened her legs wider, desperate to feel more. She needed them more than ever before. Her body ached with emptiness, an emptiness she knew her men could fill.

Brady leaned down and claimed her lips. She parted them, allowed him entry and his tongue danced the tango with hers. Hands covered her breasts, kneaded them, teased her nipples into the hardest pebbles. Lips latched down and sucked at her nipples. Ooooh, she couldn't stand too much more of all this. Three men loving her wherever there was a place to be loved.

Her soul was on fire, flames shot through her body from her soul to her womb to her heart. This was so right, this was what was always meant to be. Somehow, and she didn't even know how, Brady was suddenly beneath her and she was atop him. She hovered above a cock so hard and thick, it was unbelievable. She'd seen his cock before when hard, but now, how could she ever take him inside her? Spreading her legs as wide as she could, she opened herself to him, felt the tip of his cock at her entrance, searching, pushing, gently, then more urgently. Her vaginal walls spread to accommodate him. Her cream helped to lubricate his entrance as he inched inside. As she leaned

forward to press her lips against Brady's, she felt another cock positioned at her bottom, pressing against the entrance that had never been disturbed.

For a moment she stiffened, then as Brady's soothing voice spoke in her mind, she relaxed. Ash stood before her. She recognized his legs. He crouched down and his cock hovered before her waiting lips. Opening her mouth, she took the tip in, ran her tongue over the hole to tease him before she allowed him further entry. Then as she felt him shudder, she took him into her mouth. Gagging for just a second as he pushed in far, all the way to her throat, she squashed that feeling and relaxed her throat muscles. This was Ash, her mate. She could – would – take him as he needed. He started to thrust, surging into her mouth in long, sure strokes. She sucked as if she'd suck the very soul from his body, desperate now to taste his seed.

Ash gripped her hair, thrust deep into her mouth as Damen pushed deeper into her ass and Brady shoved all the way into her vagina, hitting the entrance to her womb. She gasped as she felt the two cocks surging inside her. The pressure, it was immense. Brady's hands were on her breasts, kneading, pinching her nipples into hard points. Right now, she wanted nothing more than to be able to knead their balls, to fondle them as they

were fondling her, but it took all her might to balance herself by placing her hands on the soil beneath them.

Brady shuddered, he moved in and out of her very fast, then suddenly he slammed into her and, after one last huge shudder, she felt his come shoot inside her, reaching her waiting womb.

Before she had a chance to react to her own release, he slid from beneath her. She felt Damen withdraw from her anus, heard the snap of rubber and vaguely realized he'd used a condom to enter her there. Brady flipped her to her back and, before she knew it, Damen spread her legs and entered her. Ash's cock hovered above her mouth. She accepted it as she had before and sucked, licked, teased. Brady's hand was on her breasts, the other hand below, his fingers teasing her clit. She was near to exploding, this was all too much. She needed to come, needed it more than ever before.

Damen's body jerked, spasmed and he came, just as her own release happened. Her pussy clamped down on his cock, milking the seed from his body. As soon as her body began to relax beneath him, he sat up on his knees. Ash withdrew his cock from her mouth and took Damen's place. Ash was wider than her other mates and he spread her even more. Pleasure-pain spiraled through her as he worked at getting his

cock into her. He thrust once, twice and on the third thrust, he hilted inside her, ramming up against her womb. She groaned as her body again climaxed, clamping down on Ash's cock in an attempt to drain his seed from him. He didn't take very long to come at all then. Two more thrusts and she could feel his hot come spill inside her fertile womb. He collapsed on top of her, his face on her belly.

Brady lay near her breasts, his hand holding one of them and massaging it gently while Damen lay above her, cradling her head. She'd never felt so loved in her life, had never imagined to be like this. Her men. Her three tigers. Her lovers. The fathers of her children. She had conceived this night. She knew that deep down. None of them would ever know who the father was of her cub, and deep down, she knew they didn't want to know and neither did she.

Above them a bird chirped. The wind carried their thoughts to the goddess. They lay quietly, the four of them, embraced as one, their souls joined forever, into eternity.

Jolene...we have to find her...

Serena broke the spell that held them with her thought of her sister.

She's alive.

Untangling, the brothers stood around her, gazing down at their beloved mate. "We will find

her. We are one now, bonded forever. Ash, Damen and I will help you find her.”

Serena stood, joined them, and melted into the embrace of six arms. “I love you all. I’m finally home, and now, at last, we’ve become one.”

Epilogue

Athena Williams stepped onto her front porch and looked down upon the valley below. From here she could see the town of Drummond, the spires of smoke from the many chimneys in town. But beyond that she could just barely see the creek in the distance, Wolverine Creek.

For weeks she'd been dreaming. Dreaming of a time before, when she'd been loved by her own family. But upon waking, she could never quite remember what she had dreamed, just the sense of loss and abandonment, the sense of isolation she'd felt all her life.

Looking toward the front door of her cabin, she sighed. Her family meant well, she knew that. But they'd kept her isolated up here for her protection all her life, hardly ever letting her even go into town.

She was in her twenties now for cripes' sake and still they wouldn't let her leave home, wouldn't let her visit the creek, the spot most of

her dreams centered on.

She suspected they were hiding something from her in their effort to protect her. Looking up at the cloud-filled sky, Athena couldn't help but wonder what would happen if she slipped out tonight, if she went down there. Would she remember her dreams, would she remember where she'd come from then? She didn't know, but soon, soon she'd have to find out because she knew she didn't fit in with her family, she knew in her heart she belonged elsewhere and until she figured out where, she knew the dreams would continue.

With that thought firmly in mind, Athena turned and headed back into the cabin, back into the home that had begun to feel like a prison. Soon, she promised herself again, soon.

About the Authors

Gabriella Bradley lives in beautiful British Columbia, Canada, amidst rugged mountains. She more than often has a grizzly in her backyard searching for food. Other critters that visit on a regular basis are cougars, coyotes, squirrels, raccoons.

She has been a writer all of her life, though only ventured into erotic works in 2003. Her hobbies include hiking, gardening, swimming, sewing, embroidery. Favorite movies are old timers like *Gone with the Wind*, *Spartacus* etc. Favorite music is Abba.

Gabriella can be reached at this email:

gabriellabradley@telus.net

Gabriella's website is located at:

<http://www.gabriellabradley.com/>

Bonnie Rose Leigh has been enthralled with the written word since childhood. When she ran out of things to read, she created her own stories. Now, she is a multi-published author and lives in a small town in Upstate, New York. She spends most of her time on the computer either writing or visiting with friends. When not busy on the computer, her free time is consumed with reading. It doesn't matter what genre the book is either, though she is partial to romance novels. Her favorite after-hours hobby is sprawling in a chair with a book clutched in her hands and a cup of cocoa sitting nearby.

Bonnie would love to hear from each and every one of you. Make sure you subscribe to her monthly newsletter or check out her blog as it will be updated regularly with release dates, excerpts and online appearances. And, as always, feel free to drop her email if you have any questions, concerns or just want to chat, and she'll get back to you as soon as she can.

Bonnie's website address is located at:

www.mybonnierose.com

She can now also be found on MySpace at:

www.myspace.com/bonnieroseleigh