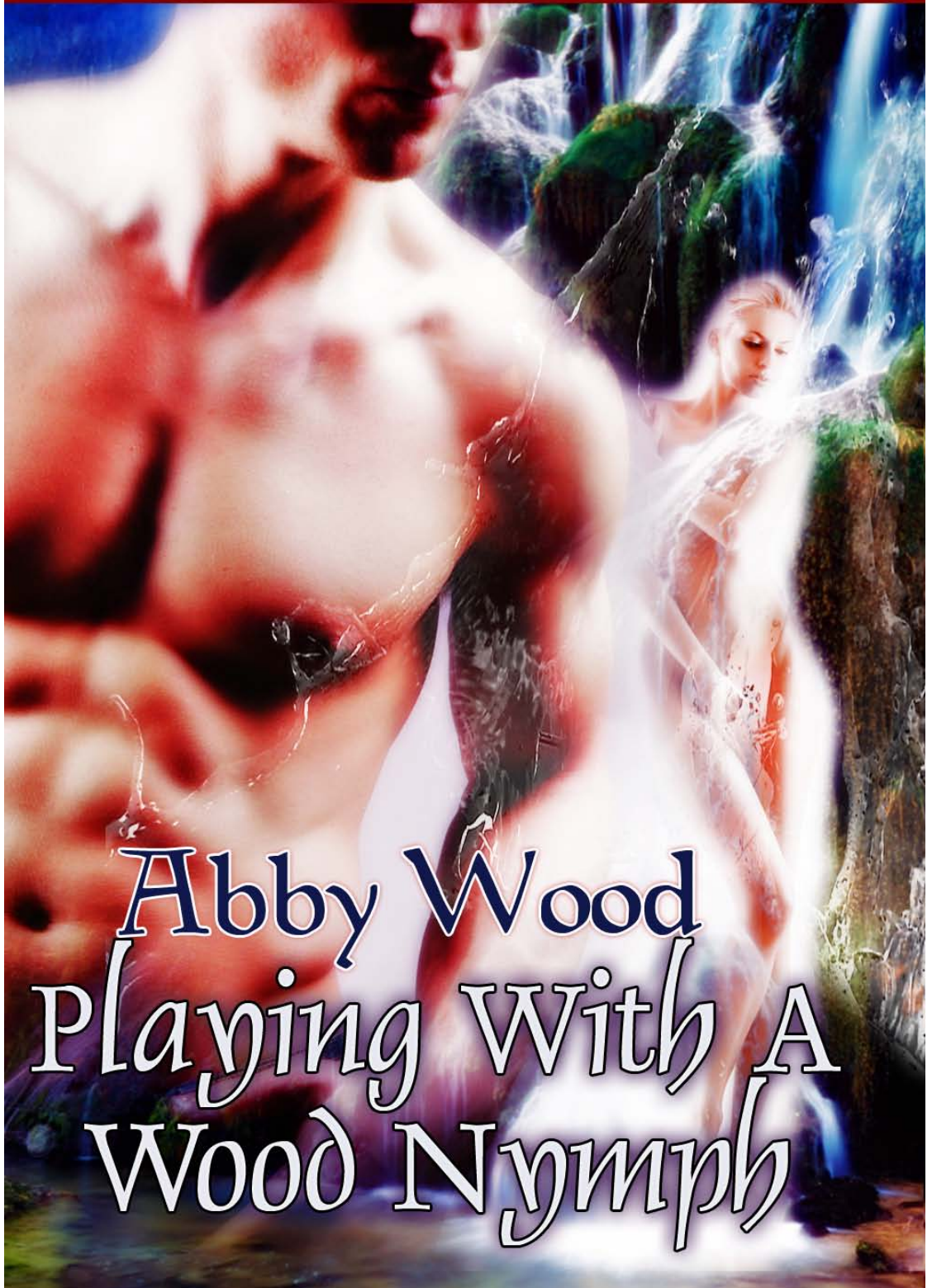
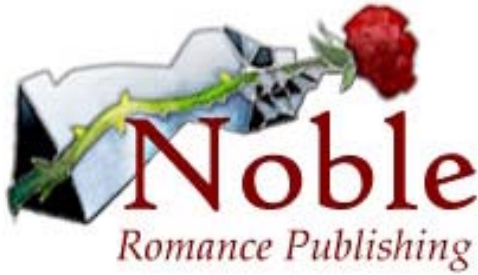


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Playing with a Wood Nymph

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Book Blurb

Using her magic, Melanie of the Dryad family weaved a spell around the man who wandered into her forest. Wanting to play her wood nymph games, she was devastated when the man turned her down.

Unable to understand why he dreamed of a naked woman in the woods during a photo shoot, Jared found an even bigger surprise after developing the pictures he'd taken at the waterfall. Who was the nude beauty sunbathing behind the rocks? Why did he feel like he knew her?

Chapter One

The Great Oak reached high into the sky, providing Melanie with protection from the afternoon sun. She stretched her arms above her head and yawned.

"You have blessed me with unlimited pleasure and the ability to share that with others." She gazed up at the tallest tree. "I will never disappoint you." Melanie rubbed her breasts. "I will use my powers and bring pleasure to everyone I meet."

Coming down to the waterfall and giving herself an orgasm in front of her favorite tree was a habit she'd developed many years ago. Wrapping her arms around her waist, she smiled. She loved being a wood nymph, loved living for pleasure – both given and received. She'd never neglect the trees that gave her all the special powers that enabled her to seduce at will. To do so would be foolish. As a nymph, she had a duty – to seduce and be seduced. Turning her back on her obligations could have her banned from the forest.

The branches gently blew in the breeze, as if thanking her. Melanie laughed and scrambled to her feet. Her body hummed with renewed energy. Before long, she could satisfy her desires again and make the Oaks even happier.

"I will make you proud of me. Today, I plan on –"

A bright flash of light startled Melanie. She gasped and turned to search the other side of the towering waterfall. A human stood out amongst the natural surroundings of the forest.

The male with a body like a Greek god held a camera to his face and snapped another picture of the natural wonder few people had ever viewed. Her lips curled in interest. What a perfect treat for an afternoon of entertainment.

Casting herself invisible, she floated over the tranquil pool of water beneath the falls and sat on a boulder a few feet from the man who dared enter her private oasis. Taller than her by at least a foot, his stunning body matched no others she'd previously seen. *I am going to love playing with this one.*

Her mouth softened, and she licked her bottom lip in pure delight at finding such a manly treat here. It'd been ages since a male wandered this far back into the woods and tempted her to use her magic. *Yes, the Oaks have granted me a wonderful gift today.*

All she needed to do was swirl around him in a frenzy of bliss after she used his body, and he'd lose all memory of having been with her. She, on the other hand, would remember and experience the satisfaction of coupling with this superior person with the broad shoulders and solid thighs who would bring her complete gratification.

She spread her legs atop the rock and rubbed her pussy along the smooth, cool surface. Already slick from pleasuring herself earlier, her clitoris swelled at the idea of fucking this human for the rest of the day. Confident he hadn't spotted her on the other side of the pool a moment ago, she permitted him to go about his business for a few minutes longer so she could indulge in her lust for him. Once her body yelled enough, she'd entice him to play with her and finish her off.

His hair was the color of the bark on a cedar tree, mostly brown, but when he stepped out into the sun, reddish highlights shone in the light. Strong cheekbones set off the prominent chin and gave a royal lift to his rugged good looks. *Oh, Oak, he makes my pussy wet.*

Her gaze dropped from his magnificent face to the front of his pants. She caught her lower lip between her teeth; her nipples hardened. Even without a woody, his pants showed the outline of a nice-sized package. One she'd love nothing more than to open and play with for hours.

The temptation to use him for her own pleasure proved too much for her to resist. She moved behind him, slipped the thick strap from his camera over his head, and gently took the toy out of his hands. After stepping back, she placed the camera on one of the many rocks at the edge of the water, out of harm's way.

The man panicked and turned to search for his equipment. His brows cast down in a frown. Although she remained invisible to him, she allowed her tinkling laughter to

reach his ears. Her trick transformed his expression from shocked to curious and sent more amused laughter bubbling to her lips. *I have your attention now, don't I?*

He tilted his head to the side, obviously straining to pinpoint the location of the sound. Wanting to start the fun and games only a wood nymph could play, she evolved fully for his viewing pleasure. This part always sent scrumptious quivers throughout her body and into every erogenous zone.

"Shit." He rubbed his forehead. "Who the hell . . . ?"

She stood before him completely nude except for her hair that reached the back of her knees and the garland of daisies sitting atop her golden locks. Cupping her breasts, she lifted them higher to tease him. Blessed by bigger breasts than most nymphs, she lowered her head and flicked her tongue over the beaded nipple.

The proof of her enticement showed up in the front of his pants where a ridge developed to the side of his zipper. *Oh, yes!*

She laughed and dropped her hands to her hips. "My name is Melanie; what should I call you?"

He cleared his throat. His gaze never left the apex of her thighs. "J-Jared."

She stepped in front of him, close enough to reach out and touch him, but she kept her hands to herself and circled him instead. His head moved back and forth as he attempted to keep track of her. No doubt, he feared she'd disappear. *That's it, my human, let my magic bring us both pleasure out of this world.*

"Do you like my body, Jared?" She stopped walking in a circle and lifted her chin to gaze into his sinfully sexy brown eyes. "Would you like to play with me? Touch me? Pleasure me?"

"What are you?" He rubbed his lips together. "Where did you come from?"

"I am a wood nymph, and I come from the forest." She laughed and trailed her hand across his chest, enjoying the way his nipples stood out in hard little beads. "I have ways of doing things that will feel very good to a man like you. So big, strong and deliciously handsome; I think what we do together will please us both."

"Jesus Christ." He ran both hands through his hair. "I have to get a picture of this. They're never going to believe me back at the office." He scanned the area. "What did you do with my camera?"

She stuck her lower lip out in a pout. "You cannot take a picture of me." She trailed her hand down her stomach, over her mound and dipped a finger within the lips of her pussy. She lifted her hand and waved her fingers in front of his face in a bewitching manner. He must forget the notion of getting proof of her existence.

"Besides, I want to play with you. When it's time for me to leave, you will not even remember me. I come, I go, I take and I leave. Don't you want to have fun, Jared? Or, are you always so serious?" She raised her brows and paused.

"No." He inhaled and dragged his gaze away from her to search the area. "No, I mean, yes, I'm all for having fun."

She clapped her hands and laughed. "Good!" She danced from rock to rock and used her toe to splash water at him. "What are you waiting for? You have to take off your clothes if you are going to engage in my games."

Leaping farther away, she gave him time to strip, certain he'd comply with her wishes. He wasn't the first man she had beguiled with her beauty.

The Oak trees blessed her with the ability to flit up and over the tallest things. She kept her lithe, limber body in excellent shape. Any man she offered herself to would be stupid to refuse her charms.

"Are you ready, Jared?" she asked once he'd removed his clothes. She stopped jumping and placed her hands on her hips. "I've already caught you; now it is your turn." She laughed. "Come on, hurry over here and catch me." She held her arms out to the side and spun in a circle on the rock to show him she didn't plan to run away.

He moved slowly, his tender bare feet no doubt unable to tolerate the pokes and prods of the forest ground. Her fingers curled into her palm and itched to trail over the muscles bulging in his thighs. *Oh . . . I can't wait to have those thick legs between mine.*

"Hmm . . . you have a nice body, Jared." She rubbed her hands down the front of her thighs and let her breasts dangle free. She giggled at his reaction. His cock stiffened and jutted from his body with a life of its own.

She stepped down from the rock and walked a few more feet to stand beside the pool of water below the falls. The plush, springy carpet of moss grew thickest here by the water, and she delighted in lying upon the cushioned ground. Finding this man here in her favorite area excited her. *This is the picture perfect place to play my games!*

Jared climbed between the last few rocks blocking his path and stepped down onto the moss. The corner of his mouth lifted, and he strolled over the smooth surface without limping or stumbling. She purred in anticipation. Yes, this man brought a new form of raw sex appeal to her otherwise sheltered life.

His short, dark hair fascinated her. She wanted to run her fingers through the thickness and wander her hands along the hair on his chest. She'd never witnessed a man with so much hair on the front of him; the thick mat almost hid his nipples. The hair narrowed down his belly the farther she scanned, to a patch that ended at the base of his cock.

His balls rode high in their sac, big, round and ready to supply her with the delicious nectar she hoped to sample sometime today. He stood in front of her, his hands clenched at his sides, and waited for her to give him permission to touch. *Not yet, I want to enjoy a few games before we start.*

"Watch me carefully. Don't glance away. For if you do, you might not know where I go." She tapped her finger on his nose, and he blinked. She vanished from sight. Her giggle, the only hint she still stood in front of him, floated in the air. *Oh, this is much more fun than finding ways to entertain myself.*

Although he wasn't able to view her, she retained the ability to touch. She reached out and skimmed both his nipples with her fingertips. His hands shot up to cover his chest at the foreign sensation. She laughed at the way his eyes widened as his deeply drawn breath expanded his chest.

Next, she trailed her finger along the underside of his cock, from the base to the tip. He lowered one hand to grasp his penis in his fist and groaned.

She slipped her finger into her slit and rubbed her clit. A small moan escaped her lips. Jared gave two swift strokes, bringing a bead of his precious juice to the head of his cock. She moved around him, continuing to finger herself while she contemplated her next move. *What to do, what to do . . . ?*

Arching her back, she thrust her breasts forward, wiggling them back and forth across his bare skin. The friction against her body produced more moans of delight from her, and she slipped her finger farther down and into her hole where her pussy juice coated the entrance. She removed her finger to wave in the air around Jared's head.

He sniffed, obviously catching her scent. "Oh, Jesus."

His butt muscle clenched, and his hips shot forward. Melina giggled at the way he threw back his head in frustration.

"Please, can you make yourself visible, so I can see you?" he said.

She smiled, snapped her fingers and reappeared in front of him. Slowly, she sank to the ground, spread her legs straight out and wide open on the moss, arranging her long hair behind her. Crooking her finger, she motioned him to join her on the ground.

The pace at which he wanted to switch games matched her mood. Now it was his turn. "You may touch me anywhere you want." She laid her hands over her breasts. "Here." She lifted her knees and bent her legs to let him view her passion-slicked pussy. "Here." She giggled. "Or, you can turn me over and play with me there."

"Oh, sweet mother of god." He lifted his hand to touch her breast, but pulled back. "You aren't going to disappear, are you?" He hurried and placed his palm on her body. "I can't fucking believe this. Never . . . shit. I can't believe this is happening."

His fingers were stiff and his hand trembled, but he explored her curves with tenderness. He lifted each breast to test its weight. His cock stood thick and proud, tapping his flat, lower stomach every time he touched her. Delightful pangs of desire shot through her body at his responses.

She placed her hands on her knees to keep the game fair. Having already taken her turn, she didn't want to interrupt his fun and spoil the first touches for him. She loved to have someone else's hand caress her intimately for a change.

He drew a circle around her areola with his finger. A shudder ran from her tummy up into the sensitive nerve-endings on her breasts. A look of wonder came over Jared's face, and he rubbed his thumb and finger back and forth over her hard nipple, begging silently to suck her. She wanted to feed him the joy of life from her body and bring a smile of contentment to his face.

His hands tracked down, over her rib cage, along the sides of her tummy, and he spanned his fingers while going over her hips. She leaned back on her elbows. Her knees fell to the sides to allow him easy access. She couldn't wait to come from his touch. The release of so much pleasure would surely make the Oaks even happier. After all, a nymph could always seduce a human.

The back of his knuckle ran the length of her pussy. He inhaled a deep breath and let the air escape slowly. He drew his hand back and dropped his chin to his chest. She sat up and frowned. Why did he stop? He *had* to continue playing. Those were the rules.

If she didn't succeed in seducing him, she'd disappoint the Oaks. How would she be able to give back all the goodness the trees had given to the nymphs? She'd be ashamed to face her people if she failed. *Oh Great Oak, what did I do wrong?*

"I'm sorry, Melanie." Jared stood and worked his way back through the rocks to where he had piled his clothes beside his camera. He didn't glance back over his shoulder or hesitate with his departure.

"No!" She leaped over to his side in two steps, grabbed his hand and held it to her breast. Didn't the passion drive him wild with lust? Did he not want to spill his seed deep inside of her?

"You can't go yet. We're not finished." She smiled, but the expression faltered and she bit down on her lip to keep her chin from quivering. "Please, you must have sex

with me. I'll never live this down. I refuse to be the one who brings embarrassment to my people." She wrinkled her nose. "Please, Jared . . ."

He ran his hand down her cheek. She turned and caught his index finger in her mouth in an attempt to sway his decision to stop, but he pulled away. Why did he not fall for her charms? *Something has gone terribly wrong.*

"Listen, I know this sounds crazy, and usually I'd screw you in a heartbeat, but this just doesn't feel right. Not with you. You're the most beautiful woman I've ever seen, but" He chuckled and rubbed the back of his neck. "For some odd reason, I feel guiltier than hell for even touching you. Add that to the fact this is the most asinine daydream I've ever had, and I think it's best if I just hike out of here and get back to work."

Melanie sat heavily on a nearby rock. Her world crumbled around her, out of control. She didn't understand anything that had happened to her in the last couple of minutes. Seducing this man should have been child's play. Humans were, after all, the easiest prey of all. And yet she had failed.

Her people would be disappointed with her. Disgusted and heartbroken by her lack of judgment, she covered her face and wept. She might as well go ahead and leave the forest.

Chapter Two

"Whoa . . . hey now, stop the tears." Jared sat on the rock beside her and patted her leg. "Why are you crying?"

He waited, but she couldn't speak past the lump in her throat.

"Is it because I won't have sex with you?"

She nodded and sobbed harder. She'd never heard of this kind of failure happening to another nymph. *Oh, Oak, I'm the first one in Dryad history to flunk out at seduction!*

"Melanie, I don't know what's going on here. I came up to do my job. I'm a wildlife photographer for a national magazine. All of a sudden, you show up in front of me out of the fucking blue. Disappear, re-appear, touch me . . . trust me, darling, that sort of thing isn't normal in my life. This whole experience has been more than a little crazy." He shook his head. "A woman who walks around with a body most women would die for, with hair that covers your ass and then some, not to mention a pussy that screams for attention . . . well, this has got to be a figment of my fucked-up imagination, and no doubt I'm talking to a mirage."

He cleared his throat. "Maybe I rubbed up against some kind of poisonous plant that's causing me to hallucinate. One of those mushrooms or . . ."

Melanie wiped away her tears and sniffed. "You're not hallucinating, Jared, and you're not dreaming. This is all real. As I told you before, I'm a wood nymph. A creature of the forest, born for pleasure. We keep to ourselves, although many of us have encountered humans in the past." She wiped her cheeks again.

"A wood nymph. Yeah, okay. If humans have encountered your kind before, why haven't I ever heard of it? I mean, this is definitely the kind of thing that would make headlines."

"We can clear a human's mind of any memory of us after we tire of playing with them."

"Listen, lady, I don't know what to believe, but I do know you're not doing anything to my mind." He stood and backed away a step. "This is nuts. Leave it to me to dream up some sexy psychopath." He gazed at her and shook his head.

She returned his stare but did not speak. What was the point? He didn't believe her, and either way, she'd have to erase his memory of their encounter. She'd failed in seducing him, which would bring shame to her people and herself. Once a wood nymph came of age, their whole life revolved around sexual pleasure. She had failed to fulfill her life's mission.

"Fuck this. I need to go." He pulled his shoe on and stomped his foot on the ground to get his heel in. Fully dressed, he stood gazing down at her with his eyebrows drawn together.

Melanie sighed. The time had come to send him on his way. With bigger problems at hand, she'd be wise to seek counsel with the elder of the family and find a way to fix her predicament. Dreading the outcome, she decided she'd rather end the charade than spend another minute dwelling on this wonderful man who rejected everything she offered him.

Before he could react, Melanie wove her body round and around him, erasing every detail of his encounter with her. In a matter of seconds, she rendered him back to the moment prior to when she slipped the camera strap over his head and started this huge mistake.

Leaving him to his photography, she wandered out of the most beautiful place in the forest at a more sedate pace than she entered, carrying the burden of the day's events. Instead of leaping and prancing across the rocks and fallen logs as she normally did, she dragged her bare feet along the forest floor, hoping to delay the exact moment her reputation for being one of the happiest nymphs around ended.

She'd take on a new label . . . the one who failed. She sniffed. She'd go down in Dryad history as a failure, and years after she died, parents would sit their children down and tell them about the nymph who blundered in seducing a human.

She headed not to her home, but to her people's common ground to speak with Arian and the others. A few of the other nymphs sat around the Great Oak tree in the center of the commons, fondling and talking while they pleased themselves with a shiny, smoothly whittled piece of wood, commonly used in substitution for a male's penis.

They appeared so happy and content. She hated to bring such terrible news and ruin their day.

She hung her head in shame and ignored their greetings to come and join them. Once they found out about her disgrace, never again would they invite her to join in their fun.

She approached Arian's tree and laid her palm against the rough, familiar bark, waiting for the vibration that came from the soul of the tree, telling her Arian bid her welcome. A short rumble beneath her hand answered. Closing her eyes, she leaped up to the proper branch in the top quarter of the Great Oak, fully hidden in the foliage.

With his long hair hanging over his shoulder, Arian relaxed back against the trunk of the tree, his bare legs dangling on each side of the sturdy branch. The glow on his face told her she had just missed his big release. Further proof came from a semi-flaccid cock that glistened with his own juices.

One of the few Dryad males, his elder status gave him the ultimate power in controlling the other wood nymphs of this area. She hated to disappoint him.

"You arrived too late, my dear Melanie. I just finished, but if you want to sit and talk with me for a few minutes, I'm sure we'll have a grand time in a bit." Arian grinned. "With a little coaxing, you'll have me hard and panting in no time."

She sat beside him, shook her head and sniffed. With no easy way to tell him what happened with the photographer at the waterfall, she decided it was better for her to cast herself out and get her punishment over with before she broke down in tears.

No longer would she wake up each day excited about exploring the woods or chasing the butterflies. No, she'd doomed herself the moment she spotted the human.

"Speak, woman; you are making me wonder if something terribly bad has happened to one of our people." Arian stood on the limb and frowned at her.

"I am going to leave the forest, Arian." She swallowed. "Tonight, if it's possible."

The tree limb shook with Arian's anger. She scrambled to hold on, fearing the vibration would fling her into the air. Arian's emotion came through his tree and rattled her nerves. She'd never made anyone angry before, especially not an elder.

"What nonsense are you talking, Melanie?" Arian sat back down and reached across the span to hold her hand. "Tell me why you want to leave. Has someone done something to you?"

"No! Never!" She stared at the branch beneath her. "It's me, I have failed. I encountered a man beside the waterfall this morning and decided to play my game with him. He turned down my offer; I failed. I have lost everything I hold dear, and I must leave. I can't bear to stay where others will look upon me with pity each day."

"I see." Arian dropped her hand and leaned back against the tree. "That *is* troubling. I don't think that has happened amongst the nymphs in my lifetime."

"That's why I have decided to leave. I am a disgrace to myself and the nymphs." She lifted her head. "I will strive to do better on my own. I think banishment is a fit punishment. I don't want to disappoint any of the trees. I am unworthy of the magic and gifts they provide for me. I have failed the forest, most of all."

"Hush for two seconds and let me think." He pressed his fingers to the side of his head.

Melanie remained quiet and gave Arian a moment of silence to commune with his counsel. He sought answers from the forest; similar to how all nymphs nurtured relationships with the trees they held close to them. Being older and much wiser, Arian drew the answers out easier than she did, and his ability to decipher their meanings used to give her such comfort.

While she waited, she sorted through everything she'd need to do prior to walking out of the forest. She'd have to visit the old man at the edge of the woods to get supplies. It'd do her no good to bring attention to her people or herself, and walking around naked did seem to draw attention from the humans . . . or rather, from most humans, Jared being the one, glaring exception.

She hoped, with Lawrence Potter's help, she could be outfitted with clothes and enough money to survive for a little while. Somehow, she'd have to get a job, find a place to live. Yes, old, dependable Mr. Potter would be the person to ask for help.

The wood nymphs trusted him completely, and, in return, he watched out for them all. If he'd help her, maybe he'd also update her periodically on how her people fared.

"Okay, Melanie. The trees have spoken." Arian sat back on the branch. "I believe I have heard of a couple of cases like yours in the past." He pursed his lips and raised his brows. "Way, way, in the past."

"I knew it. Banishing myself is not enough, is it?" She drew a deep breath. "I am so ashamed. I promise I'll never come back. I am not worthy to live in the forest with the trees. Oh, Oak, I want to die" She sank her face in her hands and wailed out her grief.

"Melanie, cut the histrionics." Arian pulled moss off the side of his Oak, and with a few twists and knots created a figurine of a bunny out of the living material. He handed the creation over to Melanie. "You were always an over-emotional child. I can see you've carried that trait with you into adulthood." He sighed. "Wipe your eyes and get ready for a story. I think this one might take you by surprise."

She sniffed, wiped her face, and crossed her arms. "Whatever. My life is still over. You didn't see this human." She sighed. "He had everything going for him. A big cock, muscular thighs and an ass I'd loved to have kissed, but . . . something about me turned him off." She brushed back her hair. "Really, Arian, what is wrong with me? How did I manage to repulse him?"

Arian rolled his eyes and laughed. "Ever the dramatic one, aren't you?" He shook his head. "No, don't answer. Listen to the story I have to tell you."

Melanie stretched out along the length of the tree limb and laid her head in Arian's lap. She instinctively reached over to fondle his cock, a familiar habit that brought her comfort. His limp organ didn't immediately rise to the occasion, and she dropped her hand in disappointment. *See! Even Arian no longer finds me attractive.*

Letting out another sorrowful sigh, she closed her eyes and waited for the story he wanted to share. No doubt a tale about another loser wood nymph embarrassed over her lack of talent who probably left the forest and died a miserable death.

"A long, long time ago, back when our people ran free in forests all over the world – before we got careless and let humans into our lives – this phenomenon was thought of as a gift from the Oaks. A very special gift bestowed on the most beautiful and talented nymph." He paused.

She opened her eyes and sat back up. "What do –?"

He held up his finger and smiled. "Hear me out. Legend has it, if a daughter of Dryad found herself unable to seduce a particular man – whether he be human or a nymph man – it was a positive sign that true love had shown itself in a way only a nymph might recognize." He waved his arm, cutting off her question.

"Think about it, Melanie. If a man fell head over heels in love with you, he'd voluntarily play your games, have sex with you without a second thought and woo you with attention. But men do those things already under the enchantment you create with your games, right?"

He waited for her nod then continued. "So, the grandfather Oaks that guide us in our journey on this earth got together and decided to give us a way to recognize true love. They created signs that would not only grab our attention and show us what we are unable to see for ourselves in our constant state of sexual arousal, but ones that would shake us to our very core." He picked up the garland of daisies lying in his lap, leaned over and sat the crown back atop her head.

"Real love?" She sucked in her bottom lip and chewed. "Do you . . .?" She frowned. "Could it . . .?" She sat up straighter. "Maybe . . ."

Arian chuckled. "Wrap your pretty little head around that, my dear. I do believe you have met your true love, and if that's the case, you are one of the few, select nymphs in Dryad history who will ever find genuine happiness with a human. I'd have to say that is a true gift, don't you think?"

Melanie stood and paced back and forth along the limb. She turned her head from side to side while she mumbled under her breath, deep in thought, ignoring Arian. She turned to make another pass on the branch, stopped, and gasped. *Oh, my Oak!*

She whipped around to stare open-mouthed at Arian. "Do you realize what this means?" She nodded in fascination. "I must find him!"

"No, no, no. Stop right there, my darling nymph. You know that isn't allowed." Arian approached her and held her shoulders. "The rules state you must stay in the forest. If . . . if by some chance, he comes back and accepts you for what you are, only then are you allowed to live outside of the trees with our blessing for the rest of your days."

"But what if he doesn't come back?" She wrapped her arms around Arian's waist and laid her head on his chest. "What if I've lost my one chance at true love? Oh, Arian! I never thought this would be possible."

"Be patient, Melanie. He loves you; he'll come back."

Chapter Three

"Jared! Mr. Swanson wants you to send over the current pictures A.S.A.P."

Jared hunched over the pile of photos scattered on his desk, resting his head in his hands. Which one should he use for this month's magazine?

"Jared!"

He exhaled and lifted his head. His co-worker, Pete, stood in the open doorway to his office, frowning at him. *Great, what now?*

"Man, are you out of it. I've yelled at you twice, and you didn't even flinch." Pete strolled over and gazed down at the pictures. "I hope you've picked out the ones the boss wants because he's screaming at every intern up in layout looking for your photos."

Jared ignored Pete's question, picked up one of the small negatives and laid the micro-photo up in front of Pete. "Tell me if you can see anything strange in this photo."

Pete took the negative and held the capture up to the overhead light. "It's a good shot of a waterfall, just like that one, and that one, and that one . . ." He tapped his finger against each picture scattered on Jared's desk.

"No, look closer, tell me what you see." Jared steepled his fingers under his chin and waited. *Go ahead. Tell me I'm going crazy.*

"O-kay. Um, you've obviously got the waterfall, the rocks below, a sweet little pool at the base of the falls, some ferns and"

Jared couldn't wait any longer. "Yes? What is it?"

"One fucking huge tree." Peter laughed. "What did you expect me to see? You were in the middle of a forest, dude."

"No, damn it. Look over at the very edge of the photo, in the shadows and behind the biggest rock. Tell me what I'm seeing." Jared pushed out of his roller chair and sent it crashing into the wall.

"Shit, settle down, dude. I'm looking." Pete walked over to the side of the room, turned on the viewing lamp and stuck the shot in the holder to study the contents more closely. "I don't know, man, is that . . . ?"

"I knew it! Fuck! I knew I wasn't going crazy; you *do* see the woman, don't you?" Jared ran an agitated hand through his hair. "Don't fucking deny it. Jesus, I thought for a while I was going nuts."

Pete walked back to the desk and slumped in the chair. "Holy *shit*, dude. Do you know what you have here? You have fucking proof!"

"Ha, proof of what? I caught a woman sunbathing nude in an area that is off limits to people?" He jerked the picture out of Pete's hand, moved over to grab his cabinet keys out of the old model car sitting on top and unlocked his file cabinet.

"My grandmother used to tell me a story about the wood nymphs back in her home country. They ran around the woods and fields naked, and they all had long, flowing hair, just like that woman in the picture. Maybe you ran into your own mythical creature." Pete paused. "Think about the possibilities here. Discovering a wood nymph is a hell of a lot sexier than finding fucking Big Foot."

After slipping the negative into a folder, Jared shut and relocked the drawer. He shook his head. Pete had always had a fascination for mythical creatures: Big Foot, the Abominable Snowman, the Loch Ness Monster. "She's not a *wood nymph*, Pete. There's

no such thing as a wood nymph. You've got one wild imagination. But hell, lately, so do I. I had this really strange dream last night. Then this morning, I was pouring over the pictures, lining them up for Jeffers, and I kept going back to that same one. I swear the woman walked out of my dreams and landed in my shot. Hell, I know for a fact I was alone up there on the mountain. The picture's not even that great, but suddenly, after studying it five or six times, I found the woman I dreamed about last night." He pointed toward the cabinet. "That woman invited me to sample her body." He shook his head.

"Fucking good dream." Pete whistled.

Jared lifted the corner of his mouth, remembering her wanton beauty. "Yeah."

"You never know. Maybe she *is* a wood nymph. If so, that photograph could make you a mint." Pete stood and reached out his hand. "Give me the pictures you want to turn in, and I'll take them over to Mr. Swanson myself."

Jared swept a few pictures from the side of the pile into his hand and passed them over to Pete.

At the door, his friend turned back. "I'm telling you, she's a nymph." Pete waved over his shoulder, laughed and hurried away to deliver the pictures.

"Wood nymph? Guy's fuckin' nuts." Jared leaned back in his chair and linked his hands behind his head. Normally, he didn't remember his dreams, but this one seemed to grip his mind and not let go. The details didn't appear to lessen throughout the day, either. Even in a memory, the woman tantalized and teased him.

Highlighted by the sun, her golden hair floated around her body and ended in waves at the back of her knees. Those long tresses gave him wicked ideas. Oh, what he'd do to such a beautiful woman. Her high cheekbones and wide eyes claimed innocence, but her sexier-than-hell body screamed *fuck me*.

He smiled. Those breasts of hers appeared too large for her small frame, but perfect to cuddle up with at night. In the picture, her nipples peaked and shone rosy red, the size of sand dollars. God, he loved women whose nipples stood out darkly against pale skin.

He rubbed his hands over his face. Just thinking about her gave him a woody that wanted to bust out of his pants. "I'm as crazy as Pete. The woman in my dream was just that—a dream. And the person in the picture was probably just a nudist trespassing on government land, looking for some privacy."

* * * * *

"How does your new toy feel?" Melanie lay sprawled out on her side with her head propped up on her arm. She gazed over at Felicity, one of her best friends and confidantes.

Felicity rolled her nipples between her fingers. "Mm . . . you should try it. Jordan crafted the gift for me personally. I haven't removed it since he gave it to me this morning. It's absolutely wonderful."

Melanie lowered her gaze to Felicity's pussy and studied the contraption. A vine looped around her friend's hips and between her legs. Two sturdy thin tendrils parted her lower lips and held them wide open to the elements.

"Is it better than a woody?" Melanie loved her smooth cock made out of the hardest Oak in the world and handcrafted to fit her body perfectly.

"Um, I don't know. This is different." Felicity reached down and trailed her finger along the slit of her pussy. "This allows me to play with other parts of my body, and if I concentrate, I can sense even the slightest bit of breeze on my clit. It creates a delicious heat that swells up my lips and covers them with dew. It holds me at the stage where I'd allow someone to do anything they wanted to me because the simplest touch brings me tingles of delight."

Melanie rolled over and flopped onto her back; her fingers trailed around the golden globes of her breasts and she gave a big sigh. Felicity's experience with the contraption sounded lovely, but she wished Jared would hurry and return for her. Holding her desires back until they were reunited turned out harder than she imagined. If he were destined to be her life mate, she wanted to save herself for him.

"Let's get Jordan to make you one too." Felicity ran her hand over Melanie's stomach. "You seem uptight, not your usual carefree self. I think you need relaxing. Do you want me to bring you happiness?"

Melanie closed her eyes and smiled. "No, you're right. I am edgy, but not in a bad way. Ever since Arian explained everything, I've found myself daydreaming about the man who loves me." She opened her eyes and sat upright in one fluid motion. "How will I know that I love him too?"

"I don't know. I guess if he makes you come and puts a smile on your face." Felicity frowned. "You are not exactly smiling, are you?"

Melanie shook her head. "Plus, I can make myself have orgasms. I don't think that's a sign of falling in love. There has got to be more to it than that."

A soft, westerly wind picked up. Felicity's hips thrust forward, and a long moan of pleasure came from her lips. "Well, you let me know." She arched her back. "Oh, Oak, this is wonderful." Her chest rose and she spread her legs wider. "Oh, yes. Yes!"

Melanie gazed down at her friend, watching her become caught up in the throes of ecstasy. A smile tugged at her lips. She'd enjoy nothing more than to lie beside Felicity and let the winds caress her too, but the promise of waiting for her life-mate demanded she hold out for Jared.

Deciding to take a walk alone away from the others, so she didn't tempt her inner passion, she stood and linked her hands behind her back. Maybe she'd go to the waterfall and lie down. Instead of pleasuring herself, she'd dream of the day her beloved Jared came back to the forest, and the extraordinary life they'd have together.

Ever since her parents died of old age, the waterfall had become her chosen spot to reflect on life and dream about days past. She missed her parents. Unfortunately, wood nymphs who marry have trouble conceiving, and her parents didn't succeed until they'd reached a rather advanced age. They'd only had a short time together, but those were the best years of her life.

While the other nymphs preferred to linger deeper in the trees, Melanie sought out the hidden paradise where she found solitude. The sound of the water soothed her

troubled mind on occasion and caressed her soul on days she only wanted to find enjoyment.

She sat on the same boulder she'd reclined on the first time she spotted Jared. Wouldn't it be great to have a human for the rest of her life? Reproducing came easier to a mixed couple, and she did love little kids. She'd be very lucky if the Oaks blessed her and Jared with children.

She ran her hand over her lower stomach and imagined her belly swollen with a baby that came from a true love union. With her breasts engorged with milk, she'd not only nourish her child, but feed her mate too. The first giggle of the week escaped her lips, and she hugged her arms around her middle in excitement. *Please, Jared, come back to me soon.*

She wandered over to the mossy area, laid down with her arms folded behind her head and closed her eyes. She imagined her parents and the trees standing in the background smiling at her and Jared. They'd be so proud of her for being the chosen one and for receiving such a special gift.

The odd snaps and cracks over the soft hum of water woke Melanie from her nap. She slowly sat up and brushed the bits of furry, green moss off her arms. The sun still rode high in the sky, so she mustn't have been asleep too long.

She stretched her arms high above her head and stifled a yawn. Turning toward the scuffling sound coming from the denser trees behind her, she hurried to her feet. Overjoyed, she clasped her hands in front of her and peered along the line of trees for Jared. After so many days spent wondering if he'd return, she finally let her hopes of having a life with him bubble to the surface as she bounced on the tips of her toes. *He's coming. He's coming.*

He pushed through dense underbrush and entered the clearing the same way she dreamed a prince might arrive to sweep her away to live happily ever after. She sashayed over to a boulder and leaned her hip against the rock, not trusting her legs to keep her upright. Her gaze absorbed every detail. He appeared exhausted, but stunning.

Sweat-drenched hair, dark wet stains on his shirt under his muscled arms and on the front of his broad chest marked how difficult the hike up the mountain was for humans. Knowing the journey must have taken him at least three hours, she would let him catch his wind before surprising him. In the meantime, she'd be content to simply admire him.

He removed his shirt, tossed it down and stepped through the maze of rocks ringing the pool. He dipped his hands in the cool water, splashed his face and dumped handfuls over his head. The sun reflected off the droplets cascading down his muscled chest, and she sighed. *That man is all mine.*

Lawrence Potter, the human who lived at the edge of the forest, once informed the nymphs that trespassers needed to hold a pass of some kind from the forestry department to visit this area. How had he attained his permit to Dryad land? He must be a powerful man with lots of connections. In truth, he was a gift she would never take for granted.

Unable to wait any longer, walking quietly, she approached him from the side and watched him splash water once more over his head.

He shook his head to clear the drops out of his eyes.

She tapped him on the shoulder. He slapped the bare skin, and she covered her mouth to keep from laughing. He must think she was an annoying bug!

He reached down to pick up his shirt, and her amusement leaked out in a throaty laugh. He jerked around and came face to face with her. His smile grew, and she grinned back at him.

"Hello, Jared." She clasped her hands together behind her back and sauntered around him in a circle, letting him gaze upon her body.

"Holy shit, you are real. Jesus, I thought you were only a dream, but I had to come back here. I had to make sure." He pivoted where he stood to follow the direction she walked around him. "Did we meet the last time I was here? Why don't I remember? Who are you? Where do you come from?"

She laughed. "I'm Melanie. I can tell you everything now that I too know the truth." She stood in front of him, placed her hands on his chest and trailed her fingers across and down to include his stomach in her explorations. "Let's sit on the moss and we can decide what we are going to do with our lives."

"Our lives?" He lowered his brows and remained where he stood. "What the hell does that mean?"

She clasped his hand and tugged him over to a large boulder. "Relax. I'll explain everything." She pulled him down beside her, placed her legs over his and hugged his arm. "Right now, I want to know everything about you. Where do you live? Do you have a job where you get paid money? How many children do you want?" She giggled. "Have you eaten McDonald's food?"

"What?" He frowned. "Is this a joke? Did one of my friends put you up to this? It was Pete, wasn't it?"

"Do you have more than one name?" She gazed up at him and ignored his questions.

He simply stared at her, his expression unreadable.

She tapped his chin. "Come on, Jared, the faster we get this over with, the sooner we can have sex. I mean, *make love*."

He cleared his throat. "Whoa, slow down. Listen" He rubbed his arm across his eyes. "What did you say your name is again?"

She ran her leg against his jeans. "Melanie."

"Melanie, bear with me here." He appeared nervous and ran his hand through his hair. "Why are you naked?"

"Because I am a wood nymph; we are always naked." She let go of his arm, brushed her hair behind her and trailed her fingertips from shoulder to thigh. "Why would I want to cover up when the wind tickles my skin, and the leaves from the trees caress my body wherever I travel through the forest?"

"Wood nymph?" He inhaled. "Sure, and I'm an elf." He barked out a laugh. "This is rich. Go ahead, put on your clothes, scamper back to whoever set this up and tell them I'm not falling for it."

She threw her arms around his waist and leaned her cheek against his arm. "I am human, just like you, but I am a descendent of the Dryad family." She clicked her tongue. "The Oak trees have gifted me with the ability to disappear and reappear, to flutter through the forest in a happy state. A wood nymph lives for pleasure. Pleasure provides harmony, for both ourselves and our people, and satisfies the forest that provides us with protection. That is the only thing that makes me different from you."

"Pleasure? As in, sexual pleasure? So what you're telling me is that your life revolves around sex." He shook his head. "This is too much. You're asking me to believe in a myth."

"If I wasn't real, would I be able to do this?" She snaked her hand behind his neck and dragged his head down until their mouths met.

She moaned. Moving her lips against his, she tasted, tantalized and drew him instantly into the kiss. Her nipples hardened against his bare skin. The intimate contact only lasted a moment before he pulled away, gasping. His gaze locked with hers.

Staying pleasure-free lately had played havoc with her emotions, and she found it hard not to climb onto his lap and rub her pussy against him. It wouldn't take much to send her into a blissful orgasm.

"Okay." He nodded. "Let's say I play along with this little charade, and agree you're the real deal." He inhaled, filled his cheeks with air then let it out in a rush.

She nodded. "Yes, I am. I'm glad you realize that. Arian — he's the elder of the nymphs — he told me the reason you didn't have sex with me the first time we met is because we are destined for each other." She smiled. "We have so much to plan."

She squealed with excitement. "Do you want to live here in the forest with me or should I go back to your house?" She bit her lower lip. "Is it so terribly wrong if I want to go to your house? I've always been fascinated by how you humans live." She raised

her brows. "Although, if it's allowed, I'd love to come back to visit the other nymphs here in the forest occasionally."

"Slow down." He extracted his arm from her grasp, pulled his legs out from under her and stood. "I don't know what you're talking about. We don't have a relationship." He gazed down at her. "You're a hell of a woman, I'll grant you that, but I'm not going to take you back to my place or . . . or plan a life with you. That's not how things work."

He ran his fingers through his hair. "I admit I felt compelled to return here, to see if you were real, but I'm sorry, I don't believe in . . . in *wood nymphs*."

She narrowed her eyes at his obvious confusion, crossed her arms under her breasts and tried to explain over the lump of emotion in her throat. "But, you don't understand. This is supposed to happen. Arian said this has happened before. The Oaks gave us a sign. We are destined for one another. True love."

"I don't care what this Arian person said. What you're asking me to believe is too fantastical." He paced back and forth for a few seconds while she watched with her heart pounding so hard it hurt. "It'd be totally different if we met in a bar, or hell, even set up on a blind date, but for me to come into the woods and have sex with some woman running around buck naked . . ." He stopped, gazed down at her and licked his lips. "No, absolutely not. That's out of the question."

"I can see your desire for me in your face." She stood, frustration coursing through her veins. "You want me, too. Oh, Jared, we'd be wonderful together. The Oaks have granted us something very rare. We can't insult them." She lifted the corner of her mouth. "I bet your cock fits in my pussy better than any piece of wood."

She rubbed her tummy in slow, wide circles. "What makes you afraid to take pleasure from my body? I have already told you the Oaks have blessed us. Now that you know, you shouldn't have any qualms about fucking me."

"You're not listening." He sighed and mumbled, "This doesn't make any sense." He stared at her. "Where do you live?" He walked back over to the rocks, picked up his shirt and shoved his arms through the sleeves. "If you're real—I mean, if you're really

what you say you are, then prove it. Take me to your house. Give me some kind of proof and we'll go from there. But I swear to God, if I find out I've been set up, I'll kick the ass of every person involved."

"If I show you my home, you'll believe me? Really?" She squealed and jumped up and down on her toes. "Well come then, I'll show you. I don't live far from here and you'll learn I do not lie."

A ten-minute journey through the forest in human terms typically took her a few seconds, as she'd zip from rock to stump to fallen branch, but she controlled herself and stayed back to walk beside Jared. She clasped his hand in hers and didn't give him the chance to let go. He'd promised he'd believe her if she showed him proof. And a deal was a deal in her world too.

She led him to her home where her parents had raised her and where she now lived alone. Her cave offered a private area where her beloved Oak trees protected and provided for her with a cocoon of shelter. She smiled in delight at bringing the man who loved her to the most important place in her world.

Approaching the hidden cave, she wound her way through the maze of underbrush that carefully camouflaged the opening from curious eyes. At the entrance, no bigger than a large boulder, she squatted, smiled back at Jared then crawled through.

Inside, darkness enveloped them. Melanie patted Jared's chest. "Wait here." She hurried to light one of the many lamps. The dark never bothered her, and she knew her way around the cave with her eyes closed. But she could sense Jared's apprehension and worked quickly to dispel his fears. Once the lights were on, he'd see how normal her home was and he'd relax.

Chapter Four

He'd lost his mind. That was the only explanation he could come up with for why he'd followed the strange woman to some cave in the middle of the forest.

Standing there in the darkness, he wondered which of his friends had set him up. Pete's stupid tale about his grandmother's story must be playing tricks on his brain. Jared could almost believe Melanie *was* a wood nymph

Hell! How often did a woman present herself to him butt naked and offer to give herself over to his pleasure? The corner of his mouth lifted. Okay, maybe it'd happened a time or two before. There *was* that one drunken woman at the hotel bar in Chicago last summer But damn it, that was different. That occurred under believable circumstances. Whereas this Fuck, this had to be a setup. Pete probably planned the whole thing . . . him and his stupid stories.

Melanie turned a lamp on, smiled over her shoulder and hurried about setting her home ablaze with the soft glow of lanterns. He quirked an eyebrow and rubbed his chin as he took in the unexpected surroundings.

The wooden chairs and benches were made of undressed timber, similar to what he'd expect to find in a log cabin. Even the knick knacks and whatnots reflected a certain rustic charm. The vase on the dining table in the corner of the room was constructed of twigs tied together with some sort of string. Its contents, a handful of brightly colored wildflowers, made him itch to take out his camera, especially the way they contrasted with the hewed wooden statues, depicting birds and wildlife, sitting on the neighboring end tables.

If he didn't know better, he'd think he'd stepped into a normal family residence. Granted, the furnishings may be basic and old fashioned, but it was a home.

Except, what kind of people lived inside a cave?

"Can I get you something to drink?" Melanie disappeared into the dark recesses of the cave.

He ignored the question and wandered over to the dining table. Three hand-drawn pictures framed in maple hung in a line on the wall. Two of the pictures obviously depicted adults drawn by a child. The third drew his full attention.

The man and woman stood with a child between them, their hands linked in a typical family portrait. Typical, but for the fact they were all nude, and they all had

extremely long hair. On closer examination, he realized someone who possessed quite an artistic talent had created the charcoal drawing. The artist captured detail so well, he instantly recognized the child in the picture as being the woman with him now.

All three people in the drawing wore identical smiles that hinted at a mischievous personality hidden behind extremely attractive faces. In all honesty, he'd never witnessed such happiness and beauty.

"Those are portraits of my parents and me." Melanie entered the room and handed him a cold can of beer. "After they died, I drew a picture from memory of one of my favorite moments." She pointed to the family shot. "My eighth birthday. I received a rabbit."

He blinked and shook his head. She made everything sound so normal. Didn't she understand how crazy this was? How unreal?

"Go ahead, pop your top." She motioned with her hand at his beer. "We'll sit and get to know each other."

He held the beer can toward the light. "I take it you come down off the mountain to go grocery shopping." *There you go. Everything here isn't what it appears.*

She giggled. "Wrong. We have a human. Actually, he's what we call a hermit now that he lost his true love. He lives at the edge of the forest and gifts us with things periodically for helping him do the chores around his cabin." She held up her can. "I've found I've developed a taste for the drink."

"That'd explain a lot . . .," he mumbled under his breath.

She crossed her legs and smiled. Jared returned her smile but shook his head. How was she managing to stay in character so long? She acted as if she had all the time in the world to play this game.

"How do you eat?" He opened the beer, chugged, and swiped his arm across his mouth. "Damn, that's cold."

She opened her own can and duplicated his actions. "Yep, the back end of the cave is very cold."

She set the beer on the end table and uncrossed her bare legs. Jared caught a glimpse of her pussy and his mind went blank.

"I eat a vegetation diet. Wild onions, potatoes, greens . . . And there are seeds everywhere we replant to harvest more food in the summer." She shrugged. "Simple things." She leaned forward and clasped her hands between her legs. "Although, if we decide I will live in the city with you, I'd love to try new foods. One time, some hikers brought something in a bag with the word McDonald's on it; I stayed invisible just to creep up close to sniff the wonderful smells as they ate."

He straightened, his suspicions once again rising to the surface. "If you've lived here in the forest all your life – if your people have been here for generations, as you say – then where did you learn to read?"

"From Mr. Potter, of course. He taught Arian, and Arian taught the rest of us." She shrugged as if the answer were obvious.

"Of course." Jared frowned. "I'm sorry, Melanie, but this is a lot to take in."

She smiled. "You'll come to realize fate is intervening between us and it's really out of our control. I told you, the faster we get to know each other, the sooner we can make love. Doesn't the thought appeal to you?"

Another big gulp of the beer didn't quite settle the pulsing hardness in his jeans. "Do all your . . ." He paused. "Do all your people, nymphs, whatever you call yourselves, talk so candidly?"

He hurried to take another drink. He'd need the whole can plus five more to find this conversation comfortable. Maybe she had a six-pack hidden away in this cave of hers.

"Yes, we are all very sensual. Self-pleasuring is how we spend all of our free time." She giggled. "You have a hard time understanding me, don't you? I have told you all this. Tell me about you. Do you have a good sex life?"

The crinkling of the aluminum beer can in his fist broke the sudden stillness that had descended in the cave. "Uh, yeah. It's fine. Normal."

"Oh, wonderful! I'd hoped you'd say that." She sighed. "I think you'll be happy with me and the things I can do. Everyone says I am a joy to play with."

"Everyone?" He sank into the nearest chair. "Exactly how many people have you *played* with?"

"Everyone." She reached over for her can and took a sip of the beer. "Here, you seem thirsty. You can have the rest of mine." She placed her can on the table before him. "If you want, I will introduce you to my people. I'd like to tell them goodbye before we leave."

"Yeah, sure, why the hell not? Let's go visit these friends of yours." Time to end this charade. Unless Pete had managed to convince a whole group of people to prance around naked in the forest, the jig was up. Soon, he'd be hiking back down out of the forest and he could forget all about this crazy adventure and even crazier woman. He glanced at Melanie and sighed. How had Pete gotten such a gorgeous woman to play along with his practical joke? *And she acts as if she believes everything she's saying.* What a shame. *Beautiful, but deranged.*

* * * * *

"Arian!" Melanie waved her arm above her head, and, with her other hand, pulled Jared along behind her. "Come on down. Look who's here!"

Jared groaned.

She smiled up at him. "You'll like Arian."

"Uh, you're talking to a tree," he scoffed and pulled out of her grasp. He'd indulged her with her make-believe life long enough. If he wasn't careful, he'd find himself acting just as crazy.

He stepped a few feet away and turned his back. A battle raged inside him. Although he wanted to prove her insanity, he found a part of him wished some guy named Arian *would* fly down out of the tree and say hello, just so he could take her up

on her offer. The promise of great sex she'd been dangling in front of him like a damned carrot since the moment they'd met. How fucking crazy was that?

But God, the things he could do with a woman like her. He'd keep her hidden away . . . his own personal girl toy. He adjusted his pants. She'd given him a gnawing hard-on ever since he arrived at the waterfall.

"Hello, Melanie. I see you've brought a visitor." A deep, masculine voice came from behind him.

Jared straightened and turned at the realization another man approached. Shit. Jared stared, open-mouthed. A man, much like Melanie, with long, flowing, flaxen hair, stood beside her. He wore not a stitch of clothing, and his long, thick cock stood at attention. *Well I'll be damned.*

The man fondled his engorged dick, his gaze going back and forth between Jared and Melanie as if he were waiting for some kind of introduction. *Well, I'm sure as hell not going to shake the guy's hand.*

"Jared?" Melanie forced her fingers into his closed fist. "Please, won't you meet the other wood nymphs?"

His resolve softened at her request, and he found himself stepping forward to greet the man with a silent nod.

"Arian, this is Jared, the man I told you about . . . my life mate." Melanie withdrew her fingers from Jared's grasp and threw her arms around Arian's waist. With a little smile, the naked man laid his arm around her shoulders.

A powerful urge to stake his claim in front of Arian hit Jared deep in his gut. This man held a more forceful weapon than he could fight: A relationship with Melanie. By his action, Arian was forcing him to decide on the spot what he would do. His first reaction came automatically. No way did he want this man taking Melanie from him.

He wasn't even sure he'd come back up here again, much less have anything to do with Melanie once he took her off the mountain. His decision on what to do became clear. If she said she wanted him, no way in hell was he leaving her here with this man.

Jared glanced down and raised his brows. Arian's short stature wasn't reflected in the size of his cock. The thing must hang down to the middle of the guy's thigh even when his pecker was soft.

"It is nice to meet you, Jared." Arian turned to Melanie. "Have you talked? Where are you going to reside?"

"We haven't really"

"I'm taking her home with me." Jared raised his gaze to the other man, and challenged him to disagree.

"I understand. Good, good. She will make you a wonderful companion." Arian lifted one brow. "I've enjoyed her for years."

Jared stepped forward, his hand fisted at his side, but Melanie gently wrapped her fingers around his wrist. An overwhelming urge to protect her from other men came over him. *She belongs to me, damn it.*

He pivoted away from the scene in front of him and bent his head to speak to Melanie. "Is there anyone else you want to say goodbye to before we leave?"

He couldn't claim to understand what was going on here or how Melanie had the ability to blur the line between fantasy and reality for him. He swallowed. The incredible attraction he had toward her overruled any sane rationalization. If she wanted out, he'd damn well help her leave.

"You believe me then?"

"I have no idea what I believe anymore." He cleared his throat. "I'm hoping once we are both back in civilization where people wear clothes and don't magically disappear, I'll be able to think clearer."

She squealed and threw her arms around his neck. Her breasts squished against his chest, and to his surprise, his cock pressed at his jeans in pleasure. Hell, he couldn't even control himself when a strange man stood no more than six feet away. How was he any different from Arian?

"Yeah, I'll take you to my house. Maybe back there I can figure out where the hell you people came from, and you can find out if you want to strike out on your own and

live a more normal life." He muttered against her hair. *I know I'm going to regret this. Damn Pete for filling my head with this mythical shit.*

Chapter Five

After Melanie hugged and kissed all the other naked members of her group and promised them she'd remember every new sexual game she learned while away, Jared grabbed her hand and tugged her out of the common area faster than he suspected any nymph traveled through the forest. His impatience seemed to delight her, and she laughed the whole way.

"Do you need anything from your cave?" He didn't stop, but kept the pace he set and hoped she'd say no. With his mind made up, he wanted to get her home and think about the huge decision he'd made. Every time he second-guessed himself, he recalled the way the few men who *had* been around had jacked off while staring at the women, or touched any female that strolled by. A jealous possessiveness he didn't even know he owned reared its ugly head.

She shook her head. "No, my cave will always be my home, and we can come back to the forest anytime we want. I am ready to head down the mountain."

He skidded to a stop and Melanie stumbled into him. How the hell did he expect to get her home without drawing attention? The sight of Melanie's body would have every man—and woman—salivating.

"We have to get you some clothes." He scratched his head.

She wrinkled her nose. "I don't have any." She bit down on her lower lip. "Once I go down off the mountain, I have been told my magic is not reliable. I might not be able to disappear long enough to make it to your house." She smiled. "We could stop by Lawrence's cabin and ask him if he has extra clothes I could borrow."

"No, I don't want to involve anyone else. Let me think . . ."

Jared ran his hand through his hair. He hadn't considered all the repercussions of his actions. What if others found out about the cult . . . the *nymphs*, whatever they

wanted to call themselves? Could Melanie survive in civilization? Hold a job? Move out on her own? *If she's as innocent and naïve as she appears to be, she probably thinks I'm going along with her idea of a long term relationship.* Jared chewed his lip for a moment, trying to find a solution. *Shit. I'll straighten that out later, after I figure out what the fuck I'm doing.*

He stripped off his shirt, slipped it over her head and tugged it down to her thighs. "That'll cover you up till I work out how to get you more clothes." Right now, he only wanted to get her away from this place, protect her and keep her away from Arian. Something about that man gave him the creeps.

No way was he about to leave her behind and let Arian use her for his pleasure. Jesus . . . just thinking about her being at the mercy of those people every day and night, letting them touch her intimately, filled him with a jealous rage.

Thanks to Melanie's help guiding him through the trees, the trip down the mountain proved easier than the hike up. At the small, gravel lot where he'd parked his car he breathed a sigh of relief. The place was deserted. At least he'd get her home without anyone getting a good look at the half-dressed woman he'd brought with him out of the forest.

He pulled the seatbelt around her, clicked it into position, pushed her gently back in the seat and laughed. The way she kept popping her head closer to the window to peer around outside reminded him of Buster, a dog from his childhood who loved to go on car rides. "Anyone would think you'd never been in a car before."

"I haven't." She giggled. "Once a few of us snuck down out of the forest far enough to watch them zoom along the road. I'd never seen anything travel so fast. Even the airplanes flying in the sky go slow. You'd think they'd fall down. I have no idea how they stay up. Even I can't stay levitated long." She turned and ran her hands along the dash, pushing buttons and flipping switches.

He waited till she finished then redid all the dials and knobs. Satisfied she had finished messing with the controls for the heater and radio, he started the car. "Don't touch anything else while I'm driving, okay?"

"Okay, Jared." She tugged at the neck of the shirt. "How long does the journey take?"

"About forty minutes." He shifted into reverse and backed out of the turnout. "When we get to my house, we're going to sit down and have a serious discussion. You'll need to be quiet and listen to what I tell you, okay?"

"Sure, sure. Anything." She rocked from side to side to position her hands under her thighs. "Am I allowed to speak now?"

He chuckled. "Yes, you can talk."

He expected her to start in on a litany of subjects, but she remained quiet with her face turned toward the side window. What was going on inside that beautiful head? The way she was staring at everything, you'd think she'd never been outside the forest before. She seems so innocent and The truth gripped him in a sudden, revealing flash—so very *young*.

"How old are you?" His gut tightened. That should have been his first thought before he removed her from the only home she'd ever known. Given his typical luck, she'd be underage, and he'd find himself in a world of trouble.

"I am one hundred and eight seasons." She kept her face averted.

His foot came off the throttle, and he had to consciously reapply the pressure to keep up with the traffic. One hundred and eight? *Wait, she said seasons, that means*

"You are twenty-seven, right?" He shifted his gaze back onto the road ahead. "If there are four seasons in a year, you'd be twenty-seven years old."

She turned and smiled. "If you say so."

"I'd never have guessed you're that old," he mumbled.

He wiped his forehead; suddenly his skin felt cold, clammy. A symptom of how nauseous he was at the thought of everything they faced. How could he explain her presence? *Hey, everyone, meet the woman I found living in the forest.* He snorted. *Yeah, that'll work.*

Inside the city limits, he turned into the first fast-food drive-thru he found, ordered them each a meal and handed Melanie her first treat of something other than

nuts, berries and plants. She didn't utter a word but savored each bite. Her moans and sighs filled the car. He sniggered. She sure found pleasure in the damndest things.

He had no sooner pulled up in his driveway than Melanie doubled over in the car seat, her face contorted in pain. The empty fast-food wrappers lay at her feet. *Uhh, oh.* It didn't take a genius to understand that her first taste of convenience food had made her feel sick.

"Jared?" She groaned and squeezed her eyes shut. "I don't feel well. Something is wrong with my stomach."

"Come on, follow me. I'll show you where the bathroom is." He unclipped her seatbelt, hurried around to open the car door and escorted her up to the house.

In his haste, he fumbled with the lock, but eventually he managed to get her inside; all the while she groaned in pain. Speaking soothing words, he guided her down the hall and into the bathroom. She raised her head; tears pooled in her eyes. Damn, he should have realized what processed food would do to her stomach.

"I don't . . . I" She cried out in pain.

He pointed to the toilet. "Sit on it or throw up in it. I'll give you some privacy. If you need anything, yell."

Bent at the waist, she shuffled over and opened the lid. "Go out. I don't want you to watch."

He shut the door and walked into the kitchen. The message indicator on his phone was flashing. He hurried over, pushed the button and groaned. Six messages and he bet all of them were from his boss about missing the meeting this morning. Rolling his eyes at the irate voice on the recorder, he fast-forwarded so he didn't have to listen to Mr. Swanson's anger. He'd sort it out on Monday.

At the last message, he released the fast-forward button and let the recording play.

Jared . . . Pete here. Just checking in to find out if you caught the nymph on your hike today. Loud laughter broke out over the speaker. Jared shook his head. *Asshole.* After a moment, the laughter died away and Pete finished up his message. *Anyway, Chrome-*

dome threw a fit at the meeting because you were AWOL. Give me a ring back. More laughter. I want to hear all about the fabulous sex you had with the woman.

Jared pushed the stop button. *What a dickhead.*

He rubbed his stomach and realized he was still bare-chested because Melanie had his shirt. He went into his bedroom and found some old T-shirts and sweatpants for her to wear plus a couple of pairs of shorts with strings at the waist she could pull tight enough to stay up on her narrow hips. He'd have to go out and buy her a few outfits tomorrow.

Actually, the thought of her wandering around his house in the nude excited him. His lips twitched. He rather enjoyed the way she pranced around in the buff without a shy bone in her body. His cock rose to attention. Maybe the sheltered wood nymph show she put on for his benefit wasn't an act, and Pete was right all along . . . he'd wandered into a group of wood nymphs. His heart raced and he grinned. *Damn. My own wood-nymph-o-maniac living right here under my roof.*

The next time she offered to play with him, he'd take everything she offered him. God, it was wonderful to be back on his own turf where he felt more confident, where *he* set the rules. *She'll mess up somehow, and I'll figure out what she is up to with this charade.*

He rubbed his cock through his pants and closed his eyes. Hmm, he could just picture her spread out on his bed, her fingers slick with her own juice, begging him to get her off. With one final squeeze to tide him over until he could have the real thing, he picked up the pile of clothes and returned to the living room.

Melanie sat on the sofa, minus the shirt he'd lent her, naked once again. He plopped down beside her, laid the bundle of clothes between them and smiled over at her. She lifted hesitant eyes to him. God, she was adorable. The way her mouth pouted with the edges turned down like a little lost puppy.

Her hand clutched at her waist. *Poor honey. I really screwed up, thinking she'd enjoy some real food.* "Your tummy still hurt?" He shifted on the couch. His engorged dick pressed against his jeans, making it uncomfortable to sit normally.

"All the food came out of my mouth." A tear slid down her cheek. "I think I am dying. I don't think I can survive without my trees." She sniffed. "Plus, I ruined your shirt."

"Come here." He patted his chest.

She crawled over the clothes and curled up on his lap. He sucked in a breath. Her tight, heart-shaped ass pressed against him as she squirmed to find a comfortable spot. She finally settled down with his cock following the crack of her ass, making him pulse with need. He drew her into the circle of his arms and rubbed his hands over her flesh, enjoying the feel of female skin, so smooth and delicate.

"You're not going to die." He chuckled. "Even people who've eaten at restaurants their whole life can experience what you're going through. You're not used to meat or grease, and it has upset your stomach. Haven't you ever thrown up before?"

She shook her head. "I also drank something in your bathroom called mouthwash, and it burned my throat clear down to my belly. I thought it might make my mouth not taste so bad."

"Yeah, that's what it's for, but you're not supposed to drink it. You just put a little in your mouth, swish it around then spit it out. Poor baby. Just sit here and you'll soon feel better. We'll have to figure out things for you to eat for a while. I'm not a cook, and usually I just get take-out." He kissed the top of her head. "Everything will work out in time." He laid his cheek on her head.

"I guess I have a lot to learn."

"Not so much. You'll do fine. I'll teach you." He rubbed his hand in a circle on her belly and smiled at the way she purred at his touch.

She was warming up his already heated desire, so he stretched his legs out to give his engorged cock more room. She smelled wild, as if he had plucked her out of a flower garden. His heartbeat sped up as his fingers roamed along her arm, down over her hip to trail to the top of her thigh. He was very close to groping her, but he didn't know if he'd be able to stop once he started.

Under his caresses, she uncurled and stretched out her legs, allowing him to explore the rest of her body. She laid her head back on his arm and smiled, tracing the side of his face in a lover's caress. Surely that signaled her willingness to have him go ahead?

Bending his neck, he kissed her; the taste of wintergreen mouthwash hit his lips. He cupped her hip and drew her closer; the bare skin of his chest encountered her breasts. He groaned and pulled his head back. Her striking beauty sucked the breath right out of him.

"God, you drive me wild." He lowered his gaze. "Your body is perfect."

He cupped a breast, molding it, exploring its volume which more than filled his hand. Her nipples hardened under his touch, and he strummed his thumb over the sensitive nub. Her body arched, and he groaned with pleasure. *Her lust matches mine.*

"Oh, Jared, you know how to make me feel better. This will please the trees and me." She brought her hand up and circled his nipple. Shocks of desire went straight toward his cock. She wiggled her ass, definitely aware of the woody poking her from underneath.

She sat up and shifted her ass until she sat astride his lap. Her hands worked the button and zipper on his jeans. He lifted his hips, and she tugged his pants down far enough to set his cock free. *Oh, that's a relief.* Watching her gaze at the proof of his desire made him even harder.

Her wet, pink tongue came out and ran the width of her bottom lip, leaving a trail of moisture behind. He wanted those full lips, that powerful tongue sucking him dry. He'd fan her hair out to cover him, letting the strands tickle his skin, heightening his pleasure. The thought of dragging her head back and forth over his cock brought him to rock hardness.

Unable to stop himself, he grasped the base of his cock in his fist. She raised her eyes to meet his, the smile on her lips hinting that she knew what ideas circled in his head, and she willingly agreed. She scooted off his lap and got down on the floor between his knees. With a flick of her hands, she spread out her long hair to form a

curtain over his legs. The feather-light strokes of the softest curls he'd ever felt brought his balls up tight in their sac, and the pain-pleasure sent pre-cum to the head of his dick.

Melanie leaned forward, her pebbled nipples rubbing the sensitive skin on the inside of his thighs. She lowered her head and gently licked away the bead of pre-cum from the tip. She rubbed her lips together and purred. Thank God he kept his cock fisted, or he would have shot cum all over her face at the way she delighted in the flavor. Damn, the woman drove him crazy with need.

"Go ahead, suck my dick, baby." He guided her head down, keeping hold of her hair and setting the motion. "Show me how much you want me to shove my big cock down your throat."

Slow and sexy, she stretched her mouth around the width. Her velvety tongue lapped at the underside of his dick where the head mushroomed. He'd never received such a pure, love-of-his-dick blowjob in his life.

"Oh, baby, that feels so good." He stroked the back of her hair. "You like the taste of me, don't you?"

She raised her gaze to his and murmured her answer with a mouth full of cock. The vibrations against his shaft set his dick pulsating. *Holy shit.* This woman was a lesson in contradictions, one moment all naiveté and innocence, and a seductress like none he'd ever encountered the next. What other tricks did she know? *Oh, jeez, I can't wait to find out.*

Her slender fingers reached between his legs and cupped his testicles. Her nails gently scratched the sensitive skin and stretched it tight. The pleasant ache in his balls grew. He lifted his hips and thrust into her mouth, leaving his hand on the back of her head to encourage her to take in the whole length.

Without decreasing the suction, she drew every inch into her mouth. He felt his cock touch the back of her throat and nearly lost it right then. Wow. What a rarity, a woman who knew how to give proper head.

"Enough, babe." He gently pulled back until his dick slipped free. "Now it's your turn."

He wanted to extend the pleasure for as long as possible and give some of it back in return. He lifted her off the floor, set her on the couch, spread her legs and knelt between her feet.

Golden-blond curls framed her delicate pussy. Her labia glistened with moisture and begged him to lick up her juices. He parted the slick, swollen lips. Her feminine scent drove him forward to lap the surface, and his toes curled in appreciation. God, she smelled great.

He swiped the soft folds with his tongue from bottom to top, ending at her clit. Using his lips, he suckled and rubbed the delicate button. He moaned at the way her clitoris grew so big. *Finally, I've found someone who'll match me sexually, someone I don't have to coax every step of the way. I could suck on this all day just to watch her squirm in pleasure.*

He opened his eyes and gazed up at her face. She stared down at him, her hands massaging her breasts, kneading them with her dainty fingers, tweaking her nipples. Her hips moved, pushing her pussy against his mouth, and she moaned in pleasure. He'd love to keep her in this position, but he wanted to feel her cunt wrapped around his cock even more.

He gave her pussy one last, lingering kiss, stood and swiped his mouth with the back of his arm, then he reached into the back pocket of his jeans, which were pooled around his ankles. After removing the condom he kept hidden between two twenty-dollar bills, he threw his wallet across the room and tore open the package.

Melanie cocked her head, her eyebrows lowered. She reached her hand between her legs to take up where his mouth had left off. "Why did you stop?"

"Condom." He rolled the rubber down over his cock.

"Ugh." She sat up straight, pleasuring herself forgotten. "What is that?"

"Birth control, baby." He picked her up and laid her on the couch.

"Oh." She giggled. "The Great Oaks have gifted us ways to protect ourselves from disease and unwanted pregnancies. There is no need to have that funny thing separating us from feeling each other's bodies."

He hesitated, caught between believing her and long-established, sensible precautions. If he followed her suggestion, would he be admitting he believed her story? The temptation to do so was strong. He would much prefer the heightened sensations that unprotected sex would bring.

She stroked his face. "Trust me. It's not necessary, Jared."

He pulled off the condom and hovered over her, supported on his elbows with his knees between her legs. He gazed down at her breasts for a long moment then lowered his head and drew her nipple into his mouth. His cock rhythmically pulsed for entrance into her pussy. His body, urging him to reach the ultimate prize, battled with his thoughts to stretch out the fantastic pleasure into an all-day foreplay session.

His body won.

Thrusting his pelvis toward her opening, he teased her pussy without letting go of her nipple. Unable to plunge into her the way he wanted, he let go of the glorious bead on her breast and straightened his arms.

"Ready, babe?" He danced his cock around the opening of her pussy.

She smiled and lifted her hips. "Yes, pound me hard."

He slid into her. The warm, tight muscles of her vagina grasped him firmly and sucked the breath right out of his lungs.

She gasped. "You are so big."

He withdrew without leaving her body then slammed his cock back in her cunt. Again and again. His balls slapped her ass every time he plunged deep.

Melanie clutched his arms, arched her back off the couch and screamed his name in a guttural yell. Her pussy convulsed around his cock. He thrust balls-deep and grunted his own satisfaction.

His legs weakened to jelly, and he strained to keep from collapsing on top of her. Every one of his limbs was weak and sated from such a powerful release. *Talk about finding fucking nirvana.*

He let his cock slip out, kissed her lips and stood, kicking off his shoes and stepping on his pants to remove them. "Hang on, baby, I'll be right back."

The room tilted, and he swayed on his feet, trying to find his balance. He felt drained, as if he'd run a marathon. He stumbled down the hall to the bathroom. After turning on the shower and adjusting the temperature, he ambled back out to the living room.

Melanie sat up, smiled and held out her hand. Instead of joining her on the couch, he pulled her up and swept her into his arms. She giggled and clung to his neck, letting her feet dangle in the air. God damn she felt good. A shower should revive them both, and he'd bet his left nut they'd end up enjoying each other again under the water spray.

Chapter Six

"Come here, Tarzan. Jane want you." Melanie bent her finger and waved him forward.

She stood nude on the seat of the couch. Jared dropped his briefcase, rushed over and caught her to his chest without letting her touch the ground. Laughing at the object she clutched, he shook his head.

She'd fashioned one of his old tube socks into what he believed should resemble a monkey but appeared to come from the lizard family. Holding the sock up, she grinned.

"Cheetah missed you." She flung the pretend animal over her shoulder. "Jane want to swing on your vine."

He carried her over to the couch. Settling her on his lap, he laughed. God, she was a delight. He never knew what kind of game she'd come up with each day.

"I take it you've watched Tarzan on television." He kissed her lips.

She grinned. "Have you seen the show?" Her eyebrows rose. "I can't wait to tell the other nymphs about this man who lives with the apes." She sighed. "He is so handsome and strong."

"Good thing you met me first, huh?" He tickled the side of her waist.

She squirmed on his lap and laughed. "Stop tickling me." She inhaled and grew serious. "You know you are the only man for me. If I was able to choose my mate out of twenty, beautiful bachelors, I would pick you."

He snorted. "You'd accept my rose?"

"Yes!" She nodded.

He growled and nibbled her neck. "I'm not sure giving you free reign to the television during the day is a very smart thing." He sucked her ear lobe. "You do know all the people on those shows are acting. Most of them live a completely different life than what they portray."

"Yes." She leaned her head back, exposing her neck. "I know that."

He nuzzled around in the spot where her shoulder met her neck. She loved him sucking her there. "My vine is growing, Jane."

She giggled. "Carry me to your tree, Tarzan, and I can help you with that problem."

Jared swept her up, carried her to the bedroom and tossed her on the bed. She bounced and laughed. Jared couldn't help but join her. Her unadulterated, pure delight in everything she did was contagious. He found himself looking for new things to teach her, to show her, and watching for her reaction. In short, he'd become addicted to pleasuring Melanie.

She sat up, and he stripped off his clothes, flinging them around the room in carefree abandon. She licked her lips and caught the bottom one between her teeth. His cock surged to attention. "God, that's sexy. Come here, I want to taste you."

Kneeling at the end of the bed, he spread her legs and pulled her ankles. With her feet on the ground, her pussy lay wide open in front of him. He lapped at the juice coating her lower lips. *Damn, I wish I could stay home every day and have her whenever the craving hit.*

From anus to clit, he licked, sucked and nibbled his way around her cunt. He slid his hand under her ass and inserted his thumb into her pussy. With his fingers

slickened by her moisture, he glided his hand back and forth, producing a moan from Melanie.

His balls constricted. He wanted her now. The long workday pushed his limit of the time he could survive without touching her. He rose to his feet. She sat upright and held up her hand for him to stop. *Stop?*

"What's wrong, baby?"

She shook her head. "I want you to come all over my chest. I want to see you stroke your cock and view what pleasure comes over your face."

His cock surged, and he groaned. "Keep talking like that and I'll blow the biggest load you've ever seen."

Her hand slid over her smooth skin, and her fingers delved into her pussy. "You can watch me play with myself and show me how much you enjoy looking at me."

He gripped the base of his cock in his fist and gave it a few pumps. His gaze rose from her hand busy at work between her legs, to her breasts with their rosy nipples drawn into hard nubs. Her large boobs rubbed against each other every time she stroked herself.

She used her free hand to lift her breast. Lowering her head, she drew the nipple into her mouth. He moaned. *Jesus Christ, I didn't know she could do that.*

"Suck it hard." He gripped his cock tighter. "Damn. Love. That." His breath came in gasps. "Squeeze." He inhaled. "Them together." He stroked the length of his cock, from the tip to his balls.

Melanie cupped a hand under each breast, lifted them up and pushed them together. She threw back her head and mewed. He stepped between her legs and rubbed the head of his dick from one nipple to the other. His pre-cum shone on her hardened nubs.

He bent his knees, arched his back and replaced her hands with his. He slid his cock in and humped the plump crevice between her breasts. His thumbs strummed her nipples at the same time. *Damn that feels good.*

"Touch your clit." He groaned. "Finger yourself." He kept his cock pumping in the warm cocoon she'd made with her body.

"Oh, Jared. I want to come." She dipped her chin and flicked her tongue at his cock. She bounced on the bed, her finger circled her clit, and she tried to lick the head of his dick every time he thrust up.

"I . . . can't" He pulled back and gave one last thrust. "Stop."

Balanced on his toes, he came. Long streaks of cum shot from the head of his dick like he was some damned porn star. She leaned her head back, and he gazed at the pearly jizz coating the arch of her neck. He groaned and rode the peak of his orgasm.

"I'm coming!" Her ass undulated on the mattress. "Oh. Oh. Oh!" She convulsed on her hand and shuddered.

Jared released her breasts and stepped back. He wobbled on his feet, gave up standing and collapsed on the bed, face first. She flopped back beside him and heaved a big breath.

"That was wonderful."

He chuckled. "You're not kidding. Titty-fucking, my new habit."

"You have lots of habits, Jared." She laughed.

* * * * *

The batter spread out into a circle, and Melanie leaned down to get a better view. Jared had told her to wait for the bubbles, and then she could turn the pancake. Seconds ticked by painfully slowly. They were her favorite food so far but buying them from a restaurant each weekend seemed silly. Cooking remained a mystery to her, and Jared admitted he wasn't the best teacher for the job; nevertheless, he had bought a few groceries and showed her a recipe.

She sighed. *If only Jared could teach me, but he hasn't a clue. Maybe I should stop watching the Brady Bunch and learn from the cooking shows instead.* She giggled. *But then I'd miss the antics of those three Brady boys.*

"How's breakfast going?" Jared wrapped his arms around her waist and nibbled her neck.

"Careful, Jared." She wiggled her shoulders. "I have to" She slipped the spatula under the batter and turned the pancake. "Look! I did it. Just like Emeril does on television."

He groaned, obviously distressed by yet another of her references to television. "That looks great." He dropped his arms. "I'll set the table, and we'll dine in style this morning."

"Remember the syrup." She didn't look away from the skillet, concentrating her full attention on their meal.

Eight golden-brown pancakes later, with a smile on her face, she carried the platter to the dining room and set it down in front of Jared. *I did it!*

"Mm . . . These look great, baby." He stabbed his fork into a couple and transferred them to his plate.

"Really? I did good?" She bounced on her seat. "I've been trying really hard to learn."

"Yeah, they taste perfect." He swallowed and smiled.

She dipped her fork in the extra syrup on her plate and licked it off. "Hmm, nearly as good as the chocolate bar you brought me the other day."

They ate the rest of their meal in silence. When Jared had cleaned his plate, he scooted it to the middle of the table, leaned back and patted his stomach. "I'm stuffed. You are an expert pancake maker. I declare you the official weekend cook."

She smiled. "I'm so proud of — "

The telephone rang, and Jared jumped up to answer the call. She shook her head. Jared said this world had no magic, but television and telephones sure looked like magic to her. How could people talk to each other over such a long distance?

She gathered the dirty dishes and put everything away.

Jared hung up the phone. "Leave those for later, honey; we've got better things to do with my two days off than washing dishes."

Melanie rinsed her hands and joined him on the couch. He pulled her close and wrapped his arm around her shoulders. She snuggled up and curled her legs under her bottom.

"Do you have to go somewhere?" He had so many friends and they were always phoning and asking him to go out. She ran her hand along his thigh.

He kissed the top of her head. "Nope. I told Tom I didn't want to go."

"What did he want you to do?" She held her breath and waited for his answer. "Did he want you to go out and chase women?"

Jared pulled her face-down over his lap, her head cradled under her folded arms. Her ass stuck up in the air. Her pussy dampened at the memory of what happened last time he placed her across his knees.

"No. You watch entirely too much television." He swatted her bare butt cheeks. "He wanted to play tennis."

"You don't like to play tennis?" She flinched.

He caressed the hot spot on her ass from where he spanked her. "I'd rather play with you." His hand came down again, a little bit harder. "I want to see how wet your pussy gets and how red your lovely ass gets from my spankings."

She widened her legs and wiggled her bottom. "I like how it stings and not knowing when you are going to do it again."

He dipped his finger between her legs and rubbed her clit. "You're nice and wet already." He spread the cream up around her anus. "God, that's beautiful."

He delivered another stinging slap, and she moaned. His finger returned to her anus and rubbed the sensitive nerve endings after each swat.

She writhed on his lap. Each smack brought her higher, and she wanted to come. He slid his finger into her pussy and pressed his thumb against her back hole. Not entering her anus, but letting her wonder if he would.

"Come around my finger, baby." He rubbed her ass with his free hand. "Next time I spank you, have that tight little pussy of yours squeeze my finger." He lifted his

hand but put it back down to massage the sore surface. "Get ready." He tickled her buns. "You never know when I'll strike."

"Jared!" She humped his hand. "Please, I'm dying here"

He blew across the warmth on her skin. She shuddered and moaned. He pushed his finger in farther and rubbed her anus in a circular pattern.

Slap!

"Oh god, oh god, oh god." She arched her back, her head coming off the couch.

Jared's thumb began to thump against her back hole. Her body seized and her climax spread throughout the length of her pussy.

"That's it, baby. Milk my finger." He spanked her again. "Keep going."

Her legs stiffened, and she collapsed on top of his legs. Her breath came in heaves. He withdrew his hand and pulled her up beside him on the couch.

"Thank you, baby."

She smiled and nodded. "Give me a second to catch my breath."

"No hurry. We've got all day to play." He pulled her against his side and kissed the top of her head. "Two days of Melanie and Jared time."

Chapter Seven

"I love you so much, Jared," Melanie whispered.

She lay beside him. He'd slipped his arm under her head and held her close. At her words, his chest tightened. The last three weeks she had given him her love unconditionally. He sure enjoyed having her here and having mind-blowing sex with her, but love? Was that what they shared?

Their homes might not be far apart physically, but in many ways they came from two different worlds. But maybe she was right? Lately he never wanted to leave the house, plus he liked keeping her all to himself.

He rushed home at lunchtime everyday to see her and check up on how she had entertained herself during his absence. After work, he hurried straight back to sweep

her off to the bedroom to enjoy her body. Where had the last few weeks gone? The days and nights melted into one and nothing he planned ever got finished.

She only owned the few outfits he had bought, because he preferred to keep her naked in the house. *The sex is great. But, committing to just one woman? Hell, I'm not ready to go there. Not yet, at any rate.*

But he *did* care about her. She didn't play those manipulative games like his previous girlfriends. She hadn't been corrupted by the world, thank God. It wasn't just the sex; he enjoyed talking to her, and he missed her whenever they had to be apart.

"I don't know how I survived without you, babe." He kissed her lips, and rolled out of bed. "I know you want more from me, but . . . I'm not the kind of guy who jumps in with both feet." He raised his brows. "I've got an idea. You want to do something you've never experienced here with me yet?"

"A new game? I liked the one we played the other night when I got to wear the silky material that pushed my breasts up to here." The flat of her hand tapped under her chin. "I even liked the spankings I got for being bad." She sat up on the bed and laughed. "Following your orders got me hot and excited."

"Nope, this isn't one of the games we play." He pursed his lips and tilted his head. "Or maybe it is How would you like to have a few people come by the house? We'd barbecue, and you'd be able to meet all my friends."

"Really?" Kneeling, she bounced on the mattress. "I would love that. Do they play games too?"

He shook his head. "No." He sat on the edge of the bed, reached for her hand and gazed into her eyes. "Here's the thing. It will be a game, of sorts. You'll have to pretend you are not a nymph. People here don't go around naked. They don't touch themselves or touch others whenever the spirit moves them. At the party, you only belong to me, and around other people, no touching yourself or me . . . except to hold my hand, sit on my lap or kiss."

Her lower lip came out, and her shoulders drooped. "I embarrass you? I have noticed on the television that none of the people act the way I do, even the people on

the channels that have sex all the time. The people don't have any feelings coming from their hearts . . . not like the nymphs. Not like me."

"No. No! You don't embarrass me. I don't want you to change at all when we are alone." He lifted her chin with his finger. "That's just the way it's done around other people. If you acted the way you normally do, people would know right away you are a wood nymph. You don't want that, right?"

Her hair swung back and forth as she shook her head. "Of course not. I would never want to bring harm to my people."

"Okay, so we have plans to make. You'll need a new outfit. I'll go grocery shopping, and I'll let everyone know we're having a party on Saturday." He buttoned up his shirt. "This doesn't change how you act at home when it's just the two of us, okay? Personally, I love the wood nymph, Melanie. I'll teach you over the next few days what I expect of you. Don't worry. I know you'll do great."

"What is the reason for the party? Is it your birthday?" She stood and slipped on a pair of his old sweats she'd cut off and rolled above her knees. She remained topless because she still wasn't comfortable wearing shirts.

"It's a party to introduce everyone to my new girlfriend." He winked. "A party for you." There, he'd given her a little rope. Hopefully that same rope wouldn't come back to form a noose around his neck.

"Girlfriend? Oh Jared, I like the sound of that. What comes next? Marriage?" She followed him out of the bedroom. "I knew you'd eventually realize we belong together, and the trees are never wrong when they hand out blessings."

"One step at a time, Melanie. Slow down." He rubbed the back of his neck, the imaginary noose already cinched there. He picked up his car keys off the table, bent down, gave her one more kiss for the road and waved over his shoulder. The door shut, and a high-pitched squeal came from inside the house.

He walked out to the car with a huge smile on his lips. *God, she's a delight.*

* * * * *

Melanie locked herself in the bathroom. She held up the shimmering dress Jared bought her for the party and slipped it over her head. Her tummy rolled and pitched at having to wear something so foreign and uncomfortable. The material itched and pulled against her skin. She couldn't even muster enough courage to check her reflection in the mirror.

She'd do what he requested today. The desire to please him overshadowed her discomfort in human clothes. She inhaled deeply and let it out. Once she gathered her courage, she'd go out and show him her new outfit.

Would she remember the rule Jared had stressed again and again? How she must never touch her private parts in front of other people no matter what craving came over her. The party seemed more a punishment than a celebration. His friends must be stuffy and boring.

The nymphs didn't care about clothing. Touching others added to the festive atmosphere, and ensured everyone had a good time.

Two knocks vibrated off the door and she jumped. "Y-yes?"

"Everything okay? You've been in there for an hour. Do you need help with the dress?"

She shook her head although he stood on the other side of a closed door. She gazed down at the way the little black dress hugged her body, then shrugged and turned to unlock the door. She couldn't hide in there forever.

Melanie swung the door open and stepped out. Jared stared without saying a word, making her more nervous by the second. Standing stock still inside the bedroom, she cast her eyes on the floor to wait for his opinion. *Please tell me I don't look horrible.*

He walked around her and inspected every side of the dress. Her hands fisted the material at her hips. He didn't like it. Now he'd call off the party, and she'd blame herself for her stupidity.

She didn't compare to other females he knew. She should never have come here. If she'd tried harder to convince him to live in the forest with her people, she'd not be going through this whole terrible moment right now.

He stepped so close in front of her, his dress shirt rubbed against the front of her outfit. A jolt of awareness traveled through her body at the friction of the material against her nipples. Goosebumps rose along her arms. She never wanted to disappoint him, and failing at the simplest thing normal women managed to do without a second thought stung her pride.

He brought his hands up and cupped each side of her face, lifting her head. She stared up into those dark, hazel eyes she adored. His thumb stroked the escaped tear trailing down her cheek. She loved him completely. Deep down, no matter how much he denied it, he felt the same way too.

"You are absolutely, breathtakingly beautiful." His lips softened and his eyes glazed over. She recognized the truth of his words. He wore the same expression on his face during times she caught him watching her unawares. The tenderness that came over him told her more than spoken words ever would.

"I am?"

"You are. You are going to make all the men want you and the women jealous." He kissed the tip of her nose. "In fact, I'm not sure I want to share you with any of them. I'm kind of getting used to having you all to myself."

"I do not want that!" She wrinkled her nose. "I want them to like me, but I am yours, only yours, from now on." She laid a hand on her stomach. "Oh, I am so nervous. I think I might throw up. I do not enjoy getting sick."

"I have something for that." He moved across the room and opened the desk drawer. "I was saving this for later, but after thinking about how much bringing pleasure to your body relaxes you, I think now is the perfect time."

He returned to her side, holding a small package wrapped in black paper and tied with a red ribbon. She reached for it, her hands shaking.

"What is it?" She turned the square object around and held it up to her ear.

He laughed. "Open it."

She sat on the bed, set the box on her lap and closed her eyes. She mentally painted a picture of the tenderness in Jared's gaze and the way his mouth curled at the corners. Endearing and unexpected. She wanted to remember this moment forever.

She opened her eyes and carefully peeled back the paper, not wanting to rip it so she could save it in the keepsake box he gave her last week. *I'm going to wrap a gift for Jared in this paper and surprise him one day.*

She smiled over at him. He sat on the edge of bed, a grin on his face. He looked adorable, and if they didn't have this big party happening, she'd take him to bed and have wild sex with him to show how pleased she was over the gift.

Opening the lid, she held her breath and cocked her head. She exhaled and cocked her head the other way. *What the heck is it?* Nothing in the box appeared familiar.

"Come." He motioned.

She set the box on the bed, stood and slipped her hand into his.

He nodded toward the package. "Bring your present."

She reached back for the gift and followed him across the room. He sat on the chair and directed her to stand in front of him. He lifted her dress up to her waist, reached into the box and pulled out a thin, elastic strap. He wrapped this low on her hips.

After gathering the rest of the contraption in the box, he pulled a piece of the strap from the back of her waist, down and through her legs, and then snapped another piece into place. When he finished, an oval plastic button with ridges lay atop her pubic bone.

"It's pretty, Jared, thank you." She gazed down at the pink adornment, and smiled. *Why would he want me to wear such a weird doodad? With my dress on nobody would see it. Doesn't he want me to show it off?*

The corners of his eyes crinkled and he chuckled. "Hang on, babe."

He adjusted the strap. "Put one foot here." He patted the seat beside him.

She lifted her leg and obeyed his command. He placed the pink oval directly on her clitoris and proceeded to make a few adjustments. Pleased with himself, he rubbed his hands together and chuckled. She mustered a smile, but still had no idea why such a silly contraption would make him so happy.

He hurried over to his top dresser drawer and removed batteries from the rubber toy shaped as a giant male cock he'd used on her last night, then he walked back over to Melanie and picked another small device out of the box. He fiddled around for a moment, laughed and walked out of the room.

"Jared?" she called, not knowing if she should follow him or stay in the bedroom.

"Stay right there, babe." He laughed again. "Just hold onto your pants!"

"I'm not wearing pants, silly." She sucked her bottom lip between her teeth, held her dress up and waited. Maybe he planned another surprise for her, something bigger and more exciting she'd be able to show other people. She really did love presents, and the things Jared brought home for her to try fascinated her. This was the first time one of his gifts had confused her.

A sudden, electric-like shock hit her clitoris. She screamed and danced about, trying to dislodge whatever attacked her pussy. Jared's laughter from the other room broke through her panic, and she stopped moving around. How could he laugh about something that scared her half to death?

The vibration no longer shocked her, and she dropped her dress. Crossing her arms, she concentrated on the quivering between her legs. After a few seconds, the side of her mouth lifted, and she moved her hips. So that's what this was for! The little pink toy stimulated her pussy.

Her nipples hardened under her dress, and she rolled her shoulders, enjoying the way the silky material caressed the nerve endings. Her pussy juice coated her inner lips and brought her to a heightened sense of awareness.

She squealed in delight, gingerly walked to the dresser and grasped the edge to steady her legs. Heat rushed inside her cunt, and her hips undulated against the pretty pink button, carrying her even higher.

Jared stepped through the doorway. His smile faded, and he stared at her with aroused intensity. She arched her back, thrust out her breasts and met his gaze. He lifted the device and pushed a button.

"Oh!"

"Oh."

"Oh."

The pulsating button sped up and sent her over the edge to an orgasm. She clutched the dresser and reached out for Jared with her other hand. Her legs trembled and she sagged against his side.

"Oh, Jared, thank you. That is the best present I've ever received." She tilted her head up to kiss him.

"Mm." He pulled back. "You're okay?"

She nodded. "I feel much better. My butterflies are gone. I think I can do this party without embarrassing you."

"Good. Let me worry about everything. I have it all planned out." He reached down and patted the toy on her pussy. "If you promise not to tell anyone what you are wearing under your dress, you can leave it on during the party. If I see you getting nervous tonight, I'll give you a little buzz to calm you down, okay? It'll be a nice little reminder you belong to me."

"Okay." She laughed. "You have even better games than I do!"

* * * * *

Melanie sashayed out of the kitchen carrying a tray filled with more drinks. She headed outside to the backyard with the grace and ease of someone who'd hosted in a group setting many times over. Jared caught her eye and smiled. Ever since they met, she had adapted to his world better than he expected, but her acting talents really took him by surprise.

The sun had set, and he flipped on the backyard light. She'd carried herself marvelously throughout the party, and he'd never been prouder to show off his current girlfriend. The band that had tightened around his chest every time he'd thought about introducing her to his friends loosened completely after an hour of watching her play the perfect hostess.

Of course, little things she did drew his attention, like kicking her shoes off and going barefoot at a semiformal party, but the other women had removed their shoes and thanked Melanie for making them feel comfortable enough to do so. He should never have doubted her ability to win these people over. She'd done a hell of a job convincing him what they shared together meant something special.

He stood inside the doorway, out of sight from the others, and enjoyed the way she moved around as she passed out drinks. Giggling over the men and bonding with the other women. She appeared at ease among his friends.

Jared reached into his pocket and searched for the top button on the remote control to the vibrating rabbit she wore pressed to her nub. She had become a master at hiding her reaction throughout the evening, and getting erotically stimulated made her sexier than hell. He could almost smell the arousal coming off her body.

Melanie giggled and twirled without spilling the last two drinks on the tray she carried. He watched the other men appreciate the feminine way she entertained them, and his finger came off the button. A raw stream of jealousy hit him in the gut.

His breath came in gasps, and he held onto the edge of the doorframe. Melanie searched for him in the crowd, found him at the door and smiled in that special way she did that drove him crazy. He smiled back and laughed, but inside adrenaline coursed through his veins.

His woman had known of their sealed fate since the start. Over the weeks, he'd come to know she spoke the truth because she'd proven how sincere her love was for him. Not merely with her words, but with her actions. She'd loved him, pampered him and given every little delicious part of herself to him without any restraint. Without realizing it, he'd stopped thinking of her as the woman who walked out of one of his

dreams and now accepted the emotion building up inside. He'd fallen deeply and madly in love with his beautiful wood nymph.

Someone's hand clapped him on the shoulder, and he turned. "Hey, Pete."

"Great party, dude." Pete sidled up beside him. "Your new lady is making quite the hit with the guys, and I bet a few of these women will turn bi before the end of the evening."

Jared nodded. *Yep, and she's all mine.*

"Might be that long hair and killer bod." Pete lifted his drink to his mouth. "They sure give me some wild fantasies."

Jared stood up straighter, his brows lowered, and his gaze soaked in Melanie making her way across the patio to him. He stepped out of the way but snagged a kiss from her before she headed in for more drinks.

"If you want to remain alive, you better keep your mouth shut. I won't have you or anyone else making disrespectful comments about Melanie." Jared glared at Pete.

"Hey! No harm meant, I swear. I'm happy for you." Pete slapped him on the shoulder again. "Not every day a regular guy gets lucky enough to find his own wood nymph."

Jared coughed to clear his throat. "What are you talking about?"

"The woman in the picture." Pete nodded toward the house. "That's the wood nymph. Did you think I wouldn't recognize her? Who the hell looks that good around here?"

Jared laughed . . . a little too loud and a little too fast. "Bullshit. I think you've had one too many drinks, Pete."

"Say what you will, but you're sitting on a gold mine." Pete lowered his voice. "Can you imagine how much money The National Enquirer or The Star would pay for proof like you've got? You have the photos, and you have the woman. If I were you, I'd cash in and retire to the Bahamas."

Jared grabbed the front of Pete's shirt and dragged him inside the door where they wouldn't be overheard. *Damn me for forgetting about showing Pete that picture.*

"Not one word. Do you hear me? I swear to fucking god, you spout anything about believing Melanie is a wood nymph, and I'll come after you so fast, you'll sport a new asshole with my foot up it!" He flung Pete away from him and glared.

"Chill man!" Pete straightened his shirt. "Your secret's safe with me. No skin off my nose if you want to throw away the greatest opportunity you'll ever get handed."

Jared watched Pete walk outside. Halfway across the patio, he turned back and lifted his glass. Jared's hands balled into fists and he moved back inside to hunt down Melanie. Time to put a cap on the drinks and declare tonight's party a success.

The desire to have Melanie all to himself and let her in on his newly discovered feelings urged him to push everyone out the door. He couldn't wait to see her expression when he told her those three words that had been missing from his vocabulary.

Chapter Eight

Monday dawned early. Melanie's head rested on his stomach, her tongue slowly licking and caressing the cock she had pleased only moments before. Half asleep, he stroked her hair. He must be the luckiest bastard on earth to be awakened every morning by a slow, deliberate blowjob meant to begin his day by putting a smile on his face and a spring in his walk.

Working her charms, she woke him up little by little; then she raised her head. He'd never get tired of the sight of her with her lips swollen from loving him and a sparkle in her eye.

"I hate Mondays." Melanie pouted as he reluctantly climbed out of bed.

"I know, so do I, babe." He walked into the bathroom, turned on the shower and returned to the bedroom. "How about I take off Thursday and Friday and we go back and visit your people, so you can share the good news."

She sat up in bed. "Really? Oh Jared, yes, yes, yes!"

"I'm going to jump in the shower." He waggled his dick. "Maybe it'll revive, and we can squeeze in a little Melanie time before I'm due in at work. I wouldn't want you to think I'm ignoring you."

She nodded, cuddled down in the blankets and purred. "There is one part of me you've ignored." She yawned. "Hurry back."

He stepped under the warm spray of water, reached for the soap and lathered his body. Melanie thought he'd ignored a part of her? Hell, he'd spent hours lavishing attention all over her body. Why in the hell would she say that?

Functioning on autopilot, he shampooed his hair, thinking about Melanie's cryptic message. He'd performed sex, eaten her pussy with enthusiasm, shoved his cock down her willing throat and incorporated every toy and game into their sex life he possibly could. There wasn't anything . . .

The soap burned his eyes, and he turned to hold his face under the water. His heartbeat raced, not from the pain, but from the offer Melanie threw out at him this morning. He never dreamed she'd allow him to have anal sex with her.

His dick grew hard at the thought. He lowered the showerhead, hurried to spray down his body and stepped out of the shower. If she wanted to offer her sweet ass to him, he'd be out of his mind to turn her down. Every girlfriend he'd ever gone out with refused to let him go in the back door, and the thought of taking Melanie in her tight, puckered hole sent a thrill deep into his balls.

He barely ran the towel over his torso before he strolled out of the bathroom and approached Melanie on the bed. She lay on her side with a mischievous grin lighting up her whole face. She knew exactly what her declaration did to him, the little minx.

"You're sure?" He lay down beside her and ran his hand down her arm.

She rolled over on her stomach. "In the forest there are branches that get broken off at the bottom of the trees. We girls have learned to smooth them out until they shine, and then we can back ourselves up onto the little wooden rod. Having our other hole captured with such a thing while rubbing our pussy forces our orgasm to consume our whole body."

"Hmm." He didn't trust himself to speak. The visual of Melanie getting butt-fucked by a tree put his nuts in a vise of pleasure-pain.

"I truly believe I give back something to our beloved trees, using them for my pleasure, and in return, we find more happiness." She whispered, "I think putting your cock in my ass will bring you much happiness, Jared."

She closed her eyes; her voice had taken on a husky, sleepy drawl, and she squirmed against the sheet. He loved how she slipped her hands underneath her body in bed and twiddled her clit for comfort. He trailed the back of his hand along the satin smoothness of her skin. His fingers barely touched the dip in her back above her hips. Her ass sloped up in the perfect arch, and he couldn't keep from exploring every hill and valley.

He bent to place a kiss on her butt cheek; his tongue flicked out to swipe the extra soft skin. She didn't flinch, but rather purred. He accepted her encouragement. She never disappointed him in whatever he did to her. She was, beyond a doubt, the first person in his whole life to match him sexually.

He tickled the top of her ass crack, and she parted her legs more. Gently, he ran his hand down to rub her pussy. His middle finger sought her clit, the heel of his palm pressed against her asshole. She stuck her ass in the air, and he moved his thumb up to draw a circle around the space he'd love to claim.

Instead of the resistance he expected, the puckered hole relaxed, and he slipped the first joint on his thumb inside. "Oh, baby, it sucks me right in. Do you like that?"

"Yes, Jared." She tilted her hips to accept more. "I can take your cock, I promise.

Without moving his thumb, he shifted between her sprawled legs and held his dick in his hand. His cock—rock hard—pulsed at the prospect of plunging into unknown territory. He removed his thumb, lowered his head and lubricated her asshole with his tongue. The simple act turned him on more than he ever dreamed.

Needing to involve his cock in the action, he placed it on her hole, teasing and enticing both of them. He wanted to let her get accustomed to his size. He stroked the length of his cock, letting the bead of pre-cum add more lubrication to that inviting,

furrowed entrance. When he thought her slick and ready, he ran his swollen cock head up and down her crack, forcing her to anticipate the way he'd fill her up with his size.

"I love you, baby." He groaned. His cock teased the hole that taunted him and begged to suck him dry. "Relax. I'm going to fuck you. I'm going to ream that pretty little asshole and make it mine."

He placed his hands on the mattress on each side of her body, raised his knees and gently prodded her opening. She pushed against him, opening herself to accept his width. His cock slipped in, and she took the head without any hesitation. Knowing he needed to go slowly, he braced himself in position.

"Give me more." She moaned. "I want all of you."

Despite his promise to himself to go slowly, he found it impossible to hold back. Her anus accepted him easily. Her muscles clamped down on his cock and convulsed in the strongest squeeze he'd ever experienced. He thrust his hips back and forth.

"Oh god, yes." His own ass quivered with the need to pound the hungry hole that gripped his dick and wouldn't let go. A short, quick thrust slapped his scrotum against her pussy. She lifted her ass to meet each stroke. With her hands slid underneath her, she fluttered her fingertips against his balls each time they came into contact with her pussy.

He lengthened the strokes, almost coming out before plunging back in again. His calf muscles cramped at the restraint; his arms quivered at the control he expended. She pushed against him and drew her knees up underneath her. Bracing her elbows on the bed, she allowed him to take her at his own speed.

Shifting positions, he knelt on the bed, grabbed onto her hips, and pulling her ass back to meet each lunge, he fucked her faster. Pressure built in his balls. His hips bucked as he neared his release, and he swore he became lightheaded.

Melanie's pussy, dripping wet, slapped against his balls, and he gazed up into the mirror in the headboard of the bed and viewed her golden breasts swinging against each other. Her head was thrown back, her eyes closed, mouth open in obvious

pleasure. The whole picture careened him over the edge, and with one final victory plunge, he shot his load deep in her hole.

"Oh damn, baby, th . . . what an un-fucking-believable start to my morning."

* * * * *

On the way to work, his brain did a ten minute closed-loop re-run of the morning's sex. Feeling like the luckiest man alive, he strolled into the office, hung up his coat and set about preparing for the inevitable. The monthly magazine was due to be released by the publishers today. Shit. Everyone's stress levels would be higher than usual.

"Jared Denali!" His boss, Mr. Jeffers, AKA Chrome-dome, flew into his office, his arm waving a magazine up in the air.

Jared sat back in his chair. The smile on Jeffers' face shocked him. His boss rarely mustered a gruff humph about anything good. Hell, he never came into his office. In fact, this was the first time he'd ever come up to the employees' floor.

"You fucking did it!" Mr. Jeffers beamed. "You put National Photography Journal on the map, my boy."

"What are you talking about?" Jared leaned his elbows on his desk.

"What am I talking about?" Jeffers laughed. "You! Keeping this discovery a secret and getting it posted early this morning before the department even opened for press. You have the biggest goddamn bonus coming to you. I don't even give a shit about the way you went behind my back to get this printed without my approval. Fucking genius!"

Jared shook his head in confusion. What the hell was going on? He wasn't in the office earlier this morning. His boss tossed the magazine on his desk, and Jared's heart threatened to stop beating. *Oh, shit.*

The blood rushed out of his head, and he blinked. He stared at the picture sported on the front cover and felt his whole world come tumbling down. *Shit. How the hell did that happen?*

He read the headlines again, not believing what sat right in front of him.

*PHOTOGRAPHER FINDS PROOF OF WOOD NYMPH LIVING IN GRIFFORD
NATIONAL FOREST*

Are there more of them roaming the woods?

The source of Chrome-dome's jubilation drove a knife into Jared's heart. Beneath the print, the picture he took of the mysterious waterfall showed front and center. The incriminating evidence of Melanie lounging on a boulder in the bottom right hand corner, oblivious of the fact he'd taken a photo of her. *Fuck!*

He turned the magazine over, unable to view the destruction one headline could cause the Dryads. If his boss put the magazine on the stands, it would destroy Melanie and threaten her family's safety. Hordes of curious people would tramp through the forest, hoping for their own encounter. Oh, sweet Jesus, she'd never understand this.

"Mr. Jeffers, I don't know who took this picture, but it's obviously been tampered with. No way is this photo real; it's obviously been doctored." Jared shook his head. "I'm afraid someone has played a sick joke on us both. There was no one at the waterfall the day I shot this picture. It must have been digitally manipulated. You'll have to stop the magazines from going out this afternoon, or your company is going to end up the laughing stock of the year."

His boss threw back his head and laughed. "I've got the negative, proving it's the real McCoy. Come on, Jared, this is your once in a lifetime shot at the big league. Take the rest of the day off. Hell, take the rest of the week off with pay!" He chuckled. "You amaze me. We all live for that one picture that will make us famous, and you're shrugging it off . . . well, not on my watch, boy-o."

His boss left the office, shouting to all the employees standing around to order lunch in, and he'd foot the bill. A chorus of cheers pounded against the inside of Jared's skull. He sank back in his chair. This didn't make any fucking sense. Who'd submit his picture?

Pete.

Jared scrambled out of the chair. Reaching inside the model car sitting on top of the file cabinet, he grabbed the key he kept hidden and unlocked the top drawer. Opening the cabinet, he removed the file that should have Melanie's negative and picture tucked safely inside. His seeking fingers came up empty. *Damn.*

"Scooter!" He yelled for the courier waiting in the main lobby.

The young man ran into his office.

"Where's Pete right now?" Jared loosened his tie and grabbed his car keys out of the top desk drawer. He'd beat the shit out of Pete and hurry home to Melanie. If he reacted fast enough, maybe he'd stop his life from spiraling out of control. *I have to save the wood nymphs for Melanie.*

"Out of the office, sir. He took an emergency two days off to visit his ailing mother." Scooter waited for orders, but Jared waved him off.

Son of a bitch liar; his mother is on her fourth honeymoon in Vegas. Doesn't even have the balls to stick around to get his ass kicked.

Chapter Nine

Melanie strolled around Jared's backyard, lost in her own little world. Fully fenced, the area provided her some much-needed privacy. She'd removed her clothes, confident she'd not be caught naked outside.

The grass tickled her feet. Hanging around the small ornamental trees in the corner of the lawn gave her a sense of home. Not exactly *her* home, but it helped during the times she missed her family.

Jared must be the kindest man alive to think of how much she missed the forest and suggest they go back and visit at the end of the week. Now that he'd realized their love was destined for forever, she'd show him all the special places she enjoyed. She smiled. This time he'd surely participate in all her wood nymph games.

Her nipples hardened. Maybe he'd even be willing to try out the spike on the tree where she impaled her butt on occasion. Arian enjoyed having his hole entered, and she bet Jared would too.

She nimbly swung up onto the lowest branch of the biggest tree in the yard. Happy to discover the leaves hid her from the house next door, she giggled. With her legs dangling on each side of the branch, she lay on her stomach on the thin piece of wood and struggled to find her balance.

The rough bark rubbed against her skin and reminded her of how far away from the Oaks she'd traveled with Jared. Things she took for granted back home no longer worked here in the city. Balancing in the trees, disappearing and hovering over the ground became impossible. The trees must not know where to find her. How would she ever feel comfortable in the city if the connection she shared with her forest disintegrated over space?

The branch situated between her legs at the apex of her pussy reminded her of Jared, and she wished the rest of the day would hurry up and end. She didn't feel alone with him in her arms.

Every day became sweeter and more special. He showed her in all the ways possible how much he loved her.

The wonderful toys he brought into their sex life intrigued her, yet she'd learned it wasn't the toys or the games Jared and she played together, but the all-consuming love they shared that filled her with happiness. Their mutual love exceeded the joy she found in the forest with her people. It gave her the same sense of contentment she remembered having with her parents.

Arian's tale about the Oaks blessing her filled her with humility. She would never do anything to displease the Oaks after having them bestow such an honor upon her.

"Melanie!"

Startled, she tilted on the small branch, nearly losing her balance. She wrapped her arms and legs around the tree to keep from falling. With her heart beating wildly, she quickly swung her legs down. She'd never heard Jared yell in such a way.

She ran toward the house. "I am out here, Jared."

He opened the screen door. "What are you doing? Why aren't you dressed?"

"I . . . I wanted to sit with your trees." She pointed behind her. "I'm sorry. I didn't think anyone could see me because of the fence."

Her chin trembled despite the warm summer weather. Something terrible had happened. Jared never accused her of anything with this degree of annoyance.

"What is wrong?" She laid her hands on each side of his waist. "Did I do something terrible?"

"No." He pulled her close to him. "Damn it. No. It's me, not you."

"You're not sick, are you?" She laid her head on his chest. His heart beat faster than normal. "What did you do?"

He exhaled. "I must get you back to your people. I'll explain in the car."

"But . . ."

"Don't question me right now, Melanie, we have to hurry." He pushed her toward the door and followed her into the house. Undoing his shirt, he kicked off his shoes and sent them sailing toward the living room. "Just throw on some sweats, and we'll go. We need to hurry."

She ran into the bedroom, slipped a pair of Jared's old sweat pants on and tied the string to keep them around her waist. Borrowing one of his old T-shirts, she threw it over her head and grabbed the flip-flops he'd bought her.

She slid her feet down the hall. Tears fell from her eyes. Something dreadful must have happened to her family. She swallowed. *Oh, sweet Oak, please don't let it be a forest fire.*

Jared drove extra fast through the downtown area, zigzagging through slower traffic and running yellow lights. He hit the highway going way over the speed limit. She clutched the seat and remained silent, her mind caught up in a web of fear that what she was rushing toward would ultimately tear her apart.

She hoped something hadn't happened to Arian. Oh god, what would the nymphs do without him?

"Are you doing okay?" He laid his hand on her thigh.

She shook her head. "I'm scared, Jared. I don't know what is going on. Is Arian okay? The other nymphs? My trees? There isn't a fire, is there?"

The muscle along his jaw twitched, and he stared straight ahead at the road. She wrapped her arms around her tummy. Why wasn't he answering?

"Please, Jared, tell me what happened." She wiped her cheeks free of tears. "If I must help my family, I need to know what is going on."

Keeping one hand on the wheel, he reached behind, grabbed his briefcase out of the backseat and handed it to her. She laid it on her lap.

"Open it."

She fiddled with the clasps, and it popped open on its own accord. Magazines, pictures and papers filled the case. She turned to Jared, not understanding what he wanted her to do.

"Look at the cover of that magazine." Jared's fist slammed against the steering wheel.

She picked up the magazine and flinched when she read the headlines. Her mouth fell open, and she lowered her gaze to the bottom right side, studying a very clear picture of her in all her glory, spread out on a rock. *Oh god, this is from the first day I met him. He did get a picture of me.*

"I'm taking you back to your family. You must tell them to hide, or better yet, leave the area. The forest is not going to be safe for them to wander in after everyone reads that magazine. It'll hit the newsstands in less than an hour, and once it's made public, scores of people are going to go hunting for the wood nymphs, all because of that damned picture."

She shoved the evidence back in the briefcase, closed her eyes against the threat to the future safety of her people. Had it all been a lie? Had he been searching for her to uncover the truth about the Dryads like those who had tried in the past? Had he used her? Betrayed her?

Maybe it was all for publicity? Maybe he didn't care if he disrupted the peace they'd gained by successfully hiding for thousands of years. Maybe he didn't love her, or want a future with her? If that was the case, the Oaks were terribly wrong. He wasn't her life mate.

"Do you understand what I am telling you, Melanie?" He lifted the briefcase off her lap and tossed it on the backseat. "I don't know if we are beating anyone to the forest, but you've got to explain to the other nymphs the terrible danger that will come to you all. We don't have much time."

She nodded. Her tears dried up, and she turned her head to stare out the side window. Where would they go?

They'd lived there, found safety there, for generations. Deep down, she understood her people wouldn't want to leave. Their whole history belonged in the forest. They'd become part of the trees, embedded deeper than any other relationship they'd have the chance to experience in their lifetime.

She had no one to blame but herself. She had brought the outsider in, told him about her people and shared with him every little detail of her life. This was the worst thing any Dryad had ever done. She squeezed her eyes shut. How could she go about fixing something outside of her control?

Jared pulled onto the gravel logging road that lead to the turnout area where they'd have access to the forest. "Son of a bitch . . ."

Melanie turned to the front and gazed at six cars already parked on the gravel. Despite the presence of a couple of police cars attempting without success to prevent them from entering the restricted area, photographers with their cameras looped around their necks and hunters with guns strapped over their shoulders blocked their way. They'd arrived too late.

"I've got to think." Jared whipped his car around and headed back down the road. "Do you know any other way to gain entry into the forest without everyone spotting us?"

For the first time, she found herself hesitant to answer him. She didn't know of another entrance, and why should she help him at all? Hadn't he already brought ruin to her people? How could she ever get over knowing her decision to leave with a human would put her family in harm's way? Jared had given away her secret. The same secret he urged her to hide from his friends and colleagues the other night at the barbecue.

She shook her head. No, she'd not give out any more information. She'd save her family on her own.

Jared turned the car and entered a dirt road, but a few cars blocked this road too. He put the car into reverse. Gravel flew up and peppered the underside of the car. "Damn it, this situation is getting out of control. There are more people coming."

A powerful, calming sensation came over her limbs and worked its way into her head. Instantly, she recognized that the Oaks were giving her the gifts they bestowed on all nymphs. The magic she lost at Jared's house came back full force. *Oh, bless you, Oaks.*

Melanie wasted no time finding out if the power to make herself invisible worked. She must remember that others might disappoint her, but the trees never would.

Without a second thought, she cast one last glance at the man who she'd believed the Oaks gave to her for a mate, closed her eyes and vanished out of the car. In a flash, she arrived deep in the forest.

"Arian!"

"Felicity!"

"Nymphs!"

Melanie hovered over the ground and glided through the forest with more power than she'd ever received. *Thank you, Oak tree. Thank you for helping my people. I will never turn my back on them again. Just help me to be there in time to save our forest.*

"Arian! Anybody!"

Arian appeared under the tree in front of her; she hovered a foot above the ground for a few moments before setting down in front of him. Tears soaked her cheeks, and she struggled to gather enough breath to warn him of the humans who came in search of her people.

"Thank . . . thank you for coming." She fell into his arms. "Oh, Arian, I've made a terrible mistake."

"What is it, nymph?" Arian gently set her back from him, but held firmly onto her shoulders. "What has happened? Are you alright?"

"Humans. They are entering the forest in search of us. They have cameras and guns. I'm afraid we are going to have to leave our homes, and it's all my fault." She reached up and grasped his arm. "Please, you must order everyone to leave. Jared exposed us, and it is no longer safe here."

Arian shoved her away and stepped over to the tree. He laid his forehead on the bark, closed his eyes and inhaled. She stayed silent during his commune with the tree. He'd come up with the answers to save them all. With his higher power, he always did.

Melanie gazed down at her body, shrouded in clothes belonging to Jared. With a disgusted sigh, she hurried to strip them off. No longer did she have to hide herself from others. From now on, she'd remain with her family.

"Come, we will form counsel in the common area." Arian held out his hand for her to join him on the walk.

Ashamed and terribly embarrassed at having to face the others, she clasped his hand. "Arian, I am so sorry. I didn't know. I trusted Jared, and he let me down, I"

"Shh." He gave her a squeeze. "You love him. Don't say another word against your mate. It makes the trees angry."

"He doesn't love me! How could he let other humans know of our existence? It was our secret."

Arian stopped and turned toward her. "I am asking you to trust the trees, to believe in what I am telling you. They do not lie. I know Jared is your mate for life. You have many years with him still. You know what will become of you if you turn your back on the one that has been chosen to love you for the rest of your life, don't you?"

She pursed her lips and remained silent. Her family's lives were in peril. She did not want to talk about what would happen to her if she cut ties with Jared. She'd take the punishment, especially if it saved her family in the meantime.

The others were already gathered under the Great Oaks, awaiting their arrival. The next few moments swept her up in a frenzy of welcome hugs and senseless babbling regarding her happiness. She held her head high. She'd do whatever it took to see them all safe. Even if in the end, she lost everyone's respect.

Arian paced back and forth before the crowd. "I have gathered you all here today because I have learned of a terrible thing going on outside the forest boundary. Even as I speak, there are humans armed in ways to hurt us, gathering at the bottom of the mountain. They come to take us away from our homes. They will take everything we hold dear. We can't let that happen."

"Please, Arian, just tell them. We must hurry." She shifted from one foot to the other in a desperate attempt to hold back from screaming that they needed to hurry. The humans were coming!

He shot her a glare. It was wrong to interrupt a council meeting. *Damn, I can't do anything right.*

"Sorry." She sat next to Felicity on a fallen log.

"I suggest we go into our homes and stay until the humans have tired of searching and have left empty handed." Arian stopped and swept his gaze over the crowd. "If you must leave your dwelling for any reason, or you are caught, use your

powers to make yourself invisible or wipe their minds of any remembrance of their encounter with the people of the Dryads.

To Melanie's dismay, everyone nodded in agreement and headed off in separate directions to hole up while the strangers invaded their land. She sat with her head bowed and let the sense of failure radiate throughout her body. They'd never had to hide from a group of humans this large, and the number of people would grow even more once the magazine hit the newsstands.

"Go back to the cave, Melanie. I will be by shortly to visit with you." Arian turned and disappeared.

She headed toward the only home she'd known, besides Jared's house. The troubles hanging over their heads weighed solely on her shoulders. She stayed visible. It didn't matter if the humans caught her.

She'd kill herself before they obtained proof of her existence. Once dead, she'd vanish into smoke and join the others who had gone before her. Not even Arian could stop the mad rush of people willing to do harm to the Dryads this time.

Her life's worth reduced to nothing now that she had walked away from Jared. The laws stated if a nymph left a life mate, the nymph would either live the rest of its days in solitude, mourning the loss, or would end their life, thus freeing the mate they left from a binding contract issued by the Oaks. At this point, she'd rather end up taking her own life than dwell on the destruction she brought her people.

She entered the confines of the cave. Keeping the lights off, she sat in the chair she remembered her mother always sitting in and closed her eyes. With her choices now stripped away, she'd bide her time to learn the outcome.

Her stomach seized at the thought of Jared finding her gone from his car, but she pushed the pain out of her mind. He deserved her desertion. What he did . . . she'd never find it inside herself to forgive him.

The nymphs now hid in their homes unable to enjoy their woods. On a typical day, they'd flit about, enjoying each other's company, pleasuring themselves and giving thanks to the Oaks. An aura of calm and serenity would fill the forestland and there

was seldom a reason to hurry. Time stood still, people existed in harmony, and even the creatures that lived alongside them benefitted.

How long would they survive if they couldn't move freely? Even if they survived today

A blast reverberated off the walls of the cave, piercing her eardrums. She covered her head, but remained in the chair. The opening of the dwelling remained well hidden to the naked eye and provided enough security to keep out danger.

Although the hunters came closer, she didn't think they'd find their way inside. Hopefully Felicity would remain safe in her tree and not disregard the danger simply because she had a wild urge to visit one of the male nymphs for comfort.

A voice yelled out near the cave's entrance, and still she refused to leave the chair. Numb from everything happening so fast, she pushed her safety to the back of her mind. Hadn't she just moments ago been sitting in a tree at Jared's house, dreaming about the vacation to the forest they planned for this weekend? How had things gone wrong so fast?

No crack from a gunshot or voices entered the room. She rubbed her face. More than likely, the strange men already moved deeper into the trees in their hunt. She sent up a prayer to the Oak tree to keep her people safe.

A scraping sound came from inside the entrance. Startled at how near the noise seemed, she froze. Holding her breath, she dared not move an inch to give her location away.

They must be blinded by the darkness. She braced herself. As soon as they turned a light on, they'd find her. She reached out and ran her fingers over the end table in a search of a weapon.

"Melanie?"

She sucked in a breath. *Jared!*

"Are you here?"

She refused to answer. If she remained silent, he'd have no idea she sat only a few feet away. He'd have to walk in front of her to reach the lanterns, and if she sensed

him making it that far in the dark, she'd simply vanish. Whatever excuse he wanted to give her for his part in their troubles . . . well, she didn't want to hear.

"Damn it. Where are you?" His big feet stubbed the log she kept to the left of the door and he bit off a stream of curses.

She sucked her lower lip between her teeth and clamped down. *Just leave me alone, Jared.* If she thought it would work, she'd swoop around him in a frenzy and clear his mind of everything he remembered about her, but alas, the magic did not work on someone destined to be your mate.

Minutes passed, and she heard no more from him. She exhaled and shifted in the chair. He must have left the cave.

Not wanting to waste time sitting and waiting for the next person to advance farther into the cave, she walked the familiar floor into the kitchen area and removed a stone off the ledge where she kept her tools. *This will work well.*

The rock was shaped and chiseled to a flat point, sharp enough to cut sturdy vines and small branches; it might work to further her plans if necessary. If it came to no other choice, this weapon was what she'd use to end this nightmare.

Strong arms surrounded her, pinning her arms to her side. Lips touched the side of her neck, and she waited for her chance to lift the weapon and slice her throat.

"Stop," a voice hissed in her ear. "It is I, Arian."

She jerked out of his arms. "What is the meaning of sneaking up on me? I was on the verge of" She trailed off.

"Do you think I don't know what you are planning to do, my nymph? I know what every member of our clan thinks, feels, wants, needs . . . and you are no exception." He pushed her into the outer room. "Sit. I want to speak to you."

She laid the weapon on the end table beside her chair and crossed her arms.

"Your mate did not betray us to the humans."

"I saw the proof with my own eyes. Whatever Jared has told you is a lie!" She clamped her teeth together. Her body hurt from all the stress and the desire to lose her

anger through touching herself didn't show up in its usual way. Right now, even the thought of pleasuring herself sickened her.

"I have talked with him. He tells me a co-worker, who saw the picture before Jared even knew you existed, stole the photo and put it in the magazine. Jared didn't find out about it until it was too late to stop the other humans from seeing it." Arian kneeled before her and rubbed her thighs. "I believe him. The trees believe him."

"Why did Jared not tell them a lie? He could have told everyone it was me. His friends think I am human. I fooled them, Arian. I had all of them laughing and talking to me like I was one of them." She sniffed.

"I don't know, Melanie." He continued to rub along the length of her thighs. "You must go to him. Together you will figure out how to solve this problem. You can bring peace to the people who are trying to tear apart our family and steal our happiness."

"What if I fail?"

"True love never fails." Arian lifted her from the chair. He placed a soft bundle in her hands. "Here, these are the clothes you wore into the forest. Get dressed, and I will fetch Jared. He wanders aimlessly like a clumsy bear, making loud noises and screaming your name." Arian snorted. "I don't see what you nymphs find so appealing about these big humans."

She giggled. "Thank you, Arian. I will find Jared and do my best to save our people. I have learned a lot outside of the forest. I must think like the humans because they do not have the ability to understand us. I'll make you and the other nymphs proud of me."

"Good nymph. Travel safely." He kissed her on the forehead and disappeared from the cave.

She dressed in a hurry, and although she'd lost her flip-flops along the way, her bare feet flew over the forest floor. This territory she knew by heart, and she put all her faith in the trees and in her life-mate. She'd judged him too quickly. Now, she must make it up to Jared, for all their sakes.

She believed Arian spoke the truth. The Oak trees would never let her down, and in return, she'd trust Jared about the mistake with the picture. She should never have run off so fast without getting an explanation first.

Jared's voice boomed over the raised voices, trying to gain attention and failing miserably. The others shook their fist at him and shouted for him to move out of their way. He stood on a fallen tree, wielding a branch much too large for a normal man, and it brought a smile of wonder to her face. He appeared determined, even against a multitude with guns and axes, to protect her family's home territory.

She must perform her best imitation of a human to convince all these bloodthirsty men. Placing her hand on her stomach to quell her nerves, she inhaled deeply through her nose. She prayed they'd believe her. If they'd already formed an opinion, it'd take a person with great strength and talent to pull off the feat she planned.

These people must be convinced to give up chasing the myth.

Strutting out of the forest with her arms swinging and her chin held high, she approached the group. "Jared! There you are! Why did you leave me at the waterfall? I thought you wanted to take my picture again?"

The crowd elbowed each other and moved closer, their cameras clicking away and almost blinding her with the flashes. A giggle of silliness threatened to work its way out of her chest, but she held it at bay. Thank the Oak she spent a lot of time watching television while Jared worked during the day.

"Jared, I'm not getting paid to stand around and swat bugs. My agent is going to be pissed if I don't make it back for my other photo shoot. I have a chance of scoring the cover of Sports Illustrated, you know, and if getting covered in insect bites and scratches screws that up, I'm suing you!" She planted her hands on her hips and tossed her hair in a pure diva move.

"Ugh, there's another one of the beasties." She grabbed a handful of her hair, brought it in front of her face to inspect it carefully and shrieked. "I'll never get them all out without ripping out my hair extensions."

She glared at the man she loved more than anything in her life. "This is your fault! You are going to owe me big time!"

"Babe" Jared stumbled his way over to her and whispered, "Keep it up, beautiful, it's working."

"I demand you take me back to the city." She sniffed and wiped her arm across her forehead. "I've had too much sun; I'm not feeling well. You can forget about making me sit out there naked, this . . . this hellhole is intolerable. Take me back to the city now!"

"Fine, fine." He held onto her elbow. "Excuse me, people. As you can see this has all been a set up. A trick on my employer went horribly wrong. I'm sure if you get the next month's magazine there will be a retraction and an explanation."

"Fucking idiots!" Someone yelled in the back of the crowd.

A gun discharged, and a man pointing the barrel of his weapon in the air nailed them both with a dirty glare.

An older man close to them spat on the ground at their feet and turned around. "Hey, did anyone hear about the mermaid that fisherman swore he saw off the coast of Depot Bay?"

The crowd moved as one huge cloud away from Jared and Melanie. She waited for the last person to leave and jumped into Jared's arms. "We did it!"

"*You* did it, babe." He kissed her lips. "Where the hell did you learn to act like that?"

"Who Wants To Be a Supermodel, channel two-three-one at one o'clock Eastern Time, Monday through Friday." She giggled. "I love that show!"

Chapter Ten

"I can't believe it's finally finished." Melanie stood outside their new home, gazing up at the monstrosity Jared demanded the builders construct for his wife.

He laid his arm around her shoulders. "Yeah, it certainly took them long enough. I wasn't sure if the county building inspectors would allow it, but finding that loophole in the deed and discovering this property was grandfathered into the books before the government sanctioned off the forestry was a stroke of luck. We have old man Potter to thank for that."

Melanie's eyes glistened as she remembered how the hermit, Lawrence Potter, had come to their aid. His shack had sat on the only available property attached to the nymph's forest. After listening to their story, he'd gladly sold out to them as he too had fallen in love with a wood nymph, but had been called away overseas to fight in the Vietnam War. During his absence, his wife had mourned his loss every day and deteriorated in front of everyone. She had passed away not long after he left. That was why, on his return, he had devoted his life to providing supplies to her people, trying his best to keep them safe in an attempt to make it up to the Dryads. Getting too old to do the job, he'd willingly sold out to Jared and wished him well, confident Jared and Melanie would look after the Dryads.

"Well, Mrs. Denali, what do you want to do first?" Jared wiggled his eyebrows.

A mischievous grin curled her lips, and she reached down to pull her sundress over her head. She kicked off her shoes and skipped toward the trees. Oh, Oak, it was wonderful to be back home with all her magic intact.

"What's wrong, Jared? Don't you want to play my games?" She turned and wiggled her ass, taunting him to give chase.

He loped after her, tossing his shirt off and skipping on one foot while removing his jeans. He caught up with her a hundred yards past their new house where a replica of the waterfall where they met stood for their private enjoyment.

She sat atop a boulder, spread her legs and gazed up at Jared. "You can touch any part of me you want."

"And you better believe I *will*." He caught her up in his arms and carefully carried her over to the grassy area where he laid her down on her back. His body covered hers, and she giggled at the way his cock poked into her stomach.

His hand wandered down to her pussy. Finding her wet and ready, he slipped a finger in and worked it back and forth, hitting her g-spot. She arched up into his hand, pleasure spreading throughout her pelvis. He lowered his head and suckled her breast. She loved the way he knew exactly what pleased her most.

She purred, and he groaned against her nipple. She tugged at his arm, wanting to touch his cock. He moved around and straddled her head. The sight of his balls hanging in front of her face proved too tempting.

She gathered one of his testicles in her mouth and lavished it with her tongue. The prickly sensation of his hair on skin so soft heated her insides, and she thrust her pussy in his face.

She switched and gathered his other ball in her mouth, giving it the same attention. She clutched his dick and stroked it up and down, loving the velvety softness over an erection hard enough to caress every inch inside of her body.

A drop of pre-cum dropped between her breasts, and she rubbed the head of his cock in the liquid. His ass clenched as she moved the mushroomed head over her breasts, skimmed her nipples and stroked him with her fingers.

He moved off her and pulled her to her feet. Her legs shook with desire as he guided her over to a tree. Pointing at the trunk, he stepped back. She turned and discovered a broken branch. Polished and shined, the spike gleamed against the natural rough bark of the tree in a size that would fill her completely.

He'd replicated it from her description months earlier, when she'd first confessed to enjoying having her rear fucked. She caught her bottom lip between her teeth and sighed.

"You made this for me?" She smiled, reaching out to stroke the tree. He'd done a marvelous job—smooth, and just the right size and height for her to use. The perfect gift.

"Yeah, ever since you shared with me how you enjoyed the trees in this way, I dreamed of fucking you while you are fucked by a tree." His eyelids lowered with desire. "Do you want to give it a try?"

She nodded and backed up. The tree's spike poked her in the rear. Jared reached around to her butt cheeks and gently pulled them apart while she positioned herself. She laid her back against the rough bark of the tree and shuddered.

In slow motion, she leaned back and relaxed the tight ring of her anus. The way he'd carved and rounded the wood provided an easy entrance.

"It is even better than all the others." She reached down for his cock. "Fuck me too, Jared. Just remember, the tree's cock doesn't have any give."

"I know. I'll be careful." He stepped up and parted her pussy lips.

She quivered and laid her head against his chest, her body consumed by the two things she loved most in the world. Her juices ran over his cock, and she urged him to move in and out.

Slowly, he thrust his hips in quick, little spurts, barely causing a movement, trying not to hurt her. "God, I can feel the tree inside you, it makes you so tight."

"Make me come, Jared, make me and the tree happy." She reached behind him and slipped her finger into his hole. "Maybe you are part nymph. Next time you can use the spike."

"Oh, Jesus, baby." His hips spasmed.

The faster speed set her careening over the edge, and she shuddered in release. Her breasts jiggled against his chest. In a chain reaction, he shot his load deep inside her pussy.

They stood in each other's arms, content, relaxed and full of happiness. Jared helped her off the tree's handmade cock and led her over to the shimmering pool. He cleaned them both, and then together they walked back to their home.

"Are you happy here, knowing you can visit your family anytime?" He kissed the top of her head.

"You have given me more than I ever dreamed." She gazed up at her new house. "You've given me the best of both worlds."

~The End~

About the Author

Multi published author Abby Wood writes compelling, emotionally packed, and sexually charged romance. Whether you're a fan of contemporary, western, or paranormal, you'll find a story that brings you into the lives of her characters and lets you experience a brand new world. Learn more about Abby at <http://authorabbywood.com/>