

ELLORA'S CAVE TWILIGHT

*Blue Lady*  
**SHELLEY  
MUNRO**

ELLORA'S CAVE *Quickies*®

**Blue Lady**  
*Shelley Munro*

*Middlemarch Mates, Book Ten*

Saber and Emily are longtime mates. Happiness has been theirs, until the tragic loss of their unborn baby.

Saber is desperate. Emily has shut him out, wallowing in depression. They inhabit the same house but his loving mate has withdrawn, and he wants his happy, matchmaking woman back. It's time to up the ante. Armed with a bag of sex toys from his wild twin brothers and a tropical island setting, Saber is determined to seduce his mate to his way of thinking, to drive the blues away, and he won't take no for an answer.

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



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Blue Lady

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# *BLUE LADY*

Shelley Munro

### *Acknowledgements*

This story is for all my readers who love Middlemarch and its inhabitants as much as I do. Thanks for all your notes and comments and, for those of you who are desperate to know, I've started writing the twins' story. It's finally underway.

Thank you to my lovely editor Mary. I always learn lots when I work on a book with you. For example, who knew that only New Zealanders and Australians spit the dummy? Thanks so much for all your hard work and encouragement.

And finally, thanks to Paul, who does spit the dummy on occasion, but I love you heaps anyway.

### *Trademark Acknowledgement*

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Ben Wa: Ben Wa Novelty Corporation

## **Chapter One**

Saber Mitchell prowled across the tussock in feline form, gradually picking up speed until he was galloping at full strength. His mind seethed with turmoil. Anger. Helplessness. Pain. He felt it all.

The emotions roiled inside him, combining into doubt and panic. Something had to change between him and Emily before it was too late and their marriage imploded under the strain. His muscles strained. His lungs labored as he fought the stiff breeze roaring over the brow of the hill. Running didn't help. No matter how fast his sprint, he couldn't outrun his fears.

He was losing Emily.

Anguish swelled inside him and he slowed, realizing he'd instinctively headed for the spot where he and Emily had made love during the heady days of their courtship. He'd known what he'd wanted then. Confidence had filled him as he'd pursued his goals. He'd wanted Emily and done his best to both seduce and woo her to his way of thinking. Officially bestowing his mark on Emily and mating with her was the best thing he'd ever done.

He loved her.

It might seem laughable to some, but Emily really did complete him. Her presence made him a better man. She pulled him and his brothers together, making them into a big, happy family, one full of love and laughter.

Hell, he didn't know what to do, how to make things better or how to fix the yawning hole between them. Because there was one thing he knew for sure—he couldn't survive without Emily. They were mates, meant to live out their lives together.

Saber came to a halt in the shelter of a large pile of schist, his sides heaving from the exertion. The scent of dried grasses and the underlying, more pungent aroma of the soil,

damp from recent rain and cattle filled his lungs. He'd come out here to think, but his mind couldn't get past the fact he was losing Emily and the reality—he'd never felt so helpless in his entire life.

It didn't help that he hadn't been there for her and their unborn daughter when they needed him. That's what killed him most of all. He'd promised to look after Emily and hadn't. He'd failed her.

The ache of failure intensified, hurting his chest. Despondently, he padded back into the wind, heading for his vehicle. This time self-sufficiency wasn't going to work. He needed help.

Half an hour later, he walked into Gavin Finley's surgery, halting just inside the door. Gavin was both doctor to the local feline shifters and vet for the human part of the Middlemarch community. Kiran, Gavin's assistant, was with him as they worked on a golden retriever.

"Gavin, I need to make an appointment," Saber said. "Can you fit me in?"

"Is there a problem?" Gavin watched Kiran carefully stitch the wound closed.

"No. Yes." His hands curled to fists at his sides while he struggled to ask for help. He was the one who fixed problems. He didn't need help. His shoulders slumped forward a fraction.

That was a lie.

He and Emily desperately required help. Saber glanced at Kiran. He'd tried to feel anger at the young tiger shifter because it was his presence that had placed Emily directly in the path of danger. Logically, he knew Kiran was just as innocent as Emily and their unborn baby. The men who had stormed their house, searching for Kiran, were to blame, and his initial anger had dulled. "I need to speak with you in private—when you have a moment."

"Kiran and I have another appointment." He glanced at the wall clock. "We should be done by three. Do you want to meet at Storm in a Teacup for a coffee?"

"No," he barked. That was the last thing he wanted. Emily was actually working there today, which was a change from the lethargy and melancholy of the past months. He didn't want Emily to know he was seeing Gavin. "I...could we meet here?"

"Better make it half past three so I have a chance to get something to eat. My stomach is gnawing my backbone."

"I'll bring food and coffee," Saber said. Emily would give him food. They might not talk, they might not socialize with family and friends in the same way they used to, but they did eat, or pretend to, in the case of his mate.

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"I need to talk to you about Emily." Despite the feeling of disloyalty, Saber would do anything to make things right. They'd never be exactly the same as they were before. Saber knew and accepted that. But he refused to believe the empty bubble they'd inhabited for the last eight months was all they had in the future. He forced himself to talk, to stumble through and lay out his—their—personal problems in the hope Gavin could help. "She's not getting better. We don't talk anymore. We sleep in the same bed, but that's all. Emily doesn't—won't touch me." A lump built in Saber's throat, the sting of tears coming on him suddenly. "She locks herself in the bathroom and cries. She thinks I don't know. It's like she's retreated to her own world where nothing else exists. I...I don't know how to fix things." Saber squeezed his eyes shut, concentrating fiercely on maintaining his equilibrium when all he wanted to do was howl with the pain.

"You have to give it time." Gavin reached for his hand, making Saber flinch. Instinctively, he tried to pull away, but Gavin held fast, refusing to let him withdraw. "The loss of a baby due to miscarriage is exactly like mourning the loss of a loved one. You both bonded with your baby and pictured what she'd look like. You considered names and set up a nursery. God, Saber. Something like this doesn't go away overnight. Emily needs to grieve and go through all the stages, the initial grief, the anger, the depression and acceptance before she can come out the other side. You both do."



"But how much time?" Saber inhaled and blew out the breath slowly in an effort to release the tension residing in every muscle of his body. He'd known this would be difficult. Just talking about their baby girl felt like someone had taken a knife to his gut. "I...we can't keep on like this without our marriage breaking. I can't lose Emily. I can't," Saber finished fiercely. They'd lost enough already.

Gavin frowned, reaching for a pen. Saber watched him tap it on the desk and hoped he'd stop soon, his eyes narrowing as his mind started screaming at him. Everything annoyed him these days and his uncertain temper proved it. His youngest brothers Sly and Joe were keeping far away.

"Have you thought about a change of scenery? Sometimes that helps." Gavin paused, as if he were weighing his words.

His prolonged silence sent Saber's alarm bells ringing. He straightened, his spine hitting the back of his wooden chair as he stared at Gavin impassively.

"How are you doing?"

"Fine," Saber said in a gruff voice.

Gavin maintained his measured gaze, and Saber struggled to hold everything together. Everyone expected him to remain strong.

"I'm fine," he repeated.

Gavin didn't look as if he believed him. Saber steeled himself for another barrage of questions but they didn't come.

"Why don't you go on holiday? Go to the beach or the mountains—any place where you can be alone together. Give yourselves time to mourn and reconnect with each other."

"Emily won't go."

"Maybe you should take matters into your own hands. Organize a holiday and make it so she can't refuse."

Saber nodded slowly, knowing his brothers would pick up the slack for him. All he needed to do was ask them. Emily wouldn't have a problem either. It wasn't as if she was spending much time at Storm in a Teacup these days anyway. Today was a rare occurrence. "Maybe you're right. Maybe we should take a holiday."

"Great. How does Fiji sound? Lucas Huntingdon mentioned a resort on one of the Fijian Islands the other night when we had dinner together. It's private and exclusive. He's thinking of investing in the resort. I'm sure he can swing a special deal for you."

Fiji. That would mean a plane flight, and he hated flying.

"I can give you something to get through the flight," Gavin said, obviously reading his mind.

Saber nodded again. "I'll ring Lucas tonight."

\* \* \* \* \*

Small turquoise waves lapped the white sand while a gentle breeze stirred the palm trees, making the fronds rattle musically. A bright orange crab scuttled in front of Emily, the suddenness of his darting run startling her. She let out a girly squeak of surprise, blushing when Saber laughed.

"It's just a crab," Saber said, steadying her with a brief touch on the shoulder. "It won't hurt you."

His touch lasted for fleeting seconds before he moved away and resumed his ambling walk. Emily knew the crab wouldn't hurt her, but she was on edge, the knowledge that Saber wanted to talk truly terrifying her. Things had been difficult between them—strained—since...since... God, she couldn't bear to think about her baby girl. She blinked rapidly, trying to hold back the tears. People didn't go on holiday to discuss getting a divorce, did they? Besides, he was almost smiling. She didn't think men who wanted a divorce looked as if they wanted to smile. Too bad he was stuck with her because of the feline mark he'd bestowed on her.

Only death would stop their yearning for each other, but that didn't mean they needed to live in the same house. These days she couldn't even look at Saber without recalling the way she'd let him down.

She'd lost their baby, their beautiful daughter. She'd failed dismally.

Fighting the ache of tears, Emily continued to walk along the sheltered bay at Saber's side. She had no idea how she'd ended up on an almost-deserted Fijian island. No, that wasn't quite true. Saber had maneuvered her, making it impossible for her to refuse. Only twenty-four hours after his announcement, she'd found herself about to board a plane with her friends and family excitedly taking care of the details such as packing and organizing a roster to keep her cafe Storm in a Teacup running smoothly.

She stole a glance at Saber, anxiety tying her stomach in knots. Her hand trembled when she brushed her hair aside and tucked a lock behind her ear. "Why are we here? Why are we in Fiji? You never said what you wanted to talk about." She'd wanted to ask him straight-out if he intended to show his disappointment in her and move out of their home. Like her first husband... Michael hadn't approved of her either, leaving her for his secretary.

"We're having a long-overdue holiday." Saber stopped walking, reached for her hand and tugged until they faced each other. "I thought it would do us both good if we took a break and relaxed."

"And there's no other reason?" Fear made her insistent. She was a defective wife. Michael had told her so. Saber wasn't cruel like her ex. Saber was more subtle and that's what scared her most of all. She scanned his face, desperately trying to read him.

Saber hesitated. "No other reason."

Sweat trickled down her back and it wasn't just a product of the heat. Saber had considered his reply carefully. Her mind leapt ahead, trying to work out what he could mean. God, she should ask more questions, but she was frightened of learning the answers. Instead, she wiped the back of her hand across her brow. "It's hot."

"Would you like to go for a swim?"

"I don't have my swimsuit. I'll have to go back to our *bure* to get it." The cute wood and straw huts might appear rustic on the outside, but inside they were pure luxury. The thought heightened the tension churning inside her stomach. She didn't understand why they were in Fiji.

Saber tugged his tank top over his head, and Emily couldn't help but stare. He'd hardly changed in the three years they'd been mates. The breeze had ruffled his shaggy black hair in an attractive manner while his green eyes actually glowed with an inner fire she hadn't seen for some time. Determination. He had a goal and intended to achieve whatever target he had in mind. She skittered away from the possibilities even though they lurked in her mind like sharks circling a coral reef.

Heck, what would she do if Saber actually asked for a separation?

"This is our private beach. We don't need swimsuits." Saber removed the last of his clothes and shot her a challenging look. "Come for a swim. It's not safe for me to swim alone."

Emily felt her mouth gape open and she hurriedly closed it again. Her gaze darted the length of his body, and when he laughed softly, she realized her attention had lingered on his groin. Heat filled her cheeks and no doubt stained her face with color.

"Chicken?"

His taunt made her gasp. The teasing light in his eyes reminded her of how it had been in the beginning and the instant attraction between them when they'd first met. Heck, what did she do?

"I can't believe you've turned shy."

"No." The denial shot from her mouth before she could censor it.

"No? So why aren't you taking off your clothes?" His green eyes sparkled with challenge and devilment. Unbidden, her fingers went to the buttons of her cotton shirt. The top button slipped free then the second. She glanced at him and watched his dark brows rise, upping the dare. Emily averted her gaze, huffing out a breath at the same time. She rapidly undid the rest of her buttons and slid the shirt off her shoulders.

They'd been together for three years, knew each other intimately, yet this felt like the first time all over again. Once again, her mind leapt to the reasons Saber had arranged this uncharacteristic holiday. He wasn't acting as if he wanted to walk away. Emily swallowed the lump of nerves tightening her throat. Maybe she could seduce him? Maybe that would help? Reaching behind her, she unfastened her bra and tossed it on the sand. Without looking at Saber, she kicked off her sandals and scrambled from the rest of her clothes, trying not to wince at the stretch marks and pale skin he'd see.

"Emily." The alpha note in his voice called to her, made her look without volition. He smiled with approval and stretched out a hand for her to take.

Confusion was an understatement. She hesitated then took his hand. A frisson of heat sped from her fingertips and up her arm. The sun beat down, warming her all over. Skin that had never seen the sun glowed a dazzling white. An excited little blip jolted her, much like the first time they'd touched.

Ah memories. Her heart twisted with anguish as she stepped into the sea. No matter how much she wanted Saber, things could never be the same, not after all that had happened. She had to remember that. She couldn't pass the blame to Kiran or anyone else. The sole responsibility for her lost baby rested with her.

"You're beautiful, Emily."

Her breath hitched and she glanced at him in surprise. What the heck was he doing? Thinking? Slightly bemused, she allowed him to tug her deeper into the sun-warmed tropical water. It lapped at her thighs then her waist, caressing her skin like smooth, glossy satin. When they reached breast-depth, Saber halted and turned to her, grasping her upper arms to hold her in place. Not that she could have moved. The light in his green eyes stole her breath, weakened her knees.

He intended to kiss her. The knowledge seared her, making her mouth open in shock. Saber hadn't kissed her, hadn't touched her for weeks. She tried to remember the last time and came up empty. Make that months. Emily bit her bottom lip. The non-

touching wasn't exactly his fault. At first, she'd been too distraught. Numb from the loss of their baby. And now it was too late to bridge the gap. She didn't know how.

Unaccountably nervous, she tugged at the ends of her long hair. It hung like brown rat's tails, partially concealing her breasts. It needed a cut. Something else she'd ignored recently.

"If you don't want me to kiss you, tell me now."

Her gasp was audible above the lap of the waves. His fingers tightened on her upper arms to a point shy of pain. She stared up at him, peeking from between lowered lashes. He looked...hungry. Predatory like the dangerous cat he was. Without waiting for her to reply, he lowered his head, closing the distance between them. Their lips met, tentative and cautious, much like a first kiss. That comparison faded rapidly as Saber deepened the contact, drawing her closer so his muscular chest crushed her breasts. An intense burst of heat hit her, swirling through her body. Her heart lurched painfully, and a moan escaped as he devoured her, wrapping his arms around her as if she were a treasured possession.

In shock, Emily clutched his shoulders, allowing him to push his tongue into her mouth, taking the kiss from hesitant to carnal. After wavering, she went with the moment, embracing it with everything she had, grateful for the contact when she'd thought Saber detested her and wanted her gone.

His low groan and the dig of his cock told her she'd engaged his interest. Then she realized her fingertips stroked his marking site. Horrified, she jerked her hand away from the fleshy pad of skin between shoulder and neck.

"Hell, I want you so much. Please let me make love to you." His husky words should have appeased her fears. No such luck. They terrified her, filled her with doubt. She buried her head against his shoulder, and he must have taken that as consent. He lowered his head to nibble the delicate skin of her neck. His tongue drifted over her mark and the fight drained out of her, replaced by a searing desire she hadn't felt for months.

He continued to lave her mark, using the sensitive spot to play her like an instrument. Emily closed her eyes and clung to him, glorying in his touches. She hadn't realized how starved she'd been for touch, how lonely.

"I can't wait. I'm so sorry. I can't take it slow. I need you so bad." Saber lifted her easily, parting her legs. He guided his cock to her entrance and pushed inside before letting her weight do the rest.

Emily winced at the slight pain. She wanted him and had thought her body would do the rest, preparing for his possession. Not so.

"Hell, I'm sorry," Saber whispered after registering her flinch.

"No, don't stop." She gripped his biceps with urgency, instinctively knowing if they stopped now things would become even more uncomfortable between them. They stared at each other, the turquoise water rocking their bodies. It felt warm and silky, the idea of making love outdoors where anyone could see very decadent. A turn-on.

Saber kissed her fiercely, their teeth clashing before he angled his mouth a fraction more for the perfect fit. A purr vibrated deep in his throat, the sexy sound relaxing Emily. Saber slid deeper into her pussy, and they both sighed.

"Wrap your legs around my hips and hold on to my shoulders." He placed her hands on his shoulders when she was slow to respond to his order. "That's it. Now use the buoyancy of the water. Yeah," he purred. "That's it."

The feel of his cock stretching muscles and tissues unused for some time sent a curl of arousal spiraling through her pussy. She rose up and sank back down, her eyes fluttering closed to concentrate on the building pleasure. It felt so good being with Saber like this. So good. Part of her had missed him, but she hadn't realized the full extent of the crack in their relationship until he'd touched her intimately again, filled her. Emily admitted it—she couldn't let him go. Despite the aching silence between them, she could never stand aside and let him move on to another woman.

Never.

Emily quickened her pace, rising and falling until hot, sensual flames licked every inch of her flesh.

"Emily. God, you feel so good wrapped around my cock. So tight and wet. I can't...oh hell." His entire body shook as he climaxed hard.

She felt the splash of wetness deep inside her and the faint pulse of his cock as he burrowed his head in the crook of her neck. His mouth fastened over her mark, his tongue moving over it in a soft, tormenting stroke. It felt good. Heck, it felt great, but it wasn't enough. Saber softened and lifted her away from him.

"Come with me," he said.

Emily opened her mouth to complain and snapped it shut again. Complaining wasn't the way to get back in Saber's good books. She should count her blessings. At least he was touching her again. He dragged her to shallow water and turned to grin when they reached the shore.

"Perfect."

Before she could ask what was so perfect about feeling sexually frustrated, he swept her off her feet and placed her on the sand. Seconds later he joined her. Bewildered by the swift move, she blinked. A wave ran to shore, the white foam rushing over their bodies. Saber chuckled and let the water sweep them higher up the beach. He leaned over, caging her beneath his body and started kissing her. He devoured her mouth, sweeping aside the protest forming on her lips. They were on a beach where anyone could see them. She pushed at his shoulders until he lifted his head.

"Shouldn't we get dressed?" She cast a swift glance left and right, reassuring herself they were actually alone.

"I told you. It's a private beach. Our private beach for the entire month."

"But I'll get sunburned."

"Not if you stop protesting and let me have my way."



He wanted to have his way with her. *Be still my heart.* "Haven't you already had your way with me?" she snapped.

"Ask me at the end of the month." His grin faded, replaced by the open determination she recalled from the days of their courtship. He'd wanted her and had courted her until she came around to his way of thinking. He'd been sweet yet relentless. "By the end of our holiday you should have your answer."

"What answer?"

"That's for you to find out." He snared her gaze, and where she expected anger, she received a grin. "Shut up and kiss me." His mouth descended and he sealed their lips, their talking seemingly done for the moment.

Confusion pounded along with her heartbeat as the kiss changed from persuading to sweet. Her blood seemed to thicken in her veins. Sweet mercy. They hadn't kissed like this in forever. Saber's brothers or their wives always interrupted or they had visitors. At the time, Emily hadn't minded because she'd become part of a family – the family she'd always wanted. Then she'd fallen pregnant and she'd never been happier.

She should've known something would go wrong.

Saber lifted his head. "Stop thinking so hard."

"I'm not."

"You are. You've checked out on me again. It's insulting and makes me think you don't want me. Do you know what that sort of thing does to a man?"

Emily gaped up at him in shock. Not want him? Did he have rocks in his head? It was him who'd engineered this holiday. It was Saber who said they needed to talk. "I...no, that's not true." Of course she wanted him!

"Good to know," he said gruffly, and started to nuzzle her neck. He kissed the delicate spot behind her ear and nipped her neck. One big hand caressed her breast. Since her pregnancy they'd become more sensitive and she gasped at the bungee of sensation that shot to her clit. She stirred, wriggling a little, caressing Saber's back, her

hand sliding down his spine to come to a rest on his ass. "No touching," he ordered in a husky voice. "Hands above your head."

Emily frowned, becoming more and more bewildered by his behavior.

"Hands above your head," he repeated, his fingers a frustrating inch away from her nipple. She wanted to experience the hit of pleasure again.

"You're the one who's gonna get a sunburned ass." She aimed for smug but didn't pull it off. Instead she sounded bewildered, which was exactly the way she felt.

"Are you refusing to follow my instructions?"

"Yes." An imp inside Emily decided to act out. She had no idea what she was doing, so off balance she didn't know what to think or how to react to this resolute Saber.

His eyes darkened. "Are you sure you want to do that?"

"Y-yes." No, she wasn't sure at all. She had no idea what she was doing.

Saber grinned then, moving so quickly she scarcely had time to blink. A small squeak erupted from her as he positioned her over his knee. He caressed her buttocks with his calloused hand – a farmer's hand, rough from the day-to-day workload.

She'd hardly registered the caress when he lifted his hand. She felt the warmth of the sun, the faint kiss of the breeze – then he smacked her.

"Ow!" She reared up in shock, the masculine grin she witnessed flabbergasting her even more. She attempted to wriggle free, but he held her firmly. His fingers brushed across the stinging flesh of her buttock.

"That's for disobeying me."

Disobeying? What the hell? Before she could say a word, he smacked her again – two rapid taps in different places. Heat spread over her butt, the sting of pain clearing quickly to bring a new, surprising sensation. Holy Hannah. She'd heard of spanking and immediately decided it was way outside her comfort level and a kink she never wanted to experience. Maybe she should rethink this, along with a few other things?

There was a long silence, broken only by a gull flying overhead and the swish of the incoming waves. A quiver went through her as she catalogued the feelings pulsing through her body.

"I've never disobeyed you."

"No?" Three, swift smacks rained down on her stinging buttocks. This time there was no mistake. She groaned and it wasn't with pain. When the third smack came, she lifted up into it, embarrassingly aware of the surge of juices trickling from between her legs. "Do you like that, Emily?"

"No," she blurted, aghast at admitting the truth.

"And this is for lying to me." Another series of smacks sent heat skittering across her ass, the vibrations from the smacks going all the way to her clit. Before she could analyze the combined pain and pleasure, she felt Saber's hand cupping her burning buttocks. He trailed his fingers gently across her singing flesh. Emily couldn't prevent a quiver of pleasure. "You like this. I can smell your pleasure."

"Maybe." Heat suffused her face, and she was glad he couldn't see her expression. Heck, she'd never get used to his sneaky feline senses. It was difficult to keep changes in her body to herself. He'd even known she was pregnant before she'd realized it herself. She pressed her lips together to contain her sudden flash of humor. He was certainly enjoying himself because his cock was digging into her.

"Let's see, shall we?" Saber ran a finger between her legs, a distinct squelch making her blush harder. "Good, I was right."

Before she knew it, he'd arranged her on all fours. He moved behind and entered her with one hard thrust. This time there was no pain. Only pleasure. He retreated and invaded, filling her with leisurely strokes while he toyed with her swollen bud. Teasing and stroking her until she whimpered and trembled against him.

"Saber," she whispered, pushing back into his thrusts.

He thrust again and the tension snapped inside her. Her pussy pulsed around his cock, pleasure fizzing through her veins with each unhurried pass of his fingers. She moaned out loud, shattering under the maelstrom of sensations.

“That’s it, sweetheart. You feel good. I like the way your cunt squeezes my cock.”

His dirty talk set another smaller series of pulses in motion. Saber cursed softly and slammed into her, gripping her hips as he repeated the move then stilled, fully impaled. His husky groan of completion filled Emily with satisfaction. Not even the painful grip of his hands at her hips dulled her delight in the moment. It seemed they hadn’t lost the knack when it came to good sex. She just hoped they could solve the rest of their problems as easily.

## Chapter Two

Saber pulled out of Emily, feeling better than he had in days. Hell, he was almost grateful to Sly and Joe for the advice they'd given him at the airport, along with the interesting bag of sex toys. *If all else fails, spank her. Make her see sense.*

He stood and held out his hand, helping her to rise. "Come on. Let's go and have a shower."

"I seem to have sand in some interesting places."

A ripple of pure pleasure went through Saber when Emily actually took his hand. When they reached their pile of clothes, he scooped them up.

"Aren't we going to get dressed?"

Not if he had his way. Saber intended to keep her naked for as much of the month as he could. "We're going to have a shower. There's no point dressing."

"At least let me put on my sandals. The sand's hot."

They paused for Emily to thrust her feet into the sandals and continued to their luxurious *bure*.

Buoyed by their lovin' outdoors, Saber led Emily into the bathroom. The shower was huge and plenty big enough for sensual play. He had something else in mind though for their afternoon—something more comfortable. After tossing the clothes aside, he knelt to remove Emily's sandals and urged her to turn on the shower. Soon the water poured from the dual showerheads, making quick work of the sand when they stepped under the water.

Saber lathered lavender gel on a washcloth. "Turn around. Let me do your back."

She hesitated where once she would have followed his direction without delay. It hurt—her lack of...trust. Yeah, trust. Once she'd believed in him completely. He hoped

the intimacy and confidence that came with sex might be the thing to fix the breach between them.

"I've never done anything to warrant your hesitation. Do you trust me?"

Her eyes rounded. "Of course I trust you."

"Show some faith. Let me wash you." He watched her audible swallow and felt his temper strain at the leash. If he could get his hands on the bastard who had injured Emily and their baby, he'd kill him all over again with his bare hands. Reining in his emotions, he waited for her to obey.

Slowly she turned to present her back.

"Part your legs for me." Saber breathed out in relief when the hesitation was scarcely noticeable this time. He washed her back and moved down to her ass, taking care to use gentle strokes because he knew her buttocks would feel tender. He'd enjoyed spanking her, but the fucking—lovemaking had been even better. He slipped a sudsy hand between her legs, using a teasing stroke. He didn't want to get her off again yet, but keeping her on edge was all part of the plan. "Shall I tell you what I'm going to do with you for the rest of the afternoon?"

"What?" The cautious reply made him smile. He pressed a kiss to the middle of her spine and curved his hands around her body to cup her breasts. A perfect handful.

"I'm going to start right from the beginning. We'll lie on the bed together and make out."

Emily turned to face him, a question on her face. "Kissing?"

"I like to kiss you." And he hadn't done it enough recently. "I'm gonna cup your face in my hands and kiss you. Soft kisses on your eyelids. A peck on your nose. I might nibble your chin or lick around your luscious mouth."

"That sounds like a lot of kissing."

At least she sounded intrigued.

"I'm going to slide my tongue across the seam of your mouth, take a taste. Maybe nip your bottom lip. Then we'll kiss. Slow kisses. Light kisses. Kisses with tongue. We'll kiss for a long time." Saber brushed his fingers over her pink lips. "And that's just for starters." Saber washed her breasts, cupping them with soapy hands. God, she was beautiful. He'd thought so the first time he saw her and his feelings hadn't changed. This holiday had to work. He sluiced the last of the soap away and briskly washed himself. "That's it. Let's go."

Saber turned off the water and nudged Emily out of the glass stall. He grabbed a towel and blotted the droplets of water from her body.

"Wait for me on the bed."

Emily frowned. "You're awfully bossy lately."

Because he was frightened she'd leave him if he didn't force the issue. He'd tried to support her, be strong, but he hurt too. He mourned their child as much as Emily did. "Is submitting to my instructions such a bad thing?" Hell, the last thing he wanted to do was hurt or scare her.

"Nooo."

Saber frowned inwardly. He needed to keep her too busy to think. "So, if I retrieved the four silk scarves from the bag of sex toys the twins gave me and tied you to the bed you wouldn't have a problem with that?"

"The twins gave you sex toys?"

"At the airport." He grinned as he recalled Sly and Joe's wink-wink, nudge-nudge routine while telling him about the sex toys. At the time he'd felt like throttling them, but he'd come around to their way of thinking. The bag held all sorts of erotic possibilities.

"I saw the three of you together in a huddle. It's time the pair of them got their comeuppance."

Saber's grin widened with delight. Emily was thinking about matchmaking again. She hadn't shown interest in the daily goings-on in Middlemarch for ages. Things were looking up. Confidence built in him. He could do this.

"On the bed, Emily. We're going to play with some of the toys the twins purchased for us."

Her bottom lip jutted out. "What about the kisses?"

"Don't worry. There will be plenty of those to go around. On the bed. Now."

Emily's heart started to race. This holiday was shaping up into something quite different from what she'd anticipated. She didn't understand exactly what Saber was up to, but he obviously still desired her. Maybe she'd go along with whatever he wanted. He wasn't acting like a man intent on separation. Michael had stated his intentions up front, so perhaps her fears about their relationship were ungrounded.

With another quick glance at Saber's impassive face, Emily strolled into the bedroom, putting a sway in her step as she headed for the bed. In the past she'd done seduction well. She could do it again if she put her mind to it.

She dropped onto the firm mattress and rolled to the middle of the huge bed to wait for Saber. He took his own sweet time. By the time he prowled to the bedroom, her nerves hummed with trepidation. What exactly did he intend to do with her? Knowing the twins, the bag they'd given Saber could contain anything. *Everything*.

He stopped by the wardrobe, the door creaking when he opened it. A zipper sounded, and the pace of her heartbeat cranked up a little further.

"Close your eyes."

Emily followed the instruction, trying to breathe evenly and keep her nerves under control. Every sense intensified with the lack of her eyesight.

"Ah," Saber said.



"Ah what?" The unknown was turning into a many-headed monster. She knew the twins' sense of humor and the knowledge did little to reassure her.

"Nothing sinister. Keep your eyes closed."

He started kissing her, just as he'd described earlier. He cupped her face with his work-rough hands and brushed kisses over her closed eyes. He licked around her mouth and fused their lips in a toe-curling kiss. Tender yet intimate, it stole her breath, made her pulse race, and above all, his kiss gave her hope. He laced their fingers together while he continued to stoke a fire in her. Gradually he upped the pace until he was devouring her mouth. The entire time he held her hands, grounding and making her feel connected. He gentled the kiss, slowly easing back until their mouths barely brushed. Lost in a sensual haze, Emily floated with the pleasure.

Saber separated their hands. "Keep your eyes closed," he reminded her as he moved. With Saber no longer touching her, every nerve ending pulsed in awareness. She heard what sounded like a bottle opening. The wheeze of a bottle confirmed it. The mattress depressed and she felt him straddle her hips. Her skin prickled as she imagined him studying her body, her breasts. At least he couldn't call her fat like Michael had because she'd dropped a lot of weight in the last few months. Most of her clothes hung on her like unattractive sacks. Not that she cared, although she had to admit, looking like a bag lady probably wasn't the way to keep a mate onside. Perhaps that was why Saber had insisted on skinny-dipping. Maybe her one-piece swimsuit offended him.

"Stop frowning." Something in his tone suggested she'd upset him again. Checking out, he'd called it. She really didn't mean to, but her mind was all over the place and every thought reminded her of her failure.

"I'm not." Emily wiped her expression clean and denied everything.

"You know what happens when you lie."

Spanking. A bolt of arousal shot through her at the thought of Saber striking her ass again. Heck, if it felt that good all the time, she'd be happy for him to spank her. The beginnings of a grin tugged at her mouth.

Saber didn't give her a chance to deny her lie. Liquid drizzled across her breasts, warm and fragrant. A hint of sandalwood and spicy cinnamon teased her nostrils. Her skin tickled as the liquid ran down the curve of her breast. His large hands dispersed the oil, rotating in firm, circular strokes across her breasts and straying to her shoulders. He moved teasingly close to her nipples, the sensual tension that had dissipated, growing again. His touch felt so decadent. He'd always touched her, made her feel good in the past, but he'd never taken such care or ordered her around as he had today. It was actually kind of hot, but once again, Emily wondered what it meant. She'd taken to dissecting every action, every word because the future frightened her so much.

She sighed when his fingers drifted closer to her areola and she felt her nipple pull to a taut nub. "Saber," she whispered, his name a silent demand for more.

"If you want more, Emily, you need to tell me. I don't want a passive lover."

A sliver of fear struck her at his words. She'd certainly been passive lately. "I don't understand. You liked my submission earlier."

"There's a difference between passive and submissive."

There was? "Explain." The one word held all the tension she felt inside.

"Passive tells me you don't care either way. I could be anyone, any man. You're just going through the motions. Submissive is different because you choose to give yourself to my care. It means you want and desire me."

"I want you," Emily said sharply, panic stripping away all her previous calm.

"Do you?"

Emily opened her eyes, more disturbed by the strange note in Saber's voice than she cared to admit. "I want you to tug on my nipples. Pinch them and give me a hint of pain." Her heart thudded against her ribs as they stared at each other.

"Close your eyes again."

"Why?"

"I want you to concentrate on the tactile sensations, the pleasure. I want you to relax. You haven't done much of that lately."

Emily held his determined gaze, let out a huff of exasperation and finally did as he ordered. Immediately he started to massage her breasts, his even strokes soothing the tension bubbling through her mind. This interaction with Saber might be terrifying, but it had forced her to focus and concentrate. The emptiness didn't feel quite as bad and despondency didn't cut so deep.

His fingers crept closer to her nipples, a bolt of sensation streaking through her when he gave a light tug. Her breath caught when he followed up with a pinch. A shard of pain echoed in her pussy and a soft groan escaped. His palms moved in firm circles above both nipples then he tweaked them hard. The burning twinge of pain heated her entire body and she bit her lip to keep from calling out, begging for more.

This caution was also something new. He'd told her to ask for what she wanted, to quit her passive behavior, but did he really want that? He'd always directed their lovemaking, telling or showing her what he wanted her to do.

He shifted his weight downward, his hand leaving her breast. More oil trickled on her heated skin, running into her navel. She shivered with anticipation, determined to keep her fears at the back of her mind.

"Part your legs for me."

She followed his instruction, jumping a little when he drizzled more oil over the folds of her sex. Emily gave a fleeting thought to the sheets before his attentions distracted her along with a tingling sensation where the oil hit her aroused flesh. Saber's fingers followed the flow of the oil, whispered across her swollen folds. She trembled, imagining the expression on Saber's face as he studied her responses to his touch. His eyes would darken. They might bear a glint of humor or his face might pull tight with need.

Instead of teasing her, he seemed bent on arousing her. A thick finger pushed into her sheath while another circled her clit. A buzzing sound started without warning, and she felt him insert something into her pussy.

"Does that feel good? Tell me."

"Yes, it feels good." A vibrator?

"Emily." Her name held a wealth of disappointment, making her wonder exactly what he wanted from her. After all these years together, she should've known. "Give me specifics. Does it feel better if I do this? Or this?" He removed the vibrator and trailed it over her clit.

A double jolt of pleasure took her by surprise when he pressed his fingers against the front wall of her vagina and circled her clit with the vibrator. "Oh yes. Do that again. Yes, right there."

"Words, Emily. Give me words. Talk dirty to me."

A flush of heat filled her cheeks and seeped down her throat to her chest. He wanted frank language? She could do that. "I want you to fuck me with your finger and touch the sweet spot—yes! Right there." The heat intensified inside her, a flash detonating in her pussy.

"Better," he acknowledged, laughter shading his voice. "Give me more. Nothing you ask for will shock me."

Confusion settled in Emily and refused to let her fully relax. What the heck was he trying to prove? Had he become bored with their sex life? No, scratch that. Of course he had because they hadn't exactly had a sex life since...since...

Her breath whooshed out while she battled a sudden realization. She had gone through something similar with Michael. They'd gone on a holiday together, one that she'd arranged in the hope they'd rekindle the heady times of their honeymoon. A shudder went through her and it had nothing to do with Saber. It was stone-cold fear. What if Saber had met someone else?

No. She shoved the thought away as soon as it crystallized in her mind. Saber wasn't like that. He wasn't sneaky and wouldn't treat her or any other woman in that manner. No, Saber was honest. She trusted him completely, which meant there was something else afoot here. The last thing she wanted to do was lose him. Then she really would be alone.

"Emily." The hard tone in his voice sent chills rioting through her. She froze and opened her eyes, consternation pounding in concert with her elevated pulse rate. He removed his fingers from her pussy, and her heart thumped hard. Worry joined her panic when he switched off the vibrator. His face—she had to see his expression to try to make sense of things.

"What?" She had never sounded so timid in all her life, and the sardonic curl of his lips told her he'd picked up her diffidence.

"There are three people in bed with us. Kick the third out or I'll walk."

## **Chapter Three**

Emily stared at Saber in acute shock. She scrambled to an upright position, her heart pounding so loudly she could scarcely hear herself think. "You think I'm having an affair? Are you crazy?" Her voice rose toward the end of her sentence and her eyes prickled with a tightness that signaled imminent tears. "How could you think that I would..." She trailed off, words deserting her in the face of his accusation.

"I never said you were having an affair." He scrubbed a hand over his face and the anger seemed to drain out of him. "I said there were three people in bed with us. You keep checking out on me. I hate making love to you when you're not in the moment with me."

Emily swallowed, the shocks coming one after the other. Saber wasn't one for a lot of deep discussion. Oh, she knew and sensed his feelings, and lately she'd been aware of his turmoil. Part of it came through the mate bond. The other part she surmised from observations and the fact she'd lived with him for several years. "I don't understand."

Saber climbed to his feet and started pacing. His laugh held bitterness. "Of course you don't. If you think I'm not hurting, that I don't wish I'd been there that day." He whirled to face her, his expression almost savage with the cat shimmering across his face. "I'm going for a run."

"Don't you think you'll need some clothes?" She used a teasing tone, but instead of alleviating some of the tenseness, it served to fuel more. A chill stalked down her spine.

"I'm running in feline form."

"But someone might see."

"Let them," he snarled.

Emily didn't think she could feel yet another shock, but his words caused a ripple of unease. If there was one thing Saber was very careful about, it was letting strangers

witness his feline form. When she thought about it, she was still surprised he'd taken the initial plunge during their courtship and actually showed her his other form. When it came to safety and keeping feline secrets, he verged on paranoid. With just cause. It was easy to imagine the interest feline shifters would engender in the scientific world.

"Okay," she said. "How long will you be gone?" She wanted to know when she should start worrying. She gnawed her bottom lip while she waited for his reply.

His face seemed to soften at her words. "A couple of hours. I need to do some thinking."

"Saber, I have never looked at another man. Never."

"I know," he said, and he crossed the distance separating them, coming to a halt by the bed. Leaning over, he kissed her. It was a gentle kiss yet held a touch of restrained passion that reassured her as words couldn't. "I've arranged a massage session for you. I thought you could use it tomorrow, but why don't you go up to reception and see if they can fit you in this afternoon?" He turned away before she could reply. "And order our dinner while you're up there. Something substantial. You know what I like. We'll eat up in the restaurant tonight."

Before she could reply, he disappeared out the door. Mind in turmoil, she slumped against the fluffy pillows at the head of the bed. If he didn't think she was cheating on him, then what did he mean?

Their lovemaking had been incredible, even better than she remembered. It had been when her mind wandered that he'd transformed from lover to icy stranger. Emily sighed. Saber was right. She had zoned out, taking her head out of the present and letting her thoughts drift. Maybe she should come right out and ask him if he resented her because she'd lost their baby.

For a long time she'd even wondered if she could have children. She still remembered the intense relief when she'd fallen pregnant. Saber loved children, and it was so important for the feline community to increase in numbers. Yet he'd never put any pressure on her when it had taken time. He'd showered her with love and support,

but things had changed now. She'd lost their baby girl. What if she could never have a child? What would happen to their marriage then?

\* \* \* \* \*

Saber shifted beneath a coconut palm. Assured by management that no one would intrude on their private beach, he didn't even search the shadows for voyeurs. He called up his feline and let the change take him, embracing the pain and discomfort as muscles, sinew and bone reshaped to black leopard.

In a slow lope, he traveled across the white sand, his mind full of thoughts. He'd let his frustration get the better of him earlier. He'd tried to bite his tongue, but Emily had pissed him off with the way she'd obviously been miles away. One minute she was enjoying his ministrations then she'd drifted off to god knew where in her thoughts. He'd started to feel like a third wheel. It was a familiar place, and he'd started to resent the hell out of her for making him feel this way – about as useful as tits on a bull.

Hell, he knew she wasn't having an affair. He knew there wasn't another man in her life. It was the baby—their baby—that filled her mind. Fuck, there had to be something wrong with him that he resented a baby. Emily had been so excited when she'd learned of her pregnancy. So had he, elation filling him while he and Emily prepared a nursery and discussed names for their daughter. Saber increased his speed, trying to outrun his pain. Their baby would never know how much they'd loved her.

Saber hit the water, a wave splashing into his face and making his nose tickle. He sneezed and leaped over the next wave, jumping back into the turquoise water.

Emily had to face facts. Their baby had died, but they were both still alive. He needed his wife, the affectionate and warm woman he'd fallen in love with almost at first sight. God, he was jealous. How the hell could he be jealous of a baby, one who had never even taken a breath of air, at that? What kind of a man did that make him?

It made him human. Gavin had told him they both had to mourn. Logically, he understood the concept, but it didn't make it any easier to accept.



Back to Emily. Saber angled his body so he entered the more shallow water and picked up his pace. He needed patience. He'd have to start over. If today had proved one thing, it was that they were still sexually compatible. His twin brothers obviously knew what they were doing when they'd given him the bag of toys. Mind made up, he continued his run, this time taking time to enjoy his surroundings and the warmth of the sun as it beat down on his black fur. He'd go with sexual hijinks and fill Emily with pleasure so deep that she'd focus on nothing else except him.

Outside the *bure*, he shook the sand and seawater from his coat and shifted to human form. Emily wasn't there, but she'd left him a note.

*I rang reception and was able to book in a massage. I should be back around four.*

*Love Emily.*

Saber read the note with approval. Part of him had expected to find her still in the *bure*, staring sightlessly at the wall. That she'd actually taken his suggestion brought a sense of satisfaction. The *Love Emily* didn't hurt either. Affection of any kind had been sadly lacking in their lives recently. Something else he intended to change. These days, if he touched her, even in a casual manner, she flinched. Emily needed to get past that. She had to learn she was safe with him. The thought made him pause.

Charlie and Laura, friends and local cops, had told him there was nothing he could have done to change the outcome. The man after Kiran would have killed them all given the opportunity. Gavin had said something along the same lines. Survivors' guilt was a powerful thing. If he wanted to help Emily, he had to push thoughts like that aside. They had to accept the horrid past and move on with their lives.

Saber padded to the bathroom and took a quick shower. Once he'd dried himself, he returned to the bedroom and flung himself on the bed. Emily shouldn't be much longer. He considered the sex toys in his possession and made plans. He worked much better with a goal in sight. He knew exactly what he wanted—a happy life with Emily. When it came down to it, Saber realized he didn't need children to validate his existence. If they happened that was a bonus, but Emily was more important to him

than anything else. He wondered if he should tell her that and shied from the idea. It probably wasn't something she wanted to hear right now.

Sex would bring them together, the physical closeness. The connection—as long as he could keep her thoughts focused on him. A burst of sensation zapped through his veins. His cock started to fill. Lazily, he caressed it, letting the sensations build while he fantasized about what he could do to Emily, what they could do to each other. Minutes passed and his cock lengthened, his balls tightening. His eyes closed as he fell into the fantasy, the pleasure.

A soft sound of surprise made his eyes fly open. Emily hovered in the doorway, the faint flush in her cheeks telling of her embarrassment. He considered her a moment longer and casually stroked his cock from base to tip. Her attention was riveted to his cock and the stroke of his hand. Okay, maybe not embarrassment. That could be interest.

"Come in," he said, his words low and husky.

Her blush intensified. "I've never seen you do that before."

Saber paused. "I never have time to relax like this when I'm at home. I'm either with my brothers or with you. Why don't you come over here?"

"Only if you keep going," Emily said, surprising him with the note of curiosity in her voice.

Saber grinned. "Would you like me to give you a blow-by-blow description?"

"Yes. I never knew it would be so sexy watching you touch yourself."

The lazy pleasure rippling through Saber ratcheted up a notch at her words. "You can watch me anytime, sweetheart." Hell, if he'd known how hot he'd get under her attentive gaze he would have tried this earlier. Weeks ago. With his gaze on her, he continued to stroke his cock from root to flared head and back again. He watched as she moved closer to perch on the end of the bed, scrutinized the flick of her pink tongue as she licked her bottom lip. "Do you want to touch?"

"No, I want to watch. Go on, tell me what you're doing. Give me a running commentary."

The minx was throwing his earlier words back at him. Her teasing brought a rush of hope. All he needed to do was find a way to communicate, a way for both of them to get past their grief. Saber knew the tragedy of losing their baby would always be there, but it didn't need to rule their lives. Next time — He broke off the thought and stopped stroking his cock.

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing." He aimed for casual and didn't quite make it. They hadn't used condoms earlier. Birth control hadn't even occurred to him. Fuck, he didn't think he could handle Emily getting pregnant again. A ripple of fear made his cock soften.

"Something is wrong," Emily insisted. "I'm not blind. Besides, you've gone all soft and floppy."

"Floppy?" The word burst from him along with a bark of startled laughter. Only Emily had the ability to surprise him and make him laugh this way. "I have enough wood to get the job done."

"I'd ask you to prove it, but I feel so relaxed from the massage I think I'd be the floppy one. That doesn't mean you shouldn't carry on," she added.

Saber thought about avoiding her earlier question and discounted the idea. Avoiding talking is what had landed them in the emotional turmoil. He took a deep breath. "We didn't use any birth control earlier."

"Does it matter?" she asked carefully. Her gaze darted from his, and his stomach sank. God, why hadn't he kept his big mouth shut?

"Do you want to get pregnant again?" Saber's heart twisted when she turned away, stood and moved to the wardrobe.

“Our dinner reservation is at six thirty. If we go soon, we have time for a pre-dinner cocktail. I’d like one of those fruity ones with a little umbrella.” The coat hangers rattled as she selected a dress to wear for dinner.

Saber cursed inwardly, no longer interested in getting off. Frustration hammered through him, finding an outlet in clenched fists. Dammit, he wasn’t going to let her get away with this. They were going to talk if it was the last thing they did. And they were going to have sex again – lots of sex, either with or without condoms.

It made him realize that, despite his fears for Emily’s safety, he would like to try for another baby. He’d loved seeing the changes in her body, the swell of her stomach and the increased tenderness of her breasts. He’d loved feeling their daughter kick. Yeah, another baby might not be such a bad idea – if that was what Emily wanted as well.

The twins had added a box of assorted novelty condoms to the goodies, and he’d use them if he needed to, but he wouldn’t forgo sex with Emily, not since that seemed to be the only way they could communicate.

Emily walked into the bathroom, still slightly steamy so Saber must have had a shower after his run. Did she want to get pregnant again? Saber’s question had taken her by surprise. All this time she’d thought he’d blamed her for losing their baby, for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. But a few things he’d said since they’d arrived here didn’t make sense. They certainly didn’t add up to separation.

She wiped the foggy mirror with her hand and scowled at her reflection. She hadn’t even thought about the lack of birth control. They hadn’t used anything for a long time, so it wasn’t something that had struck her as odd. She loved the feel of Saber inside her with nothing between them.

After turning on the shower, she stepped into the glass cubicle. Mindful of the time, she washed briskly. She dried off and realized she’d brought her sundress with her, but in her hurry to escape Saber, she’d forgotten to get a pair of panties.

"Bother." Emily smoothed on vanilla and cinnamon body lotion before applying a little makeup.

"Something wrong?" Saber's gaze wandered down her body before returning to her face. The hunger he didn't try to hide made her stomach buck and her breasts prickle with anticipation. Wow, that didn't look like a man who wasn't interested.

"I don't need a bra with this dress but I forgot my panties. Won't be long."

"Don't bother with panties," he said, and he couched his words as an order. "I want you to wear these for me."

Emily stared at the two round balls sitting in the palm of his hand. Wear? Did one wear Ben Wa balls?

"Part your legs so I can put them in for you."

Saber didn't give her a choice. His brows rose while he waited, his will implacable. Slowly she widened her stance. With the ease of familiarity, he ran his fingers down her slit, stroking softly over her clit until warmth sizzled inside her. Emily bit back her groan of pleasure with difficulty. Since they'd made love earlier, she'd thought a lot about sex. Walking in on Saber pleasuring himself had only heightened the arousal sizzling through her sensitized body.

With deft fingers, he inserted the balls into her pussy. "Perfect," he said. "I'm going to enjoy thinking about you wearing them for me tonight."

Emily took an experimental step and heard a faint tinkle. They felt surprisingly comfortable and a bit naughty. "What if they fall out? I've never tried these before, but Tomasine said she had some and they fell out when she and Felix went out for dinner. Felix thought it was funny. Tomasine said it was plain embarrassing."

Saber made a choking sound deep in his throat. "Damn, when was that? Felix didn't say a word."

"Quite right. Men shouldn't go around telling tales."

Saber chuckled and tugged on her hand, indicating she should follow him into the bedroom. He plucked her dress off the hanger and took it with them. The Ben Wa balls tinkled a little but felt fairly secure when she walked.

"Get dressed. Just the dress," he said.

"But what if I fall flat on my face? I don't want everyone to see my bare backside."

"You won't fall," Saber said, "because I'll be at your side to catch you. I won't let you fall."

\* \* \* \* \*

By the end of their dinner, Emily wasn't worried about the Ben Wa balls falling out. Neither was she worried about falling over. No, the thing that concerned her most was leaving an obvious wet spot on her dress. It was a combination of Saber's full attention and the Ben Wa balls. Her stomach quivered, and she bit down on her lip, trying to contain the arousal surging through her body. Her breasts felt heavy and oh so tender. Her pussy bloomed, a low-grade tingle signaling her need for Saber. Normally, she enjoyed eating out at a restaurant, taking great delight in dissecting the various dishes on the menu. She liked to note the way the restaurateurs presented their dining room and meals.

Not tonight.

Tonight all she was aware of was Saber. They chatted about their time on the island and the various activities they could pursue and all the time they talked, Saber's hand caressed her shoulder, played with her hair or slipped under the table to stroke her leg.

The waitress brought their main courses. Earlier, she'd chosen fish, cooked two different ways. Emily thanked the waitress with a smile, almost jumping out of her skin when Saber ran his hand up her inner thigh and curled his fingers to check on the Ben Wa balls.

"Will there be anything else?" the waitress asked.

"No thanks," Saber said.

"Saber." Emily's voice held reprimand and she tried to wriggle away from his touch.

"You're turned-on."

"Of course I am," she whispered. "I want you to take out these wretched balls and put your cock there instead."

"Ah."

The laughter on his handsome face made her grin. She couldn't help it, despite her irritation. Actually, sexual frustration probably came closer to the truth. "This is your fault."

"If it makes you hot, then my wicked plan is working."

"Plan?"

"Yeah, sweetheart. Thanks to the twins' foresight, I have a very good plan. Eat your dinner. You're going to need the energy."

Her pussy flexed on hearing his words, gripping the Ben Wa balls tight. She stirred restlessly, her cheeks heating when she heard the faint tinkle of them.

Saber smirked. "Would you like to try my fish?" Before she could answer, he held a piece of the white flesh to her lips. "Open wide."

Fish wasn't exactly what she wanted to eat right now. Oh no. Right now she'd love to torture Saber, using her mouth on his cock until he begged for release. She'd take great delight in withholding his pleasure too. The wretched man.

Emily wasn't sure how she managed to get through her meal. She certainly couldn't describe the herbs and spices the chef had used during the cooking process. All she could think about was Saber thrusting deep inside her, driving them both to an incredible climax. She had difficulty withholding her groan of frustration as she grew progressively wetter.

"Would you like dessert or coffee?" the waitress asked as she collected their plates.

"No thank you," Emily said in a firm voice. She didn't want to give Saber the chance to delay a return to their room.

"That was great," Saber said. "We're fine."

Emily waited anxiously while the waitress brought their check for Saber to sign. Each time she moved a spike of pleasure zapped her. Judging by the gleam in her husband's sexy green eyes, he knew exactly what was going on. He signed the chit the waitress brought and stood. Emily's stomach bucked when she saw the naughty grin twist his lips. She held her breath and waited.

"You want me," he whispered, his breath a warm balm against her ear. "I can smell your arousal. Come on. Let's blow this joint." He took her hand in his and led her from the restaurant.

Emily walked gingerly as she wove past the tables, all too conscious of the jingle of the Ben Wa balls and the other diners who might hear the sound and jump to embarrassing conclusions.

Fiery torches lit the path leading to their *bure*. Emily's thighs brushed, the distinct dampness making her think she might explode if Saber didn't touch her soon.

"Did you enjoy your dinner?"

"I can hardly tell you what I ate," she retorted, scowling at him.

"I promised myself I wouldn't do this."

"Do what?" Her stomach cinched tight with sudden fear.

"This." Saber stepped off the path, yanking her after him. He rounded a tree and pulled her into the darkness cast by the shadows. Seconds later, he sank to his knees in front of her and lifted the midnight blue dress. Roughly, he nudged her legs apart and slipped his tongue over her damp folds. "God, you taste good."

The roughness of his tongue brought both relief and a desperate need for more. His tongue curled around her swollen clit then rasped across the sensitive nub. Once.



Twice. Her orgasm exploded over her, a crashing series of waves as her pussy clamped down hard on the Ben Wa balls.

"Saber." She clutched his head and yanked his hair as the ripples in her vagina trailed off. Her breath came in choppy bursts. "God, Saber." Her fingers loosened the grip she had on his hair, and she caressed his cheeks, cupping his face when he glanced up at her.

"That's a reward for being so good tonight." He chuckled, the husky sound making her pulse skitter and desire pump through her again.

Emily grinned but rolled her eyes. "Every time you touched me during dinner I thought I'd expire on the spot. You know what they say about payback."

Saber didn't seem concerned, standing to fuse their mouths together. His arms wrapped around her, urging their bodies together so she could feel his firm muscles and the bulge of his erection pressing against her softness. His fingers gripped her upper arms, holding her in place while he devoured her mouth.

Desire simmered in Emily again, a coil of energy in her lower body. She wriggled free, breathing harshly. "Let's go back to our room."

Without replying, Saber grasped her hand and dragged her back on the path. With tension pulsing between them, they made the ten-minute walk back to their *bure* in record time. Saber shouldered open the door and kicked off his shoes. Clothes and footwear flew in all directions, and soon they were both naked.

"On the bed," Saber ordered.

Emily didn't even think about refusing since that was what she wanted too. She wanted Saber to remove the Ben Wa balls and stuff her full of his cock. She reclined on the bed and gave in to the naughty impulse to touch herself. Half expecting Saber to growl a rebuke, she was surprised when he paused at the end of the bed to watch the show. His ridged abs flexed while his cock pulsed and, if anything, seemed to thicken. The teasing stroke around her clit faltered as she captured his gaze.

"Don't stop. I want you wet and ready for me because I intend to take you hard and fast."

"Tell me," she whispered hoarsely. "Describe how you're going to take me."

"Simple," Saber said. "I'm gonna tug out the Ben Wa balls, fit my cock to your entrance and enjoy the hot, wet slide when I enter you. I'm going to keep pushing into you until I'm balls-deep and can't go any farther."

Emily shivered as she imagined the mechanics and the sensations that would come hand-in-hand with Saber's possession. "Then what?"

"Then I'm gonna fuck you, sweetheart. I'm gonna invade your cunt with my cock until you're stuffed full with me. I'll set a steady pace, retreating until you feel empty and crave me again. I'll soothe the ache until we both go up in sensual flames and explode with the pleasure."

"That sounds great." And it did. The ache he spoke of settled in her pussy, the wet slide of her finger across her clit making the sensation deeper, her need more urgent. "Take me, Saber. Please."

"But I haven't told you what we're going to do at dinner tomorrow night."

The mischief she saw on his face reminded her of the expressions she saw on the twins' faces at times. A smile tugged at her lips. Saber might act like the leader of the feline community and speak sternly to his youngest brothers, but he exhibited some of their mischievous traits. Not that he'd agree if she mentioned it. "Why don't you surprise me?" She sensed he wouldn't tell her anyway.

"I intend to." His green eyes glinted with hunger, and she watched him stroke his cock.

"Are you going to just talk, or are you going to take action? Sometime tonight."

"I need to ask you something first."

Emily's heart skipped a beat. Her finger ceased its comforting stroke across her clit. His voice hinted at something difficult he needed to ask her. Her mind whirled through

all the possibilities. She kept reminding herself he wouldn't want her sexually if he intended to leave her. The loving wouldn't feel so good, it wouldn't consume her so much if Saber wanted out. It's true they hadn't made love much since the loss of the baby, but since they'd arrived in Fiji, they'd started to make up for it. She and Michael hadn't had much sex before their final split. The sex they'd managed had been dreadful with no loving involved. Sex with Saber was different.

"What?" The word came out as an undignified croak. Fear replaced her previous arousal. She didn't know if she was ready for this, for whatever Saber wanted to say.

"Do you want me to use a condom?"

"What?" Emily gaped at him. His question wasn't the one she expected at all.

"A condom. Should I use one?"

Emily hesitated. She didn't think she could go through the pain of losing another baby. Gavin had said she was healthy and there was no reason why she shouldn't carry a baby to full term. Logically she knew the miscarriage occurred because of an accident, but that didn't mean she'd conquered her fears. At the back of her mind lurked the feeling that she was defective and would never manage to give Saber a child. Yeah, she still worried he would walk away because she couldn't give him what he wanted. Then there was the fact she might not even fall pregnant again. The first time had taken so long. Swallowing, she glanced up at him. She saw concern, the frown between his brows hinting at worry. What she didn't see was anger or impatience. Emily took a deep breath and shook her head. "No, I don't think condoms are necessary."

"Good." That was all he said, but a beautiful smile lit his face, and suddenly Emily didn't fear the future quite as much.

## **Chapter Four**

She didn't think condoms were necessary. Saber wanted to shout out loud and show the exuberant feelings bubbling through him. At least that meant she didn't intend to leave him. Just the thought of her departure filled him with trepidation, and he could almost feel the empty hole inside. He shivered and forced himself back to the present. To his mate, Emily.

Saber grasped the slippery string of the Ben Wa balls and pulled steadily. Emily gasped as the balls slowly emerged, glossy with her juices. Saber tossed the balls aside and settled in to taste his mate. He ran his tongue down her slit, his feline purring and rumbling beneath his skin. They both wanted this—to take Emily and make her scream with pleasure. His tongue scraped across her clit before retreating, her scent and taste filling him with pleasure. The only thing that would feel better would be filling her with his cock and feeling the subtle flex of her flesh caressing him. With tongue and fingers, he teased her until she trembled and pleaded for his possession.

"Saber, please do all those things you said you were going to do with me. Please." A sultry flush filled her face as she quivered under his ministrations.

"You have no idea how much I want that, sweetheart."

"Then what are you waiting for?"

"I'm waiting for you to concentrate on me." And she was now. Right now he was the only thing filling her mind. It reminded him of better times and gave him hope for their future. Saber rose and guided his cock into her willing body. He sank into her clinging warmth with one hard stroke that made them both cry out. Then he set a hard pace, flinging them into pleasure and claiming her so she had no doubts as to who was fucking her and how he felt about her. He loved her—totally and absolutely.

Her fingernails dug into his shoulders, the sting of pain sending fierce need and clawing hunger through him. Saber licked her mark and she went crazy beneath him, groaning loudly, her pussy squeezing him in rhythmic contractions. He pounded into her with a primal sense of satisfaction. This was what he'd wanted and needed—her utter surrender.

Saber plunged into his mate again and came in hard, almost painful spasms while Emily continued to cling to him. They drifted down from the orgasmic rush, their breathing in harmony. Aware he was probably crushing her, Saber pulled out and resettled beside her. Despite the balmy heat of the tropical night, Emily crawled closer and wrapped her limbs around him. Emotion, powerful and raw, rocked him then, and he had to squeeze his eyes closed to keep tears of joy at bay. It made him realize their relationship wasn't broken, merely bent, but definitely fixable. Silently, he thanked Gavin for the advice to go on holiday and the twins for taking the time to buy their big brother sex toys, even if they'd really meant to embarrass him.

Tomorrow, he and Emily would talk about the baby, and this time he wouldn't tread warily. This time he'd tell the truth as he saw it, he'd listen to Emily because what they had between them was magical. It was worth fighting for.

\* \* \* \* \*

Emily stood at the wardrobe and wondered what she should wear today. Every muscle of her body ached, yet she hadn't felt so relaxed or at peace for ages.

Saber walked up behind her, still damp from the shower. He shut the wardrobe and grasped her hand in his, pulling her toward the front door of their *bure*.

"No clothes," he said firmly.

"But I'll get sunburned."

"We won't be outside for long, but you can take a sarong and some suntan lotion."

Sweet mercy! Her heart did a distinct bump and grind on seeing the heat flashing in his eyes. Under normal circumstances she'd protest, but nothing about this holiday was ordinary. It was magical and seductive, and it gave her hope.

"I like looking at you." His smile lit up the entire *bure*.

"What about breakfast?" Her stomach gurgled to emphasize her point. After all the exercise, she needed to refuel. Funny, but today was the first time she'd felt like eating for ages. At mealtimes she forced herself to eat because she knew Saber or one of her sisters-in-law would comment if she didn't make the pretense. Emily grabbed her sarong and found a bottle of high-protection lotion to slather on once she hit the beach.

"I have breakfast covered." Saber snagged a small blue chiller bag before he led her outdoors.

Like the previous day, the sun was shining and the waves lapped at the shore. Out on the reef, larger waves crashed against the coral, kicking up a white wreath of churning water. The sand oozed between her toes and she sighed with contentment. Until she thought about their baby girl. Her satisfaction galloped away, replaced by remorse. She didn't deserve happiness. The moan of anguish she'd meant to keep to herself emerged as a pained croak. Saber shot her a sharp glance, the curl of his mouth flattening out to a scowl.

"Dammit, Emily. I hate the way you zone out on me." He stopped abruptly, dropped the chiller bag on the sand and turned to her with determination. Before she had time to blink, he'd spread her sarong on the sand and sat on it. "Come here." The icy tone of his voice did nothing to build her confidence.

Emily hesitated.

"Have I ever hurt you?"

"No."

"Then stop hovering like a mouse. I might be a feline but I can restrain myself."

Something in his face told her that while he wouldn't hurt her he had something else in mind. Before she could step closer, he sprang. He tackled her by the legs and had her over his knee before much more than a startled squeak escaped her. The flat of his hand stung when he applied it to her bare bottom. The second blow came quickly.

"I love you, dammit. I'm tired of you shutting me out. I'm tired of feeling as if I have to tread on eggshells around you. I'm tired of hiding the way I feel. Don't you think I mourn for our daughter? Because, sweetheart, believe me, I've gone through all the emotions. The anger. The pleas and bargaining for things to be right again. You were in the wrong place at the wrong time. Losing our baby wasn't your fault."

Emily froze on hearing his impassioned words. She wriggled free of his touch and turned to face him.

Saber continued. "Losing the baby wasn't my fault either. Do you think I don't wish I could change things? Hell yeah! I'd give my life in exchange for a different outcome. But I'm tired of you punishing me. I can't take it anymore."

Emily swallowed, mesmerized by the open passion on her mate's face. Saber normally kept his emotions contained. "Do you want to separate?"

His mouth dropped open a fraction, his teeth clacking when he snapped it shut. "Hell no," he snapped. "Whatever gave you that idea? I love you. How many times do I have to tell you?"

Tears filled Emily's eyes. The stiffness left her body and she gave him a watery smile. "But I thought you blamed me. I thought you intended to walk away."

Saber moved then, grabbing her and hugging her so tight she feared for her ribs. He pressed desperate kisses to her face, her throat. Her mark. "Why the hell would you think that?"

"I kept thinking about Michael and how he rejected me. I...I thought it was happening again."

"Fuck, Emily." Saber grasped her upper arms and pulled back so he could see her face. "I obviously need to spank you more often. The day your idiotic first husband left

you was my gain. I'm not stupid enough to toss you away like yesterday's trash. I have never, ever considered my life without you in it."

"But you were so quiet after I lost our baby."

"I was grieving, sweetheart. I lost a child as well, except it was worse because I felt as if I lost my best friend and mate at the same time."

A tear overflowed and ran down her face. She gave him a watery smile. "Are we going to be all right now?"

"Do you love me?"

"More than anything." Emily ran her fingers across his cheek, the faint rasp of stubble sounding in the quiet that had fallen between them.

He grasped her hand and kissed her knuckles. "We still have lots of holiday in front of us. A private beach and a bag of sex toys."

Emily frowned. "But what if I can't have another baby?"

"I don't care. We can adopt or not have children at all. I love you. I don't mind as long as I can spend my life with you. God, that sounded sappy. Don't quote me to my brothers. They'll fall over themselves laughing."

Emily grinned. "From what I hear you have nothing to fear. Your brothers are quite romantic when they're in private with their mates."

Saber snorted but didn't ask questions. "I must have done something right then. Are we okay? About children, I mean."

"Maybe we could look into adoption when we get back? I've heard it takes awhile or maybe we could foster kids."

"Either option would work for me. Do you want to go for a swim?"

"Is this a multi-choice quiz?" Emily grinned at the interest sparkling in Saber's eyes. She could almost hear him thinking.

"Yeah," he said slowly. "There is a plan B."

Her brows rose. "Yeah?"



Saber pounced. Emily found herself flat on her back with her mate leaning over her.

"I love you, Emily."

"So you keep saying. Isn't it time to show me?"

"As long as you promise me if you feel worried about our relationship at any time in the future you'll talk to me. Tell me what you're feeling so I can reassure you. If I do the same thing, then maybe we won't end up like this again."

"I promise."

"Good." Saber kissed her deeply, devouring her mouth and taking the mood from simmering to blazing hot in seconds flat. He played with her breasts, using hands and mouth to taunt and tease her. She shuddered at the fierce emotions that arced between them, aware of the damp readiness between her thighs. Each lingering touch was like a brand, the burn traveling deep. A sharp tug of her nipple sent a corresponding tug to her pussy.

"Saber, no more foreplay. I need you inside me now."

"I'm not gonna go easy on you, sweetheart. You need to be good and ready to take me."

Emily shivered at the thought of him using her hard. "I'm ready," she protested. "I feel like I might explode any second."

Saber paused. "On all fours. I want to go deep."

She scrambled to her hands and knees, glancing over her shoulder. The hard visage could have looked scary to anyone who didn't know him, but Emily didn't hesitate. She winked at him, a grin blooming. Slowly she wiggled her ass in a come-get-me sway.

The flat of his hand struck on buttock, making her jump. A second smack brought a groan along with a surge of pleasure. He'd never spanked her until this holiday, and she decided she liked it. She thought of the weeks ahead with pleasurable anticipation, positive there would be many more things to discover and experience with Saber. She hadn't had a chance to explore the bag the twins had sent with Saber yet.

"Your ass looks pretty in pink."

"As long as it isn't sunburn."

"Not a chance," he said, covering her. Broad fingers stroked along her slit, delving shallowly. She pushed back, attempting to get a deeper penetration, but he just laughed, continuing to push her pleasure and frustration levels higher. Then finally, she felt him position his cock at her entrance. He thrust inside her with a masterful stroke that had them both groaning. He stretched her, driving in hard and deep. With each stroke, the exquisite tension inside her tightened until, finally, it snapped, tossing her into a world of acute pleasure. Her pussy grabbed at his cock, clutching the rigid shaft. He grunted, withdrew and pounded into her with several hard strokes before he stilled.

Emily could feel the strong beat of his heart, felt the surge of wetness in her sheath. He curled his larger body over her, murmuring words of love against her ear. Words she would never tire of. Despite the reason they were there, she was thankful they'd found each other again.

Saber pulled out of her and tugged her against his sweaty body. Their clammy flesh stuck together as they kissed.

"Come for a swim then we'll have breakfast." Saber tugged her to her feet and hand in hand they walked into the turquoise water.

"Are you going to give me a clue about what you have in mind for tonight?"

Saber chuckled, the rich sound bringing a rush of pleasure. He tapped her nose with his forefinger. "That's for me to know and you to find out."

"What exactly is in the twins' bag of tricks?"

"Everything," Saber said dryly. "I'm glad they didn't decide to search it going through customs."

"So will I like this something?"

"Yes."

She didn't like the renewed glint in his green eyes. "Will it torture me?"

“Yes.” His grin widened.

Emily sniffed. “I’m going to check out this bag before we go to dinner. Turnaround is fair play.” She paused, allowing an imp of humor to fill her face. “I wonder if they have any cock rings.”

And laughing at Saber’s ragged intake of breath, she ran into the deeper water, full of confidence for the future. No matter what happened they’d face it together.

## About the Author

Shelley lives in Auckland, New Zealand, with her husband and a small, bossy dog named Scotty.

Typical New Zealanders, Shelley and her husband left home for their big OE soon after they married (translation of New Zealand-speak: big overseas experience), a year-long adventure lengthened to six years of roaming the world. Enduring memories include being almost sat on by a mountain gorilla in Rwanda, lazing on white sandy beaches in India, whale watching in Alaska, searching for leprechauns in Ireland and dealing with ghosts in an English pub.

While travel is still a big attraction, these days Shelley is most likely found in front of her computer following another love—that of writing stories of romance and adventure. Other interests include watching rugby and rugby league (strictly for research purposes \*grin\*), being walked by the dog and curling up with a good book.

Shelley welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her [author bio page](#) at [www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com).

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