



JAGUAR

PACK VALLEY SERIES

Mate

SA WELSH

JAGUAR *Mate*

PACK VALLEY, BOOK 1

SA WELSH

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DEDICATION

For Charlotte,

Who encouraged my weirdness and is one of the strongest
people I know.

No matter where life takes you, you will always be TT to
me.

TRADEMARKS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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Buffy: Buffy the Vampire Slayer

Lassie: Classic Media

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ONE

He hit the ground hard, the stones and sticks of the forest floor digging into his scraped palms as he tried to break his fall. It didn't do much good, though, when you had a heavy-footed oaf standing on your back to drive your face into the dirt. Jayden was not having the best day.

"Get up, fag-boy." The growled words punctuated with a vicious kick to his ribs.

"Come on man, we need to go. Someone could have heard him yell. I ain't going back to prison for no cocksucker, Billy. I won't face the pack either just 'cause you wanna get even. They'll skin you like they did your daddy." Heavy footsteps thudded through the ground to Jay's ear as one of the two thugs ran off, leaving just Billy next to him.

For years, Billy tormented Jay, for no other reason than the fact he happened to be a Goth and liked to dress differently. Rednecks like Billy-Bob Jr. (seriously, can you believe his name) saw the long hair and assumed he was gay. In their world, it gave them the right to beat the shit out of him whenever they felt like it.

It had never been this bad though: usually a punch or two until someone from town intervened and made sure they left him alone for a month or so. They had never

dragged him away from a public street before. Now, deep in the forest, away from the town's Halloween celebrations, he doubted anyone would come to his rescue this time.

Jay took advantage of his attacker's momentary distraction, leapt to his feet and tried to run back down the hiking path. He had a vague idea how far he was from the path, as he spent most of his free time roaming the forest to avoid going home. His step-dad and Billy were a lot alike. He had even praised Billy when Jay had turned up with a black eye and finished off the job, leaving him black and blue.

Those bruises were in places easy to hide from the prying eyes of the protective community, under threat of losing the cabin his mother had loved so much. The more he fought back the harder his step-dad would hit. He'd learned early on to pick his battles in order to survive. He had only one year and three days left before the deed passed to him on his twenty-first birthday.

It felt like a prison sentence, but the thought of losing the last thing left of his mother hurt more than anything his step-dad could dish out.

Jay made it about thirty yards before Billy's big body shoved his own skinny frame into a tree, grabbing his hands when he tried to hit back and pinning them over his head in one massive, paw-like fist, cutting off circulation.

Jay was only two years younger than the asshole in front of him at nineteen, but the other man had at least forty pounds of muscle on him.

"You wanna know how a real man fucks, you fag-bag? I'm gonna show you what a little bitch you are." The fucker leant forward, wafting rancid fish-breath into his face and almost making him puke. Perhaps he should have; maybe it would have allowed him to get away.

"Leave me the fuck alone Billy! You've had your fun, now piss off!" Jay yelled in an attempt to disguise his fear as anger, but, in truth, he was seconds away from screaming like a girl.

Jay gave in to the urge when Billy started to pull at his clothes "HELP! Get the fuck off me, asshole! HELP! AAAAAHRH!" He got a smack to the face for his trouble as the bastard laughed. He felt his jeans begin to give way and slide down an inch. *Shit!*

The grinning Billy laughed again as he too felt the jeans begin to fall, but his face looked odd, scary odd, as if he was growing a snout, and his arms were way hairier than they had been a minute ago. *What the fuck?* "They can't hear you. The pack is celebrating Halloween with the townies. It's just you and me out in this forest. No one is gonna stop me this time. You'll pay for what your bitch mother did to my father."

Father? What? Jay had never met Billy's dad; he had disappeared not long after Jay's mother had died.

Not caring now whether he hurt himself in the process, he resolved to get the fuck away from this freak, *NOW!* It took all of his strength to slip free of the sweaty, meaty fist and he savagely bit the arm reaching for him. He noticed the fist now had five talon-like claws and thick brown fur covered Billy's skin.

"What the fuck are you?" Jay whispered. He knew this town had more going on beneath the surface, but shit, this reminded him of a bad *Buffy* episode. He'd swear that Billy's now definitely snout-like face started to resemble a grizzly bear. His mother had been killed by a grizzly bear when he was young. He watched in horror as Billy's bones popped and cracked as he changed into something that looked disturbingly like *the bear*: the one that had haunted his nightmares and memories.

It couldn't be. *No way.* That particular bear had been hunted down and killed after the town had discovered his mother's body.

Cold, murderous eyes gleamed with excitement as it lifted its snout to sniff the air. The deformed human/bear hybrid's mouth twisted in sadistic humour as it growled "No one gonna help you this time. No townie, no mother, no goddamned council, or pack Alpha. You're mine now

and I'm gonna make you scream and beg before I kill you. Your stupid human bitch protected you once and the pack has protected you since because of her '*bravery*'. *Now you're mine!*' The last words were almost unintelligible through the growling, snapping jaws.

Jay broke out of his paralysis, running as fast as he could in the direction of the town. That old saying about never running from a bear was bullshit. He would outrun this bastard if it killed him. He was dead either way, so he didn't have anything to lose by trying.

The crashing footsteps thudded against the ground inches behind him and Jay could swear that he felt that rancid breath singe the back of his neck. He ducked and rolled just in time and the now-enormous bear-Billy-thing went flying over his head.

Scrambling to gain his feet again he charged left, knowing that he wouldn't keep his lead for long. He thanked god that he knew these woods well, knew when to duck and when to jump, to avoid the low-hanging branches and dips in the undergrowth.

Knowing there was a clearing up ahead he kept going, legs burning and heart thundering. He didn't have a clue where he would go from there. Whichever way he went it would be downhill and he knew for sure that he wouldn't be able to outrun the thing behind him.

He couldn't help the breathless sob that escaped him as he entered the clearing, knowing that he had nowhere else to run and that the Billy-*thing* was going to catch him.

Tackled to the ground and slammed into the dirt again, he knew it was over. His clothes ripped in the fierce grip of his captor. Those deadly bear claws sliced through the skin on his back like a knife through butter. The white-hot pain made him scream and blood started seeping through his clothes.

Jay was roughly turned over and forced to look into the eyes of the thing that was going to kill him, the cruel gaze looking satisfied at his pain. One massive paw crushed his throat while the other swept back in preparation for the killing blow.

An eerie yowl sounded behind him and all he could think was that something else was coming to enjoy the kill. Well, at least his body would feed one of the forest's inhabitants this winter. Halloween usually signalled the first snowfall in Pack Valley, and most of the larger creatures prepared for winter hibernation.

He squeezed his eyes shut and waited for the deadly blow. Suddenly, the crushing weight atop him disappeared. He opened his eyes in time to see several large, black jaguars leap over him and encircle the bear-Billy, or whatever it was.

He watched in stunned silence as two jaguars and more than eight other large animals, including wolves, lynxes and mountain lions, herded the bear away from the clearing, driving it back.

Jay saw the muscles twitch in Billy's left arm and knew he was going to use his dangerous claws to take a swipe at the smaller Jaguar. He couldn't help the warning cry that escaped his throat, despite the fact that they wouldn't understand him. "Watch out!"

The jaguar moved out of the way just in time to dodge the massive paw. The other animals acted as one, taking the advantage to pounce on their quarry and bring it to ground. Growls, hisses, and howls filled the air and Jay had to look away as the animals ripped into their prey.

The third black jaguar was suddenly right next to him, shielding his view of the carnage. He met the sleek animal's intelligent gaze, waiting for the next move. The cat seemed to be waiting for the same thing as it cautiously moved closer until it was directly in front of him, leaning closer to sniff along his face and neck, nuzzling his long dirty-blond hair out of its way.

The tickle of whiskers against his neck made his heart skip a beat. He noticed that the fear he had felt during Billy's attack had died along with him.

Why wasn't he afraid of the powerful beast in front

of him? It was more than capable of killing him, not to mention the others were still devouring the beast that had been Billy. He couldn't feel any sorrow over that fact, and the jaguar in front of him fascinated him.

Jay jumped and yelped in pain when he heard a deep, rumbling growl erupt from the throat of the cat as it nosed the wounds on his back. The other two jaguars stepped away from the carcass and headed straight for him. For some reason he didn't understand, he felt at peace with the big cat rubbing its face along the back of his neck, but nervous as the other two approached.

Sensing Jay tense up, the cat turned and growled gently at the approaching cats. They stopped and answered in chuffs and light yowls before turning away and disappearing into the camouflage of the forest.

The jaguar's heavy head nudged him but he couldn't figure out what it wanted until it motioned, in a gesture blatantly stolen from *Lassie*, towards a small dirt path that he'd never noticed before,.

He pulled himself to his feet and stumbled down the path. He pulled himself to his feet and stumbled down the path, the wounds on his back causing him to seize with every few steps. Whenever he cried out from the pain, the jaguar would rub against him in encouragement like a house cat would. He felt strangely comforted.

Eventually Jay made it to the end of the path, and was confused when he found himself standing outside the CathFawr Estate.

The CathFawr family owned and controlled most of the town. They were kind people who protected the rest of Pack Valley's residents and inhabitants. They also happened to have a son a year older than Jay who was drop-dead gorgeous and sex on legs. Jay had lusted after Kyle since he'd hit puberty.

In his confusion, he hadn't noticed Kyle's parents striding towards him with a blanket and first-aid kit in hand, his father's massive size moving with surprising grace despite the fast pace.

Holding his hands in front of him apologetically, Jay said, "I'm sorry Mr. and Mrs. CathFawr, I didn't know where I was going. I was attacked by Billy and..." He trailed off and wracked his brain for a way to explain how he got here and why there was a jaguar standing beside him. The black jaguar looked decidedly amused at his panic. What if they didn't believe him, or worse, what if they hurt the jaguar?

Mrs. CathFawr saved him from his panic when she rushed forward; her face furrowed with worry and concern, yet seemingly uncaring that there happened to be a *jaguar* beside him. She wrapped him in the blanket, managing to

avoid jostling the wounds on his back as if she knew they were there. "Hush, it's okay Jay. We know. We know what happened." Then she met his gaze. He gasped when he saw familiar eyes staring back at him: the emerald eyes identical to the smaller jaguar from the clearing. *What?*

It might have been from shock, or blood loss, but it was suddenly very hard to breathe and the lack of oxygen made pretty, black dots spiral through his vision.

Mr. CathFawr must have realised that Jay was about to say goodnight, and jumped forward to catch him as his legs gave out. The last thing he was aware of confused him more than anything else had this weird Halloween: Mrs CathFawr shouting to the jaguar, "Hurry Kyle, go and shift so you can take care of your *mate*. We'll take him to your room." With that, the lights dimmed and he was out for the count.

TWO

Before Jay even opened his eyes he knew he was in Kyle's suite of rooms, recognizing the scent from his childhood days spent playing in this very room. But right now he was lying under a warm, heavy blanket that smelled wonderfully masculine and familiar.

Pain throbbed through from the abused flesh of his back. Pain had become 'the usual' over the years, reminding him of 'his place' as he counted down the days until he was free from his stepfather.

Memories of what had happened in the forest came hurtling back, and as the terrifying scenes played behind his eyes the wounds in his back burned like new. He couldn't help the yelp of fear that escaped his throat when he felt a strong hand fall onto his shoulder.

"It's okay Jay, I'm here... I'm here. He can't hurt you anymore. Look at me. You aren't in the forest. You're in my room."

He tried to open his eyes, but he couldn't, caught in the horror of reliving the pain and terror.

"JAY! Look at me!" The dominant tone *made* him obey. It was as if the memories that held him captive ran away from the deep, authoritative voice.

He opened his eyes and found himself in Kyle

CathFawr's arms. Jay was lying across his lap and his cheek rested against Kyle's chest, his muscled and very *naked* chest— *Stop it!*

Jay moved to sit up but the claw marks on his back pulled and reminded him that his memories were real; Billy had turned into that... *thing* and tried to kill him! His attention shifted from the attack and focused on the memory were the jaguars that had come to his rescue, but that was impossible. *Right?*

"The jaguars? They saved—" Forcing the rough words past his gravelled throat almost hurt more than his back. Almost.

Kyle must have seen him wince as his hold loosened and Jay was laid down onto the bed, carefully positioned onto his side so his wounds wouldn't re-open.

He felt Kyle's hand smooth across his forehead. "Come on cub, you need to be conscious if you want to know about the jaguars." His teasing tone sounded amused as he tried to coax Jay back to awareness.

The mention of the jaguars did the trick; he became immediately concerned that something had happened to the sleek beast that had saved him. "Where is he? What did you do? You better not have hurt him Kyle!" Thinking of the black jaguar being hurt filled him with more pain than he could describe.

The confused look on Kyle's face calmed him a bit, but the pain remained. *Please don't let the cat have been hurt for helping me.*

"Him? Who? Billy's gone. You saw what happened; he had to be stopped."

"No, not Billy. I couldn't care less that the sick bastard is rotting. The black jaguar! Where is he? He helped me get away; please tell me he's okay." Anger crept in, watching as Kyle's confusion evaporated, replaced by a brilliant smile.

"The black jaguar? The one that brought you here?" That teasing tone returned and Jay would have smacked Kyle in the arm but their friendship hadn't been that close in years. He'd distanced himself from this family to protect himself but he still mourned the loss as he looked back.

"Yes, the big, black jaguar that led me here. How many do you know?" The sarcasm in Jay's voice sounded a touch more accusing than he meant as he glared up into those familiar peridot eyes.

Kyle leant forward so only inches separated their upper bodies. Their faces were so close that their breath mingled. "Don't worry cub, the jaguars are fine. I promise," Kyle added as Jay glared at him suspiciously.

Moving as if to say something else, Kyle opened his mouth, but whatever it was went unsaid as a door opened in

a room nearby. Someone, probably his parents, walked up the stairs.

"Kyle, we need to talk to Jay now that he's awake," a masculine voice called through the closed doors before being interrupted by a feminine voice sternly adding, "Honey, you better be dressed in there. No scaring the cub."

Why the hell were people calling him 'cub'? Before his curiosity got the better of him, Jay was distracted when Kyle leapt up from the bed as if it were on fire and pulled on a shirt. Jay just lay there and ogled the strong muscles flexing.

Unable to stop his stare from drifting south, he saw that Kyle was only wearing a well-worn pair of jeans with rips on the thighs and below the bum that gave him tantalizing flashes of skin. Didn't that just make his heart pick up a few beats.

As if picking up on Jay's racing heart or sensing his intent stare, Kyle turned to meet his gaze and Jay swore he saw an answering flare of heat.

Looking at Kyle and seeing that heat flare again, Jay's dick twitched in his jeans. Then he watched as Kyle did the weirdest thing; he tilted his head to the side and sort of *sniffed the air*? What the hell was that about? There was no way Kyle was able to smell his arousal. *Was there?*

Kyle's parents' appearance from around the corner into the huge, open plan suite quickly doused the heat and caused Kyle and Jay to drop their gazes guiltily. Kyle moved to open the heavy wooden doors separating the master bedroom from the rest of the apartment. *What was happening?*

Stepping forward through the doorway as one, as if as if it was a well practiced move, Kyle's parents stopped and did that weird sniffing thing Kyle had done before they smiled knowingly at him. Ushering Kyle back towards the bed, Kyle's father produced a first aid kit and his mother a tray of something that smelled deliciously sweet.

Please let it be her famous sponge cake; he could die happy if it is. Jay's stomach growling revealed his hunger and Kyle's mom smiled again briefly. The worry was still in her eyes, and those rose lips, so like the ones he ached to taste, settled into a concerned tight lipped line.

"Mr. and Mrs. CathFawr, I'm sorry to have disturbed you. If you can just let me clean up I'll leave." The last thing he wanted to do was upset or anger them, as a child he'd always yearned for them to be his parents, but had been happy being their son's best friend.

He'd never thought he was good enough though, courtesy of his bastard step-dad.

Making as if to get up, he found himself firmly pushed back down into the mattress by a frowning Kyle. Unfortunately his hand landed directly on a bruise originally inflicted by said stepdad.

"What's wrong Jay? Billy didn't hit you there, did he?" Before he could stop it he felt his jumper and shirt tugged over his head, revealing all of the new and old fist and boot-shaped bruises that marred his pale, scrawny body.

Three deep growls threatened the silence but he couldn't make himself look up, the shamed, dirty feeling overriding his curiosity.

He didn't have to say anything, but pride demanded he make some excuse in an attempt to divert attention away from the injuries. "It's no problem. I can treat them when I get home. Frank will help me." The blatant lie tasted like dirt on his tongue.

Kyle's dad sat beside him on the bed and pushed his chin up, forcing his ashamed gaze from the floor. "Son, look at me. We all know that those bruises aren't just from Billy. We've tried to get you away from that bastard since your mother died, but we couldn't prove that he was unfit to care for you. You never came to us for help, so our hands were tied. Kyle tried to get you to confide in him, so we could throw that bastard out of our town, but you avoided

him and us. Why?"

Not sure what to say, Jay was relieved when Kyle's mom interrupted and saved him from answering. "I think that on some level you know there is something... different about this town. You're smarter than most and you'd have to have noticed that others in the town look to us to lead. You just can't figure out why and that makes you suspicious of our motives for trying to help you. Am I right?"

He couldn't stop the slight nod in confirmation of her theory, knowing it would do no good to avoid the inevitable. Obviously, this conversation was going to happen regardless of his discomfort, so he might as well accept it. His fear and need for secrecy were hard to overcome though, so he remained quiet.

Taking his hand in hers, she continued softly. "Honey, you need to know the truth of this town, and the truth about why your mother brought you here." She would have continued but Kyle cut her off as he gently pulled her back.

"He should hear it from me."

By this point, he was dying to shout: TELL ME! He must have moved, betraying his thoughts and frustration, because Kyle's dad smirked at him and chuckled when Jay blushed at being caught. "Don't worry cub, you'll find out

soon enough after Kyle's patched you up. Just try to keep an open mind and we'll answer any questions you have when you come down to the dining room for more food."

With that they stood, moving to leave after giving Kyle a hug and whispering something Jay couldn't hear. Whatever it was had Kyle blushing furiously and nodding shyly but with determination.

THREE

The doors closed with a quiet *snick* as the lock fell into place, leaving Jay and Kyle alone in the huge room. Tension thickened the air and they both breathed a little quicker.

Kyle just stood there, staring at the door for a minute or two before taking a deep breath, as if he had come to some important decision. Jay watched as Kyle strode purposefully across the room to stand by the bed.

His gaze caught the muscles in Kyle's arms twitching as he tensed and relaxed. Jay could see the nerves jumping along his skin, but what could Kyle be nervous about?

Shifting position so he sat more upright, Jay yet again felt the wounds pull in protest and he felt a tell-tale tickle of blood trickle down his back. "Oh shit, that hurts. Can you pass me the First Aid kit, please. I think they've just re-opened."

The mention of his injuries snapped Kyle out of his internal struggle. He almost ran around the bed, stumbling over Jay's tattered shirt on the floor as he snagged the First Aid kit his mother had left on the foot of the bed.

"I'm so sorry Jay, I was in a world of my own there for a second." The sound of genuine concern and guilt in

Kyle's voice confused him even as he heard the voice at the back of his head giggle happily. *He still cares. Kyle cares that I'm hurt.*

Doing as directed, he sat on the edge of the bed with his back to Kyle, looking up at the band poster and birthday card he had given Kyle years ago. Why did he still have them? The band didn't even play anymore, but the poster and card hung above the bed in a silver frame, still in perfect condition, not even dusty.

Though the wounds on his back felt like they were on fire, he couldn't stop the jolt of lust that shot through him when he felt soft fingertips skim across his sensitive skin.

The heartfelt curse from Kyle as he tended the wounds had him worried. "What? What's wrong?" The answering silence made panic quickly start to rise in his throat. What if the wounds were worse than he had assumed? What if Billy had nicked an artery and he was slowly bleeding to death?

Clearly the lack of adrenaline in his system was starting to affect his reasoning.

Kyle did that weird sniffing thing again before rushing to reassure him. "No, it's okay. I promise. We can fix it, but I need to explain a few things first." Kyle trailed off and Jay turned around to face him, still a bit panicky

and now confused as well.

"Kyle, after the night I've had I'm not in the mood for games and I'm too tired to work things out. Whatever it is just *tell me*. I'm sick of being kept in the dark and having people make infuriatingly mysterious comments without elaborating, so damn it, *tell me now!*" He had no idea where he got the confidence to make such a demand of the gorgeous man in front of him, but it seemed as if exhaustion had removed some of his defences.

The shock on Kyle's face at his outburst quickly turned to pleasure, and he swore he could see a glint of pride. "I knew you were feisty, Jay. You always were when we were young, before you withdrew from everyone and started to avoid me."

A hurt frown marred that beautiful face before Kyle continued quietly. "What did I do wrong Jay? It seemed as if one day you were my best friend, almost a part of me and the next you couldn't stand to be anywhere near me." Hurt made the usually deep, silky voice small and insecure.

The look of hurt was so raw on Kyle's face that Jay found himself spilling the truth before he could claw the betraying words back into his mouth and lock them away. "It wasn't you Ky. About that time that bastard Frank started hitting me without the pitiful excuse of it being an 'accident'. I was pretty messed up for a while."

Taking a deep, painful breath, he forced himself to continue. He couldn't stand the thought that he'd hurt Kyle. Even if it made him lose what little hope he had left, Jay knew that Kyle deserved the truth. "I also realized... I realized that I was attracted to guys... to... you. Damn it Ky, I was twelve years old and shit scared because my stepdad was beating me and I was in love with my best friend!" He hadn't called him Ky since he'd realized why he was so drawn to his best friend, but the old endearment felt so natural on his tongue.

The pregnant silence left him squeezing his eyes shut with dread and praying that a hole in the ground would open up and swallow him. Why had he just spilled his guts to someone who could break him with just a few words? *Not to mention break his heart.*

Forcing his eyes open, he tried to get his legs to move so that he could run before Kyle processed his confessions. He was fast and reasonably sure he could outrun Kyle if he could just ignore the pain. Damn legs wouldn't co-operate though, protesting that they'd done enough fleeing today. *Damn.*

Starting to feel the panic build again, he waited and watched for Kyle's reaction, telling himself that he stood no chance of even salvaging a friendship with the very straight, muscular man in front of him. Much less anything

involving the man naked in his bed.

Jay didn't know what on earth the look on Kyle's face meant but he had never seen him look so... *feral*.

Jay nearly jumped out of his skin when a low, rumbling roar emanated from Kyle's throat. He didn't know a person could actually make a sound like that, but apparently Kyle could.

He could barely understand the words that followed as Kyle's voice turned into a deep, strained growl. "Promise me you won't go back to him. *Promise me, Jay!* You love me? Frrrrrrrrank took you away frrrrrrrom me?" The possessive anger in the latter statement made the hairs on the back of his neck stand up, but surprisingly it was as much out of desire as fear.

"I- I- I promise"

As much as the cynical part of his mind told him that Kyle was surely going to hurt him, another part knew without a single doubt that Kyle would never raise a hand to him, never hurt him intentionally. Kyle's evident anger that someone had hurt him supported the strange idea that Kyle cared for him too, but could he take the chance in believing it?

Kyle was now crawling —*prowling*— over him and he had to lean back on his elbows to stop from falling back. Again he was reminded that he had four full-length claw

marks on his back, but whatever was wrong with Kyle had his full attention, and numbed the pain.

Now braced above him on all fours, Kyle was close enough that he could see weird ripples moving beneath his skin and his hair growing into shiny black fur. *Oh no, this was what happened to Billy! Oh god, not again!*

"Kyle! Ky! What the hell is happening?" His voice turned high with building fear.

Jay's panic seemed to shake Kyle out of whatever internal trance he was in as that growling voice answered, "I won't hurrrrt you Jay. I will never harrrrm you. Promise me that you know that and that you will trrrrust me. *Please.*"

Kyle's eyes had been squeezed closed but as he almost choked the last word they opened and sought his own. The stunning peridot eyes now held a narrow, seed-shaped pupil. *Cat eyes.*

"I- I- I promise." The raw need and desperation in Kyle's eyes pulled the words out of him, but once they were out in the open he realized with shock that they were completely true, and he felt the fear drain away.

Jay still didn't know what the hell was going on, but he now knew that he could and *would* trust Kyle. It felt like all the pieces of the puzzle were there, but the exhaustion from the energy-sapping night prevented him from piecing

them all together.

"Tell me Ky."

Jay watched in silence as Kyle lifted his head and sniffed the air in front of him, leaning closer. "You're not scared." The hot puffs of air played with the hairs on his neck. Stunned when Kyle pushed his face into Jay's long hair, he couldn't stop his dick from sitting up and taking notice behind the zipper of his muddy and ripped jeans. It was almost begging for Kyle to keep touching him.

Feeling almost bereft at the loss of contact when Kyle pulled back to meet his gaze, he knew his lusty thoughts were clear on his face. Kyle had always been able to read him; even when they were kids he hadn't been able to keep many secrets. "I'm sorry. I'm usually more in control than this, but with the moon and everything else..."

Moon? He knew there was a full moon. No self-respecting Goth failed to notice that there was a full moon this Halloween; it was the Ace in a deck of cards- coveted and lucky. But what did the moon have to do with Kyle?

"In control of what? Are you... are you going to turn into... that thing Billy did?" There was only so far he could stretch his newfound bravery, and facing another bear-thing was going to make him crack.

"NO! No, I swear, I am nothing like Billy. Billy had gone feral after he was shunned by the pack for targeting

you after..." Apparently his eyes glazing over had hinted at his confusion, because Kyle trailed off, sighing softly.

"I'm sorry I just don't under—"

"No, it's my fault Jay. I'm getting ahead of myself. I've just never had to explain this to anyone before"

"Just start with how you can fix my back, Ky, because I think I'm going to pass out again soon." Those annoying black dots were back and starting to dance round the edges of his vision.

"Right, sorry. Shit, I thought that it would be easier than this." Damn, Ky was cute when he blushed. Lickable, squeezable, bite— *okay stop!* Now was not the time, stupid libido.

"That's not helping Jay. I can smell your need and its fuelling mine. *I can't help it.*" A deep growl emphasised the last few words and he didn't doubt that Kyle was trying to get back in control, so the least he could do in return was get a grip on his own lust.

FOUR

"Remember when we were younger you said that there was something weird going on this town? That it was weird that all of the native families would disappear for a few days every month?"

"Yeah but I didn't mean anything—"

He'd been fascinated with secrets that everyone else seemed to know and tried to ferret them out. To be honest, it had just been something fun to do when he was ten, imagining all sorts of things from crime fighting grannies to secret ninja bakers.

"I know you didn't mean it as bad thing. You were just curious, but you were right. When most of the town would disappear, we'd be in the woods while the rest of the town protected us from rogue hunters. We are pack-*family*. My family is the ruling line and are bound by birth and duty to protect."

His muscles protesting, Jay excitedly moved to sit upright again. "Okay, as weird as this may sound, for some reason it doesn't surprise me that you're some kind of leader. You were always dominant. But you need to move on to how you knew what happened and Billy and the jaguars and—"

"Jay, calm down. I'm getting there. Saying I'm

dominant is more accurate than you think. My dad is Alpha of the pack and I will join him when I reach maturity and the bond with my mate is stable—"

"Wait, *mate*? As you're using 'Alpha' as in leader, I assume you mean mate as in *soul mate*, am I wrong?" His heart stopped as he pictured Kyle with someone else. God, that hurt. How could he stand and smile while the love of his life stood with someone else? Kissed her, *loved her*, *instead of him*? Well, that took care of the hard-on.

He felt strong arms wrapping around him as he was pulled onto Kyle's lap, the wounds on his back pulling, pain making tears burn his eyes. It was his back that made him cry, not the thought of Ky with someone else.

Nope, it was definitely not the thought of Ky belonging to someone else that had stray tears falling down his cheeks. *Sure*.

"Jay, please don't cry, *please*. It's not that bad. You don't have to claim me. I won't force you to do anything you don't want to, but *please* give me the chance to show you how much I love you."

"Huh? What do you mean? You just said that you had a mate. How can you love me?"

"Jay, honey, we need to move things along a bit faster. I think that blood loss is making you dense. *You are my mate*. You haven't asked about the pack yet though, and

you need to know what we are."

"Don't call me dense! You should have started off with the fact that you think I'm your mate, not gone off on a tangent like I'm doing now, and let me worry myself sick that you were going to walk away with your happy ever after and leave me all alone!" The relief at knowing Kyle didn't have a mate outweighed the fear at hearing that *he* was Ky's mate. That he'd save to freak out about later.

Getting a grip on his panic, he scrubbed his check with the back of his hand, forcing himself to calm down. Some of the puzzle pieces started falling into place.

He remembered times when they were young and he'd seen people from town bringing problems to Kyle's dad rather than the sheriff, and the jokes about cats and furballs from the kids in town when he'd be with Ky. Not to mention the time Jay had been covered in bruises and spent the night here. Kyle's parents had been growling under their breath as they'd patched him up while he made excuses for that bastard Frank. Then there was the growling he'd heard in anger from Ky.

"I'm going to take a chance here and if you laugh at me I swear I will castrate you. My guess is you're all shapeshifters, your family being the jaguars that protected me from Billy." Feeling Kyle tense up, he continued, "Okay, you're not laughing so I take it I'm on the money."

His head pounded and his vision went fuzzy again.

"You're taking this all very well Jay. I thought there'd be more shouting, disbelief, and possibly running away screaming in terror, especially after what you saw in the forest. Don't tell me you've finally lost it, or think you're dreaming or something." Kyle spoke cautiously and slowly as his arms tightened slightly.

"Don't worry, I've already scheduled a break down for tomorrow, but right now I want answers. Just tell me all of it. It's not like I have any secrets from you anymore."

He'd always been able to keep secrets, except when it came to Kyle; that was why he'd had to avoid him. All it would have taken was for Ky to take his shirt off or wear those tight, ripped jeans for his lust to have been out there for all to see. Not just on his face either. He swore he'd had more hard-ons than a geek watching Baywatch those nights he'd dreamed of Kyle.

"Hey, I'm glad I know how you feel about me now. Lust is better than nothing, and hopefully it'll be a good foundation for our mating."

"Okay, stop with the mating business for now. We can deal with that after. Sorry if I sound cold, but I really do think I'm gonna pass out soon." Not to mention getting seriously freaked out by his dream being dangled in front of him. He couldn't afford to believe he could be Kyle's mate.

He wasn't good enough. He couldn't even save himself earlier, how could he hope to be worthy of Ky?

Why was it so hot in here? It felt like a furnace all of a sudden. Perhaps it was panic or delayed reaction. Why was the room spinning?

"Don't worry, you'll feel better in a minute but you really need to be prepared first. You're right though, I'm just so... nervous that you'll disappear from my life again."

"I'm think I'm going to stick around. Things are getting interesting. Now stop stalling and explain. I know you too well to believe you've gotten this off topic by accident."

"Okay fine, but no interrupting until I've finished explaining."

"I'm all ears." He made a zipping motion over his lips.

"Yeah, when it suits you. *Anyway*, yes, you are right. We, my family and the town, are shapeshifters. I told you that my family are Alpha and that I will be when I claim my mate. We are black jaguars and in our feline form, we have healing properties in our saliva. It hurts at first but numbs quickly as the healing starts. Ferals like Billy have the opposite effect; they poison and that's why you're feeling faint."

Apparently he was supposed to say something. Kyle

starred at him expectantly as he figured out what Ky was saying. "Oh, *OH!* You mean you have to shift into the jaguar to heal my back?"

"Thank god shock comes in handy sometimes."

"Don't mutter Ky. I can still hear you. So shift and heal me so I can think straight and have a breakdown about what a weird night I've had." There was only so much he could deal with in one night and it appeared he was reaching his limit.

"Fine, but has it occurred to you that perhaps I don't want you to freak out when you see me turn into a jaguar in front of you? No? I didn't think so." Clearly trying to come across more annoyed than he actually was, Kyle moved to stand in front of him.

He though his heart stopped as he watched, open mouthed and panting slightly in anticipation, as Kyle pulled the shirt over his head and started on the buckle of those temptingly ripped jeans.

Obviously smelling his arousal, Kyle turned towards him, grinning smugly in a way that left no doubt that his desire was not hidden at all. Damn, he was going to have to get used to this. He wasn't even going to think what he'd do when he was around other shifters; he certainly wasn't going to go out in public any time soon with his libido having regressed to horny early teen.

Swaying way more than necessary, Kyle deliberately shimmied his solid, muscled body out of his skin-tight jeans.

His eyes stung, pleading with him to blink, but he couldn't. He was incapable of shutting his eyes even for a split second. No way was he going to miss any of this seductive striptease, the side to side grind and the clenching, muscled backside making him forget to breathe.

"K... K... Ky *please*." He couldn't take much more of this, almost swallowing his tongue when Ky bared the lightly haired globes of squeezable, biteable, lickable flesh then a huge hard shaft, the purpled head shiny with pre-come.

Unable to stop himself, he reached for his own zipper, easing the pressure on his aching cock. Hard as nails had a whole new meaning to him now. Even the cool air through his underwear pushed him closer to the edge. The pain from his back was now hot and frustrating, adding to the intense feelings smashing into him in waves.

"What the hell is going on Ky? This is more than the usual desire. It's like I have no control and all I want — no *need*— to do is touch you. It's been building since I woke up but now it's almost painful when I try to think of something other than you."

He saw Kyle struggling to think through the same

lusty fog. "Oh hell, I forgot about the mating haze. It's not supposed to kick in until the bond is consummated and we've claimed each other. Oh god, I'm sorry, I never wanted to pressure or coerce you into accepting our bond."

Both of them moaned when the next wave swept through them, this one more intense than the last and pulling them towards each other until they were nose to nose, forehead against forehead. Kyle held his weight on those deliciously strong forearms, his body just an inch above Jay.

"At the risk of sounding ignorant, *What the fuck is the mating haze?* If you say 'this' I will smack you."

Kyle smiled slightly as the haze lightened enough to think clearly. "As if I'd be sarcastic at a time like this. The mating haze is meant to kick in after the mating to ensure the couple cement the bond. It's also supposed to enable the mated pair to be linked telepathically when in shifted form, but I don't know how it will work with a non-shifter."

As if he wasn't insecure enough, now he had to contend with not being a shifter and unable to share that side of his mate's life. There, he'd admitted it: Kyle CathFawr was his mate. The force pulled them together until his lightly haired chest rubbed deliciously against the hard muscle of Ky's smooth one. Their hands wandered across feverish skin.

"Mmmmmm, feels good. Knew shifter skin was supposed to be sensitive when with their mate but I had no idea how... good it would feel. Neverrrr done this before. Feels so goooooood." The words came out in stops and starts as Ky kissed along his shoulder, biting softly where shoulder met neck, fuzzing his mind with sensations.

"Wha-what about all those women you w-were going out with? Don't tell me you passed up what was offered when they spread their legs. The rumours of your... '*prowess*' is well known in town." He was unable to help his tone from being cold and angry, letting on how much it had hurt to see Ky with someone else.

Despite avoiding Kyle for years to keep his desire for him a secret, he refused to be logical when it came to Ky. Just because he wasn't *with* Ky didn't give the man permission to fuck every available female in town! It didn't make sense to him either, when he thought it through, but he didn't think love was supposed to make sense.

Damn, he'd used the L word too. These stupid feelings were making him dizzy.

"I meant what I said Jay. I've never done anything like this before. I saved this experience for my mate... for *you*." That blush really was adorable, and his anger faded under Ky's confessions. "I've heard the rumours and while it's nice that people think I'm a sex god, I swear to you, *my*

mate, I never touched any of those women in a sexual way. I swear I have never wanted anyone other than you since I found out you were my mate. I cannot and will not claim any other."

Okay wow. That was— Kyle sounded so sincere. Could he take a chance? Yes, damn it, he would. "Good. I will hold you to that. I haven't y-you know either. I've only ever wanted you."

"Wow, man this is... I never imagined you'd want me too. I thought I'd have to set out to woo you, convince you that not only did you like guys but that you were my mate, my *true mate*, before explaining that I go furry and purr when I'm happy."

"You purr?"

"Out of everything I just said that's the bit that caught your attention?"

"Hey! I like the thought of devising ways to make you purr."

"I look forward to seeing what you come up with, but first we need to heal you. We keep getting distracted. Do you want me to move before I shift?" Honesty and love unhidden and unashamed shone in those peridot eyes.

"No... stay where you are... please?"

FIVE

The 'shift' as Ky called it was completely different from the horrific, bone-crunching sight he'd witnessed in the forest with Billy. Kyle's change was... beautiful, almost as if he were simply slipping from one form to another, leaving the sleek, masculine creature in his stead. Silver moonlight poured in from the windows behind the bed and gleamed along the cat's soft, shiny coat.

Jay was so transfixed by the gleam he forgot, unbelievably, that there was a *jaguar* on top of him, legs and paws on either side of his head and hips.

"You're just... just *wow*. You were beautiful in the forest but up close you're stunning." Driving his hands through the thick the fur along the jaguar's neck, he got a soft chuff in response.

"We are definitely going to explore this more later, but I think while we have a break from the mating haze we should take advantage of it before we get carried away again." Now all he had to do was stop smoothing and touching and stroking and—

Yeah, stopping any minute now.

More chuffing followed as the massive head shoved him carefully but firmly over onto his stomach, baring his wounded back. Hot puffs of air stung the torn skin as Ky

crouched above him to take stock of the damage again.

"Rrrrrrrraaaaaaooowlll."

"Yeah, I don't speak cat yet, furball."

"Oh!" Strong jaws closed on the skin between his shoulder and neck, squeezing gently and giving him a slight, gentle shake. Spiking his blood pressure again but not in a bad way, this was something else he'd have to file away to explore later.

One heavy paw pressed on his hip to stop the light grinding he didn't realize he was doing. Anticipation of the pain of healing that Ky had warned him about warred with the lusty excitement he felt at having Ky on top of him, whatever form he was in.

A long, rough tongue scraping over his skin warned that the pain would come sooner than the satisfaction of release.

"Ow ow ow, you weren't overestimating how much it would hurt, were you?" It ached almost as much as when Billy had clawed him, and he hoped the voodoo magic healing spit would kick in soon.

The long, burning laving slowly changed and started to feel really good. Jay did not bother to stop the soft moan that escaped as his libido woke again. Ky must have mistaken the moan for pain and stopped laving to rub that furry head across the back of his head and neck, trying

to soothe him.

Turning slightly to look into the peridot cat eyes, he could see the edges of the animalistic hunger just beneath the surface: a predator that was totally focused on his prey — his mate.

"Ky—" He broke off as his back began to tingle, the slight burning changing to a chilling tightness. "What's happening Ky?" He turned further in an attempt to see what the hell was going on with his back and ended up twisted like a pretzel, still unable to see much passed his shoulder. Instead he cautiously reached back to run a hand up his back. "Oh my god, you were right. You'd never be able to tell I'd ever been hurt; the skin feels good as new. Better in fact. I can't even feel the cigarette burns. Frank went too far with a beating a year ago—"

A deep growl cut him off. He could feel the dangerous tone to the growl and the hairs rising on the back of his neck, this time in fear, as he looked at Kyle. The black jaguar bared his teeth and crowded him possessively, protectively, against the headboard of the bed.

Coal black fur as soft and sleek as velvet rubbed against his side and chest as he turned onto his newly healed back, not exactly sure what to expect from the beast in front of him. The wildness present in its eyes was new and unnerving. He wasn't with Kyle now; he was with the

cat.

"K-Ky, are you alright? I didn't mean to tell you about what Frank di—" He growled again, deeper and more aggressive than the last. "Oh shit." Those strong jaws wrapped around where neck met shoulder again, this time hard and serious, those sharp teeth just resting against his skin. He didn't want to fear Kyle but the lack of humanity in that gaze scared him.

"Kyle come back. Please come back to me." A rough tongue began licking where the teeth had nipped to soothe the hurt, but he had no idea if the cat, or Kyle, understood his plea.

Kyle's heavy jaguar body pressed him into the mattress, crowding him until all he could see was smooth, sleek, black fur. "Oh, oh." Kyle was now rubbing against him like he had been during the mating haze and it felt really, really good. It shouldn't feel this good. Should it?

Rubbing harder, the jaguar nuzzled its head into his long hair and the base of his neck. Jay couldn't resist driving his hands back into the fur on Ky's back and sides, anywhere he could reach. He could feel the powerful muscles bunching in pleasure at the attention.

Rubbing turned to flat-out writhing and wiggling as the jaguar rested his whole weight on him. Kyle was almost too heavy, but Jay was too caught up in the sensations to

care about being able to breathe.

The weight vanished and the growling started again, softer this time but just as powerful. Kyle's whiskers tickled his face as they were nose to nose before he found himself being pushed onto his stomach. He tried to push up onto his hands and knees but was pinned back down flat by a heavy paw, the deadly claws tickling along his skin with light pressure as a warning to submit, but not enough to hurt.

The mating haze was back and this time it was stronger, almost impossible to resist, demanding the bond be claimed. Jay could feel the mating bond Kyle had told him about click into place. It was like tangible force pulling them towards each other.

It felt amazing and scary at the same time, like he wasn't in control of his own body as it pushed closer to Kyle. No matter what his form he was still Ky. *His mate*. There was no point denying it now, he knew, *knew* without a doubt that Ky was his mate. It was time to claim it as such. The mating haze demanded no less.

"Please Ky, *mate*, *I need*—" The heavy rubbing now drove him mad, his cock so hard he thought it might break through his jeans. Why hadn't he taken his jeans off when Ky did?

He'd been too busy trying not to drool as he caught his first look of Ky's generous package, aroused and ready.

The sight of pre-cum leaking from the slit on the flushed mushroom head, and that long shaft, eight inches at least, standing proud had made Jay lose focus on anything around him.

The cat had stood above him now was still his mate, but he wanted the man back so he could take advantage of all that perfect golden skin. All the naughty things he'd dreamed of revolved around that human body, and not the cat atop him.

He could feel that same length pressing into him now, riding along the seam of his jeans, trying to push through the fabric to his clenching hole. He hoped this mate thing would make them fit together perfectly because he wasn't sure his virgin hole could take something so... huge.

It shouldn't feel this good to have a jaguar rubbing off against him but that, combined with the delicious friction of his hips thrusting into the mattress, built an almost painful pleasure and nudged him closer to the edge of climax.

"Ky, mate, need you to change. First time has to be us, just us. I love your cat but I need the man to show me love. Show me how mates claim each other. Need the *man* to claim me. *Now*."

SIX

The rubbing turned to thrusting as the weight on his back changed, lengthening into a muscled, naked man, Ky leaning back down to nuzzle the hair away from his neck and leave stinging, biting kisses that made his toes curl.

"I never knew my neck could make my cock tingle, but damn I like it."

"It's... a... mate ...thing," Ky groaned softly between kisses. Jay pushed up against Ky and gained enough room to turn over onto his back before Ky resumed his kissing assault. Licking around the hypersensitive skin of his nipples before biting them gently, Ky caused him to whimper pathetically.

So close to begging Kyle to fuck him, his stubbornly proud, previous self didn't recognise the moaning, horny, sex-crazed man he'd become. The mating haze had demolished the walls he'd built around himself and his needs. He was emotionally bare to the man above him, defenceless.

"In the first stages of the bond mates are hypersensitive and drawn to touch each other and keep in physical contact for a few days, even as little as holding hands will satisfy the bond until it settles. Any other person's touch will burn..." The cat was perilously close to

the surface again. "No one else! You're mine now and I will not permit another to touch you. My jaguar won't allow it."

"It's alright Ky." *Breathe in... out. In... out.* If he calmed himself, Ky would follow "I've never wanted anyone else. Only ever been *you. I'm yours. My mate.* I won't allow anyone to touch you either. *My cat, my love.*"

"*Mmmate*, yours. Both me and my cat will protect you until we die. We would die for you."

"*No!* No dying until we're old and grey. Now claim me, mate."

Ky fumbled with the fly of Jay's jeans but growled at him when he offered to help. In the end Ky tore through the jeans with careful claw strokes. Another thing to file away for future reference: that some aspects of his cat were at his call in human form as well. Wonder if that went for more... interesting aspects?

Ky prowled up the bed and between his legs, ripping his boxers off. The sound of tearing fabric made his cock twitch excitedly, the leaking head tingling with the cool rush of air at being bared.

"Love your body, makes me want to lick you from head to toe, but I don't think either of us will last long for the first few rounds. We'll save the exploring and licking for round five." *Round five? Wow.* His night was looking good. He had no idea whether the night would kill him or

let him walk properly tomorrow, but he knew he'd enjoy finding out.

Spreading his legs, he gave Ky what he hoped was a 'come hither' smile. It worked better than he thought when Kyle practically pounced on him, grabbing his legs and stretching them wide, knees bent and heels of his feet nearly touching his backside.

"I promise that though I will be Alpha to the pack, with you I will always be your partner. Mates are supposed to be equal in all ways, especially Alpha mates."

"Good, because I plan on getting my hands on that tight bubble butt." Jay gave Ky a leering smile that made them both break into giggles a prom queen would have been proud of.

Ky's hands were ghosting along his legs, smoothing up his trembling thighs, edging closer to his sweet spot. He was immediately brought back to the brink of begging when he felt strong fingers wrap around his stiff cock. They pumped smoothly, using the eager juices to lube the way.

The sight of Ky between his legs was enough to bring him close to orgasm. The feel of skin on skin with the man he loved, peridot eyes gazing hungrily at his dick was too much for his frazzled nerves.

"Come for me Jay, mark my skin with your scent. *Claim me!*" Leaning over him to whisper without losing

rhythm, he said, "*I love you mate.*" It was too much, too much sensation, too much emotion. The most amazing shock zapped through his senses, the most powerful and bone shaking orgasm he'd ever experienced. God, he wanted Ky to feel this too.

"Aaaargh! Oh... my... god!" His breath came heavy as he rode the wave of climax, watching his seed painting Ky's chest. *Marking him.* He didn't expect the almost overwhelming feeling of possessiveness to fill him at having his mate marked by him.

"You're mine now, Ky, no going back. Now make me yours." Cheekily goading him, Jay urged him to seek his own climax and experience the rollercoaster so they could bask in the afterglow and cuddle. God that sounded girly —*cuddling*— but he couldn't imagine a better feeling than being close to his mate.

Ky brought his hand up to suck gently on his index finger, swirling his tongue around the digits. Getting the idea he reached for Ky's fingers to do the same. Was it normal for it to feel so good, so... naughty?

That wet heat made his spent cock twitch against his leg. The spirit was willing but the body needed a few minutes to catch up from the mind-blowing orgasm that had left him weak and grinning.

"I'm going to stretch you first. I don't ever want to

hurt you with carelessness, mate." Ky pulled the fingers free of his mouth and teased between his ass cheeks.

Rubbing the wet fingers over and around his hole, he massaged the tense, clenching muscle while the other hand gently squeezed his balls, pulling slightly and causing zinging sensations to shoot up his shaft.

"D-don't tease Ky *please*. I'll tell you if you hurt me"

"You're nearly as ready as I can make you, just need to stretch you with my fingers and lube you up. Reach under the pillow." His hands moved blindly above his head until he was able to rummage under the pillows and pull out a half-empty tube of lube.

"Been busy hmmm?" Jay didn't think he'd ever get tired of seeing that adorable blush spread across Ky's face, turning his ears a bright pink.

"Now who's teasing? Gimme that lube so I can get inside that gorgeous ass that's kept me up at night."

"Oh yes please, in me... now. Wait, what about condoms? I have one in my wallet but that's it." Damn, why couldn't he be like the ever hopeful jock who carried almost a suitcase of condoms with him wherever he went? There was no way once was going to be enough to satisfy either of them, especially in the mating haze.

"Shifters carry no transmittable diseases. For some

reason our animal counterparts protect us and our mates. If you trust me we don't need them, but if it will make you more comfortable I'll wear the one you carry and we'll do other things to make each other happy until we get to the drug store. I'll go with whatever you decide."

If it was possible, he felt himself fall even deeper in love with the man kneeling between his legs at his willingness to let Jay lead the way, despite it going against his dominant personality. Did he trust Ky?

Yes. The answer came almost immediately; he trusted Ky with everything he was. They were mates and it was past time to claim that bond.

"I trust you mate."

The love shining in Ky's eyes made Jay's eyes burn with emotion. He'd never in his life thought he'd be loved again after his mother died.

Reaching up, he pulled Ky down for a scorching kiss, tongues battling before he let Ky take control of the kiss as he wrapped his legs around Ky's waist, forcing them so close there wasn't a breath of air between them.

Shoving a hand down between his legs, Ky gently eased a generously lubed finger into his ass, breaching his virgin hole. The stretching felt so weird, indescribable, as Ky added another finger and started slowly thrusting deeper. He bent them at just the right place to brush his

sweet spot.

"Are you sure you've never done this before, because you know a suspicious amount about gay sex. I wouldn't know where to start and you're supposed to be as virgin as me, mister." He narrowed his eyes accusingly but his moaning and writhing took the sting out of the words..

Ky just chuckled smugly, entirely too proud of himself for making Jay squeal on a sharp upward stroke over his prostate. "I've never even touched another person sexually, that kiss with Mary-Lou doesn't count because I was only eleven. Everything I know is from several interesting books and the internet, not to mention I've dreamed about claiming you for years. I have a *very, very... vivid imagination*." He punctuated each word with a thrust of his fingers as he added a third.

"I look forward to reading these books then. I'll have to practise what I learn. You know anyone willing to be my pussy cat?"

"Oh god, don't start with the pussy jokes already. At least wait until the morning."

Positioning himself, Ky added a generous amount of lube to his very hard dick. Jay had been so wrapped up in the shock waves he hadn't realized how much Ky had enjoyed pleasuring him, but now he could see the happy trails painted all over his stomach. The sight was definitely

waking him up.

As Ky moved into position he pushed up to catch a deep kiss, their tongues duelling as his nerves were overturned with lust and anticipation. "Oh god, you're huge Ky. F-feels soooooo goooooood!" The burning pain of entry lasted only seconds before the feeling of Ky being balls deep inside him overwhelmed every nerve in his body.

They locked gazes and he could see the cat scratching at the surface before Ky swept down to bury his head in his hair again. Teeth sunk into the skin, the pain just heightening the pleasure. He knew this was part of the claiming, accepting the man and the cat together as one. How'd he get so lucky? Was this what his mother meant when she said he'd find his purpose here?

Ky gave him a long moment to adjust, and he could feel how much control it took for Ky to keep still. His muscles were trembling so much it made Jay shake with lusty anticipation at what would happen when that control snapped.

"Give it to me Ky, everything you've got. I won't break so don't hold back." Ky must have taken him at his word as he was knocked breathless at the power of the first thrust, the second just as breathtakingly delicious.

Moans turned into shouts and Ky's voice soon turned growly, words mingling with and deteriorating into

yowls that were pure jaguar, wild and incredibly arousing, so much so that he was a few hard thrusts away from a second mind-blowing orgasm.

"Come for me Jay! Claim the bond, *me*." The growled demand hit him like a sledgehammer and the flood gates opened. Unable to deny his mate, he grasped onto the bond pushing at his senses and felt it snap into place.

The rush, oh god, the rush was unbelievable. He could feel everything Ky felt as if there was an invisible bridge between them: the emotions, the sensations, the mating haze and the bond. It was amazing.

"Mate!" He wasn't even sure who shouted it they were so in tune. It was better than he'd ever imagined or dreamed of. They were in their own bubble and nothing from the outside world could hurt them.

Ky had told him the mating bond was powerful but not that it was so... all consuming that it made his head spin and the ground shake beneath him. The shock was mutual and he could feel Ky's awe through the mating bond.

Neither of them had enough energy left to do much more than pant, but the unreality of the situation hit Jay and laughter bubbled from him in a burst of air.

"You know having your lover burst into spontaneous laughter after you've just made love can really

dent a guy's ego."

"Good thing your ego's big enough to take it then isn't it?" Moving to rest his head against Ky's chest when he pulled out, Jay collapsed beside him. The disengaged feeling he was going to have to get used to, because it just felt plain weird, nothing like when they were making love.

Cuddling felt better than he hoped it would. They were both totally satisfied and curled together tightly, not even caring about the wet patch or the fact that they were sticky. He had a feeling that cuddling together every night would be something he'd never want to give up. Damn, his inner teenage girl was showing again.

"I was laughing because I'm so bloody happy. Never thought I'd feel something so... huge, and no, that wasn't an innuendo so stop smirking."

Ky pulled him closer, kissing his forehead and nipping his neck playfully. "Go to sleep honey; we can explore the joys of morning shower sex when we wake up. I can't wait to see that Goth Guyliner running and smudged in all the right places. Goodnight, my mate."

SEVEN

When he woke there was no pain, just the pleasant soreness of his backside from their energetic lovemaking during the night. Not to mention the shower play.

He felt the deep, solid barrel of a soft, furry chest pressed against his back and a heavy paw was resting on his hip. After they had worn themselves out Ky had asked whether Jay minded if he shifted. Apparently after a mating bond was consummated with the *man* it was tradition to rest with the cat to show acceptance of both natures.

It had been nice to feel so safe and protected as the massive animal kept guard over him as he slept.

A deep purr from behind him let him know that the jaguar was awake. He'd always loved it when ordinary cats purred but to hear the heavy rumble coming from the jaguar-man behind him sounded more like a well-oiled engine, and the whole bed vibrated pleasantly.

"Shift mate, we expended a lot of energy last night and with your high metabolism you need to eat soon. Plus we should have seen your parents last night but this morning will have to do. Remind me to thank your mother for the cake; it made a brilliant refuelling snack after our nap the first time."

When they had worn each other out finally he'd

questioned Ky about being a shifter, part of him sad that he'd never be the complete mate that Ky deserved.

The warm, tingling sensation flowing through the still open bond told him that Ky was shifting back to the man. Ky's paw at his hip morphed smoothly into a long, muscled forearm squeezing around his waist, hips thrusting a rather large morning erection against his tender ass.

"Are you telling me that you didn't enjoy 'expending a lot of energy' with me last night, because I'd know that was a lie. My parents never actually expected to see us for dinner. I told them you were my mate when I realized our connection, and my plans to woo you on a romantic getaway. I'd be annoyed that you beat me to the wooing part of the plan, but I'm too loved-up and sore from last night."

Jay hugged Ky back tightly, afraid he'd disappear when he woke up from this dream. When would his walls build up again? He felt like he was going to burst into tears any minute.

"It's not a dream honey. I've claimed you and you've claimed me; we're mated and you won't have to bear any burden alone again. Plus, we get to have shower sex so move that rump into the bathroom."

"The spirit is willing but the body is sore, you're very... large, my mate."

"You're not exactly little either, Jay, but I've

decided it is a delicious kind of sore because every time I feel it I remember the feel of our bond clicking into place. I wanted to try something else I read about in those books... rimming, I'm sure your active imagination can figure it out."

"R-rimming? Please tell me that is what I hope it is?" The images flashing through his mind were so erotic he hoped, really hoped, his guess was right because damn, his imagination was running away with possibilities.

"First one in the shower is the one on his knees." Ky took off at a run for the bathroom and the enormous walk-in shower. He had a feeling that he'd enjoy all the hidden treasure in those books; they were quickly earning their weight in gold.

"Cheater!" Racing after him but not really upset, willing to try anything with Ky, Jay trusted him not to push him into something he was uncomfortable with.

It was amazing, really, how far he'd come in the space of about twenty-four hours. Everything from being attacked to claiming his mate. He had yet to introduce himself to the Kyle's parents as their son's mate and, when they stepped down, his future partner in leading their pack. Ky had told him a bit about the duties he had now as heir and some of what would be expected of them both when they reached mated maturity, which was apparently mid-

twenties.

Jay came to a stop just outside the already steamed up shower cove. The shower took up nearly the entire bathroom and had multiple water jets at various heights on the wall.

He saw Ky under the spray, all wet, dripping, and erotic, kneeling on the tiled floor, legs apart enough to give him a great view of his finely haired balls, drawn up tight to his body as Ky pumped his cock lazily.

"I raced you Jay, are you going to grant me my prize?"

"Prize?" All thoughts had vanished when he'd caught sight of his mate, bare and aroused, waiting for him.

"You've forgotten already. I must be doing a good job of addling that overactive mind. Come here mate." His body was moving, obeying before he even processed what Ky had said.

Ky's hands on his hips turned him around so he faced the large mirror. Ky's piercing peridot eyes met his in the silver surface. Why wasn't it fogged? The room was steadily filling with steam yet the mirror was still polished and shiny.

"I might start to get insulted if your attention wanders this easily when I'm on my knees for you, but to answer the question undoubtedly flying round your logical

brain, the mirror is treated to be steam proof... so we can play and watch. I thought you'd noticed it earlier but I must have been doing a better job of distracting you."

Not giving him a chance to reply, Ky leant forward. He felt his ass cheeks being spread wide and cool breaths blowing over his now not-so-virgin hole. "Oh!" Jay watched Ky's eyes glint mischievously before a hot, wet tongue dragged over the clenched muscle.

"Oh god that feels amazing!"

Ky's hot tongue kept licking and Jay's eyes started to flutter shut, the sensations too much. "Keep them open; I want to see you come. Feel you squeeze my tongue and come in my hand. Let go and I promise I'll catch you."

Ky definitely had a way with words when he was aroused and what he could do with his tongue stripped all thoughts from Jay's mind.

The last wall, the one still waiting for the other shoe to drop and for Ky to realize he was too much trouble and not worth it, just sort of crumbled away against the love he saw shining in his mate's eyes.

"I'll always catch you mate, whether you fall or run. You're mine and I'm yours, beast and all. My cat still thinks you're very... exciting and would one day very much like to play hunt with you on our lands."

"Play hunt? As in—?"

"As in you run with a head start, then I release my cat to hunt for you. I know that it will probably take a while for you to feel comfortable again in the forests but—"

"No. I love to walk the forest trails and I refuse to let Billy take that from me, from us. Hey! Who told you to stop? Quit talking, more licking. That's what cats are good at aren't they?"

"I've created a monster haven't I? Will you ever run out of cat gags?" That slightly rougher than human tongue rasped over his overheated skin while the steam surrounded them, making it seem as though they were on a cloud.

He wondered if this new-found romanticism would curb itself or whether he was going to be constantly breaking into spontaneous poetry.

"Here kitty, kitty, I'll have some cream for you soon." He broke up into moans and laughter as Ky slapped one cheek then the other, without removing his tongue from his ass or faltering in the demanding rhythm pumping his cock.

A low growl emanating from the man behind him let on that he wasn't the only one close to the edge and made his balls tighten even more.

"OH! Mate!" A throaty growl joined his shout before both of them sank to the floor, Ky cradling him against his chest with thick, muscled legs bracketing his

own scrawny limbs.

EIGHT

Dressing quickly in clothes Ky handed him, he'd swear that the pile hadn't been there on the glass coffee table earlier and seeing his confusion Ky explained shyly "Mum must have dropped them off while we were... occupied."

Occupied? Oh shit, he gulped. "You mean... in the shower? How can I look your parents in the eye now Ky? All I'll be able to think about through breakfast, well, lunch now I suppose, is her hearing what we were doing."

"Honey it's fine. The entire suite is almost soundproof so she'd only have heard what was going on if she came into the bedroom." Ky was hiding something; he could tell by the pink tips of his ears. "But my parents will know by our scents that we've mated It's hard to have much privacy among shifters. They'll have felt the rush of the — *our*— bond through the *pack connection* because it's their duty to protect us."

"So basically your parents knew the exact minute we had sex? That's... creepy."

"Everything that's happened yesterday and that's the bit you find creepy. There isn't a lot of privacy within packs but mates, *true mates*, are honoured. Most shifters never find their *true mate* and just settle with a companion. For

some reason though, my line seems luckier than most in finding our true mate."

He was so busy being distracted by the thought of Ky's parents (the only healthy parental figures in his life) knowing that he'd had sex, *mated* with their only son, he hadn't noticed that Ky had slowly been herding him out of the enormous apartment wing.

They walked down a hall suddenly a hell of a lot closer to the dining room where Ky's parents were, no doubt, waiting for them. Shit.

"Don't worry, we don't bite honey. Come and have dinner. Kyle's jaguar needs to refuel and so do you Jay; you're far too skinny. We'll talk about that later, son." Ky's father's voice boomed down the hall with authority.

Both of them jumped at the interruption before Ky grabbed his hand and almost dragged him in to the room and over to the table, shoving him gently into a seat before he could make a run for it.

"Good morn— what time is it?"

"It's just gone midday but we thought you'd be emerging from the bedroom about now, and the haze should be wearing off too. I have to say Jay, it's nice to have you back — both of our sons home again."

What did she mean? "Mrs CathFawr—" Being called son by them was almost a dream come true but he

had no wish to bring trouble to them. There was no way Frank was just going to let him go.

"Don't start that nonsense with me son. You've mated with Kyle and now we can fully protect you from that bastard so don't think you can just run away again. We won't let him hurt you anymore. Not now that we know how bad it is. *Was*. I'll gut that man myself if I get the chance."

How could they have known; he'd kept away from them to protect them but perhaps now it was time to step up. He had to stop hiding if he was ever going to be worthy of his mate, his *mate*.

Feeling Ky's hand grip his knee, he turned. "Remember when I said pack would protect their own? Well, you're pack now."

Jay felt his throat closing up, eyes stinging with unshed tears. How could they want him to be part of their pack? Couldn't they see he wasn't good enough for their family let alone their son?

"Oh Jay." Ky leant over and pulled him into his lap. Shit. Not only was he leaking tears but the bond was still open enough to leak his thoughts and feelings too. Great, he didn't even want to think about how Ky's parents were reacting to his near breakdown.

Clawing his emotions back under control but not

moving from Ky's lap, he turned to look at Ky's parents. His mother had tears running freely down her face as she gripped his father's hand. It was clear they were sharing something like he was with Ky, the mating between them so apparent, so solid. Could he and Ky ever reach that point of comfort?

"Jay. *Son*. Before your mother died she came to us, asking us to look after you and explain things when you were old enough. Your mother brought you here because she was raised here. She knew about our people though she wasn't one herself. Your father was a shifter, a lynx, and so there is a fifty-fifty chance that when Ky reaches shifter maturity it could trigger your change." Ky's father's voice was so deep and smooth, calming his raw nerves.

Glancing at Ky it was clear that Ky didn't know about his heritage either. It seemed the information was new to both of them; it made him feel less lost and on his own knowing his mate was there with him.

"It seems that your grandmother was a seer, or wise-woman; apparently she saw that you would find both your mate and danger here. Your parents left to protect you but your father was killed by hunters not long after. The grief almost destroyed your mother, but she came back because she knew she couldn't deprive you of the chance to find your other half. She also knew that if she came back

Billy's dad would try to claim her, now that she had no mate. He was very much like Frank. Dangerous."

Ky's parents had moved so they sat on either side of him and Ky, his mother taking over the story seamlessly as if they'd rehearsed the exchange. "You know what Billy turned into, and his father was the same. We tried to protect her but she refused our help. Your mother had been fooled by Frank, thinking he would be a good father to you until you knew the truth. To be honest, we were all fooled until you started getting bruises from 'accidents' and withdrew into yourself, but we couldn't do anything unless you came to us."

At the mention of the bruises, Ky started to growl, the deep rumble way more erotic than it should have been with his parents sitting right next to them. "Shhh, it's okay Ky. No more. I promised you I wouldn't go back."

Damn, would he really be able to shift? To share that experience with his mate would be the greatest gift he could have.

Forgetting about Ky's parents, he immediately sought to soothe his mate, stroking his hands through the jet black silky hair until the growling stopped and a small purr escaped. When Ky realized he sounded like a contented kitten he made a conscious effort to stop, blushing so cutely.

Jay jumped when he felt a delicate hand cupping his face. "How can you doubt you are worthy of us or our son; you put him above yourself. We are honoured to have you in our family and we'd also love it if one day you would be comfortable calling us Mam and Papa like Ky does. When he's not trying to be a big kitten that is. I haven't heard you purr since you were little, Ky. It was so cute then and it hasn't changed."

Ky bit him slightly on his neck when he laughed at the 'big kitten' comment and he knew he'd have to tease him about it later. *His big, muscled, sexy kitten*, he thought loud enough to pass through the bond as he received another bite, Ky's hot tongue soothing the sting.

"I-I would like that a lot... Mam. Why did my mother tell you all of this though? Did she know Ky was my mate?" He couldn't wrap his head about this at the moment; it was like he'd reached his quota of shocking discoveries.

"I think she knew. It's hard for a mother not to notice the way her son lights up at the mere mention of his best friend. Even when you'd pulled away, Ky would still light up when you were mentioned or he saw you, however briefly, in town. It was only a matter of time until his cat demanded he claim you as his mate."

Talk about lighting up. The blush on his face spread

to his neck, but at least he wasn't the only one looking like a beetroot, as Ky's heated face was still hidden in his neck.

Soft lips distracted slightly as they nibbled up to his ear.

"Bad kitty." But apparently even mouthing the words under his breath was still too loud as Ky's, as *their* parents broke into happy laughter: Papa's a deep belly laugh and Mam's hiccupping lightly through the leftover tears.

"Oh, our darling boys. You're absolutely perfect for each other." Mam said, cupping his cheek in one hand and Ky's in the other. "Now let's have some food. We made your favourite from when you were younger: grated cheese on toast with tuna and ketchup. Ky developed quite a taste for it after shifting, tempting us too. It's actually very nice, even if it is a bit cliché for cats to love tuna." The feminine voice lilted with laughter again.

He couldn't remember the last time he'd had any food that wasn't pre-packaged or microwaveable. No, actually he could. It was the last time he had stayed here before fear had made him keep them at arm's-length. It was so nice to have a real meal again, the feeling of safety and comfort so familiar but one he hadn't felt for years.

He finished the last bit of toast on his plate, having given the extra sandwiches to Ky after he'd practically inhaled the huge pile on his own plate.

He insisted on clearing the table and washing the

dishes, dragging a protesting Ky with him to dry and put away. It was only fair after his parents had made them the huge plates of toasted sandwiches.

Mam called for Ky from the other room to help her with something, leaving Jay on his own in the kitchen to finish up the dishes. Ky had been far too happy to get rid of the tea towel, claiming, "I cook and lift heavy things but please don't make me dry dishes."

A few minutes passed in peace before Papa came in to take up where his wayward son left off. "I think it has something to do with standing still that Ky disagrees with; he has since he was a kit."

An easy routine formed between them as he washed and passed the dishes to the large, muscled Alpha to dry. He was much bigger than Ky, wider and taller, with an air of authority surrounding him. Apparently being Alpha was something you were and not something you could learn. Would Ky get that big when he matured?

"I wanted to thank you for the warning you gave in the forest. You didn't know who or what we were but yet you still tried to protect my mate and my son from the monster trying to kill you."

Being pulled into those strong arms gave him a thrill at the feel of such strength, but not in the same way as when Ky did it. This was calming and made him feel safe

and cared for... like family. He knew what it meant to be part of pack now. It wasn't just an empty gesture; it was his home.

"I was so proud of you. I'm glad you've joined with Ky. I've always known you'd make a good son and will be a great asset at Ky's side when he becomes Alpha. You're strong enough to guide him and help him through the bad times."

With that said, it was as if the Alpha had done what he set out to do. He walked back towards the door, pausing in the doorway to look back, the mischievous expression identical to Ky's. "By the way, remember when Ky taught you some Welsh slang when you were younger? Think of my mate's chiding name for him and you'll have years of fun with it. My mate has a sense of humour."

Smiling as he realized what Papa had meant, he called out to Ky. "Here kitty kitty, come out and play." Mam used to call Ky *Blewog Du CathFawr* when he was naughty which translated into *big fluffy black kitty*. Oh, the fun he'd have with that later.

He waited for his wayward mate to answer, standing at the sink, feeling for the first time as if he *belonged*. Whatever was going to happen with Frank, he knew he would have his family and his pack to protect and support him, his mate and best friend standing by his side,

ready to catch him if he fell.

The End

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

There really is nothing better than a good book and a big mug of tea on a rainy day, which is often needed when considering the wet weather in Wales. She is rarely found without a book of some description on her person and a notebook, she can always be seen scribbling and doodling while lost in thought about sometimes random nonsense or day dreaming about alternate worlds of fiction. Real life may not be much fun but the imagination allows infinite possibilities to be explored and lots of naughty fun too if you're up to the challenge. So in the words of a crazy scientist — I reject your reality and submit one of my own.

Happy reading!