

THE  
HEALING  
CURSE

TALYA BOSCO

Loose Id

# *The Healing Curse*

*Talya Bosco*



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## **The Healing Curse**

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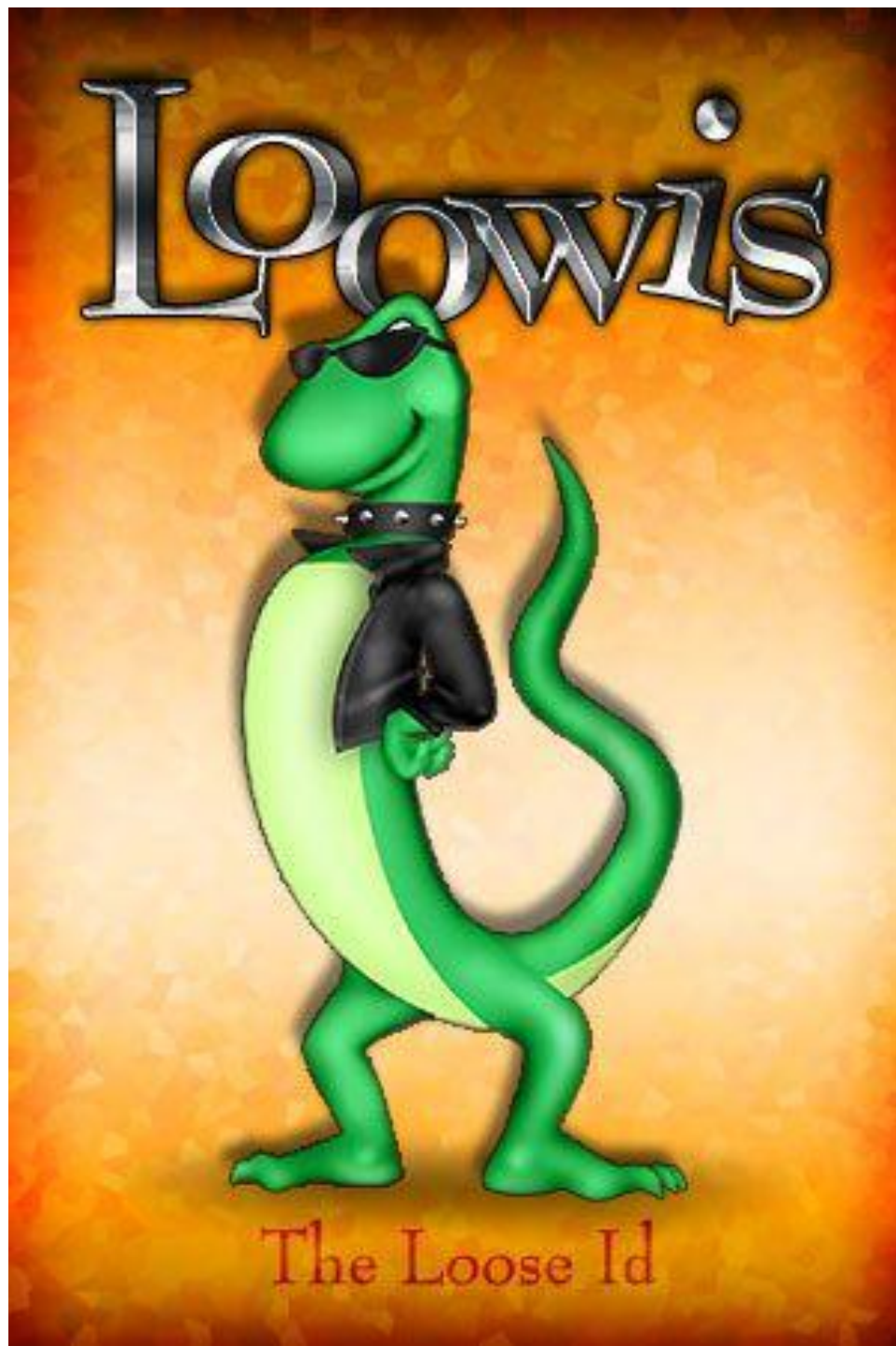
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## Chapter One

Karina looked out the window of the cabin again. Nothing as far as the eye could see but trees, trees, and more trees. Even though it was still early afternoon, the sun was slowly disappearing in an early gloom. The Rocky Mountains were a beautiful place, but much of it was still fairly untouched by man, which made it a perfect getaway if someone was trying to avoid civilization.

Nestled on the top of a forest rise, the solitary cabin's solar panels and generator gave it some of the comforts of civilization. Propane provided the energy needed for heating water and cooking. So maybe the goal wasn't to avoid civilization, but people.

The isolation made the waiting even harder. She was more nervous than she'd thought possible. If only the men had been around when she'd gotten here, she'd already know if her trip had been in vain. It had been hard enough getting up the courage to come in the first place. Every minute she waited made it more likely she would grow a brain and turn around and go home.

But she couldn't do that. She couldn't afford it. Her heart couldn't afford it.

So why had she waited for so long to do this? Because she'd been afraid. Plain and simple. Fear had kept her from changing the status quo. She'd been afraid she'd lose a friendship that meant the world to her.

But that fear had kept her from reaching for more. And after her scare this past week, she couldn't let it stop her any longer. If she lost their friendship, she would move on. What she didn't think she could live with were the what-ifs.

She should probably be doing this at home, but no, she had to go all foolish and impulsive and follow them up here to their cabin, where she knew they came to be

alone. But she was tired of just looking. Tired of the hints she threw their way and they never seemed to pick up on. It was time to do something about it.

It was almost five o'clock. She'd been here for three hours, and still they weren't back. What the hell were they doing out in the woods for so long?

Kent's SUV was here, so wherever they had gone, they'd walked.

She'd figured she'd be able to show up and surprise them, find them in their cabin doing stupid man stuff. Apparently their stupid man stuff involved being outside. All freaking day.

It would be dark soon too. She thought about going after them but knew it would be a dumb move. Even dumber than coming here in the first place.

She paced back and forth in front of the picture window, rubbing her arms. The more she thought about it, the more she accepted this wasn't the smartest thing she'd ever done.

What the hell was she going to do if they got back and didn't want her here? Well, of course they didn't want her here. But what if they kicked her out? Where would she go? It wasn't like they were in the middle of hotel country, where she could get a room. Although there were probably a couple around if she really looked.

What was she thinking? They wouldn't do that. At the very least, they'd let her stay overnight and send her home tomorrow.

Frustrated and needing something to keep her busy, she walked into the kitchen. Maybe cooking would occupy her brain enough to hold her worry at a reasonable level. At the very least, she'd have something to placate the guys with.

The cabinets were filled with nonperishables, so when she found a brownie mix, she wasn't too surprised. The guys liked their chocolate. And brownies were a favorite treat of both men.

She assembled the ingredients and reached into a lower cabinet for a baking pan.

The sound of the front door opening had her stopping midmotion. *Shit. They're here.* She'd hoped to be sitting in the living room, ready for them. But even distracting herself hadn't helped, she was far from ready for them. She straightened up and faced the door leading to the front of the house. She knew it wouldn't take them long to figure out where she was.

"What the hell are you doing here?" The harsh words shocked Karina. She hadn't expected them to be ecstatic to find her here, but she also hadn't expected hostility. Justin stopped a few feet into the room, with Kent standing right behind him, looking no happier.

"Hi, guys." The looks on their faces made her stomach twist into knots. Angry didn't begin to cover it.

They were so similar in so many ways, they could almost be mistaken for twins, both tall with dark hair and the most striking eyes. Kent had green ones, and Justin, blue. If she didn't know better, she'd assume they were related somewhere back in their family trees. They were gorgeous.

She could just see Justin's tribal tattoo on his left arm poking out from the hem of his sleeve. She knew the ink twisted down his biceps and triceps and snaked up toward his neck. She'd wanted to lick every line of that design practically since the day she'd met him. And Kent's clean-cut look was just as alluring to her. She'd always wondered if there was a wild boy under that responsible adult.

Justin growled at her, and she took a step back. What the hell was wrong with him? He normally wasn't quite this touchy. Was he really that upset that she'd disturbed their time together?

Kent took a step forward. "Karina, what are you doing here?"

*Oh shit.* She wasn't ready. Not yet. She needed some time. What the hell had she been thinking?

"I was bored?" *Nice going, woman. Come all the way up here, and you don't have a damn excuse ready. What were you planning on doing, telling them the truth?*

*Saying I'm here to ask the two of you to fuck me like crazy. Yeah, that will go over real well.*

Justin leaned on the sideboard against the far wall. "Bored? Really? And you thought we'd entertain you?"

"Well, I knew you guys come up here so often. I figured you'd have something fun to do." Head, meet desk. How stupid could she be? She should have just told them the truth.

Justin walked toward her, purpose in every step. Her pulse sped up at the sight of him striding like a wild animal stalking his prey. Her breath caught in her throat. She'd never seen him as sexy as he looked right now.

By the time he got to her, sexual need coursed through her body, her pussy dripping with excitement. He leaned over her, crowding her with his body. She swallowed hard.

"What kind of fun did you want, Karina?" His low, husky voice penetrated straight to her core.

If only she could tell him what kind of fun she really wanted. Her gaze flew to Kent, who was standing on the other side of the island. Hell, this was what she'd come here for, right?

Before she could answer, Justin pulled back with a quick motion, giving her space to breathe once again. "I'm not even gonna ask how you found this place. I'm afraid I wouldn't like the answer."

She cringed. He probably wouldn't.

"But that doesn't mean I'm happy about you being here." He paced rapidly across the room as though burning off extra energy. She hadn't expected him—either of them—to be this upset at finding her here.

"I'm sorry." Her voice was low, almost a whisper.

"Sorry? Sorry you traveled five hours to find us? Sorry you waited in the cabin for God knows how long till we got home? Sorry for driving roads that aren't fit for



most vehicles? Sorry that if something had gone wrong, no one would have known to go look for you? What are you sorry for, Karina?”

“Sorry I disturbed your time away.”

“How did you even get in?”

Karina looked down before answering. “I remembered where you said the key was.”

Justin looked at her and threw up his hands before turning to Kent. “You handle her. I’m so hot right now I could wring her neck.”

He walked back through the door and stomped up the stairs. A door slamming made her jump. She turned to Kent.

“Why is he so angry?”

Kent spoke as he walked toward her.

“Did you listen to what he said?”

“Was there any way I couldn’t? He was so intense there was no way in hell I could have ignored that.”

“Did you tell anyone you were coming?”

“No. I decided at the last minute.” After her consultation with her oncologist, which she still hadn’t told the guys about. They’d be pissed about that when they found out, as well.

“So you climbed into your car and headed this way?”

“Yeah.”

“You do realize you are forty-five minutes from the nearest bit of civilization, don’t you?”

“Not exactly. There’s that little country store about twenty miles down the road.” *Shit*. She shouldn’t have told him that. The only way she would have found that was if she had been lost. It was on the other side of the cabin from the direction she’d come.

“Hmm.”

Her stomach grumbled.

“Have you eaten anything today?”

She felt the heat rush to her face.

Kent shook his head. “Never mind, don’t bother. I know you haven’t. We have a couple steaks defrosting. There’s enough for three.”

“Can I help?”

“Make the salad and the potatoes.” He opened the fridge and grabbed the meat. “All we have is instant, though, so you’ll have to make do.”

“No problem. I don’t mind them, and if you have seasonings and stuff, I can doctor them up.”

When she’d first heard them talk about a cabin that had been in Justin’s family for years, she’d assumed it was a small, rustic thing. Not this beautiful showpiece.

Easily two thousand square feet, the place seemed to have everything someone could possibly want. Not only for a week away from the rat race of civilization, but for actual full-time living.

She’d found three bedrooms upstairs, each with its own bath. And each one large enough to be a master suite.

Downstairs consisted of the living room, the large eat-in kitchen, another bathroom, and, toward the back of the house, a couple of small rooms perfect for offices. There wasn’t anything more anyone could ask for.

But if the rest of the house was impressive, the kitchen was unbelievable. The room easily took up one-third of the lower floor. Cherry cabinets and stainless steel appliances filled the space. The large island in the middle had varied heights for prep work as well as eating, with tall chairs lining one side. Everything was top-of-the-line. It was a dream kitchen for anyone who liked to cook, and Karina would kill for a chance to spend some time cooking in it. She managed to just stop herself from clapping at the thought of having free rein while Kent grilled the steaks.

"I'll be outside. The grill won't take any time to heat up. Try not to piss off Justin any more than you already have, okay?" And with that, he took the steaks and walked out the back door.

"Piss off Justin more than I have?" She gave a small growl. It wasn't her fault Justin was so pissed. Hell, she'd never seen him like this before. He was being more than just unreasonable. What did she do besides follow them up here without an invitation? It wasn't like she had brought a bunch of friends up for a party. It was just her. One of their best friends.

She grabbed the lettuce and trimmings out of the fridge and slammed them down on the cutting board before grabbing the knife to cut the vegetables. *Maybe coming was a bad idea. Maybe I should have waited for them to come home and confronted them then.*

"Fine, I never should have come here, but fuck you. I'm here. I'm sorry if I stepped on your toes. I didn't mean to bother you."

"Then what did you mean to do?"

Karina jumped with a screech, and the knife slipped out of her grasp. She felt the sting of the blade as it sliced through the skin of her palm. Blood spurted, splashing onto the lettuce.

"Shit!" Justin was by her side in an instant.

She was vaguely aware of Kent running back in at Justin's curse, and then one of them was pulling her hand over the sink and running cold water over it.

"I'm fine. It's just a scratch." She tried to pull her hand away. It didn't hurt that bad. When she looked at it, though, she went weak at the knees. Shit, where was all that blood coming from?

"Oh, no, you don't. Don't you dare pass out on me, woman. You're a tough bitch, and you know it. A little bit of blood is not gonna make you lose it." It was Justin. Something about his voice made her want to just put her head on his shoulder and get comfort from him. And then she realized nothing was stopping her from doing just that. So she did.

“Kent! Hurry up with that damn first-aid kit. She’s gonna faint on us.”

Justin put pressure on the cut. She had to fight a shiver as the innocent touch of his hand against her skin gave her a small tingle. He continued to hold her hand over the sink but removed it from the stream of water. The dripping blood turned her stomach, and the room began to spin. She hated blood and seeing it drip in a steady stream had her pressing her head against Justin harder as she tried to block the sight from her mind.

He reached for something and then wrapped her hand in a towel. She knew it was ridiculous, but ever since she’d gone through treatment for her cancer, she’d had this fear of her own blood. The doctors had assured her it was perfectly normal, but she couldn’t shake it. And even now, despite the fact she couldn’t see it, she knew she was bleeding and began to feel woozy.

Kent rushed back into the kitchen, a large first-aid kit in his hand. Justin tugged her to one of the tall chairs, supporting her from behind as she sat under the bright lights.

She vaguely remembered that Kent used to be an EMT before she’d met them. Well, that was a good thing. At least he knew what he was doing.

“It’s pretty damn deep, Justin. She’s gonna need stitches.”

“Can you heal her?”

Heal. She smiled. Silly man. He meant help her. Not heal her.

“I won’t risk it for something like this. It’s not life threatening. Maybe if she actually passes out from the pain.”

“Pain?” She giggled. “It doesn’t hurt that much. In fact I feel wonderful. I’m in your arms. Well, Justin’s arms. But I want both of you. Can you put your arms around me too, Kent?”

*Oh, damn.* Did she just say that? No, she just thought it. No amount of blood loss would make her say something that dumb. Anyway, the guys hadn’t reacted as though she’d said a thing. Well, Justin had tightened his hold, but that didn’t mean

anything. Okay. She was safe. Her head felt so light, though. Shit, she'd never reacted this strongly before. How bad was the cut?

She tried to watch as Kent worked on her skin, but realized she felt much better when she closed her eyes and let him do what he needed to.

"Karina, honey, I'm gonna give you a shot, okay? Something to help you with possible infection and the pain."

Karina tried to wave her hand, and Justin grabbed her wrist tighter.

"But I just told you I wasn't in pain. Didn't I?"

"Why the hell is she so disoriented?" Justin sounded worried. Wasn't that sweet of him?

"You know her and blood. Plus she hasn't eaten anything all day. And probably didn't have much for supper last night. Not to mention she had to be worried about how we'd handle her just showing up. The blood loss is on top of it all."

"Fuck. And I had to go and yell at her like that."

"Stop worrying about it. She'll be fine. Let me get a couple stitches into her, get the bleeding stopped, and then we'll see if she needs some deep healing."

Karina felt Justin tighten his hold on her as Kent manipulated her hand. She sighed and once again laid her head back on Justin's chest.

"Shh, angel. Just relax and let Kent take care of you. Everything will be okay."

He was right. Everything was just perfect. She was in Justin's arms, and the two of them were taking care of her. What more could she ask for?

## Chapter Two

Karina woke slowly. She stretched and wiggled under the warm, heavy blanket and didn't want to wake up. When she did open her eyes, she found herself in a strange bedroom.

The large room was beautifully decorated in shades of gold and red. The similarly toned wood furniture blended into the walls, making the room appear huge at first glance. A matching quilt covered her on the plush king-size bed, keeping her comfortably warm. It was the look she'd always wanted for her own room at home but had never gotten around to trying.

With that thought, memory came back to her and she realized this was the third bedroom in the cabin. The one she'd admired earlier. Or was it last night?

The room was lit by a small floor lamp on the far wall. It gave off enough light to let her see around, but it was most definitely night. So either she had slept only a short while or an entire day. Doubting she'd slept for over twenty-four hours, she decided it must still be Friday night.

She looked down at her hand and found it bandaged. It looked as though a professional had done it. Which is what Kent was. Even if he did work with animals now, being a veterinarian.

Shit. He'd given her a shot. Had he shot her with animal painkiller? If he had, she was going to kill the bastard.

She tried to sit up, but her head started to spin almost immediately. She remembered feeling dizzy and Justin taking her into his arms, but nothing after that. What the hell had happened?

The door opened, and in walked one of the men she'd been in love with for longer than she could recall.

Kent. It didn't matter how many times she saw him or how tired she was when she did; her body always went into overdrive at the sight of his tall frame walking toward her. He was slim and built. He reminded her of a runner, but not a thin marathon runner. One of those sprinters with legs and a chest to die for. His green eyes usually sparkled with mischief, but tonight they seemed much more subdued. She thought his hair was too short, but if he let it get too long, the curls made him look like a male Shirley Temple. She could stare at him all day and never get bored.

Coming right behind him, Justin walked in and leaned against the doorjamb. He was wider of chest and a bit taller and just as yummy looking. His hair brushed his shoulders in waves that she itched to play with. She wanted him to come closer just so she could get a whiff of his cologne. The deep woodsy scent always made her think of wild nights around a ritual fire.

"You're awake." Kent walked toward her holding a tray in his hands with something that smelled delicious.

She opened her mouth to answer him, but nothing came out. She swallowed and tried again. "What did you shoot me up with? I can't even think straight."

"Nothing major. Just a little bit of painkiller and antibiotics. You're so groggy because you haven't eaten all day." His voice grew hard. "And you always go weak at the sight of your own blood."

He put the tray on the nightstand and helped her to sit up.

"I'm sorry, really, I am. I never intend—"

"That's your problem, Karina; you never intend anything to happen."

She flushed, heat rolling through her body at the sound of Justin's voice. He flicked on the overhead light, and she blinked in the sudden brightness.

"Justin, stop being an asshole," Kent said.

Karina looked at Kent with surprise. She'd never heard him sound so sharp. She looked between the two of them, narrowing her eyes. "What did I interrupt?"

Kent sighed and shook his head. "Nothing. Don't worry about it." He glared for a long moment at Justin before turning back to her. "We were just both worried about you. But you're gonna be fine. Eat this and get some sleep. We can talk in the morning."

She looked at her wrist and only then realized she wasn't wearing her watch. Hell, she wasn't wearing anything but her camisole and panties.

"Did you undress me?"

"No. That was me." Justin did it again. Just a couple of words and already her body was heated and primed for him. If only he wanted more than friendship from her. Although at the look on his dark face right now, she was wondering if he even wanted friendship anymore.

"Justin made sure you were comfortable in bed while I cleaned up downstairs." Kent smiled. "And tried to save the steaks."

"Oh no. Were they ruined?" Karina felt her stomach drop at the thought of their ruined meal. That she'd caused.

"Yup. Burnt to a crisp." His smile lit up his face despite his words. "Don't worry. We made do with soup and sandwiches. Pretty much exactly what you're having."

Karina took that moment to really look at what they had prepared for her. Thick beef stew and a ham sandwich. Along with a bunch of crackers and a large glass of milk. Suddenly she felt all of ten again and living with her grandmother.

Tears popped into her eyes, and she had to blink them away.

Gods, what the guys must think of her. She came all the way up here to seduce them, and here she was, practically an invalid in bed.

"Eat up. Then get some rest. We'll see you in the morning."

"Is it okay if I come downstairs to eat?"



Kent and Justin looked at each other before Kent answered. "We have to go out for a bit."

"You guys are leaving?"

"We have some things we have to do."

"Things to do? It's the middle of the night in the middle of the woods. What could you possibly—" Karina stopped herself. She had interrupted their vacation. They hadn't invited her. They didn't owe her any explanations. She put up a hand in apology and to hold off their response. "Sorry. Never mind. You guys just go do what you need to do. I'll sit here and eat. And then get some sleep."

Karina had to stop herself from saying anything at the looks on their faces. She knew they didn't trust her not to snoop around. So to placate them, she reached for the tray and brought it over her lap. "Go, get. I'm sorry to be a pain. Have fun."

To further convince them, she grabbed the sandwich and took a bite, shooing them out with her free hand. Kent bent down and kissed her on the forehead before following Justin out the door.

Karina continued to eat as she thought about what had just happened. What the hell was wrong with Justin? Usually he was calm and even tempered. Tonight he was like a cat that had been rubbed the wrong way.

And Kent was awful tense. She looked at her bandaged hand. Was it that? Had she hurt herself more than she'd thought? Or was it just the fact that she'd interrupted their time here at the cabin?

Every few months, they would come up here and do "guy stuff." At least that's what they called it. But they didn't pack coolers full of beer, they didn't bring back any hunting trophies, and neither of them was big into the typical macho crap that so many other men she knew were. So what the hell did they do up here alone?

The thought that maybe they were secretly gay had crossed her mind more than once, but that didn't seem likely. They lived together, that was true. And they had for at least five years, but that was it. They each had their own bedrooms, and they'd had girlfriends. Plenty of them. Not that she'd kept track, but living next

door to them in a duplex, it was hard to miss. Anyway, there would have been no reason to hide it. Plenty of their friends were openly gay, and neither would have had to hide it for work. Kent owned his own animal hospital, and Justin was a telecommuter for an insurance company across the country.

And the damn cookouts the guys threw always had more women than men. The two of them were magnets for the opposite sex. Herself included.

It wasn't like she was a stalker or anything. The two men had actually started the friendship. They'd invited her over for a "welcome to the complex" cookout. And their friendship had grown from there.

Some weeks they spent more time at her place than they did their own. Other weeks the reverse was true. But the one place they never spent any time was where she wanted them most. In her bedroom. Or to be more exact, her bed.

She knew they were interested in her as more than a friend. She'd seen their erections when it was just the three of them. They were difficult to hide in swim trunks, after all. And she knew at the very least they were fond of her. They wouldn't seek out her company so much if they weren't. So why the hell hadn't they done anything? Were they afraid of ruining a good friendship with her? Were they afraid it would affect their own friendship if she chose one and not the other?

Her major problem was she didn't want one or the other. She wanted both.

That made her a sick, twisted pervert, but she couldn't help herself. The thought of both of them making love to her at once had given her more fantasies than she could remember. In fact, they'd been the only fantasies she'd masturbated to for the last three years.

Damn men. Why couldn't they be mean? Or ugly? Or stupid? No, they had to be sweet, gorgeous, gentle, and intelligent. At least most of the time.

No wonder she'd fallen in love with them long ago.

Well damn it, maybe she should have done it at home. Coming up here had been spur of the moment. She'd never expected this kind of reaction. They acted like they were hiding something from her, but if it wasn't a secret affair, what was it?

She looked at her tray and realized she'd eaten everything on it and was feeling much better. Kent must have been right. Between the blood loss and the low blood sugar, she'd just been drained.

But now she had energy to burn.

The sound of the door closing downstairs pushed her into action. She jumped out of bed and watched out the window as the two of them headed into the woods. Wherever the hell they were going, it wasn't with the SUV, which really piqued her interest.

Decision made, she turned around and grabbed her clothes lying on the bureau and quickly dressed.

She knew she'd promised to rest, but damn it, there was something wrong. They were not normally this quick to anger or secretive. The nosy neighbor and concerned friend in her couldn't let it go. She needed to find out what was up.

As quietly as possible, despite the fact that she had seen both men leave, she snuck down the stairs and headed to the front door.

A quick glance at the mantel clock told her it wasn't quite as late as she had thought, but it was still after ten. What the hell were the two of them doing going into the woods this late at night?

Whatever it was, she was going to find out.

\* \* \*

They may not think she was the smartest woman in the world when it came to her vehicle, but she damn well knew what she was doing in the woods. Thanks to an upbringing by her grandmother and an uncle that was more interested in hunting than working, she knew how to move around in the woods as silently as a deer.

Not to mention actually tracking an animal. Or a human.

It was a strange ability for her, a city dweller that had no interest in hunting, to have, but she had a suspicion it was going to come in handy tonight.

When she got to the spot where they had entered the woods, she realized following them was going to be both easier and harder than she'd originally thought. There was a path that led into the forest, pretty much assuring that was the direction they had gone, but she'd have to be more careful not to get too close to them. The last thing she wanted was for them to spot her.

Karina walked slowly down the path, checking bushes and the underbrush to assure herself they hadn't veered off. The full moon shone sporadically through the trees above, dappling her way with light. The trail showed signs of being used often, and not just recently. Wherever it led, people had been going there for years.

After about twenty minutes, Karina began to doubt herself. She turned her head and looked back the way she had come. Was it possible she had missed something? Well, it was always possible, but she didn't think it likely. None of the underbrush on the sides of the path had been disturbed. So unless they'd sprouted wings, the guys had continued this way.

She bent down and looked at the ground closely. Nope, there was a footprint a couple of feet ahead of her. They'd come this way. She figured she'd give it about twenty more minutes and then head back. If she couldn't find them in that amount of time, then there was no telling where they'd gone or when they'd be back. And she wasn't looking forward to them finding her missing from the cabin. They'd assume she got lost or worse.

She walked around a bend and saw the men. She dropped to the ground and waited a minute. When they didn't react, she assumed they hadn't seen her.

She was on top of a small incline, and the path led the way to a depression cleared of trees. Clouds floated over the moon, blocking its bright light, throwing the clearing into spots of darkness only lit by the crackling bonfire in the middle. Shadows danced with the flames, teasing her vision. If she didn't know better, she would have sworn small bits of light hovered around the fire.

The men were on opposite sides of the fire. Justin crouched beside it, stirring the logs, while Kent stood with his head down. The whole scene reminded her of

many of the pagan events she'd gone to over the years, only with fewer people. She watched them for what seemed like minutes but was probably only seconds.

Their voices floated up toward her as she crouched on the path.

"Damn it, Kent, hurry up. My skin is about to crawl off my bones."

"I'm going as fast as I can. Karina's screwing with my concentration tonight."

"Tell me about it. Could you smell how excited she was? It was all I could do not to take her there in the kitchen when we found her."

"Can you handle her being in the cabin?"

"As long as she doesn't come any closer, I think I'll be fine. The shift will help me take care of it. But are you gonna to be okay? Are you gonna be able to send enough to me?" Justin took off his shirt as he spoke, pulling it over his head and then unbuttoning his pants while he kicked off his shoes.

Karina was so enthralled by the show he put on she almost missed Kent's response.

"I'll do what I can on my end. I just hope she's asleep when I get back, because if I have to look at her, I can't be responsible for my actions. We don't need her here."

He can't be responsible for his actions? They didn't need her here? What the hell did that mean? Were they really that angry she was here? She'd thought they'd considered her a close friend, not such an imposition. She knew that she'd been stupid and selfish to come, but she hadn't expected such a negative reaction. Tears filled her eyes at their words.

*Damn them.*

"Goddess above, Goddess who guides us. Thank you for the blessings of these lives we now live."

Justin stripped off the last of his clothing, and Karina sucked in a deep breath at the sight. His skin glistened in the heat of the fire, the light dancing over his

chest and legs. She had just enough time to notice he was sporting a very impressive erection when Kent's words distracted her once again.

Kent stood there, his arms held out to the sky, imploring the Goddess. "Please watch over your son as he becomes a creature of the land. One with the forest, the animals, the earth."

He turned and nodded at Justin, who was now kneeling on the ground. "See you in a bit." He smiled grimly.

The air around the fire shimmered, shining with an unnatural glow that obscured her view of the men for a few short seconds. She stood up, confused, eager to see what was happening behind the light.

When it faded, Kent was where he had been, but instead of Justin on the other side of the fire, there stood a full-grown black cougar. She gasped and opened her mouth to warn Kent when the realization that he knew the cat was there hit her.

*What the hell?*

She must have moved, because next thing she knew, her leg slipped under her and she fell on her ass. The dirt gave way, and she quickly slid down the small hill, landing with a crash just feet from the men. From Kent. And the cat.

The cougar stared at her with those deep, dark eyes and screamed as only mountain cats can do. No roar, but the purely feline scream of a cougar.

"Don't move!" Kent's warning rang through the clearing, but it was unneeded. She had no intention of moving an inch as long as that cat was this close. When he started moving toward her, her breath caught in her throat.

He was beautiful. By the light of the fire, she could tell he wasn't a truly black cat. Black- and rust-colored tones dappled his fur, shimmering the flickering glow. He was almost to her before Kent's sharp tone penetrated her trance.

"Justin. Stop."

Kent's words made no sense to her.

“Justin, think about what you’re doing. Go run. Hunt. Let the energy out. Come back to us when you’re ready.”

The cat turned his head and looked at Kent. He took one more step toward Karina and then turned sharply with a cry and sprinted into the forest.

“Are you okay? Karina! Are you hurt?” Kent ran to her. When he reached her, he crouched and grabbed her by the shoulders.

Karina shook her head, trying to wrap her brain around what she had just seen. Her gaze was glued to the spot in the trees the cat had run through.

“Karina, answer me.”

“No. No. I’m fine. But what the hell was that?”

She turned her attention to him. He looked in the direction she’d been staring before answering her.

“That’s a long story and one I can’t tell you right now. I need you to go back to the cabin and lock yourself in your room.” His voice was tight and harsh.

“What’s wrong? Are you okay?”

“Just do what I ask, please. I can’t stay here much longer with you beside me. You need to go.”

“Kent—”

“Just go!” He got up and backpedaled, stopping almost ten feet away from her.

Karina looked at him, surprised. She struggled to her feet and turned to go back up the hill.

“And whatever you do, don’t run. Promise me you’ll walk to the house slowly and carefully.”

Karina turned to face him again, more confused than she had been a moment ago. “Okay. I promise.”

His nod was all the acknowledgment she got before he too turned away and walked into the woods.

## Chapter Three

Karina swept the already clean kitchen floor with jerky motions. There was no way in hell she was going to go up to her room like a child who had been reprimanded, but she couldn't just pace the living room. At least scrubbing the kitchen gave her hands something to do while her mind figured out what the hell had happened out there.

Justin had disappeared in the fog of light; she'd seen that. But a huge-ass cat had appeared in his place. That was impossible.

And then Kent had implored the Goddess for guidance and help. He wasn't even pagan.

Was he?

How the hell could she have lived next door to the man for five years and not know he was pagan? She knew he was open and accepting of others' beliefs, but she hadn't known he worshipped the Goddess. He'd never mentioned anything when she'd talked about going to festivals and the like.

If he had kept that from her, what other secrets did he have? Were he and Justin really lovers? Did they really feel that negatively toward her?

Oh gods, she was a fucking fool. A love struck, stupid little fool. She should just get in her car and leave now before they got back. But if she did that, then they'd probably worry about her, despite not wanting her here. That was all she needed, Justin even more angry with her.

So now she had two options. Go lock herself in her room like Kent had asked, or wait down here and try to get an explanation about what had just happened from the men.



Men? Shit, who was she kidding? She had definitely seen what she thought she'd seen tonight. There was no way in hell she hadn't. They weren't men. At least not ordinary men.

So what the hell were they? Frustrated and confused, she put the broom back in the closet and walked into the living room.

"I thought I told you to lock yourself in the bedroom."

Kent stood in the now open doorway, looking ragged, as though he'd run miles in the woods. Scratches crisscrossed his bare chest—scratches she was sure he hadn't had two days ago. Her gaze strayed to search out other damage, but she was distracted by his rippling stomach muscles as he breathed.

"Why?"

"Damn it, can't you just do what you're asked for once? Why do you need an explanation for everything?"

"Because I'm not a child to be ordered about, which is all you two seem to have been doing since I got here. Because I don't understand. I don't understand what happened tonight. I don't understand what the two of you are. I don't understand anything."

"That's exactly why you need to lock yourself away for the rest of the night. I promise we'll explain everything in the morning."

"Why do I need to lock myself away? Am I in danger?" She looked at him, really looked at him, and saw how stressed, how anxious he was. He was holding himself tight, she could see that, but she didn't know why.

"Am I in danger?" Her voice was softer this time.

"I don't know." His answer was so low she wasn't sure she heard him for a minute.

All her thoughts of neither of them liking her disappeared, of them wanting her gone because they couldn't stand her. They wanted her gone because they were afraid they would hurt her. Knowing that made her love them a bit more.

She couldn't stand to see either of them doubting themselves. They were better than that. "You won't hurt me. I know that like I know my own name."

Kent groaned. "You *don't* know that. You don't know what we become when we come here."

"Then tell me." Her voice had softened, and she reached out a hand, eager to give him any comfort she could.

"Goddess be damned, woman, can't you do what I ask?" His gaze raked over her body hungrily. Goose bumps covered her skin wherever his gaze landed.

"What's wrong? I can't help unless you talk to me. What do you need?"

"You. Okay? I need you." He gripped the edge of the doorway so tightly, Karina wouldn't have been surprised to hear the wood crack under the pressure.

"I'm right here." She took a step toward him but stopped short when he put a hand up.

"No, Karina. I mean *need* you. As in need to bury myself in your body. All I want to do is fuck your brains out, whether you want it or not. And I don't know if I can keep myself from doing it if I have to keep looking at you." With that he swung around and rushed into the darkness outside.

Karina was after him before her brain caught up with what he'd said. Her body already knew what it wanted. It's what she had come here for. And even if she hadn't, coming here had caused the pain in his body.

She found him in the back, chopping wood desperately. The back lights were on, casting an uneven glow across the area, but there was just enough to see the look of pain on his face.

He never looked up as he started talking. "I tried running. That didn't help. Usually Justin can take it for me. He feeds our lust for both of us, but we didn't have time today. You were there at the change. He needed to leave. You needed to leave."

He split a large log and then reached for another one and then again. His energy seemed unflagging as he continued his motions.

“Kent.” She walked toward him as she spoke. “Kent.” As she moved, she took off her overshirt and then her T-shirt, leaving only her camisole and jeans on. When she reached for her jeans button, she tried again, this time moving into his line of sight. “Kent. Stop that. You’re gonna hurt yourself.” She popped the first button of her jeans and took a step closer.

He let the ax fall one more time and looked at her like a starving man. His chest vibrated with harsh breathing. Sweat peppered his torso.

“You said you wanted me, you needed me. I’m here.”

“No.” He shook his head and took a step back, dropping the ax. “No, Karina, you don’t understand. I won’t do this to you. I won’t let you give yourself to me like this. It’s not what you want.”

“How do you know what I want? Have you ever asked me? No. You and Justin have kept your secrets and haven’t pried into mine. But damn it, maybe it’s time to stop hiding. Why do you think I came up here? Because I wanted a weekend away from the city? Because I really was bored? No. I came up here because I want you. Both of you.” She took a few more steps closer to him, opening her button fly completely as she walked.

“If taking me will make you feel better, then take me. I offer myself to you.”

Kent had stopped backing up and stood as though frozen.

“You don’t know what you’re asking me. I can’t promise to be gentle.”

Karina laughed. “I don’t want you to be gentle. I burn for you like I can’t explain. I need you. I need you both, but if I can only have one of you, then please, let me have you tonight.” She reached him and placed her hand on his naked chest. Hard muscle moved under her fingers as he wrapped his arms around her body.

He twisted his hand in her long hair and tugged at her, pulling her body tight against his for a bruising, crushing kiss.

Her life as it was disappeared when their lips met. She'd wanted this for years, and all her dreams and fantasies couldn't compare to the reality. She closed her eyes, eager to block out anything that might distract her.

His lips crushed hard against hers. She opened her mouth, eager for his thrusting tongue. She knew there would be no teasing or gentle tasting; his actions were that of a desperate man. He ravished her, tasting her with an intensity that left her breathless.

He forced her back against a tree. Her breath came out in a *whoosh* as she hit the hard wood. Bark dug into her back, and then his hands were on her chest, grabbing at her, kneading her breasts. The hard squeezes sent shards of pleasure-pain through her.

Liquid flooded her pussy. She'd wanted this for so long her body was alive with sensations. She didn't care if any woman would do for him now. She was the only one here, and she was the one who was going to finally get him.

A tug against her shoulder as he ripped the strap of her camisole was all the warning she had before his hot mouth descended on her now bare breast. He took as much as he could between his lips, sucking it so tight she gasped from the pain.

Her camisole hung on only one shoulder, the satin stretched out as he continued to fondle her chest. Her hard, pebbled nipples begged for more attention, no matter how fierce it was.

He pinched at the cloth-covered nub, pulling it and squeezing it much the same as his lips did to the other. His bite sent sharp pain shooting through her body, bringing her senses to full alert. She wrapped her hands in his hair and pulled him tighter into her as she rocked her head back and forth.

He ripped himself from her breast and her grasp, panting to catch his breath.

He took her hands and shoved them above her head. "Grab hold of that branch, and don't let go."

She did as ordered, staring him in the eyes.

“Don’t let go, Karina. If you touch me again, I can’t be responsible for what happens. You drive me crazy with your presence, your smell. Let me try to keep control, please.”

It was the please that did it. She tightened her hands on the branch and nodded.

She watched him, his breathing still ragged as he visibly tried to keep himself under control. He reached for her jeans and slowly pulled them down over her hips, thighs, calves. His hands shook with the gentle movements. She wanted to yell at him to go faster, but his earlier comment about trying to stay in control kept her quiet.

He lifted her feet one at a time to help her completely out of her pants.

“Where are your shoes, woman?”

It took her a second to realize what he was asking. “I took them off when I got back to the cabin.”

“You walked out here without anything on your feet? The yard is full of wood chips.” His growl sent shivers down her body.

“You needed me.”

Something flickered in his eyes—something soft—but it was quickly replaced by the lust that had burned since he’d returned to the cabin. Fear ran through her body at the look, but anticipation and hope overrode it.

He dropped to his knees and put his head at her pussy.

“I can smell your desire. Your need. You’re excited about this, aren’t you?” His gravelly voice didn’t need a response, but she gave him one anyway.

“Yes, damn it. I’m so turned on I’m going to burst if you don’t take me soon.”

He wrapped his arms around her waist and buried his head into her crotch. He inhaled deeply. “I don’t have Justin’s senses, despite everything, but even without them, I can smell you. You’re wet. Soaked.”

“Yes. Now do something about it.”

She expected him to rip her panties like he had her camisole. To thrust his cock inside her and fuck her like crazy, but he didn't.

Instead, he pulled back and nudged her pussy gently with his nose. He laid his lips against her cloth-covered ones and blew a soft, gentle breath. Tingles ran from her pussy up her spine and she wriggled back.

He shivered against her legs. His breath came in short, quick bursts. His precious control appeared to be slipping. About time too. She didn't want him to be in control; she needed him as much as he said he needed her.

He sucked in a harsh breath, and her heart went out to him. Part of her wanted to call it off, to tell him to stop, he was obviously so torn over it. But she knew if she did that, it would be even worse. All she could do was take what he was willing to give her. Later she would try to make sure there were no regrets on his part.

With one hand, he pulled the material to the side and flicked his tongue at her tight curls. Her knees buckled, and the only thing keeping her up for an instant was her grip on the branch above her.

He thrust his tongue between her lips. Her groan echoed across the backyard.

Every flick of his tongue, every suck of his mouth sent electricity shooting through her body. Tiny sparks danced over her skin as her orgasm built sharp and fast. Every pore, every molecule of her body was awake, alive, open for more. The orgasm crashed over her. She yelled wordlessly, thrashing against the tree. Still he continued to feast at her core.

She was still coming when he thrust his fingers into her body. Her walls contracted around the fingers he pumped into her.

But no, he wasn't done. He thrust in again and again with those beautiful fingers, crooking them, rubbing against her sweet spot. Tension curled deep in her stomach as her muscles tightened and released with the strokes of his digits. The next orgasm rolled up on her, her legs stiffening and hands tightening. She sucked

in a harsh breath. Her body shuddered, and she slammed against the tree, still holding tight to the branch above.

Her brain went blank as the climax continued to ride her in waves. Harsh breaths racked her body as she tried to retain her sanity.

He stood up and opened his pants. She breathed a sigh of relief. Finally she was going to get his cock.

“Condom.” He stopped short, and she had to force herself to focus on what he’d said.

She shook her head. No lack of a condom was going to stop them now. No way. “No problem. I’m covered.” She was beyond the ability to speak coherent sentences but was sure he’d understand. She knew they used condoms with other women; she’d often joked about the jumbo packs she’d find at their place. And it wasn’t like she could get pregnant.

He looked like part of him wanted to argue, but obviously the lust won out. She tried to spread her legs but found them almost too weak to move.

He grabbed a thigh and hooked it over his hip and bent his knees to get angled right. She could feel the wet material of her undies still bunched to the side, and she wondered why he didn’t just rip them off. But it was a fleeting thought. She had much more important things to worry about. Like why he was taking so long to fill her with his cock.

Karina didn’t know what to expect. Was he going to be hard and fast or slow and deliberate? Her pussy just ached to feel his cock slide between her lips and finally fuck her.

When he thrust in, she slapped back against the tree. She winced at the scrape of bark against her already sensitive skin.

He held on to her leg and her opposite shoulder and thrust into her hard and fast. Karina felt the pressure build once again. Her head became heavy, her muscles almost too weak to hold her up. She tightened her grip on the branch. Each thrust and shove drove her closer to the edge just out of reach.

Tension rolled up her spine to her lower neck, and swirls of desire spread throughout her body as he finally, finally fucked her.

His eyes were closed. Sweat peppered his heated skin, the liquid glittering in the light of the full moon. Concentration ran across his face as he continued thrusting hard.

Did he even realize it was her he was fucking? Did he care?

She realized she didn't care. She was going to enjoy this moment for all it was worth, and if it was a onetime event, she'd hold the memory close forever.

One sharp thrust pushed her back against the tree hard. A yelp ripped from her throat as the bark scraped her skin.

Kent's eyes popped open, sense returning to them for a moment. "Karina?"

She shook her head, not wanting to answer, not wanting to stop, but another wince forced her words. "Tree. Scrape." It was all she could get out, her body wound tight with excitement. Her back tense with the pain. If it hurt this badly now, she was afraid how it would feel after the exhilaration had worn off.

"Wrap your other leg around me."

Immediately she did as directed and released her hold on the branch above. Kent carried her to where she'd taken her overshirt off. He knelt down without slipping out of her and grabbed the shirt on the grass with one hand. Spreading it out, he then laid her down gently on top of the material.

She had to be impressed with his talents but was immediately sidetracked by his other talent as he pushed completely inside her once again.

His eyes had lost that crazy glow they'd had minutes before, and he began to make love to her this time, moving slow and deep, thrusting as far as he could go before pulling almost entirely out.

Warmth flooded her body at the new look in his eyes and his now gentle actions. This was different. He was different.

Without a doubt, he knew exactly who he was with now.



He supported himself on one hand and stroked her gently. He started at her face, a thumb brushing across her cheekbone and then her jaw. Then he worked his way down her neck, her shoulders, to her breasts, where he lovingly caressed her. Ripples raced across her skin wherever he touched. He turned his hand to rub the back of his fingers across her bared nipple before cupping the breast with his hand. Heat permeated her heart. The sigh that slipped from her lips was met with a smile from him.

“You are a beautiful woman, Karina. I am a very lucky man. Thank you.”

She wanted to tell him that she was the lucky one. Wanted to thank him, but the look on his face enthralled her so deeply she had no words.

He continued caressing her, flicking at her nipples, teasing her stomach, down to where his body met hers. Her skin heated at his touch, warmth spreading out from wherever his fingers stroked. When he cupped her mons, she gasped.

He used his thumb to find her clit, to stroke it, play with it. With each flick, small jolts of electricity sparked deep inside, driving her closer and closer to another orgasm. The gentle contrast of his movements against what had happened moments before thrilled her to the core. This time when the orgasm swept over her, it flowed like a wave, driving her higher and higher until she heard him yell out with his own orgasm.

She felt his cock pulse as it released his seed into her body, her inner walls milking him as they came together.

Kent supported himself on his arms for a minute as they both waited for the aftershocks to calm down. Her breathing slowed as contentment washed over her. Why had they waited so long? When they were both able to breathe again, he pulled out and collapsed at her side.

She lay there, panting, not believing what had just happened. Talk about incredible. Her camisole was ruined, but she didn't mind. She had others.

“Are you okay?” Kent asked.

Karina looked at him. He lay sprawled on his back, arms spread out, panting heavily, but his head was turned to her.

“Okay? Oh, hell yeah, I’m more than okay.”

A twig broke behind her, and she turned her head to see what had made the noise. Instead of a nosy raccoon like she’d expected, she suddenly found herself face-to-face with the black cat once again.

“He won’t hurt you.”

“Does he... Is he Justin?”

“He tells me he retains all his memories and feelings. But sometimes he finds it hard to think intelligently. That’s why I told you not to run earlier. He can lose himself to instinct.”

“And his instinct earlier would have been to attack me?”

“No. It would have been to fuck you.”

She jerked her head to face the man by her other side. “What? He’s a cat.”

“Yeah, but when he shifts, the one thing he wants is to mate. It’s a side effect of my helping him. That lust hits both of us.”

“That’s why you needed this so badly?”

“Yeah.”

“What about now? What does he want now?”

He nodded his head toward Justin. “Why don’t you ask him?”

Karina turned around again to face the cat, only to find the cat was no longer there. Instead, Justin sat there beside her. He sat on his knees, naked as she’d last seen him. His smile looked tentative and almost worried.

She reached out for him on impulse. He grabbed hold of her hand between the two of his.

She searched his face for some clue as to how he felt, what he was going through. “Are you okay?” she asked him.

His smile made her heart speed up. “You aren’t disgusted?”

Karina went through her mental reactions on seeing him change. Shock, amazement, disbelief. Nope, disgust had never crossed her mind. “Why would I be disgusted? I’m confused, surprised, curious. But disgust isn’t even an option.”

Relief seemed to cross his face before he squeezed her hand tightly.

“We need to get to bed,” he whispered.

Despite having spent the last thirty minutes getting her brains fucked out by Kent, her pussy clenched at Justin’s words. The thought of being in bed with the two of them sounded wonderful.

“For sleep, Karina. We all need some rest. Shifting can take a lot out of me.”

She cringed. She hadn’t realized she was that obvious.

“Tomorrow we talk, and then we see where we go from there, okay?”

She nodded and turned to look at Kent, who was getting up. He put a hand out to help her stand. He tugged her a few inches, and pain shot through her shoulder blades. She gasped, the sharp sting surprising her with its intensity.

Justin’s shout filtered through the pain. “Shit! Kent, what did you do to her?”

Kent stopped short, and Karina sat down quickly. Justin knelt behind her and put his fingertips on her upper arms. He held her gently. Kent walked around to her back and swore.

“Fuck, Karina. Why the hell didn’t you say something?”

“Because it didn’t feel bad until the very end there. Stop worrying, already. It’s only a few scratches.” The sting had already toned down to a dull but consistent throbbing.

Justin moved to face her. “Babe, it’s more than a few scratches. Your shirt is covered with blood. I bet you can barely move your arms. Go ahead and try.”

She reached up a hand and was immediately assailed with pain shooting down her shoulder blade. “Shit.”

“Exactly. Now, let’s get you inside and get that cleaned up.”

“Let me get dressed first.” All of a sudden she was aware that she was standing in her ripped camisole and undies, with the two of them stark naked in front of her.

“Screw that noise.” Justin shook his head. “Kent, get her clothes. And yours. I’d rather not look at that naked ass of yours any longer, please. You, Karina, are tromping your ass into that house and letting us take care of your back. Then you can worry about modesty. I’d carry you, but I don’t want to hurt you. Where are your shoes?”

Kent answered for her as he put on his jeans. “She came out here after me without them.”

Karina frowned. “Jesus, it was just the yard. You act like I’m walking through a pile of rusty nails.”

Kent shook his head. “You didn’t know we’d just end up at the woodpile when you came after me.” When she opened her mouth to protest their overprotectiveness, Kent placed his hand on her lips. “Please, let me be concerned.”

She glared at him but didn’t say anything.

Justin sighed heavily and shook his head as he took her hand to lead her back. “Fine, just watch where you step.”

The three of them walked to the back door, and Justin held it open to let her and Kent walk through.

Kent led her to the island in the middle of the kitchen and had her sit on one of the high stools around it, her back to him. “Jus, go get the first-aid kit from the bathroom while I cut her shirt off.”

She made a small sound of protest, and Kent clucked at her.

“Hush. I already ripped it. It’s ruined beyond repair. I’ll buy you a new one when we get back home.”

It wasn’t the shirt she was worried about. It was being naked in front of them. Well, more naked than she was now. With the heat of the moment gone, her

modesty started to take over. She'd adjusted her panties before they'd started walking back, but now she might as well be completely naked.

But she said nothing, just nodded her head.

"Here, take these." Kent held out a couple of tablets, a glass of water in his other hand.

"What are they? Are they gonna put me out again?"

"No. They're just aspirin."

When she didn't touch them, he sighed. "I promise."

She took the pills and popped them into her mouth, followed by a swallow of the water he handed her.

Kent walked behind her once again, and she heard scissors cutting through the material on her back. He pulled it away, and she twitched at the prickles of discomfort as the dried blood pulled at her skin.

She leaned her head gingerly on her arms as she felt a wet cloth against her back. When she heard the shirt hit the sink, she debated looking to see how bad it was, but decided she liked her head where it was.

"Jesus, woman, how the hell did you let me do this to you?"

"I think it was mutual, and honestly, I didn't feel it at first."

"You into S and M or anything else we should know about?" Justin's question surprised her, but she only turned her head slightly and glared at him before laying it back down on the counter. "Just think of all the fun we could have before you fall apart."

"Bastard." She wasn't sure they'd heard her until Justin's soft chuckle met her ears. She knew he was trying to make light of the situation, probably to make Kent feel better, but she decided she just wasn't interested.

She tried not to wince as Kent probed at her back.

*I will not pass out. I will not pass out. Again.* It didn't really hurt that bad, but she was bone tired. Who knew good, hard sex could exhaust her that much?

Kent kept his hands on her, touching her gently. "It's not too bad, mostly superficial scrapes, but they bled a lot. Your skin's gonna pull for the next couple days, and you'll scab over, but nothing serious. No scars."

"Heal her." Justin's voice was low.

Silence filled the room.

"Are you sure?" Kent's question was almost gentle.

Karina listened to the two of them talking over her back, not really understanding what the hell they were talking about.

Justin's voice was harsh. "Of course I am."

"You know what can happen, Justin. Are you up to it if you need to be? I don't think I have the energy to help."

"Trust me. I'm still burning with need. That run didn't get rid of nearly enough."

"I don't know if she's up to it."

"I think she fell asleep anyway, which is for the best. Do it now."

"We need to ask her first. To let her know what she'd be in for."

Silence met her ears for a long moment until finally she got frustrated. "Hello, woman here wondering what the hell you are talking about. Not sleeping."

All she heard was a sigh. Kent's voice when it finally came was soft. "Karina, could you turn and look at us for a second, please?"

She thought about it and then shook her head. "Nope. Naked. Not gonna move until I have something to cover myself with."

"Good Lord, woman, you and Kent just fucked like animals outside, and now you're worried about modesty?"

"Fuck you, Justin." Her words lacked any real oomph, but she still didn't move.

After a few seconds, she heard movement in the kitchen and a piece of material was shoved into her hand. "Here, put that in front of you. We aren't doing anything to your back until we have this discussion."

At first she thought he'd handed her a damn washcloth. She opened her mouth to yell but realized it was a dish towel. Not something she could wrap herself up in, but at least it would cover her chest.

She locked it under her arms and turned around to face them. Somewhere along the line Justin had put on a pair of jeans, so now the two of them stood in front of her bare-chested and looking hotter than ever.

It didn't matter that she'd just had some of the best sex of her life. It didn't matter that minutes before she'd been bone tired. She wanted them. Both. Right now.

Her pussy clenched around air, and she could have sworn it whimpered in need.

Kent ran his fingers through his hair before starting. "We have some things to talk about, and now really isn't the time. Tomorrow would be best. But Justin thinks I should heal you tonight, and I have to say I agree with him.

"You aren't in any danger of scarring or anything like that, but you won't be comfortable for a couple days, and if I can prevent that, I'd like to try. After all, I'm the reason you're in pain."

"Kent, stop it. It was mutual."

He shook his head. "It doesn't matter. If it wasn't for me, you wouldn't be in pain."

She was going to argue further but stopped when she realized what he said. "Heal me? What do you mean? Wait—you guys said something about that earlier when I cut my hand."

Justin took the hand in question and started to pick at the bandages on it. "Kent can heal some wounds by magic. Not always completely, and not without repercussions, but he can provide some help."

Karina laughed. “Heal wounds? Come on; how gullible do you think I am?” Her gaze went back and forth between the two men, waiting for one of them to crack a smile.



## Chapter Four

“Karina, you just saw Justin change from man to cat and then back again, but you can’t believe I can heal you?”

She opened her mouth to respond and realized she had no response. He was right. How could she believe that Justin could turn into an animal but not accept that Kent had healing ability?

Hell, the healing ability made tons more sense than the cat thing. Millions of people swore by Reiki and stuff like that. Only the crazies believed in real werewolves and vampires.

“Look at your hand.” Justin held it in his. He’d taken the bandage off, and she expected to see nasty stitches at the very least. What she saw instead was a wound that looked almost completely healed.

If she didn’t know she’d cut herself earlier that evening, she never would have believed it. The skin had somehow knit itself back together, and almost no evidence was left to show where the knife had sliced her.

She wanted to say something, anything, but she was at a total loss for words.

Kent continued talking. “Healing has some side effects, though. It can make you sleepy or...”

“Or?”

“Horny.” Justin’s answer was to the point.

Karina turned to him “What?”

He shrugged and looked at Kent to answer.

“Trust us when we say it’ll make you horny. I don’t know why exactly, or how. I assume it’s something to do with the energy your body expends. Sometimes the lighter healing has little to no effect. That’s usually when you get sleepy. Or it might make you more willing to initiate sex with your partner later that night. This would definitely be lighter healing.”

Karina thought about it for a moment. Shit, despite earlier—or maybe because of it—she was already horny. Did she really need a boost?

“Is that why you thought I didn’t know what I wanted when we were outside?”

“Your earlier healing shouldn’t have had any lingering effects on you. You would have slept most of it off.”

Justin squeezed her hand. “I promise you we will answer all your questions tomorrow, but right now we need to get you healed.”

She pursed her lips. This was all too much to handle, and her mouth ran away before she could stop it. “Is that your plan? Get me horny so you can fuck my brains out too?”

Justin groaned. “Woman. I want you whole. That’s it. End of story.”

“And if I get horny like Kent says I will?”

“That’s up to you what you do with it. Like he said, the magic he wants to use on you tonight is pretty minor. At the worst, it should make you want to masturbate later in your room.”

“This is what you meant when you said healing had repercussions?”

“Yes. I’m tired, and Justin knows it. I healed you earlier tonight, performed magic at the circle, and am gonna heal you again.”

“Don’t forget you fucked her like a madman outside.”

Kent sighed. “And we had sex. I promise you, all I will be good for after this is about eight hours of solid sleep.”

“Then, no.”

“What?” Justin did not sound pleased. “Explain yourself.”

“I don’t want Kent working himself into exhaustion because of me. I’ll survive. And even if I do scar, a few more won’t make any difference.”

Kent took her other hand. He brought it up to his lips and kissed her knuckles. “Sweetheart, whether I heal you or not, I’m heading up to sleep. Please let me do this before I crash.”

Karina looked down for a moment, unsure how to explain why she was so reticent.

Kent waited a moment before he asked her, “Is it because of the aftereffects? Are you afraid of what might happen?”

She nodded. It was the truth. She wanted Justin as badly as she wanted Kent, but not like this. Not because of some outside force driving them to be together.

“I can’t promise you that it won’t affect you strongly, although it shouldn’t.”

“It’s not that. I don’t care how horny it makes me. I’ve been horny before. I can handle it myself.”

“But I thought you wanted Justin too?”

Justin stood up straighter at Kent’s words.

Karina glared at Kent. “Fine. I do. But I’m not gonna be a pity fuck. I don’t want him having sex with me because he thinks I need it.”

“But that’s exactly what you did for me.”

“No. That was different.” She’d wanted him. She’d always wanted him. Tonight had just been her opportunity to act on that. She wasn’t stupid; she took what she could get. Who knew if it would ever happen again?

Before she could explain, Justin spoke. “Kent, you worry about her back. I’ve got this.”

Somehow the two of them had her turned around, the stool pulled away from the island before she could blink. She sat there, facing Justin, Kent at her back.

“You had sex with Kent not only because you thought he needed release, but because you wanted to, right?”

Karina felt exposed and raw. This was such a strange conversation to be having. She'd never have pictured it this way. She wasn't sure how she'd expected it to go, but discussion of healing energy and changing into cats definitely hadn't been in her plans.

She nodded, knowing that was all she could do right now.

"Do you realize that the sexual urge that drove Kent earlier also affected me?"

"I thought Kent said your changing and running took care of it."

"It usually does, but not always completely. And tonight is definitely one of those times. But it's not uncontrollable, Karina. I'm horny, but not so horny that I can't control myself."

Her gaze flew to his face, but he put a finger on her lips before she could deny ever having thought that.

"Shhh, let me finish. If you don't want me, I'll stay away from you. I'll go for another run. I'll find a way to burn off my excitement. I always have before. If it will make you feel better, you can lock the bedroom door and I'll even sleep down here tonight. But if you do want me, nothing on this planet will keep me from you. Not because of Kent's magic. Not because of you being hurt. But because of you. I want you for you. I've always wanted you. Hell, we both have."

She wanted to ask him why the hell they hadn't made a move before now then, but the look in his eyes stopped her. He was right; tomorrow was time enough for questions. Tonight was time for actions.

She turned her head and looked at Kent. "And you? Are you okay if we...?"

"I won't lie and tell you I wouldn't rather it be me. Or even better, both of us. But I've had my turn tonight, and I really am beat. Be with Justin if that's what you want. But only if it's what you truly want."

Oh she wanted it. She wanted it so much she could taste it. When she turned back to Justin, he'd moved closer and his head was inches from hers. She had

enough time to lift her head slightly, going for a kiss, before he bent down farther and met her lips with his.

Karina's world ruptured with that one kiss. Her head swam with excitement, spinning in reaction to the gentle touch. Her pulse sped up, and she sagged against him.

His lips caressed hers lightly, teasing her. She opened her mouth on a sigh and felt his tongue explore. Sparks shot through her body at that slight touch, and she knew without a doubt that she'd made the right choice.

She was aware when Kent began his magic on her back. Warmth started from the touch of his hands on her shoulders and spread down her back, deep into her skin. Prickly sensations ran over her back as though it had been asleep and it was just now waking up. She shivered, caught between feeling good and feeling like ants crawled over her skin.

But the warmth grew, covering those prickles, calming them and turning them into something much more. Her entire body seemed to come alive, making each brush of a breeze, each stroke of a hand, each caress of a lip stronger, more intense, more real.

She locked her hands around Justin's biceps as heat licked her back, forcing her to arch into him and shout against his lips.

Her hair felt like it stood on end, and her pussy was so wet she was afraid she'd start dripping on the stool. Her temperature rose palpably. A shock like static electricity, only more so, shot between the two of them.

Justin pulled back. "Wow. I felt that."

Karina blew out a breath. "Shit. No wonder you had to warn me."

She turned her head at Kent's chuckle. She dislodged Justin's hands, but he moved them to her shoulders.

“Sorry, I sent a little too much energy through. You’ll be a bit tender as your skin finishes healing, but you won’t even remember you were hurt in an hour or two.” He turned his attention to Justin. “Be careful of her back until then.”

And then he turned back to Karina, reaching out a hand to cup her cheek, much as Justin had done minutes before. “Watching the two of you makes me hard enough to explode, but I won’t do you any good in the shape I’m in.” He leaned over and gave her a kiss gentle enough to rival Justin’s first one. “Have fun, and think of me.” He turned and walked through the door, and in seconds she heard his footsteps walking up the stairs.

“Karina? You okay?” Justin’s voice seemed to come through a fog.

She shook her head, dazed. “Oh Goddess, what’s happening?”

“It’s the magic. Give it a minute; it should calm down.”

She laid her head on his shoulder and waited for the magic to subside, but it only took a few moments to realize it wasn’t going to work. The magic wasn’t calming down. Her body was revving up, and she didn’t know what to do about it.

“Justin. Help.” Sensation so intense it bordered on pain racked her body. This wasn’t enjoyable to her at all. Where was the pleasure? Because there wasn’t any right now.

He pulled back and looked at her. “What’s wrong, baby? Talk to me.”

“The need. The desire, it won’t stop. It’s growing.” Her voice rose as her body continued heating up. Shivers rippled across her skin. She’d never been so excited, so needy in her life. It was almost too much to bear.

Justin picked her up and brought her to the living room, where he sat her on the large ottoman. The towel long lost, he pulled her thong off in one quick motion. He knelt on the ground in front of her, her legs bracketing his torso. He was just tall enough that they were eye to eye in this position.

“I don’t know why the magic is this strong. It shouldn’t be.” He shook his head. “Whatever it is, you can control it. It won’t hurt if you don’t fight it. It’s just your

desire amplified.” He grasped a bit of her hair and tugged at it. “You’ll be fine. Just go with it, okay?” He smiled. “I promise you some of the best sex you’ve ever had.”

The need continued to race through her body. She felt panic rising, but forced herself to ground and center. She focused on her breathing and accepting the magic, and the need. Slowly it turned more controllable, more pleasurable. She blinked away the tears. Trying to concentrate on his words, she attempted a smile. “I don’t know about that. Earlier tonight is gonna be pretty hard to beat.”

“Yeah, well that was just him riding the magic. Now it’s both our turns. Whatever happens, remember you have all the control. You can control your needs and desires. They do not control you.”

He cupped her face with his hands, and she nodded. If he said she could control it, then she’d try. Another sharp wave of need swept over her. She gripped the sides of the ottoman fiercely with both hands, afraid she’d fly off if she let go. She rode the wave, giving all she had to controlling it. It felt like her skin had been first burned in a fire, then drenched in an ice bath. The tiniest of movements had her reacting, first in pain, then in pleasure. Her skin hurt it was so strong.

Her nipples felt hard and tight, the light breeze that came through the open window sending sharp spikes through her. Moisture flooded her core as her clit pulsed and her labia swelled.

Was this the same thing he and Kent went through every time he changed? Or was it different because she was the recipient of healing magic? If this was normal for him and Kent she was impressed. They were amazing. How the hell had they kept from taking her the moment they’d seen her earlier tonight?

And something told her that this was nothing compared to what ran through the two of them.

She never took her gaze off him, and once the wave had passed, he moved in for a kiss. She expected him to be fierce and fast, but he surprised her by taking her in his arms and kissing her slowly and deeply.

She opened her lips to allow him entrance and was immediately lost in his taste, his feel, his scent. All her being, her concentration was centered on him and what he was doing to her senses.

He tasted of a wildness she'd never sensed in him before. A wildness tamed by the strength of his will. She didn't know how she could sense that in just a kiss, but she knew that no matter what happened, he was never completely out of control.

When he pulled his lips from hers and stared into her eyes, she forgot to breathe, she was so caught up in being with him. He turned her head to kiss his way up her jawbone and then nibbled down the side of her neck.

She loosened her hold on the furniture and grabbed his shoulders. She dug her fingers in to his hard, muscled upper arms at each new touch of his lips. The need that had been such an overwhelming force moments ago was now in the background.

Now the need that built with his actions was more natural, easier to handle, even though still stronger than anything she'd ever experienced.

He bit her where her neck and shoulder met, the pain sharp and sweet. She gasped and pressed into his bite. She was going to have a hickey when he was done, but she didn't care. She'd wear it with pride as she remembered tonight. The bite seemed connected to an invisible string to her core, and her clit reacted to each suck of his lips. It throbbed with the need to be treated the same way.

His hand cupped one of her breasts, and she squirmed when he squeezed it, thumb flicking across the nipple. His nail scraped the hardened tip, and she shivered in his arms. When his other hand grasped her other breast, she let her head fall back and rolled with the sensations as he caressed her.

Her oversensitized body felt each stroke of his tongue, each touch of his hand, each brush of his legs almost overwhelming in intensity. Her breath came in short, hard gasps by the time his mouth reached her breasts. He licked her nipples with fast, light touches of his tongue. First one, then the other; then he blew on them. Darts of pleasure shot to her pussy with his attentions.



Impossibly, they tightened further as he teased them.

She moved her hands into his hair, threading her fingers through the silken tresses. Tingles started at her fingers and ran through her hands, up her arms to meet with those deep within her body created from his playing with her.

Karina lost herself in the maelstrom of sensations running through her body. Heat pooled in her stomach and curled around her nipples and pussy. It stretched into her arms and legs and made her entire body a burning ember ready to burst into flame at just the right stroke.

Somehow, Justin seemed to know how she felt, keeping her at that near-frenzied level of need, never letting her calm down, never letting her come. He fed it enough that she could keep the control he'd assured her was in her grasp.

But soon his kisses, his caresses, his nips weren't enough. She needed more. The desire started to eat at her again, feeling like it was ready to claw its way out.

Yet, somehow he knew that as well. He pulled away and grabbed her hips, tugging her to the edge of the ottoman. She grabbed on to the soft material to keep from falling back.

"Do you know how long I've wanted to taste you, Karina? How long I've wanted to bury my face in your pussy and eat you out? Every time you go to the pool and lounge in your damn bathing suit. Every time you sit on your porch and sunbathe in the nude, all I can think of is burying myself in your body. Thrusting my cock into you again and again until you scream with pleasure. Gods, woman, you have been the bane and blessing of my existence since the day you moved in next door."

Karina felt the heat of embarrassment crawl into her cheeks. She hadn't known he could see her from his place on those days she'd bared all to the sun. She'd assumed he was working hard in his office on the ground floor. The only way he could have seen her was if he'd been looking out from an upper-floor window. Or one of the bedroom balconies.

Had he seen her use her tiny bullet on those days when wanting the two of them had become too much? The times she hadn't been seeing someone regularly

and her need to be taken, to be fucked had become overwhelming? She had a sneaking suspicion he had, and her body liked the thought as her pussy clenched in remembered sensation.

He sat on his jean-covered ass—oh, gods, he was still wearing his jeans and here she was buck-ass naked, legs wide open in front of him. She moved to close her legs, but he kept them open just by nature of sitting between them.

He stroked her inner thighs, starting at her knees and working his way up, before sliding back down to her knees again.

“I’m going to eat you now, just a little. I know you have to still be sore from earlier. But know this. I will have you again later. I will eat at you until you beg me for mercy, and then I will eat you more.”

Her breath hitched in her throat at his words and the need on his face. Good gods, the man was totally serious. And damn her if she didn’t love the thought.

Justin held on to her inner thighs and slowly bent his head forward to her center. She sucked in a breath an instant before his lips touched her lower ones. Air rushed out of her lungs as his skin brushed against hers. Tingles of anticipation sparked through her.

He kissed her in soft, gentle movements. She squirmed with need. By the time his tongue actually darted out of his mouth to stroke her swollen clit, she raised up off her seat to meet it.

Suddenly the need that had ridden her earlier came back full force, nearly as strong as it had been at the beginning. It bent her body with its strength. She wanted his mouth to continue its motions. She wanted his fingers inside her. But she needed his cock more.

She wrapped her hands in his hair and pulled him back and forced him to look at her.

“Please. Fuck me now.”

His eyes darkened. Something in either her face or maybe the way she spoke convinced him to take his oral pleasure later. He sat back on his heels.

“Let me go get a condom.”

The lust was riding her so fast, Karina felt like growling at him. She gritted the words out. “I’m clean and not about to get pregnant. I know you two use condoms with your other women, so unless there’s something I don’t know, just fuck me already.”

Karina expected him to rip his pants off and thrust into her now that the formalities were over. She was wet, soaked even, and her pussy needed to be filled with an urgency that was startling in its intensity. But once again, he failed to do what she expected.

Instead, he stood up and slowly removed his pants. Her gaze followed each and every movement he made. His muscles rippled enticingly below his bronze skin. She wanted to reach out and grab his cock, take him in her mouth, and suck him as hard as she could. Her pussy didn’t like that idea, though, much preferring that she jump his bones and ride him for all she was worth. But he was out of arms’ reach, and she knew he was going to force her to go at his pace, despite her need.

He took a step forward and reached for her hands, tugging her up, and pulled her after him. He walked backward until his knees hit the wide chaise behind him. He lay down and pulled her over him.

The chaise was wide enough for two, and her knees were easily supported by the soft material as she straddled him.

“Your back can’t handle the pressure yet. And I want to watch you ride me.”

Desire swept through her at his words. Her body clenched, wanting her to slide him inside her hard and fast.

But he wasn’t having it. Not yet. He positioned her kneeling over his cock so that her pussy lips cradled it. She moved against him, feeling his hardness rub against her cleft, and she reached down for it, needing it inside her.

He grabbed her hand. “Not yet.”

This time she did growl at him, frustrated.

“Hold on to your ankles and don’t let go.”

“I want—”

“Karina!” His sharp command surprised her, startling her into doing what he said. The thrill that ran through her at his taking command surprised her, but it helped her concentrate, keep centered on what she wanted.

She realized she was once again spread out for him to see. The look in his eyes burned straight to her core as she read stark desire. For her.

He knew what he was doing, she reminded herself. He’d been struggling with this need that was so new to her for—well, she had no idea, but he obviously knew how to control it. How to force it to wait.

Once again he placed his hands on the inside of her legs and stroked up her thighs. By the time they met at the apex of her legs, she was shaking with renewed need.

When his thumbs met at her pussy, she moaned and released her ankles.

“Hands.” He removed his fingers and glared at her.

“Bu—”

“Hands.” His voice was firm and demanding, and Goddess help her, she absolutely loved it. She did what he directed, and he immediately put his own hands back where they had been. Her body grew warm and pliant against him.

He stroked her labia with his thumbs, up and down, playing with the tight brown curls covering her lower lips. Tendrils of want coiled through her body. The urge to press against his fingers became almost too strong to resist. She wanted them inside her, not baring her further to his gaze.

She felt liquid seep out of her core, and wondered if he could see it. The way his eyes darkened once again, she was willing to bet he could.

“Beautiful.”

She squirmed against his cock, rocking her hips, wanting more, wanting him inside her.

When he took a finger and stroked between her lips, she almost shot off of him. Sparks speared through her. He teased her, sliding the tip up and down, around her entrance, never giving her more than that.

She whined his name. She didn't know if she wanted him to stop or continue. But it didn't matter; he ignored her unspoken plea.

"Shh, I'm enjoying myself."

The need should have been coursing through her, driving her crazy as it had minutes before, but it seemed content to wait in the background. Almost like a separate entity watching what Justin did to her and how she responded.

When he inched his finger into her, her moan reverberated off the walls of the living room. He rubbed against her inner walls, moving his hand in a circular motion.

She pushed against him, wanting more, needing more. Prickles under her skin pulsed in time with his fingers. The lust wasn't going to be denied completion this time. It spread through her body, setting her nerves afire so each breath excited her further.

A second finger and then a third joined the first, spreading her, stretching her.

He started pumping his hand into her, twisting it and finding all her hidden inner spots. Her hips vibrated against him. She grew closer to orgasm with each thrust, each tweak of his fingers. When the thumb from his second hand stroked the top of her clitoris, it was too much.

She grabbed her ankles tightly, and held on for dear life as she rocked her body against him. She forced his fingers so deep she cried out at the fullness inside her. Waves flowed through her body, pulling her down as she came hard. She shook with the strength of the orgasm that overtook her. By the time she'd calmed down, he'd grabbed her hips and held her tight against his cock.

“You ready for me, baby? You ready to ride me?”

The only response she gave him was a groan as he lifted her slightly into position over his thick, erect cock and slid into her.

He was right; she was still sore from her and Kent's actions in the backyard, but the sharpness of her nerve endings just served to feed her desire. Each centimeter he slipped in piqued her arousal further, and when he was completely inside, she felt a connection she'd never experienced.

He stretched her completely, and she loved it. Cock buried to the hilt, he stayed there, not doing anything for long enough that she began to rock on him, urging him to move. Shivering, streaks of pleasure racing through her, she moaned. With her hands locked to her ankles like they were, she had very little freedom of movement and no leverage at all. Justin was in charge of every bit of pleasure she'd feel.

He began to move, her body trapped against him, hips captured in his hands as he thrust into her harder and harder. The desire that had been simmering deep within her the entire time, never completely gone, coursed through her body once again.

The orgasm began to roll over her unexpectedly, more sharp than she had ever had before. It started at the back of her head, and shivers slowly ran down her spine, out her arms to her fingers. It spread through her back, down her legs, and all the way out her toes. Spread out, the sensations snapped back and coalesced at her pussy at each and every thrust from Justin's cock.

A cry was ripped from her as tingles raced across her skin. Lightning shot through her body, electrifying her nerve endings and turning her into a blazing-hot ball of feeling. She thrashed her head back and forth, moaning as the orgasm overwhelmed her.

She released her ankles and dug her nails into Justin's chest, leaning on him as wave after wave rolled through her. Sparks ran up and down her back, through her skin as though she were on fire. She closed her eyes, expecting to be blinded

from the glare her body had to be shining forth as her entire world collapsed and she fell onto Justin's chest.

\* \* \*

After what seemed like hours, Karina slid off Justin to lie beside him on the chaise. She willed her breathing to calm down. "Damn. That was..."

"Powerful? Incredible? Mind-blowing?"

"Is it always like that?"

"I don't know. To be honest, I usually spend the night running it off."

"What made you come back tonight?"

He turned and looked her in the eyes. "You. I needed to be with you, to be near you."

"Did you know this would happen?"

He shook his head. "I thought I had it under control. Hell, I did have it under control until Kent healed you."

"I thought you guys said I would feel mild arousal. That was anything but mild." She shivered as she remembered the need that had tried to take over her body more than once.

"It should have been. I really don't know why it was so intense. Kent did say he sent too much energy into the healing. Maybe it was that? I could guess all night, but honestly I have no idea." He touched her face. "And if I had suspected it would happen to you, I never would have asked him to heal you."

"Is it like that for you?"

He shrugged. "I'm not sure what you went through, really. I know I've learned to live with it. Kent and I have figured out a way that I can siphon off most of his desire, and I run it off."

"What is it? How did it all happen?"

Justin yawned, covering his mouth. "I promised you we'd tell you everything tomorrow."

He had. And she knew there was no way in hell she'd let them avoid it. But could she wait that long?

She didn't want to, but one look at an exhausted Justin fighting back another yawn changed her mind. The poor guy had run for hours, and then he had come back here and proceeded to fuck her brains out. There was no way he wasn't worn-out. She reached up and covered her mouth as she yawned as well.

*Bastard. Damn yawns are contagious.* Well, she'd lie here for a couple of minutes and then go up to her room.



## Chapter Five

“Wake up, sunshine. It’s time for breakfast.”

“Go away, Kent. I’m sleeping in.” She rolled over and buried her face in her pillow. The man had the most annoying habit of letting himself in on weekends to make breakfast. They really needed to start stocking their own damn pancake mix. He better be planning on bringing it to her, ’cause she’d be damned if she got out of bed just to eat.

Shit! Wait, she wasn’t in her bed.

Her eyes popped open, and she realized she was in the same room she’d been in yesterday. Yesterday.

The day she’d followed Kent and Justin up here to their cabin. And saw Justin shift into a cougar. And then had her brains fucked out by Kent. And then by Justin. After Kent had magically healed her.

She rolled over and saw Kent in the doorway holding a tray of food. When she saw Justin standing behind him, she pursed her lips. This waking her up with food was becoming a habit. Then they walked in, and she realized Justin was carrying a large steaming mug.

“That had damn well better be tea, ’cause you know I can’t stand that crap the two of you drink.”

Justin raised an eyebrow. “Now after all these years, do you really think we’d be stupid enough to bring you coffee?”

Not really. But it wasn’t like they had been expecting her. And they only kept tea at their place for her. She shook her head. None of that mattered. What mattered right now was what had happened last night.

She got a whiff of the fresh pancakes and bacon, and her stomach growled. Kent's breakfasts had become infamous over the years, so much so that she and Justin refused to make it any more.

Okay, fine. What mattered right now was filling her stomach. She'd worry about last night later.

By the time Kent got to her bedside, she was sitting up and ready for him to place the tray over her legs. Justin pushed an extra pillow behind her back, and she picked up the fork to enjoy the food they'd brought her. She knew it would be good. "So you wanna tell me what this is all about?"

"What do you mean?" Kent sat at her feet on the side of the bed.

"We've brought you breakfast in bed before." Justin sat on the other side of the bed, close to her.

"Hmph. You two aren't gonna try to convince me everything I saw and experienced last night was just a dream, are you?"

Kent looked over at Justin before turning back to her. "You wouldn't buy it, huh?"

Karina shrugged her shoulders and felt the pull of freshly healed skin, then rubbed her legs together and felt the moisture and tenderness that follows really good—and vigorous—sex. "Um, no. Don't think so."

"Yeah, well, we didn't figure you would."

"So you guys want to explain things to me?"

"How about you eat and we talk?"

Karina shrugged again. She wasn't about to turn down the explanation she wanted.

"First off, I need to know how you're feeling." Kent reached for the hand that was resting on the tray. "Any side effects from last night? Are you okay?"

Karina swallowed the bite of pancake she'd just taken. "I'm fine, Kent. I told you last night it didn't hurt that much. There's no pain at all now, either. Other

than a slight tightness in my back, there's nothing there. Hey, that reminds me. How the hell did I get here again?" She looked at Justin and felt the heat rush to her face. "The last thing I remember was lying down on the chaise."

"I woke up a few hours later and carried you here."

"Again? Good Goddess. At this rate, I'll be spending all my time in bed."

Justin smiled that smile that got her engines revving so much she had to swallow hard. "That can be arranged. You won't hear any protests from us."

Shit. She'd been angling for this for so long, and here they were, the two of them, giving her exactly what she'd wanted. Them. On a silver platter, no less.

But how the hell did she handle it? Was it one of those situations where someone got what they wanted and then realized it wasn't what they really wanted?

No, one look at their faces was all it took to remind her why she wanted them. How long she'd wanted them. It wasn't just for sex. She wanted them for more than that and always had.

"Why don't we concentrate on the explanation you promised me before we discuss staying in bed?"

Justin shook his head. "I never took you for a coward, Karina."

Her jaw dropped open. A coward?

"Justin." Kent's voice was hard as he reprimanded his best friend. "Stop teasing her. After last night, she deserves an explanation."

Justin turned to Kent. "Does she? Really, Kent. We didn't invite her up here. She followed us."

Shame flooded Karina at Justin's words. He was right. She'd done exactly what he'd said. But that didn't negate the fact that she still deserved an explanation for what she'd seen. She pushed away her breakfast, suddenly not so hungry any more.

At least she'd got a good fucking—two good fuckings out of it.

“What if we’d been involved in something illegal? Or dangerous? How would you feel about that? What if one of us had really hurt her last night? A fat lot of good an explanation would do her then.”

He looked away for a minute before turning to glare at Kent. “What if I’d attacked her as a cat? You know damn well it’s a possibility.”

“Neither of you would ever hurt me.”

Justin turned to her, his face dark and fierce. “How do you know that, Karina? You don’t know what I go through for the change.”

She reached up a hand and stroked that hard, angry, and very worried face. “Because I know you. You would take your own life before you’d ever hurt me, so stop it. I know I did a stupid thing coming after you two, given what I’ve learned. I think we can all agree on that. But I had to do it, Justin.”

“Why *did* you come up here?” Kent moved her tray off the bed and sat back down. The blanket was pulled up over her hips and a man sat on either side of her, trapping her beneath it.

But she didn’t feel trapped. She felt protected. It was probably one of the stupidest thoughts she’d ever had, but there it was.

She hung her head at Kent’s question. “I told you why.”

“Tell me again. Tell us the whole thing.”

She wanted to argue with them. They’d promised to answer all her questions today, but they were making her do the answering and explaining. She debated refusing to talk to them until they told her what she wanted to know, but decided against it. She wouldn’t be leaving until she got the answers she wanted, and if they didn’t like it, too bad. Maybe telling them her part first would make them more willing to share their own.

“I saw Dr. Vincent yesterday.” She put her hand up before either of them could yell at her. “Don’t worry. I’m fine. I found a lump on my breast last week, and they wanted to get it checked out immediately. It’s nothing. But it was enough to get me

thinking. I promised myself when I came through the ovarian cancer ten years ago that I wouldn't take life for granted anymore—that I'd go for what I wanted. I realized after my appointment, after learning I wasn't going to be sick again, that I hadn't been doing that. I had been putting off—hell, avoiding—the most important thing in my life. So I decided to come after you. To see.”

Justin held her hand and stroked the back of it with his thumb. “See what, Karina?”

She turned her head away from the two men and looked out the window. In just the last few minutes, the sun had gone behind the clouds and it had begun to rain. It was slow but dripping on the window in a rhythmic pattern that was depressing.

“I had to see if I had a chance. If I was deluding myself. If it was something you wanted—both of you wanted—or if I should give up and walk away.”

Justin tugged at her, forcing her to look at them again. “What is ‘it’? What are you talking about, Karina?”

“Can't you figure it out?” She didn't want to have to spell it out to them; it hurt too much.

“I think I can, but I also think we need to hear the words as well.”

“Fine. I wanted you. Both of you. I've grown to love you, and as more than just neighbors or brothers. I wanted to be with you sexually and in every other way imaginable.”

“Why didn't you ask us at home?”

Karina shrugged. “It was spur of the moment. Once I'd decided I needed to move on, it couldn't wait. It was a dumb idea. I know that. But I don't regret it. I don't regret coming up here, and I don't regret what happened. With either of you.”

“What are you looking for, Karina?” Justin asked her softly. This time he looked out the window. “Neither of us are the settling-down kind of guy.”

She felt her heart break at those words. She'd told them she loved them, and they hadn't responded the way she'd hoped. They hadn't kicked her out of their place, but they hadn't told her they loved her either.

Did she need their love? Was she willing to take whatever it was they wanted to give her?

Hadn't she already decided exactly that? That she'd take whatever they gave her. She knew coming up here that a long-term relationship with both of them was most likely out of the question, so why should she be so surprised and disappointed?

Because even though she'd known what would happen, she'd also hoped for the best.

"I don't know what I'm looking for."

Kent pulled her hand up to his chest. "Karina, we can't promise you a future. But we can give you right now."

Right now. Was it enough?

She removed her hand from Kent's grasp and reached for the sheet to push it off. If right now was all she could get, then she was going to take it.

"Wait."

She froze and turned to look at Justin.

"Are you sure this is what you want?"

She gazed at him for a long moment and felt her patience desert her. "Jesus, Justin, what the hell do you want from me? I told you I came out here to get my brains fucked out. I had sex with each of you last night, and I'm about to strip in front of you. When are you just gonna accept the fact that I want you?"

Frustrated into action, she grabbed the blanket, tugging at it and forcing Kent to move before she climbed out. "You know what, forget it. I'm gonna go take a shower. If you want to get lucky, follow me. If not, then...whatever."

She waved at them as she walked into the bathroom and shut the door firmly behind her.

What the hell had she just done? By the gods above, she was really trying to fuck up her life, wasn't she?

Karina continued to berate herself as she reached in and turned on the shower in the large walk-in stall before climbing in. It was big enough for four people. And it had five showerheads, two removable, as well as a bench for sitting. What the hell were these guys doing up here in the mountains?

Well, other than turning into lust-filled animals. She snorted. That was exactly what they turned into. At least Justin. Kent remained a man. Even if he was lust-filled.

Wasn't that the complaint of a lot of women? That men were beasts? But it had never been one of her complaints. She liked sex. A lot. According to her doctor, her hormone imbalance was probably to blame for that. But it didn't bother her. A little extra testosterone was nothing in the scheme of things.

Apparently she had enough for both of the men, as well. How many men turned down free unattached sex, she thought, disgusted with herself as she got under the spray of water. She handed herself to them, pretty much told them she'd take whatever they wanted to give her, and still they hesitated.

*God damn it!* She fought back tears. She wasn't sure if they were tears of rejection or anger. Those bastards still hadn't explained what the hell had happened last night either. If they thought they were going to get away without telling her what it had—

The door opened, and all thought drained from her brain except for the fact that Justin was in front of her, naked and very erect. He took two steps in.

"After due consideration, we decided to take you up on your offer."

"I don't know if the offer still stands. It's been a few minutes."

He swept the wet strands of hair away from her face and caressed her cheek. "Are you that fickle that you would rescind such a delicious offer so quickly?"

“Are you that slow that you would take so long to respond? Or maybe you just decided any pussy would do?”

Justin stepped farther into the shower and crowded her against the back wall. “If any pussy would do, I could go down to the General Store and find some there.”

“Pussy at the general store?” Her anger was temporarily replaced with confusion.

Justin sighed. “There’s a bar and grill connected to it. That’s what it’s called. Most of the tourists and locals hang out there when they want a little company.”

“And you’d know this how?”

Kent walked into the shower to join them. “Because the cute little thing that works behind the counter at the store keeps inviting him.”

“Really?”

“And he keeps turning her down.”

Why the hell would he do that? If they got horny like they did last night every time they came up here, then she would be a nice release for him. Although Kent had been kind of rough last night, Justin had been in complete control.

But he’d said he’d gone running after the change. That’s why he’d been calm. Well he could go running before going down to the General Store too, couldn’t he?

“Hello? Karina?”

She shook her head and saw Justin standing in front of her, snapping his fingers. “Jesus, woman, what the hell is wrong with you lately?”

“Excuse me?” Damn them and their freaking secrets. “You know what? Maybe it would be better to just skip this.”

“I don’t think so.”

She turned to see Kent soaping up a facecloth.

“Okay, and again, excuse me? What part of ‘let’s skip this’ did you not understand?”



Kent reached out and turned her to face the wall, hands spread out on the tile. “You need a shower after last night. Between the tree, the grass, healing, and everything else, your back needs to be scrubbed, and there are spots you can’t reach by yourself.”

She saw Justin out of the corner of her eye. “I’ll make do.” Her voice was grumpy, almost sulky. Where the hell was her irritation with them all of a sudden?

“Uh-uh. Sorry, my fault you got messed up, my responsibility to take care of it.”

She was going to protest, really, she was, but the second the thick cloth full of suds touched her back, all defiance melted. There was very little in the world that felt better than getting your back washed by someone you cared about.

The cloth brushed up and down her back, and she dropped her head forward, her forehead resting against the cool marble. When the cloth moved from her back to her shoulders and then her arms, she moaned, quivering with each stroke of material. The scent of jasmine filled her nose, reminding her of hot, sweaty nights in Mexico.

By the goddess, this felt so good her legs were ready to give out. Kent tugged at her to pull her away from the wall and turn her, keeping her back to him. She opened her eyes to see Justin standing in front of her looking absolutely scrumptious.

The water from one of the showerheads hit the top of his shoulders, and rivulets ran down his hard, chiseled chest, pulling her gaze with them.

She acted without thought, bending toward him to follow one of those drops as it rolled down his body. She smiled at the groan that came from the man in front of her when her tongue met his chest.

Kent reached around and grabbed her breast. She wriggled her hips, and her pussy clenched when he squeezed.

Justin grabbed her shoulders and pushed her back, so that she could see his eyes. The lust there was different than it had been last night. He looked like a man who wanted a specific woman, not a man driven to mate with the nearest woman.

Her gaze shifted to his lips. His sweet, beautiful lips. She reached up and stroked them with her fingers, feeling the softness of the skin before he parted them and took one into his mouth.

His tongue teased her finger, wrapping around it, playing with it as his hands stroked down her body, sending sparks wherever he touched. Her gaze locked on to his. The need in his eyes drove her body to a fever pitch, heat engulfing her from within.

Kent continued washing her with one bare hand and the facecloth in the other, although each stroke seemed more a caress than a wash. By the time his hand reached her pussy, all pretense at washing her was gone. He separated her lower lips and stroked her.

Justin let go of her finger with a final suck. She let out a shuddering breath, which he caught in his own lips with a kiss. The outside world stopped existing, and everything she knew centered around these two men making love to her. Life outside the shower stall became unimportant and irrelevant as long as the men held her in their arms.

Kent slid first one finger, then another into her core, and she gasped against Justin's lips.

"Oh, baby, you're already wet for us. Your pussy is grabbing at my fingers. Do you know how hot that is?"

Justin pulled away from her lips and growled. "Kent, move her back. I need to taste her." His gaze never left hers, and his voice softened. "I promised you last night that I was going to eat you out. That I was going to make you scream. I keep my promises."

Kent backed up until he was sitting on the built-in bench and then pulled her onto his lap, straddling his legs. She leaned back onto his chest, rubbing against

him. Their slick bodies slid against each other smoothly. His cock pressed into her back, and there was no doubt he was as turned on as Justin was.

When Justin bent to his knees in front of her, her breath caught in her throat. Oh, Goddess, what had she done to deserve that look in his eyes?

Her memory flashed to last night when she'd had him in this exact position. Minus Kent, of course.

What did she have to do to get him to do it again and again? And again?

Kent kept her against him, her legs wide open, her back pressed against his chest. One hand held her at her waist; the other caressed a breast.

"Do you know how much he loves to eat pussy? He could sit there for hours and just suck at you until you passed out." The hand that was at her waist slid down her flat stomach and cupped her mons. "He's told me of the times he's seen you play with yourself on your patio. You've made him hard enough to explode, woman. Today you start to pay for that."

The shivers started at the back of her neck and ran up and down her spine. Even her toes tingled in response. When he parted her lower lips for Justin, she froze, watching as Justin leaned in.

Justin moved in, every inch seeming to take a full minute. Anticipation curled in her stomach as she watched him. Last night had been nothing. She'd felt little more than the pressure of his lips before she'd demanded he fuck her. But from what both of them had said, she knew it wasn't going to be near that quick today.

Justin stopped and looked up at her before taking his hand from her leg and standing up. He grabbed one of the removable showerheads and squatted back down in front of her. His gaze locked on her, he aimed the device straight at her pussy. She jumped at the direct contact of the water, but Kent kept her on his lap, preventing her from moving more than arching back into him.

Justin reached for her with his free hand and stroked her lips as he had last night. Kent's hand slid up her stomach, anchoring her against his chest. His cock snuggled against her ass, and she fought with herself not to wiggle against him.

The evil smile on Justin's face made her heart jump into her throat. With a wink that she knew was directed toward Kent, he turned the water higher and harder, angling it straight at her clit.

She'd read stories where women had massaging showerheads and got off while using them, but it had never been something she'd tried. Now she regretted having missed that experience as the hard needle tips of water pulsed against her.

Karina squirmed, her legs twitching to close. Kent forced them to stay open to the pressure of the water.

It was like hundreds of tiny fingers, tongues, cocks pressing against her lower lips, her opening, her clit. All pounding away to build tension and pleasure, tingles streaming through her limbs. The water slapped against her clitoris stronger and faster than her best vibrator. Fingers of excitement crawled through her torso and up her spine, coalescing at the bottom of her neck.

She pushed her ass back against Kent and shifted her hips, but Justin followed her, holding her lips open as he drove her toward her first orgasm of the morning. Barbs tickled under her skin, coursing to the rest of her body. The sensations ran through her so strongly she felt like screaming in frustration. She opened her mouth to yell at him to stop, to ask for something different, but the words couldn't escape past the ball of lust that came rolling up her chest.

She squealed and bucked in Kent's arms when the orgasm raced through her. Her body shook and quivered with each wave of fulfillment that crashed over her. She arched her chest against Kent's hand, her head rolling back on his shoulder. She tightened her legs, twining them around his as the last of the sensations burst through her.

Justin swooped on her pussy before she'd even relaxed back into Kent's arms, her body still vibrating. At the touch of Justin's lips, she moaned and thrust against him.

He'd promised he was going to eat her out, and that's exactly what he did. He licked, nibbled, sucked, and nipped at her. He played her, letting her calm down

slightly from her orgasm and then bringing her close to another one before backing off once again.

She ached with the need to come, to feel that release he promised but refused to give her. Water from at least one of the showerheads still dribbled onto her, turning her skin into one sheet of intense need. Each drop dragged her closer to going over again.

Kent, too, tortured her, playing with her breasts, plucking at her nipples until they were rock hard and perked up to attention. He squeezed them, and she hissed in a mixture of pain and pleasure.

She reached behind her and grabbed his cock. She gripped it tightly.

“Yes! Karina, yes.” He ran his tongue up the side of her neck and then nibbled his way down to where neck and shoulder met. His bite was firm. Hard. And it drove her wild.

When Justin inserted two fingers into her pussy, she lost it and yelled her own “Yes!” gyrating against his face, pumping the cock behind her as best she could. Kent’s wet cock slid in her hand easily. She felt each ridge and bump and squeezed tighter.

“More!” Her voice echoed off the shower stall. “Fuck me now, damn it!”

The words were barely out of her mouth before Justin stood, then lifted and tilted her slightly to slide onto Kent’s cock. The feeling of him filling her from behind sent her pussy vibrating and pulsing against him as she sucked him into her body.

Once she was fully seated on him, his groan of pleasure matched her own. She closed her eyes and just enjoyed the feeling of fullness he gave her before her body urged her to do something.

Justin held on to her hands, giving her some leverage as she began to move on top of Kent. His cock pulsed inside her. But soon Kent took over and began to push in with measured thrusts.

She opened her eyes, and the most glorious sight met her vision. Justin still stood in front of her, holding her hands, his beautiful erect cock inches from her face. The bulbous head stood out from his uncut foreskin, water droplets hanging on.

She'd wanted to taste him last night, but her body had been in more control than she had, and Justin had insisted on pleasing her. This morning, she was going to please herself, damn it. She tugged her left hand out of Justin's right and reached for the wonderful cock in front of her.

At the first touch of her hand, Justin's moan and slight thrust told her she was doing exactly what he wanted. She leaned forward and took the thick cock into her mouth.

Karina had never been a huge fan of blowjobs, but Justin's clean smell of soap, water, and him turned her on and made her pussy clench around Kent's cock. She inhaled a deep breath and played with Justin's cock.

Kent thrust into her hard, and all she could concentrate on was the sensations running through her body, centering at her pussy. His shaft rubbed against her walls, stroking her from the inside out.

She tightened her grip of her hand and mouth on Justin. She moved back, licking the sides of his cock, tasting the salty sweetness of the water running off his skin. She pumped him as she licked, and moved to once again grasp the tip with her lips.

Kent held on to her waist with one hand, the other going down to her clit to play with it. He stroked and flicked at it just as Justin began to thrust into her mouth slowly.

By the goddess, this was what she had read about, dreamed about. Fantasized night after night. Being filled by the two of them. Them fucking her and making her come again and again.

Kent twisted her clit, squeezing it tight. She sucked in breath around Justin's cock from the sharp sting. But the sting quickly went from pain to pleasure. When

he released it and slapped at it sharply, the shock that shot through her was nearly overwhelming in its intensity.

She rode Kent's cock hard and sucked Justin's eagerly, moving back and forth between them. Meeting each thrust with a need that surprised her.

When Justin locked his still-free hand into her hair and tilted her head to look at him, she nearly melted.

"I'm gonna fuck your mouth now, baby. Fuck it hard. You take it, and when I'm done, I'm gonna shoot my cum down your throat and you swallow it all. Every last drop. You hear?"

Her heart dropped out of her chest and into her stomach at his words. At his order. She nodded, swallowing around his cock as a thrill ran through her.

"When I'm done, Kent's gonna finish fucking your pussy and you're gonna come for him and keep coming till he's done."

She moaned. He began his slow fucking of her mouth. He slid between her lips smoothly. He pushed in, nearly hitting the back of her throat before pulling back again.

He still held on to one of her hands; his other supported her head. Kent fucked her slowly, in and out, holding her at the right angle for both of them to be inside her.

She should have been uncomfortable, positioned like she was, but she felt only pleasure running through her body.

Justin continued his soft thrusts. His gentle movements gave way to stronger, faster ones. Each thrust a bit faster and deeper than the one before. She clenched his hand with one of her own, and the other played with his balls while she sucked his cock. His harsh breathing told her he wasn't going to last much longer. She redoubled her efforts to make him come in her mouth. She wanted to please him, and he'd ordered her to take him till he came. There was no way she wasn't going to give him what he wanted.

Justin shouted a warning an instant before a stream of cum hit the back of her throat, forcing her to swallow on reflex. She worked her throat and mouth around him, massaging his balls with her hand, helping to get each and every drop out of him.

By the time he stopped shuddering, Kent started thrusting into her harder and harder.

Justin pulled out of her mouth and knelt down in front of her once again. He gently kissed her lips and helped her lean back against Kent's body. She felt Kent's cock scrape deep inside her.

With one hand, Justin caressed her face, his other reaching for her clit and playing with her again. She hadn't thought it possible for her body to react anymore, but her thigh muscles quivered in time with his flicks. Kent held her against him with one arm, the other plucking at her nipple once again.

"You are so tight and wet. Pulsating around me. Come for me. Come with me inside you. Milk me with your cunt."

She didn't know if it was Kent's words or Justin's hands, Justin's soft kiss against her lips or Kent rubbing against her G-spot, but suddenly she was coming again. Her quivering leg muscles tightened and then loosened as the orgasm built. She arched against Kent, Justin keeping her lips locked to his. She moaned loudly, clamping onto Kent's cock as she came.

Vaguely she was aware that Kent thrust into her one more time, fast and sharp, before he too yelled his orgasm and shot his seed into her.

Harsh breath met her ears after what seemed like hours. It was hers. And Justin's and Kent's. They were all breathless from what had happened, and she was speechless and boneless as well.

Once again they seemed to know what she needed and helped her stand. They washed her from head to toe, caressing her oversensitized body gently as they wiped away all traces of last night and minutes ago.



When they all got out of the shower, they wrapped her up in fluffy towels and dried her before snuggling her into a large, soft robe.

They each kissed her on the cheek and left her alone, walking out wrapped only in towels.

She sat on the vanity chair and put her head on the counter. Damn it. She'd let them distract her from her questions yet again. How stupid was she to be redirected with anger and sex?

They were going to answer her questions if it killed her. She wasn't going to leave until they did.

## Chapter Six

Karina sat in the living room and waited for the two men she loved more than anything in the world to tell her their biggest secret. Well, maybe not tell her, as she already knew what it was, but explain it.

Kent stood in front of the fireplace, leaning against the mantel looking at her as though wondering what he was going to do with her. Besides fuck her six ways to Sunday. She smiled behind her hand. Tomorrow was Sunday. If she counted the tree and ground as two separate ways, he still had three more to go.

Justin sat on the overly large ottoman they'd started their sex on last night. Visions of what they'd done there—and on the chaise at the end of the couch—flooded her brain.

She hadn't realized how late it had been when she'd woken up, and it was already early evening. Every time she'd tried to pin them down to answer her questions, they'd avoided her, saying this or that had to be done, but they'd finally run out of excuses. She'd put her foot down when it had started to get dark out. She wasn't going to let them leave the cabin without an explanation. And if they tried, she threatened to follow them.

The silence stretched for long minutes. Karina knew this was probably the first time they'd told anyone about what they did here, and she was willing to wait while they got ready. The crackling of the wood as it burned filled the room with a sense of comfort and hominess. She hoped it was as relaxing to them as it was her.

"It's a long story," Kent began.

Part of Karina wanted to tell him to forget it, that she didn't really need to know, but she'd be lying to all of them if she said that. "Tell me what you think I need to know to understand this, please."

Kent sighed and nodded. "Hundreds of years ago, someone in my and Justin's families offended a very powerful witch. Stories differ as to whose fault it was or exactly what happened and whether the punishment was just, but the long and short of it is, our ancestors pissed her off."

"Kent, just tell her." Justin obviously had no patience today. "We're cursed, Karina. I turn into what you saw last night, and Kent—Well, let's say Kent is just screwed."

Kent frowned at Justin before turning back to her. "The witch cursed Justin's family to become cougars on the night of the full moon and the two nights on either side of it. My family she cursed to be powerless and, well, in pain."

"In pain? What do you mean?"

"My family comes from a long line of witches. Very powerful witches. But power is a two-edged sword. In our case, we need to use it or it eventually eats us from the inside. It causes us pain and even death."

"I thought you just said that she cursed you to be powerless?"

"Yes and no. My ancestors still *had* power, they just couldn't *use* it."

"Then what did I see last night?"

Justin stood up quickly. "Karina, just let him talk."

Karina flinched at the tone of his voice. She had to remember this was their lives they were talking about, not some oddity to be dissected. At least he wasn't full-blown angry again.

She nodded. "I'm sorry. I'll shut up and let you explain. Justin's right."

Justin looked as though he was going to say something, apologize maybe, but instead he turned and walked into the kitchen.

"This is hard for him."

“I understand that. It can’t be easy for either of you. Just please, continue if you would.”

“Bellren, the witch we’ve been talking about, cursed our families, like I said. But she gave us an out. If one family could kill off the other first, then their curse would be broken.”

“What?”

“She took two families that had been close for centuries, and turned them into instant enemies.

“The cat you saw last night? That wasn’t exactly how the curse first started. In the beginning, the adults turned into true beasts—animals that would tear into anything that crossed their paths, even their human mates and children. They were much more dangerous than even a wild cougar.”

Karina swallowed over the lump that had formed in her throat. How could anyone live like that? Not knowing if you would kill those you loved when the curse overtook you.

“At first the families tried to solve the problems together, but nothing worked. After one brutal month where an entire family of my ancestors was killed by two cougars, my side started taking revenge. Soon there were few of either family left, and they ran away from each other in a desperate attempt to preserve the little they had left.

“Over the years, both families have been able to find witches to help them with the curse—lessen it, if you will—but there is no way to break it. No way but the way Bellren set forth. When Justin and I first met each other in college, we had no idea who the other one was. We were roommates our freshman year.” Kent walked to the window. “Talk about ironic. College is hard enough, never mind being thrown in a twelve-by-twelve room with the one person in the world who wants you dead more than anything else. We became friends first and then learned the truth.” He laughed bitterly. “I can’t begin to tell you how hard that was. When we realized that

we were the last of our respective lines, everything fell into place. The only way either of us would be free was if one of us killed the other.”

Karina didn’t know what to say. What could she say? Before she could do much more than sit forward on the couch and think about going to him, Justin spoke from the doorway.

“What he isn’t telling you, Karina, is that I thought about it. I seriously thought about it. Kent’s family had it better than we did. At least I thought they did. Their magic was no longer all-powerful, but at least the witch they found helped them discover a way to use their power. They could heal people. That’s how they dissipated the energy in their bodies. How could that possibly be a bad thing? They didn’t have to worry about killing someone when they weren’t in control of their own bodies.”

He shook his head. “What I didn’t know was the side effects of it. How strongly it could affect both them and those they healed. Men had been known to go out and rape women afterward. Women would offer themselves to the first man they saw. The *fix* Kent’s family was given was another curse in and of itself.”

“But it kept my family alive.” Kent’s voice brimmed with regret.

Justin nodded and then continued. “The closest my family came to a cure was the ability to control ourselves and what we killed. For the most part, we were able to restrict our killing to deer and the like, which is why this place was built. It’s a great hunting ground.

“But the cure wasn’t foolproof. Accidents have been known to happen. My grandfather killed my grandmother shortly after Dad was born. He stayed around long enough to make sure my dad knew about the curse and everything else that it entailed, and then killed himself after Dad’s eighteenth birthday.

“My father decided he would never have kids, and my mother wasn’t supposed to be able to have them. But by some stupid-ass miracle, she got pregnant. She wanted me so badly, Dad didn’t have the heart to suggest an abortion.”

Kent came and sat beside her on the couch and reached for her hand. “My side effects convinced me I would never heal anyone if I could avoid it. That’s why I became a vet. I can use the healing ability on animals, and other than breeders, no one cares if they go into heat early.”

Karina shook her head. “I still don’t understand how it works.”

Justin finally left the door and walked into the living room. He sat on the ottoman once again. “After some trial and error, Kent and I figured out a way to almost tame the magic together. His healing energy works on me, kind of healing my body by allowing my shift to be easier and smoother. It also keeps me from having to shift every full moon.”

Kent stroked her hand. “But the side effects are still the same. Justin is overwhelmed with the need to mate when we are done, which is why he goes for the run. He’s able to take much of my lust with his and just run it off in the woods.”

Justin snorted. “Most of the time. Occasionally, I can’t burn off enough.”

“And we both go down to the General Store.”

“You bring women back here?” Karina thought of the king-size bed she’d been sleeping in, and the oversize shower. Both were perfect for sex—or orgies.

“Never,” Kent said. “We go back to their place or wherever it is they’re staying.”

“And you share the women?”

He shook his head. “We have once or twice, but normally we each find someone to be with.”

“It makes it easier with the locals”—Justin sounded almost sad—“not to know about the freaky sexual habits of the guys up on the hill. The only women we’ve shared have been tourists. Women we aren’t likely to ever see again.”

“You told me that healing me would have mild side effects. Were you lying to me?”

“No, I wasn’t,” Kent said. “Your injuries were mild enough and I was tired enough that I thought the side effects wouldn’t be strong. And like I said, Justin and I have a bond. I knew I could direct some of the lust to him if I needed to. I honestly didn’t expect it to overwhelm you.”

Karina thought about it for a moment. If she was honest with herself and with them, it hadn’t overwhelmed her. It had pushed her into doing what she’d wanted to do all along. What she’d come up here to do in the first place.

It had ridden her stronger than she would have expected, that much was true, but it hadn’t forced her to do anything.

She sighed and squeezed his hand. “It didn’t, Kent. I told you before why I came up here. I guess you could say it just helped matters along.”

Justin stood and walked to the fireplace. He squatted to stoke the fire, his back to her. “So now you know everything. You know why we come up here every few months. You know why we live together, why we have women in and out of our place.

“And why we can’t have a future together.”

Karina shook her head in a double take. “What? What have I learned that tells me that?”

Justin turned around to face her again. “Weren’t you listening for the past hour? Didn’t you hear a word either of us said? We can’t have families. Our future is closed. The curse ends with both of us.”

“I understand you want to end the curse, but what do you mean there’s no future for you? There’s always a future.”

Kent shook his head. “What kind of woman wants to take a man that has to be with his best friend so often? A man who can’t be responsible for his actions, who might do something stupid some night because he honestly cannot control himself? Not to mention the fact of the overactive sex drive. One that isn’t likely to dissipate anytime soon, if ever.”

“Me.” Her word was soft, almost a whisper, but she knew they both heard her. She stood up, suddenly angry at the both of them. “Me, damn it. You accuse me of not listening, but I think it’s the two of you who aren’t listening.

“I know you care about me. You have to.”

Kent put his head in his hands for a moment and then looked up at her. “Yes, we care about you. And yes, it’s probably love. But that doesn’t matter. We won’t burden someone with this.”

“You won’t burden someone with it? What gives you the right to decide what someone can handle?”

Justin stood up and walked to her. He grabbed her arms and forced her to look directly at him. “They’re our lives too, Karina. What gives *you* the right to decide?”

She stared into his eyes for a few seconds, seeing the pain, the love, the fear that was in them. “Can you stand there and tell me that you don’t love me, Justin?”

“It doesn’t matter how I feel, Karina. Facts are facts.” He let go of her and walked away, putting more than a physical distance between them.

“It doesn’t matter to either of you then that I don’t care about this curse? That it doesn’t bother me?”

“It doesn’t bother you now, but what happens in five years when you want kids? What happens when the sex gets rough and I hurt you?”

Kent’s voice was full of pain. “When I rape you because the power is out of control and I have nowhere to release it?”

“What?” Karina scowled. “What are you talking about? You’d never rape me.”

Kent wouldn’t look at her. Justin answered instead. “His parents are divorced because of what his father did. He raped her fifteen years ago when the power was riding him hard. He’d happened across a bad accident in the road and couldn’t help himself. He had to heal them. There were kids, too young for puberty, so his dad took all the lust onto himself. By the time he got home, he was a maniac. Kent’s



mother forgave him, but he couldn't forgive himself. He left her the next day. Neither Kent nor his mother have seen him since then."

"Did his mother know about the curse?"

"Yes, which is why she understood. She never blamed him."

"But he blamed himself." Karina didn't need either of them to respond, she knew she was right. She walked to Kent and sat down in front of him. She grabbed his hands. "You are not your father, Kent. And you have releases he obviously didn't."

Kent looked at her, despair in his eyes. "Really? What about last night? I was in the backyard earlier today. You know what I found? Hair and blood in the tree that I fucked you up against. God damn it, woman, I took you so hard I made you bleed. Hair was ripped from your head by the roots."

"I liked it, Kent. I asked for it. You pushed me away the first time and walked away from me the second. You would never hurt me."

"You don't know that. And I won't risk it."

"What if I am willing to risk it? Don't I get a say in the matter?"

Justin spoke from behind her. "No. You don't. We can't risk it."

Karina stood. She threw her hands up in frustration as she walked to the middle of the room. She turned to face them. "This is so unfair. You both admit you love me, but you won't take a chance on us."

"We can never have children. We've both had vasectomies because we won't pass this on to someone else. And we don't know if we will wake up someday to having done something horrible to you. There is no choice." She'd never heard Kent so defeated before. It hurt. She knew she had to convince him—both of them—they were wrong.

"I've known I can't have children for over a decade. Don't you think I've come to terms with that? It sucks to be twenty years old and be told that your dreams of a happy little family will never come to fruition. I know what it feels like for things

you want to be forever out of your grasp. But in this instance, they don't have to be. We can have what we want." She stopped and looked at the two of them for a long moment, willing them to say something. "As for the rough sex? I like it hard sometimes. And I'm also the woman who came up here looking for it. With *two* men."

Justin shook his head. "Sorry, Karina. We've already talked it over. We're not willing to take the chance." He looked outside. "It's too late for you to go home now, and we need to get to the circle. There's plenty for you to do here to keep busy. It's stopped raining, but if the lights go out, there are candles and matches in your bedside table." He reached for her and pulled her close to him. "I'm sorry." He kissed her forehead and walked to the front door.

Kent stood up. "We'll put the house on the market as soon as we get back. No reason for you to have to see us every day." He joined Justin at the door. The two of them walked out without looking back.

Karina felt her heart walk out the door with them. The final snick of it closing broke her completely, and she crumpled to the floor in despair.

## Chapter Seven

Karina looked out the window. They'd been gone for a little over thirty minutes. It was time to go after them.

After they'd left, she'd thought about going home. About getting in her car and driving as far as she could go despite the late hour and probable conditions of the road. But she had decided against it.

No, what she had to do was more important than going home. She was willing to try one more thing before she kissed her future with them good-bye forever.

She'd gone through hell early in her life with her cancer. If it had taught her one thing, it was to never stop fighting. She wasn't about to throw everything away without one last try. Ready, she headed out the door after her men.

The way was easier tonight. She remembered the path and wasn't so worried about being caught by the men. If she were caught, it would just make the confrontation occur that much sooner. A confrontation she was looking forward to.

The storm clouds had drifted away, and the moon shone as bright as it had the night before, the droplets of water on the greenery glistening here and there. She loved the smell and feel of the air after a cleansing rain, and tonight it held more promise than usual.

By the time she got to the hill over the clearing, her feet were cold and heavy with mud. The temperature had dropped with the rain, and she was shivering. But none of that mattered.

The men were in the circle and appeared to be at about the same point in the ritual as they had been the night before. She waited until Justin's shift began, and then she walked down the hill.

By the time she was at the bottom, Justin had shifted completely into his black cougar form and sat at the opposite end of the fire, much as he had last night. She wondered where they had gotten enough dry wood to start the fire, but then dismissed the thought as both heads turned to her.

She took a deep breath and stepped closer to the circle of firelight.

“You both said the drive is on you the most right after Justin changes. Justin, for you the drive to mate is so strong that it’s almost overwhelming. Kent, you said that until you release some of that lust to Justin, you can’t be sure of what you will do.” She began to unbutton her dress as she spoke. “I know you both better than you know yourselves. I know that no matter what, neither of you would ever hurt me. I’m here to prove it to the two of you. To prove that I am safe with you, and that I will love you always.”

She pulled her dress off and tossed it back toward the trees. She kicked off her sandals and stood there.

“I stand here in front of you. Naked, wanting, and female. If you were ever to do harm to me, now would be the time. Do your worst.”

“Karina.” Kent’s voice was harried, torn, and lust-filled.

“You won’t hurt me, Kent.”

“Please. We need you to leave. You’re killing us.”

“And you’re killing me. I went through too much ten years ago to let something that has the potential to be so good just go away because of simple fear. Fear gets you nowhere in this world. Hiding does nothing but help you keep the status quo. I don’t want the status quo. I want more, damn it.”

She turned at Justin’s growl. Fear coiled in her chest despite her assurances to the contrary. Fear that she acknowledged and accepted and did her best to tamp down.

Justin stalked toward her. That was the only word. He didn’t walk. He stalked, intent evident in every muscle and sinew of his body.

“Don’t move.” Kent’s voice seemed to come from a distance, all her concentration wrapped up in the cat.

“What happens if I do? What happens if I run?”

He didn’t answer, so she started walking. Keeping half her attention still on the cat, she strutted toward Kent. There was no other word for it. She swung her hips as she moved, putting sex and enticement in every step. If there was even a shred of male human left in Justin, she knew she had to be doing to him exactly what she was doing to Kent.

Kent’s reaction was obvious. His cock stood at attention as he watched her approach him.

“Do you want me, Kent? Do you want to take me now and fuck me hard? Fuck me against a tree again?”

He winced.

“Or maybe lean me against that boulder over there and fuck me from behind again? Did you like that this morning? Fucking me while Justin fucked my mouth? I haven’t told you a truth about me, Kent. I like it hard. I like an element of danger in my sex sometimes. Just the thought of a little bit of pain turns me on.” She reached her arm down to her pussy and dipped her fingers between her lips. She was soaked.

She brought her hand up and spread out her fingers, watching them glisten in the light of the fire. “I’m wet, Kent. Watching you stand there, holding yourself back while I play with myself makes me so fucking hot I want to come right now.”

She plucked at her nipples, spreading her moisture across them. Kent remained voiceless, but his hand had crept to his cock and he stroked it slowly. That was one of her favorite things about men; they couldn’t hide their reaction, even if they wanted to. She reached down and caressed herself again, watching his eyes narrow at her movements.

“After the two of you left, I felt as though my heart was going to break. But then I realized I’m too strong for that.” She stopped less than a foot from Kent and held out her still-wet hand. She brushed his lips with her juices.

When he inhaled her scent and he licked at her taste, she smiled. “If you two aren’t going to fuck me, I’m going to find someone who will. I’m going to head down to the General Store and announce to the room that I’m horny as all hell and need a nice, hard fucking. I’m gonna take the first two guys who offer and let them love me all night long. However they want it. Maybe if I’m lucky, one of them will even fuck my ass.”

With that, she turned and started to walk away from them. This was it, her final chance.

“Karina. Don’t move.”

She turned her head back over her shoulder and smiled. “Who’s gonna stop me?”

“Don’t do this. I won’t be responsible for it.”

“That’s the point. You are not responsible for it. It’s *my* choice.” She turned away from him and walked in the opposite direction, this time putting more energy into her steps. “Fuck you, Kent. In fact, fuck you both. I’m gonna get lucky.”

She felt more than heard Justin’s rapid approach. She’d pushed them both too far.

But it was what she’d intended. If this didn’t prove her point to them, nothing would. Her heart beat faster and her breath sped up as she waited for Justin’s attack.

He slammed into the backs of her legs and sent her sprawling. The breath was knocked out of her lungs for a second. The growl that reverberated through his throat sent shivers through her body.

He straddled her, back legs at her thighs, forelegs at her shoulders. Damn, he was big in this form. He buried his nose in her hair. She sucked in her breath. *Goddess, please, don't let me have been wrong.*

His tongue lapped at her neck, and she felt his hot breath an instant before his teeth touched her skin.

She froze, waiting. This was the moment. Either he would tear out a chunk of skin or not. She hoped he was in enough control for little more than a warning nip before he climbed off her.

He did neither; instead he opened his mouth wider and trapped her neck between his jaws.

When he pushed his lower body against her ass and she felt his very aroused cock pressing against her, she moaned and pressed back against him.

She couldn't help herself. She hadn't been planning on having sex with him in cat form, had thought he'd have better control than that, but damn it, she wanted him. She was hot and wet with need, and if Kent wasn't going to do anything about it, she'd take what she could get.

"Do you like that, Karina?" Kent's strained voice sounded closer than he had been minutes before. "Do you like the thought of this animal fucking your brains out? Taking you with your neck between his teeth so you can't fight him?"

Karina tried to turn her head to look at him, but the growl from Justin kept her facedown as she answered. "It's Justin. I don't care what form he is or what he wants from me. It's Justin, and he can have it all."

"What about me? Are you willing to play whore for me too?"

Her pussy clenched at his words. If he only knew how that kind of talk turned her on. She hadn't been lying when she'd said she liked it rough. She needed it rough sometimes, and nothing got her going like dirty talk.

"If you want me to be your whore, Kent, then that's what I'll be. I'll spread my legs for you and let you fuck me as hard and as often as you want. Wherever you

want. However you want. And if you want me to be a lady, I can do that as well. It might not be as much fun, but I'll give it a shot."

Justin growled against her back again, rubbing his cock against her ass.

She spread her legs open in response. They slid easily on the wet grass, her moisture mixing with that of the earlier rain. "You too, Justin. I'm yours to do what you want."

Hands tugged at her hair, and she looked up to see Kent kneeling in front of her.

"Suck my cock, Karina. Suck it so my eyes roll back in my head and I shoot cum all over your face."

She squirmed, her pussy getting wetter every second. "Yes, please."

"It's my turn to fuck you from behind." Justin's voice was harsh, rough. She hadn't even realized he'd turned back to human form.

Before she had a chance to respond, he kicked her legs open wider and thrust into her with all his strength.

Her inner walls stretched to accommodate his width, eagerly hugging him as he forced his way in. The speed and strength of it nearly ripped her in two. But pain quickly turned to pleasure as he pulled out and pushed in again. She shuddered around his cock as she was rocked with pleasure with each of his thrusts.

When he pulled her up to a kneeling position, she pushed her ass back at him with a growl of her own. She wanted him to fuck her now. Hard and fast.

When she looked up, Kent's cock was still in front of her, and she opened her mouth to suck him in. He was wider than Justin but just as long, so it took some quick adjustments of her neck and throat to get as much of him in as she could. But once she did, it was worth it.

By the Goddess, did he taste divine. Salty sweet, she tasted his sweat as well as the essence of magic that surrounded him. The same wildness she'd sensed earlier enveloped her senses and covered her body like a blanket of need. Her skin



seemed to wake up and suddenly become more alert, more sensitive to everything around her.

Kent grunted and pushed farther into her mouth at her groan. "That's part of it, Karina. You wanted it in raw form. You got it. That's how alive our bodies are. It's how just the stroke of the wind can drive us crazy."

If she wasn't already on her knees, the need would have driven her there. No, not need—awareness. Awareness of everything, including herself.

It came to her that there was no lying to herself in this condition. She was in love with these two men and needed them in her life like she needed her next breath. When they thrust into her at the same time, she moaned again. When he hit the back of her throat, she jerked back, his movement too fast for her to accommodate him.

Kent moved as though to pull out, and she grabbed him, digging her nails in his hip and shaking her head as she held on to his cock with her lips.

"Trust her, Kent. She said she likes it rough."

Karina looked up at Kent and met his gaze. She tried to assure him with only her eyes that Justin was right: She wanted this. She didn't want to let go of his cock for even a minute, but she let him slide out slowly.

"Karina?"

"Yes. Please." She moaned when Justin thrust into her hard, sliding against her G-spot. Goddess, how she loved doing it doggy-style. Justin shoved into her and then again. Her pussy spasmed tight around him. She turned and looked at him with a smile.

"You like?" He punctuated his question with two more quick thrusts, and her insides quivered in a small orgasm. It wasn't much, just a precursor to what was to come. She didn't care; her walls contracted and relaxed around him rapidly, begging for more.

“Don’t stop,” she begged him and then turned around, putting her head down to concentrate as he thrust again and again.

She tightened her pussy around his cock and met each thrust with one of her own.

Kent knelt and lifted her head. She was sweating and panting, closer to another orgasm than she thought possible given the short time.

“Cock. Give me your cock.” She wanted to taste him again.

When he shook his head, she gritted her teeth, ready to yell at him, not knowing what else to do to convince him she wanted this.

“I want you to come on Justin’s cock first. And then we’re gonna fuck you together. Me in your cunt, Justin in your ass.”

The picture Kent’s words sent flying through her head seared her brain with such ecstasy that she came immediately. She shuddered around Justin’s cock, her skin alive with tiny prickles of excitement. She yelled out to the Goddess in delight as she nearly drowned in wave after wave of pleasure.

Even after Justin pulled out, still hard, her body convulsed, jerking as it found its way down from the height of ecstasy.

“Have you ever done double penetration before?” Kent asked once she’d calmed down enough to answer him.

“No. But I’ve done anal before. And vaginal with a butt plug.”

Kent’s eyebrow went up at her admission. She almost felt embarrassed and then realized that it was nothing to be embarrassed about. She’d enjoyed it. And it had prepared her for them.

Kent smiled. “I’ve been told it’s much the same thing. But I’ll be honest. We haven’t done it either. Are you sure you’re willing to give it a try?”

“Hell yeah.”

Kent nodded and then rolled underneath her, his back on the ground, her lying on his chest.

“Let Justin get you ready first.”

Get her ready? Fuck. She was already so damn ready she was strung like a guitar string waiting to be plucked. But when Justin started to play at her ass, she sucked in her breath and pushed back against his finger. He rubbed the rim of her anus. Shafts of pleasure speared her at the feel of his fingertip as he began to push it in.

It slid in easily, lubed with either his saliva or her juices, but one finger wasn't enough. She wanted more. She wiggled her ass at him, and he immediately thrust in a second and then a third finger. Her moan echoed in the clearing as he stretched her ass to accept his cock.

When he slid out, she felt empty for all the time it took him to position his cock in place of his fingers.

Her gaze locked with Kent's just as Justin started to push his way in. She closed her eyes at the pressure. It was always difficult at first, but once he slipped past her outer rim of muscles, her body relaxed immeasurably and she began to enjoy the pressure of him in her back entry.

“You okay?” Kent asked her once again.

She nodded.

“You ready for me?”

“Please.” Her voice was more a whimpering plea than a confident agreement, but she wanted him so badly she didn't care how desperate she sounded.

He positioned himself easily and angled his cock at her entrance. When he finally slid in, tiny explosions went off in the back of her head, and she arched her neck up as they spread down her spine.

They paused once they were both fully seated within her. A butt plug had filled her, but it was nothing like this. She'd never felt so full, so complete before. She breathed in deep, catching her breath, letting her body adjust to the two of them inside her.

They waited for her, Justin stroking her back, caressing her spine, Kent stroking her face. When she moved against them, they began to move as well.

They went slowly at first, one pulling out while the other stayed seated, and then the first pushing back in while the other pulled out. Soon slow and steady wasn't enough, and they began to fuck her in earnest.

Hard and fast, they pushed their way into her; each thrust, each stroke drove her closer to her quickly building orgasm.

She didn't know if it was the lust riding the two men, the love she felt for them, or the connection they all shared, but she knew she wasn't going to last much longer.

She concentrated on their cocks sliding in and out of her body. Wet sounds mixing with their grunts and groans as they fucked her.

Kent grabbed her head and brought her lips to his for a soul-shattering, toe-curling kiss. Her world centered on his lips, her cunt, her ass, their cocks. Everywhere they touched her body burned straight to her soul.

Justin spoke raggedly. "Karina, baby, I'm not gonna last." He reached around her waist with one hand and flicked her clit in time with his thrusts.

*Shit. Fuck. Damn.*

She pulled away from Kent's lips and stared into his eyes as she came. Her body pulsed; her skin rippled with the shocks of her coming. She felt herself splinter around their cocks when the orgasm surged over her.

It must have been enough to bring the two of them, because their shouted groans followed her quickly and the feel of their cum shooting into her from either side warmed her straight to her core.

She shuddered, pushing against each of them, first one and then the other, eager to feel every last pulse, thrust, and shiver before collapsing in utter completion.

After a few moments, they changed position until she was laying on her back, looking up at the sky, a man on either side keeping her body warm. A cool breeze wafted across the clearing, but instead of making her shiver with cold, it cooled her skin to a tolerable temperature.

The men each propped themselves up on an elbow. They came into her line of sight without her having to look back and forth.

Kent spoke first. "I love you, Karina, with all my heart. I have since the moment I laid eyes on you and have never stopped for an instant."

Justin closed his eyes for a moment before opening them—and his heart—to her. "When Kent told me about the new neighbor that had moved in next door, I never expected her to catch my heart and not let go."

She smiled at them both. "I know this won't be easy. Between this curse of yours and my need to be in control in life."

"And your need to be controlled during sex," Justin said softly.

She felt heat rush to her face. He was right. She didn't need it every time, but she liked them taking control.

"Sometimes." She narrowed her eyes at his statement.

"Sometimes."

Kent nodded.

"But I love you both. When I thought I might lose you tonight, it almost destroyed me like not even my diagnosis had." She closed her eyes for a moment before opening them again and staring at the two men. "I can live without you if I have to. But please don't make me."

Kent looked at Justin for a long moment before turning back to her. "I think you proved your point tonight. But I'm not saying I won't be worried."

"Or that I won't be nervous around my change." Justin smiled.

"But we know you can handle more than we ever thought possible. From anyone."

Justin stroked the side of her cheek with a finger. “I am willing to give it a try, my little hellcat. And I have to admit the thought of taking control of you during sex makes me hard all over again.”

Karina chuckled, feeling well and truly loved. A thought hit her, and her gaze went back and forth between the men. “Oh, gods, the lust, the drive. Is it still riding you?”

Kent sighed. “No. Not at all. For the first time in, well, since puberty, I can say that I feel totally replete and satisfied.”

“Justin?” She turned to her other lover.

“I agree. For the first time since Kent and I started doing this, I feel content. Not even running all night was ever able to do this for me.”

He looked at Karina with love shining in his eyes. “You’re our little miracle worker, my love. I never thought I’d feel this at peace after a change.”

Karina laughed. “Miracle worker? Definitely not. Your love? Always.”

 THE END 

## Loose Id Titles by Talya Bosco

*Kansas City Shuffle*  
*Redesigning Adele*  
*The Healing Curse*

## Talya Bosco

Talya is an avid fan of all forms of the printed word. She has been reading for as long as she can remember, and has dreamed of being an author for almost as long. On any given day, when she's not working, you can find her at the computer or curled up somewhere in her house writing or reading whatever has caught her fancy that week. She has been known to push the limits of her deadlines, or go to work on little to no sleep, only so she can finish a book she is reading.

Her reading habit was the bane of her family's existence while growing up, but she has found a wonderful man that shares her evil inclination. They live quietly, reading books, playing on computers, practicing martial arts and enjoying one another's company.

Talya feels all that reading has helped her to become a better author. She has devoted her professional life to writing fun, erotic stories that make you believe in second chances and happily-ever-afters.