

*If You Must Wake the Tiger...  
Use a Long*

*Beautiful People Risking*

*Lick*

*Jeanie Johnson and Jayha Leigh*

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# If You Must Wake the Tiger... Use a Long Lick

Jeanie Johnson and Jayha Leigh

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To best girlfriends, badazz big brothers, badazz little brothers, and to all of our readers who aren't scared to jump in the adventure with us...and to those who are scared but jump in anyway. You rock.

—Jeanie and Jayha

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This work of erotica contains adult language and sexually explicit scenes, which are smoking hot. This book is intended only for adults, as it is defined by the laws of the country in which the purchase is made. Keep this book out of the hands of under-aged readers.

## Chapter One: Let the Dames Begin

Jaden Ius was the antithesis of high maintenance. A simple woman with simple needs, her wants were few. She could make do as long as she had iced tea and plenty of it, some kind of meat on her plate at meals, someplace to swim and space to just chill out. Apparently, Richmond wasn't roomy enough for her, because her father, brother and uncles had packed her into the SUV and personally put her ass on a plane along with orders to rest. Just because she hadn't had a vacation in...ever didn't mean she needed one now. Still, she took it, because the men in her family had read some kind of women's magazine and gotten a wild hair up their asses about her taking time for herself and doing woman stuff.

If they hadn't been so sincere in their efforts she would've laughed in their faces, but she loved them too much to do such a thing. *Woman stuff*. Ha! A trainer at the Ius Gym in Richmond, the most womanly thing she'd done was attend a college that had the name "Mary" in the title.

Like all Ius progeny, she'd grown up in the gym that was her family's legacy. She'd had her first pair of boxing gloves at age three, recorded her first KO at age

four (and had subsequently been banned from playschool), and hadn't looked back. She loved the gym and the guys who frequented it. Ius Gym had kept a lot of boys off the streets by channeling their anger and energy into a skill. Likewise, the gym had been the place where a lot of women were taught to defend themselves.

Though the gym had once been a male-only bastion, these days it wasn't unusual to see a throng of women in the gym hitting the bags, sparring and being put through their paces. A longtime widower who'd never remarried, her grandfather Jonas hadn't been all that keen on having females in his gym, but that'd changed when she'd come along. Not trusting anyone with her, he kept her with him. She'd spent the first five years of her life cradled in his arms or perched atop his shoulders as he put boxers through their paces.

Nobody put boxers through their paces like Jonas Ius. Her grandfather didn't go easy on any of his boxers, regardless of their social standing, kinship to him, or their gender. That was why Ius Gyms counted so many Silver Gloves, Golden Gloves, and title holders among its boxers. A lot of the greats had come through Ius Gyms, but Jaden's favorites all had the surname Ius. Golden Gloves was like a rite of passage



in her family. All of the men in her family had achieved that honor. Her grandfather had been a swarmer...a damn good one, according to all the old men who talked about his legendary matches, the write-ups sports writers had done on him, and men who'd fought him. One of the best inside fighters she'd ever seen, her Uncle Paine had gone on to contend for the Super Middleweight title. Outstanding outside fighters, her Uncles Louis and Frazier had won Olympic medals—and then there was her daddy.

Bishop Ius was a boxer's boxer. Proficient at fighting outside and inside, he could technique his opponents to a first round KO, but at heart he was a brawler. He didn't mind mixing it up. He was made to be a heavyweight champion of the world, and perhaps he would've been...if not for her.

A man who liked the ladies, Bishop had Jarek when he was fifteen, and later that year, he had her. He never stopped fighting, but he did stop playing around...well, at least in his professional life. He worked during the day, went to school at night and trained the rest of the time. He fought anybody, anywhere, anytime so that she and her brother would want for nothing. And they didn't, but it hadn't been enough for their mother, who wanted fidelity more than she wanted stuff. One day, before Jaden was old

enough to remember who she was, she packed up her dreams along with her dresses and walked out.

Though he was young, her daddy had never had a woman leave him until their momma. And that'd been his wake-up call because now the only woman in the Ius household was gone, which meant he had to make a home; he had to learn to do hair, iron clothes, and clean house. He had to learn to mold a little girl into a woman...a woman who was sure of herself, confident in her abilities, and wouldn't take any shit. In short, a woman who'd never put up with a man like he had been.

He'd enrolled in Virginia Union and gotten his BS in Mathematics. He didn't particularly like mathematics, but he was particularly good at it, so when he finished his undergrad he trudged to UVA and got his Master's. And one day the former undisciplined boy was a disciplined man who taught the kids math by day and taught them how to be men the rest of the time.

A strict teacher, Bishop Ius didn't even pretend he was going to take any mess from his students, just like he didn't pretend he was going to take any mess from Jaden or Jarek. He gave orders; they obeyed. They'd both grumbled about their daddy's high-handedness, but they were a lot like him in

temperament, drive, and fighting style. It wasn't a surprise that they'd ended up following in his footsteps. While they'd both attended William and Mary for undergraduate studies instead of his alma mater, they'd both followed their daddy's footsteps and attended UVA for graduate school.

She loved the gym, which was why she was its current CFO and would one day be its CEO. With a BS in both Marketing and Finance, a JD/MBA , and glowing letters of recommendation from some of the biggest names in the sports industry, she had her pick of jobs. And for a while, she'd taken them. She'd been a promoter in Vegas and Atlantic City, an agent to title holders, and even a referee, but her heart just wasn't in it. Ius Gym wasn't just her legacy; Ius Gym was in her blood.

Despite his MS in Linguistics and current assignment with an elite government agency, it was in Jarek's blood too. He loved the gym as much as she did, and he had the Golden Gloves (an obligatory accessory for the males in the Ius lineage) to prove it. Just like their daddy, Jarek was a boxer's boxer who didn't mind mixing it up. Everyone was sure Jarek would be the one to one day take over the gym, but ironically, she was the one who'd been handed the keys to the gym. Well, actually the keys weren't

“handed” so much as “took.” “Mine,” she’d announced, and her brother had been right there backing her up. It wasn’t that Jarek didn’t care; it was that Jarek had dedicated his life to a more worthy cause: he went out and hunted down the monsters who inhabited the world and preyed on the weak.

Despite one’s level of education, if Ius was your last name you were expected to know how to carry yourself in the ring, in a street fight, in the classroom (especially as someone was paying for the privilege of you being there), in the pews (if you went), and in the workplace. Jaden had been brought up believing that hard work was the norm, so doing it didn’t faze her. Laziness, on the other hand, did faze her. She truly just didn’t get that. It seemed like so many people sat around waiting for someone to hand them this dream life. Fuck that; if you were healthy and had a sound mind, there was no reason for you not to get off your ass and go work for it.

She didn’t mind working, but spending those hours on the plane and the last two hours bundled up in the backseat of the Yukon Denali made her realize there wasn’t anything wrong with playing either. Maybe the men in her family were right: she did need this vacation. And now that she was here, she decided she was going to fucking enjoy it.

The proprietors of TresNi were no joke. They'd arranged for a private jet to fly her from Copenhagen to the smaller airport that was some two hours away. Once she'd arrived, she'd been welcomed to Denmark by a double shot of hotness who introduced themselves as Kuno and Gernot. Kuno—the hotness rocking the black dress pants and crisp white dress shirt—took her bags, while Gernot—the hotness with the pinstriped dress pants and crisp dress shirt—ushered her into the waiting vehicle. When she'd gotten settled, she was served hot chocolate and a packet of shortbread cookies (her favorites) and told she wouldn't be allowed to do anything but relax and enjoy. Well, damn.

Bundled up in the backseat of the SUV reveling in the peace had been a fine way to pass two hours. Though it was still dark out, she rarely slept in a vehicle. Though she didn't sleep, neither Kuno nor Gernot intruded on her thoughts. In fact, they didn't utter a word until the SUV pulled into the lighted drive of TresNi.

Opening the door, Kuno helped her out. "Thank you," Jaden said politely.

"My pleasure," he said as he took her arm and tucked it around his elbow.

“And also my pleasure,” Gernot said as he did the same with her other arm.

“I’m perfectly capable of getting to the door.” She smiled. “You two don’t have to walk me in.”

“I’m sure you are perfectly capable, Fru Ius, but here at TresNi you will have to learn to allow us to get it,” Gernot purred into her ear as he led her inside.

Jaden couldn’t help but gasp as she eyed the inside of the opulent resort that promised *relaxation and pleasure abound*. That phrase was as intriguing as the resort was breathtaking. And it was all kinds of breathtaking.

Her awe was interrupted by Kuno raising a hand to his lips and kissing it. “I would say ‘enjoy your stay,’ but we will do everything within our power to see that you do.”

Oh damn.

“I really appreciate it, but I don’t require constant pampering.”

“While you may not require constant pampering, here at TresNi you will get it...every minute of every day,” Gernot said before doing the same and *departing*.

*Well, damn some more*, she thought as she gave her attention to the front desk attendant, which wasn’t hard to do when he was also a composition in hotness.

“*Goddag, Fru Ius* [Hello, Ms. Ius]. *Jeg hedder Lothar Brynjar* [My name is Lothar Brunjar]. Welcome to TresNi,” he said.

“*Tak* [Thank you],” she returned.

“Everything has already been seen to. All you have to do is enjoy,” he said as he handed her a beautifully crafted key. “Everything on the menu is available anytime you wish it. If there is something you desire that isn’t on the menu, simply let us know,” he finished.

“Wow,” she whispered.

“If there isn’t anything you immediately need, I shall escort you to your room.”

“I’m good,” she said.

Two seconds later, Lothar was walking with her to the elevator. A minute after that, Lothar opened the door to the most beautiful room she’d ever seen. Walking around the massive room, she couldn’t help but think that it looked like it came straight out of some design magazine.

“Is everything to your liking, Fru Ius?” he asked.

“How can it not be?” she responded. “And please call me Jaden.”

“In that case, may I bring you something to feast upon?”

*An older version of you*, she thought. Aloud, she said: “You wouldn’t happen to have any iced tea on hand, would you?”

“No, but I will acquire it for you if you give me some time.”

Her curiosity piqued, she asked, “Where you going to get it from?”

“Whatever place you’d like it from. I’ll place a call now and have it overnighted.”

“You’re serious, aren’t you?”

“Yes,” he said.

“Well, as much as I love sweet tea and appreciate what you’re willing to go through, all that won’t be necessary. I’ll have my daddy send over a couple of boxes of tea, and I’ll show your cooks how to make it.”

“No, Jaden. You will tell us the wheres and hows and we will see to it,” he said. “You are here to be pampered...and you will be.”

“In that case, I’ll take a nap, then come down for lunch.”

“Is there anything in particular you’d like for lunch?”

“As long as it has meat in it and it’s cooked all the way through and doesn’t have fruit on it, I’m good,” she said.

“Ah, a true carnivore,” he said.



“Since the day I was weaned from the breast,” she said.

Smiling, he excused himself.

Stripping off her clothes, Jaden headed to the bathroom, where she indulged in a long soak in the massive tub.

Standing six foot two inches tall in her bare feet and weighing one hundred eighty pounds, Jaden wasn’t accustomed to being treated like spun glass by anyone except the men in her family who couldn’t be talked out of it. Though her daddy had paid for her vacation, she was nevertheless surprised by the care of the staff. And despite having been to many a five-star hotel, she was blown away by the inside of the resort. TresNi was fucking beautiful. And for the next three weeks she was going to soak it all in.

## Chapter Two: Wry of the Tiger

Ívarr Brynjar was the kind of male other males wanted to be when they grew up...and who could blame them? Rocking the trademark Brynjar hotness, possessing the coveted Brynjar wealth, and having the title of the proprietor of TresNi—the most exclusive holiday resort in all of Scandinavia—Ívarr ate well, slept well, and played extremely well. There were few things a rich, handsome male couldn't have, and even fewer things that Ívarr Brynjar couldn't have. That happened when one was a white tiger alpha shifter.

Having such privilege and the subsequent social entrée, Ívarr had no reason to be anything but the life of the party. While the majority of the Brynjar males lived into the role of socialite, Ívarr was *not* one of those males. Despite his family being consummate jet-setters, Ívarr didn't enjoy the party atmosphere or participate in the club scene. The party and club scenes weren't the only scenes he didn't do; he also didn't do the city scene. Though his family home was located in a rural area, his parents spent most of their time at their Copenhagen digs when not aboard a yacht, jet or being pampered at some sort of resort.

Ívarr had tolerated the city...but not well. Every chance he got, he was camped out in tiger form in the boreal conifer forests. When he'd graduated from Københavns Universitet (University of Copenhagen) and received access to his trust fund, he'd bought up forests with part of his money. A year later, when he'd finished his MBA at Oxford and his money had time to accrue a good bit of interest, he'd had TresNi built.

Originally, he'd planned on keeping TresNi to himself, but he'd realized individuals needed a place like TresNi that offered only the best in amenities, but also the freedom to indulge in one's erotic fantasies along with the utmost privacy. He didn't advertise TresNi because he didn't have to. He simply hand-selected individuals and offered them a weekend at his resort, and they'd spread the word. Once word had gotten out about TresNi, reservations had come pouring in. His exclusive clientele included the extremely well-heeled, known recluses and shifters of all types.

While TresNi was beautiful, he spent most of his time in the temperate, mixed dense forests of Lækkert. He loved it there. It soothed his tiger, and the tiger soothed the man in him, which was why lately he'd spent more and more time in tiger form. While purebred tigers were solitary creatures, tiger shifters

tended to form close-knit streaks or ambushes (families).

His brothers and cousins didn't complain about his long absences. Always one to keep to himself, he didn't tolerate company well—of any kind. Few of the guests that visited TresNi ever realized he was the proprietor, and Ívarr liked it that way. He kept his anonymity, and breathing things stayed away from him. Win-win for all involved.

When he was forced to be around people or shifters, his meanness rose to the surface. These days his meanness was noticeably closer. Nothing seemed to please him...including females. Though he enjoyed the female form, as of late the dominant emotion he felt around females was annoyance, which usually came right after the first sentence that spilled from their lips. Annoyance did not make a happy bedfellow, and considering how virile Brynjar males tended to be, a sexually unsatisfied Ívarr coupled with an annoyed Ívarr was an extremely dangerous Ívarr. This was why his brothers and cousins left him alone.

Well, everyone left him alone except for Dagr. Technically his cousin, Dagr was in actuality more like a brother to him—not that he'd admit such a thing. Currently, his cousin was one step away from missing some of his entrails if he didn't cease that noise. On

his cell phone, Dagr was turning down yet another lucrative offer from his business associate. Hearing the sheer amount of zeroes in front of the decimal point, normally, he'd advise Dagr to take the money, but knowing how much it annoyed Jarl, he was glad his cousin didn't. One day he'd have to meet the geologist who not only got thoroughly under Jarl's skin, but according to his numerous and vociferous complaints had threatened to nail said skin to a fucking wall if he kept fucking with her. Ah, he'd never met Epoch, but he already liked her. Then again, he tended to like anyone who hated Jarl Vidar. The problem was so far only two people in existence did: Dagr's favorite geologist and Jarl's sister-in-law, Subira. Irony of ironies, both women were going to be in Jarl's streak. Subira was in because she was mated to Jarl's twin; Epoch was going to be in because from the scent of things, she was going to be Jarl's, which meant Jarl's life span was about to skydive.

Though Ívarr was far from being a people person, he needed more individuals around like Epoch and Subira. Of course, both women were human...and from the southern U.S. Southern women seemed to be quite feisty (read: passionate), which was why he'd started advertising TresNi south of the Mason-Dixon Line.

If any southerners took the bait, they would probably grate on his nerves, but at least it'd be a different type of grate, and from what he'd heard of Subira's and Epoch's accents, it'd be a different sound of grate. So far the sounds that filled his ears were those of his brothers and younger cousins flirting with the many nubile females who flocked around them. And being that he and Dagr were the biggest (standing just under seven feet in height and weighing just under three hundred pounds) and most alpha of the Brynjar males on the premise, they had way too many females flocking towards them. While Dagr didn't avoid them, he did.

Of course, Dagr was an eternal flirt and loved being paw deep in pussy. And being an alpha like himself, he liked pushing his buttons. As such he'd hammer at Ívarr's boundaries just to get a reaction. Some days he gave Dagr the entertainment he so craved, but as of late even Dagr had backed off of him. He was sure Dagr sensed the change in him, but he had the good sense to leave it alone. What he was feeling was not up for discussion. Period. His subconscious didn't even touch it.

Dagr's voice intruded on his thoughts. "Epoch sends her love," he said as he switched off his phone.

Ívarr responded with a grunt.

“It seems Jarl is being his usual self—”

“Self-important pussy,” Ívarr interjected.

“And of course Epoch has threatened his life one too many times for him to ignore,” Dagr continued as if he had not spoken.

“She hasn’t killed him because he’s your ‘friend,’” Ívarr snarled.

Ívarr had no idea how Dagr picked an arrogant son-of-a-bitch who had fucked his way through most of Europe—if Jarl’s bragging was to be believed—as not only a business associate but a best friend. Ívarr had wanted to kill Jarl the first time he’d met him. Actually, he’d tried just that. Something about Jarl set him off, and when the shifter had stepped foot on TresNi, Ívarr had defended his territory, and Jarl had the scars to prove it.

Despite being all manner of asshole, Jarl Vidar was no one’s pussy, and he’d given as good as he got. While that had caused him to respect Jarl, nothing Jarl did would cause Ívarr to like him. Years later, Dagr still laughed about their knock-down/drag out. Of course, bastard that he was, Dagr had known what a meeting between him and Jarl would lead to. While he and Jarl lay in the forest recovering, Dagr had laughed at them and thanked them for some much-needed

entertainment as he'd rolled his big tiger form in the grass.

"You should take a leaf out of Jarl's book, brother. Everyone loves him, shifters and humans alike," Dagr said with a hefty dose of laughter in his voice.

Ívarr couldn't see his own face, but he was sure it had turned a nice shade of "hell to the motherfucking no." Though he snarled his displeasure, he said nothing. Instead, he turned his attention back to his cousins. He zeroed in on Lothar, probably because he was the most like him. While the other Brynjar males ate up the attention heaped on them by the beautiful females, Lothar simply snuck away, no doubt to the library, where Ívarr and Dagr had found him many times.

"That boy is a strange one," Dagr commented.

"You say 'strange;' I say 'smart.'"

Dagr suddenly clutched his chest in the pretense of being wounded.

"What the hell is wrong with you? Available females are meant to be savored," Dagr said.

Ívarr didn't bother to look at Dagr as he answered. "Feel free to savor, then."



About to trek to the forest, he was suddenly waylaid by a group of scantily clad women who'd shimmied their way in front of him and Dagr.

"Hello, gentlemen," the woman purred.

Ívarr wondered whom the front woman was speaking to only to realize she was speaking to both him and Dagr. He snarled low, which earned him an elbow to the ribs from Dagr and a hungry look from the woman who had spoken.

"Hello, ladies," Dagr answered for them both, which was a good thing because Ívarr was unsure if he could speak without laughing in the woman's face.

"How about buying us some drinks." It was a statement, not a request.

"Drinks are always complimentary," was Ívarr's clipped response.

Dagr shot him a cold look, which was supposed to serve as some kind of threat.

"But we want to drink with you," the woman pouted as she trailed her nails down his chest.

Ívarr scowled down at her as one of her unnecessarily long-nailed fingers made contact with him.

"While we here at TresNi aim to please our guests, I am not one of those things here to please," Ívarr said.

“Oh, you’re playing hard to get,” the woman said in that annoying whine even as she leaned into him, nearly suffocating him with the no-doubt expensive perfume she’d apparently bathed in.

His bad temper pricked and his nostrils stinging, Ívarr simply extracted the woman’s claws from his person and moved her gently aside.

“I never play,” he said before stalking off and leaving Dagr to deal with the women.

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He had hardly made it out of the door before he’d shifted back to tiger form. He headed straight for the pristine lake where he bathed himself in the cool, clear waters before ambling deeper into the forest to find a good spot to soak up the sun. Every now and then he would lift his white-and-black striped head and sniff the air, then go right back to ambling.

The winter at TresNi had been long and hard and beautiful. Though he loved the snow, like most of Mother Nature’s children Ívarr was glad spring was finally arriving full force. He welcomed the season of birth and blooming with the respect it deserved—by playing in it. He relished in the beauty spread out before him and in the melodic sounds of the forest. Nothing was more peaceful than the chirping of birds, the running of streams, and the sound of...rock music?

It might've been a good song...if it'd been playing somewhere else. The sounds of whatever the fuck that was playing threatened to make his ears bleed. It wasn't simply the volume at which it was played; it was the *what* that was being played.

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Ívarr's hackles went up as he watched the group of boys, which was the only way to describe the four males who exited the Land Rover with the too-loud stereo. Though he was normally not interested in the guests of TresNi, something about the group disturbed him. He relayed that information to Lothar via their telepathic link. *I do not trust these males, Lothar.*

*Neither do I, which is why I have every available shifter on alert, Uncle Ívarr.*

Ah, Lothar was a fine lad, with a good temperament and good sense, who didn't feel the need to have his cock sheathed in every available pussy he came across. That was why he'd made him the lead attendant at TresNi. Seeing the boys walk back out of TresNi with a lot less swagger in their steps and a whole lot more put out in their demeanors, and seeing the forest spring to life with Brynjars, Ívarr knew it was time to give Lothar a raise.

Knowing Lothar could handle anything that came up, or had the good sense to call if he couldn't,

Ívarr alerted him of his plans. *I'm going deeper into the forest. I'll be back in a few days. If you need me, you know how to reach me.*

*All right, Uncle. Enjoy your hunt.*

*I always do.*

## Chapter Three: The Scent of a Woman

Being that it was a slow time for tourism, Jaden was one of only a handful of guests at TresNi. Because her fellow holiday-ers were true adventurers, they were gone all day and a good chunk of the night doing stuff. Though she'd asked, she never received a clear answer as to what "stuff" entailed, which was why she declined their multiple invites. A fun bunch, they took her rejections good-naturedly and even brought her back souvenirs from their outings.

Despite remaining at the resort, Jaden wasn't the least bit bored. The quiet and the surrounding beauty called to her, and she found herself looking forward to her morning walks, afternoon tea, and evening snack on the deck. She also found herself enjoying the Brynjar boys despite their ridiculousness. Like most good-looking, well-to-do males, they thought the sun rose and set with them. Like women the world over, she felt it was her duty to let them know just how wrong they were...just like she did with her own brother. Yep, she started taking shit over. First, it was the kitchen so she could show the staff how to make sweet tea. Next, it was the Brynjar Boys themselves, just because she could. And being that she

had the only vagina in the place, she wasn't listening to their objections.

Yeah, bossing around hot men and having the run of a beautiful resort was the life. Though she hadn't done shit for the past two days but tease the Brynjar Boys and relax, Jaden found herself sleeping a good deal. Of course, the cloud-like mattress and the soft as silk bedding might've had something to do with that. She'd never heard of OSLS (Only Soft Landings Sister) mattresses or Princess Zuri bedding until she'd slid into that bed, but after that first unbelievable nap she'd woke up with a consumer crush on that bed. Finishing her toilet, she ran downstairs oblivious of her half-dressed state and cornered Lothar. Well, actually, she'd jumped on his back and held a coffee stirrer to his throat.

"One of two things is going to happen: Either you're going to tell me who made the mattress and bedding, or you're going to charge the cost of an entire bedroom set to my daddy's credit card because I'll make off with it," she'd said.

Of course, Lothar, being the calm, cool and collected man he was, wasn't even perturbed. He'd simply buttoned up the top three buttons of the dress shirt she'd slept in, taken her hand and escorted her to the office. Calling for breakfast, he fed her first and

then called the owner of the company and handed her the phone. Twenty minutes later, she had the personal promise of Reign Ballinger that not only would a set be ready for her, she could personally set it up, being Richmond wasn't far from their Atlanta headquarters. Now that was service. And she needed more of it, she thought as she finished rinsing in the shower.

Having bathed before she went to sleep, she didn't technically require another shower. She simply took another one because she loved showering, especially when the shower had so many bells and whistles. All it was missing was an older version of Lothar, and it'd be on.

Famished from her long night of doing nothing, Jaden hurriedly dressed in her favorite stonewashed relax-fit jeans and Virginia t-shirt. Pulling on her black Tims, she grabbed her Virginia sweatshirt and her fleece hoodie before heading downstairs.

Passing the reception desk, she noticed a new hottie manning it. Waving hello, she made a beeline for the dining area. She said "hello" to the guests there who were finishing up their breakfast.

"What kind of adventure are you off to today?" she asked as she grabbed a plate and piled it high with steak, eggs, and toast.

"A little bit of everything, Ms. Jaden," Elov said.

“You want to go?”

“You look like you have a full load already,” she said.

“I can always make room for you on my lap.” He winked.

Jaden couldn’t help it. She burst out laughing. Elov might be a Swede by birth, but he was all mack daddy...all the time...and married to a woman who looked like she was a member of his country’s famed bikini team.

“Ah, Elov. Even if you weren’t married, I’m just too much woman for you to handle, but thank you for the ego boost.”

“We’re not married!” his two homies Cirino and Eustaquio said.

“Yeah, and unlike Elov here, we can handle a woman like you,” Cirino—the hot Italian—said.

“Or die trying,” Eustaquio—the equally hot Spaniard—chimed in.

Again Jaden laughed. “All y’all are cute. And none of you have a chance with me.”

“You wound us, Senorita Jaden. You wound us.”

“Probably, but the women you meet today will help you get past the pain.”

“But what will you do?”



“My day is booked up with chilling. Now go have fun, and remember to leave some women for someone else,” she said as she sat down.

Two seconds later, a copy of her favorite newspaper was placed beside her along with a pitcher of iced tea.

“Thank you, Lothar,” she said.

“You’re most welcome, Jaden.”

“You going to join me?”

“I can sit for a few minutes,” he said. “Those men like you.”

Not even pretending like she didn’t know what he was speaking about, she answered. “Those men like everything with a coochie.”

“If they are bothering you, I will handle them,” he said.

“If they were bothering me, they’d already be handled, and you’d be explaining how three dudes in their party went missing.”

“I forgot for a minute that beneath all of that delicate beauty lays a warrior.” He smiled.

“If you like I can beat that into you later today.” She smiled back.

“That won’t be necessary. I’m still recovering from the attack with the coffee stirrer you almost did me in with.”

Their bantering was interrupted by the arrival of yet another man who looked like he was related to the Brynjar Boys.

“Good morning, Lothar,” he said before turning and including her in the greeting. “And good morning to you, my beautiful lady. I’m Dagr.”

“Good morning, Dagr. I’m Jaden and I’m hungry, so if you’re here to flirt, sit down so I don’t get a crick in my neck trying to look you in the eye. If you’re not here to flirt, obviously you’re gay because I’m hot like that. Either way, I’m not about to pause in eating to accommodate you,” Jaden informed him.

Dagr helped himself to some breakfast and then sat down. Like the rest of the Brynjar Boys he was slightly arrogant, a whole lot hot, and needed to be taken down a peg or two. Ah, her work was never done. Still, he was a delightful breakfast companion. Having brains to go with his beauty, they engaged in a rousing debate (which he lost) that spanned time periods and continents.

Sated from her breakfast and the conversation, she was ready for the mud bath she had scheduled and her walk. Pulling on her fleece hoodie, she thanked both Lothar and Dagr.

Leaning down, she hugged Lothar. “Thanks for spoiling me,” she said before turning to Dagr and

holding out her hand. “Thanks for the chance to trounce you in a debate.”

Laughing, he took her hand, but instead of shaking it he brought it to his lips and kissed it. “I assure you the pleasure was all mine, Fru Jaden.”

“Wow, with the exception of my Lothar, all of y’all Brynjar Boys are full of shit,” she said as she walked out.

She’d just made it down the stairs when Dagr came crashing out the door behind her. “Obviously you’ve been in the company of the lesser Brynjar males. Unlike them, I am not a boy.”

“Mmm-hmm,” she said.

“Allow me to prove this to you at lunch,” he challenged.

“If you’re still here when I come in for lunch and I find you as interesting as whatever Lothar serves me for lunch, I just might reconsider my theory on the Brynjar Boys,” she said before heading off. She had a walk to get to.

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“Losing your touch, Dagr?” Lothar teased Dagr as he walked into one of the restricted areas of the resort.

Dagr grinned. “Of course not—the lovely Fru Jaden is meeting me for lunch.”

“Not in TresNi’s dining room,” Ívarr said as he walked in. “I still haven’t heard an end to the complaints after the last ‘lunch’ you had with a woman.”

Slapping Ívarr’s back, Dagr bragged, “I can’t help it if the ladies all flock to me.”

Whatever else Dagr was going to say was lost when Ívarr suddenly grabbed his hand. Ívarr breathed in slowly, his eyes closing as he inhaled deeply.

Dagr yanked his hand back from Ívarr’s grasp. “Hey!” Dagr would’ve said more, but then he looked in Ívarr’s eyes. Involuntarily, he moved back. Ívarr’s ice-blue irises were almost completely eclipsed by the black of his pupil.

“Oh shit,” one of the young ones exclaimed once they all got a good look at Ívarr. In his human form Ívarr was showing all the signs of a male tiger who’d found his mate. And Dagr had touched her! Shit, they all had, but Dagr was the one closest to Ívarr. Uh-oh.

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After managing not to rip Dagr or any of his cousins apart, Ívarr attempted to resume his morning routine. His mind was on the female that his tiger had chosen. Being away from the resort, he hadn’t even gotten a look at her, yet as soon as *that* scent had hit his nostrils he’d been bombarded with images of him

claiming her. It didn't matter that he had no idea what she actually looked like; his body and soul knew what she would feel like: *home*.

Despite everything his tiger was telling him, the human side of Ívarr didn't want to give in and fought it. He wasn't ready to be tied to one female, dammit. And then he inhaled, and the faint trace of her scent hit him again. Involuntarily his head swiveled around, looking for the source of *that* scent...looking for *her*.

"What?" Dagr asked him.

"I'm going to hunt," he announced and stomped off.

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Jaden was glad she'd allowed Lothar to talk her into the mud bath. All of her objections (her hair, her contacts, her size, her gender) had been for naught. The females on staff (boy was she glad for them) had treated her like spun glass. Not only had they been exceedingly careful with her hair—wrapping her braids up more securely than Ft. Knox—they'd been exceedingly careful with her. Helping her into the vat of warm mud, they'd put on smooth jazz while she spent twenty minutes immersed in the muddy concoction. She'd felt absolutely weightless and loved every moment of it. After they'd helped her out of the mud bath, the attendants had washed her off with ice-

cold water and clean cloths before putting her in a mineral whirlpool bath, which was followed by a steam room treatment. Finally, she was wrapped in a blanket so that her body could cool off slowly. The entire experience had been divine, so much so that she scheduled another one for a few days away.

Though the mud bath took longer than she'd anticipated (just under two hours), Jaden didn't regret it. Slipping back into her clothes, she decided to head out for her walk. She always enjoyed a good walk; she just rarely had the opportunity to walk in such beauty. As much as Richmond was home, she'd always enjoyed the more rural places of Virginia, in particular the Blue Ridge Mountains. Lækkert was no Shenandoah National Park; still, it was beautiful...and serene. Jaden had never been nestled so deep in the middle of nowhere. Accustomed to the sounds of the city and the cacophony of the gym, she found the quiet took some getting used to. Still, she discovered that she rather liked it.

As she set out for her meandering walk around the resort, she noticed a silver Ferrari 599GTB Fiorano screech to a stop outside the entrance. A big blond guy who had Dagr's size and the Brynjar arrogance stepped out. She didn't have to get close to him to realize that unlike her Brynjar Boys, this man was

serious about his arrogance. Oh well, not her problem, she thought as she strolled deeper into the woods. Jaden didn't know how long she'd been walking when her phone started to ring, and hearing the particular ringtone, she knew it was one of her family members.

"Hello," Jaden answered the call.

"Hey, little sister," Jarek said.

No doubt he was calling to check up on her.

"You didn't call last night," he said.

*Yep, checking up on her all right.*

"Sorry. This place is so relaxing I took a nap before dinner and woke up just in time for breakfast," she said.

"Are you feeling all right? Do you need—"

"Jarek," Jaden said her brother's name quietly. Hearing him sigh, she smiled.

"You're my baby sister—I'm allowed to worry. It's in my DNA," Jarek said defensively.

"I know, and I love you too, big brother, and I'm fine. At this particular moment, I'm walking around the grounds enjoying more nature than I've ever experienced. Lots of trees, fresh air and all that."

"And you're going to be there for a whole three weeks? So I should expect a call to pick you up from the airport in a week?"

“Daddy paid for three weeks, and I’m going to be here for three damn weeks, even if it is a fake summer over here.”

“You’re wearing a hoodie *and* a sweatshirt, aren’t you?” Jarek asked her.

“Maybe...you don’t know,” Jaden said with a pout that only her brother could bring out of her. “Besides, it’s freakin’ chilly in the sun!”

Jarek laughed out loud. “Oh yeah, Daddy said he’s going to call you today as well.”

“Did you narc on me to Daddy for not calling?” Jaden asked disbelievingly.

“No, he said something about a punk you turned down?” Jarek said, sounding confused.

Jaden rolled her eyes. “I turn down a lot of punks both professionally and personally, so you’re going to have to be more specific.”

“I’m sure Daddy will give you the details. All I need to know is if I need to come handle said punk.”

“No, you don’t have to handle anyone. I’ll keep my phone on so I can get Daddy’s call, but meanwhile I’m going to finish my walk.”

“You do that; have a good time. If any of those Danes get outta line I’ll be on the first flight out.”



“I know, Jarek, I know. You live for the hope that someone will get out of line so you can come kick some ass.”

“Maybe.”

“Maybe my ass. You need a woman in your life—that way you’ll be too busy to be all up in my stuff.”

“I’m the consummate bachelor,” he said.

“Yeah, only because you can’t get a certain Texas Ranger to give you the time of day. You’d better make your move, else some other man’s going to move in on Brix.”

“And I’ll end him,” Jarek said.

Smiling at getting her brother all riled up, a “ha ha” spilled out of her mouth.

“You’re lucky I love you,” Jarek said.

“I sure am, and you’re lucky I love you back. Now go do something nonviolent,” she said as she disconnected.

Slipping her phone back into her pocket, she smiled to herself as she thought of her family. Growing up as the only female in a family full of males, Jaden was used to the men in her family running off potential suitors. While other women might be pissed about that, as far as Jaden was concerned, if a man she was dating was *that* easy to run off, then it wasn’t meant to be.

“Hi there, Jaden,” a voice she didn’t expect to hear filtered through her peace.

Turning, Jaden watched the young man approach. Knowing he was going to try and game her into training him, she leaned against one of the big trees and listened to his bullshit. If he’d been smart, he would’ve researched and determined that getting her to train his ass would not be accomplished by interrupting her first vacation in ten years. Of course, if he’d done his research, he wouldn’t have asked her to train him in the first place. Listening to him drone on and on about the legend everyone pumped him up to believe he was and hearing him name drop like a frat boy trying to talk his way past the bouncer and into the hot new club was starting to thoroughly annoy her.

“So what do you say, Jaden?”

Oh wow, he just first-named her again like they were homies or something. *Strike three* was all she thought, but before she could say it her phone began to ring. While this motherfucker and his little entourage started laughing at her ringtone, Jaden thought, *strike four*, as she answered the call.

“He’s there. Isn’t he?” her daddy asked.

“Uh-huh.”

“He manage to change your mind?”

“No.”

“Okay, baby, don’t hurt him,” her daddy said.

“Is that an order or a request?” she asked.

“Neither. It’s a hope,” her daddy said with a grin in his voice.

“In that case, I can’t promise that,” she said.

“How about ‘don’t hurt him too much?’” he amended.

“Okay,” she said as she disconnected.

“So are we good?” the snot-nosed little shithead had the nerve to ask her, as if her answer couldn’t possibly be ‘no.’

“You already have my answer. I believe it was e-mailed, left on your voicemail and delivered to you in person before I came on vacation,” Jaden said coldly.

Her response took some of the wind out of the kid’s sails. Good. Stepping around the cocky little bastard, she hadn’t gotten more than a few feet before he said something else to piss her off.

“I can pay you whatever you want. You’d regret missing this opportunity.”

Jaden stopped moving. Slowly turning to face the kid who really didn’t know when to shut his mouth, she gathered her patience before speaking. “I’m going to say this one more time: I am *not* going to train you. Not only do you not have enough money to

make training you worth my while, you don't have enough skill. If there's anything I regret, it's that no one in your circle told you the truth about your so-called talent."

Internally patting herself on the back for being all nice about it, she thought about another mud bath.

"I'm the number-one contender," he said.

No, this motherfucker didn't just interrupt her daydream, and did he say what she thought he said? *Yes, he did*, her mind said, all pissed off with her. "Come again?"

"You heard me. I'm the number-one contender," he said all proud like.

Jaden couldn't help it; she burst out laughing. "Only by default," she said. Listening to the various versions of "Oh, snap," his "so-called" friends about choked on, she watched as the face of the "number-one contender" reddened.

"Who the fuck do you think *you* are? Turning my more than generous offer down?"

"One thing I never have to think about is who I am, but let me go all Exodus on you for a moment and spell it out. I'm Jaden Ius, granddaughter of Jonas Ius; daughter of Bishop Ius; niece of Paine, Louis and Frazier Ius; sister of Jarek Ius. On top of that I'm the

CFO of Ius Gyms. Further, *I'm* the one *you* want to train you, homie. *That's* who I am."

Jaden hadn't meant to get pissed, but sometime during her telling him, she found herself getting closer to him and her voice lowering. Jaden didn't get loud when she was pissed; Jaden got quiet.

"As I said before, I'm on vacation and you're interrupting it. Leave now and it ain't going to be no problem. If you keep this shit up, I'll—" she started.

"You'll what?" the dumb shit smirked at her. "Beat me up? I doubt it."

"You doubt things you shouldn't, like those opponents who added to the 'L' in your win-loss record. Conversely, you have faith in things you shouldn't, like your left hook, your right cross, and your endurance. What you need to do is go study the film, get a whole lot more technique and a whole lot less arrogance. Now get out of my face, stay out of my gym, and go find yourself...and find some humility while you're at it."

"You know what you need to find? You need to find a man who'll put you in your place."

"Maybe, but being you ain't a man, I ain't worried about you being the male to do that. And if you try to be the man to do that, it's going to go bad for you," she promised. Jaden was no longer amused. In

fact, she'd stopped being amused about two seconds after he'd made his presence known. Not even thinking about her actions, she peeled off her hoodie and came out of her sweatshirt. Rolling her shoulders, she got into her boxing stance.

"Bitch, please," Number-One Contender said as he swung on her.

Easily ducking his blow, Jaden smiled and reached in her pocket. "That's two mistakes, Number-One Contender," she said.

"Yeah, and what would those be?" he asked.

"One, you swung on me. Two, you missed," she said as she balled up her fist. She might not be Golden Gloves, but thanks to the males in her family she could box with the best of them. *Men are assholes, life isn't fair, and the world is dangerous*, her daddy had said. *I know because I spent most of my youth being an asshole. I can't keep assholes away from you, but I can make sure you know how to handle an asshole.* And he and the men in her family had spent their lives doing just that. Jaden could box thanks to her daddy, grandfather, and uncles. She could street fight thanks to her cousins and brothers. She also had a black belt thanks to the tutelage of her brother's friend Calm Slayer. And thanks to the women in her family, she knew how to fight dirty.

And right now, in the middle of a forest in Denmark, surrounded by a man with way more money than sense and an entourage of like-minded friends, if she had to go dirty, she'd have no qualms about doing so. For the moment, she was willing to hand him his ass without the bells and whistles. She swung on Number-One Contender and did her best to cave in his ribcage. BAM!

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If they were anywhere else, the sight of two males in nothing but towels conversing with another who looked like he'd just come from a photo shoot might raise a few eyebrows, but it was summer on Brynjar land and no one was about, so all eyebrows stayed in place. Dagr hadn't planned to hunt, but that was before Ívarr's tiger decided that Fru Jaden was his mate...and Ívarr's human side decided to fight it. Having seen how unpredictable a tiger in mating heat could be, he thought it best to go along on the hunt.

"Is that the theme song to *Rocky*?" Dagr asked Ívarr as they stood side-by-side in their tiger form, communicating via telepathy.

"No, it's from the soundtrack," was Ívarr's answer.

Dagr turned his head to stare at his cousin with a grin.

“Fuck you,” Ívarr responded.

“Is no one listening to me?” Jarl Vidar complained.

Dagr managed not to roll his eyes...barely, but Ívarr had no such qualms.

*‘Is this pussy still whining?’* Ívarr growled telepathically.

“I can hear you,” Jarl said pointedly.

“We know,” Dagr and Ívarr responded in unison.

“It’s *your* fault, Dagr. You won’t fire her, and she’s becoming more and more impossible.”

Neither of the cousins needed to ask who “she” was, as Jarl’s constant bitchfests contained one name exclusively: Epoch Udane—the geologist he’d hired.

Epoch was one of few females who had the gall not to be impressed with Jarl, and while that entertained him to no end, it served to annoy Jarl to the extreme.

“Maybe you need to hunt with us. It will take your mind off of work,” Dagr suggested.

“Or he can go fuck himself,” Ívarr suggested.

“That’s not a bad idea,” Jarl said as he removed his suit jacket and laid it on the passenger seat of the car Ívarr liked to call “the pussy-sized car made for a pussy kind of male.” Jarl was mid-strip when Ívarr emitted a growl and took off at a furious sprint.



Feeling Ívarr's anger, Dagr shifted and took off after him. *"What's going on?"* he telepathed.

*"Intruders,"* Ívarr said.

Suddenly the forest was full of tigers all following after their alpha. They'd run for about thirty seconds when he picked up the threads of a conversation. He knew that voice and was supposed to have lunch with its owner in two hours. Considering Ívarr's reaction to her residual scent, he knew he'd be sitting half a room away from her when they did lunch...that is, if they didn't have to spend the afternoon cleaning up a mess. From the "motherfuckers" that were being thrown about, he wasn't so sure. One thing he was sure of was that this day was about to go bad for the intruders. Ívarr wasn't known for his personality, but rather for his lack of it. Fucking with him was a sure way to come to a bad end. Fucking with the female he was positive was his mate was a guaranteed fatality.

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All set to go on a hunt, Ívarr was all manner of annoyed that Dagr's pussy little friend Jarl showed up in his pussy little car. Damn, he hated that tiger as much as he liked the human female who spent her free time telling Jarl the many ways he wasn't shit. While no one would ever accuse him of being a people

person, Epoch Udane was welcome here anytime. He was debating whether he should call her to come put Jarl in his place when his nose picked up the scent of intruders...and not just any intruders, but the same ones who'd already been told to stay off the premises. He was thinking to send one of the younger tigers after them to drag their asses back to him, when the wind changed and he smelled *her* scent. He didn't even think; he simply reacted. No one contradicted his orders; no one got a second chance to fuck with him; and no one messed with his guests. *Especially when that guest is your mate?* his subconscious asked. Of course, he ignored that question.

Already exceptionally strong even for a tiger, Ívarr was a Brynjar, which meant he also had exceptionally keen senses. This was why he had no trouble picking up the conversation in its entirety. Though he was still enraged that anyone would dare trespass on his property, he couldn't help but be proud...and turned on...with the way the female reacted to the intruders. Jaden Ius was feisty; she stood her ground; she wasn't taking any shit. Jaden Ius. He mulled that name over in his mind. Even her name caused his tiger to react. Still a few hundred yards away, he finally got his first glimpse of the female...and everything within him reacted.

Dagr's comments cut through the chaos brewing within him. *"Oh, this is about to go so bad for that boy. He really needs to shut his mouth."*

*"He really needs to back the fuck away from her,"* Ívarr said as he crashed to a halt.

*"What's wrong with you?"* Dagr asked.

*"It's her,"* was all Ívarr said as he focused his attention on the tall black woman going toe-to-toe with the male who was about to meet a quick end. *"It's my mate."*

*"I could've told you that,"* he said.

Before he could say something in response, Jarl's voice cut through the brewing argument. "Oh, damn," he said as he opened his phone and captured the image of one angry woman beating a stupid man.

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Jaden jabbed Number-One Contender in the ribs with her left fist. "At Ius Gyms, it's not just about the money; it's also about integrity," she said as she followed up with a right jab. Although Number-One Contender was busy trying to get away from her, each one of her blows connected.

"Hey!" He tripped on his own feet and stumbled back against a tree, which was downright perfect as Jaden prepared to give him his one and only training lesson.

“Lift your hands. You keep dropping your left,” she demonstrated with a right cross that cracked his cheekbone.

“Come on, Number-One Contender,” Jaden said as she threw a left hook combination into his ribs.

Off balance, he was struggling to remember the basics.

“Show me what combinations you’d use,” Jaden said as she stayed balanced and ready for whatever weak shit he might throw her way. The Number-One Contender didn’t disappoint her. He came big with the weak shit.

“Take this, bitch,” the contender said as he tried to fake her out with his pathetic footwork.

Jaden didn’t move as she watched his body sway to the right. Instead, she backed up and waited. When his right hand dropped, it gave her the opening she needed. Before he knew what had hit him he was getting up close and personal with her knuckles. “Along with proper footwork and form, a good trainer would’ve taught you some respect. If you’d learned some respect, and took your training seriously, I might’ve reconsidered your request at a later time. But that shit’s over now, because one thing we don’t tolerate at Ius Gyms is a man who hits a woman.”

The combination of the barrage of punches she hit him with, his poor conditioning and his arrogance led to his downfall. He was deteriorating quickly, but unlike him, she didn't take anything for granted. Falling back on her favorite move, she lined him up with a left hook to the ear. His balance destroyed, she hit him with a bone-crushing right cross as he went down. Being a lady, she stepped back to give him room to fall into unconsciousness.

Adrenaline still pumping, she spun around to his entourage. Number-One Contender was their meal ticket, so she expected some static from them. Instead of static, all she got was surrender. Mouths agape, they backed up and kept backing up...and kept backing up. If they were looking at her with that kind of fear as they fled, that'd be one thing, but they weren't looking at her. They were looking beyond her. And two seconds later, they were all-out running. That wasn't good. She was badass and all, but not that badass.

Turning, she scanned the background to see what it was that had grown men running in fear. And that was when she noticed them. Two fully grown white tigers were creeping towards her. Not surprisingly, a white man was with them. White guys did strange shit like that. While the tigers were

creeping, he was busy filming her little “bout” on his cell phone. *What the fuck?* she wondered.

And then she thought, *Oh, damn.* While she could box, brawl, and scrap with the best of them, she had nothing in her arsenal for fighting two tigers and a strange white guy. Fuck.

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“What do we do now?” Jarl asked Ívarr and Dagr out loud, forgetting the humans didn’t know what they were.

“*We back the fuck up. That’s Ívarr’s mate,*” Dagr said seriously.

There were times to argue, but Jarl knew this wasn’t one of those times. A tiger in the midst of the mating process was a dangerous creature. Like Dagr, he backed up...way up...leaving Ívarr to his woman.

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As Jaden watched, the strange white dude and one of the tigers peeled back. While she wondered what they were up to, she tabled her concerns and focused on the remaining tiger. She’d seen tigers before but never one this big, one with a gaze that piercing, or one so damn close to her without the benefit of something separating them. The tiger kept its eyes on her the entire time it approached. Being that dude’s entourage had bitched straight up and left

him, all that stood between her and death by tiger or strange white dude was the Number-One Contender.

Jaden didn't move a muscle as the tiger approached. As tempted as she was to kick Number-One Contender over to him and haul ass, the Ius in her just wouldn't let her stoop to that. And that was too bad, because the tiger looked...hungry. Dammit. Cursing her soft heart, she reached down and dragged Number-One Contender out of the way. Or at least she tried to. The tiger's soft roaring alerted her to the fact that it wasn't pleased with her actions.

"Dude, seriously," she said. "He's unconscious. At least give him a fighting chance!" she said even as she backed up.

The tiger continued its approach, going so far as to use Number-One Contender as a stepping stone. Seeing the tiger dig its claws into Number-One Contender's chest, she grimaced. Number-One Contender might've been unconscious before, but having roughly six hundred pounds of tiger standing on you brought you into consciousness real quick. Coming to, all Number-One Contender got for his efforts was a face full of pissed-off tiger. The tiger didn't even roar. In fact, it didn't do anything except look at him real creepy like. She wasn't sure how many teeth tigers had, but she bet Number-One Contender

did, being the tiger was all up in his face showing all five thousand or so of them. Emitting a roar, the tiger extended its paw and bitch-slapped Number-One Contender back to sleep. Damn. He might not have any kind of form, but Number-One Contender did unconscious real good.

Through with Number-One Contender, the tiger focused its attention on her. Not in the mood to be mauled or eaten and having nowhere to run to, she made a phone call. "Tell them that I went down fighting."

Disconnecting, she slid her phone in her pocket. The odds were against her; still, she wasn't about to go down without a whole lot of fight. Wrapping her hand around the roll of quarters in her pocket, she looked the tiger right in the eye and showed all of her displeasure. Yeah, she was pissing it off, but so be it. Not willing to wait for the fight to come to her, she let out a roar of her own and took the fight to the tiger. Sure, she might die...but she might not. She wanted to live, and being an Ius, she was willing to do what it took...or die trying.

Jumping on the tiger, she swung her weighted fist at its head, and just like eighty-five percent of the time she threw a punch, she didn't miss. Of course, she wasn't accustomed to striking a six hundred pound



opponent that had like five thousand teeth, big-ass claws and freaky eyes. She threw five more punches and didn't miss with any of those either. Then again, the tiger wasn't doing shit but standing there taking it...and that freaked her out. While theoretically, she could do this all day, she knew it'd only take a few minutes for her to punch herself out...and the tiger knew that. Knowing this wasn't going to get her anywhere, she said to hell with technique and went southern. Launching all almost two hundred pounds of herself at the tiger, she took the surprised animal down. Wrapping her arms around its head, she choked with all her might, hoping she'd choke it to sleep before it did something like eat her.

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Ívarr had never once believed he'd mate, primarily because he didn't actively look for one. Still, despite him not searching for a mate, the universe had brought his mate to him. And what a mate she was. The brown-skinned woman appeared to be as bad-tempered as he was when pushed. Her entire being radiated a strength that called to him on every level. From the way she'd taken down the human male, it was apparent that she was also well-versed in fighting. While he preferred soccer and skiing, he'd watched enough boxing matches to know good form when he

saw it, and Jaden Ius had textbook form. From the punches she'd hit him with and the way she was hanging onto his neck, she was a strong female...one who'd never give in despite a bigger opponent, a stronger opponent, and lopsided odds.

Better than being fearless, beautiful and strong, Jaden Ius was also honorable. Though she clearly had no use for the human male she'd pummeled, she couldn't stomach him killing an unconscious male. Neither could he, which was why he'd table his beating for later. The human male and those who came with him were guilty of more than simple trespassing; they were guilty of messing with his mate.

Ah, his mate. He did like the sound of that. Knowing she wasn't about to give in anytime soon and not willing to chance hurting her in any way, he shifted back to human form. Gently flipping her over, he stretched out his large frame over her. He was a big male in human form, but Jaden Ius was more than enough woman to handle him. Tall and well-rounded in all the right ways, he knew she would be able to take the kind of loving he'd always held back from releasing...even with female tigers. It wasn't that they couldn't take him in his raw form; he simply didn't want to give all of himself. Except to this woman. He knew she would stand up to him for the rest of their

lives, and he also knew he would relish their “challenges,” for it would always end with their naked bodies entwined.

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Six white Siberian tigers sat on their haunches, watching the lovely Jaden proceed to snap Ívarr’s head back with the heavy blows she was delivering to his head. That in itself was amusing, but not as amusing as what happened next. Tired of punching Ívarr, she emitted a roar worthy of any tiger and tackled him to the ground. Oh yeah, Jaden was just as crazy as Ívarr. And Ívarr was so far gone for Jaden.

“*Ha ha ha ha,*” Dagr howled with laughter at the abuse Ívarr was getting from his mate.

“*Wow, she’s really mean,*” Kuno commented as he lay flat on his belly, resting his head on his front paws.

“*And Ívarr’s loving every minute of her meanness,*” Dagr remarked as they continued to watch Jaden and Ívarr.

“*There’s something wrong with you Brynjars. What’s wrong with a compliant woman? You’re all as bad as Óðinn with that woman of his,*” Jarl sneered.

All the Brynjar tigers turned their heads to stare at him. No one talked shit about Subira Vidar...after that one incident.

“*What?*” he asked when they said nothing.

“*We’re telling,*” Kuno and Gumarich sing-songed before running off to most likely get into some shit. Dagr smiled at his friend. Even after thirty plus years, Jarl (along with half of the white tiger shifter community) was still smarting over his twin’s choice of mate, and Óðinn still didn’t give a shit—and he dared anybody to confront him about the fact that he didn’t give a shit. Unlike others, Jarl didn’t dislike Subira because she was human or African-American, but because like his geologist, Subira was dismissive of Jarl. His musings were interrupted by an observation by one of the younger cubs.

“*She smells...wow!*” was the young tiger’s dreamy observation.

That comment earned him a medley of swats on the head from both him and Jarl.

“*Ow! What was that for? I’m telling the truth,*” the cub protested to the two alphas he was situated between.

“*And she’s the mate of Ívarr, who is surpassed in crazy only by his half-brother Eindride. You keep sniffing her like that and he’ll rip you apart and send you to your mother in several piece,*” Dagr said.

*In separate boxes,*” Jarl finished.

*“Over a long period of time. Now be off with yourself, lest I find myself having to help clear the property of your remains,”* Dagr said.

*“And that’ll be a lengthy process, being that Ívarr probably has remains all over the property,”* Jarl said.

*“That’s not very nice,”* Dagr joked with his friend.

*“Considering how much I hate your cousin, it’s the best I can do under the circumstances. Seeing as no one looks like they need emergency services and you refuse to do something with Epoch, I’m going back to the resort and getting some coffee. I have women to seduce and all that,”* Jarl said as he ambled off.

*“I assure you Ívarr hates you back just as much...and Epoch hates you more,”* he said as he stretched out on his stomach. He was about to get his nap on when he heard his cousin growl at Jaden. Opening his eyes, he was almost blinded when he got an eyeful of his cousin’s ass as Ívarr shifted to human form and took Jaden’s lips. Prompted to move from his comfortable spot by Jaden’s moans of pleasure, he took the opportunity to get the hell out of Dodge. He might not be scared of Ívarr, but he definitely wasn’t interested in fighting him unless they absolutely had

to. Sighing, Dagr ambled deeper into the woods...in the other direction, marveling over the fact that his cousin was a freak.

## Chapter Four: Wooing One's Mate

One moment Jaden was fighting a fucking tiger to the death; the next moment she was caged in by a naked, ripped white man with ice-blue eyes, thick, silky hair and an intensity that turned her on. She'd seen a lot of strange shit in her life but this one hands down took the cake...and the ice cream.

"Weren't you just a tiger a moment ago?" she asked.

"Yes," fine motherfucker responded in a coochie-tingling accent as he turned back to a tiger before turning back to the most gorgeous man she'd ever seen. How dare he? And how dare he have the gall to turn her on despite the fact that he was some kind of supernatural being. The fact that he turned her on pissed her off more than the fact that she was lying on the cold-ass forest floor.

"Are you going to try and kill me?" she asked.

"No," hottie responded so matter-of-factly that she believed him.

"Fine. Hold on," she said as she dug her phone out of her pocket and hit redial.

"I'm not dead but I am about to beat the shit out of somebody," she said before disconnecting.

That seen to, she got all in his face. “What the fuck is wrong with you?!” Jaden yelled before toppling him over.

“Nothing at all *min søde kærlighed*,” he answered.

“What did you just call me motherfucker?” Jaden demanded.

“What I shall call you until the end of time—‘my sweet love.’”

Straddling the big hotness, she made herself comfortable. “Typical. Of all of the men in Denmark, I have to find the craziest.”

“I assure you that I am not crazy,” he responded.

“Debatable, but what’s not debatable is the fact that the ground is cold and my mud bath has been shot all to hell between you and Number-One Contender. Further, it’s rude to rub your hot nakedness on a woman without A—asking and B—at least telling a chick your name.”

Watching as his arctic eyes blazed, he wrapped her hips in his big hands and arched into her. “I am Ívarr Brynjar, *min søde kærlighed*. May I have the privilege of pleasuring your beautiful, enticing body? May I have the pleasure of hearing your siren-like voice whispering my name in your passion after you’ve



screamed yourself hoarse? May I have the pleasure of being enraptured by your intriguing mind?”

*Oh, damn,* she thought as his hands made a sensual journey over her curves and his words made love to her mind. “Kicking ass always make me hungry. Feed me,” she demanded aloud. Silently, she demanded, *Then fuck me as good as your eyes, lips and hands are promising.*

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The Brynjar Boys and lone Vidar male all watched in rapt fascination as Ívarr fell all over himself to cater to the woman he was claiming as his mate.

“Is anyone else disturbed by his behavior?” Jarl asked, watching in disbelief as the human female reached over and stabbed Ívarr’s steak before lifting it onto her own plate.

Every Brynjar turned to look at him. “Are you serious?” Dagr asked.

“What? You can’t tell me you’re not worried about his state of mind,” Jarl continued.

Dagr and his cousins started laughing in response.

“Jarl, you’re my friend, but when you stop being an ass and finally recognize a *real* woman, you’re

going to be just as crazy as Ívarr—and then I’ll remind you of this day.”

Jarl looked horrified. “I could never want a woman as mean as...”

“Epoch!” Dagr finished.

“Fine. Obviously, there’s a recessive gene for crazy running amok in your gene pool. Either that or you Brynjars simply enjoy sleeping with one eye open,” Jarl said.

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Jaden was doing her best to resist the fully dressed and no less hot Ívarr. With his body half-draped over her, she found herself enjoying herself despite wearing what amounted to an Ívarr wrap. She wore an Ívarr wrap because, in a nutshell, Ívarr was jealous. He would growl under his breath every time the Brynjar Boys—whom he referred to as his “nosey shit cousins”—and the blond—whom he referred to as “a pussy you don’t need to worry about”—looked in her direction. Ah, he was so cute...and she’d never felt so damn desirable, beautiful, precious.

And she’d never had a steak so delicious. Jaden didn’t know if the taste stemmed from the fact that Lothar had once again had the staff outdo themselves or if it was due to the fact that she had commandeered Ívarr’s steak. Or perhaps it was that Ívarr spent the

lunch feeling her up under the table...and she let him. Damn, his fingers felt good as they rubbed all over her person.

Jaden used the lunch to sate her hunger and to sate her curiosity about their kind. She had a good grasp of the whole tiger shifter concept, being that Ívarr had explained it pretty thoroughly, but she couldn't help fucking with the Brynjar Boys and Dagr's homie...and riling up Ívarr.

"We prefer to take our animal forms when we are feeling a need for nature," Dagr explained. "We take our human forms for everything else."

"Oh, so when y'all are feeling frisky the girls of Denmark need to look out, eh?"

"Only if they're as beautiful as you, Jaden," Dagr flirted.

"Continue with the worship," Jaden said as she leaned back into Ívarr's body and rubbed against him.

Hearing that snuffling noise against her ear and feeling his hard cock, she shivered in anticipation.

"There aren't enough words in any language for us to properly worship the charming and astounding beauty you grace us with, Jaden," Dagr piled on the compliments perfectly.

As good as Dagr's compliments were, they didn't come close to comparing to the compliment of Ívarr's reaction.

"What can I get you, *min søde kærlighed*?" Ívarr purred into her ear.

Though she attempted to remain unaffected, Jaden's body was on fire for Ívarr and he knew it, which was why she had to get smart.

"Dagr covered in chocolate would be a good start," she said.

That elicited an unhappy growl from Ívarr and a chuckle from Dagr.

"That can be arranged, my dear," Dagr whispered suggestively from his safe perch clear across the other side of the long dining table.

Despite the distance between her and all of the other males in attendance, Ívarr crowded even closer to her, causing her to grin.

"So can a hit on your furry ass," Ívarr growled.

"Oh stop it, Ívarr. I like Dagr. He's fun, and like the rest of the Brynjar Boys, he compliments me so well."

"I can be fun," Ívarr protested indignantly.

"Bullshit," every male in the room said.

"Arranging for people to go missing isn't what most people consider 'fun,'" Dagr said.

“I have to disagree,” Jaden said. “Depending upon who you’re arranging to go missing, it not only can be fun, it can be a family event.”

Her announcement elicited two reactions: astonishment from everyone else and arousal from Ívarr.

“Obviously, you two were made for each other,” Dagr said.

“Are you insane?” Jarl asked.

“Nope, I’m southern, and that’s how we do,” Jaden said unrepentantly.

“On that note, I’m leaving,” Jarl said. “I smell a delicious female, so I’m going to excuse myself and make her day a little brighter by introducing myself.”

Jaden was tired of the blond’s attitude. She didn’t know what was up, but she could see why Ívarr hated him. While she didn’t hate Jarl, she could see herself fashioning a makeshift shiv and shanking him if they ever met in a dark alley.

“You know, Jarl, you should try a southern woman. Not only would a proper southern woman help mold you into a real man, she’d help you remove that stick from up your ass.”

She didn’t know how Jarl would react, but being she was wrapped all up in Ívarr, she really didn’t give a

shit about his reaction. Still, the horror upon his face made her warm and tingly inside.

“I assure you, Jaden, that a southern woman is the last thing I want.”

“And if you step to a southern woman with that bitch-ass attitude, I assure you a southern woman will be the last thing you see before you wake up in a nice lime-dirt mixture.”

“I am an alpha,” he began.

“And you’re scared of southern women...with good reason,” she finished. “Now go on and run after the lesser women you’re accustomed to. A southern woman will snare you soon enough. What she’ll do to you is open for debate.” She laughed.

“Ah, beautiful Jaden, don’t you feel bad for crushing Jarl’s ego?” Dagr asked.

“Not in the least. Besides, baiting the blond is so easy and too much fun,” she said.

“Do you know how turned on you’re making me?” Ívarr said.

“Is it me or is it the way I tell off the blond?” she asked.

“Both,” he answered as he slid his hand under her bra and squeezed a breast.

“Ívarr,” she moaned even as she spread her legs. “Ívarr,” she moaned as she arched into his caress.

“*Ja*, say my name just like that, *min søde kærlighed*,” he said as he took her mouth in a kiss. “Say my name just. Like. That,” he demanded again as he pulled her fully onto his lap and ground his hard cock into her.

Despite being in a room full of others, Jaden couldn’t bring herself to give a shit. Grabbing a fistful of his luxurious hair, she yanked him closer to her and practically wallpapered herself to him. Feeling her pussy spasm, she tore her mouth away from him and screamed out her demand.

“On your back now, you fine motherfucker,” she said as she ripped his shirt apart and licked a flat nipple a moment before jumping to her feet and clearing everything from the table with one broad swipe. Wasting no time, she slammed Ívarr to the table and climbed his body in a sensual display that’d make any cat proud.

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One moment the Brynjar Boys were laughing at the way Jaden riled Jarl up, the next they were sitting in open-mouthed fascination as Jaden literally attacked Ívarr. Jaden might be human, but that little lady knew what she wanted, and she wasn’t above taking it. From the look of ecstasy on Ívarr’s face, he was enjoying every second of it. It was the hottest

thing any of them had seen in a while, and the most astonishing, as Ívarr wasn't known for his passion but rather for his coldness. His coldness didn't stand a chance in the face of Jaden's white-hot passion.

Being sensual creatures, they all sat back and watched, wondering how far Jaden would take it. Seeing her reach into Ívarr's jeans and pull out his cock, they realized that apparently, she was willing to take it all the way.

"Mine, Ívarr!" she proclaimed. "Mine!" she repeated.

"*Ja!*" Ívarr agreed around a groan. "*Ja!*"

"Um, Jaden, we're still here," Dagr said.

"Like I give a fuck. I'm busy mating Ívarr. Do y'all need to act as witnesses to the act?"

"Um, no. Not that we aren't always up for a good display of passion, but seeing Ívarr's cock isn't part of it. Alas, my dear Jaden, I'll be making a hasty exit before my cousin rips me to gorgeous Danish pieces. If you tire of him, call for me and I will attend to you immediately," he said as he fled the room with the rest of the Brynjars.

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Ívarr had been hot for Jaden when all he'd known of her was what she smelled like. Though both the tiger and the man wanted her, he'd wanted to give



her time to accept him. The hardest thing he'd ever done was to refrain from sinking his teeth and cock into her on the floor of his beloved forest and filling her with his babies. He contented himself to light caresses over lunch even though her body was calling to him, her scent was beating at him, and his tiger was roaring at him to claim his mate. While his hands were busy acclimating themselves to her curves, the man won out over the beast. He had to give Jaden the time and space to accept him, because once she gave herself to him, he wasn't ever giving her back.

And then she went and told that worthless pussy Jarl off, and everything in him went crazy. Jaden was his match in every way. Not only did she eat like she meant it, she told people off without hesitation, and she touched him with boldness. Though he dwarfed her in stature, his Jaden wasn't the least bit intimidated...and being his mate, she didn't have to be.

"I should rip all of them to pieces for even looking at you," Ívarr growled.

"You can do that after I do the same to all the bitches you touched before me," she growled right back.

"None of them hold a candle to you, *min søde kærlighed*," he said.

“I know this,” she said. “Not only do they fail to hold a candle to me, they fail to hold a candle to the candle of any southern woman I know.

“Now stop talking and allow me to fulfill your fantasies.”

“You are confident you can do such a thing,” he taunted.

Her laughter slid to him even as her hand slid up and down his cock, causing him to shudder.

“I am,” she breathed into his mouth. “Open, for me,” she demanded as she dusted his hard chest with her breasts.

Ívarr wanted to do nothing more than take her, but being that he planned on an all day and most of the night seduction, he needed her in his bed. Using his cat-like reflexes, he gained his feet with her firmly in his arms.

“I shall let you prove that, but from the comfort of my bedroom,” he said into her ear.

“Our bedroom, Ívarr. What’s yours is mine,” she said.

“I’d have it no other way, Jaden,” he said as he kicked the door shut behind him and gently tossed her onto the bed.

Jaden had never in her life had a one-night stand...and she didn't plan on having one today. Today, she planned to mack down the man she planned to keep for the rest of their lives. She couldn't explain it, nor did she bother trying to. Everything in her wanted Ívarr Brynjar, and though there was a lot to work out, she wasn't going to waste time fighting it. From her rearing, she knew what made a good man, and Ívarr was all of that...and then some. And he was hers, she thought as she peeled off her clothes.

"I can't promise that I can be gentle," she said. "So if you're partial to anything you're wearing, take it off now."

Of course, the fine-ass man simply smiled at her words. More importantly, he began to strip. Though her body wasn't perfect, Jaden didn't have time to be embarrassed by anything on her body when her eyes were filled with all six foot something and two hundred fifty plus pounds of delicious Ívarr Brynjar—aka her man...her hot, delicious, ripped, beautiful man.

Her fantasies were interrupted by Ívarr's voice washing over her. And then they were buoyed by the feel of his hands on her hips drawing her closer to his sculpted body. "You are everything, *min søde kærlighed*, everything," he said.

“This is true,” she whispered.

“I smell your desire, and all I want to do is fall to my knees and lap up your cream,” he said as he did just that.

Jaden cried out at the first lick of his tongue. “Ívarr,” she moaned as she sunk her hands into his hair.

“Jaden,” he purred around her clit before sucking it into his beautiful, talented mouth.

“Ívarr,” she gasped again even as she arched her hips into his mouth and ground her sex against his lips.

Pulling back from her, he kissed his way up her thighs, sexing her with whispered promises. “I’m going to make you cream again...and again...and again, *min søde kærlighed*. I’m going to make love to you until we both feel like we have nothing left...and then I’m going to make love to you again,” he said as he paused just below her breasts and gently tugged on them with his teeth.

Her gasp turned into a long moan when Ívarr nibbled her collarbone before nipping the area where her shoulder and neck met. “Yes, yes, yes.”

Looking at Ívarr through half-hooded eyes, she knew without a doubt that she had Ívarr’s undivided attention. Caressing her with his lips and hands, he

rearranged her on the massive bed, laying her back against the pillows.

“Are you comfortable, *min søde kærlighed*?” Ívarr asked as he kissed her and gently blanketed her body with his.

“Yes, thank you,” Jaden answered as she wrapped her legs around him and drew him in for a kiss.

Her man had a talented tongue, and it ignited fires wherever it touched. Though she could feel his need, Ívarr continued to kiss her gently. He just touched her lips, his tongue laving at them to make them part. When she did part them, Ívarr moaned his delight into her mouth before ravishing her mouth with a thoroughness that left her breathless. For long moments, he pleased her mouth. The moments turned into minutes...delicious minutes as he parted her legs and stroked her sex with a thick finger.

“Ívarr,” she moaned. “I need you.”

“I need you too, *min søde kærlighed*.”

“Then take me—or do I need to take you?” she asked.

“Jaden, when you give yourself to me, you need to know that I won’t let you go.”

“You need to know that when you give yourself to me, I’m not letting you go,” she said with all seriousness.

Ívarr chuckled. “You are so passionate. I am not an easy male to live with, Jaden. I am unyielding, often unforgiving, impatient, and as I learned today, I am jealous.”

Reaching up to caress the strong lines of his face, Jaden sighed. Ívarr’s honesty touched her. What man would confess his faults *before* getting sex? For that matter, what man would confess his faults with video evidence, affidavits, and a stadium full of witnesses pointing out their faults? Yet, as much as Ívarr wanted her, he laid himself bare for her, and she only loved him more for it. Yes, Jaden loved Ívarr Brynjar. She loved him.

“Yes, you are all of those things, Ívarr, and you are also honorable, gentle, and honest—in business, in your assholishness, and in your lovemaking. And above that, you are mine, Ívarr Brynjar. You are mine, and I am not in a mind to ever let you run from me...from us. I don’t know how it’s going to work; I only know that together we’ll make it work.”

“Yes,” he breathed.

“Make love to me, Ívarr.”

“Gladly,” he said as he took her lips and surged into her heat. His size seemed to fill every space within her. Deliciously full, she gasped out his name before lapsing into a medley of sighs and moans.

“Am I hurting you, *min søde kærlighed*?” Ívarr asked.

“No, Ívarr. You’re making me feel so good,” she said as she tentatively moved around him.

His hiss of pleasure echoed in the room. “Jaden,” he gasped. “*Min søde kærlighed*...so good, so good, so damn good.”

“But I haven’t even done anything yet,” she said as she tightened her muscles around him.

“Don’t do anything some more,” he rasped. “Don’t do anything harder,” he continued. “Don’t do anything all. Night. Long,” he pleaded.

“Only if you react so intensely,” she said as she raked her nails over his nipples and arched her whole body into him.

“Ja-den!” he roared.

“Ívarr,” she challenged. “Don’t let me go,” she said as she rolled him over.

He didn’t let her go. Instead he held her tighter and waited patiently while she settled herself upon his person. Slowly rotating her hips, she used her lower-body strength and slowly made her way up and down

his hard cock. Ívarr was so big; he felt so good; she relished every stroke, she savored every moment, she treasured every sound of pleasure he made.

Jaden tortured them both with lovemaking in an adagietto tempo. When she couldn't stand the slow pace, she sped up the tempo to adagio. She might've been talked into making love in a faster tempo if she hadn't been so fascinated by Ívarr's reactions. He took her slow lovemaking...and enjoyed every moment. Veins in his relief, nostrils flared, his full lips pulled tight across his teeth, arctic eyes almost all black, body hard with need, he was too beautiful, so responsive, all humbling.

Finally, on fire with the passion that he'd both lighted and tended, she spoke. "Ívarr."

*"Ja, min søde kærlighed,"* he rasped.

"Give it to me. Give me everything," she pleaded.

Snatching her to him, he took back the dominant position and thrust into her so hard she couldn't feel herself without feeling Ívarr's heat, need, and strength. Powering into her *allegro appassionato* (with speed and passion), he made love to her with emotion; he played her body with passion. As he entered her with controlled strength, every thrust touched her womb, every retreat had her clinging to him and following. "You're mine," his body said as he thrust into her.



“Don’t leave me,” her body begged whenever he withdrew.

“Jaden, Jaden, Jaden,” he chanted.

“Ívarr. Ívarr. Ívarr,” she gasped out in between gasps and silent screams of pleasure.

Taut with desire, Ívarr’s body rumbled and sounded like all the cars on the track in the first moments after the announcer begged the racers to “Gentleman and ladies, start your engines.”

And she responded like all the fans at Talladega and Daytona...combined. That is, she whooped, she cheered, she did everything but yee haw.

How could she not react like tens of thousands of screaming fans when her man looked at her like the boundaries of his universe began and ended with her? How could she not react with wild abandon when he touched her with such intensity? How could she not love this man with everything once she laid eyes on his honesty?

Enjoying the rhythm with which he made love to her, everything within her protested when he came to a stop. “Ívarr,” she panted out her displeasure.

“*Jeg elsker dig, min søde kærlighed.* I love you,” he said.

Ívarr's confession broke a dam she didn't know she had within her. Tears flooded her eyes even as contentment filled her soul. "I love you, Ívarr Brynjar."

"Stay with me, always," he asked.

"Try and get rid of me," she said.

Smiling, Ívarr rested his forehead against hers and breathed out his response. "*Tak, min søde kærlighed.*"

"Thank you, Ívarr."

"I want to mark you, Jaden."

Reaching up and rubbing her thumb against his full lips, she replied, "You already have...with every touch."

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Looking down at his mate, Ívarr was overwhelmed with...everything. He'd never felt so much emotion. He'd never felt stronger...or more vulnerable. Now he knew the truth about Óðinn Vidar. Óðinn didn't give up everything for Subira; he gained everything. Just like him. Not only was he gaining everything, he was getting way more than he deserved.

Touching his lips to hers, he drank her entreaties from her mouth and filled her with promises. "I love you, I love you, I love you," he said, and when she gave him the words back, he marked her as he poured out everything into her. It was the most intense moment

he'd ever experienced. Though he was fluent in many languages, he just didn't have enough words to describe that moment. Jaden Ius was his world, and he loved her beyond everything that was measurable.

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"I love you, Jaden," he said when they'd both calmed down enough to form words.

"And I love you back, Ívarr."

"Thank you, Jaden."

"You laid out your faults, and if I had any I'd lay out mine. Despite my near perfection, I have a demanding job, which I don't plan on giving up."

"I wouldn't ask you to, Jaden."

"But what about *your* job?" she asked.

"I've only been doing this until the time I could dedicate my life to my mate and any children we might have," he whispered.

"You keep giving me perfect answers," she said.

Ívarr chuckled. "Perfect answers from an imperfect male."

"My imperfect man," she said as she pulled him closer.

"I'm not fully human, Jaden. I can't change that, nor would I want to."

"You're not southern either, and that's the more egregious fault," she countered.

“What about your family? Do you think they will understand our mating bond?”

“I think at some point you’re going to have a whole bunch of Ius men all up in your stuff.” She smiled. “Despite my telling them not to be, they’re rather protective.”

“As they should be. Still, I will use all of my charm upon your family.”

Jaden’s laughter rumbled in his ear. “Charm? Stop it,” she said.

“I have charm,” he said.

“You have hotness, honor, and integrity in spades, but charm...not so much,” she said. “Actually, not at all, but I love you despite that.”

“I’m glad, Jaden. I hope your family can accept me, but I’m not giving you up if they don’t,” he said seriously.

“And that is the reason you don’t need charm,” she said.

Burying his face in her throat, he purred.

“How do you do that?” Jaden asked softly.

It wasn’t her words so much as her tone that alerted Ívarr there was more to his mate’s words. Lifting his head, Ívarr saw her vulnerability. Even if he hadn’t glimpsed it in her eyes, the link they now shared due to the marking made him aware of it.

Easing his loudly protesting body a whole two inches away from his mate, he wrapped Jaden in his arms and gently pulled her across his chest. Wrapping himself around her, he pressed her head against his heart so she could feel and hear his words clearly.

“As you pointed out, I have no charm, but know this, Jaden: you were made to match my heart and soul. While other females may admire my form or covet my wealth, there is no other being in this world that could take me as I am. Just you. Only you, Jaden.”

“Thank you, Ívarr. I love you so much.”

## Chapter Five: Reckoning

Jonas Ius stood shoulder-to-shoulder with his sons at the reception desk of the Danish resort his baby granddaughter was vacationing at. The boy behind the desk looked awfully uncomfortable. Good. If he said the wrong thing, he was going to feel uncomfortable...a whole lot uncomfortable.

He couldn't blame the boy for his discomfort. After all, it wasn't every day that the Ius family traveled en masse anywhere, and when he said en masse, he meant en masse. Along with his sons were every one of his grandsons, and all the great nephews he could muster up on short notice. Considering that all of these boys had Golden Gloves and some of them had championships, he was feeling pretty good about his party. Yeah, it was a lot of potential ass-whipping he was traveling with, but after the message his granddaughter had left on her brother's answering machine, it was necessary. He didn't care that she'd followed up the call with another message saying she was okay. The fact that she'd had to make the first phone call made this trip necessary. Not able to wait for the first flight to Denmark, he'd called in a favor from one of his champions and had secured a jet.

Though he didn't like flying, he did it because someone needed his ass handed to him for touching their Jaden.

"Fru Ius is not currently in her room," the reception boy told the Ius men.

A room full of dark eyes narrowed on his face making him stammer. "B-b-but I will find out."

"You do that," Bishop said menacingly.

"Jarek," Jonas called his grandson to him.

In an instant Jarek was at his side.

"Go and find your sister," Jonas ordered.

With a nod, Jarek disappeared while the remaining Ius males filled the foyer with their presence.

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Ívarr ran the fluffy towel up and down his mate's body. Getting to his mark, he gently kissed the bite, ensuring it was healing properly. Struggling not to bury himself inside of his mate's body, he turned Jaden so they were face to face. Her face was a composition in satisfaction. Her contented smile had Ívarr grinning his ass off.

"Shut up," Jaden said without heat as she wrapped her arms around his waist and rubbed her face against his chest.

“I said nothing,” Ívarr protested half-heartedly as he wrapped a black silk robe around his mate before lifting her into his arms and cradling her against his chest. In this position, he was able to reach her mouth easily, a fact he took advantage of with great relish.

“Your face said it all,” Jaden responded sleepily.

Ívarr was wondering if she was up to another round of “play,” perhaps in one of the hot spa pools. Hearing her even breathing had Ívarr dismissing it...for now. His soft thoughts suddenly fled as he stepped out of the spa rooms and found himself with a razor-sharp blade to his neck.

“Take your fucking hands off my baby sister, motherfucker.”

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Jaden was enjoying a snack of pulled pork and sweet iced tea while she listened to her man get grilled by what seemed like her whole family. It wasn't the grilling that had her smiling so much as the what he was wearing: a hand towel. “Cover your balls, boy,” her grandfather had instructed Ívarr as he tossed him a hand towel. What exactly the hand towel was meant to cover, she wasn't sure, and being that her brother had brought her southern food, she couldn't be all that bothered with finding out.



Ívarr didn't once flinch at the promise of a beating from each of the Ius males. Jaden noticed it was only when someone mentioned taking her away from him that his tiger eyes suddenly appeared, along with some fang and a whole lot of pissed off.

Her granddaddy was in the middle of a particularly interesting threat when the remaining Brynjar boys busted into the room. It was time for Jaden to intervene.

"Okay, before the fur starts to fly, hold up," Jaden said as she put down her sandwich and made her way over to Ívarr. Rearranging his hand towel, she took her place upon his lap and faced her family.

"Daddy, Granddaddy, Uncles, Jarek, cousins, this is my mate. Ívarr, like the rest of his family, is a Siberian white tiger shifter."

"We don't give a shit about that. White boys are strange, so that fits right in. What I care about is how he plans to treat you."

"Like the near perfect, delicate woman I am," she said.

"Didn't you beat the shit out of the Number-One Contender?" a sexy voice said moments before a dark-skinned woman with a big-ass fro and what looked to be a white tiger full-length jacket sashayed into the room.

“Yeah, but he had that coming,” she said.

“True, and from that video he got a lot more than he expected. By the way, I’m Subira. Mr. Ius, allow me to have a chat with you and assure you of some things.”

“You sound southern,” her grandfather said. “And that jacket you’re wearing looks like you done got some tigers straight.”

“That’s because I am—Mississippi born and bred—and I did,” she said as patted the massive white tiger who took a seat at her feet. “My motto is: “Ain’t no such thing as overkill.”

“That’s a good motto to have. Saying that, this boy needs to do right by my grandbaby,” her grandfather said.

“Oh, he will. In fact, from the looks of things, he already has.”

“I was trying to tell y’all that, but y’all bumrushed in here all ready to kick ass and take names,” Jaden said.

“Well, we like that.”

“There’s going to be a wedding,” her daddy said. “A big wedding with all of her friends there.”

“Granddaddy, you can’t threaten a man into marrying me,” she said.

“Yes, I can,” he said all unrepentant.

“Yes, he can,” Ívarr said simultaneously.

“See,” her granddaddy said. “That boy got good sense.”

*And he also has a big cock*, she thought as Ívarr subtly arched into her. He was so lucky she loved him, else she’d tell her daddy what he was doing.

# Epilogue

*Syvti Resort, Tiger's Angel Mountain, VA*

A blur of white silk dupioni, white and sky blue embroidered lace, tiny sky blue boxing gloves, and inky black curls came zipping through the room.

“DADDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDYYYYYYY!” the terror that was Malaika Brynjar screamed as she weaved her way through the throng of people milling about the gasp-inducing living room of Syvti Resort. Nestled deep in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, the resort had already hosted several heads of state, various members of royalty, and numerous individuals with the descriptor “billionaire” attached to their names. Despite the numerous awards it’d received in various categories, there currently wasn’t a single guest in attendance as the proprietors had shut down the resort to host what Ívarr considered the most high of events: the christening of his most beautiful (and spoiled) baby girl.

Accustomed to the exuberance of his only child, Ívarr didn’t even bat an eye at the noise or the speed. He simply opened his arms wide so that his baby could jump into them.

“Mommy’s mean, Daddy,” Malaika said pitifully as she stared up into her father’s face with wide ice-blue eyes and a sad mouth before snuggling deeper into his arms.

“Daddy will fix it,” he assured his baby as he rubbed his nose against his baby girl’s chubby cheek, making his little darling giggle.

“Tickles, Daddy.” Malaika grinned up at her father even as she reached her tiny hand up to stroke his cheek.

And what did her father do? Held her closer as he kissed the top of her head. The vision of the powerful man so tenderly holding his daughter brought sighs from the women in attendance and smiles from the men. *Suckers, all of them*, Jaden thought as she made her way over to her mate and child. Her trek across the floor would’ve been faster if not for the numerous Brynjar and Ius males trying to distract her from getting her only child told good and proper.

“You can’t spank her on the day of her christening,” her grandfather said.

“Why not? She’s acting up on the day of her christening,” she said. “Plus, she has boxing gloves, and according to the Ius house rules, if one has their boxing gloves one should be prepared to fight.”

Jaden smiled, knowing she had her grandfather there. Jonas Ius had given Malaika the light blue, baby-sized boxing gloves two months ago as a gift, and she hadn't put them down since...even taking them to her christening.

"That is the rule, but you're not in my great-grandbaby's weight class, so it doesn't count," Jonas said resolutely.

"Yeah, but—" Jaden began, ready to present another argument as to why it was okay for her to spank her daughter.

Her grandfather interrupted her. "I don't want to hear it. You can't spank her."

"Why not?" Jaden asked.

"Because," Jonas Ius said resolutely.

"Yeah, because," her daddy backed him up.

*Yep, suckers.*

Wearing her momma's eyebrow, she shook her head and gave all of the men in the room a little taste of her displeasure. "When are you all going to learn, especially you, Ívarr? That child plays y'all better than a violin virtuoso," Jaden said with a shake of her head as she came to stand directly in front of her husband and child.

Her hands on her hips and her raised eyebrow indicated that she was not happy, but did any of the

males in attendance care? No, they were too busy pleading Malaika's case with sad eyes of their own.

"She's nothing but an angel for which she *and* this mountain are named," Ívarr responded with his habitual answer.

Syvti had come into being when Ívarr decided he could no longer morally own and operate an adult resort upon becoming a husband and father. Selling TresNi to his young, unmated cousins, he'd bought up all the properties in the area and built Syvti, one of several family-oriented resorts. Oh yeah, and he'd petitioned the state and renamed that area of mountain. Tiger's Angel Mountain was thusly named so his baby angel would always know where home was.

Twenty minutes outside of Charlottesville, the area offered panoramic views and enough thick forest for him to roam. As she pointed out, the many trees also offered an endless supply of switches she could use to beat their child. Of course, he wasn't having any parts of his daughter being spanked.

"I don't even want to hear whatever excuse you're going to make up for her, Ívarr. Come on, spoiled Angel, it's time for a nap," Jaden said sternly.

Of course, Malaika clutched her boxing gloves tighter, shook her head and burrowed deeper into her daddy's chest.

“Malaika,” she said.

“Want Daddy do it,” Malaika pouted before sticking her thumb in her mouth.

Not in the mood for her daughter’s theatrics, Jaden was about to snatch her down and tell her off when Ívarr hit below the belt.

“*Min søde kærlighed*,” he purred in her ear before gently nipping it. Bastard. Fine, hot, delicious bastard, she thought as she took a deep breath and released it. Though she tried valiantly to retain her stern expression, it didn’t work. Stepping into Ívarr’s embrace, she kissed her baby girl’s cheeks and tickled her gently, making Malaika giggle again. A loving child, Malaika grabbed hold of Jaden’s fingers and held them to her cheek as she closed her eyes on a sigh.

“Lub you, Mommy,” Malaika said in her falling-asleep-fast voice.

Jaden felt the last vestiges of annoyance leave her at those three words. Just like her husband did, their daughter was able to take hold of her heart and squeeze it at will.

“Say good night to everyone, Malaika,” Jaden instructed as she kissed her daughter’s cheek again.

Though Malaika was fading fast, she managed to open her ice-blue eyes and smile at her many uncles. And then as children do, she focused in on the one



male everyone tried to avoid: Eindride Brynjar. The half-brother of Ívarr, Eindride had no social skills, no understanding of humans and why he couldn't simply maul them to death at will, and no remorse for the fifteen fights he'd started (and finished) yesterday alone. He also had no idea how to escape the attentions of her baby, who was fascinated with him.

"Nigh nigh, Unca En-rye," Malaika punctuated her farewell to her favorite uncle with a yawn and a wave. As far as she was concerned, Eindride *was* everyone. And everyone let her continue to think that because it was too amusing to watch Eindride try and shake off Malaika's barrage of hugs, kisses, and demands for piggyback rides. In fact, they all did their best to encourage it.

"Come on, Mommy. Let's take our Angel to bed," Ívarr said softly as he led them to the SUV that would take them to their private home a short distance away.

Her thoughts about telling him off were interrupted by Ívarr's whispered words. "After I put our baby to bed, I'm going to take you to bed...and then against the wall, and over the couch...and on the floor."

Jaden's soft laughter blocked out the rest of what her husband promised. And then she sighed, recalling all of the other promises Ívarr had made,

starting with the promise to love, cherish, protect, and ravish her always. The addition of “ravish” to his wedding vows hadn’t even caused a single brow to rise in shock. It couldn’t because there were so many other things for the guests to be shocked about. There was the contingent of boxing champions in attendance, wearing or holding their many title belts and loudly threatening the groom. There were the massive Siberian white tigers that had proceeded her down the aisle. Then there was her outfit. While her simple, strapless silk gown with trumpet skirt train went beautifully with the diamond wreath necklace, the diamond cuff bracelet, the five-stone diamond and ice-blue aquamarine drop earrings, it was the other piece of jewelry that had elicited gasps. While the jewel-encrusted, white gold heavyweight championship-style belt wouldn’t have looked out of place on any number of the actual heavyweight boxers in attendance, it did look a bit odd around her waist. But she didn’t care. Ívarr had given it to her, and dammit, she was wearing it. Plus, it had her title on it: Jaden—the tiger tamer. And that’s what she was—a tiger tamer. Of course, there was only one tiger she was interested in taming, and she’d done that so well. Looking in the backseat at their sleeping baby, she amended her statement. She’d tamed her tiger...but nowhere near as well as their baby had tamed him.

## **\*\*JJ and JL\*\***

Thank you for trusting us to deliver your prose. While we do write to supplement our incomes, we appreciate the investment of your time. We hope that you enjoyed the adventures of Jaden and Ívarr.

To read more about the characters connected to this book, check out the following stories:

Jarek Ius (Jaden's brother) in *Deep in the Smart of Texas*.

Jarl Vidar (Dagr's best friend) and his mate Epoch Udane in *Double En-Blonder*.

Dagr Brynjar and his mate Era Udane "You can Lead a Norse to Water but You Can't Make Him Kink" is in the *Smack It, Flip It, Rub It Down* anthology.

For more information on the Jeanie and Jayha universe, please visit our website:  
[www.jeanieandjayha.com](http://www.jeanieandjayha.com).

## About the Authors

A kickass tag-team bound together by the pen, Jeanie (the shagalicious wordslinger) and Jayha (the ninja master of h\*ll no's) are forces of nature that will either leave you begging for mercy or begging for more.

We are women who have brains we aren't afraid to use; feelings we aren't afraid to express; and, middle fingers that we aren't afraid to extend. We pen stories that push all kinds of boundaries and we don't apologize for it. Our heroines are feisty; our heroes are hot, and our stories are one-of-a-kind adventures. Come visit us at [www.jeanieandjayha.com](http://www.jeanieandjayha.com) and remember: if you don't enjoy your stay, f\*ck it, you didn't have to come.

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