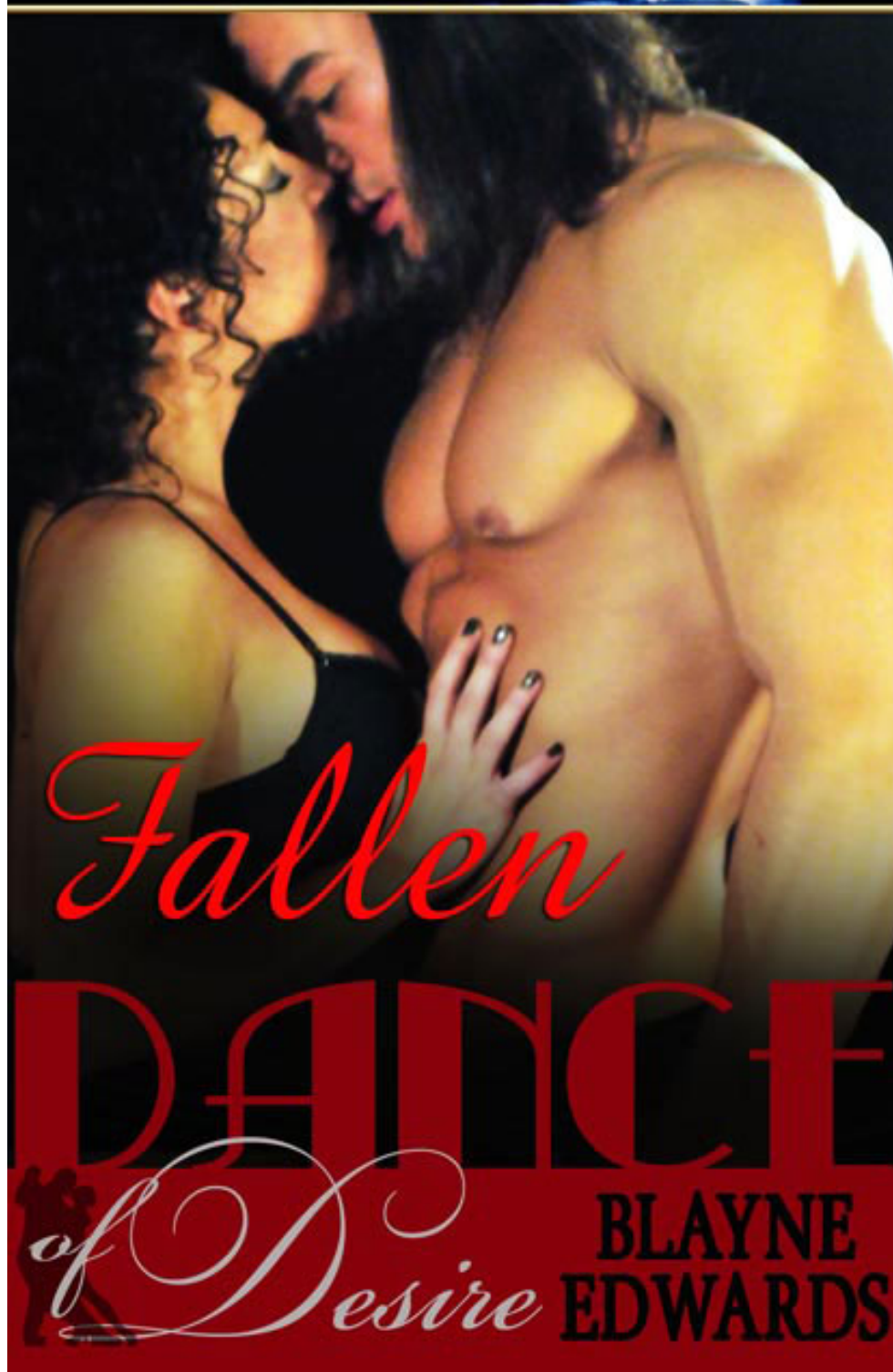


ELLORA'S CAVE TWILIGHT



## **Fallen**

Blayne Edwards

“She just fell from the freakin’ sky!”

The Cherokee people don’t have a mating dance. Unfortunately for Lossiah’s clan, he’s an innovator. An innovator and perhaps a bit of a troublemaker. Of course, he never meant to bring home the flu bug that almost wiped out his entire family, and he didn’t really think the Dance would convince the Great Spirit to forgive him and send him a wife. Losi’s not a bad guy. He’s just trying to score some action. And who can blame him? Living isolated in the Smoky Mountains for all those years can be hell on a guy’s sex life. Not to mention what it can do to his two-step.

Sarah’s had it up to *here* with being nagged about her sex life. There is no problem with her sex life. She has no sex life! How can there be a problem?

What do you do when something you want is just out of reach? If you want it badly enough, you reach a little farther.

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



[www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com)

Fallen

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# *FALLEN*

**Blayne Edwards**

*Dedication*

*For Drum and Bird.  
I found it.*

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## Chapter One

"I. Am. Lost."

For almost two hours Sarah had denied the truth. She'd chosen to believe the well-marked Appalachian Trail she'd left for a closer look at a *Rhododendron carolinianum* was just over that next ridge. Just beyond that clump of trees.

Just around that bend.

It was dusk convincing her otherwise. Nighttime was quickly ushering in a Smoky Mountain darkness Sarah doubted even her flashlight would penetrate. A sense of dread swelled in her stomach as she fought her way through the underbrush and trees. She was nowhere near the trail. She had ventured much further into the mountains than she'd meant to go and was now somewhere deep in the forest proper.

She was indeed lost. To make matters worse, in a half an hour or so she wouldn't be able to see her hand in front of her face.

Sarah stopped, swallowed the last mouthful of water in her canteen, and with an attitude of hope she didn't really feel, retrieved her cell phone from her pocket.

*No Service.*

"Shit."

"You're a highly educated gardener." That's what Sarah's sister, Mamie, had called her. "You have no adventure in your life. No spark! How can you live without spark?" her adrenaline-addicted sibling had asked. Sarah had considered bungee jumping. She'd given skydiving a thought. But Sarah knew neither of those activities would add the life-altering element Mamie referred to as "spark".

"You need a man," Mamie had advised. "I don't know how you do it. It's unnatural for a woman to masturbate for this long."

Yes, it had been a while since Sarah'd had sex. Quite a while, in fact.

"Okay," she admitted to the darkness. "So it's been a few years." She sighed and looked around at the quickly disappearing rocks and trees. "Like eight years," she said quietly. "Maybe ten."

Twelve at the most.

But who was counting? she wondered as she pushed a limb out of her way. What did it matter that she hadn't had sex in a dozen years? It wasn't like she hadn't had numerous opportunities. She met men all the time. She'd even dated a few.

Just none she wanted to sleep with.

Mamie saw her sister's standards for sexual partners as unrealistic. And this was seriously disheartening since Sarah had never thought her standards were lofty or high.

"It's not that I don't like sex. I love sex! I just want a good man," she'd explained to the therapist Mamie had suggested Sarah see. "I want someone with integrity and self-respect. A man with some dignity and values. One who thinks with his head and heart and not just his dick."

The shrink had prescribed a singles' cruise for the sexually inexperienced and repressed and charged Sarah one-hundred-and-fifty dollars. Mamie went on the cruise and met her current bed buddy Ben, and Sarah had enjoyed eight days of silence and celibacy while her sister was gone.

Sarah's trip to the mountains to plant-watch had been a reward for finally standing up to her sister after Mamie returned from the cruise all tanned, smiling, sexually exhausted and eager to once again preach the importance of "spark".

"You're my sister, and I love you," Sarah had informed Mamie. "But butt out."

Mamie hadn't called her for two days but she'd eventually cooled down and the two had resumed talking. They were sisters. And best friends. They had each other even when they had no one else, and unfortunately those times had been too frequent in both of their lives. Especially after their daddy died.

As angry as her sister sometimes made her, Sarah had never wanted to hear Mamie's voice as bad as she did at that very moment. Mamie's voice, a 9-1-1 operator's voice, hell, even a wrong number would suffice right now. Hoping against hope, Sarah pulled her cell phone out of her pocket one more time and flipped it open, fully expecting to be greeted by her new best friend, *No Service*.

The screen was black.

"Shit!"

Even the digital display she'd grown to hate had abandoned her. She hadn't been able to make a call for hours now but there had been other options. Tiny bleeps of service, perhaps. A half-second call from the top of some ridge when daylight came. Just long enough for Sarah to say she needed help and give some all-seeing satellite in outer space a hint as to her whereabouts.

But now the phone's battery was dead and Sarah was pretty sure the phone had to have power for GPS tracking to pick up where she was.

"I'm screwed," she said out loud as she looked up to judge the darkness's progress. Overhead the treetops were slowly fading against the sky. A moonless night was right there, with her. Sarah was surrounded by it.

"I don't know what to do."

Within minutes it was dark. Truly, frighteningly dark. Fearing her flashlight would soon suffer the same fate as her cell phone, Sarah turned it off and stood fixed on the forest floor.

A tide of black immediately washed over her field of vision. Insignificant as it was, Sarah's eyes had grown accustomed to the flashlight's beam and for a moment her pupils were much too small for her eyes to detect any light from the stars. Such temporary blindness would have been disconcerting under any circumstances, but given Sarah's already agitated state over being lost and alone in the forest, it was the final straw that pushed her to the edge of panic.



Sarah wasn't a crier. Sure, she cried when someone close to her passed away. And she'd cried at least once in her lifetime simply due to the unlucky timing of PMS and a speeding ticket.

But overly emotional, she wasn't. Sarah had learned very young if she was going to cry every time life handed her a crummy situation then she was going to spend a lot of time weeping. And in her experience weeping had never accomplished a thing. It had no power at all. This was obvious, because if crying did possess any power then Sarah and her sister wouldn't have grown up without their father.

And yet the tears began to fall. She was tired, she was scared, and for the first time since she was young, she had no idea of how to take care of herself.

"Which way do I go?" Sarah wiped the back of her hand across her cheek to dry the tears that had escaped. Turning this way and that, she posed her question to no one again.

"What do I do now?"

There was no moon. No beams of light shining down to help her see her way through the bushes. And yet something bright and very clear caught her eye.

Long trusses of bell-shaped flowers. Fifteen or twenty in each group, Sarah decided. And the bush itself was huge. Twenty or twenty-five feet tall, she estimated.

Sarah placed a hand on her hip and stared straight at the glowing white flowers. What she suspected didn't make sense. Her fear and anxiety was compromising her memory. Making her imagine things that simply weren't there.

But these flowers looked so much like...

Sarah shook her head to clear it. Mamie was right. She was a very educated gardener. A botanist. Plants were Sarah's life. And her current situation was proof that plants were the way she related to the world. Given an ordeal, the first thing Sarah always looked to for advice were plants.

In this case she was asking herself how a particular plant could survive in a habitat so different from the one where it was usually found.

It was an odd coping mechanism that had resulted when her father died and she hadn't been able to make sense of anything for so long. At least that's what Sarah's hundred and fifty dollar an hour shrink said.

To Sarah, it was just the way she'd learned to live. Plants were her grounding place. They lived by rules she could clearly understand. Adequate sunlight, water and drainage, soil with the correct pH balance. Kept within the right parameters, Sarah knew certain plants could go on living for centuries.

If human beings could be so lucky.

"*Rhododendron irroratum*," Sarah murmured as she stepped closer to the blooms. "A big, thriving *irroratum*."

It no longer mattered that she was lost in the mountains. As Sarah inched her way closer and closer to the flowers, concern for her own safety fell to the wayside. All that mattered was getting to those flowers. Touching them. Smelling them. Taking a sample back home with her to study.

Sarah remembered very clearly the night her daddy died. Some thirty years had gone by and it was as if it had just happened.

Sarah recalled the moments just after he passed were very dark and very quiet. And for a heartbeat or two following his last breath a sense of profound peace wrapped itself around her.

It was a night much like this one.

Sarah was thinking about the night her father died when the toe of her shoe caught on the *irroratum*'s root. She grasped for one of the flowers and it caught her, only to rip away from its branch. Together, Sarah and her memory went tumbling down. Down and down and down until Sarah's darkness met fire and her peace and quiet were drowned out, oddly enough, by drums.

\* \* \* \* \*

"You really believe this will work?"

Did he really believe the Dance would work? That was not just a very good question. Given the nature of what he was about to do, it was the only question that mattered. Did he *believe* it would work? Lossiah looked around the circle before nodding. "Yes. I really do."

Lee took his friend's answer and sat down beside the water drum. "Okay then. Let's do it." He thumped the head of the drum three times with his fingertips. "But I didn't know the Cherokee had a mating dance."

"We don't." Lossiah stepped just outside the reach of the campfire's light and peered into the darkness. "That's why the elders have forbidden me to do this."

Lee lightly tapped the drum in several different places, each time pausing to listen to the tone. "So you don't care what the elders say?" he asked. "What about all that talk about respect and honor and tradition you're always giving me?"

They were deep in the Smoky Mountains, standing in a circle that was the dot at the center of yet another circle of property Lossiah's family had occupied for almost two hundred years. Property that took a slice of four different individual parcels of land. Three of those parcels were hybrid owned and protected.

It was the fourth slice Lossiah's people had always worried about.

Lossiah stared out toward that fourth unprotected edge. The village was where it had been for centuries. It was closest to that worrisome edge. Not an ideal situation but one Lossiah's people and their hybrid neighbors had staunchly defended when most of the Cherokee people were forced from their lands nearly two hundred years earlier.

"I do respect the ways of my people," Lossiah explained. "And I care very much about what the elders say and think. It's just that..."

"You don't really expect this to work." Lee smiled. "You're not worried about what the elders think because you know they trust you not to go against them. And because you don't really believe a mating dance will work."

Lossiah went back to the center of the circle and faced the fire. Lee was right. Somewhat. The village was within earshot, but no one could see him. The other members of his tribe would hear the drums, and they would know someone was dancing.

But only Lossiah and Barklee Caine would know the reason for the Dance.

As for the second part of Lee's claim, he was also somewhat correct. It wasn't like Lossiah expected a mating dance to cause the right woman for him to simply fall from the sky.

But Lossiah also knew if anyone could make such a miracle happen, it would be the Creator.

"A dance is like a prayer," Lossiah said. "And with this prayer I'm asking the Great Spirit to help me find the woman I was meant to have."

Without questioning further, Lee began to pound out the rhythm the two men had worked on for several weeks. Lossiah closed his eyes and relaxed, allowing his body to absorb the vibrations. The tone of the drum's voice. The sound. And not until every cell in his body was moving to those vibrations did Lossiah begin to circle the fire.

"How do we know if we're doing it right?!" Lee shouted over the music.

Lossiah could hear Lee, but his body and mind and soul were too engrossed in "prayer" for him to answer. Many members of his tribe had mates who were from the outside world but each of those adopted tribe members had come to live with Lossiah's people by fate. Brief but sufficient encounters on rare visits to the outside world, inquisitive hikers, even a Christian missionary had once stumbled upon the village and chosen to stay with Lossiah's people. As isolated as they were, Lossiah's clan had managed to stay alive and his village had remained untouched by the white man's greed because the Great Spirit had provided for them. Lossiah's people and their village had survived, even when the other clans had been uprooted or even killed off completely.

Because they had survived unmolested for so long and when others did not, Lossiah felt it was only natural that the elders feared what might come to pass if he invited an outsider in. He understood their concern that he might anger the Creator if he danced for a mate. At its root Lossiah's request was for him and him alone. And while keeping the clan's bloodline alive was for the good of the Cherokee people as a whole, Lossiah would be the first to admit the survival of the clan's bloodline wasn't the only reason he was dancing.

Lossiah was dancing because he wanted a woman. He *needed* a woman. His male spirit was lonely and had been for many years now. His man's mind and its harsh thoughts craved the softness of a woman's loving opinion. As for his body, Lossiah feared it was easing this ache that had cost him a mate so far. He had made it to the age of twenty-two before giving in to his body's needs and venturing outside the village in search of relief, and since that first time he'd had to wonder if he'd somehow altered the course of his own life when he'd taken matters into his own hands.

Had he only done it the one time, it wouldn't have been so bad. But after that first moonless night when he'd secretly made his way through the forest and into the warmth of a woman's arms, Lossiah had many, many times left the village for the outside world and the pleasures he'd found out there.

Lossiah was now thirty-five. It had been seven winters since he'd last betrayed his people by threatening to expose them to the outside world. Seven winters and seven springs since Lossiah had last felt the heat and softness of a woman.

Seven winters since Lossiah was forced to watch his entire clan suffer for his mistakes.

As he danced Lossiah apologized for being impatient. He apologized for not having more faith that the Creator would provide for his needs as a Cherokee and as a man. He also asked that the Great Spirit not be angry with his people for his actions and that He not seek revenge on anyone but Lossiah if what he was doing was wrong.

Lastly, as he danced, Lossiah asked for a wife. But not just any wife. *His* wife. The woman Lossiah's spirit was meant to find.

It was a tall order and one not likely to be filled quickly. Lossiah knew this. He knew he had possibly destroyed his chances at having the woman he was meant to have. And even if he hadn't destroyed his chances, Lossiah understood the Creator was probably going to give him a lesson in patience before allowing Lossiah to find her.

But his prayers would be answered. Lossiah was sure they would. The longer he danced and the more lost Lossiah became in the Sound, the more certain he became that the Creator would give him exactly what he needed when the time was right.

What surprised Lossiah was that after only seven years of paying for what he'd done to his people, apparently the Creator felt the right time to forgive was right now.

## Chapter Two

"Holy shit, man! It worked!"

The rhythm had stopped and so the Dance had as well. Lossiah opened his eyes to find Lee standing slack-jawed next to the water drum, mallet still in hand. He was staring down at a dirty, crumpled body.

A dirty, crumpled *female* body.

"Dude, did you see that? She just fell from the freakin' sky!" Lee bent slightly at the waist to examine the woman. "That Great Spirit dude of yours needs to find a new delivery method," Lee stated. "I think He killed her tossing her down like that."

Lee was one of the kindest, most big-hearted wolf/human hybrids Lossiah had ever known. Each member of his family was a friend Lossiah never wanted to live without.

But there were times when Lossiah had to wonder if there wasn't a big, dumb Labrador retriever somewhere in the Caine woodpile.

Lossiah bolted around the fire and knelt down on the ground beside the woman who had appeared from out of nowhere. There was a knot on the back of her head and she was bleeding from several cuts and scrapes. "She didn't fall from the sky, Lee." Lossiah rolled her over just enough so he could check for a pulse. Her pretty face was a topography map of scratches, dings and bruises.

"But she sure looks like she did, doesn't she? Is she alive?"

Lossiah nodded as he let her pulse sink into his fingertips for a moment longer. The skin of her neck was warm and very soft.

"Yes, she's alive. But she's uncon—"

The small but determined fist connected with Lossiah's jaw with an alarming amount of power behind it. His words and for a moment his senses were knocked down when she came up fighting.

"Hey." Lossiah dodged the next swing only to take a right hook to his already aching jaw. "Hey!" he yelled. For the next thirty seconds or so he fought to gain control over a barrage of wildcat swings, punches and scratches. He finally got both of his legs wrapped around hers and pinned her to the ground.

"I'm not going to hurt you!" he called over her grunts and squeals. "Just...I need to make sure you're all right."

She was so battered and bruised. And understandably so since the ravine she'd just fallen into was at the bottom of a ridge at least two hundred feet high.

Lossiah was worried she might be even more seriously hurt than she appeared. She could have internal injuries. Broken bones he didn't see. Or head trauma even.

The pit of Lossiah's stomach knotted. What would he do if she had some kind of head trauma? He'd just found her. The Creator had just given her to him and now this? It was so unfair! He had to get to know her! The real, uninjured her! She had to tell him what she liked. What she didn't like. He had to hear her giggle. Laugh. Cry.

While he was distracted by thoughts so fanciful that he would never admit them even to Lee, the woman twisted out of Lossiah's grip and returned to pummeling him. This time he had to be a little more forceful when he restrained her.

"Be still, dammit!"

Lossiah wasn't sure which reaction to his cursing disturbed him the most. The rather feminine way Lee gasped, or the way the woman's eyes were telling him she would eat him—feathers and all—if he ever spoke to her like that again.

Lossiah noticed the blood on her teeth when she gritted them together and demanded, "Where's my flower?"



Keeping one arm securely wrapped around both of hers, Lossiah used his other hand to gently ease her upper lip back so he could examine her mouth. As far as he could tell both of her lips were busted but none of her teeth were broken.

The tension in Lossiah's gut eased a little. Maybe she wasn't seriously injured after all.

He rethought that hope when she emitted what sounded very much like one of Lee's growls and demanded yet again, "Where is my flower?!"

Lossiah glanced up just in time to see Lee use one finger to make a circular motion at the side of his head.

Why his friend's action angered him so much, Lossiah wasn't sure.

"She's not cuckoo," he stated. "She just banged her head on the way down."

Lossiah wasn't expecting what she did next. That's why when she got one hand free and reached up to grab the strap of leather around his neck she was able to easily jerk his head down until the tip of his nose almost touched hers.

"I'm going to ask you one more time." Her pupils were wide open, making her eyes black. She smelled like babies and soft, warm blankets in the wintertime.

"Where. The hell. Is my flower?"

In the corner of his vision Lossiah spotted it. It was even more crumpled and dirty than she was, but it was indeed there. Right behind her. She had landed on it.

Lossiah reached behind her and retrieved the cluster of white rhododendron blooms from the ground.

"You mean this flower?"

The ragged, dirty rhododendron bloom could have been the Holy Grail judging from the way she snatched it out of his hand and began to examine it. "*Rhododendron irroratum*," she said quietly. "Native to China, Vietnam and Indonesia."

Lossiah and Lee exchanged glances as she grew more and more animated.

"You understand what this means, right?"

"Yes," Lossiah answered. "Well, no, actually."

"It's not supposed to be here."

"It's not?"

"No." She motioned around them. "I could understand if I'd found it closer to civilization. Lots of non-native plants end up in odd places because people plant them there. But why would a rhododendron that only grows naturally in the full sun of Vietnam and Indonesia be growing wild in the shadows of the Smoky Mountains?"

She was excited over this flower. And apparently she was just fine. Either she was okay or her fall had knocked her into some genius level of cuckoo. Lossiah could handle genius and cuckoo if it looked and smelled and felt like this woman did. He shifted to make her more comfortable in his lap as she held the bloom closer to the firelight.

"This doesn't make any sense." She seemed lost in some intricate design Lossiah had never known a rhododendron bloom possessed. "How did it get here? And..." She shifted this time and made herself more comfortable on the ground between his knees. His heart skipped a beat when she draped one arm over his leg and kept right on talking. "And how has it survived in this region? The soil conditions are different, the winters, the altitude, there's a lack of sunlight."

It wasn't until she looked expectantly from one man to the other that they both realized her question wasn't rhetorical.

"I...I don't..."

"I have no idea."

Neither answer was the one she wanted. Lossiah watched her brow furrow and her mouth tighten into a straight line as she tried to solve her little mystery.

Lossiah could only stare and be thankful. Whatever he'd had done to deserve this, he wished he knew so he could do it again. And again, and again, and again.

She was the most beautiful creature he'd ever seen. Beautiful and wedged very snugly between Lossiah's legs, a fact his years-long sexual dry spell and his cock immediately noticed.

"We need to tend to these scratches." He stood and attempted to adjust his erection to a less-obvious angle while she was still engrossed in her flower. His people had adopted many articles of modern clothing—Lossiah wore jeans most of the time—but to dance he'd chosen to wear a more traditional garment. It was a decision he was beginning to regret as the tiny breechcloth wasn't leaving anything to the imagination.

She didn't seem too concerned with Lossiah's leather pup tent or her injuries. All that seemed to matter was her flower. Lossiah reached down and wove his fingers into hers. "Come on. Let's get you cleaned up." She accepted his hand without taking her eyes off her bloom. "The creek is cold," he explained as they neared the outer edge of the circle, "but its water is clean."

*And I could use some cold water right now,* Lossiah thought as his cock bobbed merrily up and down with every step.

She hummed, oblivious to the dance at least one part of his anatomy was still performing.

"You going home?" Lossiah asked as Lee began to gather his belongings.

The younger man nodded. "Yep. Delivered, one wife, straight from God." He beamed and tried to twirl the mallet. When it fell to the ground, he immediately bent to pick it up and tried—without success—to twirl it again. "She looks like she came from a scratch-and-dent sale, but my work here is done."

Lossiah laughed and the two men bid their goodbyes. Lee was comical at the exact moments when Lossiah needed him to be. He was very good for relieving tension at times when the air was too thick. Times when other people didn't know what to say because they were too sad or dumbfounded, Lee could be counted on to find the words. And they were usually hilarious.

"Am I going to take a bath?"

Such an odd question, Lossiah thought as his attention returned to her. "Yes, you are."

She smiled and shot him a mischievous grin. "Are you going to take one with me?" she asked.

The breechcloth might as well have been hanging from Lossiah's ears for all the good it was doing wrapped around his midsection now. Both the animal and the hide were sticking straight out. "I...I can if you want."

In an instant the playful demeanor disappeared only to be replaced by something else. Something feminine and aroused and inviting. Lossiah moaned when she reached under the buckskin, wrapped a warm, delicate hand around his shaft and said the last two words Lossiah ever expected to hear.

"I do."

Lossiah was speechless. And it wasn't just because of the way she was so skillfully fondling his balls.

"Dude..." Lossiah couldn't see Lee's face, but he heard the same disbelief in Lee's voice when he said, "That was one righteous freaking dance."

Righteous was apparently right. What else could explain it? As Lossiah led this woman who had simply fallen out of the forest and into his life down to the water, he reconsidered his crack about Lee being part Labrador retriever. Maybe the guy wasn't so simple after all, Lossiah thought. Maybe Lee was smarter than he looked and sounded. And maybe Lee only seemed dumb because he believed what very few others had the courage to believe.

Lossiah turned just in time to see Lee toss his duffle bag over his shoulder with one hand while still attempting to twirl his mallet with the other. This time the unbalanced object flew out of his hand and hit the wolf/human hybrid in the head.

Retriever, Lossiah decided. There was definitely retriever somewhere in that woodpile.

\* \* \* \* \*

Spark. That's what Mamie had suggested Sarah add to her mundane life. "Do something risky," her sister had challenged. "Something you would do if you knew you only had a month to live."

The man who'd gently undressed her and painstakingly washed every trace of dirt and mud and leaves from her battered body hadn't been easily convinced that Sarah wasn't as delicate as the flower that now lay forgotten somewhere on the creek's bank. It had taken her pushing him down and twice making good use of what kept peeking out from under that buckskin before he finally conceded that she was indeed tougher than she looked.

Now, in the afterglow of what was most definitely the best sex of her life, Sarah lay quietly beside the owner of that buckskin, wondering exactly how she ended up there beside the creek, who this strange man was and what had possessed her to fuck him the way she had. Sarah didn't screw men she didn't know. And she definitely didn't screw half-naked men she ran into in the forest in the middle of the night.

She was pretty sure even Mamie would consider this "spark".

Sarah rolled over and took the man's rigid cock into her mouth. He tasted salty, like her, and his shaft was sticky from her juices. His erection grew even harder in her fingers as she stroked and sucked and teased the rim around its head with her tongue.

"Are you okay?" he asked.

What an odd question, Sarah thought. Was she okay? Why wouldn't she be okay? She'd never been fucked this thoroughly, nor had she ever come so violently – twice! – with any other man. Rather than justifying his question with a verbal answer, Sarah took his entire shaft into her mouth, slowly slid it out, and then straddled his body again.

Lossiah persisted, "Do you know where you are?"

Yes. She knew where she was. She was on top of him. Sarah rubbed the head of his cock against her clit until her tiny organ was throbbing, and then lowered her pussy

down his shaft. It was an easy fit with both his cum and the juices from her own body lubricating the way, but still tight enough to cause Sarah to moan when the cheeks of her ass touched the tops of his thighs.

His cock filled her perfectly. Not too large, not too small.

“Do you like that?” she asked.

He gripped her ass with both hands and kneaded. Guiding her back and forth on his dick. Fucking himself with her.

He was breathless when he spoke. “Yes, I like that. Now answer me. Do you know where you are?”

Sarah ignored his concern and leaned back to expose her clit. “You want me to show you what I like?”

All ten fingers dug deeper into the flesh on her ass when she began to play with herself. Sarah splayed herself open and let him watch her tease her small but engorged clit.

“Sarah?” His self-control was slipping. “Do you remember what happened?”

Sarah closed her eyes and focused on the pressure and fullness his cock was providing her. She wanted to come again. She’d already come twice. She remembered coming twice and she remembered how intense it was the second time because he’d come at the same time.

There were other details, details like his name, where she met him and why they were now in the middle of the forest she couldn’t seem to recall. But Sarah remembered the sex she’d had with him. Sarah suspected she would *always* remember the sex.

“You fell. Do you remember falling, Sarah?”

Falling? No. But flowers. She remembered something about flowers. Or headlights. Was that what they were? Either way, they had guided her to the edge of a ravine. And in the back of her mind, if she concentrated very hard, Sarah could almost remember

falling. Not the actual fall of course, but more like the idea of falling. The concept of a fall and the non-emotional results.

Two hundred feet. Maybe a bit farther. Numerous cuts, scrapes and abrasions. No broken bones.

There it was. The fall.

"Tell me your name again."

Sarah's face contorted as she moved back and forth on his erection. The urge to come was unbearable. The sensation was already rising. Her body was exhausted and no part of her unsatisfied. But he was inside her again. That perfect fit. She was going to come again.

"What is your name?"

"Sarah," she stated, very matter-of-fact. Her hips made a circular, grinding motion on his cock. "My name is Sarah."

"What is today's date?"

Head trauma. The papers would say the fall the thirty-four-year-old botanist took down a two-hundred-foot embankment resulted in head trauma.

"Do you know what today is?"

Sarah looked down at the point where the generous-sized erection she was riding met her body. Her sex was red and swollen. Happy, but tired. This was what Sarah would do if she only had a month to live. She'd jump the first gorgeous man she found, forget getting to know him and building a relationship with him and all that time-consuming nonsense, and fuck him until she couldn't walk. She'd fuck him, she'd let him fuck her. Any position, any orifice, anything either of them had ever wanted to try, Sarah would do it.

And then she'd fuck him again.

Spark. This was her definition of the word and she'd finally taken her sister's advice. There was just one problem.

It wasn't real. None of this was real. Sarah had a concussion. Her head was bruised on the inside. The bright white halos circling around every tree and bush and rock—the buckskin-clad "Indian" who rescued and made love to lost and horny hikers—none of it was real. So this situation wasn't spark. Not really. It was more like spark's brainier, less-adventurous little sister.

It was spark lite. Like her.

"Sarah?"

There was something wrong with her head. That was for sure. Sarah could see her finger trace one of his nipples and then the other, and she could hear him talking, but she felt disconnected. Like she was there, but she wasn't there at all.

"It's the tenth," she heard her voice answer.

"The tenth of what?"

The wild Indian getup was straight out of Sarah's subconscious. A latent sexual desire Sarah's bruised cerebellum had let out to play.

A byproduct of her own repressed wilder sexual side the shrink would probably say. For another hundred-and-fifty dollars, of course.

"Sarah?" He was more demanding when he said her name. Sarah leaned forward to press the taut peaks of her breasts against his smooth, hairless chest.

"What?"

"It's the tenth of what?"

"The tenth of the month," she snapped back with a grin.

He laughed and wrapped strong arms around her, squashing her against his chest. "I'm sorry," he said sweetly. "I know I've asked you these questions a hundred times in the past two hours. I'm just worried about you. I need to make sure you're okay."

A hundred times? In two hours? Sarah tried letting the words and their meaning roll over in her head but the swelling in her brain wasn't leaving room for anything to



roll around. So the words and their meaning were stuck right where they landed. In a ball of confusion Sarah didn't know how to unwind.

"Are you sore?" he asked. Without waiting for her to answer, his hands began to roam about her body. His fingertips gently examined her breasts, her rib cage, the muscles of her thighs. He chuckled before adding, "I mean, are you sore from the fall?"

What was so funny? Sarah wondered. What else would have made her sore?

And if he was a hallucination, why were his hands against her skin so warm and real?

"I'm fine," Sarah assured him. He was still hard and filling her. The sensation was still exquisite. But Sarah wasn't going to come this time because something deep in her mind was beginning to freak out.

"I'd still like for you to go into town and get checked out." He kissed the puckered peak of one breast and then briefly suckled the other. Sarah squirmed as the sensation of his lips around her nipple caused a jolt of wet electricity to surge between her legs. "We can deal with a lot of injuries back at the village." He indicated the neat, straight line of a scar on his right arm. "We could even stitch you up if you needed. But internal injuries are a little beyond our expertise."

"I don't have any internal injuries," Sarah heard herself say. "Lossiah, I am fine."

A wave of nausea rushed over Sarah. Why was her mouth saying these things? She wasn't fine! The knot on the back of her head hurt terribly. And how did she know his name? She didn't remember a fantasy with the name Lossiah. She'd never even heard of the name Lossiah.

Why was she fucking a man named Lossiah?

A large, slightly roughened palm cupped the side of her face while his other arm pulled her almost nose to nose with him. Lossiah's breath warmed her skin and, strangely, the sensation immediately calmed her.

"I can't lose you now," he whispered and barely brushed his lips against hers. Rather than remaining stiff or turning away as she normally would have with someone she didn't know, Sarah felt her lips instinctively move to gather his fleeting kiss. "I've waited so long to find you."

He kissed her again, only this time for much longer and with a familiar passion Sarah recognized, but couldn't quite place. His lips were firm at first. Urgent. As if they were seeking something perfect he knew he could find in her mouth. His tongue darted quickly, barely flicking against the tip of hers, leaving that exhilarating zing of his flavor and electricity in its wake.

Finally his lips, his entire being relaxed and together they sank into that warm, forever state of completion. He breathed in while she breathed out. Pressed together, sharing, tasting, breathing, being one.

When they finally parted Sarah noticed that every part of her was awake and aware. For the moment the confusion was gone. She knew where she was, she remembered falling, remembered bashing her head against a rock on the way down. For a split second she knew this man and everything around them was real. She also knew she needed to hurry and tell him that she was indeed injured. That she was confused and going in and out of mental consciousness. Sarah had only a brief window during which to tell this man that she did need a doctor because something was definitely wrong with her squash.

All that urgency, everything that needed to be said, and yet the only words her mouth could make were, "I've never been kissed like that before."

"Neither have I."

Something blinked behind her eyes. Like an electrical switch that was about to short out. Reality was gone. And the confusion was back.

Under the stars, on a grassy patch by the creek, Sarah laid her head on Lossiah's chest and let the rambling, spinning thoughts begin again. He was still inside her. Still hard.

His lips brushed her cheek again and gentle teeth nibbled at her ear. Sarah sighed and savored his affection. It really didn't matter if something was wrong because somewhere in the back of her mind was something else. Some other notion that would have rolled around and looked her right in the face were her brain not so bruised and crowded.

Something, she wasn't sure what, but something about this whole situation was very right. Something was very good. And that something, she suspected, had to do with a figment of her imagination she'd named Lossiah.

## Chapter Three

The elders were going to be furious.

It was bad that he'd defied them and performed the Dance. It was even worse that apparently the Dance had worked.

What was really gonna nail his ass to a stake was this outsider his dance had brought to their village. An outsider for whom he was he was indirectly responsible. So furious, yes. With Lossiah's history it was even possible the tribe would banish him from the circle.

Still, all of those concerns were less important to him than they were two hours before.

Lossiah knew she didn't fall from the sky. He wasn't quite that backwoods primitive or naïve. But she had literally fallen into his life at the exact moment he was asking for her. So divine intervention or simply good luck, Lossiah didn't know what to call it. He did know what to call Sarah though.

She was his wife.

Lossiah reached out and took her wrist in his hand. She hadn't lost consciousness, but he would have felt better if she hadn't gone back to sleep so soon. She'd dozed as soon as he got her to the cabin and then woke long enough to describe a rather naughty dream she'd thought was real. And then she dozed off again, leaving Lossiah with a hard-on the size of his arm and a whole mind full of images and ideas.

Lossiah wished she was still awake and not just for obvious reasons. He wanted to hear her talking. Irritating as it probably was to her, he needed to hear her reassure him over and over that she was okay. Her name was Sarah. She was a botanist because she related to plants easier than she did people. She'd fallen into a ravine while reaching for an out-of-place rhododendron bloom. *Rhododendron irroratum*. *Rhododendron irroratum*.

Lossiah needed to hear her say these things again and again and again. He needed to know Sarah's injuries weren't serious enough to merit a trip outside the mountains.

Lossiah didn't like the white man's cold, materialistic world. None of his people did. Too much pavement and money and pain had made civilization a place Lossiah's clan refused to visit unless absolutely necessary. Lossiah had willingly agreed to never return to the outside world after his trips outside the circle had almost killed his entire clan.

He felt different now. As of this night Lossiah had found something that would make him visit the white man's world again. If Sarah needed a doctor or a hospital then Lossiah would take her to one. He would go with her wherever she needed to go in the outside world and he would return to the village only when she could return with him.

Yes, he was sure of it now.

The elders were going to be furious.

Lossiah held her wrist and counted beats until the steady, normal rate of her heart thrummed away at least some of his anxiety.

She was beautiful. Perfect. Truth be told, Lossiah couldn't have asked for a more generous answer to his prayer. She would be a wonderful mate for any man, especially when Lossiah considered how eager she'd been to consummate their union when he'd told her they would soon marry.

She'd stroked and licked and kissed the entire time he was trying to clean her up. Not an inch of Lossiah had been safe from her inquisitive little fingers and mouth. Sarah was an eager, fearless lover. Lossiah could already tell. She wanted to taste and touch and try everything with him and that was fine with Lossiah. He loved the idea of never getting bored with the woman in his bed.

But they hadn't consummated anything. Not yet. Lossiah told her how he'd defied the elders in order to have her and that they had to wait until those same members of the tribe blessed their upcoming marriage before they could be together physically as husband and wife.

She hadn't wanted to comply with his wishes. She didn't want to wait for someone else to tell them it was okay to make love any more than Lossiah wanted to let someone else make that decision. And when she had tried desperately to convince him to see things her way, Lossiah had almost gone insane in his desire to push her down to the forest floor and sink his cock into her. There was nothing in the world he wanted more than to fuck her long and slow and hard.

But for once, for the first time in his life, Lossiah had proven strong enough in the end. He wanted her. He wanted her badly. But he wanted her forever and not the way he'd had all those other women from his past.

It had taken every ounce of respect for his tribe and for her and most of all for himself he had to deny the naked, wet woman he'd just bathed, but Lossiah had done it. He could only hope the elders didn't drag their feet when he asked them to bestow their blessing.

She moaned and Lossiah pushed himself up from his pallet on the floor. Taking her wrist again in one hand, he pressed the back of the other against her forehead.

Her skin was bruised, but warm and dry. Her pulse was still steady.

She appeared to be okay.

Lossiah studied the small cot he had used as a bed ever since he'd almost single-handedly destroyed his village. He hadn't expected the Creator to answer his prayer so quickly so Lossiah hadn't prepared his cabin for the arrival of a woman. But here she was. Lossiah would have to have a proper bed now. A marriage bed, he thought to himself. One soft and warm and inviting enough to entice his bride to share it with him night after night.

She emitted another sound of unease that dug at Lossiah, prompting an urge to comfort her. Careful not to wake her, he balanced as much of his body on the cot as its small size would allow and wrapped his arms around his brand-new gift. She wouldn't know he was holding her, not unless she woke, but that wasn't the point.

He was her husband. It was Lossiah's duty—his job—to be there for her and comfort her and protect her, even at times when she didn't know he was there. The Tsalagi, or Cherokee as most white men knew them, had always regarded the female members of their tribe very highly, and Lossiah had waited a long time to have a woman of his own. Women were valued in Lossiah's world. They were respected not only as bearers of children and keepers of the home, but also as decision makers when it came to matters of war and punishment, and even in the fate of captives.

So this woman was indeed a gift for Lossiah. She was precious to him, even if the elders disagreed with the way Lossiah had asked the Creator for forgiveness and ultimately received her.

Her body seemed more relaxed with him beside her, so Lossiah allowed his own muscles to unwind a bit also. Not enough that he might fall asleep, as he wanted to keep a watchful eye on her until morning, but relaxed enough that he could rest for a few minutes. It had been a long day. A long, stressful, wonderful day. It was a day Lossiah knew he would never forget, and not simply because it was the day he met his wife. Lossiah would never forget this day because with its arrival came an event Lossiah had been waiting on for thirty-five years. It was an event he suspected might even positively sway the opinion of the elders.

Today, Lossiah was finally a man.

\* \* \* \* \*

Sarah ached from one end to the other. Every muscle, every inch of skin, every nerve ending hurt. It took all she had to roll over and face Lossiah on the cot.

Black lashes lay like open fans on the tops his cheeks. His breath was the sure, even inhale and exhale of a deep, peaceful slumber. He was content. Happy for the first time ever, he'd said.

And she'd had a hand in that.

He was also beautiful. Sarah had to admit, she'd outdone herself when her injured mind had created him. A long, lean, firm body. Fit from living off the land instead of wasting years in front of a television or a computer. He was also tanned from head to toe. Sarah thanked her imaginary "wild man" heritage for his skin as she did for his high cheekbones and long, jet-black hair.

Best of all, he was exactly what she'd always wanted. Lossiah was decent. He was respectful. It had taken a head injury for her to do it, but she'd finally done it.

She'd found a good man.

Sarah sighed and snuggled deeper into his arms as she recalled the way he said they had to have the Elder's permission before they could marry. She hadn't believed anything Lossiah told her at first, especially when he said she'd fallen asleep the minute her head hit the pillow, and that she'd been dreaming when she thought they made love.

Sarah wasn't quite sure if she was still dreaming or not. She wasn't seeing halos anymore, but everything was still fuzzy. And when she asked Lossiah if he was real and if he truly believed they were meant to be husband and wife, he of course told her, "Yes."

But how else would he have answered? Who but Sarah would know how such a situation would stimulate her romantic streak? And as far as her willingness to go along with the madness that said she'd been rescued by some gorgeous Cherokee man who just happened to be running wild through the mountains when she fell, it was entirely possible that in her altered mental state Sarah was making up for lost time in the spark department.

For all she knew she was dead by now, her body still lying in a broken heap at the bottom of that ravine. It might be weeks before they found her and by that time all they would find were bones and maybe some hair.

She didn't care. If Sarah was dead then she felt silly having been afraid all those years. If this was dead then being dead with Lossiah was so much better, so much more



fulfilling than anything she'd ever experienced prior to diving into that ravine. The irony was that Sarah very well might be deceased, and yet she felt more alive than she ever had. All because of the man beside her.

"Losi?"

He didn't stir. Sarah inched even closer and pressed her lips against his ear. She smiled at the way the peach fuzz on its lobe tickled her lip.

"Lossiah?"

His breathing pattern changed and he made a very quiet noise. Sarah nibbled gently at his earlobe before planting several kisses down his neck and onto his shoulder. He grunted and Sarah grinned. Even while he was asleep she was able to get under his skin. These sexual powers of persuasion were a new experience. She'd never acted the part of a vixen. Never considered herself a woman who could pull off the role of "sex kitten".

But after only a few hours with Lossiah, Sarah already felt different. She felt better. About herself. About everything, really. She was prettier with him. She was smarter and funnier and most of all, she was sexier.

Sarah sighed. Why couldn't she have stumbled into a real man like this?

No matter. Maybe he was real, maybe he wasn't. He was with her right now. And he was crazy about her and beautiful and sexy as sin himself. For now, Sarah was everything she'd always wanted to be and she was going to take advantage of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to do everything she had ever wanted to do with a man.

Sarah rolled and pressed the hardened tips of her breasts into his side. Her sensitive nipples immediately reacted to having his bare skin against them and they sent a shock wave of wetness and wanting straight to her core.

Her pussy ached more than any other part of her, but not because of her fall. Her pussy ached because it wanted Lossiah's cock. Deep inside her, over and over. Thrusting and grinding and filling her. Sarah understood that Losi didn't want the

elders displeased, but what about her? Did it not matter that he'd bathed her and held her and then left her frustrated when she needed more of him?

Her sexual frustration mattered to her, especially since she suspected Lossiah didn't really have to worry about the elders. For all Sarah knew the elders were just an extended part of her hallucination. Something else she'd dreamed up when she bumped her head.

The elders probably weren't real. Then again, if the elders weren't real, neither was Lossiah.

Hoping to shove such depressing thoughts out of her head, Sarah considered the man sleeping so soundly beside her. Lossiah. Such a beautiful name. And such an arousing, intriguing soon-to-be lover. All their talk about making love and not making love had made her horny. His voracious sexual appetite was obvious, just as it was clear that he wanted to have sex with her. But he was so respectful about everything, including sex. So adult. Lossiah wasn't like the other men in Sarah's past who were like sixteen-year-old boys when it came to sex. Totally oblivious to anything other than the demands of their cocks.

Lossiah apparently took great pride in having self-control. He was mature enough to know the value of restraint. Such rare qualities—and the idea of getting better acquainted with what she suspected was a rather marvelous cock—made Sarah impatient to know what it was like to have him inside her. Sarah needed him, dammit. And since she wasn't sure how much longer her compromised mental state was going to last, she needed him right now.

Blessings of the elders be damned!

"Lossiah?" She said it softly. He didn't stir or answer. She tried again. "Losi?" Nothing. Nada. "Oh, Lossiah?"

Still no response.

Sarah groaned and closed her eyes. Unfortunately her hallucination had been more potent than her wildest wet dream. Sarah's pussy was as wet as it would have been had

their foreplay been real. Whether her mind was working properly or not, her female parts knew exactly how they wanted to handle the situation and they weren't going to let any other part of Sarah rest until the "situation" had been dealt with. Completely!

Sarah wrapped her thighs around one of his legs and pressed the lips of her pussy against him. She'd never molested anyone before, least of all a grown man, but given her day so far, her newest activity wasn't so farfetched. Sarah took a moment to enjoy the rougher texture of his skin against the softness of her inner thighs. She took note of his temperature. Of the masculine heat coming from his body. And of his smell. Lossiah didn't have the first hint of a perfumed or manufactured fragrance on him. He smelled like naturally clean skin and the forest and healthy man.

There was something feral about him. Something that made Sarah feel more like a shameless, instinctual creature than a society-bound woman. This more animalistic way of being was a notion Sarah definitely wanted to explore, especially when it came to her bedroom activities.

With that idea still fresh, Sarah slowly and deliberately began to move up and down. Humping him. Using the friction of Lossiah's skin against hers to get off.

And it was working. Each stroke she took against his leg caused her clit to swell a little more. Each brush of skin against skin brought her tiny female member a bit farther out of its hood at the same time intimate female muscles were beginning to quietly constrict and relax.

Sarah could come like this. She could come easily and quickly if she continued to grind against Lossiah. And unless she screamed when she climaxed, he'd never be the wiser.

But she didn't want to come like that. Sarah didn't want the orgasm she'd have while he was still sleeping and unaware of what was going on. She wanted him to come while he was awake and watching. And preferably helping.

"Lossiah?" Sarah whispered to the soundly sleeping man. "Losi? Honey? Wake up."

He wasn't responding. Not verbally at least. But as Sarah's hands began to roam the contours and angles of his body she discovered at least one part of Lossiah was awake and alert.

"Lossiah?" She gripped the shaft of his erection in her hand. "I want you inside me." While still moving against his leg, Sarah began to massage and stroke his cock. At one point she even took the time to lick her palm so she could more easily jack him off.

"Are you going to force me to come like this?" she asked when he still didn't open his eyes or respond. "You're so hard, Losi," she murmured. "And that's exactly what I need right now. A long, hard part of you inside me."

Sarah wasn't quite sure of what to make of her hallucination's apparent lack of interest. After a few minutes of no response she began to second-guess her fantasy.

Was she kidding herself to believe she was secretly some wildly passionate woman? Had she been lying to herself all those years when she believed all she needed was the right man, one who made her feel safe and cherished, to help her come out of her shell?

Sarah lay back on the pillow and stared at the logs in the cabin's roof.

She'd never let insecurity get the best of her, but this was too much. Apparently her subconscious mind knew something she didn't. It had created this delusion and now it was trying to tell her something. That had to be it. Her hallucination was trying to convey something about the way she really felt about herself.

Now she had two reasons to be frustrated.

"You're supposed to want me," she said out loud, but very softly. "Why don't you want me?"

A low grumble sounded next to her. Someone else was also frustrated. And awake, just as she now suspected he had been the whole time. Sara let her mouth curl into a half smile and tried to keep the amusement out of her voice when she spoke.

"I guess it won't be the first time a man marries a woman he doesn't really want."

From the quick, almost violent way he rolled over on top of her, Sarah half expected him to be mad about what she'd just done. But he wasn't mad at all. In fact, Lossiah was laughing.

"You are impossible!" He continued to laugh even as he wedged his body between her legs. Sarah wiggled her bottom until she was comfortable with their position. "I told you," he mock-scolled. "We have to wait."

"But I don't want to wait," she whispered between kisses to his chin and neck and lips. "I want you now." A kiss to his neck. "I want you inside me." Another to his ear. "I need you, Lossiah." Sarah grinned deviously while her voice feigned innocence. "Does my brave Indian warrior not care about his woman's needs?"

Another grumble. This one sounding very much like defeat. Sarah lifted her head when he indicated that he wanted to put his hands behind it. Careful not to irritate the pop knot she'd received, Lossiah cradled her head in his palms and brushed his lips against hers.

"Yes, I care about your needs." He kissed her long and sweet. "Your needs are the only thing I care about now."

Lossiah let the head of his penis rest against her opening. When Sarah moved her butt from side to side hoping to coax at least a little of it into her pussy, Lossiah shook his head.

"You need a strong man," he stated. "A man who isn't helpless to his whims."

Sarah's voice was much lower when she countered, "I need a man who knows how to use his penis. And who isn't afraid to use it."

A sideways grin danced across Lossiah's face. Sarah gasped when just the head of his erection slipped into her cunt.

"You need a man with dignity," he replied. "One with respect for himself and for his elders and most of all, you."

Lossiah's firm, muscular ass was the next positive quality Sarah noted when she wrapped her legs around him. "I need a man inside me. And I'd prefer that man to be you." Sarah shrugged. "But if you don't think you're the right man for the job..."

It wasn't a thrust. There was nothing that definitive about the way every inch of Lossiah's cock came to be exactly where she wanted it. It was more a slow, determined press of his into hers. A joining, Sarah suspected she would call it later. Just as he had when he'd kissed her, Lossiah simply sank into Sarah. And with rhythmic stroke after stroke after stroke that pressed him deeper and deeper, Lossiah slowly dragged Sarah into him.

And then he stopped. When they were as melded together as he could manage, Lossiah simply stopped moving.

"Feel."

Feel what? Her lips almost uttered the words, but her intuition wouldn't let them. He wanted her to feel the pressure of his pelvis against hers. How the bones and skin closest to their sex lined up and how exhilarating it was to be touching one another right there for the very first time. He wanted her to notice how full she was. How complete her body was now that part of him was inside it. Lossiah wanted her to feel his heartbeat against her chest. His breath against her face.

How much he already loved her.

"Did you find it?"

Sarah nodded. Yes, she found it. All of it. Everything he was talking about and probably even things he couldn't even begin to guess. They were all right there, already a part of her.

Lossiah flexed his hips and Sarah gasped when his cock left her completely. With one smooth, sure stroke he was deep inside her again. He repeated the action and this time Sarah shivered when the head of his cock brushed her clit. Another stroke and he teased the nub of flesh even more before once again burying himself deep enough that the soft, furred skin of his balls pressed against her ass.

Sarah unwrapped her legs from around his waist and spread her thighs as far as they would go. She was wet. So wet that the juices from her pussy had dripped onto his balls and made them sticky. Sarah could think of nothing but how badly she wanted to be fucked. No man had ever made her this horny. No one had ever used her own body as a way to control her, but that was precisely what Lossiah was doing. He was making her body want him. He was making her want to be fucked by him and him alone.

Sarah's palms against his ass were begging him to do exactly that. Her hands were urging his cock to go deeper. Telling him to fuck her faster and harder.

Lossiah wanted the same thing. He wanted to fuck Sarah hard and fast, and then he wanted to come. Sarah could tell by the strain on his face and the tension in his hips and ass that another well-placed stroke or two was all it would take to push him over the edge. If only he wasn't so hell-bent on resisting.

"Why are you holding back?"

He took in two ragged breaths before attempting to speak. "Because you're going to make me come." He kissed her before scolding, "Stop doing that."

"Isn't that the point?" she asked. "For you to come?"

"No." He laughed. "Well, not entirely. It has a little something to do with you too."

This time, when he moved, Sarah lifted her hips and matched his stroke. Their bodies met at a powerful angle. One that almost pushed them both over that edge.

"How about if I come with you?" Sarah was panting when she asked. "Will you stop holding back if I come too?"

He answered with a series of perfectly placed thrusts. She arched her back and met them, unaware of how perfect they were until it was too late.

Sarah cried out as every muscle and nerve ending in her body grew taut. She was vaguely aware of the cot beneath her and the night air that had cooled the cabin. She knew she was naked and underneath a man she had just hours ago met. But most of all,

she knew the second he rubbed the head of his cock against her swollen, throbbing clit this one last time...

Everything else disappeared. The cot, the cabin, the confusion over whether or not he was real. Everything was gone but this magnificent man, his hard, hungry cock and what they'd just done to her body.

Sarah came with a crippling intensity. Spasm after spasm gripped and released her. Over and over the walls of her pussy tensed and relaxed, milking the shaft of his cock until finally slowing just enough that she felt his own body jerk, tighten and release itself inside her.

Lossiah was still stroking, but just barely. Even as his cum spurted deep into her cunt, he continued to thrust and grind. The stimulation kept Sarah's own climax pulsing for much longer than it should have.

"Stop," she half laughed, half pleaded. "Please. Stop."

He smiled at the involuntary twitch he triggered when he ground against her one more time. "Stop?" Now he was really panting. "Why?"

"Because." Sarah paused to savor one of the more powerful aftershocks of her orgasm. "It feels too good."

"Too good?" He grinned and ground against her again. "How do you know when something feels too good?"

Mercifully, he stilled. Sarah took a deep, cleansing breath and dragged the tips of her fingers gently up his back. She laughed when Lossiah shivered.

"It's like that," she said.

"Like what?"

Sarah used her fingernails to once again provoke the reaction. "It's like being tickled. It feels good, but it feels so good that you can't stand it."

Lossiah stared down into her eyes. "So when something feels too good, it hurts."

"Something like that."



He hummed. Satisfied with his own explanation, as well as in other ways Sarah suspected, he simply rested on his elbows above her for a full two minutes or so.

"You're quiet."

He hummed again and then rolled to lie beside her on the cot.

"Anything wrong?"

Lossiah shook his head as he fingered and played with one of her nipples.

"Lossiah?"

When he looked at her his eyes were laughing. Not laughing as they would if someone had told him a joke, or even as they would if he'd just witnessed something funny.

They were just...laughing.

Somewhat concerned by his behavior, Sarah licked her lips and prepared herself to deal with whatever had caused it. "Lossiah, please talk to me."

With a quick swoop he took a nipple between his lips, suckled it just long enough to make Sarah moan, and then let it pop out of his mouth. Even after he raised and kissed her long and slow, his eyes didn't lose the glaze of laughter. Sarah searched them as he traced her bottom lip with his thumb.

"I know what to tell the elders when they ask why I believe you're supposed to be part of our clan."

Sarah's brows arched. "You do?"

Lossiah's palm was warm against her cheek. He kissed her. Kissed her again.

And again.

"I do." For some reason he laughed for real this time. Then he explained, "I'll tell them I know you're supposed to be here – with me – because you were sent to help me make up for my past."

"Your past?"

Lossiah nodded. "I've done some things wrong. Things against my people. Against my tribe."

"What does that have to do with me?"

Lossiah sighed and settled in beside Sarah. Within seconds his breathing slowed to what Sarah already knew meant sleep was close for him.

"I'll tell them," he yawned, "you're what I deserve. You're my punishment."

"Your punishment?" Sarah didn't bother trying to hide her anger. "You consider being with me punishment?"

Lossiah nodded and pulled her tighter. Even when she fought him, he wouldn't let her go. "Yes, that's exactly what you are to me."

"But why?!"

She couldn't see the laughter in his eyes now. They were closed. Lossiah was drifting off to sleep. But a part of him was still laughing. Sarah could hear it in his voice when he revealed his "insult's" true identity.

"You're exactly what I deserve," he said sleepily. "My punishment is being with you from now on. Because now that I've found you, absolutely everything hurts."

## **Chapter Four**

Dawn. Almost. Sarah squinted through sleepy eyes at the dimly lit logs of the cabin's ceiling. Disoriented at first, it only took a moment or two for her to remember where she was.

She was with Lossiah. In his cabin. In a Cherokee village that had existed unnoticed in the Smoky Mountains for almost two centuries.

Her mind was clear.

Sarah carefully rolled to her side and scooted as close to the wall as she could. Had she realized how small the cot was, she would have slept in this position. At least Lossiah would have had enough room for at least half of his body. As it was, the poor man was somehow sound asleep with one hand grasping the wall to keep from falling off.

She smiled and gently wedged her head underneath his chin. She didn't want to wake him as they'd only been asleep a couple of hours, and yet she secretly hoped he would wake. Sarah wanted to talk to him now that she wasn't foggy. She wanted to ask him questions, all kinds of questions about him, his tribe, his life away from civilization, how his clan had escaped the removal of the Cherokee people in the 1830s. Most of all she wanted to ask him if she'd heard correctly when he'd talked about them being together from now on.

Sarah sighed and lightly dragged her fingertips down the center of his chest. Her questions could wait, she supposed. They'd have to wait. Lossiah had to be exhausted after caring for her and bathing her in the creek and satisfying her womanly "needs" the way he had.

A silent chuckle shook Sarah's body as she recalled the way she'd enticed him to change his mind about making love to her. She had no desire to break down every

barrier and cross every line with a man. But she did want this. A man who couldn't help but give in to her, even when everything inside him was telling him not to do it. Sarah was an old-fashioned romantic. She wanted to be a man's weakness. And she wanted to live in a time and place where a man was willing to work for what he wanted because what he wanted wasn't a high-paying career or an \$80,000 car or a yacht.

It seemed to her that men and women had simply lost interest in one another. There was no romance out there in the real world. No passion or desire. In her experience most women were so easy to have that men had stopped trying. They didn't have to impress or seduce to get laid. They simply had to show up, buy a drink or two, and *voila!* The pussy was theirs.

Sarah wanted something a little deeper. Something a little more challenging. Spark to her was being with a man whose pursuit made her stay one step ahead at all times. A man for whom she had to be witty and sexy and seductive because if she wasn't, there was nothing for him to chase.

Lossiah seemed like the kind of man who would understand her way of thinking. He was a hunter by nature, as all men are. But Sarah suspected Lossiah probably wasn't so far removed from his natural habitat that he'd forgotten what men really are.

Lossiah would hunt her. He'd keep her on her toes. He'd add spark to her life and give her a reason to come out of her shell and stay out.

Sarah knew this because nothing about her current situation mirrored her life. Waking up next to this man was the most insane, dangerous, unlikely thing she'd ever done. Considering waking up next to him every morning from now on was even more unlike her. She'd known Lossiah all of eight hours and yet here she was, making plans to stay with him. Excited about the thought of staying with him!

Even her sister would see this situation as sparkly.

Sarah wiggled her way to the foot of the cot and stood up. Her surroundings were foreign—she didn't know where a single thing was in the village—and she doubted Losi wanted her gallivanting around before she'd been properly announced.

But there was one small problem. One small, pressing, urgent problem.

Sarah eased the cabin door open just a crack and peered outside. She spotted a couple of women in the distance. They were far enough away that Sarah could probably sneak out and never be seen, if only she knew which way the outhouse was.

Through the sliver, Sarah narrowed her choices down to three small buildings. Unfortunately they were so far apart that she'd never make it from one to the other without being discovered if the first one she tried wasn't the facility she needed.

Sarah glanced over her shoulder at Lossiah. With her gone he'd relaxed and was lying spread-eagle across his cot. Probably getting the first few minutes of good, comfortable sleep he'd had all night. There was no way she was going to wake him just so he could tell her where she could go potty.

The woods it was, she decided as she eased the door open a little more. Luckily Lossiah's "woman" was a botanist. And as every botanist knows, very few exotic plants grow in close proximity to powder rooms. In Sarah's profession, even an outhouse would be considered uptown.

Sarah quietly fished around in her pack for some tissue. She'd peed in the woods before. She supposed she could do it again.

A quick dash around the side of the cabin put Sarah in plain sight of an older dark-skinned woman. Sarah ducked behind a rain barrel until the woman went back inside her own log house. Another sprint put her at the edge of the woods where she had to crouch down behind a stump to avoid being seen by a teenage Cherokee girl.

Finally, Sarah made it to a private spot. Quickly as she could she took care of business and prepared to make another mad dash back to Lossiah's cabin. And she would have dashed back, immediately, had she not seen them.

It wasn't a rhododendron this time that caught her attention. But the sight was every bit as breathtaking as the one she'd seen the night before.

Magical. That was the only word to describe the way the early morning sun's rays were streaming down through the treetops and fog. Straight, bright beams of light that

were falling just so. It was perfect, the way they dived to the ground. As if they were pointing at something. Illuminating something, perhaps.

Sarah quietly stepped forward, tracing the beams with her eyes, until a soft noise made her stop.

The rays had been pointing at something. And what a vision it was.

The woman was young, maybe twenty or so. The man was maybe a year or so older. They were both naked and both a deep, rich reddish-brown from head to toe. The woman was on her back, her body lying at a slight angle because of the small knoll she was on. As for the man, he was on his knees but leaning forward. He was kissing and licking and tonguing what had to be the most gorgeous pussy Sarah had ever seen.

Shocked by her own thoughts, Sarah tried to turn away, but couldn't. There was something so normal and right about her thoughts. The woman's sex *was* gorgeous. Its shape, its firm, pouting lips, even the dark, curly hair around it seemed like something out of an erotic painting.

Sarah wasn't a lesbian or even bisexual, but there was no denying the arousal she felt as watched the man spread the young woman's lips open with his fingers and lick her again and again. Even reclined the way the woman was and even though she was in what could be considered a submissive stance, with the ravenous way the man was devouring and touching and exploring her pussy the young woman gave off an air of power. Distinctly feminine, gorgeous power.

Seeing the man's tongue flick at the pink pearl between the woman's lips and watching the woman's back arch and her thighs quiver as over and over he licked her from one hole to the other made Sarah anxious for Lossiah to do the same things to her. She wanted Lossiah to feast on her pussy and lap up her juices with the same enthusiasm and hunger this man had for his woman's taste. The mere idea of Lossiah's tongue delving deep into her cunt and his teeth nipping and tugging at her clit caused a rush of hot liquid to pool between her legs.

Careful not to move too quickly and be discovered by the couple, Sarah checked this way and that for anyone who may have followed her into the forest. She found no one who might see her. No one who would could report what she was about to do.

She turned back in time to see the man slide his hands underneath the woman's firm, beautiful coppery-brown ass and lift. His action brought the woman's sex up to his mouth. As his hands kneaded and massaged the flesh of her butt, his lips and tongue and teeth worked their way as deeply as they could between those swollen, glistening lips.

Sarah's hands had found a way to stay occupied as well. While the fingers of one pinched through her shirt at one of her own tight, puckered nipples, the other was working its way down and into the waistband of her khaki shorts.

Two fingers slid easily into Sarah's pussy. She was so wet it made her rethink pleasing herself the way she was about to. Perhaps she should go back to the cabin and wake Lossiah. Strip naked at the front door perhaps and get his dick instantly hard by telling him what she'd just seen and that she wanted him to do the same thing to her.

That thought—the one of having Lossiah's mouth buried deep in her center—made her pussy flex. Sarah fought back a moan when she pulled her fingers out and circled their slick pads against her clit. The little nub was supersensitive, swollen and hard. It ached, both begging Sarah to touch it and causing her to jerk in pleasure that was too intense at the same time. Finally, Sarah found a suitable spot. One she could stimulate until she climaxed without losing her mind before that happened.

The woman on the ground was about to climax herself. Sarah could tell by the pace of her breathing and the circular motions of her hips against her partner's mouth. She was working with him now, assisting his efforts to make her come.

Sarah smiled when the woman reached for one of her own dark brown nipples and pinched, twisting just short of pain, Sarah suspected. She then rubbed the sensation away. Over and over she did this, diffusing the pleasure he was giving her, using pain

to make what he was doing to her bearable, and all the while taking what he offered by grinding her sex against his mouth.

This was what was so arousing about the woman, Sarah considered. It wasn't a desire to be with her or a sexual arousal that had anything to do with her body.

It was a kinship. An understanding only a woman can have of another woman. To find someone else who truly understands the way a woman's body works, how it reacts and feels and what provokes need in it, and to see that person—this other female—in such an intimate light. To see her naked and spread open and vulnerable while knowing exactly what she was feeling and needing and most of all, what she was anticipating.

Sarah watching this woman being pleased wasn't voyeurism. There was nothing wrong or disrespectful in Sarah's wanting to see her face contort and her body shiver and spasm when she came.

It was like Sarah was watching herself. She wanted the woman on the ground to come. She wanted her body to have what it obviously, desperately needed because Sarah knew what it was like to have the same need.

In only a matter of seconds, Sarah got her wish.

It was sudden, but not abrupt. A quiet gasp. A sound so soft and feminine that had Sarah not been waiting for a sign, she would have missed it.

She was coming. That beautiful, copper-brown creature was coming while Sarah watched. As soon as her climax began the man holding her slowly lowered her hips to the ground. Gently, easily he continued to lick between her legs as the rest of her silently bucked and quivered.

Sarah's own climax followed close behind. Quickly finding that unheard rhythm every female body produces, the muscles inside Sarah's pussy began to tense and release. Throbbing quietly, as if answering the call this other woman had sent out, she came.



Before they were both finished, even before their bodies calmed to a normal, non-aroused state, the man on the ground took his turn. In wonderful contrast to the quiet, gentle workings of a woman's desire, he thrust quick and hard into the young woman's still-quivering pussy. Seeing his woman pleased had obviously pushed his state of arousal beyond what he could control as he quickly withdrew and thrust again. Where Sarah and the other woman needed steady, circular stimulation to come, the man's sex craved something else.

He needed to fuck. Nothing gentle, nothing soft or feminine about what his body needed if it wanted to come.

Sarah slid her hand out of her shorts and reached for a nearby sapling to steady herself as she continued to watch. Seeing the man so helpless to his desire was even more arousing than it had been watching the woman. Sarah could relate to the woman and the needs of her body without wanting to be with the woman sexually.

But watching the young man's firm, tanned ass flex as he pumped and drove his cock into warm, wet pussy reminded Sarah of someone she did want to be with sexually. Someone she did want touching and tasting her. Someone with whom she was willing and eager to share every part of her body.

"Beautiful, aren't they?"

Sarah didn't dare draw breath. The older woman had stepped up so quietly that Sarah hadn't heard the first leaf rustle or twig snap. Instead of confronting her new acquaintance, Sarah swallowed and stared straight ahead at the naked man and woman being bathed by the sunlight.

"Youngbear and Kina have only been married a month or so," the woman beside her explained. "They don't have a cabin of their own yet. So they come out here every morning."

Sarah's first thought was of course to be nervous because she'd been spotted. But the woman didn't seem the least bit hostile, so that notion didn't take shape. She next

considered being embarrassed or ashamed because she was invading this couple's privacy.

As if reading Sarah's thoughts, the woman next to her whispered, "They know I like to watch." The woman's skin was like warm, crinkled tissue paper when she gently wrapped her fingers around Sarah's forearm. "But don't worry, child. I think they get a kick out of letting me do it."

## **Chapter Five**

Sarah flushed a deep crimson at the admission that so mirrored her own actions, but didn't confess as much. Instead she stood there silently beside her brand-new "friend". She could see the woman out of the corner of her eye but was afraid to turn and look at her. The situation was so odd. So unlike what Sarah expected would occur if a member of the tribe caught her before she'd been properly introduced.

"Lossiah's waited many years for you."

Sarah blinked.

"He could be a very good man."

"He's already a good man." Sarah was a bit shocked that the words had taken on a life of their own and burst from her mouth. She lowered her voice when she finished her defense. "I see a lot of good in him just the way he is."

The woman emitted a quiet but high-pitched whistling sound. Like air being sucked through false teeth. "Good isn't something you see, child," she corrected. "Good is like love. It's something you feel."

Sarah was nodding. "Well then, I can feel the good in Lossiah."

The woman giggled a tiny, little girl's giggle that took several years off her age. "You love him already, don't you?"

Sarah blinked again. In front of her the young couple appeared to be struggling. Fighting together to help the husband locate what his wife had already found.

"I..." Sarah closed her mouth. Did she love Lossiah? Her brow crinkled as she considered the woman's question. Was it even possible to love someone as quickly as this? "I wouldn't say that I love him," she offered.

"You didn't say it," the woman purred. "I did."

Sarah's heartbeat faltered.

"But it's good that you already love him," the woman quietly explained. "Because he's loved you for a long, long time."

That falter became a full-fledged palpitation. Sarah didn't want to talk about things like love and fate and the harsh reality that always eventually dulled such fanciful concepts. She wanted to enjoy her "spark". She wanted to have great sex with Lossiah and pretend they were going to live together in the woods stump-humping from now on, and she'd deal with all this emotional stuff later. After she knew for sure her head was operating properly and could no longer blame her behavior and decisions on increased cranial pressure.

'Cause God knew there was no way in hell she would ever let herself fall for a guy this fast if she hadn't scrambled her squash.

Determined to ride out her fantasy until the very end, Sarah took a deep breath and finally faced the woman next to her. "Look, I don't know who you are. And I don't know why you think Lossiah's been in love with me for a long time..."

"A long, long time," she smiled.

Sarah waved the interruption away. "Okay, a long, long time. Whatever. What I do know is that Lossiah has taken very good care of me. He's been good to me. And he's done so apparently at the risk of alienating his entire tribe."

"Ahhhh," the woman sounded. "And you want to know what a woman can do to prevent that from happening?"

Sarah opened her mouth and then closed it. Actually, she was about to tell the elderly one that this was *her* hallucination, even though at this point Sarah was pretty sure she wasn't hallucinating anymore, and that if she didn't stop ruining her buzz, Sarah was going to conjure up something big and winged that would carry the old woman off.

But advice on how to keep Lossiah from being expelled from the village? Okay. That sounded good too.

At the advice of her heart, Sarah agreed. "Yes. I do want to know how I can help Lossiah stay in good with the elders."

A soft, knowing smile began to curve the older woman's lips. "That wasn't what you were going to say. You weren't going to ask me how to help him make amends."

Sarah blinked again. Okay. A point for the wrinkled one.

"But you want to know that now." The woman's smile finished forming. "So I will tell you."

The old woman's hand extended up and out. Sarah let her eyes follow tiny, brown fingers until she found what they were indicating. Filtered by morning fog, the sun was easy to look upon as it rose over the mountains. The older woman's hand circled 'round and 'round the bright, glowing disk as she spoke.

"There are certain things the Tsalagi people hold sacred. Certain objects and symbols." Sarah flinched when the loud, screeching cry of a bird rang out through the forest. "The eagle," the woman noted. Sarah's eyes grew wide when a large feather drifted down and landed at the woman's feet. "The feathers from the same bird. The sun." Sarah glanced at the woman's still skyward-pointing hand. "The moon. And the circle that represents them both."

"The circle," Sarah noted quietly.

The older woman's smile intensified. "Yes, child. The circle."

A muffled moan sounded, signaling the young man had just come. Sarah glanced back to the couple just in time to see him thrust a final time as his wife's legs tightened around his waist and drew him in deeper.

The circle, the old woman had said. Sarah's mind wandered back to the climax she and the young Cherokee woman had shared just moments earlier.

"Certain numbers are also sacred to our people," the older woman said quietly. "The number seven. And the number four."

*Four.*

"The survival of the clan is first and foremost," the woman advised Sarah. "Never forget that. And never forget the things we hold most sacred." She turned away from the sun, looked very deeply into Sarah's eyes, and said, "If you want to be with Lossiah, help him close the circle."

And then the woman was silent. Somewhere in the back of Sarah's mind a memory was fighting to surface. There was something there. Something about a circle and the number four. It was something Lossiah had told her about his people as he bathed her in the creek. Only it wasn't a circle because it wasn't four. It was an incomplete sphere because there were only three.

But three what?

The confusion was maddening. Lossiah had said this to her when her brain was bruised and swollen so Sarah couldn't recall enough of the memory to ask him what he'd been talking about. All she knew was that he'd mentioned some of the very things this woman was telling her now. And even if Sarah did remember what Lossiah had told her, how was she supposed to know what it had to do with her helping Lossiah gain the elders' forgiveness for performing the mating dance and bringing her into the village?

"We know you're there, Aggie!"

At the sound of the young man's voice, Sarah jumped and quickly dove behind the bush in front of her. She turned just in time to catch a glimpse of the older woman's buckskin skirt disappearing into the forest.

A childlike giggle followed her spry, quick-moving shadow.

"We know you're watching!" It was the young woman's turn now to call out with a lighthearted laugh. "You like to watch, don't you, you sneaky little thing?"

Sarah had to cover her mouth to keep her own laughter from escaping. It would seem she'd been correct when she'd decided "Aggie" had a mischievous streak. An interesting soul, Sarah considered. Aggie's advice and warmth was not at all what Sarah had expected from her first tribal greeting.

Nor was Aggie's youthful spirit.

Sarah sat there in the brush for a long time. She was thinking about what Aggie had told her and she was thinking about Lossiah. There were so many things she didn't understand about the village. How had it come to be and how had it remained hidden for so many years? And what about her own current situation? Had she really just fallen into this wonderful man's life? Was Lossiah really as good as he seemed? Sarah was anxious to get back to his cabin and ask him about the strange things the woman had said, and to ask him if he felt the same about her as she felt about him.

She was even more anxious to get back to the cabin and tell Lossiah what she'd experienced with the young man and woman in the forest, and that she wanted him to use his mouth on her the way the young husband had used his on his wife.

Not until the hushed, cooing voices of the couple told her they were too enamored by one another to notice anything or anyone else did Sarah slip quietly from her hiding place and make her way back to the village's edge. Unfortunately Sarah found there were more people awake and about now. Many more. So many that she saw no way for her presence to go unnoticed. The sun was up completely and there was no pre-morning dawn or fog to hide her as she made her way out of the forest's edge and into Lossiah's cabin.

Sarah grimaced. How was she going to slip past so many people? If only she hadn't dawdled so long, she told herself. If she hadn't stayed to watch the couple or if she hadn't run into Aggie...

Aggie. Yes. That was it. Aggie would help her. Sarah had no idea why she believed such a crazy idea would work, but she did indeed believe it. Perhaps it had something to do with a certain mating dance that had proved magical. Sarah had to admit, it was odd how she'd fallen into that ravine at the exact moment this man, this wonderful, caring, beautiful man, was performing his dance. Chewing her bottom lip, she took a deep breath and resorted to an act that before meeting Lossiah, Sarah would have never tried.

“Aggie, help me.”

The cloud came from nowhere. The clear, crisp morning sky suddenly grew very dark, as if a thunderstorm was moving in, only this cloud was moving much faster than any storm Sarah had ever witnessed. The sudden shift in light and atmosphere caused Sarah to freeze in her tracks. That was, until the wind ushered in a single word, spoken in what sounded very much like an old woman’s voice.

Go...

Sarah bolted from the forest and across the village’s main yard. She ran as fast and as hard as she could, and not until she was safely at Lossiah’s cabin door did she stop and look up to find the cloud that had darkened the sky long enough to let her pass.

The loud screech of the eagle was only slightly less intimidating than the size of the creature’s wings. Wings large enough to blot out the sun. Wings that were there one second, right in front of Sarah’s eyes, and then gone.

Aggie? The old woman who knew that Sarah belonged to Lossiah and that Lossiah had loved her for a long, long time? The old woman who had somehow known that Sarah had already fallen in love with Lossiah?

No, Sarah thought to herself. Surely not.

Then again, Sarah considered as she reached for the wooden latch on the door, she thought she was clearheaded now, but she had just suffered a head injury, hadn’t she? And when one was recovering from a head injury, Sarah supposed anything was possible.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Where the hell have you been?!”

Anger. Lossiah had never liked anger. Not in himself, not in the people around him. Especially not when it was directed toward someone he loved.

But this woman! This black-and-blue, battered, scratched-up woman who’d just scared the life out of him. Lossiah held back as much of the anger as he could when he



wrapped his fingers around her wrists and pulled her to his chest. The warm, feminine softness of her breasts against him immediately lessened his ire.

Still, relief that she was safe hadn't yet made it to his face so Lossiah's teeth gritted together when he once again demanded, "Where. Have you. Been?"

That look. He'd seen it once before. She'd shot it at him after testing his patience the first time he'd been worried sick about her.

Her teeth were not gritted when she responded. They were, however, bared.

"I had. To pee."

Lossiah blinked.

"Lossiah. Let go of me."

Let go of her. Yes. He probably should do that lest he lose a testicle one night while he was sleeping. He wasn't holding her tight enough to hurt her or anything, but he was holding her somewhat against her will. And as honey sweet as Sarah was, she just didn't strike Lossiah as a woman who'd tolerate being held against her will and not get even somehow, someday.

But wait. Lossiah narrowed his eyes at her and resituated his grip.

"You went to pee," he stated. The look got sharper and she nodded. "Did you go pee in Montana?"

The look melted as Sarah's expression changed to one of confusion. "What?" She struggled a bit and Lossiah let go of her wrists. He settled for wrapping his arms around her and holding her against him instead. For the moment he simply couldn't stand the thought of letting her go completely. "What are you talking about?"

"When I woke up this morning, you were gone. And I have looked every –"

"This morning?" Sarah interrupted with a laugh. "Lossiah, it's still morning."

Lossiah's worry was back. Only this time it wasn't accompanied by anger. He held his breath and slowly shook his head. "Sarah? Honey? Where have you been all day?"

This time her laugh blurted out. "All day? Losi, I just went to the bathroom." Her face flushed a deep red before she finished her argument. "That's all I did."

A thick, consuming dread slid from Lossiah's mind to his stomach. She really was hurt. That was all there was to it. She really did have a head injury. That's why she didn't know how long she'd been gone. Without alerting her to his suspicions, he checked the size and shapes of her pupils.

"Do you feel okay?" he asked. "Are you nauseous or dizzy?"

This time when she struggled she meant business. Not wanting to upset her in case her head injury was even worse than "really bad", Lossiah let her go. He followed her across the room to his cot. When she lay down, he stretched out next to her.

"Do you know your name?" he asked.

Sarah rolled her eyes. "Lossiah, you are driving me crazy with these questions. I am fine! I promise you, there is nothing wrong with my head. Will you please stop worrying about me?"

Stop worrying about her? Lossiah grunted a helpless laugh that contained no amusement at all. Telling him to stop worrying about Sarah was like telling him to stop breathing. It just wasn't going to happen. Lossiah rolled her over to face him and melded his body against hers.

Unbelievably, even with the amount of worry and angst flowing through him, he immediately got hard.

"Sarah? I know you told me you just went to the bathroom and back. But you've been gone for almost nine hours." He waited for her to respond but she didn't. "Do you not realize that?"

She opened her mouth, but then closed it. Lossiah watched her pupils constrict, making her green eyes large and scared.

"Losi, I was gone for twenty minutes. Thirty minutes, tops. I just went into the forest and..."

She stopped talking when Lossiah quickly rolled over, retrieved her watch from the small table beside the bed, and showed it to her.

"It's five thirty."

The panic in her voice tore a hole in Lossiah's gut. "Yes. It is." Her bottom lip started to quiver and searing pain ripped its way into Lossiah's heart. She was scared and there was nothing he could do about it. This was torture. Lossiah had never felt so helpless in his life.

"It's five thirty in the afternoon," she whispered again.

"I know it is."

She handed the watch back and buried herself deeper into his chest. Lossiah pulled her as close as he could and tightened his arms around her.

"You have to go to the hospital."

She shook her head.

"Sarah, you did something to your head when you fell. You are hurt on the inside." Lossiah took a deep breath to calm his nerves. She *was* hurt. Oh God, she really was. And it was all his fault. If he hadn't danced, if he had only listened to the elders when they told him not to perform the Dance. Was he *ever* going to learn?

"You need a doctor," he said, purposely hiding his own fear from her. "And you need one now."

He heard her sniff once. A tight, determined sound indicating that her mood was about to change whether it wanted to or not.

"Yes, apparently I do need a doctor." Another shorter sniff punctuated her sentence. "But I feel fine right now so it can wait."

"Wait?" Lossiah was perplexed. "Wait for what?"

Sarah had already slid off the cot and was standing next to it. Lossiah watched breathlessly as she pulled her t-shirt over her head and reached around to unhook her bra.

"If I've been gone as long as you say I have then there is obviously something wrong."

"Yes," Lossiah agreed. "That's exactly why you have to go to the hospital."

Sarah shook her head. "No, that exactly why we have to do this now." She was choking back tears. "If there's something wrong with my head then there's a chance everything will change when they find whatever that is. Once I go to the hospital, once they figure out what's wrong with my head..." She sobbed once. "Lossiah, I am so afraid you aren't real. I'm afraid that once I get to the hospital they'll tell me I imagined you. I'm afraid they'll tell me this whole thing—you, last night, the way I feel about you already—that all of it was just some delusion I was having because I banged my head against a rock."

"Sarah," Lossiah soothed. The way she felt about him already? Could that mean what he thought it meant? His heart leapt in his chest but he stayed calm on the outside. "I am real. I promise you, I am very, very real."

She was shaking her head again. "But I can't be sure of that, can I? Not when I'm also sure I wasn't gone for nine hours and when I know I'm seeing things I shouldn't be seeing."

"Things you shouldn't be seeing?" Lossiah questioned. What was she talking about? What things had she seen that she shouldn't have seen?

They were all good questions but they were questions whose answers would have to wait because the minute Sarah shrugged out of her undergarment, Lossiah's attention was captivated by an inescapable sight.

Two cream-colored mounds, each one tipped with a deliciously tempting pale pink nipple, bounced as soon as she released them from the confines of her bra. Lossiah had seen her breasts already, but he'd seen them at night and with her lying down. Catching a glimpse of these beauties had simply been part of a bigger, more attention-driven activity, so he hadn't had time to fully appreciate the sight.

Sarah standing in the daylight, offering his eyes their chance to take their fill, was much more than allowing him to catch a glimpse. His sexual experience had been limited to women who were “easy”. That was the word one of the elders had used to describe them when Lossiah’s nighttime activities had brought suffering to the village. With so little time to satisfy his body’s urges, Lossiah had only been with women who needed very little persuasion before they would bed a man. Fortunately for Lossiah, his dark good looks and firm, fit body had been all the persuasion most had needed.

But this? What Sarah was doing to him? This was seduction, Lossiah suspected. Purposeful, deliberate seduction.

And he suspected he knew exactly why he was being seduced.

“Sarah.” Lossiah licked his lips and swallowed. “You have to go to the hospital.”

She was rolling both nipples between her fingers. The soft pink flesh was beginning to pucker and turn rosy.

“I will. I’ll go.” She smiled and closed her eyes and pinched each nipple harder. “In a little while.”

Lossiah couldn’t breathe. His cock and balls felt as if they were about to burst. He’d never been this hard. Never had so little blood left in the ninety-seven percent of his body that wasn’t comprised of erectile tissue.

“You need to go now,” Lossiah argued. “I can go to the Caine property and have someone back here with a vehicle in thirty minutes.”

Sarah bent her head and caught one of her nipples between her teeth. A single bead of sweat rolled down the side of Lossiah’s face.

“You have to go, Sarah.”

The sucking noise Sarah made when she pulled the nipple out of her mouth made Lossiah’s cock jerk. Hoping to relieve some of the pressure in his aching balls, he reached down and wrapped his hand around his shaft.

She was unbuttoning her shorts now. "I said I'll go." They fell to the cabin floor and she kicked them out of the way. Lossiah continued to absently stroke his cock as she slipped her thumbs into the top of her panties and slowly pulled them down. "But there's something I want from you first."

Something she wanted from him? Okay. Lossiah was fine with that. He shouldn't be fine with it, but he was. He should be firm about her going to the doctor. She needed modern medical care and Lossiah should demand that she get it.

But this was Sarah. The woman who rattled his brain so badly he wasn't sure of anything anymore except that anything she wanted, he would find a way for her to have.

Lossiah watched silently as she turned and crossed the cabin floor. She walked slowly, allowing him plenty of time to study the soft, rounded curve of her ass. The feminine but sculpted muscles of her calves and thighs. The delicate, kissable dimples at the bottom of her back.

Lossiah's heart was pounding in anticipation and because of some strange territorial urge he was hard pressed to describe. It was an urge to "claim" her as his, he decided. An urge to make her his and his alone.

While Sarah moved the wooden bench away from his table, Lossiah considered how very much like the animals of the forest his people really were. He wondered if other men—white men, for example—felt the same urge to claim their women the way he suddenly wanted to claim Sarah.

Not that it mattered how other men dealt with their women. Lossiah definitely felt the urge to make her his. The problem was, as much like the animals of the forest as Lossiah and all other men might be, he knew women of every color and race were a little different than their male counterparts. A little less bestial and a little more civilized. And that difference of opinion, Lossiah noted grimly, could lead to problems.

"Come here," she motioned and slid her backside onto the table. Lossiah made the trip across the cabin in two steps. "Sit down on the bench."

*Claim her. Take her. Fuck her.* The ugly words especially sounded foreign in Lossiah's head. The people of his clan didn't use such language. There was no need for vulgarity. But those words were so right. Even the vulgar ones described precisely what he wanted.

Images from Lossiah's past flooded his senses. Nameless, faceless breasts, arms, skin, vaginas. He was by no means "innocent" but the bulk of his sexual experiences had been hurried and had occurred years before with women who were anything but "lovers". Since his sex had always been with women he knew just for a night, and as most of the females in his clan were relatives who weren't sexual beings in Lossiah's eyes, he'd never developed sexual preferences. Other than the obvious, the shape and bouncing of breasts and the curves of a female body, he really didn't know what it was about any particular woman that would turn him on. What was it about a woman's personality, what could a woman say, what could she do other than touching and sucking him to make him hard?

Sarah was sitting on the edge of the table with her pretty, pale legs crossed. A small tuft of dark curls peeked out at Lossiah from between her thighs. She was smiling.

And Lossiah's dick was growing harder by the second.

"I saw something in the forest," she said quietly. Lossiah thought he detected a tiny hint of embarrassment in her tone. "Something I want you to do to me."

Her words had not been the least bit vulgar. Not at all. But their potency was no less jarring as Lossiah considered their meaning.

Something she wanted him to do to her. As if he was one of the bears or wolves or coyotes who called the mountains home and she was warm, willing, life-sustaining prey.

Yes. Sarah's words were definitely something that turned him on.

Lossiah kept his voice as restrained as possible when he asked, "What do you want me to do to you?"

Her face flushed a rich shade of crimson but her green eyes twinkled. She was beautiful in her combination of wanton eagerness and genteel reserve. It made Lossiah less self-conscious about his own somewhat limited sexual expertise.

"I want you to lick me." The white skin of her throat moved when she swallowed. The flush was traveling south. "I want you to eat my pussy. Will you do that for me?"

Lossiah considered that he should probably tell Sarah she need never, ever, ever ask that question again. Never. Because the answer to that question would be the same tomorrow as it was today and as it would be every day from now until they both died.

Then again, if she wanted to ask it every day from now on that was fine too. But she'd better be prepared to suffer the consequences if she did because Lossiah had just discovered that one of his biggest turn-ons was hearing Sarah say the word "pussy".

He was nodding long before his mouth was able to form words. "Yes. I will do that to you." His cock jerked again in his hand. "I will do that *for* you."

Within a minute or so Lossiah had added a few more turn-ons to his list. He liked the very idea of "fucking" Sarah on the wooden table that had sat unused for years in the middle of his cabin. He liked the way she swung her shoulders from side to side, getting her long hair out of the way, he believed, before she lay back on that table and spread her legs. And he especially liked the musky, womanly way she smelled when he leaned forward and pressed his tongue against her clit.

Still, it wasn't until Lossiah closed his eyes and began to concentrate on her taste and smell and the feel of her sticky sweet juices on his lips and chin that he discovered his biggest turn-on so far.

Sarah gasped when Lossiah slipped his index finger inside her and her breath caught in her throat when he took her swollen little clit between his teeth and tugged. And within minutes her entire body was shivering as over and over he kissed and lapped and loved her sex.

This was it. This was what Lossiah hadn't been able to learn all those other times with all those other women. When he'd been with them it had been for his own



pleasure. His body had demanded he satisfy its urges and he had almost killed his entire clan to do that.

But hearing Sarah moan so softly and seeing the way his touch and lips and caresses were causing her body to twist and grind and beg for more of him was better than any orgasm he'd ever had. Doing this to Sarah—doing this *for* Sarah—made Lossiah feel more like a man than anything else he suspected he would ever do.

Too soon, way too soon for Lossiah's tastes as he could have done this for hours had Sarah's body tolerated it, she came. Lossiah stroked the soft, wet lips of her sex as long, rolling spasms and fierce shivers of pleasure gripped her and let her go, only to grip her and let her go again.

Those spasms were still rolling, intimate female muscles still flexing and quivering, when Lossiah drove inside her. Her pussy gripped his cock, received it and then held on, resisting when Lossiah pulled back to take another stroke. It was maddening, the wet heat and constriction of her vaginal walls around his shaft. She wasn't just a woman. It wasn't just a female body Lossiah was fucking. Sarah's sex was a sheath around him. A warm, pulsing tunnel into which he drove himself over and over.

Lossiah had been willing to take any woman he might have received as a result of the Dance. As skeptical as he'd been, he still hadn't gone into the situation lightly. He had prepared his dance knowing if the Creator was so generous as to send him what he asked for, then he would cherish it. He'd cherish her. Whoever she might be.

And yet as open and accepting as Lossiah had been, nothing could have prepared him for this. Nothing could have told him how much and how quickly he was going to genuinely care about this woman. This, what Lossiah felt, was not the relief of a man who'd finally found an acceptable mate. It was not the grateful appreciation of having finally been forgiven for past mistakes.

This was love. That's all it could be. The ache he felt when she was mere inches away, the fear that had gripped him all day long when he couldn't find her. The terror that washed over Lossiah every time he remembered that she had fallen nearly two

hundred feet into that ravine. And that she was most likely hurt in a way neither of them could see.

Love. That was what Lossiah felt welling up inside him as he plunged into her. He wasn't fucking her. He wasn't using Sarah's body the way he'd used other women. Lossiah was giving himself to Sarah. In the most basic way a man knows how to give, he was giving himself, his body, his sex, and his love to this woman.

What Lossiah couldn't believe was how eager Sarah was to take what he had to offer. The soft, cushioned skin of her inner thighs was shivering when she sat up on the table and wrapped her legs around him. And her hands trembled when she reached around and gripped his butt, pulling him even closer. Deeper into her body than he had dared go on his own.

Her actions, that she would spread her legs so wide and pull him in so deep, told Lossiah that Sarah wanted what he had. She wanted what he was. Best of all, she seemed to want all of him. Sarah wanted every bit of what made him Lossiah.

And in only a matter of seconds, she was going to get exactly what she wanted.

Lossiah slowed his strokes, placing them carefully now. Deliberately. He was about to explode inside all that warmth and wetness and woman, and judging from the tension in every nerve and muscle in Lossiah's body, it was going to be the most violent, exhausting explosion he'd ever had. He was going to come inside Sarah. He was going to come hard and hot and deep inside that gorgeous pink cunt of hers.

Lossiah's wonderful thoughts were interrupted when Sarah loosened her hold on his butt and leaned back. She caught his attention with her eyes even as he continued to thrust.

"Tell me when you're ready," she said.

Lossiah nodded, even though he wasn't completely sure what she meant. He assumed she was talking about his climax, but why she would want to know such a thing? Unless...

Lossiah's heart dropped. She wanted him to pull out before he came. That was the only explanation. Sarah didn't want him to come inside her, even though he had just the night before.

Without his consent, Lossiah's strokes immediately took on a much more mechanical air. Just seconds earlier he'd been giving himself to this woman. Joyfully, happily giving Sarah everything he was and had. And yet with a few well-placed words she'd made this just another artificial coupling. Another meaningless "fuck" for Lossiah to add to his list.

Sarah apparently sensed his climax, the one Lossiah suddenly wanted over and done with, because she leaned back again and smiled at him.

"Are you ready?"

Lossiah nodded and closed his eyes when she pulled his cock out of her body. He'd jerk off on her tits, he supposed. Or on her pussy lips. Heaven knew he'd had to do both of those things before.

But before Lossiah could take the shaft of his cock into his hand and finish himself off, Sarah slid down from the table and onto her knees. Lossiah's cock lurched and bobbed in front of him, aching for him to give it the final stroke or two it needed to release the cum that sat heavy and thick in his balls, but, just in case he'd read Sarah's request very, very wrong, he kept his hands at his sides.

It was one of Sarah's hands that told Lossiah he had done exactly that. He'd interpreted her signals wrong. Lossiah's entire body jerked when five delicate fingers wrapped around the shaft of his cock and began to slide up and down.

Every function in Lossiah's body stopped as he watched his penis get closer and closer to Sarah's mouth. He didn't breathe, didn't blink, he suspected even his heart stopped beating for the twenty seconds or so it took Sarah to open her mouth and wrap her lips around the head of his cock.

She didn't have to lick. She didn't have to do any fancy tongue work or finger his balls. Lossiah had been wrong when he'd thought she didn't want him. Sarah did want

him. She wanted all of him and she wanted him in a way no woman had ever truly wanted him before.

The fingers of one of Lossiah's hands were digging into the oak table behind her. It was all he could do not to let go. Not to let that explosion happen right in her mouth. He wanted to let go, and he was almost certain she wouldn't mind since she had put them into this rather compromising position.

But even as she stroked and sucked there was a tiny hint of uncertainty, as there always is. That was, there was a hint of uncertainty until Sarah pulled his cock from her lips just long enough to dispel all doubt.

"Come."

She barely got her lips back around his head before Lossiah did just as she instructed. He came. Harder and faster and longer than he ever thought possible, Lossiah came in Sarah's mouth. And it just got better because unlike any of the other women who'd done anything close to this when he was younger, Sarah didn't spit his semen out. She didn't appear at all repulsed by the taste or idea of his cum. If Lossiah was reading her correctly this time, Sarah liked his flavor. She loved his cum—she loved him—and she told him this by swallowing every drop of him and even sucking and licking the tiny hole of his cock when there was no more for her to drink.

By the time she was finished Lossiah was weak. His body felt relaxed to the point of drained. He could barely stand, never mind walk, so he held on to the table for a moment longer.

"You okay?" Her big green eyes were twinkling up at him.

Lossiah panted and tried to nod. "I'm the one who's supposed to be asking you that."

Sarah laughed. A light, easy giggle that sent shivers of happiness straight up Lossiah's spine. She stood and wrapped her arms around him and pressed her warm, bare breasts against his chest. Lossiah's own arms immediately returned the favor.

She was holding him up. She probably didn't know that, but she was. Lossiah was bearing his own weight, but this woman had made him so unsteady, she had so unbalanced him with the things she'd done, that if she were to take herself away from him now, Lossiah would most definitely fall.

Just days before, Lossiah's biggest fear had been of making the elders so angry that they would banish him from the village. After he made the decision to perform the Dance, Lossiah had dreaded facing the consequences of his actions because at the time those consequences had seemed dire.

Not so much now. Now, after regaining his balance and getting dressed, when Lossiah opened the door of his cabin and stepped out hand in hand with Sarah, his main concern was not banishment from the clan. The elders were simply going to have to accept that whether Lossiah was allowed to stay in the village or not, and whether they agreed with his performing it or not, the Dance had worked. Lossiah had danced for forgiveness and forgiveness had been given. And it had been given in the form of something Lossiah was not willing to give back.

## **Chapter Six**

"That did not go well."

Sarah closed her eyes and curled up into a tight little ball on the backseat of Damon Caine's car. His wife, Chloe, twisted in the passenger seat and faced Sarah.

"I think it went as well as could be expected," Chloe offered. "Lossiah was already on thin ice with the elders. It was a simple flu virus he inadvertently brought home with him seven years ago, but his people have lived in isolation for so long, that virus could have easily destroyed his entire tribe," she explained. "Lossiah went against tribal law and his actions exposed his entire tribe to an illness that some of the members weren't able to fight off. And then for him to defy the elders again?" She reached for Sarah's chin. "Let me see your eyes."

Sarah leaned forward and let the woman examine her yet again. "I feel fine," she stated. "Physically, at least, I feel normal."

"And you look normal," Chloe agreed. "You may have been disoriented right after you fell but there's no sign of a concussion or any major injuries."

"It doesn't matter what she looks like on the outside." The very tone he used told Sarah the man in the driver's seat wasn't someone with whom one argued when he knew he was right. "Obviously there's something we're not seeing. She wouldn't have simply forgotten nine hours."

Both women reluctantly nodded at what Damon Caine had just said.

"What do you think the elders will do to Lossiah?" Sarah asked. "Do you think they'll banish him from the village for performing the Dance?"

"Well, if they do banish him I know a certain member of the Caine family who can keep him company in exile."

Chloe stifled a laugh over her husband's threat. "Like you're really going to banish Barklee from the mountains." She waited for her words to sink in. "You don't sleep a wink when he's away from home now. And that's when we know he's at a Holiday Inn."

Sarah watched the man's knuckles turn white on the steering wheel. "Chloe? The Cherokee people have lived in these mountains for tens of thousands of years. Theirs is one of the longest surviving civilizations, if not the longest surviving civilization, in the history of mankind."

"And all that's going to end because some twenty-four-year-old kid beat his drums a little too loud one night?"

There was a strange and rare connection between the two people in the front seats. Sarah could feel both the tension and the love between them, and for the moment she wasn't sure which was strongest.

"They have their beliefs and ways for a reason." His voice was lovingly restrained as he spoke to his wife this time. "Just like we have our beliefs and ways for a reason."

Whatever Damon had really said, whatever he'd meant, his wife apparently understood. The tension immediately dissipated.

"I wish he was here," Sarah said quietly. "I wish he had come with us. But then again, I'm glad you talked him into staying."

Chloe shook her head. "Lossiah didn't need to leave with us. He needed to get things in order with his clan. And I wasn't really the one who convinced him to stay. You did that."

Sarah took a deep breath and stared out the window. Dr. Caine was right. As pale as he'd become at the sight of the car, Lossiah had been dead set on climbing into it and going with them to the hospital. But it would have been pointless for him to go, as there was nothing he could do. It was just like Sarah told him. She was a big girl. She could take care of herself, and even if she did need something, Chloe and Damon Caine seemed like perfectly responsible, caring people. If Sarah needed help, they were there

for her. Besides, Lossiah's leaving would have made things even worse between him and the elders.

And making things worse was something he definitely didn't need right now.

Sarah fought back tears as she recalled how uncomfortable Lossiah had been as he'd approached the Caines' Hummer. Lossiah wasn't used to the modern world or technology. He didn't know how to drive a car or operate a microwave or use a cell phone. It would take him years to learn how to function outside the forest and even after he did adapt he'd probably be miserable. An old habit suddenly became very useful as Sarah asked herself, how would a plant do in Lossiah's situation?

The answer stung hard. As strong and capable and masculine as he was in his natural environment, Lossiah would be lost if he had to leave the village and his clan. He would live, she suspected, but he would probably never thrive. Not as a man, nor as a human being.

There was no way in hell Sarah was going to be the catalyst behind such a cruel and counterproductive transplant.

"My father heard the property was going up for sale."

Sarah heard what Damon had just said to his wife but she didn't really pay attention. He was speaking quietly, in a hushed tone, so Sarah assumed the conversation was private.

"Do you think it's true?" Chloe asked.

"I don't know. It could just be a rumor. That land hasn't changed hands since the early 1900s. I don't know why the family would sell it now but I wish they would. If it goes up, I'll buy it."

Chloe let out a long sigh. "They've had over a century of peace and quiet."

"And nervousness," her husband added. "It feels secure but they know better than to think they're safe. It's been pure luck that no one has ventured that far back on the parcel. Someone who can be trusted *needs* to own that land."



Sarah's interest was now piqued. They were talking about Lossiah's family. She knew they were talking about Lossiah's family and their land because she'd heard a very similar conversation before.

She just couldn't remember all of it.

"There are only three." No longer worried about butting into a conversation that had nothing to do with her, Sarah wedged herself between the front seats. "There are supposed to be four but there are only three."

The husband and wife glanced wordlessly at one another.

Sarah's frustration was mounting. Why hadn't she asked Lossiah about the conversation they'd had when they were at the creek? Why had she wasted her time having sex with him instead of...

She smelled the rubber burning in her head when that ridiculous thought stopped. Having sex with Lossiah a waste of time?

No amount of head trauma could convince her of that.

"The Cherokee people hold certain things sacred," she started again. "The eagle, the circle, the number four."

"Sarah, are you okay?"

Sarah waved Chloe's hand away from her forehead. "Yes, I'm fine. I just need to know, why are there only three of them? And what about the fourth and the circle."

"What circle are you talking about?" Damon asked. "And the fourth what?"

Dammit. Dammit, dammit, dammit! Sarah rubbed her eyes and tried to focus. She couldn't even remember enough to ask the questions she needed to ask.

Unless...

"Aggie said if I wanted to help Lossiah make amends with the elders that I needed to remember what his people hold sacred. The number four. The circle..."

"Aggie?"

"Yes." Sarah ignored the shocked tone of Damon's voice. "So, I know they hold the eagle and the circle and the number four sacred."

"You spoke to Aggie?" he interrupted. "And Aggie spoke to you?"

"Yes!" Sarah rolled her eyes. "I talked to Aggie. And she answered. Now will you please let me finish? This is confusing enough as it is."

Sarah wasn't normally so short-tempered, especially with people she didn't know and who were bending over backward to be nice to her. But the thoughts that were trying to come back, the memory of what Lossiah had told her and the time she'd spent with Aggie. It was all too much for her to digest at one time.

Unfortunately, when Damon pulled the car onto the shoulder, Sarah realized she should probably explain her somewhat rude behavior.

"I'm sorry I snapped at you," she offered when he turned to look at her. "You're being so nice to me and you're going out of your way to take a complete stranger to the hospital. And I appreciate that so much. I appreciate what you're doing for Lossiah and his people. He told me how your family has protected his ever since they moved into their circle of land. But I can't remember everything I need to remember. And it's driving me crazy because Aggie said that we're supposed to be together and I know she's right because he loves me and I love him too. I love him *so much*."

Sarah paused because for a moment she simply could not breathe. This was spark. Her sister was wrong. It wasn't wild sex or bungee jumping or riding a Harley without a helmet that made your blood pump and your heart race and that scared the holy bejesus out of you.

It was letting yourself fall in love. Love. *That* was the ultimate rush.

She forced a modicum of calm and started yet again. "Look, I know that whatever Lossiah told me last night is the key to helping him stay in his clan. But I can't remember anything he said."

Her explanation had apparently been even more offensive than her verbal outburst. Both Damon and Chloe Caine were sitting in the front seat, slack jawed.

It was Damon who finally regained his ability to speak. "Sarah, when did you talk to Aggie?"

He didn't sound mad. Sarah relaxed a little even though the Aggie thing was beginning to wear on her nerves. "This morning."

"Where did you see her?"

"In the forest. She caught me watching Youngbear and Kina."

His eyes narrowed. "Caught you watching Youngbear and Kina?"

"Yes."

"Watching Youngbear and Kina do what?"

Oops. Sarah grinned sheepishly and felt her face heat up. "They were, um, making love?"

For some reason Dr. Caine was smiling. It took a second or two longer for her husband's expression to match hers, but eventually it did.

Damon put the car in gear and turned it around.

Sarah was watching scenery they'd just passed. "Where are we going?"

"Back to the village." He was laughing.

"But what about the hospital and an MRI and all that?"

Both occupants of the front seat were amused as hell about something. But as usual, Sarah had no idea what.

"You don't need an MRI," Chloe finally turned and said to her. "There's nothing wrong with your head. You've had no symptoms other than some confusion when you first fell, have you? You didn't lose consciousness."

"No."

"And your pupils are equal and reactive."

"Okay."

"No nausea, no sensitivity to light. Right?"

Sarah nodded. Okay, so maybe there were no symptoms of head trauma. "What about the nine hours I somehow misplaced this morning?" she asked.

"There's a perfectly logical explanation for that," Chloe explained. When her husband literally snorted, Chloe playfully punched him on the arm. "Well, it's perfectly logical in *our* neck of the woods."

*Okay. Whatever you say, Doc.* Sarah blinked and nodded.

"As for your other question, there are only three sides of protection for the clan. Three parcels of land out of four are protected by hybrid packs."

Sarah blinked again. "Hybrid packs of what?"

Chloe waved her hand in front of her face. "Never mind that for now. Just trust me, there should be four," Chloe explained. "There has always been a weak spot in the clan's circle of protection. But I suspect if you figured out how to protect that fourth side it would set things right between Lossiah and the elders."

"Exactly!" Sarah felt relief although she was no closer to knowing what to do than she had been. "That's what Aggie said. That if I helped Lossiah close the circle it would make amends with the clan. The question is, how?"

Chloe Caine looked at the side of her husband's face until he shook his head. Only then did she turn back to Sarah.

"That's apparently what Aggie wants *you* to figure out."

\* \* \* \* \*

Lossiah thrust the blade hard, twisting until it broke skin. With a grunt he slid the knife all the way from neck to genitals, ripping through flesh and muscle and tendons, until the body was open from one end to the other. He wore no expression as the deer's innards rolled out onto the ground.

For three weeks, she'd been gone.

Lossiah had been lonely before. Prior to meeting Sarah he'd spent many nights alone in his cabin, yearning for the comfort of a woman. But he'd never felt loneliness like this.

He was miserable. Functioning merely as a body to do work around the village. No dancing, no laughter, no telling of stories around the fire. And it wasn't that the elders were punishing him or refusing to let him participate in village activities and fun. On the contrary. When Sarah had returned and told the elders the story of how Aggie came to her and told her to close the circle, they had immediately forgiven Lossiah for the Dance.

Aggie's blessing was as good as it got in the eyes of the elders. If she had chosen someone to be part of the clan, no one was going to argue with her. And she had evidently decided that Sarah was supposed to be part of the clan.

Lossiah sat down hard on an oak stump and dragged his hand down his face. His life, and even more importantly his happiness, was in the hands of two women. One he missed almost more than he could bear. He *ached* for Sarah. And it wasn't just sexual. To hear her voice. To smell her skin. To simply sit and watch her sleep. Any of those things would have been enough.

As for the other woman who held his fate in her hands?

Lossiah had never met her because she died almost eighty years before he was born.

At one time Aggie had been a giggling, mischievous Cherokee girl who had often spied on her older sister Kina while she and her new husband Youngbear made love. Reportedly, Aggie never lost her playful streak and was known for being a prankster and practical joker until the day she passed in 1898. In addition to being a prankster, Aggie was also known for being very, very clever. She was, in fact, one of the most respected Beloved Women the Cherokee people had ever had.

And yet neither Cherokee nor conventional white, European history would have a record of her.

It was Aggie who, at the tender age of twenty, had arranged for Lossiah's ancestors to steal off the Trail of Tears and make a run for it. She was the one who convinced some four dozen of Lossiah's great-great-great-great-great-grandfathers and grandmothers that it was better to be shot dead after having run three free steps on their own land than to submit to the white man's ignorance and greed and follow Taylor's Route to Oklahoma.

All forty-eight of her followers survived the escape. And in the one hundred and seventy-one years since they successfully made a run for their freedom, not a single Cherokee man or woman had dared question Aggie's judgment or decisions. Not even when she trusted and befriended the elusive wolf/human hybrid creatures who in later generations sired men like Luke and Damon Caine and Mason Gable and Winston "Pug" Martin—men who were loyal to family and pack first and foremost and who would never allow anything to happen to any of Aggie's people so long as they or their full-blood Cherokee "relatives" drew breath—had any of Lossiah's people doubted her.

Obviously, in Lossiah's clan, Aggie's word was gospel. But unfortunately Aggie's blessing on Sarah's acceptance into the clan and her union with Lossiah had come with a stipulation. A stipulation the elders had no choice but to enforce, even though they knew Aggie would not have chosen a woman who wasn't worthy of joining the clan.

Still, it had been three weeks since Sarah and Damon and Chloe Caine had returned to confront the elders with Aggie's secondhand request. Twenty-one and one-half days had now passed. And yet Sarah had not returned to the elders with the solution to Aggie's problem.

Three weeks with no word from her. It was understandable that a man would begin to worry.

Lossiah rested his hands on his knees and looked at the pool of blood at his feet. His people had not survived this long, undetected, because Aggie was stupid. The woman knew what she was doing, didn't she? She could be trusted to do what was best for her people. Right? And if she'd been smart enough to choose Sarah to close the gap that had

existed in their circle for nearly two hundred years, that had to mean something as far as Sarah and her loyalty to Lossiah was concerned.

Didn't it?

The doubt over whether Sarah was indeed working on a way to be with him sat like a dark cloud over Lossiah and his village. A huge black cloud whose shadow Lossiah watched make the blood at his feet even darker. A shadow that was so dark it had a voice that cried out, screeching, much like Lossiah felt like doing.

Who was he kidding? Sarah was probably back at home by now. In her apartment or house or whatever modern domicile she occupied. She was most likely back in the comfort of air-conditioning and cable television and the internet and men who weren't afraid to get into cars and accompany her to the hospital. Lossiah just knew it. She wasn't coming back to him or his people. She was gone. Gone. Living it up. And she'd left nothing behind but this huge, screeching black cloud hanging over Lossiah, his life, and his happiness.

The deer's intestines, bladder and kidneys were in the dirt at his feet. Helplessly lying there. Their host was dead and as mere parts of a whole they were unable to save themselves now. They had no hope. They were useless without the doe who had sustained them just hours before.

Lossiah knew exactly how they felt.

## **Chapter Seven**

“Play some Skynyrd!”

Sarah closed her eyes and let her head roll back. Pug Martin did this every night. Every single night. And as much as Sarah now loved Pug and Lynyrd Skynyrd – then again, who didn’t love Skynyrd? – she really didn’t think she could tolerate one more night at The Den.

Unfortunately The Den was where most Appalachian-born and -bred hybrids gathered. And according to Aggie, another wolf/human hybrid was apparently what Sarah was supposed to be looking for. The question was, which one?

“Any luck?”

Sarah shook her head and closed the binder she’d been keeping notes in for three weeks. Twenty-one and one-half days, to be exact.

“No,” she stated as the alpha male hybrid sat down next to her. “Not one damned bit of luck.”

Mason Gable put his chin in his hand, and frowned. “You know I’ve tried.”

“I know you have,” Sarah sighed. “You, Caine, Pugster there.” She pointed at the stocky hybrid on the dance floor. “You’ve all done everything you could to try and help me figure out how to secure that fourth parcel.” She traced the flower on her binder with her index finger. “But I still don’t know how I’m supposed to do it.”

Mason crossed his arms and looked across the dance floor of his bar. “I was willing to put The Den up to buy the property,” he stated. “The bar plus everything else I have in the bank.”

Sarah was nodding. “I know. And combined with Caine’s chunk of change it made a damned generous offer.”



"But they aren't going to sell."

Sarah shook her head. "They're too afraid the moment they sell some big casino is going to come along and offer twice what we paid for it."

Mason's brow wrinkled. "Did you tell them we weren't buying it to sell?"

"Yep. Even told them we'd put a clause in the buyers' contract stipulating that we couldn't resell for fifty years."

"And they still won't budge."

"No."

Mason was quiet. As was Sarah. Of course they were quiet. There was nothing else to say. In the past three weeks Sarah, Mason, Pug, Caine, Chloe and every wolf/human hybrid this side of the Mississippi had brainstormed and collaborated and tried everything they could think of to try to obtain the fourth parcel of Lossiah's people's property. And yet with all the meetings and texting and middle-of-the-night calls with brilliant ideas, not one plan had worked. Not a single damn plan.

"We can't give up," Sarah said. "There has to be a way to do this. Aggie wouldn't have put her people in such an impossible situation. She wouldn't have led them to a place that couldn't be secured. She loved her people. And she would never put them in harm's way."

Mason chuckled, but his amusement wasn't exactly what Sarah needed right now. "What's so funny?" she demanded.

A massive paw massaged one of her shoulders as he spoke. "I was just thinking about how a month ago you had no idea that things like wolf/human hybrids existed. And I'm pretty sure you'd never conversed with any old Cherokee spirits before you ventured into these mountains. And yet here you are, sitting next to a guy who transforms into a wolf, talking to me about a woman who's been dead for years like we've been friends forever and you just ran into some long-lost relative at a family reunion."

Mason's amusement made perfect sense. Sarah wasn't upset with him anymore. "Well, you and I will be friends forever and hopefully Aggie will be my relative someday. And in a way I did run into her at a family reunion," she laughed. "Kina and Youngbear were family and they were definitely reuniting."

Mason let out a bellow that was part laughter and part growl. It was a sound that had scared the daylights out of Sarah the first time a hybrid had let one rip. But after hearing it a couple of times she'd realized how uplifting the sound was.

She smiled and once again looked down at her binder.

"Makes you wonder what else is out there, doesn't it?" Mason asked. "Never mind that creatures like Pug and I exist. If Lossiah's family has lived undiscovered in the middle of the Smoky Mountains for all these years, there's no telling what we're walking all over every day and somehow not seeing."

Sarah nodded as she once again traced the flower with her index finger. It was a nervous habit to doodle when she was thinking too hard.

"I can't believe no one in a plane has never spotted them," Mason continued. "They build fires every day. The smoke has to be visible from the sky."

Nervous habits. How many did Sarah have? she wondered. How many had developed after her father died and she was so unsure of everything in life? She doodled, she twisted single strands of hair.

She thought like a plant.

"Guess it's a good thing it's the Smokies," Mason offered. "No one thinks twice about seeing smoke in these mountains."

When faced with difficult situations, Sarah related to plants. Plants. Like a plant no one would think twice about seeing.

Unless that plant just happened to be...

Sarah's finger stopped tracing the flower. When she looked up at Mason, she was smiling.

"We were walking all over it the whole time." She was almost in tears, and yet laughing. "It was right there the whole damn time."

Mason's face was frozen. He opened his mouth but it was a second or two before any sound came out. "What was right there?"

"The answer." Sarah stood and gathered her things. "The way to close the circle has been right in front of our eyes."

She was halfway across the bar when she heard Mason call out to her, "Where are you going?"

Where was she going? She was going home, that's where she was going. Home to the mountains, home to the village and most of all, home to Lossiah. Sarah didn't bother answering Mason's question. She'd explain it all later.

Right now, Sarah had to go get a flower.

## Epilogue

*"Rhododendron irroratum, Rhododendron irroratum, Rhododendron irroratum."*

With each word Sarah lightly tapped the truss of flowers against a new patch of Lossiah's skin. The small white blooms were delicate, feminine, against the dark, muscular landscape of his chest. Sarah used the tips of the bloom's petals to make lazy circles around each of his small brown nipples and then traced a line up and down his belly. Finally, she guided the blooms to examine each of his ribs, hesitating at the second and third indentation on his right side to enjoy the way their touch made him shiver.

"I can't believe they finally sold the property." Lossiah put one hand behind his head and propped himself up on the ground. "The Caine territory just doubled in size."

Sarah teased the sensitive skin she'd discovered until Lossiah moved her hand and the flower to another rib. She faked a pout over having her play interrupted. "It's actually the Caine-Gable territory," she reminded. "A first in the history of hybrids if what I hear is correct."

Lossiah nodded. "That is correct. No other alpha male hybrids have ever agreed to share territorial rights to a piece of ground. And I'm not sure why Caine and Mason agreed to do it."

"What choice did they have?" Sarah asked. "They couldn't divide it. Splitting the property would have meant surveying it right down the middle. And surveying it right down the middle would have meant..."

"My village would have been discovered."

Sarah and Lossiah were both quiet as they each considered the magnitude of friendship and kindness it had taken for two men to go so far against their territorial, lupine natures and share ownership of the parcel of land that lay between their homes.

"It's still hard for me to believe," Lossiah finally said. "Both the Caine and Gable packs have been trying to purchase that property for a hundred years. But the family who owned it would not sell. Not until now."

Sarah shrugged. "The land wasn't as valuable as the original owners thought."

Lossiah grunted. "Maybe not to them."

"Nor to anyone else now," Sarah reminded. "Wolf/human hybrids may be vicious but never underestimate a conservationist." She rolled over and kissed the rich, reddish-brown skin on Lossiah's belly. "Plant geeks can be downright bloodthirsty, especially when there's an endangered species to be protected or non-native plant life to be carefully, thoroughly, ridiculously examined." With each of her last words she pressed another kiss against his skin. Lossiah smiled down at her and lovingly cupped her face in his free hand. "That *irroratum* shouldn't be there," Sarah continued. "It may not even be a *rhododendron irroratum*. It could be some rare, undiscovered species of rhododendron that only grows in the Appalachians of Western North Carolina and that is on the verge of extinction due to modern development and erosion and pavement."

"And cars," Lossiah smiled.

Sarah tried to hide her grin. "Yes, cars may have played a hand in it too. Even so, no developer was going to wait six or seven or eight years..."

Lossiah chortled in disbelief as he interrupted Sarah. "A flower could postpone a multibillion dollar business deal by seven or eight years?"

"Probably not," Sarah admitted. "But I have several über-dork friends who were willing to swear their research could burn up the better part of a decade because of this little beauty."

"So your *clan* was willing to lie for you."

"No," Sarah stated defiantly. "They were willing to do what's right. If it meant stopping a developer from breaking ground in an area one of their peers had deemed worthy of protection, they were willing to do whatever was necessary to make sure that protection was in place."

"A bunch of tree huggers are guarding my people." Lossiah laughed and wove his fingers into her hair.

"Three packs of wolf/human hybrids are guarding your people." Sarah paused and amended her claim. "Three hybrid packs and Beloved Woman named Aggie."

"But a tree hugger made it possible for them to do that."

"Yes." She smiled and snuggled closer to Lossiah. "I guess I did."

Sarah watched as Lossiah quietly gazed up through the limbs and leaves of the massive rhododendron. "How did it get here?" he wondered out loud. "If it really is an ir-ro-ra..."

"*Irroratum*," Sarah assisted.

"*Rhododendron irroratum*," Lossiah pronounced the name perfectly. "How did this plant find its way all the way over here?" he asked. "The elders confirmed that no one in our clan has ever been to Vietnam or Indonesia or Laos. So where did it come from?"

Sarah considered Lossiah's question as she studied the handsome edge of his high cheekbones and well-defined jaw. "I suspect the elders are wrong," she offered. "I think one member of your clan probably made a quick trip overseas and back."

"When?" Lossiah asked. "And how? We don't leave the circle unless we absolutely must."

It was Sarah's turn to gaze up into the limbs of the shrub. "Judging from the offspring around this monster, I'd say it's been growing here about eighty years. The seeds were probably transported and dropped somewhere around the early 1900s."

Lossiah's brow wrinkled. "Transported and dropped."

Sarah grinned and nodded.

"You mean dropped as in..."

Her grin became a full-fledged smile. "Eagles don't have pockets. How else was Aggie supposed to carry the seeds that would someday close the circle of protection around her people?"

For a long time Lossiah lay there silently admiring the plant that had probably saved his clan. There was a tension leaving him. A tension so strong that Sarah had detected it every time she lay against him. It was a tension she suspected had been bred into him by almost two centuries of worry and stress.

Sarah sighed and let her eyes close. They were safe now. Finally, Lossiah's people didn't have to go to bed wondering if their way of life was about to end. After almost two hundred years of uncertainty, this Cherokee clan could live in peace. Best of all, it was a peace Sarah had helped them find.

In turn, Sarah had found something she hadn't known she needed. Until Lossiah performed the Dance and until she literally fell into his life she hadn't known what was missing from her life. Her sister had called it spark, but that term had never suited Sarah's more quiet, conventional style.

Power. What Sarah had been searching for all those years had been much bigger, much brighter and hotter than mere spark. Her father's death had plunged Sarah into a decades-long pit of imaginary helplessness. As much as she'd loved him, as badly as she'd wanted to kill the cancer that had killed him, she couldn't save him. She couldn't stop him from dying. Because his death had left her feeling so out of control Sarah had always been afraid to take chances. She'd been unwilling to date men who didn't meet her "standards" because she wasn't willing to risk her heart.

Sarah had never trusted herself enough to go out and live life the way her sister did. But Aggie did trust Sarah. She'd trusted her not only with the fate of her people, but also with something more precious, more endangered and on the verge of extinction than any rare or exotic plant Sarah could ever dream of finding.

A good man's heart.

Sarah used the bloom to tease the spot on Lossiah's chest where that very organ would be and then dragged the petals lower. When he flinched, she smiled.

"I think I found it."

"You think you found..." Lossiah grunted. "You think you found what?"

She chuckled when his body involuntarily reacted again. "A ticklish spot."

"I'm not ticklish."

"You're not ticklish?" she challenged playfully. "Not anywhere?"

"No, I'm not."

Sarah rolled to straddle one of Lossiah's bare thighs, paused briefly to savor the heat of his body against her naked pussy and then slid down to his knee. She leaned forward and, with a tiny kiss and lick to the two ribs in question, proved Lossiah wrong.

"Okay! Okay!" Lossiah shook with laughter as he dragged Sarah up the entire length of his body until her face was close to his and her breasts were mashed against his chest. He caught and held the back of her head with his hand long enough to steal her attention, her breath and her senses with a kiss. When the kiss ended Sarah opened her eyes and watched Lossiah's brown eyes begin to smolder and turn black. Without a word he rolled them both over and took her mouth again.

Lossiah's kiss was much darker this time. More like the first night they met. Thick and impenetrable, the warmth of his breath against her cheek and the slow sweeping motion of his tongue against hers wrapped itself around Sarah like a cloak. A cloak that was alive and male and hungry and whose appetite she suspected could only be satisfied by one thing.

Her.

Making love to Lossiah would be different this time. Sarah could tell by the intensity of his kiss that although Lossiah was still the tender and giving man who'd made love to her a half dozen or so times already, there was something else he needed. Something he hadn't taken for himself when they'd been together before.

Sarah spread her legs, allowing Lossiah to settle between them. She was immediately rewarded with more pure male arousal than she'd ever witnessed with any man. Having been somewhat firm already, in an instant Lossiah's cock grew thick and hard until it was like a hot, flesh-covered pipe. Sarah gasped as Lossiah nipped at



the sensitive skin of her neck and pressed his erection into the yielding softness of her inner thigh.

A low rumble of raw male lust made it out of Lossiah when Sarah reached down and took his penis into her hand. Rigid and veiny, his erection was a picture of masculinity. Even so, its large and plum-shaped head was covered in skin that was petal-soft to touch. Soft as the most delicate flower, most likely because it had to guide the rest of Lossiah's hard shaft into Sarah's body.

"Are you wet enough?"

His question could have been taken as unfeeling or cold. But Sarah knew better than to view anything Lossiah said to her as cold. Lossiah had grown up in a world much different from her own. It was a world she was anxious to learn about and accept, largely because of differences like this.

In Lossiah's more natural world the gruffness of his voice, his lack of decorum and the absence of any pretty, meaningless words communicated to Sarah what other men, men raised in Sarah's world, would have conveyed to her with profanity.

He wanted to fuck. Lossiah was horny. His dick was hard, his balls were heavy and as soon as she was ready to receive him, he wanted to fuck his woman.

Lucky for Sarah, that woman just happened to be her.

Without waiting for her to answer, Lossiah pressed two thick fingers into her pussy and then drew them part of the way out. Evidently not satisfied with the level of arousal he found, he pulled the fingers out completely and used their sticky pads to find and tease and stimulate her clit. Sarah gasped when he suddenly pushed the fingers back inside her pussy and even added a third when he judged her passage wet enough to take it.

He wanted her as horny as he was. Lossiah wanted Sarah's body—her cunt, her nipples, her mouth and skin—to be just as hungry for him as he was for her. She knew this by the way he worked the three fingers into her pussy, by the unapologetic way he thrust the digits in deep and hard only to retreat and gently tease her clit. All the while

his teeth were biting and tugging at first one puckered nipple and then the other. Sucking, drawing on each one until Sarah thought she would lose her mind, and then letting the peaks pop out of his mouth.

Sarah's body was responding exactly as Lossiah wanted. What had started as a damp, subtle hint of feminine interest was quickly becoming a surge of sexual need. Around his probing male fingers her pussy dripped. Wet and empty and aching for him to fill it with as many of his fingers and as much of his tongue and cock as would fit. Her nipples were hard and eager to have his mouth take them, suck them and bite them again and again. There was love present. It was all around them. But it wasn't the desire to make love driving either of them now. And no longer was it just Lossiah who needed to fuck Sarah. Now it was Sarah who needed to be fucked by Lossiah.

Hoping to get what she needed, Sarah gripped the shaft of his cock tighter and guided it to her opening. Lossiah withdrew his fingers and with a single, straight and determined thrust between her lips, buried himself up to his balls. Sarah barely had time to catch her breath before he pulled his erection out and with another thrust, this one even more determined than the first, buried himself to the hilt again.

Sarah raised her hips, trying to mirror his pace, but found her efforts useless. Leaving only part of his weight resting on his forearms, Lossiah ground his pubic bone against Sarah's and settled on top of her. She was pinned to the ground, although not the least bit uncomfortable even with his entire body bearing down on her. Only then, when Sarah was unable to interrupt or alter his actions, did Lossiah do what she suspected he'd wanted to do all along.

He fucked her. With sharp, brutal thrusts that drove his cock as deep as her wet, aching slit would allow, Lossiah rode Sarah. Thrusting over and over, with a brute, masculine force and an almost painful passion that brought tears to her eyes, Lossiah repeatedly slammed his cock into her. Sarah could only lie there, legs spread as wide as they could go, her pussy yielding and accepting his sex as easily and quickly as it could. Even if she'd wanted to, Sarah couldn't have stopped Lossiah from fucking her once he

found the rhythm his cock and hips and hunger craved. She could only lie there and enjoy playing the smaller, vulnerable female who was being sexually devoured by Lossiah's bigger, stronger male appetite.

And enjoy being devoured by Lossiah she did. Being fucked so savagely was frightening and exhilarating and maddeningly erotic all at the same time. Sarah had only just discovered this new power she had inside her, a power for which she had searched her entire life, and yet here she was helpless again. Pinned to the dirt and leaves on the ground by the sheer weight and strength and desire of a man.

But not just any man. This man was different. This man would never do anything to hurt her. Sarah could safely enjoy this spark. She could hand over that power she'd just discovered and know she had nothing to fear. Not as long as she was handing herself to this particular man.

Lossiah loved her. It was just as Aggie said. He had loved her for a long, long time. Sarah could trust Lossiah with her body, her life and her heart. And she wanted nothing more than to trust him with all those things, because as imperfect as he was in many others' eyes, Lossiah was absolutely everything Sarah had ever wanted in a mate.

The Dance had worked in more ways than one. Not only had it led to Lossiah being forgiven by the clan, it had allowed him to forgive himself for his past, and probably even encouraged him to move forward. Sarah suspected the Dance had given Lossiah what neither the elders nor anyone else could have given him.

He had his own way to be a man. As irresponsible as he had been in his youth, Lossiah now had something to look after and care for that didn't belong to the entire clan. Sarah was every ounce a member of his extended family, but ultimately her survival, her food, her shelter, her comfort and safety and happiness were her husband's responsibility.

And Sarah's husband was Lossiah.

His movements were beginning to slow and his thrusts were less demanding. The need that had blinded him to anything but being inside her was dwindling the closer he

got to his climax. Finally able to move about some, Sarah wrapped her legs around his waist and her arms around his neck. Lossiah readily took the kiss she offered, and even returned one every bit as warm and loving as one would expect a true and good husband to give.

Before the kiss was over, he came.

While he thrust one last time, shivered and groaned in exquisite release, Sarah lay there underneath him savoring the pleasure his body had found by way of hers. She'd never thought it possible to get so much happiness from seeing someone else happy, but here it was. For the moment her own physical pleasure wasn't as important, and her coming wouldn't have been as much fun as seeing Lossiah's pleasure was.

There was no doubt about it. She wasn't hallucinating and her feelings weren't because of any head injury or intracranial bleeding.

Sarah loved Lossiah. As unlikely as it had seemed the day after the Dance, there were two people living her life. There were two bodies for her to enjoy, two personalities to explore. Two sets of emotions to ride.

None of Lossiah's clan had ever been married according to the laws that governed the outside world. There were no courthouse records of their unions. No ordained ministers officiated.

Sarah and Lossiah were married just the same. The elders had just that afternoon witnessed their admission of love and devotion to one another and declared them husband and wife.

There were two of them. Sarah and Lossiah. But together they were now one.

"Did I hurt you?"

Sarah pushed a strand of shiny black hair out of his face and smiled. "No. Not at all."

Lossiah was trembling. "I didn't mean to seem so selfish," he said quietly. "I just needed..."

Sarah put her fingers on his lips to silence him. With an easy nudge she was able to roll them over until she was on top. His erection was waning, but as soon as Sarah sat back on his cock and suggestively palmed her breasts with both hands he stiffened inside her again.

"I'll be a good wife to you, Lossiah. I'll be faithful and supportive. And I'll give you anything you ever need or want," she whispered. "No matter what it is, all you have to do is ask."

Within seconds Lossiah was as hard as he had been when it was he who hadn't yet come. With her pussy now drenched by his cum and the juices of her own excitement, Sarah effortlessly slid back and forth on his shaft. She marveled at how Lossiah's cock was the perfect size. The perfect size for her, that was. He filled her just exactly as she needed to be filled.

He also touched her and kissed her and nipped at her in all the right places. With the exact pressure and intensity Sarah needed if she was to have her own pleasure. That Lossiah had paid such close attention to her body's language and reactions meant everything to Sarah. It said to her that he cared as much about her happiness as she cared about his.

Lossiah knew she liked to be held tight when she was riding him. He understood that she preferred he sit up even when she was on top, so her breasts were pressed against his chest. She could only wonder if Lossiah knew she had only recently grown to love this position, or that she liked it simply because his breath on her skin and the look in his eyes while he was inside her was more erotic than anything she'd ever experienced with any other man.

"I love you."

Sarah closed her eyes and smiled. Best of all, Lossiah knew this. Sarah's new husband granted her wish that when the pulsating spasms of her orgasm began he would whisper these three words in her ear. Over and over, for as long as it took for her to finish.

This time Sarah came for probably two minutes. She rode out every last twitch and shiver and ragged breath until her body was completely, hopelessly relaxed. Two delightful minutes spent coming and listening to Lossiah tell her he loved her. Two minutes. But when Sarah opened her eyes it seemed to her they'd been entwined for much longer than that.

"The sun looks odd."

Lossiah was nuzzling and kissing her neck. His hands were forever lost in her hair.

"Losi?"

He hummed. Sarah read his noise as, "What?"

"This light is weird."

Lossiah tore his mouth away from her skin for only a moment. He glanced around them and then immediately returned to sampling different parts of her body.

"Do you see it?" she asked.

Without removing his teeth from her earlobe, Lossiah shook his head.

Sarah laughed and took his face between her hands. "Listen to me," she scolded playfully. "There is something wrong out here."

The snap was sudden and loud. A profound and suspicious silence followed. Sarah narrowed her eyes and examined the edge of the forest. Nothing moved. There were no other sounds. Not until another twig snapped.

It was a breathtaking sight. The way the sun's rays were falling. Streaming down, as if pointing at Sarah and Lossiah.

"I know you're there, old-timer!" Sarah was laughing as she called out. "I know you like to watch!"

There were several snaps now. As if dozens of twigs were being trampled underfoot as something scurried into the cover of the forest.

Snaps, scurrying, and the giggle of a happy little girl.

## About the Author

Blayne Edwards was born, raised and still resides in the foothills of the Appalachians with the human animal she married and the timber wolf she adopted. After marrying the animal—but before adopting the bitch—she completed a degree in English Language and Literature from the University of Tennessee and promptly went to work in business management because it was the adult thing to do.

It only took a couple of years for Blayne to realize being an adult isn't all it's cracked up to be.

A chance online encounter with fellow author Angela Knight led Blayne to the world of e-publishing and erotica.

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

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