

ELLORA'S CAVE TWILIGHT



High Plains  
SHIFTERS

Lawman

REGINA  
CARLYSLE

**Lawman**  
*Regina Carlisle*

*Book 5 in the High Plains Shifters series.*

In the deep of night she longs for him. Mate, lycan, lover. Her lawman. As Katalin Petrova struggles to control her wild and untamed “gift”, she yearns for the only man who can make her whole. His every touch burns, searing her with unimaginable pleasure. Only her strong, protective lover can tame the wild yearnings of her body and help her claim the power of her ancestors.

While Gabriel Dunham, lycan lieutenant of the Wolf Creek Pack, watches over his intended mate, his patience to claim her nears an end as savage need burns his body. Consumed by unbridled lust, he claims her, takes her, hoping it will be enough to protect Katalin from unseen forces determined to rip her from his arms.

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# *LAWMAN*

**Regina Carlisle**

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## **Chapter One**

Though it was midafternoon, weariness settled over Sheriff Gabriel Dunham like a shroud and he had only a serious lack of sleep to blame. Nights spent in his truck while watching over Katalin, his intended mate, had taken their toll on him. Every night, he stared toward her small, secluded house where a warm bed and a beautiful woman waited for him. But he was no fool. He didn't dare go inside. Taking her now, making her his wasn't an option at the moment.

She was too fragile, much too delicate and Gabe simply wasn't strong enough to hold back from his determined need to stake his claim on her.

Kat needed more from him now than hot, frantic sex.

After all she'd been through, Katalin needed safety and he wasn't quite sure that he could deliver considering the raw, savage need that clawed through his belly. It was like a prairie fire gone wild, alarming in its intensity.

Protecting others was in his nature and he'd face death rather than hurt her.

A lawman who'd lived more than two hundred years on this earth, he'd worked the docks in the great ports of St. Louis during American expansion to the West and then later, he'd followed covered wagons filled with hopeful adventurers. In those days, he'd been a lycan in search of a pack, a place and a people to call his own. He'd settled in rough, rowdy towns throughout the savage West selling his skills with a gun, sometimes in the name of law and order and sometimes not. Many had been the time Gabriel Dunham had accepted the job as "protector", a bodyguard to the rich and powerful. That he was a giant of a man who stood well over six foot seven and appeared as intimidating as hell had kept him employed throughout the West during the many years of his life.

Gabe leaned back in the chair at his scarred desk and propped his booted feet atop it, crossing them at the ankle. His eyes burned like hellfire and he needed sleep in the worst way. Burning the candle at both ends wore at him.

As always, in quiet moments, he thought of Katalin Petrova.

Through the past centuries, he'd hoped and prayed for a mate, the woman destined to belong to him alone and he'd pretty much given up on ever finding her. But now, through an act of fate, she was here, a beautiful female who was too damn delicate to touch.

Breakable.

She'd just taken a job at the library at Cloverfield High School. The school year was brand new and suddenly the local streets were quiet since every teen lycan in town was currently parked at the school instead of dragging Main Street or partying out by the lake as kids were known to do. He knew that after her ordeal over the summer she was making baby steps toward re-entering society. Dr. Santos, a lycan psychiatrist from Dallas, had suggested this job would be a good thing for her so Katalin had bravely forged ahead with things.

Was she thinking of him as he thought of her, a quiet obsession born of desperation burning just below the surface of her skin? Scrubbing his palms over his face, Gabe finally closed his eyes and let her image swim to the surface of his mind. Damn but his mate was a pretty woman. The ache of his need wasn't a sudden thing but a perpetual burning in his gut, a need to claim her, fuck her, and make her his.

For life.

Sighing deeply, the sound of the air conditioner a low hum in the room, he let himself drift off as memories of his first moments with her sifted through his brain and sleep took him away.

"I've got you now, Katalin. You're safe." Sitting at the side of her bed as shadows surrounded them, Gabe reached out his hand to brush back a pale reddish curl from her forehead. Someone had once told him this particular color was strawberry blonde but it

sure looked like a Texas sunset to him. Katalin Petrova's exotically tilted blue eyes looked back vacantly but he sensed the current of emotion that raced through her veins. Letting his mind meld with hers, he absorbed her desolation into his pores. A vast emptiness, fear, rage, guilt.

Guilt?

What the fuck? Why?

That he felt her emotions, even buried as deeply as they were, was no surprise to him. This was the way of mated couples. Instant recognition had swept him from the first moment he'd clapped eyes on her. "You don't have to worry about anything now. Not even talking, honey. I know you can't right now but that's all right. Do you hear me? You are going to be fine and nothing is gonna pry my ass from your side. Do you believe me?"

Katalin blinked.

Gabe sensed her desire to speak as her lips opened slightly. She was probably wondering why her intended mate was babbling like a loon. He wasn't a big-talkin' man yet you'd never know it by the way he rambled on. But if coming off like a damn fool would put her at ease, he'd do it. Unable to stop himself, he gently drew his fingers over the soft flesh of her cheeks and across the bridge of her small nose, instantly noting how big and rough his hand looked against her pale skin. Her lips were full and slightly parted. When he drew the tip of one finger over that particular bit of softness, a tremble raced through her body.

Gabe went still. Leaning in, close enough to feel the brush of her breath against his face, he pressed his lips to hers. "Don't be afraid of me, Kat," he whispered against them. "I would give my life to protect you."

Looking into her eyes, hoping to see something other than that vacant expression, he blew out a gusty breath. She was in shock from her ordeal the poor, sweet little thing. The need to comfort her swept him. She wouldn't be sad or bereft or lost if he could help it. Standing, he shucked out of his boots and drew the worn, cotton tee shirt



over his head until he wore only his jeans. The woman needed cuddling in the worst way. She was so lost. Confusion, hers, wrapped around him so he lay down next to her and drew her still body against his.

A low breath soughed from her lips as if in relief.

Gabriel, the big, badass lycan lawman, buried his face in her soft curls, wrapped one brawny arm around her waist to tug her more tightly against him. The guest bedroom she'd been given by Joe and Quinn McKinnon, the pack's alpha and his *lupa*, was huge. The white linen offered a stark contrast to the vibrancy of Kat's hair as it spread across the pillows like a fiery flag. His own dark, wheat-colored hair mixed with hers as if their merging was meant to be. "Let me start at the beginning," he murmured, astonished by the raspy, heaviness of his voice. "You and your sister, Sara, were kidnapped by rogue lycans. They intended to force consummation on you two but we prevented it." Among their kind a forced consummation was tantamount to rape and punishable by death.

Her breath caught and her worry swirled through his mind in an empathic connection that was impossible to ignore. Energy sizzled between them and popped with sound in the otherwise quiet room. His cock instantly hardened but he couldn't do a damn thing about that now. Lust flashed heavily through his veins. Ignoring it, Gabe nuzzled her hair, quick to answer her unspoken question. "No, Sara isn't hurt. She's fine and sleeping in the bedroom next door. Cactus is watching over her. He's a good man. He found his mate today in your sister Sara as I found my mate in you, darlin'. Fate. It's meant to be. You are mine, my pretty Kat."

A restless movement surprised him. She'd gone into shock, some deep emotional paralysis since the moment he'd carried her from that ratty trailer in the wilds of Mexico and driven her to the pack's ranch in West Texas. She would remain here at the Wolf Creek Ranch near the lycan town of Cloverfield until she was well. In time she would realize she belonged here with him as his mate.

Best not to push her now.

"Shh. Shh, now darlin', don't get yourself all worked up. Nothing but comfort is happening tonight. You're weak as a kitten but I'm going to take care of you, protect you. Forever if you'll let me. Sleep now, sweet Kat."

A picture frame on the wall rattled along with a vase that sat upon the bedside table. Gabe frowned. What the hell? Energy popped again, briefly filling the silence and he knew somehow, that power had come from her, wielding itself like some freaky force of nature. Curiosity swelled and he wondered about this woman who was destined to be his mate. His arms tightened around her as he felt the strange, sizzling force recede to bury itself deep inside her mind. Her thoughts went calm, her emotions tucked away as if hiding from him, she finally slept leaving him to wonder what the hell was going on with her.

The phone on his desk rang, jarring him from sleep. Sitting up, planting his booted feet on the floor, he reached for it.

"Sheriff's office."

"Gabe. Hey, how are you?"

Gabe smiled at the sound of Sara Petrova Mackey's voice. He'd liked Katalin's sister from the moment he'd met her but even more so now that she was the consummated mate of Cactus, one of his closest friends. "Better than I deserve. Everything okay?"

Sara sighed over the phone. "Well, yeah but I have a problem. I'm all tied up with something and I'm supposed to pick Kat up at the school in a few minutes. Until she gets a car I'm her taxi, Gabe. Can you help me out here? I'd call Cactus but he's out at the ranch and the phone connection is crappy."

Gabe's heart rate kicked up a notch at the prospect of seeing Katalin but then he frowned. "Dr. Santos has pretty much tried to keep me away from her these days. I don't like it. For what it's worth, I think I can help her. Sure don't like not knowing what's going on. Hell, there's nothing I'd like more than to cart her around anywhere she wants to go but every time we get within two feet of each other everyday objects become projectiles."

"Yes, that tiny little thing is a dangerous woman," Sara said, humor in her voice. Then she paused. "She needs you, Gabriel. I was just talking with Cactus about this last night. I can tell she is distraught without you. I can't help thinking that once the two of you become joined through consummation, you can keep her calm enough that she can get the telekinesis under control. You could soothe her. I just know it."

Soothe her?

Hell, every time he was within feet of the woman her emotions swamped him. Grief, fear, lust, desire, just everything. He'd sell his soul to find one tiny kernel of truth in his future sister-in-law's words. Gabe's response was low and measured. "I'll pick her up at the school, Sara, don't you worry. Eventually we'll get this all figured out."

Gabe got up and dug through the pocket of his jeans suddenly wide awake. Watching over Kat every night, wanting to protect her was taking its toll on him but the prospect of seeing her, if only for a moment, perked him up better than ten cups of coffee might do. He revved up his big truck and drove to the edge of town where the high school was located. Braking to a stop across the street, he watched young lycans laughing and pushing at each other as they raced to their cars. All that energy just waiting to burst at any moment but to the casual observer they might be human kids. Not so. It was a constant battle watching over them. Especially the young male lycans. They had raging testosterone like human boys but when you added the fact they could shift at will, it was purely a recipe for disaster. The females, of course, wouldn't see their first shift until after they'd consummated with their mates.

Horns blared as they blasted from the parking lot, hell-for-leather, and Gabe shook his head wondering how they managed to survive these wild teen years.

Anticipation caught him up as he looked toward the wide double doors of the school. A group of adults, all lycan educators, walked from the building and unable to stop himself he craned his neck, trying to catch a glimpse of Kat.

"Hey, Sheriff!"

"Hey, Molly. You doing okay today?"

The girl adjusted the straps of her backpack and headed toward her mother's car as it pulled up. "Yep. Doing great. Bye!"

Smiling, he watched her drive off then returned his attention back to the group of teachers. Sunlight caught the strands of Katalin's hair making them shine like a sunset. His body responded helplessly, his cock twitching behind the fly of his jeans. Horny ass. He couldn't help it, damn it all. He wanted her like he needed his next breath. She laughed at something someone said and he felt his gut tighten. One day, she'd be that easy with him. He prayed to the gods for that day.

"Kat! Over here. Let's grab some coffee and then I'll give you a lift home."

Frowning, Gabe watched Dee Santos step from her car and onto the sidewalk to wave Katalin down. Frustration sank its claws in his belly and his disappointment bordered on despair. Yeah, Dr. Santos was helping and she was a damn nice woman but he was getting downright tired of her presence in Kat's life. He was man enough to admit he was jealous of the time they spent together considering his moments with her were so few.

When Kat rushed over and she and Dee Santos drove away, his heart sank. Wearily he climbed back into his truck and headed off to make his rounds.

\* \* \* \* \*

As Katalin Petrova lay in her bed, shadows moving in a menacing fashion across the pale bedroom walls, she wondered what it was about the heavy dark of night that made every horror even more intense than in the daylight hours. Though she should be at peace in this new place, a shiver shook her as memories of her childhood rolled through her mind like a scary old movie in which her father, Anton Petrov, played the starring role.

Past terror suddenly seemed so real that it shook her to her bones.

Kat pressed her head deeper into the soft cotton of her pillow, tugged the sheet to her throat and closed her eyes as a gentle breeze from the open window sifted across her hot face, momentarily cooling her. But the memories wouldn't leave her alone.

What had happened that night months ago was her burden to bear, her guilt, her fault and nothing would ever change this raw truth. In one instant of carelessness, her world had come crashing down. Anton had witnessed her blossoming power and the result was a night of violence and death.

Kat tightened her eyes as tears of helpless rage seeped from beneath the fringe of her lashes, a hot, liquid reminder of loss and pain. She saw her mother dead, a beautiful, caring lycan female, bleeding on the floor of their rustic cabin. She saw the look of abject horror on her sister Sara's face and then later, the way the sisters had been forced from their home at the point of a rifle as her father planned to sell them both to outlaw wolves who would use their powers for their own greedy purposes. What those lycans would do with Sara and her would have been, among their kind, tantamount to rape.

Would the memories ever dim? Would she ever manage to close her eyes without seeing it all again?

She doubted it.

Red visions curled through her mind. Forgotten was the current serenity of her little cabin in the Texas woods. Safety and security seemed far way, too far to grasp. The memories threatened to undo her.

"Anton! Dear gods! No. Please," her mother had shouted mere seconds before her father had pulled the trigger and then trained the gun on Sara and her.

Her mother's words echoed through her mind bringing with them pain and grief.

Tears fell heavier now and Kat gasped, struggling against the powerful urge to cry out her anguish. But her mouth only opened in that soundless way that happens when caught in the scariest of nightmares. Her hands trembled so badly she clutched them

together against a chest that tightened, threatening to squeeze the breath from her lungs.

A whoosh of sound swept the room.

Shock propelled Katalin upward until she sat, wide-eyed, among her tangled sheets. A giant wolf, huge and golden in the evening shadows leaped through the open bedroom window, shifting into human form as he blasted through the air in a surge of strength and power. Before she could blink or even make a sound, Gabriel Dunham stood there, gloriously naked, brawny and big as a damn mountain in the center of her room near the foot of the bed.

"Gabe!"

"I felt you. I feel you. You're in pain, honey. I'm here for you. Always. You know that."

For a man of few words this was the biggest speech she'd ever heard him make. Energy sizzled in the air between them, a force of raw power that drew her like a warm blanket. She'd only known him for a few months yet she'd recognized him as her mate the instant his flesh had touched hers.

Shadows played over the corrugated muscles on his belly and shifted over the muscular mounds of his powerful chest. His hair, dark gold, the color of Spanish coins, hung past his shoulders. Gabe speared restless fingers through the length, shoving it back from the stunningly beautiful lines of his face. In three long strides he was there on the bed with her, his arms gathering her up as he drew her against him.

"Where did you – How did you –"

"Shh," he murmured into her hair. His breath was warm against her forehead and waves of heat rolled from his big body to hers cocooning her in a comfort she'd never known before. "Hush now. Just know I felt your pain and I'm here. Sleep now."

"Can't, Gabe." Katalin breathed the words into his heavy chest realizing her breasts were nestled snugly against him, the thin cotton of her nightgown so miniscule as to be

nonexistent. Instantly her nipples tightened, pearling into tight, little knots that pulsed against his chest. "Where did you come from? I don't get it."

His arms bunched as he pulled her close. Gabe's fingers flexed against her bare back and she realized that, as she'd tossed and turned her short gown had risen past her hips leaving her lower body bare except for her panties. His cock was hard, thick and long, pressed to her naked belly.

Fear fled to be replaced by another sensation. As an unmated female lycan, she'd never known sexual pleasure with a male but the erotic urges his touch engendered was unmistakable.

Katalin burned. Her belly tightened. Heat coiled tightly there, sending waves of throbbing desire through her pussy. Her legs quivered and the urge to wrap them around his hips to draw him closer overwhelmed her.

Though lust quickly replaced her fear it did nothing to stop the questions. "How did you get here so fast?"

Gabe released a long, low breath. "Been sleeping in my truck outside your place, Katalin."

"But why?"

"You might need me." The words were simply spoken, stated as a matter of fact.

Emotion moved through her body and she realized it was his. The empathic connection between mates swept from him to her binding them together with invisible string. Sadness, loneliness, worry. His. Katalin felt his need of her. Sexual hunger, also his, swept her and she returned the emotion as she forgot her innate shyness and moved her hands to his waist, her anchor in the storm. Touched beyond anything she could remember, she thought of big, tough Gabriel, Cloverfield's Sheriff, sleeping in the cab of his truck, watching over her and her heart tightened with unnamed emotion.

"How long have you been sleeping outside in your truck? How many days? And don't fib to me."

A small smile quirked his lips and Kat sensed he wasn't a man who did it often. "Now aren't you a bossy little thing? A week or so, I reckon."

"Why?"

The smile faded and frown lines formed between his intense, dark green eyes. Gabe lifted one big hand to smooth tousled curls from her forehead. "Since Dr. Santos found a place in town, I worried about you being alone out here in the middle of nowhere." Dee Santos was a lycan psychiatrist from Dallas who'd come at the request of the Wolf Creek pack's alpha. Kat had been her patient until recently. "She says you're fine now but I just feel better sticking close."

Shame filled her though she knew it wasn't well done of her. Many people needed help, even lycans, it was just that being frail or weak was something she'd never wanted for herself. "There's no need, Gabe, really. I'm fine."

"Not so fine, I'm thinkin'. You don't have a handle on your gift of telekinesis yet, do you?"

Kat settled her forehead against his chest and breathed him in. He smelled of spice and the forest and things that were wild and untamable. "No, not yet. Things still fly through the air and crash around whenever I'm upset. Dr. Santos wants me to practice control but, Gabe, I'm not sure how to do that."

He stroked one big hand down her back. "Maybe that's something we could figure out together, darlin'."

She shook her head. "Dr. Santos says no."

Gabe went still. "Is that so? Care to tell me why?" Kat felt his anger, the intensity of it as it swept from him to her. The glass lamp on her nightstand banged back and forth, the thumping sound only further proof that she had no business being around people at the moment. Looking over his shoulder at the lamp, Gabe turned back to her. "Breathe, honey. Steady now."

In. Out. Slowly. Deeply.



Kat closed her eyes and concentrated on each breath. Gabe's arms were warm around her, his heat radiating through her like a steady balm. The lamp stopped shaking. The simple act of stopping the momentum sifted through her like a calming breeze. She blew out a long breath and grinned up at Gabe.

He froze. His eyes narrowed and a muscle worked in his strong jaw.

His expression sent heat blasting through her system. He wanted her. She wanted him. Kat's grin faded slowly as Gabe cupped her cheek, stroking the flesh with his thumb. "I think that was the prettiest thing I've ever seen," he said simply.

"What?"

"Your smile. I want you happy."

"I am happy but I'm sad too. Make sense?"

Gabe nodded once. "Yeah. I think so. Tell me why Dr. Santos doesn't believe we can work on controlling your telekinesis together. We're mates. Meant to be. We've known it since the day I carried you out of that ratty trailer in Mexico when you and Sara were kidnapped."

"She told me I should stay away from you until we figure this out. Dee said she has never dealt with a case like mine and the emotions I feel from you coupled with my own might make me lose control."

"She's wrong."

The flatly stated pronouncement told her much about the man she was just coming to know. Stubborn. Oh yeah. Mighty stubborn.

"You think so?"

Gabe went quiet, a look of thoughtfulness on his rugged face. "Who better to calm you than a man who can get into your head? It makes no sense to keep you isolated out here in the middle of nowhere. I don't like it."

"Obviously, since you've been sleeping outside in your truck every night."

"I'm not about to apologize. Can't stay away and I think you know why."

"Mates."

"Yeah."

Gabe's arms tightened around her and Kat sucked in a gasping breath as he leaned in. He was going to kiss her. A first for her since no man had ever touched her. Heart hammering wildly, she looked up, saw the raw need glinting in his eyes and let herself go. The first press of his lips sent a blast of rampaging lust through her body. It was a wild, uncontrollable thing and though Dr. Santos said she should keep her distance, Kat couldn't give a rip about that. Not when his firm mouth moved so gently over her own. He parted her lips with his tongue then gently nipped her bottom lip before dipping it inside.

Sweet. Hot. Delicious.

Wanting more, Katalin sank into the kiss as he took it deeper, hotter. His tongue brushed hers and the little sound she made became lost in his mouth as he drank it down. He pulled her close to the muscular mounds of his chest causing her nipples to pearl tighter beneath the flimsy fabric of her nightie. Unable to resist, she rubbed against him needing pressure, wanting him to touch her. Gabe groaned as his kiss turned savage. His lust hammered against her like a jungle drumbeat and she simply didn't know what to do with all these feelings. Energy wound like a tightly coiled spring in her body only to blast outward.

A crash made her jerk.

"What the fuck?" Gabe released her, jerking to his feet to stare at the shards of glass littering the floor. The lamp she'd calmed earlier had been propelled by light, motion, and energy into the nearest wall.

Kat wanted to cry.

Like the stupid lamp, their moment together, the one she'd dreamed of for weeks was shattered. Lying back on the bed, she closed her eyes as her emotions settled. "Dr. Santos was right. We shouldn't be together."

"Fuck that. We'll figure this out, darlin'. I promise you. Now you stay here. I don't want you to cut yourself."

She started to protest but Gabe silenced her with a look from narrowed eyes. He moved through the shadowed room and walked through the bedroom door only to return with a broom and dust pan. Finally he stood at the side of the bed to stare down at her. "No more kissing tonight. But just for tonight. Hear me?"

Katalin was no fool. She knew he wanted her. Like a tuning fork, his body practically vibrated with lust. His cock, thick and hard, rose high and his balls were drawn tightly beneath. He ran a hand that trembled through his hair, pushing the long length back from his face.

"Don't go back to the truck. Stay with me."

Silently Gabe returned to the bed and gathered her close. "We'll figure this out. Rest on me. Sleep now, honey, just sleep."

## Chapter Two

"What do you mean it's not a good idea to see Gabe?" Katalin sat on her couch next to Dee, calmly holding her hands in her lap. Inside she wasn't calm. Not at all.

Dee set her mug on the coffee table in the living room and looked at her. Smiling gently, she reached for one of her hands. "I'm just worried things might become a mess if you are too close to Gabe. You don't have an adequate handle on your abilities and honey, you could hurt somebody."

Kat's anger grew and she tried as hard as she could to tamp it back. She jerked her hand away and went to her feet. "I would never hurt Gabriel."

A book extracted itself from the bookcase and flew across the room to crash into the wall. Dee's eyes went wide as she leaned back a bit. "Kat. Please."

"Don't tell me to be calm. I'm sick of being told to be calm. I'm hurting here, don't you get it?" Another book followed the first as Dee's coffee mug lifted from the table and banged into the ceiling causing a rain of broken pottery to fall on their heads. Kat's curls moved around her head as if electrified. She felt like a petulant child deprived of her favorite toy. In this instance it was a great, big, sexy, six-foot-seven toy, but he was hers, damn it. Hers! "I need him. He calmed me last night. He held me and calmed me and kept me from going crazy with everything. I *need* him."

Dee jumped to her feet. "Breathe, honey. Just breathe. Slowly. Deeply. Come on. You can do this."

An overstuffed chair adjacent to the couch banged against the floor.

Bam. Bam. Bam.

The front window shattered.

Overwhelmed and out of control, Kat felt shattered too. Tears poured from her eyes as energy sizzled through her system. Repeating Gabe's name like a mantra in her mind she tried to reach for his image. She searched for calm in the storm. Deep in her heart she knew only Gabriel could help her. Another window shattered and as if from a distance she heard Dee speak into the phone.

Dee grabbed her arms but then jerked back as if shocked. The strong current of energy zapped the doctor, Kat knew. It wasn't intentional. It wasn't. Fearlessly, Dee leaned close to her face. "He's coming. I've called him. Kat, please do your breathing exercises."

Screw breathing.

Her anger surged. Everyone took things from her. Everyone. She was sick of it. Gabriel Dunham called to her soul and they kept him away. Damn them all. Angry and lost, she trembled as the walls of her tiny cottage rattled and shook. Suddenly her skin seemed too tight to contain her bones and she knew if help didn't come soon, something horrible would happen.

In. Out. In. Out. Breathe. Breathe.

Not working.

Her mind pulsed with energy gone wild as her eyes snapped shut. A door slammed in the distance, footsteps pounded closer but she didn't dare open her eyes for fear of flying apart. She smelled him, closer, closer. Her heart responded, her body reacted.

Gabe!

"Damn that was fast, Sheriff," Dee said breathlessly and despite Kat's dire straits she heard the shakily spoken words.

Instant warmth wrapped around her. Gabe's arms pulled her into the sheltering curve of his body. Kat sank into him, every inch of her body caught in the storm of her powers. She shook as if afflicted. "I'm here, honey. Shh. Hush. I'm here. Aw, sweetheart."

Gabe lifted her up and she clung to him. Relief swept her and her rapid breathing began to calm. Her heart stopped its crazy hammering. Burying her nose against his throat she breathed him like a balm. Her mate's voice thundered through the room. "Leave us now. I've got it."

"I can't just leave n—"

"Leave." Gabe roared the word and then his voice went softer. "I appreciate what you are trying to do, Doctor, but I'm not leaving her. She's my mate. I've got this and you should go."

The finality in his voice washed over her. Dee might hate her now and inwardly Kat worried about it. Dr. Santos had been nothing but kind, a friend even, and had seen her through the worst of dark days when she'd simply shut down, lost to everyone. She owed her. Later, she'd fix things with Dee. Later, she'd say how sorry she was. Now she could only cling to Gabriel, her port in the storm. "Gabe," she whispered.

"I'm here."

She closed her eyes and felt him move with her, his boot heels heavy on the hardwood floors of the cabin. The softness of the mattress on her bed settled against her back and finally she looked up at him. The worry etched on his face hurt her, embarrassed her too. If only she had a grip on the powers she'd been born with. None of this would be happening.

But then if she hadn't been born this way and been bartered by her father to a group of criminals called the Hellfire Club, she would never have met her mate.

Weird tradeoff.

"I want peace," she whispered.

The bed dipped when he sat next to her to brush the hair from her face. "I'll see you get it."

"Can you *do* that?"

"I will. I promise. I would give my life for you. What kind of man would I be if I didn't make your world peaceful?"

For the first time in her life, she began to believe something good might happen and that good thing was looking at her with such intense affection it nearly stole her breath. Beginning to settle from the meltdown, she licked her lips and watched Gabe's gaze follow the motion of her tongue. Would he kiss her again? Touch her as he had the night before? Caught up in the notion, she held her breath when he leaned closer. Gabe pressed a kiss to her forehead and she tried to keep her disappointment from showing.

"I'll be right back."

Kat watched him walk into her bathroom, listening to the sounds of him rattling around. Water splashed in the sink. Within seconds he walked back to her and drew a damp washcloth over her face. She didn't realize she was hot until the chill met her flesh.

"Better?"

"Yes. You're taking good care of me. I don't deserve it after making such a mess."

Gabe shook his head and after tossing the cloth aside reached into his pocket for his cell phone. "Hang on, darlin'. I need to call Joe."

Joe McKinnon was alpha of the Wolf Creek pack. She'd met the handsome devil on several occasions but didn't know him well. Lying quietly she listened, her lycan hearing highly developed despite the fact she had yet to shift into her beast. Joe picked up on the second ring.

"Gabe?"

"Yeah. Problem here at Katalin's place."

"She okay?"

Gabe looked at her. "She's fine but the house is a wreck. Her powers are surfacing quickly. Sharper and stronger than you could ever imagine."

Joe went quiet for a moment. "Tell me what I can do."

"Send out a couple of cowboys with new windows for the cabin. She blew two of them to smithereens and the house needs to be secured for the night."

"I'll have someone there in a couple of hours."

"Good enough, Joe. Thanks."

"Did you call Dr. Santos?"

"She was here when all hell broke loose. Kat doesn't want her here. She wants me. I'm staying."

Kat heard the finality in his voice and part of her did a private little happy dance. He was staying with her. No more sleeping in his truck. Maybe together they could conquer her demons and somewhere, somehow they'd find some happiness. Some peace. When Gabe disconnected, he moved to the foot of the bed, slipping her shoes from her feet and tossing them to the floor. "I'm going to get you all fixed up, honey. You just lay here and relax a little bit."

She opened her mouth to protest that she was fine now. She wasn't an invalid. But Kat never got the chance because he headed back into the bathroom. Water jetted into the tub and over the sound of rushing water he called out to her. "Hey, do you have any bubbles? I know you ladies like that."

Lordy! Was he not the sweetest man alive?

For months she'd watched people sidestep him, seen their respect and awe. Some seemed almost intimidated by the raw power he exuded. True, he was as big as a mountain though she'd seen nothing but kindness from him, a tenderness that seemed strange coming from such a rugged man. Her heart turned over. "The bottle of pink stuff on a shelf near the tub," she called.

A moment or two later, he spoke again. "Smells pretty good."

The slight smile she wore widened as she imagined him unscrewing the lid from the bottle and sniffing the bubble bath. She would never tell a soul but hold that little bit of knowledge as if it were the sweetest secret.



Gabe reached over to turn on a floor lamp, surveying the living room with a critical eye. True to his word, Joe McKinnon had sent out two cowboys from the Wolf Creek Ranch late in the afternoon to replace the broken windows. Maria, the McKinnon's housekeeper had come along for the ride and though Gabe protested, she'd insisted on helping with the mess left behind from Kat's implosion. They were good people, these brother and sister lycans who called Cloverfield, Texas, home. Truth to tell, he hadn't had much time to be introspective until now. Consumed with worry and trying like hell not to show it, he made sure Katalin was settled in a nice warm bathtub and when she'd finished, he led her back to her bed, naturally under protest, and tucked her in for a nap. Gods knew he wasn't a genius but then he hadn't needed to be to realize that the use of her telekinesis zapped her energy. Poor little thing had been asleep for hours.

Gabe looked around the neat-as-a-pin room recalling that once this little cabin had belonged to Martha Bennet who'd later become the consummated mate of their king, Silas MacAdam. They now lived in Silas' ancestral castle in Scotland and since the cabin was isolated from town yet still close to the ranch, it had only made sense for Katalin to hang her hat here. Rationally, he knew she was safe here. Hell, everyone in town knew of her rare gifts and accepted her as one of their own. Both she and her sister, Sara, had been welcomed into the pack with open arms. Good folks.

After checking the security of the windows, he went into the kitchen and took a plate of food from the fridge and nuked it in the microwave. Carrying the food along with a tall glass of iced tea, he paused in the doorway of the bedroom. Her curly reddish hair spread across the pale sheets like a shiny flag. She was so damn still and Gabe knew she had to be exhausted but hell, the woman had to eat. When he approached the side of the bed and set the plate on her nightstand, her eyes fluttered open.

"Gabe," she whispered. The sound went through him like a song. Gingerly, he sat at the edge of the bed and settled his palm against her hair. Damn, it was soft. "How long did I sleep?"

"Quite awhile but that's okay. You needed it. Are you always this wiped out after these things happen?"

She frowned a little. "Nothing quite this violent has ever happened to me before. It was always just small incidents but this time..."

"Shh. Don't think about it now. Come on, honey, sit up. You need to eat something." Gabe helped her sit and fluffed pillows to support her back though he suspected she would've preferred to handle things herself. Tough shit. He handed her a plate of grilled chicken that was covered with some kind of fruit stuff. Looked to him like pineapple and mango. A side of steamed green beans topped off the meal. "Here you go," he said, handing her a fork and tucking a napkin into the top of the oversize tee shirt she wore.

Smiling Kat removed the napkin and placed it in her lap. "Did you make this?"

"Hell no. I can't cook for shit. Do you remember Maria? Quinn and Joe's housekeeper?"

"Sure I do." Kat cut into the chicken and chewed for a minute. Her eyes closed as she smiled. "Mmm. Awesome. She made this?"

Gabe smiled at her enjoyment of the food and wondered when she'd last eaten. Yeah, to say he was a tad overprotective was an understatement but hell, he'd waited his entire long, long life for a mate. He wanted her safe. "Yeah, she came over with a couple of the men from the ranch and helped with the cleanup. She figured you'd be hungry later. Damn woman wanted to stay and take care of you but I told her no."

"I hope you were nice about it."

He was almost insulted but then he realized that, yeah, he could sound kinda mean sometimes. "Sure I was."

Kat patted his hand as if to take the sting out of her words and then shook her head. "It's so embarrassing to lose control like this."

"Not your fault. We'll figure this out together."

"I was never like this before," she mused. "Suddenly I was just so mad. It just burned through me and I couldn't stop it."

"Figure frustration has been building for quite some time, don't you think? All this power and no way to control it. You are in a new place, with new people. Hell darlin', your whole life has changed. You have a lot to deal with. But I think we have to face the fact that your powers are growing."

Finished with her meal, Kat handed off her plate and leaned back to look at him. She looked so damn sweet sitting there with that little frown on her face. His heart thumped. "It's pretty scary."

"We'll get through it together. I'm not leaving you alone."

She shook her head and reached for his hand. It kinda startled him because he purely wasn't used to people voluntarily touching him. He liked it. Gabe felt the curl of her fingers and lightly squeezed in return. "You can't babysit me 24/7. People depend on you."

"Nah, it's not a big deal. It's not like Cloverfield and the surrounding county is a hotbed of crime. I drive through the human populated towns in the area once a day just to make sure everything is okay but I'm here most of the time. If I need to, I'll take on a deputy. Besides you'll be at work during the day and hanging out in the school library should be a fairly stable environment."

"True. Do you think you can help me? Any ideas?"

Well now. Wasn't that just the million dollar question? He had some thoughts about that. He went quiet for a minute before staring her dead in the eye. "I've been thinking on this some, darlin'," he began watching her steadily. "It seems to me that when we are close you are calm. Do you remember the other night when I held you? The lamp moved but I talked you through it and things settled down."

"I remember," she whispered. "I got really calm." Her eyes flashed into his filled with recognition. "Yes. We were close and you held me tightly. When you spoke to me it was as if that energy went still for a minute."

"Yeah. I've been thinking about it too. I don't want to push you but I believe that you'll get a firmer grip on things through sex."

"Sex?" Her face flamed with color and he wished he could take back what he'd said. The very last thing he wanted to do was push her away. "You mean consummate things?"

Among their kind, mates observed a "consummation ceremony". From what he knew it was heady, highly erotic and intense. When eventually he fucked her in the consummation rites his cock would swell inside her, locking them together in a battle of lust that would go on for a very long time. He would sink his teeth into her neck as she climaxed repeatedly and at the end of things, she would shift into her wolf. Gabe's cock hardened behind the zipper of his jeans at the thought of taking her in every imaginable way. She would be hot and creamy around him, vaginal muscles fluttering wildly as he made her scream with pleasure. Yanking his mind back to the current conversation, he brushed his thumb over the back of her hand, hoping to soothe her. "I think it's too soon for that but believe me, honey, it will come. For now, we should get used to each other's touch and I'm not about to lie to you, I need to fuck you. I've wanted you for too damn long. If you are ready for this, gods know, I sure as hell am."

Kat slammed her eyes shut. "I don't know much about this stuff."

Gabe reached for her and drew her against his chest. Beneath the cotton of her tee shirt, she was braless. He breathed in the scent of soap and bubble bath, loving the way her breasts felt against him. "Why would you? I know you've been sheltered for most of your life and no man but me has touched you. Are you afraid?"

Her head moved against him as she shook it. "Not really. I feel safe with you but I worry I won't be enough. You've lived over two hundred years. You've had women. How can I ever hope to measure up?"

Stunned to his core, he drew back and looked at her. "Let's get this straight. I think about you night and day. I want to fuck you so badly you occupy my every waking thought and at night you are in my dreams. You don't have to be experienced for me to wade through fire to claim you. Don't you get it? You're mine, Kat."

Needing to get through to her, dying for her, Gabe took her lips in a savage kiss. At once she opened to him and he took instant advantage, plundering the recesses of her mouth with his tongue. His teeth nibbled at her lips and when she sighed responsively, he angled his face for a firmer touch. His breathing ratcheted up a notch when with a subtle movement, Katalin pressed tighter. In her innocence, she rubbed her diamond-hard nipples against the front of his tee shirt. They burned him like a brand and needing more from her, he lifted one hand to cup one breast.

"Small," she whispered, breaking the kiss. Kat made a soft whimpering sound as he continued to manipulate her soft flesh.

"Hmm?"

"Small. They are small."

Gabe kept up the pressure, moving his fingers over her nipple, plucking lightly. He kissed her cheek and held his lips there. Smiling, he rolled the firm bud. "Not small," he said. "Delicate. Hell, you are so slender I worry I'll crush you. Everything about you is perfect."

A sliver of moonlight swept through the windows casting mysterious, sultry shadows through the room and Gabe wanted nothing more than to climb onto the bed with her but she deserved better than a quick, rushed fuck. The moment demanded more. Much more. Reaching below the sheets that lay rumpled across her lap, he grabbed the hem of her shirt and pulled it over her head. Kat gasped and instantly folded her arms over her chest.

"Uh-uh. You won't hide from me, darlin'. I won't have it and you're beautiful. The prettiest thing I've ever seen. Come on now." Gently he unfolded her arms and looked his fill. He was right about her breasts. They were pale, delicate and crowned with tight

pink nipples that he was dying to taste. Bending low he pulled one into his mouth and sucked lightly. "Fucking delicious."

Gabe continued to suck her, tonguing her lightly, alternating the pressure until her body heat practically scalded him. Her fingers swept through his hair, digging in to bring him closer. "Hang on, darlin'," he whispered against the moist nub of her nipple. "You have to give me ten minutes, you hear?"

"Ten minutes? Are you trying to kill me here?" Kat's breath came out in staccato little pants.

"I'm not coming to you without cleaning up, Katalin. You deserve better."

"Oh."

Reluctantly he released her and stood. "Settle back. Think about what I've been doing to you and how you feel about that. When I come back in this room I want you naked and waiting for me."

## Chapter Three

Katalin slid her eyes over his broad, broad shoulders and admired the silky length of his golden hair as he walked into the bathroom and shut the door. A more powerful-looking man had never been born and a shiver raced over Katalin's flesh as she realized what would happen between them very soon now. She pushed her hair back from her face wondering if she was ready for this.

*Yes.*

While it was true she had no real knowledge of what sex would feel like and how her body might respond, she wasn't totally ignorant. She still remembered the times when her sister, Sara, would manage to sneak romance novels into their small cabin and together they would huddle together in the bed they shared reading naughty passages and giggling like loons. If Anton—she refused to call him *Father*—had known, there would have been serious trouble for both of them. That Sara defied him and brought the books into the house was a testament to her bravery.

Kat had never been brave. Never. That was all about to change tonight.

Standing from the bed she picked up the tee shirt Gabe had pulled from her and carefully folded it. She removed her panties and placed them, along with the tee shirt on top of her dresser. Naked, she walked to the window and carefully peeking behind the curtain, stared out at the night as water from the Gabe's shower blasted out a warning tune. Tonight she promised herself, she would reclaim her life.

The refrain of her childhood ran through her mind.

*Be careful, Katalin.*

*Be quiet, Katalin.*

*Don't let him see what you can do, sweetheart. Please be cautious, quiet and still.*

Before she could talk, the words had been emblazoned on her mind and mutinous displays of temper such as moving a cup or book across the room had meant punishment from her frightened mother.

Anton couldn't know. The safety of them all depended upon it.

In the end, in a moment of carelessness on her part, Anton realized she'd come into her power. All hell had broken loose that night. Shoving trembling fingers through her hair, she pushed the nightmare to the back of her mind.

Thanks to Sara and Cactus, Anton was dead. Kat drew in a heavy breath and swore she would face the rest of her life without fear and part of that was mating with the man destiny had chosen for her. No longer would she hide in the shadows in fear of someone discovering the existence of her vile and dangerous gift. Kat wanted to live and she somehow, deep in her heart, knew that Gabriel held the key to her freedom and that peace she told him she wanted.

The door to the bathroom opened and Gabe stepped naked into the room. Turning from the window, Kat gathered her courage and walked to him stopping only a few feet away. If he was surprised by her actions, it didn't register on his rugged face. His dark gaze locked on her face before lowering down the length of her naked body. For an instant that shy girl she'd always been tried to resurface but Katalin ruthlessly pushed her away.

His eyes paused at her breasts then moved to her belly and lower. Another shiver caught her up and she realized she held her breath. Her heartbeat accelerated to an impossible rate and a framed picture rattled on the wall.

"Don't look at it. Look at me," he said. "Focus on me alone."

Katalin licked her lips and struggled to slow her heart rate through the steady breathing taught to her by Dee Santos. "Okay."

Gabriel stepped close enough that his body heat whipped around her, warming her, heating her blood. Cupping her cheek, he stared down at her and it was impossible to



mistake the pride and possession burning in his gaze. "Listen to what I'm going to tell you. You are the most beautiful creature the gods have ever made. Believe it."

Bending low he took her mouth in a kiss meant burn, meant to pleasure, meant to bring any woman to her knees. Ferociously, he ate at her lips, torturing them with tiny nibbles and then he plunged his tongue deep, staking his claim. Her inhibitions shattered as he pressed her body to his and lifted her up into his arms. Gabriel carried her to the bed and with one hand, reached down to toss the rumpled sheets to the foot of the bed. When he'd arranged her to his satisfaction, he stood looking at her. "I want this to be good for you. Are you scared?"

"No. No, I'm not."

Relief settled over his features and her heart melted, but that quick reaction was soon replaced by awe. She'd seen his body before but again she took in the corrugated muscle of his abs, his brawny chest, the strength displayed in his neck. His arms were corded and stronger than any she'd ever seen. Her gaze zeroed down to focus on his heavy cock. Truly an instrument of pleasure assuming size really *did* matter. The whimsical thought skittered away when Gabe came down beside her on the bed and took her mouth again. His hand cupped a breast, thumbing the nipple into gemlike hardness and she wondered vaguely why she'd ever worried about being small. Pleasure radiated from his touch, from the tiny circular pattern he traced there. Gabe leaned down and slipped the nipple into his mouth to suck and a tiny sound skipped from her lips as she sent curious fingers into his thick hair to hold on for the ride.

More. She wanted more. Harder. Firmer. Wilder.

Sucking strongly, then lighter, he teased her with his lips, tongue and teeth as passion swamped her, dragging her under. As if stroked by invisible fingers, her pussy responded growing drenched with need.

She felt empty and knew only Gabriel could ease her.

His hand cruised the flesh of her ribs and belly, finally settling over her pussy. Gabe slid one finger with seductive slowness over her slit and Kat went still. "Easy now," he

said his voice raw and heavy. "If I do something you don't like, tell me. Gods you're creamy."

He stroked that wicked finger through the petals of her cunt and helplessly, she arched against his touch, her back bowing as she sought more and then he gave it to her. Parting her labia, his touch grew firm, wicked, he plucked the tender knot of her clit, circling the slick bundle of nerves until she gasped. Lust flashed through her system.

Kat cried out. A small, tinkling sound followed as a bottle from her dresser hit the floor.

Suddenly Gabe's face was near hers. "Forget it. Listen to the sound of my voice. Concentrate only on the touch of my fingers, my mouth. Focus everything inside you on the way you feel."

"Just touch me again. Please."

Gabe stared into her eyes and she saw lust, tenderness too, swimming there as he breached her channel with one big finger. Kat went still as he pushed deeper then slightly withdrew only to add another. Need tore through her as she moved, meeting each thrust. Moving his luscious mouth down the center of her body, trailing open-mouthed kisses over her flesh, he stopped finally at her belly to rub the spot with his cheek.

Tenderness. Need. Satisfaction.

His emotions swamped her, curling through her body like a slow, sexy song and then his mouth moved lower. Gabe adjusted his position until he kneeled between her spread thighs. Shadows moved over his face as he looked down at her body. An innocent like her should have been mortified. Nothing about her, aside from her preternatural gift, had ever been outrageous but there was no shame, no embarrassment. Instead heat bloomed through her core sending a fresh flood of moisture to drench her pussy.

"Dyin' to taste you," he said, his voice a low rumble of sound.

*Do it. Do it.*

She wanted to scream the words but she couldn't. Anticipation made her ache and then he lowered his mouth to her cunt and sent his tongue over the seam, dragging the moisture over his tongue in a steady motion. Her hands curled through his hair, holding on for all she was worth. His breath was hot, heavy on her flesh when he parted her labia with his fingers, taking his touch deeper. Lush sensation made her go still until she could no longer stand it. Moving against his devouring mouth, she writhed, absorbing the pleasure into her pores. Gabe slid two fingers deep, fucking her that way as he sucked the swollen knot of her clit. Consumed by the intimacy, the thrill of his mouth on her, Kat felt his energy push deep adding to the agony of lust and the need for release. Vaginal walls clasped his fingers with each steady thrust into her body. Everything inside her tightened, reaching, reaching for the promise of pleasure. Tighter, tighter, the coil wound until she practically shook with need. A sharp ecstasy, so profound it rattled her bones burst into a million tiny sparks. Kat cried out as an orgasm raced like fire through her body, blasting over her flesh until she thought she'd burn.

Gabe gentled her with his mouth only to bring her up again, pushing her to the edge of sanity and the suddenly he was over her, this giant of a man. His eyes burned into hers, his need, his emotions fairly overwhelming. She felt the broad head of his cock drag over the sensitive, needy flesh of her pussy until it settled at her opening.

"Yes," she whispered.

Staring steadily into her eyes, Gabe pushed inside a tiny increment but it wasn't enough. Not now. Kat needed him deep. She looped her legs over his in an effort to bring him closer. When he pushed hard and heavy into her, she sucked in a breath. He was so big, so thick, filling her up ratcheting her lust up another dangerous notch. Gabe went still.

"Gods, you feel perfect. So tight. Wet. I've waited so long for this and damn it, my patience is at an end. I'm going to fuck you hard, darlin'. Hold on tight."

Gabe drew back and thrust again, harder. Kat dug her fingers into his sides as he started to move, dragging his cock over pulsing, sensitized nerve endings. In. Out. Slowly and then much faster. Energy, which she knew was just a sample of his power, whirled through her body at a maddening pace as he fucked her. Each downstroke brushed her throbbing clit as Kat writhed against him.

It was good. So good.

Gabe was propped on his elbows above her but then he reached down with one hand and gripped her ass to haul her closer. That tiny movement was all she needed to fly apart again. Her cry, wild and raw, ripped the air as she rode his cock through the storm of lust that gripped her.

“Gods!” Gabe gritted the word, going still for an instant before increasing his speed, thrusting, pounding, fucking her into oblivion. Kat opened her eyes, watched his narrow dangerously. The expression on his face was so savage, it set off another strong orgasm. Gabe gritted his teeth, letting go and she felt his semen blast deep as she spasmed around his hungry cock.

He was a damn heavy man and she was so delicate, he didn’t want to crush her. Rolling to his side, bringing her with him, Gabe kept them connected, his cock still lodged deep inside her, pulsing in the aftermath of the best sex he’d had in his long, long life. If this was just a sample of what sex with a mate was like, he wondered how much more powerful it would be when they finally consummated in the tradition of their race.

Gabe sent a gentle hand over her wildly curling hair, brushing it back from her face. “Are you all right?”

Her sleepy smile warmed him, touching him deeply with its intimacy. “Yeah. Now I’m even angrier at Dee for keeping us apart this way. I’ve been missing out.”

He smiled. "Let's not be too hard on her. She was just looking out for you and meant no harm. I should have followed my instincts here. Nothing bad happened. The walls didn't cave in and the windows are all intact."

"Amazing." She buried her nose against his chest and Gabe heard her drag a deep breath into her lungs. He tightened his hold on her and drew her closer, loving the feel of her nestled up nice and tight. Finally she looked up at him. "I did what you asked and focused on you. It worked."

"Thought it might. Now I want to try something. Let's sit up for a minute." She eyed him quizzically but together they sat up. Reaching out, he flipped on the lamp on the bedside table and pointed to the small mess on the floor. "See that? I think that flew off the dresser. Let's see what you can do with this. Concentrate and see if you can move the broken glass."

What he'd thought was a bottle was in actuality a small vase. It lay on the floor broken into several large pieces. Kat sat on the edge of the bed and Gabe moved behind her. He wrapped his arms around her waist from behind and leaned close to her ear. "Concentrate on those pieces of glass. I've got you. Focus now and visualize those bits of glass lifting from the floor."

Gabe didn't know shit about her powers. Not really. He was in virgin territory but his instincts had never failed him. He knew she needed some confidence and he was bound and determined she'd get it. Hopefully, if she leaned on him with this stuff, they'd be able to figure it out. Gabe sent a little push of power into his mate and he felt her own energy sizzle in response. Her emotions, normally so easy to feel, were calm. He could feel her concentration and within a few minutes the pieces of broken glass lifted from the floor.

"Yeah. Good," he whispered. "Hold them there."

"Yes."

"Concentrate now. Visualize them moving to the top of the dresser."

Remaining utterly still, Kat frowned and they crashed to the floor. Gabe felt her frustration and quickly soothed her again. "That's okay, darlin'. Try again. Easy now."

Again the pieces lifted and held. The force of her concentration transferred itself from her to him and in a bit the glass moved ever so slowly toward the top of the dresser. Once they were positioned there, holding steady, Kat made a little sound of surprise and turned to him. With a little whoop, she launched herself into his arms as the glass tinkled along the wooden dresser top. "I did it! Oh Gabe!"

Her joy, unmistakable and wonderful to see, swept through him as he held her in his arms and together they lay back on the bed. Reaching over he turned off the lamp and tugged the covers over them both. "You hate not having control, don't you?" he asked.

"It's awful. I don't think there has ever been a moment in my life where I've had control of anything. It's scary."

"Imagine it is. We're going to work on this together, okay?"

As naturally as if she'd always done it, she turned more fully toward him and looped one leg atop his until their legs were entwined. Her scent, the sexual pull of her drew him, but she needed to talk. He felt it.

"Gabe I want to figure out how to use my powers. Maybe then Sara will stop worrying about me."

He laughed a little, pressing his lips to her hair. "From what I know of her I can't see that happening. She's watched over you most of your life and old habits die hard. Doubt she can help herself. You're her sister and she loves you."

"She was always protecting me. She and Mama both. Anton, my father, was born with something wrong in his head, I think. A screw loose. He was mean, bad to the bone and lazy. It was a stroke of luck for him when he found Mom and realized they were meant to be mated. She comes from a long line of eastern European lycans, many of whom are gifted with supernatural powers."

Gabe knew much of this but let her talk it out, sensing she needed it. "Mom didn't have special powers but Anton knew that his daughters might. He watched us constantly for signs. When I was just little, a baby really, I began to do little things when I was upset and it scared Mom and Sara to death. They'd calm me, tell me to be quiet and still. I think they must have known that getting me upset wasn't such a good thing to do since I had no control over anything I might do.

"It was scariest when Anton was home. He mistakenly believed Sara possessed no gifts so basically he ignored her." She laughed a little. "If he only knew that Sara could kick his mean ass maybe things would have been different but as you know, Sara didn't realize how physically strong she was until she and Cactus came together."

"She is one tough female, your sister. She runs faster for longer and packs a wallop to boot."

Kat laughed and playfully punched him in the arm. "Good thing she likes you, huh cowboy?"

Gabe grinned, loving her happy, carefree side. "I'd better watch out or she'll be after my job."

"Nah, I think she's happy enough to see you as sheriff." Her smile faded a bit. "I'm glad she found Cactus and that he's a mate who isn't intimidated by her strength. He's a good man."

"The best. Honey, a man isn't a man at all if he isn't proud of his mate. If he doesn't support her."

"I wish Anton had been different. We might have all been happy instead of living in such misery. Mom might still be with us." Kat went still. "It's my fault she died, you know."

Stunned by her words, he frowned. "What the hell! Why would you say such a thing?"

Kat shook her head and it was impossible for Gabe to miss the desolation in her eyes. "It's true," she said, quietly. "I lost control of my temper. Maybe it had always

been there just hovering beneath the surface but he hit Sara. He just doubled up his fist and smacked her. Mom, as she'd always done, jumped between them trying to redirect his anger from Sara to herself." She tucked her bottom lip between her teeth, then released it. A shiver swept her and Gabe pulled her close. "I just snapped I guess. My temper went crazy and things started flying everywhere. Mom and Sara started yelling at me to calm down but it was too late. Anton had his first glimpse of what I could do." Kat went very quiet and Gabe felt her sorrow and guilt as if it were his own. "He went to the gun rack over the fireplace mantel, took down the rifle and shot Mom. She died instantly. I think you know the rest."

Gabe knew they'd been taken at gunpoint by their father who planned to sell his daughters to the secretive Hellfire Club. Little was known about the group except they were criminals bent on kidnapping and forcibly mating with gifted female lycans. This quest for power was just making its presence known among their kind and plans were, even now, in play to bring them down. Through a strange series of events, the Petrova sisters been found and brought to Cloverfield and the Wolf Creek Ranch.

"It's all over now," he said, his voice rough from emotion. "You aren't to blame for your mom's death, darlin'. I think deep in your heart you know that, too. She just had the misfortune to get in a crazy man's way. Life is strange that way and we all have our road to walk. Your path led you to me and believe me, love, I'll never let anyone hurt you again. You have my promise."



## **Chapter Four**

"Concentrate, Katalin. Move the cup." Kat sat snuggled on the couch, cocooned by the warmth of her mate, as she followed his instructions. Earlier Gabe had placed a number of small objects on the coffee table and after breakfast, he'd said they would begin her lessons. "Listen to the sound of my voice and remain calm."

She felt the slight push of his energy into her body. Focusing on the pottery mug she felt that swell of power move through her to reach out toward the object. The cup moved several inches.

"More."

She focused again, the thrust of power growing stronger, until the cup continued its path to the edge of the table. "Stop," she whispered. "Stop." The cup continued until it toppled harmlessly to the floor.

"That's okay. Try again. This time pick the cup from the floor and settle it back onto the table." His arm tightened around her. Katalin absorbed his strength into her pores and taking a deep breath lifted the mug and reset it on the table. Joy bloomed up as she turned to Gabe.

"I did it."

Gabe pressed his lips to hers quickly, returning her smile. "I knew you could. I'm beginning to think you simply need to practice remaining calm. It's when your emotions are unsettled that things go a little nuts."

Kat rolled her eyes. "Mild term for what I do when I'm in a snit."

"Remind me to never piss you off."

Mirth bubbled up and feeling free and easy with this man who was still such a stranger to her, she rolled against him until she straddled his lap. "I'm tired now. No

more working, okay?" She settled against him loving the way his arms wrapped around her. "I want to know more about you, Gabriel. Talk to me."

"Not much of a talker," he said. "For you, I'll try."

"I wish you would."

"What do you want to know?"

She peeked up at him, noting the slight twitching of his lips. "Where do you live? I figure you have a house somewhere around here? I know you don't live in your truck despite the fact you've been sleeping there so much."

Gabriel drew his hands over her back settling them at the base of her spine. A sexual shiver rolled over her but her curiosity about him outweighed everything at the moment. Sunlight streaked through the brand-spanking-new windows and she realized he was just as delicious in the harsh light of day as he was when shadows kissed his skin. "I have a house at the edge of Wolf Creek Ranch," he said, a touch of pride in his voice. "Built it myself many years ago. These days it would be considered a Historical Home by the State of Texas but I laid every stone and poured the foundation with my own two hands. I think you'd like it."

"I'm sure I would. Maybe I'll see it soon?"

"You don't have to wait for an invitation, darlin'. The way I see it, it's our place now, which leads me to something I've been wanting to talk to you about."

She knew what was coming. She might be rather introverted out of necessity but living alone was disconcerting to her. "You want me to see your place?"

"More than that. I don't like the idea of your being out here alone, sweetheart. Now, don't get me wrong, I'll stay here with you forever if you want me to but, hell, I don't know how to say this."

"I never figured you for an indecisive man."

"And I never figured you to be so downright sassy." Gabe grinned and smacked her butt playfully. "I'm a big man, darlin' and this place is pretty damn small." The

hand he'd settled on her ass began to caress and tease. His cock hardened against her pussy, and suddenly the layers of denim and cotton separating them was too much entirely. "And that bathtub. It's tiny. Do you have any idea what a lycan like me could do to a woman like you in a nice, big tub?"

Kat leaned forward, the action rubbing her rapidly dampening pussy against his thickness. Playfully she nipped his chin. "Is that right? I'd sure like to hear all about it, lawman. Are you telling me you think I need a bath or something?"

He laughed. "I don't think both of us would fit in that little bitty tub of yours." Gabe looked down at her, humor vanished as quickly as it came. He dragged the edge of his thumb over her jawline. "Move in with me, Katalin. I'm not saying we'll 'consummate' yet and I don't want to rush you but I want you with me. Every night."

"This isn't just about helping me with my gift, is it?"

"How can you even ask it after last night?" Gabe bent his head and kissed her, taking the tasting deep. Desire raced through him and Kat felt it as if it were her own. A responding need caught her up and she knew Gabe felt when it happened. He groaned as if ravenous, his tongue sweeping her mouth, drinking her down as his hands flexed over the globes of her ass. "Come home with me," he whispered roughly against her lips. "Pack up your bags. Do it."

"Why don't you convince me? Convince me now."

When had this bold woman been born? Had she been hiding out just waiting for the moment this particular man came into her life? Yes. Yes. Yes. Feeling her power, Kat sent her fingers into his hair, cupped his head and held him close knowing she'd never get enough of him. His cock pressed against her pussy and as the aching need for him rolled through her body, heady and hot, she rocked against that staggering hardness, delighted when he growled low in his throat. Rubbing against him as pleasure jetted in little pulses through her cunt, she broke the kiss and buried her lips against his strong throat. "Gabe," she whispered.

"Stand up, sweetheart."

Shakily, she pulled away and stood between his spread thighs. He caught her gaze, his expression hard, as he reached for the zipper of her shorts and pulled them down her legs along with her silky panties. There was no need to deal with shoes since she was barefoot. Kat kicked the shorts away and saw his eyes focus on her pussy. "You're already wet and ready for me. I see your pussy glistening." As if to prove the point, he dragged one finger over her slit, gathering the wetness. Kat looked down and watched him spread her labia, a study of concentration. He flicked the tender knot of her clit then leaned in to swipe at it with his tongue. Her eyes drifted shut at the feel of his tongue, his hot breath on her tender flesh. Her clit was swollen and she sucked in a ragged breath when he pulled it into his mouth to suck. Kat had never experienced that well-fucked feeling before. Sex had been seriously on the agenda last night and it seemed that every time Gabe looked at her, her body creamed, demanding more from him. Leaning closer, he ate at her pleasure-drenched pussy, licking the flesh, sucking it firmly into his mouth. Lust spiked sharp and hard inside her and then his mouth was gone, leaving her bereft, empty.

"Gabe?"

"Hang on."

She looked down to see him unzip his jeans. Lifting his hips, he pushed the jeans down and kicked them aside. His cock was thick and dark with color rising up from his groin and Kat wasn't a fool, she knew what he wanted. Gabe leaned back then reached for her.

"Come here."

Kat straddled him, a knee on either side of his hips. His nostrils flared as he reached for her. "Ride me."

Fisting his hand around his cock, he swept the heavy head over her flesh. Kat shivered. Longing curled in her belly as she sank over him, taking every inch of his erection into her body. The press of him deep inside was tight, delicious, forcing a whimper from her throat. Following instincts as old as time, she rose and fell over him,

clutching, releasing, clutching again. She couldn't get enough of the feel of him buried deep. Sensation raked with tender claws.

Gabe thrust upward to meet her. His expression a picture of savage intensity, he grabbed the hem of her tee shirt and pulled it up to expose her breasts. She wore no bra this morning and was now seriously thankful for that. He latched onto a nipple and sucked hard, drawing on her and adding to the power of each strong push into her body. Her clit brushed against his pelvic bone and needing more pressure, a firmer touch, she swiveled her hips, rotating against him. Gabe flexed his fingers on her ass and shoved deep again. His power, his energy blasted up wrenching a cry from her lips and that tightly wound spring coiled heavily in her belly unwound with a snap. Kat toppled over the edge as her body jerked with a powerful orgasm. The electrifying sensation moved through her and even while caught in its grip she realized her hair whipped wildly around her head.

Gabe followed her, groaning low around the puckered hardness of her nipple, his body going still for a split second before he thrust deep once, twice, three more times. She felt his cum shoot into her as he climaxed. His fingers dug into the globes of her ass then relaxed to stroke her there. Kat sank against him, sorry to feel the cotton of his tee shirt instead of warm, giving flesh. "Gabe," she whispered.

Stroking his hands along her back, he brushed a kiss atop her head before finally lifting her face. He pressed a kiss to her mouth. "Come home with me, sugar. Please. I'll stay if you want but I really want you there. I want to see you lying in my bed waiting for me."

"And the big tub? You want to see me there, too?"

His lips quirked. "That I do, ma'am."

Kat settled against his chest again knowing she surely wore a silly, goofy grin. "Okay, then. Give me an hour. How does that sound?"

\* \* \* \* \*

Several days later, Gabe pushed open the door of Poteet's on the Prairie, Rayne Poteet Ramone's store. Kat stepped inside inhaling the scent of a spicy potpourri that mingled among the racks of assorted clothing and bric-a-brac. Afternoon sunlight glistened over the aged hardwood floors and the cowbell hanging over the entrance jangled, sounding a welcome.

She'd spent the weekend with Gabe and had successfully moved her meager belongings into the beautiful two-story limestone house.

Toward the back of the cavernous retail space, she spotted her sister, Sara sitting at a lunch table with Rayne, Quinn McKinnon, and Dee Santos. Sara stood and rushed up to give her a hug.

"Oh my gods! I was beginning to worry. Haven't heard from you in days."

Kat returned the hug. "When are you going to stop worrying?"

"Never!" Sara turned to Gabe and grinned. "Hey, Sheriff."

Gabe tipped the brim of his black Stetson a bit. "Ma'am."

Sara, blonde, stunning and possibly the most physically strong female lycan on the planet, grinned suddenly. "I assume you are the reason I haven't heard a peep from my little sister?"

"Guilty."

Her expression gentled. "That's good. Thanks for dropping her off for lunch with the girls."

"My pleasure." Gabe reached out and squeezed Kat's hand. "About an hour?"

"Yeah, I need to get back to the school by one."

Gabe headed out the door and Kat felt the eyes of every single one of her friends on her. Turning to Sara with a smile, she reached into her large purse and withdrew a small white sack that contained her lunch. "I'm starved. Let's eat."

Curiosity graced the faces of everyone gathered around the table. Rayne Ramone, a pretty redhead leaned back and crossed her arms across her chest. "Okay, so the hunk is gone. Spill it."

Katalin occupied herself with taking her lunch from her sack as Quinn, who was not only a friend but her *lupa*, and pretty much the boss lady of their pack, handed her a soft drink. "Thanks, Quinn. Okay, where to start." She felt her face burn under their scrutiny until Sara reached over and took her hand. The action calmed her since she'd always been such a private person and discussing her recent sexual awakening wasn't something she wanted to blab about. Kat blew out a breath. "Well, I guess you all might as well know that I've moved out of the cabin and I've settled into Gabriel's place."

Dee Santos leaned close, concern marking her features. "That's awfully sudden, don't you think?"

Kat shook her head. "I don't think so. We're mates and everyone here knows that. It's meant to be."

Rayne grinned and wagged her brows. "Soooo, how was it?" Quinn smacked her arm playfully and Rayne winced. "Sorry. None of my biz."

Kat had to laugh. She took a bite of her sandwich and chewed thoughtfully. She wasn't about to discuss her brand spanking new sex life. Maybe one day but not now. She knew Rayne didn't really expect an answer. "Gabe's house is beautiful. Have you all been there? I've never lived anywhere so nice and I'm afraid it's going to take me awhile to get used to the luxury of it."

Quinn nodded. "The man grills a mean steak. We've been there quite a few times. Glad you're settling in."

"Me, too," Sara said, chiming into the conversation. "Cactus and I didn't like the idea of you living out there in the wilds all alone. This was meant to be, after all, you and Gabe."

"I know. It's so good to feel like I'm really living rather than just existing." Unexpectedly her eyes filled but she blinked them away. She hadn't realized how

lonely she'd been until being with Gabe nonstop for the past few days. "He's helping me with my gift."

Dee leaned forward and frowned. "It might be too soon. His empathic connection could be too strong and things might get dangerous, Katalin. I'm not convinced this is a good idea."

"Look, Dr. Santos, I know you mean well but I've made my decision. Gabe and I aren't going to stay apart." Kat's irritation showed in her voice but nothing flew randomly around the room. There were no crashes or bangs. Drawing a deep breath, she gave the doctor an apologetic look. "I'm sorry if I sound harsh. You've been so kind to me but Dee, what we are doing together is working."

"It is? Hey, that's great, Kat," Quinn said. "You're gaining some control?"

Sara eyed her steadily. "Show us. Can you?"

Feeling a bit like a performing poodle, Kat looked at her friends, these women whom she cared for so much, and resolved herself they wouldn't be satisfied otherwise. "A lot of this has to do with my focus and my temper. When things feel out of control for me emotionally, that's when the telekinesis becomes unpredictable. Gabe and I have been working together on it and I'm happy to report I'm doing better every day. He grounds my emotions."

Kat balled up the sack that had contained her lunch and held it as she stood and moved to the center of the room. Feeling their eyes upon her, the anticipation that swept the room, she focused on the wad of paper and tossed it high into the air. About midway on its descent she thrust out her arm and the thing stopped to bob around for awhile, just hanging there suspended. Concentrating, breathing in a steady cadence, she moved her arm toward a trash can near the cash register. With a flick of her wrist, the white ball of paper fell into the receptacle.

A chorus of hoots and cheers went up. Someone, Rayne she thought, whistled loudly. Grinning like a loon, thrilled with her little achievement, Kat swept out her arms and bowed dramatically. It had been downright brave of her to attempt this and it was



the first time she'd tried without Gabriel being with her. Feeling courageous, she looked around, eager to attempt more.

"Hm. I think I need a new outfit, Rayne." A pair of ladies blue jeans lifted from the rack along with a ruffled pink top. The garments shifted and moved into place in the air as if an invisible woman might be wearing them. "I don't know," she mused. "Maybe I'll try a different one. Another pair of jeans and another top, this one white, soared through the air into place next to the first set of clothing. Feeling playful and happy, she mentally moved the objects until they twirled around above the fascinated faces of her audience. "Look! They're dancing!" Kat laughed aloud completely enchanted by what she'd managed.

"Amazing. I can't believe it," Quinn hollered, clapping her hands.

"Wow. Kat, that is some kind of power." Dee Santos looked at her, beaming. "I am so impressed."

Joy bubbled to the surface and for the first time since she could remember she felt free. No one was telling her to shush or to be quiet and still. Sara walked up to her, a bemused expression on her face. "I haven't heard you laugh like that in so long."

The quietly spoken words reached into Katalin's heart and love for her sister expanded until tears filled her eyes. Her concentration broken, the clothing fell to the floor in a heap. "I'm happy," she answered simply and realized it was true.

Sara hugged her hard and Kat let herself cling for a moment.

When they stepped apart and took their seats again, Rayne gave her a big smile. "Does this mean we'll be planning a consummation party soon? Hmm?" Most lycan couples were given a consummation party following a traditional consummation, or joining, between lycan mates. Very much like a human wedding reception, it would include food, dancing and lots of laughter. Every lycan girl dreamed of the moment some days after shifting into her beast when she and her mate would stand before their peers and receive their good wishes.

She felt her face burn just a little. "Soon maybe. We are living together and really just getting used to things."

"There's no hurry, you know." Dee Santos gave her a serious look. Her dark eyes were kind. She obviously knew from their dealings that Katalin wasn't comfortable discussing these kinds of things right now. "You have plenty of time. Get used to being together. Get familiar with those spectacular powers. Whatever you two are doing seems to be working."

"Thanks Dee. I mean it," Kat said. "It feels great to finally have your support."

"And you always will. I'm not only your doctor but I'm your friend. I care about you."

Quinn spoke up. "We all do, honey. I'm sorry if we embarrassed you with our teasing. We are just so damn happy for you. I can't wait to tell Joe what you can do."

Katalin nodded. "Gabe said we should head out to the Wolf Creek Ranch soon and give him a demonstration. Who knows? Maybe I can help with something one of these days. I'd like to feel I contribute to the pack."

"Sweetie, you don't have to do anything but be yourself," Quinn stated with finality. "This is a small town and folks around here care about you just as they care about Sara. You are one of us. You just take your time with the whole consummation thing, honey. It'll happen when it's meant and I promise we are going to have the most spectacular barbecue at the ranch to celebrate with you and Gabriel."

A few minutes later she and Gabe pulled up in front of the high school, where she would hang out in the library helping students with their research for papers, showing them where to find particular books and reminding them repeatedly to *keep it down*. Getting this job at the school library was actually one thing Doctor Santos had gotten right. Being among others, even in a limited capacity had done wonders to bring her out of her tightly wound shell.

Gabe pulled her close. "Pick you up at three?"

"Yep, unless you have an emergency or something. If you aren't here, I'll call Sara, okay?"

He shook his head, his eyes drifting over her face to settle on her lips. Kat's heart thumped. "Uh-uh. I'll be here."

"Hmmm. You seem to have a hard time letting me out of your sight, Sheriff. I never figured you for a possessive dude, dude."

He laughed, his teeth flashing white before he lowered his mouth to hers in a long, steamy kiss that caused her toes to curl inside her sensible leather pumps. "What happened to that shy, quiet woman I used to know? Huh?" He kissed her again keeping it light this time considering they were parked in front of the high school. Guess he'd just realized it, huh? Oops.

A group of girls walked past the truck on their way to class and one of them called out to Kat. Startled, she and Gabe jerked apart. "Hey, Miz Petrova. Hey, Sheriff." The entire bunch began laughing and chattering, looking back over their shoulders as they continued toward the building. "Gods! We'll be the talk of the school," she muttered.

"I'm sorry. My fault." Gabe didn't look in the least sorry. "Kiss me again."

"No!" Kat grinned and slid across the seat to safety. "You are big trouble, mister."

"At least let me walk you to the door."

Her eyes went wide. "And cause more talk? I don't think so." Relenting, she smiled. "Tell ya what, I'll make it up to you tonight."

Gabe went still. "How about in that monster-sized tub of mine."

Grinning suddenly, feeling happier than she had in years, she opened the door and stepped onto the ground. After settling the strap of her purse on her shoulder, she gave him a long, long look from top to bottom and every sexy space in between. "That sounds like a mighty fine plan. You bring the bubbles."

## **Chapter Five**

Viktor Korolev quietly hung up his cell phone and, rising from his desk, walked to a free-standing bar that nestled along one wall of his office. Night had fallen at the compound just south of the Piney Woods of east Texas. The home of the Hellfire pack was massive and rustic, despite touches of rough elegance, and as alpha he laid claim to many acres of land near the Louisiana border. After putting precisely three cubes of ice in a highball glass of cut crystal, he splashed in a measure of bourbon whiskey and took a sip. Lycans weren't highly affected by booze but he liked the taste and it seemed to calm him if only for a moment.

Taking his drink, he went back to the heavily carved cherry desk that occupied the center of the massive room. Regaining his seat, the flicker of the computer monitor a mild irritant at the moment, he considered the phone call he'd just taken from operatives. The news was disturbing and he felt a measure of relief when a knock sounded on his office door. The distraction was welcome.

"Enter." Alexander, one of his favored bodyguards, stepped into the room, his face a mask of studied boredom. He was tall, as most lycan males were, roughly three inches taller than Viktor's own six-five. Alexander, bore the mark of his Slavic ancestors including ice-blue eyes and a haughty demeanor. Tonight he wore his long, pale hair tied back at the nape of his neck. The only color about him was the dark, buttoned shirt which he wore tucked into a pair of expensive finely woven wool slacks. "Do you have the girl?"

"Yes, we just returned from Austin," he said with a curt nod. "Miss Rainwater met friends at a bar on the town's famous Sixth Street last night and we got lucky. She left early and alone. We grabbed her as she was getting into her car."

"I see. Good work. My sources say she has latent psychic abilities. Did you see any sign of them?" Viktor motioned to one of the leather chairs in front of his desk. "Please, sit."

Alexander took a chair. "I believe so. She seemed spooked from the moment she left the bar. When we grabbed her she put up a fight but I suspected then she had a *knowing* about us. As per your instructions, I have put her under guard in the guest cabin."

The guest cabin was isolated from the rest of the compound and used to facilitate the ongoing breeding experiments. It was Viktor's belief that pairing males of his pack with *gifted* females would eventually produce a superior race of lycans. The notion appealed to him. All that power and, as alpha of the Hellfire pack, he stood to reap the benefits. Somehow word about them had trickled through lycan society and the term Hellfire Club had emerged. Viktor found it humorous. No, this wasn't a club but a pack and what he now undertook was a grand experiment that he knew would not fail.

"Excellent. Julie Rainwater has an older brother, Samuel, and he will surely attempt a rescue assuming he can find us. I don't expect he will be a problem. He is a lone wolf. A lycan without a pack is next to useless, I believe. In any case, she will be mated to Boris Chernov within the next few weeks."

"Why Boris? The man is a brute." Alexander wore a look of disgust.

"Getting soft?"

"No. She is a delicate thing and very young, just a college student. I simply believe the man is not worthy."

"It appears she has a champion."

"Not at all. It is just that I dislike Boris."

Viktor looked at his favored lieutenant over steepled fingers. "As do I but he is loyal. It is time I reward that loyalty by giving him a mate. Now. I've had news of the Petrova sisters, Sara and Katalin."

The younger man shook his head his lips curled in a show of disgust. "Anton Petrov was a fool. How could he have lost his own daughters this way? It was a complete comedy of errors. He kidnaps his daughters and then he loses them to still other kidnappers. Then the young ladies are rescued by a group of lycan cowboys from a decrepit trailer park in Mexico, of all places. If it weren't so maddening, I would laugh. Yes, Anton was a ridiculous man."

"Doesn't matter now, my friend. He is dead and gone. I learned something interesting in my research. Sara, the oldest daughter, possessed powers after all."

"Did she? I didn't know."

"Yes, she is safely consummated with her cowboy lycan now and out of our reach. A cowboy lycan. Ridiculous." Viktor practically spat the words. "It seems her powers were latent and she is truly one of the most physically strong lycan females ever born. She is fast and stronger than any male in the Wolf Creek pack from the tales I've heard. No doubt she could kick your ass and mine too. All without breaking a sweat."

Alexander's eyes widened. "Amazing. To think of having the use of that power."

"That's why it is all the more important we find a way to capture Katalin, the other sister. She has found her mate, a Sheriff, of all things. They have not consummated but as Anton told us before his death, she has the power of telekinesis. Even now those gifts of hers are blossoming like a flower. Imagine how powerful she shall be once she is consummated with the right lycan male."

The younger lycan laughed. "And I assume it will not be with the Sheriff."

"Absolutely not." Viktor laughed too. There was no way he would allow such a thing. His smile faded a bit. "I have not come up with a plan yet but I am working on it. I want you to have her for yourself when the time comes. I believe she would be the perfect mate for one such as you, my friend."

Alexander's nostrils flared and his ice-blue eyes dilated until the blue nearly disappeared altogether. "I don't know what to say. I have waited so long for a mate."

Viktor stood, an indication the meeting was over. He walked around the desk and slapped Alexander on the back. "You deserve the best. Now shall we drink to it?"

Full dark had settled by the time Gabe braked to a stop in front of his house. Wearily, he rubbed his hands over his face. It had been a hell of a day in the County Sheriff's Department with one little emergency after another when all he had really been able to think of was getting home to his mate.

Home.

Mate.

He liked the sounds of those words.

Gabe got out of the truck, adjusted his tan Stetson and studied the house he'd built over one hundred and fifty years ago. His critical eye took in the sun-weathered limestone rock and the wide veranda that swept the front and sides of the place, recalling how he'd set each stone and hammered each nail in the hopes that one day he'd find the perfect mate. Together they would raise a family on these barren plains. Now it had happened. Or at least part of his dream had come true. Electricity sizzled through his veins at the simple thought of finally consummating things with Kat and once again, Gabe realized that he wasn't as patient as he'd once thought.

Hell's bells, he wanted her.

Eager to see her, he climbed the wide, sweeping front steps to the porch and stepped into the house. The scent of food hit his nostrils and his belly rumbled in response.

Scanning the huge living room with its hardwood floors and plush furnishings, a mix of old style charm and modern convenience, he frowned. Where was she? "Kat? I'm home."

"Back here in the kitchen."

Her emotions, tranquil and calm mixed with eagerness, swamped him causing his frown to disappear. Tipping his Stetson back with the edge of his finger, he stalked through the living room and connecting dining room to enter the kitchen. Kat stood at the stove and when he walked in she turned to smile. She held a big spoon in one hand and the other was fisted at her hip. She wore a pair of shorts and some kind of oversize tee shirt that had a neckline so big the shirt dipped to expose one slender shoulder. "It's about time you got home. Miss me?"

Happiness exploded through his system as he swept his hat from his head, tossed it to the kitchen table and went to her. Sweeping her up, turning in a wide circle with her in his arms, Gabe buried his face against her throat. "You know it, my little cat," he whispered before pressing a kiss to her exposed flesh. "I'm sorry I'm so late."

Katalin's arms went around him the second he lifted her up and she squeezed them a little. Tilting her head, she looked at him. "Don't apologize. I've been busy with dinner since I got home. Did your emergency get settled?"

Gabe took her lips and felt the welcome in her kiss. Setting her on her feet, he smiled and went to the fridge, taking out a long-necked bottle of beer. Once he'd opened it, he took a drink and settled back against a countertop. He didn't want to talk about his day but if she needed to hear it, he would oblige. "Yeah. I was just about to head home when dispatch got a call about an elderly human male who'd fallen. I met the ambulance at his place to make sure everything was okay. Looks like he broke his hip. He's a widower, so I locked his place up nice and tight and made a call to his adult children."

Katalin took a chair at the kitchen table. "That was nice of you."

Gabe grunted and took another swallow of his beer. "He's a nice old man and it's my job."

"Are there a lot of humans in the area?"

"A few. Cloverfield is the county seat and as you know, it's a lycan community. But my office serves the entire county and the small towns surrounding Cloverfield are



entirely populated by humans. Of course, they don't know what we are. No clue. Every four years we have an election and so far, nobody has run against me."

She smiled. "I'm surprised the old-timers vote for you considering your long rocker hair."

Gabe lifted his brows. "A rocker? I have a mind to spank you for calling me such a thing. I am purely a Texas man and country to the bone."

Katalin's face turned a pretty shade of pink and it made him pause. Lust swept through his body and his cock stiffened, hard as a stone, behind the fly of his jeans. Just the image of bending her over his lap and spanking her pretty bare bottom made him wish she weren't quite so fragile. No doubt, if she could read his mind instead of just his emotions, she'd take off running. Her gaze focused on the top on the kitchen table and ruthlessly he tuned in to her emotions. Lust. Hunger. Curiosity.

Her emotions beat through his blood like the fluttering of a million tiny wings. Eyeing her steadily, Gabe set his beer aside and in three long strides he stood looking down into her startled face. Gently, when every savage instinct in his lycan body protested, he took her shoulders and pulled her to her feet. Leaning close, he whispered against her lips. "I'm hungry."

Kat's gaze dropped to his mouth then back up again. Sexual tension vibrated like a tuning fork between them. "I have chicken," she murmured. "And vegetables. You like veggies, don't you?"

Gabe shook his head. "Not particularly in the mood for chicken and veggies right now, Katalin."

She licked her lips and helplessly he watched the motion. Heat slid over his flesh as his eager fingers plied the long plane of her back. Giving in to the savage impulses whipping through his body, he reached for the hem of her shirt and pulled it over her head. She'd taken her *after work comfort* to a delicious new level by going braless so Gabe took advantage by latching onto one perky nipple, pulling it deep into his mouth to suck. Kat's soft whimper was like a sexy song. Swamped by the lust that moved from

her to him, absorbing it into his pores, he licked and tugged her diamond-hard nipple while moving her backward until her pretty ass was pressed against the sturdy kitchen table. Something sizzled on the stove but he couldn't give a damn about that right now. Not when she was pliant and sexy in his arms. Gabe insinuated his thigh between hers and pushed up against her hot, little pussy. Instantly Katalin reacted, moving against the muscular column as her hands clung to his shoulders. Her head fell back, giving Gabe free rein to move his mouth from her nipple to the column of her throat. Nipping at the tender junction between her neck and shoulder, he felt the shiver that raced through her as if it were his own. The natural energy of their species heightened every kiss, every touch and Gabe took full advantage. Drawing back slightly, he turned Katalin until she faced the table. Instantly his hands cupped her breasts, loving the way her hard, little nipples poked into the center of his palm.

"I saw your face when I mentioned bending you over my knee and warming your bottom. You liked that idea, didn't you?" he whispered. Gabe emphasized the words by plying her breasts and teasing the nipples with his thumb and forefinger. He didn't expect an answer from her. She was too new to the game of sex and pleasure for that. "We won't do anything you aren't ready for. Got that?"

"Yes."

Gabe dragged his hands over her torso, lingering at her ribs and the softer than soft flesh of her belly before diving his hands into the front of her shorts. He dipped his fingers briefly into the liquid flesh of her pussy. "Damn you're creamy, darlin'." His voice went rough verging on a low growl. "Fuck these shorts."

Quickly whipping the garment—along with her panties—off her legs in one movement, he cupped a breast with one hand and from behind her, he sent his fingers over the petals of her sex, gathering the moisture on his hand as he played with her. Sending two fingers deep, he heard her gasp and felt the clench of vaginal walls. He finger-fucked her long and slow. "Bend over. I want to look at you."

Gabe bent her naked body, belly first over the table and gently coaxed her legs apart. Her ass was round and perfect. Stepping back, taking his time about it, he examined the length of her legs, the pink ripe flesh between her thighs and the tender dip at the base of her spine. Silence hung heavy in the room as energy and lust poured over him like a tsunami. "You are the most perfect woman."

"No," she whispered. "No, I'm—"

"Shh. You are perfect for me." Bending over her, he pressed his lips to her back while his hands went to work stroking the globes of her ass, dipping intermittently into her juicy cunt. Below him, she shivered in response. Her need called to him. His cock ached. Gabriel was done with waiting. Thoughts of her had ridden him hard all day and he couldn't stand the restraint a second more. "I have to fuck you, honey. Now."

The rasp of his zipper sliding downward broke the heavy silence in the room. Katalin went still against the surface of the table, her hands flexing at the edges of the wood. Gabe pushed his jeans below his hips and fisted one hand around the base of his cock while holding her steady with the other. The head of his cock throbbed and his balls drew up tightly against his body as he dragged himself over her pussy. Repeating the action, teasing himself, teasing her nearly brought him to his knees. Finally he couldn't wait. Due to his height, he bent his knees and with a low groan, he pushed inside with a force he'd never used with her before. Energy blasted from his cock into sensitive tissues pulsing in time with the beat of his heart. In. Out. In. Out. He rammed his cock deep, filling her up with steely power. There was no time for finesse. Only need. Only fucking and feeling and losing control.

Katalin cried out, her voice muffled by the wood of the table, and against his thighs he felt her legs tremble. Pleasure swam through his body, permeating his mind and he realized with awe that their lust was shared, powerful and more real than anything he'd ever hoped to experience. Thrusting, pounding, he gritted his teeth as waves of sensation ripped through him. Kat's vaginal walls gripped hard, milking his cock until he knew he wouldn't last much longer. Finally, finally Kat wailed out, a sound of

torment and pleasure as she spasmed around the thick stalk. There was nothing left to do but slam his eyes shut as orgasm took hold, leaving him shaken and feeling more vulnerable to a woman than he'd ever been.

Later, Gabe leaned back in the tub, holding Kat against him. Dinner had been left to warm in the oven and he didn't have much doubt he'd head back downstairs later and fix a couple of plates for them. Maybe around midnight. Damn, he was a horny ass. The poor woman had to work tomorrow but if he had his way they'd spend the rest of the night in a sweaty tangle on his big bed. While he'd run the bathwater, getting it to a comfortable heat level, she'd shyly set several fat candles on the ledge of his boat-sized tub. Romance, sex, the whole ball of wax was new to her and the innate reserve of her personality was, to him at least, so damn charming. Now the candles flickered in the darkened bathroom, bouncing light off water and walls. Gabe drew his hand down her bare arm, chasing the drops of water. Kat looked up at him, her eyes vivid in the candlelight, her lashes clumped with dampness. "This is nice. Sure you aren't hungry?" she asked.

"Starving, darlin' but just for you." He tapped the end of her nose. "We'll eat later. Tell me about your day. Did Sara bring you home?"

Kat rested her cheek against his chest. "She did. I walked from the school to Poteet's and Sara met me there. She was picking up a few things and trying on and such so I didn't want to put her out."

"You could have called me."

She rolled her eyes. "And I didn't want to put *you* out."

Gabe pressed his lips to her wet hair. "I can see we need to talk about getting you a car."

Instantly Kat sucked in a gasp and rolled over to lean her forearms on his chest. Her breasts teased his ribs. "Oh no you don't! I wasn't asking for a car. Yeah, eventually I'll get one. I'm actually sticking back money from my job at the school and I figure I'll be able to afford one...hmm."

Gabe could practically hear her ticking off the months before she'd have enough to spring for a car. "Uh-uh. You are my mate and I am perfectly capable of getting you something. No arguing. I've been thinking about this for awhile now. It's not right that you have to depend on others. You aren't helpless."

Katalin went still against him and he wondered if he'd said something wrong. Finally she sighed. She traced one hand along his side, her slender fingers teasing his skin. "Can I tell you something?"

"You bet."

"I've never felt so comfortable with anyone before. You seem to be interested in what I have to say."

"I am. I want to know everything about you."

Kat pressed her mouth to his throat and Gabe swallowed hard. Every little touch, no matter how innocent, made him want her. "You don't tell me to be quiet. You never tell me to shush. I know my mom and Sara were only trying to protect me from Anton but it was always so important to hold my emotions steady that after awhile it just became natural for me to be still and keep my thoughts to myself." She looked into his eyes and Gabe was lost. "You let me be me. I somehow know that, with you, I can say whatever I want and the world won't go crazy around me. Does that make sense?"

Gabe fell in love with Katalin in that moment. The predilections of the gods suddenly made some weird kind of sense and he knew there was a reason they were together. Aching for her, he gathered her slick body tighter against him and kissed her with a hunger he knew would never end. She was his. They were a mated pair and consummation between them would simply be a powerful beginning to the rest of their lives.

## **Chapter Six**

Katalin slid against him in the tub and straddled his hips when Gabe took his kiss deeper, sending his tongue over hers, brushing the sides of her cheeks. It was as if he couldn't get enough of the taste of her. Kat sighed, sinking into him. She felt the same and her heart tightened, filling with an emotion that could only be love. With Gabe she felt protected, cared for, and cosseted yet he let her have free rein too. Never once had he been disinterested in her thoughts and feelings. Even her powers seemed to be under control with his steady influence surrounding her.

And he wanted her.

Sexually.

Gabe tugged her even closer until her breasts were plastered to his muscular chest. The notion that this powerful lycan male belonged to her threatened to steal her breath, and unable to resist his appeal, she rubbed her nipples against his warmth loving the way he went still as if to absorb every sensation. Her nipples hardened, the ache dipping into her core to coil in her belly. His cock rose up hard between them and the temptation of all that heat and strength was impossible to ignore. She pressed her cunt against it. Clinging to him, she slid over the steely erection then finally reached beneath the water, letting her fingers play across the surface of the heavy head. Gabe broke the kiss with a low groan, resting his head against the rim of the tub. His neck and jaw, so strong and sturdy, tempted her mercilessly so she pressed her lips there, stringing kisses over his damp skin. Wicked desire swept her up. Gabriel clutched her hips, digging his fingers deep, pushing up in counterpoint.

"So good, Gabe. So good," she whispered against his throat. Writhing over the heavy stalk as the water kicked up around them, she caught her breath, lost in sensation. His balls drew up tight against her and she rubbed her pussy against them.

“Damn woman! Ride me, honey.”

Rising over him, poised to take him deep inside her body, she was suddenly so glad she was lycan rather than human. There was no need for that bit of protective latex for their kind because they didn’t carry disease and the threat of pregnancy wouldn’t be problem until she shifted into her wolf. Yay for being a lycan.

Joyous, needy, hungry, Kat sank down over his cock, loving the way her flesh responded, loving the way he filled the emptiness, completing her in a manner that nothing had before. Gabe pushed up, high and hard inside. The heavy thickness consumed the void making sensitive nerve endings sit up and sing. He held the upward momentum as she rode him, rising and falling over his cock. Gabe latched onto a nipple, sucking as she fucked him. Hunger swept over her, through her, as wicked fingers of pleasure danced over her flesh. Settling her hands on his head to hold him to her, she rose and fell loving the power that shimmered between them. Her pussy. His cock. Joined as one. She milked his flesh until Gabe gave up and fucked her hard, pushing up deep then withdrawing. A low sound broke from her lips when Gabe reached for her clit, tugging the knot gently. Pleasure raced through her body, breaking over her like a wave. Light and energy consumed her. She felt the push of it as Gabe thrust it deep into her pussy. A part of her let go, a part she’d held tightly in her mind and a responding energy burst from her to Gabe.

Gabriel made a rough wild sound. “Gods!” His teeth flashed white in the semi-darkness and a low beastly growl burst from his lips. “Fuck!” He pushed deep and high once more and as Kat flew apart, lost in the powerful climax she felt his seed jet into her. Spasming around his cock in the aftermath, she rested her head on his chest and gasped for breath. “Not done with you,” she choked. “Take me to bed.”

Bereft when he withdrew from her claspings pussy, she sighed, feeling lost without him buried deep. Disentangling her gently, he stood towering over her, to step from tub. Within seconds, he lifted her up, his lycan strength so amazing she was left

breathless by the time he stood her on her feet. Instantly, Gabe wrapped her in a fluffy towel and began to dry her.

"I can do it," she whispered.

"I want to. Let me take care of you."

His emotions, more tender than they'd ever been before swept her, filled her and helpless tears burned in her eyes. Their unconsummated union loomed before her and she knew if he wanted this powerful experience now, she wouldn't deny him. Yes, part of her was afraid of this particular act because the end result would be her shift from woman to wolf. Was she ready? Would her consummation with Gabe result in something frightening, considering her unpredictable gift? It was like walking into the unknown and though she knew she wouldn't be alone, it was scary.

She watched Gabe, as he tenderly dried her damp body. He paid such serious attention to every detail. His eyes followed the motion of the soft cotton as he rubbed it over her throat and chest. He dried her breasts, her belly and between her legs, the soft friction making her gasp as pleasure streaked through her pussy. She hadn't been fibbing when she said she wasn't done. She wasn't. Knowing she loved him beyond reason, now it was her intent to make him fall in love with *her*. It was only fair. None of their kind were promised love but she wanted it. How empty would life be without love?

Kat reached for the length of cloth, took it from him, and tossed it to the floor. Bravely she reached for another towel and looked into his burning eyes. "Let me."

Giving as good as she'd gotten, Katalin dragged the cloth over every inch of his big body, gathering up the drops of water, admiring the man's muscular fitness and thanking the gods he belonged to her. Following the movement of the towel with a rain of kisses she dried him with the attention to detail he'd shown her. The job was a joy that burst through her and filled her with a sense of her power as a woman. His cock rose up again. "Ah, I love our species," she said, dropping the towel to the floor. She reached for his cock and stroked lovingly from base to tip. "I want to taste you. I need



to feel your cock in my mouth.” Sweeping her thumb over the broad, thick head, she collected a small drop of moisture and looked up at him.

Gabe made a rough sound of frustration and hunger. Quickly removing her hands he bent low and placing his shoulder at her belly, he lifted her up and stalked from the room with her hanging over him. Shocked at the feral claiming, she squeaked a sound but then relaxed against him as he settled one broad hand on her ass. Kat’s hands reached until her fingertips brushed his hips. She wanted to touch too but then she lost all thought as he pushed a finger deep into her drenched pussy only to withdraw it suddenly. He smacked her ass lightly. Once. Then again, harder. Her ass burned deliciously and her cunt creamed. Again he slid a finger deep and repeatedly fucked her with it. Swamped. In uncharted territory, she wondered if he would continue to spank her and secretly hoped so.

Anticipation curled through her body as he made it to the side of the bed, deposited her onto the mattress. Before she could blink, he grabbed her and laid her face down over his lap. Gabe grunted a sound and pushed her thighs apart. Tenderly he fucked her pussy with one finger and then two. She squirmed helplessly against his thighs, pushing back against the sensation and then he withdrew his fingers. “You want this,” he stated with finality. A smack landed on one ass cheek and then another. Back and forth he went, swatting her flesh until her butt warmed then outright heated. Delicious, naughty fire flooded her and her pussy creamed. Gabe stopped spanking her and rubbed his hand gently over her abused skin then sent his fingers over her slit. “Creamy. Sweet. I want to taste this again. Would you like that?” He pushed two then three fingers deep and Katalin could do nothing but writhe against his lap. Gabe tweaked one hard nipple as he pinched her clit. She whimpered. She jerked. Kat wanted more of this deliciousness.

For the first time she was being treated as a person who wouldn’t break. There was no pussyfooting around with Gabe. He used a strong, heavy touch with her and she loved it. No longer was she too delicate to be treated as a normal woman.

Her pussy ached, responding to the slow steady finger-fucking as she pushed against his seductive touch. "Harder. Please."

"Like this?"

"Mmm. Yeah. Gods!"

He flicked her clit with his thumb then pressed and Kat sucked in a gasp as she came apart. Before she had a moment to come down from the powerful orgasm he flipped her to her back on the bed. Her legs dangled from the edge and then his mouth was there forcing the orgasm to another heady peak. Fast and wild, she climbed, shaky under the lash of his rasping tongue, his teeth. Kat's limbs trembled as she lost it, flying over that razor's edge into a well of pleasure.

The next thing she knew, she was nestled against the pillows as Gabe drank the tears from her face. "Shh, now. I've got you." His voice was a rough purr of sound. His hands stroked her body, calming and predatory all at once.

"I want to taste you too," she managed. "Let me try." She looked up at his face and watched his eyes close knowing he wanted it too. "Please. But you'll have to show me what to do. Show me what you like."

A savage expression settled over his features as he moved to his back. "Come here."

Kat sat up, her pussy still quivering from the recent orgasm, and sent her gaze on a searching quest over his body. His cock rose up from his groin to tempt her mercilessly. Kat went to her hands and knees and moved to him. Her breath whispered out over the head.

"Take me in your hand."

Kat obeyed, gripping the base and fisting her hand around it. Gabe went still and his emotions swamped her. Lust. Need. Raw, pulsing hunger. He reached for her still burning ass and settled his hand there. "Lick it. Suck it."

His finger slid into her creamy pussy as she lowered her mouth over him. She licked the heavy stalk, circling the flesh with the tip of her tongue, curling it around

him. While he fucked her with his finger and plucked at her tender clit, passion soared again, blasting through her like an arrow. She lowered her mouth over his erection, sucking the head and sending her tongue on a teasing quest beneath the ridge, then across the satiny flesh at the tip. Gabe made a low sound, pushing deeper into her mouth. Sucking light, then hard, alternating the strength of each pull, she finally released him to whisper against the thick head. "Am I doing this right?"

"Fuck yes. Any righter and I wouldn't survive this. Gimme more."

Pride surfaced as she continued to play at his cock and she paused only a moment when she felt Gabe grab her hips. As easily as if she were a feather, he lifted her until she lay sprawled over his torso. Her mate positioned her knees near his shoulders and Kat went still at the feel of his hot breath against her cunt.

As Gabe's mouth settled on her pussy, she relaxed against him loving the way her belly pressed against his chest. She took his cock in her mouth again to steadily suck. She played with his heavy balls as he ate her out. They worked in tandem, and lust poured over her, hot and delicious. Gabe moaned a rough sound that vibrated through her cunt and then he stiffened his tongue, stabbing into her vagina. She fucked it, squeezing against it as sexual pleasure trembled through her limbs. Her legs quivered.

Yet, through it all she sucked his cock loving the way he pushed into her mouth. What began as a slow tasting became something else and they mutually increased the speed. Together they writhed, entwined and if she'd had notions of being inadequate they instantly evaporated as they climbed toward orgasm. Kat searched Gabe's emotions, his hunger and felt him prodding too. Well matched. Yes. Two halves of a whole pressed together, pulsing together. Orgasm built, coiling through her belly tighter and tighter until she went still for one split second before splintering apart. A scream burst from her mouth, muffled by Gabe's thick cock, which jerked heavily. His semen burst out and she swallowed it down as his penis pulsed against her tongue.

In the aftermath, breathing rapidly, Katalin rested her cheek against his groin and stroked her hands over the columns of his thighs. Gabe brushed his lips gently over her

spent pussy, tenderly stroking his palms over her butt. For a moment they laid there, two lovers broken by passion but then Gabe finally reached for her and settled her against him on the bed. He kissed her forehead then drew back to look into her eyes. Kat wanted to read his emotions now but somehow it felt an invasion of privacy. She felt his need to keep whatever he felt to himself and it hurt a little. If he didn't want to share right now, then she wouldn't either. Aching with love for him, she hid her hurt and smiled. "I think I did that right."

Gabe's teeth flashed white as he suddenly grinned. "No doubt about it. You are a pro. Hungry?"

Her tummy rumbled in response and Gabe laughed. Standing from the bed, he reached out and smacked her butt playfully. "Come on then. Let's grab some dinner. Looks like we need to keep up our strength." He sent her a hot look that fairly melted her bones. "For later."

Forcing a smile, trying for all she was worth to keep things light, she buried her worries deep and swept his body with what she hoped was a leer. "Umm. Good idea, lawman. You're reading my mind."

\* \* \* \* \*

The next afternoon, Katalin sat in the Cloverfield High School library, flipping idly through a book she'd taken from the shelves earlier. Deliciously sore in a number of rather delicate places, she shifted on the hard chair and thought back over the sex-filled night. She should be exhausted but oddly, Kat felt more energized than she ever had before. Looking around the big, quiet room, enjoying the random emptiness she figured that once the bell rang, she'd have a group of boisterous teens invading her space when they arrived for study hall.

After all these years of being virtually alone, it was oddly comforting to be in the company of others. Dr. Santos had been right to suggest that gradually integrating herself into society was a good thing. Every day she felt more confident in her

telekinetic abilities. Her life really was falling into place and she figured the next big hurdle would be earning Gabriel's love and following that up with a consummation. A shiver ripped over her when she thought of it. Every lycan female imagined her consummation ceremony and the big, boisterous party that would follow. It was rite of passage that was as valued as any human wedding. Dr. Santos had advised she and Gabe take all of that slow and Kat knew she was no doubt correct about that. They had all the time in the world but a part of her wanted it so badly she could practically taste it.

"Kat!"

Katalin looked up from her musing and smiled as one of the subjects of her thoughts walked into the library. "Hi Dee! What brings you here?"

Dee Santos was truly a stunning lycan female, Kat observed. Her Hispanic heritage was evident in the bronze tone of her skin and in her flashing, dark eyes. Her lips were full and smiling. Obviously highly educated and intelligent, she carried about her a sophistication that was largely absent from this rural, small-town atmosphere. Today she wore nicely pressed jeans, a silky black shirt and a pair of kickass red stilettos. She carried two cans in her hand and passed one over. "Here, I got you a diet soft drink." Kat smiled as Dee continued without pause. "Got a call from the principal. One of the girls was troubled about something so I dropped by to have a chat with her."

"Is she okay?"

Dee nodded, smiling. "Oh yeah. Typical teen angst that she'll outgrow in a few years. She just needed to vent. I figured as long as I was here, I'd stop in and check on you. How are things going?"

"Never better."

"And Gabe?" Dee's eyes widened marginally and then she grinned. "Don't answer that. You have all the markings of a satisfied woman. I'm happy for you, Katalin. After all you have been through in your life it's so great to see the happiness on your face. Now if only you could garner complete control over your gift."

"I'm working on it. I meant to tell you that Gabriel and I are —"

A succession of female screams sounded from the hallways. Young male voices began to yell out. Shouting and the general uproar sent both women to their feet. Kat raced into the hallway knowing Dee was hot on her heels. A crowd of young people and teachers clogged the narrow space. Tension was ripe in the air. Pushing her way through lycans young and older, she arrived at the edge of the group just as two males shifted into their wolves and leaped at each other. Fangs snapped and growls ensued. One young wolf sank his teeth into the neck of the other, who quickly shrugged him off and launched an attack of his own. It was well known that young lycan males were volatile and, much like she was with her own gift, largely unable to control things. Situations with these young folks could get out of hand in a hurry. They were like human males with all that rampaging testosterone but they also turned furry. A bad combination. Someone could get hurt.

Energy sizzled through her system along with her alarm at the situation. Her hair whipped wildly around her head as she focused on the teen lycans and she felt her gift rip through her system to practically explode from her fingertips.

"Stop!" Kat swept out an arm and one skinny wolf flew through the air to skid along the highly polished floor. Silence fell. Oppressive, heavy with anticipation. All eyes were glued to her in astonishment but she couldn't worry about that now. The other young wolf turned his head and snarled. Kat glared back and lifted her other arm. Pointing in his direction she yelled again. "Stop!" The wolf lifted from the floor and flew backward landing on his ass several yards away. The crowd scurried backward, mouths open in disbelief. Instantly the two combatants shifted and lay naked in the hallway.

Lost to the sounds around her, the cacophony of excited voices, she felt the energy still surging through her body and wondered wildly where the hell she would put it. A door stood open on the bank of metal lockers and Kat focused her gaze on it.

Bam. Bam. Bam. The door banged shut and opened repeatedly, absorbing the telekinetic energy until finally things settled somewhere deep inside her. Blowing out a slow breath, focusing on the inanimate object, she felt the sizzling sensations subside. Her curls fell back to her shoulders and a sudden lethargy poured through her veins. An arm went around her and she realized Dr. Santos was holding her up. "Kat? Are you all right?"

As teachers rushed forward to attend the naughty wolf boys, Kat heard Dee's voice as if from a distance along with the sounds of adults calling for the kids to return to their classrooms. Heavy footfalls sounded on the floor and suddenly Kat was wrenched from Dee and held in Gabriel's arms.

"I'm here, darlin'. Hang on."

Kat clung for a minute as his scent filled her head. "How did you—"

She began to tremble and his arms tightened.

"Got a call there was trouble. Luckily I was only a block away." Gabe looked over his shoulder at the two naked boys and scowled. "Hang on to her, Dr. Santos," he said, anger infusing his voice. "I've got some business to attend to here."

Instantly Gabriel stepped away as Dee held on to her. She watched, her vision swimming slightly, as he grabbed each boy by the arm and dragged them to their feet. She couldn't hear what he said to them but within a second or two the boys hung their heads as the school principal led them down the hall toward the office. Another teacher grabbed up their discarded jeans, tees and tennis shoes and rushed off, presumably to make sure the boys' naked asses got properly covered and quick.

Feeling woozy and ill, Kat swayed against Dee and then Gabe was there again. "Sorry little dumbasses," he said, his voice sharp with anger. His voice instantly gentled. "I've got her, Doctor. Thanks."

Kat's knees gave out and as she slumped Gabriel caught her up. Safety and security enfolded her like a warm blanket as he held her close. He murmured something against her hair but she couldn't make out the words. Her mind was totally open as weakness

took her over. Gabe's emotions swamped her. Concern, anger, affection, possessiveness. Love?

Her head lolled against him as he stalked down the hallway and carried her from the building. He'd been afraid for her. He was angry with the boys. As a result his protective barriers were down, vulnerable to her and his love reached through the exhaustion to touch her heart. Joy swam through her head, and as he settled her in the front seat of his pickup, he bent low, concern evident on his face. He cupped her cheek and pressed a kiss to her lips. "Rest, darlin'. Let me get you home and tuck you in nice and tight."

There would be no argument from her. Katalin closed her eyes, holding her happiness to her heart like a gift. As Gabe started up the truck she gave in and fell into sleep.



## Chapter Seven

Exhaustion had overtaken his mate and Gabriel was worried about her as they sat together in Joe McKinnon's study later that night. They occupied a plush leather sofa and while he was pretty much sprawled out comfortably having been in this room a million times, she sat sort of curled in on herself. Tension radiated from her body and he sensed her nervousness. Joe, alpha of the Wolf Creek pack, sat behind his desk nursing a cup of coffee. A single small lamp provided the only light in the room. Quinn, Joe's mate and their *lupa*, poked her head in the door. "You sent for me, honey?"

"Yeah, Quinn, come on in and join us." Quinn, a tall, curvy blonde and the love of Joe's life smiled at him but immediately upon spotting Kat rushed up to take her hands. "Are you okay, Kat? I heard about what happened at the school. I've been so worried about you."

"I'm just pretty tired right now. I've never done anything quite like that before. It's a little embarrassing to tell you the truth."

"Nothing to be embarrassed about," Gabe said for the hundredth time.

As Quinn took a chair near her mate, Kat's eyes flashed at him and Gabe felt that tiny spark of temper like a smack. "And why not?" she said. "I'm just getting to know the people here and I was feeling so at home and accepted but now everyone thinks I'm a freak."

"Stop that now. Nobody thinks anything of the kind. Everyone here knows of your powers and that you're working to control them. The way I see it, darlin', you prevented some bad things happening at the school today."

"Listen to Gabe. He's right." Joe set his cup down with a snap and leaned forward in the chair behind his desk. His brown eyes focused steadily on Katalin. "You are part of the pack. One of us and we are proud of you. You have been through a hell of a lot

yet you have come through it better than most would. That speaks highly of your character."

Kat rubbed at her forehead and her weariness reached out to him. Gabe captured her hand and held it. "Joe called us here because he wants the details of what happened today. Are you up to talking?"

She shook her head. He wasn't about to force her to do anything she didn't want. Protective instincts prompted him to put his arm around her to draw her close. She instantly relaxed. Looking at his alpha, Gabe related the details of events at the school. Joe's eyes widened. It was quite a feat for a small lycan female to mentally lift two young males from the ground and separate them while in the midst of a fight. A true testament to exactly how powerful she was.

"Damn. That's amazing." Joe shook his head and stared at Katalin. "And here we believed your sister to be one of the most powerful lycan females we'd ever seen. I think you have her beat, little sister."

Gabe looked down at Kat and placing a finger beneath her chin lifted her face. "You have nothing to fear and nothing to worry about, sweetheart." Relief flooded her features and she smiled looking from him to the other occupants of the room.

Quinn sat quietly before finally speaking up. "I told Joe what you did at Poteet's that day. It was just a fun little thing with the clothing dancing everywhere but I knew then you must have so much untapped power."

"Which leads me to my next question," Joe said. "How much more powerful will you be once you two have consummated your union?" Kat's fair complexion bloomed with color and Gabe felt her body heat kick up a notch. Joe shook his head. "I'm sorry to put you on the spot because the time and date of your consummation is entirely up to you two. Dr. Santos advised that it was best to keep you apart for awhile and I'll admit I thought it was a good idea at the time."

Gabe spoke up then. "I thought so too at first, Joe, and I didn't like it one bit. Being separated from your intended mate is pure torture but I figured she might know what

she was talking about. After all, she's a lycan psychiatrist. Turned out she was wrong. We work together on controlling Kat's powers every day and rather than mess with her head, I've calmed her emotions some."

"It's true," Kat said with quiet conviction. "My emotions were all over the place and Gabe and I have figured out that with him by my side, I'm able to focus. Today was the first time I've done something truly big and done it on my own."

Joe smiled. "I'm glad for you."

"But that's not entirely true," Quinn said. She leaned forward a bit, smiling. "During lunch at Poteet's that day, you were with friends. Me, Sara, and Rayne are your biggest champions. I'm beginning to think you were comfortable with us, relaxed, ya know? We were laughing and talking...just being friends and your power surfaced in a totally controlled way."

"I won't always be with Gabe or friends though and that's scary," Kat responded softly. "What if the next time, I hurt someone?"

Gabe looked at her. "Nobody got hurt today. You have to begin to believe in yourself as we do."

"Which brings me back to the purpose of this little meeting." Joe poured himself another cup of coffee from a pitcher on the desk. "Consummation. Now you two will do what you must and believe me, nobody will celebrate more following your consummation than Quinn and me. I just want you to keep in mind that those bastards from east Texas want Katalin and considering the range of her power, we need her able to shift into her wolf for her own protection.

"While it's true we haven't heard much out of them for awhile, I have no reason to believe they are less interested in capturing Katalin and forcing a consummation." Gabe's blood ran cold at the reminder of the wolves who wanted his mate. He'd been so concerned with helping her learn to control her powers he had neglected protecting her from those who might harm her. Simply consummating their union would protect her

because she would be lost to the Hellfire assholes forever. Guilt filled him up. Damn it! He knew better. Joe continued to eye him steadily.

“Now I don’t want to push you two but today Katalin showed an ability to handle and control her powers and I believe you were a major part in helping her do that, Gabriel.”

“I know it’s true,” Katalin said, vehemence in her tone. “I’m calm with Gabriel and he has taught me how to focus in a way I never could before.”

Gabe looked at his mate then at Joe. “Katalin and I obviously have a lot to talk about but you’re right, Joe.” He grinned over at Quinn. “Suspect you ladies will be arranging a consummation party here in the next week or so.” His heart in his throat, he looked at Kat and saw that her eyes were shiny with tears. Her emotions roared from her to him. Joy. Affection. Love.

Love.

Gabe closed his eyes briefly and pulled her against him. Leaning close he whispered, “That’s assuming the lady agrees.”

“Oh I do. I do agree.”

Joe grinned broadly and stood from his seat, presumably to offer his approval when the doorbell rang. Quinn got to her feet with a smile. “I’ll get it. Hey honey, why don’t you pour us all a celebration drink or something. I’ll be right back.”

Gabe stood and shook hands with Joe, receiving his congratulations. Katalin was laughing as Quinn stepped back into the room, her frown signaling trouble. A massive Native American stood behind her in the doorway. From his scent, Gabe knew he was lycan. The man, big as a damn mountain, followed Quinn into the room and sent a dark, black-as-night gaze over the group.

Immediately, he removed his Stetson and reached for Joe’s hand. “I’m Samuel Rainwater. Sorry as hell to barge in on you folks this late but I really could use your help. I’ve heard you run an efficient and strong pack. Not a begging man but I’ll beg if I have to.”

Joe nodded grimly and made quick introductions. "This is Gabriel Dunham. He is our Sheriff and the toughest lawman in these parts. Why don't you tell us what we can do to help you, Samuel."

"Sam."

"Okay Sam, why don't you take a seat and tell me what we can do to help."

Quinn shoved a squat glass half filled with whiskey into the newcomer's hand and he accepted it. He took a bracing drink. "Think I'll stand if you don't mind."

Joe nodded and took his seat but suddenly Gabriel didn't feel like sitting either. Trouble was brewing. He could practically feel it shimmering in the air. Rainwater, stoic as hell, carried about him an air of quiet desperation and Gabe figured it took a hell of a big problem to send a man like him looking for help. "What pack do you belong to, brother?" he asked.

Samuel shook his head. "None. I'm not a wolf who likes to depend on others. Right now I live in south central Texas where I raised my sister. We did okay until recently."

"Talk to us." Joe's body radiated power as he watched the man.

"You men ever hear of the Hellfire pack?" A heavy silence filled the room and finally Sam continued with a nod. "I can see that you have. The bastards took my little sister, Julie. She shows latent psychic abilities and from what I hear they are collecting our unmated and gifted females to force consummations within their pack."

Icy fear settled in Gabe's belly, along with a hefty dose of rage. "Where did they get her?"

Sam's features were grim. "She is a college student in Austin. She'd told me over the past few weeks that she'd had visions and she was scared. I know her psychic abilities won't be fully realized until she is mated so she can often be wrong about things. Julie was just so certain. Don't like seeing her scared so I was heading that way, figuring I'd fetch her home for awhile." Rainwater finished his drink and set the empty glass on the edge of Joe's desk. He closed his eyes briefly as if to control his emotions and when he opened them again, Gabe recognized the desolation. "Julie met friends for

drinks that night but later, when she headed to her car, the pricks grabbed her. I've never felt so helpless in my life. Her friends found her purse on the sidewalk next to her car and one of them found my number on her cell phone. She called to tell me Julie had disappeared. Human police in Austin are looking for her but I fucking *know* who has her. By the time I got there, their scent was everywhere. Gods!"

Quinn walked up to him, compassion evident on her face. "Let us help you, Sam."

Gabe saw the flash of relief on the lycan's face. "Are you psychic too, Rainwater?"

Sam shook his head and held up one big hand. "I only have my hands and my strength but even that wasn't enough to save her. I let her down."

Understanding the extremely protective instincts inborn in male lycans, Gabriel recognized the guilt. Oh yeah. He'd felt that before himself on plenty of occasions and his heart went out to the man. "We'll get her back."

Joe rested his hand on the phone. "Being a lone wolf might sound great in theory my brother, but it definitely has its drawbacks. Join us. We could use a man like you and when we find your sister she will have the protection of the pack." Gabe felt the steady gaze of his alpha as Joe picked up the phone and began to dial. "Call Cactus, Gabriel, and I'll call Ringo. I think it's time to rally the pack and see what we can do."

\* \* \* \* \*

Kat leaned against the wall near the front door of Joe and Quinn's beautiful home and stared up into Gabriel's eyes. He hadn't even left yet and already her heart mourned for him. He leaned against her, caging her in, his arm resting along the wall near her head. "Take me with you. Please, Gabriel. I can help. I know it."

"No, darlin'. You are the most powerful woman I know but your powers are too new. I'm not going to have you exposed to danger," he counted grimly. "These are the very lycans who want to capture you for themselves and I don't want you within a thousand miles of the bastards."

Early this morning it had been decided that Katalin would stay at Joe and Quinn's place while the men and Sara headed for east Texas to find Julie Rainwater. The thought of what the young woman might be facing at the hands of these monsters made Kat's blood run cold and more than anything, she wanted to help.

"You all ganged up on me, Gabe and I don't appreciate it."

"We ganged up on you because, despite that soft appearance, you are hardheaded and stubborn. I won't put you in danger. Staying here makes sense. Some of the cowboys will be here at the ranch, Quinn is here and Maria. You need to be with others and you'll be safer here than with me." Gabe softened his words by kissing her slowly. Finally he lifted his head. He traced the curve of her cheek with one finger. "Don't you know it kills me to leave you, sweetheart? But I would just curl up and die if anything happened to you. You'll be safe here. Now no more arguing. You hear?"

Kat knew she had no choice. She'd have to stay here and worry along with Quinn, Rayne and the other mates. "And you won't be able to call?"

Gabe shook his head. "I don't think so. Where we're heading is scarcely populated and cell phone service will be downright iffy. If there's an emergency, I'll be able to contact the dispatch office with my radio and they can pass a message to you. You can do the same. If you need me for anything at all, Quinn or one of the cowboys can drive you into town to the sheriff's office and they can put you through to me. Got it?"

She didn't like this one little bit but she nodded. The time for the departure of the group of Wolf Creek lycans was upon her. At the moment, they were the only two people in the house with everyone else saying their goodbyes outside. Dread consumed her. This marked the first time she and Gabe would be truly apart since the day he'd saved her in Mexico. How would she manage without him? Unable to prevent it, her eyes filled with tears. "I'm going to miss you so much."

"Ah, honey. I'll miss you too but I promise I'll be careful and before you know it I'll be back in Cloverfield giving you a hard time."

Gabe kissed her again, long and slow. The sweetness of his touch captured her breath and as despair dragged her under, she clung to him, needing him like she needed air. "Gabe? Gabe come back to me, be safe. I love you."

Gabriel went still, his beautiful eyes intense. His emotions ripped through her with enough force that she gasped. This time, his kiss was savage, raw, as he blanketed her with loving emotion. "Damn, woman," he whispered against her lips. "You stole my heart from the first second I looked at you. I never imagined to find my mate much less love her so goddamned much. You are my life and my heart."

"Gabe!"

"I love you, Katalin. I'll be home to you soon and you'd better prepare yourself. The next time I see you we are consummating things. Believe it."

Moments later, she, Quinn and Rayne stood together watching the parade of trucks drive down the long road leading away from the Wolf Creek Ranch. "They'll be all right," Rayne said quietly. "Ringo is tough. Scary tough."

"Yep. Joe too," Quinn said as the three of them watched dust kicked up by the vehicles passing hang heavy in the air. "They'll all be okay, ladies. I know it. I just hope they get there in time to help the Rainwater girl."

Katalin understood the fear they were so bravely trying to hide. It occurred to her they were really no different from human women who watched their men, their sons and daughters head off to war or take up dangerous professions. In the end, they all loved the same. Quinn and Rayne stepped away and both turned to look at her.

"You okay, honey?" Rayne asked running a hand down her arm.

Emotion clogged her throat and tears burned across the surface of her eyes. "Uh-huh," she choked. She knuckled a tear from her cheek and tried like hell to smile. "Um. Gabe just told me he loves me."

And just like that she burst into tears. Quinn and Rayne, sisters of her heart hugged her tightly as she cried it out. Finally they pulled back and Quinn wiped some tears of her own. "Hell, I think this calls for a celebration, don't you? It's not every day a



stubborn male lycan admits his love. I say we have a nice little girls' day, what do you think? Maria makes a mean margarita."

"Sounds like a plan to me," Rayne said. She took Katalin's arm and together they walked into the house.

\* \* \* \* \*

Several days later Katalin was working in the library when she noted it was time for lunch. As was her habit, she planned to walk the short distance to Poteet's where she'd meet the girls for a quick bite to eat. She hadn't heard a word from Gabriel since the first night he was gone. The men and her sister, Sara, had holed up in a small fishing cabin near a lake in the area where they were searching for Julie Rainwater and the connection had been really fuzzy, cutting in and out until Kat wanted to scream. Quinn and Rayne both had the same problems talking with their mates and they had all been assured that if there was an emergency someone would find a landline and call.

Fuming about the situation and wanting desperately to hear Gabe's voice, Katalin stepped out into the early afternoon sunshine feeling mighty jealous of Sara who was in east Texas with her mate and in a position to help because of the sheer strength, speed and power she possessed. Kat adjusted the strap of her purse on her shoulder and stuck out her bottom lip. Surely they could use someone who could move things around? Seriously.

She'd just started down the sidewalk when Dee Santos pulled up next to her. "Hop in, Kat," she said. "Hurry."

Alarm swept through Kat at the tension radiating in Dee's voice. Wasting no time, she got into the car and Dee immediately pulled out at a fast clip. "What's up? What's wrong?"

Dee continued down Main but turned off, bypassing Poteet's On the Prairie and heading out of town. "I just ran into the dispatcher at the sheriff's office, Kat. Gabe called in a bit ago. The cell phone connection is almost nonexistent but he wants you

and me to head out there. I'm taking us to Joe's plane right now so we can get there at a decent hour."

"Wait! Wait! I don't understand. Is everything okay? Start at the beginning." This was so sudden that Kat was terrified that something was wrong.

Dee reached over and patted her knee. "Don't panic. If I were to guess, he and Joe reconsidered what you might be able to do to help them in finding Julie. The dispatcher didn't say. I had parked at the post office next door and was just getting in the car when she flagged me down. Everyone in town knows we always have lunch together at Poteet's, so she asked me to relay the message. I don't really know much more but we're to fly to an airport near Beaumont and one of the men will pick us up."

"I still don't understand."

Dee sighed. "I think I do, honey. No doubt they have figured out where Julie is being held and they are planning a rescue but, honest to gods, we have no idea what has been done to her." A shiver of dread whipped through Kat's veins and she noted Dee's grim expression. "I'm a doctor and I can help her if she needs it. She's so young and no doubt terrified. For all we know she has already been raped and forced to shift and mate with one of those monsters."

"Bastards! If they hurt her there will be hell to pay."

"You'd better believe it. Now let's get out of here and see what we can do to help."

As they pulled onto the Wolf Creek Ranch property, Kat looked at Dee. "Are we picking up some clothes?"

"No, we're driving to the air strip. The pack has a private air strip out here. The plane is gassed up and ready to go."

"Who is flying us?"

Dee turned to her and grinned. "Me. I'm a licensed pilot. We'll be there in a little over an hour. Woman of many talents, huh?"

Kat laughed for the first time since getting in Dee's car. "You've got that right. Impressive."

Dee braked to a stop near the strip of land carved out of the wilderness and the two of them stepped from the car and headed toward the plane. Finally Dee glanced over and smiled. "Why do I sense that you are feeling a bit happy despite the circumstances?"

"He needs me. They all do, I guess," she said. "For the first time I'm beginning to think this gift that has dominated my entire life might do some good. Everyone has always been so overprotective of me and it just feels so great that Gabe and the others are treating me like a grownup."

"You *are* a grownup. You are a strong and gifted woman. Never doubt it."

In a bit over an hour, Dee landed Joe's plane seamlessly on a rural airstrip somewhere in east Texas. They'd not spoken over the roar of the single-engine plane but that was okay. Her mind was swimming, wondering what they would face, and too, she was anxious to see Gabe. Her heart thumped at the prospect. Even now, he might be walking toward the landing strip. Looking around the area, she noted the abundance of pine trees at the edge of the field. She'd grown up in the Piney Woods but lived much farther north and had never really been to this area. When they opened the doors of the plane and had successfully lowered the ladder, she and Dee walked toward the edge of the woods.

"Where are they?" Kat wondered.

"Someone will be here soon," Dee answered. Kat turned to look at her friend. Maybe it was her imagination but her voice seemed different. She saw a look of pleasure cross Dee's face. "Ah there you are, Viktor."

Kat turned and her eyes went wide at the sight of several men coming toward them. They were big, rough and obviously lycan. Several of them were armed with rifles. A man with shoulder-length dark hair and narrow eyes smiled slightly and held

out his arms. Dee rushed into them leaving Kat to realize immediately that something terrible was happening.

When Dee disentangled herself from the man she'd called Viktor, he stepped closer. "And you must be Katalin Petrova." He sketched a short bow. "I am your host Viktor Korolev. I am sorry for the little trick my mate played on you but you see, we have been most anxious to meet you."

"Your mate?" Kat looked from Viktor to Dee Santos, her friend, her doctor, her betrayer. "How could you?"

Dee shook her head, sending her long dark hair swinging around her shoulders. "I'm sorry, Katalin. I like you. I really do but I had to snatch you before you could consummate with Gabe. Your powers are just too strong and Viktor needs you to complete his plans." Terror grabbed Kat as she listened. From her peripheral vision she noted several of Viktor's wolves moving closer. She had to act fast but she couldn't think. She couldn't move.

Horried, she gaped at Dee and shook her head in disbelief. All along Dee had been part of this outlaw pack and was the mate of their ringleader.

Dee laughed suddenly. "Don't look so surprised. As a practicing lycan psychiatrist, I was privy to lots of information regarding gifts and powers. Of course, I'd heard through the grapevine about poor little Julie Rainwater and her struggles to accept her visions. She was easy to grab and necessary to the operation. I am sorry but you are necessary, too."

Kat's fingers curled into claws as a red cloud of rage filled her brain. A rifle flew from the arms of one of Viktor's men and from out of nowhere a dead log flipped wildly through the air. Kat's powers exploded through her, uncontrollable in the face of her careening temper. Her hair whipped about her head as a branch cracked from a tree and fell harmlessly to the ground.

Viktor laughed loudly and clapped his hands. "Perfect. Perfect. I love it. What a treasure you are."

Kat focused her gaze on the madman, struggling for all she was worth to do the lycan some serious damage but she was too late. One of the lycans rushed her from the side and just as she turned to face this new threat, he pulled back a meaty fist and struck her. That was the last thing she saw before the world went dark.

## **Chapter Eight**

Kat opened her eyes to total darkness and a massive headache. She was also completely naked. What the hell? It didn't take long for her to realize she was not only nude and tied up somewhere but that she was a major idiot for ever trusting Dee Santos. Giving her arms a yank she growled low in her throat, noting that she was blindfolded and that her hands were bound behind her back. She sat propped against a wall and her feet were also bound and stretched out in front of her.

Furious, her temper rising, she struggled to bring it under control so she could think clearly. What a fool she'd been to blindly believe Dee! But then, she knew she had to cut herself some slack. Dee had never treated her in any way but with kindness. She'd pretended to be her friend and Katalin had bought into the whole act. Forcing herself to relax, she made a small sound as pain lanced across her head and her jaw. Kat worked her mouth and remembered that she'd been struck in the jaw. It was swollen and hurt like a bitch but she was lycan. She would heal quickly.

She became aware of a presence in the room, of eyes watching her. She shivered. Suddenly the blindfold was ripped from her head and she found herself staring into a pair of ice-blue eyes. He had the audacity to smile at her.

"Ah you are awake. I am sorry for the inconvenience but I promise you, Katalin, this is only temporary. I am Alexander and you are destined to be my mate."

"Where are my clothes?"

"Just a precaution. You are less likely to run when naked. Once you are settled here, I promise to return your clothing." Kat juttied out her sore jaw and scowled at the possessor of the icy eyes and long, whitish-blond hair. On any other day she would find him mildly attractive in a rather restrained sort of way. She'd become so used to seeing the Cloverfield men in their jeans and Stetsons the more urbane appearance of this

Alexander character held no appeal. He was no Gabriel Dunham. Her heart ached and she wondered if Gabe was even aware she'd been taken. How much time had passed?

Trying desperately to ignore the fact she was naked in the presence of a total stranger, Kat licked suddenly dry lips as her captor watched her with a predatory gleam in his eyes. "What time is it?"

"It is evening, little Kat."

"Don't call me that. You don't have the right to even *speak* to me much less invent a foolish pet name for me," she spat. "Where am I?"

Alexander took seat on a ladder-backed chair and eyed her steadily. "You are in the basement of a cabin owned by the alpha of the Hellfire pack of lycans. Considering your ability to move things around somewhat, you cannot stay upstairs where it is definitely more comfortable. Too many objects up there. No, it is safer for all of us if you remain here where you can do less damage. Once we have dealt with the lycans who hunt us, you and I shall settle into domesticity, eh?"

"Go to hell."

"Spicy little thing. I like that." Alexander lowered his eyes over her body and Katalin cringed. She would rather die than have this man touch her.

"If Gabriel finds you, he will kill you."

Alexander stood and smiled again. "He can certainly try but I assure you, it is more likely he will die. You see, I too have waited long years for a mate and I am not ready to give you up."

"I'll never be your mate."

"Do not be so sure of that. Now I must leave you to see about these pesky lycan cowboys." He shook his head. "Quite humorous. But as you see, you have company so you won't be lonely."

The lycan looked across the room toward a shadowy corner and Kat saw another naked, trussed-up woman. Instantly she knew this had to be Julie Rainwater. Her

Native American features and large, doe-like brown eyes practically screamed her heritage. Those same eyes were wide and frantic. A large piece of silvery tape was pressed over her lips, obviously to prevent her from screaming and giving away their location to those who would rescue them.

Alexander approached again and pulled the blindfold from his pocket. "I must blindfold you again. I am truly sorry."

"Why?" Kat put a small cajoling tone in her voice. "Please. There is nothing here for me to move. I can't stand the dark. Please."

He sighed deeply and tossed the blindfold to the floor. "Very well." He wore a small device at his belt and it suddenly crackled with sound. He reached for it and Kat realized it was a walkie-talkie.

"Alexander?"

"Yes, Viktor. I am here."

"There is activity around the compound. Those fucking cowboys are everywhere. Deal with it. Now."

"I will. They will not survive, I promise."

"The women. Are they secure?"

"Yes, I am with them now. They are naked and being held in the basement of the cabin as you instructed."

There was a pause and Kat sensed the tension in the man's body as he waited. Finally Viktor's voice sounded. "My mate and I are making a run for the plane. I want her far away from any retribution from the Wolf Creek pack. I am certain you understand. While I am gone, you are in charge until this is over. Once they are dealt with, I will return."

"Yes, sir."

Alexander scowled and spoke a word under his breath.

"Coward."



Kat remained quiet. She needed him to leave so that she could figure out a way to get Julie and herself out of here. Alexander stared at her for a moment or two then turned on his heel and left the basement.

Letting out a long breath, she looked over at Julie. The poor girl was not only terrified but exhausted. "Listen to me, Julie. Your brother is here. He has come to fetch you home and the Wolf Creek pack has his back. Believe me. We're getting out of here together."

Tears filled her eyes and then fell rapidly down her cheeks.

Kat continued to look at her. "I know you have latent psychic abilities so you won't think I'm crazy when I tell you that I am also gifted. Now don't be afraid but I am going to remove the tape from your mouth."

Concentrating hard, focusing on a calm she'd practiced so often with Gabe, she watched as the tape began to move from Julie's mouth. The girl winced at the pain of tape peeling away. Instantly she worked her mouth. "Oh my gods! Thank you. Thank you so much. I can't tell you how afraid I've been."

"I know, sweetie. But Samuel is here and we're going to get out of here. Tonight. Now listen to me. I can untie those ropes on your legs and wrists."

Kat focused on the ropes binding Julie's ankles. They practically flew apart as they unwound from her and ignoring the girl's gasp, she instructed her to present her back. Julie wiggled around on the floor until she sat with her back to Katalin. Instantly the ropes unwound.

"I can't believe it," she whispered. "Let me help you."

"I can get my ankles," Kat said. "But there's no way I can untie the ropes behind me. I can't make things move if I can't see them."

Julie got up and staggered across the floor and began working on the binds at Kat's back as she, herself, undid the ankle ropes. In what seemed like eternity but was really only minutes, she was free and holding Julie close. "It's okay," she whispered into her hair. "You're going to be safe now, I promise. Now you sit here for a minute. I'm not

consummated yet but my mate is out there, along with your brother. Our connection is strong and I'm hoping it's powerful enough that I can connect with him and let him know where we are."

Julie went quiet as Kat closed her eyes. Remembering every moment with her man, she filled her heart and mind with every loving emotion, every word, every touch. Were the feelings of love strong enough to reach him, to let him know they were here? She could only try. She didn't realize she was crying until Julie reached out and wiped the tears from her cheeks. Suddenly a blast of emotion, so strong it nearly took her breath poured over her, so strong it was almost like a physical touch.

*Gabe!*

He had to know she was here.

"Come on, sweetie. Let's get the hell out of here." Together, both of them naked as babes, they climbed the stairs leading from the basement to the cabin.

\* \* \* \* \*

Earlier that same day Gabriel stood at a circular table in the cabin they occupied. Along with other members of the Wolf Creek pack, he pored over topographical maps of the area. To anyone passing by it might seem as if a group of fishermen had come to enjoy a few days of angling for big-mouthed bass.

But that wasn't the case.

Because their cell phones were next to useless in this heavily wooded area, Joe had gone into the nearest small town to place a call to Quinn and check on things at home. Sara was in the kitchen of the small cabin, brewing up another pot of coffee but it was obvious to Gabe that she was paying close attention to the conversation. When he looked at Sara, his thoughts strayed to Kat. Though there was a strong family resemblance between the sisters, there were definite differences. Sara was curvier than Katalin, who was so delicate and dainty, he constantly worried she might break if he touched her. Their eyes were the same tilted shape and both a vibrant blue. Sara was a

beautiful blonde whereas Kat's hair looked like a sunset, alive with streaks of vibrant red. He felt like a lovesick pup watching Sara and thinking of Kat this way. Sara glanced up and smiled at him and Cactus settled a hand on his shoulder. "She's okay, brother. She's home and safe. Now let's keep her that way by taking out these bastards."

Gabe nodded and turned his attention to Ringo Ramone who pointed out the location of the main house of the Hellfire compound. "It's big," he said. "No idea how many wolves might be living in the area but we'll be finding that out soon enough. Of course there is no way of knowing if they are actually keeping the girl in the main house or somewhere else."

Samuel Rainwater, leaned against the wall and remained silent but the rage in his dark eyes promised retribution. Nobody here dared say it but there was every possibility young Julie had already been forced into a consummation. Hope lived and Gabe knew they would find a way to save the girl if at all possible and maybe even bring down these vile criminals.

"We'll go in tonight under cover of darkness," Gabe said. "I know we all want to get these creeps but our first order of business has to be Samuel's little sister. Her safety and her rescue has to be top priority. I'd like nothing better than to take them down or bring them back to the ranch for *pack justice* but Julie Rainwater comes first."

The sound of an engine roared outside the cabin and everyone paused as a truck door shut and Joe McKinnon stalked into the room. His expression was grim as he focused his eyes directly on Gabe. A chill swept him. "Joe, what's wrong?"

"Trouble. Big trouble. Quinn was frantic when I called. She and Rayne expected Dee Santos and Kat for lunch today at Rayne's store. They never showed up. Kat didn't return to the school either. Quinn and Rayne started talking to just about everyone in town and someone said they saw Dee pick Kat up in her car and watched them drive out of town."

Gabe went still. "What the fuck?"

"And that's not all. My goddamn plane is gone. Dee told me many times that she'd love to take it up one day and that she had her pilot's license. Quinn thinks Dee has taken Kat and they have gone off somewhere in the plane."

The words had no sooner left Joe's mouth when they heard the sound of a single engine plane soaring overhead. The group of them rushed outside and watched it land beyond a line of trees. It was impossible to tell exactly how far away it was but they were on it. Jumping into the array of pickup trucks parked outside, they headed off in the direction of the landing. Gabe gripped the steering wheel promising retribution if anything happened to his mate. Cactus sat stone-faced in the front seat while Sara sat, equally tense, in the back. "You know what this probably means," Gabe gritted out. "This means the good doctor was in on this all along."

"Bitch!"

"Calm down, sweetheart," Cactus said to his wife. "We'll find her and when we do I promise you can tear her ass up."

"You'll have to fight me over her, Sara." Gabe scowled and punched the gas pedal to the floor, kicking up a cloud of dust. "She is delivering Kat straight into these bastards' hands and I want her hurt."

Revenge riding him hard, he pulled into a clearing where the plane sat. Joe and Ringo drew up beside them and several more pickups full of Wolf Creek cowboys stopped behind them. Gabe got out and walked over to Joe's truck. Remaining calm was the hardest thing he'd ever done. "They're gone. Not a trace of them but I can sure as fuck smell them. Probably a half dozen lycans have been out here."

A highly developed sense of smell was a damn good thing.

Joe folded his arms over the steering wheel. "Let's meet back at the cabin and figure this out. We strike tonight and the gods help them when we get our hands on them."

\* \* \* \* \*

Edgy, restless, scared damn well out of his mind, Gabe hunkered down behind dense shrub surrounding the Hellfire compound. It was now very late in the evening as they watched the house, remaining alert for any Hellfire lycans who might come upon them. He had to admit it was a hell of a house. Built like something you might find in the mountains of Colorado, it was a two-story, log structure complete with lots of glass windows and skylights. Beautiful and rustic, it was the home of a madman.

Several Wolf Creek lycans had cautiously approached various windows and doors finding the place locked up tighter than a drum. There was nothing to do but break down the barriers and they were just the wolves to do it. Suddenly, quite without warning, Gabriel was swamped by heavy emotions. They swam through his blood like points of light. Love. Care. Laughter. Need.

Katalin!

His eyes went wide as he sent the emotions back to her ten-fold. He turned to Samuel Rainwater who had taken up a post nearby. "I think I know where they are, Sam. Come on." Gabe looked back at Joe to tell him they were breaking off from the pack when the sound of the plane engine reached them from the distance. "Fuck! Joe, they're getting away."

Joe rounded up Ringo and several others. "Let's go see who is on that plane."

"Samuel and I are going to get Kat and Julie. They aren't in the house but I know where they are." He glanced at Cactus and Sara and knew they'd be coming too. He looked out over the other lycans. "Take the house, men. Round up as many as you can and be careful."

Using the preternatural speed of their kind, Gabe, Sam, Cactus and Sara took off running through the woods. The others didn't know exactly where he was going and he couldn't really tell them that he was simply following his heart. Suddenly they broke into a clearing where a small cabin stood. Several men lolled about at the entrance until a lycan with long, pale hair stepped outside.

"Get 'em," Gabe growled low.

Sara and Cactus immediately shifted into their wolves and rushed them. The outlaw lycans stripped as they ran, shifting into their wolves some bursting out of their human garments leaving scraps littering the ground. Cactus and Sara met them in lethal battle as other wolves, lycans from the Hellfire pack crept out of the woods. Sam and Gabe braced themselves to shift if necessary but they had to get inside that cabin first. Suddenly the door flew open and two naked women rushed outside.

“Kat!”

As one, Samuel and Gabe ran forward. Gabe wrapped his arms around Kat and she screamed. “It’s me. I’ve got you.”

“Oh my gods! Gabe.” She pressed herself to him, shaking like a damn leaf, trembling so hard he wondered what held her together.

Gabe glanced over to see Sam stripping the shirt from his body and whipping it over his sister’s head. She clung to him, crying as Sam did the best he could to comfort her. He looked like he wanted desperately to kill somebody and Gabe understood the feeling. Once he peeled Kat from him, he reached for the hem of his tee shirt but Kat whirled away. “No time!” She yelled the words as a pale wolf with startling blue eyes loped toward them, fangs bared. Kat’s curls whipped up around her head, whirling crazily. Her face was eerily calm. “Stop!” She flung out her arm as she yelled the single word. The wolf yelped as he flew backward but he got up again. Gabe stepped to Kat’s side offering what emotional support he could. The waves he sent her way were calm, comforting, supportive, proud. Yes, proud. Damn but he was proud of her.

A tiny, slightly scary smile, lifted her lips but she didn’t look his way. Again, there was simply no time as the huge wolf hunkered low and snarled. His fangs snapped as he vibrated with rage. “Fly,” Kat cried and the wolf lifted high, twisting in the air before being flung by Kat’s power into the side of the cabin. He lay motionless after impact and Gabe raced forward, unhooking a pair of handcuffs from his belt as he went. Gabe watched the unconscious wolf shift back into his human form and wasted no time in cuffing his hands behind his back.

He turned to his naked mate absorbing her utter fierceness. Possessive pride and love bolted through him. She seemed not to realize she was naked. Bless her warrior heart! Gabe yanked the tee shirt over his head and pulled it into place on Kat's body. Finally she seemed to shake herself from the trance she'd fallen into and looked at him.

Tears instantly filled her eyes and he could feel her absolute exhaustion. "Gabe," she whispered. "Oh, Gabriel."

Gabe pulled her close. "I've got you, darlin'. You just lean on me now, okay?"

Off in the distance several men lay on the ground, defeated in battle by Cactus and Sara, who looked positively bloodthirsty for such a pretty little thing. They were both naked and in human form again. Splashes of red streaked across Sara's face and chest and Gabe averted his gaze when Cactus pulled his warrior mate into his arms.

Samuel Rainwater sat on the ground cradling his sister in his arms as she wept. Julie, small and delicate, clutched at her brother's long, inky-black hair but he was oblivious. His eyes were closed as if his body simply couldn't contain his relief. Gabe picked Katalin up and held her close as he approached the other lycan. "She'll be all right, brother," Gabe said. "Give her some time. We'll help make her right again. All of us."

Joe and Ringo walked out of the woods and into the clearing. Relief flooded their faces when they saw all was well and the women had been saved. "Good job, everyone," Joe said. "I want some of you to round these assholes up. We're hauling them back to west Texas where we'll dispense pack justice."

Every one of them knew it was tantamount to a death sentence. The deadly hunt could go on for hours but each knew the outcome was certain. Death by the pack. Though the hunt would be fair, it would be final for the criminals.

While the injured lycans were bound and hauled off to waiting trucks, Joe turned to those who remained. "Viktor, alpha of the Hellfire pack, and Dee are gone in my plane. A very slippery couple. They might be hiding out for awhile but I swear we'll get them one day. For now, I'm just glad the ladies are safe. They are safe aren't they?"

Gabe knew what Joe meant and started to speak but Kat did it for him. "We weren't assaulted. Julie and I are both fine but this was sure a close call." Katalin shivered from reaction and Gabe fought down his fury.

"What do you say we get these ladies comfortable for the night," Gabe said. "Then tomorrow we'll take them home where they belong."

Joe clapped Gabriel on the shoulder. "Sounds like a good plan, Sheriff."



## Chapter Nine

Where on earth had all these women come from, Kat wondered as she sat in the living room of the house she shared with Gabriel. Her feet were at this exact moment, soaking in a warm vat of sudsy water while one of the Cloverfield women worked her nails over with a buffer. A couple of teachers from the high school were arguing about which nail polish she should use for tonight's consummation between her and Gabe.

"I think she should do an American. Very classy, so elegant," the sophomore English teacher noted. "She should definitely do that and it lasts a long time."

The biology teacher juggled a bottle of pale, pale pink color. "Uh-uh. Love this. It's so delicate."

Maria, Quinn and Joe's housekeeper, marched up, a silver platter in her hands and arched a brow. "The American for her fingers. The pink for her toes. Now shoo. Off you go."

The ladies laughed good-naturedly and headed back upstairs. Gods only knew what they were doing up there in the master bedroom and Kat was almost afraid to ask. They'd been running up and down the stairs for the past hour. Every lycan girl dreamed of her consummation night but never in her wildest imaginings had she expected all this attention. Maria smiled at her and held out the platter, which was piled high with a mountain of beautifully decorated chocolates. "Here you go, *querida*. This will settle your nerves. Breathe now, *si*? Just relax and let Maria take care of you."

Kat picked up a fat chocolate and bit into it. She rolled her eyes as the flavor burst over her tongue. "Ohhh. Gods! So good."

When Maria set the platter on a small end table within easy reach, Sara, Rayne and Quinn walked in carrying mimosas. A bright strawberry decorated the edge of each crystal flute. "I propose a toast," Quinn said handing a glass to Katalin. The ladies lifted

their glasses. "To a future filled with every happiness. And to a consummation night that is everything you dreamed it would be."

Rayne sat on the sofa and leaned back. Her eyes drifted shut as she smiled sappily. "Um. I still remember mine. Wow. Ringo is such an animal."

"Literally." Quinn snorted.

Rayne tossed a throw pillow at her.

Kat listened to the chatter as her friends sprawled here and there around her. At the moment she sat bundled in a bathrobe and a white towel was wrapped around her hair. Sara moved behind her and after removing the towel, grabbed a comb and began to work it through the damp strands. "This is fun, huh?" Sara said for her ears alone.

"I never imagined."

"Neither did I, considering the way we grew up. Our lives have really changed haven't they? I haven't had much of a chance to talk to you since what happened a few nights ago."

Kat thought back to the danger and craziness and suppressed a shiver. She never wanted to go through anything like it again. Sara moved from behind her. Quinn and Rayne fell silent as they listened. "I've never been more proud of anyone as I am of you, sis."

"Stop. You're gonna make me cry." Kat sniffled as tears filled her eyes. "Never figured I'd make anyone proud, ya know?"

Quinn grinned at her. "You are a total badass. Everyone in town is telling stories about what you did out there. I'm proud of you too."

When the manicurist stepped back into the room to finish the mani-pedi treatment, Maria returned to place a mountain of brilliantly wrapped gifts on the coffee table. "A pre-consummation party wouldn't be complete without gifts."

"Aw, you guys shouldn't have done this."

"Of course we should," Rayne said around a bite of chocolate. "You only have one consummation, you know. It has to be memorable. That's a rule."

The afternoon rushed by. The house looked spectacular, the floors gleamed with cleanliness and the scent of flowers filled the air. Several of the ladies wished her well and headed out leaving only Maria, Quinn, Rayne and Sara behind. Maria handed her a gaily wrapped box. "Come on, Katalin. It's time to open your gifts."

Katalin sat in the comfiest chair and attacked the presents with gusto. By the time there was only one gift remaining, she'd received naughty undies, body creams, a hairbrush inlaid with mother-of-pearl and lush scented soaps. One gift remained and Sara picked it up and laid it in Kat's lap. "From me."

Opening the beautifully wrapped gift, she pulled out a length of midnight blue and listened to the gasps of the others. The truly spectacular nightgown was a totally sheer, ankle-length confection that featured a single satin ribbon beneath the bust in an empire style. A tiny matching thong completed the seductive ensemble. "Wow."

"It will complement your fair skin perfectly, I think. And Gabe will love it."

"I have not a single doubt about that." Kat looked around the room at her friends as love for them blasted through her. "I don't know how to thank you guys for this."

"Just be happy, honey." Quinn said. "That is thanks enough."

\* \* \* \* \*

Gabe walked through the front door of the house later that night figuring a florists' shop had exploded in his living room. Flowers sat atop every flat surface along with candles that sent flickering light over the room. He walked up to the coffee table and ran a finger over the petals of a purplish flower. Ladies had taken up residence here for most of the afternoon so he'd purposely stayed away. He knew how they liked to fuss and his heart warmed that they'd done this for his mate.

He had cleaned up for the event as well, having borrowed one of the bathrooms at Joe and Quinn's. He'd wanted to stay away and give them all their time together. Gabe

bent down and hauled his boots off and removed his Stetson. Looking around to find a place to put this stuff that wouldn't mess up the pretty scene, he finally moved through the darkened house and put his things in the mudroom out back. Gabe stopped in the kitchen as came back through and noted a wedding cake sitting on a round crystal cake plate. Bending over it, he smiled at the words *Happy Consummation Kat and Gabe*. Then he went to the fridge and found it stocked with food, no doubt provided by Maria who took such good care of Joe and Quinn. Warmed to his toes by the generosity these good people, he headed toward the stairs. A mess of flower petals were scattered over each step. As if he needed a path of petals to find his bride. He had only to open his heart and mind to find her.

Gabe's heart tightened as he walked up the stairs, bypassing other bedrooms until he finally reached the master suite. Sucking in a breath, he opened the door to the big man-sized space and went in unsure of what he would find. He wasn't a nervous man by nature but a flock of butterflies set up residence in his belly, beating away and reminding him that consummation nights were a first for him too and he sure as hell didn't want to fuck anything up. Pray the gods he did this right.

More candles, all flickering their little wicks off, more flowers and a whole lot more petals were everywhere and some kind soul had turned down the bed to rain petals all over the pristine white sheets. Gabe glanced toward the closed bathroom door and sighed. His bride was obviously doing one more girly thing so he decided to leave her to it and headed across the room to the double doors leading outside. They had been left open to catch the night breeze so he stepped onto the sprawling deck he'd built many years ago. A heavy railing went across the length and near the right edge a double wide set of steps led to ground level. This little convenience was perfect for a shifter who liked to roam the prairie at night. Gabe leaned against the railing and looked out over the vast land. For the most part it was as flat as hell but off in the distance plateaus and buttes rose up to meet the endless sky. Tonight stars were scattered everywhere and to his way of thinking, they might be smiling down on them tonight. When had he become a whimsical man? Gabe smiled and drew in a breath of

fresh air thinking that was most likely when he'd met and fallen in love with the sweetest little she-wolf north of the Rio Grande.

"Gabe?"

Gabe turned at the sound of her voice and leaned against the railing for just a second to catch his breath. She stood there in the doorway, candlelit from behind and wearing a darkly beautiful bit of fluff that he aimed to strip right off her gorgeous body the minute he could breathe again. Gabe saw her uncertainty and straightening from the railing reached out his hand to bring her close. He sent a long, lingering gaze over her, loving the way the darkness of the sheer material made delicious shadows on her nude body beneath. "You are the most beautiful thing I've ever seen. Just stand here and let me look."

Kat's curls fell freely around her pale shoulders and rather than look the seductress she had a sweet innocence about her that did funny things to his belly, not to mention his dick. As she bit her bottom lip, looking so unsure of herself, his cock filled to harden behind his fly. Needing to chase away her uncertainty, he reached out to draw lazy little circles around her nipple and when it went hard, puckering tightly, his mouth watered for a taste. Just one. Gabe bent down, sending one arm around her, and took that sweet little gem into his mouth. With the tip of his tongue he teased and pressed that delicious bit knowing she would feel the scrape of the fabric against her sensitive flesh. A little cry left her lips as her fingers speared into his long hair. When she tugged incrementally, Gabe switched to the other breast and insinuated his thigh between her legs. Rubbing her hot pussy, he knew the combination of denim and the gossamer fabric would tease her, taunt her, and make her want more of what he planned to give.

Off in the distance, wolves howled a mournful tune and he knew that tonight pack justice would reign for the outlaw members of the Hellfire pack whom they'd captured. The news had purposefully been kept from his mate because no one wanted to mar her day. Gabe continued to manipulate her nipple as her breathing picked up, growing heavy and fast.

Stepping back, Gabe swept his eyes over her and reached for the flimsy straps holding her gown to her body. "I want to look at you in the moonlight."

Kat went still. He reached for the bit of fluff, running his fingers beneath the miniscule straps to touch warm flesh. Dipping his fingers beneath, he lowered them over her shoulders and tugged at the satiny tie beneath her breasts. The garment shimmied to the deck to settle in a heap around her feet.

Gabe looked his fill. The scent of her filled his head and he knew there was no need for all those flowers everywhere. She was fragrant and perfect all on her own. Unable to resist temptation, he stroked her breasts and ran his hands over the curves of her naked body. A tiny scrap of fabric hid her pussy from him but he knew he had to touch. Reaching out he slid his thumbs beneath the satin-covered elastic, palmed her bare butt and traced a pearl encrusted decorative thing that nestled atop the shadowy crease of her ass. He trailed his fingers over it and Kat sucked in a breath, her eyes never leaving his face. "Pretty but I want them gone," he said.

She stayed still, silently watching him and finally he dipped his thumbs into the front of the thong and tugged until it too slipped down her legs. Gabe drew his fingers over her slit finding the tender knot of her clit already swollen. Gently he plucked the knot and had the pleasure of watching Kat's eyes drift shut.

"Gabe."

"I'm here. I love how I can read every emotion on your face. Maybe I sound like a damn fool but I like watching your face when I touch you." He stroked the damp flesh, continually circling and pressing her sweet, little clit until he pushed two fingers deep into her channel. Immediately, she whimpered. Repeatedly he stroked her, one hand settled at the tender dip of her spine. Kat shivered and trembled, gasping a breath and he knew she was close to the edge. Yes, it was only the beginning of what he planned for her but he couldn't stop. Nothing was more important than her pleasure.

Kat rocked against his hand, her vaginal walls squeezing his thrusting fingers until the slippery flesh began to quiver with the beginnings of orgasm. Gabe crooked a

finger, unerringly finding and pressing her G-spot. Kat's head fell back as she moaned low, the speed of her movements kicking up a notch. She gripped his arms and hung on for the ride he gave her and when she flew apart, he caught her in his arms and carried her inside not stopping until he reached the side of the bed. "I can't wait to fuck you, darlin'. All day long I've thought of nothing but how it feels to be with you."

"Me too," she whispered, sending her arms around his neck to hang on tight. Gabe kissed her hard and released her enough that her feet could finally touch the ground. When they broke apart, she reached for the mother-of-pearl snap buttons on his black, Western-style shirt and popped each one, following each undoing with the touch of her lips on his chest. Her warm breath rushed over him like a balm and unable to resist touching, he sank his fingers into her red curls. When the buttons were done and his shirt gaped open, she glanced down, frowning. "Where are your boots?"

Gabe grinned at her. "I didn't want to crush any of those petals with my big boots."

"They are rather big," she whispered. "And they aren't the only thing big about you." Kat cupped a hand over this full-to-bursting cock and rubbed the spot until he thought his eyes would roll back into his head. Dark fire raced through his veins and he knew if he didn't get inside her soon, he'd go crazy. Gabe removed her hand and lifted her high, finally settling her in the middle of all those rose petals. "Your jeans. I wanted to do that."

"Uh-uh. Tired of dicking around here, darlin'. You're mine and I aim to claim you in the way of our people. Not going to wait anymore." He stripped out of his jeans and socks aware of her intense study of his body. Gripping the base of his cock, connecting his gaze to hers, Gabe dragged his fist repeatedly over his aching erection. Kat licked her lips and he watched her hand stroke her own belly slowly. She appeared not to realize what she did but he was lost to the sight of her touching herself. "Touch your nipples, Kat."

She plied her own nipples as he masturbated but when she streaked another hand down the length of her torso to palm her cunt, Gabe lost it. A man could only take so

much. He climbed onto the bed and yanked her legs apart. Eating a woman had never been more delicious. He lapped her up until she came again, crying his name, her fingers clinging to his hair as he breathed hotly against her pussy. Thrusting his fingers deep, he looked up her body, watching the pull of air into her lungs as she watched him. "Fuck me, Gabe. Make me yours. Give me what every woman craves during her consummation."

He didn't need to be asked twice. Crawling up her body, pressing kisses on the way, he took her lips with savage possession, sending a wave of heat over her. Breath passed her lips on a sigh as she innocently presented her throat in a gesture of trust as old as their species and as infinite as time. Gabe nipped the tender column, whispering in her ear, "Feel my heat?"

"Yes."

"Good. Send me yours. Ah yeah, there you go. That's good, darlin'. Think about how much I love you and about our lives together. Feel it and send it back to me." He sucked her flesh into his mouth then drew his tongue over the spot. Her nipples pressed into his chest like a brand and the drenched wetness of her pussy dampened his thigh. His cock tightened, a tiny pulse beating there. "When I come into your body I want you to prepare yourself."

"Okay. Okay."

"My cock is going to get really big at the base and we'll be locked together as I push the full force of my energy, my beast into you. Up until now I have held back. Do you understand that?"

Kat turned her head on the pillow and blinked at him. "More energy? More?"

"Yeah. Don't be afraid."

"I'm not. If this had happened earlier, I wouldn't have been ready but, Gabe, I'm not afraid. I've never felt more powerful before and I'm ready to handle more." She traced the curve of his jaw with a fingertip. "You'll be with me and as long as you are, I won't be afraid. Take me. I'm yours."



Gabe swept his mouth over her shoulder and down to her breasts, sucking them hard. She was still wet, still ready but he wanted to taste her and do it forever. Coming up to his knees between her splayed thighs, he took his cock in his hand as the ball of energy smoldered and then caught fire deep in his body. Never before had he sent a full blast of pleasure into a woman but the power of it threatened to undo him. The head of his cock throbbed. Dragging it through the damp layers of her pink flesh, he felt Kat's emotions, lust, love, desire, roll over him like a song. Grabbing her up, her weight next to nothing compared to his own preternatural strength, he settled her against his chest. Belly to belly, his cock spearing up between them, he arranged her thighs until they were on either side of his. His hands stroked the length of her back stopping only to knead the firm flesh of her ass. Kat rocked against his cock, her cream coating it thoroughly. "Ready for me," he whispered.

"Yes."

Gabe lifted her, impaling her on this steely erection and Kat cried out, dropping her head to his chest as he pushed up, deep and high. The walls of her cunt closed around his stalk, melting over him in a wave of heat so intense it threatened to burn him. Gabriel's beast moved through his belly, rolling heavily, the warm fur and electric rush causing power to whip through him until the force of it blasted from the end of his cock.

Kat screamed, the sound ripping from her throat as she slammed her eyes shut.

"Here it comes. Gods! Kat. Gods!"

The rush of heat, of energy, of power held them both in its thrall as the base of his cock swelled impossibly hard and finally Gabriel knew he was happily stuck there, buried deep in her lush pussy. Her creamy flesh pulsed around him as he pounded heavy and hard and there was nowhere to go but up. Savage heat poured from the head of his cock and it began to vibrate deep in her cunt. He felt his erection acting as a vibrator that shook wildly in her body. Kat screamed again, writhing upon his cock. Her nipples stabbed his chest like tiny spikes and unable to resist their allure, he rubbed

his chest against them. Finally, he clamped down on one and as his fangs broke from his gums, he bit her lightly, growling a low, frantic sound over the flesh. A rush of passion rolled over him as he increased his speed. In. In. In. Deep. Hard. Thrusting. Pounding.

Kat's cries were wild and she was seized up in the spell of multiple orgasms that flashed over him, shared by her through each raw emotion. Gabriel, in turn, shared the delicious sensation of her liquid flesh milking him as if she couldn't get enough.

Over and over they came. Gabe coming. Kat coming. Together exploding in raw, unadulterated bliss that had no beginning or end. Faster and faster he fucked her, unable to control a goddamned thing. As one they rushed through each wave, riding it hard only to attack the force of another as it swept over them.

"I feel her." Kat choked the words and Gabe understood her beast now rolled through her body demanding birth. "Gabe!"

Fangs sprang from Katalin's gums and Gabriel sank his into the tender notch between her shoulder and neck. He tasted her blood, coppery yet sweet as she cried out spiraling toward the edge of another climax. Gabriel licked the small bite marks and followed her over that sharp ridge of pleasure. Light and energy poured through Katalin's body and since they were so closely connected he felt it too. Powerful, raw but full of light.

Riding the crest of the final climax, Gabe felt his cock slip from her body and then there was nothing left but to watch his mate embrace her beast. Energy sizzled and flashed through the room and as she stretched, muscles popped and shifted. In the end, he stared in wonder at the beautiful, russet-colored she-wolf. She lay there for several moments, panting hard before rolling to sit on her haunches. Kat watched him from deep blue eyes and he knew a moment of pure pleasure as she inched toward him and licked the sweat from his chest.

Gabe dragged his hand over her head and buried his face in the ruff at her throat before finally standing from the bed. His shift was immediate and when Kat jumped

from the bed, he nudged her until together they raced through the doors and into the night.

Indulgent, he watched her race through the open spaces of his yard where she stopped occasionally to sniff the dew-laced grass or paw at some insect hidden among the foliage. He sensed her joy, felt her curiosity as if it were his own but when her head went up at the sounds of other wolves in the distance, Gabe knew he must limit the extent of her roaming. At least for tonight. Pack justice wasn't something he wanted his mate exposed to. She was his to protect and he aimed to do it.

Padding up to her, he buried his muzzle against her silky throat, then lightly nudged her toward the trunk of an ancient cottonwood. His mate cocked her head as if questioning but raced toward the tree and circled it twice before curling up at its base among a bank of shadow-kissed yellow flowers. She looked at him, intelligence burning in her eyes and Gabe felt love for his mate sift through him as gently as a song. When Kat stretched out her paws and settled her head against them, he joined her, curling against her solid warmth.

\* \* \* \* \*

Hours later, Gabe lolled back in the tub and held his mate's wet body against him. "Guess I'm pretty damn speechless right now, darlin'. I never imagined anything like that."

Katalin, looking lush and perfect and wonderfully sated, rolled over a bit to press the side of his throat with her lips. "And it was a good thing?"

Gabe laughed, joy swimming through him, and smacked her bottom with his palm. "Silly question, woman. Don't know if I would want to go through that much pleasure again though. Just might kill me. But what a way to go."

Kat grinned at him and then turned serious, her eyes misty and beautiful in the candlelight. "Thank you for tonight, mate of mine. I think you know how much I love you. We're going to have the happiest life ever."

As Gabriel took her mouth in a kiss full of tenderness and promise, he vowed to make sure it happened.

## About the Author

Regina Carlisle is an award-winning, multi-published author. She likes writing that is hot, edgy and often humorous, and puts this trademark stamp on all her stories. Regina lives in west Texas with her husband of 25 years and counting, and is a doting, fawning, over-indulgent mother to her two kids. When she's not penning steamy erotic tales or hot contemporary stories, she's indulging in long chats with friends who help her stay sane and keep her laughing.

Regina 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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