



Cheveyo's Claiming

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Prologue

"This is going to be so great!" Raquel Garcias spun around, her long blonde hair swaying in her excitement. "I can't believe your parents agreed to let you take time off to come to UCLA with me this fall."

Cheveyo Johnson smiled down at his petite girlfriend, grabbing her hands to stop her spinning. "My parents aren't ogres, Raquel. There are other guides in the family. They want me to be happy and if staying in with you in Los Angeles will make me happy, they won't stand in my way." His smile faded. It was only fair to warn her. "I can't promise though that I'm going to be entirely happy in a city the size of Los Angeles. I get antsy even coming into town." He gave a sigh and cupped her cheek. "But I'm willing try for you, sweetheart. I just hope I don't disappoint you if in the end I can't handle it. L.A. is probably as different as night is to day from the lodge."

Her eyes sparkled with mirth. "Don't be silly. You'll love the city and I'll be the envy of my sorority." She tugged one of his braids. "I'll have my own personal savage. Just think you'll be my naughty Indian and get to ravish me every night."

Giving a mock growl, he nuzzled the side of her neck, uncaring that they were in the middle of town leaning against the side of his beat-up red pickup truck where anyone could see him groping the mayor's daughter. She giggled, wrapped her arms around his neck, then pressed her body against his.

"Hmmm, I love your wild side, Cheveyo." She nipped his shoulder. "What do you say you take me home?" Her tongue slid up the side of his neck igniting his desire. "And I give you a ride you won't forget?"

He pulled back in surprise. "Really? You're ready for my claim?" He lifted her chin. As the youngest daughter of Sunflower's mayor and despite the fact they'd been dating since her junior year in high school, they hadn't gotten further than some heavy petting in the bed of his pick-up. After all, his mother raised him to believe 'no' meant just that and a gentleman treated

his woman like a lady – at least until she no longer wanted to be treated like one.

Giving him a sultry grin, she rocked against his rising hard-on. “Daddy took Momma to Mesa for the weekend. So I have the house all to myself until they get back.” She pressed her lips against his. “I want you, Cheveyo. Make me your woman.” Her tongue rubbed across his lower lip.

He groaned before swatting her ass. “Get in the truck, woman, before I take you right here.” Releasing her, he watched hungrily as she opened the door to slide across the cracked leather seats. Taking a deep breath, he was just getting ready to swing up into the cab when a yell from behind him made him pause.

“Cheveyo!” A harried waitress came running out of the only diner in town. A chill raced down his spine. “It’s your folks. Sheriff’s on the house phone!”

“What’s going on, babe?” Raquel’s voice intruded.

“I don’t know.” He shut the truck door. “Stay put. Let me see what the folks want.” He gave her a leer. “Then you and I have a date with that queen-sized bed in your room.”

Leaning out the open window, she gave him a saucy look. “You bet your ass we do.”

* * * *

Four Days Later

Standing with a hand on each of his brothers’ shoulders, Cheveyo fought to keep his tears back. The creaking sounds of the winches as they slowly lowered the caskets raked him raw. Inside the simple pine boxes were the bodies of his gentle mother and his stepfather, an honorable man, who’d adopted him when he was ten. As the boxes disappeared from view, he still had a hard time believing they were gone. He squeezed both of the boys’ shoulders, trying to reassure them that all would be well, despite the drunken driver who’d stolen their parents from them.

At five and seven, Shasta and Sequoia wouldn’t understand if he fell apart. They were relying on him to stay strong, just as the rest of the family was expecting him to keep

Johnson's Lodge running. At the age of twenty-one he was being asked to not only fill his father's shoes but his mother's as well. He felt as if the weight of the world landed on his shoulders. For once he'd wished the second sight he'd been gifted with since birth would've warned him of his parents' impending deaths, so he could've at least asked them what he was supposed to do now they were gone.

The sudden silence as the crank stopped made him flinch. It was final. His parents were really gone. He swallowed hard before speaking softly to his brothers. "Come on, boys, it's time to go. The rest of the family will be waiting back at the lodge for us." Leading them towards the lodge's van, he opened the door for them. As they scrambled into the seats, he tried to ignore the fact that Raquel hadn't been able to meet his eyes. She'd stood between her father and mother, silent as a tomb. She was supposed to have been by his side, but she had wanted her dream of UCLA and college life more than she wanted him. Despite her giving him her virginity the night after he'd found out his parents were gone, her love wasn't strong enough to cope with the responsibilities of a ready-made family and business. Even though he wanted to be objective, he couldn't. Her desertion tore his heart out.

Chapter One

Three years later

Scowling at his reflection in the mirror, Cheveyo cursed as the stubborn tie looped around his neck mocked him. For the past ten minutes he'd been trying to tie the damn thing with little to no luck. Never before had he felt more out of his element than he did at this moment. Standing in front of his dresser in dark slacks and white dress shirt, his long tied back hair and skin were at odds with the clothing.

"Damn, I miss you, Momma." He cursed again as the knot turned out lopsided. His mother would've had his tie perfectly knotted and he'd have already been out the door. But then again if his momma had still been here, he wouldn't be getting ready to go and beg a strange woman for the funds to help him expand the Johnson's Lodge.

"Cheveyo, Cheveyo!" Sequoia slid into his room with Shasta hot on his heels. Shasta's dark disheveled hair, torn shirt and grass-stained jean shorts told their own tales.

"He hit me and pushed me down the hill, Cheveyo!" Shasta accused as Sequoia hid behind his oldest brother's back.

Mentally counting to ten, Cheveyo prayed for patience. Giving a disgruntled sigh, he turned and crouched down in front of his eight year old brother so he could look into his eyes. "Why did you push Shasta?"

Sequoia's lower lip trembled. "Cuz." Then his thumb went into his mouth.

Cheveyo sighed in frustration. His baby brother only reverted to thumb sucking when he couldn't cope with things. "That's not an answer, Sequoia."

When Sequoia continued to suck on his thumb, Cheveyo turned to Shasta. "What did you do, Shasta? Sequoia obviously didn't just push you down because you were arguing with him again."

Shasta fidgeted and looked at the floor.

Straightening to his full height, he knew it was time to bring out the bad-ass brother. "Come on, guys. I have to leave shortly

for my meeting in Mesa and I still have to drop you off at Uncle Koda and Aunt Pati's in Sunflower. We're going to settle this before we leave. I won't have you two acting like fools. Now tell me what happened?"

Shasta shifted. He finally met his eyes. "I told him I'd kill him if he didn't quit following me and Tommy everywhere."

Rubbing the bridge of his nose, Cheveyo grasped at his fading patience. Even though Sequoia had been seeing the therapist for the last year, he still got upset whenever anyone mentioned death or even referred to it. Shasta knew it and Cheveyo had warned him time and time again to stop taunting his brother with it. Evidently gentle Sequoia had finally snapped under his brother's repeated threats and pushed him down the hill out behind the lodge.

"What have I told you about that, Shasta?" It took everything he had to keep his face stern and not gather his brothers up in his arms. He understood they were all still dealing with the grief of their parents' death, but he couldn't allow Shasta to continue strike out at Sequoia.

"Not to." Shasta hung his head.

"Look at me, young man!" Shasta's head shot up. "Since you obviously don't care about how your words can affect your brother, the PlayStation is gone for a week and when you get to Aunt Pati's there'll be no television or video games there either. Do you understand?"

His brother nodded. "Yes, sir."

"Good, now go change your clothes and I expect for you to have an apology for your brother when you come back." As Shasta left the room, Cheveyo lifted Sequoia into his arms and settled into his mother's rocking chair. It was the only thing he'd found that calmed the boy, and out of desperation he'd finally moved it into his room after many a midnight visit from his brother. Soothing his hand up and down Sequoia's back, he started rocking. Tears stung at his eyes. Sometimes he felt so helpless. What he wouldn't give to have a helpmate.

* * * *

After pulling into the parking lot of the restaurant, Cheveyo exited the van. Stretching slowly, he tried to work the kinks out of his lower back. The drive between the lodge and Mesa normally took about an hour but after his late start, he felt like he'd been on the road for twice that. Luckily he'd planned on arriving early, so his delay hadn't made him late. This meeting was too important to be late.

Rolling his shoulders a final time, he headed towards the main entrance. As he walked, he thought about the trip from the lodge to his aunt's home. The tension between his brothers had slowly subsided, but still hadn't completely dissipated when they had arrived at Aunt Pati's. After a rushed explanation and handing off two very subdued boys, he'd climbed back into the van to complete the trip. *God please let them behave for Aunt Pati. This meeting is important. We need the money to expand and I don't need to get a call from home.*

After greeting the Maitre d', he was led through the dining room. When the man stopped then gestured for him to sit, he nearly swallowed his tongue. With a name like Avon Lewis, he'd expected an older, dowdy woman. Instead what he found was an attractive brunette, wearing her dark hair up in a French twist and a light colored business suit.

"Are you Mr. Johnson?" Her honey-molasses voice made him think of rumpled bed sheets and darkened bedrooms. He licked his lower lip as an unexpected vision overtook him. His sight darkened and then took a sepia tone that accompanied his visions. He could see the woman nestled in his mother's rocking chair, holding Sequoia, soothing the boy. Then he saw himself walk into the room holding a baby wrapped in a light colored blanket.

"Here you go, Momma." Disbelief rocked him when she reached up and took the bundle from him. Whose child was it and why was the woman in his home?

"Thank you, Daddy." She turned to the boy cuddled on her lap. *"Look, Sequoia. See, there's nothing to be afraid of. Little Orienda and I are fine. I know it sounded bad but we're not going*

to be taken from you. We love you and your brothers too much to leave." She looked up at him, exposing the colorful beaded choker around her slender neck. His blood roared in his ears. He had claimed her. *"Isn't that right, my love?"*

"Mr. Johnson! Come on, wake up! Don't do this to me!" The urgency in the person's voice shook him free of the vision. His eyes blurrily focused on the woman who was kneeling on the floor next to the table. Just behind her was a shape of a man who he assumed was the Maitre d'.

Blinking his eyes rapidly to clear them, she came into focus. "I'm here."

"Thank God! You collapsed!" There seemed to be a sheen of tears in her eyes, despite her briskness. She motioned for the other man to move back.

"I'm sorry. Ms. Lewis, isn't it?" He pushed himself into a sitting position. This was the first time a vision had literally knocked him on his ass, but it was worth it. He'd found his mate. Devouring her with his eyes, he barely restrained himself from hauling the unsuspecting woman over his shoulder and taking her home. What he'd felt for Raquel paled in comparison to his need for this woman.

"Yes." She wrapped an arm around his shoulders, holding him. His skin felt tight as he felt her touch for the first time. Even muffled through the dress shirt, he wanted to moan in the pleasure it wrought.

"Are you okay?" she asked when he pulled away and chambered to his feet. Leaning down, he offered her his hand.

"I'm fine." Pulling her up, he gazed down into her hazel eyes, surprised when she was almost eye level with him. At six foot he wasn't overtly tall, but she had to be less than three inches shorter than him. He found he liked it. He couldn't resist brushing a tendril that escaped her up-do from her cheek. "It's not every day that a man meets his destiny."

A bright flush graced her porcelain fine skin. "Really, Mr. Johnson, you're quite the flatterer. But there's no need to sweet talk me. The money is yours. This meeting is nothing but a mere

formality.” She moved away from him, reaching for the briefcase he hadn’t noticed. “Sit, sit. I have some papers for you to sign and a proposition for you.”

He fought to keep his growl to himself as his dick went hard at her words. *Focus on business first, Cheveyo. Then you can set about seducing her.*

“Proposition?” He reached for the glass of ice water.

“Why yes. I want to see about us becoming partners.”

He damned near spilled his water.

Chapter Two

After negotiating her Grand Cherokee up the gravel drive, Avon Lewis got her first in-person glimpse of the Johnson Lodge. It'd been two weeks since she'd met its intriguing but young owner. The main building of the lodge was a split wood log cabin. Huge, it filled the clearing surrounding it. She could easily see her dream coming true here. Turning off the ignition, she flipped the visor down, and double checked to make sure her hair hadn't come out of the French braid she'd secured it in. Scowling at a few of the tendrils which had worked free, she decided that it wasn't worth undoing and redoing. Her new partner-to-be would just have to get used to seeing her hair messy.

"That's right, Avon, keep a positive outlook. Surely you can convince some young buck to let you use his lodge for the unfortunate..."

"I don't know if I should be offended or not. Youth does have its privileges." The smoky voice made her jump. She flipped the visor back up and glared at Cheveyo, who was leaning with one arm braced on the top of the door frame staring in the open window at her. Dressed in a white tee, denim shorts, with his long hair divided and braided, he looked like a yummy mixture of old and new. She wanted so badly to taste him.

"Really?" Arching an eyebrow at him, she couldn't believe she was actually flirting with the man. For once she wanted to be anyone other than the Widow Lewis who'd lost her husband at too-young of an age.

His already dark eyes grew even darker as he focused on her lips. His "*oh, yeah.*" sent ripples of desire crashing through her. In reflex, she gripped the steering wheel tighter. As his head grew closer, she couldn't help but wonder how experienced he was. *Would he know how to make me scream with pleasure, or would I have to teach him?* Strangely the idea of coaxing this man's hands to all of her pleasure spots was a turn-on. Never before had she lusted after a younger man or even thought about giving in to the need, but for Cheveyo Johnson she just might; if

she could find the courage to seduce him. There was just something about him that called to her on a deeper level. Just before their lips met, the screaming laughter of children broke through the intimate moment.

"Cheveyo! Cheveyo! Sequoia has the hose out again!" A boy who looked to be about ten ran by half drenched. Another boy, perhaps a younger brother, chased after him with a green garden hose.

"No, get Cheveyo!" The older boy pleaded with the hose-wielding boy. "I'm already soaked! He's completely dry!"

She gasped when the boy giggled and turned the hose on Cheveyo. Stray splatters of ice cold water rushed by him and cooled her overheated skin when he jerked to the side.

"Son of a bitch! I'm so sorry, Avon." Cheveyo whirled around on the giggling boys, affording Avon with a clear view of the back of his drenched t-shirt and jeans. She licked her lips, as she watched the muscles flex under the wet cloth while he put his hands on his hips and yelled at the boys to turn off the freakin' water. For his troubles, the boys drenched the front of him.

A bubble of laughter escaped her as he froze. She couldn't blame the boys for wanting to stay cool. It was nearing ninety degrees outside. There was no reason for a little bit of water to ruin their fun. Opening the door, she got out and hesitantly laid a hand on Cheveyo's shoulder. When he turned to look at her, one of his braids fell over her hand. The cool silk of it tempted her to tug on it. She wondered how it would feel against her skin. *Whoa girl, lusting is one thing but reality is another. Focus.* Dragging herself back to the situation at hand, she gave his shoulder a squeeze.

"I'm not made out of sugar, Cheveyo. I won't melt if I get wet." She winked at him. "Besides, it is hot out and..." Releasing his shoulder, she stepped around him, and into the direct spray of the water. A soft moan of relief escaped her as the coolness washed over her. "...I think I need to show some little boys why they called me Queen of Water Fights back on the farm."

The widening of the boys' eyes would've been comical if she hadn't been after the writhing green snake in their hands. Wrestling it away from the older boy, she turned it on them, loving the sound of their laughter as they ran away screaming. Pulling the trigger on the hose, she made sure she doused them good. In this heat it had to feel good.

An amused chuckle came from behind her. "How old did you say you were, sweetheart?" Cheveyo held his hands up to fend her off, when she spun on him. His eyes dropped before darkening with lust. She glanced down to see the faint outline of her hardened nipples pressing against her shirt. Only the fact that it was dark red kept her from being totally exposed.

Lifting her gaze to his, her hand tightened on the trigger. "More than old enough to know better, but still young enough not to care," she taunted before spraying him full in the face. When she released the trigger, she watched him wipe the water away. A devilish smile crossed his face.

"You do realize payback is a bitch, right?" He dove for the hose.

Giving an unladylike squeal she dashed away, not ready to give up her prize yet.

* * * * *

Sitting at the table later that evening, after the supper dishes were cleared away, Avon was glad she'd accepted Cheveyo's invitation at the restaurant. It had been totally unexpected but tempting, especially after he claimed he wouldn't listen to her proposition until they had more time together than a just a rushed dinner meeting.

Leaning back in her chair with a cup of coffee, she watched as he pointed out something in the textbooks sprawled across the table. Sitting between Shasta and Sequoia, who she learned were his younger brothers, and while helping them with their homework, gave her a new view of the young man she'd been secretly lusting after for the last two weeks. Idly she wondered how many different sides she would find while she was

here. She'd met the astute businessman at their initial dinner, the playful boy who chased her and the boys around the yard earlier, and now the concerned parent of his younger brothers. How many more would she find and which side would he show as her lover?

Watching his head bent over Sequoia's sent a sense of longing through her. This was a scene she'd never had the opportunity to experience. Hank, her late husband, had been sterile, so they'd never had the opportunity to have kids. *And Lord knows that bitch of a mother of his would've thrown a fit if we'd adopted.*

A few minutes later, the books were slammed shut and Sequoia and Shasta gathered up their homework.

"Hit the showers, boys. *But* I don't want the floors soaked." Cheveyo shook his head as they raced from the room carrying their book bags. She closed her eyes at the sound of their feet racing up the stairs. A smile tugged at her lips when she felt Cheveyo's hands settle on her shoulders. After a brief hesitation, he began to massage the knotted muscles of her shoulders.

It's almost as if he's afraid to touch me. She couldn't help but want to reassure him.

"You don't know how good that feels." Her head rolled back, her eyes still closed, figuring it'd be easier for him.

He chuckled. "I can imagine. You had a long drive up from Casa Grande." He kneaded her shoulders. "Especially if you drove straight through." She sighed as she felt the press of his lips against her temple. Tingles rushed through her. Her nipples peaked when his thumbs brushed down her arms. His lips brushed over her ear. "You're beautiful, Avon."

Her stomach tightened and she opened her eyes. "You think I'm..." She flushed when he gave her a sensual smile.

"Most definitely." He traced her cheek bone with his finger. "It's one of the reasons, I invited you up here. You're my..."

"Cheveyo!" The yell and then thud above their heads broke the moment.

They both jumped. She opened her mouth to apologize when his finger covered her lips.

"Relax. Those little rascals have impeccable timing. They seem to know when their brother is trying to kiss a pretty lady." He gave a sigh as another shout echoed through the house. "You'd think I live in a zoo the way they act." Another loud thud shook the ceiling. "I better go see what they need." Stepping back, he moved to leave her.

"Cheveyo!" This time the yell was more insistent. He shook his head.

"I'm coming! Hold your horses!" Just before he left, he gave her a wink.

Chapter Three

After waking late the next morning, Avon, still dressed in her nightgown, found Cheveyo standing in front of the kitchen sink, gazing out the window with a mug of coffee in his cupped hands. Coming to a stop, she caught her breath. After the dreams that consumed her last night, she wasn't prepared for the temptation of seeing the object of her desire in nothing more than a pair of faded denims and his long hair loosened. As his guest, she didn't expect him to cater to her needs. She'd assumed he'd be up and gone, doing whatever it was he did at the lodge. *Not standing here looking like a Native American Fabio with all that beautiful dark hair.*

Her face heated. *Oh the dreams I had about that damn hair of his!* The idea of him using it to tease every inch of her body was enough to make her blush like a naive teenager. What he did to her. He made her feel like a schoolgirl with her first crush. Even after tossing and turning for over an hour, she'd dropped off to sleep only to be tormented by dreams of him. She sucked her lower lip between her teeth to halt the moan building in her throat. *God, I want him.* She couldn't find a single, solitary reason to care about their age difference. The idea of teaching him how to pleasure her body had her wanting to whimper. *Of course, his brothers are a concern, but if we're discrete, then no one should get hurt, right?*

Even keeping her own council on the matter, she wasn't sure how she was going to keep herself from becoming attached to Shasta and Sequoia. They were adorable and she could tell they were in dire need of some serious TLC. *But am I the woman to give it to them, or is Cheveyo just looking for a hot but brief affair with the forty-two year old woman who wants to use his lodge as a summer camp for disabled kids?*

As if he could hear her thoughts, Cheveyo turned from the window to face her. Her breath caught in her throat when she saw all the beautiful copper skin of his chest and the glint of silver hanging from his left nipple. With no chest hair, all she could see

is tightly sculpted muscle and a naughty little ring she wanted to tug on with her teeth. She tightened her muscles to keep from reaching out and doing just that when he stopped within inches of her.

"Morning, sweetheart." He lifted his hand to brush her mused hair from her face.

Looking around for the boys, she said the first thing that came to mind. "Where are Shasta and Sequoia?"

A slow grin spread across his rugged face. "They're with Aunt Pati. She and her husband, Koda, are taking them for the rest of the week."

Her eyes widened with surprise, remembering the slender Native American woman she'd met yesterday. "They are?" Her words came out in a croak.

He slowly nodded. "I wanted time alone with you, Avon Lewis, before my overwhelming family scares you away." Moving closer, he let his body brush against hers, crowding her against the kitchen wall. "Mates always come first in my family." Pressing his arms on either side of her head, he leaned in towards her. "Especially when she needs time to adjust to the idea that she's been claimed." He paused a moment, searching her expression. "Uncle Koda said I should wait - to have patience but I can't, sweetheart. Mother Earth in her greatness has gifted me with you." Nuzzling the side of her throat he growled. "And I can't find the patience to wait before claiming every inch of you as mine."

Her heart raced wildly at the idea. *Whoa, where did flirty Mr. Inexperienced go? Damned if he isn't even sexier this way.* She whimpered. The idea of him being inexperienced excited her but his strong aggressiveness now was setting her on fire even as his talk of claiming her started to fill the empty spot her late husband left behind.

She locked eyes with him before letting out the brazen little vixen she'd been before her husband's death. "I'm all for that...." Draping her arms over his shoulders, she pulled him closer until their mouths were a breath's width apart. His eyes glittered with savage hunger. Just before his lips captured hers, she buried her

fingers in his dark curtain of hair. "...but let me make one thing perfectly clear, Cheveyo. I would love to spend every night in your bed while I'm here but I don't want your brothers hurt when I leave, so we need to be discrete."

If she'd expected his gratitude for her concern towards his brothers, she quickly realized her error when he jerked away from her. His eyes cooled as he put space between their bodies, leaving her feeling cold and empty. "I know you're unfamiliar with my customs, Avon but..."

Mortification stuck. *Ah hell, I read him wrong. This shows how little I know about seducing a younger man.* She was barely able to force a smile. "No harm, no foul, Cheveyo. I was foolish to think you wanted more than a few kisses. Just chalk it up a horny old lady who's in the midst of a midlife crisis."

She stepped towards the door when his calloused hand wrapped around her upper arm.

"Oh, you made a mistake, Mrs. Lewis. A huge one." He pulled out a chair, sank into it and tugged her down on his lap. She squirmed as her bare legs brushed his denim-clad ones. Pressing her hands against his bare chest she tried to push away from him, ignoring the tingle that came from the contact. Her only goal was to get away from him, and go hide in her bedroom so she could forget what a fool she'd just been.

With unbelievable ease he restrained her. "Knock it off. I'm not going to hurt you but we're going to get one thing straight before we go out on the trail."

She licked her lips, now nervous about spending two days on the trail with him as they originally planned when they first discussed the idea two weeks ago. *How the hell am I going to keep my hands off him?* She lowered her gaze. It was simple, she couldn't. "Perhaps it would be better if I had one of the other guides show me the trail and camping area you had in mind for the kids."

A low rumble under her palm surprised her. *Now what did I do to piss him off?*

“There’ll be no other, mate.” His forefinger lifted her gaze to his. “I’ll be the *only* person guiding you. Whether it’s around the lodge or learning what caresses pleasures us both, there’ll be no other. You’re mine!”

Her eyes widened as his mouth covered hers before she could fully assimilate his words. Pleasure surged through her and it was all she could do to hold on to his shoulders. His tongue pressed against the seam of her lips, demanding entrance. With a soft exhalation she granted him entry. *Oh God, he’s kissing me like he wants to devour me.* She hadn’t felt this desired since Hank’s passing. With each thrust and rub of his tongue over hers, the coil of desire inside of her tightened. A low sound escaped her as she fought to keep from sliding over the edge. It was simply unbelievable.

Finally when dark spots started to sway in front of her eyes, he tore his mouth from hers, his breath raspy and eyes burning with lust. His bare chest heaved against her, pressing against her swollen nipples.

“Listen to me well, woman, I’m offering you more than a tawdry affair or summer fling that you think you’ll be able to walk away from.” He lifted her off his lap to stand next to the chair. “What I’m offering you, is the time-honored position as my mate and all it entails.”

Confusion seethed inside of her. *How did this happen?* She didn’t understand. “Entails?”

He slowly rose from the chair and stared at her from beneath hooded lids. “You’ll be my lover, the other half of my soul, my helpmate, mother of my children, and above all else, my wife.”

Her jaw dropped in astonishment. “You can’t be serious!”

His eyes narrowed. “I’d never joke about something as serious as this. Mother Earth showed me when we met that you’re the only woman to complete me. I always take her visions as a predictor of what my life will become.”

Her mouth opened and closed, her mind whirling as she tried to comprehend how the situation had gone from a possible fling to marriage.

He sighed as if he understood her distress. "But I have patience. I can wait for you to catch up to me." After pressing a kiss to her temple, he turned and swatted her on the bottom. "Now go get dressed before I forget my good intentions, sweetheart."

Chapter Four

After watching Avon disappear through the door and then up the stairs, Cheveyo let loose a harsh moan and reached down to rearrange his painfully hard cock into a more comfortable position inside his jeans. Taking his coffee cup to the sink, he braced himself over it, willing his body to quit aching.

Telling himself that Avon wasn't ready yet for their inevitable joining and its consequences wasn't helping. He wanted nothing more than to bend her over the table and sink deep inside her. *For God's sake, I'm acting like a horny sixteen year old, and not the man I've worked so hard to become.*

Taking deep breaths, he finally managed to get his body somewhat under control. *At least enough to keep me from following her upstairs and dragging her to the closest bed.* It was tempting, damned tempting after he spent the night hard and aching, knowing she was mere feet down the hall. Setting a good example for the boys was important and he was sure that jumping their lovely houseguest on her first night in their home wouldn't be a good thing. He reached for his abandoned coffee on the counter. *Besides I gave her my word that I would show her the campsite and trail while she was here.*

When she'd first brought up her idea of using his lodge for a camp for disadvantaged kids at dinner, he'd been intrigued. Not only because of his need to for an excuse to get her up to the Lodge but also because of her natural excitement and need to help children. After digging online for more information about her and her various charity works, it only reaffirmed the nature he'd glimpsed in his vision. The widow Lewis was a caretaker, plain and simple. *And mine.*

Dumping the rest of his coffee down the drain, he listened to the guest shower come on. He should probably do the same. At least then he could get rid of his hard-on before he got on Buck. He and his right hand were old friends. Besides the idea of riding a horse as ornery as Buck with an erection wasn't his idea of fun. *Now riding Buck while Avon rides me...* He groaned

hoarsely as his groin tightened. *Better make that a cold shower. No amount of jerking off is going to take care of this. Damn I want her.*

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Shivering under the pounding cold water, Cheveyo groaned. The icy deluge wasn't working. His cock still stood proud between his thighs. His nuts pulled up tight with the need for release that just wouldn't come. With an agonizing grunt, he wrenched the hot water knob, turning the frigid spray into steamy warmth. His shivers stopped as his skin warmed. He cursed when his cock continued to throb.

"Son of a bitch." It was no use. He was going to have to take care of this before they left or he'd never make it. She'd be on the ground and under him before they made it even half a mile. His libido, even though his opportunities to indulge after his parents' death were slim, had always been healthy. Now that he'd met Avon, it seemed to be stuck in overdrive. Wrapping a wide hand around the aching flesh, he tightened his fist and gave a firm stroke down his base, then back up to his swollen tip. Panting, he savored his own touch, imagining Avon's hand replacing his.

He could imagine her kneeling at his feet, running those tiny hands of hers up his thighs until she cupped his balls in one soapy palm, while the other pushed his hand away. *Ah, hell would she stroke fast or slow?* He gritted his teeth, his hand moving faster. *Oh please let it be fast.*

His breath stuttered as he imagined her fingers that were cupping him wandering to rub the sensitive area behind them. He recently read in one of the books he'd purchased in hopes of seducing his mate, that there was a special spot back there. Would she be willing to find it for him? He couldn't imagine sticking his own fingers back there but the idea of her doing it made his balls pull up tight.

Stroking faster, he tried to imagine what it felt like to have a woman, his woman, explore every part of him. He groaned as

his shaft swelled in his grasp. "Ah fuck, so close." The sounds of flesh on flesh filled the shower as he feverishly worked his overexcited dick. He needed to come but he wanted her with him. Unable to control his need to call out for her, he arched his back. "Oh God, please...Avon!" His shout was drowned out by the running water. spurts of seed hit the wall and were washed away as he ejaculated. Still jerking, he worked through his climax until his knees weakened to the point he was kneeling on the shower floor.

Bracing himself on his hands and knees, he shook as his body came down from his orgasm. *If that's how intense it's going to be just imagining her here with me, I'm so screwed. I'm going to go off like a rocket before I even have a chance to satisfy her.*

* * * * *

A half hour later, feeling a bit more relaxed after rereading the section on foreplay in one of the books he'd bought, Cheveyo met Avon in the living room. Perhaps he'd have a chance to try out the book's suggestions tonight. As he finished securing the bottom of his first braid with a dark hair tie, he couldn't help but devour her with his eyes. With her dark wavy hair pulled into a ponytail high on her head, khaki walking shorts, and sturdy hiking boots she was prepared for a day of outdoor fun. The only thing missing was a hat. Satisfaction filled him when he realized his mate knew more than a little bit about dressing for a hike, unlike a lot of the city women who signed up for his guided tours.

"What are you smiling at?" Avon propped her hands on her hips, intruding on his thoughts.

Releasing his braid, he deftly parted and began to braid the remaining section of his hair. "You. I'm pleased I won't have the usual argument about appropriate hiking clothes."

She arched an eyebrow at him. "And what exactly were you expecting me to be wearing?"

He stepped closer to her as he finished braiding his hair. Pulling the hair tie from his wrist, he secured it before tossing it over his shoulder. "You'd be surprised what some of the female

guests have deemed to be appropriate trail clothing. I had one that thought wearing a gauzy sundress and sunhat was good for a day of horseback riding and hiking up to Arrowhead Mountain.”

Her eyes widened and she laughed. “You’ve got to be kidding me. What did she think a guided tour was – a romance novel come to life? A dress has to be the most impractical thing a woman could wear to hike and go horseback riding. That’d be like wearing your Sunday’s best to muck out the stalls.”

His smile grew wider. “And what would you know about mucking out stalls, Mrs. Lewis?”

She snorted. “I wasn’t always married to Hank Lewis, of the Phoenix Lewises. Long before I made my way south, I was born and raised on a farm in Iowa. I’ve been around enough horses, pigs and chickens that I should have a degree in husbandry.”

He touched her cheek. “So my mate is a farm girl in disguise. How intriguing.” Not giving her time to protest his words, he brushed a kiss across her nose, before guiding her out of the living room. “Now, my little farmer girl, let’s grab you a hat so we can make it to the campground by dinner time.”

Chapter Five

Kneeling next to the small fire pit the camping grounds provided, Avon opened a can of beans with ease. Glancing around the area, she sighed. She couldn't have asked for more beautiful scenery. After a leisurely two hour ride up to the mountain, Cheveyo led her into the most pristine campsite she'd ever seen. The lushness of the area was perfect for kids. There was plenty of grass, picnic tables and even a small park with swings, a slide and a spectacular view of a small lake. She could easily see herself bringing her disadvantaged kids up here. But that wasn't what was preying on her mind.

On the ride up, she finally gathered her courage and asked Cheveyo exactly what he meant earlier when he had spoken of them being mates. As a white, she couldn't claim to understand his Indian heritage. Surprise at the simplicity of his answer had rocked her to her core. Even if she didn't believe in visions, he urged her to examine her own feelings. Did she not feel their connection? Her age didn't matter to him, he explained, it was her spirit that called to him. Then he'd dropped a bomb shell on her. He wanted to claim her tonight, but it was her decision. Since then she'd been able to think of little else.

When Cheveyo dropped to his knees next to her with a prepared plate of raw meat, she peeked at him from the corner of her eye. She'd thought of nothing else but having his body on top of hers since he left the decision up to her. Trying to keep it light, she teased him. "So where did you hide the steaks at, Houdini?" She hadn't noticed any coolers.

He grinned. "Insulated saddle bags – a travel guide's best friend." The sizzle of meat filled the air when he slapped them down on the iron grate that swung over the pit. Her mouth watered when the savory aroma drifted closer to her. Her hunger for food now competed with her desire for him.

"So what did you think of the areas I pointed out on our way up?" He took the beans from her. With graceful movements

he dumped them in to a small metal pan from his mess kit, before placing them on the fire.

She tried to remember the places they'd stopped, but all she could remember was the way her need grew the further they travelled. The beautiful meadows and the other areas they'd stopped at along the way were just vague blurs compared to her desire for Cheveyo.

Shifting uncomfortably, she answered. "Everything you've shown me is beautiful, Cheveyo. My only concern is about them being passable by vehicle? It's something I'll have to take into consideration with kids. Emergencies happen."

He tipped his head as if nodding while he stirred the beans. "The lower trails are easily traversed by vehicle but the upper passes aren't. Not to worry though, we always carry emergency radios and there's a ranger station within a ten minute flight from almost all the places I showed you today." Flicking his braid over his shoulder, he checked the meat and stoked the fire with his other hand.

Nodding, she was mesmerized by his movements. He handled cooking with ease. In fact, she'd noticed how he handled everything on the trail like it was second nature. She wondered what else he did that was second nature. Her cheeks heated when she thought of him mastering her body. *God, I've got to get my mind out of the gutter before I jump him. Time to change the subject!* "So do you miss being a guide? I know you said that since your folks passed on, you've been running the business."

He looked up from the food. "A bit. While I don't get out in the field as much as I'd like, I still make time to bring the boys out. I want to give them everything their dad gave me. He was a good man." He gazed at the fire. "He didn't have to adopt me but did. He taught me how to fish, camp and hunt my own food." He looked over at her. "Those things are good for boys, you know. It gives them good life skills and teaches them how to rely upon themselves." He shifted as if expecting her to disagree with him.

She placed her hand on his arm. "I never said it didn't, Cheveyo. I'm happy to see you're not letting your ancestors' way

of life die. Shasta and Sequoia need that connection to their heritage.”

He relaxed under her touch, before staring at her long and hard. Heat entered his eyes. “Can you do something for me, Avon?”

Cocking her head, she tried to control the need that rose hard and fast. Not trusting her voice, she nodded.

“Never change, my mate.” He pressed a quick kiss against her lips, but withdrew before she could kiss him back.

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Unzipping the flap on the tent they’d be sharing, Avon moistened her lips. It was time. After dinner, Cheveyo was talkative and wanted to know everything about her. He never pressed her about their sleeping arrangements or if she would give herself to him. In turn, she found herself telling him things about herself and even her marriage to Hank she never would’ve dreamed of telling another. He just lounged against the picnic table and absorbed everything she said. But now the time for talk was past. She wanted her other half – her mate.

Stillness filled her as the truth of it settled over her. *He was right. Whether I believe in his visions or not, we have a connection that can’t be denied.*

“Are you all right, sweetheart?” Cheveyo was lying with his head propped on one arm on top of the air mattress he’d brought along for her comfort. He’d removed his shirt and boots but left his jeans on. She didn’t think she’d ever seen anything sexier in her life.

Wordlessly, she pulled the zipper down behind her. Meeting his eyes, she reached for the hem of her shirt. Slipping it over her head she dropped it to the ground. A quick flick of her finger and her shorts joined her shirt. His hoarse groan was a welcome sound to her ears. Standing in front of him in nothing more than her bra and panties, she soothed her hands down her sides. Her eyes met his. She could see his desire for her.

“Avon?” Rough and uncertain, he didn’t move a muscle, just stared at her.

She dropped to her knees next to him. "I want you, Cheveyo." Taking a deep breath, she cupped his cheek. "I'm ready to be your woman."

He tugged her against his chest. "Thank God. I thought I was going to have to lay here all night with a hard-on."

Unable to resist, she flicked her tongue over his nipple and the silver ring through it. He jerked as if struck.

"Holy mother of God." His hand buried in her hair when she tugged gently with her teeth. Releasing the ring, she pushed it up with her tongue and laved the hard bud at its center. "Damn." His back arched. She lifted her head to watch his expression. He seemed dazed.

"Are you okay?"

His eyes closed as he pleaded with her. "Again...please!"

She couldn't stop the surprised smile that crossed her face. "Like that?"

His eyes silted open. "Fuck yes." His hands lifted to cup her breasts. Just before touching them, he licked his lips. "Tell me what to do. How to please you, Avon." He drew a rough breath. "I read some books but I need to know what you like. A firm touch or soft?"

She groaned and her head dropped. "Please tell me you're not a virgin. I'll feel like a cradle robber if you've never done this before..."

His finger pressed against her lips. "No, I'm not a virgin." He shifted uncomfortably. "I'm not experienced as some," he sighed, "and with the boys, I haven't had a woman in a long time."

When she opened her mouth, he shushed her. "By my choice. My brothers needed me more than some unimportant woman." He lifted her with ease until she was straddling him. "But you're my mate and more than anything I want to make you come." He winked at her. "So give a guy a clue." He lifted his hands. "Show me where you want my hands." Leaning up he brushed his lips over the swell of her breast above the lace of her bra. "Where do you want my mouth, Avon?" He nuzzled her. "Just tell me..."

Her hands cupped the back of his head as his mouth explored the swells of her breasts. Feeling his braids, she stopped him. "You want to please me?" Her voice was barely above a whisper. He nodded. "Free your hair."

Moving back until she straddled his upper thighs, she let him sit up. Her breath came faster when he reached for the end of one braid. Fascinated, she watched his fingers work through the braids until his long hair was once again free. She even whimpered when he ran his hands through it. "Okay, now what, sweetheart?" His grin was impish.

She reached behind her and unhooked her bra. His eyes darkened when she yanked it off. "Son of a..." he traced a finger over one dark nipple. "Beautiful." He leaned forward. Just before his tongue touched her, she jerked back.

"No..." even to her own ears, her voice was shaky. "I...I've had this fantasy..." She flushed. "I've wanted..." Taking a deep breath, she picked up a strand of his hair. Holding his gaze, she brushed it over her nipple. A low gasp escaped her tight throat. Her eyes drifted close as the cool satin of his hair teased her flesh, causing her nipple to harden further.

"Oh, yeah, pleasure yourself." She barely heard him as pleasure raked over her. Another cry broke free at the brush of hair over her other nipple. Her eyes shot open to meet his. In his hand was another piece of hair. "This is what you've wanted? To feel my hair against your skin?" He probed her gaze. She nodded helplessly.

"No problem. I can do that." With a flex of his body he rolled her under him. His hands guided her arms above her head. He pressed a kiss against her parted lips. "Keep them there." With a rakish grin, he pulled his hair over his shoulders so it ran over his chest. "Just feel." He dipped his head.

A sharp cry echoed through the tent when she felt his firm lips, wet tongue and the brush of silk. She arched up as his mouth moved over her shoulder and his hair followed. The slight tickle of it as he pressed moist kisses against her skin was driving her crazy. "Cheveyo!"

He purred against her breast before his mouth latched onto her nipple. Instinctively she reached for him. His head lifted. A feral look crossed his face. "Mine." Pushing her arms back up, he licked his damp swollen lips. "No touching." Lowering his head he paused. "I want to drive you crazy with desire."

"I'm already crazy!" Her protest was lost as a wave of pleasure rocked her. While she'd been busy paying attention to his hair and mouth, his nimble fingers slipped inside her moist panties. The stroke of his fingers over her folds made her clutch at him. This time he didn't stop to correct her. Instead he chose to bury two fingers inside her sheath.

* * * *

Cheveyo groaned deep in his throat at the wet heat surrounding his fingers. She was tight and dripping. *Dear Lord he wanted her.* His cock strained against his zipper. It was all he could do to keep from freeing his aching flesh and burying it in her heat. Releasing her nipple, he moved to the other as his fingers moved in and out. Remembering the book, he searched with his thumb for her clit. It was supposed to be the seat of her pleasure.

When he bumped the swollen little bud, a low keening sound tore free. Looking up from his feast he stared at her rapturous expression. "There?" he croaked.

"Yes." Her hips bucked up to meet his hand, her sheath tightening around his fingers.

A low growl built inside his chest. He needed to see, to taste, to experience every part of her pleasure. Dipping his head, he trailed his mouth down her stomach, making sure to let his hair brush over her. When he finally reached his destination, he settled on his stomach between her splayed thighs and moved his thumb away.

"Cheveyo, what are you..." Her confusion was evident.

"Shhh. I need to see." Spreading her folds, he gazed hungrily at the shiny bit of flesh poking out from under its hood. It didn't look like the pictures in the book – it looked better. Blowing over it, he watched as it swelled even further. The growl that had

been building in his chest tore free and he buried his mouth in her pussy. She screamed and bucked when his tongue found her clit. Around his fingers he could feel the pulsations of her orgasm. Holding tight he rode out her pleasure, licking and lapping at her.

When she tugged on his hair hard, he finally stopped.

“What?”

“Get up here!” Her eyes were wild.

“Huh?” Uncertainty tugged at him. Hadn’t he pleased her?

She gave him a feral look. “Get your Indian ass up here and fuck me!”

Her coarse language sent a jolt of fire straight to his cock. Scrambling to his knees, he yanked desperately at his zipper, her hands getting in his way as she tried to help. Finally he freed his cock and fell on her. He cursed when he stabbed and missed her opening. “Fuck!”

One hand cradled his head against her breasts, while the other slid between their bodies. “Shhh, let me help, mate.” He moaned when her soft hand wrapped around him. A firm tug from her hand almost made him spill. “Now push.” Her whisper made him buck. A delighted scream followed by a masculine groan echoed through the tent as he slid inside her deep and fast.

He froze. “Did I hurt you?” His eyes captured hers, searching for pain in them.

She shook her head. “But I’m gonna hurt you if you don’t start moving.”

That’s all it took, and his control snapped. Pulling back, he thrust into her fast and hard. “Wrap your legs around me.”

She must have heard his plea because her legs embraced his hips, letting him sink deeper with each thrust. He hissed when he felt the pressure build inside him. “Not yet, not yet.” Fighting the urge to come, he tried to think of anything other than his imminent orgasm.

Under him, Avon grasped at him. “Let go, come for me.”

He shook his head, even as he moved harder against her. The slapping of their bodies was loud. “Not without you.”

She gasped. "Never without you." Her fingers dug into his sweat covered shoulders as she peaked again, this time her pussy fluttering around his cock. "Love you!" Her scream pushed him over the edge.

"Fuck!" Arching back, he bucked hard and fast as the pleasure burnt, built and then exploded. His cock swelled and he froze over her as he unloaded with a roar. "Love you, mate!"

When the pleasure finally eased, he fell forward, barely catching his weight on his arms. A soft laugh escaped the woman under him. He was barely able to open his eyes. "Avon?"

She smiled up at him. "You didn't even manage to get your pants off, wild man."

A tired chuckle escaped him. "No I didn't." He brushed a damp strand of her hair away from her face. "I meant it, sweetheart. I love you. Will you eventually marry me? Wear my choker?"

At her blank expression, he rolled away. Reaching into the bag he'd brought into the tent with them, he pulled out the beaded choker he'd made as a boy. Holding it in his hand, he turned back to her.

"In my family, the men make these chokers for their mates. It's a symbol of our love to the woman who completes us. Will you wear it?"

Tears welled up in her eyes. "You make me feel complete. You've filled a spot inside that's been empty for so long, but are you sure you want an older woman?"

He nodded solemnly. Her lip trembled and he had a moment of panic, before she threw her arms around him. "Then yes!"

* * * *

Later that night, Cheveyo lay on his back staring up at the night sky through the open top of the tent. Gazing at the stars, he couldn't help but feel closer to his mother and father. Or the deity who brought Avon into his life. Gathering his sleeping mate closer, he sighed. "Thank You, Mother Earth, for my Avon."

About the Author

Dakota hails from the home state of the Hawkeyes, corn and pigs. Surrounded by her children's laughter and the corn fields, she crafts her stories. She enjoys writing romances and sci-fi/fantasy stories. She is a romantic at heart, so even the sci-fi stories have an underlying romantic plot. She started writing at the tender age of fourteen and hasn't stopped since. In her spare time she reviews for Dark Divas Reviews and writes for several blogs, that is when she's not lovin' on her children and husband.