

Unfinished Story.
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Chapter 1. The Arrival

‘It’s dark outside.’ She thought as she opened her eyes. Her pupils adjusted to the darkness fast, and she looked at the place she awoke in. A dingy motel where even the cockroaches seem offended. She sat up and stretched languidly. She got out of her sleeping bag that she had set on top of the bed. She wasn’t about to sleep in it heaven knows how many people did weird things in it?

She gracefully walked to the bathroom, walking past the dirty mirror she paused for a moment to look at her body before she covered it completely. She wasn’t what you would expect. She was about five foot, five inches tall. She was covered in a white fur from head to tail... yes tail. She had black stripes all over the fur as well, but it made a pattern, a zoologist would say in layman’s terms. Tiger stripes. Her hands had the normal five fingers, although the tips of the fingers were fat and had retractable claws. Her body was the shape of a human woman. If one watched her walk they would think she walked on her toes, but she had a small bit of digi-grade feet that made her walk on her toes. On her head she had cat ears, her pupils were cat eyes and she had soft fine whiskers.

She was rare, and she knew it. She was looking for “people” just like her. She had been for several years, but with no luck. She heard of a rumor from the town she was in, she had to check it out. She cursed the genetics team that made her. No right. She sighed and walked into the bathroom, closing the door.

She stood impatiently at the front desk. Waiting for the guy behind it to take her key. She was now in clothing that covered her whole body completely. Even to a hat that smashed her ears down. She wore dark glasses to hide her eyes. She wore long gloves on her arms to hide her arms. The guy approached her and looked at her curiously.

“Why are you wearing all that stuff?” He asked her.

She sighed in frustration. “I suffer from photo-dermatitis.”

“Photo what?”

“I’m allergic to the sun.” She explained.

“Oh... ok.” He printed out her receipt and she handed him the key and paid for the room in cash.

She left the motel office and adjusted the backpack on her shoulder. She was sure she’d have to get an odd job. She walked into the town and watched as the town started it’s

usual day. No one seemed to notice her as she walked up the sidewalk. She saw a note on one door saying they needed some physical laborer to get boxes out of trucks. She walked into the store and walked up to the manager. He was talking to two other men who looked quite big. He looked at her as she stood there.

“Yes miss?” He asked, wondering if she was really a miss. He couldn’t see her face except she had long white hair from under the hat she wore.

“Yes... You need Labor help? I can do hard work.” She looked at their faces, and one of the guys tried to stifle a smile.

“Oh really?” Said the manager.

“Yes.” She said.

It was then the manager and both guys started laughing. She sighed and mumbled something about underestimating the little guy.

She walked to some boxes that were on the floor. She grabbed one and it was a bit heavy, but she lifted it with ease with one hand, then she knelt down and picked up another with the same weight and placed it on the other box. She then walked to the manager. All three looked at her and she always loved the reaction to humans when she did something they didn’t think she could do. “Where do you want these?” She asked without a hint of strain in her voice.

The manager pointed to the other side of the store. “Over there.”

She ended up working the rest of the morning there. When she was done as well as the other two guys, the manager paid them. She was happy he didn’t require ID and she left with one hundred dollars. That would give her a couple of meals. It was about noon and she walked to the town’s library. She went in and quietly went to their computer. She took off her sunglasses and hooked them to her shirt. She worked quickly on the computer and found the newspapers section of the library. She went to look at the archives. The woman at the desk watched the stranger and yawned and turned her attention back to her book.

She shuffled through the reels and found one that was on the computer and set it aside then found a couple more that corresponded within the search curriculum. She then brought them over to the libraries document projector and fed them through the ancient thing. She shuffled through the newspaper clippings and suddenly stopped at a story about a laboratory exploding just a few miles away. The whole building collapsed and the locals thought it was just a normal little soft drink lab. She narrowed her eyes; she knew the paper was just spoon-fed the story. All part of the cover up she was sure about it.

She scanned through the papers for that year again and stopped at a little blurb about someone seeing a big foot. The paper didn’t give the name of the person who allegedly

saw this elusive creature. She frowned and continued through the reel. Nothing else caught her eye, so she took the reel out carefully and put a new one into the projector.

After two hours of looking through the old archives she rubbed her eyes tiredly. Her stomach rumbled it's discontent with her. She patted her thin tummy and sighed she got up and stretched a bit and looked at the notes she had jotted down.

1. Big Foot
2. Lab explosion
3. Livestock disappearing
4. Mysterious Stalkers
5. Strange noises
6. Glowing eyes at night.

She went and put away all the archives neatly and left the library. The librarian watched as the woman left and sneezed suddenly. That was strange; she only sneezed if there were cats near. She shrugged it off as just an errant sneeze; maybe the woman had a cat.

She walked to the nearest diner and a waitress seated her immediately. A few patrons looked at her curiously but went on with their eating and chatting. The waitress approached her and stood. "May I take your order?"

"Yeah, I want some milk... and I want a hamburger. Cooked Rare."

The waitress' eyebrow shot up. "Sorry, we don't offer rare. E. Coli and stuff like that."

She sighed and grumbled. "Ok... how about... Medium Rare? I want my meat to bleed. It's part of my condition." She held up her hand to show she had it covered completely even on this hot day of summer. "I would rather have rare... It's a lot better for me than you think."

"I'll see what I can do." The waitress said, and then waited for the order to finish. "what would you like on it?"

"Nothing else but bread. I don't like the other stuff. Fries would be good though." The waitress nodded and walked to the kitchen to place the order.

She looked at her notebook. From what she surmised all the incidents happened around where the lab used to be. She had to check it out. She took a blank piece of paper from her notebook and absentmindedly started to fold it and move the paper gracefully and purposefully with creases and folds. She placed a paper origami swan on the table and she started to do another one without concentrating. Soon she had two paper swans, three frogs and a cat.

The waitress came and placed her glass of milk on the table. "Quite a zoo you have there." She said. Startled she looked up at the waitress. Then looked at what she did.

“Oh... Yeah! It’s a habit. My hands need to be busy.” She frowned at the little paper animals. The waitress left and in a few more minutes came back and put a hamburger in front of her.

“There you go. I even convinced the cook just to brown it. It’s rare like you asked.” She whispered.

“Thank you.” She uncovered her mouth with the scarf she had over it and saw that the waitress had left to attend other patrons. She lifted the burger up to her lips and bit in with very big fangs. She chewed the burger and swallowed taking another bite. The blood from the meat was warm and it tasted good. Some dripped to the plate and down the sides of her mouth. She looked up suddenly when she heard an intake of breath. She looked at the booth across from her. There was a little girl watching her with big eyes.

She put the hamburger down and about three quarters of it was done. She stared at the girl for a moment and lifted her glasses and showed her fangs at her. The girl gasped and pointed. “Kitty!” She squealed. Quickly she pulled on the glasses again and looked back down at the burger on her plate.

“Kitty, kitty, kitty...” The girl continued to say. The parent at the booth looked over and pulled the child down. “Stop being rude... That is a person not a kitty.”

She smiled to herself and finished her burger. She was nibbling her fries when the waitress came back to give her the bill. “How was it?”

“Good.” She said. “Thank you.” The waitress nodded and left.

She took out some money and paid the amount that was stated on the bill and then left a five-dollar bill as tip. She left the diner and walked to the bus depot. The little folded animals still sat in the diner.

She got onto a bus heading out to the area in where the laboratory exploded. She got out of the bus and it drove off. She stood looking at the forest she faced. She shrugged her backpack up again and walked down the road. While on the bus she asked the driver where the old lab used to be, he had pointed up the way she was heading.

Soon she came to an old chain link fence, she looked at the clearing covered with weeds, and old concrete. It looked like the company that owned the land didn’t want to rebuild. There was a shell of a building still standing. She walked along the fence hoping to come across a hole in it. If worse came to worse she would climb it. She walked until the fence disappeared into the forest. She continued to follow it and smiled when she saw a tree had fallen on it and bent it down. She put her backpack on the ground she dug through leaf debris and put her backpack under it. She looked around cautiously then took off her layers of clothing. She uncovered her ears and sighed with relief. She unwrapped her tail from around her waist. Taking off her gloves she flexed her claws. Then she took her feet

out of the boots she wore. Leaving only a t-shirt on and a pair of shorts she stuffed all the clothing into the backpack and she buried it.

She jumped onto the fallen tree and ran along it. She jumped onto the other side of the fence and ran through the forest until she came to the clearing. She sat on her haunches then and scanned the ruined building. She wished it was dark so she could dash across the clearing without being detected. She knew she'd stick out like a sore thumb if she went out there now. So she waited. Her ears twitched when night started to descend. She heard noises of the nocturnal creatures coming out of hiding. Her keen eyes caught sight of a hare close to the building. She sniffed the air, it had gotten cooler, but since it was summer it was still warm. She cautiously entered the clearing on all fours just to keep down low. Then feeling that she was safe, she dashed out to the building. When she reached it she put her back to the wall. She saw bits of the wall scattered about some had weeds growing on them. She went to what used to be the front entrance and walked through the debris. There were beer bottles and cigarette butts scattered about. She walked around them not willing to make any noise by bumping into the bottles. When she turned a corner she heard a gunshot and the wall in front of her exploded in dust. She got down fast and crawled to the safety behind a wall. That is when she heard voices.

"I think you got it." Said a slurred voice. She growled and crawled quickly to a wall further away.

"I tol' you there was a yeti about heres." Said another voice more slurred than the first. She caught a whiff of these humans and they smelled like alcohol, used cigarette smoke and sweat. She almost gagged on the smell. She kept low and cursed humans for their stupidity. She backed away from the area and turned to another section of the building, away from the noises the humans were making. She walked into a room that was more intact than the rest of the place. There she saw old rusted out cages. She sniffed the dusty air and knew it had been several years since this place was abandoned. She walked along and looked at each cage in turn. She stopped at a cage it smelled vaguely like... canine?

She saw a filing cabinet and she ran over to it. Leaving her paw prints across the dust covered floor. She opened one drawer and looked in it. It was pretty much empty, slamming it shut she pulled out another drawer and it was empty too. She then moved the cabinet aside. Underneath it was a couple pieces of paper. She unfolded one and looked at it:

Hybrid Genetic Co-Op.

The progress isn't good. We were given very fine canine specimens but they are really not turning out as well as they should. So we decided to mix DNA with other species.

She frowned at the last sentence. Mixing DNA? Isn't mixing human with animal enough? She continued to read...

After many failed experiments we were able to get one viable specimen, he is very hostile we had to sedate him to take blood samples. After nightly observations we noticed that he seemed lonely.

She frowned when she saw that the rest of the paper was torn. She grabbed the other paper that she found and read it.

All production needs to stop. Destroy all evidence. The feline project is a total disaster; all evidence needs to go before it is too late.

The paper looked singed and was torn a bit as if by claw marks. She sniffed it and it only smelled like dust. She continued to read.

It is imperative you put all animals down, burn their bodies. By all means necessary:

GET RID OF THEM!

She growled and crumpled up the paper. They destroyed them all? How was she ever to find someone like her if they kept killing everything? She stopped when she heard another gunshot. She rushed to the doorway and listened. She then heard screaming and yelling as well as another gunshot. She ran towards the commotion and stopped when she heard growling and one of the humans pleading pitifully. He sounded like he had sobered up a bit.

“Please! I wasn’t the one shooting. Don’t hurt me... I won’t tell anyone about you.” She continued to hear growling and she slowly raised her head over the wall and saw that the drunks had made a small campfire and they had been drinking all night. She saw the guy that had the gun was just a mass of bloody tatters. What shocked her, the most, though was she saw an enormous wolf-man like creature hovering over the other man. The creature was wearing only a cloth around his waist. He had sharp claws out, covered in blood and his face was contorted in rage, he breathed heavily as if he was out of breath. She knew he wasn’t, he was like her, and a deep rage always welled within their bodies, and once they attacked there is no reasoning with them. They were made to be “Ultimate Warriors” to show no pity. She saw in his face though an inner turmoil. The same she got when the bloodlust started to dissipate. Though before the creature’s indecision had taken over he lunged at the man and tore out his throat. Blood splattered across the wall and she ducked in time for it to miss her. She looked again to see the carnage. He was on all fours pacing the area growling. His fur was black and white and his muscles rippled under his skin as he paced. The overwhelming scent of blood kept her scent hidden it seemed for he didn’t even glance in her direction. Soon she could discern that he was talking more than growling.

“Damn it. I lost it again. Lost it. Just seeing that gun. Fuck!” He suddenly started pacing on his own two feet. She ducked down because he was sure to glance her then. “I smelled the scent of someone, then these pricks.” He growled again. “Fuck! Now I cannot smell anything but blood. Goddamned humans and their guns.”

She slid down against the wall and sat. She listened to him rant and rave, and had a feeling he had caught her scent, probably from the forest. She debated whether or not she should introduce herself or just wait until he calmed down more. While debating that with herself she didn't notice that he started to walk to the wall she was sitting close to. He sniffed and looked over the wall, but not downward, he caught her scent though and he started to go around the wall.

She heard someone step close to the wall and she crawled from the spot where she was and saw as he appeared around the bend. He was sniffing the air again. 'Crap.' she thought. 'He has a canine nose. He'll find me eventually.' So she stood her ground as he came around the corner and stopped to look at her.

"You." He said.

"What about me?" She asked as she folded her arms over her chest.

"It's you I caught the scent of." He said.

"Yes..." she nodded and shifted her feet just in case he wanted to fight with her.

"What are you..." He stopped and sniffed. "Feline?"

"Yes..." She answered. Her claws unsheathed slowly.

"Why are you here?" His eyes narrowed and he flexed his claws. He smelled that she was curious about him, but ready to fight or do flight if needed.

"I came to... find people like... me." Her eyes narrowed as she saw him flex his blood soaked claws.

"People... like you?" He asked frowning. "I don't understand."

"I think you do." She replied and looked at him, he was definitely one of the genetic experiments.

He looked at the ground and frowned a bit and then held his claws out in front of him. "These hands... they are covered in blood. They killed my father. So... I killed them."

"I know how you feel." She continued to look at him. "I have done the same."

"But you are not me." He stated and looked at her again. He noticed she had perfect white fur with delicate black stripes accenting it. Her eyes were a deep azure blue that reminded him of the sky. "Are you?"

"Of course I am not you. You are your own self. I am myself. I've lived among humans for several years. Recently though, my human mate died." She looked at the ground in

sadness. “He treated me as an equal. We enjoyed one another’s company but in the end... disease took him from my grasp.”

He looked at her incredulously. “You mean you have been out there? Among them?”

“Yes... but I have to cover myself well. Concealing my identity. Very tiresome after awhile.” She sighed and slowly sat down on a stone. “I have been looking for you. I believe you are who I am searching for.”

“Me?” He asked as he walked closer to her, his defenses suddenly falling. “Why me?”

She suddenly smelled a musky aroma come from him, a mixture of bear, wolf and... skunk? Her eyes narrowed. “You are one of many that I have resigned myself to find. By the way, did you know you smell of bear?” She paused and added, “Plus skunk?”

“Yeah.” He sat down a little further away as not to offend her. “It goes away after a while. Either that or I gotten used to it. What do you mean one of many?”

“Well, there were other laboratories like this one. Some were a lot bigger. I am hoping to find the others like me.” She paused and looked at his hands as the blood was slowly drying into his fur. “The lab that created me... was closed down by me. My sisters and I are the only ones to have survived. I was the eldest.” She closed her eyes as if in remembrance of the few who didn’t survive.

“I see.” He whispered and looked up from staring at his own hands. “Can you let me wash up? I... am dirty.” He smiled and she nodded assent. He got up and walked to something she didn’t notice before on the side of the building. A hand pump, he grabbed the handle and started to pump it and clear clean water gushed out. He held one hand under it while the other pumped then traded off.

“Ah, now you don’t smell of blood...” She paused then wrinkled her nose. “You don’t smell like skunk either...”

“I told you it goes away.” He said smugly.

“You smell of ferret now.” She murmured and he looked at her in surprise.

“I do not!” He said in defiance.

“I know...” She smiled. “You smell of wolf and bear. What is your name?”

“I’m Alex.” He put out his wet hand to shake hers.

She looked at it, but didn’t take it. “Um... Hi Alex... I’m Catnel.” She bowed, and he looked at her in a confused way.

“You don’t shake hands?” He asked.

“No...” Catnel said as she shivered. “I’m not a dog. No offense.”

He scratched his head for a moment. “Ok. Do you mind if I smell you at least?”

A horrified look crossed her face in a split second and she shook her head quickly. “I rather you not... didn’t you get a nose full of my scent already?”

He looked hurt at her comment and he whined.

“Ok, but private areas are off limits!” She crossed her arms and stood.

He smiled and he walked over to her and sniffed her head fur and her face. “You smell good.” He sniffed again. “You did come from a far away place you smell like you were from a city.”

“I came through a couple of cities. Never lived in one.” She looked up at him, and frowned. “Are you done?”

He kept sniffing her and closed his eyes.

She got annoyed, got up and walked away from him. “I think you are quite done.”

“You had a pup?”

She frowned. “Yes, but I call them kits or babies. Plus she isn’t a kit any longer.” She crossed her arms and he figured it was a defensive move. He probably had offended her.

He whined in apology. “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to upset you.” He suddenly looked around her and sniffed about. “Where is your kit?” He asked.

“She is living as a normal human with her grandmother.” She turned away and looked up into the clear night sky. “She looks more human than I do. She does have my head fur though.” She waved her fur about over her shoulders. “I guess that is better for her.”

He frowned. “You abandoned your child?”

“No... she is being watched. I call her weekly. I am still her mother.” She looked back at him and frowned. “And what have you been doing since the explosion?”

He looked down at his hands again as if he was remembering the day it happened. “I was in a cage when some people in dark clothes came into the room. I wasn’t sure who they were. At the desk was my “father” he was working on some paperwork and he seemed sad. He told me earlier that he wanted to set me loose, and to never come back, and he was planning on setting me free the next day. But that day never came...”

"We need to work fast." A man in a black mask exclaimed as they walking into the laboratory. There were three in all; they wanted to make the whole thing look like an accident.

"What do you want us to do?" A female voice asked.

A short fat guy nodded.

"Well, we are to kill the animals... all the animals."

"Even... Alex?" The woman asked hesitantly.

"Especially him." The man in command hissed. "Then after they are dead, we must burn down the whole facility."

The two others nodded and entered the laboratory. "Remember, no one stands in the way." The leader hissed.

Conveniently the guard at the front desk was missing. They went from room to room killing animals. All three gathered together in front of the one door that held the advanced research animals. One being their one and only DNA hybrid success: Alex.

When they got into the room they were shocked to see that Doctor Gladster was still there, they were hoping that they didn't have to deal with any killing of doctors.

They spotted the cage in which Alex was sitting on a bed that the doctor had put in, and he was reading a book. The door of the cage was wide open and the leader went forward to confront the doctor.

"Doctor Gladster, what are you doing here? Didn't you get the memo?" The leader nearly shouted at the doctor.

"Yes." The doctor faced the intruders. "And I think it is wrong."

"You don't have a say!" The leader pulled a pistol on the doctor. "Get out or you will be killed along with your "pet". He cocked the pistol and trained it on the doctor's head.

"Do as you will, but you are not going to kill Alex." He stood his ground.

Alex had put down his book and slowly approached the door to his cage. The other two people withdrew their own guns were too engrossed on the conversation to notice that Alex's cage was open.

It happened swiftly, when the gun went off, Alex leapt from the cage and grabbed the short fat guy first and slashed his throat. He then leapt for the leader, and the leader

ducked and he flew through the air hitting the wall. Last he saw was a woman taking off her mask and she was holding a very large syringe. She had said: "It'll not hurt a bit." He then looked across the floor and saw his 'father' crumpled on it with wide eyes and a hole in his forehead.

"When I woke up, there was a fire. I tried to find my father, but he was gone... I did follow a trail of blood into a burning room. The heat was so intense, I couldn't get close."

He shook his head for a moment, "Then, I had a feeling of dread, I had to get out of there before it was too late. I ran, telling my father, that his dream had come true I was free. I don't think that is what he intended though. The building exploded as soon as I reached the tree line." He looked at his hands. "I hunted the ones responsible down... the female human was shocked when she found out that the drug she gave me didn't kill me. And these hands, they killed her first, then they killed the one who killed my father."

Catnel just nodded.

"I do remember the good times I had with my Father. He taught me to read, to write, to appreciate things. Taught me that I was someone special, someone a bit different then all the others. He also told me how I was made."

"You know, how you were made?" She asked.

"Yes, you don't?"

She sadly shook her head. "My father got killed when I was young. Though he did teach me to read and write. He didn't live long enough to tell me how I came to be."

"I am sorry." He blinked. "My father told me that I was special because he used 4 types of DNA to make me. I was the first success, and the last. He called me a miracle..."

"A miracle." Catnel murmured. She was happy and was almost hopeful that they would find more.

"He used the DNA of a timber wolf, a Kodiak bear, his own DNA, and a strand of skunk DNA... which I found kind of amusing. He thought I would be upset about the skunk DNA, but I wasn't. That would explain why I smelled funny sometimes." He chuckled.

"And explains why you have such a long unusual tail." She added.

He looked at his own fluffy tail and looked at her thin tail. "You have tiger DNA in you?"

"Yeah, I have Siberian Tiger. My father had a thing for cats." She smiled.

"If it's Tiger, how come you aren't orange and black?"

“Some tigers come in white. And well, father took some DNA from a white tiger.” She smiled.

“No other animal DNA in there?” he asked.

“Nothing that I know of, except, human and tiger.” She shrugged. “All of father’s paperwork was burned. So I cannot tell you anything else.”

They paused for a moment in silence. She swung her tail back and forth as she thought about everything. He stood and crossed his arms over his chest and looked at the horizon. The dawn was about to break and Catnel hadn’t realized how long they had been talking.

“Well,” She broke the silence and Alex looked at her from the corner of his eye. She stood up and stretched. “My night was shot to heck. Where do you sleep?”

He blinked for a few minutes. “In the forest.” He stated.

“Ok, take me to the forest. I need rest. And besides, you don’t want to be here when someone comes looking for those losers you killed.”

His eyes widened to that. “No! They would have killed me first.”

“Yes, I know. But if cops see you or me, they will definitely shoot first and ask questions later, or they will skip the questions and just dissect us.” She stood up and started to the forest.

Alex followed her along until they came to the fallen tree. “This is where I found your scent.”

“Of course.” She mumbled as she jumped up onto the tree with grace and agility and walked along it. He climbed up and followed her until they both jumped down on the opposite side of the fence. She then dug through the leaves and found her backpack. “With that nose of yours, I am surprised you didn’t dig this up.”

“Your smell was all over the place.” He mumbled as he watched her. He frowned when he saw her heft the large thing on her shoulder. “Want help?” He offered her.

“Nope.” She smiled at him. “Now, where do you sleep?”

“Um...” He paused and sniffed the air. “Follow me, I have a cave not too far from here.”

She nodded and started to follow him, for a large guy, he hardly made a noise as they went through the forest. She didn’t complain as they walked, she knew it wasn’t a big deal she had walked further. When he stopped she did. She looked at a large hole in the face of a small cliff; she smiled and looked at it.

“Nice place.” She said as he led her into the cave a little further.

“It suits my needs.” He said as he went to an alcove. She noticed there were stacks of books along a wall and on a raised rock was a ton of blankets in which he made his bed. He sat on his makeshift sleeping area and smiled at her. In an indentation on the floor she noticed he had used the area as a fire pit. She went to examine his books.

“Nice collection... Some classics here.” She commented. She then looked about and saw a nice flat area and she went over to it. She put her backpack on the floor and removed her sleeping bag and unrolled it. He watched her curiously.

“What are you doing?” He asked as he absentmindedly grabbed a book.

“I’m going to go to sleep.” She mumbled as she crawled into the bag. “Very tired.” She gathered clothing out of her bag and piled them up for her pillow. She lay her head down and closed her eyes.

He looked at her for a few moments then: “Catnel?” There wasn’t an answer. He tried to look at her from his seat. “Hello?” Nothing. Shrugging he lay down too, soon he fell asleep as well.

Chapter 2. Revelations

She ate a bit of rabbit that he had caught and cooked over the fire. It was what she expected it to taste, nothing different then before, it brought back memories. He sat back and was reading he had eaten his fill before sitting down to read.

She kept eating and watched as he read the book. She put the leg down and sat back with a sigh. He peeked over the book at her. “Was it cooked ok?”

“Yes, thanks. I hadn’t had one of those for several years. Usually, I just buy a hamburger.”

“Buy a hamburger? You can buy things?”

“I told you before. I just use layers of clothing.” She folded her arms across her chest. “Where else would I buy stuff?”

He blinked at her several times, opened his mouth for a moment, then; snapped it closed.

“If you are going to say something... Please say it instead of pretending you were a snapping turtle.” She smirked.

A smile crept to his face, it rarely happened, smiling. It felt good to smile. "Can I go with you?" He asked.

Her eyebrow shot up and she looked at him. There was a long drawn out silence, and he closed his book awaiting her reply. He almost thought she was going to tell him to not ask her that. He saw her expression change, as she looked him over.

"Well," She finally started to say. "Not dressed like that you're not."

He looked down at himself and saw the tattered cloth tied around his waist. If she could see it under his fur he would have been blushing. "I... uh... I..."

"Save it, I'm sure you had better clothing when you were a prisoner." She smiled. "Don't worry, I will find my way into town and buy you something decent to wear. But first..."

She grabbed her bag and rummaged through it. She pulled out something yellow. Standing up she approached him, walking gracefully, and to him she almost looked predatory. "Wha..." He was going to ask her what she was doing when she held her paw out for him to take.

"You need to stand up." She said as he looked at her hand. Understanding came to his face and he stood up without her help. "I got to take measurements." She unrolled the yellow object she had in her hand. It was a tailors measuring tape.

His eyes widened. "Measurements? Of... What? What for?"

She clicked her tongue. "Of your body, waist, shoulders, so I can get you clothing. Gods!" She shook her head... 'If he acts like that for shoulders, hate to see how he acts when I have to measure his leg inseam.' She felt herself go flush at that. 'Stop it... Cat.'

He resigned himself for the measurements of his shoulders and neck and length of torso, even didn't mind the chest measurement. He heard her heart beating hard though when he also heard her gulp. He turned to look at her and she was just standing there with a paper in her hand, and numbers on the paper. "What is wrong?" He asked her.

"I just got to the difficult part of... measuring." It was the first time since he met her that she seemed flustered.

"What is difficult?" He asked. "So far it all seemed harmless." Then he thought... 'Except you were touching me, nearly drove me crazy.'

She swallowed hard and stood a bit longer without moving. As if she was at turmoil with herself. 'Gods, his body was huge a regular god in his own right...' She twisted the yellow tape in her paws. 'He's watching you and wondering what you are afraid of... Remember you don't fear anything.' A stern look came to her face. "Ok." She said with confidence. "I have to measure your legs and waist."

He nodded, figuring it wouldn't be too difficult since the other measurements were harmless. "Um... ok."

She went to him and her paw shook as she moved to put the measuring tape around his waist. She jotted down the number. 'That wasn't too bad. Now the difficult part.' She circled around him and looked at him in all angles.

"Um... Alex?"

"Yes?" He looked at her.

"Stand like this." She stood up straight and had her legs spread out slightly. "And don't move... I have to measure your... inseam."

"My what?" He asked as his eye got wide again. "What is that? Not a new name for my..."

She cut him off... "NO! No... I have to measure your inner leg... Just one... just so I get the right size of pants for you, so you are not... Squished." She hid her shaking hands away from his view, knowing that he could smell her nervousness she tried to calm down.

"You need to..." He looked down at the cloth he wore. "This will work."

"No. It won't." She almost laughed at the lame attempt he made. I'll try to do it as fast as I can." She suddenly smelled the nervousness coming from his body. 'Oh gods... Why couldn't I have found another female instead?'

She swallowed hard not for the first and last time as she got on her knees in front of him.

He swallowed hard and tried to think of something else anything else then the fact that there was a female down... 'Snow... ice cubes... cold water.' He thought. 'Snow... icicles... clouds... cold waaa...ter!' He felt her hand up there! 'Think cold... Cold... Cold...'

She sat back and wrote down the number quickly turned and retreated away from him. "All done." She said to him hoping he didn't notice the quiver to her voice. 'Oh gods... Oh gods... you must be punishing me...' She thought. She folded up the paper and placed it in her bag. 'He is big all around.'

He relaxed when he heard her say she was done. He sat down quickly and looked over to her, she was putting clothing on. A hat was the last thing she put on squishing her ears. He winced at the pained expression on her face. "You are leaving?" He asked in an almost pitiful whine. None of her fur shone in the disguise she wore and if she didn't smell like her, he could swear she was just another human.

“Yes.” She shrugged the backpack onto her shoulder. “I will try to get back before nightfall. Don’t worry about me. I am a survivor.”

He watched as she left, and he wondered maybe if he should keep an eye on her just incase. He got up...

Chapter 3. Of Children

She looked at the clothes on the rack and sighed and consulted the measurements. She had a hard time finding just the right shirt to fit him. He had so many muscles, and the town didn’t seem to have any “big and tall” shops about. She improvised and hunted for the right clothing. This was surely going to cut into her budget that she had accumulated for the trip. That reminded her, she went outside and to a telephone booth. It was getting difficult in finding them this day and age. She had a cell phone, but she didn’t want anyone over hearing her conversations. She quickly added several coins to the machine and dialed the number she knew by heart.

The phone rang about twice when a female teenage voice answered. “Hello?”

“Hello baby.” She said.

“Mama!” The girl squealed and laughed. “Hey, did you find anything?”

“Yes, but it is so difficult with this one.” She sighed. She missed her child so much. “I miss you. I’m sorry I’m gone so much.”

“No problem Mama.” She could almost see her daughter smiling.

“So did your fangs come in yet?” She heard a groan over the phone.

“Yes, but they aren’t that big and I don’t want to freak out boys.”

“Some boys like that.” Catnel smiled as she heard her daughter groan from embarrassment. “Just hide them. You can always ask the dentist to file them, although they will come back again.”

“Yeah, I guess so, but I do like them. They remind me of you.”

“I will be back, tell your grandmother that I am going to send some money next week. I love you. Take care, ok?”

“Ok Mama. I love you too. Miss you.” There was a long pause as they listened to one another breath then they hung up together.

She lifted her sunglasses and wiped her face. She sighed and hefted her backpack again. Turning she went to the next store. The clerk looked at her as she approached the counter. "Can I leave my bags here while I shop? It'll be easier on both of us."

"Sure." The clerk said and went about putting sale tags on clothing.

Catnel weaved through the aisles and came to a rack full of sweat pants and jeans. She selected some and looked at the size. Perfect. She went to the counter after she grabbed a couple of long sleeved shirts and a pair of x-large leather gloves. She even picked up a wallet, she didn't know why she picked it up, but she shrugged and put all of it on the check out counter.

The clerk looked a little bored as she rang things up. "Do you know a good place that sells hats?" She asked the clerk.

She blinked a few times as she started to stuff the things in a bag. "Yeah, down the street, about a block there is a place. Um... I don't remember what it is called. Sorry."

Catnel paid for the clothing and got her change. "Thanks." She went and picked up her backpack and bags that she left near the counter, everything was still in order. She hefted it and walked out the store and walked in the way the clerk told her.

As she walked she heard a couple of men whispering, she stopped for a moment and lifted the hat off her ear a little to hear clearly.

"I heard truly, Jose and Gerry were killed." Said one man with a squeak to his voice.

"How were they killed? Did they end up shooting themselves while drunk?" The other man had a rough voice and laughed.

"No, I think they had a run in with a yeti." The squeaky one proclaimed.

"Bull." Said a new voice. "There is no yeti."

"I just know what I heard. Their bodies were torn up... by some big animal."

"They probably ran into a bear. The morons." The new voice said. And the other guy agreed. Catnel put her hat back on and walked away from the voices.

She went up a block and looked around and couldn't find the hat shop the clerk said was there. So she turned down an alleyway and started walking down it to see if she could find it. Probably one of those out of the way places.

She walked a ways and stopped when she thought she heard something. She turned quickly to look behind her. Nothing. She shrugged and walked forward again, and there it was again. She frowned and sighed.

“Alex... come out of hiding I can hear you.” She said and waited. He snuck out from behind a large dumpster.

“How did you know? I didn’t make a sound.” He said.

“I’m like you. I can hear better than humans.” She put her hands on her hips and looked at him. “You are going to stick out like a sore thumb, it’s a good thing you know how to hide. Come here.”

He strode over to her. She shook her head and frowned. “What is wrong?” He asked.

“Come along, I’ll have to find you a place to change.” She shoved a couple of clothing bags into his paws. She started walking and he followed her. She glanced around the corner of the alley and saw the back of a gas station just a few feet away. The restroom door was slightly ajar. “Quickly follow me.” She dashed out and rushed to the door. She looked back and saw him run across to her. She held the door open and directed him to go inside, she entered too and shut the door.

“This place... smells bad.” He stated. She took the bags from him.

“If you had stayed at your cave you wouldn’t have to smell this stench.” She reprimanded him. She looked around the dingy little bathroom and frowned. It did smell and the toilet was grossly under-washed. She shivered and wondered how humans can live in such filth. She rummaged through one of the bags and handed him a long sleeved shirt.

He looked at it and sniffed it. “You want me to wear this? Do you know it is hot out there?”

She gave him a stern look, and he quickly put the shirt on. Backwards. She rolled her eyes. “Don’t tell me I’ll have to dress you.” She directed him to lean down, he did and she adjusted his shirt. “Now if anyone asks you why you wear so much clothes... say you are allergic to the sun.”

“Why? I’m not allergic to it. It feels good. I like to run in the field and roll on the grass and...” He stopped when he saw the look on her face. “Oh... it helps with the disguise?” She smiled, nodded and looked in the bag again and pulled out two pairs of pants.

“Sweatpants or jeans?” She asked. He looked at them both. Then took the jeans from her, she turned away when he went to put them on. “I cut the back for your tail. The zipper goes in fron...”

“I know.” He said.

“I pondered getting you underwear, but then I thought that would be useless. I don’t usually wear it and it mostly gets in the way, riding up and such, gives you wedgies...” She rambled on as he zipped and buttoned the jeans.

“Ok...” He said and she turned and looked. She sighed, and he looked almost like a large bodybuilding human... She pulled the gloves out of the bag.

“Put these on. I need to get you a hat though, and some shoes. You look great... Now you won’t be mistaken for an animal... until someone looks at your face.” She gave him a spare pair of her sunglasses. She pondered his muzzle since he was part bear, wolf and skunk he had a very prominent one. Hers wasn’t as prominent so she wore a scarf around it. She growled when she couldn’t come up with an idea.

His ears pricked up at her growl. “What’s the matter?” He watched as she paced a bit back and forth.

“The hell with it.” She said and opened the door to the bathroom. “Come out for now. If anyone asks, tell them you couldn’t find your hat this morning so you put on a mask.”

“Um... ok.” He shrugged and followed her.

She led him out into the main part of town. Some people didn’t even glance at them. A couple looked a bit surprised but had other things on their mind. She took him over to a Payless Shoe store. “We have to get you some shoes...” She looked at his clawed feet. “I think large tennis shoes will do it.”

The store clerk stared incredulously at them as they went in. Catnel turned to the clerk and the clerk kept staring at Alex. “Can I leave my bags here?” She asked. The clerk didn’t acknowledge. Catnel rang the bell and the clerk looked at her. “Don’t stare... He has a rare condition so he is wearing a mask. He couldn’t find his hat this morning.”

The clerk blushed. “Oh, sorry.” She looked at the floor.

“Is there any good large shoes for men here?”

“Just look down there.” The clerk pointed in the direction of men’s shoes. Catnel put a package of tube socks on the counter.

“I’m going to buy these.” The clerk nodded and Catnel tore open the package as her and Alex went to the men’s shoes.

“Sit on the bench and I’ll measure your foot.” She brought the foot measurement device over to him after placing socks on his feet.

“Again with the measuring?” Alex tilted his head.

“Just put your foot in here.” She pushed it to him. “Then stand up.”

“Sit down, stand up; make up your mind.” He sighed.

She ignored him and looked at the size. “Sit back down, I’ll be right back.”

Soon they had gone through several shoes and found the right ones that fit his feet without hurting him too much. She sympathized with him, finding shoes for digi-grade feet were hard. She had to wear boots out in public, she figured she’d have to invent some shoes that look normal to humans but felt great to her and others like her.

He whined a little as she paid for the shoes and socks. It was a low whine that only she could hear. They walked out and she spotted the hat store she was looking for earlier. She went to cross the street and a car backed up and almost hit her. She frowned at it and walked around it. Alex was another matter, and he frowned at it but had taken his glove off to drag his claws across the paint job as it drove off. The driver didn’t even notice. She shook her head as a smile came to his face.

“Alex...” She said as he joined her on the sidewalk.

“What? It almost hit you.”

She walked away and into the hat store. He followed her and was promptly assailed by a large hat being placed on his head and squishing his ears.

“OUCH! Hey! Stop it.” He took the hat off, and she took it from his paws and placed another on his head. “Hey!”

She had proceeded to put several hats on him. And only a couple hid his face and ears well. They were both ones he hated. She bought them anyway and made him wear one.

Chapter 4. Holy Jeans

She sat on the stone floor of the cave and was making holes in all of Alex’s pants for his tail. She was humming as she worked. She had stripped off all her clothing except for a t-shirt and some shorts. Alex was sitting in the jeans he put on earlier and was watching her but pretended to be busy reading.

She kept humming and he looked at her more intensely. She suddenly stopped and looked back at him. “You don’t like my humming?” She asked.

“No, you can... hum.” He looked back at his book and read the same sentence for the tenth time in a row. She really distracted him, a lot.

Suddenly she coughed and let out a small sneeze. He looked over the book at her and she was still sewing the pants. Didn't even look like she sneezed at all. She bit the string off. And picked up another pair of pants. He watched her for a few moments then went back to reading again.

"Oh!" She yelped out and he put his book down.

"What?" He asked, concern in his eyes. He saw she had a finger in her mouth.

"I just poked myself with the needle is all." She said when she took her finger out of her mouth to look at it. A small bead of blood came to the surface and she licked it clean.

"Stupid needle." She then went back to work again.

He looked at her for a moment and was confused as to why he felt he had to protect her. He couldn't really protect her from herself. He didn't retrieve his book and continued to ponder this 'Catnel' Who came in and made his life turn a little different, a little more adventurous. Who was this woman? Why did she make him feel the way he feels?

She finished off another one of his pants and yawned widely. Standing up she stretched as far as she could stretch. Her t-shirt lifted up off her belly and he was staring at her soft, snow-white fur. Trying to will her shirt to go up a bit higher... So intense his stare was he didn't notice that he started to drool a bit.

She noticed his eyes on her and she got out of her stretch and looked at him. He was staring at her and... drooling? "ALEX!"

He blinked, snapping out of it. He saw she wasn't in the stretching position any more. "Huh? What?" He asked her.

He saw a smirk come to her face. "You got a bit of..." She tried to keep from laughing. Instead she approached him and took out a napkin. He watched her and it suddenly dawned on him what she was saying. He took the napkin from her quickly and looked away while wiping his mouth.

"Sorry..." He said.

She giggled and said. "Cats rule. Dogs drool."

"What?" He asked suddenly and turned to look at her.

"Oh, it's nothing." She said innocently. She turned and walked away, but not before her tail curved around his hand for a moment. He looked at her as she walked away and watched her tail flounce about as if teasing him. She sat down with her back to him and she picked up another one of his pants and started to work, continuing to hum once again. Her tail just bounced about as if it had a mind of its own. Almost looking like it was

dancing to her humming. Watching it, he blinked a couple of times. When he blinked a third time, it lay on the floor twitching every so often.

The rest of the evening was racked with silence. She kept fixing all his pants for his tail and he managed to read more than just one sentence in his book. It seemed that Catnel decided to ignore him for the rest of the afternoon. She had her back to him the whole time.

Catnel was thinking of her late husband, Tarran, he had been rich, and had left everything to her. She put it all into a savings just for her daughter that only she could withdraw until her daughter was old enough to use it. She pretty much made sure her daughter was well taken care of. She was broken hearted after his death, but it had been over five years since he died. Five years was a long time for a feline. She remembered when she first met him; she was so cruel. She enjoyed teasing him... kind of like the way she has been teasing Alex. But she was more brutal with Tarran... maybe age has gotten to her. She was drawn to Alex, like she was drawn to Tarran. She was afraid though; afraid that she would lose another, so she kept her distance. Plus, he seemed so very naïve and she didn't know what she should do.

She lay on her back and looked up at him as he sat on his blankets. He was engrossed in his book and didn't notice that she was looking at him. She sat back up and folded all of Alex's new clothing and placed them to the side. She then went to her sleeping bag and crawled inside it. "Goodnight." She announced as she hid inside it.

Alex looked up and saw her moving around in her sleeping bag. He finished the chapter he was reading and grunted a goodnight back to her. He started to get his own bed ready when movement from the sleeping bag caught his eyes. Her arm shot out from within the thick fabric of the sleeping bag and she dropped her t-shirt on the floor, then there was more movement and the shorts followed. He looked at the clothing for a moment and then looked at the now unmoving sleeping bag. His eyebrow shot up as he pondered the implications.

He pulled his jeans off and was instantly happy. They had been a little tight and it was nice to finally be free. He didn't quite understand why human males wore pants all the time. He lay down on his blankets and relaxed and looked at the ceiling of his cave. Trying to figure out Catnel, was like trying to figure out one of those puzzle boxes his father gave him, he could solve two sides but all the others were mixed up.

Chapter 5. Ch... Ch... Cha... Changes

Catnel was running from a fire. The heat from the flames made her fur singe and she ran, she couldn't escape unless she used her other form. As she ran she willed her body to change, to shift to make her hand turn to paws and to run on all fours. While on all fours she was a lot faster. It had been several years since she had to use this shape, but she felt comfortable in it. She was a tigress, a major predator; she outran the flames and stood out in the snow breathing heavily. She caught a scent, and she stalked towards the

source, it was close and she had to know whether it was prey or something else. While in this form all her inhibitions were gone and she wanted to take what was hers and get rid of anything that may get in the way. Her claws were bigger, her teeth larger... Her eyes glowed with an inner fire that couldn't be quelled. There was something, a form, a body... She inched closer and closer and smelled something strange on this thing.

Alex awoke to a figure over his bed. Breathing heavily on him, it was a large beast. It smelled of Catnel, but looked nothing like her. He looked at her and didn't have one hint of fear; he just wondered what the hell was going on.

She growled low at the body, it was awake... It didn't fear her. What cannot fear her? She sniffed the body and noticed it was a male. She leaned her head closer and sniffed along his neck and spotted his jugular by just smell. Growling more she quickly turned and jumped off of him and back onto the cave floor. She growled a couple of more times and lay down on her side and looked at him.

She lounged there like a giant house cat. He sat up and looked at her. He knew how close she had been to his lifeline, yet she didn't harm him. Her bright blue stare seemed to draw him to her and he slowly got up and walked to her, he knelt down. "How... did you do this?" He wasn't ever able to do this, and he wanted to know how she could change her shape. She never told him that she could.

She only blinked at him as if uncomprehending what he was asking. A loud rumble emitted from her throat and she blinked lazily.

'Was she sleepwalking?' He pondered as he watched her suddenly fall asleep. When she fell asleep she started to go back to her original form. He watched in awe. Then he noticed that she wasn't wearing anything. She lay on her side still and curled up more then before. He went to get her sleeping bag but noticed it was in tatters. He then went to his bed and grabbed one of his blankets. He went slowly towards her and placed the blanket on her body, she mumbled and reached out and grabbed his arm. He looked at her to make sure she was still asleep. She was. She pulled him closer to her and she said very quietly. "Don't leave me... I'm cold." Not knowing what to do, he sat down next to her; she kept hugging his arm close. He hated to know what she would do if she woke up right about now.

He looked at himself and saw that he wasn't quite dressed to be snuggling by her. He decided to wait until she released him from her grip. Then he was going to run and hide under his own blankets until she woke up. She started purring deeply and he looked at her with wide eyes as she started lick grooming his arm. He moved away a bit and started to twist away from her. She let go and he let out a breath of relief. He went over to his bed and rolled into his blankets covering his face. She made him so... so... frustrated. He growled curses as he slowly fell back asleep.

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The morning didn't come soon enough since Alex kept waking up and looking around, but found out she was still asleep under the blanket he provided for her. When he looked to see if she was still there he saw she was missing. He sat up quickly and saw her holding her tattered sleeping bag in disgust. She had put on a new pair of shorts and a pink t-shirt. He heard her talking to herself. "Damn it all. I knew I should've woken up when having that dream. Now I have to buy a new bag."

She heard him stir and she turned to look at him. "I didn't do anything weird last night did I?" She asked him.

He frowned at her. "You don't remember?"

"No... should I have?" Then she remembered she woke up with a blanket on her. "Oh... thanks for the blanket by the way."

"You changed." He said. "You turned into a large white tiger." Then his expression changed to something of a question. "How... how'd you do that?"

"Oh, I was hoping that I hadn't done that, but from the damage to my sleeping bag... Sorry if I frightened you."

"You didn't scare me. You startled me, but never scared me. How did you do it?" He started to get up but almost forgotten what he wasn't wearing and grabbed a blanket and wrapped it around his waist.

"I just know how. I can also look human if I have to. It takes a lot of concentration. It's also emotionally draining so I don't do it often."

"Teach me how." He stated. "I would like to learn, I'm sure it will make it easier... maybe be able to hide my face more without humans freaking out."

"Humans freak out from air." She chuckled. "I'll try and teach you, but I warn you with all the different DNA inside of you, heaven knows which will be your dominant species. I'll start teaching you the thoughts you can organize to better form your disguise. Watch..."

He watched as she closed her eyes and her face started to change. She suddenly looked like a human female, she opened her eyes and he noticed that they were still the blue cat eyes. She shifted back quickly.

"I like you better like this." He said and she looked at him warily. She thought she heard a hint of something in his voice, but she shook her head.

"I think it is high time I go and get something for us to eat." She smiled.

Before he could refuse having her hunt, his stomach let out a tremendous growl. He looked a bit embarrassed. “Well, I guess my stomach is talking for me now.”

“Good, I will be back.” She left the cave smiling.

Chapter 6. Shaping the Future

It had been two weeks since she had taught him to change shape by thinking about it. He was able to make his muzzle a bit smaller so he could hide better. She was very pleased with his progress and patted him on the back. “Very nice. Can you now try to shift into your real animal?” He lifted his eyebrow and issued a small whine. “Um... I don’t know what my dominant animal is?”

“Just think about changing into something that is within your soul. You might even be surprised... you might even change into all of them just by concentrating.” She smiled as she encouraged him. “First though, I think you need to take off your shorts, or you’ll ruin them.”

She then turned to walk away a bit. He knew the drill, she would tell him to concentrate while having her back turned to him. He stripped off his shorts and cleared his mind from all distractions except for her voice. “Ok... I’m ready.”

“Clear your mind. Think about what a bear looks like, picture the bear, be the bear. You want to be a bear. You are strong, big, angry, hungry, and lusting for more power. You need to tear down things rip stuff apart you were almost there when you went after those men. Now picture yourself as a bear. Know how each bone fits into each socket...”

She heard him groan and growl, then heard a slight snapping... She turned quickly to look at him, he was on all fours and his body was changing... She didn’t notice his nakedness just noticed that he was changing; finally changing. “That is it Alex... Continue.” His fur was becoming wet with sweat and he gripped the floor causing large gashes in the stone. He suddenly crumpled onto the cool cave floor and he was panting. She got up and grabbed one of his blankets and covered him. “That was good... you came real close.”

He looked up at her and smiled. “Thank you. I got... tired.”

“Yes... that happens a lot.” She grinned and gave him a kiss in his cheek. “You will do better.” She then walked over to her bag to get some water.

He rubbed his cheek where she kissed him. When she returned she gave him a bottle of water. He drank it down quickly. “Thanks.”

“Rest.” She instructed him. “I will show you again... How to do it.”

He sat up and pulled the blanket around him. She walked a distance away from him and smiled as she slowly took off her t-shirt. He had seen her do it before to show him how she changed into a tiger. Just that every time she did show him, it seemed like she was giving him a show. She closed her eyes, and he tried to concentrate on what she was doing and not what she looked like. Her curves were enticing to him and he saw the swell of her breasts, her nipples peaked through her fur and he just wanted to grab her and take her in his arms and... The popping of her bones knocked him out of his daydream. He shook his head and watched her change. She did it fluidly and well practiced. He sighed as he thought about how he should do that. She padded over to him in her tiger form and growled low at him as if asking him if he had been paying attention.

“Yeah, I see how you do it.” He mumbled. Catnel in tiger form eyed him for a moment then turned and strode away. He sighed and pulled the blanket to him. Suddenly she was on top of him growling and they were on the floor. “Hey!” He yelled as she used her weight to roll him about. “Stop it!” She batted at him playfully. Alex didn’t want to hurt her, and she wasn’t using her claws, but she was annoying him to no end. She pinned him on the floor with both her big paws on his shoulders. She gave him a wide toothy grin as much as a tiger could grin. She jumped off him then and turned back to herself as quickly as she could.

Standing facing away from him she looked back as he lay sprawled on the ground. “If you learned to shift, you could take me.” She chuckled.

“Huh?” He asked, slightly confused at the innuendo.

“In a wrestling match. I defeat you all the time. Unless you learn to change... maybe it’ll be a better match.” She explained as she pulled on the shorts that fell off of her and grabbed her t-shirt and pulled it on as well.

He nodded. “Yeah, well...” he trailed off. ‘Tell her.’

“I guess that will be it for now.” She sniffed the air. “You smell like you need to take a nice bath. In fact...” She sniffed more. “I do too!”

He watched as she left the cave to head towards the creek. He got up and grabbed the shorts he had on earlier and pulled them on and walked out the cave after her. ‘Good thing she didn’t smell something else on you.’ He thought.

She threw her bothersome clothing onto a branch and waded into the many pools of water the creek made. She sighed heavily and let the water wash over her fine fur. Like any tiger she loved the water more than anything. Especially, after doing a hot workout on a hot day. Plus soaking herself in something cool kept her scent in check. A shadow fell over her and she looked up and saw Alex standing there.

“You need any company?” He asked as he walked closer to the pool. She looked at the water for a moment and back up at him.

“Yeah, jump in, the water is cold but comfortable.” She said. As she said it he started to take his shorts off. She looked away quickly. ‘Calm down, it’s just a bath.’

He didn’t jump in as she instructed, since it would have been foolish to do so. He waded in and sat opposite her. He let the water flow around him and watched as the little fishes that inhabited the pool swam past his toes.

Catnel yawned deeply as she sat in the pool and put her head back on the bank letting her body soak in the water. The sun peeked through the trees and made reflections off the surface of the water. Alex watched her lay back and looked at how the sunlight played in her hair and on her neck. He slowly dunked his head in the pool, hoping to clear his mind better. When he pulled his head out of the water she wasn’t in the pool anymore. He looked around and frowned when he saw her clothes were gone too.

She hated doing that to him. But she definitely knew that smell and it scared the hell out of her. She ran into the cave and started to take inventory of what they had and what they needed. She quickly dressed into something less revealing and placed her hat on her head. She’ll have to make a last stop in town and buy two sleeping bags, water, and some provisions. Maybe buy another backpack definitely they will need another backpack.

Alex got out of the pool after he was cleaned, and made his way to the cave. He was shocked to see she was dressed like she was going to go to the town. “Hey! What are you doing?”

“I need to get stuff in town. I need you to stay here.” She said.

“No way... I’m coming with you.” He went to his stuff and started putting clothes on quickly.

She looked at him for a moment. “Ok, but please don’t do anything dumb.”

He had a hurt look on his face. “You think I’m dumb?”

“No. That is not what I said.” She frowned and grabbed a small bag she called a purse. It was a lot easier to carry than the backpack. “Don’t put words into my mouth.”

“Ok...” He frowned and jammed his hat on his head. “I’m not dumb.”

“I know you’re not.” She said apologetically. “Let’s go.”

Chapter 7. The Mystery Deepens

‘This isn’t good.’ She thought as she looked at the tent on the wall of the sporting goods shop.

Alex was frowning at the trophy case full of mounted animal heads. He was issuing a low growl and she could hear him from across the room. She quickly rushed over to him. He didn't glance at her, just kept looking at the head of a wolf.

"Stop it." She hissed at him warningly.

"What did that wolf ever do to them?" He asked.

"Nothing." She said... "People are no longer allowed to hunt them, that is over fifty years old. Besides, people are looking at you. Stop growling." She nudged him in his kidneys with two fingers to get him to listen to her.

"Hey... that hurt." He growled at her.

"Come on... We have to find you a backpack." She took his paw and dragged him to the rack that contained rows of backpacks.

"Why do I need one?" He asked.

"Oh sure, use me as a pack mule. You need one for your stuff. If you are going with me, you'll need to carry your own stuff." She pulled one down and handed it to him. She saw the price and took it from him. "Damn it. We need some cash quick."

"Why don't we use your money?"

"Because I don't have enough." She dragged him out of the store and looked around the street, then remembered the guy that hired her a few weeks ago when she first arrived in town.

Three hours later Catnel was shoving money in Alex's new wallet. "There... You have your own money now. Use it wisely." She opened her purse and put her money away too.

He stuffed the wallet in his back pocket. "Are we going to get the backpack now?"

"Yeah..." She said absentmindedly. He noticed the change in her voice and looked at her.

She was staring at nothing in particular. He put his paw in front of her and waved it a couple of times. Not even a blink. He looked at where she was looking and saw a white van. Nothing was really special about it. Until the back doors of it swung open and four men jumped out. They were all wearing exterminator uniforms, but also wore black sunglasses. "Wha...?"

She grabbed his hand and started running. "Hurry Alex, we have to get out of here!" She yelled at him as she ran. He ran with her smelling the instant fear coming off of her in waves.

“What is it?” He asked.

“They have found me.” Was all that she said as they ran. “We got to get to the cave and leave as soon as we can. I caught their scent earlier, but I wasn’t too sure... Until now.”

They ran as swiftly as their legs could carry them, when they reached the cave she smelled around hoping to not catch any of their scent. She grabbed her backpack. “Get everything you can and stuff it in here.” She said.

He never smelled her like this before. Fear wasn’t a scent he found familiar on her. He did as she asked him to do. Whoever these humans were, they scared her. He would have to find out more about them.

“They will probably start scouring the forests for me.” She mumbled as she paced the cave a bit.

“It’ll be ok.” He offered. “I’m here to protect you.”

“But who will protect you from them?” She asked looking at him sideways.

“They are just humans.”

“With sleep darts and excellent aim. Who dissect, lock up and torture. Not necessarily in that order.” She shuddered.

“What do you suggest we do then?” He asked as he walked to her and put his paw on her shoulder.

She stopped and looked up at him. “We run. We hide. I cannot let them find me. They will find out that I had a child. They will then find her. I cannot let that happen.” Tears suddenly sprang to her eyes. He pulled her to him and hugged her close, her tears staining the front of his shirt, as she nuzzled against his chest.

A complete feeling of protection overwhelmed him and he growled low in his throat. He held her close and looked around to see if anyone would dare come after her. “Ok... We’ll leave, if anything happens. I’ll protect you.”

She nodded and pushed away from him. Her backpack was stuffed full and she hefted it to her shoulder, but he took it from her. “Thanks.” She said weakly and blinked back her tears. She hated feeling frightened and it was enough to make her feel weak and helpless.

Chapter 8. Quarry Missed

A man stood within the cave and sighed heavily. “She was here.” He wasn’t a large man, and had short cropped hair the color of copper. He wore a dark suit and tie with

sunglasses. It had been several years since he started looking for her and she had slipped through his fingers again. She had murdered two more... he just knew she did it. Although there were rumors of another living around here, but all he knew she had been the reason for the reports. He looked at the bookshelves that still held some books but not all.

Another man came up to him he had a phone in his hand. "Sir, she is on line one for you."

"Thanks." He took the phone. "Yeah?"

"Did you find her?" A sultry voice asked.

"No... we haven't yet." The frustration in his voice evident.

"Find her... We are running out of time." The voice said. "If you don't find her, it will be too late." He then heard a click and the line went dead.

"Damn it." He clicked the phone off and tossed it to the guy that gave it to him. He walked away from the cave and frowned when he saw dark fur on the ground. It had a different consistency than her fur. He smiled suddenly. "She has a friend."

Chapter 9. Dinner

Catnel put the money in an envelope; she sealed it and put a stamp on it. As they walked past a mailbox she dropped it in and they both went on their way.

She was happy they had found another sporting goods shop in the next town, away from the men looking for her. They had acquired another backpack and sleeping bags plus other provisions. He walked along side her in silence and kept an eye out for anyone that might bother them. They had been walking for two days only stopping occasionally to rest.

When they got into the newest town she found a nice motel for them.

She lay sprawled out on one of the two beds in the room. "Ah. I needed a soft bed to lay on." She grabbed the pillows and nuzzled into them. Alex looked at the room and walked around it sniffing each and every item in it. He sat on the other bed and looked at the nightstand that was between the two beds. There was a small box with buttons on it. He held it up and pushed one that had POWER written on it. The TV came to life across the room and he jumped, throwing the remote in the air. Catnel sat up and caught the remote and started to chuckle. "It's just the television." She stated as she started to channel the programs.

"Television... I heard of it... Never seen it."

“Well now you have... and it’s a total waste of time.” She pushed the power button again and the TV went blank. She lay back onto the bed and snuggled a pillow against her body and started to purr loudly.

He looked at the pillow with envy.

“Get some rest.” She murmured as she closed her eyes.

Nodding he lay back on the bed. “Hey... this is a lot better then the stone I was sleeping on.”

She didn’t answer as she had fallen asleep.

He sat up and looked at her sleeping and tilted his head a bit. He wasn’t able to get any more information out of her about the men that were hunting her down. He started sleeping with one eye open just to keep her protected.

She murmured in her sleep and he went over to her bed and sat down on it. Slowly he took her boots off her feet. Her toes stretched out showing her long claws, they relaxed. He leaned down and kissed her cheek and she mumbled... “Rest.” ‘Even in her sleep she is bossy.’ He went and lay on his bed and relaxed. It was better then sleeping on rocks. He really didn’t think he was tired though. He took off his own boots and wiggled his toes. All the walking hurt especially on the hard asphalt, not to mention how hot it was. The air conditioner in the room hummed to life and started blowing cold air. Alex lay his head back. “I’ll just rest my eyes for a moment.”

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“Alex... Alex...?” He felt someone pushing at him. “Alex, wake up.”

He opened his eyes and just saw a shadowy figure above him. He reached up and grabbed the figure and pinned it down to his bed quickly. When he could see better, he saw Catnel looking up at him with surprise melting away to anger. He quickly jumped off of her. “Oh, uh... Sorry.”

She put her hand on her face and groaned. “We are safe for now, you don’t need to protect me.” She got off his bed and stood with her hands on her hips. “I wanted to know if you were hungry?”

“Oh yeah... I’m starving.” He said. “Which one of us is going to go hunting?”

She looked at him for a moment and then shook her head. A smile suddenly played across her face. “We... are going out to eat tonight.”

“What?” He looked absolutely terrified by the prospect.

“Tisk!” She said. “You know how to look human... I taught you enough.” She rummaged through her backpack. “Plus I have been meaning to wear something that I have bought, but never had an occasion to wear it. Until now.” She pulled out a box and smiled.

“What should I wear?” He asked as she disappeared in the bathroom.

“Nice clothes.” She said through the door. “Black pants and a nice shirt.”

He took out some black slacks that she had modified. Took off his other clothes and started to put on the slacks. He heard her humming in the bathroom, a different tune this time. He grabbed the shirt and started to button it up. He found it amazing that she was able to find the right sizes for him, of course after all the measuring she did he could only expect the best. He was looking at himself in the mirror when the door of the bathroom opened.

She walked out wearing a long black dress with a slit up the right side going up to her thigh. She had her long white head fur up in a bun and her face was that of a human with slight slanting of her eyes, beautifully defined cheekbones and a small nose. She had red lipstick on and her human ears, he noticed; were slightly pointed on top.

He was staring at her for a long moment, before he spoke. “You... look nice.”

“Thank you. Now make yourself look like a human male.” She grinned showing that her disguise didn’t quite hide her fangs.

“Sure.” He had been practicing it for a while. He thought and felt his face tickle a little. Keeping his eyes closed he pictured how a nice looking human male looked like. He hazarded a look at himself in the mirror.

“Wonderful.” Catnel clapped... “If I didn’t know better, we would look like the perfect human couple.” She stood beside him and they both looked at the mirror together. He had dark eyes, thin lips and a well-chiseled face for a human male. His ears also had points on top of them. He slowly put his arm around her and she didn’t pull away.

“I think we’d look better normal.” He stated.

“Sure, but we are going out to eat, and humans freak at our real forms.” She pushed him away at that point and grabbed her purse. “Let’s go then, before we get tired.” She scrunched her face.

He followed her as they left their motel to go to eat.

As they waited to be seated he looked about the crowded room nonchalantly, she stood by him and coughed as someone walked by smelling of cigarette smoke. He wrinkled his nose too. ‘How can they do that to themselves?’ He pondered. Catnel nudged him and held up a buzzing blinking disk in front of his face. “What?”

“We get to sit now.” She smiled as she led him through the crowd to the guy that took her name down. He led them to the table, Alex held out her chair for her, which surprised her a lot. She sat down and he sat across from her. The host gave them a menu each and told them the specials. She looked down the menu and saw that they had Prime Rib, and she pointed it out to Alex right away. “This... is perfect.” She pointed to it and smiled. “It’s cooked slightly and supposed to be rare.”

“That is good, what are fries?” He pointed at the description of choices. She read it: Comes with a side of fries, baked potato or mashed potatoes.

“Fries are potatoes cut up in slices and fried up. Hence the word... ‘Fries’.”

“Oh, ok... I think I will have that.” He nodded, satisfied

The waitress came and took out her pad of paper. “Have you decided what you would like? A drink first?”

“Water.” Catnel and Alex both said at once. The waitress smiled and jotted it down.

“I’ll have the prime rib with mashed potatoes and a side salad... Caesar.” Catnel ordered.

“Yes, ma’am... and you sir?”

“The same, but I want fries with it.” The waitress held out her hand to take the menus and Alex grabbed it and sniffed it. Catnel took the startled waitress’ hand out of his and gave her the menus.

“Sorry, he’s from another country.” Catnel giggled when Alex gave her a dirty look. The waitress shrugged and went to put in their orders.

“You keep making excuses for me.” He pouted when the woman was out of earshot.

“I’m sorry.” She looked down at the tablecloth. “I... just worry.” She started to smooth out the cloth with her human like hand. It was then, covered by his hand; she looked up into his eyes.

“I assure you.” He said looking back at her intensely. “I can take care of myself.” His gaze was intense and their eyes were locked together for a minute. She was the first to look away.

“I know.” She saw that he still had his hand on hers and she pulled away slowly.

He noticed that she was distancing herself from him and he let out a sigh. He didn’t pursue her hand again and just decided to watch the humans around them. The waitress came and put their water on the table. Catnel pushed the ice cubes around with her straw

and made them clink against the glass. A barrier of silence descended upon them. For a few moments both had complete loss for any words.

Catnel broke the silence. "They want me to help prolong their life." She said.

"Huh?" Alex said as he turned to look at her after staring at a woman with large hair. "Why would they think you know how to do that?"

"They think that I can grant them it by..."

His interest peeked. "By?"

"Making a serum from my heart."

"WHAT?" He blurted as he stood up. Everyone in the vicinity of the table looked at him. He remembered where he was and sat down. "What?"

She was twirling her napkin in her fingers. "You heard me. Don't make a scene."

"I was shocked is all..." He growled low. "Why would they think that?"

"I don't know. I don't want to know. I just want to stay away from them, as long as they never find out about my daughter, I'm happy."

The waitress arrived and placed the salads on the table. "Here you go."

Alex looked quizzical at the salad. Catnel started eating right away; she stopped when he looked at the leaves. "You're supposed to eat that."

"But it's grass. I only eat it when my stomach hurts." He picked up the fork and poked at the salad.

"It tastes better than grass. Not something I would eat all the time mind you, but it serves a purpose." She put some more in her mouth and chewed.

He put some in his mouth and chewed. He seemed to be forcing himself to eat it. He ate a couple more forkfuls but stopped there. "Not a rabbit." She heard him mumble and she almost choked when she laughed.

The waitress came back with the main course. Alex pushed the salad away from him as she placed the prime rib dinner in front of him. "Are you done with your salad?" She asked.

"Oh yeah." He nodded as he looked at the meat on his plate. She set the other dinner in front of Catnel. She took both salad plates and left them to their dinners. "Looks rare." He said.

She looked up at him. “Don’t drool in it.” She giggled.

“I don’t drool.” He said indignantly and looked at the fries on his plate.

“I’m not going to say anything.” She said as she took the knife and the fork and started to cut up her meat. She lifted it to her mouth and caught him staring at her. “What?”

“Just seeing if you like it.” He said as he watched her put it in her mouth.

“Mmmm... Yum...” She chewed on the sweet tender meat and sighed happily. After she swallowed she smiled. “Juicy...”

His eyebrow shot up and watched as she cut another piece off. ‘Why take time... should just grab and tear into it.’ He thought... He grabbed the meat in his hands and he heard her gasp. He frowned at her and bit into it to defy her. She had a total look of shock on her face that suddenly turned to laughter.

“You animal.” She giggled and looked around and saw other diners looking at Alex in shock. She laughed louder. “Stuck ups.” She grabbed her meat in her hands and started eating it like him.

Chapter 10. Prove it.

Catnel opened the door to the motel room, she was laughing. Alex followed her and he was just smiling and wiping his face with his hand.

“You were so funny.” She giggled. “Eating it like that, what made you do that?”

“It was easier that way.” He honestly said.

“It was really funny when the woman beside us started saying we were disgusting. Even more hilarious when the kids started to eat with their hands too!” She broke out in gales of laughter.

“It’s not like you helped. You did it too.” He smiled wider to see her laughing made him feel better.

“It was better when you started to growl at the waitress.” She giggled again.

“You growled first.” He let his face start to return back to normal.

Catnel shifted her face to normal too... and she started to dance around the room. “I can’t help growling, that was damn good meat. I was just surprised they didn’t kick us out.”

She started to twirl really fast and she lost her balance and fell. He rushed over and caught her. "Be careful." He said.

Smiling at him she said. "My hero."

"Just sit down and relax." She did what he asked. "What is wrong with you?"

"Good meat makes me giddy." She confessed and licked her lips. She smoothed out her dress and lay back on the bed. The dress revealing her leg up to the thigh, he looked at it.

"Giddy? You mean drunk giddy or just regular everyday giddy?"

"Not drunk." She smiled.

"Well, good. So you want to do anything else?" He sat on his own bed and clicked the TV on. He started to channel surf.

She rolled on her side and looked at him. "Sure. We can do something."

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They sat at the free concert way, way in the back, away from the louder percussions of the drums. It was a lovely night and the concert was outside. Catnel had a bottle of bubbles in her paw and she was blowing them. He watched as they drifted about into the night air.

She gave the bottle to him. "Blow some of these and I will see if I can catch them." She was giggling. He actually thought she had something else in mind when she said she had an idea. He started to blow the bubbles and she started to pounce on them. She was still giddy from before and from what he observed she was getting giddier. He blew another batch of bubbles and inspected the bottle. Catnip bubbles, hours of fun for your cats.

He almost dropped it. Catnip? She was getting giddy from catnip? "Catnel!" He put the lid on the bubbles and put it in his pocket. She came up to him and pouted.

"Hey what happened to my bubbles?"

"I put them away." He said and frowned.

"Oh yeah?" She pounced on him and he fell backwards with her. She started to feel around his body for the bottle of bubbles. She put her hands on his chest and over his sides. She laughed as she frisked him while he was lying there. He tried to get up and she pushed him back down. "Come on hold still while I find my bottle." She grinned evilly and put her hand on his crotch. He yelped in surprise. "Nope! Nothing there." She snickered when he looked at her and frowned. He pushed her off of him and looked at her.

“Catnel!” He wasn’t really angry, just a bit shocked at her behavior. “I think we need to go back to our room.” He took her hand and started to lead her out of the park.

She walked beside him, she was looking down and he suddenly felt bad for yelling at her. They continued to walk when he smelled her tears.

“I’m sorry I yelled.” He slowed down and she suddenly stopped. He turned to look at her. She was still looking down and her shoulders were shaking.

“I’m sorry...” She whispered huskily. Then she snickered... “That you have nothing there!” She laughed and ran past him. He rolled his eyes and ran after her.

“Oh!” He ran after her through the dark park. Relying on his senses to seek her out.

She ran on ahead and saw a low tree branch grabbing on it she swung up into the tree and started to jump from branch to branch back towards him. She stopped when she saw him searching around for her with his nose. She stifled a giggle. She spied on him as he went to search for her.

He went to the spot where she caught a branch and... lost her scent. “Catnel?” He whispered into the dark looking up into the trees.

“Alex.” She said and dropped on him. They both fell and she giggled at him as he rolled about on the ground. He pinned her down and smiled in triumph.

“I got you! Now apologize.” He grinned down at her. His eyes glowed in the twilight. He noticed her eyes had a greenish tint.

“Apologize for what?” She said sweetly. He tried to ignore the scent that was coming from her... and he felt a bit apprehensive about what it meant.

“Apologize for saying what you said.”

“Oh? What was it I said again?” She was acting coy.

“For saying I have nothing.” He growled.

A smile as evil as the first time, spread over her face; and she showed her fangs to emphasize the evilness in the smile. “Prove it.”

He sat back off of her; she still lay on the ground and looked at him. “Prove it?” He asked. She nodded and lay on her side propping her head on her arm.

“How in the world can I prove it?” He asked. He swallowed nervously and knew she was baiting him. He could smell it on her that she wanted something from him; it could be the catnip talking.

She rolled and got up and dusted the dirt off her dress, which was pretty much ruined. She looked at him and she smiled. She put her right hand on her chest with her fingers spread out and she unsheathed her claws. She traced her index finger down over the rise of her breast to the side of her rib cage then let her finger trace down to her hip and then down to her thigh where there was the cut in the dress. He had watched the progress of the finger intently. While there she used her claw to cut the dress up more... all the way to the hip. “I need you to prove it.” She said almost slightly inaudible. But he heard it.

He was shaking a bit and the animal inside was fighting with his conscious. *‘Oh look... she wants you.’ ‘No she doesn’t it’s the catnip.’ ‘Go for it... she wants you.’ ‘No... no... no.’* He growled to silence both of them. She heard him growl and cut her dress up more.

The park around them was quiet and the only noise he could really hear was his and her heart beat. “I...” He started to say and he stepped closer. Her smell washed over him and he moaned but tried very hard to control himself. Something primal gripped him and he fought with it fiercely. “I...”

A growl issued from him and he walked closer and took her hand from her hip away from the dress. His grip tightened on her and she looked up at him with no pain showing. “You?” She asked smelling his own want, his own need. She issued a low growl and didn’t pull away from him.

“I...” He said for the third time. “Need... to... tell you...” He leaned to her closer and saw her dart her rough tongue out to lick her lips. He lost control of that moment and placed his mouth over hers. He felt her shudder against him and he moved to put his hand to her back to support her. His tongue licked the surface of her lips and she welcomed it as her tongue wrapped around his. A sudden euphoria rushed through him and he held her tightly in the kiss.

His kiss made all her senses melt and she moved her hands over to his back, ripping his shirt to shreds with her claws. He growled possessively into their kiss as she gripped his back. He let his other hand wander, moving over her breast cupping it, groping it and feeling its softness. She shook and he moved his hips against her body. Their tongues continued to wrestle with one another as the rest of their bodies reacted. She started to feel wet with desire for more. They moaned together within the kiss and she let her hands wander down his back. He reached down and pulled her closer to him feeling the warmth radiate off of her body. Rocking his hips against her she let out a moan of yearning. She felt his tail around his waist and smoothed his fur and she reached down to his crotch and he let out a growl deep in his throat. He cupped her buttocks and lifted her so she was even with him as they kissed even deeper.

A sudden loud bang of trashcans falling made them instantly break the kiss and they looked behind them. A man was running down the path and they quickly separated. Alex turned and cleared his throat a couple of times and Catnel just stood looking at her paws. Soon a couple more people came running through. One stopped for a moment as if he was trying to catch his breath, he glanced at the two and then continued on. She smelled sweat in his wake. Alex didn't look at her for a few moments and continued to clear his throat.

Scratching the back of his head he turned to face her, he didn't really seek eye contact. "So, I think we should head back now, huh?" He still held a bit of huskiness in his voice.

"Yeah." She whispered and kept looking at her shaking paws. They slowly walked out of the park together. Neither said anything to each other and he opened the door to the motel. She walked in and went quickly into the bathroom, locking the door.

Sighing heavily, he sat on his designated bed and pondered what had happened a few moments ago. He licked his lips in remembrance of her kiss he took off his shirt and saw that it was in shreds. He sniffed the shirt smelling her on it. He heard the door to the bathroom unlock he folded the shirt and put it beside his pillow. She came out of the bathroom wearing a flannel shirt and sweat pants. She crawled into her bed and under the covers quickly. "Night..." she mumbled.

"Goodnight." He looked at the lump in the bed for a moment then got up to go into the bathroom himself.

She sat up when she heard the bathroom lock. 'Oh gods... It has been so long...' She shuddered. 'He's so much more...' She felt herself grow aroused again and she hid under the covers. 'I can't do that. Can't get side tracked.' She closed her eyes and tried to fall asleep.

He paced the small bathroom, he had never felt that way... she felt so very, very soft. He licked his lips again. He had cleared his throat so many times, was because he was afraid he was going to say something wrong. Afraid something was going to talk for him... he looked down and frowned. 'Stop thinking about it.' He scolded the part of his anatomy that seemed to think on its own. It actually hurt, throbbing. He growled, all frustrated. He turned the shower on cold, got out of his slacks and stepped into the cold water. He let it cool him down, but did nothing for the pain. He grit his teeth and put his head against the cool tiles on the wall. He reached down and started to stroke himself to get some relief. He pictured everything about her in his head, imagined her doing things to him, soon he was working up a rhythm he panted as he came. Not really wanting to relieve him self in that way, but it helped a lot.

She heard the shower start and she felt it was a safe bet he'd be in there for a few minutes. She got out of her bed and walked over to his and looked about and saw his torn up shirt. She held it to her and smelled his scent on it she lay on his bed and smelled him all over it. She closed her eyes thinking of his body against hers, remembering how big

he was when she grabbed his crotch. He definitely proved her wrong. As she thought about him her hands seemed to have minds of their own as she slipped her hand under the elastic of her sweat pants. She continued to smother her face into his bed sheets as she let her fingers run up and down her wetness. She shuddered, picturing Alex giving her kisses all over her burning body. She was suddenly startled out of her imaginings when she heard the shower shut off. She got up and went quickly to lie down on her own bed.

When he emerged from the bathroom, he noticed that she was sleeping. He went to his own bed and got under the covers quickly grabbing the tattered shirt that she shredded. He turned off the bedside lamps.

Chapter 11. What Do Dreams Tell Us

Catnel was on a bed of flowers looking at the darkening sky. It wasn't quite turning to night. She rolled in the flowers as a full tiger. She pounced on a grasshopper and batted at several different flowers with her large paws.

As she cavorted in the blooms she suddenly felt a presence, she turned and saw a large animal and he was staring at her, a bear with a wolf face and black and white coloring. He went to her and growled deeply. She growled back and blocked his view from her flowerbed. Her tail swished back and forth and she narrowed her eyes. He wouldn't leave and she wanted him away. She growled a warning, he still didn't leave, and he still tried to get to the flowers. 'Mine' She growled.

The wolfbear stopped and looked at her with sad eyes. 'Sorry. Not ready.' She purred out to him as he walked away towards the darkening sky on the horizon.

'Will wait longer.' The wolfbear growled back sadly.

She awoke and looked around the dark room. Her fur was matted to her as she had been sweating. She took off the flannel outfit she put on and tossed it to the floor in annoyance. She glanced at the other bed and saw Alex was asleep. "I'm sorry." She whispered to him. Then rolled over and fell asleep again.

He looked into the darkness holding the shirt close to him her scent lingered on it. He fell asleep holding it to him.

He was sitting on a stool in front of a large feast. He started to eat bagels with blackberry jam, followed by apples and pomegranates. He looked up from eating he saw a large tiger colored hot pink laying on a bed of rubies. He blinked and the tiger turned to Catnel fully naked and she was still colored hot pink and she was beckoning him to join her on the bed. When she smoothed her hand over the rubies they turned to soft silk sheets the color of deep red. He went with her willingly and lay on the bed with her. As he went to reach for her everything started to melt away.

He awoke and saw that he had kicked all the sheets off of him. He glanced to her bed and saw that she was still asleep. He looked around and saw his shirt on the floor next to her clothing. He looked back at her bed and down at the clothes. He knew she had a habit of stripping off her clothes while she slept. He grabbed the flannel shirt and sniffed the fabric.

“Mmmm.” Her scent smelled so good. He nuzzled it and then reluctantly put it back on the floor. “I wish I could tell you how much you mean to me.” He whispered as he pulled the sheets up onto his bed again. He wondered what his dream meant. Soon sleep took him again.

Chapter 12. Cold

Draven put his face in his hands and groaned. The trail ran cold again and it was becoming really annoying. Tina kept calling for progress and he had to keep telling her that he had no new leads. He sat up and adjusted his tie as he looked out the windshield of the van. Two days he looked in hotels, motels and every nook and cranny of the whole town. If she didn't know they were there she sure did now.

The death of the two drunks were enough to tip them off that something unnatural happened to them that wasn't just a result of a normal 'animal' attack. He saw the bodies, they were nothing but mutilated flesh, as if something larger than a mere wolf or dog had torn into them. He knew it just had to have been her that destroyed these two men, the poor slob; were definitely in the wrong place at the wrong time. All she did was kill and that is probably all she ever knew what to do. She was missing for several years, disappeared off the map. She had made the mistake of showing up again, only to do this. As soon as his boss found out he had Tina call him.

Tina was a six-foot tall blonde with shocking blue eyes. At least that is what she looked like to him when he met her those many years ago. In the consecutive years following she always looked the same. Never aging a bit and always with the cold waves that drifted from her. Like she despised being in the same room as he was. He pounded on the dashboard of the van. “Crap.”

Tina paced the large room and looked at her watch. Too soon to call, not that he made any progress at all. “Pathetic human.” She stated as she frowned. “It shouldn't be so hard to find the first cat.”

The room had wall-to-wall plush red carpeting, the only real furnishings were book shelves covered in books and a large office desk with a wingback leather chair. She walked around the desk and sat in the chair. She looked at her phone on the desk and glanced at the computer of which had its screensaver on. LOC INDUSTRIES

She drummed the desk with her unnaturally long nails, each one painted painstakingly bright blue. She glanced again at her watch, and was about to pick up the phone when the buzzer rang on it. She pushed the green button. "Yes?"

"Tina..." Said a feeble voice.

"What do you require?" Her face that was once cold and deserving all respect melted with concern.

"I need my pills." Said the voice.

"Yes. Right away." She was so intent on calling Draven, she almost completely forgotten to get him his pills. She pulled out one of the drawers of her desk and grabbed a bottle of prescription meds. She got up and walked out of the room as quick as she could.

While she was gone her phone started to ring.

Draven had a small lead and he wanted her to know right away. Yet she didn't answer the phone, usually she always answered on the first ring. He hung up. "No matter, the bitch is probably tending to those nails of hers." He looked at the man who gave him information. The man was short and had a really greasy hairstyle. He had told Draven that he saw two people walking to the other town. Only one had a backpack that seemed overly stuffed. The shorter one of the two had white hair and he thought it was unusual.

Draven gave the greasy man a hundred dollar bill for the information. He smiled and showed that he had rotted uncared for teeth. Draven doubted that the man would use the money for proper dental. Yet, who gave a fuck? The man walked away from the van and Draven looked at the men that were in the van with him. "Say guys?" He smiled. "Care for a trip to the next town?"

All the men looked tired but they all gave a curt nod. "Ok. Then." He started up the van and drove out of the dead end town.

Chapter 13. Of gods and Tea

Alex sighed as he tried for the fifth time to change into his animal form. When they woke up the day after they kissed, they hadn't talked all morning Catnel paid for their room, and they left the town and started walking again. They still didn't talk as evening came and the silence was driving him crazy. So he decided to go out and find some food while she stayed at the camp they made in the forest. He caught the food easily enough the few minutes he was out there.

While he was out there he wanted to show her that he could do what she had been teaching him. He concentrated again and imagined being something more something

bigger. It was painful, his paws became bigger and longer. His throat contracted almost cutting off his air, the first time that happened he panicked and stopped the transformation. As he concentrated more he felt and heard his own bones crack and pop, it felt like he was being stretched thin, beyond his limits. He yowled in pain and shuddered more bone popping and suddenly he was on all fours and he looked down his elongated muzzle. ‘Wow’ the exclamation came out as a loud growl.

He moved his paw in front of his face, sitting back on his haunches. His claws were huge like a bears. He hit the tree in front of him with his massive paw and he practically knocked it over. He left five-inch deep gashes in the trunk. He sniffed the air and every smell was more defined. He got up on all fours and walked around feeling the power in each step he took. He had to show her what he had managed to do. Taking the catch from earlier into his mouth he went back to camp.

Catnel put another log onto the fire and sat back. She was definitely being too hard on him. She cursed herself from being too receptive to the effects of the hormones they put into meat now a days. She poked a stick into the fire and withdrew it and drew a picture in the ground of a little heart. She erased it by moving her foot through the dust. A snap of a twig put her on the defensive as she stood up quickly and turned to where the sound had originated. “Who is there?” She demanded.

A low growl came within the forest and her fur started to stand on end. She looked about, using her sharp eyes to search around. She saw movement, something big, something dangerous. Sniffing the air, she cursed for it was upwind from her that she couldn’t catch the scent. She uttered a low growl in hopes to warn it away from the camp. Instead it came closer. Catnel changed her shape to her tiger form tearing her shirt and pants in the process. She was ready to pounce to defend their camp if need to. The creature lumbered into the light of the camp and she stopped from lunging at it.

He stopped and looked at her, she was in her tiger form. He placed the rabbit he was carrying down and approached her. She backed up a look of complete confusion on her face.

‘He did it?’ She thought. ‘He looks like he did in my... dream.’

She relaxed a little and shifted back to her regular form. “Alex?” She asked as she grabbed new clothes to wear. She got in her shorts and shrugged on a new t-shirt. “Is that you?” She approached him and he rumbled at her as if to confirm her questions. She put her hand through his fur-covered shoulders. His colorings were black, gray, white and silver. He was larger then her tiger form. His face had very wolf-like qualities, but his build was that of a large bear, with the colorization of a skunk. She walked around him and he let her inspect him. A low rumbling emitted from him, and she put her hand to her mouth. His tail was large and fluffy... definitely not a bear tail. A giggle came from her, and she came around to face him. “Oh gods you look magnificent!” She put her face into his shoulders and hugged him. “A wolfbear.” She rubbed her hands over his pelt and he

really enjoyed her giving him this much attention. Seeing her smile made him feel so very good.

After a few moments of sitting admiring him, she cleared her throat. “So... can you change back?”

He let out a mew in question. ‘Oh, I never thought that.’

“Ok, think the way you did to change and reverse it.” She smiled hoping he made sense to what she told him. “It’s easier to turn back then to turn to.”

He closed his eyes and felt his body shift smoothly. When he opened his eyes she held a pair of shorts up to him and was looking away. He took the shorts from her hand and pulled them on. “Ok.”

She hugged him. “Wow... I am so proud.” She beamed at him.

“Did I really look that good?” He asked.

“Oh yes. But then again... I wouldn’t have expected anything less.” She smiled and picked up the rabbit that he brought back for their dinner.

Blinking... ‘Did she just compliment him?’ He went to help her with the meal. She was skinning the rabbit when he sat down. After she got the skin off she handed it to him. He took it and prepared it for the fire. For some reason, she thought it was a little vile to eat it totally raw. Although he had eaten plenty of them raw when he lived in the cave. ‘Preference.’ He thought and shrugged.

They had eaten and they were just sitting back and relaxing. Alex was reading one of the books he took with them.

She took the pot off the fire she had been boiling water in. She took a cup out of her backpack and pulled out a tea bag and dropped it in the cup and poured the water over it. He never saw her make tea before and his ears perked up as she started to hum. She then rummaged again in her backpack and withdrew a small white packet; he has seen packets like this before she would have mustard, ketchup, or even salt in them. This one she tore open and added the golden sticky liquid to her tea. The sweet smell of it reached his nose.

“I know what that is!” Alex exclaimed. “Can I have some?”

Catnel looked at him in horror. “No... Mine.” Her ears went back and she growled. “My honey... not yours.” She stuck out her tongue at him. She smiled and stuck the packet end in her mouth and sucked out the remaining honey.

His ears drooped and he pouted at her. She giggled and sipped her tea. “You’re mean.” He whispered.

“I heard you.” She said as she pulled out an unopened packet of honey. “I guess you won’t get this then.”

“Oh Come on! I’m part bear... I need honey.”

She stifled a laugh. She looked at him out of the corner of her eye and he still pouted. She tossed the packet at him “Here... knock yourself out.” She gulped down the rest of the tea.

After he sucked out the honey, he looked at her. “What is with the tea?”

“I needed to detoxify my body.” She yawned. His eyebrow shot up at her answer.

“Do I need to detoxify too?”

“No.” She answered quickly.

“Why?”

“Because.”

He didn’t take that for an answer. “Why? Just give me some of that tea.”

“I can’t.”

“Don’t want to share is more like it.”

She grew annoyed... “Ok...” She took the box out of the backpack and shoved it under his nose.

He took the box from her hand and read it: Yogi’s Women’s Moon Cycle Tea. *When PMS, mild mood changes, cramps and edema associated with the menstrual cycle arise, it's time for Woman's Moon Cycle Tea. This helpful blend is formulated with two main herbs, Dong Quai and Black Cohosh Root, which alleviate menstrual discomfort and regulate menstruation. Yogis recommend light, easily digestible foods when a woman feels out of her center. Long deep breathing and regular exercise can also provide additional support and comfort.*

“Oh... OH!” He looked at her and handed the box back to her. She grabbed the box and frowned mumbling something about nosey males. She grabbed her sleeping bag and went to a nice clear spot away from him. She got in the bag and lay down.

“Night.” She said.

Alex rubbed his temple. “Night.”

Alex sat and stared at her back as she fell asleep. 'Smooth...' He thought. Then another thought occurred. 'Oh... She's going into heat soon... Oh... Crap...' He shook his head, how is he going to resist that? 'Maybe she has a way to control it.' He relaxed a bit. Catnel usually has answers to these things... At least he hoped she did.

Chapter 14. The Death of Me

"Ice Cream!" She exclaimed as she woke up.

Alex jumped and looked at her, he had put dirt on the fire and was in the process of rolling up his sleeping bag. "What?" He asked her.

Catnel rubbed her head and yawned. "Huh?" She looked at him like she didn't say anything.

"You yelled when you woke up." He said pointedly.

"Oh? What did I say?"

"Ice cream." He tied the bag up and placed it on his backpack.

"Weird." She mused. "I don't remember dreaming about it." She got out of the bag and stretched. Alex noticed that she hadn't stripped off her clothing this time. He made busy like he was cleaning the campsite. She started rolling up her bag, still yawning. She stopped when she noticed he kept glancing at her. "What do you need to ask me?"

'Caught.' His inner voice mocked. "Um." He picked up invisible trash.

"Well?"

"That tea."

"Yes?" He heard the impatience in her voice.

"Does this mean?" He said cautiously.

"Yes... It means I'll be in heat for a couple of days? Can you handle it? Or should I buy you a shock collar?" She looked really serious and he winced.

She tied the sleeping bag tightly and shoved it on her backpack.

"Sorry." He apologized.

"Not as sorry as I am." She sighed... "It's not your fault, we both have our needs." She sighed and looked at her hands. "I just need you to promise me something."

“Sure.” He agreed before hearing what she had to ask.

“I become very... wait, not the right word... I become extremely demanding, and I need you to promise me that you will not act upon my requests.” She smiled.

His eyes widened. “Worse then the other... night?”

She felt her face turn flush under her fur. He saw that when she became embarrassed her ears turned red on the insides. “Worse.” She said. “I can’t control it... unfortunately.”

It was as he feared, she had no control of it and she was relying on him to help her. Before he could stop himself: “Ok, I promise.”

“Thank you!” She gave him a hug. “That’s great! I know I can trust you.” Her attitude changed for the better for the rest of the day.

They had camped out for the second night and she went to bed early. He sat back and read his book to the light of the waning fire. He felt his eyes drifting closed and he yawned. “Should go to bed.” He mumbled sleepily as he put his book in his backpack. He glanced over to Catnel and she was curled up in the bag sound asleep.

Closing his eyes, he drifted off to sleep.

A weight was on his chest. Someone just licked his nose; he stretched out his arms and held onto the body that was against his. ‘Nice dream.’ He nuzzled into her neck and started to lick her. He felt her hand reach down to grab his crotch, felt her undo his shorts that he wore to bed. Felt her hot breath on his neck. Felt her touch him and start stroking him. He arched and moaned with pleasure. His eyes shot open and he saw her on top of him. “Cat...” He pushed her off him by sitting up quickly.

“You... didn’t like that?” She pouted and licked her lips.

“What are you doing?” He looked at himself and he was nude and aroused.

“Trying to have some fun.” She smiled timidly and seductively slinked to him.

“You should go to bed.” He said as he grabbed a blanket from a nearby backpack and covered himself.

“Oh so you want to do it in a bed?”

“That isn’t what I meant.” His eyes narrowed.

“Oh... Come on... You don’t fool me for one bit Alex.” She smiled at him.

“What do you mean?”

“If you hadn’t promised... You would be all over me.”

“Th... that isn’t true.” He stammered out.

“Oh... You know you want me.” She purred at him and she started to lift the blanket. His eyes widened as she started to crawl under it.

“N... No.” His heart felt like it was going to burst from his chest. He stood up quickly and held the blanket to him as a barrier from her advances.

She smiled as she sat there. “See... You do want me.” And she pointedly looked at his crotch.

He looked down and he was definitely aroused. ‘Traitor.’ “Th... That doesn’t mean I want to act on it.” He said lamely.

“Sure.” She said in a doubtful voice. She walked up to him and he was up against a tree. She nuzzled up against his hot body. The heat of his restrained desire could almost make the whole forest set ablaze. “You sure you don’t want a little taste of... me?” She asked him.

He looked down at her nodded his head, but then stiffly shook it. Tempting as it was he didn’t want to break a promise. “I... I think you should go sleep in your bag.” He extricated himself from between the tree and her. She grabbed the blanket and yanked it from his grasp.

He stood exposed and she pounced on him making him fall to the ground. She was straddling him and she growled in his face. “I need you.” She said gruffly. “You are going to have me whether you want to or not.” She lunged and bit his ear and sunk her claws into his shoulders.

“NO! I fucking PROMISED you!” He shouted and pushed her off him. She looked at him in shock and sat where she fell. “Yes! I want you! But... Not like this! It’s taking all my will to not just take you! I promised you! I promised, because I... I lov... care about you!” He yelled at her. “Now, GO Lay down!” He grabbed the blanket from the ground where she discarded it and he went over to his sleeping bag and covered himself in it.

She looked at the sleeping bag with Alex in it. She hesitantly started to walk towards him, but stopped. She let his words sink in for a moment, ‘He cared about her?’ He was going to say something else she was sure of it. She felt a tightening in her stomach and she looked a bit longingly at him. She then turned back and went to her own sleeping bag.

From within Alex's sleeping bag he rubbed his temple and groaned. "She is going to be the death of me." He slowly peeked out from under the blanket and the bag on his head and saw her walk to her own bag. He had almost said what was in his heart, and it hurt a lot, because he felt she would definitely run if he told her that. He wanted their moment together to be special, not to be forced together because of lust of the moment.

Chapter 15. Artic Circle

Tina tapped on the table with her long nails as she talked with the insufferable Draven. He made her so annoyed and she just felt like wiping the smug look off his face. He was now sitting in her office with that smug look, watching her every move.

She rubbed her forehead. "So you are saying that you followed her to a motel, where she was staying, with someone else... and you didn't capture her?"

"Yeah... Imagine that?" He rolled his eyes.

"You are always one step behind her!" She slammed her fist down on the desk and he just watched her with that smug look.

"Well Tina, if you would stop being such a home body, maybe you would like to try your luck?" He shrugged and then gave a yawn.

She frowned at him and stared at him with those cold blue eyes. "You know I cannot do that! He needs me here."

"Have someone else take care of him for a couple of days. Are you afraid no one else can do it as well as you?" He crossed his legs and kicked her desk.

"That is exactly why I don't leave his side." She said and went to sit on her office chair. "I'm assistant CEO of Loc Industries. I cannot just go gallivanting around."

"Fine." Draven got up.

"Where are you going?" She asked as she was suddenly in front of him.

"Out to find her. How much time does he really have left?"

He saw her put her head down. "Not much longer."

"Well, I'll call you as soon as I find her. Now get the helicopter to drop me off back where you got me. My men should be waiting." He walked out of her office and suddenly all his stress melted away. She always seemed to chill him to the bone. Her eyes were the things that could easily represent the Artic Circle. He flexed his fingers because they were in a fist the whole time in the meeting.

She was so glad Draven left she sunk down into her chair and turned around on it a few times. She so wanted to show him what it was like first hand to be torn apart by a feline. She flexed her fingers and her nails sunk into the leather upholstery of the chair. She had to find Catnel. It was imperative, for the life of them all she needed to find her: dead or alive.

Chapter 16. Sunflowers

He was moody when he woke up, and grumbled a lot. She tried to give him as much space as possible. She had no idea what was eating at him but she was sure it had to do with her. She had kept him awake for five nights, but unlike the first night, she made him read her some of his books out loud. She confessed that his voice calmed her down and helped her relax. She stepped on another rock and made a slight hiss under her breath, hoping he didn't hear her.

As they walked along the old road they found, he looked at her as she limped a little bit. A frown creased his forehead as he watched her limp. He never noticed it before. They had started walking early in the day and it was starting to get really warm. She had her hat off and her hair was blowing in the breeze, her ears were back as if indication of pain.

He caught up to her and walked up on her right side he looked sideways at her to see if she had pain on her face. From a quick glance she showed no indication of it. They kept walking until they came upon a wide field of wild sunflowers. Catnel gasped and stopped to look at the large flowers jutting from the ground.

"Oh." She said as she slowly approached on large sunflower. She smiled and looked at it as it swayed in the breeze. She sat down quickly and untied her boots. Alex walked over and watched as she took off her boots, then her socks. Her right foot was soaked in blood and he stepped back when he saw it.

"Why didn't you tell me?" Alex asked as he walked up to her. The scent of her blood assailed his nose.

"Huh?" She asked as she massaged her injured foot in her hand as if it was nothing. She looked at him and at where he was staring. "Oh? My foot? It's nothing."

"Nothing?" He frowned. "Doesn't look like nothing." He kneeled and took her foot in his own paws and examined it closely. He noticed she was bleeding from her heel. A perfect cut done by a surgical tool at one point. His eyebrow shot up and he looked at her.

"I just need to clean it." She pulled her foot out of his paws and opened her water bottle and poured it on her wound.

"What was that?" He asked as he stood up.

“Nothing.” She said as she took out a bottle of antiseptic out of her bag and some bandages.

She heard him growl in frustration. “Tell me.”

She let out a long sigh. “It was from a surgery that I had when I first got married. I thought maybe I could fix my feet... to look more human.” She shook her head.

“Your husband made you?” She could almost hear an underlying layer of blame in his tone.

She frowned at him and looked straight in his eyes. “No. It was my idea. As was my idea to almost cut off my tail too, he made me see differently.”

Alex blinked for a moment. “You were ashamed of being what makes you beautiful?”

“It was in a difficult part of my life, it was while my husband was going through therapy, and I... couldn’t go... because of the way I looked.” Suddenly a tear came to her eyes. “I felt helpless, that I couldn’t be beside him when he needed me the most.” She wrapped her foot after she cleaned it. “I wanted to fight with him... I felt I let him down for not being with him.” He saw her shake a bit. “He told me that if I did this to myself it wouldn’t help him, it would just kill him more. So I stopped trying to alter myself. For him... This injury never seemed to heal.” She put away her supplies and put her foot up on a rock. “Can we stay here for the evening? The flowers make me feel good.”

Alex took his backpack off his shoulder and placed it on the ground, he then sat beside her. “Yeah. Sure.” He didn’t need to argue he wanted to rest as well her foot concerned him. “But, I think we need to get away from the road.” She nodded and started to get up. Alex jumped up and picked her up into his arms.

“Hey! I can walk.” She said as he walked into the flowers with her cradled in his arms.

“No you can’t.” He reprimanded her. “You got to let that heal. Walking on it will just make it worse.”

She rolled her eyes and let him carry her into a clearing that was between the field and some rather large trees. He placed her on a smooth rock and disappeared into the field of flowers to go get the backpacks. She cursed her foot for starting to break open again. She always wondered why it never healed, probably to remind her of her mistakes. Or it was the gods punishing her for being an unnatural experiment. As she sat there she started to cry to herself.

Alex came back through the flowers and stopped when he saw that she was crying. He stepped away and sighed. It wasn’t his fault he was sure, this was something she had to work out on her own. Though, he can always be a vessel in which she can tell her secrets to. He was there for her and he wanted to always be there for her. When he saw she

wiped away her tears and sat up a bit he emerged through the flowers as if he didn't see anything. He walked over and placed the packs on the ground. She gave him a smile and scooted down the rock and was about to limp over to him when he frowned at her.

"Where do you think you're going?"

"To help you set up camp?" She asked.

"Not while I live and breath." He said sternly. "You need to rest."

"But..."

"But nothing." He unpacked her bag and gave her a folded blanket. "Prop your foot up on that."

She did as she was told and watched as he did everything, making her feel useless. She let out a long sigh. He started up the fire and set up the sleeping bags. She looked a bit quizzical at where he placed the sleeping bags. His was right next to hers, while usually they slept on opposite sides of the fire. As if the fire was the ultimate barrier between them. He didn't seem to notice her look and kept fixing up the camp. He stood up and smiled to himself.

"Ok, I'll go hunt something down." He announced. "You just relax."

"Sure... I'll just be bored up on a rock as I await your return... All mighty hunter." She said sarcastically.

He snorted at her comment and left.

She sat back and waited looking up at the clouds as they drifted by. She smelled the on coming autumn... and she wondered how many more months it would be? It's going to be difficult when it starts to snow. They were coming to the mountainous region of the northwest and she knew it was inevitable. They either had to go through the mountains or around them. If they went through she knew it would slow them down significantly, but not as much as if they went around them.

Her ears perked up when she heard Alex coming from the flowers; he was carrying a small game hen. "Give me it." She said to him.

He tossed it to her and she started to tear out its feathers. He watched her work and spoke. "So, how is your foot?"

"Feeling better. Thanks." She pulled at the wing feathers, and threw them on the ground.

"So why did you think that would make any difference?" He asked.

She thought about his question for a moment. “Well, I don’t know.” She stripped the bird clean and then threw it at him. He caught it easily and started to clean the rest of it for cooking. “I have a question?”

He looked up from placing a long stick through the squab. “Yes?”

“Why did you put our bags together?”

He looked at their bags. “Well it’s supposed to get cold tonight. I can smell it. It’s easier to sleep together to share the warmth.”

Nodding at his logic. “Ok... I have another question.”

“Yes? As long as you don’t ask me to promise you something.”

She chuckled, “Should we go through the mountains or should we go around them?”

“Through should be faster.”

“Unless it snows.” She pointed out.

“Ah... yes. Snow.” He turned the bird over the fire. “Snow should be a nice change compared to all the heat we have been having.”

“Well if worse comes to worse. I have found that changing makes the terrain more bearable.”

He looked at her when she said bearable. Noticing that she didn’t mean it to insult him he asked, “What do you mean?”

“Well, I spent one winter up in the mountains, and it was terribly hard to go about only on two legs. So... I turned into my full tiger and I was able to hunt and care for myself a lot better. I was also able to keep warm too.”

“You mean to stay in our shapes for an extended period of time? Is that a good thing?”

“It didn’t harm me.”

If you think it would be a good idea? I’ll go into the mountains if only to get through them faster.” He shrugged.

“I think we will make that decision when we come to the mountains.” She scooted down the rock as she noticed that the bird was getting done.

Alex jumped up and helped her off the rock. “Be careful, you don’t want to get hurt more.”

“You worry too much.” She sighed as he helped her sit on her sleeping bag. “Thank you.”

“Only because I care.” He said as he offered the bird to her.

She took a wing off of it and started to eat. He ate too as he sat leaning against the nearest tree. They ate in silence. The wind rustled through the large sunflowers and she looked up at them. By the size of the flowers she knew it was late summer. She wasn’t quite sure what day it was, but she knew the month was August. When they reached the mountains she figured they’d get there in September before the heavy snows. Hopefully there won’t any unforeseen obstacles that get in their way.

Chapter 17. Devil in the Blue Dress

Tina stood outside the door and listened intently. For several weeks she had listened to his door to just listen to him breath. Ragged breaths still came from the room and she turned the knob and entered.

She walked in a cavernous bedroom. Barely any light shone in it as she made her way slowly around obstacles that most would have tripped over. She made her way to the bed. It was a rather large bed with lots of blankets piled on it. His figure seemed to be swallowed up by the mass volume of the bed.

“I’m here Gared.” She sat in a chair that was near his right side. “I have your medications.”

The man in the bed reached out a shaking hand. She placed a couple pills in it. He slowly closed his hand over them and pulled it to his lips taking the pill. She handed him the water that was near his bed. He sipped at it. “Thank you.”

“My pleasure.” She continued to sit and relax listening to him breath.

Her ears perked up when he drew in a breath. “Tina... you don’t have to stay here all the time. If you think you can help... please aid in the search.”

“But... who will help you? I cannot leave you behind... You are too important to me.” She put her head on the sheets and he placed his hand on her head and petted her.

“I have other help, I know you don’t trust them, but they will be fine until you come back.” He suddenly was wracked with coughing and she looked up at him with worry but he waved her concern away. “I am very serious.”

“I will be worried too much to concentrate.” She confessed.

“Call me daily. I don’t mind calls from my little one. I insist.” He rubbed her head again. She purred and smiled happily. “Turn into your animal, warm me up. I am really cold.” She nodded, taking off her clothes and crawled up on the bed. She changed fluidly to her full form of a blond puma with crystal blue eyes. She settled across his bed and he petted her pelt lovingly. “You are lovely.” She purred a response and grumbled with each stroke she received from him.

When he had fallen asleep, she turned back to human, went into the other room, dressed and went to make the preparations to leave. Making sure her boss had everything he could ever need. She sighed to herself in frustration knowing that she’ll have to deal with Draven. She growled low whenever he came to mind, he was too arrogant for his own good. Of course it will possibly make her smile to see the look of shock on Draven’s face, especially when she takes his leadership.

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The wind from the helicopter made him frown; it held a chill to it that he just couldn’t figure out. It wasn’t even close to winter and he was miles away from the wicked witch Tina.

The copter landed and the blades started to slow, he looked away for a few moments and when he looked back he saw a long bare leg come out of the copter, followed by the rest of her body. It was Tina and she was definitely exuding the icy feeling he could feel. She was wearing a light blue dress that accentuated each of her curves the other men in his group were all staring at her like she was a slab of meat. Draven knew better, he knew her ways and he was despising her with every elegant step she took. When she got to him she smiled sweetly.

“What are you doing here?” He sneered at her.

“I am going to take over.” She said softly.

“The hell you are.” He bristled.

“I am, and there is no way we are going to lose her now.” She said as she turned on him, her glacier blue eyes chilling him to the marrow.

“What makes you think that you will make any fucking difference?” He asked as she turned from him and walked to the stairway. He followed, still bristling from her taking over.

“Because my dear Draven...” She said as they got to the elevator to go to the ground level of one the Loc Industries buildings. “I can think on her level.”

Draven sighed in frustration and for the fact that he couldn’t argue with her on that fact. He just couldn’t get into the mind of Catnel, although it wasn’t as if he didn’t try. Now

she is here, and he just didn't think he could stand being around her. He gritted his teeth in hopes that with her on the team that the searching will finally be over.

There was a limousine waiting for them outside the building and Tina smiled because she knew it was here for her exclusively. Draven groaned when he saw it and it made her feel a little more superior to him. 'Maybe spending time with him won't be too bad, considering I can torture him with my status.'

She was enjoying making him uncomfortable. He didn't know what he saw in her the first week they ever met. He was totally, head-over-heels for her. In the end though... it was little more than her ripping out his heart and stepping all over it like it was nothing but a used up tissue. He noticed that she had a bigger passion in her life, a passion so consuming that it took precedence over everything else. It was her passion for being on top, being the head, being the boss. Little did he know, the boss; was her own Father. Yet she looked nothing like the old man, and he had wondered why. While dating they never got intimate, everything to her was gaining power. He often wondered what happened to get her this way. Why they ended up, totally despising one another, he'd never know.

She filed her nails and Draven sat across from her in the limo. He watched as she shaped her nails into sharpened edges. She then got out scentless nail polish. It was light blue in color and she shook the vial and started to paint each nail with practiced ease. He rolled his eyes and looked away. Her nails matched her blue dress, and she shifted her long legs and he saw around her waist was a tawny colored fur belt. The one she always wore, even when they went out.

"Why do you always wear that?" He ventured to ask. Indicating the belt.

She looked at what he was indicating and smiled. "I am quite attached a family heirloom to be specific." She picked up a file that she had her assistant put in the limo. She opened it and started to rifle through the paperwork.

"Ugh. Paperwork." Draven groaned as she heard her shift paper between her fingers. Usually she did this when she was trying to change the subject or just wanting to ignore him.

"Just because I am going to fix everything that you screwed up, doesn't mean I have to shirk my duties." She said looking at him over the papers she was going through.

"You never heard the phrase... 'All work and no play...'"

"Yes I have. This is imperative though." She frowned and looked at it with more scrutiny. Trying to ignore Draven's sigh of frustration.

Catnel awoke cuddled up against a warm body. His arm was around her and she snuggled up closer to him. It was cold, and rain was falling outside the cave they had found. It was several days since they left the sunflowers behind. They ended up sleeping close together for warmth for the past several nights... ever since they had to seek shelter in the cave. The rain hadn't stopped for long. When it did they usually went out to hunt, only to find nothing. She had to face the fact: they were going nowhere fast, all because of the cold unrelenting rain. His arm was strong and she could smell his musky scent, it gave her a heady feeling. She shook her head a bit to clear her mind and just cuddled next to him closer. She slowly closed her eyes and started to fall asleep again when she heard a noise.

They both sat up and he was on his feet faster than her. She growled a warning and looked out from behind him as they both stood there. There wasn't any further movement out in the forest, except for the heavy rainfall. "Stay here." He said to her. She watched him as he walked to the edge of the cave and stared out. He was wearing just a pair of shorts. She got up and limped a bit towards him, he looked back at her in a warning glance. She looked upon his back it was a beautiful thing. His muscles moved under his skin and she had thoughts of just touching it. Moving her fingers through his fur like she did when he was transformed. She wanted to bury her face in his fur again, to smell his scent.

There weren't any more sounds but he crouched down, and she followed suit. With her hurt foot she couldn't hunt very well, and he had wanted to protect her. She had insisted she was fine until she hurt herself again. She cursed her stupidity and was glad he was here to help her out. If it had happened while she was alone, she probably would have been caught several days ago.

Those thoughts made her start to think that maybe he would have been safer if she hadn't found him. Heaven knows what would happen if they caught him. She'd have to tell him more about their intentions with her. She'd have to tell him about each one. Even Tina.

He still crouched looking out into the rain; the rain ruined the scents that they were able to catch. He had to rely strictly on sight and sound. His ears twitched when he heard another softer sound. His muscles and tendons in his legs were stretched taught like springs. He was ready to pounce on anything that would come within his sight.

There was a sudden movement to his right and he looked at it. He focused on it and was ready to pounce. The trees moved and a beast lumbered through the brush. He stopped himself before he pounced seeing a large bear come into view. He looked back at Catnel and she was staring at the animal in disbelief. The bear snuffed about, and Alex frowned and growled at it. The bear stopped and looked up at Alex staring at it. Alex growled again, this time a low warning. The bear looked at Catnel lazily and then back at Alex and gave a mild grunt and turned away. Lumbering back into the rain again. Alex stood up and looked back at Catnel and she frowned at him.

"What did you say to him?" She asked him.

“Did I say something to him?” He feigned innocence. She saw his look and knew he was lying to her. He got up and walked to the fire pit and noticed that the fire was about out. He threw a piece of wood on it. It suddenly started back to life.

“You are lying to me.” She said smugly. “I can tell when you are. What did you say to the bear, to make him leave?”

“I um...” He looked away for a moment. “I just told him that the cave was occupied.” She saw the inside of his ears turn red, like he was blushing.

“Uh huh?” She nodded. “Not from what I felt from him. You said something different.”

He looked at her and frowned. “Why are you getting upset? I got rid of it didn’t I? Wait... How did you know I talked to the bear?”

She looked at the ceiling of the cave and sighed. “I know you talked to him, because I talk to felines. And well, you are part bear... So it’s an assumption of mine that you talked to him. Not really much of a conversation.”

He looked at her for a moment. “Yeah, it isn’t much of a conversation.” She was looking at him in a questioning way. “Oh, you still want to know what I told him?”

She smiled and nodded. His ears blushed again, and she smiled wider.

“I... told him that... the cave was taken... by me and my...” He looked away and mumbled the last part.

“Huh? Excuse me? Your what?” She reached over and pulled his tail. He turned, and gave her a weak smile.

“My... mate.” He said almost in a whisper. Her eyebrow shot up and she still tugged at his tail.

“Your mate huh?” She tugged a couple of times.

“No... uh yes... Uh... Sorry?” He apologized.

She started laughing and giggling as she tugged on his tail. He fell backwards and on his butt. He couldn’t get back up as she kept tugging on him.

“Hey! Let go of my tail.” He tried to tug away from her. She just tugged on him more and hugged his tail close.

Taking a deep breath she wiped the tears that came to her eyes. “You are so cute when you are embarrassed.” The blush came back to his ears and he looked at her with wide

eyes. "I'm sorry for laughing." She snickered a bit and stopped when she saw his ears droop. "Aw... no... don't do that." She let go of his tail quickly.

"So... you think it's funny? To be my mate?" He asked, his ears still drooping and his face sad.

"Oh no... No... I don't. I just think it is funny that you told him that, just to get rid of him." She smiled, hoping that she didn't hurt him. He walked a little bit away and poked at the fire with a stick to make sure that was burning a bit better.

"So you don't really think it's funny?"

"No, I don't." She got serious... "I just wonder something?"

His ears perked up. "Yes?"

She crawled over to her sleeping bag and started to get comfortable. He watched her as she moved around on all fours trying not to put any weight on her injured foot. He watched her hips and he slowly smiled. He took a step towards her and then another. He watched as her tail swayed to and fro. He snapped out of it when she turned and looked at him. "I wonder..." She stopped when she saw him looking down at her.

He shook his head. "What do you wonder?" He asked

"I wonder how long it will be before the rain stops. I'm tired of the cold." She shivered and pulled her sleeping bag around her.

Alex sighed and walked over to his bag, he sat down and pulled her close to his chest to keep her warm. "I think it will stop in another day." She snuggled against him and started to purr. 'I wish it wouldn't stop... having you close to me is a treat.' He thought. He rubbed her arms letting his paws feel her fur.

She purred louder and closed her eyes. "Oh... That feels good." She murmured. He watched the fire and the rain and just petted her arm. "It wouldn't be so bad." She said suddenly.

"What wouldn't be so bad?" He asked.

She shifted position and was looking in his eyes. "To be your mate." She smiled.

His eyes grew wide. "What?"

She kissed the tip of his nose then settled down back into his arms. "You heard me. I know you're not deaf." He started to pet her arm again, and rumbled in his throat.

“I know I’m not deaf. I just want to know if I heard you right.” He put his finger on her chin and moved her head to look at him.

“You heard me perfectly well.” She smiled. “I wouldn’t mind if you and I were mates.” She scooted away so she could see his face better. It was a mixture of confusion and of something else.

Her scent changed. He knew she wasn’t in heat any longer but he smelled her change in scent. “I…” He stumbled for words that refused to come out. Instead he reached out to her and pulled her to him. He looked into her eyes to see if there was something different, to see if she would turn away. She looked back and her gaze didn’t waver.

“What?” She asked him her breathing slow and steady. She looked back at him and put her hand through his head fur.

He closed his eyes at her touch and felt his heart leap and then ache a bit. “I… I think we need more sleep.”

She nodded. “Yes.” She leaned back against him. He stroked her arm gently again and she started to purr. He was close to kissing her again, and he was sure she wouldn’t have fought it. Something stopped him though, he didn’t know what. His paw shook a little and he concentrated on making it steady.

She started to fall asleep against him he was so warm and comfortable. As she fell asleep, she wondered why he didn’t give her a kiss.

Chapter 19. Spirit

Draven gave the ‘Ice Queen’ his paperwork. She snatched it from him and looked it over. He watched as she took a large black pen to it and started to slash things out of it. Draven glowered at her and gave a frustrated sigh. She kept slashing at his work with almost a murderous attitude.

She said nothing and just looked at his writing, he had put down all leads, wrote down every sighting of her. Tina slashed out the improbable places and frowned at each lead and got rid of 75% of them. She took joy in watching him cringe with every slash she delivered to the work ups.

She suddenly cleared her throat and he looked up. She slammed the paperwork down on the table and then opened up the map. “I looked through it all.” She put her long nail on a road on the map. “She and her friend… are going to be here. In two days.” She pointed at a small town in the state of Colorado. He frowned at it.

“How do you figure?” He said. “Last we saw or even heard of her she was in Wyoming. Why would she be going south? It doesn’t make any sense.”

Tina frowned and looked at him with sharp accusing eyes. “That is why I am here. I know how she thinks. She is going to be here.” She pointed again at the town. “It’s the best place for her to start to go into the mountains.”

“Why the mountains?” He asked, “She should go around the damnable things.”

“The mountains will make us slower. There is going to be an early snow... once they get into the mountains, the chances of catching them is very slim.” She slashed the mountain range with her black pen. She then circled the city they would be in. Manitou Springs, Colorado.

“Ok, I’ll get the ball rolling and call all personal to the area. Hopefully we’ll be able to find out where they are hiding. Although... I find it very ironic that they would be in Manitou Springs.”

“How so?” She asked, raising a well-plucked eyebrow at him.

“Manitou means spirit, and she seems to disappear like one.” He observed.

“Very astute of you... I’m impressed.” She folded up the map and smiled. “Make sure no one... I repeat... No one jumps the gun. We must not rouse any suspicion.”

“Yes.” He nodded and clicked his phone open to call up everyone. He also needed a helicopter to take them to Denver as soon as possible.

Chapter 20. Mud Wrestling

It was hard traveling in the cold rain by foot. So they both decided it would be good to run on all fours. They both packed their clothing in the backpacks and tied them around their bodies and ran at night through the awful weather. They traveled faster than before and Catnel’s foot didn’t hurt as much in her more muscular tiger form. Although, she feared they had caused a little too many traffic problems out on the highways. Yet, she couldn’t help people seeing them running beside the road.

She was sure that seeing a large bear-like animal would make anyone swerve or step on the break. Of course that is why she thought it was best to run at night, that way the people couldn’t really see them clearly enough to go into full panic.

Morning came and they stopped in a small cave on the edge of Interstate 25. They had to go through lots of suburban neighborhoods. Possibly scaring a couple of domestic animals along the way.

When they found the cave, both of them collapsed in exhaustion and didn’t even try to turn back to their normal state. They lay curled up with one another. Just to keep warm from the cold rain that was on the topcoat of their fur. His large wolf bear frame curled

around her slightly smaller tiger frame. Having both black and white fur melding into each other. Where one ended the other began no one would know for sure unless they were brave enough to see.

Catnel woke up when the sun hit the noontime. She made a grunt and looked around with half-lidded eyes. His paw was on her shoulder and he was snoring lightly. She crawled out from under his heavy paw. She stretched her long tiger body, stretching her claws out and dug into the soft ground of the cave floor. She sat on her haunches and let her tail curl around her feet as she looked outside. It finally stopped raining and she was glad of that, there were still clouds in the sky and she saw a few were still swollen with rain. There was sunshine though and it made her feel better.

She looked back over her shoulder at him and sighed inwardly. Suddenly her stomach rumbled she looked causally over at the backpacks that they had hauled with them. She knew there was food in them; she just didn't want to open them.

Alex blinked a little bit to clear his vision and grumbled as if to say something, but then he remembered he couldn't talk. He lifted his head to look about and saw the back of Catnel sitting at the entrance of the cave. He got up and walked over to her, sitting beside her and looking outside. He growled an unspoken question to her. *"What are you looking at?"*

She continued to look out into the surrounding trees. Enjoying the silent afternoon, and the scent of the cleaned earth from the rains. She growled her reply, *"Just enjoying the sunshine. Something calls to me here."* She slowly blinked and looked around. *"I'm hungry... Are you?"*

He was looking down at her, he noticed while in this form he was a lot larger than her. So if they ever wrestled he'd win hands down. He sniffed the air and smelled the scent of mud, grass, and leaves. He smelled again and caught her scent and then his own scent. He growled his reply to her and smiled inwardly. *"Yeah... I am hungry."* He nudged her shoulder with his nose as he bent down.

Her eyes widened as she kept herself from being knocked over from his nudging. She growled a warning to him not to knock her over and moved away a little bit and glanced back at him. His tail started to wag back and forth and he stalked over to her and sat next to her again. She looked warily at him and tilted her head. She then looked back outside. She felt his body against hers as he nudged her again. She stumbled to the side and she used all fours to right herself she growled at him. *"What is...?"* He then pounced on her, just as she was about to ask what was wrong with him.

He had pinned her on the ground and was happily wagging his tail. She growled for him to get off her and he playfully nipped at her. She used all her muscles and pushed him off. She grumbled and looked at him as he rolled to get back on all fours. She pounced on him before he could right himself. She growled. *"You cannot best me."* He rolled and

they both fell off the rock. They were both rolling together and fell into a large mud puddle outside the cave.

Catnel shifted into her normal form with a sputter she sat up from the mud puddle. She looked and saw Alex turned back too and she giggled. He was covered in mud and he sat in the middle of it with his back to her.

He heard her giggling, and he turned to look at her, she was totally covered with mud as well. He shook his head and laughed a little bit. He started to climb out of the mud puddle when suddenly he was pushed and he fell back into the mud. When he looked up from wiping the mud from his face, and saw her smiling at him.

“I got you this time.” She said to him.

His eyes narrowed. “Oh yeah?” He got up out of the mud and watched as she started to try to wipe the mud out of her fur. He crouched and jumped quickly at her and hit her face on. He briefly saw her eyes widen as he leapt at her. They both ended up in the mud again.

They rolled in the mud; wrestling around and getting their fur caked up. They kept wrestling one besting the other. They were both panting as they both struggled against each other. She grunted and pushed at him, he put his arms around her waist and pushed her down again. She kicked at his feet when he started to get up and he ended up back in the mud. She pounced on his back and as she was about to climb out of the mud he dragged her back in. They were both laughing as they tried to keep one another from leaving the mud. He grabbed her around the waist to pull her back into the mud after her attempt to get out again. He was on top of her and they smiled and looked at each other, she looked up at him and he looked back and they both stopped as they both looked at each other’s eyes.

Her heart stopped beating, she was sure of it as she saw that look in his eyes.

His breath caught in his throat at the look she gave him.

Time seemed to stop for a moment... Neither of them moved as if they were afraid if they moved the mood would break.

He was the first to make a move as he leaned down and took her mouth into his and kissed her deeply. She gasped and her body reacted to his kiss. He put his arms behind her for support and dragged her to him she offered no resistance as their tongues wrestled each other. She closed her eyes letting his aura wash over her like a wave. She moved her hands up over his mud caked back and held on to him. Feeling his muscles move under his fur and skin her fingertips dug in as desire took her. He growled possessively into her mouth and kissed her deeper, letting his tongue explore her mouth and tongue in return.

Her body suddenly felt a surge of heat that ran through her stomach and radiated outward. She arched her body in response to his kiss and let out a growl in response to his own. As they kissed he moved one of his paws hesitantly up on her side.

There was a rumble from above in which they both ignored and continued to kiss. His hand started to move up to explore her curves up to her waist touching her lightly and shakily. His other paw supporting her back still, his tongue caressing hers, he pushed himself up against her body. A few drops came from the sky and started to fall sporadically. They continued to ignore the drops both closing their eyes and taking in each other's company.

The rain fell in a torrent suddenly, causing the mud to start to wash away from their fur. He broke the kiss while he slowly cupped her one breast in his paw He squeezed lightly and she let out a mewling noise. He lowered himself down and licked her now wet throat with his long tongue. She put her head back and let a drawn out moan escape her lips. He wanted her so badly and here she was, willingly letting him peruse her body. He hesitantly moved down with his tongue, the rain slowly washing away the mud that covered her fur, he traced down to her left breast letting his tongue find its way. He looked up at her face and she was looking down at him. He led his tongue over her left nipple and lightly flicked it. He felt her shudder under his body with each tongue flick. While he let his tongue explore his paw moved downward to her inner thigh, rubbing hesitantly and then up to her.

Her eyes flared open when she felt his fingers slip into her. Her whole body jerked with a new shocking sensation. His fingers slipped in easily and his hand shook at her warmth wet smooth inside. Just feeling her with his finger made him hard and he delved onto her nipple with his mouth, sucking on her. As well as letting his fingers slip in and out of her feeling her muscles clench his fingers. He moved his mouth to her other breast and let his tongue wrap around the hard nipple and he sucked on it as well, nibbling the tip, she shuddered under his torture letting out little breathless moans.

He looked up at her and she laid back enjoying everything he was doing, she felt him burn a path through her fur with his tongue down her stomach. She arched her back and moved her hips up against his paw as if begging for more. His fingers slipped in more then he intended and he shuddered. He put his muzzle up to her and breathed in, her scent causing his head to spin. Slipping his fingers out slowly he licked the tips of them tasting her on them. Without hesitation he needed to taste more of her, as he pushed his muzzle into her crotch. His lengthy tongue sliding up over her lips, shaking as he tasted her, a sweet honey like taste. He pushed his tongue in deeper past her wet slick lips and drank in her juices. His tongue went deep exploring every curve and bump.

Catnel moaned and looked down at him and he looked up at her and gave a possessive growl. She gripped the mud around them and left her claw marks in it as she gripped it and let out a strangled moan. She looked up into the sky past the trees watching the swirling cloud pass by as raindrops spattered near her eyes. His tongue caused her body to violently convulse, she never felt this sensation before and she didn't want it to stop.

Her voice betrayed her as she let out a moan that shook her to her very soul. She felt his paw on her stomach moving slowly through her damp fur. Looking down she saw him looking up at her from between her legs. He growled sending shocking vibrations, through his tongue. He lapped up and down letting his tongue slide in again and out again.

He moved his tongue with practiced skill, and it thrilled him to see her looking down at him. He saw, felt and tasted her reaction when his tongue lingered on certain parts. He decided to linger on one part of her that caused the most reaction from her. He wrapped his long tongue over her and ran over a few times, always rewarded with her hips moving up against his muzzle or a wonderful moan, gasp or cry from her. He also was rewarded with such a beautiful wave of juices. After a few moments of lapping her up he lifted his muzzle and looked at her hungrily.

She looked back at him, her white fur covered face looking flush and her eyes filled with want. She held out her paw towards him and slowly moved her hand over his face. He closed his eyes and leaned against her. A low rumbling was emitting from his throat and he leaned down letting his tongue rub over her stomach through her fur. She let out a gasp as he placed his fingers into her again, rubbing on the spot that gave her such pleasure before. He looked at her with longing and she growled at him, although they could talk, something primal was making them both growl at one another.

Alex understood her growl and moved closer up to her face, still licking up her chest pausing at each beautiful mounds of flesh, he let his tongue lick around to her taught nipples sucking on each one. Then slowly running his tongue over her collarbone and neck area. Her whines and gasps causing him to whine in return, feeling a swelling with each reaction she gave him. He wanted so much to be inside her to feel her warmth encompass him. He wanted to please her first though, and he made sure she wanted what he had to give her. Reaching her chin he licked up and over licking her lips.

She opened her mouth at the touch of his tongue and let out a moan... "Al... ex..." She murmured as she moved her paws to his sides and up over to his back. She pulled him to her in another kiss that overwhelmed her senses she lifted up her hips to invite him to be closer to her then before. He growled and bit her lower lip with his canines. She growled back and dug her claws into his back. He delved into her mouth with his tongue dominating her own and she quivered under his powerful body. Gently he pushed her legs apart with his paw, she only resisted a little to make it a bit of a sport. He looked in her eyes as he kissed her deeply and passionately. He pushed himself into her and she just completely melted. Catnel's tongue melded into Alex's and the beat of their hearts seemed to work as one all at once. He pushed himself deep within her and she arched her back as a whine escaped within their kiss. He broke the kiss suddenly and gasped himself at the sensation of her around him.

They moved together in perfect harmony, she let out mews of pleasure that were punctuated by growls and incoherent words. He grunted and whispered things that only she could hear and understand. He moved slowly as not to rush he put his paws on her

shoulders and panted as he pushed into her. She dug in her claws and mewed out loud with each thrust he delivered into her. Her face had a look of pure pleasure and he reveled in her aura as it cosseted him.

She looked up at him and his eyes were like burning jewels of desire. He engulfed her mouth with his and let his tongue snake into hers yet again. Slowly caressing her tongue with his. He let out a moan as he pushed again into her, this time his desire stirring him to go faster. He thrust himself hard into her and she gasped in his mouth. He pulled back from the kiss and smiled at her as he thrust deep into her. She made another noise that drove him mad with passion and he thrust into her over and over again, being rewarded with her loud mews, screams and pants. With each thrust he felt himself harden more and more. He grabbed her shoulders and drove deep into her causing her to scream out his name in pleasure. He felt her warm fluids gush over his hard member and he knew he made her come yet again. He went into her with a new fervor feeling as she clenched him inside of her with her muscles.

The rain stopped falling as they made love under the trees. He kept going into her without noticing the weather change. He was panting and he felt at the edge of a deep precipice as he looked down at her under him. Water dripping from his head fur she looked up at him with eyes of pure love and trust. He murmured to her, as he kept moving in her, taking his left paw he wiped the water from her cheeks. His orgasm was right at the edge and she looked so angelic to him. Her white head fur spread out under her like a pure white halo. Her deep blue eyes made him catch his breath as she fluttered her lashes at him. It was enough to drive him over the edge. She gasped again as he moved deep inside her and at that gasp he just couldn't hold it any more. He thrust in again and let himself go, deep inside of her. He let out a long howl as he let himself release his hot fluids deep within her his voice was joined by her low growl.

They hit pleasure together and they both fell panting to the muddy ground. He didn't want to come out of her as he rolled pulling her with him so she was on top. She gave him little nuzzles on his cheek as she lay on his chest. For a few moments they lay there; he was still inside of her and she felt him getting hard again. Especially when she clenched her muscles. He looked at her and smiled, she looked down.

"You have to stop that." He growled low at her.

Raising an eyebrow she looked down at him. "Oh? And what are you going to do about it?"

He issued a low growl and tightened his arms around her. "I'll squeeze you."

"Oh... yes... Squeeze me." When she said, "squeeze" she tightened her muscles.

He rolled his eyes back and gave her a smile. "I'm warning you."

She licked his chest and smiled. "Oh, you are huh?" She slowly started to sit up on his hips sliding him deeper into her.

He put his head back. "Oh... gods."

She smiled at him as she tightened herself around him. She felt him grow again as she slowly moved upwards again. Placing her paws on his stomach she looked at him and smiled. "You don't like this?" She teased.

"Oh... Cat..." His hips shook as he pushed up into her and rolled his eyes back. "It's... wonderful."

"I figured you hated this." She started to ride his hardening member. She smiled when he looked up at her and bit his bottom lip. She moved slowly and deliberately, slowly rising up and then slowly moving down making him thrust in her deep.

"I don't hate anything that would feel this wonderful." He confessed through slightly clenched teeth. She started to move a little faster while he talked. She then growled and looked at him with a feral glint in her eyes. She rubbed his chest, spreading her fingers over it through the wet fur. As she rubbed she increased her speed on him.

She narrowed her eyes and looked at him. "You want me to go faster?" She panted at him as he arched his back and moved his hips to take over her movement. Thrusting in her. Reveling in her warmth. He held her up at her hips just above his and rammed himself into her tight warmth. She put her head back and gasped out loud. "Oh... Alex... Oh... Oh..."

"Oh... You are so tight." He murmured as he thrust into her over and over again. "I'm going to fill you up again."

With her head back she started to let out a long strangled mewling noise. "Oh, you feel so good." Her whole body shook with pleasure.

"Oh... You are heavenly." He moaned as he pulled her on him and exploded into her. He spilled his hot juices into her for the second time and he howled yet again. She let herself growl in response to his howl. He pulled her down into a hug. "You make my beast come out."

She giggled at that and looked up into his eyes. "You are a beast... but so am I." She licked his throat. He rumbled deep in his throat and it sent shivers down her spine. She suddenly sighed and he looked at her.

"What is it?" Worry apparent in his eyes. "I think I am beginning to understand your sighs."

She slowly disengaged from him and lay down next to him. "I am... sorry."

“Sorry? Sorry for what?” He asked incredulously. “It was... I was... Oh Cat; I love you. How can you say sorry?” He sat up and looked at her with his eyes searching hers for some acknowledgement that she loved him in return.

“Oh Alex.” She reached up to his face and rubbed his cheek. “I am sorry that I let go of my urges. That I took advantage of you.” She looked away from his eyes quickly.

His eyes widened and he looked at her in disbelief. “What?” He blinked when she closed her eyes and kept her face turned away. “Look at me.” He reached over and put his finger under her chin turning her head to look at him. She opened her eyes and looked into his. “You... never took advantage of me. I have wanted you, for... so... long.” He leaned down and kissed her pouting lips. She looked into his eyes, a watery gleam in them like she was about to cry. His heart melted at her eyes, making him want to pull her into his lap and hug her close.

He went to reach for her and she shrugged away from him as she stood up quickly. “I think we need to go.” Her back was to him and the rain started to fall again, she looked up into the sky as the rain came down like a waterfall upon them. The rain, washed over her fur making the rest of the mud wash off her body. He stood up and looked at her back and he felt his desire for her stir. She got on all fours and crawled out of the muddy ditch. He fought the urge to grab her and make love to her again to show her that she didn’t take advantage of him.

He got out of the mud and walked into the cave after her. He knew that the rain had washed his fur clean too. He left footprints on the cave floor and he followed hers not being able to help himself in comparing his with hers. Hands down he was the much larger of the two of them. She was sitting near her bag rubbing her fur with a towel drying her self off. She didn’t look up as he walked by her to get a towel himself. He watched her as he moved his towel over his head fur and noticed that she was suddenly shivering. Alex slowly got up and went over to her and used his towel on her. She didn’t pull away this time as he rubbed her fur dry.

“Thank you.” She replied as she looked at him, her eyes rimmed with tears.

“Oh, please don’t cry.” He said as he then took her into his arms and hugged her close. She didn’t run or struggle to get away. He smoothed down her fur and licked at her face as the tears dropped down her cheeks. “Oh, I love you. There isn’t anything you can say or do that will keep me from not loving you.”

She leaned her head into his chest and sniffled a bit. “I... I am so pitiful. I didn’t want this to happen.” She put her hand up on his chest and he put his paw over hers. “I... really... love you.” She whispered. “Yet, I don’t want you to get hurt because you are with me.”

“I won’t get hurt. Neither will you.” He said as he took her paw in his and kissed it tenderly. “I will protect you. I will protect you with my life, if need be.”

Chapter 21. Manitou

Draven stood looking into a shop along the main street of Manitou Springs, Colorado. The shop sold Indian silver and turquoise jewelry, and it all was set up on animal pelts. He looked at the pelts carefully and was thinking of going into the store to ask if the furs were real when Tina came walking up carrying a bag. “What on earth do you have in there?” He asked as she smiled at him with her cold eyes.

“Oh, I will show you when we get back to the hotel room.” She said as she flagged down the limo that was waiting for them. When it drove up, she climbed in and even helped him inside the car too.

‘She is a little too cheerful.’ He thought as they drove away towards the hotel. “So Tina... Why are you so happy right now?”

“Can’t you feel it?” She said as she looked at the bag she was holding.

“Feel what?” He asked as he closed his eyes.

“Oh, well... you will feel it soon.” She said as she patted her bag. Her cheerfulness was eating away at him as he watched her act like a schoolgirl. It was times like this that actually got him to like her, just a little bit.

The limousine drove up to the hotel and stopped. Draven and Tina got out of the vehicle and Tina grabbed Draven’s hand and led him quickly to the elevator. He was completely taken off guard and had to run to keep up with her, her nails digging into the flesh of his wrist. She stopped in front of the elevator and stomped impatiently as it came down. “What is the rush?” He ventured to ask.

“Just wait.” She said as he let out a sigh. “It’ll work...”

He blinked at the last part she said. “Wha...” He was cut off suddenly by her dragging him into the elevator. They stood for a moment as the elevator went up to the penthouse. It seems with her everything had to be extravagant; she grabbed his hand again and rushed to the door of the penthouse, unlocking it quickly. He was surprised that she even wanted to hold his hand, and he was quite amazed that her hand was warm and soft to the touch. Not as icy as he had thought to begin with.

“Quickly,” she said as she closed the door and led him into the living room of the place. He glanced around and saw that it was decorated in a jungle type theme. Almost like a rain forest, the couch was all natural looking except for the cushions on it, which were all

in animal print. The place was absolutely garish in décor and he stared at it all. “Sit on the couch.” She waved him over it. He sat down and watched as she placed the bag on the wooden table in the middle of the room. She walked about the room and lit a candle that she had on a shelf.

He was looking at the bag for a moment and didn’t notice what she was doing until he looked up and saw that she had her hair down out of the tight bun she always wore. Her hair flowed like silk down her back, around her throat and between her breasts. His eyes widened, she didn’t have her shirt on. “Tina...” He said as he looked at her breasts. She ignored him as she grabbed the bag in one hand and was carrying the candle in the other and walked over to him. He kept staring at her breasts as they swayed back and forth.

She sat in front of him placing the candle beside her and opened the bag smiling. “Ok... Draven, we are going to have to work together.” She looked at him and noticed he was looking at her boobs and not her face. She snapped her fingers in front of his face until he looked up into her eyes she saw the blush rushing to his cheeks. “Draven, look at me here.” She pointed to her eyes. “Brains are in here.”

“Yeah,” he blinked a few times and nodded at her. “You have my attention now.” *‘In more ways than one.’* He swallowed hard and willed himself to calm down.

As she sat there her tail uncurled from around her waist. She started to take items out of the bag. She lifted out an animal skin soft and supple. It was the skin of a pronghorn antelope she spread it on the floor before both of them. Then she took out a small bowl that was made of clay. After that she brought out a bundle of sweet grass, then took out some other herbs he wasn’t too aware of. He was so interested in what she was doing he didn’t notice that she had a tail. She brought out another bowl and this bowl looked like it was made of a crystal like rock. She placed the long sweet grass and the other long-stemmed herbs in that bowl. In the clay bowl she placed crumbled up herbs from a small leather pouch.

He watched her with interest, wondering what she was really doing. He watched as she dug through the bag and brought out a several vials with labels on them and a large vial with a label that said: Purified water. She poured the purified water in the clay pot then took a small pestle and started to mix the herbs up with the water. She added more water after she was done. She set that aside and looked up at him. He looked into her eyes and she slowly closed them.

“What are you...?” She held up her hand as if to hush his questions. She opened her eyes again, he looked at them and it seemed like she had a far away look to them. She moved slowly and stiffly she moved her hands to the sweet grass and lifted it up and put it into the candle’s flame. It lit up with flame and she moved slowly and placed it back into the crystal bowl. She then grabbed the other long stemmed grass and did the same to it. She took out of the bag a long owl feather. Draven watched as the flames on the grasses disappeared and smoke started to waft up from both of them. The smoke entwined with one another and he saw that the two types had a different colored smoke. She moved the

feather over the smoke and he looked at her face. She had her eyes closed and she was mumbling something he didn't understand.

"Relax, clear your mind." She said calmly looking at him. "Let yourself be taken away from your physical body, release yourself. Become your inner animal." She said soothingly almost hypnotically.

Breathing in some of the smoke he blinked several times. It felt, strange, he shook his head for a moment and blinked at her. "What are you burning?" He managed to ask.

"Sweet grass and Mugwort. Mugwort is good for visions and divination now relax, be calm." As she talked she swayed back and forth moving the feather over the smoke. Soon she put the feather down and picked up the clay bowl with the water and herbs in it. She drank from the bowl and handed it to him. He drank from it too and felt a strange taste in his mouth. Blinking he looked at her again and shook his head.

"What is going on?" He blinked again and to him she looked like she was turning into something strange.

"Be your inner animal. Relax." She kept saying over and over.

He looked at her and saw that she had an animal face, like a cat, fur started to cover her whole body. He shook his head and saw her tail and noticed that she had fangs. "Oh my God." He murmured and he reached out to her as if he needed to touch her to make sure what he was seeing was real.

Her voice broke into his cloudy thoughts. "Become your inner animal, show me him. Become the animal within. Let go of yourself. You were never human to begin with... you are like us. Show me."

Draven felt dizzy and he looked at his hands and he had fur on them, he blinked a few times and there was still fur all over his arms and hands. The air felt heavy around him and he looked up at Tina and she was walking around she was naked except for the fur over her body. He stood up and stumbled over to her. "What... is going... on?" He felt like he was talking through a straw.

Walking over to him she put her paws on his shoulders to steady him. He had completely changed. From what she could see he had a cross DNA with a canine of some sort. Why he reverted to stay as a human, she wasn't sure, but from what she figured, he had forgotten who or what he really was. The herbs have worked, though temporarily, she looked at him and he was looking at her with half closed eyes. He moved his paw up and caressed her breast and she suddenly stiffened. She slowly moved his paw off of her and looked into his eyes. "How are you feeling?" She asked.

He looked at her lips moving and it took a moment for his mind to make out what she said. "I am... feeling strange." He lurched forward a bit onto her she kept her arms open

to steady him. He landed on her with his face buried in her breasts. He let out a noise and licked at her nipple with a long tongue, she pushed him off of her.

“Now behave Draven, you don’t need to get all worked up.” She cooed to him as she moved him to sit back down. He let out an irritated growl and made a grab for her, she moved to avoid him.

Draven watched her walk around him and smelled her. She was slightly aroused and he knew it, his tongue lolled out of his mouth and he panted at her. “I want to touch you.” He looked at her with as big of eyes as he could get. “Why won’t you let me touch you?”

Tina shook her head and stopped walking around him. “We are going to try and find Catnel first. Can we do that?” She watched him warily as his ears seemed to droop. “You want to find her don’t you?”

He looked up at her slyly “I want to touch you first.”

She put her hands on her shapely hips and smiled at him. “After we find out where Catnel is going and who is with her. Ok?”

He let out a defeated huff and closed his eyes. Tina walked over and sat in front of him and closed her eyes as well. They sat for several minutes breathing in the scent of the mugwort and sweet grass.

“The two are running as animals.” Draven’s voice was deeper than usual, and had a hint of growling to it. Tina opened her eyes and looked at him and he still had his eyes still closed. “One is a male. He is one of us. Different. The other is female. She is Catnel. She found him. They are together.” He said this stiffly and evenly.

“Different in what way?” Tina asked him.

“Different. DNA different. Mixed up DNA. He is stronger than we are.” Draven answered her.

“Stronger.” Tina said and thought about it. She was thinking about it a little too hard that she didn’t notice that Draven had opened his eyes and he was starting to crawl to her. She blinked and turned her attention back to him and was shocked to see him so close to her. He had put his paw on her leg and was moving it up her thigh. She looked at his paw and then to his face. He had a look of yearning on his face as he reached up with his other paw to touch her breast. She didn’t flinch away from him, licking her lips, as he got closer to her. He crawled up to her closer and cupped her breast in his paw while with the other paw moved up between her legs.

“Draven.” Tina said as he moved up closer to her, and moved his muzzle to her neck and started to nibble on her. She tilted her head and let out a moan. He growled at her and pushed on her and she lay down with no resistance.

He looked at her as she lay on the floor. "Tina, you look delicious." He growled at her and she looked up at him.

"Draven..." She reached up to him and touched the side of his face with her paw. He leaned into her paw and her fingers trembled as she put them through his face fur. He nipped at her and growled low in his throat.

"Tina..." He growled again and slowly leaned over her and licked her collarbone up her throat and under her chin. She placed her hands on his back and started to move them over his shoulders pulling him to her slightly. She growled back at him when he licked on her throat with urgency he looked into her eyes and she mewled at him. He was overcome with her noises and pretty much devoured her lips with his own. He slowly slipped his tongue into her mouth in a dominance dance with her own tongue. She closed her eyes as she moved his paws up to move over her breasts. Flicking his thumb pad over her nipples, she arched her back and he made a low growl in her mouth. He slid his tongue over hers and sucked it into his mouth then nipped at her lips for a moment. He pulled up for a second to look at her body, his thumbs rubbing on her hard nipples. He bent down and licked one.

"Oh!" She exclaimed as she opened her eyes to look at him sitting over her. He was licking her nipples ever so gently and blowing on them. She moved her hand up to his hair and put her fingers through it and rubbed his long wolf-like ears with her thumbs.

Draven stopped licking her nipples and growled at her he bit at her neck and slowly started to turn her around with his paws. Helping her sit up and moving his hands on her back down to her soft behind. She knew what position he was maneuvering her in and she helped him out by getting on her hands and knees. Slowly moving her tail under his nose, he growled at her and grabbed her tail. "You have to learn to control this." He mumbled and pushed it over to the side as he looked at her soft smooth bottom. He ran his hand over her back and slowly moved his member to her already wet entrance.

Tina let out a mewling noise when he pushed himself into her. Her whole body quivered as he started to move in and out of her. He leaned over her back and bit her neck and she let out a loud yowl of pleasure. That yowl drove Draven Rowls mad with desire as he went faster into her, latching himself to her neck with is teeth, he pounded into her.

Tina hadn't been mated in years and he was giving her his all. She clawed the floor around them as he growled with lust into her ears. When he bit her she felt her whole body go numb with need. She tightened around his thrusts and groaned when she felt him release his orgasm into her. "Oh Draven..." she moaned. "I wish you would remember this."

Draven awoke with a headache. He opened his eyes and saw greenery all around him he sat up and he stopped for a moment when he heard her moan beside him. He looked down and saw Tina's long blond hair, he let out his breath quickly and looked down at himself and saw that he wasn't wearing any clothes.

Slowly he lifted the green sheet covering her body and saw that she was naked as well, he stopped though when he noticed that she had a tail. His eyes began to widen, and was about to jump away from her when he looked at his hands. His nails looked more like claws and he moved his fingers. "What the..." He mumbled and moved his hand back and forth.

Tina stirred in her sleep and turned to face him and blinked at him when she saw he was fully a human again. "What is wrong my love?" She asked as she leaned on her side looking at him.

He looked at her quickly. "What did you call me?" His eyes had a look of confusion.

Laughing lightly Tina sat up letting the sheet covering her fall. He looked at her naked body and then down at his own. She reached out and caressed his now human face and smiled. "You are my love. Is that too hard to believe?"

He moved backwards away from her, as he saw her tail curl around her waist. "You... you're not human."

A knowing smile came to her face. "Neither are you." She watched him as his face changed from that of frightened, to argument, to confusion.

"What?" He whispered out of his dry throat.

"You heard what I said, you hid it well. You even had me convinced. How did you forget?" She started to get up and he moved back more. She smiled and stood up and he looked at her naked body and felt a rumble in his throat. He grabbed his throat and looked at her. "Oh you haven't forgotten." She purred at him and walked over to him.

"You mean... I am an animal, like you?" His eyes widened

Tina nodded and walked closer to him and he didn't back up any more as he looked at her like he was seeing her in a whole new light. She smiled when she heard him growl again deep in his throat. "You cannot deny it any longer Draven."

Draven felt the hairs on his body stand out and he looked down and he saw that he was covered in fur. "Oh God." He gasped as he looked at his arms. He started to shake a little bit and she knelt down to him.

"Sweet Draven, you have to calm down." She leaned on him and looked into his eyes. He looked back and felt the hair rise on the back of his neck and he reached up to her and

grabbed her pulling her down into his lap. Draven felt himself losing control as he licked her lips with his tongue. She parted her lips and he moved his tongue into her mouth. They kissed deeply and he slowly laid her on the floor. He moved his body over her and she looked at him with half closed eyes. He licked her throat and his growing desire was enough to drive him wild. She felt him enter her and she gasped as he bit on her shoulder.

He abandoned himself to his need for her and he started to make love to her, he was surprised that she allowed him to do this to her, usually she was such a cold person. His body trembled as he continued to move in her. He kept feeling his body slip from a feral state to rational thought. He was about to go crazy as he looked down at her and saw her soft breasts rising and falling and hearing her little whimpers and moans. It made his manhood swell up with desire and within a few moments he let himself go. Her whole body shook as he released himself in her, she put her arms around him and pulled him down.

Chapter 22. Entrapments

Alex awoke with Catnel cuddled up close to him. He felt happy that she was here with him. He had been lonely and she seemed to have filled the void that was in his heart for so very long. It was as if his whole life had opened up ever since she showed up in it. She murmured and he slowly moved a strand of head fur from her forehead with one of his claws. Her eyes fluttered open at his touch and she looked up at him with her blue eyes.

“Why are you awake?” She asked as she snuggled up closer to him.

“I was thinking.” Alex said as he kissed her forehead.

She sat up and looked at him he frowned as her warmth left his body. “Thinking about what?” She asked as she turned to face him. He looked at her body and his frown faded.

He considered lying to her, but thought better of it. “About you, about me.” He said.

Catnel looked at him for a few moments, and he noticed her ears were twitching. He thought she was about to get moody. “We should go.” She finally said as she started to dig through her backpack for clothing. Her back was turned on him and he watched her hips sway as she bent over the pack.

As he watched her and he started to get aroused. He bit his lip and looked away from her, but it seemed that he couldn't control what he was thinking. He wanted to walk up behind her and make her smile. He closed his eyes and tried to think of something else.

Catnel turned around and looked at Alex to ask him a question but stopped when she saw he had his eyes closed. She sighed and continued to pack up the bag. She smelled the air and could distinctly smell the stale air of winter coming. She stopped suddenly when she smelled something else. “Oh...”

Alex's eyes opened up immediately when she uttered that word. "What is it, Kitten?" he asked as he stood up. She saw he was ready to fight his claws were drawn and his fur was standing on end.

"There is something in the air. It's not good." She looked at him. "We are going to be separated."

He blinked at her prediction. "What?"

"You must be strong for me Alex. I will give up to protect you. You need to go over the mountains." She suddenly turned to her feral tiger form and ran off into the woods before he could stop her.

"Wait... Catnel!" Alex cried out to her.

Catnel ran without looking back, almost afraid that if she did he'd be on her tail running after her. She'll have to find them first before they found her. Before they found Alex. They would most likely kill him if they knew he was her new mate. She smelled Tina's stench, and it was unmistakable. She kept running until she saw the large red rocks standing up like castle walls she slowed down and looked at the place known as "The garden of the gods." She sat on her haunches and looked at the cars parked around the natural park. She scanned them and saw the white van she was familiar with.

She shifted into her human form and remembered she didn't have her clothing on. She blushed and quickly shifted back to feral. She went down close to the other cars parked and started to look inside them. She was on the edge though for she feared being caught off guard either by a normal human or by Tina herself.

She walked along the side of a small Volkswagon and noticed a suitcase in it. She shifted and tried the door. It opened and she smiled to herself as she pulled the suitcase over and opened it. She found sweatpants and an oversized T-shirt. She quickly put them on. Closing the door to the Volkswagon quickly she ran up to the top of a hill to watch the white van.

"Interesting view." Said a voice from behind her. She turned quickly and saw a gun pointing right at her chest. Draven was smiling at her his fangs showing prominently.

"Draven..." She said, not even glancing at the gun. "So, you finally realized you weren't as human as you thought you were?"

"Shut up Catnel. It's about time you were caught." He kept his eyes locked with hers and only briefly glanced about. "Where is the other one?" He demanded.

"Other what?" She asked him.

“Your traveling companion. Don’t deny it; I can smell him all over you.”

“I have no idea who you are talking about?” She said stubbornly looking away to the left when she heard a slight noise.

He glanced in the way she was looking and was suddenly punched from the other side. As the fist came into contact with him he felt the gun fly from his hand. His whole body flew through the air and crumpled onto the ground. He looked up at whoever assailed him and saw a large figure standing where he once was. Alex was rubbing the knuckles on the paw that punched Draven.

“Alex!” Catnel yelled when she saw him. He stalked towards Draven though and she saw his claws lengthen and his fangs slowly grow, she knew he was going to go feral, like when he attacked the drunken hunters. She quickly ran to intercept him. “NO!! Alex... Please... Don’t.” She said as she stood in front of him.

Alex didn’t hear her but saw her, his blood was thrumming in his ears and all he wanted to do was kill the one who dared threaten his mate. But she was standing in his way. Why did she protect him? What was wrong with her? He slowly stopped when she placed her hand on his chest and he felt her cool touch melt away the aggression. He stood and blinked at her for a moment then back at Draven who started to sit up.

“He’s a strong one Catnel.” Draven coughed and spit out some blood and a tooth into his hand. “He hits like a goddamned bus.”

Alex didn’t say anything as he picked Catnel up and cradled her in his arms. He then turned and ran away into the woods again.

“We are going to catch you!” Draven yelled after them. “I almost had you...”

Tina came out of the van, chuckling as Draven looked at her. “Well, now we know what her companion is capable of.” She purred to him as she walked up to where he sat.

He kept a hand to his bruised face rubbing it lightly. “Man he hits fucking hard.” Draven moaned as he stood up. Tina pulled his hand away from his face and saw the skin turning purple.

She shook her head and frowned at him. “I guess next time you will be a little more aware of your surroundings.” She said as they made their way back to the van, she wrote something quickly in a little notebook she was carrying.

Alex ran and he ran fast and hard holding Catnel in his arms. She looked up at him and saw the look on his face. “Alex, you have to put me down.” He didn’t look down and kept running. “Stop. They aren’t after us.”

He stopped and was panting. "You shouldn't go running off." He said.

"But, now they know about you." She said in a strangled voice.

"I don't want to lose you." Alex confessed as he let her out of his arms. She blinked back tears that were threatening to burst from her eyes. He went to place his paw on her cheek and she turned away.

"You are being selfish." Catnel said as she looked away from him.

"Sounds to me, that you are being selfish, not me. I'll fight along with you. I want to help you." Alex walked around her to make her look at him. "Please, let me into your life. I'm not that naive, that man wasn't a normal human, and a normal human would have died from the force of my punch."

She lowered her head and sighed inwardly. "You are right." She started to pace a little bit. "Draven is one of us. Just that until recently, he never knew he was one of us. I don't know what changed him, but whatever it is, it has to do with Christina." She ran her fingers through her hair and let out a sigh. She didn't look like she was going to say anything else. A ton of questions swarmed up into Alex's mind but he let her set her own pace in telling him what was going on. "I was one of the first successful experiments and all others were based off of my 'blueprints' after the fact. In some cases my blueprints were applied after some experiments had started. That is why, I suppose, you are a month older than me." When she said that he wondered how she knew he was a month older. "Christina... or Tina... is my improvement. More perfect than I was. An upgrade of sorts I guess." She laughed bitterly.

"I..." Alex started to say but closed his mouth not quite knowing what to say.

"Tina would obey, unlike me. She would do as she is told; she's ruthless, cunning and heartless." Catnel paced more as she unraveled the mysteries around her hunters. "They only want me for one major thing that they never anticipated. They found out that I can have children, and they had found out all the previous experiments could produce offspring and that is why they had us all killed off. They didn't want us to pollute the gene pool I guess."

At the news Alex's eyes widened and he looked at her. He swallowed hard and knew that what she said was true, meant that he could become a father. His own father had told him that the possibilities of him being a father was improbable, the DNA made it impossible to reproduce. Yet, with this new news he felt his heart leap a bit.

"What is wrong?" Catnel asked him suddenly when she saw the look on his face. He looked at her quickly and smiled.

"I can be a father." He said shakily and proudly. "I always wanted to be a father. To teach my child the same things my own father taught me."

Catnel smiled at the sudden pride that shined on his face. Like she just opened up a new toy for a child. He walked over to her and hugged her close, giving her a kiss on her lips. "Yes." She answered him.

A sudden frown crossed his face. "So, that is why... You had me promise..."

Catnel chuckled and looked at him. "That was one of the reasons. The other reason had to do with the fact that I am really weak during that time, and all my inhibitions go out the window, plus... I cannot remember a lot of it." He saw her ears showing her blush.

"You mean... I could have, and you wouldn't have remembered?" She gave him a sidelong glance when he asked that and he couldn't help but start laughing.

She wrinkled her nose at him. "With you, I would remember." She said her eyes narrowing at him suspiciously.

He chuckled some more and held up his paws at her look. "I didn't take advantage."

"I know Alex, I said I would remember you." She smiled at him. "We better go we need to get our packs and get into Manitou Springs. I have to find my contact." She looked at him and suddenly had a heavy desire to hug him. She walked over to him and gave him a hug. Alex placed his finger on her chin and tilted her head up. He slowly pressed his lips on hers and kissed her.

"I want you to be happy." He mumbled to her as he smoothed down her face fur. "And you will be, I promise you."

Chapter 23. Night Visions.

The lights flickered in the old buildings lining the main street of Manitou Springs. Two figures wrapped in cloaks walked down the sidewalk, one figure taller than the other; the smaller of the two limped slightly.

They came to a corner store that looked closed, but they knocked anyway and they were permitted to enter.

Catnel removed her hood and looked at the elderly lady that let them into the store. She was an old Apache Indian and she smiled up at Catnel and Alex. "Welcome, I was expecting you earlier. Fira was also expecting you earlier too." She waved her withered hand and smiled.

"We were side tracked Mom." Catnel admitted as she hugged the old woman. "Where is Fira? I missed my sister."

Alex's eyes widened. "Mom... Sister?" He looked at them in a confused fashion.

The old woman chuckled. "Who is this boy?" The woman asked as she brought up her cane to poke at Alex's leg. He let her poke at him as he stood there.

"This is Alex, Mom, he is my mate." Catnel introduced him to the woman. "Alex this is my mom... I will be right back; I'm going to go get my sister. Keep Mom, company."

Alex looked at the human woman. "Uh... Hi."

"You don't think I am her real mother do you?" She asked him.

Alex shrugged and wondered about the situation. "Well, I didn't know Catnel had a sister either."

"Oh yes, her sister is a nice girl, very bright and intelligent. Always reading, keeping to herself." The old woman sat on a stool she had in the shop. Alex just watched her hobble about. "I'm not their mother though. I just took care of them for a little while after their father died. Probably the same way your father died." She pointed at him with her cane. "He died protecting you didn't he?"

"How did you... know?" He eyed her suspiciously.

"I know a lot. And well it isn't too obvious that you are one of those experiments. Even if I was struck deaf and dumb I would know my son's work."

Alex looked at her closely and sniffed; he sat back suddenly and blinked at her.

"What..."

"Oh so you do recognize the scent." She smiled. "I always wanted a grandson, but never expected one quite so... Unusual."

"You are Doctor Gladster's mother?" He asked hesitantly.

"Oh, is that what name he took?" She chuckled, and smiled. "I guess he was ashamed to be manipulating DNA like he was, shunning his heritage. But I have to smile, since his real name meant; 'Wolf that runs with bears.' And what did he make? A wolfbear." She chuckled again.

"I'm shocked." Alex said.

"Shocked about what?" Catnel's voice came from the doorway.

"I think I found my Grandmother." He said unbelievably.

"Who is whose grandmother?" Asked a different voice. Alex looked at the person the voice belonged to and almost fell over. There in the door way was another cat woman.

She was wearing jeans and a t-shirt. She didn't look like Catnel, but he was shocked to see her nonetheless. He staggered a bit and found a seat to sit down in.

"Fira, this is Alex." Catnel offered the new woman, waving at Alex as he sat down looking at them both.

Fira was tawny colored, had shocking blue eyes, she looked younger than Catnel. She walked around Catnel and looked at Alex and smiled at him. "Wow Cat..." She mumbled as she reached out to touch Alex. "He's so handsome."

Alex looked up at her and forced a weak smile. "Thanks. I am feeling a little overwhelmed."

"Oh Alex... I'm sorry to put this on you." Catnel said going over to him and hugging him close to her body. "I didn't know how overwhelming it could be." She started to smooth his face and look into his eyes. He looked back and smiled a little more and leaned up to her and kisses her. She gave into his kiss and leaned on him as his tongue wiggled into her mouth.

"Don't let me get out the spray bottle." The old woman chuckled.

Alex and Catnel broke the kiss and looked up at them. If she weren't covered in fur, they would have seen Catnel blushing. Fira started laughing. "Oh that is funny Mom." She snickered and looked at them for a moment. "I think that we should all go downstairs. We have a ton of things to do." She seemed a bit more carefree than Catnel and she had a bit of a skip to her step as she went to the stairs. Alex watched as her tan tail disappeared from view.

"She's a normal household cat?" He asked.

Catnel nodded and smiled. "Yes, of the breed; Siamese."

Alex got up and went over to the old woman. "Want me to help you downstairs?" He offered. The woman smiled and stood up carefully.

"Oh, no... I am quite capable of moving around by myself." She waved him away impatiently.

He blinked and backed away. "But..."

"Just go downstairs."

Catnel took Alex's paw and led him downstairs. "She's like that. Stubborn but the nicest woman in the world." They entered the basement and it opened up into a large room. On the walls were shelves and shelves of jars, animal pelts, and other strange items. Along one wall were pictures of animals. Alex walked closer to the wall of pictures and stopped.

The photos weren't of basic animals. They were pictures of the DNA altered animals from the Projects. He saw a picture of Catnel as a young kit hugging a human male.

"That's my father." Catnel mumbled and he jumped because he forgot that she was standing beside him. She walked to wall and pulled one picture down he looked at her and she smiled as she gave it to him. "We didn't know if you died with your father, but you didn't so... here." She put the picture in his paw and stepped back so he can look at it.

Alex looked at the photo: It was of him as a small pup with his father. Doctor Gladster was ruffling his headfur and Alex had a look as if he was put off by it. "How did you get this?" He asked after a few moments of staring at it.

"My son was so proud of you that he sent me a couple of pictures. I didn't think I'd ever see you in person though." The old woman said as she entered the room holding a cane. "When he stopped calling and writing, I knew what happened."

Alex looked at her and back to the photo. "If I knew..." He said.

"You didn't... no one knew..." Fira said from the couch that Alex didn't notice as he walked in. She was looking at a book with glasses perched on her nose. "It was because of our father that we were able to escape with our lives. Your father sacrificed himself for the greater good. He loved you more than his own life."

Catnel nodded in agreement with her sister. She smiled at Alex and pulled him to the couch. He sat down and she settled in close to him. Catnel's 'Mom' came in and sat in a rocking chair. "We have been looking for everyone on that wall there." Catnel said as she waved at it. "Unfortunately, we have only found about 6 out of a 100 original experiments." She sounded disheartened by the fact and Alex put his arm around her.

"But, don't forget Cat... We still have more places to look." Fira said cheerfully. "There is a facility in Utah that needs checked out. That is why you must go over the mountains sooner than later, before the winter sets in." She grabbed a laptop that was sitting on a table beside the couch and started to type on it. "There is a snow storm coming in a couple days. If you leave tomorrow, maybe you can beat it. It'll slow down Tina I'm sure of it."

"I hope so." Catnel murmured as she leaned on Alex. "I almost was captured by Draven today, if it wasn't for Alex..."

Alex petted her hair and smirked, blinking tiredly. "I didn't want to lose you."

Fira watched it in amusement and looked at her Mom. "Mom, I think we should let them rest." She closed the laptop and set it on the table and got up. She went to the old woman and helped her up and they both left the room.

Alex and Catnel fell asleep on the couch. Alex was still holding the photograph of him and his father. Catnel snuggled against his chest as if she always belonged with him.

Chapter 24. Draven's Bane

Draven looked in the mirror and touched the bruise on his face and winced. "Damn it."

"You know, if you would just turn more furry, you wouldn't see that bruise." Tina dripped sarcastically at him. She was lying on her side on a silk covered bed

"Shove it." Draven muttered and put the ice pack he had back on his face. "I'm pissed off. I had a nice face."

"It's still nice, when you are in your real shape." Tina teased him and licked her lips

"Oh stop it. We have to find them." He sat on the corner of the bed still holding the ice on him. She sat up and moved closer.

"I know we do." Tina mumbled her face turning serious. "If we don't we will likely lose them in the mountains. I detest the cold and losing my quarry."

"We had them. If it wasn't for her friend..."

"Mate." She interrupted.

He waved in her face in irritation. "Yeah... yeah... her friend... we would have had her."

Tina frowned at his hand and was thinking seriously about biting him for waving it in her face. "It is your fault for not using your senses."

"I am not used to them." He mumbled. And her face seemed to contort a moment in a brief interval of rage.

"You better get used to them." She said almost too sweetly as she placed her hands on his shoulders. "Or you will suffer the consequences." She dug her nails into his shoulder and he made a small yelping noise.

Draven looked at her. "Well you are being very aggressive tonight." She flashed him a bitter smile and he pushed her mouth against his and kissed her. Pushing his tongue into her mouth.

She pushed away from him snarling. "I guess not as aggressive as you are." She looked at him with hatred and moved away from him. He grabbed the ice pack and put it back on his face.

“I swear... I am going to make him fucking pay for ruining my face.” Draven cursed. “I have completely had it with Catnel and her mate.” He moved the ice around his face.

Tina frowned and sighed as she slipped off the bed and grabbed a piece of paper and started to draw something on it. Draven ignored her and thought about putting a gun to the temple of Catnel’s mate. What was it she called him again? Alex.

“Alex...” He said slowly tasting the name like it was bitter. Tina looked up at him from her writings and frowned, she watched Draven for a moment then started to write more.

After an interval of quiet scratching on the paper, she looked up and smiled. “I think I finally have a plan.” She whispered. This got his attention as he sat up and went over to her.

“Let me in on it and does it have anything to do with me and putting a gun to Alex’s head?”

Tina just smiled at him showing her sharp teeth. “You’ll see.”

Chapter 25. Mountains?

Nobody trips over mountains. It is the small pebble that causes you to stumble. Pass all the pebbles in your path and you will find you have crossed the mountain. - Unknown

Catnel looked at the backpack that she was going to carry up the mountain. She had a defeated look on her face and Alex stood behind her and watched her shoulders slump slowly. “What is wrong?” He asked in his calm, straight - forward voice.

“I don’t think I can do it.” She whispered and looked at the mountains again.

“We can do it. Together.” He said as he leaned to her and kissed her cheek. “It won’t be hard to do this together, and hopefully we can get away from Draven and Tina.”

She let out a sigh and smiled weakly. “Ok. I think I can do it as long as you are with me.”

They had started to walk when a small wind picked up, and started to blow a few dry leaves about the ground. It was then she was remembering the short conversation she had with Fira. Alex was in the other room looking at photographs while she chatted with her ‘sister’.

“I am sorry we don’t have any better transportation for you and Alex. All we have is our van, and you know we cannot part with it.” Fira stated sadly.

Catnel had patted her on the back and smiled. "It's ok. I believe we can make it. It's just me trying to convince my feet that we can." She looked at her ankle and all Fira could do is look at it too.

She knelt down to examine it again for the hundredth time in the two days they have been there. "I have used all the herbs I can to make it heal faster. I think you should keep weight off of it for about five more days, but you are too stubborn to take my advice."

"Yes I am." Catnel admitted and smiled. "I haven't been on it for a day in a half that should count for something." That only got a chuckle out of Fira as she tightened the bandage again.

"I can give you the ingredients and you can make it yourself when you get into Utah. I just want you to promise me that you will get it taken care of. If not by you; then: by Alex. He seems genuinely concerned about you." She glanced at him through the doorway.

Catnel smiled and nodded. "I promise I will take care of it."

She and Alex walked in silence through the main street of Manitou Springs, they had on their 'human' disguises but also wore their heaviest of clothing incase they let them slip.

Alex was looking about warily; he probably was scanning for any sign of Draven or Tina. Every so often he would pause and sniff the air inconspicuously. She felt nervous herself, she didn't want to cause anyone on the street any danger, especially here.

Alex placed his hand on her shoulder and she looked at him. He was looking up the road, in the direction they were going. She looked at what he was looking at. Two white vans were parked at the one road leading to the mountains. Catnel looked at Alex briefly then back at the vans. "If we pass by those, we'll be caught." She mumbled to him.

"I know." He said quietly as if he was forming a small plan in his head. She didn't know what he was thinking but she was hoping it was a good one. If not she had a backup plan herself. "I think we should try to go another way."

Silently she nodded as they casually crossed the street as if they didn't notice the two vans. They weren't very clever, thought Alex as he held his arm out for her to take. When her paw went around his arm he felt her warmth enter his body and he felt his confidence rise up again. She seemed though suddenly as if she was leading him. So instead of fighting her, he let her lead him. She led him up to a shop with silver and turquoise jewelry, and she stopped and pretended to point the jewelry out to him as if it was the first time she had ever seen it. He followed along with the rouse as two men walked by wearing heavy jackets.

"That was a couple of them." She whispered to him once they were out of earshot and he nodded.

“I suggest we find a way out, and fast.” Concern deepened in his eyes as he looked into hers. She looked away quickly as if she was afraid of what she would see in them. A conviction that he would die for her if the need arose. She just didn’t want that to happen, she had seen too many die and she didn’t want to see him die as well. Not for her and not for anything as foolish as her quest.

She looked around the street up and down and thought for a few moments. She had a frown on her face as if she was willing her thoughts to be spoken. It seems as if no idea wanted to spring forth from her mind and she looked down. “I cannot think of something right now.” She whispered to him and shook her head sadly. “I have been trying to think but it seems to be clouded, like something is blocking me from saying what I want to say.”

“What is it? What do you need to tell me?” He asked, facing her head on, trying to will her to say what was on her mind. She just shook her head and looked back at him a little bit of confusion spreading across her face.

“I wish...” She began and shook her head violently. “I wish I could.” She shook as she stood in front of the shop. “It’s like a mental blockage, it won’t come out and I am trying, I’m trying.”

Alex looked at her and saw the confusion wash over her face. She seemed to be arguing with herself to try and get the answer out of her. An inner turmoil that seemed to brew within her soul and it was eating her alive. He looked around and saw a couple of men walking towards them and he took her hand and led her inside the shop they were standing in front of. The small shop smelled of herbs and of animal skins. He wrinkled his nose to the smell and glanced around. Catnel stood and looked around as well, her eyes lingered on a pelt of a rabbit. She shook her head and stepped back from it and bumped against a large pelt of a wolf. “Oh god.” Alex murmured under his breath as they stood among several animal skins. Catnel looked more confused then she was outside and he squeezed her paw as if to reassure her that he was still there.

“I don’t like being in here.” She whispered to him. “It smells too much like death.” She started to back up to the door, but stopped when she saw two men standing near the door. “They are out there!” She whispered harshly and Alex nodded to confirm that he already knew.

He moved her so he was standing between her and the door. “We have to pretend we are in here by our choice. If we don’t, then we will be found out.”

Catnel nodded at the logic and wondered if there was a rear exit to the shop. All the horrible animal skins seemed to be mocking her. “These animals, they were only skinned for their fur, the rest of the bodies were wasted.” She mumbled.

The owner of the shop looked up at the two new arrivals and smiled. He set down a book he was reading on taxidermy, and adjusted his leather vest, he cleared his throat and Alex looked at him. "Hello, sir." He welcomed him cheerfully. "May I help you?"

Alex looked to the man and back to Catnel then looked at the pelts of the many animals. He took her paw and steered her towards the counter where the man sat. "What do people use these for?" He asked honestly. Catnel peeked to the door and saw the two men talk to one another as one glanced into the shop. She straightened up and moved against the protectiveness of Alex. He put his arm around her shoulders and held her close to his body.

The man behind his counter sat up straight and proudly as he started to give a speech about where the skins came from and how much each one costs, what people use them for. As he was explaining this, the two men outside started to walk away. Alex was only halfway listening to the guy explain his wares when Catnel tugged on him and nodded towards the door. "Thank you." Alex said to the man and he nodded still looking at them expectantly.

"Would you be interested in a wolf pelt?" He offered Alex, and Catnel looked at the man and flashed her feline eyes at him.

"Alex doesn't need to wear a pelt; he already has a nice one." She seemed to hiss, and the man looked at her wide-eyed. "Thank you." She added as an after thought.

They both seemed to rush out of the store as quickly as they could. The man was left a little bewildered, but he shrugged and went back to reading his book. "Tourists..." He mumbled.

"That shop was horrible." She said as they finally emerged into the fresh air again, she looked up the road and saw that one of the two white vans was gone. "Come on."

They walked quickly but calmly up the road slowly approaching the white van but casually looking in shops as they approached. As if the van was nothing to them but a normal van. Alex seemed to be a lot calmer about the whole situation then she was, and she felt tense and nervous. Her heart was racing and she wished she knew what was going on. She had a wave of confusion hit her again and it was almost staggering this time, as if she ran into a brick wall head on. Alex noticed her hesitation and gripped her paw tightly.

"I feel sick again." She mumbled.

"What can I do to help you?" He whispered to her.

"I want you to give up..." Said a new voice from behind them. Alex turned around and spotted a tall woman with perfect hair put up in a long braid slung over her shoulder. "And while you are at it..." She walked up to them slowly gracefully, swinging her hips.

Alex started to growl low in his throat as Catnel grabbed her head and made a strangled cry to suddenly crumple to the ground.

Alex stopped growling and knelt down to her. "Kitten?" He started to lift her into his arms when something was held to his temple and he heard the click of a gun being cocked.

"You pick her up and you will see your lovely 'kitten' spattered with your brains." Tina's voice dripped with venom. "Of course you wouldn't see much afterwards would you?" She laughed at her lame attempt at the joke.

Alex looked up at her, the gun now pointing to the front of his skull. "What did you do to her?" He demanded as he held Catnel's paw in his.

"What do you think I did to her?" Tina smiled. "I made her sleep." She moved her other paw to his face and moved her paw up and removed his hat from his head. "Well, Catnel sure knows how to pick them. Wow." She looked him over hungrily. "I bet you would do well in the boss' breeding program."

Alex looked at her in shock. "A what?"

She smiled. "Oh... Catnel didn't tell you? Shame." She clicked her tongue and moved her booted foot to kick at Catnel's prone body. A possessive growl escaped Alex and he moved over her body protectively.

"Don't hurt her." He rumbled.

She seemed to ignore him as she snapped her fingers and several men came out into the open. "Take Catnel and place her in the van, tie this one up tightly, he looks like he will give us a ton of trouble, if not properly restrained." Draven came out from the driver's seat of a van and he walked to them. Tina looked at Draven with triumph in her eyes. "See... easy."

Draven frowned and looked at Alex murderously, his one eye was swollen shut and he had a large bruise on the side of his face. "Fuck you Tina." He murmured to her and she smiled at him smugly. He strode over to Alex.

Alex eyed him warily as a couple of men pulled Alex's paws behind his back and cuffed him. Draven smiled and cracked his knuckles and then delivered a punch to the side of his face. Alex didn't flinch and kept staring at Draven.

Draven got mad and clenched his fist and made a sour face. "Just take the Mutt away." He pouted. The two men pulled Alex to his feet and he wouldn't let them move him any further as he watched the other men grab Catnel and almost pushed and dragged her onto a board and take her into a van. He made a low growl and a slight whimper as they shut the doors and he could no longer see her. They stirred him to the other van and pushed

him. He growled and showed his teeth to several and they backed up. He went willingly into the other van stealing one last glance at the van that held his mate. As it drove off, he swore he would save her.

Chapter 26. Trapped.

- *Every nightmare has a happy ending you just wake up before the end can come.*

Catnel sat up, her head pounding. She held her paws to the sides of her head and glanced at her surroundings. The walls were white, and the florescent lighting was making her head hurt more. She placed her paw over her eyes to cut the glare down. She made out the cage front and cursed to herself. She knew she was in a modified facility, and she hoped within hope that they were still around Manitou Springs. She stood up slowly and almost fell, but managed to finally get on her feet. She went to the cage door and looked out.

The room outside her cell was about medium sized, with a security desk in the middle of it. At the desk was a rather bored looking guard and he was leaning back in his chair reading a magazine. He was facing her and she looked around the room some more. Noticing more cages lining the walls. She bit down on her bottom lip and let out a small sigh. The guard seemed startled by the sound she made and looked at her. She sneered at him and sunk to the floor still staring at him without saying a word.

Terrence Miller didn't expect the freak to wake up so soon. Tina said that the creature wouldn't wake up until morning. He looked at her and she kept staring at him as if she could catch his clothing on fire. "Don't stare." He mumbled almost imperceptibly.

"I have a right to." Catnel hissed a little.

Terrence gripped the cattle prod that was near his hip. "Stop or you get a good dose of electric." He showed her the prod and she just sneered at him.

"Oh, big important man, going to hurt me with your stick. You are not man enough to poke me with your stick." She hissed again and showed her fangs.

He knew what she meant by that comment against his manhood. He looked at her fangs and saw that her claws were out. He didn't want to really tackle with her without a real reason to. So he pushed the magazine up to his nose and tried to ignore her. He was grateful that Draven didn't leave the other freak in the room as well. The creature was built like a mountain. He remembered that Draven wanted to do some... experiments on the big male. He felt her staring holes through the magazine at him. When he moved the magazine down away from his face, she was still facing him, but she was sitting in the middle of the cell with her eyes closed.

He was definitely getting paranoid.

Catnel cleared her mind of everything and sat and relaxed. She knew she had to get out but didn't know how at the time. She hummed softly to herself, without the guard hearing her. He couldn't hear anyway because of the noises some of the computers were emitting. She wanted to seek him out. She needed to know that Alex was still ok, and within the facility. Her heart trembled when she let her body be taken away. Slowing down her pulse rate she went into another world, she knew being able to turn to feline form, she had the power to relax enough to have a controlled out of body experience. She just never did it before. She floated upwards, and looked down to see that she was still sitting up in a relaxed state. Nodding slowly she went back down and started to walk outside the cage. She felt a pull at herself and knew her body wanted her back. She had to find him first.

Catnel took a huge breath and walked out the door. She stared down the corridors and closed her eyes and concentrated on his spirit and felt a tug to the left. She ran down the stretch past a few people in white coats. They couldn't see her she was just a spirit herself. Her soul called out to him, and she felt another pull and she followed it. The pulling turned weak suddenly and she rushed forward to it, through a door and taking a right. She moved with top speed. Stopping suddenly at an iron door with large bolts she hesitated and walked through them.

Draven sat at the console. He had a wicked grin on his canine face. Tina decided not to hang around to watch it. A pity. He turned a knob on the console and a red LED light blinked to life. He looked up at window before him and started to laugh with malignant delight. Tightly tied to a table lay Alex, he was being put through a battery of tests, and Draven was testing out how long the wolfbear could stand electric current coursing through his body.

Alex didn't even cry out, but he was hurting, he wouldn't give Draven the satisfaction of hearing him begging or asking for mercy. He bit down on his own teeth and kept his eyes closed as the electricity went through his body numerous times. He suddenly opened his eyes, he felt as if someone else was watching. He looked in the room beyond the glass and saw Draven grinning like a lunatic. He then glanced about and suddenly saw a faded image of her. He closed his eyes and opened them again as another bolt shot through him.

"Cat?" He managed to say. She stood holding her paws in front of her face as if horrified at what she saw and had a worried expression. She was glowing white almost ethereal, she was beautiful and if she had wings he could almost say she looked like an angel.

"Alex..." She mumbled and slowly approached him. "Hold on my love... I will find my way to you." She moved her paw to his cheek and he didn't feel her, but knew she was with him.

"I... it... hurts." He gasped so only she could hear and he saw her nod.

“I know... please hold on... You will be with me soon.” Then she faded away.

Draven leaned into the console. “Do you need me to turn up the voltage?” He asked with a sneer.

Alex looked back through the glass and snarled. “You can just jam it up your ass and turn up the voltage!”

“Pity...” Draven said and turned the knob to the next notch. “Here comes some more lightning.”

Catnel gasped and blinked suddenly. She was back in the cage, but she knew how to get out of it. She lay on her side though for she suddenly was wracked by a wave of nausea. She clutched at her stomach tightly and made a pitiful retching noise.

Terrence suddenly sat up and looked at the animal in the cage. One moment she was just sitting quietly, the next she was making the most ungodly racket. He went to the cage and hit it with his cattle prod. “What are you doing?” He inquired and she proceeded to throw up. He looked around wondering what to do. Tina gave him specific instructions that nothing was to happen to the prisoner, but to be wary of anything unusual.

Catnel kept throwing up and lay sprawled out on the hard metal floor of the cage. After her last convulsive heave she lay still. Her head against the steel floor her eyes open and unmoving. A glaze over her eyes as if she was dead.

Terrence looked at the creature and stared. *‘Was it breathing?’* his mind started to panic. “Here... get up!” He poked the prod through the cage mesh and delivered a mild shock with it. She didn’t move.

He swallowed hard. *‘Oh God. If she is dead... Tina will eat me for dinner.’* He fumbled out his keys and found the one to unlock the cage. He opened it and stepped inside and the smell of her vomit reaching his nostrils was overwhelming. He held down the urge to retch and went to her to feel for her pulse. When he knelt down, there was a sudden swift movement and his cattle prod was out of his grasp. “Ugh!” He was pushed against the wall of the cage and his keys were taken from his belt loop.

Catnel had moved swiftly and over powered him. She held him against the wall of the cage. “You should be careful around tigers. We can be... unpredictable.” She ruffled the top of his hair with her paw and swiftly moved out of her cage and closed it behind her leaving him inside. “Enjoy the accommodations. I sure didn’t.” She frowned and turned to walk from the room. She needed to get Alex and fast.

She quickly went out the door and locked it behind her. She smiled when she noticed that the room was sound proof. She was pretty sure the guard was screaming his head off. She

looked down the corridors that seemed so familiar to her. She closed her eyes for a moment, and heard a noise down the way. Opening her eyes she sought out a hiding place. There were a few doors toward the end of the corridor. She ran swiftly to them and slipped inside one.

The air was damp in the room she was in and she slowly turned around and saw hundreds of glass cases. She walked among them slowly, and peered into each case. She saw reptiles and amphibians. Each one labeled their scientific names. She stopped in front of the cages of the phelsumas. The little green, blue, and red colored geckos were colorful and looked like little jewels among the branches. Their skin sparkled brilliantly as they moved about doing what little lizards do. She watched one with intent interest as it darted across the glass and stopped with a droplet of water fell across its face. The water beaded upon the nose, it used its tongue to slowly lick the water away. The lizard's eye was unblinking as with most phelsumas.

She walked away from the little geckos and went to another door on the far side of the room. She tested the lock and was happy to feel the lock click and disengage. She opened the door slightly and looked out to see if it was clear. A couple of people walked past in lab coats and they were talking about a trip one of them took to the Bahamas. They stopped right against the wall, near the room. She closed the door and sighed, she had to get past them and find Alex.

She slowly sunk down onto the floor.

Chapter 27

Tina was bored and she frowned when the light over her desk flickered a little bit. She bit on her bottom lip and stood up quickly making her chair fall to the floor. She walked out of her makeshift office and across the hall. She opened a large metal door and walked into the inner room. "God damn it!" she shouted and Draven turned around quickly and frowned at her.

"What?" He shouted back at her in irritation.

"Give it a rest! I am trying to write a report in the other room and I cannot with the damn light flickering." Tina marched forward and switched the console that Draven was at, off. She looked through the window at Alex and smiled. He was pretty much unconscious and looked very weak. "Besides, from what I see you broke his spirit."

Draven frowned and looked at Alex too. "He could still use a few thousand bolts through him."

"Just leave him. We have things to do." She grabbed Draven by the shirt collar and practically dragged him out of the room. The door shut behind them, and the bolts sliding home indicated that it was locked.

Alex breathed shallowly in the cell like room, still strapped securely to the table of his torture. He thought of the visit he received from Catnel. Remembering the one thing she said to him that didn't quite make sense. *You will be with me soon*. Did this mean she was dead and that he would join her in the after life? Did dying have to hurt this much? He moved his wrists in the shackles and it rubbed his fur out in clumps. His head fur was soaked with his sweat, he usually never sweated, and he watched as a drip of it fell to the floor. There was a sudden noise in the other room, a sliding and a clicking noise. He glanced up and saw someone in a white lab coat walking around in the other room. He breathed in a shuddering breath and turned his head hoping to get a little comfortable. If it wasn't for Tina coming in when she did, he was pretty sure he would have died. In a way that female saved him, although he hated her guts.

The person in the lab coat was moving around noisily in the other room and he looked at the figure again. The person's back was to him and it looked as though he was using a mop. Alex watched as the figure brought the mop up and swung it around and hit the door to his cell. There was a loud thump and a sound of a metal object hitting the floor. There was another thump as the mop hit the door again and the door swung open. The janitor ran into the room, and Alex looked at him for the first time and his eyes widened.

"Told you that I would find my way to you." Catnel said as she smiled at him.

Alex had thought she was a he and he was glad that she was there. He just couldn't say anything as she went to him and started to unlock the shackles. She stopped for a moment and looked at him. He saw that she had tears forming in her eyes and she leaned to him and kissed him on the lips.

"We must hurry." She whispered to him as she helped him stand. "I don't know where they went, but we have to get out of here first." She gave him an extra lab coat that fit him tightly. She went to the steel sink that was in the corner of his cell and got a cloth wet and started to wipe his wounds with the damp cloth, removing the electrodes as painlessly as she could.

"Cat..." He finally whispered. "What happened?"

She stopped with her ministrations and looked up at him from her place at his feet. "It's a long story; I woke up in a cage and... well... I escaped and went to find you. I'll tell you more when we get out."

He stared at her in silence for a while as she removed the last electrode from his foot. Why did he think that she was someone else for a moment there? She smelled like her and looked like her, how come she didn't in the other room?

She got up and looked at him and tilted her head at him. He placed his paws on her shoulders and held her at arms length. "What happened before? What made you... pass out?"

Catnel stopped for a moment and looked down at the floor. "I have a fail safe button. It seems Tina knows about it." She walked away from him her back to him. "They installed these microchips in the cats when we were young, and when a button is pressed we usually shut down, makes us... pass out. I didn't know that Tina would use it against me."

"What made you think she wouldn't?" He pressed, grabbing her shoulders and looking her in the eyes. She looked away suddenly and seemed to wiggle from his grip.

"I don't know. What I know now, is that we have to leave." She took his paw in hers.

Chapter 28

She panted and stood by the steel door, the one she saw in her vision. She reached for the knob when it turned on its own. She jumped back and hid behind the desk in the room. Draven was probably done torturing Alex she hoped she wasn't too late. The white lab coat she had on was stained with some chemicals, but it was better then she had expected.

When the door opened she watched who emerged and she almost let out a loud shocked gasp when she saw herself. 'Who...' She bit her bottom lip when she saw that Alex was following her clone.

Catnel blinked several times, not exactly knowing what to do. She didn't want to confuse Alex more then he was, and from what she saw of him it broke her heart, he looked beat up and bruised. Tired and confused. When they went down the hall she stood up quickly and slunk after them.

"So where are we going?" Alex asked weakly as he let Catnel lead him. He heard a slight noise behind him and glanced back, but he didn't see anything and looked back at her.

"We have to hide somewhere, where they won't find us."

"Okay, but where?"

She smiled at him and tugged on his paw. "I have a place, don't worry."

She looked around a corner and led him down another corridor. He sniffed the air and flinched a little. Catnel smelled a little bit like Tina for a moment there. He sniffed down the way they came and suddenly stopped dead in his tracks when he glanced a figure at the end of the corridor. He blinked and the figure was gone.

He looked back at Catnel who was leading him and back down the corridor. He shook his head, 'There cannot be two... can there? Must be the effects of the electric shocks making him see things.'

Catnel lead him through a maze of corridors and doors and finally they went down a darkened hallway that smelled of must and mold. There was another under lying smell that he didn't quite recognize and she moved him into a room. "Wait here." She whispered to him in the darkness. He sat down on an old chair thankfully and watched as she moved out into the hallway and looked up and then down. She then came back inside, closing the door slowly.

"We should be fine in here."

"Where is here?" Alex asked quietly as he watched her move to his ankles to look at the wounds on them.

"We are in the basement. I think they once used this building for making pharmaceuticals, but I am not too sure. You smell it right?"

"I... smell something, but mostly mold." He said as he put his paw on his nose. He moved his head back and stretched suddenly letting out a yawn.

"You should rest." Catnel said and started to move her paw through the fur on his leg.

"Yes." He rumbled happily, feeling a lot better.

Catnel growled as she crept down the final corridor where she saw them disappear, she knew the source of that smell. There was mold, but also a smell of musk, a scent of pheromones. It was a combination of her scent and some other female.

"Trying to trick my mate." She growled as she crept forward to the door where the smell was emanating. How come Alex didn't notice the slight differences in the other's scent? Her eyes widened when she smelled something coming from the room.

She rubbed against him and licked up his chest slowly and he looked down at her in surprise. "Kitten?" He asked as she purred and nuzzled against him. "What are you doing?" He pushed against her and looked at her.

"I thought I meant something to you." She seemed to pout at him and slowly nuzzled along his chest fur.

"Well, yes, you do." He said and blinked as a new smell came to his nose. She didn't smell like Catnel at all and there was a slight difference to her figure that he didn't notice before. "You..."

She looked at him with her eyes. "What is it Alex?" She asked.

“You are not Catnel.” He sat up slowly and the cat girl sat away from him and looked at him innocently.

Just as he made the connection the door opened and Catnel was in the doorway growling ferociously with her claws flexing. “Stay away from him.” She moved menacingly around the Catnel clone. The clone stared at her and Alex was doing the same. He sat up more he knew something wasn’t right.

“Kitten.” He murmured and looked at her and took in her scent. He started to slowly wag his tail in happiness and it thumped against the wall. “I knew...”

Catnel slowly rubbed her cheek against him and turned to look at the imposter. The cat shrunk back in fear. “What do you think you are doing?” She rumbled.

The clone slunk back more and looked around her, not daring to look in Catnel’s eyes. “I was told that... Tina found me someone to be with. She made me go in and help him, said that I could have him as a mate.”

Catnel growled. “What makes you think I believe that?” She approached the girl as her tail puffed up large.

