Chapter One

Maybe they were doomed to walk the prairie forever, never finding help. Glory shook her head fiercely. No, that was tiredness and hunger speaking. There had to be people somewhere. This rotted old railroad track would lead them to civilization eventually. Glory threw a desperate look around and saw nothing but tall dry grass and blue sky as far as her eyes could see—just empty prairie as bare as it must have been when the pioneers first settled the West. If she and Jane didn’t find help, people would die. Maybe people had already died. It had been over twenty-four hours since they’d left the crash site, and dozens of people had been hurt, some so badly that they hadn’t regained consciousness before the rescue teams had left the crash site. Jane still trudged along in her sensible librarian’s shoes, but turned her head back to look at Glory, a thin eyebrow raised in inquiry.

“Just hoping I might have missed some sign of civilization,” Glory muttered.

She watched Jane pull out her cell phone and try again, for the millionth time, to make a call. Glory sighed when Jane returned her cell phone to her purse. “Still nothing?”

Jane’s brown hair, having fallen out of its prim bun, pushed her shoulders when she shook her head. “Maybe a search and rescue team has already found the crash,” she said hopefully.

“Maybe.” Glory didn’t say anything else. What was there to say that they hadn’t already said? Their plane had crashed, and the only surviving member of the crew had tried repeatedly to send a Mayday, but the plane’s radio didn’t work. Nor did any cell phones, and none of the survivors could connect with the Internet to send an email Mayday. The co-pilot, Connie Mondale, had told them that help was certainly on the way, and organized the efforts to free those trapped by the debris and make the injured more comfortable.

“Perhaps Ms. Mondale has gotten the plane’s radio to work by now.” Jane persisted in her cheery optimism.

An optimist Glory was not. “Fat chance,” she grunted as she stumbled over the rough ground. “She spent hours trying to call, right?”

“Yes. She did.” Jane was slightly subdued, but lengthened her stride in determination. “Now it’s up to us to find help.”

Glory had to hand it to Jane. She had plenty of energy and enthusiasm. And she had to hand it to the co-pilot. Even with her ankle smashed to smithereens, Connie had kept it together. She had done everything she could to get the passengers help. But hours later, with no help yet on the scene and medical aid desperately needed, she had asked for volunteers to pair up and walk for help. Glory had volunteered, and so had a bunch of others. The co-pilot rejected some as too young or too hurt, leaving six to be paired up into three teams that she sent in different directions. Glory had been paired up with Jane Harris, a forty-something librarian from St. Paul, and they’d been walking since yesterday afternoon without finding any sign of people at all. The prairie seemed eerily empty.

Glory caught up with the librarian and resumed walking. “You know, I was so excited yesterday morning when I got on the plane in Minneapolis,” she ranted. “Four years as a glorified aquarium cleaner at the Mall of America’s Underwater World, and I finally landed a face-to-face interview with an international ocean-life study center. Dream come true, you know? It’s the reason I got my degree in marine biology.”

“Yes, you mentioned that,” Jane murmured drily. “Repeatedly.”

Okay, maybe Glory had already had this conversation a couple dozen times, but … “Dammit!” Glory swore when her low-heeled pump got caught in the thick grass covering the rail, making her stumble again. Damn, that hurt. Jane gave her a prim glance of reproach, and Glory forced back more curses at her new shoes.

“Are you okay?” Jane asked.

Glory wondered what Jane would say if she cut loose with her normal repertoire of four-letter words, and cleared her throat. “Fine,” she grumbled. “Why did I buy these stupid shoes, anyway? Oh, yeah, because they go with this stupid business suit.”

“You want to make a good impression at the interview,” Jane said, looking approvingly at the boring business suit Glory was wearing and less approvingly at her hair.

True. Glory wanted the job so much that she had bought the sedate navy blue trousers and jacket for the interview. She doubted her usual dressy goth gear of black jeans, black satin bustier over a blood-red silk T-shirt, and ankle-length black duster would have impressed them much. Too bad. She loved the way the bustier cinched in her waist and emphasized the curve of her hips. She was a big woman, but she had all the curves a woman could want. And then some. Her figure was more along the lines of Marilyn Monroe than Tyra Banks. Too bad ultra-thin was in and ultra-curvaceous was out. Her best friend Jill always said Glory would have been a sex goddess in another era.

“Yeah. Like this outfit is going to impress anyone now. It’s ruined.”

“I’m sure your prospective employer will reschedule your interview. You can wear something else to that one and do something about your hair color. Our misadventures are completely out of our control. It’s probable they are already aware of the crash. I’m sure that by now rescue teams have found the crash site.”

Geez, talk about Miss Pollyanna. The never-ending wind blew Glory’s hair into her eyes, and she shoved it behind her ear with an impatient hand. She had stripped the purple, red, and black streaks from her hair and changed it to a shade of pink that matched the blouse she’d bought to go with the suit. Yesterday before boarding the plane she’d smoothed it into a sleek French twist. Now it blew like a ragged curtain over the tops of her shoulders. She had left her nose ring and the rings for her left eyebrow at home, wearing only a tiny fake-diamond stud in her nostril, with a matching pair of studs for her ears. When she had boarded the plane she had looked like a successful business person. A little boring … Well, a lot boring, but she really wanted this job. They were supposed to land in San Francisco at 2:36 p.m. Pacific time, and her interview was at 4:00. She figured she’d have time to touch up her hair and makeup in the airport ladies’ lounge before taking a taxi straight to the interview.

Well, she had missed the job interview, and her new suit was ruined by her misadventures. She liked that word—misadventures. It sounded better than “her shitty luck.”

“You’re probably right.” Glory tried for some of Jane’s optimism. “They’ll reschedule the interview, won’t they? Sure, they will. After all, we’re heroes, braving the wilderness to get help to save the rest of the passengers.” The cheerfulness died when she stepped on a rock and bit off another four-letter word. “It never seems this hard in the movies.”

“Heroines,” Jane corrected. She smiled, but it was sober. “You’re right. The movies make things look comfortable and quick. But we’re still better off than the ones left at the plane.”

So many of the passengers who had boarded the plane yesterday morning had been killed, including the little girl whose whiney complaints about not being able to run around had made Glory want to slap her during the first hour of the flight. Remembering her made Glory feel sick. What was she doing, worrying about her clothes and her feet and her interview when that little girl would never have a chance to grow up and have a job at all?

Hey, was that—? Glory squinted at a distant low hill. Yes! Something had moved out there! People? Her heart pounded so hard it felt like it was making the stupid ruffles on her fuchsia silk flutter.

“Hey, Jane, look! Look!” She jabbed Jane in the arm to bring her attention to the dots bobbing along in the distance and began hollering and waving her arms madly. Jane was more sedate, but she waved her arms too.

“Thank God,” Jane said. “Finally, we’ve found help.”

The dots came closer, turning into a half-dozen people on horseback, with a bunch of big dogs running alongside. Glory gaped as they rode up to them at a gallop and formed a circle around them, the horses kicking up so much dust that she began to cough. What the hell? When the dust settled a bit she could see that they were Indians. They had long black hair and bare brown bodies made barely modest by a strip of fabric that covered their important bits in front and back but left their chests and legs bare. Every last one of them was model handsome. Damn. Their bodies, unconcealed by clothing, were mouthwateringly perfect. What was this, a movie set? These guys looked like they were actors in a *Dances With Wolves* movie. The dogs were *huge.* She thought they were wolves, but they were too big for that. Maybe a mixed breed? One of the dogs came right up to her and sniffed her crotch. She slapped at its muzzle, shouting, “No! Bad dog!”

Some of the Indians looked shocked. Laughter bubbled in her throat. Hysteria? Gloria refused to do hysteria. She swallowed hard to force it back. The dog stared at her for a minute, grinning at her with its tongue hanging over sharp teeth, then trotted off and disappeared behind the horses surrounding her.

She turned her attention back to the Indians, searching them for phones. She didn’t see any phones, and none of them wore enough clothing to hide a cell phone in, so she supposed they didn’t have any with them.

“Um.” Glory had to clear her throat to cut through the dust coating it. “Hi. Sorry to interrupt. But can you help us? Our airplane went down back that ways and … and … Wow.”

Another Indian walked between the horses, tightening the string around his waist that held his diaper thing up, and Glory completely forgot what she’d been saying. It *was* a movie set! That was her favorite wrestling star in makeup and a really long black wig. And very little clothing. Yowza. He was living proof that guys like the ones on romance covers really did exist. She swallowed, wiping a hand over her chin in case she was drooling, and started over.

“Hi. Look, sorry to bother you, but our plane crashed, and we need help. Like an ambulance. And…” Her voice trailed off again because all these men were looking at her very strangely and sniffing the air. She and Jane weren’t freshly bathed, but, geez, talk about rude. “Hey!” She snapped her fingers. “Listen up! This is important.”

Jane gave her a patient look and took over. “Yes, gentlemen, Glory is correct. We need immediate medical assistance. There are approximately three dozen injured at the crash site. Our cell phones are not working. They may have been damaged in the crash, or perhaps there’s no coverage here?” Her voice lifted at the end, inviting them to make a call for an ambulance.

Glory restrained herself from rolling her eyes. Jane was a nice lady, boring as beige paint, but nice. But who talked like that? Glory had a master’s degree in biology, and she didn’t talk like a prissy British butler. She and Jane were total opposites. Glory listened to Nine Inch Nails and Linkin Park; Jane loved Bach. Glory and Jane both loved to read, but Glory liked hot vampire romances; Jane read literary masterpieces.

The romance cover model look-alike ignored Jane. He stepped even closer to Glory, and boy, did he smell good. She took a couple quick breaths to savor his scent. What cologne did he wear? Something spicy and so yummy that she wanted to push her nose into his neck and inhale. He growled something over his shoulder without taking his eyes from her. She should try to pay attention to what he was saying, but damn, he was so gorgeous she had trouble focusing. Any movie with a hot piece of eye candy like this guy would get her money at the ticket booth. And if he was dressed like he was now, they’d get her money multiple times. Holy cow, he was so big and buff he made her feel like a size ten.

“Look,” she told him. “Mister … um … I’m really sorry to interrupt your movie stuff, but like Jane said, people are hurt. We need to get them some help right away.”

“You can call me Um if you want,” he said in a low rumble that made her want to melt into a puddle of feminine goo at his feet. His smile was quick and white. “My name is Wolf’s Shadow. What is your name?”

*Yum, is more like it*, she almost blurted. “Gloria Peterson. Well, Glory. And this is Jane Harris.” He was really into his part. Unless he wasn’t an actor? It sure looked like he must be an actor, or maybe a model, with that handsome face and even more handsome bod. How many guys looked that good, especially wearing only a diaper? Well, not a diaper. A breechcloth. It showed off the side of his body from ankle to armpit very nicely. He must do some serious lifting, to have such a well-developed physique. Glory could look at him all day. Too bad they didn’t have time for that. “Can you help us? Do you have a phone?”

He looked from her to Jane, a slight frown pulling his brows toward each other. “We have no phones. Where are your men? Why did they send two women out alone?”

Glory swelled with tired outrage at his critical tone, but Jane’s voice was mellow. “All the men are injured or killed. There was no one else to go for help.”

Wolf’s Shadow turned his head toward another of the Indians, and the wind lifted his hair. Was that shiny black curtain falling down his back and brushing his butt real? Holy crap. He said something in a foreign language to the other men, then looked back at Jane and indicated one of the other men. “My cousin Jumping Stag has medical training. He and the others will go with you to help your friends. I will take Miss Peterson back to our camp to rest.”

Glory was tired, and her feet in their new pumps were killing her, but Jane must be just as tired. Neither one of them had slept well last night. Without sleeping bags or a tent to keep them warm, they had huddled so closely together that in some cultures they would be considered married. It was one of the few mornings in her entire life that Glory had been glad to see the sun come up.

“Jane is tired too,” she began. “I don’t think we should separate. The co-pilot said we should stick together.”

Wolf’s Shadow frowned. “You will come with me to camp,” he ordered.

Glory eyed his magnificent physique with disgusted appreciation. Wasn’t that just the way it went? Guys that good-looking were just naturally bossy. It came from being used to getting what they wanted. Too bad for him she was used to going against the flow. “Sorry. We’re sticking together. No offense or anything, but I don’t even know you.”

For some reason that made him smile approvingly. “Don’t worry. I promise my intentions are strictly honorable.”

*Pity*, thought Glory.

Jane asked, “How far is it to your camp?”

“Not far,” said Wolf’s Shadow. “For a small woman like yourself on foot? An hour away, perhaps a little longer.”

Glory looked at Jane questioningly. “I don’t know.”

“Go ahead, Glory. Someone needs to make a call for help, just in case no search and rescue team has found the survivors yet. We’ll need air ambulances to evacuate the injured. You notify the authorities, and I’ll lead these men back to the crash.”

“Okay, that makes sense.” And she would get a chance to get to know Mr. Big and Gorgeous on the way back to civilization. “Take it easy, Jane.”

Wolf’s Shadow talked to the other Indians, saying something to them in a voice too low for Glory to catch. Three of them dismounted and handed their horses over. One of them, a slender man in his late twenties, helped Jane up to the horse’s back. She didn’t seem to notice the way he sniffed at her. Then Wolf’s Shadow lifted Glory up into the saddle like he was lifting a little kid who weighed nothing. The saddle wasn’t much more than a folded blanket. She scrambled to stay on, her purse swinging wildly. “Hey, me and horses don’t get along.”

“We will go slowly, Gloria Peterson,” he promised. It sounded like he tacked on her last name, as if he wanted to call her by her first name but didn’t think it was polite. “Here, give me your bag, and I’ll carry it so it doesn’t pull you over.”

His hand on her thigh was warm when he gave her a quick caress before slinging her purse over his shoulder and swinging onto the other horse. Damn, only a guy like him could make her big purple purse look small on his shoulder. And he didn’t seem to mind carrying it. Her last boyfriend would have bought her tampons before he would have carried her purse. Wolf’s Shadow raised his hand to the others, and he led her away from the Indians at a fast walk, with a couple of the dogs dancing along. She wondered how long the ride would take. She’d like to call the study center before it closed, to let them know that the plane had crashed and set up a new interview.

Glory clutched the horse’s mane with one hand since there weren’t any reins, and waved good-bye to Jane with the other. Then she clamped both hands in the horse’s mane. The last time she had been on a horse she had ended up with a broken arm and a concussion. She felt about horses like she now felt about planes. Evil creatures. Wolf’s Shadow rode close beside her, his knee brushing hers from time to time. He was watching her with an odd expression, like she was dessert. And he leaned close every now and then and inhaled. The sight of her purse, bright purple patent leather, slapping against his back, made her smile. The sight of his chiseled, hard pecs and long, muscled legs made her drool. At a half inch under six feet, she was used to towering over most women and quite a few men. He was five or six inches taller than she. She liked that in a guy. But in her experience, guys who looked like him were not interested in girls who looked like her.

Then again, his gaze kept going over her, and every time it did, he smiled. What could it hurt to try to get to know him? If she was stranded here overnight … She could definitely stand to spend a little time with him in bed. The Nine Inch Nails song “Closer” passed through her head. Oh, yeah. She’d like to eff him like an animal.

“So,” she said brightly, looking up at him with what she hoped was a flirtatious smile. “Who are you? I mean, where are you from, and what do you do?”

He smiled back at her, and that white smile made her breath catch. “I’m Wolf’s Shadow. My friends and family call me Shadow. I’m from here.” He waved his arm broadly to indicate the empty prairie. “I am my father’s Beta in the Lakota Wolf Clan. We migrate to where the hunting is best. Once or twice each season we go down to Kearney to visit kin and trade for supplies. Our cousin Taye leads a pack there.”

She had no flipping clue what he was talking about. “Lakota?” she asked with interest. “I lived not far from the Standing Rock res for a while. Are you from there? Or maybe Pine Ridge? Or…?” She trailed off to give him a chance to answer.

He shook his head, and the wind lifted his hair again, making her want to pet it. “No, the Clan doesn’t live on a reservation. We live on the plains like our ancestors did long ago.”

Weird. Not that it was any of her business. “That’s nice,” she said instead. “But what about in the winter? It must get pretty cold.”

“It’s warmer in the Sacred Lands. We move there for the cold months. It’s a good time of the year in spite of the cold. We gather in each others’ lodges and sing and tell stories. The Grandmother and the other women teach the young reading and history and math. And…” His voice sank to that sexy rumble, and he smiled at her. “It’s a time for loving.”

Glory swallowed hard. The way his black eyes were looking at her dried her mouth and wet her panties. “Oh?” she said stupidly. “*The* Grandmother?” She attempted to get her wits back and make coherent conversation. “Is that a title? Like *The* President?”

He ignored that, leaning close. “I’m a good hunter.” His voice was still low, forceful. “I can provide for a mate. I didn’t think my hunt today would be so successful. I wasn’t expecting to find you. You’re so beautiful. To whom do I pay your bride price?”

Glory eyed him sideways. “You’re acting, right?” she suggested doubtfully. “This is part of your script.”

“Acting? *Pretending*?” He snarled at one of the dogs who trotted around them. It looked to Glory like the dog was laughing, its tongue hanging out. “I’m not acting. You’re my mate, Gloria Peterson. Can’t you feel it?”

“Quit kidding around. It’s not funny.” It hadn’t been funny in tenth grade when she’d believed Rob Jorgenson liked her. He’d flirted with her for a month before he announced loudly and publicly that he had only done it to see what it would be like to sleep with a big fat cow. Glory had walked up to him and punched him in the face so hard that she’d sprained her wrist and broken one of his teeth. Being suspended from school had been a small price to pay to see the look of shock on his face when she punched him. She stared coolly at Wolf’s Shadow. “And quit calling me Gloria Peterson. That’s my mom. Call me Glory.”

He stopped his horse, and hers stopped too, with a jolt that made her slip sideways. He reached out one brawny arm and pulled her back up effortlessly. “I’m not kidding. This isn’t a joke.” He frowned a little bit, and pulled a windblown lock of shiny black hair away from his face. She found her eyes tracing the hair to the straight edge of his jaw to his full lips. “I’ll court you if you want,” he said. “You’re worth it. I can’t believe that my mate is such a beautiful woman.”

“Beautiful?” she snorted. “If you want to get in my pants, you don’t need to…”

Then she paused. If she wanted to spend a little time in bed with him while waiting for transportation back to civilization it might not be such a good idea to offend him.

“Beautiful?” she said again. She spread her hands to indicate her anything-but-slender figure. “Yeah, sure. Look at me. Not exactly what you’d see on *America’s Next Top Model*.”

He did look at her, black eyes hot. “I don’t know what you mean by that. I suppose you have plenty of suitors. Maybe there’s one you already favor.” That deep voice went deeper, almost flat. “But he can’t have you. You’re *mine*. I won’t give you up.”

Something twisted painfully in Glory’s chest. “Hello? We just met. Maybe I’m not a teeny little stick. But that doesn’t mean I don’t have feelings. So just cut it out, okay?”

“I’m not a little stick either,” he growled back. He snatched her hand and held it to the front of his breechcloth. “See? That is what you do to me!”

“Holy shi—!” Wolf’s Shadow should be named Anaconda! She snatched her hand away so violently she almost fell off the horse again. Her pink hair was probably paler than her embarrassed blush. “What the hell do you think you’re doing?”

“Sorry. I got carried away,” he muttered. “I’ll court you.”

“Just knock it off, okay?”

“Why are you angry, Glory? I know you want me. I can smell your desire. It’s the same for me. Every time I scent you I get harder.”

Glory snorted in disgust. What a typical egotistical jerk. She wasn’t pretty or slender, so he thought he could make fun of her. She could remember her mother’s plaintive voice telling her she’d be pretty if only she’d lose some weight. Even now, a decade later, that memory hurt as much as the memory of Rob laughing at her. She kicked her horse to get it moving again, and it bounded off at a dead run. She shrieked and fell off like a kid doing a belly flop. She was gasping desperately for breath when Shadow’s moccasins pounded into her line of sight. He fell to his knees beside her, his long hair falling on the ground next to her face when he bent over her.

“Lie still, Glory,” he commanded, running quick hands over her. “Let me see where you’re hurt.”

She grimaced and managed to roll over. “Just my pride,” she wheezed. “I didn’t mean for that to happen.” She found her gaze level with his crotch, barely covered by his breechcloth. It looked like he hadn’t lost interest. “Ah, geez.” She groaned and jerked her eyes higher. That view was pretty nice too, and safer; his chest and abs were a work of art. He pulled her to a sitting position with one arm behind her back. She took a deep, calming breath. Damn, that cologne was going to make her drool, and she wanted to be cool and collected. “You are so hot,” she wailed. “Why do you have to be such a jerk?”

“If a jerk is a man who is happy to have found a beautiful woman to love, then I am a jerk. You’ll have to live with it.”

She slapped a hand flat on the ground. “I don’t appreciate being made fun of, so just quit it.”

He stroked a hand up and down her arm. “I don’t know why you’re angry at me. I’m telling the truth. I’m not making fun. You’re beautiful. So soft and curvy, just like a woman should be. I’ve never seen a woman as well filled out as you are. What would I do with a tiny woman? I’d crush her.”

He sounded like he really meant it. “Seriously?” she asked hesitantly.

He nodded. “Very seriously. You’re the woman my wolf wants as a mate. I want to get you home and in my lodge as fast as possible.” His hand went to her hair, smoothing the windblown mess gently, with a wondering look. “Your hair is … pink.”

He was really hung up on wolves. “Yeah, temporarily.”

“I like it. It’s pretty.” His forefinger lightly brushed over the stud in her nostril. “And this is pretty too.”

“Yeah.” Glory wasn’t sure she believed him, but his physical reaction was hard—Glory snickered to herself at the pun—to fake. She wouldn’t be here long, just until she contacted the study center and made arrangements to get to her interview. If he wanted to sleep with her, why shouldn’t she go along with it? Even if he was only using her, she would enjoy herself and never see him again. He could laugh with his buddies later, and she wouldn’t be around for it. Sure, a roll in the hay with Mr. Buff and Bodacious, and then off to her interview. She allowed her hand to linger on his muscular shoulder when he lifted her to her feet and gave him a smile that glazed his eyes. Oh, yeah, they could have some fun while she was here.

“Sorry I’ve been such a bitch.”

Just to tease him she pressed a quick kiss to his chin. His arm tightened around her back, and his lips were hot and eager, and not on her chin. Or, not just on her chin. But he ended it too quickly, pulling her back to that blasted horse and lifting her up. The dogs by the horses got up and shook themselves before following along when they started off again.

Chapter Two

Shadow watched the woman riding beside him with wonder. At last, his wolf had chosen a mate for him. And what a mate. This was no thin scrap of a woman. No, his mate was tall and strong, with soft lush curves that he wanted to explore in great and loving detail. Her face was a soft oval with startlingly pale blue eyes and a soft, plump mouth that he wanted to taste again. He couldn’t stop looking at her hair.

“Why is your hair pink?” he asked, fascinated.

She flashed a smile at him. “Because it matches my shirt.”

He looked at the shiny fabric half hidden beneath a loose blue jacket. He had heard of women changing their hair color to hide gray, but not to match their clothing. Her clothing was unlike anything he had seen before. The townies—people who lived in towns—tended to wear many layers in cold weather, and even in summer, they covered nearly their entire bodies. He and his people would prefer to go naked if they could, but the Grandmother had forbidden that. He cast another look at his mate, imagining her without all the layers covering her soft, curved body. Shadow allowed himself the pleasure of that thought for only a moment before cutting it off. He focused on his mate’s clothes instead. Those layers were constructed of unfamiliar fabric. An impossible thought disturbed him. She and the other woman had talked about phones and planes.

“Glory, where are you from?”

“Oh, I’ve lived all over,” she said breezily. “Born in Illinois, grew up in North Dakota, college in Florida and North Carolina, and I live in Minneapolis now. But I’m interviewing for a job in California…” The breeziness died briefly, and turned to fervent earnestness. “I’m really hoping I get this job.”

Confusion struck him. Who could live in so many different places so far apart? And a job? His first instinctive thought was that he would never permit his mate to leave him and have a job. His second thought was that California didn’t exist except in history books. His stomach swam with a vague feeling of dread as he looked at his strange mate. If what he suspected was true, then she had no idea what he was.

“Glory…” He hesitated to ask what year she was born, so he quickly changed his question. “What job?”

“It’s a research position with the Marine Life Study Center in San Francisco. I have a master’s degree in marine biology. It is exactly the sort of job I’ve always wanted.”

She looked so happy talking about her job plans that he didn’t have the heart to disappoint her. They would get that straightened out later. After he had fully claimed her they would talk more plainly, and she would understand where and when she was.

“What about you, Shadow? You said you worked for your dad? Is it a family business?”

“I’m his beta. Second in command.”

She grabbed a hank of that incredible hair and put it behind her ear. Tiny sparkles in her earlobes matched the sparkle on the outside of her nostril. Her personal adornments were fascinating. “What sort of business is it?”

He shrugged. The idea of a job, with set hours and routine, was a townie thing. Mostly, he hunted, taught his younger brothers and cousins how to fight and hunt, and protected the few women of the Clan. The women were their greatest treasures, and now he was bringing another precious woman into the Clan. He would die to protect Glory. “We provide food and leather goods for communities in the area and trade for what we need. We live as our ancestors did, as closely as we can.”

“Oh.” She clearly didn’t understand. “Where did you go to school?”

“The Grandmother and other women in the Clan teach the children to read and write, and math and history.” Right now he wished he had paid better attention to history. “We live closely with the land. It is important to preserve our culture and our land. We don’t need a great deal of schooling.”

“So … You do historical reenactment?” His mate looked confused, but ready to be enlightened.

He looked at her blankly. “What?”

“You recreate life in the Old West? Like, you live in teepees and go on hunts and stuff like that?”

“Yes. That is how we live. The Wolf Clan wants to teach others how to care for Mother Earth. That is my family’s business, and it’s important. If we don’t care for the earth now, what will future generations have to live with?”

“Oh, like a naturalist or conservationist company that does education? That’s cool.” She flicked those stunning eyes at him again, smiling with approval, and he felt it all the way down to the base of his spine.

“You have the most beautiful eyes I’ve ever seen,” he breathed.

Glory’s soft pale cheeks flushed slightly, but she let him hold her hand and kiss her palm. Her scent drove him crazy. How soon would he be able to make love to her? He couldn’t wait to get her back to his lodge where he could peel off her layers of clothing and taste every inch of her.