

Ready & Willing
by Selena Blake

Part Sixteen

The fogginess of the dream made Ava blink up at the man hovering over her. Head aching, she held a hand up to her heated cheeks. Why were all the good dreams just dreams?

“Where’s Wesley?” Alain asked.

The light from the kitchen silhouetted him and she scrunched her eyes closed, turning away. Who cared where Wesley was? She just wanted to go back to sleep. And finish the dream.

“Ava? Where’s Wesley? There’s something wrong with one of the mares.” Alain shook her again. Ava knew exactly which mare Alain was talking about. Between prepping meals she’d been hanging out in the barn.

Chipper was heavy with foal.

But this time, when her gaze snapped to his she saw his nose twitch. Oh hell. His gaze narrowed on her and his pupils dilated. His posture went from concerned to alert.

“Wesley’s out with the others looking for poachers.”

She knew the instant that the words were out of her mouth that it’d been the wrong thing to say. He shook his head as if to clear it, but when his gaze connected with hers again, she saw the fire there. The lust.

His gaze zeroed in on her lips and his fingers flexed into the sofa tissue of her hip.

Ava scooted to the end of the sofa. “Why don’t you call the vet? I’ll go check on the mare.” She needed to get out of here and fast.

“Later.”

He leaned closer and she sucked in a deep breath. She didn’t want to fight him. But there was something incredibly dangerous about his slow, calculated movements. Gone was the elegant dancer, the easy-on-the-eyes-cowboy from yesterday.

In his place was a predator.

He got down on one knee, cocked his head to the right, and studied her knee as he walked his fingers across it.

“Alain...” she said in a warning voice, her abs coiled tightly. It was hard to resist him when her body was screaming a singular word: mate. That’s all that mattered. Breed. Keep the species alive.

But he wasn’t the man she wanted. Not really.

He’ll do, the wolf whispered.

“Go call the vet. I’ll see to the mare,” she said, but the words ended up as a whisper as he leaned forward, invading her personal space. To Ava, there were few things in the world so intimate as sharing air with someone else. Right now she felt as if she were about to suffocate. Her chest was tight, her womb aching. The wolf wanted free reign; she was tired of holding back, of putting duty over desire.

The handsome man in front of her didn’t make it any easier. It was hard to resist those eyes...

She scented the change in him. Gone was the reasonable man. In his place, the animal ready to mate. He leaned closer, his lips scant inches from her throat. She tipped her head away but he wasn’t deterred. Afraid to so much as move, lest she spur his attack, she held her breath. He inhaled deeply and his palm slid down the outside of her thigh.

No one touches what’s mine, Ava. Got it? Kaden’s words rumbled through her mind and her inner wolf gave a low growl. Even to her own ears, she sounded pleased rather than fierce.

She would not give in to him, to her wolf, to the need that begged her to let go. There were some things in this life more important mating. More important than a quick romp to scratch an itch.

Ava gave another growl, this time with a little more ferocity.

“I love it when you growl like that,” he murmured and brushed his lips against her skin.

Another time. Another place. In another lifetime she would been on him like butter on bread. But he was the wrong wolf.

“Enough,” she snarled, planting her hands against the solid wall of his chest. But before she could shove him ass over teakettle, he jerked away and went sailing through the air.

Kaden stood over her, an impenetrable wall, looking more dangerous than she’d ever seen him. Eyes dark as night, the veins in his arms bulging, his

posture erect and deadly. He glanced from her to Alain and back, nostrils flaring. She could see the wolf trying to take over. Trying to change. It wanted to fight.

Kaden's growl was far more intimidating than hers and when he turned back to Alain, hands loose at his sides but twitching to make a fist, she realized he wasn't just ready for a brawl. He was ready to kill.

She fully expected Alain to back down. To turn and walk away. Had she been in his position, staring down the lethal man in front of her, she wouldn't just walk away. She'd tucked tail and run as fast as her feet could carry her. Her more sensible side told her she should do just that.

But Alain simply stared back at Kaden, his chest puffed up and ready for battle. The two men were a hair-trigger away from going were and ripping each other apart.

This was all her fault.

Standing quickly, she didn't give her equilibrium time to balance before she grabbed Kaden by the wrist and used every ounce of her strength to jerk him out the front door. They both needed some air. The world moved in slow motion as she strode across the porch and down the well worn steps. The instant her feet hit the dirt, he dug in his heels. The halt in momentum was like a boat dropping the world's biggest anchor, spinning her around like a kite on the end of a string.

The light from the living room was just bright enough illuminate his face. The look in his eyes made her release her grasp and back up a step. He sucked in a sharp breath and his ribcage expanded.

He touched you.

Ava didn't need to hear the words to know what he was thinking. The war inside him was evident. He wanted to fuck her. And he wanted to rip Alain limb from limb. The two emotions met and clashed in his eyes. His pupils contracted and dilated, as if he couldn't decide what to do.

The hormones coursing through her made it hard to keep her wits. Never in her life had she felt a need so strong. It was like a physical weight pushing her to her knees. The wolf wanted to drop to all fours and beg him to take her. The softening she felt inside surprised her. A peace. A warmth that defied her fear from moments ago. The knowledge that he was the one. He had always been the one.

He hooked his hands over those perfectly lean hips and stared her down.

It was on the tip of her tongue to apologize.

But as his gaze zeroed in on her mouth she realized she had nothing to apologize for. She hadn't woken up that morning and decided to become irresistible to the males of their species. And she hadn't invited Alain's advances.

It wasn't her fault that poachers were likely out there stealing the Pack's cattle. Nor was it her fault that Kaden had thought it a better idea to leave her at home like a good little woman.

She so over being the good little woman.

Frowning, she glanced up to see Alain standing in the doorway and ground her jaws together. Perhaps she'd over stayed her welcome on the ranch. She didn't want them fighting over her.

"Alain said something's wrong with Chipper," she said, returning her gaze to Kaden. "I suggest one of you contact the vet while I go check on her." And as soon as she saw to Chipper she was going to call for a helicopter to come pick her up and take her home. It was past time for some distance. She needed to clear her head and convince her father to name her the Alpha. After that she'd deal with Kaden and the desire he created inside her.



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**Mated to
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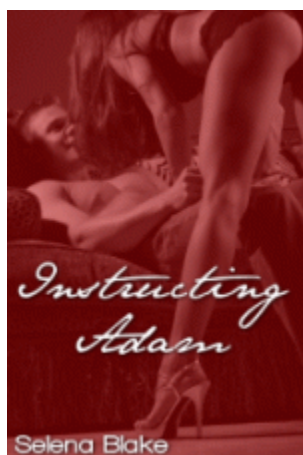
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**A Cajun
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About Selena

An action movie buff with a penchant for all things supernatural and sexy, Selena Blake combines her love for adventure, travel and romance into steamy paranormal romance. Selena's books have been called "a steamy escape" and have appeared on bestseller lists, been nominated for awards, and won contests. When she's not writing you can find her by the pool soaking up some sun, day dreaming about new characters, and watching the cabana boy (aka her muse), Derek. Fan mail keeps her going when the diet soda wears off so write to her at selenablake@gmail.com. Visit her online at <http://selenablake.com> or become a friend at <http://www.facebook.com/authorSelenaBlake>

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