



Ready & Willing
by Selena Blake

Part 13

Ah hell.

Kaden's hands dropped to his sides, missing the feel of her skin against his. Crazy, but there it was.

...if I kiss you, I won't be able to stop. Her words echoed through his mind. How the hell was he supposed to resist a passion that strong for four more minutes, let alone four days?

Why did she have to go and say that? Letting his frustration get the better of him, he slammed his fist into one of the four by six beams holding up the porch roof. The wood splintered and the roof groaned as the support disintegrated.

Great. One more thing to fix tomorrow. More annoyed than before, he turned back to the window and saw Wesley looking straight at him. The other wolf glanced away and said something to Ava. At her nod, Wesley strode to the front room, that easy swagger belying the tension in his shoulders.

Kaden knew he should change into some clothes and go help the cowboy, but as he slipped into the backdoor, Ava's brown eyes met his for a millisecond and then she was off, making a beeline through the house. Her breasts bounced gently in her haste.

Torn by duty and desire, Kaden made a split second decision.

Leaving Wes to handle ranch business, he headed for Ava's bedroom.

She was just outside her door when he entered the hall. He called her name and she paused but didn't turn toward him. Now was not the time to admire the way her hair skimmed her shoulders or the way her hips flared at the waist.

Instead, he focused on the way her hands closed into fists and then opened again.

"You can't say something like that and walk away," he told her as he closed the distance between them. Not with so much left unsaid between them.

She still didn't turn to face him. Instead, she reached for the doorknob. "Yes, I can. There's nothing left to say."

"Ava..." He licked his lips, trying to decide how to make her understand.

"Just leave me alone Kaden." With that, he found himself staring at a closed door for the second time that day.

"Ava..." He knocked.

"Go away Kaden." Her voice was muffled.

"Come on sweetheart. Don't you think we should talk about this?" Man, he

sounded...oh no, he wasn't going there.

She didn't respond. "Ava?"

"Make up your mind, Kaden." He could tell she was standing right on the other side of the door now. Heaven help him, he could imagine the look in her eyes, the heat in her cheeks, the shape of her body. "Hot or cold? Let me know when you figure it out. Until then, there's nothing for us to talk about."

A growl slipped between his lips before he could stop it.

"Everything all right?"

Kaden swung toward the voice. Alain stood at the bottom of the open air staircase, his hand on the railing. Kaden didn't like that he'd been so absorbed in Ava that he'd let anyone sneak up on him. He was losing his edge.

"Yeah. Fine." Giving one last glance at Ava's door, he headed back down the hall toward his room. He needed to get his head on straight. Needed some time alone...away from the bewitching *Shewolf*.

Ava waited until she heard his footsteps retreat before she let out the breath she'd been holding. She'd half expected him to burst through the door and make good on yesterday's promise. And dammit if she wasn't disappointed when he didn't. Her eyes smarted.

How typical that he desired her but didn't want to act on that desire. She sank down on the edge of the bed and dropped her forehead into her hands.

He filled her mind with images of them entwined together, oblivious to the world, lost in each other. And then he doused cold water on the dream.

Nevermind the fact that he was smart to keep things verbal and flirty rather than physical and -- Heat rushed through her at the thought and she sprang from the bed.

Pacing to the window and back, she told herself to be strong. The countless

hours she'd spent in the gym, the late nights she'd spent helping her father, the sore feet from helping her mother host events...it'd all be worth it. She just had to be strong. Just a few more days and her fate would be decided.

If her father named her Alpha, she'd scratch her itch and move on to more important matters. Like earning the respect of the pack.

If her father didn't name her Alpha...she'd cross that bridge when she came to it. That was all--

"Ava?"

She frowned. That wasn't Kaden. In fact, it sounded like Alain.

"Just a sec," she called.

She tugged a pair of yoga pants up over her hips and quickly tied the knot. As she stepped to the door she jerked a tanktop over her head and wiped her eyes.

"Hey," she said as she opened the door. The tall wolf gave her a grim smile which she tried, and failed, to return.

"You all right?" He glanced back down the hall, obviously having overheard her outburst.

She left the door open and retreated into the room. "Good question."

"So you and Kaden, huh?"

She turned to see him watching her carefully, his hands tucked into his back pockets. The stance only accentuated his long lean frame and the incredible muscles in his arms. Why couldn't she have met him oh say twenty years ago?

She closed her eyes for a moment, forcing herself to calm down. Then she met his gaze again. "There's no *me and Kaden*. We both want to be the next Alpha of WhitePaw."

"But you're a Garnier." Alain frowned, dropping his hands from his pockets.

He rubbed his thumb against the inside of his forefinger over and over.

“That I am.” She snuggled into the arm chair in front of the window and tucked her feet beneath her. “Doesn’t matter though. The Alpha picks who succeeds him. At least in our Pack.”

“Kaden is the favorite, then?”

Ava gave an inelegant half snort/half nod. “Of course. Haven’t you noticed? He’s the golden child.” The Pack Beta. And male. All male...

Alain’s eyebrows shot up at her tone.

He was still favoring his finger. “What’d you do to yourself?” she asked.

“Huh?” He glanced down at his hand. “Oh. Splinter.”

Somewhere in the house, the phone rang. For once, she didn’t feel like being polite and perfect. Instead, she let it ring, dropped her feet to the floor and went into the adjoining bathroom for her toiletry bag. After retrieving her tweezers she returned. “Let me see.”

Alain dutifully uncrossed the injured arm and held out his hand to her. She took his palm in hers and aimed the silver tips at the speck of wood.

“Ava, it’s your...” Kaden’s voice trailed to a stop as he stopped in her doorway. She glanced up and cocked her head at him. He tucked the cordless phone against his chest. The man sure did know how to fill out a pair of jeans. She kept her expression neutral though. He couldn’t know the turmoil inside her. “Isn’t this quaint?” he mocked, a handsome eyebrow hitching upward.

Just like that, another bucket of cold water...right over her senses. So much for the neutral expression. She cut her eyes and gave him a glare that would incinerate a lesser man. Too bad he wasn’t a mere mortal.

She gave the splinter a tug. “There. Have any splinters you need removed, Mr. Black?”

She turned back to the bathroom. “Like from your ass maybe?” Evidently

Alain heard her because he chuckled softly.

“Your mother’s on the phone, Miss Garnier,” Kaden called.

Ava darted back into the other room and jerked the phone from his grasp. “Mom?”

Kaden and Alain were staring at each other, electricity arcing between them. Oh brother. She made shooing motions with her hands until they’d both departed.

Her mom was saying something about her eldest sister. “Are you ready for this? How does Auntie Ava sound?”

The words sank in for a heartbeat before Ava squealed with delight. “Really?”

Footsteps thundered in the hall. “Ava?” Kaden burst through her doorway with Alain hot on his heels.

Even with the two brooding werewolves crowding her space she couldn’t knock the doofy grin off her face.

Everything all right? Kaden mouthed.

“Mom, hang on.” She covered the mouthpiece with her other hand. “I’m going to be an Auntie. Alana’s pregnant.”

Kaden’s features softened and then he smiled the most beautiful smile she’d ever seen. It made her think of sunsets in his arms and tender morning wake-up kisses and babies who had his smile.



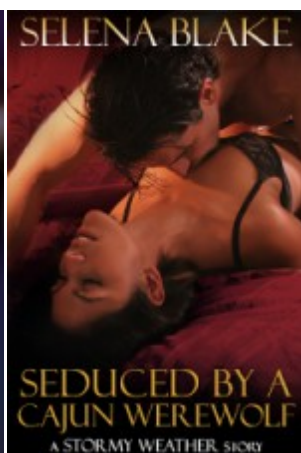
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About Selena

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://selena-blake.com> or become a friend at <http://www.facebook.com/authorSelenaBlake>

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