



Ready & Willing
by Selena Blake

Part Nine

Kaden had never seen so much misery in one place. Coughing. Wheezing. He curled his lip. Sneezing.

A small man leaned out of his bed and threw up into the nearby trashcan. Kaden looked away and continued ladling out bowls of chili.

He noticed a shift in the room and glanced up to see Ava walking through the door. Every particle in the room surged toward her as if she were the strongest magnet on earth.

Alain Harper was on her heels, another pot in his hands. Kaden blew out a breath and reined in his jealousy. The other wolf had offered to help out around the ranch while he was in town but Kaden didn't get the sense that

he was so interested in 'helping out' as he was nailing the Alpha's daughter.

"Well hello there," one of the cowboys said, leaning up on an elbow, his gaze locked on her long, toned legs.

Hadn't Kaden predicted this? His temper spiked but Ava simply smiled at the cowboy and gave a brief 'hello.'

A dozen sets of bare wood bunks flanked the walls. Sick as they were, the men took notice of the beautiful woman making her way across the room. Their eyes followed her, gazing at the short shorts and her melt-in-your-mouth curves. *Fuck.*

She didn't even pause when she reached the table where he stood. No, she ignored him and picked up two spoons, slipped them into two bowls and then took them to the nearest men.

The spell was broken. Someone sneezed. And another poor sap raced to the bathroom.

"Chili?" Ava asked the men. They nodded.

"What would you like to drink?" she asked.

Alain put down a pot of what smelled like chicken soup on the table and gave Kaden a quick nod.

"She's something, isn't she?" Alain asked, his eyes on the only woman in the room.

"She's a pain in the ass."

Alain's eyebrows shot up but he didn't say a word. Kaden put the ladle back into the pot as he watched the interaction a few feet away. The man on the bunk asked for water. The tall blond leaning against the wall asked for the same, but as Ava turned away he muttered something about 'a damn invasion.'

Kaden had known there would be nervousness among the hands with a group of help coming in. He was prepared for it. But he hadn't prepared for

them looking at Ava as an outsider.

Ava paused, her gaze flicking up to meet Kaden's. Her amber colored eyes darkened and her chest rose slowly as she took a deep breath. *Oh shit.* One eye brow rose and her jaw hardened. Shoulders back she pivoted on her left heel. The room went silent again, waiting. He couldn't be sure, but he thought everyone was holding their breath.

She stepped toe to toe with the cowboy who probably outweighed her by at least fifty pounds.

"Buck, isn't it?" she asked but didn't wait for confirmation. "You know, being sick doesn't give you an excuse for being an ungrateful asshole." She plucked the bowl from his hands and turned away.

The cowboy started to reach for her. "You bitc--"

Kaden was around the table and reaching for the bastard even as Ava turned back and planted a palm in the center of the man's chest. Kaden pulled to a stop, his heart thundering in his chest. The beast inside him demanded blood. No one disrespected his woman.

Whoa. What--? He put his hands on his hips and tightened the leash on his inner wolf.

"You don't know how right you are," Ava whispered back, her tone fierce. The man's eyebrows jumped up his forehead and his lips parted. "Don't make me kick your ass in front of all your friends."

There was a lengthy pause, just long enough for Kaden to relax a fraction. But then the man's forehead creased and his brows drew together. "Who the hell do you think you are?" Buck demanded, matching her tone. The dumb jerk even had the nerve to sneer at her.

Alain stepped forward, but Kaden held up an arm to hold him back. If anyone was going to kick that cowboy's ass to the next county and back it was going to be Kaden.

"Shut up, Buck," his bunkmate said, standing.

“Oh, I do apologize.” Ava shifted the bowl of chili to her left hand. The fact that she was no longer touching the son of a bitch soothed Kaden’s beast ever so slightly. His shoulders dropped a fraction. “I’m Ava Garnier.”

“Garnier?” Buck actually sputtered.

Kaden could see her cheeks crease as she smiled. Though the man probably couldn’t tell Ava was trembling, Kaden didn’t miss the minute movements or the way her energy seemed to zing away from her. From temper or nerves, he wasn’t sure. She seemed absolutely sure of herself. A spitfire *Shewolf* if he’d ever seen one.

“You know, the boss’s daughter?” she asked in a teasing tone that caught Kaden off guard. How could she be so calm? Why wasn’t he more calm? It wasn’t like him to get riled so easily. He noted the almost imperceptible cock of her head. “I think we should start over. Don’t you?”

The blond man stood motionless. He looked so shocked Kaden wasn’t even sure the SOB was still breathing. Finally, he gulped and nodded.

Ava stuck out her hand. “It’s nice to meet you, Buck. I’m Ava Garnier. What would you like to drink this evening?”

Oh, she was good. Damn good. Her voice was sweeter than honey and he had no doubt that every man in the damn bunk house was as equally impressed with her as he was.

“Water’d be fine.”

She handed back the bowl of chili. “Enjoy your dinner.”

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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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