

NANO BOOK



HEART  
OF COUGAR

*Short Story*

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RRROSE CARBINELA

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# Heart of Cougar

*By*

**Rrrose Carbinela**



## **Heart of Cougar**

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# Heart of Cougar

"**I** AM NOT CERTAIN this is a good place to camp, Papa."

"Be quiet. I should never have sent you to spend time with John after your mother died."

I bit my tongue lest I say something I might regret. My months trapping with Uncle John in the northern wildlands had been the most enjoyable time I had ever spent anywhere; a healing time after much sorrow. Mama had not fared well once we'd arrived, and had quickly succumbed to some native infection. Papa had had no time for me, and sent me to Uncle John, who had let me wear buckskins, and had shown me how to track the deer and beaver he was after. He taught me how to use the projectile weapon he called a rifle, and how to skin the creatures once they were dead. We had lived off their flesh, and off the fruits and berries Uncle John helped me recognize. He had instilled confidence in an uprooted, shattered, distraught young woman.

I had not been as good as he was at all these tasks, but I had learned quite a bit. It was that learning which made me nervous, now. Papa had picked a large, wide, open space, next to the river. Not only was there no shelter from the storms I could see gathering over the mountains in the distance, there was no protection from any other force of nature, or force of man, either, such as Natives. Not that anyone was a native to this planet; they'd just been here longer.

"Papa, I have seen tracks crossing the path. There are Natives here. I do not know the tribe, and they may be dangerous." Natives had arrived hundreds of years earlier,

eschewing technology and choosing to live as the tribal groups of Mother Earth had done.

"Bah, the Natives have all run away since we made landfall. There's nothing to fear. Now set up the camp while Matthew and I hunt up some game."

"Yes, Papa."

Those were the last words we exchanged. As they were noisily returning, yelling something about rabbit stew for dinner, two things happened.

"Papa! The river!"

Those far away storms had flooded the river upstream, and I stared in horror as a wall of water churned around the bend heading directly for where Papa was walking towards me and the camp. I turned and ran, right into the arms of a Native warrior.

"Let her go!" Papa shouted, dropping the rabbits and raising his rifle.

The Native turned with me in his arms, and ran.

Over the roar of the river, I heard a faint pop, and felt the Native stumble as a sharp pain drove into me. Matthew's faint screams joined mine as I fell into darkness.

\* \* \*

I woke to searing pain in my side. I was hot, thirsty, hungry, and could not open my eyes, I was so weak. Something jostled me, and I screamed. Darkness came again.

A wet cloth on my face made me shift. Pain made itself known again. I opened my eyes, and saw dark hands approaching me. "So this is Death," I thought, struggling against it. Something gripped my head, and cool water touched my mouth. I sucked on the wet cloth, weakly, greedily.

\* \* \*

Soft crooning woke me. Wet cloth, warm this time, tasting of chicken. Small bits of vegetable and meat slipped into my mouth, and I chewed. A satisfied sound from my angel of mercy. I lay back, still awake, still weak. Alive. I wondered about the dark hands of Death, and whose hands had driven him away. I had no answers, so I opened my eyes.

I was not at home. I was not in any dwelling I could recognize. The darkness was murky; flickering shadows indicated an open fire not too far from me, yet I felt as though I was in an enclosed place. Groaning, I raised myself on my right side, the side that did not burn each time I moved.

A Native woman, bent over the fire, raised her head, and our eyes met. A pleased smile lit up her face. I had not known Natives could be so beautiful. The ones I'd seen with Uncle John had all had a dark, leathery look about them. This one's skin looked soft. She had wide-set eyes, which gleamed in the firelight. Her lips were full, tinged a darker blue than the rest of her. I had thought the blue looked strange on the men I had met, but on her, it looked soft, and somehow welcome.

She scooped liquid from a pot by the fire into a bowl and approached, placing her hand on my forehead much as Mama had used to do when she was alive and I had had a fever. She nodded with satisfaction, and offered me the bowl. I was still too weak to hold it, so she fed me.

A male Native entered, scowling at me, at us. He said some angry things, and she apparently told him he must wait a moment for me to finish my broth. He snarled and left. I saw fear in the woman's eyes. I could do nothing about it.

That night I lay awake and finally identified the sounds I vaguely remembered had invaded my troubled sleep: a rhythmic shuffling and grunting, the rustling of bedding, and some thuds, followed by sharp gasps. Those made me

turn my head to see. I turned away, enraged. I could do nothing; I was too weak.

The next morning, the Native woman moved slowly, somewhat hunched over. I clenched my teeth, wondering why she allowed him to hit her. She read the anger in my face, and tears leaked from her eyes as she hung her head in shame. I reached for her hand, and gripped it. She held on to me, her eyes meeting me, grateful. We heard him calling as he approached, and she gently pushed me back on the bed, signaling me to close my eyes. We kept my growing strength from him.

I listened keenly to what conversation I could hear, picking up words and phrases here and there. Over the years they had been on this planet, they had developed their own tongue, and it was not in any translator I knew of. Moot point; I didn't have a translator with me anyway.

I learned, by looking at myself once I could, that I had been shot. Papa's bullet had apparently hit not only the Native, but me as well. I wondered about Papa. The flood must have carried him and Matthew away. To distract myself from that pain, I wondered how the Native had fared. Apparently he had landed on me, breaking three of my ribs in the process. It still hurt to move, but I was healing. I suspected the broth had willow-bark in it, because when I had some, the pain lessened. Some nights, after the broth, I would sleep heavily and dreamlessly. She always walked stiffly the following day, and I knew she was drugging me so I would not witness her shame.

\* \* \*

Finally, after many days, I was strong enough that inactivity chafed me. I sat up, looking around for something to do. She was shelling peas. I reached for some, and shelled with her. She began to speak, holding the peapods and making the same sound over and over. I looked at her, took



the peapod from her, and repeated the sounds as best I could. She smiled.

"Rachel," I said, pointing to myself.

"Ray shell," she said, touching my hand. I felt a frisson when she did, almost missing the few syllables that were her name. I later learned it meant "Beautiful Sunrise." I liked it even before I learned that.

She taught. I learned quickly. We did not speak when her mate, Roaring Storm, was near, just as we did not indicate how strong I was growing. He would berate her daily, for feeding him bland food, for not giving him sons, for being a weak female. He called her useless... that was one of the kinder terms. I would clench my teeth and pretend not to understand. Once I covered my ears as though the noise was painful. That night he beat her vindictively. He had not wanted to house me, but she had claimed I had strong medicine. The chief had permitted me to be taken to their abode, and she was allowed to care for me. Roaring Storm resented this, especially since it was his brother, Stream at Hillside, who had been wounded when he tried to rescue me from the flood. He had survived, barely. His wound had become infected.

\* \* \*

One day I heard much hullabaloo outside, and slowly walked to the entry. Most of the warriors were preparing themselves for a journey. Sun saw me, and walked quickly towards me. She pushed me inside and whispered they were going on a week-long hunt. No storms for a few days, at least none of the human kind.

As soon as they were gone, I pulled Sun aside, and fingered my hair, and scrubbed my skin. Habituated to being silent around Roaring Storm, I rarely used my voice. I had not had a bath in longer than I could remember, and I did not like the feeling. Uncle John had shown me how to find quiet pools and scrub myself with sand or mud, and I had

always felt much better after doing so. Sun seemed to understand, for she took me by the hand and silently led me to the nearby stream. I grimaced; it looked shallow, but she continued along the banks of the stream until the next bend, waving her hand with a flourish.

"Sun! This is wonderful!" burst from my lips as I saw the sheltered pool.

"I am pleased you are pleased," she said.

I looked at her, arrested by the tone of her voice. I could not name all that I saw in her eyes, but my heart raced as I studied them. I saw concern, and pleasure, and... dared I admit it? Did I truly see desire in her eyes? Her chest was heaving as she breathed faster than normal. I watched her eyes as I divested myself of the clothing she had provided for me. I saw them drift down my person, stumbling over breasts and over the thatch of hair below. I saw them rise again, and I watched her bite her lip.

"I go," she said.

"Join me," I whispered, swallowing hard.

Eons passed. Then she lifted her arms and unclothed herself. Her blue skin was even lighter under her clothing. I frowned at the yellow bruises on her belly and reached out to softly stroke her. She flinched, and I paused, looking at her eyes. They were wet with tears. I drew my hand back.

"Hush," I said. "The water will feel good." I waved my arm so she could precede me, and gazed at her back and buttocks as she waded into the pool. She was beautiful. I was not yet in the pool, but I was wet.

We did not touch as we covered ourselves in mud and then scrubbed it off, and I tried with some success not to look at her as we stepped out of the pool to sit on a rock and let the sun dry us. I lay back, placing my hands under my head and gazing at the clouds. I nearly jumped three feet when I felt a soft brushing on the scar at my side.

"You have healed quickly." She stroked it once more, then sat back.

"I had the best healer. I have not thanked you."

"There is strong medicine in you," she said. "It calls to me. I... do not know if I should answer?"

Oh, my. I longed to feel her answer!

"Now is not the time, if ever," I said, sitting up and looking at her earnestly. "I cannot... I cannot take what is not mine. It is not respectful of your hospitality, of your care."

Her face fell. "I see."

"Sun, you do not see. My heart longs for your answer, yet my head tells me it is not right, not now. You would be hurt in the end, and I do not wish for that."

Her head had snapped up when I confessed my longing. She searched my eyes, and then sat back, seemingly satisfied.

"I will wait until the time is right. We must leave here, now. I may grow impatient," she said, a small smile touching her lips as her eyes grazed my breasts.

I longed to place my lips on hers, to taste that smile. Papa had always wondered why I spurned the suitors he had chosen for me. I had known why, but never dared hope I might find a like-minded woman. Yet Sun had expressed herself rather clearly. I clenched my hands as I followed her back. How I wished things were different!

\* \* \*

The rest of that week sped by. I joined the other women at their tasks, doing the ones I could do, watching, trying to learn the ones I could not yet do. I was happy here, much happier than I had been with Papa, either in town or in the wilds. I did not know if this would change when the men returned, but for the moment, I was content. Sun and I did many of the tasks together, not-quite-innocently touching each other as the days passed. Our hands would linger as we exchanged items we needed. Sometimes her shoulder would brush mine as we walked together. Once we both rounded a

corner at the same time, in opposite directions, so that our bodies touched fully for a moment. I placed my arms around her so we would not fall, and we stood embracing for longer than was necessary. My lips brushed her cheek as I pushed her away.

"Are you alright?" I asked.

"Yes... and no," she whispered.

"Sun..."

"I know. I shall be patient."

The men were back the next day. Roaring Storm got roaring drunk, and was particularly nasty to Sun that night. I dared not try to stop him... yet. I had not regained my full strength, and he was much bigger than I. After he was done, I heard him breathing hard, and felt his stare on me. The next day I took a sharp bone knife and hid it in my bedding. I feared for myself, now, as well as for Sun.

That night, Roaring Storm got into the firewater again. He held Sun by the hair as his punches against her belly punctuated his hissing, low-voiced tirade: "Why are you here, you useless woman? Where are my sons, the sons you are to give me? What use are you, worthless one? If I cannot have sons on you, I will try someone else!"

He felled her with a blow to the head – the first blow to her head I'd witnessed – and lunged at me. Trembling with anger at my still-weakened body, and at my impotence to help her, I had been gripping the knife from the moment he began hitting her. I had merely to hold it, braced against the bedding, blade up, when he threw his body upon mine. His roar of pain brought many running.

"She tried to kill me!" he ranted. "The devious white woman tried to kill me. She wants to take all my things and escape back to her people! She is evil. She must die!"

"Oh, be quiet, you disgusting skunk!" I shouted.

Dead silence ensued. I'm not certain whether it was because I spoke at all, or because I spoke in their own tongue. No one knew I knew it besides Sun, who was still

unconscious on the floor, and a few of the women who had impassively watched us speak together during the previous week.

The chief entered. "What is happening?" he asked.

He looked over at Sun, and immediately several women went to tend to her. I was still standing combatively facing Roaring Storm, bloody knife in hand. I longed to go to Sun, but he had placed himself between us. Even wounded, he was dangerous. Perhaps more dangerous than otherwise.

"Is this how you repay our hospitality?" he asked, mildly.

"Do you not respect Nature?" I asked. He blinked. "Do you not thank the Spirits for providing for you, and do you not thank the animals you kill for providing you with nourishment, and clothing, and tools? Do any of you dare follow the spoor of a deer without being grateful that no part of the animal will go to waste? Is not this your belief?"

"It is so," the chief said.

"In the months that I have been here, this... *warrior*," I drew out the sound in derision, "has yet to thank his woman for the things she provides him with each day. He shows her less respect than he shows the deer and badger and beaver and rabbit he brings to her, which *she* skins, tans, prepares meats from, fashions tools from their bones, and clothing from their skins. He would never dream of beating them before taking what he wants of them. Yet he comes here each night and beats her where others cannot see, before taking her body for his pleasure. He does not see to it that she is comfortable, or comforted, by his attentions. Even the deer may flee when it senses danger, but she is not permitted to flee a nightly punishment. The cougar will fight back when cornered, and tonight, this... this *warrior*," I sneered again, "cornered me."

"Enough," the chief said, holding up a hand. Looking at some of the other men, he said, "Take Roaring Storm outside and tend to his wound." After they left, he waved

everyone else except the medicine man out, then went to Beautiful Sunrise's bedside. "Is this true?" he asked.

The medicine man nodded. "She has bruises. Today he knocked her on the head, and she scraped it against a stone as she fell. She bleeds a little, but will be well."

"Heart of Cougar," the chief said, apparently addressing me, "were you defending yourself?"

"I was."

"Why did you not defend Beautiful Sunrise?"

"I could not. I have been weak until recently. Even now, tonight, I could not have stabbed him. His own weight falling on the knife drove it into him, and it did little damage, at that. I am full of shame that I could not defend her any sooner than now. I am not easily moved to violence, but Roaring Storm kindled my anger." I stared at the bloody knife in my hand, then let it drop as I looked over at Sun. I moved to sit by her.

She stirred, groaning a little. Her eyes opened. "Ray shell," she said, seeking me out. I took her hand. She squeezed it, reassured, and turned to the medicine man. "I am not dying, old man," she said.

His eyes were on our hands as he chuckled and said, "No, you are not. Life flows into you." He rose, bowed to me, to the chief, and to Sun, and left.

The chief had not missed any of this exchange. "Watch over her, Heart of Cougar," he said, before also leaving.

We were alone. She looked at me, concerned. I had blood on my clothing and hands. "You are unhurt? What happened?"

I shrugged. "He tried to... jump on me, but I had a knife. I held it blade up, and he hurt himself on it. It doesn't matter. How are you?" I could not bring myself to speak the word, "rape." It would bring shame to Sun, I thought, that her mate would so treat a guest. I hid my sudden shivering as I realized the fullness of the danger I had been in.

"My head aches. My heart aches. Hold me?"

"I am bloodied."

"I do not care. Please?"

I stretched alongside her, and took her in my arms. She rubbed her cheek against my shoulder, sighed, and fell asleep. I did too. Eventually.

I woke before her, shuddering from a nightmare where I had lost her forever. I pushed myself up on my elbow and watched her sleep as my heart slowed, then raced again for other reasons. I finally bestirred myself to wash the caked blood off her face, off my hands. She woke as I scrubbed her face, wrinkling her nose at the coldness of the washcloth. She put her hand over mine, causing me to cup her cheek. She pulled the washcloth from between her face and my hand, then turned her head slightly to kiss my palm.

"Sun..." I said, swallowing.

She smiled but released me. Just in time, too, as a warrior stuck his head through the entry to summon us before the chief.

"Heart of Cougar," the chief said, "tell us again what you had observed."

I swallowed. I had spoken in the heat of anger last night, and hoped I could speak as eloquently now. Apparently, I could. I saw some of the elders nodding wisely as I spoke, and scowl as Roaring Storm tried to defend his actions. The elders gathered in a cluster to discuss the accusations and counter-accusations, then the chief spoke.

"Roaring Storm, you are to travel towards the setting sun until you find bison. You will hunt town eight bison, skin them, tan their hides, prepare their meat, make tools from their bones, and bring them back. Until you have done so, you are not a member of this tribe."

"Why eight?" I murmured to myself.

"I have been with him eight summers," was the soft reply from beside me.

"Why bison?"

"Bigger, more dangerous, and farther away." This reply came from behind me, from one of the other women. Murmurs of agreement rustled around and behind me. I shook my head, amazed at how many of Mother Earth's native species the Natives had managed to bring with them or recreate, before abjuring technology entirely.

I had not removed my eyes off Roaring Storm, noting his anger, his sulkiness, his resentment. He would bear watching, whether or not he had been banished. He was escorted to the edge of the settlement and pushed on his way by the chief's son. Everyone else then went to their duties as though nothing of import had happened. I knew otherwise. My heart raced intermittently all day long as I did my share of daily chores.

\* \* \*

In the evening, I entered the dwelling to find that Sun had returned before me. She was stirring something into the rabbit stew in a pot by the fire. I sat next to her, offering some beans I had picked on my way. Our fingers brushed as she took them from me.

"I thank you, Sun, for preparing this meal for us to share," I said softly.

"I thank you, my Cougar, for defending me." Her voice was so soft I almost did not hear it.

"Sun..."

"Eat. Many things have happened this day."

I hoped for things to happen this night. I was thrilled when she leaned against me as she ate.

"How is your head?" I asked.

"It aches. But only a little." She smiled at my concern.

"And, uh, your heart?"

"It aches as well, but will soon be soothed?" Her voice tilted up in question.

I swallowed. "And your body?" I had no desire to hurt her any more than she had already been hurt.



"It aches below where you would expect it to ache," she said wryly. "It burns. It hungers." She put the bowl down, and turned to me. "It wants."

I set my bowl down as well. "Sun. Beautiful Sunrise." I leaned towards her and our lips brushed. Fire flared. Floods flowed. Feelings flew, driven to new heights of freedom. I pushed her gently down, and she opened her arms to welcome me. We kissed for an eternity, I think.

I kissed her eyes, her cheeks, her ears. She giggled, moaned and arched herself for me. Somehow, we found ourselves on the bedding. Clothing disappeared, and I was lying beside her, naked, holding her, naked, wanting her, naked, loving her, naked. My hands touched her, cupped her breasts, drew designs on her belly as my lips followed the paths I traced on her body. She groaned when I took her nipple in my mouth. Her hands gripped my hair, holding me tightly to her breast as she arched her torso for me. She held my head with one hand, and her other covered the hand toying with her free breast. I pinched her; she gasped, whimpered, and reached for my own breasts. She pushed me over and fastened herself onto me and I reveled in the heat of her mouth. She was hungry indeed.

"Sun... Sun, I want to touch you. There, where he hurt you. Please, may I touch you?" I whispered urgently, needily.

She pulled away from my breasts and stared at me. I raised my hand and cupped her face. "It is where you are most beautiful, Sun, I want to touch you there."

"You have never seen!"

"I don't need to see to know. It is where the life comes from you..."

She spun away, sitting up, hurt. "I have no life coming from me!"

"Sun, do not weep. There is so much life coming from every part of you that I am overwhelmed with it!" I struggled for words. I had forgotten her barrenness, and

wounded her almost as badly as her mate had. "The life from you does not come in the form of babes, I know, but Sun, there is so much goodness, and giving, and patience, and grace, and blessing that shines from every part of you... do not disdain that which the Spirits have gifted you with, for I do not. You are beautiful in every part of yourself, and I desire you... I love you, Sun; I wish to remain with you. Do not close yourself off from me just because I am a bumbling fool! Please, Sun... Please? I need your light in my life."

As I spoke, I saw her back relax.

"You wish to remain with me? Why?"

"Because how can I know that you are provided for if I don't make sure of it? How can I know if you are healthy, and happy, and full of the Spirits' blessings, if I am not here for you? How can I exist if I do not know that you are well? I love you, Sun; I wish to be with you."

Her voice was the thread of a whisper as she asked, "Always?"

"Until the Sun you are named for no longer shines."

She lay back down beside me, her back still toward me. I snuggled up close to her and brought my arm across her belly. She took my hand in hers, kissed it, then laid it on the bed, close by her breast. She remained still. With difficulty, I did, too. At some point, I dozed off.

\* \* \*

I awoke when the heat of her body left me, sometime around dawn. I got up on one elbow, and we looked at each other silently as she clothed herself before going outside. I let my head drop back, frustrated. I might have totally ruined everything with my thoughtlessness of the previous night. I turned over on my belly and hit my head repeatedly against the edge of the bedding.

"What are you doing?" Sun asked when she returned; her tone of voice startled and concerned.

"Punishing myself for a fool," I muttered into the pillow.

"You are not a fool. I am," she said, sitting on the edge of the bedding and stroking my back. "You are strong and courageous, and have acted in my defense, for my good, without asking anything in return. You could have claimed me last night, but you did not, because I was stupid and selfish, and withheld myself from you. You... respected me. I am shamed before you, Heart of Cougar."

"You should not be," I said, turning to lie on my side. "I was thoughtless, and I hurt you. It is I who should ask forgiveness."

She puffed out an exasperated sigh. "If we waste any more time asking forgiveness we have both already given, the morning will pass away and we shall have accomplished nothing." She cocked her head and quirked an eyebrow at me. Her hand, which had slipped onto my hip when I turned, stroked up my side, and around to cup my breast. I gasped and leaned back, watching her head come towards my hard, aching nipple.

"Do we not have chores?" I gasped, as she reached her goal.

"We are exempt for today. I asked," she murmured, shifting up to trap my lips in a searing kiss.

My arms came around to hold her as she climbed on my body. I opened my legs to welcome her, and her hips nestled sweetly between mine. Heat, wetness, welcomed me. The pounding pulse of passion pushed us; we strained against each other to its rhythmic beat, tempo increasing as the temperature rose between us. Sweat poured from us as we writhed, mouths locked onto each other. I grasped her buttocks and pulled her into me as I arched into her. Wrapping my legs around her, I opened myself as fully as I could, the more to feel her against me. She gasped, broke the kiss, and her head arched up away from me as ecstasy overcame her. I reached to lick the corded muscles of her

throat as she held herself, shaking, tensing, vibrating like a plucked bowstring until she collapsed over me, breathing hard. I thrust against her a few more times, causing her to jerk and shudder, until my own body burst in joy.

We lay, exhausted and sated, for a few minutes, before I pushed her over so that I could see her body. She was still breathing heavily, eyes half closed, as I lowered my head to lick her collarbones. She moaned in pleasure when I sucked her nipple into my mouth, finally finding the strength to move, just enough to hold my head to her breast. Her other hand found mine, then slowly drew it down her body until I felt her hairs. I lifted my head.

"Are you certain?" I searched her eyes.

"Yes." She shifted and opened her legs for me.

"Oh, Sun," I whispered as my fingers slipped between. She was slick from both our juices, and I stroked and reveled in her silkiness, tracing her, learning her, before I found the tight bundle of nerves I sought. I pinched gently, and she gasped. I kissed her belly – *those* bruises were already fading – and let my fingers drift to her opening. I felt the tremors in her legs, in her belly, but her hands were steady on my head as she stroked my hair, waiting. I slipped one finger inside her, and she jumped a little, then relaxed.

"You are touching me... there," she whispered.

I kissed her belly again, and inserted a second finger. I curled my fingers up, searching for that sweet spot that would take her to the stars, and I found it. I pressed against it gently as she gasped. I brushed my thumb against her nerves, and she moaned. Her legs dropped open even more. I gently thrust in and out of her, until she caught the rhythm and was pushing against me with each thrust. I added a third finger; a fourth followed soon after. Roaring Storm must have been huge. I had no difficulty at all. She took them, driving herself onto them even harder. There was still room. I paced myself, and her, and at the right time, I folded my

thumb inside the other fingers, and entered her fully. She was so wet, and so open, I slipped in with ease.

"Oohhhh! Oh, Ray shell!" she said, softly.

She had learned not to make any sounds while he took her; and I was pleased to hear her wondering voice. I moved my head to watch her take me inside her. Her scent invaded me. I had to taste. Her fingers clutched me as my tongue found her, found her nerves, and licked and sucked on her. She was moaning constantly, her hands gripping my hair, holding me to herself. She lifted one leg over my back, and pulled me even closer with it, grinding harder, faster. I thrust a little harder, deeper, and she convulsed around me. Her contractions were so hard I thought she would break my hand. Wetness squirted from her all up my arm, startling me. Her body was the beauty of willows in a storm, flailing, arching, straining, until again she collapsed, spent. I licked her nub one last time, and she shuddered. I gently withdrew my hand, and she found the strength to lean down and grab it, to kiss it and lick it. I rose up along her body and covered it with mine, and she opened her legs to me, wrapping them around me as I nestled onto her. She pulled my head down for a kiss. She tasted so sweet.

"You show respect with great energy," came a voice from nearby.

Startled, I almost raised my body from Sun's, but remembered her nakedness and stayed on her.

"You show respect in a most unusual way," I retorted, "entering a dwelling and watching and commenting on the inhabitants' behavior."

"Is not this what you yourself did?" the chief asked mildly.

I had no reply for this.

"She did not enter with intent, as you have done!" Sun said indignantly.

The chief chuckled, and threw a robe over us. "Be at peace, fire-eater. I have nothing negative to say about your

coupling. I wished to assure myself of Heart of Cougar's respect for my daughter."

I gasped. I had not realized their relationship.

"Humph," said Sun. "If I did not know better, I would have thought you wished merely to enjoy the sight."

"Peace, I said." He frowned at her. Then, looking at me, he asked, "Can you provide for my daughter?"

"I can try. I know how to track game, but all my skill is with the rifle. I do not know how to shoot with a bow and arrow."

"This can be taught and learned. In the meantime, I shall see that you do not go hungry. Will you defend her?"

"To my dying breath."

"And I see that you respect her with great... thoroughness," he smirked.

I blushed.

"Not as great a thoroughness as I am about to demonstrate," Sun snapped. "Leave us!"

"In good time."

"Humph!"

"Roaring Storm has been sent away, but he is evil and very sly. I did not know, daughter, how he was mistreating you, or I would have dissolved your union long ago. Do not be silent if this one begins to treat you ill."

"There will be no need," she assured him.

"I think you are right." He smiled at her before turning to me again. "Be on your guard; we may have sent him away, but he may not have gone far. And he will have anger in his heart toward you."

"I had already guessed this, father-of-my-love," I said, making up the title on the spur of the moment. He seemed pleased by it. "I will be wary and alert."

"Good, lover-of-my-daughter. She has been hurt once; I do not wish her to be hurt again."

"She will not be."

"Good." He rose and left, just like that.

I dropped my head into the crook of Sun's neck. "We need a lock," I muttered.

"What is this 'lock'?"

"It is a device to... to make sure no one can enter without our consent."

"No one else will come in; Father will see to it."

"Wonderful. Everyone will know what we're doing."

"Everyone already knew." She pushed me off herself and onto my back, kissing my breasts and belly.

"Sun..."

"Yes?" she raised her head to look at me.

"No one has ever been inside me."

She gaped. "You acted as though you have done so many times!"

"I, well, I have, but I have never allowed anyone else to do more than look. And sometimes cup me."

She nodded. "I will be gentle, then."

She did not ask about my past, and I did not say any more about it. It was long ago; and no longer mattered. I had no idea how much I had missed, but I was so very glad Sun was the first to touch me, kiss me, lick me, enter me. I wept as I felt her inside me. Her fingers thrust gently, in, out, then twisted and turned until her palm was facing up, and her fingers sought my sweet spot as her thumb stroked my nub. I saw suns burst in glory.

We did not venture outdoors the rest of the day.

\* \* \*

A week went by, then two. The excitement of Roaring Storm's exile seemed to have passed. Yet I was watchful, wary. I still felt his anger near. I almost never went anywhere by myself, nor would I allow Sun to go off alone. I was returning from the fields when he jumped me. I sensed his presence scant moments before he leapt out at me, but those scant moments were enough for me to unsheathe the

hunting knife I carried. Bigger and stronger than me, he had no difficulty knocking me down, but I had been able to turn the knife towards him. Blood spurted as he once again impaled himself on my weapon. This time he did not cry out. I shoved his inert body off me, suddenly afraid. Where was Sun? Had he harmed her before seeking me out? I needed to know.

I raced down the path to our dwelling, tears streaming down my face, fear dripping from my sweating body as I ran. Bursting inside, I shouted, "Sun! Sun, where are you?" She wasn't there. I started to panic, then I heard her voice.

"Ray shell? What is wrong?" she asked, coming in and walking towards me, then racing towards me. "You are bleeding! Ray shell, my Cougar, what has happened?"

I took her face in my bloody hands, and pulled her in for a desperate kiss. I needed her breath, her life, her soul, to reassure myself he had not harmed her. She broke the kiss.

"Shhh. Ray shell, I am here. It is all right. Shhh, be still, my beloved."

I was still shaking with reaction, clutching her, when shouts and cries grew louder outside. The chief burst in, looking wildly about.

"Beautiful Sunrise, are you well? What is all this blood? What... ? Heart of Cougar, what has happened? Roaring Storm is on the path, dead. Your knife is still in him, I recognize the handle. It is the knife I gave you last week."

"It is," I said, still panting, still clutching Sun's hand. I could not let her go. "He jumped out at me, and knocked me down just as I drew the knife; he landed on it. I could not stay to see if he lived or not. I was worried about Sun." Sun squeezed my hand, reassuring me she was with me.

The chief looked at me sternly. "The knife is in his back."

"What?!"

"The knife is in his back."



I was stunned. "He jumped at me! He knocked me down. How could the knife be in his back?"

Sun spoke up. "Let us go see where he lies."

We walked outside, then the chief said, "Stop. Turn to face me, Heart of Cougar."

I did so, and he looked at me. There was blood all over my front, below my waist; Roaring Storm's blood. The chief grunted.

"Someone seeks to place blame on you, Heart of Cougar. You did not slay him."

He strode down the path to where I had left Roaring Storm, not knowing or caring whether he was alive or dead. We trooped silently behind him. Roaring Storm's body lay across the path, face down, the knife indeed sticking up out of his back. The chief studied it again, then looked at me, raising an eyebrow. I puzzled for a moment, then realized there was very little blood on the corpse's back, yet there was a pool of it beneath him, smeared where I had wriggled out from under him.

"I do not know if you were his slayer, Heart of Cougar, but it seems someone wanted me to think so."

"Or to be certain he was dead," I said. Sun's hand was trembling in mine. I turned to look at her, just in time to catch her as she fainted. "Sun? Sun, Honey?" I was frantic as I laid her down gently.

Chief waved at one of the women who had followed, and she took off running. He crouched next to me, and stroked Sun's face, brushing away the flakes of dried blood from when I had held her face. Then he took her hand, and paused, looking more closely. Blood smears. Blood beneath her fingernails. Chief waved everyone else away.

"I think we have found the killer," he said softly.

"Chief, I may have killed him. I probably did. He made no sound when he fell on me. There is no penalty for stabbing a dead body, is there? Other than for disrespect?"

We gave each other long, considering stares. Then he nodded.

"You acted in self-defense. She acted in defense of you."

Sun stirred. "I could not let him harm you," she murmured, clutching at my hand. "You are my life, Ray shell, my Cougar." She turned to her father and said, "He had tried to rise, dislodging the knife from his belly. I saw him, saw it, and... well, I do not remember very clearly. Anger rose in me, and... well... a darkness came over me. I did not realize what I had done until just now, when I saw him." She burst into tears, and I gathered her close in my arms, rocking her and crooning.

Chief spoke, "Be at peace, child of mine. None will condemn you."

The woman who had run off returned then, with a skinful of water. Sun drank some, then was able to rise. I held her close as we slowly walked back towards our dwelling. Warriors stayed behind to dispose of Roaring Storm's body in whatever way they thought best. From the look in Chief's eyes, I assumed the body would get little respect.

Sun and I walked beyond our dwelling, heading for the stream and the deep pool where we had realized our attraction. I held her close as the cool water washed the last remnants of Roaring Storm from our bodies, from our minds.

\* \* \*

Two more weeks passed. Our days were filled with chores, our nights with love. Then Sun became ill. Each morning, she was ill, rushing out to vomit in the bushes. After the first few days, I ceased worrying. Nature would take care of this, in a few months. Roaring Storm had left a legacy after all.

"Leave me," she said one morning after her sickness passed. "You must leave me. The Spirits are displeased, and will turn from me to you, soon"

"What?" I asked. "What are you talking about?"

"I am ill each morning after I have lain with you. Do you not see? The Spirits are displeased." She turned away from me and so missed my surprised look.

"You think you are ill because you take pleasure with me, and the Spirits are displeased about that?"

She was wringing her hands, evidently upset. "Yes. You must leave me before they turn their anger on you. Please, Ray shell, my Cougar. I do not wish them to be angry with you."

"Sun, I do not think the Spirits are angry with you. Nor will they be angry with me. Not for loving you, not for you loving me." I stepped close to her and put my hands on her shoulders.

"They strike me down each morning after I have lain with you!" Sun spun around angrily, pushing at me, trying to create distance between us.

"Sun, delight of my heart, that is not what is happening," I said, chuckling.

"You laugh at the Spirits? Ray shell, I cannot bear it if anything happens to you! Do not anger them further, I beg you!"

I sobered and gripped her arms. "The only one who could be angry is Roaring Storm, who did not live to see his child be born."

"What?" She was stunned.

"You are pregnant. Roaring Storm succeeded in getting a child from you at last."

Stunned, she sat down suddenly on the bedding. "Pregnant?" She did not know whether to be distraught or elated.

"Why be upset, Sun? You will – no, *we* will have a child, to love and raise, to teach, to delight in."

"But... it is *his* child."

"It is *our* child. I had not thought such joy could come for me, that I would have a child to call my own."

"Are you certain?"

"I am. I am as certain about loving our child as I am about loving you. And that love will not cease until the sun is dark."

She frowned. "The sun was darkened in the day, six summers ago."

"Until the sun does not rise again, then. The sun shone again, after that day six summers ago, did it not? And it rises every morning."

She smiled at me. "I do love you, my Cougar. You give me cause for joy."

"Then my work is going well, my Sun, going well indeed."

**The End**

## About The Author

**O**F MIXED Arab/Latino descent, late- blooming Rrose finally accepted her sexuality after 50 trips around the sun, and she's loving it. Twice graduated from George Mason University, once as a Spanish major and later as a Psych major, she is still crazy about languages. Her other interests include writing, reading, photography, motorcycling, pool, dancing, and women, not necessarily in that order. She firmly believes that sunrise is worth waiting up for. Write her at carbinela@lebarican .com.

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## Other Titles by This Author

**Romance: Mild To Wild – Erotica, Anthology**

### Summary

**F**ROM THE SWEET first blush of blossoming romance to the wild erotic adventures of exotic women, this volume will present you with a set of fourteen varied stories about women and the women they love. Come on a quick tour of Ancient Greece, the Caribbean of the late 1700's, and Modern America to discover a world of Lesbian Love.

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**Thank You** for Reading this Short Story.

