



Spider Game (GhostWalkers)

By Christine Feehan

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It's not Cayenne's fault. Locked up, experimented on and never knowing kindness, she was bred this way—with a heart of pure venom. Trap understands her. He survived his own dark past and he shares her desire for getting even. But now Trap's greatest danger is Cayenne herself. Because what's inside her is hard to control—especially when it's aroused by a lover as reckless as Trap.

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Editorial Review

Review

Praise for the GhostWalker novels

“The queen of paranormal romance! I love everything she does.”—J.R. Ward

“I cannot wait to see where Ms. Feehan takes us next.”—Fresh Fiction

“A perfect 10.”—Romance Reviews Today

“Explosive! The sexual chemistry is literally a scorcher.”—Fallen Angel Reviews

“The fastest-paced, most action-packed, gut-wrenching, adrenaline-driven ride I’ve ever experienced.”—Romance Junkies

“Sultry and suspenseful...swift-moving and sexually charged...In short, it is an electrifying read.”—*Publishers Weekly*

About the Author

Christine Feehan is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of many novels, including the Carpathian series, the GhostWalker series, the Leopard series and the Sea Haven series. She lives in Northern California.

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Chapter One

Trap Dawkins sighed as he tilted his chair on two legs, automatically calculating the precise angle and vector he could tip before he fell over. He was bored out of his fucking mind. This was the fifth night in a row he’d come to the Huracan Club, a Cajun bar out in the middle of the fucking swamp for God’s sake. Peanut husks covered the bar and round, handmade wooden tables with a crude variety of chairs covered the floor. The bar was constructed of simple planks of wood set on sawhorses surrounded by high stools also hand carved.

To the left of the bar was a shiny beautifully kept baby grand piano. In the bar that was mostly a shack out in the middle of nowhere, the piano looked totally out of place. The lid was open and there wasn’t a dust spot—or a scratch—on the instrument. It was also completely in tune. The piano sat on a raised dais with two long steps made of hardwood leading up to it. There were no peanut husks on the platform or on the stairs. Everyone who frequented the bar knew not to touch the piano unless they really knew how to play. No one would dare. The piano had gone unscathed through hundreds of bar fights that included knives and broken bottles.

Trap glanced at the piano. He supposed he could play. Sometimes that helped his mind stay calm when it needed action. He couldn’t take sitting for hours doing nothing. How did these people do it? That question had occupied his brain for all of two minutes. He didn’t really care why they did it, or how, it was just plain a waste of time. He wasn’t certain he could take much more of this, but on the other hand, what alternative was there?

He'd come looking for her. Cayenne. In spite of the fact that no one could accurately describe her, Trap knew she frequented the bar. This was where she chose her victims. The robberies in the swamp were only rumors, whispers, the men too embarrassed to say much. They were always drunk. Always on their way home. They were men with bad reputations, men others steered clear of. She would choose those men and they wouldn't be able to resist her. Not her looks. Not her voice. Not the lure she used.

He sighed again and glanced toward the bar, wishing he had another beer, but seriously, it was nearly one in the morning. She wasn't coming. He would have to endure this nightmare again.

"Fuck," he whispered crudely, under his breath. He had discipline and control in abundance. But he couldn't stop himself from the destructive path he was set on. He had to find her, and that meant coming to this hellhole every night until he did.

"How you doin', Trap?" Wyatt Fontenot asked, as he put a fresh bottle of beer on the very rickety table in front of his fellow GhostWalker and toed a chair out so he could straddle it. "You ready to leave? You're lookin' like you might be startin' a fight any minute."

Trap would never, under any circumstances start a fight. But he'd finish it, and he'd do that in a very permanent way. That was why half their team came to the bar with him.

"Can't leave," Trap said. Low. Decisive.

Not that he didn't want to leave, Wyatt noted. Trap said can't. There was a big difference. He'd told Wyatt he was looking for Cayenne, the woman he'd rescued from certain death, but knowing Trap, that was so far out of his reality that Wyatt hadn't really believed him. But now . . .

"Trap." Wyatt kept his voice low. Steady. His gaze on one of his closest friends.

Trap was a very dangerous man. He didn't look it, sitting there, legs sprawled out in front of him, his chair tipped back and his eyes half closed, but there was ice water running in his veins. More, he had a brain that worked overtime, calculating everything even as he observed the minutest detail of his surroundings.

He had a steady hand and the eyes of an eagle. He was silent and deadly when he stalked an enemy, and he was known to go into an enemy camp alone, death drifting in and the reaper drifting back out. He killed without a sound and thoroughly, taking out the enemy without raising an alarm. When he returned, he was the same exact man—cool and remote, his brain already moving on to solve another problem.

Trap raised those piercing glacier-cold eyes to his. An icy shiver crept down Wyatt's spine.

"I've known you for years," Wyatt continued. "You get caught up in problems, Trap. Problems that need solvin'. Your brain just won't let it go. This woman is a problem. That's what this is."

Trap sighed. "You know better. You, of all people know better."

"You don't become obsessed with women. Hell, Trap, you hook up for an hour or two and then you walk. Not a night. An hour or two at the most."

Trap didn't deny it. "I fuck 'em and then walk away because I don't need the entanglement but I need the release." He stated the fact mildly. Unashamed. Uncaring.

"This woman is a problem to solve to you. That's all she is. This has nothin' to do with the woman herself, just the mystery of her. You have to know that." Wyatt's Cajun accent was becoming more noticeable, the only thing that betrayed his wariness.

Trap's expression didn't change. His icy gaze didn't leave Wyatt's face as he took a long pull on the beer and set it down. "You grew up in that family of yours Wyatt. You got your grandmother. Sweet and kind. You had all this." He gestured toward the swamp where Wyatt had grown up. "Running wild. Living a life. Having a family. You know what that's like."

Wyatt remained silent. Trap never talked about his past. Not ever. They'd met in college when they were both still teens and worked together on numerous projects that made both of them very wealthy. Wyatt had joined the service, and ultimately the GhostWalker psychically enhanced Special Forces unit. Trap had followed.

In the years they'd known each other, Trap had never once alluded to his past. He sounded like he was gearing up to do just that, and Wyatt wasn't about to blow the opportunity to learn more about what had made his friend as cold as ice. He simply nodded, keeping his gaze just as steady on Trap's, mesmerized by the blue flame that burned ice-cold under the glacier.

"I had two sisters and a brother. Did I ever tell you that?" Trap's fist tightened around the neck of the beer bottle, but he didn't lift it to his mouth. "My name wasn't Dawkins back then when I had them. It was Johansson." He said the name like there was a bad taste in his mouth. "Changed it legally in order to keep that shit out of the spotlight. To keep my enemies from finding me. Didn't work with the enemies, but it did with the press."

Had. Wyatt's heart clenched hard in his chest. He regarded Trap as a brother. He had for years. He shook his head slowly. What kid had enemies they had to hide from? Enemies so dangerous they needed a name change? Wyatt remained silent. Waiting. Letting Trap take his time.

"My brother, Brad, and my sister Linnie were younger than me by a couple of years. Drusilla was older by a couple of years. Dru took care of us while our mother worked. She worked because our father didn't." He raised the bottle to his mouth and took a long pull. Through it, his eyes didn't leave Wyatt's.

Dread built. This was going to be bad. Really bad. Many of the GhostWalkers had difficult lives, which was probably why they made the military their home, but Wyatt knew the hell that was there under all that ice, those blue flames that burned white-hot and glacier-cold, meant whatever had happened to Trap was going to be bad.

He felt movement behind him and knew Mordichai, another GhostWalker and member of their team, was coming up behind him. He dropped his hand low, down by the side of the chair and waved him off, counting on Mordichai to understand—to know not to come near the table or allow anyone else to.

"My father despised me. I was different, even then, even as a child. He wasn't in the least bit logical and half the time he didn't make sense. He hated the very sight of me, and Dru took to stepping in front of me when he was around, because the moment he laid eyes on me, he had to beat the holy hell out of me."

Trap shrugged, the movement casual. "I didn't understand what I did wrong, and poor Dru tried her best to shield me. I was so young, but already too old in my mind."

Wyatt understood that. Trap rivaled some of the greatest IQs in history. Wyatt was intelligent, but like many others he was especially gifted in certain areas. Trap was just plain gifted at everything. Along with the brains, he had the fast reflexes and superb body of a warrior.

"My father wasn't proud of me for being gifted. If anything, he took it as an affront. Dru always said he felt threatened by me, but I was a little kid and I didn't see how I was a threat to him."

Wyatt didn't make the mistake of letting compassion or anger show in his expression. Trap would close

down immediately. Trap kept his emotions under tight control and Wyatt realized why. There was rage coiled deep. So deep that it was never—ever—going to be purged.

“We never told mom about the beatings, but one day she saw the bruises and the swelling. He’d broken my arm and a couple of ribs. She took me to the hospital, and he was arrested. While he was in jail, she packed us up and moved us out of the city. I was eight. Dru, ten. We went clear across the country. His family bailed him out. He had two brothers, both as worthless and as vicious as he was.”

The chair never moved, remaining balanced on two legs as Trap took another long pull of his beer. He put the bottle down with deceptive gentleness on the table. The movement was precise and deliberate. Just like Trap. Just like everything Trap did.

“They found us when I was nine. My father came into the house late at night while his two brothers, poured gasoline up and down the walls inside and outside the little house we rented. He dragged my mother out of bed, down to the room where my little brother and sister slept. He shot them both and then shot Mom in the head.”

Trap’s expression didn’t change. His tone didn’t change. He might have been reciting a story he’d read in the papers. Wyatt’s fist clenched beneath the rickety table, but he didn’t allow his expression to change either.

“Dru and I were talking together in our secret hideaway. When we first moved in, we found a closet that was really shallow and after Mom went to bed, we’d sometimes get up and read or discuss something interesting we’d learned that day. We heard the shots and we went to find Mom, to see what was going on. Dru threw herself in front of me when he came at us. He shot her twice and her body landed on top of me. I could see her eyes, Wyatt. Wide open. Blank. She had beautiful eyes, but all of sudden, there was no light. No brilliance. My beautiful sister, so smart, so funny, the only one who could relate to me, who really saw me, saw into me, was dead. Gone. Just like that.”

“Fuck, Trap,” Wyatt said softly. What else was there to say? This was far worse than anything he had imagined.

“He should have just shot me,” Trap said softly, almost as if he was talking to himself. “If he had any intelligence at all, he would have just shot me like he did Dru. She was so smart, Wyatt. A gift to the world. She could have done things, but he took her life for no reason other than he was a fucked-up asshole.”

Still, even with the language, there was no change in Trap’s voice. None. That rage was buried so deep, so much a part of him, Wyatt doubted he actually knew it was there anymore. He held up two fingers, knowing Mordichai was watching them closely. Most likely the other members of his team were doing the same, not knowing what was going on, but willing to help in any way they could.

The GhostWalkers who had come with them were spread throughout the bar, one sitting on a barstool, one lounging by the famous piano the owner of the Huracan Club, Delmar Thibodeaux, guarded with a baseball bat, and a couple of others sitting at table across the room. All would be watching Trap’s and Wyatt’s backs, and at same time appearing as if they had no cares in the world.

Neither man spoke until Mordichai plopped two icy cold bottles of beer on the table and sauntered away, pretending like all the team members were that he had no clue Trap and Wyatt were in a nightmarish discussion.

“How’d you stay alive?”

“He dragged me out from under Dru. I think he wanted to beat me before he shot me, but as I came up I rammed my head into his groin and twisted the gun from his hand as he went down. I’d already calculated

the odds of success and knew I had a good chance. I shot him twice before he was on me. He had a knife in his boot.”

Wyatt had seen the wicked scar that seemed to take up half of Trap’s belly. He’d been what? Nine, he’d said. His own father had wiped out his family, killing his mother and brother and sisters. Wyatt pushed down the rage swirling deep in his gut. He drew in a deep breath to keep from annihilating the room. The peanut husks on the floor jumped several times like popcorn in a popper and the walls of the bar shimmered and breathed in and out. He took several breaths to get himself under control.

“He stabbed me twice. Once in my belly and again in my thigh. I hung on to that gun, but I went down in all the blood. That’s when my uncles came in. They came at me, but I lifted the gun and both backed off fast. I guess they were either cowards or they knew my father was done for, because they left him there bleeding out, threw gasoline all over the floor, lit a match and told me to burn in hell. They got out. I crawled out. Still got the scars on my legs and feet from the burns.”

Wyatt clenched his teeth and then carefully brought the bottle to his mouth. He needed action. Something. He almost wished a fight would break out as they habitually did in the bar. When he was younger, he often came there to drink, fight and find a woman, just like most of the other men in the swamp and bayou did. Now he came to drink and fight. He had a woman waiting for him at home.

“I had one living relative, my mother’s sister. She was fifteen years younger than mom, barely twenty-three, and single, but she came and got me and I lived with her. We changed our names, moved and thought we were going to be all right. At twelve I founded my first company after selling two of my patents. We lived good for a while.”

For the first time something moved in his cold, piercing eyes. Trap raked his hand through his blond hair, hair that definitely identified him as an outsider there in Cajun country. Had he not been with Wyatt, he would have been the first target chosen for anyone looking for a fight. The fight wouldn’t have ended well. Trap wasn’t a man who enjoyed a good friendly brawl. You didn’t put your hands on him. You didn’t threaten him. Even there in the Huracan Club with his team around him, he kept to himself. Wyatt could see the name Johansson suited Trap far better than Dawkins. Trap definitely had some Swede in him, with his build and blond hair.

Wyatt didn’t want to hear what happened to Trap’s aunt, but he had to know. There were too many flames burning icy hot behind the blue glacier of Trap’s eyes.

“For a while?” he prompted.

“Yeah. For a while. I made a lot of money, even thorough my early teenage years. Went to school, could have taught most of the professors. Did a lot of research in pharmaceuticals, and we both know you can make a fortune there. I just kept making money.” He made small circles on the table with the edge of the beer bottle. His gaze once again held Wyatt’s. “You know that money didn’t mean a fucking thing to me, Wyatt. Not one damned thing. I can’t help the way my mind works. The money made it easy to get the lab I wanted and the equipment, but that was all. I live simply. I don’t use it.”

Wyatt frowned at him. “Trap, I’ve known you for years. We went to school together. We were both younger than everyone else and yeah, smarter, so we naturally gravitated toward each another. We went into business together. You don’ have to convince me you aren’ into money.”

“She was kidnapped. They took her right out of the house when I was working in the laboratory. She would always come and get me for dinner. I could skip other meals, but not dinner. She didn’t come. When I went into the house, the place was a wreck. She fought them, and I hadn’t heard a fucking thing.”

Wyatt listened to Trap's voice, but he couldn't hear any expression at all. Just the soft monotone Trap often used.

"I paid the ransom, of course. Millions, enough to set them up for life in another country where they could change identities and live life large. I paid it immediately. They returned her body to me on my front porch. She was dead. They'd used her." Trap's blue eyes went so cold the temperature in the room actually dropped. "Hard. They made certain there was plenty of evidence so I would see that. They hurt her in every way possible before they killed her. They left me a note. Quoted an eye for an eye. They made it very plain that any woman I was with would suffer the same fate."

Trap took another long swig of beer. "I knew it was my uncles. I pointed the cops at them. I hired detectives. They disappeared. Their tracks were so well-covered that I knew they had changed identities. Even bribing the best in the business, I didn't find out who they'd become. All that money I'd made wasn't worth shit, Wyatt. It didn't buy her back for me, and it didn't find her killers."

Wyatt sank back in the chair and regarded his friend. He understood Trap's antisocial behavior much better. He had buried himself in work, cut himself off from everyone, making certain he had few ties. He hadn't blindly followed Wyatt into the GhostWalker unit, he wanted the skills. He hadn't given up on finding the men who murdered his aunt. He would never give up. He didn't tie himself to a woman or let himself feel affection for one. He used his work to keep him apart, to keep his mind occupied so there would be no chance that he would ever put another woman in jeopardy.

"Trap," he cautioned softly.

"She isn't a problem," Trap said just as softly. "Cayenne. She isn't a problem. Fucking Whitney paired us together. I don't ever think about a woman, not even after I've fucked her. Not ever. I go to my lab, and I work until there isn't a trace of her left. This woman I let out of a cage, not knowing if she's going to try to kill me. I just see her a couple of times and I can't get her out of my head. I can't, Wyatt. She's no problem to solve. He fucking paired us together."

Both men fell silent. Dr. Peter Whitney had been the brains behind the GhostWalker program. He'd sold his experimental ideas to the military. They'd tested psychic ability. Those accepted into the program had to test off the charts for various abilities as well as have the personality and physical abilities to withstand Special Forces training. Once accepted into the program, they were enhanced and then trained in every type of combat situation conceivable.

There were four teams, and each had been enhanced not only psychically—as they'd agreed to be—but physically as well—which they hadn't agreed to be. The first team had many problems and a couple of their men had died—succumbing to brain bleeds. Whitney got better after that, improving with each new team, but it became obvious he had used animal DNA to make his superior soldiers.

It came to light that long before he had worked on adult men he had first begun his experiments on female children he had taken from orphanages from around the world—disposable children. He believed they could be sacrificed for the greater good. If his experiments worked on them, only then did he try to duplicate them in the soldiers.

He kept the women prisoners in various facilities scattered around the United States as well as in some foreign countries. He went underground once his experiments had come under scrutiny, but he had friends in high places. They not only shielded him, but believed in what he was doing, so they aided him.

One of his experiments was to pair a male soldier with one of his female experiments, using pheromones to entice them to each other. No one knew how he did it, nor was there a way to undo what he'd done, so when the male soldier came across the female, and she him, they were so attracted, it was impossible for one to

walk away from the other. What Whitney hadn't counted on was the emotional attachment the pair formed. Or the camaraderie of all GhostWalkers.

They were not only elite, they were also different from every other human on earth. Some couldn't be in society without an anchor—another GhostWalker who could draw psychic energy away from them. The four teams had formed into a single unit looking out for one another. They trusted no one else and depended on one another. When one soldier found the woman he was paired with, she was protected by all of them—after all, Whitney had performed the same experiments on the women.

Each of the women was combat-trained and enhanced both psychically and physically. Some of them had been used for cancer research. Others had been forced into his “breeding” program. Wyatt had three daughters, little triplets, all of whom had snake DNA and were venomous. Trap had come to the bayou to help him find a way to keep them from hurting anyone if they accidentally bit while they were frightened or teething.

“How long have you known?” Wyatt asked. He wasn't going to argue. Trap wasn't a man given to fantasies, and the last thing he would welcome into his life was a woman—especially one he was paired with. One he couldn't ignore and set aside after he'd had her body.

“She bothered me on a level she shouldn't have from the moment I laid eyes on her. I thought—I hoped—it was because she was an experiment gone wrong and they issued a termination order on her. Maybe I could figure out what went wrong and I could fix her. My brain was already trying to assess her the moment I saw her and heard her voice, analyzing what her psychic abilities were and what DNA she might have been enhanced with.”

“That makes sense.” Wyatt wanted to pounce on that. Trap was holding himself together, but the rage deep inside was close—too close. He didn't dare set Trap off with so many innocents around. He felt the other members of their team moving into positions closer to them. Just in case. That meant they noticed the tension mounting as well. No one really knew Trap's full abilities, but it was generally considered that along with Ezekiel and Gino he was one of the most lethal men on the team—when it came to psychic enhancements.

Wyatt didn't want the building to shake apart and come down on half the men with families living there around the swamp and bayou.

“I tried to make it that, Wyatt,” Trap said. “But she didn't let go. I think about her when I'm in the lab working on how to come up with a vaccine that will stay in the system for snakebite. Not once, in my entire life, have I ever been distracted from my work. I dream of her at night, and I have always commanded my own dreams. Not just any dreams, erotic fantasies, and I'm not prone to those, not even when I've gone a while without a woman. When I consider finding another woman to get relief, the idea is not only repugnant, but it's absolutely abhorrent.”

“Fuck.” Wyatt almost spat the word. “I see why you're putting yourself in this position now. It didn't make sense. You're the last person in the world to go to a bar every night. We've come here now for the last five nights. I thought maybe you wanted to get in better with the locals.”

A faint gleam of humor moved through the ice in Trap's startling blue eyes. “Hardly. I did take your advice and hire a few of them to help with the renovations once escrow closed and the land and building became mine, but hanging out with them in a bar is going beyond the call of duty.”

“How are the renovations coming?”

The humor deepened. “We're about finished. I know she's living there. No one has seen her, but things go missing, and all of sudden the men are leery of working there, especially after dark. The workers think the

place is haunted. Word leaked out that Wilson Plastics might have been a front for government experiments. I didn't let anyone go down into the lower region where the cells and the crematoria were until we'd gotten rid of all the evidence. Now, it's a beautiful apartment I designed for her. Still, word got out, and the men who really need or want the work show up, but they work in pairs and they won't stay late at all. I think she started the rumors and is sitting back laughing her pretty little ass off. Seriously, I only have a few odds and ends left anyway."

"Did you try to find her there? You hate coming here, that might be a better alternative."

"It's not going to happen. She's got her webs everywhere. The moment I come near there, she's gone. I don't want to risk driving her away."

Wyatt wished he'd had more than a glimpse of the woman Trap had rescued from those cells. Wilson Plastics had been a cover for a dangerous experimental laboratory and termination center for the experiments deemed gone wrong. His three little girls and the woman Trap was certain he had been paired with had been down in those cells, waiting to be killed and then cremated, their ashes taken out to sea so no one could ever know of their existence.

Prior to being Wilson Plastics, the land had been owned by Dr. Whitney. The huge building had been a sanitarium. Whitney had conducted his experiments on the orphans he "rescued" from around the world. The sanitarium had burned to the ground. Whitney's company had sold it, and Wilson Plastics bought the land. Wyatt's GhostWalker team had exposed the company for what it really was, and when the land came up for sale, Trap bought it.

Their pararescue team had decided to make a fortress together right there in the swamp. Wyatt's little girls and his wife couldn't possibly leave the swamp, not until Wyatt and Trap came up with the vaccine that would stay in the system without daily injections. They also had to either remove the venom sacs or find a way to keep the girls from accidentally biting while they grew up. In any case, Whitney was trying to reacquire them, and that meant they needed protection at all times.

"So you think your girl is a squatter, living on your property?"

Trap nodded slowly, the humor still in his eyes. "Yeah. She's there. And she's the reason we hear rumors about drunk men being robbed on their way home."

"Those men aren't the best of the bayou, Trap," Wyatt pointed out. "If she's the one doin' the robbin' she's pickin' the men who are particularly nasty to rob."

Trap shrugged. "Doesn't matter. That's not okay, and she knows it."

"She's got to eat."

The humor faded from Trap's eyes. "Seriously, Wyatt, if I'm feeling this way, can you tell me she isn't? She could come to me. If not me, then you. She knows we're GhostWalkers, the same as she is. She could come to us. She doesn't need to rob anyone and put herself in danger like that."

There was an edge to Trap's voice, and a faint shimmer moved through the room. The opaque disturbance made Wyatt uneasy. He glanced across the room to Mordichai, who had a frown on his face. He felt it too. Trap had an energy about him now, one that was distinctly lethal.

"She doesn't think she's the same as we are, Trap. She was listed for termination. She considers herself flawed, just as Pepper always did. Not one of us, but a throwaway. She isn't goin' to come to us. She figures we'll look down on her. That we'll judge her in the way they did. It's possible she doesn't trust herself to be

around us.”

“She doesn’t trust us,” Trap corrected. “I can’t say as I blame her, but she feels it, the same as me, that pull between us, or she’d be long gone. You know it’s true. She had no reason to stick around here. She has no place to stay, no money, nothing. No clothes. She’s staying for me.”

“She’s a GhostWalker, Trap. By now she has all those things,” Wyatt persisted. “She can slip in and out of any store or home without ever being seen. If she’s the one robbing the drunks, then she’s got money. You said yourself you’re certain she’s setting up her home there in the buildin’ you just bought.”

“I’m positive,” Trap said. “So much so that I’ll be moving there soon. I’ve nearly got the laboratory all set up. Most of my equipment is in. We’ve got a big workspace, and I can protect it easier than the one we set up in your garage.”

“I don’t know if I like you livin’ there alone right now, Trap, especially if she’s there. We don’t know how dangerous she is. I know you’re close to finishing the renovations, but Whitney could hit us any time. The boys haven’t had enough time to set up all your security.”

“She’s there,” Trap insisted. “If I’m there alone, she won’t be able to resist coming to me. I’d never be able to resist going to her if I wasn’t afraid of scaring her off. She won’t hurt me.”

Wyatt sighed. There was no arguing with Trap when he made up his mind. “If you’re determined to do that, why are we here?”

“I need to see her in action. All of you have asked around. You know she’s been here. She’s gorgeous. Alluring. Almost as sexy as Pepper. You think these boys are going to forget her? Not be able to describe her? She does something to mute that either while she’s here or when she’s leaving. I believe it’s when she’s leaving. She’d want them attracted. She’s looking for a type. Someone she believes deserves being robbed. A criminal. That tells me she’s got a moral code of some kind.”

Wyatt flashed a grin. “They couldn’t have decided to terminate her because she’s a straight up killer.”

“A black widow? She’s that. She carries venom for certain. She can throw webs out. And there’s her voice. She can lure with her tone and that damn French accent that’s sexy as hell.” Trap’s body shuddered at the memory of her voice seeping into his body through his pores. The feel of silk on his skin. Her long, thick hair that was so unusual. Black with red highlights right down the center. She had an hourglass figure—high, firm breasts, a small waist and flared hips. Even with her curvy figure she was small, slight even, so she could fit into places few others could get in and out of.

He was a big man. Solid. All muscle without an ounce of fat. He’d been with his fair share of women. He knew he was attractive physically and he was highly intelligent. But most of all he was rich. Not just rich. He was in Forbes magazine as one of the richest men in the world, yet he was in the military. He was a prize catch, and women pursued him. He didn’t do the pursuing. He had never wanted to take a chance that his uncles would rape, torture and kill another person he loved.

His brain needed to work. He had no choice, not if was going to remain sane. He couldn’t work as long as he was obsessed with Cayenne—and he was obsessed. His body needed relief, and soon. Right now his brain was occupied with fantasies of her and her body. Of the way she felt when she was up against him. Of the way she smelled, that faintly elusive and mysterious mixture of storms and fresh rain. Sometimes he woke up with her scent in his lungs and he wondered if she’d been in his room. He was fairly certain it wasn’t possible—he was staying with Wyatt and the rest of the team at Wyatt’s grandmother’s house and security was ultra-tight. Still, he wondered.

When he woke in the middle of the night, his heart beat too fast and his body was hard and tight and her scent was everywhere. Once he swore it was on the pillow next to him. He didn't sleep much. Sometimes he went days without sleep when he was on the trail of something he was developing for his pharmaceutical company. When he did regularly go to bed, he slept no more than four or five hours and not all at once.

Often Trap got up to read or work out elusive problems. His scribbled formulas were on just about every scrap of paper in the room and a few had been written on the wall. Sometimes he was certain those papers weren't in the same exact spot. He considered that he might be losing his mind. The last few weeks he'd been acting totally out of character, and that's what convinced him he needed to find her. To put a stop to whatever was happening.

If Whitney manufactured their attraction to each other, he should be able to find a way to undo it. Come up with an antidote. Cayenne would stay safe that way. It was the only way he could ensure no one would ever get their hands on her again. He would have to give her up before the attraction grew to the point neither would be able to resist.

Wyatt sighed. "You're going to move to that building before we have it ready, aren't you, Trap?"

Trap nodded slowly. "I can take care of myself."

"Yeah, under most circumstances, but if you're wrong about her, this woman could kill you, Trap. I couldn't harm Pepper. I doubt you could hurt Cayenne."

Trap's gaze turned glacier. "You've always been sensitive, Wyatt. You don't like anyone pointing that out because you think that makes you feminine." He spoke entirely dispassionately, no judgment or expression in his voice. "That's what makes you such a good man. You care about people. You always have. I stopped when my own flesh and blood murdered my family. I couldn't allow myself to feel. If I did, I wouldn't survive. If this woman who is supposed to be my woman decides to kill me, she's an enemy. She isn't mine."

"She's scared, Trap."

He nodded. "I know that. I know she'll fight the attraction—and me. That isn't the same as wanting to kill me."

"When a wild animal is threatened—cornered—they often strike out. She's never known freedom or kindness. She has no idea how to live in the world. She's been locked up, experimented on, which means needles and God knows what else. She's never had anyone give her compliments or romance her. She knows nothing but enemies."

"I have a brain, Wyatt," Trap said. For the first time impatience crept into his voice. "I've had a lot of time to think this through."

"I don't want you to do something you'll regret—or worse, not do somethin', which will get you killed."

The ice blue flame in Trap's eyes deepened. Nearly glowed. "She's mine," he said softly. This time there was a wealth of expression in his voice. Possession. An underlying anger. That strange shimmer slid into the room again, filling the space where air had been, completely at odds with his intention to reverse whatever Whitney had done to tie Cayenne to him.

"Doesn't seem to me that you're so willin' to sacrifice your own happiness, or hers, to keep those uncles of yours in the shadows. Maybe you ought to consider courting her publicly. Get yourself in the tabloids, let the paparazzi take a gazillion photos of the two of you. That would bring them straight here. Right into a team of GhostWalkers waitin' for them." Wyatt flashed a cocky grin, knowing Trap was the most camera-shy man

he'd ever encountered. "Whitney already knows where she is. It isn't like he'd suddenly find her."

Trap looked thoughtful as he took another pull on his beer. "That's not a bad idea. She isn't so easily compromised either. They try to tangle with her, she'll kill them in a heartbeat. I've been trying to find them for years."

"Maybe they're dead."

Trap shook his head. "Not a chance. They're out there, living the good life. Once I find them, I'm going to kill them."

Again his voice lacked expression. Still, that shimmer hung in the air. Trap took another drink and glanced toward the piano. If he played, it would get him through the last couple of hours before Thibodeaux shut the place down.

The door opened, and the night breeze drifted in. Along with it came the scent of rain. Of storms. Of her. Of Cayenne. She was there. At last. He lifted his gaze and for one moment, indulged his need to drink her in.

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