



Megan's Bluff

An Imperial Werepanther
Story

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Megan crouched behind the lush green bush and waited for Mykael to pass. She could hear the snow crunching beneath the pads of his feet, the sound getting louder as he approached. She knew that his instincts told him his security had been breached, but she'd been thorough, covering every trace of her intrusion.

Her tail lashed back and forth, betraying her agitation.

Just a few more seconds...

Now!

Mykael's dark form raced past, and she exploded from her hiding spot, a midnight black bundle of fangs and fur and claws. She leapt for his back, sinking her teeth into the loose fur at his neck before he had time to react.

The larger cat snarled, whirling around in a vain attempt to unseat his unwanted rider. His sleek black pelt glistened beneath the light of the new moon.

Megan held on with grim determination. She'd planned carefully for this confrontation, and she needed to bargain from a position of strength. The Imperial Were-Panther community had to be forced to deal with the issue of their females, and the way they treated them.

In all of Imperial history, the females had been badly outnumbered by the males. For eons after the fall of the Empire, the only known births were male. With no females of their own, the Imperial Were-Panthers began to take human females as mates, and the practice became widely accepted. Many of them forgot that female were-panthers had ever existed.

Mykael dropped one front shoulder, throwing Megan off balance. She dug her claws deeper into his tough hide in a bid to stay on his back, but the big male twisted around and grabbed one of her front legs in his massive jaws. A quick toss of his head dislodged her, and she sailed through the air, landing on the ground with a jolt that knocked the breath out of her.

Mykael stalked across the clearing, amber streaks swirling in the tawny depths of his eyes. Thick ropes of muscle slid smoothly under his sleek, ebony hide. Pointing his head skyward, he snarled, the sound a chilling combination of fury and challenge.

Megan dragged a ragged lungful of air into her bruised lungs and surged to her feet, turning to face her opponent. She kept her head high, refusing to yield to the larger cat. He paused, and she saw a flicker of recognition in his eyes. Her heart sank. That telltale flicker told her that he knew all about her.

Over two decades ago, a male named Jakeb had found Kaitlyn, a female of their kind. He claimed her as his own and the Imperial Were-Panthers whole way of life had been turned upside down. They looked for more females, and fierce battles were fought for possession of each one found, disregarding the whole bonding process.

Now that the males knew about the existence of the females, the Council insisted that each female kitten born be registered at birth, and if no bond-mate came forward to claim her by her twentieth birthday, she was assigned a mate by lottery.

While it made sense, from the male's point of view, to avoid the bloody battles for possession, no one had bothered to consult the females.

And the females were royally pissed off.

Why should they be forced to mate against their wishes? They wanted all of the rights and freedoms afforded to the males. A small group of young, unmated females had banded together to do something about it. They'd decided to send Megan to present their demands to the head of the Imperial Were-Panther's governing council. If she could convince him to back her, they'd have a better chance of getting the laws changed in their favor.

Mykael lifted one massive paw and cuffed her across the side of the head just hard enough to knock her off her feet. She landed on her back, with her vulnerable belly exposed and her paws scrambling uselessly in the air. Pouncing, he stood over her, lowering his face to within inches of her own and snarling softly.

Defiantly, she snarled back, counting on his protective instincts to restrain him from disciplining her any further. She knew he wanted her to shift.

He didn't budge, his eyes implacable as he waited for her to acquiesce. Only the very tip of his tail moved, flicking back and forth in an agitated rhythm.

Megan sighed softly. Antagonizing him further wouldn't be in her best interest, she needed to convince him to back the females' demands at the next council session.

Still, she couldn't resist extending her claws and swatting his muscular shoulder with her paw.

Mykael's eyes glittered, amber streaks swirling as he stared down at her. Megan watched, mesmerized as he lowered his massive head toward her. Delicious heat danced down her spine to coil in a molten ball in her belly.

Primal instincts, long buried roared to the surface. She was a mature female in her prime. Unmated. Her only experiences had been with young males, ones that she could easily dominate.

Mykael wouldn't let her call the shots, but his magnificent body called to her, heating her blood.

Mykael rubbed his head against hers, sliding it along her cheek, her neck, her forehead. His scent, a heady mixture of warm rain forest and aroused male cat, sent desire snaking along her nerves.

Want.

Need.

Naked lust. They fogged her senses and she snarled again, softly this time. An invitation and a challenge.

Mykael responded with a commanding roar, and Megan found herself moving to obey, some deeply buried instinct prompting her to give in to his demands.

She rolled over, focusing on her breathing as the magic rolled over her. Her body shifted, the sleek cat disappearing as she emerged from the sparkling cloud in her human form.

Mykael's breath caught in his throat. By the gods, she was beautiful!

Long black hair fell in a silky curtain to her waist, framing a pale round face. Her eyes mirrored his own, dark brown shot through with streaks of amber. He took in the soft curves and feminine lines of her body, and felt the blood rushing to his cock. He'd waited a long time to seek a mate, longer than most of his kind, and this unexpected confrontation sorely tested his control.

As comfortable as he was with his panther, some things were best dealt with in human form. He backed away and summoned the magic, willing his shift. The change took longer than he would have liked, his panther loath to leave the presence of the female.

He could smell her ripe scent, the enticing mix of pheromones and young aroused female. He let the magic dissolve, leaving him standing in front of her with his shaft fully engorged.

He felt a wry smile curve the corners of his mouth as her eyes went wide at the sight of his naked body. He hoped that was awe in her gaze, not disappointment. He let her stare a few more seconds before he conjured up a pair of tights to cover himself.

“Megan, isn’t it?” He knew exactly who she was, had watched over her from the shadows outside her home her since she’d been a kit, barely able to crawl.

He held out a hand to help her up from the ground. “You’ll have to excuse the chilly reception. I wasn’t expecting company. To what do I owe the honor of this visit?”

Her skin felt like the softest silk. Bolts of lust hammered at his control, and he wondered if she realized the danger she’d put herself in by coming here alone this evening.

She caught her bottom lip between her teeth, every line of her body betraying her nervousness as she peeked up at him from beneath her lashes.

“We want equality with the males.” The words tumbled out of her mouth in a defiant rush. “We want to petition the council to allow the females to choose their own destinies, and their own mates. You have no right to treat us like animals, forced to breed because there are so few of us.”

“Then why not go to the council? Why come to me?” He advanced slowly toward her, deliberately seeking to intimidate her. “I do not make the laws.” He admired the way she stood her ground as he approached.

Her eyes sparkled with anger. “We intend to, but we stand a better chance of having our voices heard if we are backed by the council chair. I volunteered to be the one to come and plead our case with you.”

He crossed his arms, curious. He’d had no idea she knew he existed. “Why?”

She shrugged, and he detected a subtle change in scent that indicated she wasn’t telling the truth, at least not all of it. “I’ve seen you at a distance with the other councilors. You command their attention, and they listen to you. The other females are afraid of you, but I’m not. I’d be more afraid of the minister of out-ports. He smells corrupt.”

He smiled, amused at her bluntness. The minister of out-ports was indeed corrupt. “Haven’t you heard the stories? I eat little kittens like you for breakfast.” Unbidden, the image of this female flashed in his mind, her thighs spread wide before him while he feasted on her sex.” He shook his head to clear the tempting image.

She shrugged, a ghost of a smile crossing her lips. “Then I guess I’d better make sure you agree to help me, before the sun rises. I have no desire to be your morning meal.”

The little minx actually had the nerve to laugh at him. He reached out and traced the line of her high cheekbone. “The rules were made long ago, and may have outlived their usefulness.” He grasped her wrist and gently drew her toward him. “What do you plan to offer me for my cooperation?”

Her eyes widened as she realized what he had in mind.

He could have told her that he planned to claim her. Should have told her that they were destined for each other. But he didn’t.

He tipped her head back and took her lips, plunging his tongue deep inside the moist cavity of her mouth. She tasted like forest and sunshine, with just a hint of peppermint.

She kissed him back, hesitating for a brief moment before surrendering completely, molding her body to his.

The smell of her arousal tore at his control, and he realized she’d come here tonight hoping for this.

The demands to the council were an excuse.

He scooped her up in his arms and strode to the patch of soft moss on the far side of the clearing. He lay her down there, and paused, drinking in the site of her perfect young body. “You’re sure?” If he went much further, he wasn’t sure he’d be able to stop.

She nodded, her gaze falling to his engorged cock. “I’m sure.” She reached out a hand to touch him. “You’re even more magnificent than I imagined.”

He lowered his head and nibbled on one earlobe, then worked his way down her cheek to sear a kiss across her lips. His body pressed against hers, hard and masculine.

She reveled in the feel of it. Finally. She’d seen him watching her from the shadows, lurking in the woods just beyond her home. As a youngling, she’d felt safe and protected, but lately, the sight of him made her feel restless and edgy.

He cupped her breasts in his large hands, molding the tender mounds. He brushed the tip of his thumbs over her nipples and they pebbled into hard little buds.

She whimpered as darts of lust whipped through her and her pussy creamed in eager anticipation.

Mykael moved his head down to suck one dusky peak into his mouth, his teeth scoring across the nipple. Megan moaned, and he settled in to feast on her breasts. He knew just when to suck, when to curl his tongue around the edge of the nipple. His fingers were in constant motion, stroking her breasts, exploring her belly, tracing the line of her hips.

Megan arched and squirmed, lust and want racing through her until she didn't think she could bear it any longer.

"Fuck me." She pleaded with him. She could smell his arousal, knew that he wanted it just as badly as she did.

His eyes were pure molten heat, the amber streaks swirling in a mesmerizing pattern. He moved his attention lower, licking her ribcage, her belly, the soft hollow of her hips.

"Please. I need you." She hated to beg, but she needed him. Needed him inside her. Now. He held her down with one arm thrown carelessly across her hips, and his warm breath wafted across her bare mound.

Megan moaned and whimpered, writhing beneath his practiced hands and mouth. He parted the soft folds that hid her sex, and his nostrils flared wide as he inhaled her ripe scent.

He dipped his head, and she screamed as his tongue circled her clit, before dipping in to taste her juices. "By the gods, you're sweeter than I'd ever imagined!" Throwing her legs over his shoulders, he feasted on her sex, his tongue delving deep while Megan arched and twisted. Pleasure so intense it bordered on pain lanced through her and she tangled her fingers in his hair while he devoured her.

Megan felt her orgasm begin; rolling through her while he continued to worship her with his mouth. The pleasure spiraled out of control until nothing mattered but Mykael and the feeling of his tongue and teeth and lips, consuming her. She gasped out his name, holding him tight as the aftershocks slowly faded away.

Mykael drew himself up, cradling her in his arms while her breathing slowed to normal. "You know I've been watching you." It wasn't a question.

Megan nodded. "For along time. I used to think I imagined you, because no one else ever saw you." She studied his face. "Did you know even then, that you wanted me?"

He nodded, a faint smile on his lips. "You're my bond-mate. I sensed it the first time I saw you, but you were much too young for me to claim. I've been waiting all these years for you to grow up."

She realized the truth of it, could feel the bond between them. She'd never reacted so wantonly to a male's interest before. It felt right.

With a sinking feeling in her heart, she saw his predicament. "And I came to ask you to support me in having the claiming laws revoked."

"Not the best timing, is it?" He traced a finger down her cheek.

"No." She could feel his massive cock pressing hard against her thigh. Despite the years of waiting, he'd given her pleasure first, ignoring his own needs. "But I could offer you a deal."

He lifted one brow. "What kind of deal?"

"I know you're an interstellar trader. If you teach me to pilot, I'll go with you. I'll crew for you, warm your bed, be your partner."

He tilted her face so he could look into her eyes. "And what's the catch?"

She swallowed hard. "I don't want to settle down. If you try to claim me as your bond-mate, I'll fight you every step of the way."

He considered her for a few moments. "So you're willing to be my partner, by not my bond-mate?"

She nodded, holding her breath. She was bluffing. She could feel the pull of the bond, and she knew she'd never be able to walk away. If he wouldn't take her on as his partner, his equal, then she'd settle for being his bond-mate.

But she wouldn't be happy about it.

"Agreed." His voice rolled over her, thick with need. "I'll take you on as partner and teach you everything I know. You can start right now."

He used his considerable strength to roll her over, slipping one hand under her belly to lift her up on all fours. She turned her head, and he could see the passion in her eyes as she watched him. Keeping his gaze locked on hers, he positioned himself behind her and took his cock in his hand. Slowly stroking his hand down its length, he aimed it at her entrance.

He entered her with one powerful thrust, seating himself to the balls in the heat of her moist channel. She'd agreed to be his partner, and once they were away from everyone, alone in the vastness of space, he'd figure out what she had against bonding and deal with it. He didn't want a reluctant bond-mate.

The smell of her wet sex drove him wild, and he thrust into her in a hard rhythm, his hands holding her hips steady. He could feel the walls of her slick channel gripping him with every stroke. Leaning over, he slid his tongue down her neck, tasting the sweet sheen of sweat that coated it.

Megan moaned and bucked beneath him, and he picked up the pace, surging into her over and over, fanning the flames of their passion. She pushed back against him, meeting him thrust for thrust, and he knew he was lost. He would do whatever she asked; take whatever she cared to offer him. He closed his eyes, lost in the ecstasy of their union. Their pleasure built higher, until it exploded into a million tiny fragments of feeling, pleasure so intense he wasn't sure they'd survive it.

They collapsed on the soft ground, Mykael making sure he landed beside her so he didn't hurt her. They lay still a few moments, limbs entwined, breath coming in short gasps.

She opened her eyes, staring up at him with the sated look of a well-fucked female. "You're really willing to help us? To have the council repeal the binding laws and give females the same freedoms that the males have always enjoyed?"

Mykael stroked a stray lock of hair from her face and dropped a kiss on the tip of her cute nose.

"If it makes you smile, Megan, I would have them repeal the very law of gravity."

THE END

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