

Cabe Down for the Count : A Scorpion Love Story

By Kate Simon

God, he felt like crap. He'd been popping antacids for days. He couldn't remember what he'd eaten, but this had to be food poisoning. He'd had it once in Bahrain which had established his long standing aversion to goat-related food. He thought once he'd showered and dressed he'd feel better. He was mistaken.

"Gallo, you look like crap," said Kate.

"Good morning, dear. I love you too."

"Seriously, what is going on with you?"

"I'm fine. Indigestion. Maybe a little food poisoning. I'll be fine."

"I keep telling you not to trust rest stop food. Why don't you stay home?" she smiled.
"I could play nurse. I do have that pretty white outfit you love."

She gave him the smile that always meant he was in store for some wicked fun.
"I'm sorry, sweetheart. We've got a briefing at ten."

He grabbed his keys and headed toward his car. He never he turned down an invitation from his mischievous witch. He would have shaken his head if in disbelief he didn't think it would make his headache worse.

The noise at the garage wasn't making his headache better. He poured himself a cup of coffee and tried to focus on the information for the briefing.

"Hey, Cabe. You look like crap," said Toby.

"So I've been told. Don't you have work to do?"

Toby's snark disappeared. "Yeah, actually, I do." He put his hand on Cabe's forehead.

"What the hell are you doing?"

"You have a fever. You're clammy and pale. Paige, please get my bag."

"I'm fine."

"When did the pain start?"

"I said I'm fine."

"You can answer me or I can call Kate and tattler. Your choice."

"A couple of day's. It's probably just some food poisoning."

"Did it start in the middle of your stomach and then move?"

Cabe looked surprised. "Yeah? So?"

Toby reached his hand down and pressed on Cabe's abdomen. Cabe responded by uttering an ear piercing scream.

"What the hell, Doc?!"

Toby grabbed his bag from Paige. "Call for an ambulance. Now." He turned back to Cabe and grabbed his stethoscope. "Before you started arguing with me, if my diagnosis is correct, and it always is, your appendix is about to burst."

Today Kate planned on finishing some after action reports at home. The best part of her new status with Homeland was she could work from home as often as possible. She'd just sat down with a cup of tea and her tablet when her phone rang.

"Hey, Paige. What's up?"

"Kate, Cabe is sick."

"Yeah, I told the pigheaded fool to stay home but you know him."

"No, Kate. Toby just called for an ambulance."

Her mind immediately blocked out every sound but Paige's voice. "Tell me."

"Toby thinks it's appendicitis. He's sending him to Mercy."

"I'll meet you there." She clicked off her phone, grabbed her shoulder bag and looked for Cabe's keys. He'd taken the Dodge to work so their government SUV was still in the garage. She pressed the buttons to open the garage doors and the front gate. As soon as she hit the street she hit the lights and drove as fast as she could.

Kate made the thirty minute drive to Mercy in twenty. She pulled into the emergency entrance, threw the SUV into park and sprinted toward the sliding doors.

A uniformed security guard tried to stop her. "Hey lady. You can't park there. Move it."

She grab her ID out of her pocket and flipped it open on the run. She hit the admission desk and flashed her ID again. "I'm Agent Gallo. My husband was just brought in."

The woman gave her a tired look and picked up her ringing cell phone. "I'll be with you in a minute."

Kate snatched the phone from the woman's hand. She spoke very slowly. "You listen to me, sweetheart. My badge outranks whoever is on this phone. Where is my husband?"

The woman pushed an intercom button. "Ahh, Carol. Do you have a man named," the girl paused and looked up at Kate.

"Gallo."

"A Mr. Gallo? Where?" The girl hung up the phone and turned to Kate. "Examining room three."

Kate tossed the phone at the girl. She rounded the corner to the sound of the girl cursing. She spotted a three outside a room and opened the door. Cabe was laying on a gurney looking even worse than he did this morning. Toby and Paige were with him.

Cabe gave her a weak smile. "Kate, I.."

"Shut up," she yelled. "Toby. Speak."

"Definitely appendicitis. They're going to be taking him to surgery any minute."

"How long has he been sick?"

"Sweetheart, I .."

She turned to him and he'd never seen her so angry. "I said shut up." She looked back at Toby. "How long?"

Toby looked at Cabe and shrugged. "For it to be this advanced, several days."

"I need the room."

Toby and Paige retreated as Kate stared at him. Cabe had faced down terrorists and nuclear meltdowns that didn't frighten him as much as the expression on his wife's face.

"You asshole!" she shouted. "You've been sick for days and you knew it!"

"I thought,"

"Stop talking. You have access to one of the best doctors on the planet and you ignored the pain." She walked to the side of the bed and he could see the tears running down her cheeks. This was worse than the pain in his belly. Much worse.

"Don't you know that if something happens to you, the most important part of my life is gone. You promised me I would never have to live my life without you. You

promised." She started to sob. "You promised."

He reached for her hand and pulled it to his chest. "I'm so sorry, sweetheart."

She leaned over and kissed him. "You damn well better be. I love you, you idiot." She kissed him again with the passion of his Katie girl. She took a nip of his earlobe and whispered, "You are SO going to pay for this."

Cabe smiled. There she was. His best girl, ready to give him hell. He couldn't wait. The door opened and Dr. Hawkins walked in.

"Hello, again. I'll be operating on you today. I've seen the results of the tests and we can't wait. They'll be taking you up in a minute."

"Aren't you a trauma surgeon? Isn't this a little below your pay grade, doctor?" asked Cabe.

She smiled. "Not for you two. How's the shoulder, Agent Riley?"

"It's great and," she held up her wedding ring. "It's Gallo, now."

"Congratulations. Well, I'm going to get ready." The door opened and an orderly stood ready with another gurney. "And it looks like your ride's here." She patted Kate's shoulder. "I'll talk to you soon."

Cabe looked at the orderly. "Can you give us a minute?" He nodded and closed the door. He pulled Kate close and stroked her cheek. "I am so sorry I frightened you. I will do my best to never do it again. Now kiss me, Katie girl. Please."

He kissed her and then whispered, "I'll be awaiting my penance."

She got a wicked gleam in her eye. "'Twill be severe, boyo."

He smiled as the orderly wheeled him out of the room. Now that was something to live for.

Kate sat in the same surgical waiting room where Cabe had waited after she'd been shot. The rest of the team had joined Paige and Toby. She smiled. Her family was here.

"Kate, are you two okay?" asked Paige.

"You heard?"

"Uruguay heard," said Toby.

"I just got so angry that he took such a stupid risk. Toby, if he so much as sneezes

I want you to give him a full work up."

"Okay, Mom."

Happy smacked his arm but Kate smiled. Toby knew she didn't mind being called Mom. Actually, she kind of liked it.

"Agent Gallo?" Dr. Hawkins walked into the waiting room still wearing her surgical scrubs and hat.

"How is he?"

"He's going to be fine. He'll be here for at least five days. After that he's going to be laid up for at least thirty days. It may not be a large incision but he needs the recovery time. Intestinal surgery is no joke." She paused and looked over at Toby. "Dr. Curtis, another good call."

"What?" asked Kate.

"I doubt his appendix would have lasted more than an hour before rupturing."

Kate shook her head and thought, "He is gonna pay for this."

Cabe was feeling a lot better since they hit him up with some pain meds. He watched the lights above the fly by him as he was pushed down the hallway. His head started to spin a bit at the motion and decided he'd be better off with his eyes closed. He felt a door push open as the orderly said, "Here we are."

He could have been asleep for a few minutes or a few hours. When he woke up he saw Kate was sitting a chair, reading something on her phone.

"Hey," said Cabe in a rough voice.

"Hey," she replied as she stood. She leaned over and kissed him. "Dr. Hawkins said the surgery went fine and you were one lucky bastard."

"Was that her diagnosis?"

"No, actually that was mine. What she did say was you were about one hour away from a rupture."

He had taken a stupid risk. There would be a lot of groveling involved during his

recovery. "Am I still in the dog house?"

Kate gave him a smile and another kiss. "Like you won't believe."

"Did you find out when I can get out of here?"

"You'll be here at least five days."

"What? That's crazy." He tried to sit up. Kate pushed him back down.

"I'll tell you what's going to happen. You are going to be a model patient and do what you're told. Dr. Hawkins said once you're home you'll be out of commission for thirty days."

"Not happening," He said as he tried to sit up again. She pushed him back down. Kate started talking to him in a very slow, deliberate tone. He knew that meant trouble.

"You listen to me, Gallo. You've had intestinal surgery. It's no joke. You will stay put or I will handcuff you to the bed."

Cabe smiled. "Promise?"

"Oh no you don't. You're not charming your way out of this. You are weak as a kitten and you're going to do what you're told."

"I'm not weak, I'm just groggy from the drugs." He tried to sit up again. Again she pushed him back down. "Hey, knock it off."

She gave him an indulgent smile, like she was talking to a three year old. "Cabe, remember all those workouts we've had? All those take downs I've done on you?"

"I remember all those times I countered and took you down."

"Yes you have. There is no doubt, no matter how skilled my technique, you're still a hell of a lot stronger than I am."

"Damn straight." Once again he tried to sit up. Once again she pushed him back down.

"Cabe, sweetheart. I just knocked you back down with a light push on your shoulder, four times."

He looked at Kate and sighed. "Ah, crap. This is gonna suck."

She smiled the smile of a wife who just bested her husband.

Cabe kept drifting in and out, each time his head a little more clear. This time he woke up to the smell of cheeseburgers and fries. He looked over to see Kate wolfing down the fries, as per usual. "Hey, you gonna share?"

"You're awake." Kate smiled and gave him a kiss.

"Seriously, give me one of those. I'm hungry."

"Sorry babe, no solids yet. I shouldn't be eating this in front of you but it's after five and I'm starving." She put the remains of her dinner in the take out page. "Happy and Toby brought it for me. Speaking of which, are you up to visitors?"

"Happy and Toby still out there?"

Kate leaned in and gave him another kiss. "Sweetheart, they're all out there. Even Ralph."

"Really?"

She brushed a stray hair from his cheek. "They've been here the whole time."

"Yeah sure." Cabe hit the button to elevate the bed. "How do I look? I don't want to scare the kid."

Kate brushed her hand across his cheek. "You look great, babe." She leaned in and gave him a kiss. "You always do," she whispered.

As she went to get the team from the waiting room, he looked around his hospital room for the first time. It was twice the size of a regular hospital room, with half decent artwork on the walls. There was a couch and a couple of chairs. Several flower arrangements were in the room.

The team filed in and circled around his bed. Paige stood close by with Ralph. "How are you feeling?" she asked.

"I'm doing fine, kid." He looked at Ralph who seemed to be upset. "Hey buddy, you okay?"

Ralph edged closer to Cabe's bed and handed him a scroll. "I did this for you while we were waiting."

"Thank you, buddy." When Cabe unrolled it he saw himself holding Ralph's hand. On the top of the scroll he'd printed, "Get Well Soon, Nonno." He looked at Kate and pointed to the bed guard. "Help me put this down." He extended his hand to Ralph. "Come

here, buddy." Ralph moved close and Cabe pulled him into a hug. "I love it, Ralph."

Ralph looked at him and smiled. "I love you, Nonno."

"I love you too, Nipote."

"I looked at your chart. You're doing fine," said Toby. "A few days in here and then a few weeks at home."

"Not you too, Doc."

"Cabe, it's not optional. I will come by the house every day if need be to make sure you're taking it easy."

Cabe all but growled.

"Thanks, Toby," said Kate. "I may hold you to that if he gives me any problems."

Cabe looked over at Sly who was standing in the far corner of the room. "Hey, Sly. Where are my balloons?"

Sly smiled. "See Toby, I told you so. Everybody likes balloons. He made me leave them in the waiting room. I'll be right back," he said as he darted out the door.

"Is there anything you want us to bring you?" asked Happy.

"You mean other than my discharge. No, I'm good."

"I'm glad you're doing well, " said Walter. He put his hand on Cabe's shoulder. "In the future, please take better care of yourself. You are a vital part of the team."

Cabe smiled. This was as close as Walter got to saying "I love you."

Sly came back with a balloon that said Get Well Soon and several with Super Fun Guy characters, including Whimsical Boy. He would never live down those short pants.

"We should let the patient get some rest," said Toby. "Kate, you must be tired. Do you want a ride?"

"No thanks, Toby. I'm good." She gave each a hug as they left. "Goodnight guys."

Cabe sat up and sipped some water. "You should go home, sweetheart. You need your rest too."

"Oh, I'll get my rest, but I'm not going anywhere, Not tonight." There was a knock on the door and an orderly came in with a bed.

"More tests now?" asked Cabe.

"Not for you," she said as she helped the orderly position the bed next to Cabe's. "I'm sleeping here tonight." She held up a shopping bag. "I had Paige grab me some

toiletries and something to sleep in.

"How did you manage that?" asked Cabe.

Kate gave him that indulgent smile you gave to a child while explaining things. "Cabe, darling. We've given this hospital twelve million dollars this year. As you have pointed out before, they'd let me skateboard down the hallways if I wanted." No doubt this room was another perk of their work with the hospital, like having a top trauma surgeon perform his appendectomy. Kate pulled down the safety bar on the left side of Cabe's bed and pushed the other bed next to it.

"It's not home but it will have to do," she said as she locked the door. She peeled off her clothes revealing the color of the day, black.

Cabe grinned. "Now this is more like it."

Kate shook her head and smiled. "Down boy. I'm just getting comfortable." She took off her bra and slipped on a t-shirt and a pair of shorts. She unlocked the door, grabbed the TV remote and got into bed. She flipped on the guide and scanned dozens of channels. "Western Channel? Patient's choice."

"Sounds great." He reached across and grabbed her hand. He kissed it and pulled it to his chest. "I really am sorry."

Kate turned to her side and gave him a kiss. "I know."

"I love you , Katie girl." She gave him the smile that put his world to rights.

"I know."

Kate's dog house was driving him crazy. It was more like prison. He'd gotten home yesterday but she put him straight to bed. Normally, that would have been a good thing. Now, not so much. He was still a little shaky but that was because he'd been off his feet for five days. He saw no reason he needed to stay in bed, unless Katie was there with him. He got up and made it to the bathroom on rubbery legs.

"Hey, how are you feeling?" Kate walked into the bedroom carrying a tray.

"I feel fine and they're is no reason to bring my breakfast."

"It's afternoon and this is lunch."

Cabe threw off his covers and tried to get out of bed. Kate put her hand on his shoulder and pushed him back down.

"Hold it right there, Gallo. Only to the bathroom and back. That's all."

"This is ridiculous."

She put the tray down and smiled."I tell you what. Finish your lunch, take a shower and get dressed and we'll move this party to the deck."

Cabe had missed the sun. Inside with nothing but AC was getting on his nerves almost as much as the inactivity. Kate had pushed two deck chairs together where they'd have the best view of the ocean.

"Better?" she asked.

"Much. I don't see why you've got me confined to bed. What I need is to get back to work."

"Gallo, you listen up. I don't have you confined to bed. You've had surgery."

"I'm aware."

She gave him a slap on the shoulder. "Your biology and your doctor have you confined to bed. If you can stop being such a whiny baby, maybe I'll walk down to the beach with you." She leaned over and gave him a kiss. "For now, do you want anything?"

"Hell yeah, I do." Cabe pulled her into a deep kiss. He slid his hand down her gym shorts, cupping her ass. They hadn't had sex in nearly a week. For them, it was downright unnatural. "Mmmm, much better," he growled as he nibbled at her neck.

"Hold your horses, cowboy. I meant would you like an ice tea?"

He pulled her onto his chair. "Forget the horses, I'd rather hold you."

"Not so fast. Let's see how you manage a walk on the beach."

"I'm fine, Katie girl," he whispered as he nipped at her shoulder.

"Cabe, do you want to explain to Dr. Hawkins or Toby how you busted your stitches?"

He made a face and plopped back against his chair. "Spoil sport." He heard her laughing all the way to the kitchen. She was still smiling when she handed him the ice tea. His "Thank you" sounded like a growl.

"Good lord, Gallo. You're sounding like a pissed off lion. Do you have a thorn in your paw?"

"Katie, I'm bored out of my skull. I need to get moving."

"Fine," she said as she took the ice tea from him and set it down. "Come with me."

Cabe stood carefully, trying not to let Kate know he was sore. He tried to lead her back to the house when she pulled him forward.

"No you don't, cowboy. Walk on the beach, not the wild side." She led him toward the stairs. "Take it slow. You haven't been on your feet for a week."

Cabe held on to the rail as he and Kate walked down to the beach. He was sore, but finally moving his legs felt great. They both kicked off their sandals and started a slow walk down the beach. They passed a few minutes in comfortable silence. He looked around at the view, the ocean, his wife. He really was a lucky bastard.

"Thank you for taking such good care of me, sweetheart."

"You're welcome." She smiled as she ran her hand over his arm. "How about we grab some sand."

Cabe managed to sit down with a minimum of pain. Kate sat down next to him on the beach, their feet at the edge of the water. He put his arm around her shoulder and put a kiss on the top of her head. "This is so much better than the hospital."

"Have you talked to the team?"

"Yeah, They're working on their own things. Cooper is holding off any assignment until, in her words, Mom and Dad are back."

Kate laughed. "Have you noticed that we get called that a lot?"

He smiled. "Yeah. I'm not sure who adopted who."

"Cabe, why don't you ever talk about your parents?"

He looked out on the ocean. It was so beautiful, eternal. "Maybe because they both died before their time. As much as I still miss Nonno and Nonna, they were in their seventies when they died. It didn't feel out of place."

"Did they ever get who shot your father?"

Cabe dug his finger into the sand and pulled out an intact sand dollar. He brushed it off and handed it to Kate. "No," he said quietly. "My father had been a cop in Brooklyn until I came along. They wanted a smaller town to raise their family so we moved to Cold Spring when I was five. We were only there about three years so I don't remember much about it except it was really quiet, not like the city. Traffic stops and domestic calls are the most dangerous for police. He stopped a car for speeding on I-281. He called it in but no one knows what happened after that. It was long before dash and body cams. When he didn't report in another unit was dispatched." He picked up a stone and tossed it into the waves. "They found him in the road."

He felt Kate's hand stroking his back, waiting for him to speak. "I just realized it will be fifty years next month." His voice wavered. Kate's brushed her thumb over his cheek wiping away a tear. He closed his eyes and tried to compose himself. "I'm sorry, sweetheart."

She touched his face, forcing him to look at her. "You have nothing to apologize for."

He smiled and gave her a light kiss.

"It wasn't your fault," she said quietly.

He turned and looked at her shocked, his heart racing.

"It could have happened anywhere, not just in Cold Spring. They wanted a good life for you. What happened to your Dad was awful and sad and way before his time. But it was not your fault."

She wrapped her arms around him while he cried tears hidden for fifty years.

They sat on the beach and talked about their parents. He told her about his mother and her great shame. She was a lousy cook.

"How was that her great shame?" Kate laughed.

"She was the daughter of an Italian cook. In my neighborhood, food was love. Lord knows she tried but she never got the hang of it." Cabe smiled. "What about your Mom? Could she cook?"

"She was okay with simple things. She liked baking cakes." Kate smiled. "We ate out a lot."

"Did your father mind?" asked Cabe.

"No. He never did," she smiled. "He loved her so much. He would just look at her and smile."

"Kind of the way I look at you?" Cabe asked.

She smiled and brushed her hand over his cheek. "Yeah. Just like that."

"They really loved each other. I don't know how one would have survived without the other."

"How did they meet?" asked Cabe.

"In college. Mom was studying art history. My Dad was a business major. They were both only children. They were married right after college. I showed up about five years later. In the meantime my Dad had taken his father's electronics business and turned it into profitable chain."

"How did they handle you being so..."

"Geeky?"

"I was going to say brilliant."

Kate laughed. "They really tried. They realized fairly early on that I wouldn't be able to go to a regular school and be a regular kid. They hired the best teachers and I loved it. I was fascinated by electronics and that grew into computers." She rested her head on his shoulder. "They were great parents."

Cabe put his arm around her and kissed the top of her head. "You still miss them."

"Every day. I think they're the reason I never married. I saw how they were together and I'd never felt that for anyone." Kate looked at him and smiled. "Not until I met you." She leaned in and gave him a kiss. "Come on, cowboy. That's enough outside for one

day. Time to get you back to bed."

Cabe walked back up to the house, his arm around Kate, feeling better than he had in a week. The sun, the ocean, and his best girl. Definitely the best medicine. He sighed as he walked back into the bedroom. "I'm beginning to feel like a prisoner of this room."

"Stop whining, you big baby. Now back to bed." Kate grabbed his shirt and pulled him towards her. She pulled him into a deep kiss. "First, things first. Lose the clothes."

"What?"

Kate kissed him again. "Every day I look at you I want you. I want my hands on you." She nipped at his ear and whispered. "Every day I look at you I want you inside me." She smiled at his stunned expression. "Do you think you're the only one who's been struggling this week? Laying in bed next to you and not having you. It's driving me insane." She pulled him into a deep possessive kiss. "Get naked and lay on the bed. I'm done waiting."

Cabe complied and got on the bed. He smiled watching Kate stripping out of her clothes. She climbed on the bed and he tried to pull her toward him when she pushed him back.

"Oh no you don't. Just lie still. I'm doing all the work."

He smiled as she started nipping and kissing him. He closed his eyes and gave himself over to the sensations of her lips on his body. He gasps as she took him in her mouth, driving him mad. "Oh, God, Katie."

She positioned herself over him and slid down on him. He tried to move but she put her hands on his chest. "Stay still." She started moving, riding him hard without getting close to his incision. He grabbed her hips and pistoned her. Moments later their cries mixed with the sounds of the waves.

Kate curled up against him laying her arm over his chest. "Mmmm. That's better."

Cabe pulled her close and kissed the top of her head. "God yes. I love you so much, Katie girl."

"I know," she whispered.

He heard something in her voice and looked to see tears running down her cheek.

"Sweetheart, what's wrong?"

"I don't have the words."

He angled himself on his shoulder. "Try."

"I guess it was talking about my parents. They loved each other so much. They had this sort of unspoken communication. Even as a child I could see it. I see how much you love me in every painting. It's tangible. But me? I don't have the words. I could never explain, even to myself, everything I feel for you."

"Kate Gallo, you look at me." She turned to face him and he kissed her softly. "You listen to me. I know what you feel for me. I see it every day in your eyes. I hear it in your voice, not just in bed, not even as the witch," he smiled. "as much as I do enjoy her. I see it in how you have my back. I see it how you learn Swedish just to call a handsy woman a bitch."

Kate smiled.

"I hear it in how you yell at me when I do something stupid." He leaned in and kissed her. "I love you with all my heart." Cabe kissed her again. "I know what you feel for me." He took her hand and placed it on his heart. "I know it here."