

# NATURAL FAMILY DISASTERS

FIVE SHAPE-SHIFTER SHORT STORIES



JAE

# **Natural Family Disasters**

## **Five Shape-Shifter Short Stories**

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ISBN (print): 978-3-95533-107-8

ISBN (mobi): 978-3-95533-072-9

ISBN (epub): 978-3-95533-073-6

ISBN (pdf): 978-3-95533-074-3

Published by Ylva Publishing, legal entity of Ylva Verlag,  
e.Kfr.

Ylva Verlag, e.Kfr.  
Am Kirschgarten 2  
65830 Kriftel  
Germany

<http://www.ylva-publishing.com>

First Edition: July 2013

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Credits  
Edited by Peggy Adams  
Cover Design by Streetlight Graphics

## Table of Contents

[Acknowledgments](#)

[Author's note](#)

[Bonding Time](#)

[Coming to Dinner](#)

[Babysitter Material](#)

[When the Cat's Away](#)

[Plus One](#)

[About Jae](#)

[Excerpt from \*Second Nature\*](#)

[Other books from Ylva Publishing](#)

[Coming from Ylva Publishing in fall and winter  
2013](#)



## **Acknowledgments**

A big thank-you goes to all the people who helped me write, revise, and improve these short stories: Alison Grey, RJ Nolan, Erin Saluta, Peggy Adams, Astrid Ohletz, Marion Pönisch, and Pam Salerno.



## Author's note

The two main characters of this anthology, Jorie Price and Griffin Westmore, first met in my novel *Second Nature*. The events in *Second Nature* took them on a wild chase from a tiny town in Michigan's Upper Peninsula to an off-the-books poker game in Detroit and then into the council chamber of the most powerful shape-shifters in Boise, Idaho.

Running for their lives didn't leave Jorie and Griffin much time to enjoy their families' company or to share romantic moments. This anthology will give them a chance to do all of that. I hope you enjoy sharing some peaceful times with Jorie and Griffin too.

Jae

P.S. In this anthology, the term "pasties" doesn't refer to the adhesive patches covering a woman's nipples, worn usually by erotic dancers. In Michigan's Upper Peninsula, where these stories take place, "pasties" are meat-and-vegetable-filled pastries.



## Bonding Time

Griffin slid her fingers over warm curves and closed her eyes in pleasure. “Mmm.” She purred at the return pressure against her thigh.

The unwelcome ringing of the phone interrupted the tender moment.

“I’m sorry.” Griffin took one of her hands away and received a disappointed glance. She leaned back against the bed and lifted the receiver to her ear, planning on quickly getting rid of the caller. “Westmore.”

“Hey, sis. It’s Leigh,” her half sister said.

“Hi, Leigh.” Griffin’s attention was already returning to the body that was snuggled against hers. “What can I do for you?” Over the course of the last year, she had learned to be more polite when it came to family interactions, so a “What do you want?” or a “Not now!” was out of the question.

Leigh started to converse about news on their fathers, cousins, and the rest of the pride in true Kasari style. If no one stopped her, she would go on and on for hours until she felt she had thoroughly caught Griffin up on pride business.

“Leigh,” Griffin said. “I’m a little busy right now.” Her fingertips trailed up a warm belly and received a groan of approval.

“Oh,” Leigh said. “I didn’t want to interrupt. It’s just that Ronnie went with the dads to meet

with the leaders of the Hiawatha National Forest pride.” Gus had been mentoring Rhonda, preparing her for her role as Leigh’s partner and future natak of the pride, just as Brian had been mentoring Leigh. “The dads didn’t want to overwhelm them by bringing a fourth person, so I’m a little bored all alone at home.”

A year ago, Leigh never would have admitted a weakness like that to her half sister. If she had, Griffin would have snarled in disgust. Back then, it was beyond her understanding how a grown woman could feel bored or lonely just because she was on her own for a day.

Now things were different.

Last month, Jorie had been gone on a book tour to promote her new novel and had then been stuck in Boise for council meetings for two more weeks. By now, most Wrasa had accepted Jorie as a dream seer and would never think of harming her, so Jorie could travel with just one or two bodyguards. Griffin had stayed behind in Osgrove to get some of her own work done and enjoy some time alone.

The problem was she didn’t enjoy it anymore. After a week on her own, she found herself driving over for short visits with her family just to stay busy until Jorie returned.

Now it was her turn to entertain her sister. “Why don’t you come over for dinner?” She suppressed a sigh. “I can fill you in on my new job as a park ranger in the Ottawa National Forest and the work I’m doing for the council as a maharsi searcher.”

“Dinner? I thought I could come over right

now,” Leigh said. “Ronnie has a box of books she wants Jorie to sign.”

Griffin let her hand trail higher, spreading her fingers out over the curve of delicate ribs. Signing books was not what she had planned for Jorie tonight. “No, Leigh. Right now is not a good time. Jorie and I are both busy.” Her gentle touch evoked an enthusiastic response. Griffin stifled a groan. “Ow, sweetie, not quite so hard, please,” she murmured with one hand covering the receiver.

“Not a good time?” Leigh asked. “Why not?”

Griffin leaned forward and pressed a kiss to a soft forehead. “Well, right now, we’re having a little bonding time.”

“Oh,” Leigh said. She was silent for a moment and then repeated, “Oh. I’m sorry for interrupting. Please say hi to Jorie for me. Talk to you later. Much later. Bye.” Abruptly, Leigh ended the call.

Griffin stared at the phone and shrugged. She looked down at the warm body snuggled against hers. “Just you and me again,” she said, knowing that the object of her attention didn’t like sharing her affection.

The bedroom door opened.

Jorie leaned in the doorway and stretched as she always did after hours of being bent over the laptop. The sight of her still made Griffin’s heart beat faster. “Hey.” Jorie padded over on bare feet.

“Hey.” Griffin watched Jorie’s every move, drinking her in. “Finished with the scene that has been giving you trouble?”

The dark head tilted in a nod. “I finished it earlier and already sent it off to Ally. You can read

it later if you want.”

Griffin answered with a smile. Jorie’s trust, her willingness to share her writing, was a prize she held dear. “I’d love to. So if you already finished the scene, what were you working on? Got started on a new scene already?”

“No. I was writing down a few things for the dream-seeing manual your mother and I are working on. I think it’s a really great idea to have something like that. I sure could have used a little more instruction while I was trying to figure out how it works.” Jorie rolled her eyes.

“The council really lucked out with you,” Griffin said. A wave of tenderness and pride swept over her, and she studied Jorie fondly. “Not only did they get a dream seer who is giving them advice, they also got a writer to write it all down for them, all in one beautiful package.”

A seductive smile teased the edges of Jorie’s mouth. “So only the council lucked out with me?” The timbre of her voice made Griffin’s body vibrate.

Griffin laughed. “No. I’m one lucky cat too,” she said, meaning it. “I never thought I’d find a woman who can give me the space I need as half Puwar and the closeness my Kasari side craves.”

“That’s easy since you give me the same things.” Jorie’s gaze rested on Griffin, warm like a touch.

*Who would have thought? My perfect mate is a human. The Great Hunter really has a weird sense of humor.* “And you can even handle my mother and the rest of my family.” Griffin purred with

satisfaction.

“Apropos mother.” Jorie nodded in the direction of the phone. “Was that my mom? Did she call to ask why her allergies always flare up when the in-laws get together?”

Laughter rumbled through Griffin’s chest. “No. She’s been so accepting of us that I think it’s only fair to give her some time before we tell her why one turkey won’t be enough when she invites my folks over for Thanksgiving. Leigh called and says hi.”

“Ah. So that’s who you were talking to.”

“That and her.” Griffin pointed at the cat on her lap. “I’ve been trying to teach her to keep her claws to herself when she kneads my leg, but so far, she’s not a quick learner. I think we need more bonding time.”

Her words stopped Jorie’s approach one step from the bed. “Okay. Then I’ll go back to my writing. I wouldn’t want to interrupt your feline bonding time.” She winked at Griffin.

“Oh, no.” Griffin reached out one of her long arms, grabbed Jorie’s belt loop, and pulled.

Jorie landed on the bed next to her.

The bouncing of the bed annoyed the tri-colored cat on Griffin’s lap. Emmy stood, hopped down, and stalked out of the room.

“Ow.” Griffin pretended to sulk. “My cuddle buddy left me. Whatever will I do now? I’m a cat. I need affection.”

Jorie’s T-shirt slid up when she stretched out on the bed and leaned up on her elbow to grin at Griffin. Bare skin peeked out between faded jeans

and the edge of the T-shirt.

Instantly, Griffin moved closer, wanting to touch the warm skin.

“Oh, poor cat,” Jorie cooed, “all starved for affection. Want me to scratch your belly?” She slid her hand under Griffin’s T-shirt and trailed her fingers teasingly up Griffin’s belly.

In the past, Griffin would have had a dozen suave comebacks for that question. No one would have been able to talk to her that way without triggering the urge to reassert her feline superiority. Her role had always been that of the seducer, not the seduced. She had directed lovemaking, not trusting her partner enough to let her have complete control over her body and her heart.

Now and with Jorie, everything was different. Griffin stripped off her T-shirt, lay back on the bed, and whispered, “Yes, please.”

Jorie moved down and planted a soft kiss over Griffin’s navel, making her chuckle, then purr. “Then let’s see how quick a learner you are.” She stopped Griffin’s hands from sliding under her own T-shirt. “Keep your claws to yourself.”

With a sound that was half groan, half purr, Griffin laid her hands onto the bed and let Jorie have full control over their bonding time.

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