



Under Hill and Over the Bar

The Brotherhood 8

Loose Id

Willa Okati

Praise for the writing of Willa Okati

The Brotherhood: Amour Magique

What an intriguing story to start a series with! Ms. Okati has come up with a novel idea of an incubus who needs friends and wants to help them. But I'm not surprised, her stories are always creative and unique. I can't wait for the next book.

-- *Joyfully Reviewed*

With a unique plot and a host of sexy characters, *The Brotherhood: Amour Magique* is a winner... From humor to intrigue, to sexual sophistication, this is a first-class read.

-- Nancy Jackson, *Coffee Time Romance*

The Brotherhood 2: Bite Me

Tie me up, tie me down, do whatever you want as long as I enjoy it as much I enjoyed *The Brotherhood 2: Bite Me*. The writing is fabulous, with thought processes that are just funny as hell, and when the characters start talking to themselves it's damn hilarious.

-- Sin St. Luke, *Just Erotic Romance Reviews*

The Brotherhood 3: The Dragon's Tongue

I'd have read this in one sitting if real life hadn't intruded. Ms. Okati knows how to draw in a reader and keep them engrossed. Collin is very lovable. You will find yourself rooting for him to find love, and have a few giggles along the way.

-- Astraea, *Enchanted Ramblings*

Amour Magique, *Bite Me*, and *The Dragon's Tongue* are now available from Loose Id.

THE BROTHERHOOD 8: UNDER HILL AND OVER THE BAR

Willa Okati

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This book contains explicit sexual content, graphic language, and situations that some readers may find objectionable (homoerotic sex).

The Brotherhood 8: Under Hill and Over the Bar

Willa Okati

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Dedication

To Gillo. God save the Queen!

Prologue

This isn't a dance club -- it's an insane asylum. You could get arrested for doing that in public in, oh, I don't know, how many states?

Pressed tightly against the wall of Amour Magique's dance floor, Laurence couldn't help admiring the way tight leather trousers were put together on a pair of dancers, lacing up the sides of either leg with long thongs. He watched wide-eyed as the two men, undulating to the driving rhythm of the music, stripped off their pants without once losing the beat, strips of leather now slithering loose like snakes. He also *really* couldn't help seeing and admiring the fact that neither dancer wore anything underneath but their bare skin.

So? He was male, and gay. As were they. Very much of the gay persuasion, if the visual was anything to go by. Naked and erect, the two gyrated chest to chest and kissed each other as if they wanted to drink one another's essence from the mouth down. They were a sight to make any artist weep, both tall and thin, brown as nuts, corded with runner's muscles, and with nearly identical cocks pressed up against one another's stomachs.

And no one else around looked like they noticed a damn thing!

Well, no, that wasn't exactly true. The two got a few looks -- of admiration. Envy. Desire. But no one was jumping in there to tell them to get their pants back on, oh, no.

Laurence felt as though he should look away but couldn't seem to make himself. If, however, one of those men happened to turn around, and ... oh. Oh, wow. Yep, face about and present -- bending over to grasp his bent knees, ass in the air, a look of utter abandon and excitement written across his face. The man's partner spread those ass cheeks that were already shiny with some sort of lubricant and rubbed deep inside the cleft. The dancer's mouth fell open with a wanton sort of lust.

So did Laurence's.

Male! Gay! Free show! Hello?

Leaning down to press a score of kisses to his lover's bowed spine, the dominant man began to thrust himself inside what must feel like a wet, silken iron fist. Laurence breathed in deeply as the man seated himself with short, sharp thrusts, not stopping until his balls slapped his partner's ass. The look on the other man's face made something twist up and ache in Laurence's stomach. God, but it had been so long since he'd ...

As the two men began to have sex in earnest, Laurence forced himself to look away and walk on, out of earshot of their exclamations of pleasure. Free porn was all well and good, but when it brought home the truth that you weren't getting any and hadn't had any for a few years, the feeling of being an outsider cut too sharply.

Yeah, he hadn't had sex since the nasty breakup with his last partner, a man whom he'd loved not wisely but too well. The bastard hadn't respected Laurence's wish to keep their relationship quiet, and he'd gotten Laurence fired from his job. Oh, sure, people said you couldn't lose your employment for being gay, but it still happened. And then the jerk had had the nerve to blame *Laurence* for being too uptight! From there, things had only gone further downhill. He would have sued for palimony, but he just wanted to get as far away from a hostile ex-lover as possible. Anyway, once Laurence got to Charleston and had sought legal advice, Simon had advised against it.

He shook his maudlin thoughts away.

All the eye candy aside, he was a man, and he had a mission: *get out*. Amour Magique was weirder than Liam, and that was saying a lot.

As he walked, Laurence kept his back against and clung tightly to the walls of the dance club, easing his way past the throng of gyrating men on the main floor, feeling behind him with his hands for a way out. Wall, wall, wall, wall -- uh oh, not wall --

"Oh, um, sorry about that. I, uh, I ..." Laurence's voice trailed off as he looked up, then up some more, at the pile of muscles vaguely shaped like a man, dressed up in tusks and a piggish snout as if it were Halloween. He swallowed hard. "What the *hell*?"

The man's companion, a slim, almost lissome type, painted a pale blue all over with a head full of quills instead of hair, giggled. He was the one Laurence had groped without meaning to, but he kind of thought Mr. Pig objected more. Quills just giggled and oozed closer to the heaps of man he seemed to be attached to.

"Quigley," the gropee crooned, "aren't you going to do something? Defend my honor?"

Quigley -- and wasn't that a cute name for someone who could bench-press The Rock? -- growled around his tusks and took a step toward Laurence, balling his hands into fists.

Laurence had never been one to pick a fight where the odds were better than even that he'd end up a greasy stain on the carpet rather than the winner. He backed up, shaking his head. "Sorry, guys, sorry. Didn't mean any hassle. I'm harmless, see? You two go back to ... whatever it was you were doing. I'll just be on my way."

"Hmm." Quills tossed his head with a slightly clashing sound, like window blinds coming together. "He doesn't seem properly sorry, Quiggy. Hit him one for me. One good punch for your little prickly-bear?"

Quiggy let loose with another ominous rumble.

Laurence panicked. "Holy shit, it's Batman!" he blurted, pointing over the couple's shoulders. When, of all things, they actually turned to look, Laurence took the low road out

and rushed past another crowd of dancers. Once he had cleared them, he looked back but couldn't see the pair.

Letting out a huge breath of relief, Laurence leaned against a patch of wall he was sure was wall, and wiped a hand across his forehead. *Like I said, insane asylum.* From the moment he'd stepped through the door, he had pegged Amour Magique as a nuthouse, and he wasn't inclined to change his mind now that he'd gotten close to yet another pair of its more colorful clubbies.

Of course, seeing his friends, Liam included, seemingly vanish in puffs of smoke the moment they walked inside hadn't helped. As Laurence had stood by himself on the edge of a dance floor he could have sworn hadn't been there a few moments before, staring at it owlishly, he'd received his first threat from an absurdly tall, thin man with *really big* fists who'd asked what he thought he was looking at.

Damn Liam for not telling him this was masquerade night, or whatever. Everywhere Laurence turned, he saw strange thing after stranger thing, most of them on two legs, sometimes three, acting as if they were having the time of their lives. Most of them bristled when they caught Laurence staring and made various threats, most of which he'd been able to talk his way out of ... though his ear still rang from where a beefy type had smacked him upside the head.

He'd been against the idea of coming to Amour Magique from the beginning. No way could Laurence afford to be outed -- again -- not when he taught elementary school. As it was already, rumors were bad enough; being spotted here would kill his teaching career.

Running one hand over the goatee and mustache he'd grown at David's suggestion to disguise himself a little, Laurence shook his head. A Darth Vader mask would have done the job better in a crowd like this.

Getting the hell out of Dodge would have been ideal, but for some reason, Laurence couldn't seem to find the exit -- and he'd circled the dance floor three times. If he were

superstitious, he'd swear the club wanted to keep him there. If he were claustrophobic, he'd have begun to panic about the walls closing in. Being Laurence, he was becoming desperate for a bar and a drink. Away from the madding crowd, if at all possible.

And there, like a beacon of light out of the darkness, a way opened up and shone before him. A short hallway. Didn't look to be an exit from the club itself, but any port in a freak-show storm was a welcome sight. Laurence made as quick a beeline for the warmly lit corridor as he could, narrowly missing another couple of bizarre types and bypassing, with effort, one man down on his knees, eagerly swallowing a tall blond's cock while kneading his lover's thighs like a giant cat.

Laurence might even have looked twice at them.

Then, he was out of the crush, in the hallway and, oh, yes, blessed be, there looked to be a bar at the end of it. He could smell the beer. Sweet beer!

Laurence all but raced to get there and didn't give a damn about how desperate he must look. If the shoe fit, right?

One, two, buckle my ...

Chapter One

“Harder! Fuck him harder!” Eager, Nerys raised up on her dais of silver silk. One slim hand tattooed the soft fabric in a rhythm closely matching a heartbeat -- or the timing of a man’s thrusts into another warm, willing body. “I have twenty gold wagered on your riding ability!”

Keelan stopped for a moment, dragging an arm across his sweating forehead. “Nerys, a little less commentary, please?”

“You need the encouragement.”

“I need nothing but this sweet piece of ass.” Keelan slapped his fellow elf’s flank. “Eremand, do you want some more? Nerys seems to think we shouldn’t stop yet.”

Eremand hissed. “Yes, you bastard. Close, so close, and you stop now?” The elf was on his hands and knees, grasping his hands together hard enough to make the knuckles turn pale, his ass raised for Keelan’s pleasure, and Keelan was taking every advantage of his fellow’s position. All the same, Eremand was proving stubborn. “You won’t make me cry out, though. I swear it on the air and darkness. Just move!”

“Since you ask so nicely,” Keelan said with a trace of mockery, then turned to his business at hand, namely that of fucking Eremand until he screamed. Or so the bet went: if

Keelan could get Eremand to yell with passion, Keelan would be the winner. Nerys had suggested the game and put her money where her mouth was.

Well, the Fey had whiled away many a night in a less amusing manner. Especially these two, plus their so-far-silent companion, Black Malice, who lurked and brooded on her own dais of black satin. With eyes like hers, silver and red shot through with cruelty and filled with wicked thoughts, a man ought not be able to perform, but Keelan thought he was up to the challenge.

Bending to his task with a will, Keelan slid in and out of Eremand's eager, grasping hole, aiming for the sweet spot that they shared with mortal men. Every time he felt the tip of his cock brushing over it, Eremand let out a breathy sound, but refused to cry out.

Time for more drastic measures.

Pulling all the way out of Ereman's silken white ass, Keelan relished the sight of his own cock, hard and straight, gleaming with lubricant. Then he reached into the pocket of his own trews, only pulled down instead of torn off, and retrieved a small blue plastic plug. He reached for the slippery liquid they had used, paused, and with a whispered thought, secretly summoned another bottle to him. It looked innocent, small, made of blue glass, but he knew different.

Hopefully, no one else would.

Keelan anointed the sex toy with the new liquid, slick and clear, and admired the sight of the gleaming curves for a moment. If this didn't do the trick ...

"Keelan, what are you doing?" Eremand tried to twist around to see. "Get on with things, man!"

"One could say your words win me the bet right now," Keelan said, teasing Eremand's tight hole with a finger, circling it round and round. "Nerys, Malice, what say you?"

"Yes, yes!" Nerys exclaimed, while at the same time, Malice shook her head and drew back into herself, a huddled lump of burning darkness.

Keelan sighed. It had been worth a try, but a draw did him no good. Or rather, it did him all the good in the world. Lazily tracing around Eremand's pucker one last time, he placed the tip of the plug against the other elf's hole and pushed slightly.

"What is -- what are you doing?"

"Oh, nothing," Keelan drawled. He thrust the toy, with its curved tip, deep inside Eremand. "And everything."

Eremand drew in a strangled breath, almost crying out, but stopped himself at the last minute. "You bastard," he said in a choked voice. "You're cheating."

"No one said I couldn't get a little help." Keelan slapped Eremand's ass again. "Now, let's see how you like this." He tilted the toy to rub hard against the elf's prostate, moving it back and forth like a cat kneading its paws, claws out. Eremand writhed and bucked at the intrusion but kept his lips firmly sealed shut.

When Keelan finally let up, Eremand turned his head to look at him, taunt him. "Are you saying you're not man enough without a little trinket to help you along? The wager was for you to make me lose control, not a bauble. Do you admit defeat?"

"Never so." Keelan rotated the blue cylinder around and around, coating Eremand's inner muscles with the substance from his vial, then pulled it out with a sudden pop and a wicked grin. As he did, Eremand hunched and bucked forward, breath choking in his lungs in a way that told Keelan he had almost won his bet right there and then.

No matter. Eremand would be ready for him now. Keelan lined his cock up to Eremand's waiting hole, and thrust, plunging deep without waiting, no easing his way in. Eremand spasmed again, scrabbling at his own wrists. Still, he remained stubbornly silent save for the heavy gusts of his breaths, harsh rasps huffing in and out.

"Does this feel good?" Keelan demanded, dragging his cock nearly out, then slamming back inside. "Do you feel me, even when I'm gone? Do you hunger to have me back again?"

No sound. Not even a groan. Keelan firmed his lips. He would just have to try harder, that was all -- and nothing said that he couldn't give himself another unfair edge.

Eremand's cock, ignored until now, became Keelan's secondary focus as he plunged in and out, hard thrusts that rocked both elves off their balance. It was not the done thing to pleasure another while you took your own joy, and Keelan was banking on Eremand not expecting him to "play like a human."

More fool him.

Keelan reached between the other elf's legs and gave his ball sac a firm tug, then rolled the testicles between his fingers. Eremand *almost* gave in then, stifling all but the slightest whimper. Ah, but Keelan knew he had his prey in his sights at that moment, and needed only a the tiniest bit more. Such as a hand going around the front and taking Eremand's elegant erection into his own long-fingered grip, grasping the heated velvet of his skin and pumping his cock in a long, smooth stroke. Keelan redoubled his efforts, watching Eremand begin to writhe and almost dance, then because he knew all Fey liked a dose of pain with their pleasure, went for the gold by pressing his thumbnail against the slit of his partner's dick.

Eremand gave a mighty heave and loosed a scream as he came in hot, wet bursts over Keelan's palm. Laughing wildly, exultant in his victory, Keelan rammed deep inside Eremand again, milking a second, smaller climax out of his fellow elf before spilling his own load of seed within the man's ass.

Finished, both of them collapsed to the soft sedge grass beneath them like worn-out dogs, breathing hard. The sound of Nerys' applause brought them back around.

"Twenty gold," she cheered. "Twenty for me!" Then, as one of the few elves who would have the nerve, she turned to Black Malice. "I'll have the coin, if you please."

Keelan looked up in time to see Black Malice simmering at Nerys, no doubt casting her a foul look, the kind that once upon a time would have curdled milk in pans and caused

women to miscarry. Nerys, being immortal and having her own powers, merely laughed and extended her hand. Grudgingly, Malice slapped a small, jingling pouch into the female elf's hand.

Nerys merrily secreted the money somewhere in the depths of her bosom. An amazing feat, Keelan thought hazily, as the elf was all but naked, dressed in a fragment of cloth woven from spider webs. She had many deeply hidden depths to her, much more than met the eye.

Delighted with the results of her game, Nerys spun around and watched avidly as Keelan and Ereman got to their feet. Keelan summoned warm, soapy water and two cloths as Ereman reeled, shaking his head.

"No hard feelings?" Keelan asked. "It was fairly fought and fairly won."

"You are a foul cheater. What did you anoint the toy with? Passion oil?"

Keelan paused in dipping the cloth into water and tossed Ereman a lazy grin. "A bit of something I picked up from an incubus," he said carelessly. "I traded him a night of Elvish pleasure in exchange for a dram that he'd distilled."

Nerys let out a low whistle. "An incubus, my, my. You're keeping high company these days."

"Ah, go on with you." Keelan flicked soapy water at his friend. "He was pleasant enough. Called himself Liam."

"Liam?" Black Malice uncoiled herself a bit and gave a snort. "Leave it to you," she rasped, "to find the only sex demon in knowledge to have your own particular slant on sexuality." She thrust her breasts forward. No elf in Keelan's acquaintance had had the nerve to see what lay beneath Malice's midnight robes, but apparently she held herself in high esteem, to flaunt her goods so.

"Belittle him not; Liam was good company." Keelan attended to the business of cleaning himself off, then generously offered Ereman his own washcloth. The elf took it after a feint at Keelan, easily dodged. The Fey liked to play games, all the time, some more

dangerous than not. Keelan prided himself on being able to tell the difference. This was merely Eremand grudging him the win, not a direct attack.

Then again, no one ever knew with an elf.

Eremand drew back. Quickly cleaning himself, he sat down cross-legged in the grass, naked and unashamed. "Liam. I've heard his name whispered on the wind recently. It would seem he's up to his old tricks again."

Keelan quirked an eyebrow. "And what would those be?"

Nerys wore a sly grin. "He has a habit of playing with mortals. Tsk. I'd have thought he left that sort of silliness behind years ago. Apparently he has not changed."

"It is true," Black Malice hissed, drawing her hands out of her sleeves. Ordinary and feminine down to the last knuckle, they hooked into wickedly sharp talons the color of blood. Looking at them, Keelan almost shuddered, but managed to hold the display of emotion back. The thought of bedding Black Malice, of having her scratch those nails down his back ... well, he thanked the Lord and Lady for his own personal inclinations away from the opposite sex.

They were an odd band, the four of them. Keelan and Eremand might have passed off their liking for male flesh as the occasional foray into licentiousness, but there were few among the elven women to tempt them. Nerys, who could have anyone she wished, preferred to shun other male attention and keep company with her two favorite misfits. As for Black Malice -- well, no other group would have her, and Keelan, Eremand, and Nerys didn't have the nerve to say her nay when she joined them one night, black as a storm cloud, in their gathering circle.

"Liam rides again," Black Malice went on, flexing her fingers. "The incubus plies his wiles among the mortals."

Nerys lifted herself on one dainty elbow. "And how do you know? What the incubi do is not ours to question, and not gossip that travels in our circles."

“Do you question what I know?” Malice hissed once more, a low sound like an angry cat. “I have heard, and I have seen. Anything that is spoken in the darkness reaches my ears sooner or later. And this is a fine game that Liam plays now.” She cackled, the sound like nails down a chalkboard. “Would you like to hear of it?”

Keelan, Eremand, and Nerys exchanged dubious glances. Malice’s rumors often brought more trouble to the listener than they were worth, but they had already entertained themselves with sex. Why not a bit of chatter about others to add spice to their night?

“Go on,” Keelan said after a moment. “What has Liam been getting up to?”

Malice loosed another of her eerie laughs. “He has adopted a band of hapless men, eleven of them, who share your own perverse inclinations, as he does himself.”

“Here, hold on, then!” Eremand burst out. Keelan held out a hand to stay his friend, although he understood the elf’s upset. For Malice to call anything perverse was a deep insult.

“Go on,” he requested politely. It wouldn’t do to make an enemy of Malice. She had more than earned her name with good reason.

Malice flexed her taloned fingers much as someone else, elf or mortal man, would spread his hands. “It is his plan to take these men to the traveling club, Amour Magique, and find them all their own heart’s true love. He has,” she lowered her voice, “traded one of his mother’s Tears for the privilege of free passage in Amour’s shape-shifting halls, and he is using all his charms to bring lucky love to each of his friends.”

“Who will win the men? Has Liam picked them all out already?”

“Some say yes, Eremand. Some say no. I? I do not know.” Black Malice withdrew her hands back into her sleeves and looked arch. “But I would think another bet might be placed concerning this new development.”

Nerys, always eager for a wager, faced Malice with a delighted exclamation. “Oh, what? Do tell us.”

“Simply this -- one of us penetrates Amour Magique on the night when these men are to arrive and steals the heart of one for his own.”

Keelan and Eremand looked at each other, then burst into laughter.

“And what would Eremand or I do with a human heart? Lock it in a box and take it out to look at every now and then? Come now, Malice. It’s bad enough that we deprive the Fey women of my seed, especially as children are so rare and precious. What would they do if we laid permanent claim to a man not even of the elvenkind?”

Malice shrugged. “That, I cannot say. But to bite a thumb at the incubus and snatch one of his men -- well, this would be a fine feat for any elf worth his wine to boast of.”

Keelan leaned back, thoughtful. On principle, he liked to disagree with Malice, even if he kept his thoughts to himself, but he had to admit she’d seized upon a very good point. And mortal men were so willing, so warm, so eager ... they savored sex without the jaded air of the elves, who had lived so long that they needed to spice up their dalliances with wagers and cheating.

“Let us say that I, myself, gained access to Amour Magique,” he said after a moment. “It should not be too hard; I know of a portal that would lead me there. It’s been seldom used in centuries but should still open and let me through. How will I know which of the men who pack that place is one of Liam’s?”

Black Malice chuckled. She made a move inside her sleeve, then cast out twelve tarot cards, each with the face of a different man. “These are your prey.”

“Where did you get those?” Nerys picked up one that showed an appealing young man, his face in the bloom of fresh maturity and his body posed provocatively against a dancing pole. Save for a small pouch to protect his genitalia, he was naked. “Ooh,” she crooned, stroking with one finger, “I wouldn’t mind a taste of him.”

“He prefers his own breed, as do Keelan and Eremand.”

Nerys pouted and dropped the card.

Keelan sorted through all the images and fanned them out. From a tall and cold-appearing man to a blond with glasses and a studious air, to a redhead with a wary look and a goatee growing in, all were most toothsome and sweet temptation. He held out the cards. “Do you think I could manage this feat? Am I elf enough to sneak in beneath Liam’s nose and steal one of these men, to make him a magic-struck thing?”

Nerys pounced with glee, as he had expected her to do. “A hundred gold says you cannot! Liam may pretend to being a giddy wee thing, flighty as the breeze, but he has more power than any of us can conceive of. If he has plans for all his men, he will not brook any intruders.”

“You think not?” Keelan gazed at the cards again. His cock, always anxious to play, tingled at the thought of sinking into warm, male mortal flesh again. He’d gone centuries without, and things had changed. Men could flaunt their desires now. To be with someone who had no shame in his lifestyle ... well, such a fellow would be quite the prize and, in his opinion, well worth risking the incubus’s wrath.

Besides, he rather favored the redhead, who had a certain foxiness to his features that reminded Keelan of the elvenkind, making him wonder if the man had a drop or two of the blood running through his veins. He tapped the card. “This one. I choose to invade *Amour Magique* and do all that is in my power to capture him and bring him back to our circle for an evening’s diversion.”

Nerys and Malice both hooted with laughter. It was Malice, though, who spoke first. “You cannot. Perhaps you can capture this man, but you cannot hold him.”

Sexual excitement made Keelan bold. “What is your wager?”

Malice rocked back and forth for a moment. “A thousand silver. True silver, not the golden scrip we exchange among ourselves in these small and petty diversions. My bet is that you may be able to seize this man, but you won’t keep him.”

Keelan just managed to hide his shock. A thousand true silver was a fortune in these times. The elvenkind were so rarely believed in that no more tributes came their way. For Malice to bet such an amount meant she truly did not believe in Keelan's talents -- and that, as they all knew, was a grave insult. One he could not afford to let stand without rumor spreading of his cowardice.

"I accept," he said hoarsely. "This man, this very one --" He waved the picture. "-- he shall be mine, taken from Amour Magique and woven into my web of elven-born charms." He had no doubt that he could accomplish the feat -- furthermore, he had no thousand silver to pay Malice with if he lost, so he would simply *have* to win.

Malice laughed, a wicked sound. "Done, and be it on your own head."

Eremand touched Keelan's arm. "Are you sure ...?"

"Do not dissuade me; we have sealed our pact, Malice and I." A hot surge of blood filled Keelan's veins. "There is no room for discussion here."

Nerys clapped her hands together. "The wager is too rich for my blood, but I am behind you, Keelan!" She winked lasciviously. "Although I am sure you would rather this man be in my place instead. Tell me, how will you find out which night the men are to make their visit?"

"Easily." Black Malice tittered. "It is tonight, in point of fact. As the mortal clock runs, the men are about to enter Amour Magique right now. Do you still hold to the bet, Keelan, or do you wish to bow out?"

Keelan's face flushed with angry pride. "I never back down from a challenge. I have no time to prepare, but so be it. Clear out, all of you, clear out. I want to bring him back here to seduce and bed him."

"And if he will not come?"

"He will." Keegan gripped the card hard enough to bend its edges. "Two thousand silver says he will be mine before the morning light." It was a reckless bet, but one never did

things by halves in Faerie. He didn't have the coin, of course, but he could sell himself into the Queen's service if he did lose the bet.

He did not, however, have any intention of *not* winning. Who could resist him? A mere mortal? Surely not.

"Before the morning light, eh?" Malice tilted her head. "Are you so sure?"

Eremand shook Keelan this time. "You deal with Malice!" he hissed. "Think, my brother, think!"

Keelan shook off Eremand's grip. "The wager is made, and the night is wasting. Away with all of you, I say. I must dress myself and prepare to open the portal."

"As you wish." Malice rose from her dais with a whispery sound of rustling silk. Her face, hidden in the shadows of her cowl and hair, peeked out for a moment, just long enough for Keelan to catch the glittering of two red eyes. "It shall be on your head, so full of pride, that you have bet against Malice." And she disappeared.

Nerys rolled her eyes. "So dramatic." She gave a yawn and hopped off her own dais. "Come, Eremand. We'll be off, you and I. Perhaps we can while away the night in the revels at court. I might even tempt you into a kiss."

"You can keep on wishing," Eremand informed Nerys, but followed her lead. He turned back to Keelan. "Are you sure?"

"Very sure." Keelan gazed at the card in his hand. He traced the spidery English writing beneath the man's picture, puzzling out the name. *Laurence*. "Let Malice do her worst. It will be as nothing against *my* best. Come morning, we will see who owes whom the silver coins."

Eremand looked resigned. "Then it will be as Malice said and on your own head. Come, Nerys. Let us dance and drink the night away. We'll see Keelan in the morning -- either richer by coin and a lover or a ruined elf."

Nerys giggled as she drew Eremand after her. “Luck to you, Keelan! Perhaps you’ll make this man scream a bit more easily than our friend!”

Keelan ignored her. He stared at the image, memorizing Laurence’s face. The more he looked, the more he liked. So what if it meant going up against an incubus?

What was life without a little fun, and a few games?

Chapter Two

“... and then she just threw him, tossed him right down the stairs.” Laurence gestured with a candied cherry, sinking the red orb into his beer from a height of several feet. “Like he was nothing more than a stuffed doll.”

The bartender, a burly man with muscles stacked upon muscles and the ability to keep his mouth shut when he needed to -- or so Laurence had discovered -- shook his head to this statement. “Harsh, man.”

“Oh, yeah. Have you ever heard someone screaming just like when the monster under the bed has come out from hiding and wants to eat them? Like, like, like they’re walking on broken glass but they can’t stop? Doesn’t compare.” He paused. “Aw, hell. This cherry’s gonna make my beer taste like crap.”

“Not a problem.” The bartender selected a glass from the polished ranks behind his counter, stuck it beneath a tap, and expertly pulled another pint with a thick, foamy head. “On the house, seeing how you gunked up the other one in the interest of storytelling.”

Laurence cocked his head to look at the man. He’d introduced himself as Rocco, but Laurence felt pretty sure that wasn’t the guy’s real name. On the other hand, he didn’t feel inclined to question the veracity of someone who took a size 6X and didn’t have enough fat

on him to grease a cake pan. Besides, Rocco had been a buddy so far, and Laurence didn't like to look a gift bartender in the mouth. Er. Maybe he'd had one too many beers already.

Whatever.

After saluting the man, Laurence took a deep pull off the fresh beer and rolled the yeasty bitterness over his tongue, then swallowed with a deep sigh of satisfaction. "Oh, yeah. What's the name of this microbrewery again?"

Rocco glanced at the keg and shrugged. "Na'am Thuul. Not a name I've heard before tonight. Bah, they're always experimenting with my stock."

"They?"

"They, them, the big cheeses." Rocco waved his arm disdainfully at the ceiling. "Silas and his team of flunkies, the ones who 'run' this place." He made quote marks with his fingers. "Run, my ass. More like get run over by."

"No wonder you didn't have Bud Light when I asked for one. Too mundane?"

Rocco hooted. "Ha! You *might* find some of that watered-down horse piss on a lower level, but not up here. Clientele's kinda used to the exotic." He rolled his eyes. "When they bother to show up, anyway."

Laurence glanced around. Except for Rocco, he was alone in the whole of the large, roomy bar, a rosewood palace of a pub sunk back into an alcove. Cocooned inside, he could just barely -- if he tried -- make out the thumping beat of the music on Amour Magique's main dance floor. Peace, sweet peace.

"Looks like they're a no-show tonight." He fished the cherry out of his abandoned beer and ate it. "Huh. Not too bad. I always did like these little things, though. Neon little bastards, though, aren't they? Makes you wonder what they do to your insides."

"You cuss a lot for a teacher, man."

Laurence decided he could afford to give Rocco a pointed look. "Should never have let that slip. Look, I deal with a room full of fifth-graders all day long. Believe me, by the time

I'm done with my working day I have to let rip with a blue streak to get the tension out of my system."

"Fifth-graders, man." Rocco shuddered. "Anybody under the age of twelve is a demon, man, and I know from demons."

"Demon rum, demon alcohol ..." Laurence twirled a tiny parasol by its toothpick handle. Rocco hadn't insulted him by adding either the original cherry or the umbrella to his booze. Both had been left by a customer who must have taken off right before Laurence himself stumbled in. Rocco had appeared all too glad to get the business.

Funny that no one else was around. You'd think there'd be a lot of thirsty guys wandering in from the dance floor, right? Guys and, well, dolls, too. Laurence eyed the unknown patron's abandoned glass and its flaming red lipstick prints. "You get some colorful clientele in here, huh?" he ventured.

"I have my share." Rocco shrugged again and lifted the drink off the counter, dumping out the obnoxiously cheerful blue slush inside into a sink, washing it out, then upending the glass on a clean white towel all by itself, every move invested with the grace of a really big man who's learned how to handle himself in small spaces. "This one, with the frou-frou booze? Not so interesting as some."

"Bet you're the one with a ton of good stories. And good beer!" Laurence toasted him.

"Na'am Thuul, man. Must be one of those guys with crazy hair and a homebrew setup in his basement. They're the ones who turn out the really good shit. And I have a few stories, sure, but I like hearing what my customers have to talk about. Which reminds me, you were saying?"

Laurence inclined his head. He'd started the story, so he had to finish it up. "Yeah. This woman was crazy, right? Crazy like the mother of a kid you had to flunk because he never did his homework even though he swore to her, on a stack of Bibles, that he did. Just tossed that kitten right down the flight of steps. I had about a split second to see that fur-bearing

missile coming straight at my face, all four sets of claws whipping around like razor blades.” He took a much-needed drink. “Not that I’m surprised, though, right? She and her boyfriend fought about everything, so why not the cat?”

“So what did you do then?” Rocco leaned forward, for all the world as if he really cared. Laurence tilted his head at the big man and silently gave *Amour Magique* props for hiring a really good class of bartenders. He’d have bet that even if the place were full, Rocco would have a light and a listening ear for everyone who wanted one.

Laurence gave an embarrassed shrug. “I’d like to say I caught the poor little scrap, but really, it caught me. All four sets of claws, remember? Hung on tight, too. So I took it inside long enough to find a box, and five minutes later we were off to the vet to see if anything had broken.” He took another deep chug on his beer and stifled a small burp. “I named him Panther, and he still sticks to me like white on rice from the minute I set foot inside my house. So, yeah. There you have it. The sad story of a gay man who, stereotypically as you please, would like to avoid the free sex show out there and just wants to go home to his newspaper and his faithful kitty cat. Would you believe my friend made me bring a new condom along just in case I got lucky? Man, the nerve of some people.”

“Who’s your friend?”

“Nutty little guy called Liam.” Laurence looked back out at the throng beyond Rocco’s cool sanctuary. “I have no idea where he’s gotten to.”

“Liam. Huh.” Rocco took Laurence’s glass and once more topped the beer off without being asked. “So, what, you think this is a bad thing, having something to take care of and love? Hell, man, that’s what most of these sorry partygoers are looking for, whether they’ll admit it or not.”

Laurence snorted and accepted the beer.

“Only the truth, my man. You gotta have somebody to love. And if you don’t have a body, then you might as well have a thing, right?”

“You’re a wise man, Rocco,” Laurence said solemnly, lifting his drink. Rocco chuckled and moved further down the bar, whipping out a towel to polish the already gleaming surface just that little bit brighter.

Laurence laughed himself, then settled down into his drink. He’d lost track of how many he’d had. Four, if you counted the cherry bomb, three if you didn’t, or two and one half if you wanted to be technical, since he was only halfway down the new arrival. Enough, though, that certain parts of him were beginning to protest a little too much liquid in the system.

He waved at Rocco. “Hey -- bathroom?”

Rocco grinned as he polished away. “Sorry, friend, I don’t do casual hookups in the stalls.”

Laurence blushed. “Er, sorry. Flying solo tonight.”

“Nothing for the customers, sorry. There’s one outside close to the main floor, though, if you really gotta go.”

Cringe. “I’ll wait, thanks.” Laurence rearranged himself on his surprisingly really comfortable barstool and took another drink of his beer. *Mmm.* “All hail Na’am Thuul,” he said before taking another reverential swallow. “So am I going to be the only one in here all night long? How many more drinks before you take pity and let me use the staff urinal?”

Rocco cracked up. “House management would have my head, pal, and not the big one either.”

“Ah, what they don’t know won’t hurt them.”

“They know everything that goes on in here.” Rocco’s face went flat, and he gave his towel a snap. “Trust me, man. I don’t know much about Amour Magique, but I know enough to follow the rules. You can either sit there until your back teeth are floating, or you can use the public stalls.”

Laurence sighed. “Damn. Are they within line of sight from here?” He had the oddest feeling that if he left the bar, he wouldn’t be able to find his way back.

“Yeah, just a little ways down.” Rocco pointed. “No worries, man. I’ll keep your beer cold for you.”

A new voice interrupted. “Cold beer? Who in their right mind drinks beer cold? Rocco, do you serve it this way on purpose? That’s a blasphemy against good alcohol, and you should be ashamed.”

“Jesus!” Laurence all but jumped off his stool as the voice came from behind him. He whipped around to face the speaker, and immediately froze like a mouse that Panther had cornered. Why? Because this man, this man was the icing on every cake ever made. You couldn’t help but want to lick him off your fingers.

He was dark-haired, with a truly dark shade nearing black that Laurence had rarely seen in nature. Most Goth kids tried to ape the color, but ended up with a dull, sooty mess. They tried going after the same alabaster hue of this man’s skin, too, and made themselves look like zombies.

Laurence did *not* think of a zombie or a Goth when he looked at the stranger. He imagined himself appearing like the wolf in old cartoons, the ones where the canine’s tongue unfurled like an old window blind and hearts began pounding in place of his eyes. Laurence thought about the wicked things someone could do in the dark with a willing partner. He thought about being one half of that equation.

From black hair to radiant skin to slate-gray eyes, the man’s coloring alone would be enough to give any sane gay guy palpitations. But the face ... oh, the face. Laurence had never seen anything like this newcomer before in his life, and he wondered if everyone wouldn’t pale in comparison afterward. There were men you’d call handsome, and some who trod the thin line between prettiness and androgyny. Yes, men of all flavors in between, but

no one looked like a marble statue come to life, a fallen angel, a devil in disguise -- at least not all at once.

No, no one could be that handsome, even dressed in a doe-colored suede leather vest with no shirt underneath, old jeans that looked to have been painted on, and well-fitted boots with a low heel. *Marlboro Man, take me away. Have mercy!* Laurence thought he should go to one knee, as if the man were some sort of royalty -- then realized he might really have had too much beer.

He gave himself a mental shake. *What are you, five? This man isn't a prince of anything, and this is America, pal. You are a red-blooded male, and you do not kneel to anything unless there's a cock presenting itself to be sucked. This is another bar-hopping club boy, and while he might be gorgeous, you don't clean up too bad yourself. Stay put, boy. Ten to one he's out that door in under five.*

As the man settled down on the barstool next to his, Laurence reflected that it was just as well he wasn't a betting man. The dark angel gave him a playful elbow, as if they already were buddies and, when Laurence turned to him, gave him a cheerful grin.

"Cold beer, I ask you." He acted as if the idea were a big joke at Rocco's expense. "Might as well serve it in a bottle and finish off the insult to hops everywhere."

"Keelan," Rocco grunted, flipping his ever-present towel over one shoulder. "Been a while since one of you came in here. I've seen plenty of your cousins, but one of your true blood kin? You're few and far between these days."

The man -- Keelan -- lifted his shoulders easily. "There are fewer of us with the freedom to choose our own lifestyles." His voice revealed nothing more than casual camaraderie. "You know how family is."

"No," Rocco said, "I don't. Thanks for reminding me."

“Oh, anytime.” Keelan gave Rocco a lazy grin, and right about then was when Laurence decided that, handsome or not, he didn’t like Keelan. Time to go investigate the bathrooms down the hall, then pick a different seat when he came back. Well, that was the plan.

In reality, Keelan slipped an arm around Laurence’s waist and gave him a squeeze. That handsome face, turned to Laurence, held an edge of cruelty even under his friendly expression. Laurence stiffened.

“Want to move your hand?” he asked politely. “Actually, let me rephrase that. Move your hand, or I’ll move it for you.”

Keelan laughed. Damn him, the man even had a fine-sounding chuckle, like rich bronze bells chiming. He squeezed Laurence tighter. “And what will you do if I don’t budge an inch?” he breathed, pushing way more sex into those few syllables than should have been possible.

Laurence’s shoulders stiffened -- but, incredibly, so did other parts of him. *Down, boy!* Damn thing didn’t listen to him. Then again, had it ever?

“I think you’d like it if I stay right ... here.” Keelan slid his hand over one of Laurence’s ass cheeks, then applied some pressure.

Laurence flinched. The touch of the man’s hand where no one had boldly ventured in a long time, in public no less, sent a definite message to points south. However, his momma hadn’t raised any fools.

“Hands. Off,” he said with deliberate emphasis. “In case you made a mistake, I’m a man, not a tomato. Squeeze me one more time and you’re going to end up with beer in your lap.”

“Oh, I don’t think you’d throw your drink on me.” *Grip.* “I think you might throw yourself at me, though.” To Laurence’s surprise, Keelan leaned in and bit at the fleshy part of his earlobe, the sudden hot sharpness sending bolts of excitement fizzing down below his waist. “Come on, now. Let’s you and me find a quiet corner somewhere, hmm?”

Laurence found himself in two minds about the situation. One scenario involved him exclaiming things like, “God, yes!” and “Hallelujah!” While the other still ended with Keelan getting a beer bath.

“Come on,” Keelan coaxed, kneading Laurence’s ass. “Are you in the closet? I don’t mind. Amour Magique is full of men like you. They’re all one big happy family on the dance floor, but for those of us who like a little privacy, there’s a thousand and one nooks where we can be alone. No one will ever see, and no one will ever know.” He bit Laurence’s ear a second time, then trailed the point of his tongue up the ridge of cartilage.

Despite himself, Laurence gave a shuddering sigh.

“You like the idea. I know you do.” Turning a little in his seat, Keelan brought his other hand around to rest atop the bulge in Laurence’s jeans. He pressed lightly, probably just enough to feel what was there springing back, eager to leap out in his hand, then he nuzzled Laurence’s temple. “What’s your name? Why don’t you tell me, strawberry? What kind of name fits a man who’s all red and white, like berries and --” He flickered his tongue over his lips. “-- cream?”

Rocco rumbled. “Keelan, you leave him alone. Laurence, you don’t have to do a damn thing he says.”

“Oh, but I think he does,” Keelan crooned, pushing down again. Laurence heard a small moan and was embarrassed to realize he’d made the sound. “He wants to. Don’t you? Laurence.” Keelan raised his hand from Laurence’s aching groin and tickled his chin with one finger, pressing it into the cleft there as sensually as if he were stroking between the cleft of his ass. “Come and fall with me. It’s easy.”

Laurence found that his throat had gone dry. He cleared it in an effort to speak. “No, uh, Alexander. Call me Alex.”

The sparkle in Keelan's eyes told him the other man knew he'd lied, but didn't care. "What do you say, Alex?" He lowered his hand again, rubbing softly and heavily as a lion's velvet paw over Laurence's thigh. "I know a place where we can go."

Rocco loomed over the two of them, and Laurence had to admit, their bartender had *loom* down to an art form. "I said, you leave him alone. I know what kind of games you like to play, Keelan, and I don't want Laurence having any part of them."

"Laurence, eh?" Keelan gave Laurence a sideways look, then assumed an air of innocence. "I thought it was Alex."

Laurence narrowed his eyes. Rocco had the grace to look embarrassed, then folded his arms across his chest. "Okay, I screwed up just then. But, Laurence, you don't have to go anywhere with this guy."

Laurence hesitated, torn between half a dozen things -- the feeling of Keelan's hands on his leg, the awareness of how handsome the man was, the sure certainty that if Rocco warned you off someone he should be warned off, more than a little indignation that Keelan seemed to think Laurence was his property to paw over and play with, and his body's own veto overriding common sense. He licked his lips. "I'll be all right. Give us part of an hour and I'll be back. More beer and stories, right?"

"Laurence ..." Rocco warned.

Keelan made a small, satisfied noise, the sound of a cat who'd just caught his prey. To add to the illusion, he made a purring noise in the back of his throat. "Not quite an hour? You're underestimating me."

Laurence turned to look this fallen Adonis straight in the eye. "Look, I'm not stupid, okay? You're a hunk, you're bored, and this is a way to pass the time. We have each other's names, but I know that a quick fuck won't mean we'll want to pick out curtains with each other. Let's not make this more than what it is, okay? Thirty minutes in a closet, a nook, whatever. Then we never see each other again."

Keelan frowned. "Now I think you underestimate yourself."

"Not really. This is a hookup, right? I've been here, done this. It's all about sex, nothing more, and don't try to tell me different." Laurence shot out his hand and squeezed Keelan's own erection through his tissue-soft jeans. "In an hour, you'll have forgotten all about me."

Keelan's eyes flared with something dark. "Somehow, I doubt that very much."

"You think I can give you something to remember?"

"I know it for a fact. And you ... you'll never forget me."

A pulse of electric energy passed between them, startling Laurence's heart into beating faster. He swallowed. In the closet, out of it, thirty minutes with Keelan would make the whole trip to Amour Magique worthwhile. "Shall we go?"

"Laurence, this is the last time I'm warning you." Rocco leaned forward, interrupting the flow between the two men. "Don't you go off with Keelan. He's not a good man. Hell, he's not a --"

"That'll do, Rocco." Keelan raised a hand. Rocco's mouth shut mid-word, but his eyes blazed. With a snort of outrage, he turned his back on them and set to washing the single dirty glass he had waiting for him. Laurence saw, however, that Rocco was watching them both in the mirror behind the bar.

If he'd been thinking anything beyond *sex, good, now, please*, he might have taken a warning from the big man's face. Rocco had been nothing but generous to Laurence, and a negative from him should have gone a long way. However, Rocco's displeasure paled by comparison in the face of Keelan's breathtaking male beauty and the chance to have that promisingly large bulge unwrapped and shoved inside him.

With his last coherent thought, Laurence figured it didn't matter if he *liked* Keelan or not. Like had nothing to do with sex. They'd just be two bodies getting one another off. Thirty minutes in a closet. Thirty minutes to leave him sore and aching in all the best ways in all the best places.

He slid off his bar stool and held a hand out to Keelan. "Let's go," he said roughly, ignoring all his better judgment.

He thought he saw a silver gleam in Keelan's eyes as the man looked down for a brief moment. Then those tempting lips were back at his ear. "There's a place we can go," he whispered. "Follow me. I'll take you straight to heaven."

Chapter Three

As Keelan led the mortal -- Laurence -- back toward the portal at the other end of the bar, he noticed two things: one, the man had good hands. Very good hands. Dry and strong, with long fingers that curled around Keelan's in a solid grip. Secondly, he was aware of Rocco's severe disapproval, but he shrugged that off as easily as rain from a sealskin cloak. What mattered the opinion of another human?

Keelan couldn't have cared less about the bartender's censure and chose instead to focus on how the man seemed to approve of Laurence to the point of being protective. Aside from that, though, Rocco's opinions were irrelevant. The man was not paid to say yea or nay to one of the Fey when he chose a night's diversion from those who frequented *Amour Magique*. Keelan might have been one of the few elves who had a taste for his own sex, but there were plenty of brownies, jacks-in-iron, pixies, and boggarts who liked a bit of play.

Rocco's bar, "The Other End," had been designed with the Fair Folk in mind, and if Keelan chose to amuse himself, it was well within his rights to select a toy. Thus, he didn't bother to conceal his actions as he cast a touch of glamour over Laurence, feeding his new pet mortal a belief that they were walking out instead of further in.

When Rocco noticed and huffed heavily, Keelan threw him a cheeky grin. It wasn't fair, of course, but how else was he to get Laurence to the portal? Amour Magique did indeed have dozens upon dozens of shadowy nooks, but he wanted his man to come and play *under hill*. For the sake of the bet, oh, yes, but also because he desired comfort in their coming together, and nothing beat the soft green lawns, padded daises, and cooling light of the hidden moon.

"Is this the way?" Laurence asked suddenly, looking around himself. He frowned and shook his head. "You know, I still don't trust you."

Keelan frowned and adjusted the level of his glamour. Laurence should not have been able to form such a question in his head, much less give it voice. *He is a strong one*, a voice cautioned -- or observed, wryly -- within his mind. "And am I supposed to trust you?" he responded. "This isn't about anything but sex, Laurence. Remember? Now follow me."

Laurence's hand gripped Keelan's again, a little more tightly this time. Satisfied, Keelan made for the portal at the end of the bar, cunningly disguised as a mirror. Laurence should have been seeing it as a door. All the same, Keelan couldn't stop himself from teasing Rocco as he led his chosen partner past the illusion. "Through the looking glass," he murmured.

Behind them, Rocco snorted in what sounded like deep disgust and began polishing a clean glass so hard that Keelan heard the squeaking.

Keelan chuckled as he felt the portal close behind them. As always when traveling through one of these interdimensional tears, he felt a brief moment of disorientation, dizziness, and a touch of nausea before they stepped out on the other side, their feet landing softly on the lawn Keelan most often shared with his friends.

Turning Laurence to face him, Keelan put a hand to both of the man's temples in a gentle touch. "See me," he whispered. "Be free of the spell I have cast on your eyes." Then, as Laurence blinked, looking startled, Keelan raised his voice. "Does this suit you?"

Laurence swallowed hard enough to make his Adam's apple bob, but Keelan was proud to see he didn't flinch or jump. Instead, he gazed around at the small circle, ringed by standing stones, with its four raised pedestals covered in silk. Above them, the full moon gleamed with an opalescent, pearly sheen.

"This," Laurence said slowly, "is not a nook or a cranny. This doesn't even qualify as an alcove." He turned around and around, staring at the stones and the grass and the moon. "In fact, I think we're outdoors." His face hardened. "All right, that's it. I knew this damn club was weird, but I didn't expect to have my drink spiked."

Keelan blinked. "I beg your pardon?"

Laurence rounded on him, shoving the elf flat-palmed in his chest. "What did you slip in my drink, huh? Roofies? Something new on the street that I haven't heard about yet?"

"I did nothing to your beer. It had already been desecrated enough by being chilled."

"Yeah, right. Pull the other one. You want to explain to me why I felt like I was on a rollercoaster, and how we ended up outdoors in this ... whatever this is?"

Either I am losing my touch with glamour or this Laurence is far stronger than he might appear at first glance. He had known the redhead would be fiery of temper and tough-willed, but to challenge an elf on his home ground? The man was mad or suicidal. Also very, very ignorant. He could be killed for his pushes and shoves had Keelan a mind to object.

Fortunately for them both, Keelan decided to invoke the right of protection over his visitor, as he was interested in more than a touch of hands to his chest. He seized those hands and brought them together in his own, stroking his thumbs over Laurence's most intriguing, curled fingers. "There's nothing to worry about." He injected his voice with yet more magic, intending to ease and soothe the man. "We're still inside Amour Magique. This is one of the rooms I have rented for the night. It's merely made to look like the outdoors. If you had a ladder high enough, you could climb up and touch this shining 'moon.'" He caressed

Laurence's hands again, then brought them to his mouth for a kiss. "There, now. Do you feel better?"

To his surprise, Laurence eyed him with an even deeper suspicion. "You could have warned me," he said shortly. "You don't just surprise a man like this and expect to get away with it."

By the Lord and Lady! Keelan had never met a man so resistant to the honey-sweet temptation of elven glamour. He kissed Laurence's hands again, this time flickering the tip of his tongue over the knuckles, and lowered his voice into husky, lover-like tones. "Be that as it may, here we are. Do you really want to waste our time arguing?"

Laurence's eyelids grew heavy, while his green eyes sparkled with awakening lust. He squeezed his fists in Keelan's grip and wet his lips. "No."

Then he attacked. Indeed, Keelan could find no other word for the man's actions. It was as if Laurence were a starving man and Keelan the banquet. The mortal launched himself at Keelan, knocking the startled elf off his feet and down onto his back into the sedge grass. Pinned by his forearms, with Laurence on top of him, Keelan stared up, dazed, into a face writ with desire and need. "I've got better things to do," Laurence said, before diving down to kiss Keelan.

Ah, now this is more like it. Keelan willingly surrendered his mouth -- for the time being -- and let Laurence in to plunder with an eager, talented tongue. The man fumbled a bit, as if out of practice, but quickly learned his way around the mechanics and progressed to making their kiss a work of art. It was a proper man's kiss, too, hard and rough, teeth pressed against lips, and tongues thrusting eagerly against one another, mimicking what was to come and taking savage pleasure in driving one another mad.

When Laurence drew back to breathe, Keelan let his own hunger come out in his expression. "Very good, for a start," he teased. "But here, now. Let me show you how this is done."

Grasping Laurence by the forearms, he flipped them over and over until it was Laurence who lay on his back, Keelan dominant over him. Laughing in triumph, Keelan tried for his own kiss -- then jumped back, yelping.

The man had bitten him!

Though those sharp teeth hadn't broken the skin on his tongue, the injury still stung like hell and baffled Keelan beyond belief. He worked his jaw a few times, controlling his anger -- there was the bet to think of, after all -- then demanded, "What do you think you're playing at, man?"

Laurence had the cheek to grin at him, a grin tinged with all the sly cruelty of the best of the Fey. Not for the first time, Keelan wondered if the man had some drop of that bloodline running through his veins. If his family hailed from Ireland, 'twas all too possible.

The man stuck out his tongue and ran it across his upper lip as teasingly as a giant cat. "No one gets me on my back unless I say so," he said firmly. "Give a guy some warning next time, and you won't pay the price."

Keelan reined in his anger a second time. The nerve of this mortal! Ah, but he'd pay soon enough, and gladly. "I'll be sure to bear that in mind," he said dryly. "But there are better things to do with our tongues and teeth. Do you want to try me on for size?"

Laurence wriggled beneath Keelan. "Are you man enough?"

"And then some," Keelan breathed. "First, these clothes come off."

"I can't undress with you pinning me down."

Oh, for the love of Brighda! Impatient, Keelan blasted Laurence with a touch of what would be the equivalent of glamour napalm, and used the moment when the man was dazed, eyes wide open but seeing nothing, to enchant both their clothing away. Then, before it could wear off and the man could ask awkward questions, Keelan sank into Laurence's arms, flesh against flesh, and began to kiss him again.

Thank all the old gods, his trick seemed to work. Laurence stirred groggily and would likely have demanded answers, but lips on his and Keelan's eager cock pressed against his belly must have convinced him to keep his own counsel. Hungry arms swarmed up around Keelan, holding him tight and close, Laurence's hips arching upward to meet the press of the elf's cock against his skin.

To Keelan's pleasure, Laurence took a bit of initiative. The bold red-haired man began to move in a rhythm old as time, flowing back and forth against Keelan like the waves of an ocean. Their lips never ceased touching one another, from mouth to neck to collarbone to mouth again, both kissing as frantically as though they couldn't get enough of the other.

When Laurence broke apart, it was to gasp -- as if he had been running -- "Condom? Lubricant?"

Keelan closed his eyes and muffled a curse. Lube would be no problem, he had that in plenty, but the Fey did not often use those awful rubber sheaths. He could easily cloud Laurence's mind again into believing he wore one, but he had the feeling the man would not be so easily fooled, and the definite sense that to trick the man over something so important to humans would be poor form.

Wrong, the voice in his head warned him.

A clever thought struck Keelan. He reached for Laurence's jeans, spread out beside them on the grass, and dug in first one pocket, then the other. In one of the back pockets, he came up lucky with a small foil-wrapped square. Triumphant and smug, he waved it over Laurence's head. "Found one. Will it fit me?"

"You assume you're going on top?" Laurence wriggled beneath Keelan in a gesture clearly meant to drive him wild.

Keelan dealt him another kiss, this one touched by the magic he bred himself, a mixture of lust and challenge. "I know I am."

“Mmm.” Laurence rolled against him and smiled, his face relaxed. He looked almost boyish when he let himself go. “I get the next turn, then, if we can find a second condom somewhere.”

“You think we’ll go a second time?” Keelan was genuinely intrigued.

Laurence feigned a bite at Keelan’s skin, which was almost glowing under the light of the moon. “Bet your life,” he said softly, then made a grab for the condom. “I’ll put it on you.”

Keelan groaned. His cock was on fire with the all-consuming lust that could overtake the elves, and the thought of Laurence’s hands on him all but undid his self-control. Loosing his grip and rolling over onto his back, his cock hard enough to lie flush against his stomach, he spread his arms and legs. “Come and get me -- if you dare.”

“Shameless,” Laurence whispered. All the same, though, he got up on his hands and knees, poising himself over Keelan’s cock. He removed the foil packet from Keelan’s hand, tore it open, and drew the thin rubber sheath out. Frowning at the small doughnut of latex, he said, “It’s been a while, but I bet you it’s just like riding a bike ...”

Keelan spasmed when Laurence touched him, the slightly cool hands on his dick driving him all but out of his mind. He reserved a bit of sanity for later, as he intended to nail this impertinent human to the grass until they were both sore and aching.

Only a bit, though.

As Laurence placed the tip of the condom over Keelan’s cock, Keelan fought to keep his cool. His lover slid the rubber down, so tight and sheer it felt like a second skin, and smoothed it out at the base. Wicked hands slipped further down to play with Keelan’s balls, weighing and measuring, rolling and toying, making him insane with the feel of those hands that knew just how to tease and taunt.

Keelan made a grab for Laurence’s arms, intending to flip them again. “My turn,” he growled.

To his surprise, Laurence knocked his arms away. "I'm on top," he informed Keelan sternly. "That means I'm in charge. Lube?"

Keelan blinked. "Lube?"

Laurence swatted him lightly. "Do you have some? Slippery stuff. I'm going to need it if you're going to drive that thick, heavy spear into me."

Keelan momentarily forgot his own name, much less the location of the Fey lubricant he'd last used with Eremand. It had to still be around there somewhere, yet when he thought of summoning the bottle, Keelan paused. Somehow, to fuck one man with another's leftover supplies seemed gauche.

"A moment," he said, daring to hold a hand over Laurence's eyes. The man bucked and twisted, as expected, but it gave Keelan enough time to muster a new bottle from his own private stock. This was the good stuff, a slick humans could only dream of, which warmed to the touch and filled the air with the scents of cinnamon and vanilla. Neither tacky nor sticky, it stayed as liquid as that which flowed from a woman's pussy, although perhaps fewer thoughts of women were better at the present time.

When Laurence wrestled free, Keelan was holding up the glass bottle in triumph. He'd cast a glamour over it as well, making it look like an ordinary, small white tube. An argument over hygiene was truly just about the last thing he wanted to get into. He unstopped the cork, certain Laurence saw him clicking open a tube, and poured some of the oil out onto his fingers, then --

"What the hell?" Laurence drew back. "Where did you get that? A glass bottle? I don't do homemade lubes, Keelan. What's in there, more happy drugs?"

Damn it! Keelan sighed and passed the bottle over. "There's nothing in here that isn't safety approved," he said, impatiently, slicking up his cock and pressing it up into Laurence's palm. "Test a bit more on me, and see what I mean." *Is this man totally impervious to glamour?*

Laurence gave him a skeptical look, then tilted the container, the glass a deep emerald green and fancifully shaped like an erect phallus, dripping some of the liquid into his palm. He sniffed the oil, then rubbed a bit between finger and thumb.

“Are you quite satisfied?” Keelan demanded. He was rapidly losing any and all patience he might have had. His body demanded fucking and demanded it immediately. Any more delaying on Laurence’s part, and he -- ah, no, he couldn’t. Not with the bet, and a thousand silver riding on his ability to capture the mortal. And not when Laurence’s sweet, taut, white ass was so very, very close to his cock ...

Thanks be to all the Old Gods! Laurence was nodding. He did not, however, hand the bottle back. “Better get ready.” The mortal’s voice was low and ripe with sex. “It might have been a while, but I still know a few tricks.” Anointing his fingers with a heavy coat of the oil, he reached between his own legs and began to stroke within the crevice of his own buttocks, his eyes sagging shut in pleasure.

Keelan all but lost his breath. The sight of Laurence kneeling above him, preparing his own ass to take Keelan deep inside, was worthy of being painted. He’d have to see if he could remember well enough afterward to ... *oh, Gods*. He lost his train of thought when Laurence thrust two fingers into his own hole and began to work them, stretching himself wide.

“Is this your plan? To drive me crazy?” Keelan demanded, undulating as Laurence writhed above him, the man arching as his questing fingers must have found the sweet spot and began to work it. Laurence was breathing heavily, his bare chest rising and falling, beginning to shine with a light coating of sweat. Keelan swore. “You’ll break me. I’m dying for the want of you.”

“Are you really?” Those green eyes, brighter even than the glass holding the oil, sparkled wickedly. “Then get ready to come and take me.” Laurence withdrew the fingers from his ass, poured more oil onto them, and applied it in heavy strokes over Keelan’s cock. He knew just how hard to press and rub, heavy swirling touches over the length and width

of his prick, teasing circles at the tip. He didn't stop until Keelan howled and threw his head back, then bit at his own arm to keep himself from crying out even louder.

"Now," Laurence said, voice thick, "we're ready."

Keelan froze. He wouldn't -- surely, he'd not try -- but he did. Spreading his knees wide on either side of Keelan's hips and using one hand to guide Keelan's member, Laurence sank down on the elf's stone-hard stiffness, taking every inch deep inside him one slow push at a time. The man, ballsy as he was difficult, didn't stop until his ass was flush with Keelan's groin, stuffed to the gills with dick and gasping for air.

Keelan stared at Laurence as best as he was able to, mouthing useless words that he could not find breath to voice. Laurence chuckled, the low bedroom chuckle of a man who'd gotten his way. "You know what they say," he murmured, tracing oil-slick hands over Keelan's chest. "Save a horse ... and I'll pretend you're a cowboy."

"Giddy up," Keelan managed as Laurence began to rise up, the heavy traction on his cock driving the last bits of sense out of his mind. He reached for Laurence's hips, intending to steady him, but the man was like a rock and would not be budged. Keelan had to satisfy himself instead with merely guiding the man's progress, all the way up, till only the tip of his cock was inside -- then he let out a deep groan from the middle of his chest when Laurence slid back down, his internal muscles gripping like a python.

"This is my show," Laurence informed Keelan, pressing down on his chest. "Now shut up and fuck me."

Keelan shook his head dizzily. Then, as Laurence began to withdraw again, he raised his own hips to follow; when Laurence sank back down, he continued his thrust. Laurence laughed, tilting his white throat to the sky, wild and free as any elf on a spree, as Keelan fucked him with all the might in his body.

Laurence favored Keelan with another dazzling, vicious smile, the sort Keelan had seen before on the lords of the hunt, and *squeezed*. Clamped down tight as a vise. Keelan's back

cleared the ground and a shriek tore itself from his throat. “Ah, ah, ah, have mercy!” He almost didn’t recognize the raspy voice as his own. “You’ll drive me over the edge, and it’s too soon!”

Laurence hooked his nails into Keelan’s chest, not hard enough to break the skin, but with enough pressure to let the elf know he meant business. “It’s all about sex, baby,” he said, grinding his muscles until Keelan yelled again, unable to help himself. “And when you’ve gone for a couple of years without, there’s no such thing as too soon.”

With that, he began to raise and lower himself quick as a snake, with twice as hard a grip, so quickly that, incredibly, Keelan could hardly keep up. It was barely conceivable that he couldn’t match this mortal -- mortal? -- lover at all, gliding on the oil that filled the air with the smell of warmed spices and musky sex. Keelan struggled, just a moment, for control, and then lost himself. Laurence had undone him.

He came with a shout of male triumph and elven wonder, wishing he could have sprayed his semen deep inside Laurence, painting him white with spunk deep within, but instead feeling the condom fill with the weight and wetness of his load. He yelled again as Laurence bore down, milking every drop of orgasm from him that he could, his lover’s face twisted in an almost animal pleasure. Struggling to stifle his shrieks, Keelan pressed his arm against his mouth again and bit down, tasting his own blood as his cock seized and spasmed, coming and coming until he thought he might turn inside out.

When he had finally spiraled down from the peaks of ecstasy, he saw Laurence still sitting atop him, that fierce grin in place. “Made you come,” the man said smugly. “Now, it’s your turn.”

“My what -- oh. *Oh.*” Keelan shook his head, then gazed at the sight of Laurence’s erection, long and slim, jutting out from his groin and its nest of red curls. More than a handful, so he’d just have to use two.

At first his arms, lazy in the afterglow, did not want to move, but he forced them up and seized Laurence's cock in his palms, squeezing at the base, then tugging his hand up. Not gentle, but no need for any delicate treatment, either.

Laurence howled out his pleasure, his stomach going concave, then convex as Keelan masturbated him, each stroke hard and punishing, and exactly what they both wanted -- no, *needed*. They had no second condom, and while Laurence seemed to have forgotten, Keelan for one could not wait to feel that man's juice painted across his own chest.

"Come for me," he ordered, his hand working mercilessly. "Let go, Laurence. I want to feel you, taste you, touch you." He was short of breath, and used his words like little arrows, each one flying straight to their target. "Come. Come. Come!"

He gave one last hard jack to Laurence's cock, and then the man was crying out, spasming above him. Keelan had just enough time and presence of mind to seize Laurence by his flailing hands and hold on tight as the mortal's cock loosed its payload of semen, spraying in wide arcs across Keelan's skin and even up to his mouth, where Keelan licked his lips hungrily for the salty, rich taste.

Laurence swayed briefly, then lifted himself off Keelan's cock with an effort. He slumped forward across the elf's chest, head coming to rest at the apex of Keelan's collar bones and scalp bumped up beneath Keelan's chin. Keelan could feel Laurence's heart beating in a rapid tattoo beneath his ribs, the rhythm in counterpoint to his own's fierce hammering. Almost hesitant, he reached up to press his hands to the man's back, kneading in time with their pulses. Laurence's seed was sticky between them, but Laurence didn't seem to care. His hair had come undone from its ponytail and fanned out over Keelan's skin.

For a moment, Keelan let himself imagine how the two of them must look lying there together in the Faerie glade. Heads red as fire and dark as night, skin white and white, weary lovers struggling to catch their breath. A painting of this moment would be fine enough to present to Oberon himself.

But as with all such tastes of afterglow, the bliss passed much too soon. Laurence sat up, light on Keelan's belly, and stretched his arms wide. "That was ... I don't have the words." His voice cracked. "Amazing, Keelan. You were beyond belief."

Keelan trailed a finger through the smeared fluids on his chest and sucked them into his mouth, grinning wickedly around the digit and speaking in his most seductive manner. "And the night isn't over yet. We've hours until the sun rises, and you'll be staying here with me, won't you, of your own free will ..."

Laurence frowned at him as if he'd said something foolish. "What? Are you nuts? This was great, Keelan, but, like I said, just sex. I've got a beer to get back to, and you probably have a dozen men standing in line for a taste of you." Nimble as an acrobat, he stood, reaching for his clothes. "I didn't see how we got in here, so you'll have to show me. Where's the way back out into the bar?"

Still lying on his back, mental images of a couple of thousand silver flying away from him, Keelan closed his eyes and swore to himself. *By the Lord and Lady ... oh, shit.*

Chapter Four

Keelan thought quickly. He was an elf, after all; one of their special skills in trade was coming up with plans on the fly. Knowing exactly how he must appear, he undulated on the grass, rolled his hips, and dealt Laurence a sultry look with a bit of a pout thrown in for good measure.

Sure enough, Laurence paused in his quest to don his clothing and gazed back down at Keelan, his eyes going briefly dark. “How do you do that?”

“Do what?” Keelan arched a bit, as if he were about to yawn. He’d been well-fucked, ridden off into the moonrise, and let it show in every lean line of his body. A delectable treat surely no mortal could resist. “I have no idea what you mean, Laurence.”

“The hell you don’t. Lying there, looking so ... so ...”

“Edible?” Keelan purred. He took another taste of Laurence’s seed, so vital and alive, piquant with mortality and humming with life. *Mmm*. Laurence had the most delectable flavor to him. All human, of course, but a particularly fine vintage. And, yes, again, he could taste that tiny bit of something almost like an elven heritage running through the man’s body, like a flavorful spice.

He glanced up as the man ran his tongue over his lips. "Edible," Laurence agreed in a dry voice. "You make me feel like an appetizer at a party."

"Oh, no." Keelan thrust his pelvis up in a lusty, lewd manner, then sat up fluidly, crossing his legs for balance. "You are most definitely the main dish."

Laurence frowned. "Stop that. Would you just stop?"

"Stop what?" Keelan was honestly perplexed by this question. He was looking at Laurence as if he were to be desired, a rare and precious treat, and the man objected?

"Stop looking at me like you're figuring out just how much I'm worth. You got what you wanted. Fuck, so did I. Sex, that's all. Just sex. We've had our fun, sure, but there must be a half-dozen other men wanting in your pants. So how about getting a move on and I'll get back to my beer."

Keelan managed to keep his face from betraying his roiling emotions. What? Laurence was tossing *him* aside as casually as any mortal man? The indignity burned but was soon replaced by worry. To lose Laurence so soon would be a tragedy and a shame -- not to mention his departure would mean the total loss of his bet. No, Laurence running off wouldn't do, not at all -- not that he could without Keelan to show him the portal back into Amour Magique. He stalled for time while he thought quickly. "You're sticky," he said, raising himself up onto one knee. "Let me clean you off before you go."

Laurence looked doubtful. "You have a handful of tissues anywhere on you? You had to use my one condom, so I doubt --"

"Just one?" Keelan shook his head. "A man like you should carry several."

"I said, stop."

"Now what?"

"You're acting like I'm someone special. I'm not. Like you want to spend more time with me. I know you don't. So just cut it out, okay?"

“Whatever gave you the idea that I don’t want to spend more time with you?” Keelan moved forward sinuously, with all the grace of the elves, until he knelt at Laurence’s feet. “I don’t have any tissues, and I’ve got no dish of soap and water, but there is another way to clean you up.” He licked his lips insinuatingly. “I want to taste you, Laurence. I’ve had a dab of your flavor, but I want more. Much more.”

Laurence stilled, looked dubiously at Keelan. “What do you mean?”

“I mean,” Keelan crooned, laying one hand on either of Laurence’s strong thighs, “I want to *taste* you. Will you be cruel and say ‘no’ and ‘stop it’ to my request?”

“I -- you --” Laurence frowned. “Why do you want to?”

“Because you’re good enough to make a man forget he might have anything else to do in a night.” Keelan got a better grip on Laurence’s legs. He couldn’t afford for this to go sour now.. He had his mind set, and his plans made. He wanted more of this mortal, and he fully intended to get it. But, surprisingly, he also wanted Laurence willing. “Stay with me.” He followed his words by leaning closely into the man’s groin, still shining with liquids and smelling of spunk and spent passion. “Stay just a little longer.”

Laurence let out a small, tremulous moan, and Keelan knew he had won. “Good,” he said softly, kneading the strong muscles beneath his hands. “You won’t regret your choice. The things I can show you, Laurence ... You’ll never forget the lessons I’ll teach you tonight.”

He felt a hand on top of his head. “Less talk, more demonstration,” Laurence retorted in a voice gone a couple of octaves deeper than usual. “If you’re going to do this, do it.”

“And you still can’t believe why,” Keelan crooned. “Stop doubting yourself, Laurence, you’re quite a prize. And for this evening, for now, you’re mine ...”

He leaned forward the last few inches and took Laurence into his mouth. Soft, he remained somewhat long and tasted deliciously of musk on Keelan’s tongue. Keelan twirled his tongue around the length of the man’s cock, licking it clean of any fluids save his own saliva. Then, with a move it had taken unknown years to perfect, he opened his mouth as

wide as it could go and suckled in the man's balls as well, the soft pouch just fitting between his lips. A trick like this could only be done when the man wasn't yet full and ready.

Laurence groaned, and Keelan laughed inside. *Ah, but you like this, don't you?* He played with his mouthful as dexterously as he could, rolling the sac over his tongue, playing with the soft jewels inside by balancing first one, then the other on his lips, then squeezing down ever so gently. Laurence's hand became a fist in Keelan's hair. Keelan fought not to smile in triumph; he had so much more work to do before they were finished with this round.

Unfortunately, or fortunately, as the case might be, Keelan possessed the Hand of Lust, which could bring a man back to life as many times as he wanted during a session of lovemaking.

And when did this go from sex to lovemaking? Pause. *Answer that question later. Suck cock now.*

Keelan decided to obey his inner counsel. And as Laurence's cock was lengthening, filling, and beginning to slide further back into his throat, the elf decided to get on with the show. He knew himself to be a master at the fine art of fellatio, and he intended to give Laurence the bravura performance of a lifetime.

Applying his best skills, and a touch of elven magic, Keelan began to suck Laurence's magnificent, lengthy prick with all his might. He'd had centuries to perfect the art, and he summoned up every bit of knowledge he'd learned, all while controlling the show. First, he let Laurence's balls slip carefully out of his mouth, gleaming wet, to fall back against the apex of his thighs -- but not without one final lick to tantalize and tease.

Laurence made a soft, choked sound and managed a few words. "If this is your way of convincing me to stick around a while, you win. Don't stop now."

Keelan drew off Laurence's member long enough to murmur, "Oh, don't you worry. I have no intention of going anywhere. And you shouldn't, either. Stay, Laurence. Stay here with me, for I have much more than this planned for us ..."

He dipped down to give the small strip of skin between the other man's balls and ass a quick flicker of his tongue, then a tantalizing, pressing lick. Idly, he wondered if he could convince Laurence to have a guiche piercing done. Yes, a loop of metal there to play with, to torment and tease with his teeth and tongue -- his lover would know of a heaven few mortals ever dared to hope for. Too bad so many were squeamish about such things.

Keelan decided he would just have to see how malleable Laurence was after a thorough session of his tongue on the man's cock. Speaking of which, as Laurence's rough cries grew louder and he spread his legs wider for Keelan's questing mouth to gain greater access, Keelan thought it was time to step up the action a bit.

With one final poke of his tongue to the sensitive skin, Keelan drew back and weighed the bulk of Laurence's cock in his palm. Elven lust and young human male hormones were in his favor, it seemed, for Laurence had grown a deliciously full erection while Keelan had sported with him. The elf gazed at it for a moment, enraptured by the sight of all that man meat laid out for his inspection.

"Well?" Laurence demanded, voice gravelly. "Are you going to look at me all night, or do me?"

"Both," Keelan replied wickedly, letting his amusement creep into his voice. But before Laurence could take offense or decide Keelan was toying with him, Keelan slid his mouth over the tip of Laurence's prick and applied fierce suction to the swollen head. He ran his tongue in circles around the corona, tapping out a staccato rhythm in a circular beat. Then, playfully, he stabbed the tip of his tongue into the slit, tasting pure Laurence and salt.

Laurence grunted, an almost animal-like noise. His fingers tightened into a fist. "Condom," he growled. "For your protection."

Keelan almost wailed with frustration and pulled back to snap, “We don’t need one. If I was going to catch something, I already would have from tasting your come, wouldn’t I?”

Laurence’s grip loosened, then tightened. “Taking an awfully big chance ...”

Not really, but I’m not about to tell you as much, am I? “I’m willing to risk whatever may come. You’re all I want right now.”

And without giving Laurence the opportunity to protest even further, he slid back onto the man’s prick, this time taking the shaft deeper into his mouth, then applying both pressure and a good tongue-lashing. Laurence moaned and bucked, pushing more of his cock into Keelan’s mouth, and Keelan gladly accepted every inch. Moving his hands around to the tight globes of Laurence’s ass, he gripped the cheeks one after the other, steady and hard. He let his pleasure show with a hum of delight around Laurence’s cock, knowing how the vibrations would affect the man.

He quickly was proved right. Laurence’s knees almost buckled. *Ah, but it has been a while for you, hasn’t it? Let’s see what I can do to remedy the situation ...*

Elves such as Keelan could do more than apply the principles of a good blowjob, or fucking, or being penetrated. They could infuse their partner with the joy of living wild and free, of being almost more animal than man, at one with the lashing winds and the exuberance of unfettered nature. Almost like a drug, they could inject the sensation of being without boundaries, and while some might have said that that wasn’t playing fair, when it came to Laurence, Keelan wasn’t interested in being *fair*.

Or was he? As he sucked and pressed rhythmically with his hands, for all the world like a kitten nursing at a teat, and made appreciative noises in the back of his throat, feeling Laurence’s hands comb roughly through his hair, Keelan wondered. Somehow it suddenly felt wrong to trick this man. But why?

He narrowly avoided shaking his head in wonder and went back to giving Laurence the blowjob of a lifetime. Using every trick he could think of, from swirling his tongue in criss-

crossing patterns up the length and width of the shaft to tracing designs only he could map out, to drawing up and down with the suction of a spasming ass, he put his whole effort and attention into the act until he felt Laurence's balls draw up high and tight, and heard muffled shouting above him. Keelan glanced up to see Laurence biting into his fist and wished he could tell him not to bother, that he could be as loud as he wanted to -- no one could hear them there. Well, no one that mattered.

But then it all became moot as Laurence's orgasm exploded forth. For the second time that night he burst, but this time into a warm, wet and willing receptacle -- Keelan's mouth. The elf caught every gush of heated semen as it spilled over his tongue, relishing the taste and texture of his lover's spunk. Ah, but ages upon ages had passed since he'd last enjoyed the flavor of a human!

He eased Laurence down from his peak, supporting the man's weight as he leaned on Keelan. Once again, Keelan had a clean-up job to perform but he enjoyed every second of it, lapping Laurence's softening member until it was spotless. Ah, but the man had an amazing cock on him. Definitely one to remember.

Keelan felt another odd flash of doubt. Remember? He had planned to let Laurence go at the break of day, but there was something odd going on in the depths of his belly and mind. He didn't *want* to let the mortal go, regardless of when the dawn might break.

Shifting back and resting his weight on his heels, Keelan shrugged and murmured quietly to himself, "Black Malice would be ashamed of me, so she would."

Laurence stared down at him, eyes still dazed with lust. "Malice who?"

Keelan cursed himself, then lied smoothly. "No one. Come, rest with me for a while."

"Nuh-uh. I'm not a guy who's into selfish sex." Laurence managed to leer comically at Keelan's own erection, which had sprung up hard and hungry between his legs while he'd been giving Laurence the time of his life.

Keelan let his face turn sly. “Oh, really? Do you think I’ve earned a touch from your lily-white hand?”

“Earned, hell. You win the grand prize, and you know it. Showoff.”

“Perhaps I am.” Keelan tilted his grin. “Do I really win a prize?”

“Watch and see.”

Laurence collapsed to his knees, face to face with Keelan, as graceful as an elf himself. Then, taking Keelan unaware, Laurence pushed him over with a finger to his chest. Keelan went over with a surprised, gleeful laugh, and once he was on his back, spread his legs wide to invite Laurence in.

Laurence wasted no time, but rather than applying his own mouth as Keelan had hoped, he began to idly finger Keelan’s cock, sliding a finger from tip to base, stopping only to tease his balls with the edge of one nail. Keelan hissed and dug in his heels. He liked things rough; well, he supposed most males did. However, this light teasing was a delicious change of pace and almost enough to drive him out of his mind.

“Will you make me wait all the night long?” he asked hoarsely, partially hoping the answer was *yes*, and partly praying to the sweet God and Goddess that the answer would be *no*.

“Mmm. Maybe.” Laurence squeezed once, just once, letting Keelan know who fancied himself in charge. “Would you like it if it I did? Just kept you here, not letting you come for hours ... and hours ...”

Keelan swore silently. *By the Lord and Lady, this man could be an elf.* He certainly knew how to play the games. “Surely you won’t,” he coaxed, reaching up to stroke down Laurence’s bare arm, glistening with sweat along the cords of muscles. “You’ll take pity on me, won’t you?”

“Depends.” Laurence was suddenly kneading the base of Keelan’s cock in a death grip. “Do you think you’ve earned the right to come?”

Oho, what is this? A taste of dominance and submission? Keelan all but wriggled in pleasure. He loved a good game of “master and slave” -- although, he had to admit, he had always been the top in such scenarios. He had to wonder, though, at how alluring he found the prospect of being the bottom, and went with the impulse.

“I’ve been a very good boy, Laurence.”

“Shut up,” Laurence said idly, not relaxing his grip. “I think you’ve been bad. You dragged me off into a room heaven knows where in *Amour Magique* and ravished my body. Not that I minded, but I think you need a suitable punishment. Now, I just have to think ...”

Keelan writhed again -- or would have if he hadn’t been pinned by the hand clasp on his cock. Laurence ran his fingers across the weeping tip, swirling Keelan’s own come around the crown and length of him.

“It’s been years,” Laurence said quietly, almost too low for Keelan to hear. Perhaps he had meant for his speech to go unnoticed. “And now ...” His hand suddenly let go of Keelan’s cock, and he began to wrestle with the elf. Startled, Keelan allowed himself to be tumbled to and fro, the world jostling around him until he found himself face down over Laurence’s lap, his cock nestled against Laurence’s and his ass in the air.

Fingers, cruel in their delicacy, stroked down the cleft of his buttocks. Laurence whispered fiercely to him, “If I had another condom, I’d come inside you, fuck you so hard and deep you wouldn’t be able to think of anything but my cock. But poor me, I didn’t come prepared. That’s not my fault -- I didn’t set out tonight planning to get laid. You, on the other hand, knew exactly what you were after, and you didn’t bring anything except lubricant. I think you deserve a little punishment for your lack of foresight, don’t you?”

Keelan stopped himself from moving eagerly with anticipation. All the same, just as he’d hoped, Laurence’s hand came down with a hard *smack!* on his buttocks, stinging with just the right amount of pain and pleasure.

“What do you say?” Laurence’s voice was oddly calm except for the slightest tremble, as if he couldn’t believe he was being so bold.

Keelan pretended meekness. “I apologize, Laurence.”

“Not good enough.” *Smack*. “What do you say now?”

Keelan couldn’t stop himself from moving in pleasure and found that he could rub his aching cock against Laurence’s hard thigh. Laurence didn’t object, so he continued as he’d begun, stroking himself off bit by slow bit. “I’m sorry,” he ventured.

“Still not enough.” *Smack*.

Keelan tried again. “I should have known better.” And, hell’s bells, he should have. A mortal would want to be cautious about such things as spreading or passing disease. If he’d had time to think things through, he would have made a stop in one of Amour Magique’s bathrooms and filled his pockets with the rubbers, for make no mistake, he didn’t intend, by the slightest bit, to let the man go before daybreak.

No, he planned to play all night with the oh-so-delicious Laurence, Black Malice and her bet notwithstanding. The mortal was turning out to be far too much fun.

“I should have come prepared,” he ventured, hoping for another slap across the ass. He was rewarded by a particularly hard one, a blow that left him stinging in the most pleasurable sort of way.

“I don’t think you’re really sorry,” Laurence said raggedly, as if struggling to breathe. Keelan realized that touching him must have brought Laurence’s own cock back to life, and as he squirmed, then touched hard flesh, he knew it was so. *Oh, this gets better and better!* Deliberately changing his angle, he rubbed against Laurence’s cock, the cross-ways friction causing the man to gasp out loud.

Laurence brought his hand down again. “You are a wicked man. You tempted and teased me into being here.” A volley of slaps followed his declaration of conviction, each one harder than the last, until Keelan was sure his ass would bear fingerprint-shaped bruises. As

for himself, he humped against Laurence harder and harder, feeling the pulses beat in both their erections, knowing his lover would be leaking as he himself was. Laurence slapped him one last time, then asked, "Why did you choose me? Tell the truth, Keelan."

For a moment, Keelan froze, then went on, voice silky-smooth. "Because you looked so edible. Because I looked and saw you, all strawberries and cream, just waiting to be eaten."

"Bull. There are hundreds and hundreds of men better-looking than me in *Amour Magique*, and none of them are in the closet the way I am." Laurence punctuated each of his sentences with a spank. "Tell the truth --" He gasped as Keelan wickedly stroked hard against him. "Truth, Keelan, truth."

Keelan wiggled, not only from pleasure, but out of discomfort as well. He couldn't tell Laurence the truth -- the man would get up and demand more answers, there would be a fight, and he'd be denied an orgasm, as well as the chance to know his partner better. He hadn't had such a good time in ages, not since a priest in the fifteenth century of earth-time who'd taught him the value of being on his knees.

He wasn't certain when the change had come about in his way of thinking. This had all begun as a game, a bet, a wager. A dare taken up when Laurence's face was nothing more than a sweet temptation on a tarot card. But now things were ... different. He seemed to care about what Laurence thought and felt, and if he were to tell the truth, then he'd fallen for the mortal. Him, an elf, in love with a human! Ereman and Nerys would laugh themselves sick, but there you had it.

And he had better come up with something to say. He'd be as honest as he could.

"I wanted you," he said simply. "Needed you. Craved you. Ah, God and Goddess, don't stop! You were my choice from the second I laid eyes on you. I swear, Laurence, it's the truth."

"Do you? Do you swear?" Laurence breathed heavily, struggling for air. "You wanted me, and nobody else?"

Keelan stretched and bowed, praying that he'd be allowed to come soon. "Only you," he whispered. "Please, Laurence, *please*."

His world flipped and spun again, until he found himself lying on top of Laurence, their chests pressed together. Laurence thrust up with an impossibly hard cock, and Keelan thrust down. They found their rhythm almost immediately, falling into the pulse-beat of Under Hill's living, breathing atmosphere, much like that of *Amour Magique*. Laurence reached up to grasp Keelan's ass cheeks, gripping them hard as they rode together, cocks against bellies, both growing ever more slippery.

"Want you," Keelan heard himself babbling, the worlds tumbling out of his mouth, chanting Laurence's name over and over again. "More. More, more, more!"

Laurence silenced him with a kiss -- a hard and punishing one that crushed their lips together, knocking their teeth against one another -- then pushed his tongue into Keelan's mouth. Keelan was glad to receive it, eagerly seizing upon it, twining it around, then tugging and sucking on the appendage, all the while as Laurence thrust between his lips again and again, matching the rhythm of his slender hips.

Keelan would have been happy for that kiss to go on for hours, their mouths slanted hungrily across one another's, but alas, all good things eventually came to an end. Laurence jerked away and started cursing, painting the air with the proper blue streak of a man who was about to come like a freight train, letting Keelan know he had almost reached his pinnacle. Keelan felt Laurence's balls like hot, hard knots between his own legs, and writhed with more force yet, startling himself when the first blast hit his own body. He was off. Up, up, and away!

And, oh, but it was worth composing poems about to be read in the finest circles of the Faerie court. When his orgasm struck, Keelan arched up, shouting out he knew not what in his triumph, his cock loosing a flood of seed between their bodies. Laurence's face twisted in the beautiful ugliness of peaking and he came as well, his come mingling with Keelan's, spout after spout of the sticky fluid. He cried out as if in pain, at which Keelan would not

have wondered -- three times in one night *was* a lot, especially if one had gone a long time without.

Though he found it funny and hard to imagine Laurence not being the object of everyone's attentions.

When their members ceased pulsing between them, Laurence and Keelan were both breathing heavily, dragging air into hard-working lungs, Keelan all but writhing with pleasure over the stinging of his ass and the boneless, lazy glow of orgasm.

Then, once again, he found himself being flipped and turned. He landed on his back this time and discovered Laurence glaring down at him.

"Something's up here, and I don't like it one bit." His voice was a far cry from being pleased. "Don't try to lie."

Keelan blinked in surprise. "Lie? I -- when?"

"You called out someone else's name when you came. Norris? Nerris? And you distinctly said, *Watch this, Black Malice.*"

"Oh." Keelan tried to glance away, but Laurence seized his face and made the elf look directly at him. "I can explain, Laurence, truly."

"Well, then, you'd better start." Laurence sat up, pinning Keelan in place with his weight on the elf's legs. He folded his arms. "How about you get going right now? Oh, and while you're at it, explain to me just how you 'won the bet,' and what kind of bet we're talking about."

Keelan closed his eyes and thought again, *Oh, shit. I'm really in for it now, aren't I?*

Chapter Five

Kneeling above the pale man in all his perfection -- *too damn perfect to be real* -- Laurence knew, deep down, that he'd somehow waded into a pool full of alligators. Keelan had some sharp teeth on him, and he'd managed to grab onto Laurence without his noticing, but by God he'd release him now or Laurence would know the answer why.

"I've had enough fun and games," he said abruptly, letting go of Keelan and standing up. "I want my pants, my shirt, and I want out of here, in that order. Now, are you going to help me out, or just sit there looking way too fucking gorgeous for your own good all night long?"

Keelan actually had the balls to raise himself on his elbows and cock an eyebrow, obviously knowing he looked like a gay man's wet dream with come splattered over his torso and his penis lying heavy between his leg. "So you think I'm gorgeous, do you?"

Laurence narrowed his eyes. Keelan might have thought he was a good con artist, but come on, it was time to get real. Laurence taught fifth grade. He'd seen it all, heard it all, and had undergone all the best attempts to fool him. Keelan had nothing on preteens for creatively dodging bullets -- and he could tell that the man was swerving for all he was worth.

“Clothes,” he repeated, slowly, as if Keelan were stupid. “Door. Now.”

Keelan shifted a bit. He might even have squirmed. “Ah. Yes. You see, there’s a bit of a problem with what you’re asking for.”

“Such as?”

A sheepish look. “I don’t know where your clothes landed.”

Laurence gave Keelan his “yeah, sure, whatever” once-over that he’d perfected in front of the classroom. “Try again. I’m pretty sure a guy like you knows how to keep track of everything.”

“Not quite everything. I haven’t swayed you entirely to my cause.”

“Pants,” Laurence replied flatly. “I want my clothes. If you won’t show me, then I’ll go hunting myself. And while I’m doing that, you tell me who Norris and Black Malice are.” He folded his arms across his bare chest, feeling more than a little ridiculous to be nakedly facing down a sex partner after the entertainment was most definitely over.

“Are you sure you’re not just taking your anger out on me?” Keelan asked, shifting into a seated position, legs crossed as easily as a yoga artist -- lotus position without effort. Damn. Laurence had to admire his agility if nothing else. On the other hand, if the man was that limber just sitting, how would he be in bed -- no, no, he had to focus.

Laurence snorted. If he’d been a bull, he would have pawed the ground. “Anger? Are you insane? Aside from your lying to me, anger over what?”

“Denying yourself another chance at this.” Keelan ran a hand down the cobblestone muscles of his abdomen, teasing at each ridge. Laurence had to swallow hard. If he were a weaker man -- and if they had had more condoms -- he’d have pounced right then and there. Keelan knew his way around temptation, all right. He had plenty of conceit, too.

Laurence hissed. “You only wish. I’ve had enough of you, and I’ve been around the block enough times to tell that you’re stalling about something.”

“Stalling? Me? Whatever could I be stalling about?” Keelan gave an elegant shrug of his shoulders and made a great show of being unconcerned. He leaned back, supporting himself on his hands, clearly exposing almost all his best assets. “The night’s still young,” he coaxed. “We could have another go, possibly two. I could drive you out of your mind -- again. Look around, Laurence.” With a wide gesture of his hands, he pointed out the almost natural beauty surrounding them. “Take a good long look, and tell me you want to leave this glade without appreciating its charms a while longer.”

Laurence shook his head. Keelan was definitely avoiding responding, not to mention he still hadn’t answered the question about who Norris and Black Malice were -- and right then and there he wanted no part of it. All the same, he had to hand it to the guy ... excellent distraction technique. Once the landscape had been pointed out, Laurence couldn’t help but inspect it more closely, and he was awed by what he saw.

If he hadn’t known any better, he’d have thought himself to be inside one of the old stone henges that dotted Ireland and the UK. Tall slabs of some native stone, possibly marble, rose around them in a circle, with several of the top pieces crumbling off or fallen down. On impulse, as well as in the hopes of finding his pants tossed behind one of the stones, Laurence began to walk the circle, touching and admiring the handiwork. Real stone, cool and slick beneath his fingers, yet just a little bit rough where it had been hewn from some quarry.

“This must cost a bundle to rent by the hour,” he tossed over one shoulder.

“It’s mine,” Keelan muttered. “It’s Amour Magique that rents the place from me and my friends when they have need of a glen.”

“Pull the other one, Keelan. It’s got bells on it.” Laurence continued his circuit, feeling the grass soft and springy beneath his bare feet. This was no Astroturf, but living plant matter. Curious, he dug a hole with one toe and found dirt beneath. A small, wailing cry went up and a tiny tremor shook the ground. He jerked back in shock. “What the hell?”

“You damaged the earth.” Keelan sounded sulky. “She doesn’t mind us lying on her, rolling about, crushing blades as we make love, but now you’ve killed some of her grasses, and she protests.”

Laurence rolled his eyes. “Great. I knew there were drugs involved in this little escapade. So what are you on? Grass?” He laughed without humor. “Poppers? Ecstasy?”

“Nothing but the bliss that comes of sexual satisfaction and the thrill of falling in love.”

“Like I said before, Keelan, not buying the party line.” Laurence peered behind one of the stone slabs, intending to take a look around the outer reaches of the circle in search of his clothing, but stopped in his tracks as he got his first good eyeful at what lay beyond. The grass went on for what looked like miles, rising and falling over natural hills, each blade brightly green in the reflected beams of moonlight.

“Did you hear me?” Keelan demanded, sounding injured. “I said, ‘falling in love.’ Do you think my people do that easily, especially after one -- well, no, two -- well, three -- encounters, on a single night?”

“This isn’t the kind of afterglow I wanted. I think you probably say that to every guy you fuck, just to keep him dangling on the line,” Laurence said absently, scanning the horizon. Good God, the place had an actual horizon. How big *was* this room? “Gotta have some backups for those rare nights when you can’t score with your pretty face and that silver tongue.”

“You do me too little credit.” Oh, Keelan definitely had his sulk on. Too bad for him someone didn’t believe his carefully crafted lies. “I’ve had many in my bed, and here in the grasses, it’s true, but I’ve never begun to lose my heart. Sex has always been a game until I met you.”

Laurence rolled his eyes. All the same, he felt a niggling worm of doubt creep into his heart. What if Keelan were telling the truth? The sex had been spectacular, no doubt about

that at all. Maybe there *had* been more of the love in making love at the end there, and ... he shook his head. *Focus, man, focus!*

“Keelan, save your breath.” He glanced up at the “ceiling” and saw that the moon, a silvery disc in the sky, had moved its position from where he’d last seen it. The stars seemed to glitter at him mockingly. “Okay, nice trick,” he said slowly.

“It’s no trick.” Keelan sighed. “Laurence, do you want answers, or do you not? The choice is up to you.”

“What I want is my clothes.” Laurence turned away from the slick stone, cool grasses, sparkling sky, and concentrated on Keelan, still looking far too scrumptious to be real. Long black hair swept his shoulders, his skin appeared as pale as the marble surrounding him, and he was coated in the drying juices of two men coming together. “It’s not fair,” he blurted without thinking.

Keelan tilted his head. “What’s not fair?” He sounded honestly puzzled.

With a sigh, Laurence joined him, giving up -- temporarily -- on the goal of finding his jeans. Keelan alone knew where they were, and the only way to get answers was, apparently, to deal straight with the man. “You,” he said, his voice coming out much more softly than he’d intended. Apparently of its own volition, Laurence’s hand came out to stroke a lock of Keelan’s silky dark hair, twining it around his fingers. Keelan leaned into the touch like an overgrown cat, so that Laurence almost expected to hear a rumbling purr burst out. “You’re what’s not fair.”

Keelan raised his huge, dark silver eyes to meet Laurence’s. “How am I not fair?” He, too, had lowered his voice to a hush. He licked his lips. Soft, kissable lips, slightly swollen from the rough kisses they had shared. He leaned forward slightly, deeper into Laurence’s caress, until his chin rested in Laurence’s palm. “Tell me, lover.”

Laurence intended to say, *Don’t call me that* but the words stuck in his throat. “No one man should be this desirable,” came out instead. “How do you do it, Keelan? You look like

everything I've ever wanted in a man. Like a fallen angel who's missing his wings. You haven't insisted we make a public show of ourselves -- you took me to a private place. You fuck like a lust god whose temples have all been forgotten, but still has every bit of his power. And even now, sitting here, you make me want to take you hard and fast, protection be damned. What makes you so special that it's almost too hard to resist what you're offering up on a silver plate?"

"It is because of who I am," Keelan replied softly. He turned just a bit to the side, pressing a light kiss into Laurence's hand. "Because of what I am."

The words sent a shiver down Laurence's spine. He scolded himself for being an idiot, then asked, because he had to, "And what are you?"

Keelan shook his head. "Don't ask. Not unless you mean it, and you're ready to see the truth. Otherwise, you'll call me a liar again, and a man's pride can only take so much." He nestled his chin in Laurence's grasp. "It's true I had not begun this evening expecting to develop feelings for you. But, lo! There they are, and what can I do about them save try to convince you that they are real, and I would keep you by my side as long as I possibly can?"

"To win a bet?" Laurence had to know.

Keelan looked shamefaced. "There is a bet, yes --"

"And that's all I wanted to hear." Laurence pulled his hand back. "Come on, Keelan. You tell a pretty story, but I've said it before that this was only sex, nothing more. We're simply two guys who had a great time. A few minutes spent in each other's arms, and then me getting back to my beer."

"You're a liar," Keelan said softly. Without Laurence to occupy himself with, he turned to the grass, carefully drawing circles in it with a forefinger.

"I'm a what?" Laurence's Irish temper flared. He seized both of Keelan's knees and gave him a shake. "Do you dare to say those words again?"

“They’re only the truth.” Keelan raised those impossibly beautiful eyes to Laurence, who saw they were full of emotion. But what that emotion was, he couldn’t tell. “You want to stay here with me, but you’ve convinced yourself that I’m a ‘playboy,’ that all I want is another notch on my bedpost. All of this, when you know you already mean more to me than a quick roll on nature’s blanket, when you won’t listen to me about anything I have to say, whether it be what I am or the truth about this bet of mine.”

“Fine.” Still simmering, Laurence backed off. “What are you? Some kind of magician? A part owner of *Amour Magique*? What did I do to rate the five-star treatment?”

Keelan sighed, then brushed his shining fall of hair off both his ears. They were tapered, coming to a delicate point. “I’m an elf,” he said. “Go ahead and laugh.”

Laurence did. He couldn’t help himself. He started giggling, then chuckled so hard he nearly tipped over on his side. Keelan stuck out one elegant foot and gave him a shove so that he did land onto the soft sedge, still bubbling over with mirth. “I knew you would find this funny.” Keelan sounded resigned.

“Funny? It’s hysterical. Nice try, Keelan, but I’ve seen better prosthetics at Trekkie conventions.” Laurence wiped his eyes, but instead of getting back up, found himself inclined to stretch out in the grass and rest his sex-sore muscles for a moment. The place did have its plus side.

He gazed at the ceiling full of stars and a traveling moon, then shook his head. “I could almost believe I was outside.” A gust of wind came whistling through the stone pillars as he spoke, wafting strands of hair over his face. He brushed them off, stroked his new goatee, and sighed. “Great ventilation system.”

Keelan made a noise of impatience. “Foolish man. What can I do to convince you?”

“Oh, I don’t know,” Laurence said lazily. “Do something elfish.”

“Elven.”

“Whatever. It’s all Tolkien, isn’t it? He made you guys up. Tell you what, say ‘one ring to rule them all’ in the original, and I’ll give you extra credit for trying really hard at this game.”

Keelan made a noise of pure impatience, then rattled off a string of liquid syllables. “There. Are you satisfied? Tolkien, by the way, did not use the genuine elven language. He made it up himself after having met one of us and dreaming of her every night for several months. The man was an amazing linguist.”

“A cunning linguist, even?” Laurence sat up, somewhat regretfully, and brushed bracken off his shoulders. “Still not convinced, Keelan. Go ahead. Prove it to me.”

“You said you taught fifth grade. Do you give your students this much of a hard time when they’re trying to explain why they don’t have their homework?”

“Harder.” Laurence firmed his jaw. “Go on. Impress me.”

Keelan muttered something under his breath, then waved one hand in the air. Laurence’s jeans and T-shirt jumped up from where they had been lying hidden behind a fallen stone, along with Keelan’s own outfit of vest and pants. The clothes *walked* over to the two men, then draped over their laps.

“Jesus Christ!” Laurence jumped back, mouth dry. The cloth *tingled*, as if it were alive. “Nice -- nice trick.”

Keelan’s mouth narrowed into a thin line, and he stood, heedless of his nudity. “Right, that’s it. You wanted proof? Well, here I am to give it to you.” Loosing another burst of some language Laurence didn’t understand, he pointed at a spot on the apex of the stone circle, which burst into -- darkness. Laurence blinked at the patch of pure emptiness, confused.

He looked at the blackness, then at Keelan, who had a hand extended, and gingerly gave the so-called elf his own hand. He had to stop himself from flinching back when he felt the same static electricity between them as they touched.

“Follow me,” Keelan ordered, leading Laurence forward to the hole, and stepping inside the dark shadow, seeming to disappear. However, his hand tugged at Laurence impatiently, summoning him to follow after.

With a deep breath, Laurence ducked into the hole --

-- and emerged in Rocco's bar, bare as the day he was born, facing down a room half full of creatures the like of which he could never put a name to. Quills and his partner were there, for one thing, along with someone who looked like he was made out of twigs and bark and leaves, and a woman with a kind face and old-fashioned peasant's skirts kilted up to her dimpled knees. A hollow-faced creature dressed in ghostly, dark rags stood up to get a better look at Laurence and Keelan's ... assets. Then whistled.

Laurence did the only thing a man could under the circumstances. He squeaked, covered his penis with both hands, and did an abrupt about-face back through the darkness he'd come in on. He had a second to register Keelan's startled yelp, then felt the man clutch his arm.

Good thing, too. The second Laurence entered the darkness, he felt himself spinning out of control almost as if in zero gravity, a void. Invisible arms seemed to pull at him from every direction, each seizing a handful of flesh, tugging at him, wanting to drag him their way. He clung desperately to the only solidness he felt, following its lead, but still let loose with a hoarse yell as he found himself being tugged through something nearly solid.

His forward momentum carried both him and Keelan back down to the ground in the stone circle -- right where they'd started out. Keelan rolled away from him, breathing hard, then raised up on one elbow, patently furious.

“Don't you ever try such a foolish stunt again! The portals are only for those who know how to use them. They're as dangerous as your mortal Hell to a man who isn't familiar with their navigation or who doesn't have a guide!”

Laurence's mouth had gone cotton-dry. "We ... we were just here." He gestured to the scenery around them, stupefied. "Then we were there. In Rocco's place. And now back here again. No doors." He stared at Keelan's pointy ears, then stared some more. "Be damned. You *are* a Faerie."

"Elf," Keelan corrected, with a sharp look in his eye. "You believe me now, then?"

"I'm not sure." Laurence felt cold. "What were all those things -- people -- in the bar?"

"A jack-in-irons, a puck, the washer at the ford, and a banshee, just to name a few. No, don't, don't you start laughing again. This is serious, Laurence. Life and death. You felt as much when you walked back into the portal, didn't you? There are things beyond your ken, more in heaven and earth and between than your philosophy can encompass. Indeed, Shakespeare was a wise man in his time." Keelan reached out and gripped Laurence's fingers, holding them almost too tightly. "You are lucky, man, that I was the one who managed to win your attention this night. And I am lucky for having had the chance to make your better acquaintance. Believe me when I say this, Laurence: I am an elf. And I am better than anything you could ever dream of."

Laurence scoffed, even as Keelan held up his other hand to ward off his disdain.

"Tell me this, Laurence, and tell me true -- have you ever had better sex? Your first time, your last time, and all the times betwixt -- have any of them taken you as high or as deep as I have? There is nothing which can compare to making love with one of the Fey, especially an elf."

Laurence regarded Keelan, his mind whirling with questions. "What about Norris, then?" he asked. "Is he an elf too? And Black Malice? What's that?"

"*Norris* is Nerys, and *he* is a *she*. A nosy, inquisitive *she*, who surprises me by her continued absence from this circle tonight. Eremand, another friend of mine, yes, also an elf, must have her well occupied. As for Black Malice, *it* is a *she*, and I suppose you might call

her an elf as well, for lack of a better term.” Keelan shivered. “Black Malice is a force of nature, not to be taken lightly, and not easily reckoned with.”

“Fine.” Laurence found himself gripping tighter the hand Keelan had extended to him in a mute offer. Air gusted past them, and he lifted his face to breathe more deeply of the scent of roses and herbs, which almost seemed as if it had come through a garden not too far from their circle. “What is this place?”

“Somewhere my friends and I gather more often than not,” Keelan said soberly. “A place where we were entertaining ourselves tonight when we heard that Liam, the incubus, was bringing twelve of his friends to Amour Magique in the hopes of finding them a good time.”

“Whoa, whoa, back up for a second there. Incubus? A sex demon? Liam?” Laurence hooted. “I studied those in Mythology 101 back in college. Liam isn’t any incubus. He’s a crazy little gay man without any sense of personal space, not some ancient son of Lilith who’s been around since the dawn of time!”

“Are you so sure about that?” Keelan’s eyes twinkled darkly, as if each held a falling star. Laurence found himself fascinated by the dusky gaze. “Five minutes ago, you would have told me elves do not exist, but now you believe in us, don’t you?” He pressed his advantage. “*Don’t* you?”

Laurence sighed and quoted as best as he could remember. “‘When you have eliminated the impossible, then whatever’s left must be the truth.’ Sherlock Holmes. Another great.”

“Conan Doyle, actually.”

Laurence was irritated and didn’t bother to hide it. “Do you have to argue with everything I say?”

Keelan had the grace to look embarrassed. “I shall try not to. Proceed with your thought.”

“There wasn’t much more to it.” Laurence reached to pluck a few blades of grass, then thought better of the action. He didn’t want to hear the “earth” crying out again. Instead, he began drawing patterns among the soft green stalks. He noticed Keelan keeping a wary eye on him as he did so and had to ask, “What, am I casting a spell or hurting the dirt or something?”

“It’s unlikely,” Keelan allowed, “but one never knows in Faerie. You see? Already you believe more than you probably want to.”

Laurence sighed. “All right. For the sake of this discussion, argument, whatever, let’s say that I believe. Finish telling me about Nerys and Black Malice.”

“Ah. Yes.” Keelan flushed a faint pink. “We heard that Liam was bringing his cadre of brothers-in-soul with him, and I determined to win the heart of one. I chose you out of their ranks. No, don’t ask me how; it was part of a trick that Black Malice pulled. Imagine how delighted I was to find you’d made your own way to Rocco’s bar.”

“A bar set up to specialize in your kind?”

“More or less. The occasional mortal happens by, but Rocco simply feeds them a beer and lends them a sympathetic ear. Those who are unfriendly to Faerie folk do not find the bar at all.”

“So I just happened to be in the right place at the right time.” Laurence shook his head. “You still haven’t told me about the bet.”

“The bet ... ah, Lord and Lady, you’ll hate me for sure after this. Black Malice bet me two thousand silver coins, a fortune here in Faerie, that I could not win your heart and keep you here until morning light. I bet that I could.” Keelan looked down. “And now, the worst is out. Think of me what you will.”

“I see.” Laurence looked down at the ground, letting the story roll over and over in his mind, sifting the tale around to winnow out and muster all the facts he could. But, no matter how hard he tried, he couldn’t get around the inarguable truth that he’d been a pawn in

some strange game. That although he'd come willingly and had had a good time, he'd been a *pawn* -- that was something he refused to stand for.

He made as if to rise and spoke simply without any emotion. "Then I guess you're out two thousand silver, Keelan, because this, whatever it is, ends here. I'm sorry, but if you'd been honest from the beginning --"

"You wouldn't have believed me." Keelan's face was bleak, but he refused to release Laurence's hand. "Daylight is still hours away, and I have neither won your heart, nor can I keep you here until then. I accept that I have lost the bet and will have to earn my payment to Black Malice. But, please, Laurence -- handsome Laurence, so red and white and strawberry fair -- give me just one more taste. I beg it of you."

Laurence frowned. "A taste?"

Keelan tugged harder at his hand. "Let us make love one last time before you go. We have used quotes throughout our time together, so let me speak the words of another wise man. 'Kiss me before you leave me, and my imagination will thrive upon that kiss; sweetheart, I ask no more than this -- a kiss to build a dream on.'"

"Louis Armstrong." Laurence felt his lips begin to lift in a smile. "How did you know I liked old jazz?"

"I didn't. But he was a bard, in his way, and he sang truly of heart matters. So, Laurence, I ask this of you, I beg that you grant me the favor of this petition. Let me have you once more before you go, or you have me, and then you will return to *Amour Magique*. Just give me a memory to cling to before you are gone forever."

Laurence gazed at the handsome elf, almost too attractive to be real, literally begging to have sex with him. Half of his mind was shouting him down for being a fool to even consider it, and the other half was pitching a vociferous fit about having to part ways with someone so delectable. Unless this was another trick to keep him trapped there ... was it?

Damn it all, anyway. He couldn't not give in.

Touching Keelan's tingling skin -- was this part of who, what the elf was? -- Laurence's decision was made with his body and not his mind. "We'll need a condom. For me, not you. And more of that lubricant." He ran his tongue across his lips before responding. "I'll definitely give you one last memory before you leave. Something you won't forget for days."

"Or years," Keelan answered, his face lighting up. "You promise me? Swear it on this Faerie circle?"

Laurence nodded. "I swear."

Keelan's lips split into a delighted grin. He raised Laurence's hand to his mouth and kissed it again, this time with a bit of teeth. "Thank you. Give me a moment to gather my supplies."

Laurence nodded once more. He knew he looked calm on the outside. Inside, he was shaking with lust and uncertainty. He should have known from the moment he stepped inside that strange place he was just asking for trouble. What had he gone and gotten himself into now?

Chapter Six

While Keelan busied himself with preparations, Laurence did what any sane man who'd just fallen down the rabbit hole would do: he lay still and kept quiet. However, as he gazed up above his head at the moon moving in her path and the twinkling stars, his mind was anything but still.

Elves were real? If so, then it followed that everything else Keelan had said was probably true, too. Liam, a sex demon. Laurence couldn't help but smile a bit over the notion. He'd never have pictured an incubus who was barely five feet five, curly-haired, and given to the latest in hand-tailored GQ, but he supposed Liam must have moved with the times. Come to think of it, the man's impish features and maple-colored curls would have fit in pretty well with a toga and a wreath of laurel leaves ...

It also likely followed that the rest of his Brothers were, or would be, in much the same straits as himself, beset by creatures that didn't normally walk the earth. Or perhaps they did, just in disguise. Laurence spared a few moments to think about the men he mostly didn't know, of whom he liked only a handful, and wondered where they were, what they were doing. With any luck, the men he shared salt and bread with every week were all having the time of their lives tonight -- for one night at least.

Had any of them found true love? If so, he wished them well. Frankly, he was inclined to believe they'd run into the same situation as he had -- enchanted by an otherworldly creature who talked a good line but who was fantastic in bed.

He silently saluted the moon. *Here's to making love.*

Keelan called his name from behind him, voice hushed. Laurence approved. Silence, or as near silence as possible, befit the moment. Even the air felt solemn and still, as if something unseen was waiting and watching to see what they would do. Perhaps benevolently, but there nonetheless. "Laurence, are you ready for me?"

Laurence took in a deep breath. Now that he was concentrating on it, the air tasted differently than the thick, musk-choked aroma of Amour Magique's dance floor, the yeasty beeriness of Rocco's bar, or even the normal outdoors he was used to in Charleston. Here, everything seemed a bit newer, more unspoiled. Fresh. *Irish Spring*, he thought in amusement.

He breathed in and out again, steadying himself, and nodded. "I'm ready."

Instead of leaping on him, as Laurence had more or less expected, or even crawling up his body in a panther-like stalk, as he might have done, Keelan sat gracefully down by his side.

Such ease of movement ... if I believed in fairy tales, I would have pegged Keelan for what he is from the moment we met. Laurence turned his head to look at the elf, mildly curious and letting it show.

Keelan had been a busy elf indeed. Somehow in his silent preparations, he'd not only found a handful of condoms, now scattered across the grass in shining square packets, he'd procured more of the wonderfully scented lubricant in a duplicate glass bottle and, most surprising, come up with a shallow basin filled with what smelled like -- Laurence sniffed again -- lemons. "What is this?" he asked, raising his head in an effort to peek.

The elf smiled, dipping his hand into the pan with a splashing sound. He came up with a soft sponge that dripped with suds. "For you," he said softly. "For this, our last time together, we should be clean. I'd wear the mark of you all night long if I thought you'd allow it, if I thought you would stay."

"And since I won't?" Laurence's voice was more gentle than he expected.

"Then let me wash your creamy skin clean of any stickiness, and your chest of any sweat. Let us come together as if this were the first time, fresh and clean." Keelan made a slight move with the sponge. "May I?"

Laurence considered the elf for a stretch of time, not in any hurry to make up his mind, then acquiesced. Keelan smiled, his face so beautiful that it almost hurt Laurence to look upon him, and laid the sponge carefully against Laurence's belly. The water it had soaked in was warm indeed, just this side of being too hot. It felt like heaven against his sore muscles.

Keelan began to rub in slow, easy circles, easing away the coat of sticky fluids Laurence had gathered, dipping back into his tub of cleansing water time and again. His face was a study in concentration as he washed each quadrant of chest, each ridge of the stomach, and, after a quick questioning glance, Laurence's cock and balls. Keelan treated them with the same care he had lavished on the rest of Laurence's body, handling them like the jewels all men prized their own packages as.

"What about you?" Laurence asked as Keelan picked up a thick white square of terrycloth to wipe away the dampness and suds. "Do I get to wash you, too?"

A grin tilted up Keelan's kissable lips. "Do you want to? No, no, don't answer me. I'll care for myself. I want you to just lie there, beautiful as you are, so I may fix a picture of your body in my mind's eye to treasure later on, when I am alone."

"You only love me for my body," Laurence said, idly joking, and was surprised by Keelan's flinch. "Keelan ..."

“No. Don’t.” Keelan shook his head, silky dark hair now spilling over his shoulders almost down to his nipples.

“It’s longer, isn’t it? Your hair, I mean.”

Keelan twitched a lock up to his eyes to look. “Some. All of the elvenkind have their own quirks and peculiarities. When I am aroused, my cock is not the only thing that grows.” His eyes grew heavy-lidded. “If you had agreed to stay until daylight, I have no doubt that the hair would reach my ankles. Can you imagine such a thing, Laurence? All this, like black satin, for you to wind around yourself, to drape about you like a curtain, to tease every nerve in your skin to glittering life.” He dropped the strand of hair. “But we’ll never know, will we?”

“If you’re trying to make me feel bad about my decision, it won’t work,” Laurence murmured. He held out a hand. “Hurry up, Keelan. I want to ... get back to the bar.”

The last had been a lie, or mostly a lie, and Laurence didn’t know why he’d changed his sentence in mid-course. He’d been about to say, *I want to touch you*. Why had he stopped himself?

The look in Keelan’s eyes told Laurence he might as well have spoken the words anyway. They grew dusky with the knowledge of a man who knew he was about to make love, who had no doubt in his mind of his lover’s willingness. The expression was a look secret to the male half of any species, no matter who their partner was.

“I will hurry,” Keelan said quietly, his voice more of a caress than any touch from his hands could be. And with Laurence looking at him, he leaned back on his heels, baring his chest to view, and began to run the sponge over himself. He paid just as much careful attention to his own sterling qualities as he had to Laurence’s body, perhaps even showing off a little, like a peacock displaying his iridescent feathers before mating.

Laurence lay still and watched. He started to wonder if he were insane for turning down this man -- this elf’s -- unspoken offer of future adventures. Without a doubt, from the

tip of his gleaming dark head to the toes of his luminously white feet, Keelan had to be the sexiest man Laurence had ever laid eyes on. God, the elf had such pretty feet. Laurence could imagine himself, if he'd had the time, sucking on those toes some lazy afternoon when they shared a bath together. Kinky, but he had a feeling Keelan would like the play -- and might even return the favor.

What dreams may come, he thought. Shakespeare again. Laurence found himself thinking that Keelan would appreciate the reference, and knew he had to stop taking the other man into consideration. Keelan was already worming his way into Laurence's mind, making a home for himself in his thoughts, but they were about to end this carousel ride.

Why?

Laurence surprised himself with the question. Just as quickly, though, he had an answer. *Because he's not like me, and I'm not like him. We could never last. The two of us can't agree on anything from where we are to what we're doing.*

Except now, in this moment, where we seem to have a perfect understanding ...

Frowning, Laurence put a stop to his treacherous thoughts and urged on the elf who'd sent his world spinning around and around that night. "Hurry up." This time, he brought himself to say what he felt. "I need you."

The look on Keelan's face was a reward in itself. He smiled almost like a boy as he placed the sponge back in its silver basin, then, with a flick of his fingers, banished the washing water and materials. "Neat trick?" he asked, as if doubting Laurence's reply.

Laurence smiled. "Pretty nifty," he agreed. "Are you coming?"

"I will be, soon." Keelan began to lean over Laurence, then aborted his movement, shaking his head. "This is your show. I owe you this much, at least. You've given unto me. Let me now give unto you."

"You've changed the way you talk," Laurence said dreamily, gazing at the beauty of the undecided face. "Now you sound more like I would expect an elf to."

“Perhaps it’s that I feel more like an elf.” Keelan’s fingers rustled through the nest of condoms with that sad half-smile on his face again. “Dealer’s choice,” he offered. “There’s an embarrassment of riches here.”

Laurence let his own hand roam through the packets. “What did you do, break open a vending machine inside the club?”

“I fed it quarters, honestly gained, although how you humans manage to use such lesser metals for currency still escapes my understanding.”

“I’ll have to teach you sometime,” Laurence said without thinking. He bit his lip. “I’m sorry, Keelan. I shouldn’t make promises I’m not planning to keep.”

“No. No apologies. Not this night.” Keelan let his fingers touch Laurence’s for a brief moment, then pulled away. He lay down on his back, gloriously naked, hair spilled out in a negative halo around his head, and looked at Laurence. “Here I am,” he said, his voice seductive and vulnerable all at once. “Come and have me, if you will.”

Laurence felt a surge of strength run through him. “I choose to take you,” he said, rising up on his hands and knees. Normally he was the bottom in his relationships, such as they had been before and during his disastrous breakup -- and he hadn’t had a chance to experiment since joining The Brotherhood. He accepted; he didn’t give. Tonight, though, this felt right. He would share himself with Keelan, and spare nothing on the trimmings.

With that thought firmly fixed foremost in his mind, Laurence rummaged through the condoms again. “Keelan? Don’t lie to me. Can elves and humans transmit anything between them?”

Keelan’s answer was immediate, his tones still as soft as a downy feather. “My word on the matter, Laurence, and I do not give my word lightly. There is only the truth between us now. Nothing of an ill nature can pass between any species of which I know -- not elves to humans, nor any other creature that walks or crawls. We are unique unto ourselves.” His lips curved wryly. “There is always the issue of issue, of course, that is to say, pregnancy, but

somehow I think we need not worry ourselves on that particular matter.” He paused. “Does this question mean what I hope it means?”

“If you’re guessing this ...” Laurence scattered the condoms aside, “then, yes, you’re right.”

Keelan let out a deep breath, an almost joyful sound. “You’ll enter me bare.” His voice sounded like an angel singing hallelujah. “I’ll feel you deep inside me. Know when you’ve come by the hot pulses within my flesh.” His eyes opened a bit wider. “You will fuck me, won’t you? You do have lovemaking in mind?”

“I do, I will, I am.” Laurence touched the soft pads of his fingertips to Keelan’s mouth. “Hush, now. Let me do this, but I want you to be quiet. Can you? For me?” He didn’t know why silence seemed so important, only that it did. He didn’t want to hear any other noises, not even his own voice, while they were occupied with their long goodbye.

Keelan nodded. Laurence let some of the exasperated, surprising fondness he was suddenly feeling flood up into his eyes as he kissed his own fingertips and pressed them to the elf’s luscious mouth. Keelan caught at them, sucking briefly before letting go with a sparkle of mischief. Chuckling quietly, Laurence had to salute the elf. Even when he was down, he was up.

Speaking of which, he felt a familiar, heavy ache filling the flesh between his legs. When he glanced at himself, he was erect again, his cock ready for action. Slim, but long. Good things, so far as he was concerned -- he could reach further, and he’d need less preparation time. He had no idea how used to taking the stick Keelan might be, and he didn’t want to hurt the elf. The elf who, as he noted with a glance, was also very much aroused, his own cock flush against his belly and already damp at the tip. He wanted to ask if this much horniness was due to Keelan’s own nature, but didn’t want to break the silence.

To make sure he didn’t, Laurence leaned down and pressed his mouth to Keelan’s in a kiss.

At first chaste, a mere touch of mouth to mouth, it lingered until Laurence slid the tip of his tongue out and traced the line of Keelan's lips, coaxing them open. He slipped inside gently, stroking instead of thrusting, twining and letting himself be tasted. He wondered what his own flavor might be. The strawberries his lover kept mentioning, perhaps? Keelan tasted of toasted ripe almonds and honey, as if he'd been eating an elven banquet before coming to this bed of grass.

When the kiss ended, Laurence finished with a long, whispered, "Shh" on Keelan's mouth. He moved so that he was kneeling above the elf, one knee on either side of his hips, then realized this was how he had positioned himself before. It wouldn't do. Frowning, he considered the situation for a moment, then had an idea.

Gesturing again for quiet, he reached for Keelan's slender, muscled legs and raised first one, then the other over his shoulders, bracing himself under the weight. Keelan smiled blissfully as the motion rocked him further on his back, changing his angle so that Laurence's cock was poised at the seam of his entrance.

They stayed like that for several heartbeats, Laurence counting them as they pounded in his pulse and his cock. Keelan finally let out a breath of air and tried to move forward, to impale himself.

Laurence shook his head firmly. They were going to do this right, not roughly or harshly. Keelan would be prepared, and having been on the receiving end so many times, Laurence thought he knew how to do the job right. Reaching for the bottle of lubricating oil, he unstopped it, paused for a moment to breathe in the amazing fragrance of cinnamon and vanilla, then poured some out onto his fingertips. Just as before, it felt silky and smooth, and when he slid his fingers between Keelan's ass cheeks, his fingers almost glided their way directly to the elf's puckered hole.

As Laurence probed, Keelan released another long and lingering breath, opening himself up to Laurence's fingers, which slid in easily, barely needing to stretch the elf. He

wished he didn't have the thought that this was most likely from frequent practice. The knowledge saddened him.

Again, why?

Laurence gave a small sigh and shoved that thought to the back of his mind, focusing again on the task at hand. No, not a task -- a delight. The feel of Keelan from the inside, hot and tight, gripping him as the elf squeezed, made his face heat with the sure and certain knowledge of how wonderful it would feel to drive his cock deep within that channel. Mischief on his face, Keelan bore down, grasping Laurence's fingers like a python, almost startling him into exclaiming aloud. Unwilling to speak, Laurence dealt Keelan a severe glare which softened almost immediately into amusement.

He anointed his own member with the oil next, closing his eyes with a whispered hiss at how amazing the liquid felt on such sensitive skin. The cinnamon woke up nerve endings he hadn't even known he possessed, and the vanilla rose up in a heady cloud around them both.

No waiting, then; there was no need. Laurence aligned the head of his cock with Keelan's eager entrance, and pushed. There was a slight resistance, a moment of force, and then he was in, gliding slickly on the oil, as if he were pushing into the finger of a velvet-lined iron glove. His balls, heavy and tight, slapped against Keelan's ass before he realized he had to stop.

Gasping in surprise and at the sensation of being so deep, so tightly held, Laurence met Keelan's eyes. He found himself startled by what he discovered there. Delight, yes, but also sorrow. Laurence tried to telegraph his thoughts. *If this is the last time, then let's make it a good one.* He would have sworn Keelan understood him, for the elf nodded, and bore down with just the right amount of pressure to make Laurence gasp.

Laurence began to fuck in earnest, then, still controlled, without any intent to hurt or bruise, but with the goal to give as much pleasure as he received. To his amusement and

delight, he found that elves seemed to have the same sort of prostate gland as humans, or at least a reasonable facsimile. Keelan inhaled sharply, breath catching in his throat, when Laurence nudged it on entry and exit. He took special care to give the spongy spot a prod both ways, loving the way Keelan all but writhed on his cock.

To his surprise, the landscape began to change in subtle ways, humming in pleasure now just as it had moaned in pain earlier. The ground beneath Laurence's knees hollowed, leaving him in shallow divots, and humped up under Keelan, changing his angle yet again so that Laurence's thrusts were sharper still. Where Keelan clutched at the grass, furrows appeared in the shape of his fingers, deep into the grass.

As Laurence watched, two stones shaped like crude phalluses emerged from the dirt. Keelan grasped both of them and hung on, his face twisting in the blissful contortions of a man who was in the process of being well-fucked and loving every second of the encounter.

Grinning savagely, Laurence pushed forward again, rocking on his knees, making the most of every movement. He wished he could have taken Keelan's cock in his own and run his fingers over the gleaming ivory length, just to feel the satin softness of the skin over the steely hard core, to smear the wetness trickling down one side around and down, to cup Keelan's balls and roll them in his hands.

If wishes were horses ... but then again, we are both riding tonight. Laurence found he was sweating again, a light dew of perspiration. Keelan, too, was glistening in the moonlight. The elf almost looked to be made out of silver and was so handsome that he stole what was left of Laurence's breath away. Careful of their position, feeling oddly that this was a moment where he should be quiet, not letting his voice disturb the sounds of pure fucking, he maneuvered so that he could kiss the elf and taste his unique flavor again. He was taken aback by how desperately Keelan kissed him in return, as if he'd make the touch last forever, or at least as long as he could possibly stretch it out.

Between them, Keelan's cock throbbed, the pulsations jerking it steadily against their stomachs. Laurence felt his lover's balls draw into a hard knot, while inside the elf's slick

rear, he experienced a sensation of such exquisite pressure unlike anything he'd ever felt before. The stimulation comprised a long steady glide down from the base of his cock to the very tip, like a hand stroking him with just the right touch to ...

"Oh, God! God!" Laurence cried out, shattering the silence they'd been hard put to muffle through every thrust and arch. A part-laugh, part-relieved sob burst from Keelan as he rocked insistently against Laurence, clearly eager to receive all that was coming his way. Laurence didn't disappoint, feeling the orgasm shoot from the soles of his feet all the way through his cock, spraying Keelan's insides with gout after gout of semen.

Keelan gave a mighty shudder, but seemed to manage to wrench himself back from the precipice. His breathing was fast, though, harsh and ragged, loud in the still air around them. He looked at Laurence with huge, dazed eyes that Laurence somehow knew said, *Me next. Please.*

Laurence felt as if he had almost no energy left, but he couldn't let Keelan down. Drawing out of the elf's body, almost coming again with how good the movement felt, he let Keelan's legs slide off his shoulders and to either side of his hips. This time, he bent down and, instead of just taking hold of the cock on offer, indulged himself shamelessly by sinking his mouth down over the organ, tasting salt and musk, semen and sweat, licking up and down the side like a lollipop and finishing off with one mighty suck at the swollen head.

Keelan loosed his own shout, speaking again in the language Laurence didn't know, and came in Laurence's mouth. Laurence had done this before, plenty of times, and used his past experience not to miss a drop of the sticky fluid. He rolled it around in his mouth, over his tongue, and then swallowed, time after time until he lost count.

When the last drop had trickled down his throat, Laurence sat back and released the elf's cock and breathed heavily. Keelan gazed at him, eyes heavy-lidded with lust and orgasm, but at the same time extending an invitation. He held his arms open wide to underscore his offer. Laurence thought he knew the elf's thoughts. *Come here and let me hold you.*

Laurence went, and gladly. Collapsing into Keelan's embrace, almost laughing as he realized how much longer the elf's hair had grown, he curled into a willing embrace that ended with both of them on their sides, arms twined around one another. He felt slender, talented fingers stroking his own shorter red hair back from his forehead and sighed in pleasure at the feel of their touch.

Lying there felt good. No, better than good. *Wonderful*. No, more. It felt like coming home, something Laurence had wanted for forever, or so it seemed.

And he was going to give this up?

No, a voice wailed in the back of his head, overriding the *you have to* from the other part of his mind.

No, no, NO!

Laurence closed his eyes tightly and shook against Keelan, who immediately began to soothe him with touches and kisses, although the elf couldn't have known why Laurence was upset. Not that Laurence could tell him, either -- could he?

He had to leave. This was their goodbye.

"I'm sorry," he whispered after a moment, around a knot in his throat. "Keelan, I would if I could, but ..."

"But it seems that I have won the bet." A new voice, whispery and scratchy like thin nails being drawn down a chalkboard, accompanied the sound of starched silks and rustling leaves. A chill wind blew across Laurence's sweat-sheened skin, causing him to shiver.

He didn't want to look up. Whatever was there looking down on him with such patent amusement that it nearly burned holes into his skin would be something he didn't want to see. But Keelan nudged him, clinging a bit tighter, and Laurence made an impulse decision.

He looked up.

And up, and up.

Directly at the shadowed visage of someone who he instinctively knew could have frightened fish out of a pond, birds from their trees, foxes from their dens, and rabbits from their holes. This was a creature nature had not shaped to be kind, or gentle, not in any way, shape, or form. A being made to be frightening to look upon, and no less terrible for its cacklings of glee.

“Black Malice, I presume,” Laurence said slowly. “Come to collect your silver?”

Chapter Seven

Like a living nightmare, a creature from the land of shadows and dreams, Black Malice didn't so much walk as float over to a dais that appeared out of nowhere, covered in black cloth. Two more popped up, with creatures that could only be elves lurking behind them, peeking in at the action. *What, is this a show now?*

The other two were an annoyance, but Malice, he instinctively knew, was something you shouldn't take your eyes off. Laurence watched her with the fascination a rabbit has for a snake. He knew that she could kill him, easily, but he couldn't look away from the terrifying elf -- if she truly were an elf. Hadn't Keelan been in some doubt about the matter?

Speaking of Keelan, he seemed to be less awed, or maybe he simply had more balls. "Are you here early, or playing spectator?" he demanded, raising up onto one arm. His other came down protectively over Laurence's chest. "It's not dawn yet, Malice."

"Sss, sss, sss. I know this." Malice folded herself into a sitting position and crossed her arms over her ribs, beneath her breasts. Gnarled hands with hooked claws for fingertips peeked out of her long, inky black sleeves. Laurence couldn't see her face, but she had an air of being hella pleased with herself. "I have won the bet, though, and I've come to collect my silver, Keelan."

“It isn’t morning,” Keelan repeated stubbornly, but the note in his voice plainly revealed his bluff. Laurence had heard the same tone at least a hundred times. *I didn’t know the assignment was due today. Honest.* The elf tightened his grip on Laurence. “Go away until the sun rises, Malice.”

She hissed another few bursts of her strange laughter. “I think not, little elf. I’ve been watching -- you do put on quite a show, but I know what the mortal has decided. You have not won his heart, and he will not be staying with you until the morning light. My silver, then, if it pleases you.” She extended one terrible hand. “Or do you not have so much coin to your name?”

Laurence decided he genuinely didn’t like Malice. Pushing Keelan’s arm out of the way, he sat up himself. “So, what, you’re judge and jury now?”

“Laurence!” Keelan looked horrified. “Be quiet!”

“Why should I? This thing’s just admitted she’s been spying on us. I think I have the right to be a little indignant. Actually, I’d say I have every right to be fucking mad. Who gives you the right to spy on me and my lover?”

“Oh, it’s lover now, is it?” Malice clicked her claw-like nails together in a chattering chorus that sent shivers down Laurence’s spine. “When did this change? As for who gave me permission, I need none. This is Faerie, and this circle is part of what I call home, which means I have a right to monitor what goes on within it. But ... lover? Does the phrase stretch so far as to include ‘beloved’?”

Laurence growled. “What if I said it did?”

“Sss, sss, sss. It all depends on whether you can back your words up with proof, doesn’t it?” Malice settled back in a position of waiting. Laurence still couldn’t see her face, but he could imagine the avid, ravenous expression she’d be wearing a little too easily. “Well? Beloved, or not? I will halve the amount of silver if you can prove this much.”

“Oh, really? Well, halve this.” And with those words, Laurence turned to Keelan, seized his face in both hands, and pressed an ardent kiss to his lips. Keelan was stiff at first, no doubt shocked, but then became an eager participant, winding his arms around Laurence’s neck and clinging on tightly. Laurence felt the light scoring of nails down his back as their tongues tangled together, but he didn’t mind. Let Malice take a look at *them* and tell him he didn’t care about Keelan.

She was cackling again by the time they ended their embrace. “Pretty, very pretty. But people who are not in love kiss all the time, oh, yes, they do. Just as words mean nothing without actions to back them up, the reverse holds true.”

Laurence watched Malice guardedly. “What exactly is it that you want?”

She spread her hands. “Why, simply to hear you say the words. If you mean them, they will not be so hard to speak, will they?”

“I don’t usually have an audience for this kind of thing.”

“You don’t usually have this sort of thing to deal with at all, do you, boy?” Malice clicked her claws at Laurence a second time. “Go on, then, if you dare -- and if you mean it.”

Laurence dealt her his best severe look, then turned to Keelan and kissed the elf again, thoroughly and affectionately. “I’m pissed off as hell about the bet, but damn it if you haven’t made me care for you,” he whispered against Keelan’s lips. “I would have waited to tell you some other way, some other time, but she’s pushing me on this, and I don’t want to make a beggar out of you.”

“Ah, but do you love him?” Malice inquired, far too politely. “Those are the conditions of the bet.”

Laurence narrowed his eyes and refused to look away from his lover. “I could almost hate you for making a bet about me, but you know what, Keelan? I think you regret ever saying you’d wager on me. Tell me if that’s the truth, and then maybe I’ll say what more than one person wants to hear.”

Keelan looked at Laurence, limp within the circle of his arms, and nodded soberly. When he spoke, his voice was just as solemn. “These are hard words for an elf to say, as we rarely feel such things as I do now. Confessions and apologies do not come easily to us, but for you, I feel that I must say something, if only to appease you. Laurence, hear me out. I misjudged you as a man, and I was a blackguard to think about wagering with a mortal’s emotions in the first place. I’ve been too long away from humankind and had lost my sense of what was right and proper. If you can forgive me, I would ask it of you, but I would understand if you cannot accept my repentance.”

“Idiot.” Laurence kissed Keelan again, then pressed his lips to the elf’s shining forehead. “Something tells me I’ll regret this, probably the next time you piss me off, but I forgive you for making a bet. You *didn’t* know me, but you do now.”

“You still haven’t said what I need to hear.” Malice’s voice was an unwelcome reminder.

Laurence glared over his shoulder at the dark apparition. “You want to hold your horses? I’m getting there. Give a man a minute, would you? It’s not like we can just say these things the way women do.”

Malice hooted. “You’re no woman. I’ve seen proof enough of that tonight!”

“I just bet you have. Lech.”

Malice bristled. Keelan made the universal gesture that signified, *I can’t believe he just said what he said*. Laurence turned back to Keelan.

“This is sooner than I would have liked,” he said quietly, not caring if Malice heard or not -- although he suspected she had bat ears lurking under that cowl of hers. “I can’t say I love you, Keelan. Not yet. I don’t even *know* you well enough to tell you anything of the sort. But the bet was over whether or not you could gain my heart. I didn’t want you to, but you did. You’ve won my heart, captured my imagination, and worked wonders on my dick, which for a gay man who’s not used to getting any, is the most important.”

Keelan burst into laughter. "I could say much the same for you. And I will sweeten the pot with this: although I have had 'plenty,' as you say, I will keep myself for you and you alone as long as you will have me."

"Not bad." Laurence thumbed Keelan's lickable lower lip. "I accept."

Keelan surged up to kiss Laurence, a sweet meeting of lips with nothing to it but pure affection and gratitude. "You are a great man," he said, drawing back. "Your heart is big enough for forgiveness and acceptance of someone so different from yourself. More, you trust me. I do not know of any others who would take on someone like myself."

"Oh, but I do," Malice interjected. "Laurence, your friend David has been in love with a vampire for some weeks now. Collin, the one you find so cold, has discovered his fire heart with twin dragons, and is even now soaring above the city on his new-found wings.

Christian, the one you think young and foolish, has found his perfect match, one that will last him a lifetime, even though he thought he would never meet someone to sweeten his life. Even Micah, the vain and foolish Micah, has come to discover the beginnings of true love in the arms of an alien man! What you share between yourselves is not so special."

Click, click went the talons. "Or perhaps you think it is so, merely because it is yourself you speak of?"

"Damn straight." Laurence glared at Malice. "What's more, I'm going to push you even further, you old bitch."

"Laurence!" Keelan flinched. "Have a care, man!"

"I only pull my punches in the classroom. You said terms of the bet were for you to win my heart, as well as for you to keep me here until sunrise. Well, here I am, and here I'm going to stay until dawn's rosy light peeks its ass over the horizon." Laurence gazed at Black Malice defiantly. "You're not going to win any silver off my man, so it's you who might as well start paying up now." Laurence gathered Keelan to him, defensively and protectively

because, hell, a man had to make a stand. "Take that and stick it where the sun doesn't shine, Malice."

Malice began to laugh, a fearful sound that echoed off the stones of the circle. She cackled until she wobbled, finally raising one hand beneath her cowl as if to wipe tears away. "Oh, I like this one, Keelan. He has balls in plenty. Enough for both of you to share."

"I teach elementary school. After facing down thirty ten- and eleven-year-olds all day, there's pretty much not a damn thing that can faze me -- not even you, Malice."

"Oh, no?" Malice raised her hands to the edges of her cowl. "And what if I showed you my true face? Would you still have the nerve to lie there and taunt me?"

"Give me your best shot. I've already told you once, I'm not that easily impressed."

Keelan made a noise of amazement. Laurence glanced at the elf to see him shaking his head. "What?"

"No one has ever seen beneath the disguise Malice wears," Keelan whispered. "Who knows what lurks under her hood?"

"A carburetor?"

Keelan looked puzzled for a moment, then annoyed. "Don't provoke her. I've no desire to look on the real face of Malice."

"Too bad," Malice said, her voice changing from scratchy to silky. She began to push back her hood, then paused. "If you can face me down, Keelan, I will forgive the rest of the bet. No one has had the nerve to look on me in a thousand years. But if you can look me in the eye and acknowledge that I am a woman, I am Fey, and I am more powerful than you -- that I am beautiful -- then that is worth two thousand silver."

Laurence turned to Keelan. "Well?" he asked. "Want to haul your butt out of the frying pan?"

"Right into the fire?" Keelan shot back. "Malice, hold a moment. I would speak to Laurence first."

Malice's fingers danced on the hem of her cowl. "A moment only. My patience is not eternal."

Keelan faced Laurence, expression earnest. "If I am a free elf after this and do not have to sell myself into Court service to pay off my wager, I would ask that you come to see me again." He quickly added, "I would have the chance to win so much of you that you will gladly speak words of love. I know that you are not 'out,' as mortals say; I will not push you on the matter until we both know you are ready to reveal yourself to the world -- and I think that one day soon, you will be, unless I misread your strength of will.

"But more, I ask that you let me come with you into the mortal realms, and that you come visit me here. There is more than one portal into Faerie, and more than one way to enter. You need not visit Amour Magique again to see me. That is ... if you wish to." Keelan placed a hand on Laurence's chest, directly over his heart. "Will you?"

Laurence laid his own hand over Keelan's. "It's a deal," he promised, meaning every word he said. He couldn't ask for a better lover than Keelan. Willing to be discreet -- although God only knew how discreet someone like Keelan could keep things -- well, at least he was going to try. Pretty good company, all things considered. Bonus: fantastic in bed. Laurence couldn't wait to see how spectacular his sex life was about to get.

An idea occurred to him. "Malice?" he asked, glancing at her.

She tilted her head. "Yes?"

"What do I get for looking at your face?"

She reared back a bit, as if terribly confused. "I beg your pardon?"

Laurence summoned up another dose of false bravado. Couldn't start backing down now. "Well, Keelan gets out of paying two thousand silver. What do I get if I have the nerve to look at you, eye to eye?"

Malice laughed again, but a bit breathlessly. Good. He *had* startled her. "You have nerve, mortal."

"It's Laurence, and I suggest you start using the name. I might not be able to live forever, but while I do I demand some damned respect."

Malice shook her head. "Does he really have more balls than brains, Keelan? Or is he simply just this rash?"

"I begin to wonder," Keelan replied, although his hand on Laurence stroked as if to pat his ruffled feathers down. "Answer his question, Malice; it is a fair query."

"Very well." Malice flicked her nails, obviously thinking. "A portal," she decided. "I will give you a small box, forged of Faerie silver, which you may carry with you. Whenever you wish to visit with your Keelan, all you'll need do is open the box and a doorway will be created."

"Keelan said they were dangerous for people who didn't know how to travel them," Laurence said suspiciously. "For people without a guide."

"And so they are. This, however, would be safeguarded and bring you directly to Keelan's side each time you traveled the dark roads."

"The value of the box?"

Malice chuckled, a dark, low sound. "Approximately one thousand hundred coins. Silver."

Laurence exchanged a glance with Keelan. Keelan nodded. "It will make things so much easier," he whispered. "If you have the courage."

"*I teach elementary school*," Laurence snapped. "You think a hag is going to scare me? Believe me, after you've seen what's left after a public spelling bee, there is nothing more frightening."

Malice laughed. "Very well, then. If both of you are ready?" Her hands hovered on her hood. "Ready or not, here I come ..."

For all his brave words, Laurence swallowed hard, and heard a hoarse gulp from Keelan. The cowl peeled back from Malice's head, and --

-- she was beautiful.

Laurence sat bolt upright in shock, staring. The hands of a wizened old hag, and the face of a fallen angel. Hair that looked literally made out of silver, it was so white-blond, and the heart-shaped face of an old-fashioned pin-up. Her red lips were perfectly made for a moue or a pout, and her wide, bright eyes were blue as a summer sky. When she laughed at the pair of them, it sounded like silver bells chiming.

"God," Laurence said in disgust. "Stereotypical, right down to the pointy ears. Heap big fake, Malice. You get a hell of a lot of jollies out of your disguise, don't you?"

"More than you could possibly imagine," Malice replied jauntily, waving her wizened hands. "These, unfortunately, are real. I scarred them by dipping into a pool of pleasure before I came into my powers. And make no mistake, mortal -- Laurence -- my powers are very real. I am Malice, and I earned my name." She paused. "This amuses me, and rest assured that only because it amuses me and new entertainment is a rare commodity, for tonight, we will say that you have defeated me. Lo! Your good will and benevolence have defeated me. Not to mention, lest we forget," she added waspishly, "your pure stubbornness of will."

"Cover your face, Malice," Keelan said. "I prefer the creature I know better than this face you show us."

"Surprising," she said, sounding completely unshocked. All the same, she drew her cowl back over her head. Her voice changed again into the shadowy, raspy whisper they'd first heard. "You'll have your box, Laurence."

"When?"

"Now." Malice reached into a hidden pocket of her robes and drew out a small, glimmering square. She tossed it to Laurence, who caught the thing as easily as he would a flung paper airplane in class. "Keep that safe, mortal. You won't find another, or win one, either."

“Won’t need to.” Laurence folded his fist around the object and grinned. “Keelan? Get our clothes together. I feel like having a drink to celebrate.”

* * * * *

When Keelan stepped back into Rocco’s bar, dressed once again in his vest and slacks, he caught the bartender’s gimlet eye before Laurence did. Rocco had good reason to dislike Keelan: a little something to do with hexed spirits a few decades past. “Stop your worrying, big man,” he said jovially enough to Rocco and gave Laurence a slap between his shoulder blades. “I’ve returned with the mortal safely in hand.” At the dark look he got, he amended, “Laurence. Here we both are, unharmed.”

Laurence glanced around. “Looks like the crowd cleared out,” he remarked. “Things always like that in here? Busy as a bee, then quiet as a tomb?”

“Not always.” Rocco flicked a towel off his shoulder and balled it up in one fist, then stretched it from one massive hand to another, pulling at the terrycloth. “He treat you right? The elf, I mean. He give you a hard time?”

Keelan and Laurence both burst into laughter. “I think you can safely say we gave each other a very, very hard time, in all senses of the word,” Keelan replied amiably. “Moreover, we have come to an amicable arrangement. I have sworn to be true to Laurence, and he has procured the means to summon me whenever he desires.”

Rocco raised one eyebrow. “This is ‘amicable’ to you, elf? Last I heard, you liked your freedom, your fun and games, a little too well.”

“Can a leopard not change its spots?” Keelan shrugged easily, sliding onto a bar stool, happy to see Laurence join him at his side. “What about two pints of your best home brewery’s beer for two thirsty customers? Your only customers, might I add.”

“Not only,” Rocco rumbled. He jerked his head toward the far end of the bar. “Still got one guy in here.” He peered sharply at Laurence. “He’s been waiting on you. Says he knows you.”

Keelan swiveled around with curiosity, then blinked. Shocked twice in one night! Sitting by himself a few seats down, previously unnoticed -- probably because he had not wanted to be -- was the incubus himself, Liam, cheerfully drinking a glass of something that looked like malty heaven. He waved at Keelan and Laurence, then tilted his glass in a toast.

"Liam," Laurence said, sounding startled. "How did you ...?"

"I know a few things," Liam said, sounding delighted. "I have a finger in every pie, as they say. Malice performed well for you, did she not? Tell me, did she keep the tarot cards for her own use?"

"The tarot cards?" Laurence asked, sounding puzzled. Keelan, on the other hand, smacked the bar.

"You old trickster!" he exploded. "You set this up! You and Malice both!"

"I am guilty." Liam twinkled at them. "I knew Laurence required special circumstances, and where better to find what he needed than a secret place where he could go until he was ready to face the world as what he is? An elf would be the perfect match for him, and Malice said she knew of the very one."

"And just how do you know Malice?" Laurence asked suspiciously. Keelan could see him fingering the small box that rode in the hip pocket of his jeans. "You two old buddies?"

"Something of the sort. Malice is thousands of years old, as are some other creatures who walk the earth or run beneath it." Liam winked. "One does tend to run into a familiar face from time to time."

"So you are a ...?" Laurence asked.

Liam tapped his nose, and then grinned. "You, you were easy, Laurence. I've had a most restful time sitting here talking to Rocco about the best drafts to be found in Amour Magique. He may be one of the most knowledgeable of tenders in this establishment, and I am counting all of them, even those who serve the elite."

Laurence snorted. "You aren't the elite?"

“For one night, I am.” Liam lifted the crystal necklace he wore around his neck and gave the blue pendant a twirl. “But then, we are all special at this moment. It is an evening to live, love, and celebrate!”

He turned to Rocco. “Give them their beers, if you please,” he said. “Let us drink to arrangements between new lovers, and to the success of plans carefully laid out.”

As Rocco pulled the beers from their tap -- the Na’am Thuul -- Keelan peeked at Laurence and found him laughing silently, his sides shaking.

“Leave it to Liam,” he whispered in answer to Keelan’s unspoken question. “I guess all the rumors about him are true, huh?”

The beers came sliding over the bar to them. “To new acquaintances,” Laurence said, raising his glass with its heavy head of foam. “And to life over the bar and under the hill.”

Keelan couldn’t help but grin. He’d never expected his night to go this way, but he couldn’t regret a minute of it. “Cheers,” he said with all good humor and clinked his glass against Laurence’s.

Life had suddenly turned into one big adventure, and for an elf, there could be nothing better.

Unless, of course, they could sneak in another round of sex before they hit the dance floor ...

 THE END 

Willa Okati

Although a relative newcomer to the field of e-publishing, Willa Okati has been writing since before she was old enough to pick up a pen. She thinks she knows where those dictated stories are hidden, but she'll never tell.

Willa is also very interested in the paranormal: magery, Wicca, New Age philosophy, transgender studies, and of course, writing. You can drag her away from the computer if you really fight, but you'd better be prepared for a battle.

Just so she doesn't sound entirely dull, Willa has her fun: she is a practicing member of the SCA (Society for Creative Anachronism) and is involved in her community. She is owned by far too many cats, all of which have serious attitudes, and addicted to anything made out of chocolate or involving coffee. She is quiet, but has a very wicked sense of humor that springs out when you least expect it.

A secretary for eight years, she now writes full-time -- and wouldn't trade it for the world.

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