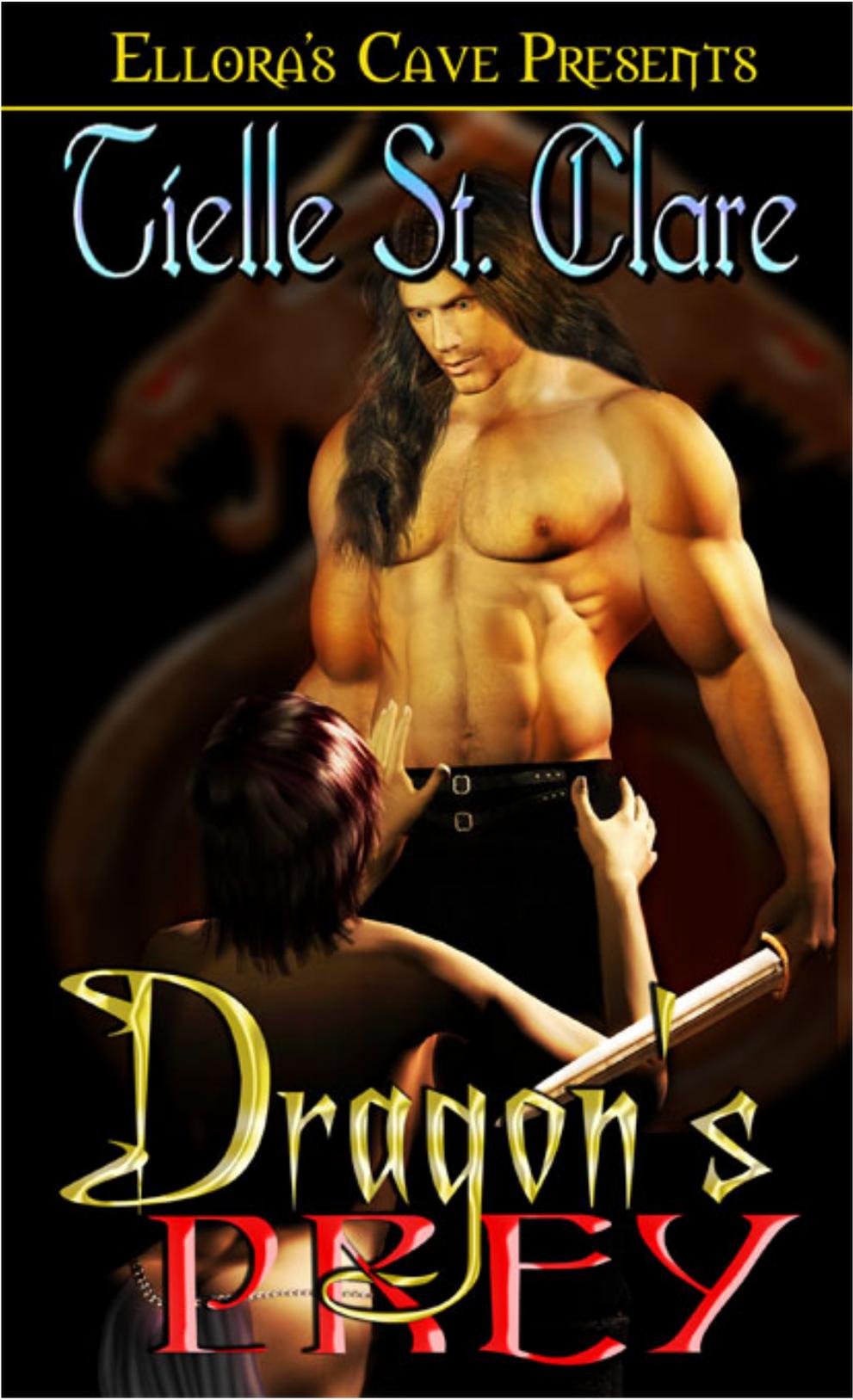


ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS

Tielle St. Clare



Dragon's
PREY

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Dragon's Prey

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SHADOW OF THE DRAGON:

DRAGON'S PREY

Tielle St. Clare

Prologue

Kayla crouched on one knee in the corner, staring at the twisted body of the most recent man sent to “tame” her. He groaned and rolled over, crawling toward the door.

“Well?” Iniz, the slave master, demanded from the hall.

“She just about killed me. There’s something not right with that girl. I’m not going near her again. I want my money back.”

She felt her lip curl in disgust. The slave master had taken to selling the rights to rape her. So far, none had succeeded. Her dragon’s strength had saved her but she didn’t know how many more she could fight.

The sound of coins changing hands rattled outside the door. Seconds later, Iniz strode into the filthy room she’d been locked in.

“That’s it, you’ll not eat for two days.”

She shrugged. He’d tried everything to control her and she’d defied him at each attempt.

Instead, she raised her head and stared at him, letting the dragon’s anger pour through her eyes.

“Let me go and I can almost promise my family won’t rip you into tiny pieces when they come for you.”

The edges of his mouth turned white. When she’d first been brought in, he’d mocked her threats. Now weeks later, she decided he was starting to believe her.

“Masslon!” he bellowed. A young man, slave collar welded around his throat, hurried into the room. “Harvet is coming through tomorrow.” Iniz lifted his chin toward Kayla. “She’ll be in the group that leaves with him.” He smirked when he looked back at her. “Harvet works for the most brutal killer in the land.” He smiled and Kayla felt an unwanted shiver run down her back. “You’ll wish you’d been nicer to my friends.”

He stepped outside, closing the door and leaving Kayla in the dark. It didn’t bother her. The dragon’s senses allowed her to see with very little light. A thick chain held her to the ground, giving her only a few links of freedom. She tugged on the chain, willing the dragon’s strength into her body—but to no effect. She growled into the musty silence.

Zayn was no help.

Until the bedamned beast got what it wanted, Kayla had no choice but to follow where her dragon led.

Chapter One

Sixx glowered into his tankard and forced himself to take another sip of the bitter ale. The liquid scraped a trail down the inside of his throat, like nails ripping his flesh. Fuck, what he wouldn't give for a good drunk right now.

He looked up, extending his glare across the room. It kept most people at bay. The rest of his troop and those who had come to train with him kept their distance. The hall was littered with tables and bodies, most of them drunk, many of them locked together—the serving girls looking for a warm body and maybe a bit of coin for the night.

Several had eyed Sixx with interest but he'd ignored their greedy glances followed by their disappointed pouts. There was no way to explain that he'd give anything to drag one of them back to his chambers and ride between her thighs for the rest of the night.

But no, like every other pleasure in his life, that was gone too—ripped away by that heartless bitch. He couldn't drink, fight or fuck.

Sixx scanned the Great Hall, feeling none of the satisfaction that used to surge through his chest. It was his—bought and paid for by the blood of many—but only as long as he could hold it.

Movement teased the very corner of his eye and Sixx slowly directed his unwelcoming stare that direction. He almost groaned when he saw who approached.

Hells. The only person who refused to be swayed by Sixx's glare—and obvious desire to be alone—was Mikila, but Mik had known Sixx as long as anyone alive and it took a lot to dissuade him.

Mik wrapped his arm around the waist of one of the servants and dragged the giggling woman to Sixx's table.

"Captain Sixx—" Mik only called him "captain" when they were on the battlefield, or when he was drunk. "I present to you a most luscious companion for the evening." He nudged the woman toward Sixx with enough power to send her into his lap. Sixx had little choice but to grab her. The woman—Jana, he thought her name was—giggled and pressed her almost bare breasts to his chest. The large firm mounds and tight hard nipples rubbing against his skin should have inspired some reaction—Hells, he'd always liked his women a little top-heavy—but his cock lay uninterested in his leathers.

Shifting her so she wouldn't notice his lack of response, Sixx gave her ass a squeeze, using the movement to ease her farther down on his knee. It wasn't her fault his life was so fucked up that his cock no longer got hard—no matter the enticement.

"Ah, Mik, I appreciate the gift but unfortunately, I'm going to call it an early night."

“You’ve been having a lot of those lately,” Mik said, his words were teasing but there was a serious glint in his eyes that suggested he wasn’t quite as drunk as he appeared. There was a warning as well – that others were noticing his strange behavior. Sixx knew his men had given him some distance because of his “ordeal” but they expected their captain back – wanted the man who’d led them through blood and bodies, across battlefields, and through nights so debauched they’d make a whore blush.

But Sixx wasn’t sure he could be that man anymore.

“A night’s sleep never hurt anyone.” Sixx flicked his eyebrows up, taunting Mik. “You might do better on the field if you weren’t drunk every night before.” Sixx didn’t necessarily believe that. Hells, he’d fought some of his most brutal battles while he was drunk or recovering from a night of ale and women.

Mik raised his chin, sending some prearranged signal to Jana. She turned in Sixx’s lap and seductively slid between his legs, ensuring that her breasts brushed against his chest as she moved. “But Captain, you don’t look the least bit tired,” she whispered, rubbing her fingers up his thighs. “At least let me wear you out before you sleep.” Her hand was a heartbeat away from his cock and she would know that he wasn’t interested. No, that was wrong. He was interested. Hells, if he could, he’d drive his cock into her mouth or flip her skirts up and fuck her right here in the middle of the Great Hall. Modesty had never been that interesting to him. But while his mind and the rest of his body seemed in agreement, his cock was determinedly soft.

Sixx stared down at the woman between his legs and sent a plea to the Gods of War to curse the bitch who had cursed him.

But until he found a way through this, he wouldn’t allow this final humiliation.

Sixx caught her hand and pulled it up to his mouth, placing a soft kiss on her fingertips. “Jana –” Damn he hoped that was her name. She didn’t pull away so he assumed he’d guessed correctly. “I do appreciate the offer and if I were inclined, I would like nothing better than to feel your lips wrapped around my cock. But tonight, I must –”

He was saved from having to think of a reasonable excuse – which was good because he hadn’t come up with one yet – by the door bursting open. The crash as it hit the wall sent his men to their feet, hands moving to their weapons. Sixx nodded in approval. No matter how drunk they appeared – as soon as a threat was perceived they responded.

Sixx stood as well, his hand resting on his sword hilt. Mik took his position at Sixx’s right and he sensed Scant at his left – his two lieutenants moving into place.

They stared at the door and waited, watching as...Harvet walked in. Mik growled his irritation and Scant grunted. “Stupid bastard,” he whispered as he moved away, back to the table he’d occupied, and the serving wench who’d been straddling his lap. Within seconds, Scant has his hand back under the girl’s skirt and she was once again

groaning. The sound seemed to trigger the noise in the room and where an instant before it had been almost silent, the voices and laughter returned.

Harvet strode into the hall with all the arrogance of a warlord, a small troop of men surrounding him. A creature—there was no other word for the mud-covered thing—limped behind Harvet, chains keeping the body bent and twisted.

Sixx slowly sat back down and watched Harvet's approach. The insignia of Sixx's troop looked dull against Harvet's filthy shirt. The disrespect shown to the mark of his captain was a blatant insult but Sixx let it pass. Sixx knew what Harvet wanted and Sixx wasn't inclined to give it to him. At least not yet.

Harvet stopped when he stood before Sixx's table.

"Captain Sixx," he began in a booming voice. A few of the new recruits looked up in curiosity but the rest were used to Harvet's theatrics and continued their drinking and fucking. "I've returned from my task."

"And did you bring my money?" Sixx relaxed back in his chair. He'd sent Harvet to the north ten days ago to collect from a client who hadn't been inclined to pay his bill.

"Yes. Lord Ressen was quite eager to pay."

Sixx didn't doubt it. No one wanted a mercenary troop camped out on their front lawn. Harvet's team had been the first warning. If Ressen had refused to pay, Sixx would have gone himself and while many peers were eager to hire Sixx and his troop, they were less pleased to face him when he wasn't happy. And not getting paid made him very unhappy.

"Good. Make sure Scant gets it." Scant was Sixx's treasurer—and next to Mik probably the only man Sixx trusted.

"My guard has already escorted it to Lieutenant Scant's chambers."

"My guard," Sixx corrected.

Harvet's lips pinched together. "Of course, Captain."

Sixx fiddled with his tankard. "Was there something else you wanted?"

"Yes, Captain." Harvet pulled his right arm forward, yanking the chain from behind him. The body at the other end stumbled across the stone floor and landed hard on its knees in front of Sixx. A harsh grunt broke from the creature. Its head was bent down and black, matted hair hung down around its face and shoulders.

Whatever it was, it appeared to be female. The slope of its back had a definite feminine curve to it.

Sixx leaned forward, staring at the thing. Mik joined him, taking the chair next to his.

Slowly the creature raised its head and Sixx saw that it was definitely human and he was still confident it was female, though it was difficult to tell between the dirt and filth that clung to her. What must have once been clothes hung in rags that were the same color as her skin. Black lines criss-crossed her cheeks, neck and forehead. Hatred filled her eyes as she glared up at Sixx. Pure dragon-venom poured from her gaze and

Sixx knew that if she could speak, she'd be screaming at him. A tightly fitted ball gag filled her mouth leaving her with barely the ability to growl.

"What's this?" Sixx asked.

"Iniz. The slave trader. He sent her as a gift to you."

Sixx stared at Harvet, wondering again why he let the man remain in his troop.

"Why would Iniz think I wanted a slave? And particularly one that's cursed?" The word drew the attention of those nearby. The servant girls pulled back or cuddled deeper into the embrace of their partner. Two of the guards standing behind the slave shifted on their feet, as if they too wanted to back away.

"What do you mean cursed?" Mik asked.

Sixx pointed to the slave's forehead. "That's what those markings mean. Someone seems to think she's possessed by a lust demon. Those symbols are supposed to bind the demon inside her and I assume the gag is to stop her from speaking so she can't transfer the demon?" He directed the end of his statement to Harvet.

Harvet shrugged. "I have no idea, Captain. She was marked and gagged when I picked her up two days ago. Iniz merely said to bring her to you. That you were her new owner." A mocking light flared in Harvet's eyes. "And good luck to you." The woman at his feet grunted like she was protesting not just Sixx's ownership but ownership in general. Funny opinion for a slave. Harvet swung his foot forward and connected with the slave's stomach. She groaned and fell forward. Her hands were bound so nothing stopped her shoulder from slamming into the stone floor. "Quiet, bitch."

The fury that exploded in Sixx's head was barely equal to the sick roll of his stomach. He lunged out of his chair and ripped the chain from Harvet's grasp. "Never touch her again," he snarled, feeling strangely protective of the woman crumpled at his feet. Sympathy that he never should have felt filled his chest. Fuck, now what was he going to do?

Harvet raised his chin and placed his hand on his sword. For a moment Sixx thought Harvet had finally found the courage to challenge him but as Sixx watched, he saw the bravado fade and Harvet took a step backward.

The chain twitched in his hand and Sixx looked down at the woman. What was he supposed to do with her? He didn't need a slave. Hells, it wasn't like he could even use her as fuck toy. Not that he'd want to.

But who knew? After a bath or two, she might be presentable. Maybe she could work as one of the serving girls.

He wrapped the chain around his hand and pulled her to her feet. Her wrists came first and Sixx could see hints of dried blood beneath the cuffs. The center of his stomach flipped and he turned his head. As her wrists rose, they pulled the chains around her ankles, keeping her bent over.

"This also came with her." Harvet held up a velvet pouch. "Her belongings. Iniz said they're yours now."

The woman moved forward, her eyes intent on the small bag. Sixx took the pouch by its strings and tied it to his belt. He'd look at it later. Once he decided what he was going to do with her.

He knew the first thing that needed to be done. This close he'd gotten a whiff of the stench that surrounded the woman. She wasn't only filthy, she stunk. What the fuck had Harvet walked her through?

"Come on." Trying not to gag, he started toward the door, surprised that the woman actually followed. Based on the rage in her eyes he'd expected more of a fight, but she seemed willing to go with him. The compliance set his senses on alert. Beyond the anger in her stare, he'd seen intelligence so he didn't expect her to remain passive long. Probably only long enough for him to remove the chains. He sighed at the inevitable confrontation ahead of him. He didn't enjoy beating women—they cried and he found the whole process unproductive. Unless one beat the spirit completely out a slave, he'd never seen it as an effective punishment.

That didn't mean he wouldn't do it if it came down to it.

"Ernst, Hinden, with me." The two recruits leapt to their feet and hurried behind him. They'd do well enough for guards. His chambers were secure—difficult to get into or out of. The guards were more to dissuade anyone thinking to check out the new slave. New women—even ugly ones—were always worth some attention.

Sixx led her down the series of short hallways to his chambers. Giving Ernst and Hinden the command to guard the door, he took her inside and directly to the bathing chamber.

"Did Harvet feed you in the past two days?"

She raised her angry eyes and shook her head.

"I'll have food sent down." He nodded to a pitcher in the corner. "There's water over there."

With a glare that spoke volumes—mainly screaming that he was an idiot—she tried to raise her hands but they didn't move. The elaborate series of chains kept her hunched over and bound her hands to her waist making it impossible to reach her mouth and remove the gag.

"Oh. Right. I'm going to remove the chains." He held up a hand trying to stop the direction of her thoughts before she could even complete them. "Don't hit me or attack me. I don't particularly like to hit women but you come at me, and I'm sending you to the ground. Understand?" She growled but he could see the resignation in her eyes. She had expressive eyes. It would be interesting to see what they looked like when they weren't spewing curses through their green depths. "I'm going to take off your chains and let you bathe because frankly you stink." That earned him a glare and he almost laughed.

“Sit down,” he commanded, shoving her against the side of the tub and spinning her so her back was to him. He reached behind her head to undo the straps that held the gag deep in her mouth. The mass of matted hair stopped him from reaching the clasp.

Expediency called to him and he whipped out his knife, slicing through the straps and hacking off the bottom seven inches of her hair. He tossed the filthy hair to the side. Obviously not realizing the gag was released, she made a garbled sound—like a muffled whimper. Hells, she’d barely made a sound when Harvet kicked her to the floor but cutting off her hair upset her? Women.

“Give me your hands.” Her eyes were wide with a different kind of fury when she looked at him this time but she offered him her wrists. Ignoring her glare and the bruises and blood he could barely distinguish through the dirt, he undid the cuffs. With the wristbands free, the rest of the chains sagged.

“Take a bath. Hells, take two. I’ll have the guard bring you something to eat.” He stopped at the door, looking at the pitiful creature sitting on his tub. “The garden has a twelve-foot high wall around it, no doors and the guards will kill you if you set a foot outside this chamber. I’ll be back.”

Sixx closed the bathing chamber door and exhaled. Gods, he didn’t need this. He stared to the ceiling, silently swearing at the Gods of War that were supposed to protect men like him. A slave. What was he going to do with her? He could sell her. Or free her.

He scoffed. Right. That would be the perfect anomaly to his reputation—Captain Monntieth Sixx, the Butcher of Balier, showing mercy to a slave. No one would believe it. Five moon cycles ago he wouldn’t have believed it himself. He’d have fucked her, used her and then given her away.

Now he didn’t know what to do with her.

Fuck, he’d deal with it later.

The velvet bag bounced against his hip and he undid the tie, dumping its contents into his hand. A pair of clear moonstone earrings tumbled out along with a gold ring, simply designed. Good quality stuff but not expensive. He dropped the jewelry back into the bag and shoved it into the drawer beside his bed.

Suddenly returning to the noise of the hall seemed like a good idea. Much better than sitting around thinking about a slave he didn’t want to own in the first place.

He opened his door. Hinden and Ernst stood at attention. “One of you wait here—don’t let her leave or let anyone but me inside. The other go down to the kitchen and get something for her to eat. Just leave it in the room. She’ll find it.”

Confident that his orders would be followed, Sixx walked back to the hall. Mik was still sitting in the same place. Harvet had left—good.

Despite the fact that his body rebelled against the idea, Sixx really, really wanted to pound the young man into the ground. Jana had moved on, joining Scant at his table—his previous maid already with another partner. Jana looked up as Sixx entered, her eyes questioning, offering but Sixx shook his head.

He dropped into his chair beside Mik and took another painful sip of the ale. It was a challenge to keep the wince off his face but he thought he'd managed.

"What did you do with her?"

"Left her in my chambers. Bathing."

"Bathing? She's a slave, Sixx."

"She stinks and she's filthy. Gods of War, she barely looked human when Harvet brought her in here."

"What are you going to do with her?"

"I have no fucking idea."

Silence settled between them and Sixx let it rest. He didn't want to think—not about the woman or fighting or fucking. He just didn't want to think.

Scant joined them awhile later—looking well fucked and content—his hair slicked back away from his face. Slowly the other three members of Sixx's personal guard joined them. Conversations wandered—battle tales, future plans. The six of them had known each other a long time—fought beside each other, saved each other from certain death.

But Sixx was no longer comfortable with them.

It was strange to feel separate from these men but he knew that he'd been fundamentally changed. They all thought it was because of the moon cycle he'd spent in captivity. The marks on his back were a silent report of what he'd endured and so they waited. Waited to see the real Sixx return.

He looked into his tankard. He'd managed to drink almost half of it—that was record since his return—but the thought of even one more swallow made his throat seize up.

The fast shuffle of feet pulled the attention of the group. Sixx was the last to look up, finding Hinden shifting nervously in front of him.

"What is it?"

"The slave. She's escaped."

"What?" Sixx couldn't believe it. Were they so incompetent they couldn't guard one little woman? "How?"

"We don't know. She didn't come out through the door. Ernst and I were there all night." He straightened his shoulders and found his confidence. "We didn't leave, Captain. I don't know how she managed it but she did not get past us."

Sixx nodded. Hinden wasn't much of a warrior—yet—but Sixx had a suspicion the man was an even worse liar. This had to be the truth.

"Shall I organize a search?" Hinden offered.

"Why?"

"To find the slave."

Sixx shook his head. "If she wants to take her chances in the mountains, let her have at it." Actually, this suited his purposes quite well. Now if she died, it wasn't on his conscience.

He forced another sip of ale and ignored the slow turning of his stomach.

Chapter Two

Kayla crouched in the darkest corner of the bastard's garden, shivering from the cool night air blowing across her skin. Still, it had been worth it. What was a few hours of cold compared to being clean again? It had been almost a full moon cycle since she'd had a proper bath. Iniz hadn't been too concerned with keeping her clean. At first, he'd tried to present her as a proper slave, one eager to please her new "master" but after she'd permanently damaged three potential owners, Iniz had merely chained her to the ground and sold attempts to rape her.

A grim smile curved her lips as she thought about the number of men who'd walked away from that encounter limping and cursing. They'd also demanded their money back. Her smile widened. She'd been very bad for business.

She had to give Zayn some credit. The dragon who shared her existence hadn't let any of the men hurt her. She'd fought them off, slapping them away like a human swatting a fly—leaving them crushed and flattened.

No, the dragon hadn't let them touch her—but neither had she helped Kayla escape. The chain that had held her hadn't been that thick. One good tug and Kayla could have snapped the links and disappeared into the forest—*if* her dragon had loaned her the strength. But no, Zayn wouldn't do it.

Kayla knew why. The bedamned beast saw no point in returning home. She'd inspected all the males in Xicanth and found them lacking. The dragon wanted to find her mate and wasn't going to aid Kayla in returning to a place with no interesting males.

But now Kayla didn't need to rely on dragon strength to escape. She'd known as soon as the bastard had left her alone and unchained that she was free. Zayn might protest, but all it would require was some human ingenuity and a little help from her brothers.

Kayla had taken the bath that been offered, scrubbing the dirt and paint from skin. Even Zayn had sighed with relief at the warm water. Despite her irritation, Kayla had to admit the bastard was right, she'd stunk—to the point that Zayn's senses were so clouded that all she could smell was herself. The lack of smell had confused the dragon, making her difficult to control and of little help. Thankfully by the time the bastard's men had collected her from Iniz, everyone in the slave camp was so afraid of Kayla and her unusual strength that no one dared touch her.

After her bath, she'd eaten the food and water left behind—so the guy wasn't *as much* of a bastard as the others—and searched his room for her amulet. Iniz had dropped it in the pouch along with her earrings and ring. He obviously wanted no sign of her presence left in his camp.

She laughed softly. It wouldn't matter. When her brothers and father found her, Iniz's slave camp would be turned to ash. Vicious though it was, she couldn't help but feel a sense of satisfaction at that image. Even Zayn rumbled her agreement.

Great, if you hated it so much, you could have helped me escape. She directed the silent tirade toward her dragon but the bedamned beast ignored her. Zayn had a great way of doing that. Anything that bothered her or interfered with her view of the world, she just ignored, pouting until she got her way.

Kayla was convinced it was sheer stubbornness that had caused Zayn to never appear in her true dragon form. Since she was a child, Kayla had longed to take on the dragon's shape—to be just like her brothers and father and fly the skies—but Zayn had stolidly refused to appear. So Kayla was left with the dragon's presence in her head but she'd never known the full strength of the creature. It tore at her heart but she'd learned to live with it. Now she just wanted to return home.

During her search, Kayla had found the velvet bag and her jewelry but no sign of her amulet. Bastard.

It wouldn't do him any good. It couldn't be melted down and she didn't think anyone could wear it. The only person who'd ever been able to wear one of the amulets was her brother's mate.

Made of dragon's blood and wizard's magic when they were just children, the dragon amulet connected Kayla with her brothers. If she could just hold it in her hands for a few seconds she could contact her brothers and they would come for her. And her father would come. She shuddered at the destruction Nekane would leave behind. She'd seen her father's dragon truly enraged only three times in her life and it had taken the concentrated efforts of her mother to calm the beast down.

Nothing would stop him from coming after the man who supposedly "owned" her.

But Kayla needed that amulet. She'd searched the entire room and found nothing. Knowing she needed to make plans, she'd slipped into the garden and hidden. When the guards had run into the small grassy enclave, they'd never thought to look up, into the trees. She'd held herself still and breathless until they'd given up and retreated back into the bastard's chamber, fighting about who had to tell him that she'd escaped. Kayla had been raised around warriors, known them all her life, but never before had she seen two grown men tremble at the thought of delivering bad news to their leader.

Kayla estimated the time. It had to be the first hour after midnight. Her captor would probably return soon, no doubt drunk, possibly with a woman. Goddesses, she hoped not. She did not relish listening to him fuck some serving girl while she waited.

The door inside opened. From her position in the garden, she could see the main chamber, the huge bed that dominated it. Oh what she wouldn't give to sleep in a bed like that. Soon, she promised herself. Soon she would be home, in her own bed, and then by the Goddesses, she was never leaving again.

She scoffed at her own vow. She knew that wasn't true. There were too many adventures in the world to remain home. Just the next time, she wouldn't get caught.

She'd been so intent on freeing the dragon that Iniz had captured that she hadn't noticed the slave master's approach. When the dragon had flown away—ungrateful creature—Iniz had decided *she* was appropriate payment for what he'd lost.

The current bastard who “owned” her walked into the chamber, rolling his shoulders as if they were tight. She watched, expecting some woman to follow him in. When she'd first seen him, he'd had a serving girl practically in his lap. Maybe he'd fucked her right there at the table. Based on the few moments she'd spent in the dining hall, that didn't appear uncommon.

He glanced around the room and she knew he was looking for her. Ha, did he really think she'd be so stupid as to stay there? He walked to the garden door and stared out into the darkness. A strange look crossed his face as he looked up to the stars—it looked like pain, loss. A tug of sympathy pulled at her chest. *That poor man.*

Poor man? she thought, jerking herself back. He was her “owner”. He could do anything he wanted to her. At least legally. Zayn wouldn't allow him to hurt her. But even Zayn might have difficulty handling *him*.

He was a huge man, almost as tall as her brother Raineck. And broad—wide strong shoulders made powerful from days wielding a sword. Tight leathers clung to the thick muscles of his legs and a thin white shirt covered his chest. He had a dozen of those shirts. She'd found them while she was searching. She'd considered taking one but knew the white would act as a beacon in the darkness. In the end she'd chosen a black shirt that hung down almost to her knees. It wasn't much coverage but she didn't expect to need it for long.

She watched the man, fascinated by his face. He couldn't be considered handsome—his face was too harsh, too strong, with sharp defined cheekbones and brutal lips. Long straight black hair hung down his back, tied brutally tight at the base of his neck. It seemed strange that a warrior would keep his hair so long but it interested her. Her fingers twitched with the urge to stroke it. Zayn rumbled in her head, a pleased sound that surprised Kayla. The dragon never liked any of the men who Kayla chose.

Not that Kayla was choosing this one. She'd never choose this one. Not only was he a barbarian and a mercenary—he was too strong. There was no way she could present this man to her father as her dragon's mate. Nekane would see it as a direct challenge and would snap his body like a dried twig.

The man turned away, walking back into his room, pulling the white shirt off over his head and tossing it into the corner. He undid his leathers as well. And dropped them on the ground. Kayla stretched up from her hiding place, trying to get a better look at him. The tight curve of his ass cheeks looked strong and powerful. He'd be able to thrust for a long time.

The thought made Kayla flinch. What was she thinking? She wasn't planning on lying with the man so it didn't matter how long he could thrust. He was a bastard. A bastard with a really nice ass.

Kayla settled back down and waited. He was probably drunk—hopefully drunk—and he'd be asleep in minutes.

Almost an hour later, Kayla almost growled with her frustration. He was still awake. He hadn't even put out the torches that lit his room. Perfect, just her luck to get captured by a mercenary who was afraid of the dark. Through the window she could see him tossing and turning on his mattress—staring up at the ceiling—as if he couldn't get comfortable or his thoughts were keeping him awake.

Arrrgh, she thought glaring at the open door. *He can't have deep thoughts. He's a mercenary. Goddesses, just fall asleep.* Her silent plea must have been heard because moments later, she heard the low rumble of a snore.

Kayla sighed with relief but didn't move. She wanted him in a deep sleep.

Her patience nearly at an end, she finally allowed herself to slip out from her hiding place. She fingered the dagger she'd found in his room and crept inside. She didn't actually intend to kill him but she knew how to use the knife. Her father had taught her well.

As she neared the bed, she scanned the room, searching for any sign of her amulet or the chain. She silently inspected the shirt and leathers he'd discarded but found nothing. It would be so much easier if she could find it without waking him.

She crept forward and steadied herself before she placed the dagger point to his throat. As the metal touched his skin, his eyes popped open—instantly awake with no sign of drunkenness. The dark gray of his eyes was a surprise. Zayn made a muffled noise that Kayla didn't recognize so she ignored it. The dragon was always very clear if danger threatened.

"Where's my amulet?" Kayla demanded, pressing the dagger into his flesh, hard enough to let him know she was serious but not actually breaking the skin.

"Why didn't you leave?" he asked in reply, sounding more irritated than concerned.

"Not without my amulet. Where is it?"

He started to shake his head but seemed to realize that was a bad idea with a knife at his throat.

"I have no idea."

Bastard. Did he think the knife was a joke?

Keeping her lips tightly pressed, she breathed in through her nose, trying to contain her irritation. As she inhaled, a sweet, delicious scent invaded her body. A string of shocks rippled through her—tightening her nipples, sensitizing her skin, warming her pussy. Kayla choked. What was happening—?

Mine!

Zayn's possessive cry shocked Kayla, the knife jerking in her hand. It wasn't possible.

Mine, Zayn repeated.

"No," Kayla whispered.

"Yes."

Mine.

"No!"

"Yes," he insisted.

The sudden realization that *he* was answering her made Kayla blink and just that brief moment of distraction was all he needed. In a movement so fast she barely saw it happening, he snatched the dagger from her grip, grabbed the front of her shirt and yanked her up, over his body and onto her back on the mattress. He came down on top of her, his hard thighs outside hers. With a casual flick of his hand, he threw the dagger away and she heard the thump as it penetrated a wooden beam and stuck.

He collected both her hands and pulled them up over her head, using his full weight to hold her immobile.

There was nothing sexual about his actions but Zayn didn't seem to recognize that. The dragon instantly filled Kayla's head with images of her captor over her, inside her. Riding between her thighs. Hard and heavy. The will to fight slipped from her body. Goddesses, she wanted him.

Her fingers fluttered with the desperate need to touch him, to roll him onto his back and wrap her fingers around his cock, draw it into her mouth. She had no idea how long or thick he was but at this moment, she didn't care — she just wanted to fuck him. Zayn moaned her agreement, the sound moving silently through Kayla's body settling in her pussy.

She clenched her jaw and tried to fight the sensations. *He's a bastard. A killer, she protested to the beast. If I stay here, I'll be a slave.*

The words had no effect on the dragon — or her own body. Even knowing the desire came from Zayn's need, Kayla couldn't resist it.

Heat swelled in her sex and Kayla felt her hips rolled upward, trying to pump her clit against him, to find some way to move him down, between her thighs where she needed him. He was so close and she needed —

She shifted, subtly raising her hips. His knees tightened, the pressure holding her still. Heat surrounded her — delicious, sexual heat flooding her pussy with moisture.

Bracing herself, forcing her physical reactions and her dragon into the background, Kayla looked into the grim, angry eyes of the man who lay on top of her, truly looking at him for the first time. If Zayn had her way, Kayla would be looking at this face for the rest of her life.

His eyes were dark and empty except for a streak of fury. Soulless. Like a man who'd lost his life but didn't have the wisdom to lie down and die. His face was made up of sharp angles marked by pale scars — the lifetime remnants of a warrior. He wasn't hideous, just well used. The only thing about him that might be considered soft was his

hair—but even that was brutally constrained and she had a feeling no strand dared escape. Looking at him, she could see nothing gentle or compassionate in him.

Zayn had to be confused.

His lips were a hard, straight line and he shook his head.

“You really should have escaped when you had the chance.”

Sixx looked down at the little bit of a thing beneath him. Damn, his slave cleaned up pretty well. Except for the ragged cut of her hair, which he could only blame on himself, she was pretty—bright green eyes, dark hair and from what he could feel against his chest, a pair of full round breasts.

His cock twitched against the blanket that lay between their bodies and Sixx just about jumped. Hells, the thing had been limp for five full moon cycles and now with this little slave beneath him, it decides to come to life? Not that he wasn't pleased. Any reaction was better than none.

He just had to figure out what to do with the slave then he'd go find Jana and work out his six moon cycles of abstinence between her thighs.

Not that the slave wasn't a prime piece but for what he had planned, he didn't want an unwilling woman. Raping a furious captive wasn't on his list of a good time. He wanted a good hard fuck with an eager partner.

As if she heard his thoughts, his slave rolled her hips up, a soft, deliberate pulse against him. The tiny movement was like a fist massaging his cock and he groaned, grinding his teeth to keep the sound somewhat contained.

He stared in her eyes—trying to see if she truly understood what she was doing. In the torchlight, her eyes seemed to change color, going from green to black. She looked at his lips and licked hers at the same time—as if she wanted to taste him, kiss him.

Sixx held himself immobile as she stretched up and did just that, pressing her open lips against his, sucking softly as she teased his mouth, flicking her tongue inside his lip as if asking for entrance. For a moment he thought about pulling back, but Hells, it had been six moon cycles and she seemed to want it. Giving in, he leaned down, making the kiss easier for her and opening his mouth, waiting to see what she'd do. She groaned as she slipped her tongue between his lips, a gentle, hungry foray.

His cock rose to full hardness now as he imagined those lips and tongue eagerly licking his shaft the way she did his mouth. He turned his head and took command of the kiss, driving his tongue full into her mouth, knowing he risked being bit but deciding it was worth it. But biting seemed to be far from her mind—at least until he pulled back. Then she nipped his lower lip, scraping her teeth over it as if punishing him for leaving her.

Sixx raised his head and couldn't help but laugh. Hells, she was good. He could almost believe she wanted him to fuck her. And while he appreciated the effort, he wasn't stupid.

"You know, sweeting, if you're going to try to seduce someone into letting you escape—you need to be a little more subtle. You can't make the transition from 'I'm going to stab you' to 'please fuck me' quite so abrupt. It's a little obvious."

That seemed to set her off and she resumed her struggles. She didn't speak—just growled occasionally through clenched teeth. Of course, all her fighting did was rub against his groin and by damn, he wasn't going to come on his sheets—not after being denied pussy for so long. He squeezed his legs together and pressed down, trying to still her movements. After a few seconds, her strength appeared to give out—though he wasn't trusting that for a moment—and he clamped both hands into one of his.

His free hand he ran down her arm, along her back, around front and up, trying to keep his search impersonal as he smoothed his palm over her breasts. Unfortunately the full mounds had tight hard nipples that seemed eager for his touch. A sound like a crushed whimper reached his ears and Sixx was again amazed at the woman's ability to act. He could almost believe she wanted his hands on her. Almost.

"You'll understand if I don't trust that you don't have another weapon hidden somewhere." He glanced at the knife he'd tossed aside. "Of course, I can't say as I blame you. I should know better than to leave weapons lying around."

She raised her chin and he heard her make a scoffing noise as if she agreed with him. He leaned back enough to rub his hand down her other side, over her hip. Staring her straight in the eyes, he lifted his hips away and searched down her legs—her bare legs. That meant she was probably bare underneath the shirt she wore, *his* shirt. She watched him—her gaze burning hot, as if his touch was affecting her as much as it was him. He tried to ignore the feel of her skin beneath his hands but the sensations flowed through his limbs and into his groin.

Giving her enough time to think about where he would search next, he slid his hand up, nudging her thighs apart. He expected her to protest, squirm away. Instead he watched her tongue peek out from between her lips and lick the edge, as if she was remembering his taste, giving him ideas of sliding *his* tongue between her legs. Her eyes were completely black now—and blazing with fire.

The little witch was practically taunting him, daring him to slip his hand between her legs.

Never one to back down, he pushed deeper, feeling her thighs strain to open. Knowing he was setting himself up for a fight, he eased his grip on her legs and let her move, giving his hand more access. The heat was incredible...and the cream that leaked out from between her pussy lips. He told himself he wasn't going to do it but the temptation was too great. Too much time had passed since his body had responded.

He eased his hand up, letting her liquid coat his fingers as he teased her lower lips. She moaned and moved against him, the subtle movements of her hips sliding his fingers into her slit.

The logical portion of his mind warned him to draw back—that this was some sort of plan, some plot to escape—but his body, denied these pleasures for so long couldn't

resist one stroke, one glide of his finger into her opening, stretching deep into her tight passage. She cried out, arching her back. Her breasts pushed up against the heavy material of his shirt and he could see her nipples were still hard. Could a woman fake that kind of response? Hells, he didn't know. He'd always felt most women were consummate actresses but this, *this* felt real. Real enough for his cock to want more.

Unable to stop himself, he pumped his finger inside her, moaning at the way her cunt gripped his finger, as if it had been a while since she'd been fucked.

Driving his finger deep into her, he held it there, brushing the tip against the inner walls. "Is this what you want, little witch?" he asked some part of his mind needing to hear her.

"Yes." Her voice was low and harsh, as though the sound was dragged from some secret place inside her. "Fuck me."

Chapter Three

Kayla knew her demand surprised him—Hells, *she* could barely believe the words came out of her mouth—but Zayn wanted him, craved him. And the dragon translated that need into Kayla's body, making her ache. Tomorrow, tomorrow she would fight with her dragon about her unwise choice of a mate but tonight she needed him inside her.

"Please," she whispered, stretching up again and placing her lips on his, breathing her plea into his mouth. "Fuck me." She felt his body react to the words. His hand tightened on hers, holding her wrists hard against the mattress as he moved over her, giving her room to move, sliding his legs between hers. The rough hair on his thighs tantalized the skin on the insides of her legs as she bent her knees and cuddled his hips between her thighs.

"Fuck," he groaned as his cock tapped against her pussy.

"Yes," she whispered. She nipped and lapped at his mouth, teasing him into kissing her. He pulled his head back as if he was trying to escape her mouth but the retreat lasted only a moment before he used his free hand to hold her head and plunge his tongue deep into her mouth. Her cry sounded like a groan as he dominated her with that kiss, giving her no choice but to respond, to submit to his strength. Her pussy fluttered and she pumped her hips up, trying to find some relief.

When he lifted his mouth, Kayla took the chance and scraped her teeth along his jaw, a part of her wanting to hurt him just a little for the need he created inside her.

"Witch," he said against her skin, returning the punishment by biting down—not too gently—on her neck. The quick burst of sensual pain seemed to reach the dragon inside her and Zayn roared her pleasure. A red haze pressed on the sides of Kayla's mind and she knew Zayn was reaching for control.

Kayla usually loved when Zayn took command—it gave her confidence that she was like the other members of her family—but not now. Now she wanted to feel everything—not watch it through the fog of Zayn's mind. She pushed the dragon back and drove her tongue deep into his mouth.

Zayn didn't like be relegated away but the violence of Kayla's feelings seemed to please her and the dragon purred her encouragement. Goddesses, he tasted perfect. The hint of ale on his mouth was a delectable accompaniment to the purely masculine flavor. As she tasted his mouth, she lifted her hips. The hard line of his cock slipped between her legs, not entering her, just pressing against her as he thrust down to meet her. Even from that light touch she could tell he was long and hard. Hmmm, thick. She really enjoyed a thick cock inside her and it had been years since one had entered her. It had been years since *any* cock had entered her.

“Please,” she whispered, hating the pleading tone in her voice but the need was so great. Her brothers had warned her that when the dragon chose its mate the need for that person was almost uncontrollable. Now Kayla understood. She didn’t know anything about this man and it didn’t matter. She wanted him, inside her. She pumped her hips up and down, loving the feel of him between her legs.

He growled and lifted himself away. Before she could protest, he’d reached between their bodies, positioned his cock to her entrance and drove forward. The full length of his shaft plunged inside her in one wicked, vicious stroke. Kayla cried out as the shock turned to pure pleasure.

Mine, Zayn purred as he hilted himself in her pussy. The walls of her sex fluttered, gripping his cock as he slowly pulled back, a long withdrawal that let her feel every inch of his shaft. He stretched his neck up and Kayla watched the muscles in his jaw tighten, as if he was fighting the sensation but couldn’t resist plunging into her one more time.

She tugged on her arms trying to free her hands—wanting to touch him, hold him—but the movement pulled across the cuts left by the slave bands Iniz had clamped on her wrists. She cried out. The sound seemed to surprise him almost as much as it did her. Tension whipped through his body and it took her a moment to realize he thought he was hurting her by fucking her.

“My wrists,” she whispered.

The tough hardened mercenary pulled his hand away and stared at the wounded flesh. The look of revulsion and pain surprised Kayla—as if his own skin was being torn.

He grabbed her wrists with both hands, placing his palms against the wounds and wrapping his fingers around the thin cuts. Pressure built as he squeezed. Warmth spread from beneath his fingers and for a moment the sensation was soothing. Then it changed, like he’d set her skin on fire. The sudden spark burned her flesh. Kayla yanked her arms down, trying to break his grip, and glared at him when she failed, conscious that tears were leaking from her eyes. She was a princess and a dragon. She *wouldn’t* cry in front of this man.

“Let me go.”

“You wanted this.” He pulled his cock back and gave a shallow thrust deep inside her. The subtle penetration made her forget the pain in her wrists. “That’s it, sweetie. Feel me inside you.” He continued to fuck her, slow and shallow, reaching a place deep inside her that had never been touched before. After long moments, the fire burning across her flesh stopped and he released her hands.

A strange darkness settled in his eyes, a grim pain that seemed to emanate from his soul. The shock of that emotion was so dramatic, Kayla forgot to struggle, her only thought, Zayn’s only instinct, was to heal and comfort. She wrapped her arms around his neck and pulled him down to her. For a moment, he resisted but then gave in, meeting her, letting her lead as she dipped her tongue between his lips.

As she tasted him, his hips began to move again, hard steady thrusts, shallow and strong inside her. The sweet pressure flowed through her pussy making every inch tingle. Each stroke sent her higher but she fought the climax that pressed on her. After so long, finally having him – the man her dragon had selected, the man for her – inside her was too delicious. She didn't want it to end soon.

And he seemed to have no desire to rush. Each stroke was a long caress, as if he was savoring the experience.

It was almost like he'd never fucked a woman before but Kayla knew that wasn't possible. He was too sexual to have been without a pussy for long. He probably had a dozen women on the side. Zayn snarled her disapproval at the direction of Kayla's thoughts and her hips thrust higher, driving him deeper. The hard, heavy pulse sent him fully inside her and drew a wicked groan from his lips.

"Yes," she whispered, raking her teeth across his skin. "Fuck me. Come inside me."

Zayn howled her desire and Kayla felt the dragon's presence blend with hers. Her senses expanded – the luscious scent of his clean hair, the warm masculine smell of his body.

"Come inside me," she demanded again. He cried out and drove his hips forward, slamming into her, setting off delicious eruptions in her pussy. The hot pulses of his cum filled her as he entered her one more time.

Mine. The dragon's whisper floated through her head as the climax rippled through her body.

"Yes," Kayla moaned in response.

Still inside her, on top of her, he raised his head and looked down. His eyes glittered with a strange light – almost a warning. His cock filled her, still hard.

Kayla held back the joyful laughter that threatened. Her mercenary lover wasn't finished with her yet.

More, Zayn demanded.

Yes, Kayla agreed. She definitely wanted more.

* * * * *

She arched her back as the thick, hard cock slid into her. Her whimper floated between them like a gift. He drew back, filling her again and again until her voice hurt from pleading and her body ached with the precious need for release.

His slow heavy thrusts seemed designed to tempt her, tease her with the promise of more. The perfect weight of his body pressed down on hers, holding her against the soft mattress, holding her steady as he fucked her. He was thick and hard, almost too much, each entrance making her ache just a little. Deep inside, her pussy throbbed as he filled her. She clutched his shoulders, holding him, her legs curling around his waist. She needed him deeper, harder. It wasn't enough.

Hot fingers caressed her breasts, teasing the peaks until she thought she would scream with the need to come.

"Please," she whispered, wishing he would speak, tell her of his love, his desire. Claim her as her dragon had claimed him. But he remained silent, fucking her, taking her. Her body screamed its need but her soul knew that all was lost.

Pleasure rose from the tight point of her clit, spreading through her core. It was delicious, wonderful, but she needed more. She needed the words, needed his voice. The slow steady pulses changed as he drew back, his hips rocking high and deep as he filled her, his breath hot on her cheek. The pressure against her clit built as he rode her faster and faster.

He filled her one more time, driving deep and shooting her body to climax. Breath caught in her throat as warm swirls of pleasure flowed from her pussy to her limbs, leaving her limp and satisfied.

"Mine," he whispered against her ear, claiming her in the way of the dragon. "You're mine."

Her heart pounded at the simple word. *Mine*. Kayla fought the dream, knowing where it led. She clawed toward wakefulness but the nightmare's hold wouldn't release her.

Across the field, her lover waited, dressed in full battle armor, his sword glinting in the bright sunlight. He raised his chin and stared at the dragon who stalked him. The purple and green beast drew its head back. Fire erupted from the back of the creature's throat.

"No!" Kayla tried to run but invisible hands held her in place as she reached for her lover.

He stared at the fearsome beast towering over him and turned his gaze to Kayla. The disgust was vivid in his eyes as he dropped his sword and backed away. The fog stretched out its fingers and grabbed him, pulling him deeper into the mist. Leaving Kayla alone.

"No!"

"What? Did you think I was just giving you free rein?"

The mocking voice—*his* voice—stripped the dream from her mind and brought back the memories of the night before...and the reality of where she was. She opened her eyes and realized she was staring at the brown striped sheets of *his* bed.

By the Goddesses who were supposed to protect all women, she didn't even know his name. Her dragon had gotten one whiff of his scent and the bedamned beast had seized control. Well, not total control, Kayla admitted. She'd been present as well. It might have been easier to forget if Zayn had taken control. Then maybe Kayla wouldn't remember quite so clearly how it felt to have him inside her.

She crushed a groan and tried to suppress the tingling around her clit. She was successful at the first and not at the second.

Kayla mentally searched for Zayn's presence. Her dragon, unlike her brothers', wasn't always in her head. Sometimes she would disappear for days at a time. But this morning when Kayla called for her, Zayn was there, the low satisfied purr of the beast making Kayla's sex ache. She could almost see the dragon licking her claws, a smug smile on her lips. The beast had finally found what she wanted. And she wanted him.

"Are you getting out of the bed?" he asked, sounding nothing like the sensual commanding lover from the night before. Now he sounded irritated. Again.

With a sigh, that turned into a moan as her aching muscles protested the movement, she rolled over, grabbing the blanket to wrap around her chest. He smirked indicating the bit of feminine modesty was futile, which it was. He'd had his mouth on her breasts last night, there was no reason not to let him see them now – except that she couldn't. Strangely a sense of shyness had returned with the daylight. She slid off the side of the bed and took a step. A chain rattled at her feet and she looked down. A large metal cuff was clamped around her ankle.

The metal bit into her skin and she winced. The light pain reminded her of her other wounds. She rubbed her wrists, unconsciously soothing the aches that had been present since Harvet had dragged her away from Iniz's slave camp. Her fingers moved across smooth skin and she looked down. The scratches and cuts left behind by the metal bands were gone. Not even faint pink scars remained.

She blinked and looked again. Tiny slashes had marked her wrists last night when she'd bathed. The harsh soap had made the cuts sting but she'd been determined to clean the wounds. She looked up at her captor, letting her confusion show.

He merely folded his arms on his chest and stared down at her, shaking his head. "You look surprised. Last night you held a knife to my throat. Did you really think I was just going to let you wander freely? Another hint about trying to escape – if you're going to fuck someone so they'll release you, you shouldn't fall asleep afterward. That would have been your best time to either kill me or run." He let his eyes wander down her body – it was a deliberately insulting stare. "You certainly know how to wear a man out."

She was so stunned her mouth dropped open but no coherent sounds could slip past her constricted throat. The *bastard* didn't seem to notice.

"Now since we weren't properly introduced last night, what's your name?"

Kayla squished her lips together and looked away. She wasn't giving him anything. Well, anything more. She'd given him quite enough last night.

When she didn't respond, he turned those empty cold eyes on her. "Tell me your name or I'll pick something." He paused with a heavy silence. "You won't like my choice."

She thought of all the possible names he could assign her. "Bitch" and "Slut" had been Iniz's favorites.

"Kayla."

"My name is Monntieth Sixx. You may call me Sixx or Captain. Anything else and you're likely to irritate me." Her weary mind shuddered at the subtle threat beneath his words. Or maybe it was something about the name. It sounded familiar. As if she should know him, maybe fear him.

But that didn't stop her. "Funny, it seems like you've been irritated since the moment I met you."

He nodded. "I'd consider that a nod to your presence more than anything else." He looked around the room. "You have enough chain to take care of your needs. Just a warning—" His eyes stared directly into hers. "I've collected the rest of the weapons and removed them, so if you want to kill me, you'll have to do it with your bare hands."

"Don't tempt me," she snarled.

He laughed and when he looked back at her, his eyes were twinkling with undisguised arrogance. "Strange, last night you had your hands on me, but didn't seem interested in killing me. You had a different use for my body."

The reminder of her pleas, her humiliation, sent a spike of fury into her chest. Her lips peeled back in an unconscious snarl. "When my father finds you, he's going to rip your body into a dozen pieces and scatter them across the countryside."

"Hmm. Interesting threat." Sixx stepped close, so close she could almost touch him. "Do you think he'll make it more painful when I tell him I spent last night with my cock buried deep inside your wet, hot cunt? And that you begged me, demanded that I fuck you? Think that will upset him?"

Kayla snarled and swung at him—her fists missing him by mere inches. "You bastard."

"Born and bred, sweeting," he admitted. "Born and bred."

He stepped back, just out of her range she noticed. "Now be a good girl today, and maybe I'll fuck you again when I return."

Kayla watched as he turned and walked away, leaving her alone, chained to a wall. She screamed as the outer door swung shut. "Bastard," she shouted though she knew he was probably long gone. Kayla gripped the chain and tugged, growling in frustration when it didn't move. Zayn joined in the sound but the beast didn't add any of her strength.

A dragon's worst fear was being rejected by its mate. Dragons seemed to come into the world anticipating rejection. Zayn was no different. She'd found her mate, claimed him and now he'd walked away.

Mine? Leave?

The panicked tone sent a shock through Kayla's heart. She'd wanted, begged for her dragon to appear in her corporeal form for most of her life but Zayn had refused. Never letting Kayla fly with her brothers or know the mighty power of the dragon's body. But now there was a new aura surrounding Zayn's words. As if finding her mate had changed her as well. The dragon's anger and pain were dangerous. There was no telling what she might do if she actually seized control. A dragon, newly released, in the midst of a band of mercenaries. It didn't sound safe to Kayla.

He'll be back, Kayla promised trying to soothe the beast the only way she knew how. "He'll be back and you'll have him again."

Mine!

"I know," she conceded. "I know you've claimed him and he'll return."

Want him now.

Great, the dragon was pouting.

"He'll come back later today and he'll fuck us," she promised though she had no idea if that was true. Hells, from what she knew and had seen of Sixx, he probably had many women waiting to service his eager cock. He'd certainly been willing to fuck a stranger last night.

And so were you.

A reminder from her conscience she didn't need. *Besides, it was his fault.*

Well, maybe not *all* his fault, she conceded. That first time she'd practically commanded him to fuck her. The second time, he'd already been hard inside her so it seemed like the natural progression. The third time—well, it was difficult to remember who actually woke who. Just that they'd ended up locked together, his cock once again thrusting inside her.

But the last time—that had been all him. He'd woken her from a sound sleep and mounted her, sliding into her before she was even awake. But she'd been wet. Kayla moaned as she remembered the slow, delicious way he'd fucked her, pumping his cock into her as if he couldn't resist coming inside her one more time.

Mine? the dragon asked again, this time her tone mournful.

"Yes," Kayla sighed in agreement. Her fingernail picked at the sheet on the bed. A tiny hole appeared and she slipped her finger into it. With a sigh, she tugged and the material ripped. Zayn growled, feeling alone and left behind. Kayla snagged her finger into the sheet and pulled again, widening the hole, enjoying the sound as the material tore.

Zayn's disappointment flowed through her—turning back to anger, the anger of a female who didn't have her mate. Didn't have the one thing she truly desired.

The hole widened as Kayla continued to pull, needing an outlet for the dragon's pain—and her own anger. The tear increased until it ran the length of the bed. Feeling just a little bit spiteful, she pulled the torn section off the bed and ripped a long line down from the top, peeling a thin strip of material away.

Kayla smiled as the sound of tearing cloth filled the room. The bastard had mocked her for desiring him, mocked her for fucking him—well, it would be a bright day in the Hells before she begged him to fuck her again. If he wanted her again—and from the bulge in his leathers as he left it was clear that he did—then he was going to have to seduce—no, *beg*—her.

Chapter Four

Sixx walked onto the training field, his body present, his mind back on the woman chained in his room. Last night he'd been wondering what he was going to do with her. Now his body seemed to have an unlimited selection of options. All of them ended with his sliding his cock into her pussy – or her mouth – or her –

Mik's hand slapped Sixx's arm jolting him out of his thoughts. "Morning."

Sixx nodded and Mik smiled. Somehow through years of killing and battles, Mik had maintained this strangely cheerful, laughing attitude. Sixx couldn't understand it.

Mik moved to his gear – pulling a thick leather glove up his arm. Winter was their off-season – too cold and wet to fight a decent war. Sixx and his guard spent a good portion of the winter training new recruits or improving the skills of those already in Sixx's troop. It was one of the reasons he was so successful. His troop was battle-ready at the first thaw.

Sixx scanned the courtyard he used as his training field. Men were starting to arrive, Scant among them. Sixx raised his chin in greeting as he pulled his sword from its scabbard, inspecting the blade. A tiny nick in the metal ticked his finger as he stroked near the edge. It was a simple fix. He could have one of the recruits do it.

Or he could have his slave do it. The thought made Sixx shake his head. Right, hand *that* woman his sword. She'd have him impaled before the weapon had even left his grip.

He'd deal with it later. He wasn't planning on using the sword today. He returned it to its leather sheath and looked up. Mik stood next to Scant, both men watching Sixx with speculative eyes.

"What?" he demanded.

Mik shook his head. "I don't know. There's something different about you this morning, isn't there, Scant?" Scant nodded his agreement. "Yeah." Mik strolled forward. "If I didn't know better, I'd say you'd spent last night riding between a pair of smooth, creamy thighs."

"How poetic," Sixx commented, letting none of his emotions show. That's what came from being friends with your men. They knew you too well.

"But –" Mik continued as if Sixx hadn't spoken. "I know it wasn't Jana."

"Because *you* were between her smooth and creamy thighs?"

"Exactly. At least for part of the night. So, who could it be?"

"I'll let you ponder that while you get your ass to work. The sun is burning that means you should be doing something besides bothering me."

Mik laughed and tightened the strap on his sleeve. "Yes but—"

The conversation was—thankfully—interrupted by Ernst's arrival. The young man bowed quickly.

"Captain, we searched the surrounding land and found nothing."

Sixx shook his head. "What?"

"For the slave. Because we lost her, Hinden and I conducted a search on our own. Unfortunately, sir, we found nothing."

"Because she didn't escape. She was hiding in the garden."

The young man snapped back. "We looked there. How could we have missed her?"

"Did you ever look up?" He waited until the realization that she'd been in a tree hit the young man's eyes. "Yes, I discovered that you don't quite understand how to do a proper search when I woke up with a knife to my throat."

Ernst looked at Sixx's neck as if to confirm it hadn't been slit open. Then he swallowed—no doubt fearing his own neck.

"Is she dead, sir? Do I need to remove the body?"

Sixx crushed a sigh. That's what a reputation did for you. "No. She's not dead. You and Hinden will try again to properly guard her. If I find her gone this time, yours will be the only body that's removed from my chambers."

A faint gurgling noise told Sixx his threat was understood.

"At once, sir."

Ernst turned and stalked away, his boots crunching in the gravel. As the sound faded, Mik's laughter filled the silence. "So that's it. The little slave didn't escape."

Sixx turned his stare back to the man he considered his best friend. Mik smiled.

"I take it that under all that filth, there was a woman—one interesting enough to tempt you. And she held you at knifepoint. That's a story I'd like to hear."

Sixx walked away but Mik was right on his heels, following close. He caught up to Sixx's shoulder and dropped his voice. "So tell me, were her thighs smooth and creamy?"

"Mik—I have a lot to do today." He looked at his friend in warning. "Don't make me waste time killing you."

The threat made Mik throw his head back in laughter but he backed away, still chuckling as he called to the new recruits to take their places. Scant also collected the men he was working with and soon the sound of metal on metal chimed through the air.

Sixx took a few minutes to stop and watch, evaluate the troop. From his place on the sidelines he could spot weaknesses but even as he saw them, so did Scant, correcting them and putting them through their trials.

Harvet was one of those working with Scant. Sixx watched him, noticing the fluid way he moved with just enough unpredictability to make him dangerous. The kid was

improving, getting stronger. He finished sparring with his partner and looked up, his eyes meeting Sixx's—the hatred filling the younger man's gaze. Hatred and a warning.

Sixx knew what Harvet planned—it happened occasionally. A young warrior wanting to make a reputation for himself or not wanting to build a troop of his own would go after his captain, challenging him. Winner take all. Despite the changes in his life over the past five moon cycles, Sixx wasn't ready to give up his troop.

He'd have to deal with Harvet soon. The others had noticed the kid's attitude and if Sixx let it pass, that arrogance would spread. Better to beat it out of Harvet now. He'd given up on the hope that Harvet would decide that life in Sixx's troop was too confining and he'd take off on his own. With a good recommendation from Sixx, Harvet could sign on with any number of troops more suited to Harvet's "rape and pillage" mentality. Not that Sixx's men weren't brutal and violent—that was the only way to survive—but they worked hard and Sixx kept them in line like a military organization.

Yes, soon he'd have to take out Harvet. Gods, he only hoped he'd found a way to beat this curse by then. But part of it was gone, he thought. He'd been able to fuck last night. And this morning. Hells, he'd come inside her four times. Four hot sexy times. The center of his stomach fell away and his cock pressed against the ties of his leathers. Perfect. Going from a cock that wouldn't get hard to one that wouldn't stay down.

If that witch wasn't already dead, Sixx vowed to the Gods, he'd kill her.

Leaving the men to their training, Sixx went to the chamber he used for business. Scant was the troop treasurer and he'd have started on the bookkeeping and payment from the coin that Harvet had brought last night. Sixx looked over the figures and grunted with satisfaction. Another couple of good seasons and when he was ready to retire, he'd have enough money to live quietly until someone put a shiv between his ribs. He'd never be rich—didn't have the temperament to be so focused on money—but he'd be comfortable.

He just had to make it through another couple of seasons. He stared down at his right hand. Hells, it barely felt like it was part of his own body. And like the rest of his body, half the time it refused to follow his mind's commands. Like last night. Of course, he hadn't actually commanded his body not to fuck her. The pure excitement of being able to fuck had been too much of a temptation to deny himself.

And she'd been willing. Hells, more than willing. Eager. He laughed without humor. He was used to women being eager to fuck him. Not because he was the greatest lover in the realm but because of who he was—the captain of the troop and the Butcher of Balier. Or sometimes just being a warrior was enough. He'd learned to recognize the greedy look on a woman's face that told him he could have her if he wanted. He tried to give his partner pleasure as well—being a bad fuck wouldn't improve his reputation—but most of the time it was a quick bounce in a back room before returning to his ale.

And then there was Kayla. He'd seen glimmers of that greedy look he'd come to expect in women who had decided to fuck him—but mostly it was desire, brutal desire

that seemed to control her. Her passion had seemed real. His cock twitched. The liquid grip of her body hadn't been faked. She taken all of him and let him ride her hard, as if she loved the weight of his shaft inside her.

He groaned and shoved the thoughts aside. He *wasn't* going to spend the day hard. Years of training gave him the mental strength to focus on the work in front of him for a good portion of the day. Forcibly keeping his mind on his tasks, he barely thought about Kayla—and the fact that she was waiting in his chambers, half dressed, wet and eager.

In the middle of the afternoon, he pushed back from his desk and paced the small chamber long enough to know it wouldn't do what he needed. He needed movement, physical exhaustion. It was almost time for the afternoon training so he grabbed his sword and returned to the training ground. Mik and Scant were finishing up with their men and the rest of Sixx's guard was arriving. Late in the day, the five men who formed his personal guard and Sixx trained—using each other to stay in shape. Sixx nodded in greeting to Scant and Mik and drew his sword. The weapon felt almost foreign in his grip as he shifted it from hand to hand, trying to find the balance.

It didn't feel right.

Sixx tossed his hair back over his shoulder and raised his chin in silent challenge. Mik smiled—always ready for a good fight—and raised his weapon. He circled Sixx and Sixx moved with him. He could see the pattern of Mik's steps, watched the tension in his muscles for warning that he would strike. When it came, Sixx swung, managing to smack Mik's sword back.

Attack. Attack. There was the perfect opening.

The commands in his head moved like sludge through his body. Mik raised his eyebrows in question as Sixx held back.

"Waiting for an invitation?" he taunted.

"Shut up and fight," Sixx snarled, hoping the witch who cursed him was screaming her lungs out in the lowest level of the Hells.

* * * * *

Four hours later he stormed into his chambers, physically exhausted, filthy and limping.

His concentration had been off. All day, it had been off. Off on the hot little body waiting in his chambers. Hells, he needed to get her out of his rooms. Just the image of her waiting for him was enough to distract him. It didn't seem to matter that he'd fucked her last night, his cock wanted more and when he should have been thinking strategy and offense, he'd been thinking about her.

It wasn't enough that he had to fight his own body, now his mind wasn't cooperating. After tripping into Mik, having Scant best him on the field and cutting

himself on his own blade, Sixx had withdrawn from actual sparring and spent his time battling with the straw totems. That had been safer for the warriors around him.

He stepped into his chambers, imagining a hot bath and an even hotter woman. By the Gods, he would fuck her out of his system. Then maybe he could get back to his life.

The chamber was silent when he walked in. He looked around, tension creeping up his neck. If she managed to escape...

Hells, if she's escaped, I'm going to have to kill Ernst and Hinden for being stupid.

He heard a sound in the other room—just the hint of movement—and knew that his little slave hadn't escaped. Ernst had reported that she'd been quiet all day.

Hmmm. This might actually work out. He'd never had a personal servant before. His mistresses and whores had been less inclined to make his life easier. It was interesting to consider coming back to his chambers after a long day training and having his little slave eagerly waiting for him—his rooms cleaned, his dinner prepared. His slave naked. On her knees. His cock hardened at the picture forming in his mind—him, sinking his shaft into her hot mouth, sliding between the soft, firm lips.

Of course, it would be a while before he allowed Kayla's mouth—and teeth—anywhere near his cock.

He went into his bedchamber, the silence and stillness translating into a threat that put his senses on alert. Without turning he knew Kayla was watching him—with those strange changeable eyes.

Prepared for attack, he slowly turned and faced her, jolting when he saw the image before him. He hadn't misread the threat—at least in her eyes. She stared at him with anger and rage and perhaps a bit of hurt. Her hands flew in quick, rough movements binding bits of brown material together into a braid. She didn't look at her work—merely stared at him with deadly intent.

Obviously, it would take some time before he'd achieved his little fantasy of an eager woman waiting for him.

Sixx let some of the tension slip from his body. He had nothing to worry about, unless she was planning to use that rope she was making to choke him. Or tie him down.

That thought led his greedy mind to others—of Kayla tied down, to his bed, helpless. Right. Even bound and enslaved, this woman would be defiant.

One of his white shirts covered her upper body. The slim lengths of her legs were bent crosswise in front of her. Her hands continued twisting the long strips of material as she silently watched him.

The sight brought a smile to Sixx's lips. It looked almost domestic and tranquil—if she hadn't so clearly been planning his demise while she braided those thin strips.

He stopped. Where'd she get the material? It looked disturbingly familiar. He looked at his bed. The pale gray mattress was bare.

"What are you doing?"

For one instant here eyes turned coy and she fluttered her eyelashes in an innocent, irritating manner. "I needed something to do with my hands."

"Like tear up my sheets?"

She shrugged and kept braiding.

Sixx reached down and grabbed her arm, yanking her up. She was tiny compared to him but she wasn't cowed by the rough handling. Her eyes sparkled with anger and, Hells, lust. His cock tightened as he imagined her getting wet.

He'd seen the same look in her eyes last night seconds before she'd begged him to fuck her.

For a moment, he thought her body was softening but then she tensed up and struggled within his grip.

"Take your hands off me," she growled in a low, imperious voice.

Sixx felt the edges of his eyes constrict. Anger bubbled up inside him but the thought of hitting or damaging this woman made his head pound. "I'll touch you whenever I wish, however I wish," he growled "If I want to lay you across my bed and fuck you, I will. If I want to take into the Great Hall and let half my men use your body, I will." The light that had sparked in her eyes at the mention of him fucking her vanished when he threatened to give her to another. It was an option. He'd shared women before. But the idea of sharing Kayla was so repulsive he knew he couldn't do it. But he also couldn't let her think she ruled her own world. She belonged to him. "I can do whatever I want with you, to you. You seem to forget you're a slave."

"And you don't know who you're dealing with." There was a threat in her words that he didn't doubt made other men tremble. She was a haughty thing. She raised her chin, looking like a queen addressing a peasant. "If you want to live, you'll release me now and let me return to my family."

Sixx didn't let the threat of her family worry him. He didn't doubt that she had a family out there—she was too well bred and her attitude a little too arrogant for her to have been a slave for long—but he seriously doubted they were looking for her. They'd probably sold her to Iniz. It was a fairly common occurrence. Well-to-do families suddenly found themselves in need of money and their only asset being a younger daughter.

"If *you* want to live—" he countered. "You'll learn to behave. Or you won't eat."

Her eyes darkened and he thrust her away from him—though it took all his strength to do so. His body, his cock, was practically begging for him to toss her on the ruined bed and fuck her until she was pleading for more. He jerked back from the temptation.

He would not be led around by his cock. Just because she was a hot fuck, didn't mean he would let an infraction like this pass.

"Clean up this mess and straighten my bed by the time I return—and maybe, if I'm in a good mood, I won't beat you before I go to sleep."

With the threat lingering in the air, Sixx spun around and slammed out of his chambers. The thoughts of a hot bath, and definitely the hot woman, were gone. He just needed to get away from her. What was wrong with him? If anyone else spoke to him in such a manner—or even stared at him with that defiant arrogance—he’d have thrown him out of the room—without bothering to open the door. Some consideration was given because she was a woman, but still, none of his previous women had ever dared challenge him in such a way.

Hells. He stormed down the hallway and burst into the Great Hall. Scant and Mik were seated at Sixx’s table. He stalked up and grabbed one of the full tankards sitting on the table, swallowing half the contents in one gulp.

A scream died in his throat as the ale raked his flesh and dripped like liquid flame into his stomach. The tips of his fingernails bit into the wood tabletop as he fought to endure the pain. Fuck. Whatever part of the curse that had disappeared, giving him the ability to fuck, hadn’t extended to ale. His stomach rumbled, the burning sensation fading but the sickness lingering.

“You all right?” Mik asked, the amused twinkle in his eye spiking Sixx’s irritation. “Where’s that hot little slave?”

Sixx snarled in response and sat down.

“When do we get to see her?” Scant asked, picking up on Mik’s teasing.

“When I dump her body out the front gate.”

“Ooh, so the hot body that kept you warm last night must have cooled during the day.”

“Mik.” He waited until his lieutenant was looking at him. “Shut the fuck up.” It wasn’t the most clever response but it was all his beleaguered mind could come up with at the moment.

Of course, Mik’s reaction was to laugh. Sixx closed his eyes and thought about firing all of them and getting a new guard—one that didn’t know him so well.

“Can I get you boys anything?” Sixx recognized the husky feminine voice as Jana. She was back. He opened his eyes and looked at her. Tonight, she wore a deeply cut dress that showed a large expanse of her breasts and draped loosely over her hips. Easy access no matter which part a man wanted to grab.

She pressed her chest forward and cocked her hip in Sixx’s direction.

This was perfect. He didn’t need to think about the witch chained up in his chamber. His cock had obviously rebounded from the curse and he could spend a few minutes riding between Jana’s legs. That would take the edge off his need.

He reached out and snagged Jana’s arm, pulling her down across his lap. Her laughter flitted through the air mixing with Mik’s cheers and shouts of approval. Sixx covered her lips with his and drove his tongue into her mouth, ignoring the fact that she didn’t taste as sweet as Kayla. He forced himself to continue with the dominating kiss, feeling Jana’s submission, hoping his cock would respond. He threw the lower edge of

her skirt out of the way and slid his fingers up her soft skin. Her legs opened eagerly as she sucked on his tongue, reminding him that he was supposed to be kissing her.

Memories of Kayla washed over him—her pleas, the intoxicating way she accepted him into her body, the soft cries as he moved in her.

Fuck. He pushed the memories aside and doubled his efforts.

He would do this—he would fuck this woman and then ignore the one who sat in his chambers no doubt planning his demise.

Chapter Five

The chamber door opened and Kayla snapped her eyes shut, willing the tension that instinctively filled her body to release, hoping she appeared asleep. She lay with her back to the door—the womanly sign of rejection. It was a bit presumptuous for her to be sleeping in Sixx’s bed—she was a slave after all—but there was no place else except the floor and that wasn’t going to happen.

Unless Sixx returned with a woman. What the Hells would she do then? Lie on the floor and wait for them to finish? She was unable to stop the shudder that ran down her spine. Zayn would be uncontrollable if that happened.

As it was the dragon was furious—but not really sure who she was angry with. Sixx for leaving her or Kayla for rejecting him.

Sixx was silent moving across the chamber but Zayn came awake as she sensed her mate’s presence. The dragon began to rumble through Kayla’s head, calling for Sixx. Along with the not-so-subtle pleas, Zayn created images of Sixx on top of Kayla, inside her, his hips pumping slow and deep between her thighs. The fantasy so was real Kayla could almost feel the pleasure rising in her.

She clenched her jaw and tried to resist the tempting pictures Zayn gave her. Kayla gripped the edge of the bedframe and fought the desire flowing through her body. It was frustrating. Her body wanted him, craved him. But her mind didn’t know him. Her heart didn’t trust him.

She could accept her behavior last night—practically jumping the man in his own bed—because Zayn had been so excited to find her mate and the dragon had seized the opportunity.

But now Kayla was in control and she wanted to know the man that her dragon had chosen. She’d spent the day and evening thinking about him. And in truth all she knew about him was he was a hungry, demanding lover and that he was a warrior. There was something about his name that lurked at the edge of her memory but she couldn’t bring it to the front of her mind.

What could Zayn be thinking binding her to a warrior? Her father would destroy him. The man Kayla needed was a husband who would blend easily into her family. Someone who would understand that Kei ruled the kingdom and Nekane, her father’s dragon, ruled their lives. When that dragon wasn’t happy, no one was happy. Just the thought of Sixx facing her father, in his human form, made her heart stop. It would be like two animals fighting over the same bone.

Always assuming Sixx is willing to fight for you, Kayla pointed out. So far, Sixx didn’t seem inclined to protect her or defend her in any manner. It was unlikely he’d

fight for her. And may the Gods protect him if he ever faced Nekane. She couldn't stop the shudder that ran down her spine. Too much blood had always turned her stomach.

She could hear Sixx stripping off his clothes and wanted to turn over to watch but held herself still. She wasn't going to invite him back between her legs. His mockery earlier had been enough and her feminine pride would only take so much.

After he'd left, she taken his "suggestion" and straightened the room—deciding that no sheets on the bed would make her uncomfortable as well as him. But then she'd waited, returning to her braiding, taking grim pleasure in the destruction of his sheets. Finally—not knowing how long he'd be gone, she'd climbed into bed, hoping sleep would claim her before he returned.

The far side of the mattress sank as Sixx stretched out beside her. The close proximity of her mate made Zayn howl with need—and the dragon renewed her efforts to build Kayla's hunger for him.

Unable to stop herself, Kayla drew in a long breath. Sixx's scent filled her lungs and her head. Another smell followed it, faint and muted. Perfume. And a woman's scent. Sixx had indeed spent his evening between another woman's legs. He'd washed but a trace of the scent lingered.

Zayn snarled and moved back into the corner of Kayla's mind, pouting that her mate would touch another woman. Kayla couldn't help but smile. A dragon's comprehension was limited to very basic needs. Zayn assumed that Sixx understood that he'd been chosen and that he would accept the dragon's claim.

Kayla tried to suppress her own flicker of jealousy. Though her father and brothers were fiercely faithful to their wives, part of that was because of the dragons' presence. Sixx would have no such pressure on him. *If* he even chose to stay with her once he knew the truth. Once he found out she was not only a princess but a dragon. Killing her and dumping her body might be a safer option for him.

Sixx shifted on the mattress tugging the thin blanket toward him, sliding it off Kayla's hip. She glared at the wall but refused to respond. Forcing the chill from her skin, she closed her eyes and tried to sleep.

The chamber was silent except for the whisper for their breath. She waited, hoping sleep would come. The rumble of her empty stomach tore through the silence. Kayla slid her hand across her belly, trying to quell the noise. Sixx had left her food that morning but nothing for the rest of the day. She could only hope he hadn't been serious in his threat to starve her.

Surely Zayn wouldn't choose a man so cruel. But how would the dragon know? She'd selected him on scent. What kind of way was that to pick a man? Her stomach rumbled again and Kayla squeezed her lips together to hide the moan that was tempted to follow the sound.

"Hells." Sixx threw off the blanket, tossing it over Kayla and surrounding her with his warmth and scent. Too startled to resist, she looked over her shoulder and watched as Sixx dragged on his leathers, his tight buttocks clenching as he tied the strings at the

top. Without a glance toward her, he stormed out of the chamber, slamming the door behind him hard enough to rattle the windows.

Kayla stared at the recently vacated space, confused. What had happened? Something had obviously upset him but she couldn't think what.

She lay back down, snuggling into the blanket, savoring the fading heat from his body. Not sure if he would return or not, Kayla turned on her side, facing the door this time, and waited.

It wasn't long before the door opened again and Sixx entered. Carrying a tray. Kayla didn't try to fake sleep. She was too surprised. The delicious scent of savory meat filled the chamber and Kayla's stomach growled in response.

"Here." Sixx plopped the tray onto the bed. "Eat."

Guilt assailed him as he watched Kayla sit up and stare at him, not reaching for the tray, as if she was afraid to do so.

"Eat," he said again. "I can't sleep with the sound of your stomach rumbling all night." It was as good an excuse as any he decided. The truth was, he'd forgotten to feed her. Though he'd thought about her all day, he hadn't thought about what she might need, what she couldn't access because she was chained. And while he'd threatened to starve her earlier, he couldn't do it. He would find another way to punish her. Train her. Because train her he would.

It didn't look like he had much choice. His cock had refused to react to Jana. The damn thing wanted Kayla.

Her hand stretched out and she slid the tray closer, using her fingers to pick up the meat and slip it between her lips. The sight of her eating made Sixx hungry – but not for food. He wanted to taste those lips, sample the flavor of the gravy lingering on her tongue. She dabbed the bread in the meat juices and nibbled on that, moaning as if it was the most wonderful thing she'd ever tasted.

It had probably been awhile since she'd eaten well. Somehow he doubted Iniz fed his slaves much beyond bread and water.

The least Sixx could do was feed her. He stood back and watched her eat. At first she ate quickly, trying to fill the hollow in her stomach, then she slowed savoring the taste a bit. Finally she dropped the last crust of bread and sighed contentedly. Sixx felt himself smile at the satisfied way she stretched her arms up.

"Better?" he asked, trying to inject some sarcasm into his voice but the desire moving through his veins muted the sound.

"Yes, thank you."

He reached out and took the tray from her hands, placing it on the low table in the sitting area, noting that somehow *he'd* ended up serving *her*.

He returned to his bedchamber and found her lying in his bed, watching him. The heat that flowed out of those green eyes was like a flame across his skin. There it was

again, that desire, the pure hunger in her stare. It seemed so real. So honest. Whatever it was, wherever it came from inside her, she was ready and willing to fuck him.

His cock leapt to attention and Sixx fought the urge to fall on her. He'd spent the day obsessing about fucking her but now he wasn't going to do it.

If for no other reason than to prove to himself that he could resist her, that he was in control of some small portion of his life.

"Get some sleep," he ordered. Her eyelids fluttered and he could see her confusion. Maybe she thought she had to pay him back for feeding her. He had no idea what her history was but maybe that was how Iniz ensured her cooperation. Sixx's stomach turned at the thought—and guilt once again crowded into his chest that he'd threatened to do the same thing.

She watched him for another long moment then lay down on her side, turning toward him. Feeling strangely on display, Sixx reached for the ties to his leathers then realized it was better if he left them on. Just another boundary between his flesh and hers.

He sat down on the bed, determined to ignore the woman behind him. He could do this. Hells, he'd lived through tortures and marching halfway across the realm in the freezing cold—surely he was strong enough to resist the temptation of one tiny woman.

Sixx didn't turn around, knew that he would reach for her if he did. He pulled the blanket up around his shoulders, keeping his back to her.

He let the silence settle into his head, doing his best to block out her presence but sleep was elusive again tonight. Since his return from captivity, each night brought a new challenge to sleep. No matter how he exhausted himself, his mind wouldn't quiet. And when he did sleep, the memories returned, jolting him awake and reminding him of the curse that sought to conquer his soul.

Kayla was quiet behind him but he knew she wasn't asleep. He knew from the roughness of her breath, from the slither of her legs against the sheets. Damn it. She had half of a huge bed—custom made to fit Sixx's large frame—for her use. She should be more than comfortable. So why, by every layer of the Hells, wasn't she asleep?

Every time she moved he felt it, like she was pressed against his skin. His cock was hard—again, still. In the moon cycles since he'd returned, his erections had been nonexistent but now it seemed they'd all come back at once. Unable to stop himself, he reached down and pressed his hand against his cock. It wouldn't take much to make himself come. All he had to do was think about the sexy witch lying beside him. But he wanted more than just his own hand. Either way, the slow strokes left him unsatisfied and he pulled away.

She twisted again and a tiny moan followed the movement.

"What is the matter?" He tossed back the blanket that had been covering his body and sat up, glaring down at her. She lifted her chin and looked at him with wide eyes. He kept his gaze deliberately above her neck focusing his eyes on hers, ignoring the ripe form that lay across his bed.

“What’s wrong?” he demanded, glaring as he towered over her.

“Nothing.”

“Then why aren’t you sleeping?”

She shifted and the movement made the steel chain clank. He glanced down at the band that encircled her ankle. He’d given her more than enough length to be comfortable.

“I’m not unchaining you. You’d knife me before my first breath.” She didn’t deny it. “Now, sleep.”

He rolled over and grabbed the blanket again. And waited. He could practically feel her watching the ceiling. After a long time, she spoke.

“I’m cold.”

Her voice jolted him.

“What?”

“I’m cold.” The words were chilled themselves and he knew she hated to admit even something so simple. He raised his head and looked at the bed. The single blanket he usually used was wrapped around his body—as was his habit. Years of sleeping alone had made him selfish about his sleeping space.

All she wore was his shirt. It stopped at mid-thigh, leaving her legs bare as he watched. She drew one leg up, bending it at the knee. The movement pulled the edge of her shirt up, giving him a hint of her sex between her thighs, an intriguing shadow that he knew held heat and warmth. He couldn’t stop staring at her. Gods, her legs were the perfect length, perfect for wrapping around his hips, holding him. The tactile memory of being deep inside her invaded his skin and his cock swelled, harder, so ready to investigate the tempting shadow between her thighs.

Captivated by the sight and the promise in her sensual movements, he dragged his eyes up her body. Her nipples were tight and pressing against the material that covered them. His hands heated, begging to cup the firm mounds that he’d tasted last night. He needed to linger, to pleasure. Make her plead and beg for his cock. Gods, he loved hearing her voice, demanding, commanding.

Hunger seemed to hover just below her skin and it called to the need that surged through his body. It would be so easy to roll over, move onto her and slide between those sleek thighs. Smooth and creamy as Mik would say. Gods, Sixx knew just how sweet that luscious skin was.

But pure masculine instinct warned him away. That this woman was dangerous to him. That fucking her again, wanting her so much, would forever bind him to her. Gods, she was beautiful. He looked at her full lips and knew he wanted to taste her again. Wanted to spend the night with her flavor in his mouth.

The thought jerked him back and he pulled the edge of the blanket out from under his hip, considering the idea, the *wise* idea, that he should get her another blanket.

Instead, he tossed the covering toward her. It draped over her body but did nothing to hide the form beneath. Fuck. He was going to be hard all night.

"Better?"

She nodded—though she looked disappointed that it was the blanket covering her body and not him. His cock was long past the twitching stage and he was ready to start thrusting, into her, deep inside her.

"Well, try to sleep."

She pulled the blanket up, covering her shoulders. As she did, her legs shifted, spread, allowing the blanket to dip between her thighs, highlighting that perfect place that he needed to occupy.

As if his hand was out of his control, it reached out and set down on her knee. He expected her to flinch or pull away. She didn't move, except to ease into his touch.

He raised his eyes and looked at her. She stared back, the fire in her gaze decrying her claim to being cold. His cock pressed against the ties of his leathers, straining to return to her wet heat. He cursed the bedamned piece of flesh and its obvious preference for this woman.

But he couldn't pull away—neither his eyes nor his hands could be compelled to leave her. Over the top of the blanket, he smoothed his hand up her side, slowly until it rested on her hip. He watched her, looking for some sign, some indication that this was a ploy to escape—but there was nothing except desire, true desire that grabbed his cock and squeezed until he thought he could come just from the touch of her gaze.

With his eyes trained on her, he slipped his palm beneath the blanket, beneath the cotton shirt she wore—his shirt. Gods, he even liked the thought of her wearing his clothes. When that warning wasn't enough to draw him back, he knew he was lost.

His hand connected smoothly with her skin, molding itself to the curve of her ass. She groaned and arched her back, pressing into his caress. He stilled. Waited.

With his free hand he tugged the blanket away, leaving only the thin covering of the shirt. It was as if he was under a spell. He told himself to stop but something burned deep inside him that needed to see her again, needed to hold her breasts in his hands and suckle at her perfect nipples.

All the warnings from earlier echoed through his head—she was too tempting, addictive, dangerous to his peace of mind. He scoffed at the idea. He had no peace. Ever. She was just the latest torture.

Still silent, he reached up and began undoing the buttons. She lay still, as if he'd bound her to his bed. The edges of the shirt spread apart under the pressure of her breath. The full curve of her breasts teased him, the material clinging to her skin. Focusing his senses on her, he tracked her reactions. Each brush of his fingers induced a delicious tension in her body, a sharp breath. When he reached the bottom of the shirt, he spread open the flaps and stared at the bounty before him.

He'd had beautiful women before but staring down at Kayla's body, he couldn't remember any of them. They disappeared as distant memories. Her nipples stood up tall and tight, begging for his mouth. The sweet curve into her waist, flaring out at her hips was a trail that demanded his attention. He placed his hand on her hip—skin against skin. The warmth seeped into his hand and shot up his arm, flowing into his chest. Damn, what was it about this woman?

What the fuck do you care? he asked himself. Just fuck her. It's clear she wants it. And you need it. Fuck her. Ride between those sleek thighs.

The voice reverberated in his head and he recognized it as his own. It was the voice that shouted at him in the daylight, silenced in the darkness. The voice of his youth and anger. But he was no longer that boy. Hells, he was no longer even the warrior he'd been last winter. His life was so fucked up that even simple pleasures came with consequences.

You did it last night. Be a man. Fuck her.

His soul rebelled at the brutal voice that chimed through his skull, urging him to take her. But still he couldn't bring himself to draw his hand back. In the time since his return, he'd been cold and here was warmth, open and offered to him.

He slid his hand up her side, capturing some of that heat and holding it deep inside. He stopped just below her breasts. The tight peaks rose and fell in slow rhythm with her breath. He bent down and laved his tongue across one nipple. Kayla gasped and pressed up, pushing her breast into his mouth. He swirled the tip of his tongue around the peak, feeling it draw higher and tighter. Again the tiny arch of her back pushed her up.

The temptation was too much to resist. He sucked the tight nipple into his mouth.

Kayla groaned. Sixx looked up. Her eyes were closed, her fingers clawing at the bed sheets. It was torture or pleasure...and he couldn't tell which.

And was she fighting his desire or her own?

Fuck. He hated this. Hated all the thoughts and questions. He wanted to be able to climb between some woman's spread thighs and ride her without these other sensations coming at him. But with all the noise in his head, one thing remained the same—he wanted her. Wanted to fill her, slide inside her.

He sucked on her breast, pressing her tight nipple up against the roof of his mouth, pulling hard, punishing her just a little for the desire that pounded through his veins. The urge to devour her, to taste every inch of her flesh grabbed hold of him. This was beyond fucking. He wanted to own her, consume her.

Even worse, he wanted her to own him. Claim *him* as her own.

"Please." The soft, desperate word was enough to silence the voices that rang through his skull.

The hunger in her voice reached deep inside him and ignited the urges that he'd crushed all night. He needed to taste more of her, needed to bind her to him. He

snagged her wrists in his hands and raised them over her head, holding her in place as he covered her mouth with his, driving his tongue between her lips. She opened, tangling her tongue with his – the perfect counterpoint to his hungry need.

Her sleek body stretched, pushing up, arching her breasts against his chest. Her thigh curled around his hip and the moisture from her cunt coated his skin. She was dripping her juices, so hungry for his cock.

Sixx whipped his head back and leaned away, needing a moment to clear his head, to regain control.

“No, damn it. Fuck me.”

He raised his eyebrows in challenge to her command.

“Again you forget that you’re the slave and I can do what I want with you.”

Chapter Six

Shock widened her eyes and she stared at him like he'd grown another head. It was difficult to keep the laughter out of his voice but he managed. "And if that means I want to walk away, now, and leave your cunt unfilled, I will do it." That was a lie. There was no way he could force himself to walk away. But she didn't know that.

He watched her eyes for a long moment and though the irritation didn't fade, it was covered over by resignation.

"Please." Her voice was no longer demanding but it also wasn't the voice of a humbled slave. She begged but she did it with an arrogance that rivaled his warriors. "Don't leave me."

Sixx slid his hand down between her thighs, cupping her sex, letting his fingers slide between her pussy lips and tease the sensitive opening to her cunt.

"And you'll be a good little slave?" He thrust one finger into her pussy. "Let me do what I want to this body? Whatever I want."

"Yes." With that simple answer, his world spiraled down to a single point, excluding everything outside the walls of his chambers. Inside there was only her. It felt as though he was moving in slow motion, that whatever was happening was meant to.

The shirt was locked at the base of her arms but the rest of her was bare and open to his eyes. Sixx pulled his hand back, the liquid from her pussy covering his fingers.

"Open your legs," he commanded. "Let me see the pretty little cunt I'll be fucking tonight." She trembled but he knew it was from desire and not fear.

Slowly, she spread her legs opening herself to Sixx's gaze.

"Shall I touch you, sweeting?" He heard the question slip from his mouth, surprised to find himself speaking such gentle words. Sixx stroked his fingers up the inside of her thigh. The heat was incredible, burning his skin. She wanted this. He flicked his fingers across the lower lips of her pussy. Another tiny hitch in her breath told him so much. He repeated the motion, deepening his caress and capturing some of her moisture on the tips of his fingers.

Kayla held her breath as he pushed his hand fully between her legs. His broad palm covered her, shooting need into her pussy. Goddesses, she wanted him. Her body was desperate to feel him. The desire to have *him* begging her was gone. She could never imagine Sixx begging for anything.

It was enough that he was here. With her.

He slipped his fingers between her pussy lips, teasing her until he finally slid one finger into her opening. It was a soft, gentle intrusion that made her crave more.

"So hot," he whispered but the mockery had left his voice. Zayn purred her pleasure—quickly forgetting her anger at both Sixx and Kayla.

He leaned over her, giving her some of his weight, kissing and licking her skin, concentrating his attention on her breasts.

It was perfect—his touch, his lips, the seductive rumble of his voice as he whispered against her skin. Her body vibrated with desire. The delicate caresses were wonderful but she wanted more. Goddesses, she wanted his cock inside her.

Mine. Zayn's plaintive wail blended with the pleas inside her own head.

Sixx continued to lick and suck her nipple. He pulled back but moments later applied the same subtle strokes to the other one. The sweet pull of his mouth spread through her body, flooding her center with heat. She rolled her hips up, trying to drive his fingers deeper, harder. The light touch wasn't enough. She twisted, fighting his hold, wanting to reach for him and drag him on top of her. His finger slipped out of her, leaving her pussy empty.

"Please," she whispered. Begging went against her instincts but the hunger inside her won out over pride. Sixx didn't seem to hear her. He skirted away from her sex, swirling his finger down the inside of her thigh, painting delicate patterns across her skin before returning to the sensitive lips. He dipped into her again and then repeated the strange lines along the inside her other thigh. In her mind's eye, she could see the swoops and swirls glowing on her skin, a thin trail left by her pussy juices.

Heat followed each caress.

"Sixx?" she asked.

"Soon, sweeting," he whispered. He lifted hand from her skin and slipped the tip of his finger into his mouth. "Liquid fire." Kayla watched the slow sensuous movement, her mouth open slightly as she tried to capture enough air. Her head was spinning. She wanted to taste him—wanted to taste her flavor mixed with his. As if he read her mind, he leaned down and covered her mouth in a commanding kiss.

The teasing lover disappeared in that kiss. His tongue plunged into her mouth conquering the space and twining around hers. He molded his lips to hers, consuming her. The musky flavor of her own sex landed on her tongue for a moment then faded as his masculine taste and a hint of ale overwhelmed her. She struggled, wanting her arms free. Needing to hold him. Her world was disappearing around her and she was left alone, struggling for something solid to cling to.

She felt him shift, his mouth never leaving hers. Thank all the Goddesses, he was finally moving over her. The rustle of his clothes gave her hope. He was going to fuck her. Long moments after the wicked kiss began, he lifted his head. Kayla chased his mouth with tiny biting kisses. He returned the caress, nipping at her lower lip then sucking on the mark.

She groaned and tried to reclaim his mouth but he pulled away, opening his lips and laving the nape of her neck with his tongue. The brush of his leathers against her bare legs distracted her. Damn it, he was supposed to be naked.

“Sixx, touch me.” She whispered, scraping her teeth against his jaw. “Fuck me.” She pumped her hips again to guide him. He lifted his head and looked down at her. She gasped at what she saw. The harsh rough mercenary was smiling – dangerously. As if her soft entreaties pleased him. Her heart started to pound as she watched him.

“Little slave, you will learn that you don’t make demands – you satisfy mine.”

She swallowed deeply, hoping that one of his demands would eventually be him, inside her.

Sixx stared down at the woman beneath him. All he had to do was plunge into her, drive his cock into the wet pussy that begged to be filled. Damn it, what was stopping him?

If he fucked her again, he’d want more. He’d wanted to claim and possess that pussy. This was more than being led around by his cock. He would not succumb to this.

He threw himself off the bed, stumbling as he forced himself to move away. He stood in the dark, watching, knowing she couldn’t see him. Her pale body glistened in the weak moonlight streaking through the windows. Her back arched pressing her breasts up, silently begging for his mouth. Her legs rubbed together trying to soothe the ache he knew roared inside her. Freed from his grip, her hands slid down her body, pausing to massage her breasts, teasing the tight delicious nipples before moving on, down, across her stomach to that hot space between her legs. He could smell her arousal and knew it coated his hands.

A low groan left her lips as she pushed her hand between her thighs. Heat washed over Sixx’s fingers. He knew what she was feeling.

My pussy. My cunt.

“Stop.” His sharp command locked her in place. “I didn’t give you permission to touch yourself.”

She glared into the darkness, staring directly into his eyes – as if she could see him in the shadows. A mixture of anger and desperation glittered at him through her gaze. But it was the hunger that emanated from her clawed at him from across the room.

“Damn it.” He smacked his hand against the wall.

He stepped forward compelled by a need inside him that he couldn’t quite define. Hells, maybe she *was* possessed by a lust demon. He’d never believed that superstitious crap before, but then he’d never believed in magic and look where it got him.

Kayla watched him. He didn’t know if it was hatred in her eyes but there was anger. The dark light seemed to change the color of her eyes from the brilliant green to almost black.

“Sixx.” The way she said his name was like a hook that snagged his body and dragged him forward, as if she understood his torment.

He'd had several reasons why this was a bad idea, why he wasn't going to fuck her but they faded into insignificance. The need to have her was too much. Gods, he needed to ride between those sleek thighs and pound his hard flesh into hers.

He crawled back onto the bed and to her, her warmth more powerful than any logic that warned him to stay away. Her arms opened up to him. Her hands slid into his hair as she pulled him closer, offering her mouth to him. He took it, accepting the fire she gave so willingly. He plunged his hand into the warm wet space between her thighs. Seductive heat waited for him as he knew it would.

He flicked the tip of his finger across the lips of her sex, testing her readiness. She didn't seem to care for the delicate caress because she snarled and pumped her hips upward, trying to slide him deeper.

The frantic tension in her body actually tempered the need in his. Oh he was still going to fuck her, but he wanted her beyond begging for it, wanted her unable to speak.

"Don't worry, sweeting. You'll get what you need." He stroked her, drowning in the hot liquid of her pussy. The heavy rise and fall of her breasts tempted him to return and he leaned down, capturing the nipple and sucking it deep into his mouth. As he swallowed her flesh, he slipped the tip of his finger into the edge of her entrance. Again, she pressed up, silently begging for more.

"Please...inside me." He drew back but couldn't bring himself to release the prize of her nipple. He bit the peak delicately and then laved his tongue across it.

Her hips rolled upward, urging his fingers deeper. The memory of driving his cock into that hot passage last night made him ache.

The scent of her cunt pulled him closer, tempting him with the intoxicating perfume. A sudden hunger filled him. He knew it was wrong. She was his slave. She should be licking and sucking him—but he was desperate to taste her, needed her warmth to fill his mouth. He pushed her knees up, the band around her ankle clanking against the chain as she moved, reminding him that she wasn't here of her own choice—but that didn't seem to stop her from wanting him.

There was no way she could fake the kind of moisture, the pure hunger that surged through her body. She reached for him, stroking his hair. He turned his head and scraped his teeth across her wrist, licking the place to sooth the wound. Her body tightened and she pulled on his hair, adding a little pain to his arousal as well.

The captivating scent of her pussy flooded his senses. He bent down and lightly stroked his tongue up her slit. The flavor exploded on his tongue and he growled, wanting more.

A matching sound came from Kayla and he looked up. She watched him, the desire in her eyes turning them black.

Knowing she watched, he held her gaze and pressed the flat of his tongue at the base of her slit and slowly, deliberately licked up. Gods, she was delicious. Like the finest treat. She shuddered as he finished the languid caress, flicking his tongue across

her clit, loving the way her thighs tensed and the way her hands gripped his head. Holding him in place, demanding that he service her. His wicked little witch.

She'd forgotten once again that he was in charge but he couldn't allow himself to care. He needed to taste her, drown in her. Hot liquid flowed from her cunt and he wanted more. He worked her hard, loving the way she rocked against him, trying to drive him into her.

Sixx cupped her ass in his hand and held her up to his mouth, sinking his tongue into her pussy, pumping into her, holding her immobile when she would have moved against him. His little slave writhed beneath his touch unable to break his grip, only able to accept what he gave her. Her pleas turned to whimpers, moans, the silent cry of her body as she twisted, trying to get closer. He covered her clit with his lips and sucked, gently pulling as he plunged his fingers into her passage.

Kayla gasped and her back bowed off the bed as the climax shot through her, squeezing his fingers inside her.

Yes, again.

He thrust his fingers hard into her pussy. She groaned and pushed against him. The pain in his groin grew, desperate to feel the grip of her cunt holding his cock. But he wanted more, wanted to see her come again. He pulled back and began a hard finger-fuck of her sex. Her heels pressed into the mattress, using what leverage she could to fuck herself against him.

"That's it, sweeting, take it." The words slipped from his mouth. Slowly the ache in his shaft faded and he focused on her. Listening to her body, hearing the silent pleas and whispered sighs, he adjusted his touch, stroking deeper, rubbing the upper side of her passage as he pumped in and out. "That's it. Come for me again. Let me hear you come."

Her body pulled tight and a long low infinitely sexy moan slipped from between her lips. The delicate ripples of her pussy made him join in the heady sensation. He held his fingers inside her, letting the heat sink into him, drawing on his warrior strength and finding the control to not plunge inside her.

The subtle pulse of her hips as the contractions eased told him that his little slave was craving more. Even without looking he knew she watched him. The pressure of her gaze drew his upward. She stared at him, her mouth slightly open as if she needed breath. As he watched her, the foreign tinges of black faded from her eyes and the mystic green returned.

Sixx placed a final kiss on her mound. She'd been a delicious tongue-fuck. Now he had to come inside her. The restraint he'd shown, holding back for so long had worn his control to nothing. He crawled up the bed in one quick movement. Her legs spread, luring him between them, the scent of her pussy surrounding him. Kayla wrapped her arms around his neck and pulled him down with strength that surprised him, down until he was within easy reach. She skated her hands across his skin as she pressed kisses to his lips, his chin, a delicate scrape of her teeth across his neck. The hunger in

her pushed at his own need and Sixx couldn't resist any longer. He ripped open the ties of his leathers and pushed the material down his hips, freeing his cock.

"Yes, mine." The words were so low and soft that Sixx almost didn't hear them but he didn't need to hear the words to understand. She wanted him.

Sixx placed the head of his cock to her opening and drove forward. She cried out and that wicked tension again shot through her body. "Goddesses, yes. Again."

Demanding little thing, Sixx thought, but found his hips moving to accommodate her command, to give her what she wanted. He rode her hard, loving the way her cunt held him, squeezing him as she moved against his thrusts.

Each time he entered her he felt like he was driving deep into her heart, filling her, claiming her. Binding her to him...and him to her.

"Yes, Sixx. Goddesses, you feel good inside me." Her voice was low but there was no desperation to it. Hells, she'd just come twice—it was *his* cock that needed relief. But his body slowed, wanting to satisfy her. He moved in her pussy, long and deep, watching her eyes as he pumped inside her.

She ran her hands up his back, skimming across his skin, stopping when she felt the slash marks scoring his flesh. Her eyes popped open meeting his. Questions filtered through the desire but Sixx wasn't prepared to explain, not when he was buried deep inside her.

He drew his cock back and plunged inside, picking up the pace, sliding across her clit as he filled her.

Kayla arched her back, crying out as the slow sensual loving faded and the hard hungry warrior returned. With that one wicked thrust, her need spiked and she needed him deeper, harder. Goddesses, it was amazing how quickly her body could crave him. The long lovely climaxes he'd worked through her with his tongue were distant memories and she needed more. She curled her legs up, locking her ankles behind his back and squeezed, pulling him deeper with each thrust.

Sixx flipped his hair back and looked down at her. The edge of his mouth kicked up in what might have been his version of a real smile and he complied with her silent demand, fucking her harder, filling her time and again. He pressed higher, making every thrust brush against her clit until she couldn't stand it anymore.

Mine, Zayn growled inside her head, the dragon's desperation shooting through Kayla's body.

"Please, Sixx." She kissed his jaw and neck, the taste of his flesh filling her head. She needed to come. She needed him to come inside her.

Her nails scored his shoulders as she clung to him. Sixx arched his back and cried out as he drove into her once and again. Then filled her with one long, heavy thrust. It was perfect. She gasped as the delicious sparkles slammed through her pussy. As if her climax triggered his, he cried out and pushed into her a final time, his hot cum shooting in pulses into her cunt.

Yes, mine.

* * * * *

Kayla dropped back onto the mattress, Sixx's heavy weight pushing her into the feather bed. She moaned but made no move to shift him off her. He felt too good. She smoothed her hands up his back, soothing him as she listened to his heart pound. Again she felt the strange scars that marked his skin but she didn't linger. Those questions were for later. Now she wanted to savor the feel of him, the delicious ache between her thighs. He'd ridden her hard, such a strong powerful man.

Mine. Zayn purred inside Kayla's head.

Yes, Kayla answered. Sixx definitely belonged to the dragon. Now Kayla had to find a way to bind the man to her.

Chapter Seven

Mik stepped onto the training field, his sharp eyes scanning the area, taking in the new addition. He walked to Sixx's side and lifted his chin toward Kayla.

"So, that's her?" She'd been in the keep for four days but this was the first time Sixx had allowed her out of his chambers.

He didn't look at Kayla—he knew what would happen if he did. Hells, not that he wasn't already hard but seeing Kayla in the skimpy slave outfit the laundress had provided for her would have made him harder than his sword. And he didn't need that.

At least not now. Later, in his chambers, then he'd be glad for it. Exult in it. Hells, six moon cycles without so much as a twitch in his cock and now he couldn't get enough pussy. Even when he'd vowed to himself and to the Gods of War that he wouldn't mount her, he'd ended up inside her. Something about her was addictive, compelling. Fuck, seductive.

Maybe he needed to fuck a different woman. It hadn't worked with Jana but he could try again.

He smiled grimly, knowing how pissed Kayla would be if he fucked another woman. She seemed to have laid claim to him.

"Yeah."

"Nice."

"Yeah."

Mik paused and scratched his chin.

"And what's she doing here?"

Sixx grimaced. A slave owner for four days and already he knew he wasn't cut out to own property. The prospect of selling her was growing more intriguing with each day. Except that then he wouldn't have her body in his bed each night, each morning. Hells, he could start having her in the afternoons. His cock was more than willing and she seemed downright eager every time he came to her.

"I had to bring her," he finally admitted to Mik.

"Why?" Mik asked staring at Kayla's barely clad body. Sixx had the distinct urge to growl as Mik's eyes wandered below her waist.

This was a mistake, Sixx decided. No one would get anything done. They'd spend all their time watching Kayla. Particularly Sixx himself.

"She was tearing up my sheets."

Mik slapped him on the back. "Well, I'd say that's a good thing, old friend."

“No. She was literally tearing up my sheets. Into long thin strips and braiding them together. Hells, it was like she was making a rope. I live on the ground floor so she can’t be thinking to use it to escape.” He glanced toward the woman in question. She stood calmly, her ankle chained to the wall, watching the men as if they were of no interest to her, ignoring the lecherous stares they sent her way. “To save my final set of sheets until the laundress can make new ones, I had to bring her here.”

Mik laughed and if he wasn’t such a good friend, Sixx would have punched him.

“This little slave is causing you more trouble than she’s worth.” He rested his hand on his sword hilt, watching Sixx strap on his shin guards. “Or maybe she is worth it. A sweet little fuck is she?”

Sixx grunted. Sweet? No, that wasn’t the word he would use to describe her. Sexual, intense, consuming. Those all applied. But not sweet.

“Just keep your mind off what kind of fuck she is,” he warned Mik.

“Why?” Mik laughed. “You’ve never minded sharing before. Hells, you like your women well used before they come to you.”

That was true. He wanted a woman who knew that he was just out for a fast hard fuck. Not some clinging wench who might want to advance herself by fucking the troop captain.

But Kayla was different. The thought of sharing her—of giving her over to his troop for fair use—made his stomach turn. A similar reaction to the sight of blood. Later, when he was done with her. When his cock no longer leapt at the mere sight of her pussy, her ass—Hells, even the early morning smile as she woke after a long night of fucking made his cock hard. Maybe then, he would share her.

“Maybe—” Sixx directed his stare at his second-in-command. “You should stop worrying about my slave and start worrying about training.”

Scant walked up. His eyes widening when he saw Kayla. Hells, whose wouldn’t? She was beautiful. Strong and sleek with nice round breasts that felt like heaven in his hands, and nipples that fit perfectly in his mouth. And Gods, her cunt—Sixx shook himself free of the image, refusing to let his cock get any harder. He needed to be able to walk and fight. He glared at Scant and started barking orders.

He directed Mik to the advanced group knowing it would wear his friend out. Mik could defeat each of the seven warriors in that class but it would take time and effort. Sixx ordered Scant to take the intermediate group and Sixx faced the beginners. It wasn’t much challenge but he liked working with the new recruits, weeding out the ones who would never make it—either because they lacked the skill or the temperament to be a mercenary.

And, because they had little control of their weapons, he had to stay alert and that would keep him safe—and his mind off his little slave chained to the wall.

* * * * *

Kayla watched Sixx work. He was good. Tough and loud but patient in an odd way. He didn't coddle the men at all but he kept working with them until they understood. It surprised her. In the few days she'd known him, he'd been strong, powerful, aggressive. Never once had he shown a moment of kindness.

Her conscience drew her back. That wasn't true. She wanted to think of him as a beast but truly, he hadn't beaten her or abused her. So, he'd kept her chained up during the days—she was a slave after all—and despite the reality of her situation she had to remember that he didn't know she was a princess. She was merely a possession he'd been given.

In truth, he'd made sure she was comfortable, clean. And well fucked. Zayn growled her pleasure.

Kayla watched as he bent down and showed a young man the proper way to grip his weapon. Her hands curled into fists. She wanted to grip Sixx's weapon, could easily imagine wrapping her hands and her lips around that thick cock that had spent so much time inside her over the past four days. Though they'd fucked often and for long stretches, Sixx hadn't let her explore his cock, or taste him.

Of course she could understand. After tearing up his sheets, he probably didn't expect her to handle his shaft with any more kindness. But she wanted him. Wanted to linger long on that delicious piece of flesh.

Her pussy twitched and moisture gathered low in her sex and it was all she could do not to moan as desire pulsed through her veins. She took a deep breath and tried to will the sensation away. She knew part of it was Zayn's hunger but the rest was the lovely memory of Sixx, moving inside her.

Her plan to learn more about Sixx had been only moderately successful. They had talked—during meals and sometimes after they'd made love—but Sixx had been surprisingly reticent, as if he didn't want her to know him. She hadn't given up though. Her dragon had chosen him, she would learn more about this man.

Her eyes tracked him as he moved, his muscles stretching and contracting, those beautiful thighs just calling to her fingers, his ass the perfect shape for her hands, holding him as he pumped inside her.

Zayn drove her forward and Kayla took a step before she remembered she was chained to the wall. She jerked back. The short chain gave her almost no freedom to move. Instead, all she could do was stand and watch. The dragon howled her frustration, the sound echoing through Kayla's head.

Mine.

The morning passed quickly, leading into early afternoon but Sixx and his men showed no signs of stopping. Sixx gave her two breaks, allowing her to relieve herself and giving her lunch but the time away from the training field was short and she quickly found herself once again chained to the wall.

Other, more experienced fighters met and practiced at the corners of her vision but she watched Sixx, watched him work with his new recruits.

They had shifted from training—positions and strikes—to sparring. Sixx quickly defeated his students, sending them to the ground with enough pain to warn them to improve.

As the final team finished up, the students wandered away and the courtyard was almost empty. Three warriors joined Sixx and his instructors. As if they'd been doing this for years, they moved in sync—the clash of metal ringing through the air. These were clearly well-trained fighters—equal to or better than her brothers she realized. It was obvious they'd fought together for years. The similar styles and the way they moved mirrored the skills Sixx had tried to teach the beginners.

This had to be the core group of Sixx's troop.

One of the men—Mik if Kayla caught his name correctly—called out a challenge to Sixx.

“Come on, Captain,” Mik said. “We'll give you a chance to perform for your slave. Show her what kind of warrior she has for a master.”

Sixx looked around, never meeting Kayla's gaze, but finally nodded and entered the center of the ring.

One by one they faced Sixx—the determination clear on their faces—as if defeating Sixx were a prize they craved. For Sixx, he remained cool and impassive, barely noticing as he struck down one after the next.

He was a skilled fighter. Kayla had seen enough of her brothers and their guard to know the restraint it took to fight during training. The goal was to defeat but not actually kill your opponent. But still something seemed off. She knew warriors, knew the way they fought. Sixx held back, to the point of making his style almost completely defensive. He didn't attack though even from her place against the wall she could see he had opportunities. She considered the idea that he was toying with them but he seemed to get no enjoyment out of it. Hells, it was like he was forcing himself to stay in the fight.

Except to deflect blows, Sixx rarely used the blade. Instead, he disarmed his opponent and thumped him on the head with a quick strike of his sword hilt.

After three had followed the same pattern, Kayla laughed.

The sound seemed to reach across the training field and Sixx stopped. He held his sword in one hand and stared at her.

“Was there something that amused you?” he demanded.

The irritation on his face was enough to call out the temptress in her.

“I was just thinking that you'd get a lot farther if you'd use the sharp, pointy end of that stick you're carrying.”

It was a tease, a joke, something she might have shared with her brothers and their guard.

It took her only a split second to realize this wasn't one of her brothers—and she didn't know the warriors training around her.

Howls of laughter spun through his men and Mik slapped his leg.

Sixx's eyes turned dark and tension wafted through the air, invading Kayla's body. He straightened to his full height and he stared across the courtyard at her.

As he walked forward, she remembered how tall he really was. She gulped and tried to keep her gaze steady.

"You forget yourself, slave. Now—" he said softly, so quiet that for a moment she thought only she could hear—but then she realized his guard was hearing every word he said. "I could beat you. But that would only prove that I know how to punish a disobedient slave."

Kayla pressed her shoulders back, determined to face him down. She raised her chin and stared into his eyes. The dark heat that filled him reminded her of dragon light.

"What I really want to show them is what an *obedient* slave you can be."

She wanted to scoff but knew better than to push Sixx further.

He grabbed a piece of rope from a hook on the wall and looped it around one of her wrists. The strong masculine scent overpowered her as he drew closer, distracting the dragon as he tied the rope around her other wrist, locking her hands behind her back. The loop cut into her skin as he pulled it tight, drawing her shoulders back and pressing her breasts forward.

The five men who watched did so with unabashed interest and Kayla felt her cheeks heat. The tiny slave costume Sixx had ordered her to wear that morning barely covered her. The top was too small, clinging to her breasts and the skirt only reached mid-thigh. It hadn't bothered her before, but now, under the intense scrutiny of these five warriors, she shivered.

She sent a glare toward Sixx and he raised his eyebrows, daring her to challenge him. After a moment of her silence, he leaned down and pressed his lips to her ear.

"Consider your words carefully." She pressed her lips closed and he nodded. "Very good. Now for your punishment, I'm going to spank your pretty ass in front of my men."

She gasped—more from surprise than fear. No one, not even her father, had ever spanked her. And she didn't understand why her nipples seemed to find this such an interesting idea. They rubbed against her top, stretching long and pressing into the thin material. No, dammit, she would not give in to this. She fought the rope that held her hands but Zayn wouldn't help. The dragon was distracted, consumed, thrilled by the low sexual tone of Sixx's voice.

"And they're all going to think about fucking you, about sliding their cocks into you, wanting your tight cunt."

Before she could protest, her mind still grappling with the idea that he was going to spank her, Sixx pulled her forward, almost carrying her until she was in the middle of the fight ring. A chair seemed to appear from nowhere and he sat down, spreading his

knees. Dust floated up from beneath their feet, making her cough. After her throat cleared, he dragged her to him, pulling her down over his knees.

Unable to catch herself, she landed across his lap with a grunt.

She stood on tiptoe—her knees bent but not reaching the ground, her shoulders pressed against one leg, her stomach the other.

She swallowed deeply and stared at the ground, wishing her hair was long again so that it could hide her face. The humiliation was unbearable. She wouldn't allow him—

She never got to finish the thought. His hand came down hard on her backside. The thin covering that hung from her waist provided no cushion. The sharp stinging slap was followed by three more, making her ass burn. Tears pricked her eyes but she blinked them back.

"You bastard," she screamed. She struggled but her awkward position and her arms being bound made it impossible to escape. Sixx's hand pressed down on her hip, holding her in place. If only her bedamned dragon would help her. "No one has ever spanked me."

"Well, that's something you can never say again," he said lazily as if her cries were of no interest. He swirled what felt like one finger across her ass cheeks, a light touch, cool against her burning skin. There was a moment when he didn't touch her and then he smacked his hand across her buttocks twice more. Kayla hissed, trying to control the cry. She would endure it—like a warrior.

The soft touch returned, sliding down the crease of her ass, farther until he slipped between her legs. The material of her skirt was pulled up allowing cool air to brush her skin but the heat from his palm soon overwhelmed the comforting touch.

"Spread your legs, sweeting. Let me see how much this sweet cunt craves me."

The words sank into her pussy and she felt a rush of liquid through her sex. But she didn't move, fighting the desire of her body and hunger of her dragon. She wasn't baring herself for the pleasure of his friends.

"Don't worry, sweeting, they can't see your cunt. They can only imagine how pretty it is and how wet it is." Her hips rolled of their own accord, reacting to his wicked, tempting words. "That's it. Spread your legs—you don't want to make your punishment worse than it is."

Telling herself she was saving her energy for the long battle, she inched her feet apart. Sixx's hand slid between her thighs, his fingers trailing across her pussy lips.

"Very nice." Even though she couldn't see them, she knew the men still watched. "But not wet enough." He pulled his fingers away and spanked her again, short hard smacks scattered across her ass that made her skin burn...and her pussy ache. The sensation surprised her. His "punishment" followed a strange pattern—two or three smacks with his hand and then he'd push his fingers into her, testing her, teasing her. Giving her pleasure to accompany the stinging pain of her backside. Promising more.

Kayla forgot about the men watching. Zayn purred inside her head every time Sixx penetrated her and Kayla echoed the sound. She rocked her hips up, straining to find some ease for the growing pressure in her pussy. But Sixx held her still, adding extra heat to the next smack, reprimanding her.

He pulled his hand away again and thrust his fingers into her opening. The penetration was hard and Kayla cried out, moaning as she raised her ass, trying to press him deeper.

"Do you want me to fuck you, sweeting?" He pumped his fingers inside her as deep as he could reach.

"Yes," she moaned not caring who could hear her.

"My friends all want to fuck you. Look at them." She turned her head, barely able to see through the ragged strands of her hair. Sixx scraped her hair back, clearing her vision, making it easy to look at the five men who watched. Their bodies were strong and powerful, their stances aggressive. Sixx's fingers rode slowly inside her as she looked at them. They all had hard-ons, obvious bulges pressing against their leathers. "They want to feel this tight ass pressed against them as they drill hard into your pussy."

He accompanied his words with another hard thrust and Kayla couldn't contain her cry. She didn't want those men—would fight the Hells if they tried to touch her—but the blatant desire for her was difficult to resist.

Sixx's hand left her body—his long fingers pulling out of her body, his warmth leaving her. She lay there for a moment, dazed and embarrassed by her hunger but needing to come more than her pride.

Strong hands pulled her back, easing her onto her knees. Sixx stood up and looked down. In this position, Sixx's groin was inches away from her mouth. It would be so simple to lean forward and taste him, stroke her tongue across that hard cock trapped inside his leathers. But she didn't move. She didn't dare.

"So, gentleman, you see before you a well-behaved *and quiet* slave."

Kayla felt her cheeks burning but she couldn't help looking at the men. Would he do it? Would he give her over to them to be fucked? Zayn rumbled inside her, the dragon finally finding something she didn't like in this game.

"Now," Sixx said, sheathing his sword. "I must return to my chambers and finish her punishment in private." His words held promise and Kayla's pussy clenched. He was going to fuck her, take her back to his chambers and fuck her.

His friends laughed—the masculine kind of laugh that made women shake their heads—and called to him enjoy his ride.

Sixx didn't respond. He locked his hand behind her elbow and helped her stand, pulling her behind him as he left the field and walked into the keep. The pace was fast but Kayla kept up—because she knew at the end of the journey Sixx would be inside her.

They walked the maze of hallways, ignoring the servants they met along the way. Sixx pressed open his chamber door and all but pushed Kayla inside. She spun around and looked up at him, her body humming. Her ass still stinging with the reminder of his hand on her skin, her pussy dripping with the need to feel him. As he came close, she pressed up on her toes and placed her mouth on his, stealing a long hot kiss, a mating of tongues and teeth, gentle bites that made her moan. Her breasts brushed against his chest, teasing her nipples even more, making them harder.

“Sixx,” she moaned against his mouth, needing him. He lifted his head and wrapped his hands around her ribs and lifted, carrying her to bed. With one powerful move, he tossed her in the air. She yelped as she flew and then landed on her side on the soft mattress. Her arms still bound behind her, she struggled to roll over, wanting to watch him as he came to her.

She lifted her head and saw him turn away, pulling his sword from its sheath and resting it on the table. Surely he was just stripping but he picked up the blade and inspected it, checking for nicks or damage. Kayla lay on the bed for a long time before she accepted the fact that he wasn’t going to join her.

“Sixx?”

He looked up and the smirk on his face changed the energy in her body from lust to rage. “You’re being punished. Surely you didn’t think you’d get pleasure at the end of it.” He set the sword back down and walked into the other room, returning with a polishing cloth.

The bastard was serious. He was just going to leave her like this, bound and craving him. The red haze at the edge of Kayla’s mind warned that Zayn was taking control. The dragon’s strength moved through her body and she rolled over, jerking her arms apart. The rope shredded like parchment beneath Zayn’s power.

Sixx had his back to her. The dragon’s instincts overwhelmed her and she leapt, throwing herself off the bed and landing hard on his back.

He grunted and she thought he’d go down but her impact only knocked him forward.

It took Sixx a moment to realize what had hit him. He reached over his back and grabbed her, dragging her over his shoulder and throwing her to the ground. Finding himself more careful than he would have expected, he softened her landing, protecting her head from hitting the stone floor. He pounced on top of her, his hands clamping down on her wrists and holding them to the ground, his knees squeezing her thighs together.

Kayla raised her chin and glared. Her eyes flickered between the deep green he’d grown used to and black. Her lips pulled back and she snarled. The sound was meant to be threatening but Sixx laughed. Surely she didn’t think she could hurt him—not without a weapon in her hand.

“What?” he said, taunting her just a little. “Think you could force me to fuck you?”

The green disappeared completely from her eyes and with a shout, she yanked her hands down, slipping out of his grasp. With more strength than he would have credited her with, she shoved on his chest and threw him over. Surprise, it had to be surprise that made him so compliant, but Sixx found himself on his back with this little bit of a woman straddling his hips. She mirrored his previous pose and grabbed his hands, holding them above his head. The position put her breasts directly over his mouth and it was all he could do not to stretch up and take one of those hard, tasty nipples between his lips.

After four days, he knew how much she liked to have her breasts sucked, licked, even delicately bitten as he was pumping inside her. She loved it.

But this was a battle of wills and he wasn't about to lose.

Chapter Eight

Sixx looked up at the woman straddling him. Gods, she was beautiful and pissed. He'd known she was hot to be fucked, but he'd never expected this. And what the Hells had happened to rope that he'd tied her with?

That mystery would have to wait. Now he wanted to see just what Kayla had planned. Did she really intend to fuck him, here on the ground?

She leaned farther forward. Her eyes drilling into his, she opened her mouth over his, her breath teasing his skin for one moment before she sealed their lips together, driving her tongue deep into his mouth. He thought to resist, to ignore her attempts to control the kiss but the competitor in him wouldn't let him remain passive. He wrapped his tongue around hers and sucked, taking command as he tasted her. She let it last for a moment then snapped her head back.

"Mine," she announced. She leaned down and nipped his lower lip, his jaw, moving down, leaving kisses and sharp bites across his neck. Hells, he was going to be marked tomorrow...and would wear the wounds proudly. She released his hands but he felt no desire to move, instead he reached up and grabbed the solid metal leg of his bed and held on, giving him something to grip as she continued her delicate and vicious path down his body. The pleasure and pain made his cock harden further. Fuck, before this was over, she was going to feel him inside her—deep inside. But first, he wanted to see how far she'd take it.

She pushed aside the edges of his vest and scraped her teeth across his chest muscles, licking his flat nipples before continuing. Her hands raced ahead, smoothing across his skin, leaving behind tendrils of heat. She wiggled farther down his body, her breasts swaying gently as she leaned over him, biting the tight muscles of his stomach. He released his grip on the bedpost and cupped her breast, squeezing and pinching the nipple, eliciting a groan from her before she lifted her head.

"Mine," she warned, as if this was her seduction. Sixx felt himself smile, gave her breast another squeeze and removed his hand, wrapping his fingers back around the bedpost, silently giving her permission to continue. Her head dropped forward and she laved her tongue across his stomach, lapping at his skin, sampling his flavor. The way she repeated the caress told him she liked his taste. Her fingers slid across his cock, a fleeting touch that made him want more. She stroked him through the leather of his trousers, the gentle touches muted by the thick material.

Gods, what he wouldn't give to feel her hand on him. The Gods must have heard his plea. She grabbed the strap that laced his leathers together between her teeth and pulled, loosening the tie.

Part of his mind realized he was insane to let her teeth so close to his cock. But there was no way he could fight the need to feel her. To fuck that pretty mouth.

She moved over him, her knees outside of his as her hands wandered across his thighs, her teeth, tongue and lips making slow work of the ties that kept him contained.

Fuck, he could barely stand this. He would lose himself completely when she took him in her mouth. He pulled down hard on the bed and heard it squeak as he dragged the heavy frame across the floor. The sound startled Kayla and she snapped her head up. The look on her face was a mixture of curiosity and irritation. She didn't like being interrupted. With a visual reprimand, she returned to her task, slipping her tongue under the top tie and lifting.

The material of his leathers separated and his cock pressed up, seeking the freedom that was so close. Kayla groaned and he felt the sound through his skin. She dipped her head down, licking her tongue across his cock, still half trapped inside the leather. Sensual fire followed the tiny caress and Sixx couldn't wait to be consumed, burned alive. She seemed content, teasing that small portion she could reach with her tongue, lapping and licking, making him impossibly harder.

"Fuck this," Sixx growled, releasing the bedpost and shoving his leathers down. His cock sprang free. Sixx groaned and heard the same sound come from Kayla. Her hand cupped him, holding his shaft to her lips as she whispered kisses down the length. No teeth, thank the Gods, but the heat of her mouth hadn't lessened and Sixx truly thought he was being set on fire.

"Gods, sweet, take it in your mouth," he begged. He slid his hand into her hair and tried to urge her to swallow him. She shook free of his grip.

"Mine," she insisted before returning to her teasing, long, slow licks from the base of his cock, up the full length, swirling the tip of her tongue around the head before repeating the pattern. Sixx cried out and punched his hips upward. He thought he heard her chuckle but couldn't be sure. Hells, he wasn't sure of anything now. His heart might have exploded and he didn't know it and this was his torment for all the crimes he'd committed in life.

He scraped his fingernails uselessly across the stone floor, resisting the urge to grab her head again and plunge his cock between her lips, fuck that sweet mouth. But he had to do something.

"Kayla—" Warning her about his intentions.

She raised her head and slowly wagged it back and forth.

"Zayn," she replied, her voice quiet and soft.

"What's Zayn?"

"My name." She lapped the head of his cock. "Zayn." She swirled her tongue across the tip and engulfed it in her mouth, sucking lightly as she pulled back and began again her slow tongue strokes up his shaft.

Sixx crushed a groan. So she wanted to play games. He could do that as long as she finished him.

“Will Kayla be returning soon?” he asked, struggling to keep some small portion of his mind able to form coherent words.

“When I’ve done with you.” She looked up at him and blinked. He’d never seen black blaze quite so hot and knew she wasn’t anywhere near finished with him. He could stop her, drag her up and pierce her with his cock but there was no way he wanted this incredible torture to stop. At least not yet.

As if his silence was his approval she returned to her task, licking and stroking his cock, loving it. Hells, he’d had women suck him off before and some even appeared to enjoy it but none had ever seemed to love it, practically worshiping his cock with her mouth, exploring every inch with fingers and tongue, lips and hands. Claiming it.

Even as he thought the words she laved her tongue along the side and whispered, “Mine.”

She trailed the hard point of her tongue up the full length fluttering against the sensitive head. His hips thrust up, bumping her lips. She pulled back and smiled. The little witch knew precisely how she was driving him insane, how close she was pushing his control. Sure that he was in for more teasing, he shouted when she opened her lips and sank down, sliding half his cock into her mouth. He pressed against the back of her throat and fought his body—fighting the need to pump. Gods, he wanted to fuck her mouth. Instead, he held himself still and she moved on him, long deep strokes, each entrance pressing him to the back of her throat and each retreat filled with the sweetest suction.

She drew back and rubbed the tip of her tongue against the underside of his head and then accepted him back inside. Sixx thought his eyes were going to explode.

It was temptation, pure temptation designed to drive him insane. She repeated the flicks of her tongue promising him more but holding back.

“Kay—Zayn, either suck me off or fuck me now.”

Her eyes twinkled with pleasure as she stared up at him, her mouth open. “Hmmm, mine.” She purred the word against his skin, giving him a moment feel the vibrations zipping through his cock before she again plunged him deep into her mouth. This time when she drew back, he knew she was going to take him the whole way. Her head bobbed and down as she sucked him. The power moved through his body and he fought to hold back his climax.

His hips rocked up, going deeper into her mouth. She accepted him, sucking lightly, grabbing deep inside him and pulling his cum out. His back arched as the climax shot through him, momentarily blinding him, hot pulses releasing inside her sweet mouth.

His muscles gave out and he collapsed onto the stone floor. She’d sucked the life out of him. His heart thundered in his chest as he fought to find his control. What the fuck had just happened? He’d come harder than he’d imagined possible.

Her mouth still moved on his skin, her tongue lapping at the base of his shaft, her fingers massaging his bollocks.

He slipped his fingers into her hair, gently stroking her head, silently thanking her though he had the sense that she'd enjoyed it as well.

She raised her head and smiled – the arrogance and satisfaction shining through her eyes.

But Sixx couldn't let her win that easily. "You screwed yourself, sweeting," he said, feeling smug. "If you wanted my cock inside you, you're out of luck. I'm done for the day."

The edge of her mouth pulled up and the light in her eyes flickered back to green. She looked at his shaft for one long moment.

"Mine," she announced again, giving his shaft another lick.

His cock twitched in response. It didn't seem possible. He wasn't a young kid who bounced back at the smallest provocation. The first night had been different. He hadn't fucked in six moon cycles. Having her four times was understandable.

But moments after he'd come so hard inside that sweet mouth there was no way he should have been able to get hard, but her tongue and lips were relentless. She seemed in no rush, seemed to take pleasure in the loving, hot strokes, purring her approval when he hardened. She lapped her way up the length of his shaft, teasing him with the promise of more.

Sixx grabbed the bedpost and held on. It looked as if she was going to have him come in her mouth again but then she drew back, tossing her head back and licking her lips.

She crawled up, marking new places with her lips and teeth as she reversed her earlier path, whispering melting kisses across his stomach, his ribs, pausing again to swipe her tongue across his nipples even as she straddled his hips, her pussy hidden from his sight by the skirt she wore. Her hand curled around his cock, positioning the broad head to her opening, almost but not quite letting him enter.

She slid her hand down his cock, letting her fingers brush against his bollocks. "Do you want to fuck me?" she asked, her voice low and husky but a different tone from when she'd declared her name to be Zayn.

"Kayla?" he asked.

She squeezed his balls. "Were you expecting someone else?"

When a woman had her hand on your bollocks, there was only answer to that question. "Gods, no."

"Good." She sank down, easing his cock into her passage, the tight grip of her cunt squeezing him as he filled her. She watched him – those green eyes burning hot as she put him inside her. She moved slowly, the desperate hunger from earlier seemed gone, as if his climax had also satisfied her. But the slick heat of her pussy told him she wanted to be fucked, that her body still craved its release. "I hate to think of you

fucking another woman," she whispered. The words were soft, but there was a hint of warning in her voice. It reminded Sixx of the reality he'd learned in the past four days—she was a dangerous woman.

She raised her eyes even as she sank down, sliding more of his cock into her sweet cunt. And Sixx knew he'd swear to anything to have more of her.

"No. Only you." Part of his mind screamed a warning. What was he doing? No sensible man ever made such a claim to a woman. But another part of him knew it was true.

"What about the other night? You returned with the scent of another woman on your skin." Kayla leaned forward, holding herself over him, her breasts brushing teasing caresses across his chest. "Did you fuck her?" She lifted her hips and slowly sank down, tightening around him as she took him back inside her pussy.

His mind, clouded by sensation, sought the words. Hells, any words would do. "No," he muttered.

"Good." She pressed her lips to his ear. "Because this cock belongs to me."

He knew he'd regret this but he couldn't think of another answer. "Yes."

As if that was all the encouragement she needed, she began to ride him, sliding his shaft in and out, setting a wickedly slow rhythm that made him feel every inch of her cunt each time he entered her. And he knew she felt the same thing and loved it. Gods, he'd never had a woman want him this intensely. Or frequently. And somehow his body was keeping up with her desires.

"Gods, Kayla, that feels so good." Moments before he'd been lax and satisfied from her sucking, now he was hard and ready for more. Impossible.

"Hmmm, yes." She dug her fingers into his chest muscles, holding him still as she used him. He was strong and resilient, giving her a steady base so she could ride him hard. The dragon rumbled inside her, wanting more, wanting her mate to come inside her. The hunger spiraled through her pussy, spiked higher each time she plunged down on his shaft. Zayn demanded that she fuck him hard and fast but Kayla slowed down. She wanted to feel him. Wanted to savor it.

She let her head fall back and leisurely let him inside. He filled her so perfectly, stretching deep and touching a special place inside that she'd never explored before. His hands crept up her thighs and swirled around her breasts, the whispered caress sending a new rush of tingles to her pussy. She'd never known how sensitive her breasts were until Sixx. Now she needed his touch, his fingers on her nipples. As if he heard her silent cry, he stroked her, circling the tight peaks of her breasts—light and teasing—before he pulled, gently, just enough pain make her ache.

Her hips pumped deeper, faster. Goddesses, she needed more. The desire for a slow, sensual fuck was gone. The dragon's hunger multiplied her own and Kayla couldn't resist. She grabbed his shoulders and fucked him, hard.

It was so delicious. She looked down. Sixx was watching her, his eyes hot and hungry. She leaned forward and drove her tongue deep into her his mouth. His hands

clamped down on her ass, slamming her down as he thrust up. The sharp, deep penetration threw her over the edge, her body shimmering with pleasure. She groaned as Sixx's hot cum flooded her pussy.

* * * * *

Kayla propped her head up in her hand and looked over at her lover. After she'd fucked him on the floor, he'd roused long enough to drag them both to the bed where they'd fallen asleep in an exhausted haze.

She didn't know when she'd realized they were both awake and just lying in comfortable silence, her on her side, Sixx on his stomach. She stretched out her hand and traced the centerline of his back with her finger. *Warm and mine*. Late afternoon sunlight filtered through the garden doors and landed on Sixx's skin, highlighting the flurry of scars.

At first she'd dismissed them as a warrior's marks but then the strange pattern made her look closer. Multiple slashes and recently healed cuts wove across his back. She'd seen scars before—her brothers and lovers had all been marked. They were symbols of honor among warriors, but these, these were different. *These* weren't the marks of a warrior but a man who'd been beaten. The distinct hash marks of a whip marred skin that was lined with old battle wounds. Not realizing that she moved, Kayla reached out and touched a deep, vicious scar on his shoulder.

Zayn growled her displeasure that someone would hurt her mate and Kayla must have repeated the noise.

"If they bother you," Sixx said though he didn't move. "Don't touch them."

"They don't bother me, but...who would do this?"

His eyes opened and he looked at her. It was clear he was deciding whether or not to answer. Finally he shrugged. "I'm a warrior. It's part of my life."

"But these are whip marks. Someone beat you."

He laughed without humor. "So I don't win every battle." He glanced up at her and Kayla met his stare. She wasn't going to let this go. He sighed. "About six moon cycles ago, I got taken captive."

"And they beat you? No warrior should be treated in such a manner." She sat up, ignoring the fact that she was naked. Sixx didn't. His eyes dropped to her breasts and she could see he was contemplating ending the conversation. She pulled the sheet up and saw the disappointment in his gaze. "Who was he?" she demanded. "He should be punished. Stripped of his lands for such cruelty."

Kayla felt the dragon rise inside her, wanting to destroy the man who had hurt her mate. And if Zayn couldn't find a way to defeat him, her brothers and father surely could.

Sixx laughed again as if he found her ferocity amusing.

"Did you already kill him?" she asked.

He shook his head and the humor left him. "I don't know who it was. It wasn't the company we were fighting. They'd already lost."

"But when you were released, or rescued?"

"I got out myself. I remember killing the guards and knowing I was going to die. I stepped outside and then nothing. When I woke, I didn't know where I was. And I could never find the chamber he'd held me in." The soft tone of his voice drew Kayla from her rage. He was lost in memories. "I was gone from that place."

"You woke up?" She smoothed her hand across his skin, needing to comfort him in some way.

Sixx nodded.

"Alone?"

He shook his head. "Not alone." The words were dead, filled with a silence that screamed inside Kayla's soul. Something had happened to him.

But he didn't seem inclined to talk about it. And the day, despite being spanked in front of five warriors, had been remarkably peaceful and she wasn't inclined to disrupt that peace.

"What about you?" he asked, turning to his side. The thick muscles of his chest called to her fingers and she couldn't resist touching him.

"What about me?"

"How did you become a slave? Don't you have a family?" As soon as the words left Sixx's mouth, he regretted it. Of course she had a family. They were most likely who had sold her. He waited for the pain to cross her eyes but instead she smiled.

"Oh yes. I have a family. In Xicanth." Her fingers swirled across his chest, not sexual or tempting. Just in random patterns, touching him just to enjoy the feel of him. "Mother, father and two brothers."

"No pets?" he teased.

She smiled and there was something in her eyes. As if she had a joke that he didn't understand. "Well, we have animals around but I wouldn't exactly call them pets."

He didn't pursue it. Didn't understand it but something about the way she spoke put his warrior senses on alert.

"Where did you learn to handle a knife?" Though he'd been able to strip the weapon from her that first night, she'd known how to fight. It was only his superior strength that had allowed him to take her so easily.

"My father taught me and my brothers."

"Odd that your father would train a girl to fight."

"My mother didn't give him much choice. Our family is unique."

He couldn't stop himself from glancing over at her. And sure enough there was that smile again—like she had a secret she wasn't sharing. Not that he wanted to learn her secrets, of course. She was a slave and it wouldn't do to become too attached to her.

A voice in his head he was slowly recognizing as a conscience laughed. *Too* attached to her. Right. She'd been here four days and already she'd messed up his mind worse than the witch.

She talked a bit, telling him stories of her family, a family she clearly loved—or idealized. She talked about her brothers and father like they were princes. Maybe they hadn't sold her. More likely they'd done it but she didn't know about it and he wasn't going to be the one to shatter her illusions.

"So, how did you end up at Iniz's?" he asked.

"I was in Ember to see—" She shrugged. "Well, having to do with our family business. Things went wrong and I found myself Iniz's prisoner." What kind of "business" would they send her to Ember for? It was barely a step up from the Hells.

"What's your family business? Pleasure workers?"

"No!" She leaned away and trained her eyes on him.

"Well, it seemed logical. Looking at you..." He let the explanation fade away.

"I look like a pleasure worker?" Her mouth hung open, as if she couldn't decide whether she should consider that a compliment or criticism.

"Not when you're dressed."

Kayla laughed and shook her head. "No, our family business is dragons."

Sixx choked. "Dragons? Killing them?"

"Oh no. We protect them."

"Have you ever seen one? They don't need much protecting."

"Have *you* seen one?"

"Yes."

"Have you ever fought one?"

"Gods, no." She sighed as though he'd relieved some great worry in her mind. "Those things are insane."

"What if you had something and they wanted it?"

Tension worked beneath her words but Sixx didn't know the source so he answered honestly.

"I'd give it over. There's nothing in this world I want enough to die for."

"But you fight every day. It's what you do."

"I fight humans. Humans are rational, they behave in a certain manner, a logical manner. Dragon's are crazy and I'd think as a woman you'd been more than willing to see all of them killed. Have you seen what they do to a woman?"

Kayla didn't answer. Her image of dragons was different from others. She knew them up close and personal, knew that they had one goal in life—to find their mate—and that the reputation they had of kidnapping virgins and killing them was part myth, part misunderstanding.

“So you’d never fight one.”

Sixx shook his head. “Never.”

The definitive answer filled her chest and Kayla felt her heart slow. Any man who wanted her would have to face at least one dragon, if not more.

Blinking to keep the tears from her eyes, Kayla rolled onto her back and stared at the ceiling.

She shivered and he realized the temperature in the room had dropped. He snuggled a bit closer, feeling the need to warm her. As their skin touched and meshed together, her eyes sparkled. He slid his hand between her thighs, loving the heat and moisture he found there.

She looked over and smiled, though there was a hint of sadness that hadn’t been there moments ago.

“I guess we’re done talking.”

Sixx nodded, lifted her leg over his hip and slid slowly inside. Gods, it was like coming home.

* * * * *

Sixx wandered out into the hallway, his legs weak. She’d fucked the strength from his body. Hells, after four days, he should have been used to it but it was still a surprise. Not only that she seemed to want it so badly but because his body was able to accommodate her. He wasn’t some green kid with a cock that rebounded at the simplest provocation. He needed time to recover. At least he had until he’d met Kayla.

He scooped his hair back and strolled down the hall. They needed food. Perhaps a dinner in bed and then he could feast on Kayla. He licked his lips, remembering the sweet taste of her cunt. She loved having his tongue inside her and he loved putting it there. Loved the way she squirmed and twisted as he tongue fucked her. Yeah, he’d spread her wide and spend a good portion of the night feasting on Kayla.

“Captain!”

Sixx slowed down and turned. Hinden hurried toward him, a piece of parchment clamped in his hand.

“This was just delivered. From Lord Menth.”

Sixx nodded and took the message. He opened the folded note and read it. “Fuck.”

Chapter Nine

"Get dressed," Sixx commanded, tossing a filmy piece of material at her. After an afternoon of hard fucking, her body was slow to react. She caught the cloth as it brushed the floor. The slippery material slithered through her fingers. Finally, using both hands she held it before her. The weave was so sheer she could see Sixx clearly through it. The outfit he'd given her previously had been short but at least it had been solid. This was transparent. Her nipples would show through.

She inspected the grim look on his face. Gone was the satisfied lover who'd left their bed an hour ago. The serious, angry warrior had returned.

"I'm not wearing this." *I might as well be naked.* She kept the comment to herself fearing that he might consider that an offer.

"Put it on." His voice was harsh and unbreakable as stone.

"I'll be practically naked."

"Better than fully naked and your ass glowing pink from my hand."

A strange shiver zipped down her spine. She knew from recent experience that Sixx would follow through with that threat. Her backside still tingled from his earlier spanking. But based on the flat line of his lips, she didn't think she would get any pleasure from the experience this time.

She sighed. The progress she thought she'd made seemed to have vanished. She clung to the memory of the afternoon, reminding herself that Zayn had picked him for a reason. Even if he was behaving like a bastard at the moment.

She held up the "dress". It was sheer strips of material connected by thin chains. Two long narrow panels were looped together to cover her breasts. Two other strips hung across the bottom, ostensibly to cover her pussy and her ass, leaving her hips bare. *Please, Goddesses, let no one who might ever communicate with my father see me in this outfit.*

Turning her back, she removed the shirt she'd put on after Sixx had left and let it drop. Sixx's hiss echoed through the chamber as she stood there naked. It was good to know that he wasn't immune. Hells, of course he wasn't immune. She'd been aggressive toward him, admittedly, but he'd accepted and welcomed her.

"Don't just stand there. Put the damn thing on."

Sixx's voice knocked her free from her thoughts. She slipped the dress over her head. It slid down her back, settling against her skin like a cool breeze. She adjusted the front, lifting and positioning her breasts in the miniscule bodice. As expected her nipples were clearly visible.

She glanced down and could practically see her pussy. She was basically naked.

She looked at Sixx, ready to protest, ready to demand that he give her something different to wear but stopped. He watched her, a dare in his eyes. He was expecting her refusal, waiting for her defiance.

What was this? Some kind of test to see if she would cower before him? He'd left the room looking stunned and sated and returned a different man. A man who seemed to have forgotten that he spent a good portion of the past four days between her legs. He treated her like a stranger. Or worse, a whore.

Irritation straightened her spine. He couldn't make her feel inferior unless she let him and she wouldn't give him the satisfaction. Pushing her shoulders back, she pressed her breasts forward and rolled her hip to the side.

Lust erupted in Sixx's eyes but was crushed so quickly that Kayla almost thought she'd imagined it. She glanced down and saw the distinct bulge in his leathers. Good. He wasn't as unaffected as he wanted to appear.

With a brusque nod, he walked to her. He kept his eyes focused on an area beyond her as if looking at her was too dangerous. Kayla couldn't help the smile that formed on her lips.

"You'll wear this."

He held up a silver band. Kayla looked at it for a moment before she realized what it was. It was a collar. A slave collar.

Tears pricked the edges of her eyes but she blinked them away. She wouldn't let him see her cry. Damn it, she was a princess. And a dragon. She was above this.

She lifted her chin and pressed her lips together, forcing herself to breathe calmly through her nose as he clamped the band around her neck. The snap of clasp joining sounded like an explosion in her head. He hooked a chain to it, weighing the collar down and forcing the metal against her neck. She winced but refused to make a sound.

Not looking her in the eye, he led her from the room, silently guiding her through the hallways. Kayla braced herself, expecting at any moment to encounter some servant or warrior who would leer at her, but the halls were empty. Where was he taking her? With the exception of being chained to the training field wall today, she'd been locked in his chambers for the four days she'd been here. Why this sudden desire to expose her? And so cruelly?

Maybe he intended to display her in his hall during the evening meal. She lifted her chin, vowing that she would tolerate whatever he did, however he tried to embarrass her. She was stronger than this.

Sixx kept walking and Kayla trudged behind him. The cool air kept her nipples hard and tight. *Perfect. Can I be any more on display?*

They turned the corner and Kayla jerked to a stop. Sixx's men—the five warriors he'd trained with at the end of the day—waited in the corridor. Sixx barely seemed to notice her reluctance. He tugged on the chain, giving her little choice but to follow him. It was a gentle pull, designed to get her moving, not hurt her. Her heart was soothed a slight bit at the small kindness.

She observed the men closely as they approached. They looked different than they had a few hours before. They were all tidy and dressed in clean clothes. What was going on? Kayla's hope of a brief, albeit embarrassing meal in Sixx's hall was quickly fading. Somehow she didn't think his men combed their hair for a typical meal. Even Sixx looked crisp. She'd been so focused on her own mortification that she hadn't noticed that he'd changed as well—and pulled his hair back to the base of his neck.

His arms were bare, the thick muscles tight and distinct as he placed one hand on the hilt of his sword. The other hand held the chain that connected to Kayla's slave collar.

"Let's go," he said to his men, walking out the front door. The tight line of his shoulders only added to the tension Kayla felt.

A shiver ran across her skin as they stepped outside. Where was he taking her? A low rumble of fear started in her stomach. He'd dressed her up, clearly labeled her as a slave. Was he intending to share her? Or worse, sell her?

Sixx gave commands to the guards at the gate and led her forward. Saddled horses waited for them. He walked to the front animal, climbed up, leaving Kayla standing beside the beast. The horse whinnied and shied away, taking all of Sixx's strength to calm it.

Kayla's mouth bent into a sly smile. Horses weren't fond of dragons.

Dragons, however, were very fond of horses. They were delicious.

Sixx soothed his horse, whispering to it until the animal stood still.

"Mik," Sixx called. "Hand her to me. And don't feel her ass when you do it."

Kayla tensed as hands clamped around her waist and lifted, practically throwing her in the air. Sixx caught her, flipping her around so she sat across his lap, her legs draped down one side. Unable to stop herself, she grabbed Sixx to stabilize herself.

Sixx draped his hand across her thighs and held her in place as he kicked the horse forward. They rode in silence and darkness until Kayla couldn't stand it anymore. It pricked her pride to be the first to speak but she needed to know what to expect.

"Where are we going?" Cold air assaulted her as Sixx picked up the pace but she refused to cuddle into him and use his warmth. Not when he was being so cold to her. Zayn whimpered inside Kayla's head, wanting to rub against Sixx.

He didn't answer for a long time. Finally, he said, "Lord Menth has summoned me."

"Lord Menth?"

"My lord. I'm bound to his service."

Kayla sat up straight. "But I thought you were a mercenary. Don't you just hire out to the highest bidder?" She hadn't meant it as sarcastically as it came out. She had no problem with mercenaries. They served a purpose.

"Menth has no army of his own. In return for use of the keep and the training grounds, I provide him the occasional service."

“But you don’t like him.”

Sixx shrugged. “He’s much like every other noble I’ve met. Selfish, arrogant and a pain in the ass.”

Kayla’s back straightened at Sixx’s assessment of nobility. He was going to have a challenge when he met her family. They were more than nobility. They were royalty.

“So, why has Lord Menth summoned you?” she asked, pushing aside the growing dread in her chest. If she ever made it home, if she ever found her medallion, how was she going to reconcile her lover and her family?

“The Gods only know. He only summons me when something’s gone wrong. Something he needs fixed.”

“Like what?”

“Could be anything. He’s inadvertently started wars before. Or he *wants* to start a war. He’s not completely rational when it comes to fighting.”

“Why do you work for him?”

“I’d rather work for a crazy bastard who lets me go my own way than for someone who’s always watching me. We make it work.”

Kayla nodded. The way he spoke made her heart ache. He obviously preferred to be in command. And she lived in a household of determinedly dominant males. Having another thrown into the mix was not going to be pretty.

That was always assuming Sixx didn’t discover she was a princess and decide killing her was the simplest solution to getting rid of her.

And also assuming she could convince him to mate with her. Her dragon’s claim alone was not enough. Somehow, she had to make Sixx want her. Enough to face down her father. Goddesses, that was unlikely. He’d told her earlier that nothing would make him fight a dragon. The ache in her chest turned to cold and she shivered.

Sixx pulled her tighter against him. The warmth from his body wrapped around her shoulders like a blanket and she snuggled into him, stealing his warmth. Sixx placed his hand on her hip and pulled her closer, nudging her backside so that it was over his groin. Sighing, she relaxed down against him. Somehow with the prospect of facing her father looming the future, she didn’t think that one dinner with Lord Menth could be that challenging.

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Sixx’s steps slowed as he and Kayla approached a set of oversized doors. He’d sent his men on ahead with no explanation, leaving the two of them alone in Menth’s hallway. The rumble of voices beyond the doors warned her they had reached their destination. He stopped and turned. The dark cold in his eyes sent a shudder down her spine. The lover who’d warmed her on the ride had disappeared again.

“When we walk into this room, we will be on display before Menth and his men.” There was no kindness to his words. “If I tell you to do something, you do it.

Immediately. Cross me on this and I'll beat you bloody." Every instinct in Kayla went on alert and she sensed Zayn's surprise. Sixx had shown no sign of viciousness but there was no doubting his sincerity. Shouted laughter echoed from beyond the doors and Kayla could feel Sixx's tension. They weren't among friends. They were among enemies – covert enemies – and Sixx could be nothing less than the warrior that he was. The room would be filled with people watching his every move, searching for any sign of weakness.

Kayla lifted her chin and stared back at him.

"Then here's my demand."

His eyes squinted. "You're hardly in the position to demand anything."

"Do you want those men to see a compliant, submissive woman? Or do you want to spend the rest of the night beating me each time I disobey?"

Sixx leaned away and waited. There was just the tiniest flicker at the edge of his mouth – nothing that could be called a smile but maybe a hint of admiration.

"Let no other man touch me and you'll get an appropriately submissive slave." She shrugged. "At least in public."

Sixx watched her for a long moment and Kayla was sure he would reject her idea. She had little bargaining position but she knew there was no way she could allow any other man to touch her. Zayn wouldn't tolerate it – and it was too dangerous to find out what would happen if the dragon decided to let loose.

Finally Sixx nodded. "For tonight you'll know only my touch. But disobey me and I will beat you."

She didn't doubt it was an honest threat. A warrior's reputation was vital to his survival. Kayla nodded. Satisfied with the agreement, Sixx stepped back and looked down at her. His jaw was set in a hard line and his eyes were silent as if she meant nothing – as if her almost naked body caused no reaction in him.

"Let's go."

She lifted her chin in a motion he'd learned meant she was gathering her courage. The thought amazed him. She was dressed in what could be laughingly called a dress with a slave collar around her throat yet she held her head as high as any queen.

Confident that she would follow, he walked into the room. Heads turned as they entered. Sixx felt his awareness kick in. He immediately located the exits and found his men. The small group sat together on cushions in a back corner of the room. That would have been Mik's doing. Mik would let no man sit behind him. The small group was eating and drinking and by all appearances were relaxed and enjoying the meal but as Sixx walked across the room he knew which of his men were on watch and knew that at least three had brought swords into dinner with them, despite Menth's requirement that no weapons be carried about the castle.

Sixx knew his men and there was no way they had come into the Great Hall unarmed. He had two daggers and three makeshift weapons on his person as well.

Menth's hall was crowded with people and deafening with the noise they made. Laughter and voices echoed through the poorly designed chamber heightening each sound until it reverberated against the walls.

Knowing it was required, Sixx approached Menth's dais and bowed his head. His host looked up and smiled. The haze of too much drink painted his eyes. Menth had obviously spent his last few hours indulging. That could be good or bad. Drunk, Menth was usually pliable and relaxed. But if he drank too much, he turned mean. And Sixx didn't want to face a mean drunk. Not tonight. Fuck, he'd had other plans for the night—and they didn't involve sharing Kayla with his lord.

But Menth's note had demanded that Sixx bring his new slave. How the Hells had Menth even found out about her? The aggressive stance of a warrior off to Sixx's right caught his attention—and gave him his answer. Harvet. The young warrior stood with his feet apart and his arms folded across his chest, his stare an ugly combination of hatred and a smirk.

So, Harvet was sucking up to Menth. Perfect.

"Captain Sixx, welcome to my hall," Menth said expansively.

Sixx nodded. "Thank you, Lord Menth."

"And have you brought her? I've heard great things about this newest slut you've acquired."

Sixx felt Kayla tense beside him and wasn't sure if it was because Menth had called her a slut—or because Sixx might have had others before her. Sixx had never owned a slave but he'd acquired camp followers over the years. Menth had always been strangely fascinated with Sixx's women, often wanting to share them.

"She's quite lovely," Menth announced, looking around Sixx to get a better view of Kayla. The noise in the hall had faded as people nearby strained to listen.

Again Sixx nodded.

"And have you been enjoying her?"

"As well as can be expected with a woman who has little intellect." It was a childish jab but satisfying nonetheless. The soft caress of feminine fingers along his back distracted him for a moment—then the sharp bite of her nails into his skin. He crushed a grunt and looked down. Her hand rested on his hip. To anyone else, it would appear that she was merely placing her fingers on him. They didn't see the tiny claws digging into his skin. He tightened his eyes in warning and she eased up.

Despite his best threats, the woman seemed fearless. She had acceded to his wishes in the hallway but there had been no cowering, no tears. She'd basically dared him to protect her.

"Bring her forward. Last time I saw her she was covered in dirt."

When had he—? Sixx looked. So, Harvet had stopped at Lord Menth's castle before returning to Sixx's keep. What was Harvet up to?

Knowing it would piss him off more than any other response, Sixx ignored Harvet and pulled Kayla forward. After a brief flash of resistance she followed his silent direction. He could hardly fault her for that. No doubt it was instinctive to fight but she quickly brushed aside the reaction and pushed her shoulders back. Sixx felt his lips curl into a snarl. Did she realize that she was presenting herself to them? Pushing her breasts forward, emphasizing the tight nipples straining against the thin cloth that covered her chest. She lifted her chin and stared at the high table.

A low rumble of appreciation moved across the head table as Menth and his men eyed Kayla's body.

"She's quite stunning, Sixx. Nice big tits. Turn her around. Let's see her ass."

Kayla glanced at Sixx and he nodded. The urge to shield her from their eyes swelled as she turned slowly, presenting her back to the leering men. Her body moved with the seductive ease that seemed to be a part of her soul. No doubt she was used having men stare at her, lust after her.

"Nice ass as well. Have you fucked it?"

"No."

"A bit slow there, boy. We'll have to remedy that. Is she a good fuck otherwise? Or does she lie there like a cow with no energy?"

Kayla tensed beside him and her chin came up. If she tipped her head back any farther she'd be staring at the ceiling. The line of her jaw clenched and unclenched.

"She's coming along, my lord," Sixx answered smoothly.

Masculine laughter echoed through the room in response to Sixx's statement.

"Let me have a turn, then, Sixx. I'd like to see how the little slut fucks for myself."

He saw her hand twitch and knew she was fighting her natural responses. Whether that meant grabbing Sixx and demanding he protect her, or lunging at Menth, he didn't know. Either way she won the battle and stared ahead, keeping her focus on the back wall.

"Unfortunately, my lord—" Sixx bowed, hoping to soothe Menth's irritation with his show of respect. It ground on Sixx's nerves to humble himself before Menth but tonight, that's what would be done. "The girl is being trained specifically for submission and I'm at a critical point. I would request that you delay your pleasures until her training is complete. I can assure you that you'll find her more entertaining if you wait."

Sixx didn't need to look at Kayla to know she was fighting her panic. He glanced at her, warning her to remain silent and trust him. Hells, all he had to do was get them through the night and Menth would forget about her.

Menth's eyes first squinted at Sixx's refusal but then he smiled. "Very well, Captain Sixx. I can wait for a properly trained fuck." He blinked and swayed in his chair. "Turn her around again." This time Menth sounded suspicious—still drunk but curious. "There's something familiar about her."

Sixx nodded and Kayla continued her slow circle until she once again faced front. Because he was standing so close to her, Sixx could sense the rising tension in her.

Menth squinted and peered over his table. "I feel like I've seen you somewhere before, girl. Where would that be? Where do you come from?"

Kayla had said she was from Xicanth but his warrior's instincts told him not to reveal that truth.

"She was from the southern kingdoms before she was sold to Iniz and then given to me," Sixx said, hoping to subtly remind Menth that Kayla belonged to him.

The lines around Menth's eyes deepened and he tapped his fingertips against his lip. "I haven't been to the southern kingdoms since I was a child." He shook his head, not taking his eyes from Kayla. "But she is familiar. I'll think of it." He laughed and downed half the tankard before him. "Take a seat—and perhaps we'll have a bit of entertainment from your slave later."

"My lord—"

"Oh I'll wait to fuck her," Menth said, stopping Sixx's prepared protest. "But that doesn't mean we can't see a bit of what she's learned, eh?" He looked to the men seated around him. They all grunted and nodded. Sixx bowed his head, acknowledging the request and hoping to the Gods that Menth passed out before he called on Kayla to perform. Hells, he could barely expect compliance out of the woman. Submission? Not likely.

Chapter Ten

Sixx turned and led her to the pile of cushions his men occupied. He guided her onto a large purple pillow – the gentle warmth of his fingers giving her some comfort. The challenging part was over and with any luck she could blend into the background and not be noticed. Was it possible that Menth actually recognized her? Would he tell her family? Part of her hoped that he would but then there was the risk to Sixx. She still had to hope that she could bind him to her enough that when she revealed who she was and what she was, he would be willing to return her home.

“Kneel.”

Kayla flinched at Sixx’s low command. She looked at the cushions beneath her. Iniz had tried to teach her proper sex slave behavior so she’d been instructed on how to sit and kneel. She’d refused when Iniz had ordered her into this position but now she tried to match the poses she’d been taught. She placed her hands behind her back, lowered her gaze and sank to the ground, the soft pillow cushioning her knees. A low grunt from Sixx told her that he approved.

“Spread your legs.” She knew the order was designed to show the men around them that she was under his control but that didn’t stop the excitement that zipped through her sex. She raised her chin and stared up at him, making sure she had his full attention as she lifted her knee and separated her thighs. The thin material of her skirt slid down between her legs, brushing against her pussy. The light flutter of material was a delicate caress to her heated skin.

Sixx watched for a moment then dropped his eyes to the shadow between her thighs. The nearly transparent cloth did little to hide her sex.

He nodded and then turned away, sitting in front of her, his hips pressed against the inside of her knees.

Mine. Zayn growled her approval at being so close to Sixx. With Sixx blocking her from the sight of most of the room, Kayla let her arms relax and curled her fingers into fists, propping them on her thighs, resisting the dragon’s urge to touch him.

She took a deep breath and the warm masculine scent filled her head. There were other smells around as well—sweat, food, ale—but none quite as potent as Sixx’s. Unable to stop herself she leaned forward and inhaled. His hair had the clean smell of the soap he used. Zayn rumbled inside Kayla’s mind.

“Kayla.”

Sixx’s voice startled her and she looked up. Over his right shoulder, he held a small chunk of bread slathered in butter. She reached up to take it but as her fingers drew near, he pulled it away, placing it in his own mouth. Mik laughed but then crushed the

sound when Sixx stared at him. Sixx repeated the action. Again, when she reached the bread, he pulled it away. The third time she understood. When he offered the bread over his shoulder, she leaned forward and grabbed it with her teeth. Her breasts pressed against his back, teasing the already tight nipples. That combined with the delicious flavor of the bread and butter made Kayla close her eyes and moan. It took her long moments to convince herself to sit back and lose his warmth.

“Very good,” Sixx complimented softly.

Eating became a full body sensual experience—lovely flavors settling on her tongue as her body moved against his. Moisture from her pussy trickled down her legs. Despite her best efforts to ignore it, she couldn’t resist the opportunity to taste his skin as he fed her, to trail her tongue along the inside edge of his thumb. With his other hand, he stroked the outside of her knee, a subtle caress that held hours of promise.

“Kayla,” he called when she didn’t take the bite of chocolate treat he held before her.

“I’m full, Captain,” she answered, her voice husky and breathless. She glanced at the men seated around them realizing they’d been witnesses to her arousal. All eyes were on her. She lowered her gaze and it landed on the lap of one man. A bulge was delineated against the thick material of his leathers.

“Take the bite, Kayla,” Sixx commanded. She thought about ignoring him but their agreement formed in the hallway returned to mind. He’d done his part in keeping other men from her. She opened her mouth and accepted the decadent dessert. The chocolate melted on her tongue and it was all she would do not to groan. Sixx didn’t turn but he kept his hand stretched over his shoulder. She saw the traces of chocolate left on his fingers and knew what was expected. Feeling the weight of stares from the men surrounding them and the eagerness with which they watched, she flicked her tongue out and licked the remaining traces of chocolate from his fingers. When they were clean, she sucked his finger inside her mouth. He tensed, his back straightening a mere inch but he didn’t pull away.

She closed her eyes and savored not only the taste of his skin but the power that flowed inside her. She swirled her tongue around his finger, remembering the afternoon, when she’d done the same thing to his cock. A hitch in his breath told her he was also picturing her with his cock in her mouth, sucking him. She groaned softly wanting the real thing.

Then, he slipped his finger from between her lips and she wanted to whimper at the loss. Knowing she was playing with fire but needing some of the warmth from it, she inched forward, widening her legs and pressing against his back.

Sixx braced himself as she cuddled up behind him, her thighs split around his hips. When he’d started out feeding Kayla it had been merely to reinforce her position as a slave—to show the world that she was the submissive woman he’d proclaimed her to be—but somehow it had turned into a sensual battle. Every lick of her tongue had

translated into a caress to his cock until it was all he could do not to spin around and drive his shaft between her pink lips.

Sixx bent one leg up, trying to hide the hard-on that was threatening to burst his leathers.

She crowded closer to him, her warmth invading his spine and creeping downward. The tight points of her nipples tempted him though he could barely feel them through his vest. He decided he hadn't spent nearly enough time sucking her nipples and was determined to rectify that when he returned to his chamber. He would slide his cock into her and hold her in position while he licked and kissed and bit those perfect breasts.

She moved another inch closer. Her bent knees were halfway down his thighs. She was practically straddling him. The conversation moved around him but his focus was on Kayla. She rubbed against him, leaning her body against his, her breasts, her stomach and oh Gods, her pussy. He felt her reach between them and drag the whisper thin material away.

She lifted her hips and began a slow subtle pulse against him. Her breath was harsh in his ear as she rocked against him. Damn, she was humping his back, rubbing that greedy cunt against him. He shifted, arching his back forward and pushing his hips backward, giving her a better mound to rock against. A quiet groan told him she appreciated his efforts. She tilted her head and leaned forward, nipping her teeth at the bottom of his earlobe.

He looked around to see who was watching but few seemed to notice her shallow movements. The heat from her sex seeped into his skin and he could feel the warm rush of her moisture. Her laughter teased his senses as she slowly rocked against him.

He reached back and grabbed her thigh, stopping her movements. Her soft cry protested but she remained still. He let his fingers slip across her skin, feeling her tense up and he smiled. She hadn't been expecting that. No doubt she'd been rubbing herself against him just to tease him, assuming he would do nothing about it. Now he was hard as a pike and more than ready to accept her offer.

Gods he had to have her soon. But it was too early to leave and he wasn't going to take her into the hallway and fuck her like he would some whore.

All he could do was tease her and himself.

He continued his upward progression, the moisture dripping down her thighs was so tempting. He wanted it on his skin, his lips, his tongue. The hot liquid guided him closer to her cunt. Her breath caught in the back of her throat as he traced the swollen line of her pussy lips. The tight curls gripped his fingers as he slid into her wet slit. She was still now waiting.

"Menth said earlier that his tournament is filled. He's held a few spots open for you," Mik said, continuing their conversation, seemingly unaware that Sixx was fingering Kayla's pussy. Sixx had little doubt that Mik knew precisely what was going on but had decided for his own reasons to provide distraction.

"He can give them up," Sixx said. He slipped his finger to the edge of her opening and rubbed slowly inside. *Very good.* Kayla pressed up as if trying to get away but immediately sank back down. "I'm not competing this year." He pushed his finger farther into her cunt. It was difficult to concentrate on the conversation with her hot liquid drenching his hand and her quickening breath on his neck. He held his finger inside her, not fully penetrating her but enough to tease.

"Menth's not going to like that. He wants to show you off."

Sixx wiggled the tip of his finger, brushing the inside of her passage. Her hips pressed forward and a soft gasp reached his ears. Good. Her body craved his penetration. He pushed his finger hard into her. The light catch in her throat was the only reaction he got but it was enough. He pumped inside her for three strokes, enough to tease her and tempt her with more.

"He'll have to be disappointed," he said to Mik as he withdrew his finger. The slick liquid flowing inside her coated his fingers. Before she had a chance to relax, he drove two fingers into her. She pressed up, leaning against him. This time a moan fully escaped and Mik's eyes widened. There was no way to act as if nothing was happening. Kayla's movements were becoming longer and deeper as she tried to push him into her.

"Captain Sixx!" Menth's blurry shout was much closer than Sixx had been expecting. *Fuck.* He'd been concentrating on Kayla and hadn't noticed Menth's approach. "I've come to invite you to my tournament. You, as the champion for four seasons, *must return* to defend your honors."

Silently cursing Menth's arrival, Sixx pulled his hand from between Kayla's legs. Her whimper made his cock tightened. Sixx patted her knee as he relaxed back against her, holding most of his weight off her body but keeping her hidden from interested eyes.

"I'm sorry, my lord. As I told you, I will not be participating this season. It is time for a new champion to take over. Mik and Scant will represent the troop. And I have no doubt one of them will continue the tradition of your camp winning."

"But Sixx, you're the Butcher of Balier. It is you they want to challenge."

Kayla tensed behind him and Sixx tried not to wince at the title. No doubt she'd heard the tales. They were legend through most kingdoms. Most of them were lies but enough was truth that he knew he had little to be proud of. Suppressing the regret that she'd found out who he was, Sixx shook his head and said, "Not this year, my lord."

Menth's eyes went from irritated to clever—which was difficult for a man as drunk as he was. "I think you'll change your mind when you hear who has agreed to attend and bring his troop."

Minimally curious, Sixx raised his eyebrows in question.

"Lord Terrak."

Sixx couldn't stop his body from tensing. Kayla inhaled sharply and Sixx thought he must have pinched her when his body had reacted to the name.

Terrak. Once they'd been friends, brothers. Now they were neither. Some would call them competitors. But that gave too much credibility to the relationship. *Terrak* was merely an annoyance.

Terrak ran a training camp similar to *Sixx's* – but *Terrak* was left with the men *Sixx* wouldn't accept. Some of them were great fighters but *Sixx* had certain expectations and when a warrior didn't meet those expectations, he kicked them out. And they went to *Terrak* to train.

The last time that *Terrak* and *Sixx* had met on the battlefield, they'd been fighting for the same lord and had defeated their employer's enemy quickly and decisively. That hadn't stopped *Terrak* from slaughtering an entire village that had already surrendered – just to spread fear of his name.

The sight had turned *Sixx's* stomach and that was before the witch had cursed him.

But even *Terrak's* presence, and *Sixx's* desire to humiliate the bastard, wasn't enough to entice *Sixx* into the tournament. It would be suicide.

"Scant and Mik will give them excellent competition and I have no worries that my men will not crush *Terrak's* warriors." Mik and Scant nodded. It was true. *Terrak's* men were good but *Sixx's* were better. More controlled, disciplined.

Menth laughed and *Sixx* had a moment to see that his lord might not be as drunk as he'd first appeared.

"I won't give up on you yet," *Menth* announced. "But I must say, you've quite disappointed me tonight. First you won't let me fuck your slave and then you refuse to fight for me." *Menth's* gaze turned hard, even through the haze of ale. "Perhaps you're not pleased with the current arrangement."

"Not at all, my lord." He had to handle this carefully. *Menth's* pride was a touchy thing and *Sixx* wasn't ready to give up his position just yet. "I'm merely delaying your pleasure so that it will be greater in the future."

"But I want something now," *Menth* said, almost pouting. He stepped closer, reaching out and stroked *Kayla's* hair. "At least let me see her in action. Bet she can suck the shine off a blade."

Kayla tensed and *Sixx* shifted, turning his body. The movement was casual but it effectively forced *Menth* to step back.

A dangerous atmosphere invaded the room—too much ale and too much temptation in the form of *Kayla*. That was the problem with nobility, *Sixx* thought. Tell them they couldn't have something and it immediately became what they craved. *Sixx* knew from experience. Hells, he'd made his living out of spoiled nobles who started wars because they wanted something. A piece of land or gold or a jewel. He'd once fought a war over a cup.

Gods, it felt like he'd aged twenty summers in the past five moon cycles. The games and intrigues of the men he'd fought and played with all his life were irritating and stupid. And dangerous.

“Come on, Captain,” Menth prompted. “Let’s see some of what she’s learned.” Fuck. He wasn’t going to let this go. “Don’t you think?” Menth called out to the room.

A general cheer went up and Sixx cursed under his breath, sending a warning look to Mik. Mik shrugged and seemed to be saying that Sixx should give them something.

Looking more relaxed than he felt, Sixx nodded. “If you like.” He glanced at Kayla and watched her eyes widen. Good a little punishment for her sensual torture. “She’s just a beginner, you understand,” he qualified. “Slave—” The muscles around her jaw tightened and the edges of her lips squeezed tight. “Lord Menth wishes to see what you’ve learned in your training. So do your best and seduce me.”

The lower edge of her chin hiked up a fraction and he could see her considering her options. After a long moment—too long for Sixx’s comfort—she bowed her head.

“Yes, my captain.”

The sensual way she answered was a fist in his gut. He wasn’t going to fuck her in front of these men but as soon as they were alone, he was having her. Twice. It would take at least that to make his cock relent.

But first he had to get through the rest of this evening and he had no idea what Kayla would do. He doubted she would do anything to put her tenuous position at risk. She was more sensible than that. And she seemed to realize that of all the men in the room, she was safest with him.

With the grace of a dancer, she pushed back on her heels and came to standing. The full mounds of her breasts strained the delicate fabric that covered them and the tight points of her nipples dented the thin material. Sixx heard the shifting of chairs and adjusting of crotches as Menth and the men around them moved to get a better view.

Sixx leaned his back on his pillow, giving Kayla full access to his body. He looked at her with amused eyes—daring her to do her worst. Or best, depending on how one viewed it.

Chapter Eleven

Kayla straightened and stared down at the man positioned before her. He was perfect—hard, toned flesh, tight lines and strong muscles. The weight of so many eyes on her didn't bother her at all—the only ones she cared about were Sixx's. Desire was all that bound him to her, so she would use it, increase it. She took a deep breath and felt all eyes lock on her breasts.

She glanced at the men seated around Sixx, letting her gaze linger on several of them until she heard Sixx's low growl of warning. The edge of her mouth kicked up and she lowered her gaze to hide it.

Sixx no doubt saw this as punishment but it would be pure pleasure for her. Her pussy throbbed with the need to have him—his finger hadn't been enough. She wanted him—all of him—but until she could get everything she desired, she would take the opportunity to play.

He offered her his hand. Hoping that hers wasn't trembling, she placed her fingers in his palm as he pulled her closer. The thin scraps of material fluttered against her skin, teasing it like invisible fingers.

His hand slid down her hip to the back of her thigh, pulling her closer. She glanced at his face and saw the amusement, even the jealousy was gone, and all that was left was a warning. They were among enemies and she would be obedient. She gave a slow nod to indicate she'd received his message then focused on her task, moving forward, slipping one knee between his. Sixx followed the silent command and opened his legs. A slight breeze washed along her back fluttering the thin strip of material that covered her ass. She arched her back, pushing her ass out. She leaned forward, using his shoulders to brace herself, bringing her breasts close to his mouth. Slowly, she lowered her head and placed a soft, open-mouthed kiss on his jaw.

The world around them started to fade—her senses consumed by Sixx, his delicious scent, the taste of his skin, the heat in his eyes. She trailed kisses down his jaw, to his neck, adding a delicate bite of her teeth and loving the low grunt of appreciation. She swung her hips in slow motion, aware that Sixx could see over her back.

"Do I please you, my captain?" she whispered into his ear. He didn't speak but his eyes flared with fire. Perfect. She sent a silent thanks to Menth for giving her this opportunity. She would drive Sixx so crazy with lust he couldn't resist her. She leaned in closer, letting her breasts brush against him. The peaks were sensitized and tightened even more as she moved against him, promising more with each light caress.

Leisurely she worked her way down, nibbling kisses along his chest, light touches beneath his vest, until she was kneeling between his spread thighs. She was distantly aware of the men around her, that much of the conversation had stopped. They were all

watching her – and watching Sixx’s reaction. The audience gave her energy. Spreading her fingers wide, she placed her hands on his lower chest and stroked down, letting her thumbs skip across his erection as she skimmed by. She circled her hands around his thighs, loving the feel of his tense muscles beneath her palms, knowing he was fighting his reaction to her. She glanced up and the dangerous heat in his gaze sent pleasant shivers through her pussy. There was no denying that she was getting to him – now she had to take him over the edge.

With his eyes captured by hers, she leaned forward and placed a kiss on his cock, claiming it. Heat flowed through the tight leathers that stretched across his erection. She opened her mouth wide and ran her teeth along the thick ridge. Sixx grunted and his hips punched up as if he was trying to shove his cock into her mouth. Though she knew the sensation would be muted through the heavy material, she trailed the tip of her tongue up his shaft, leaving a thin trail of moisture. Marking him as hers.

“Mine,” she whispered echoing Zayn’s cry, feeling a delicious ache inside her. Warm liquid slipped from between her legs. Kayla reached for the flap of his leathers, needing more, needing to feel him, his hot skin, his erection in her mouth. She wanted it all. His hands closed over hers and he held her still. The sudden impediment shocked her from the sensual web that held her. She looked up and Sixx shook his head. His mouth started to open and she knew he was going to tell her to stop – that she was done with her seduction.

But she wasn’t done. She wouldn’t be finished until he’d lost that bedamned control.

She slipped her hands from beneath his and slid them down his thighs. Using his knees as support, she pressed down on the heels of her hands and stood. She took a slow step backward and with an arrogant nudge of her knee, urged his legs closed. For a moment, he didn’t move, his stare challenging her right to command him. *Arrogant bastard*, she thought affectionately. Finally, with a cautious look, he drew his legs together. She stepped to his side then swung her knee over his, straddling his strong thighs. The material covering her ass fluttered with the movement.

She leaned forward and placed her lips against his ear.

“Since you won’t let me taste your cock,” she said softly. “I’ll take what I can.”

She sank down, allowing her weight to settle on his knees. Placing her hands on his thighs, she lifted herself up and dragged her hips forward, slow, rocking movements, drawing her closer, until her feet were tucked under her hips and when she sat down, her pussy was open against the ridge of his cock. Heat seeped into her passage and Kayla groaned, letting her pleasure be heard.

Yes, Zayn growled inside her head.

The world retreated to insignificance as she looked in his eyes. She didn’t care who watched them. All she cared about was the man beneath her – and the violent desire to feel him all the way inside, filling her.

She reached up and stroked her fingers along the tense line of his jaw then slowly began to move her hips, swirling circles, massaging his cock with her pussy. Her intent was his seduction but each circle brought her clit into contact with his shaft. Delicious tingles sparkled through her already aroused flesh and sent more heat through her core. Caught in a trap of her own making, her breath came in harsh pants as she picked up speed, her body craving the release she knew she could find with him.

Sixx grabbed her ass, urging her in deeper, longer strokes, guiding her where she needed to find her pleasure. She leaned back, placing her hands on his knees as she rocked against him. Her hips moved of their own accord, faster and faster until the pressure was too great, too much. A low groan slipped from her lips as he arched into her, his cock creating a sharp wicked stroke against her clit.

Sweet release shot from her sex and spun through her chest, making breath difficult. The wonderful sensation crept into her limbs, leeching the strength from her body.

Her head dropped back, arching her breasts higher, presenting them to the world. Sixx licked his lips, his mouth watering at the delicious sight before him, her perfect, tight nipples begging for his lips, his teeth. And the sweet fire of her cunt burning him through the thick material of his leathers. He looked up. Menth and his men—Hells, even the men from Sixx's personal guard—stared at her breasts. Some of them had drawn out their cocks and were pumping their fists as they watched.

Sixx tightened his grip on her hips and pulled her upright. Her slumberous eyes were filled with wonder...and a desire for more. The little witch wasn't going to be satisfied with humping his cock. She wanted the real thing—inside her. His shaft twitched, agreeing with the proposal.

"Gods, Sixx, that was impressive. What will she be like when she's fully trained?" Menth's growled. As he spoke he grabbed the arm of a passing servant girl, knocked the tray out of her hands and pressed her to the ground. The woman obviously knew what was expected and immediately opened the flap of Menth's leathers and began to suck. Sixx squeezed Kayla's ass, his fingers compulsively needing to touch her.

"She'll know better than to come without permission, for one thing," he answered, pleased that his voice sounded cool and controlled. It was completely counter to the way his heart was pumping. Hells, his whole being was focused on getting his shaft between her plump pussy lips. Her tongue flicked out, teasing his neck with the hot little caress, even as her fingers stroked his hair. She shifted, getting comfortable, snuggling against his chest and rubbing her pussy against his still hard cock.

Fuck, he needed to get them out of there before he ripped open his leathers and did her right there.

"Hells, Sixx, if she rode me like that, I wouldn't care if she came or not," Menth laughed and then groaned as his servant sucked him deeper.

“To be a proper slave, she must wait for permission.” Sixx placed his hands on Kayla’s hips and lifted her off him, setting her back on her knees. Moisture clung to his leathers from where she’d rubbed herself so deliberately. The sight make his cock pulse.

Sixx stood. “Lord Menth, I’m sorry to cut the evening short but I really must address this situation immediately. It is best for the punishment to follow the infraction as quickly as possible.”

Menth rocked his hips forward, pushing his cock into the woman’s mouth.

“Fine, go, but when she’s ready, I want first chance at her.”

When the Hells glow with daylight, Sixx thought. It was strange. He’d shared women before. Willingly. But the thought of Menth, or anyone else, fucking Kayla... His stomach turned over and his gut seized up. Wouldn’t happen. Ever.

Sixx bowed to Menth, though with the pair of lips wrapped around his shaft, he didn’t seem to notice.

Sixx’s guard came to their feet. Kayla continued to kneel—as if she was waiting for his permission to stand. Fine. Now when he’s in a hurry to get out of the room before half the men who wanted to fuck Kayla decided to ignore Sixx’s ownership, she acts like a slave.

“Kayla, come.”

Her eyes sparkled with laughter and he could almost hear her words. *I already did.*

But she lowered her gaze and stood, again pressing her ass up first and then straightening. When she stood, the submissive slave she’d been pretending to be was gone. She raised her chin and drilled him with that arrogantly regal look.

He glared down her and indicated she should walk to the door. She led, with Sixx and his men following her. It was the wrong order for a slave but he was tired of men staring at her ass.

An ass she was swinging in a seductive pulse that reverberated through his cock. Damn little tease. The damp heat of her cunt still burned his skin. With her slow, sensual manner, she’d seduced him and the crowd, riding his shaft as if it was buried inside her.

His little exhibitionist slave.

The slow rock of her hips hypnotized him—until all he could think of was fucking her, holding that ass while he pounded himself into her, poured himself into her.

He walked faster, urging her quickly out of the room. The door closed behind them, leaving Kayla, Sixx and his guard separated from the Menth’s hall.

Sixx stared down at Kayla. She raised her eyes and stared at him innocently. Too innocently.

“Something wrong?”

“Fuck no, if you intended to have me fight half the realm. Or did you decide you wanted to be raped by half of Menth’s cohort?”

Her mouth dropped open. It took her a moment to find the control to speak.

"What!? It wasn't my idea to make me into a submissive or to have me show off for your friends. I was doing what I thought you wanted."

"I didn't want you to practically fuck me in front of—"

He looked around and saw Mik and Scant and the rest of his guard, avidly listening to their conversation. And smiling. Mik was grinning like an idiot.

"Go home," he commanded.

"But—"

Sixx cut off Mik's protest.

"Just go. We'll be right behind you."

Mik and Scant hesitated but finally they turned and walked away, leaving Sixx alone with Kayla. She put her hands on her hips and braced her knees apart, clearly preparing to continue the battle.

The tight peaks of her nipples pressed against the thin material of her dress told him she hadn't completely released the desire that had held her moments before.

"Now, I've got a room full of men who want to fuck you and I'm going to end up killing at least a few of them before we'll make it out of the castle." He kept his voice low, letting some of his anger free. He didn't understand what caused it—only that he was furious.

Her eyes squinted into a glare. "I was doing what you told me to do," she snarled back. Despite the fact that she spoke the truth, it still irritated him.

"And you loved every moment of it," he snapped. "All those men watching your ass, imagining how it felt to have your pussy rubbing against them. Their cocks getting hard." His anger was irrational, but it made no difference.

Instead of sniping at him, she smiled—and slipped her hand between his legs, flicking her fingers across his still hard shaft. She never behaved as he expected. "The truth is, it got your cock hard. And that's what's irritating you."

She let her hand trail away and turned, swinging her hips, flipping that sweet ass back and forth as she strolled down the hall.

His cock leapt against his leathers, begging for release, begging to be plunged inside that wet cunt.

Just out of arm's reach, she looked back. Her mouth was open, just enough to tempt him, just enough to make him imagine driving his cock between her lips. She'd licked him this afternoon but now he wanted to fuck her mouth.

She took one more step and Sixx couldn't stand it anymore. The little witch had tormented him all night—sexy and defiant, tempting.

He grabbed her arm and pulled her to him, spinning her around until her back was hard against the wall. He snagged her wrists and held both high above her head. His breath tortured his lungs—like he'd run the castle stairs. "You little cock-tease."

She didn't flinch, didn't back down. Her eyes flashed black and she leaned forward, still trapped in the cage of his body, and bit his lower lip. It was a delicate nip but the tiny shock of pain obliterated the final traces of his restraint. All the power—the fury, the hunger, the lust—that had built inside him exploded. He couldn't fight it anymore. He pushed her back, covering her mouth with his, driving his tongue between her lips. She was warm and delicious. Her tongue twisted around his, dueling and drawing him deeper. Heat exploded between them. He had barely enough sense to recognize they were in the hall and guided them into a darkened corner. But that was his last coherent thought. The only thing that existed was Kayla. Her taste, the heat of her body, the grip of her hands around his neck as she pressed against him.

The way she welcomed him, as if she knew his secrets and didn't care. Anger sparked through his body—at the world, at the witch who'd cursed him, at Kayla for reminding him of all that he'd lost.

She snagged his lower lip between her teeth, biting down with just enough violence to make him growl. He looked into her eyes and saw the same raw emotions racing through her.

He ripped open the flap to his leathers, freeing his cock. They both groaned as the hard shaft stretched between them, their bodies moving in concert. Sixx wrapped one hand around her ass and lifted. Kayla spread her legs, curling them around his waist, her heels digging into his ass as she fought to bring him closer. There was no time for patience or courtesy—she didn't want it, he couldn't manage it. He needed to fuck her. Her pussy was soaked with moisture. He placed the head of his cock to her opening, pausing for one breath before driving deep into her.

She cried out as he entered her—it was a sound of joy and pleasure. His shaft was rock hard and wet—so wet, coated with her slick cunt juices. Sixx growled and pulled back. His body screamed at the loss of her pussy. He drove back in, needing the sweet grip of her cunt on his shaft, needing it like he needed breath. Her fingers bit into his shoulders as her body moved against his—fucking him as he pumped inside her. She was pure fire, burning the sensation of fucking her onto his soul like a brand. He would be forever marked.

He looked into her eyes. They flickered between green and black—each color powered by lust. She squeezed her legs pulling him harder and deeper.

His strength, his size had always required he hold back but Kayla wouldn't allow that. She demanded all he could give her.

Her head dropped back, the metal slave collar marring the lovely line of her neck. Hating it, he placed a kiss on her throat above the band. He'd rip it off when they got home. The urge to mark her overwhelmed him and he scraped his teeth across the taut muscle of her neck. Her pulse fluttered beneath his lips as he sucked on the delicate wound, knowing she would wear *his* brand in the morning. Every man who saw her would know she belonged to him.

Needing more, needing to erase the memory of any other man in her pussy, he grabbed her ass and held her still, using the wall to keep her in place as he pounded his cock into her, watching her eyes as he fucked her.

She struggled against his grip, trying to free herself to move but he held her, giving her what she needed, not allowing her to take.

"That's it, sweet, let me feel you come. Squeeze my cock." He nipped her throat again, knowing that her body was so stretched with desire that she needed something else, something more. He dipped his thumb into her slit, teasing her clit. One touch was all it took.

"Come for me."

Her body responded to his command, her cry shattering the muffled silence of the hall, her fingernails marking his skin. Wicked little contractions fluttered along his cock and he pulled back and thrust in deep one last time, shooting his cum inside her. Another satisfied whimper slipped from her lips as he filled her the final time.

Kayla sagged in his arms and only the weight of his body against the wall kept them both upright. Their chests moved in tiny rises and falls, both gasping for air. The clean perfume of soap was mixed with the scent of their loving. Sixx opened his eyes and realized he had his face buried in Kayla's neck. Her head was resting back against the wall, her eyes closed, her lips tipped up in a satisfied smile.

His cock twitched inside her making her smile broaden into a promising grin. Sixx felt himself smiling in return. The motion jolted him out of his afterglow.

What was he thinking? He straightened and unhooked Kayla's legs from around his waist. She groaned as he pulled his cock from her passage. Whether the sound was from pain or loss he didn't know and couldn't allow himself to think on it. His own body protested at leaving her pussy. He wanted more, needed more, but not here. The fact that no one had come upon them was sheer luck. Raucous laughter resounded from behind the Great Hall doors and Sixx cursed his own lack of control.

"We've got to go," he said, adjusting his leathers. He scanned the hallway and dragged Kayla away from the wall.

She stumbled behind him, the metal chain binding her slave collar clinking as she struggled to keep up with him. What the Hells was wrong with him? He had more control than this. He'd fucked women in public before but that was usually because he couldn't be bothered to get up and find another room. But this, this had been pure, unadulterated need that he hadn't been able to restrain.

He scanned the halls as he pulled her behind him. They only ran into two warriors. Sixx merely nodded in greeting and kept moving. What the fuck had he been thinking, sending his guard away? Under normal circumstances, he wouldn't have even thought of it. Most of Menth's guard were reasonably honest and they were pitiful fighters. But tonight Sixx had Kayla and that damned curse still hung on him. If one or two of Menth's guards got together and decided to come after Sixx, he wasn't sure he could defend himself, let alone protect Kayla.

He kicked open the main door and scanned the courtyard. His horse stood idly in the shadows. Along with two others. Scant and Mik. Bastards. They'd defied his orders. And what pissed him off even more was the relief he felt. Fuck. This shouldn't be happening.

"I ordered you to go back," he said to Mik.

Mik nodded and looked surprisingly regretful. "My horse came up lame and Scant was kind enough to wait with me."

Sixx looked down at the animal, prancing around, shying away as he and Kayla drew close. "Looks fine to me."

"It's a miracle." Mik slapped his hand on his chest. "The Gods of War have cured him."

"Bastard," Sixx muttered, gripping his saddle and pulling himself atop the horse. He nodded to Mik, telling him silently to hand him Kayla. Mik looked down at her, inspecting her slightly ruffled appearance, glancing at the hot space between her thighs. Sixx cursed under his breath. His cum was probably clinging to her skin. Part of him wanted to howl his pleasure that his woman was so obviously wearing his seed, but another knew she would be embarrassed.

Mik's eyes widened for a moment but when he raised his gaze to Sixx, his face was blank and he stoically lifted Kayla, placing her carefully in Sixx's hands. Sixx pulled her tight against him, pressing her legs closed, and pushing her face against his chest. Hot tears scalded his skin but she was silent as Sixx kicked his horse forward. He knew Scant and Mik were behind him but he ignored them, trusting them to watch his back.

"Sh, sh, it's okay, sweetheart." The need to comfort her was overwhelming. He smoothed his hand on her hair but it wasn't enough. There were words to say but he couldn't find them. He tipped her head back. Tears glittered in the weak moonlight shining on her cheeks. Her pink lips were swollen and soft and he couldn't resist tasting them. He kissed her lightly, teasing her mouth open, needing to taste her. He put his apology into that kiss – that he'd taken her so rudely, like some camp follower, and that he'd allowed his men to see the result.

She reluctantly permitted the kiss, then slowly joined in, her tongue meeting his. The sweet way she sucked him into her mouth reminded him of her wicked skill with her tongue on his cock. He cupped her head in his hand, positioning her so he had full, open access to her mouth. She groaned, her fingers sliding into his hair, holding him close.

The sounds of the night faded and all he could think of was getting inside her, again. Deep and hard.

He thought about those long moments when he'd been fucking her, the sweet grip of her cunt clinging to his shaft. He couldn't have pulled out of her if the demons from every layer of the Hells had come screaming by him. His cock twitched inside his leathers.

"Fuck, Sixx, give the girl a rest." Mik's call was accompanied by a hard slap on his back. "She's not going to be able to walk tomorrow if you go at her again."

Sixx lifted his head and glared at the man he usually considered his best friend. "Fuck you."

Mik wagged his finger at Sixx. "You say that so often, but never follow through."

Sixx growled at his second-in-command and kicked his horse forward. Mik's teasing had done one thing. It had distracted Sixx enough to release the painful grip lust had on his body. Of course, the rub of Kayla's ass across his cock wasn't helping but he fought the urge to spin her around and see if it was truly possible to fuck while riding a horse. The idea had never appealed to him before. Hells, he'd never wanted anything so much he couldn't wait for it.

Until her. Fuck. He'd done her in the hallway, against the wall. Not that she seemed to mind. She'd come. Hard. Squeezing his cock like a vise grip as the climax had hit her.

But now...

He glanced down at the woman in his arms. She was turned away, staring into space, her arms folded across her chest. She was pissed. Probably understandable. But because he wasn't a woman, he really didn't have any idea why she was pissed. Still it was probably best to apologize. If he wanted to be invited back between her legs, he would apologize.

Of course, this could be the solution to his problem—this strange obsession that he'd developed with her. She was pissed, his body physically wouldn't let him fuck an unwilling woman. All he had to do was keep her pissed and maybe he could go one night without coming inside her three times. That seemed to be the average for the past four nights.

It was because of the close proximity, he was sure. If he could just manage to stay away from her—for even a night, he would be able to break this strange hold she seemed to have over his senses.

If he could stay away from her.

Chapter Twelve

Kayla walked to the washbasin and poured the cold water in the bowl. She shivered at the thought of washing with cold water but she needed to clean up. Sixx's cum was sticky on her thighs. She plunged the cloth into the water attempting to ignore the memory of Mik and his obvious awareness that she'd been with Sixx in the hallway. She didn't know why it had embarrassed her. After all, Sixx had spanked her in front of them and she'd rubbed herself to orgasm before a roomful of men, but somehow it was different. Like she was just some slut Sixx had grabbed and fucked before moving on to the next woman.

Zayn didn't seem to mind. The dragon had been satisfied. Zayn sighed, mentally reliving every thrust, every powerful entrance and retreat. The delicious way he filled her and stroked her clit each time. Kayla gripped the edge of the table holding herself upright as her knees weakened.

He felt so right inside her, as if he was born to fill her – and then he'd pulled back, leaving her body sated but her heart aching. He'd barely looked at her since he'd withdrawn from her body. Like he wouldn't even remember her name the next morning.

She clenched her teeth and blinked back the tears that threatened behind her eyes.

Hmmm, want mine.

You cannot be serious, she groused silently to the dragon. He treats us like we're camp followers.

Want mine.

Arrrgh. The dragon had no understanding. The beast just wanted the man and his cock. She didn't understand. Kayla had to live with him.

Sixx walked to the small armoire and opened his vest. The torchlight delineating the clean lines of his muscles. Not that he was dreadful, she admitted. He'd been relatively tolerable – except when he was threatening to beat her. Or actually spanking her, though, in truth, that had turned out to be quite an interesting experience.

Without a glance in her direction, he stalked around the room, opening drawers, changing out of his vest and into a lightweight shirt she knew he wore around the keep.

He might be able to act like nothing had happened but Kayla couldn't. Her body, her dragon, held the memories too close.

Sixx glanced at her and she immediately dropped her gaze. She wasn't ready to be captivated by the greedy hunger that she knew flickered in his eyes. She swirled the cloth in the water lost in her thoughts.

Sixx's hands on her neck startled her. Without turning her around or speaking, he undid the slave collar and pulled it away from her skin. She hissed as the metal released its grip. The sharp edges of the collar had scratched her skin, leaving thin slices. Sixx placed his hands on her neck and heat shot through her flesh. She cried out, her hands squeezing the rag. The fire lasted only a moment then she thought she heard Sixx whisper an apology as he backed away.

It took a moment to recover herself. She stroked her fingers along her neck. The skin was smooth and cool. So why had Sixx's touch burned so badly?

She wrung out the rag and slipped it up between her legs soothing the heated flesh and wiping away the traces of Sixx. The cloth tickled her clit and a little groan escaped her throat before she could stop it. Her body wasn't satisfied, her dragon wasn't satisfied. Oh she'd come, but she wanted more. She wanted soft words and warm hands holding her.

And she wanted Sixx, inside her.

Yes, mine. Need mine. Along with the verbal plea, Zayn recreated the wicked teasing sensations of Sixx fucking her. Just enough to remind Kayla how good he felt, how thick and long he was.

She looked down. The tight peaks of her nipples were straining the confines of her bodice, looking ready to burst free. Unable to stop herself, she slid one hand up and ran the pads of her fingers across the peak, enjoying chills that swarmed down her back in response.

Listening to the call of her body, she rubbed the cloth between her legs again, massaging her clit, unconsciously moving her hips to pulse against the tiny caresses.

A strange garbled noise broke from her right and she looked up. Sixx stood, his muscles bound by tension, his hands clenched into fists as he watched her. She let her gaze wonder down his body and saw the definitive line of his cock pressing against his leathers.

The sight of his erection thrilled her body but it was the heat in his eyes that soothed her soul. He wanted her, desired her, and there was no way he was ignoring her like some slut he'd paid to fuck.

She dropped the cloth into the bowl and turned, facing him. She pulled the dress chain over her head and let it drop. Both scraps of material fell, leaving her breasts naked. She hooked her thumbs into the chain that circled her hips and pushed it down, working it over her backside. She arched her back, pushing her ass out and turning so he had a good view. The chain tinkled as it fell, tumbling to the ground in a rush of silver and color.

Kayla looked up. Sixx hadn't looked away. His hot eyes watched every move she made as she strolled across the room, adding extra sway to her hips. She knew she was setting herself—and Zayn—up for a vicious rejection but the ache in her body was so distinct, so powerful, that she needed to try. Needed him.

The fire in his eyes became clearer as she drew closer – but there was anger there as well. She stopped an arm’s length away and lowered her gaze. The stretch of his leathers had to be painful. Hiding her smile, she slowly sank to her knees, taking the same submissive pose she’d used in the dining hall – though this time she spread her knees apart immediately and placed her hands behind her back pushing her breasts forward.

Sixx stared down at the beauty kneeling before him. Though her pose was submissive, his mind recognized the energy, the hidden defiance that was woven through her body.

The hope of staying away from her for the night had disappeared during her slow sexy walk toward him. The sway of her hips had pushed all thoughts but fucking from his mind. Self-preservation is overrated, he decided. He wanted her.

“Stand up,” he commanded already knowing that morning would bring regrets he didn’t need. She slowly pushed to standing, her body moving with the fluid grace of an animal – a sensual creature that understood its appeal to the predator that hunted it. Her final action was to lift her eyes and stare at him. Amusement swirled with the lust that she somehow managed to convey in that single look. He grabbed her shoulders and yanked her close, until her breasts pushed against his chest.

“Be careful how far you think to push me.” He didn’t give her a chance to protest – or worse, release that sensual, throaty laugh of hers. He covered her mouth in a vicious, dominating kiss, driving his tongue between her lips, demanding her submission. She fought for a moment then yielded, letting him devour her in one kiss. Finally, he lifted his head. “I’m going to fuck your sweet cunt all night.”

He felt a shiver run through her body and didn’t know if it was from anticipation or fear. Didn’t care. She’d teased and prodded him into this.

She lifted her chin and dared him with those wicked green eyes. Dared him to make good on his promise.

The urge to lean down and kiss those tempting lips, to lose himself in her, was too strong. He pushed her away.

“Get on the bed.” He raised his chin toward the mattress, hoping a little distance would give him some relief. His cock was pulsing with the need to be back inside her. The scent of their fucking had been washed away but the fragrance of her arousal was still strong.

He folded his arms on his chest and waited for her to follow his command. There wasn’t a submissive bone in her body as she turned and strolled toward the big bed they’d shared for the past four nights.

She didn’t stop when she reached the edge. She bent one leg and placed her knee on the high mattress, spreading her legs enough to give him a glimpse of her pussy, giving him the perfect view of what it would be like to fuck her from behind, that tight ass pressing against him. She crawled up, pausing on all fours, then slowly rolled to her side, her back, her knees staying pressed together.

The little witch was taunting him, challenging him with every move. It would serve her right if he walked away. Even as he thought it, he knew he'd never leave. But he wouldn't become her slave just because she had a hot little cunt, because she'd practically burned him alive in the Hall, or because he could still taste the flavor of her mouth on his tongue.

Raised as a warrior, he knew there was no allowable weakness...not even sex. He would fuck her, enjoy her tight little body and that hot pussy, but in the morning, he'd walk away. He had to.

Kayla watched the change in his eyes. The desire had turned from blazing to chilled. He was valiantly fighting it but she couldn't let him win. It was too important.

His cool gaze moved up her body, lingering on the shadows that hid her pussy, and going higher. He might not want to look but he couldn't turn away.

She dropped her head onto the mattress as she slowly scooped up her breasts in both hands, holding them, plumping them. She rolled her palms over the full mounds, spreading her fingers and flicking her nipples between them as she made slow circles. As the peaks stretched, she tugged on them, moaning so he could hear her pleasure.

With Sixx watching, she released her right breast and pushed her hand down, across her stomach. She didn't stop until her fingers curled over her mound shielding her pussy from his sight. She slid her other arm across her chest, hiding her body from his eyes.

His upper lip twitched. "Move your hands." She shook her head. She didn't know what made her defy him, only that she didn't want some distant lover. She wanted the man who couldn't resist her.

He stepped to the edge of the bed, placed his hands on her knees and spread them wider. She didn't fight him, let him guide the movement. As he opened her legs, she pushed her middle finger into her pussy, taking care to keep the rest covered. The delicate penetration sent a delicious flutter through her cunt. She groaned, letting him hear how much she wanted him. He didn't move, didn't reach between her legs and remove her hand as she slowly began to pump her finger in and out of her passage.

"I can still feel you inside me," she said in a throaty whisper. The memory slipped into her body, arousing her even as she hoped it was doing to him. Unable to stop herself she pinched her nipple and rolled her hips to meet the slow downward thrust of her finger. "Nothing has ever filled me like you – so thick and hard."

She opened her eyes and almost gasped at the change in his body – every muscle stretched tight, barely constrained power. His jaw was tense and his lips pulled back in a silent scream. His eyes were focused on the single point of her finger fucking her pussy. The demons inside him were struggling to be free.

"Move your hand," he growled and this time, she knew better than to disobey. She pulled her hand back, trailing her wet finger along her thigh. She knew she'd teased him enough but something inside her – maybe the dragon, maybe some feminine

instinct—wouldn't let her stop. She sat up and stretched forward, offering her hand, drenched in her own pussy juice.

He stared at it like a starving man for long moments before he closed the final distance between them and flicked his tongue out—a gentle, lapping stroke. He sucked her finger inside his mouth—reminding her how it felt to have his lips on her clit.

He drew back, letting her hand fall free.

“More.”

She almost came with that one word. He grabbed her ankles and pulled her toward him until her hips were on the edge of the mattress. He dropped to his knees, pushed her thighs wide and buried his face into her pussy, driving his tongue into her opening.

Heat erupted at the first touch of his lips. Kayla cried out, arching into the delicate penetration. He fucked her, pushing his tongue into her passage, rubbing that first sensitive inch until she pressed against him, needing more—needing his cock.

“Sixx—” She buried her hands in his hair and tried to pull him up. He shook his head, breaking free of her hold and snarled like an animal protecting a kill. She knew that sound. It was the same noise Zayn made in her head. He spread her legs wider, trying to reach deeper. Her fingers curled into the blankets, seeking a solid object to cling to as he kissed and licked and sucked her pussy. He left her passage and suckled on her pussy lips, gently teasing them with his teeth as he worked his way to the top of her slit, his tongue swirling around her clit. Kayla arched up—the sensation too much. He pressed his hand into her stomach and eased her down, keeping her in perfect position for his mouth.

His movements slowed as if he knew she was close to coming. He placed his lips over her clit and sucked, pulling the sensation deep from inside her core. Hot flicks of his tongue counteracted the definite rhythm of his lips until her body was overwhelmed.

“Damn it, Sixx, let me come.”

She felt his smile against her skin but he didn't relent, drawing her higher. The edges of her eyes glowed black as she felt Zayn pushing through. The dragon wanted her mate.

“Sixx!” Her fingernails felt like claws in his back—like a dainty sexual cat. “Please, I need you.”

He raised his head, reluctantly leaving her taste, allowing himself one more lick as he watched her. The sweet sound of her begging made his cock even harder. It didn't matter that they'd fucked in the hallway—it felt like forever since he'd been inside her, like forever that he'd dreamed of being inside her.

He drew back and stared at the luscious body displayed before him—her thighs wide open, her pink cunt wet and waiting. Her hips rocked in low, uncontrolled pumps. His little witch was hot for it. Wanted it.

He slid his hand between her thighs, pushing one finger into her passage. Hot, viscous liquid drenched his fingers. She rolled her hips, rocking her pussy up and down, working her clit against his hand. Sixx felt his lips pull back. That sweet cunt belonged to him—as well as all her orgasms. And next time she came, he would be inside her. He yanked open the flap of his leathers. His cock sprang out, eager, long.

Kayla watched from the bed, her eyes glowing with lust. She licked her lips as she stared at his groin, as if she wanted to devour him. No woman had ever stared at him with such hunger.

“Mine,” she whispered, soft and low and Sixx felt his cock swell.

He pushed his leathers down and away, climbing onto the bed and positioning himself between her thighs. As he knelt before her, she reached out and stroked him, her hands petting his cock, her fingers smoothing over the tight surface. Sixx clenched his teeth together and fought the pleasure that surged through him at her delicate touch.

“Want mine,” she said, her voice strangely distant.

The edges of his control were blurred and shaken. He pushed her hands aside and placed the head of his cock to her passage. Raising his gaze to hers, he stared at her, watching her eyes as he sank into her. Her breasts rose and fell in sharp shallow breaths.

“Is this what you want?” He fed another inch into her pussy. “My cock inside this pretty little cunt?” He pulled back, torturing both of them with his shallow penetration. “Is it, sweet?”

“Yes.” Her moan drew him deeper, needing to fill her, imprint himself on her in some way.

“Tell me,” he pushed, wanting to hear her.

“I want your cock. Inside me.” She pressed her heels into the mattress and pumped up as he sank down.

He drove his shaft in, crying out as her passage engulfed his cock, accepting him, squeezing him.

The heat that seeped into his shaft mirrored the fire that burned through his hands when he touched a wound—hot and healing. Kayla cried out even as her nails bit into his shoulders. She clung to him, pulling him closer. Her arms wrapped around his neck. Her lips scalded his throat as she placed frantic kisses along the thick muscles.

Sensation layered on sensation and Sixx had to move, had to fuck. He pulled back, holding her ass in his hands, stabilizing it as he thrust forward, deep and hard.

“Oh Goddesses, yes!” She ground her heels into his ass, sending him deeper. “Please, come inside me.” Her teeth nipped at his chin, calling him as he turned and covered her mouth with his. Hot and sweet, just like her cunt. She groaned letting the sound rumble between them as his tongue conquered hers.

The pressure built deep inside her pussy. Goddesses, she needed him. He drew back until his cock was almost free of her. He pushed up on his knees and pulled her to him, her ass raised in the air, his cock penetrating her, his hands on her hips holding her hard against him. Bound so tight, her legs over his arms, she couldn't move against him. He raised his eyes and stared at her, as if warning her to be still. His hair hung down around his shoulders like a black halo, like the lust demons of mythology.

Slowly, he began to move her, sliding her up and down on his cock. The pressure in her pussy magnified, swelling as he massaged her deep inside, shallow focused thrusts. Her groan filled the room – the pleasure was too great to contain in her body, her soul.

“That’s it, sweetheart. Feel all of it.” His low encouraging words sent a delicious tingle through her body. “Feel all of me.” He pulled back before driving, a long hard thrust. She cried out and her back arched up, the short pulses replaced by hard heavy penetrations.

Colors began to swirl behind her closed eyes – reds and bright greens, purple the color of the dragon. Kayla cried out. It was perfect, wonderful. Sixx wedged his hand between their bodies and teased her clit with his finger. The delicious caress was enough, just enough to release the wicked tension he’d created in her pussy.

“Yes, Sixx!” Her passage clenched and Sixx groaned like he could feel every ripple of her orgasm. He slammed into her one more time and shouted as his cum flooded her pussy.

Delicious heat raced through her body, sapping the strength from her limbs. His weight collapsed down on her but he lay there for only a moment before rolling to the side, allowing her to breathe. He turned onto his back, his eyes closed, one arm draped across his forehead.

Kayla’s heart beat loud in her chest, filling her ears, clouding her thoughts. All that filled her mind was that she couldn’t let him pull away. Desire was the only thing that bound him to her. She wasn’t letting him go.

From the corner of her eye she saw his chest rise and fall in a long, resigned breath and considered her options. She could tease and tempt him, trying to draw on the pleasure they’d shared. Or she could challenge him. A reluctant smile curled her lips. Sixx wouldn’t back down from a challenge.

She rolled to her side and kept going, closing the space between them. Sixx opened his eyes as she moved, glancing at her from beneath his arm. The cold shutters were back on his eyes but she ignored them. She knew how easily they could be removed and the hot gray that lived beneath could come out. Not giving him a chance to respond, she swung her leg over his hip, straddling his waist. She pressed up on her knees and reached between her legs to stroke his wet, semihard cock.

“It’s the second time I’ve been in this position tonight,” she said with a husky whisper. “This time, I want you inside me. I want to ride this cock like it was meant to be ridden.”

She almost laughed at how quickly he rose to the challenge she'd presented him—both literally and figuratively. The arrogant look in his eye told her he liked her aggression, liked that she wanted him enough to take. His cock twitched in her hands and began to thicken. She wrapped her fingers around it, teasing it as it swelled in her grasp.

"Hmmm, is this for me?"

"Careful, little witch," he warned though his voice wasn't frightening—it was wicked, a delicious sensual threat that made her pussy throb with anticipation. "You'll end up on your back."

Kayla straightened as she chuckled. "Is that supposed to frighten me? Besides—" She petted his cock, exploring its length, the thick round head, the bright vein that marked the side. "You did say you'd fuck me all night."

His cock jumped in her hand. *Mine*. The dragon's claim filled Kayla's head and she followed the images the beast inspired in her head. *Kayla, her mouth filled with Sixx's cock, her tongue trailing up the long length*. She slid down his body, intent on turning the fantasy into reality. Placing a light kiss on the tip of his cock, she heard Sixx hiss, as if her touch burned him. The musky scent of their lovemaking surrounded his cock. Kayla brushed her tongue along the underside of his cock, teasing the head, savoring the delicious flavors of their fucking.

Zayn howled inside Kayla's head. Dragons were notoriously oral in their pleasures.

Kayla moved over him, swallowing him deep, the hard press of his shaft sliding into her throat. Sixx cried out his hips pulsing, thrusting upward.

Power surged through her body and Kayla drew back. She stared at the man beneath her—perfect, not by the world's standards, but by hers. His cock long, thick and hard. She scraped her tongue across the inside edge of her lips.

"Mine," she said, reinforcing Zayn's claim. She placed the flat of her tongue against his shaft and stroked up. The long, delicious caress created a flurry of shivers through her pussy—as if she was the one being licked. She opened her mouth over his shaft and sank down, swallowing as much as she could. Sixx groaned, thrusting up as she pushed down. She smiled around his cock. It was too delicious to ignore. *Mine*, the dragon whispered. Kayla groaned her assent—moments before Sixx's hands grabbed her arms and pulled her up.

Zayn growled at losing her prize and the sound echoed in the room. Sixx didn't seem to notice the foreign noise. He lifted Kayla, turning her and tossing her not too gently beside him. She landed on her back but didn't stay there long. Sixx held her hips and flipped, turning her onto her stomach.

New heat washed through her pussy. She barely had time to stabilize herself before Sixx raised her hips and penetrated her, driving hard and deep. She cried out, unable to contain the sound as he stretched her, a thin line between pleasure and pain. Pleasure won as Sixx withdrew and returned, filling her again. She pressed up on her elbows

and pushed back, meeting his heavy thrusts, loving the way he stroked inside her, touching a new place.

His fingers tightened on her hips, his strength holding her in place, not letting her move. She groaned as he fucked her, he was totally in control, his body taking hers, forcing the pleasure on her.

And she loved it, wanted more. Loved his power as he filled her.

“Come inside me, Sixx,” she begged, needing him, needing his cum. He reared back and thrust in hard, releasing inside her. Her body responded and she shivered as a new pleasure jolted through her sex.

They sagged onto the mattress, his cock sliding out of her as he eased himself to the side. Kayla stared at the sheets, her heart racing, her pussy humming with the remnants of such a delicious climax.

Sixx let out a long sigh and Kayla smiled. It appeared she’d exhausted her lover. It took a while for her strength to return but eventually she rolled over. Sixx was on his back, his eyes closed, his mouth open. She leaned over and placed a light kiss on his lips. As their lips met, he pulled her to him, guiding her to his side, her head to his chest. She cuddled up to him, her pussy slightly sore but well contented. She thought about teasing him about his promise to fuck her all night but the smooth strokes of his hand across her back—soothing and gentle—were as powerful as any climax. This wasn’t the first time he’d held her after they’d fucked but there was a difference in his touch. It was subtle—more lover than warrior—and Kayla didn’t want to miss a moment of it.

Chapter Thirteen

Sixx stared at the parchments before him. It was amazing. This used to be the most tedious part of his job but now he relished it. It was still tedious but it was a reason to escape the training field. And his chambers.

The training field because the curse had actually groan in strength in the past ten days. Just the sight of the practice violence was making his stomach turn.

And his desire to escape his chambers was solely focused on one thing—Kayla. She was there. He still kept her chained—because he didn't think for a minute that she wouldn't attempt an escape at the first chance—but at least she'd stopped tearing up his sheets. It seemed to be a function of him, he decided. If he was an ass before he left in the morning, he came home to a naked bed, no meal and a chilly woman.

If before he left for the day, he kissed her gently, offered her some new form of entertainment or even made sure she had breakfast, when he returned that night, his chamber was a haven of peace. The bed was made, the rooms open and airy. A hot meal was usually waiting and a hot, sexy lover there to greet him.

The kiss seemed to be critical. She wanted a kiss before he left for the day and when he returned. That seemed vitally important. Women. He wasn't any closer to understanding them after living so closely with one for ten days but he was learning to read the signs and adapt.

Hells, it was difficult to believe she'd only been in his life for ten days. She filled his mind, loved his body. He looked down at the parchment in his hand. It was a request to purchase. Since that night in Menth's castle, there had been seven such offers, each offering more coin than the last. Sell Kayla. He could certainly build up his coffers doing it. The events surrounding that night had grown to legendary proportions so he could demand almost any price for her. But he knew there was no way he could do it. Not only was he addicted to having her in his bed, he knew she'd kill him before he could spend the money.

Noise erupted on the training field, jolting Sixx from his thoughts. He looked at Scant and both men were on their feet, heading for the door. They were used to the typical sounds—metal striking metal, men shouting, even the occasional cry of pain—but this had been different. A bellow of rage followed by voices and metal crashing weren't the normal noises of battle.

They hit the tan gravel of the training field at a full out run and instantly saw the blood. Red pooled beneath the body that lay on the field. Mik. The coppery scent filled Sixx's nose and he felt the blood rush from his head.

Fuck, don't pass out. Don't pass out. It's just a little blood. A lot of blood. He turned away and inhaled through his mouth, trying not to lose control of his stomach. After a few

breaths, he looked back. Mik was trying to struggle to his feet. He came to his knees and swayed. Sixx reached out and grabbed him before he fell back into the dirt. Blood poured across Sixx's hands as the wound on Mik's arm opened again. The white of bone shone through the pulsing red liquid.

"Get Stitch," Sixx commanded through clenched teeth. He lifted Mik as Scant grabbed the other half of the heavy body.

"I can walk," Mik protested.

Sixx looked over his head to Scant. Scant shook his head, silently agreeing with Sixx that Mik needed to be carried. And Stitch needed to get there as soon as possible. The way the blood was still pulsing warned that Mik could easily bleed out. At a minimum he would likely lose his arm.

Moving in the unison born of fighting together for a dozen years, Sixx and Scant spun Mik and lifted him. No further protest came from the warrior and Sixx realized that Mik had passed out. Probably better. For everyone.

Stitch met them as they carried Mik into his chamber. Stitch was the closest thing they had to a troop physician. He wasn't formally trained but he'd fixed enough cuts and wounds in the years that he'd fallen into the role. But would he be able to help Mik? Sixx knew enough about wounds to recognize one that if it didn't kill him, it would leave Mik crippled. Unable to fight.

"Let me see," Stitch said. He started fingering the wound, pulling the edges back. Sixx's throat closed up and he forced himself to breathe through his nose.

"I'll wait outside."

He closed the door behind him, resting back against the wall as he regained control of his stomach. *It's just blood.* Hells, he'd practically swam in the stuff since he was child and now, one little wound made it so he could barely function.

Fucking witch.

"You okay there, Captain?" The sarcastic taint to his title could only come from one person. Sixx straightened and saw Harvet smirking at him. He was still dressed in his battle gear. He'd been on the field while Mik had been wounded.

Harvet wasn't alone. All of Sixx's guard had arrived, the word traveling fast that one of their own had been hurt. The warriors who'd been training had followed also.

"What happened out there?" Sixx demanded.

Harvet shrugged and the smirk deepened. "People get hurt when they play with swords."

"What happened?" Sixx asked again, moving close to Harvet. Without looking Sixx knew that the other members of his guard were drawing close. They wanted answers.

"He and I were training," Harvet finally answered, defiance filling his words. Sixx glanced down and saw the dried blood on the man's hand. "He let down his guard and I slipped through, simple as that."

"The fight had been called."

The quiet voice came from the chamber door. Slowly the small crowd moved, opening to reveal Hinden. He gulped as Sixx stared at him.

"What?"

"The fight had been called. That's why Mik lowered his weapon. Then Harvet attacked."

When Sixx looked back at Harvet, the smirk had turned into a sneer.

"What does he know? He wasn't on the field. Mik lowered his guard. It's his fault if he's too old to fight. Or maybe he just doesn't have the stomach for it anymore."

Sixx heard all the subtle jabs and pulled himself to his full height. Curse or not he was going to kill this kid one day. "You struck after the match had been called?"

"I didn't hear anyone call it."

That was a lie. Sixx could tell. "Take his weapon," he commanded Scant. "You're confined to your chamber until further notice."

He didn't look to see if his command would be followed or if Harvet would protest. He almost wished Harvet would finally have the bollocks to challenge him. Get it over with.

The door to Mik's chamber opened and Stitch appeared, blood on his hands and soaking his shirt. Sixx felt his stomach roll over and he tightened his fingers into a fist to keep control. He looked away, concentrating on Stitch's face.

The surgeon didn't wait for anyone to ask. "He'll live but I think he'll lose the arm." The tone of his words was indifferent but Sixx knew that was from years of watching friends die. "He has no feeling in his fingers. That could be damage that will heal or the limb already dying."

Mik would rather die, Sixx thought. Fighting and fucking were the only things Mik loved in the world.

"He'd like to see you," Stitch said, raising his chin to Sixx.

Sixx nodded. "I'll tell him you were all here," he said to the small crowd that lingered. Sixx nodded to Scant silently telling him to clear the chamber. If Mik was going to lose his arm, he'd want to do it in darkness and solitude.

He pushed past Stitch and opened the door.

Mik lay on the bed, his face gray and pinched.

He opened his eyes as Sixx drew near and the bright lights of pain stared back at him. The fever would follow. Sixx had no doubt about that.

"Hey."

"Hey." Mik's eyes drooped closed for a moment and Sixx was pretty sure Stitch had given him something to make him sleep.

"How you doing?"

Mik gave him a weak smile. "I'll live...or so they say."

"Yeah."

"But Sixx, if I lose this arm –"

"You won't."

"If I do, I don't want to live like that."

Sixx shook his head. "Even with one arm, you'd be a better warrior than all the scrubs that come to us."

"Promise me."

"Mik –"

"Promise me. If I'm losing the arm, just kill me while I'm sleeping. I'd rather the Gods of War take my soul while I'm still whole." Sixx wanted to deny it would happen but Mik wouldn't believe it.

"I promise." Sixx's vow seemed to comfort him and he relaxed.

"Where's Harvet?" Mik asked.

"We've got him locked down. He said it was an accident."

"It probably was." Mik laughed but the sound was cut off by a groan of pain. "It's not *me* he hates."

"True."

"Why do you let him stay around?"

Sixx rolled his eyes. "I feel a certain obligation to him."

"Why?"

He shrugged. "I killed his father."

"Oh."

"And made his mother my whore for a short time."

"Ah."

"Then gave her over the rest of the troop as a general use woman."

"Ouch."

Sixx sat up tall, feeling compelled to defend himself. "It wasn't like she wasn't willing."

"That probably makes it worse." Mik coughed and then groaned. "Any chance he's your son?"

Harvet was about the right age. Sixx could have fathered him. Hells, there were dozens that Sixx *could* have fathered, but with the exception of one mistress, none had ever come to him claiming he'd planted his seed. Maybe because he'd been fairly careful. Maybe because his reputation warned he'd be the worst sort of father for a child.

Still he *had* fucked Harvet's mother.

"She swears she was pregnant when she came to my bed. She even pointed to the body of the man she said was her husband. I had no reason not to believe her."

"Good. I'd hate to think that little shit was your son."

Sixx laughed. "Gods, me too."

Mik's eyes dropped shut and Sixx knew he was done talking for a while. He stood up and went back outside. Scant and the guard were waiting.

"How is he?"

Sixx shrugged and shook his head, smiling. "I think Stitch is off on this one," he said. "It didn't look bad and Mik said his fingers were starting to hurt."

"That's a good sign, isn't it?" Scant asked, eager to believe.

"Yeah. Hopefully, it means his arm isn't dying."

"Should one of us sit with him?"

"I'll do it," Sixx said. "I'll call you if anything changes." The guard hesitated but Sixx smiled at his men. "Go. He'll be fine." They finally started to walk away. "Scant, can you stop by and tell Kayla I'll be late?"

Scant's eyes popped open but the shock was quickly covered. "Uh, sure."

The rest of his men looked between themselves, silent telling looks bouncing between them. At least they had something to talk about besides Mik's condition.

When they are gone, he went back into the chamber. Knowing what he had to do and hating it to the depths of his soul.

* * * * *

Kayla paced the length of her chain for as long as she could tolerate it. Sixx hadn't returned all day. Scant's arrival and announcement that Sixx would be late had done nothing to calm her nerves.

Where was he? Was he hurt? Was he with another woman? Maybe he'd finally decided to take up the offer of the servant girl.

Zayn growled low inside Kayla's head, the dragon finding the idea of her mate with another woman so vile she couldn't contain the noise.

"Let's find him," Kayla announced aloud. She grabbed the chain that locked her to the wall and called on the dragon's strength. Zayn rose up inside her and added her power to Kayla's body. She pulled two links apart, listening to the metal tear and break. The chain stretched and then snapped yanking Kayla's arms apart as the links separated.

It wasn't perfect. The cuff was still around her ankle but now she had freedom to move.

She went immediately to the door, ignoring the thin, silky slave costume she still wore. It wasn't quite as transparent as the one Sixx had made her wear going to meet Lord Menth but still it left large amounts of skin bare.

The door closed behind her and Kayla stopped. She was free. Truly free. All she had to do was walk out one of the doors, climb over the wall and disappear into the forest. Now that she knew where she was, she could get herself home. In truth if she entered

the nearest town and announced she was King Kei's daughter, she didn't doubt word would be sent quickly. Most small towns would be thrilled to have a man of her father's power and reputation in its debt.

She stared at the hall that led to the training field. There were several escape paths there. She could come back for Sixx.

Sixx. Zayn rumbled her displeasure at the path of Kayla's thoughts. The dragon wanted its mate. Wanted to touch him, assure herself that he wasn't fucking another woman. The dragon's desires intensified Kayla's own needs.

She glanced longingly at the door but knew she wasn't taking that path. At least not yet. She had to soothe the increasingly agitated dragon. Keeping her steps slow, she walked the halls. The remaining bit of chain clanked against the stone until Kayla couldn't stand it any longer. She leaned against the wall and silently begged Zayn's help again. The dragon must have been feeling generous—maybe because Kayla was going to look for Sixx—because she again loaned Kayla her strength and the cuff snapped off her leg. The scrapes around her ankle burned as she stepped down. By rights she should have dozens of little scars where the band had held her but so far, the wounds left by the metal had healed quickly. Usually overnight. When she'd asked Zayn about it, the dragon hadn't noticed any change and hadn't indicated it was anything that *she* was doing.

Kayla was pleased that she wasn't being permanently scarred by this temporary slavery but it was a mystery. Even the cuts that had marked her wrists that first night had disappeared the next morning. She tossed the cuff into a dark corner and continued on her journey.

She kept her steps furtive, looking around corners before she progressed.

Noises from inside a room slowed her steps and she peeked around the door. Two men she recognized as part of Sixx's guard were sitting at a table. Full tankards of ale sat next to them but neither was drinking. They were silent, both staring at the table, fingers tapping like the energy inside them needed release.

"Well, well. It's Sixx's hot piece of ass."

Kayla tensed at the low mocking voice. It only took a moment to place the sound. Harvet. The man who'd dragged her here. If that had been all he'd done, she wouldn't have noticed him. After all, he was only doing the job he'd been given, but for the two days she'd been in his company, he'd treated her like an animal. Not feeding her or giving her water. Keeping her chained and gagged while he dragged her behind his horses. Enjoying her pain. She slowly turned stepping closer to the wall to escape the contact of his body.

"Fuck me." He shook his head as he looked down her body. "If I'd known what you looked like beneath all the dirt, I'd've done you myself before bringing you here. Then maybe you'd know what it's like to have a real man between your legs."

Zayn snarled at the insult to Sixx and Kayla let the sound out.

Harvet only laughed. "Interesting. I wouldn't have thought Sixx had the bollocks to fuck a feisty bitch like you."

Kayla couldn't think of anything to say and was afraid that if she relaxed her jaw enough to speak a full dragon scream would come out. Instead she pushed by him, ready to walk away. Harvet grabbed her arm and shoved her back against the wall. He stepped close, caging her.

"Take your hand off me," she said, letting the warning echo through her words. Zayn was about to take control and while it would be interesting to see what was left of Harvet when Zayn finished with him, Kayla had more important things to worry about. She yanked her arm away, snapping her hand out of Harvet's grip. He seemed surprised at her strength and actually stepped back. Kayla folded her arms across her chest, hiding her breasts from his constant leering.

She stroked her fingers across her collarbone, searching for the comforting metal of the chain that had hung there for more than twenty-five summers. It wasn't there of course.

Of course. She pulled herself to her full height and glared at Harvet. "Where's my medallion?" she asked.

His eyes widened for a moment but then the sharp, crafty look returned. "What medallion?"

"My dragon medallion. Iniz put it in the velvet pouch and gave it to you. Sixx doesn't have it. That means you do. Where is it?"

Harvet shrugged but mockery curled his lips. "I have no idea." He stepped closer. "But you'd like to return to my chamber, you can look for it."

"You bastard. I want my medallion—"

"Harvet!"

Harvet flinched at the call of his name then straightened his shoulders, trying to make himself look less startled by the shout.

From behind Harvet, Scant walked up.

"You're confined to your chamber. What are you doing out?"

"Even Captain Sixx wouldn't let me starve." The way he said Sixx's name dripped with sarcasm and hatred.

"Go back to your chamber. I'll have someone bring you food."

Harvet stared long at Kayla before finally turning away. He nodded coldly to Scant and kept walking, as if he was out for an afternoon stroll.

"I'm going to have to kill him one day," Scant muttered.

"Not if I get him first," Kayla replied.

Scant smiled at her comment. "Except Sixx is going to get to him before either of us."

Kayla nodded and Scant's eyes closed into a suspicious squint.

"I left you chained to the wall in Sixx's chambers. What are you doing here?"

Kayla thought about lying but decided that made no sense. He probably wouldn't believe her anyway and Scant no doubt knew where Sixx was.

"Looking for Sixx."

Scant scanned down her body to her legs. While she sensed a masculine appreciation, she didn't feel any danger. He stared at her ankle for a long time and she waited for the question about where the cuff was but he didn't speak.

Finally he said, "Sixx is with Mik. Mik's hurt."

"What happened?"

He tipped his head back the direction Harvet had walked. "Harvet cut him on the training ground."

Though she hadn't seen a lot of Mik and Sixx together, she knew that fighting men became very attached to their companions. "Will he live?"

"Most likely but he'll probably lose his arm."

They stood there for a long time before Scant said, "Do you want me to take you to him?"

"Please."

Scant led her down the hall and through several dark passageways to a small open area filled with a couch and table. Three doors opened onto the living area.

"That's Mik's chamber," he said nodding toward the center door. Scant didn't seem inclined to go any further but Kayla couldn't stop herself. If Mik was hurt, then she wanted to help. If she couldn't help him, she could assist Sixx. He probably hadn't eaten and he needed to rest sometime.

She smiled at how "wife-like" she sounded inside her own head.

With Scant hovering behind her, she pushed open Mik's door and leaned her head inside. The room was dark with a single lamp lit beside the bed. She saw two bodies, Mik pale on the bed, Sixx standing over him.

Mik groaned and arched up as if pain was shooting through his body. Sixx tensed as well, his muscles tightening as he gripped Mik's arm. She watched and realized that Sixx's fingers were inside the wound, blood coating his hands. Mik writhed again crying out. The sound seemed to vibrate through Sixx's shoulders and his forearms tightened.

Kayla must have made a noise. Sixx's head snapped around and he stared at her. His eyes were wild and desperate.

He looked at her and then down at his hands, covered in his friend's blood. All the color drained from his face and for a moment she thought he would faint. An instant later the hesitation was gone.

"Get out."

"Sixx, what are —"

"Get out," he said again, his voice bellowing through the chamber. Scant opened the door, pushing it out of Kayla's hands.

"What's going on?"

"Get her out of here." Sixx lifted his chin toward Kayla. "And get Stitch. Mik's pulled his stitches open."

Kayla stared for another moment, resisting Scant's attempts to pull her from the room. What was going on? Why was Sixx hurting Mik like that? He'd had his fingers stuck in the wound past the second knuckle.

"Come on." Scant pulled on her again. "I've got to get Stitch before Mik bleeds to death."

That was the one inducement that made her leave. Scant wouldn't go for the surgeon until she was away. When they got to a familiar part of the keep, she told Scant to leave her, that she would return to Sixx's chambers on her own. He hesitated for a moment then took off at a run.

Kayla considered turning around and finding Sixx again but she couldn't. She needed time to think about what she saw. The image of Sixx, blood staining his skin, was etched permanently in her mind.

* * * * *

Sixx entered the chamber, his hands still marked with blood, his stomach empty and his body exhausted from the repeated retching. He'd come out of the trance and seen the blood and he'd lost control of his body. Thankfully he'd been able to escape before Scant or anyone else had seen him.

Gods, he hoped that Mik would live, that what he'd done wouldn't make him die faster.

Without looking around, he walked into the bathing chamber, stripped off his clothes and climbed into the tub. The blood circled and swirled before it disappeared in the slow river. He grabbed a bar of soap needing the rough texture against his skin, needing to remove more than the surface.

When his skin was raw, he let the water roll around him. The soothing warmth of the water across his skin did little to calm his mind. What the fuck had he done? And how was he going to explain it? Fuck. It would have been better for Mik to die.

Chapter Fourteen

Across the field, Sixx waited, dressed in full battle armor, his sword glinting in the bright sunlight.

She fought the dream. This wasn't right. Always before the dream warrior, the man who betrayed her, was a faceless stranger. Now she saw him. Sixx.

He raised his chin and glared at the dragon who stalked him. The purple and green beast drew its head back. Fire erupted from the back of the creature's throat.

"No!" Kayla shouted but the dragon was relentless. "Please no. I love him. No." Her voice was silent though she knew she was saying the words.

Sixx stared at the fearsome beast towering over him and turned his gaze to Kayla. Disgust flooded his eyes and his lip pulled up in a sneer. He dropped his sword and backed away, leaving Kayla alone.

The pounding on Sixx's door snapped Kayla from her deep sleep. She opened her eyes and blinked, orienting herself in the world. She was cuddled up against Sixx's chest, her thigh draped across his hip, her knee pressed lightly to his morning erection. As if he recognized the tenuousness of the situation, he ran his fingers down her leg, easing her knee away but not putting any distance between their bodies.

That was a difference from last night. When he'd returned, he'd been cold – deathly cold. He hadn't spoken and the silence in his eyes had slipped into her soul. Whatever had happened with Mik had wounded Sixx.

Not sure what questions she wanted to ask, Kayla had waited. Waited for Sixx to reach for her as he had every night since she'd arrived. But he hadn't. He'd crawled into bed, not even commenting on the fact that she was unchained or that the chain lay in pieces beside the bed. Instead, he'd turned on his side and stared at the wall. It had been hours before he'd finally slept and only then had she allowed herself to fall asleep as well.

But the dream had haunted her, taunted her. Reminding her that no man had ever been willing to face a dragon to keep her. Sixx was brave and strong but why would he fight for her?

As if he was still asleep, he moaned and buried his face in her hair, pulling her closer, pressing her open pussy to his hip. And she was almost sure she felt his lips press to her head.

But the pounding returned and this time when Sixx moaned it was accompanied by a growl.

"What the fuck is so important?" he grouched as he climbed out of bed. He patted Kayla's hip and dragged the blankets over her shoulder, as though he wanted to keep

her warm while he was gone. The strange tension from the previous night was gone. She watched him as he pulled on his leathers and walked to the out-chamber.

She hesitated just a moment then threw back the blanket and slid to the side of the bed. Fire scraped across her skin as the tiny wound from the ankle cuff brushed the sheets. Silently wincing, she spun her legs around and dropped to the ground, padding across the floor and peeking around the corner to see and hear better.

Sixx opened the door and admitted Scant. For a moment Sixx's body tensed—as if he'd been jolted by some memory—but then it was gone and his powerful stance returned to normal.

He didn't demand Scant's reason for joining them. He just waited. From her position, Kayla could see the grim line of his jaw and the way his eyes were cold and empty.

"Thought you'd want to know. It looks like Mik's going to live *and* keep his arm." Scant shook his head. "Stitch doesn't understand it. Said he was sure Mik's arm was gone."

"Good," Sixx said. He shrugged and it was a false kind of casualness that sent warnings down Kayla's spine. "Of course, you know how Stitch hates to be wrong. You should watch him. He might cut off Mik's arm just to prove himself right."

Scant laughed and slapped Sixx's back. It was obvious the two men were relieved that their friend would recover. Kayla's mind snapped back to the moment that she'd walked into the room, with Sixx's fingers buried deep in Mik's wound. Pain on both men's faces.

"I'll get dressed and come see him. Is he awake?"

"And whining. It's still going to be weeks before he's back to full strength and we're going to have to listen to it."

"Yeah."

Scant slapped Sixx's back again and glanced toward Kayla, nodding in greeting before he walked out the door. Sixx turned more slowly and Kayla knew it was ridiculous to try to hide the fact that she was listening.

"So, Mik's recovered?"

Sixx nodded, the false humor gone now that Scant had left. All that remained was a fierce scowl on Sixx's face.

"You don't seem happy."

"Of course I'm happy." He walked past her, glancing down and seeing the broken chain for the first time. "How did that happen?" he asked kneeling down and picking up the torn metal. He looked at Kayla, curiosity and suspicion painting his stare.

"Must have been a weak spot in the metal. It just came apart." It wasn't really a lie.

Sixx looked at the chain and then to Kayla's ankle. One weak spot in the metal she might have explained away but how was she going to explain the cuff that was now gone? Sixx crawled over to her side and placed his hand on her ankle. Heat shot

through her skin like he was burning her and then it was gone. The sudden shock made her dizzy for a moment and when she opened her eyes, Sixx had disappeared. The water in the bathing chamber was once again running.

The heat had been so intense, Kayla looked down at her foot, expecting to see a burn mark on her skin. Her skin was smooth, unblemished.

And the cut from the cuff was gone.

She looked at her other ankle to assure herself that she wasn't confused but that one was also unmarked.

The truth shot through her brain like a dragon in full flight.

Sixx was a healer.

* * * * *

Kayla grabbed another strip of cloth and added it to the braid. It had started out as a way to irritate Sixx but now it was something to occupy her time. It kept her hands busy while her mind was free to think. And she had a lot to think about. Sixx had left to go about his day, leaving Kayla unchained. He didn't comment but there was a grim look in his eye as he started for the door, as if he expected her to be gone when he returned.

She smiled. There was little chance of that. Now that she was physically free, she found the bonds of emotion were holding her there.

Sixx is a healer. It all made so much more sense. She didn't know much about magical healers but she did know they were almost incapable of violence. That their very natures compelled them to heal and comfort. But how had Sixx become a warrior? He was a killer, known throughout the Seven Kingdoms.

Unless he'd become a healer *after* he'd been a warrior. That would make sense. But she didn't know enough about magical powers to know how one became a healer. The ones she'd known had been born that way and had grown up protected, almost worshiped.

It was strange. Almost a fortnight ago, she couldn't imagine why Zayn had selected him. He was nothing like what Kayla had imagined her mate to be. He wasn't well bred or noble. Hells, he wasn't even rich. Instead he was strong, sometimes frightening. Often surly.

And a healer.

There was a gentle edge to him that she knew few people saw.

And she loved him. The words had splintered her dream but she knew they were true. Zayn had chosen the man but Kayla loved him as well.

Mine, Zayn said, smug satisfaction dripping from that single word. Kayla shook her head and tried not to smile. She didn't want to encourage the beast.

The urgency of getting home had built through the morning.

What would her family think when they met him now? This might actually save his life. It was unlikely that Nekane would hurt him once he found out that Sixx was a healer.

The out-chamber door swung open and Kayla pushed the pile of cloth off her lap, jumping to her feet. It was rare that Sixx came back to his chambers in the day. But she was glad he'd returned. She wouldn't broach the subject of his being a healer, at least not yet, but she wanted to see him, touch him. He'd been so cold last night and only marginally warmer when he'd left this morning. His kiss had been almost a punishment before he'd stormed away—as if he couldn't stop himself from touching her in some small way.

Maybe she could convince him to stay for the noon meal. It shouldn't take much. A few sly strokes of her fingers across his thigh, skimming close to his cock, was usually enough to draw his attention. Perhaps she could tempt him to spend a few hours playing with her.

She stepped into the sitting area but stopped when she saw the man who waited. Harvet.

She straightened, pushing her shoulders back, calling on every ounce of royalty in her blood. Zayn rumbled through her head, hating the male's presence.

"Get out," she ordered.

Harvet's eyes widened in a mimic of shock. "Sixx has truly been too lenient if you think to command a warrior. You might be a hot fuck but I'm not led by my cock the way the captain obviously is."

He took a step closer. Zayn's hackles went up as he approached and Kayla tried to soothe the dragon. She wouldn't lose control of the beast but she also refused to let Harvet near her.

"Sixx will kill you if you touch me." *If there's anything left when Zayn is done.*

"Oh I won't do anything you don't beg me to do." The confidence in his voice put Kayla's senses on alert. He pulled a chain from his vest pocket. A silver dragon sparkled from the end of it. "Let's make a bargain. I'll give you the medallion if you spread your legs for me. I want to see what Sixx finds so special about fucking you."

Kayla saw the medallion and reached for it. Her fingers brushed the metal but then it was snatched away. Harvet wrapped his arm around her waist and pulled her against him. Zayn screamed in protest, her cry a mixture of fury and a call for Sixx.

Mine!

Harvet must have put the medallion away because his hand was empty when he grabbed her breast. And squeezed.

"I see you've considered my offer."

Kayla grabbed his arm and buried her fingernails into the flesh, turning her hands into claws. His flesh tore under the pressure and he screamed shoving her away. Kayla hit the ground, her knees scraping across the stone floor.

The dragon roared and jumped up, grabbing Harvet by his vest and tossing him backward. He landed on his ass but didn't stay down for long. The red haze covered Kayla's mind but she struggled for control, trying to keep the dragon from killing him. Harvet didn't seem to notice the change in his would-be victim. He lunged forward, yanking at her bodice and tearing the material, pulling her into the path of his palm. The blow struck her hard against her cheek sending pain through her jaw and forehead. Kayla's head snapped to the side and she tasted blood.

Zayn took control. Kayla felt her body move. Her arm swung out and connected with the male's stomach. He grunted and doubled over, the vulnerable line of his neck visible, tempting.

Mine!

The dragon screamed, demanding Sixx's presence.

Harvet flinched as the hollow sound echoed through the room. He stumbled away. His heart pounded loud, echoing in the room. Zayn snarled. Just a quick swipe of her claws and he'd be dead.

"Wha – what was that?"

Zayn glared at the insignificant creature. He wasn't worth her trouble. Certainly not worth getting her claws dirty. He backed toward the door, his eyes stuck wide open as he stared at her. Without looking back, he fumbled for the door handle and turned it.

Mine! she screamed again, wanting her mate, wanting him to destroy the pitiful human. *Mine!*

* * * * *

Mine!

The cry slammed through Sixx's head and he looked up, searching for the source. Scant scratched numbers onto his parchment, oblivious to the strange sound.

Mine. That word had evolved in his mind – until it was associated with Kayla, her lips on his skin as she breathed, his cock in her mouth or in her pussy.

But this had been more demanding. A command, a summons with a hint of panic.

Mine! It sounded again and he sighed. Fuck. As if the witch hadn't messed up his life enough, now he was hearing voices. He pushed back from the desk where he'd been reading through correspondence, offers for hire. The upcoming season held much promise of being profitable. If the new recruits continued to develop, he'd have enough men to split between two wars.

He'd been rolling the idea around his head all day. It gave him something to think about besides last night. What the fuck had he been thinking? He should have let Mik's arm die. It would have been better for everyone.

Restlessness sent him to his feet.

Sixx wandered to the training field and watched for a few minutes before he admitted to himself that he was heading back to his chambers. To Kayla. The demanding voice in his head was silent but he could still feel the presence commanding him.

Finally giving in to the sensation, he stalked down the hallways that led to his chambers. The few people he met along the way stepped clear and allowed him to pass. As he drew close, he placed his hand on his sword, needing the reminder that it was there. Drawing on the caution that years of battles had honed, he opened the door and looked inside before entering.

All seemed normal—except for Kayla, pacing the length of the room. She stomped back and forth like an animal in a cage, searching for a way out.

“Kayla?” he called softly, not wanting to startle her.

She spun around. “Mine!” The cry seemed to surprise her almost as much as it did him. It sounded just like the voice in his head—but there was no way he could have heard her, not from across the keep. She ran forward and reached for him. He moved by instinct, moving into her embrace, catching her as she threw herself at him. Her arms and legs wrapped around him, holding him, squeezing him with that shocking strength of hers.

“Sweetheart, what’s wrong? What’s happened?”

She shook her head and buried her face in his shoulder, hiding her eyes as his hands smoothed the length of her back. He comforted her, trying to ease the wicked emotions that controlled her.

After a long time, the painful grip on his shoulders relaxed and he let her slide down until she stood on the ground. He cupped his hand along her jaw and raised her chin so she’d look at him.

The distinct red slash across her cheek was starting to bruise. Someone had hit her.

“Who—?”

He didn’t get the question out when she said, “Harvet has my medallion.”

“Harvet?” He looked at her for a long moment. “Did Harvet hit you? He hurt you?”

A deep well of fury rose inside him, burning his stomach and sending fire into his chest. Harvet had touched Kayla. Sixx stepped back inspecting her body for signs of any other wounds. If he’d hurt her, raped her, Sixx would kill him.

He placed her away from him and saw the pain in her eyes. The mark on her delicate skin. Hells, he would kill him no matter what.

Kayla watched the light leave Sixx’s eyes as he stared at her and knew she’d made a critical mistake. She never should have mentioned Harvet’s name. She hadn’t been thinking. Still fighting Zayn for control, she’d focused on her medallion. It had been a move to distract the dragon.

Sixx stepped away from her, his fingers spread as if he was fighting his body. Without a word, he spun around and stalked off.

He's going to kill him. Zayn growled her approval.

"No. He can't." Panic settled in Kayla's chest. Sixx wasn't a killer. Not anymore. And she didn't want to think about what might happen to him if he fought Harvet.

When she stepped into the hall, Sixx was already gone. She tried to remember which direction Harvet had gone last night when Scant had ordered him back to his chambers. She turned right and started down the hall, keeping the edges of her torn bodice closed with one hand. There was no sign of Sixx but she tracked him by the trail of startled faces and bodies plastered against the walls. Sixx in full rage was not a man to be blocked. The path led her to the Great Hall. She ran in, stopping when she saw the small circle of men, with Sixx and Harvet in the middle. No weapons had been drawn yet but the positions of their bodies warned they were only seconds away.

She started forward but a thick arm wrapped around her waist, holding her back. "Stay out it."

Scant's voice calmed the dragon's instinctive protest. She could trust him. Scant wouldn't hurt her.

"You can't let him fight. He'd never survive."

"Then he doesn't deserve to lead this troop."

She stared up at Scant and saw the sad truth in his eyes—he wasn't sure Sixx would survive this battle either but wouldn't or couldn't stop it.

"Let him at least have the honor of the battle," Scant said.

But you don't understand. Kayla wanted to scream at Scant but Sixx wouldn't appreciate her announcing to the world that he was a healer.

Scant eased his hold enough so they could move closer, but he kept a firm grip around her waist in case she decided to interfere. Strangely, Zayn didn't seem to mind Scant's presence. As if the dragon knew he was a friend and wouldn't hurt her.

"I'm going to cut off your hands," Sixx threatened.

Instead of backing down, Harvet laughed. "I'm not afraid of you, Sixx. I won't back down like everyone else here." He waved his arm to the crowd that had gathered. "Everyone knows you've lost your nerve. Hells, you can't even train properly anymore. It's like your bollocks were cut off when they placed you in that hole." Harvet folded his arms across his chest. "You're not fit to lead this company. Seems like all you can do is fuck that slave of yours."

Harvet was playing to the crowd but Sixx didn't look around. He knew better than to get distracted by emotions. Harvet was working himself up—finding his courage. Sixx took the time to concentrate, watch his opponent. The fury was still flowing through his veins. All he had to do was remember the bruise on Kayla's face to recall it, use it.

"It's good to know you're still man enough to do that. You think we haven't seen it? You get sick at the sight of blood and it's like fighting a wooden statue. You're finished. Curl up and die like an old dog."

A few voices rumbled through the crowd and Sixx knew Harvet was pushing his luck. The men might have seen changes in Sixx but he was still their leader, still the man who'd taken them through battles.

"So you want my troop?" Sixx asked. "You want to lead these men? You'll have to go through me." Deciding it was time to stop talking, Sixx drew his sword and waited, giving Harvet ample time to pull his own weapon. "You'll either fight me or you'll die where you stand."

The smirk on Harvet's mouth warned Sixx the younger warrior thought he'd gotten what he wanted.

Sixx fingered the hilt of his weapon, holding it steady as he waited for Harvet to attack. It wasn't long. The young man was impatient. He released a battle cry and swung hard, driving his sword down. Sixx took a breath and begged his body to react.

Twenty-five battle seasons had honed his instincts. Sixx fought the witch's curse, using anger and hatred to push through the resistance of his body.

Sixx met him on the downstroke, slamming his blade into the one that threatened and knocking it away. His warrior's mind commanded that he follow up the deflection with an attack but he couldn't make his body move. He pulled back, waiting for the next blow. Harvet returned, time and again—with more talent and strength than Sixx would have credited him with. Sweat and blood from tiny nicks poured off both men. The grip of his hilt turned slick but Sixx held tight to his sword.

Three times he'd seen the perfect death stroke—the perfect opening to drive his blade into Harvet's chest—but he couldn't force his body to make the move, defending instead of attacking. But soon, his body would weaken—and then Harvet would take not only Sixx's troop but Kayla.

The thought of Kayla at this bastard's mercy distracted him for just a moment but it was enough. Harvet's blade slipped through his guard, sliding into Sixx's shoulder.

"Arrgh!" His cry ripped through the room as instinct seized control. Mindless, the burning in his shoulder tearing at his concentration, Sixx knocked Harvet's blade aside and drove forward, the point slicing into Harvet's gut. The blade slid through Harvet's body and out the other side.

Harvet gasped and went limp, his weight driving him forward further onto Sixx's sword. Sixx planted his foot in Harvet's chest and shoved, sliding him off his blade. The body fell to the floor, Harvet's eyes fluttering as he tried to stare up at the man who'd killed him.

Sixx looked down at Harvet, fully collapsed on the floor, blood pouring from his belly. The warrior's skills trained into him since birth hadn't failed him and he'd known precisely where to drive his sword. The wound was high and to the right of Harvet's stomach.

The metallic smell of blood filled Sixx's nostrils and he felt his stomach roll. He swallowed the bile and looked at the men standing around. "Anyone else think they

want to try to take my troop?" he bellowed, an animal calling out its challenge. No one moved.

A flash of white sparkled from the corner of his eye and he looked to the right. Kayla stood there, her wide eyes trained on Harvet's body.

"Get her out of here," he commanded Scant. Scant—warrior and friend that he was—dragged Kayla from the room. She fought him but Scant was relentless. Sixx waited until they were clear then looked at two of the recruits. "Wait until he dies then dump his body in the mountains. The animals can have him." The gurgling sound that came from Harvet's mouth turned Sixx's stomach and he stalked away, knowing he had to escape before he embarrassed himself. He stormed outside and bent over, the pain and loss stripping his soul.

Chapter Fifteen

Sixx walked into his chamber, the heavy weight of his limbs making each step a struggle. He tossed the bloody sword to the floor and dropped onto the couch. His legs refused to carry him any farther.

Feeling weak and disgusted, he sat staring at the blank space in front of him, trying to forget the sensation of his sword sliding into Harvet's abdomen.

He'd killed before – dozens, hundreds, thousands.

Sitting there now, he could almost see their faces – the faces of each man, woman and child he'd killed. This was his payment.

A light tread whispered across the stone floor but Sixx didn't raise his eyes. He knew Kayla watched him but he couldn't bring himself to look at her. Of all the condemnation he knew he deserved, he didn't have the strength to see hers.

Kayla stood in the doorway watching Sixx as he stared blindly at the floor.

"Is he dead?" Kayla asked.

Sixx slowly shook his head. "But he will be. I'm very good at what I do." Kayla shuddered at the death in his voice.

Her heart ached with the pain that radiated from his soul. It wasn't physical – she could see he was unharmed – but it was deeper, a wound to his spirit. She lowered herself down beside him, her fingers wanting to touch him but frightened by the anger that surrounded him. She didn't think he would hurt her – not intentionally – but she'd never seen him like this. Barely contained rage flowed below the surface of his skin.

They sat in silence for a long time before Sixx said.

"He'll spend the next twelve hours or so bleeding out." His eyes were dry and hard. "Battlefield rules. Wound but don't kill. It's better if you leave them alive. Then their men will take the time to tend to them. Dead, they just step over the bodies." He closed his eyes and rested his head against the back of the couch, his long hair tangled and matted with sweat. "But he will die. It will just be a slow, painful day before he finally leaves this plane." His knuckles turned white under the blood as his fingers curled into a fist.

"No one in your troop stops for the wounded." It wasn't a question.

Sixx shook his head. "When the fight's over, if anyone's left alive, we go back and get them."

"Is that why no one came to get you when you were captured?"

"I'd have killed them where they stood."

If she hadn't known him, hadn't spent half a moon cycle with almost no one but him for company, she might have believed he didn't care, that he was merely tired or indifferent to the death that was occurring somewhere in the keep.

But she did know him and she knew the pain this was causing him.

Mine? Zayn's plaintive cry swirled through her head. The dragon hated to see her mate in pain but didn't know how to fix him, how to heal him.

Heal him. That was it. Sixx's nature as a healer was in direct conflict with his warrior side.

Sixx couldn't let Harvet die. Not when his hand had been wielding the weapon that inflicted the wound.

"You can't let him die."

She watched him tense, the corners of his mouth turning white. "There's nothing to be done. Stitch can't fix him."

"You can."

His head snapped around and the heated glare in his eyes almost made her flinch but she held herself steady.

"You can heal him."

"I don't know what you're talking about." The tone of his words were low and dangerous, filled with warning, but Kayla couldn't let anything stop her. Not even Sixx himself.

"You're a healer. *You* can heal him."

He stared at her and for one heartbeat she thought he might hit her. Instead, he threw himself off the settee and stormed into the other room. Kayla knew she had no choice but to follow. He ignored her, plunging his hands into the cold water basin, rubbing harsh soap across the backs of his hands, scrubbing long past when the last trace of blood was gone.

"Sixx—"

"If you're so bloody concerned about Harvet, you go to him." He grabbed a towel and brushed by her. "And stay there."

Refusing to chase him from room to room, she grabbed his elbow. "Sixx—"

"Dammit." He swung free, tossing her off. Kayla felt herself fly and her back hit the door behind her. Her feet slid out from under her and she fell, landing hard on the ground.

Sixx spun around—the shock and pain wounding his eyes. He knelt down beside her. "Kayla, baby, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to hurt you." She raised her hand to the back of her head, feeling for a bump. Sixx's fingers slipped beneath hers. "Gods, baby, I'm sorry." She felt the warmth from his hand move through her skin and the pain disappeared. His fingers turned from healing to comforting as he stroked her scalp, his eyes scanning her body. She sensed when he saw the scratches on her knees from where she'd fallen after Harvet had hit her.

The hand tightened on her hair.

"I'm all right," she assured him, not liking the tension in his body.

"He hurt you."

"It's just a couple of scratches."

She was right. It was nothing more than a couple of scrapes and a few bruises but he couldn't stand it. Couldn't stand to see those marks on her skin. The instinct to heal, to take her pain away, was so strong he couldn't resist. He placed his palm on her knee and let the heat flow from his hand. Kayla hissed as he pressed and he made soothing, nonsense noises, listening to the power in his body, knowing when the tiny wounds had been healed. Without looking up or speaking, he repeated the process on her other knee.

The heat stopped and he pulled his hand away, staring at her bare legs, smooth and soft, unmarked. If he got to wounds soon enough, he could heal them completely, removing any trace that the skin was damaged.

His heart slowed in his chest as he waited. Waited for her to speak. But she was silent.

Unable to stand it any longer, he raised his eyes and met her steady stare. He'd expected pity, or fear, or Gods forbid, excitement. He didn't want to become the center of attention the way some healers did.

But instead he saw only concern, pain that reflected his. He reached up and cupped his hand on her cheek, healing the damage Harvet had left there. She turned her head and placed a kiss deep in his palm, then leaned into his strength. Now it was her turn to soothe him. She slid her fingers through his hair, soft and delicate as she watched him.

"You're a warrior. How did you become a healer?"

"Death." He sat down on the floor beside her. She cuddled closer, giving him the comfort of her body. Sixx stared across the room, knowing it was finally time to tell someone. The memories consumed him. "We were fighting in some place long forgotten by the Gods of War. We were winning. The defending army had little chance of beating a force like mine. All they could do was wait us out, hope that winter came before we managed to break through their walls.

"We were close. Another few days and we'd have broken through. I went out one night, routine patrol and walked into a trap. There was a small troop waiting for me. They killed the five men with me. I woke up miles away in a dungeon, a hole in the ground really." He shrugged. "They never demanded ransom, they didn't question me. They just kept me locked up and took turns beating me."

"The marks on your back," Kayla inserted, her voice soft and low, barely penetrating the memories. He'd told her part of the story before.

Sixx nodded. "It was filthy." He laughed without humor. That was the part he remembered the most. "Me and the rats. The wounds got infected, I was starved. I was going to die and I knew it but I wasn't going to do it in that hole. I lost track of time but

finally I found a way to free myself. I killed the guard and ran. I don't know where I went. Hells, I don't know where I started from but I remember running until my body gave out and I dropped to the ground, ready to die.

"But I woke up and there was someone with me. Gods, my skin was burning like I'd been set on fire. I reacted, the way I was trained. I came out of the sleep and grabbed the person who was causing the pain. Snapped her neck."

Kayla watched, tears she didn't think Sixx even noticed pooled in his eyes. None escaped.

"My eyes cleared and the battle rage disappeared and I saw her. Just a little bitty thing, lying on the ground, her eyes wide open, her neck broken. The front of my body was healed. My back was still torn up but she'd killed the fever and the infection. And I'd killed her.

"I knelt down beside her, horrified that I'd killed an old woman, a healer. I placed my hand on her eyes and fire poured into my body." He looked up, his eyes once again cloudless and blank.

Kayla wanted to touch him, find some way to soothe him but she knew only one thing would take away the pain.

"You have to heal him."

* * * * *

Sixx returned to his chambers, his body humming with a mixture of exhaustion and exhilaration. He'd done it. He'd healed the fatal wound that he'd caused. The sickness was gone. The strange empty sensation that had filled him when he'd made the final stab into Harvet's body had disappeared when he'd placed his hands over the wound and willed the heat and healing from inside his body to flow into Harvet. Harvet hadn't woken though he'd cried out when Sixx had begun, the pain piercing the death coma that held him.

Sixx had slipped into the chamber from the garden and out the same way, no one had seen him. No one had lingered by Harvet's bedside – they'd left him alone in a dark room to die. It made a man think of his own mortality and who would mourn him if he departed.

Kayla.

Her name was first in his mind as it had been so many times since she'd come into his life. How was it possible? She was a captive. A slave. In his years as a mercenary he'd carried many women back as spoils of war. He'd used them, enjoyed them and turned them over to his lord.

But Kayla was different.

Would she mourn him if he died? Sixx shook his head, irritated by the fanciful turn of his thoughts. Just because he had this healing power inside him, didn't mean that he wasn't the man he'd always been. If he died, he died. His only hope was that the Gods

of War would collect his soul before the Goddesses snatched it. It didn't matter what he left behind. His body would be gone and the memory would live only as long as warriors told the tales.

He closed the door to his chamber and moved through the sitting area. The candles were out, leaving only a small fire burning for warmth. He looked at the bed. Kayla was asleep, her body curled toward the empty side of the bed as if she was waiting for him.

A picture passed before his eyes, of Kayla, waiting for him to return from battle, her eyes filled with tears of worry, concern. She placed her hand on her stomach—a move so familiar, as if she was protecting the child inside her.

Kayla? A child? His child?

He would have laughed if the ache inside him hadn't swelled to fill his chest.

"Is Harvet all right?" she whispered from across the room.

Sixx nodded, not knowing what to say, his mind a contradiction of the healing and the dream of Kayla, carrying his child. He was a warrior, a mercenary, contracted to kill for whichever lord would pay his price. Men like him didn't have children—unless it was an accident.

But tonight she was here. He looked to the bed and saw her crystal clear eyes staring at him. She hadn't fallen asleep. She'd been waiting for him. Waiting for his return. He plunged his hands into the water basin and rinsed the faint traces of blood from his fingers. The red in the slowly swirling water didn't make him sick this time.

Sixx glanced into the tiny shaving mirror but couldn't stare at his face for long. His world had shifted direction. His warrior soul was defeated by the overwhelming urge to heal.

"Sixx."

Her voice reached into his chest. Without looking at her, he shook his head. Too much raced through his body—pain, anger, loss. They all combined until he knew he couldn't face her. Couldn't touch her.

"Come to bed, Sixx."

The call was for more than sex, more than the hot fucking they'd shared each night. She was pulling him to her. He slowly turned and faced Kayla.

The blankets were thrown off her body. She lay before him, naked and open, welcoming him.

"I need you," she whispered though the soft sound carried across the room. Her eyes flickered between the brilliant green and mysterious black as if she couldn't decide which part of her soul needed him more.

She slid across the bed, her legs opening, just a hint, promising more. His mouth was suddenly dry, needing the sweet moisture between her legs.

As if under a wizard's spell, he stumbled forward, his eyes drawn to the hot, dark crease between her thighs. That sweet place belonged to him. The rest of his world was

a jumble of confusion but this was something he knew deep in his soul. *Mine*. The word sounded so familiar in his head.

That pussy, that sweet delicious cunt belonged to him. As sure as he knew his life was forever changed, he knew that one truth. It was more than a legal ownership. It was a full-on spiritual possession.

She shifted, her legs rubbing across the thin sheets and just with that slight movement he knew she was feeling it, feeling the hunger as he did.

There would be no slow sensuous loving tonight. He needed to fuck her, needed to fill her, using her body to push back the ravenous demons that hunted his soul. He reached for her, grabbing her ankle and dragging her to the side of the bed. Her eyes glowed with pleasure and a hint of laughter. Little temptress. As he pulled her to the side, she sat up, reaching for him. Their mouths met and pure heat exploded between them. Tongues clashed and consumed as their hands grabbed and touched. She tore at the laces on his vest, helping him strip it off, then her hands went to work on his leathers.

Knowing that her touch—so hot and eager—would send him over the edge, he eased her hands aside and pushed her back. Following his guidance, she lay back, her thighs open and the dark pink of her cunt glittering with moisture. He cupped his palm over her mound. “Mine,” he growled against her lips—knowing he was claiming not only her pussy but all of her.

“Yes.” Her groan, her delicious acceptance released the hunger inside him. The need to fuck hard was too much. He grabbed her hips and flipped her over, putting her facedown on the mattress. He pulled her to the edge of the mattress so her legs dangled over the side, her tight, round ass pressed out, her pussy lips tempting him.

The position put her at the perfect height. He knelt down, unable to resist the sweetness of her cunt. Spreading her legs, he drove his tongue into her pussy, lapping and tasting her wet flesh until she squirmed against him, arching her back and trying to drive his tongue deeper into her passage.

With one final lick, he stood and stepped back. Her flavor lingered on his tongue like the finest delicacy. He ripped open his leathers and stepped out of them, watching her squirm, waiting for him. Needing a moment of control, he pushed his hand between her thighs and almost groaned at the flood of moisture waiting for him. He teased her flesh, dipping a solitary finger into her pussy, drawing back and painting her moisture across her skin of her thighs, her ass.

“Please, Sixx.” She looked over her shoulder, her eyes green and hungry. Her plea reached inside him and dragged him forward, until the head of his cock slid between her legs, pressing against her opening. Heat and liquid poured over his shaft even as her whispered moan sank into this soul. She wanted this—wanted him. She belonged to him.

He pushed forward, driving deep and hard, one long, powerful stroke. Kayla cried out and rocked her hips back, wanting all he could give her.

"Mine," he snarled again, announcing it to the world. He placed his hands on her hips and moved, fucking her long and deep, loving the soft whimpers and the sweet way she pumped her ass against him, her hands curling into the bedclothes as she fucked herself onto his cock. The tight grip of her cunt was a hot vise on his cock. She fit him so perfectly as if her pussy had been made to hold him.

"Yes." Her reply was breathless and strained but Sixx couldn't give up. He needed to hear it, something deep inside him needed to hear her accept his claim to her body.

"That's right." He placed his hand around her waist, slipping his finger into her slit and finding her clit. "This pussy belongs to me and no one but me will fuck it."

"Yes. Sixx, please."

The world contracted down into one central point and all Sixx could think of was moving in her, fucking her until she screamed his name. He pounded into her, wanting to mark her.

Too soon, his climax was on him. He wanted to make it last but he couldn't fight the demands of his body. He placed his finger along her clit, finding the tight point and rubbing gently, countering the hard pounding of his cock inside her. Her cry was muffled by the sheets but there no mistaking the subtle contractions along his cock. He shouted his pleasure and drove in deep one last time, letting his cum flood her.

Long moments later he opened his eyes and realized he'd trapped Kayla to the bed with his weight—and she was squirming beneath him. The light motions triggered a response in his cock, drawing it back to life. He lifted off her, slipping his cock from her passage, fully intending to turn her over and take her again. His shaft twitched in agreement.

But he never had the chance.

Kayla pressed her hands into the mattress, and pushed up, flipping him off her, sending him across the mattress with her strength. He blinked, shocked to find himself on his back and Kayla over him, her knees straddling his hips, her eyes glittering with that strange black and green combination that warned him he was in for a long night.

"Mine," she whispered, returning the claim he'd made, lapping her tongue across his nipple. She nibbled and kissed, licked and tasted her way down his body until her mouth hovered close to his cock. She lapped her tongue along the base of his shaft, tickling the hardening flesh with a gentle stroke, working him until he was hard and ready to fuck. Her eyes glittered—more green than black, more teasing than desperate. She swirled her tongue around the full head before sucking it inside, engulfing almost half his cock in one deep swallow. Sixx arched his hips, unable to stop himself, driving more of his shaft into her wet warmth—and she took him, her lips tightening, squeezing ever so slightly as she withdrew. The sweet suction was incredible.

She lifted her head and looked at him—feminine power raged in her eyes. His little witch knew precisely how to torment him.

"Where do you want to come?" She licked her lips. "In my mouth? Or in my cunt?" His cock twitched. "Hmmm, I think you want to fuck my pussy." She licked his shaft, a

dainty taste. "It's so hard to control all that power, isn't it?" She ran her hand down his hip, cupping his ass, scraping her fingernails across his flesh. "Knowing that when you're in my mouth you can't thrust and pump the way you want."

Her words swirled through his body, grabbing him by the bollocks and urging him up. With a growl, he grabbed her beneath the arms and pulled her up beside him, flipped her over and drove into her in one breath. Her giggle turned into a gasp as he filled her but one glimpse into her eyes and he knew *this* was what she wanted. She wanted to be fucked. Wanted him to take her.

He stretched out over her, his cock deep inside her. With a slow raise of his hips, he pulled almost out of her, regretting the loss of her heat but wanting this to last. He reached between them and closed her legs, placing his knees outside her thighs. He groaned as her body closed around him, making her passage even tighter. Slowly he sank into her, watching her eyes widen as he filled her. Holding himself inside her, he looked down at the beautiful woman beneath him, her breasts rising and falling in delicious pulses with her breath.

Keeping her trapped by his body, he cupped one breast, pulling it closer to his mouth. He hadn't spent nearly enough time on her breasts, he decided as he sucked the nipple inside. Hells, he could spend a lifetime and still want her in his mouth. She squirmed beneath him and he gave her more of what she wanted, sliding in and out of her cunt.

Kayla wrapped her arms around Sixx's neck and tried to stay sane. The slow penetration felt so deep, so wicked, each thrust teasing her clit. His mouth was hot against her breasts, licking and sucking.

"So beautiful," he whispered against her skin, the words becoming a caress to the sensitive peaks. She whimpered softly and held him tight. "Delicious." He gently bit her nipple and Kayla cried out, her body jerking at the wonderfully gentle pain. "Do you want to come, sweet?" he asked, sinking into her again. The languid strokes were wonderful but not enough.

She tried to answer but the sound came out as a moan. Finally she just nodded and scraped her teeth along his neck, hoping he'd understand.

"Reach up and hold the headboard."

She looked into his eyes. Greedy desire and a hint of laughter stared back at her. The haunted look that had filled his eyes when he'd first returned was gone. Her commanding, demanding lover was back.

Slowly, letting him think she might defy him, she raised her hands above her head and placed her palms flat against the headboard as instructed. "Very good, *slave*." She stared into his gaze, watching as he fucked her, moving in her.

He drew back and thrust inside. With her legs closed she felt him through the entire push, deep inside her pussy and across her clit. She braced her hands, fighting the press of his body as he rode her. With his weight on her, she couldn't move, she could only take what he gave her. It was too much for her already tormented flesh.

"Sixx!"

"That's it, sweetheart. Let me hear you."

"Please, Sixx." She fought against the weight of his body, struggling to move, to taste him. She placed hot kisses along his jaw, whispering his name, begging for the relief she needed.

Her pleas seemed to reach him, please him. He moved faster, filling her, fucking her until all of the delicious pressure exploded. It was as though every nerve in her sex came alive, pressed and teased from all angles. Her clit tingled and deep inside her sex pulsed—the two sensations combining to make her heart race. She cried out, shocked and stunned by the delicious double orgasm. Sixx groaned and moments later he released his seed inside her.

Kayla accepted his weight, loving it as he crushed her into the mattress. She would be sore in the morning but she didn't care. Her heart pounded in her chest until she could barely breathe and she'd never felt better. The red haze that warned the dragon was near teased the edges of her mind.

"More." The word slipped out of her mouth prompted by Zayn.

Sixx rolled over, moving off Kayla but taking her with him as he fell onto his back. "I can't, baby. Soon."

His eyes drifted closed and Kayla smiled. Poor Sixx. He didn't know what he was in for as a dragon's mate. She reached over and let her fingers trail across his chest, pleasing herself with the delicate touch. She could let him rest, for a while—but Zayn was awake and hungry and the dragon wanted its mate.

* * * * *

For the second morning in a row, pounding woke them from a deep sleep. Sixx groaned and eased Kayla off his body, hating the loss of her warmth but knowing what waited for him on the other side of the door.

He looked at Kayla and she squeezed his hand, comforting him with that simple touch. He pushed his hair back—it was knotted and tangled from the grip of Kayla's fingers—and dragged on his leathers.

Forcing himself across the room, he opened the door. Hinden flinched then bowed.

"Sir. Scant sent me to get you. Something's wrong. Really wrong."

His voice trembled as he spoke. Sixx nodded and let the door swing shut. He grabbed a vest, stopping to kiss Kayla on the cheek, needing that connection to her.

"I'll be back."

He didn't worry about her escaping. Hells, yesterday when he'd left, he'd done so knowing she would be gone when he returned but no, she'd stayed. Almost as if she wanted to be with him. Right. A woman like her would want to be with a man like him. A mercenary who was practically useless.

But for some reason that didn't piss him off the way it had before. Twice now he'd saved lives. And though he couldn't actually feel good about saving Harvet, he knew he'd done the right thing. Kayla had been right. He couldn't have let Harvet die. Not when he was the one who'd wielded the knife.

Walking at a slow, steady pace, Sixx entered the Great Hall and stopped. Harvet stood, healed and whole, in the middle of a group of warriors. His vest was stained with blood as if he'd dressed in the same clothes he'd worn yesterday. Swords were drawn and pointed at Harvet, keeping him in place.

"What the fuck is going on?"

Scant, who stood outside the group with his hand on his sword hilt, walked over.

"Don't you notice anything wrong?"

"Besides my warriors pointing their weapons on Harvet?"

"The fact that Harvet is standing instead of lying in a wooden box. I saw the wound. He should be dead or gasping his last breath right now."

Sixx nodded. "What happened?" he asked curiously, not ready to reveal to the world that he was a healer. He was barely able to accept it himself.

"No one knows. He walked out of his chamber this morning, no wounds, doesn't even look like there's a scar."

Fuck. Sixx silently cursed. He'd healed Harvet too fully. He wasn't in complete control of this...power yet and he'd been lost in the trance. When he'd returned to himself, he'd found Harvet asleep. The wound completely healed with no sign that there had ever been a mark on his skin.

"It's a demon!" a voice called from the crowd. "A demon has taken his soul and healed his body."

That explained why they were all guarding him.

Harvet opened his mouth to protest but a sword tip went against his throat. That was how a demon passed from one body to another. Speaking. They weren't going to let Harvet utter a word.

"They're set to kill him," Scant whispered.

"No." It would solve some of Sixx's problems and make his warrior's soul feel better to know that Harvet was dead but he couldn't do it. "Kick him out." A warrior on his own was at a loss. Hard to hire, harder still to be accepted into a troop. No one trusted a man who'd been kicked out by his fellow warriors.

Scant nodded. "I'll send him to Terrak, that bastard could use a few more demons in his troop."

Sixx offered a weak smile then watched as Harvet was herded toward the door. They would push him out with nothing in hand, leaving him only the clothes on his back, clothes that were torn and bloodstained from the wound Sixx had caused.

Sixx turned and walked away, feeling almost lighthearted as he returned to his chambers. He'd have to tell Kayla what happened. She'd probably enjoy the justice of it all.

Chapter Sixteen

"Trust me," she said.

He laughed. "Right. I'm just supposed to let you wander free all night."

She sighed. This was getting ridiculous. She'd stopped shredding his sheets. She would have thought he'd be a little more trusting. And it had been almost a week since she'd broken the chain. He hadn't chained her during the day but he'd kept a close eye on her and she knew the guards monitored her movements. At night he didn't need to restrain her since he was usually on top of her or holding her trapped to his side. There wasn't much chance of escape.

"Sixx, I've been here for almost a full moon cycle. I haven't tried to escape since that first night. Nor have I attacked you even though I've had frequent opportunities—" She smiled. "And *temptations*. I think I've proven myself." He didn't react. Goddesses, she hated to beg—unless she was pleading to come, then it wasn't so bad—but she didn't want to spend the night confined in this little space. She needed to move. Her dragon needed to move. "Please. Don't chain me up tonight. I will be here, waiting for you when you return."

He considered her for a long time then said, "If I come back and you're not here, I'm going to hunt your ass down and give it a spanking that will give you no pleasure."

"Thank you." Holding back her sigh of relief, she smiled.

"What will you do with a night's freedom?" he asked casually but she could hear the curiosity in his voice.

"I'll spend the evening with Jana." In the past week, Sixx had taken to allowing Kayla to eat with him in the Great Hall. Though their manners were a little crude, most of Sixx's guard was pleasant enough and it was such a pleasure to be out among people again. Of course, she was required to act like a slave in public but since that typically involved sitting on Sixx's lap and being fed from his hand, she tolerated it well.

And she'd met the serving girl, Jana, and they'd become friendly. Kayla recognized Jana's scent as the one on Sixx that second night but she'd let that annoying memory go. As long as Jana stayed away from Sixx now, Kayla was happy. Zayn wasn't thrilled about the presence of the other woman but the dragon didn't understand. Sometimes you just needed to talk to another woman. "She usually looks like she can use the help in the hall. I can serve ale and platters of meat as well as anyone. And then I'll go to bed."

"Alone."

"What?"

"You'll go to bed *alone*."

Kayla flinched and looked at Sixx. Was it possible he was jealous? Or thought she'd take someone else to bed?

"Alone," she said definitely, strolling toward her lover. A tendril of desire moved like smoke through her chest. The need to tease and comfort her man urged her to stroke her finger down the center of his chest. "All by myself, just waiting for you to return." Her hand dropped lower, smoothing her palm across the growing bulge in his leathers, loving the way his body reacted so quickly to her touch. "To drive your cock inside me." She whispered a kiss at the base of his throat. "I'll be here, waiting for you."

Sixx yanked her upward, bending down to meet her with a harsh, possessive kiss. He drove his tongue between her lips, conquering her with a gentle fury that made her pussy ache for the same treatment.

"See that you are, sweeting."

He patted her ass, turned on his heel and stalked away. Kayla sighed as the door closed behind him. Sixx had been summoned to Lord Menth's again. The tournament had begun and Sixx's presence was required for the opening banquet. And that meant she had the night to herself.

Not that she didn't love having Sixx around or enjoy sleeping next to him, but sometimes, a woman just needed some space.

Feeling as if she'd been given a holiday—though in truth her duties weren't difficult—she walked the length of the room, sitting on the settee and curling her legs up. Before she joined Jana in the Great Hall, she had to do some planning.

She'd finally come to accept there was no way to contact her family.

The medallion disappeared when Harvet had been chased out. The bastard probably still had it with him. Not that it would do him any good. It couldn't be melted down and only Kayla or her dragon's mate could wear it.

She sighed. It did no good to think on it. The medallion was gone so she'd have to contact her family a different way. And the only way that was going to happen was if she told Sixx. *Of course, after I tell him I'm a princess and who my father is he might decide it's safer to kill me and hide the body.* She scoffed. She didn't really think Sixx would kill her. Not now. At the beginning, maybe. Now, unlikely. He seemed to feel some sort of affection for her. He hadn't said he loved her but then neither had she.

Despite the fact that she didn't think Sixx would kill her when he learned the truth, she knew he wouldn't be happy about it.

She could just imagine the conversation. *Oh Sixx, by the way, I'm a princess and my father is Kei of Xicanth. Maybe you've heard of him? Well, he's going to be a little upset that I've been your slave for a moon cycle but don't let that worry you. You'll be fine.*

Her father would be furious—that was a given—but he was at least human. Sixx had a chance.

When he met Nekane, the real bloodshed would occur. That meant Kayla and Sixx had to go to Xicanth. At least at home, Lorrان would be there and she was the only person who could control Nekane.

It was time to tell Sixx the truth. Tomorrow, when he returned, she'd sit him down and tell him she was a princess. Goddesses, that would be an interesting conversation.

Feeling restless, Kayla got up and paced the small chamber. There were a few books that Sixx had stashed on one shelf but she'd already read them. It didn't matter. She couldn't sit still long enough.

She glanced outside. It was late enough to join Jana in the Great Hall.

As she strolled down the hall, the scents and sounds of the keep seemed very powerful, invading her core with a pounding need. A slow sensuousness welled up inside her—as if her body was craving the touch of the air. The tiny slave costume Sixx insisted she wear outside their chambers whispered against her hips and thighs, making her skin sensitive to the delicate touch.

Goddesses, her body felt heavy and sexual. And damn if Sixx wasn't gone for the night. With a sigh, Kayla pushed the need aside and walked into the Great Hall. Jana smiled as she entered, then Kayla saw the other woman look past her, obviously expecting Sixx right behind her.

She walked to where Jana was serving tankards to a table of four warriors.

"Where's the captain?" Jana asked.

"Lord Menth's for dinner."

"Oh right, it's the opening dinner of the tournament."

"But Sixx said he wasn't competing." Kayla thought that was a good thing despite the fact that Scant and Mik were urging him into it. She couldn't imagine how it would tear Sixx up to hurt someone in a competition. It had been bad enough when he'd done it to protect her. Casual violence would offend his healer nature.

"Doesn't matter. This is when Menth stirs everyone up. Openly declares challenges between troops. It's all men. Lot of chest pounding. Quite disgusting actually."

Kayla laughed, glad that she was escaping that.

"But I can't believe Sixx left you wandering about." Jana sounded surprised.

"Well, he did."

The edges of Jana's eyes tightened. "You're not going to try to escape are you? Because I can't help you. The captain would kill me."

Kayla laughed. "No, I'm not planning to escape and if I was, I wouldn't use you to do it." She looked around, noticing some of the more interested stares from Sixx's men. "I was actually coming to offer my services."

"You can service me," one of the men yelled. A little flutter pulsed inside her cunt—not specific interest in this man, but just desire. She could feel Zayn's presence lurking nearby. The dragon turned her stare on him, raising her eyebrows and daring him to continue. He swallowed deeply and shook his head. "Or not."

Jana laughed. "Fine. You can take care of yourself. And I'd love the help." She lowered her voice, so only Kayla could hear her. "But I'd be careful if you decide to fuck any of the guys. The captain hasn't been real open to the idea of sharing you."

"Don't worry. I'm just here to help and visit with you. I'll leave before it gets too rowdy."

"Good." She handed Kayla her tray. "Let's get started."

Two hours later, Kayla's back hurt, her calves hurt and her ass hurt. Of course her ass hurt because one drunk warrior thought it would be funny to pinch it as she bent over to refill his tankard. He'd only had a few seconds to laugh before the heavy ceramic pitcher she dropped on his head had knocked him unconscious.

That was when Jana decided it was time for Kayla to leave.

Kayla offered to clean up her mess but when she knelt down to pick up the pieces, Jana dragged her back up and ordered her to leave.

"Why?"

"Between that outfit, that body and the way you move, we're about to have a riot. You should get back to your chambers." She glanced at the crowd. "And lock the door."

Kayla glanced down. It was her normal outfit. It was always revealing but tonight it was more explicit than normal. Her nipples were tight and hard, pressing against the thin material.

It was probably best for her to go back to their chambers. The restlessness and need had grown through the evening, leaving her body aching and hungry. Hells, she hoped Sixx would return soon. She didn't know if she could make it all night. She took a deep breath and tried to calm the desire flooding her body.

Kayla stepped out into the hallway and grabbed the wall as lust shot through her core. Zayn growled her hunger, wanting her mate.

Mine, the beast demanded. *Mine now*.

"Well, you picked the wrong night to want him. He'll be gone for hours." While usually Kayla would have felt a little smug at delaying Zayn's pleasures, tonight, it was with regret. Her body was pulsing, each step seeming to tickle her clit until she was moaning as she walked into the bedchamber she shared with Sixx. His scent lingered in the room and settled in Kayla's head. She wanted to bury her face in his hair as she rode him, his cock pounding inside her, hard, deep. Filling her.

She slapped her hand across her stomach fighting the hunger.

"Mine," she whispered.

* * * * *

Mine!

Sixx heard the cry echo in his head. It was a demand. A summons.

He glanced around the crowded hall knowing no one else would have heard the sound. It was something associated with Kayla. He didn't understand it and he knew there was no way he could hear her from miles away but that didn't stop his gut reaction that he needed to return to her. The cry wasn't panicked. It didn't sound like it had when Harvet had attacked her. This was an order. And he had the strangest suspicion that he should follow that silent command.

Thinking of Harvet, Sixx glanced across the crowded hall to the man himself. He'd taken Scant's advice and joined up with Terrak's troop. Harvet had left with nothing—not even his weapon. How had he managed to buy a place in Terrak's troop?

"Bastard," Mik muttered, swallowing the sound with a gulp of ale.

Sixx nodded.

"Did you see where he's sitting? Right next to Terrak. Like he's his right hand man."

Scant looked over at their conversation. "Terrak wouldn't be stupid enough to make Harvet a lieutenant, would he?"

"Maybe he's that desperate," Mik said.

Sixx shook his head. "No. Doesn't make sense. Look at who else is sitting with Terrak. Farther down. Jamek, Els. They're good fighters. They'd wipe the ground with Harvet. That means Terrak has another reason for putting Harvet in a position of honor."

"But why?"

Again Sixx shook his head. He didn't know but it was something he didn't trust. Particularly when Harvet looked over and smirked, like he was relishing a secret. Something that would hurt Sixx.

Mine now!

The demand vibrated through his skull again and Sixx winced at the sound.

"I'm going to head back."

Scant and Mik raised their eyebrows and looked at each other but neither said anything. Sixx knew it was unexpected for him to leave. Most of the men would drink until they passed out. That wasn't an option for Sixx and he didn't anticipate feeling the need for any of the women who hovered in the background waiting for an invitation. He had a woman. One who was waiting for him in his bed. Hells, if he was right, she was demanding his presence.

Moving quietly, he walked to the head table and said good night to Menth. The man was so far gone in his drink that he waved Sixx away without a word.

Sixx turned and walked into Harvet. The smirk was more pronounced up close. Sixx looked down at the younger man, sighing at the thought that he might have been this young and annoying at some point in this life.

"Off to go ride between your slut's thighs? You'd better enjoy it." He laughed. "While you can." He flipped his hair out of his eyes and sauntered away, strolling back

to Terrak's side. Terrak nodded his approval, as if Harvet had been sent to taunt Sixx. Was this something to do with Kayla?

The urgency to return to his rooms built. He didn't sense danger but certainly he needed to get there.

He kicked his horse into a gallop and made it back to his keep in good time, tossing the reins to the stable lad and heading inside. The demands had grown more insistent as he'd come closer.

His jaw set, Sixx reached for the door handle, turned it and entered the room. Kayla stood beside the bed, her clothes a scattered mess across her body as if she'd tried to remove them but hadn't understood how to undo the clasps. Her left breast was bared, the nipple tight and stretched—making Sixx's mouth water.

She raised her head and stared at him. Black greeted him from her eyes—the same haunting black that surfaced often during their sex play.

"Kayla?" He walked forward. Something wasn't right. Her body held none of the sensuous, seductive overtones that it usually did. Instead, she was taut, ready to pounce.

As he thought the words, she did just that, leaping through the air and landing on him. Her arms wrapped around his neck, her legs coiled around his waist. Their combined weights sent them to the floor, Kayla sprawled on top of him.

She latched her mouth onto his, driving her tongue in deep. Sixx accepted her heavy penetration, recognizing the pure hunger that drove her to consume him. She pressed her groin against his hard erection, opening that sweet place his cock longed to inhabit. She humped him, rubbing her clit against his cock until the friction alone made his cock ready to explode. He pushed her back, easing a breath of distance between them. Fury filled her eyes as she responded to the light pressure.

"Mine!" she shouted, almost daring him to contradict her. As if to prove her point, she rose up on her knees and ripped at his leathers, tearing the strings that bound them closed. Eager hands reached inside and pulled his cock free.

Their cries—hers triumphant, his lust-filled—joined in the air as she curled her palms around his shaft and stroked him, squeezing softly as she rubbed his length.

"Mine," she said again, this time the sound was worshipful and hungry. Her black eyes staring at him, she bent down and laved her tongue up the lower side of his cock. "Mine."

Sixx snapped his teeth together. It was hers. Whatever she wanted, he would grant her.

She licked his cock again, moving up and circling the head with her tongue as if it was a treat to savor before she pulled back. She moved, climbing up his reclined body, tearing at her skirt as if it offended her. Teasing laughter locked in his throat as he reached to help her but her hands knocked his out of the way. With one firm yank, the material tore, separating at her groin and disappearing into two ragged pieces. His mind tried to track the image before him—that this tiny woman had just torn through

strong silk like it was parchment – but before he could take it all in, she moved over him and the delicious weight of her breasts and the hot cavern of her sex drew his thoughts back to his cock.

“Mine,” she commanded again as she positioned his shaft to her opening. There was no preparation, no seduction, she sank down on him, driving him deep inside her cunt. Her passage was slick with her juices and clamped around him as he sank deep into her.

She dropped her head back and groaned—a sound so foreign it was like an animal’s growl.

“Mine?” she asked, her black eyes drilling into his.

“Yes,” he said, though the sound was more groan than clearly spoken word. His response seemed to please her. The depths of her eyes glowed as she slowly lifted up until his cock almost slipped free. She teased them both with the threat of moving away but stopped and pushed down, taking his whole shaft into her in one slow stroke. For a moment, Sixx thought he was in for a slow, teasing fuck, but then she leaned forward, placing her hands on his chest for leverage. Crouched over him, she began to move, pumping up and down, riding him hard—each stroke fast and deep. The sharp pressure had him fighting his own climax but there was no way to resist the delicious way she fucked his cock. As if his pleasure, his cum, was her only desire.

Kayla came back to herself as her body was fucking his, riding him hard. As Zayn eased control—the dragon hovering just beyond her mind—Kayla felt the sharp stab of his cock inside her. More. She needed more.

Sixx held still as if he understood the wild desires that surged through her body, letting her fuck him. Desire—born of the dragon—filled her but it was different than the lust she’d experienced before. Her body wasn’t driving toward a climax—she wanted *him* to come, feel him release his seed inside her. All other desires faded away. She needed him. Now, inside her.

“Come in me,” she commanded, rocking against him, moving from long deep strokes to short, hard thrusts, squeezing his cock inside her passage. The pleasure and desperation on his face made her heart pound.

Mine. Kayla licked her lips to accompany the dragon’s claim as she pumped down on his shaft, her pussy tingling with each deliberate stroke. He closed his eyes and punched his hips up. The hard thrust lifted her up and he exploded deep inside her.

The dragon deep inside her screamed her triumph.

Mine! More!

Zayn seized control as Kayla watched, feeling every sensation in her body. It was delicious. She rode him until he softened, then lifted off his cock.

Zayn licked her lips as she wiggled down his body. “Mine,” she whispered as she took his cock in her hand and sucked the tip into her mouth. The combination of their juices filled her senses. She raised her head and stared at her mate sprawled beneath

her. *Delicious. Mine.* The human body she inhabited craved the release she'd been denied. "Want more."

Her mate lifted his head, his eyes were hazy and a little glazed. "Wha—"

"More. Need more." And Zayn knew just how to get it.

Sixx ground his back teeth together as she trailed her tongue up the underside of his cock, the rampant shaft quickly hardening beneath her ministrations. Damn, at his age he shouldn't recover this quickly but something about Kayla inspired his body to respond like a newly experienced youth. As she tongued his cock, he tried to wrap his mind around what in the Hells was happening?

She wanted him to fuck her again. He could understand it. She hadn't come the first time and was no doubt in need of a climax. He hadn't been able to stall his long enough to give her the same pleasure.

His hips punched upward as she placed the flat of her tongue beneath his cock and trailed the width up his length. He watched as she savored his cock, loving it with her tongue. The sight dragged a growl from inside his chest.

Kayla looked up and smiled, as if pleased by his reaction. Her hot teasing eyes locked with his as her mouth encompassed the head of his cock, her tongue lapping at the remaining traces of his cum. She moved on him, driving her mouth over and over his shaft until he was fully hard again.

That seemed to be her goal. Satisfied that she'd achieved it, she straddled him.

"Mine. More."

The strange one word commands flowed from her mouth as the black eyes stared back at him. *What in the Hells is going on?* She wrapped her hand around his cock and Sixx didn't care. The tip slipped between her pussy lips, sliding into her passage. She shuddered delicately as she accepted him. When he was again hilt-deep in her cunt, she smiled—pure feminine triumph.

As before, she paused for a moment before she began pumping his shaft deep and fast inside. Determined that she find more pleasure this time—Sixx grabbed her hips and tried to hold her still, slow her movements but she shook free of his grip.

"Mine," she shouted like a child denied its favorite toy. He released his hold and she continued to ride him.

He couldn't fight the pressure she built around his cock. Her cunt rode him, pressing against that one place that needed it. Part of his mind tried to stop it, tried to give her reciprocal pleasure but there was no way to contain the flood from his cock. She sank on him, driving him deep, the tight clinch of her pussy coiling around his shaft, squeezing him. He cried out as he pumped up into her filling her pussy with his seed.

He opened his eyes prepared to apologize for coming too soon. Again. But her eyes stared back at him with the glitter of pure pleasure, pure joy.

“Mine,” she said with the satisfaction of a woman who’d come many times though he knew she hadn’t climaxed.

She grabbed what was left of his shirt and pulled him to her as she rolled over, her thighs still clutching his hips. Sixx shook his head as he felt the world shift and he ended up on top of her.

“More.” Her demand was accompanied by the delicate bite of her teeth along his lower lip. The command was softer now and when he looked he saw her eyes were again green and the soft sensuality her body had returned. The tight grip of her legs gave him little room to move so he stayed inside her, his cock softening within her pussy. Her body practically vibrated with unsatisfied need. With their bodies still connected, he bent over, drawing her breast up to his mouth. She loved to have her breasts petted and kissed. He swirled his tongue around the tight peak and felt her hips shift beneath him, as if she felt it in her pussy.

“That’s it, sweeting. Let me take care of you.”

Kayla felt the delicious zing as he sucked her nipple between his lips, tormenting it with the tip of his tongue. Zayn was momentarily sated but Kayla needed her release. His trailed his kisses across her skin and treated the other breast to the same delightful teasing. Each kiss, each stroke of his tongue made the ache in her pussy worse – and so much better.

“Sixx?” She could hear the desperation in her own voice.

“I’m here, sweet.” She loved it when he talked to her in bed – that low sexual growl. “I’ll take care of you.” He started to shift away but Kayla locked her legs around him, holding him inside her. Though the dragon had momentarily retreated, Kayla knew the beast wasn’t done with him. The desire to have him come inside her again rumbled just below the surface.

“No, I need you,” she protested as he tried to move. She pulled him to her and scattered kisses on his face, his neck. The dainty kisses didn’t seem to be enough. He covered her mouth and plunged his tongue inside even as his hand stroked her breast, plumping the nipple between his fingers before gently pinching it. “Aah.” She felt the pressure in her clit. And beneath it all she recognized the faint sensations of his cock growing hard. *Hmmm, yes, mine.*

“That’s it. I’ll take care of you.” Shifting his hips, though not enough to pull out of her, he slid his hand between them and began to stroke her clit. Three weeks of bedding her had given him the knowledge of where to touch her to make her come. He had no desire to tease her. She was taut and stretched to the edge. He slowly circled her clit, whispering softly as he increased the pressure, feeling her pussy clench around him. She arched her back, pushing those beautiful breasts up as the lovely contractions massaged his cock.

A long low sigh verbalized her pleasure as the orgasm slipped through her body. Her breasts turned a delicate pink. Unable to resist, Sixx sucked her nipple into his mouth, drawing hard as he rocked his hips against her. The combined caresses jolted

another climax through her body and she tensed beneath him, his name a breath on her lips. Masculine pride surged through his chest as he watched his woman, knowing he'd given her that pleasure, intending to give her more.

She slid her fingers into his hair and pulled gently guiding him up to her mouth. Her tongue teased his as they tangled together, his cock still filling her.

"Fuck me," she whispered against his lips. "Come inside me."

"I don't know if I can, sweet, you've worn me—"

Her teeth bit down on his lower lip—just a shade too hard to be called gentle—and her eyes turned black.

"More," she demanded.

His cock twitched inside her, answering her call when he would have thought it was impossible. He'd come inside her twice already but she wanted more and his body, his cock seemed determined to fulfill her wishes. Still buried inside her, he slowly grew hard, the squirm of her hips adding caresses along his shaft even as her hands smoothed across his skin, her lips nibbling and kissing his throat.

She tightened her legs around his back, snuggling him closer. Sixx stared down into those hot eyes, his body tired but his spirit singing. Slowly, she started, moving against him, just the tiny shallow strokes his weight would allow her, pulsing his cock inside her.

Sixx groaned at the delicious pleasure. There was no way to fight it, no way to deny the call of her pussy. Unable to resist, he drew back and began to fuck her, his body slow to rise to climax after the satisfaction it had already received. She gripped his shoulders as he fucked her, her fingernails biting into his flesh as she watched him. Pure emotion poured from her gaze—heat and desire and something else that called to him. Something that made him want to please her.

Her hands skimmed across his chest, her fingers teasing his flat nipples. The wicked look in her eyes warned him she knew precisely how he liked to be touched. The delicate caresses tightened his cock. He pumped harder, faster—needing the climax that was just out of reach.

More.

The foreign voice filled his head, commanding him. His body, wrapped in the power of her cunt, responded and he released, filling her with his seed. As he shot into her he felt the seductive contractions of her pussy massaging his cock, drawing out the final drops of cum that filled her.

He lifted his head and stared down at Kayla. Her eyes were shut and her lips curled into a satisfied smile as if she'd been granted a great prize. She opened her eyes. The bright green was gone and blackness stared back at him. Over the past two weeks, he'd grown used to the changing color of her eyes. It was as if Kayla faded away and another person entirely looked at him through her eyes. Lust flowed from her stare and penetrated his body, tempting his cock to hardness when he knew there was no chance of that happening.

“Kayla—”

She shook her head. “Zayn.”

So Zayn had returned. He didn’t understand it but there was little chance of him sorting the thoughts bouncing through his head. Kayla-Zayn captured all his senses. His cock was soft but still buried inside her. She wiggled, moving against him and he felt his shaft start to harden. It had to be an illusion because there was no way he could get hard again.

“More.”

She reached up and pulled his head down to hers, sipping at his lips with dainty kisses.

“Please, mine. More.” The commands had turned to pleas and Sixx knew that he would do whatever he could to satisfy her.

Chapter Seventeen

Sixx gasped in his last breath and begged the Gods to free him.

Kayla had been on him all night. Her pussy—wet and hot as ever—encircled his cock, silently begging him to service her one more time. He couldn't do it. He couldn't get hard. He'd filled her time and again as she'd lain beneath him but now he couldn't do it.

The final strength in his muscles gave him the power to roll off her, his cock slipping from her pussy for the first time in what had to be hours.

"More," she demanded.

"No." The intoxicating mixture of pain and panic in her gaze made him groan. "I just can't, sweeting. You've done me in." She watched him for a long moment and Sixx dreaded what she would do next. He couldn't refuse her and wasn't able to resist her, but the exhaustion that plagued his body was soul deep.

"More."

"I can't." He rubbed his hand down her back, trying to soothe her. "I've come inside you so many times my cock just can't do it."

The blackness filling her eyes and her lower lip trembled. For a moment he thought she might cry.

"Mine?"

"Yes, it's yours. I'm yours." He shook his head. "But you've drained me."

The edges of her mouth curled up as if pleased with his confession. In that moment the blackness disappeared from her eyes and the green returned along with a hint of red to her cheeks as if she was embarrassed by what they had done all night.

"I-I..." It was as if the cumulative effects of their fucking overwhelmed her in that moment. Her eyes fluttered shut and her head dropped to his chest. "I love you," she whispered, the words marking his skin as she spoke them. Within seconds she was asleep, her body fluid on top of his and her breathing even.

Sixx lay there frozen—panicked and relieved. She loved him? It wasn't possible. He must have misheard her. That weak justification calmed him enough that he could close his eyes.

He tried to focus on what had happened but the delicious heat from her body flowed into his, soothing him. Exhaustion tugged on him, drawing him to follow Kayla into sleep.

* * * * *

Kayla woke as the sun streamed through the window and cut across her face. Cool sheets covered her. She opened her eyes and looked around the room. The tattered remains of her clothes were placed neatly in a pile on the chair. Sixx's clothes were gone. She glanced at the space beside her though she knew without looking that he wasn't there. She didn't remember being carried to the bed. She barely remembered the night. Zayn had been crazy, desperate.

Kayla groaned and rolled over. Her body ached from overuse but worse than that was the humiliation. She would have to face Sixx and how did she explain it? That her dragon wanted to fuck? She pulled her knees up and stared at the open window.

She didn't understand it herself. It had been more than desire. Zayn hadn't been just lustful – she usually allowed Kayla to remain when it was merely desire that urged her on. This had been a biological craving, a fundamental need that was only assuaged by Sixx coming inside her.

The poor man – she'd given him no rest and had forced arousal on him when he would have withdrawn. Kayla mentally sought out the dragon and found Zayn practically purring in that corner of Kayla's head where the beast resided. Zayn had gotten what she wanted.

She sighed, knowing she had to move. She *was not* going to be lying in this bed naked when Sixx returned. *He's probably afraid to come back*, she thought. No doubt he was hiding in the Great Hall, afraid that she'd pounce on him if he appeared. Her cheeks heated at the faint memories of what she'd done to him, what she'd demanded of him. It just didn't make sense. Zayn had been relentless in her need to have Sixx come inside her. Why – ?

Kayla pressed her hand to her stomach. Was it possible? Zayn rumbled her pleasure and arrogant satisfaction that all had turned out as she'd planned.

Air rushed from Kayla's chest. Oh this changes things.

Energy once again filled her body. She had to find Sixx. Needed to talk to him. This discussion couldn't wait any longer.

She climbed out of bed, whimpering when her feet touched the ground. Her body ached as she took her first steps and stumbled to the bathing chamber, washing quickly and removing the traces of Sixx's seed from her thighs. The warm water was soothing to her delicate flesh but it would be a while before she could take him again.

Hells, what was she thinking? The thought that he would want to touch her was almost laughable. She really had been beastly to him.

She walked back into the bedchamber and saw her skirt – or what was left of it – on the chair. It hadn't been much before, now it was unwearable. She would have to visit the laundress for another outfit. For now, she grabbed one of Sixx's shirts and put it on, letting the tails flutter against her thighs.

She considered going out but knew Sixx would be furious if she left his chamber dress as she was. She sank down on the settee and pulled her feet up onto the cushions.

The conversation she had to have with Sixx was going to take some planning and tact...and with a little luck he wouldn't explode when he heard the truth.

Sixx slammed the door shut behind him and stopped, focusing on the parchment. Another summons from Menth. What the Hells was going on? The tournament had started today. Sixx's guard – with the exception of Mik who was still recovering – were participating. Sixx had held firm to his commitment not to fight. Early in the evening last night, Menth had nagged Sixx about entering the competitions but Sixx had declined.

So why did Menth want to see him today? Menth should be deep in his celebrations by now.

"Something wrong?"

Kayla's soft call drew Sixx's attention. She sat, curled up on the corner of his settee, looking shy, almost modest. She blushed when he looked at her. She was embarrassed. The idea made Sixx smile. She hadn't been the least bit embarrassed last night. She'd been hungry and demanding.

Or Zayn had. He had to ask her about Zayn. The parchment crinkled in his hand. No, it wasn't a good time. He needed to deal with Menth.

"Sixx?"

She was still waiting for an answer. "It's a message from Lord Menth."

Kayla uncurled her body – the innate grace moving through her limbs as she strolled across the room and leaned over his shoulder, reading the parchment.

"What does he want?"

Sixx shook his head. "I don't know. But it involves you."

"Me?" She sounded as shocked as he felt. Then her eyes dropped to the ground as she was trying to remember something. She shook her head, as confused as he was.

"Yes, you're part of the summons." He nodded to chest of drawers. "You'll need to look like a proper slave." Despite the fact that most of the time she didn't act like a slave, Menth would be expecting something suitable for a slave girl. "Not what you wore the last time. Something less revealing."

He hated the idea of all those warriors staring at Kayla. He handed her the new outfit he'd brought. Her dress from last night was in pieces.

Kayla hesitated for a moment then nodded. They talked quietly as they prepared. Neither could figure out what had caused the command appearance.

"We'll know when we arrive," Sixx finally said, killing the rest of the discussion.

When Kayla was dressed, she stood in front of him, waiting for his approval. He looked down her body. The costume still showed a lot of skin but at least it wasn't transparent.

"That will do. Come here." She walked forward, stopping just out of arm's reach when she saw what he had in his hand.

"Sixx, no—"

"You've got to wear it." He hated the thought of putting the slave collar around her neck but it was required. No one in his own keep would gainsay him but outside, she could be claimed, stolen without the benefit of the collar. He wasn't taking that chance. He unlatched the metal band and placed it around her neck, gently setting it against her delicate skin. Her whole body tensed as the metal locked shut.

"I'm sorry," he whispered, placing a kiss on her temple. Gods he hated this. Hated even seeing the collar around her neck. Hated the whole situation but he had no choice. "Let's go," he said as gently as possible. Kayla nodded but didn't speak. She seemed to sense something as well. What possible reason could Menth have for summoning Sixx and ordering him to bring Kayla? The first time it had been curiosity. What now?

As they stepped outside, Mik met them. His arm was still in a sling but beyond that he was healthy. Sixx raised his eyebrows in silent question.

"Scant sent word that he was getting a strange feeling about what was happening and that you might want company."

Sixx thought about sending him away but decided against it. He had no idea what waited for him and to protect Kayla, he might need his friends.

* * * * *

Backed up by Scant and Mik, Sixx folded his arms across his chest and stared at the man he'd once called a friend. But that was a lifetime ago—when they were both young and stupid. Brash and arrogant. Brutal. That was what he remembered most about Terrak and those years—he'd been brutal. To anyone weaker than himself. Sixx liked to think he hadn't been as bad but he knew he'd done his share of harm. His stomach turned if he thought about it too long, too many memories of the death and pain he'd caused.

Terrak had looked at Sixx when he'd arrived but then his gaze had turned to Kayla and stayed there. Until Sixx had finally stepped in front of her, blocking her completely from Terrak's sight.

"Captain Sixx," Lord Menth announced when he and Terrak were in place. Harvet was once again at Terrak's right hand. "It appears we have a challenge. For you."

Sixx shook his head. "I explained, milord. I'm not participating in the tournament."

"This isn't part of the tournament." He held a piece of parchment, turning it so Sixx could read the title from the short distance. Guarantee of Ownership. "Lord Terrak claims that your slave is actually his property."

Sixx glanced at Kayla—watching her face as the announcement sank in. Her mouth dropped open and she stared blankly at Terrak. Her eyes glittered with anger.

"He's lying," she protested, starting forward. Sixx grabbed her arm and held her back, holding her close to him.

Terrak smirked. "She always was a bit difficult to control." His eyes wandered down her body. "You've been too gentle with her, Sixx. I'll have to retrain her."

Sixx ignored him and looked to Lord Menth. "She was a gift. Iniz the slave trader gave her to me."

"But he stole her from me." Terrak crossed his arms in a mirror of Sixx's pose. "And a stolen slave belongs to the original owner."

"This is a statement of ownership, signed by Iniz himself, declaring that he did, quite by accident, steal Lord Terrak's property and that the girl actually belongs to him." Menth handed the parchment Sixx. Sixx quickly scanned the document, aware that Kayla was reading over his shoulder.

"It's not true," she whispered.

Sixx shoved the parchment back to Menth. "It's a fake. Or if Iniz did sign it, he did it under duress which I'm sure Terrak is more than capable of providing." He rested his hand on his sword. "Kayla never belonged to him. And she belongs to me now."

"Do you require more proof?" He raised his hand. A silver chain hung over his fingers. A dragon-shaped medallion swung from the end of the metal rope. "She left this behind when she was taken."

Sixx felt Kayla tense beside him and knew that was the medallion she'd been seeking.

"Is this true?" Menth asked.

Kayla started to speak but then closed her mouth. Sixx looked down at her. "Is it yours?"

"It looks like mine but may I examine it more closely?" The question was soft and humble, almost submissive. That wasn't like Kayla at all. The only time she'd been the least bit submissive was when he had her in bed, usually naked and with his hand turning her ass pink. Even then, she'd submitted with a hungry defiance. This soft, gentle plea made Sixx's hair stand on end. Something wasn't right.

"Can she inspect it, Lord Menth?" Sixx asked, keeping a close eye on both Kayla and Terrak. At this point he didn't know who to trust. Menth held out his hand and after a moment's hesitation, Terrak draped the chain over his fingers. Menth looked at the medallion and then shrugged and offered it to Kayla.

Everyone watched closely as if they expected her to steal it. She was surrounded by warriors. It wasn't likely that she would grab the medallion and make a run for it, no matter how valuable it was. Sixx wasn't concerned she would steal it but he did think she was up to something.

She stepped forward and took the medallion in her palm. Her fingers clamped around it and her eyes closed. Energy raced through her body.

"Lord Menth. Hurry. Lord Menth."

Her low subtle command echoed through the room. Terrak grabbed the chain and ripped the medallion from her hands.

"What were you doing?" Menth asked. "Casting some sort of spell?"

Kayla shook her head, her eye cool and controlled as she walked back to Sixx's side. "No, my lord."

"Is it your medallion?"

"Yes. The medallion belongs to me but it was stolen. I have never belonged to Lord Terrak."

Terrak laughed. "We both know *that's* not true."

Kayla's cheeks turned red even as her jaw tightened. Sixx watched for a moment wondering if maybe there was something to Terrak's claims.

Terrak caught the dragon medallion in his hand. "But enough of these trinkets," Terrak said. "Surely, Captain Sixx, you understand that with this legal document in my hand, I have every right to take her from you."

"You can try."

"Gentlemen." Menth held up his hand. "I am the law in this land, Lord Terrak, and you'd do well to remember that." He pursed his lips together and his gaze swept the room as he considered his options. "I have no proof of the validity of this parchment."

Terrak stepped forward. "I'll bring Iniz himself here to attest to it if necessary."

Menth waved him back. "But I have no reason to believe it is fake." Sixx thought to protest but he could see Menth's patience was near its end. "Because I cannot verify its truth and I will not permit the ownership of one slave – enticing though she may be – to create a war between my land and Lord Terrak's, I will allow a blood challenge."

Sixx felt his stomach turn over. A blood challenge. He could barely raise his sword during training and hadn't engaged in a battle since taking down Harvet.

Terrak laughed as if he'd gotten what he wanted. "I accept your offer, Lord Menth, and I challenge Captain Sixx."

Menth nodded and looked at Sixx. It was up to him to accept the challenge or hand over Kayla.

Do it. She's a slave. Not worth your trouble. Not worth dying for. The voice in his head was a fervent reminder of his past.

I love you. Kayla's soft whisper as she drifted to sleep, a smile on her lips, her body pressed against his silenced the nagging voice. Sixx couldn't give her over.

"I accept."

For the first time today Menth smiled and Sixx knew it was because he wanted to see Sixx fight. Hells, a blood challenge involving Terrak and Sixx would draw attention from every warrior and noble within a half-day's ride. And Sixx had no doubt that Menth would send his slaves to every town and castle within reach to announce the battle.

"Bring the dice." A servant appeared moments later holding a cup that contained two nine sided dice. Sixx knew the pattern. In his early years, when he'd been trying to establish his reputation, he'd challenged any warrior over the smallest offense. The dice would decide the numbers of warriors to engage in the battle. It was seen as a fair way for the Gods to decide the winner.

"For Lord Terrak." Menth shook the cup and flipped the dice to ground. Eight and four.

"Twelve for Lord Terrak."

Terrak folded his arms across his chest and nodded proudly—as if he'd had some influence on the dice.

"And for Captain Sixx." Menth rattled the cup a second time and tossed the dice down. One and one.

A low rumble went through the crowd of warriors.

"Captain Sixx, the dice have given you two."

Two against twelve.

Sixx nodded. He'd had worse odds, but not recently.

"Lord Terrak, pick your warriors."

"Already done, Lord Menth." He nodded to a small clump of fighters. "As you know, my warriors are the best in the realm. We will be honored to face Captain Sixx and his men. We'll even spot him a warrior or two if he would like." He directed his stare to Sixx.

"Strange, I was going to make the same offer to you," Sixx said with all the arrogance of a man used to winning. Laughter swept through the room at the insult. Terrak and his men straightened and glared at Sixx.

"Very well. Tomorrow, during the mid-rise of the sun, we will hold the challenge—the winner becomes the legal owner of the girl."

With Menth's pronouncement, the group broke up. Sixx didn't move, keeping his eyes on Terrak. The other man's eyes tightened into a glare as he strolled over.

When he got close, he lifted his chin toward Kayla.

"Are you sure you want to do this, Sixx?" Terrak smirked. "From what I understand, you've taken a distinct dislike to bloodshed since you escaped. Some even say you get ill at the sight of blood. Do you really want to fight my best warriors—and me—just for her?" Terrak looked around Sixx to Kayla. "I've had her, you know, and between you and me, she's not that great a fuck." He directed the last comment to Kayla.

"Bastard," she growled, lunging forward.

Sixx grabbed her arm and held her back.

"Yes, he is, sweet, but don't let that worry you." He shoved her into Mik's hands, knowing his lieutenant would take control. Sixx folded his arms on his chest and stared

Terrak down. "And don't worry about her performance in bed," he said softly. "I think the lack of interest was based on the man she was fucking."

With that parting shot, he turned and walked away.

"You bastard. You don't even know what you have there," Terrak yelled after him.

Sixx ignored him, catching up with Mik leading Kayla away.

"Captain, Scant and I will be honored to represent you on the field," Mik offered as Sixx approached. The fact that Mik called him "captain" when he wasn't drunk or on the battlefield warned Sixx how seriously Mik took this challenge. Scant stepped close and nodded his agreement as well.

Sixx shook his head. "You're not up full strength yet. Scant and I will take care of it."

"But Captain—"

"Don't worry, Mik. I can still handle a few of Terrak's fighters and I need something from you. I need you to protect Kayla." He didn't look at her, knowing the pain would be too great. "If I lose, I need you to get Kayla away. Whatever it takes."

"But—"

Sixx held up his hand stopping Mik's protest. He knew what he was asking Mik. He was asking him to steal Kayla away.

"I need you and Scant to back me up. If I go down, Scant will fight while you get Kayla away. No matter what, she won't end up with Terrak, you understand me?"

"But Sixx—" Now Mik was speaking as a friend.

"I know." He grabbed Mik's forearm and held him. "This is what I need you to do." He waited a long time, letting heartbeat after heartbeat pass before Mik nodded. If he did this for Sixx, he would be betraying every code he'd live by since his youth, but he would do it. For Sixx.

Now it was up to Sixx to make sure it wasn't necessary.

He took Kayla's arm and led her away, distancing himself and her from Mik.

"Well?" he demanded.

"He's lying. I never belonged to him. My father—"

"No. I know you were never his slave. What about fucking him?"

She opened her mouth but no sound came out. Sixx waited. The past six moon rises had taught him patience.

The strength seemed to drain out of her body and she wilted. "It was once, maybe twice." Sixx felt the edges of his eyes tightened. "And it was three years ago."

"You fucked him?"

"It was years ago. Long before I met you."

"Yes, but Terrak?"

"He seemed nice." She winced. "Well, maybe not nice but interesting at least. It wasn't until we were actually...involved...that I realized there was nothing there but a desire for power."

"He's a bastard."

She crossed her arms over her chest and looked up at Sixx. "And I suppose absolutely every woman you've fucked has been an epitome of womanly virtue?"

"Well, no, but—"

She raised her eyebrows in a feminine move that was as old as time—and that males had long ago learned to recognize. He wasn't going to win this battle.

"Fine. You fucked him." Sixx could barely let his mouth say the words. "I can accept that." Like he could accept his teeth being pulled from his jaw. For that alone—for the sheer fact that Terrak had once touched Kayla's body—Sixx would find a way to kill him.

They were silent on the ride back to his keep. Menth had offered to let him stay the night but Sixx had declined. He needed the time alone. To prepare. When they got back, Sixx sent Kayla to their chambers and followed Scant to his office. There was work that needed to be done. He had to get everything in order in case he didn't return tomorrow. With the way his body was betraying him, there was a better than good chance that he'd end up wounded or dead. Either one would lose him Kayla and his troop.

He went through instructions with Scant and Mik. Scant would start the battle. Part of Sixx rebelled against letting another man take the lead but if nothing else, the past three weeks had allowed him to accept the fact that his body was no longer his to control. That this power that was in him had changed him.

So, Scant would begin and when he tired or the Gods decided he was done, Sixx would take over. There were others in his guard who would be willing to fight but Sixx couldn't pull himself completely from the mix. His pride wouldn't let him. And Mik would protect Kayla.

After talking to Scant and Mik, Sixx returned to his chambers. The sun had already set. It was mere hours until he would face what would most likely be his final battle.

He pushed open the door, knowing Kayla waited for him.

He stepped inside and she moved to greet him, easing herself into his arms, against his body, comforting and taking comfort in the embrace. Sixx closed his eyes and took a deep breath, loving the feel of her body against his, needing to feel her skin one more time. The Gods only knew if he would survive and he wanted his last night on this plane to be one of memories and pleasure. Something to comfort him if he ended his days in the dark Hells.

Kayla lifted her head, the bright green eyes staring into his soul.

"You need sleep," she said softly, drawing back, leading him to their bed. Sixx shook his head.

"I need you more."

He eased her back onto the bed and followed her down. It wasn't a night for hard loving. He wanted to taste and enjoy, linger over her flesh, let it burn the memory into his soul. He slowly stripped off her dress, kissing and licking each newly revealed piece of skin, whispering soft words as he stroked and teased every inch of her body, until Kayla was twisting and trembling with need.

He lifted himself away and stared down at her, knowing this would be the memory he carried with him into death—her beautiful eyes, staring up at him with such need, the hard peaks of her breasts, the deep pink of her cunt, wet and glistening, aching for him to slide into her.

She clutched his arms and tried to pull him down to her but Sixx resisted. He wouldn't be rushed. Tonight, he would love her slowly, deeply.

When he finally slid into her, she was already exhausted from the climaxes he'd given her with his mouth and fingers, her taste imprinted in his memory.

Her body welcomed him as he pushed into her, taking what she offered and needing to give more. He rode her slowly until neither could stand it, then he pushed her to another climax and followed her over, coming inside her one last time.

"I love you," she whispered as he held her sated body to his.

Chapter Eighteen

Kayla squeezed her hands together until her knuckles turned white.

Sixx tightened the laces on his leather vest and watched her.

"You look nervous," he said, teasing her to keep his mind off the next few hours. It was all set. Scant and Mik knew what to do. If he went down, Scant would take up the rest of the challenge while Mik slipped away with Kayla. Sixx knew it went against every warrior's code but he didn't care. He didn't care that the Gods of War would deny him entry into his afterlife, leaving him to face the Goddesses, because of his deception. He wouldn't, couldn't allow Terrak to have Kayla.

"Sixx, please don't do this. If you'd just get my medallion, you wouldn't have to—"

"What is that medallion? Is it magic?" He didn't have much choice except believe in magic, but this was different. It was an object not a living breathing thing.

"Yes. It's magic," she snapped. "Now please."

Male pride made him straighten. She didn't think he could win. She was afraid. For him? For herself?

"Kayla, don't worry. If anything happens to me, stay near Mik. He'll make sure you get away. You won't belong to Terrak."

"I don't care about that." Sixx raised his eyebrows in disbelief. She'd seemed intent on not belonging to Terrak yesterday. "Well, of course, I don't want to be owned by Terrak but Sixx, you can't fight him."

"I've faced Terrak before. And worse."

"But you weren't a healer then." She stepped in front of him, confronting him with her bold stare. "Tell me you haven't changed, that your fighting style hasn't changed since then."

He couldn't deny it but he also knew she didn't understand. This was what he was—a warrior, a killer. Despite the healing impulses that moved through his soul, he didn't know any other life than what he had. And that life demanded he face Terrak and his men.

His heart demanded that Kayla be protected.

"Kayla—" He placed his hand on her cheek. "Let it go. I'm going to destroy that bastard once and for all."

* * * * *

Sixx walked into the arena, Scant and Mik and Sixx's other guards falling into place behind him. The viewing stands were crowded—filled with warriors, nobles and slaves.

Menth had obviously sent word to the surrounding lands that an epic fight was occurring. Perfect, just what he needed—more witnesses to his humiliation.

Despite his confident words to Kayla—and Mik and Scant—Sixx wasn't sure he could win. He'd spent the morning envisioning his battles, feeling the weapon in his grip, feeling the blade slide into his opponent and smelling the blood as it poured from the wounds.

Just thinking about it left him sick and weak. Hells, how was he actually going to fight, let alone kill any of these men when he couldn't do it in his thoughts?

He glanced at Mik and Scant. They'd both come dressed for battle—ready to take over or take his place if he asked them. Maybe it would be best. Even wounded Mik probably had a better chance of saving Kayla than he did.

But he couldn't do it. If he gave over this battle, if he let someone else fight it for him, there was nothing left. He would have no life and it wouldn't matter if Kayla belonged to him or not.

Terrak and his entourage entered the far side of the arena. Terrak led the way, swaggering arrogantly before his men, waving his arm to the crowd encouraging their cheers.

"Bastard."

Sixx nodded grimly at Kayla's soft assessment.

"Captain Sixx, are you ready?" Lord Menth called from across the field.

Sixx raised his hand in acknowledgement and started onto the field, pausing for one moment beside Kayla.

"Stay near Mik. If something goes wrong, he'll take care of you."

"But Sixx—"

The warning in his eyes must have stopped her protest. She nodded. "I'll stay with Mik."

A tiny piece of fear eased in his chest. She would be safe. He looked at her one more time, willing himself to walk away—but he couldn't, not without one final taste. He wrapped his arm around her back and pulled her to him, their mouths meeting in one breathless, soul-binding kiss.

"Come back to me," she whispered when he finally released her.

He nodded—his mind clinging to the image of her waiting for him. Fuck, he had to find a way to beat Terrak and his men.

Sixx pulled his shoulders back, feeling some of the tension release as he strode across the grass field. A cloth roof covered the arena keeping most of the late morning sun out but left enough light for battle. He let all thoughts except the battle ahead fade from his mind. Kayla was safe. He could concentrate on surviving. Scant walked beside him, his confidence and anger fueling Sixx's.

They stepped to the midline in the field and waited as Terrak and his men approached.

Terrak smirked as he stopped. "From that display—" he tipped his head toward Kayla, "you might be right. She certainly has improved in her enthusiasm for fucking. I'll enjoy her even more now."

Sixx held himself still, not giving Terrak the reaction he wanted. Instead, he trailed his gaze down the line of Terrak's warriors. He'd faced many of them before, fought beside several of them as well. Each had a weakness that could be exploited.

Lord Menth approached and straddled the midline, his gaze bouncing between the two opponents.

"Good morning, gentleman. Are we ready for battle?" He asked the question with just a hint too much enthusiasm. Menth enjoyed a good fight. Even more he liked to show off for his neighbors.

"Yes, my lord," Sixx said.

"Of course, Lord Menth. The sooner we begin, the sooner I'll be fucking my slave again." Terrak smirked at Sixx, challenging him. Hiding the fury that sparked in his chest, Sixx stared back blandly, watching Terrak squirm for a moment before he turned his gaze to Menth.

"Good. So we all understand the protocol—each pairing will begin when I call for it and it ends when first blood is drawn. Once blood is drawn, the winner of that round decides the disposition of the loser."

In truth, most blood challenges ended with the majority of the participants dead. It was accepted and expected that once blood was drawn, the winner would merely drive his sword into the loser's heart. Sixx glanced to the sidelines and saw five large men waiting. Body carriers. Menth was prepared for a long bloody day.

"Let us begin. Lord Terrak—choose your warrior. Captain Sixx, you as well."

Sixx looked over at Scant—grim-faced and serious. Scant stepped forward. Scant and Mik had convinced Sixx to let Scant fight first. Sixx knew they both were hoping Scant would be able to take all of Terrak's men, leaving Sixx free from the fight. But Sixx knew that wouldn't happen. Scant was good but not good enough to face twelve. Hells, in his best days, Sixx had only ever beaten ten during a blood challenge.

And from the arrogant glint in Terrak's eyes, he was going to make sure that Scant was knocked out and Sixx had to enter the battlefield.

Scant drew his weapon from its sheath and waited as the rest of the warriors cleared the field. A cheer erupted from the crowd as they watched the first battle begin.

* * * * *

Scant stumbled as he backed away. Blood covered the front of his leathers. He'd taken out five of Terrak's warriors. But Sixx couldn't risk him facing any more. He couldn't risk losing Scant.

Sixx raised his arm, calling for a change of warriors. Scant spun around, the battle rage momentarily directed at Sixx. Sixx stood strong, waiting for Scant's eyes to clear.

Finally they did and with it the violence left his body, weakening him. He nodded and raised his sword in salute, giving over the field to Sixx.

Sixx pulled on his wrist guards and nodded to Mik, warning him with his eyes that his duty was to Kayla. Mik bowed his head in acknowledgement and put his hand on his sword. Kayla shifted uncomfortably on the wooden bench but she didn't move. She stared at Sixx with unblinking eyes.

I love you. He heard the words in his head, remembered them from the previous night and the deliciously sensual way he'd loved her.

He gave her a brisk nod and then walked onto the field. Another cry rose in the crowd when they saw Sixx was entering the battle. Lord Menth walked from the sides and met Sixx in the middle.

"Captain Sixx, you are taking over the battle?"

"Yes." Sixx scanned the warriors that remained. Terrak waited amid the crowd of fighters. Though his lips were bent in that annoying smirk, his eyes were sharp, watching everything. Sixx had trained with him and knew Terrak – bastard though he was – was an excellent fighter.

"Then, Lord Terrak, pick your next warrior."

"Chams is next."

Sixx nodded.

"Again, gentlemen, you know the rules, first blood. And the winner chooses the disposition of the loser." Menth's eyes skipped over to the pile of bodies Scant had left behind. Scant had killed three of the five. The other two were sufficiently wounded that they couldn't walk.

"The audience is eager to see the result of this," Menth said, as if this was merely a play they were putting on for the entertainment of the people. "So, let's make it a good battle, eh?"

Menth's words were muted by the low rumble of the crowd, growing louder as people shifting in their seats. Curiosity got the better of all of them and they turned, looking toward the disruption.

It took Sixx a moment to believe his eyes. Three large, almost naked men stalked across the arena field. A thin white loincloth hung around each waist but beyond that, the men were naked. Two of them had long hair that flowed down their backs. The third's was cut brutally short.

Sixx watched them for a moment, feeling as though he should know them. Of course, he'd fought for and against dozens of lords in the course of his years and perhaps he'd seen them there – for there was no doubt that these three men were of the nobility. They carried themselves with the arrogance and confidence of men used to being obeyed.

Two of the men scanned the arena as they moved, looking for something or someone.

The oldest one—the one leading the other two—kept his eyes trained on the group in the center. Sixx returned the stark, deadly gaze. Hells, there was something familiar about him.

“Who in the Hells are you?” Menth demanded as the threesome neared.

The lead man barely paused as he took a long, deep breath. His eyes turned black and his gaze snapped to Sixx. Ignoring everyone else in the center of the field, he strode across the midline and stopped in front of Sixx. He’d been powerful from a distance but up close the man was truly intimidating.

Sixx held his ground. He’d faced bigger, meaner warriors before and knew there was nothing gained by backing down.

“Where’s my daughter?” the stranger demanded.

Sixx raised his eyebrows in question. Daughter? Holy Hells, this was Kayla’s father? Now he knew where she got her arrogance from. That meant the two men standing behind him were probably her brothers—Bren and Raineck.

They’d come for her—and they were pissed.

Perfect, just what he needed.

“Sir, I demand to know your name—” Menth insinuated himself between Sixx and Kayla’s father. “And why you think to presume to interrupt a fully accepted blood challenge.”

“Perhaps, I should make the introductions,” Terrak said stepping into the ring. He grinned. “I believe I’m the only one who knows all the parties involved. Lord Menth, Captain Sixx, may I present His Majesty King Kei, of Xicanth? And his two sons Prince Bren and Prince Raineck.”

Sixx’s mind reeled from the revelation. King Kei? Prince? That meant—

“Hells, she’s a princess?” He couldn’t stop the words from coming out of his mouth.

Kei didn’t react to the introduction. He didn’t speak. He growled and his eyes turned to the black, empty stare Sixx had seen in Kayla’s eyes.

“Your Majesty, it is truly an honor.” Menth’s voice dripped with awe.

Kei stared at Sixx for another interminable minute then turned his attention to Menth. Menth flinched under the weight of Kei’s gaze.

“Where’s my daughter?” he demanded again, his voice ringing through the arena.

“Papa!” Kayla’s shout carried across the field and Sixx turned in time to see her break free of Mik’s hold and run across the grass. She got close and threw herself into her father’s arms. He held her tight, squeezing her in a way Sixx recognized—as if he’d just been given his greatest gift.

Finally, Kei stepped back. “Are you hurt?” The question seemed simple but Sixx heard the meaning under Kei’s words—*who do I need to kill first?*

“I’m fine.”

Kei's eyes tightened. "Why are you wearing a slave collar?" Kei looked up. "Who dared make my daughter a slave?" Though Kei scanned the crowd, his gaze landed on Sixx and stayed. "I'm going to rip your body into a dozen pieces and scatter them across the countryside."

"So I've heard."

Kayla saw the way her father's eyes locked on Sixx and she knew she had to do something or there was going to be more bloodshed – most of it belonging to Sixx. Not that she didn't trust him – but no one, not even the best warrior, could stand up to a fully enraged dragon, particularly her father.

"Excuse me, are you telling me this girl is a princess?" Lord Menth asked. The confusion in his voice seemed to ease some of the tension. "But I thought she was a slave."

"And so she is." Terrak strolled forward though Kayla noticed he stayed out of her father's reach. "I have signed and documented proof to that fact."

Her father turned his gaze to Terrak. They were acquainted. Terrak had come courting her several years ago and had tried to ingratiate himself into her family. Despite his pleasant demeanor, none of the dragons had been willing to tolerate his presence. That had been enough for her father to deny any proposals he might offer. Unfortunately, Kayla hadn't listened to her dragon or her family and she'd taken Terrak as a lover. Her father had eventually chased him off their lands and then paid him to stay away. Kayla hadn't been heartbroken – more mortified that her father had spent so much coin on her poor judgment.

Terrak raised that bedamned parchment. "I have legal ownership of her. She belongs to me."

"She belongs to no one," Kei bit out. "That piece of paper is worthless."

Something inside Sixx snapped. The past six moon cycles, the curse, the fact that his body would no longer obey his commands, Hells, even Kayla's presence. His life had somehow spun out of his control. There was one thing he could do and by the Gods, he was going to do it.

"Unfortunately not, Majesty." Renewed tension zipped through the small crowd. Kei turned his attention back to Sixx.

"What?"

"Terrak's document – forged though it may be – does show legal ownership of Kayla. I'm disputing that. Now if everyone will please get the fuck off the battlefield, we can continue the blood challenge."

Kayla watched her father's eyes widen – then collapse down to thin slits. No one ever spoke to him like that. Hmmm, she was going to have to explain a few things to Sixx if he was going to survive in their family.

Kayla instinctively backed away and noticed her brothers did the same thing. Nekane would never intentionally hurt them but the possibility of being trampled was very real.

Kei put the full weight of his gaze on Sixx and Kayla waited for her lover to back down. Every other man she'd ever met had crumpled beneath Kei's stare.

Instead, Sixx returned the glare blandly as if her father was nothing more than one of the young warriors Sixx trained.

"You fight for my daughter?"

"Yes."

"As do I, Majesty," Terrak said, inserting himself back into the conversation. Kayla winced at the mocking laughter in his voice. Kei turned his gaze onto Terrak. Terrak seemed to be taking great pleasure in facing Kei.

And finally Kayla understood. Terrak wasn't trying to just revenge himself on her—he was going to hurt her whole family.

"But don't worry, Kei, when I prove my claim, I'll be glad to sell your daughter back to you."

She didn't want to think about the price he'd demand.

Kei opened his mouth to speak but Sixx stepped forward. "You still have to defeat me. Now clear the field."

Sixx was a man used to giving commands and having them followed so when Kayla's father didn't move, Sixx directed his glare at the king. What the fuck did it matter anyway? He'd royally messed things up with Kayla's family. Not that it made much difference if they liked him or not. Hells, a princess. There was little chance that they'd allow her to stay with a man like him.

"Yes, let us begin," Kei announced. With his pronouncement, Kayla's brothers moved.

"A moment, Lord Menth." Sixx took Kayla's arm, dragging her none to gently toward the sidelines, ignoring the growl that came from her father.

"You're a princess?" he snapped.

"Yes."

"That would have been something that I would have appreciated knowing." When they were steps away from her family, he stopped. "Now, you get your backside on that bench. If you move from that spot I will pink your ass until you can't sit for a week."

Kayla's eyes widened and her lips tightened and for a moment he thought she would defy him—Hells, being a princess and all, she wasn't used to taking commands. But she was still a slave. *His* slave. Until he defeated Terrak and his warriors, then Sixx would hand her over to her family. But before he gave her back to the king, he was going to get a few answers. Like how in the Hells she'd avoided mentioning the fact that she was a bloody princess?

Kayla took a deep breath and then bounced up on her toes, placing a soft kiss on his lips. "Stay safe." The delicate caress sent a spike of hunger through his groin. "I love you."

Sixx growled. The words were building in his chest but he couldn't say them. "You stay here and keep your ass on. That. Bench!" He shouted the final words as he stalked off, feeling her father's glare as he walked by. The man hated him. He could accept that but he didn't have time for family squabbles right now. He had a battle to fight and even more at stake. A princess. Gods, how had that happened? He'd spent the last three weeks sleeping with a princess. One who as soon as he won this battle, would be taken back home and he'd never see her again.

Sixx stepped onto the field, his stomach burning and clenching as he tried to focus on the battle before him. Terrak's warrior came forward. The crowd was louder now, irritated at being kept waiting.

Sixx brandished his sword, waiting for the first attack. There was no way to convince his rebellious body to go on the offensive but he could defend himself. Defend himself until he found a way to draw blood.

Chams met him at mid-field. Sixx recognized him, no doubt had fought beside him at one point, perhaps even against him, but Sixx didn't allow himself to acknowledge the man's existence, thinking of him only as a faceless enemy.

"Begin!" Menth shouted from the side.

The warrior came at Sixx fast and hard, his sword swinging down in a heavy blow. Sixx's arm sang from the tension as he blocked the strikes with his blade. The warrior he'd trained to be since childhood wasn't so easily put aside and Sixx immediately recognized his opponent's weakness—he had strength but no finesse, no strategy. Sixx let the man beat on him, bracing himself for the blows until he saw an opening.

It was all about control. Kayla's life was at stake. Sixx would find a way to defeat him.

"Well, sis, if I were you, I'd keep my ass on that bench."

Kayla tensed at Rainek's tease but relaxed as his arms went around her, hugging her in welcome. She wanted to stand and turn into his embrace but didn't dare. If Sixx saw... He didn't need the distraction right now. Bren came around and sat next to her. He wrapped her in a one armed hug.

"It's good to see you, alive and somewhat well," he said.

"You too."

"How did you end up here?"

"It's a long tale."

"And one I'm sure Father can't wait to hear." They glanced over at their parent. He paced the side of the field like an animal, watching the battle unfold on the field.

"Getting rid of this will help his mood," Bren said removing the slave collar. He tossed it aside and sat back down. "Is there a short answer to why Zayn didn't just free you?"

"Sixx is her mate."

"Ah, I thought as much. This will be interesting. You. Mated to the Butcher of Balier." Raineck laughed without humor.

"We've fought against him before," Bren said. "Brutal fighter."

"Not anymore."

As she spoke, Sixx slipped his sword beneath his opponent's shield and sliced across the skin of his stomach. Sixx stepped back, blood decorating the tip of his sword.

New tension zipped through Sixx's body and Kayla knew he was fighting the healer inside him.

"First blood—" Menth's cry led the rest of the arena in cheers. "To Captain Sixx. Captain, you may dispose of the warrior as you please."

Kayla waited. Scant had killed or wounded his opponents. She knew it was expected but she also knew that Sixx couldn't do it. Sixx said something to the defeated warrior. The man looked at Sixx, glanced at Terrak and then reached his right hand to his left shoulder, tearing the gold patch from his battle vest. He bowed briefly to Sixx and then walked away, but he didn't return to Terrak's side of the field. Instead, he walked toward Mik and Kayla. When he reached the side, he planted his sword, tip down into the soil and knelt behind it.

"Hmmm, interesting," Bren said.

"What? What just happened?"

"Instead of killing him, your warrior demanded service from the other. Until he dies, the loser is bound to serve Sixx."

"Why didn't he just kill him?" Raineck asked as if it was expected.

"He can't." Kayla said the words softly. She looked at her brothers wondering how much she should reveal. They would find out sooner or later. "He's a healer now."

Raineck's laughter barked out as he stared at her. "You're joking?"

"No."

"How in the Hells did that happen?" Bren demanded.

"Also a long story but the truth is, he can barely fight."

"Of course not. A healer's nature wouldn't allow it. Gods," Bren said, sounding impressed and concerned at the same time.

"There's no way Sixx is going to be able to defeat all those men," Raineck added voicing Kayla's worst fear. And she knew that if any of Terrak's men succeeded, they wouldn't hesitate to kill Sixx. Her fingers trembled as the next warrior moved onto the field.

"I don't know," Bren said. "Healer or not, he's still who he is. A warrior and a trained fighter." Kayla nodded, trying to take comfort in Bren's words.

The next warrior raised his sword and shouted as he lunged at Sixx. Bren and Raineck both tensed as Sixx deflected the blows. The time was eternal until a slash across the arm of Terrak's warrior ended the battle. Again, the man tore his patch from his shoulder and came to kneel beside the other defeated warrior. Two down but five more waited.

Bren stood up, getting closer. Soon Raineck joined him, their voices mixing with the crowds as they cheered Sixx on.

Sixx's guard and friends and Kayla's family congregated along the side, blocking Kayla's view. Mik, who'd been set aside as her guardian, seemed to have disappeared. That was odd. Mik was a bit rough but he was fiercely loyal to Sixx. The thought drifted away as steel crashed against steel and she had to see. Knowing Sixx couldn't see her, she stood and crept to the edge of the crowd, hoping to peer around the last body and watch.

"Going somewhere, slave bitch?"

The voice filled her head moments before blackness covered her mind.

* * * * *

Sixx took a deep breath and waited for the next approach. He'd lost track of how many he'd fought. It was a blur of bodies. Each one stronger, better than the last...or maybe it was that Sixx was weakening. Hours on the battlefield and the training ground had given him enough physical strength, but the spiritual toll tore at him. Each cut he made, each drop of blood ripped his insides until he felt like he was bleeding.

He clenched his teeth and swung, his eyes clouded by sweat and strands of hair long released from its tie at the back of his head. He felt the blade bite into the warrior's shoulder. The power of Sixx's swing continued as the sword slid through flesh and encountered the bone beneath.

"First blood! Captain Sixx." Menth's voice vibrated with excitement at the results.

Sixx watched Terrak's man fall to his knees, red flowing from the shoulder wound. Sixx raised his weapon as he stepped away. Blood dripped down the blade, pouring across his hand. The sight of the dark red liquid, the metallic scent of it, released the bile in his stomach. Unable to control it, Sixx turned away and retched. He looked across the grass and saw Terrak's boots waiting.

He'd made it. Somehow, he'd managed to wade through Terrak's fighters.

"What's the matter, Sixx? Not feeling well?" Terrak laughed. "Or are the rumors true? Does the sight of blood actually make you sick? A sad commentary for the Butcher of Balier."

Sixx straightened and flicked his hair back, away from his face. He wiped his mouth. Exhaustion pulled at his muscles. He'd fought six—defeated six—battling his own demons with each strike until he could barely force himself to raise his sword.

Hope tried to light in his chest but there was no strength for it. Terrak was a strong fighter – and he wanted this. Sixx could see it in his eyes.

There was more to it than just owning Kayla. Terrak wanted to have her under his power. Defeating Sixx or even killing him was just an added benefit.

“I was rather surprised you accepted the challenge, Sixx,” Terrak said. “It’s obvious you’ve lost your taste for battle.” He looked at the six men kneeling on the side, their eyes lowered in shame.

Sixx clenched his teeth and raised his sword. “Are you done talking, Terrak? Let’s get this over with.”

Terrak laughed. “How does it feel to know you’ve been mounting a princess? I’ll bet her father isn’t too happy to know who’s been rutting between his daughter’s thighs.” Terrak lifted his weapon, his body wired with energy and power. Strength. All the things Sixx no longer had. And Terrak was eager to fight. He spun his sword around in a circle, taunting Sixx as he stalked him.

“It’s strange, Sixx, I don’t remember your fighting style being quite so *defensive* before. Lost your taste for killing?”

Sixx ignored Terrak’s words and focused instead on the pattern of the blade, waiting for the downward stroke. When it came, he met it full on, blocking it and giving a reciprocal strike. Terrak laughed as he stepped back.

“Is that all the strength you have? This will be over far too soon. We should at least give the people some entertainment.” The taunt had barely cleared the air when Terrak shouted and lunged forward. The clang of metal on metal echoed through the arena. Sixx countered each stroke, seeking the weakness. Needing to find a way through Terrak’s defenses before his own crumbled completely.

Kayla.

Her name had become both a talisman and a curse.

“I really should have killed you when I had the chance,” Terrak announced. “Back in that dungeon – you hanging there for days. It was pitiful. I could have killed you at any time but my guards wanted to play.”

Terrak’s words penetrated the battle haze. “You? Why?” They’d once been brothers at arms.

“Business.” Terrak lazily swung his sword in a full circle. “You were taking business that I desperately needed.”

Sixx placed both hands on the hilt of his sword, knowing his focus was split between Terrak’s words and the battle.

“But with you dead, your troop collapses and they’ll all come to me.” He moved even as he finished speaking but Sixx was ready.

Terrak brought down a flurry of blows, pushing Sixx back. The weight of one strike sent Sixx to his knees. Terrak stepped back and raised his arms, inciting the crowd to cheer for Sixx’s death. Sixx forced himself to his feet.

“Really, Sixx, I can’t imagine how you’ve let yourself go. If I decide not to kill you, perhaps I’ll assign you to a life’s service to me. How about that, Sixx?”

Saving his breath, Sixx waited.

“Yes, it would be a pleasure to own you. I think your first duty will be to watch me fuck the girl.” The glint in Terrak’s eye warned of a cruelty even Sixx hadn’t expected. “Oh don’t worry. I’ll sell her back to her family. After my men have had a turn at her.”

Rage erupted from a covered well deep inside Sixx. Terrak would never put his hands on Kayla. Using the fury that surged through his veins, Sixx stepped forward, attacking for the first time today. Terrak’s eyes widened in surprise as Sixx stalked him. Finesse and strategy were lost as Sixx hunted the other man.

The opportunity for first blood followed quickly but Sixx let it pass. There was nothing to stop him. Fury fed him. He pummeled Terrak with blows, waiting for the perfect moment.

Terrak stared at Sixx, his eyes revealing his fear as he backed away. Sixx didn’t let him retreat. The opening he sought followed and Sixx drove his sword into the space, plunging the tip deep into Terrak’s chest. A faint gasp and a gurgle of blood dribbled from Terrak’s mouth as Sixx pushed his blade deeper. The quick painless death was probably too good for him but Sixx wanted it over with. He yanked his sword free and watched dispassionately as the body fell to the ground.

A cry went up in the crowd but Sixx didn’t acknowledge it. Didn’t even recognize it as fury or pleasure. He’d killed Terrak but Sixx couldn’t bring himself to care. The vile images that had poured from Terrak’s mouth into Sixx’s brain had been too much. He stepped away, his knees trembling as he stared at Terrak’s sightless eyes. The sickness was building inside him.

Sixx found himself surrounded by bodies. His guard was there, congratulating him. Menth was there, trying to get him to stand and greet the crowd.

And Kayla’s family was there. The grim, angry glint in her father’s eyes had eased a bit but there was no chance of getting out of a confrontation with him.

But Sixx didn’t care about any of them.

“Where’s Kayla?”

Sixx ground his back teeth together and fought to keep his sanity. Fuck, he was trembling, shaking like a newborn lamb, the memory of his blade sliding into Terrak’s chest turning his stomach, making his heart pound in his ears.

He needed Kayla. Somehow he knew if he just touched her – if she put her hand on him – he would be all right. The evil and guilt he felt pressing down on him would fade. Kayla loved him. She would understand. Her touch, her voice, her very presence could calm the pain that poured through him.

He brushed away the rising cry of congratulations and pushed through the crowd toward his bench.

A trio of huge men blocked his path.

He was about equal in size to one of Kayla's brothers but combined, the two brothers and her father would be a formidable challenge. And if he needed to, he would face it, but now he just wanted Kayla.

But it didn't appear that her father was interested in what Sixx wanted. The man stared at him, his arms folded across his chest, the tight line of his jaw warning that he was just barely holding onto his control.

He looked past her family to where Kayla had been sitting on his bench.

Empty.

"Where's Kayla?" he demanded.

Her brothers and father spun around, following him as he stalked toward his side of the field.

"She wouldn't have left willingly," one of the brothers—Rainek if Sixx could remember Kayla's description—said. "She was determined to have her ass planted as instructed." He said it with just enough humor to make Sixx wince at his furious command to her before the battle.

"But if she didn't want to leave, why wouldn't Zayn—"

Zayn's name caught Sixx's attention but he didn't have time to question them.

"Where's Mik?" Sixx looked at Scant. Scant shook his head. They both scanned the space until Sixx's gaze landed on a body, bent and twisted. Sixx and Scant ran for it, knowing that Kayla's family followed. Mik lay crumpled behind some gear, blood staining his head. Sixx knelt down and placed his palm on the wound, willing the healing power to flow through his hand. It didn't matter that his guard was watching. He needed to heal Mik—to find out where Kayla had gone.

After long seconds, Mik jerked awake, his eyes blinking rapidly as he stared at the warriors hovering over him.

"Where's Kayla?" Sixx demanded, ignoring Scant's shocked gasp.

"Harvet. It was Harvet. Fuck, I turned and he blindsided me."

"We'll get him."

Rage Sixx had thought was extinguished resurfaced in his chest and he stood up, stalking toward the door, not caring who was behind him.

"We can help," one of the brothers said as he jogged beside Sixx.

"He's mine. If he's hurt her, I'll tear his guts out and choke him with them."

"What an intriguing threat," the brother said with a hint of laughter. "And you can certainly have him. But I can help find her."

Accepting his assistance went against Sixx's pride but he needed all the help he could get. They stepped outside and the brother raised his face to the sky like he was sniffing the air.

"That way," he said, pointing down toward Sixx's keep. And into the hill country.

"Where's your brother?"

“Uhm, trying to calm our father. That won’t last long so we should probably get Kayla back as quickly as possible. I’m Rainek by the way.”

“Sixx.”

“Welcome to the family.”

Sixx scoffed as he took off at a jog. Rainek seemed to know instinctively which path to follow and he’d assured Sixx that Harvet hadn’t taken a horse.

They followed a narrow path uphill. When they came to a Y in the trail, Rainek sniffed the air and picked a direction. Praying to the Gods that he’d made the right decision in trusting Kayla’s brother, Sixx continued their upward climb.

They turned the corner and saw them. The deadweight of Kayla – combined with Harvet panic – was slowing him down.

“Harvet!”

Harvet tripped, dropping Kayla to the ground. Spinning around to face Sixx, He crouched beside her.

“Stay back.” He placed the tip of his knife against Kayla’s throat.

“Let her go, Harvet. If it’s me you’re pissed at, let’s go at it. You’ve been wanting to take me on and –”

“No!” The knife wavered in Harvet’s grasp. The man was trembling and Sixx could almost swear his eyes were starting to water. “You’re cursed and you cursed me.”

“What?” He didn’t deny the cursed part. He’d said so himself many times. From behind him, he sensed Kayla’s brother but Rainek stayed back, seeming to recognize that Harvet was too close to the edge. If he drove that knife into Kayla’s throat, Sixx couldn’t heal her. He could heal but he couldn’t raise the dead.

“I’m supposed to be dead. You killed me.” Harvet gulped in more air, taking time to let his anger grow. “But something brought me back. And now no one wants me.”

“But Terrak –”

“Only wanted me because I brought that medallion but even he won’t let me speak to him. Everyone watches me. The women won’t come near me. They all think I’m cursed. That I made a deal with the demons who possessed her.” He pulled on Kayla’s hair, yanking her head back. She cried out and arched into the movement. She was awake. Her eyes were clouded but she was coming to. Sixx silently warned her to stay still.

“Harvet –”

“I’m going to kill her and I’ll be free. The demon can’t live without a body.” He pressed the knife against Kayla’s neck. Blood leaked from beneath the blade.

“No –”

Harvet looked up, his face marked with more pain than pleasure. “I’m doing it. I’m killing –” His eyes widened and a soundless scream poured from his mouth. The dagger fell from his grip as a stream of flame shot over Sixx’s shoulder and erupted at

Harvet's feet. Harvet leaped out of the way. He stood for a moment, trembling, then spun around and ran, straight up the hill, grabbing soil with his hands to move him faster. Within seconds he'd disappeared over the peak and Sixx was sure he was still running down the other side.

A long, low snarl sounded from behind Sixx. Taking a deep breath and moving slowly, Sixx turned and faced the creature behind him.

It took all his training and strength not to flinch as he faced the massive beast that crouched mere feet away.

He'd never fought a dragon before. Like he'd told Kayla, there was no reason to. They were too big, too dangerous and too damn cranky. Sixx had never felt the need to prove himself against one of these beasts.

But that was before his woman lay behind him, wounded, bleeding. He'd heard the rumors of what dragons did to women—how they used them and then discarded them, often killing them in a rage. He had to get Kayla out of there. Get her to safety. He glanced to the side to see where Kayla's brother was. Surely he would help. Both brothers stood on the far side of the dragon. Their stares bounced between the massive beast and Sixx but they made no move to help Kayla.

They were afraid of the dragon. He would have to face it alone. He pulled his sword from its sheath, the blood from his battles still marking the blade.

"Sixx."

Kayla's soft voice pulled his focus but he didn't look away from the dragon. The creature's attentions were solely on Sixx—on the sword in his grip.

"Get out of here, Kayla. Run."

"No—"

"Do as you're told. Run!" He shouted the command as a burst of dragon fire enveloped him. Feeling the heat of the flames, he dropped to the ground, rolling and coming back to his feet, luring the dragon away from Kayla.

Whatever else, he had to protect Kayla from this beast.

Kayla sat on the ground, frozen by the sight before her. It was just like her dream—her lover, sword in his hand, facing her father. She'd seen it so many times in her sleep she gave herself a shake to make sure she was awake. Men who had professed their love, vowed their unending devotion, had fled at the sight of the dragon. No man had ever been willing to face a dragon for her.

Sixx hadn't declared his love. The powerful sensual way he made love to her spoke volumes but was it enough? *Mine*. Zayn's prompting sent Kayla forward. It didn't matter if Sixx loved her or not—or if he would turn away as so many others had—she couldn't let Nekane hurt him.

And Nekane was pissed. He sent another spout of fire at Sixx, barely missing as Sixx rolled out of the way.

Kayla leapt to her feet, glaring at her brothers who watched silently from the side. They would be no help. There was no way Nekane was going to back down—not with Sixx facing him with his weapon drawn.

“Sixx, you need to—”

“Dammit, Kayla, I told you get out of here.”

“But—”

“Run.” He dodged another spike of fire. “Or I’ll beat your ass.”

Don’t threaten my daughter.

The hollow distant voice echoed in her mind. Sixx flinched and looked around, obviously searching for her father. He looked toward her brothers then back at the dragon.

She watched the realization hit him.

She wouldn’t say that the tension left his body—it just shifted locations. The power and strength in his lower body eased as he straightened, but the muscles in his neck and shoulders pulled up so tight, she could see the tendons from ten feet away.

He turned his glare to Kayla.

“Your father is a dragon?” Without waiting for her answer, he flung his sword away, launching it point first in the ground. He spun away, stalking to the edge of the clearing. A little piece of her heart broke. She knew it was childish, just part of a dream, but somewhere inside her, she wished there was one man who wanted her enough to fight for her.

Sixx stared into the outcropping of rocks for a moment, caught his breath and whipped around, stomping back to her side.

“You’re just full of secrets.” He swung his hand toward the dragon. “Did you ever think to tell me about this?” Nekane didn’t seem to like that Sixx was yelling at her and shot more fire at him—almost as if to remind Sixx that a dragon was challenging him. Sixx barely acknowledged it, slapping at the stray flames that burned his leathers. “This is the kind of pillow talk that a man would be interested in. ‘Sixx, by the way, I’m a princess.’ Or ‘Sixx, did you know, my father is a dragon?’ Those things would have caught my attention.”

His voice had risen until he was shouting at her.

I’m going to rip your body into a dozen pieces and scatter them across the countryside.

Kei’s disembodied voice filled the space between them. Kayla watched as Sixx flinched. He glared at the dragon. “So you’ve said. At least now I know where she gets it from.”

Stunned by his anger, and even more surprised that he hadn’t fled when he’d discover she was related to a dragon, Kayla took a deep breath.

“There wasn’t really a good time—” she protested though it sounded feeble. There had been plenty of opportunities but she’d let them all pass. At first because she didn’t trust him and then because she didn’t want to scare him away.

"I swear, Kayla, I'm going to beat your ass—" Fire washed over him before he could complete the threat. Sixx waited until the fire had evaporated, slapped at the singed edges of his hair and stared up at the beast. "Would you stop doing that?"

"Uh, Sixx, it's really not a good idea to yell at a dragon," she cautioned.

"He won't hurt me."

Don't make bets on it.

Sixx crossed his arms and faced the dragon—hoping the stories Kayla had told about her family were true. That they doted on her and loved her. It was going to take every ounce of that love to break through the dragon's anger.

"Your daughter loves me and while I'm sure you find that difficult to believe, I truly doubt that you're willing to hurt the man your daughter loves. If you were, I'd be dead by now."

The dragon stamped his feet and wagged his head. The beast didn't like being faced down and was probably not used to being challenged in many things. Still, Sixx couldn't regret it. He was going to be facing that dragon in some form or another for a long time. He wasn't going to let Kayla go. He couldn't. He didn't know when the realization had come to him but he knew it deep in his soul. She belonged to him.

"I understand that you're only trying to protect your daughter and know this—I would never willingly hurt her. You have my assurance on that. My word—as a warrior..." Sixx pressed his lips together and inhaled through his nose, the tension in his chest barely allowing him to breathe. "And as a healer."

That seemed to pacify the dragon a bit. The beast growled but didn't attack. In fact, the creature backed up a few steps as if it wasn't convinced of its own control though it never took its eyes off Sixx.

"Now—" He faced Kayla, not sure he could take any more surprises. The day had already been filled with them. She was a princess—he could accept that. Her father was a dragon. After some time, he believed there was a way to make that work.

But what other secrets did she have?

"Is there anything else I should know?"

A laugh—human and male—rang across the clearing. He looked up and saw Kayla's brothers. Looking at them now, he could easily tell them apart just based on Kayla's description of them. The serious one with the glower that matched their father's was Bren. It was Raineck who was laughing.

"Oh I think you're in for a long day of surprises."

The two men walked forward, positioning themselves beside the dragon. Sixx watched them for a long time. Bren's eyes changed as he folded his arms across his chest—turning black. The same black that Kayla's did.

The same black as the dragon.

Sixx shook his head. "You turn into one of these things?"

The dragon didn't seem to care being classified as *a thing* and shot dragon fire across the clearing. Sixx grabbed Kayla and pulled her into his arms, turning his back to the flame, protecting her and letting his leathers take the brunt. When the dragon pulled back, Sixx straightened and glared at the dragon before turning his eyes to Kayla.

"Dragon fire won't hurt me," she assured him.

"But you do turn into a dragon."

She shook her head and he could swear he saw a hint of sadness in her eyes. "No. My brothers do. But my dragon doesn't actually appear."

"Zayn." Now he connected the name with the change in Kayla.

"Yes." Kayla took a deep breath and Sixx knew she was ready to spill another secret. He wasn't sure his system could handle any more but he'd take it. "Zayn, the dragon, has chosen you as her mate," Kayla explained, her voice sounding low and hesitant—not at all like his bold, sexy Kayla.

The dragon had chosen him. So much made sense now. A dragon's mate.

He looked at the woman before him.

"And what about you? Have you chosen me as well?" He placed his hand on her jaw and rubbed his thumb across her cheek. "Because I don't think I can let you go."

Tears welled up in her eyes causing him a moment of panic. She blinked and he could see her fighting the emotion. Kayla nodded, her chin rising as she stared at him—as if she expected him to turn away. Hells, she was part dragon. He was a warrior who couldn't fight. They made a perfectly mismatched pair.

"Even after everything?" she asked, those tears threatening again. He'd never handled tears well and certainly not from the woman he...cared deeply about. "All that you know?"

"A princess for a wife—a dragon for a father-in-law?" He shrugged casually. "I think I can handle that." He leaned down and gave her a quick kiss on the lips. "Besides, after this, nothing could surprise me."

Kayla smiled and Sixx felt the center of his stomach fall away. Oh Gods, she had more.

"I think I'm pregnant," she announced boldly. Loudly. Loud enough for her family to hear.

The dragon's roar was almost simultaneous with the wash of fire. Sixx pulled Kayla to him, protecting her even knowing she couldn't be harmed by the flames. When the fire had dissipated, he raised his head and grimaced at the woman in his arms.

"That one secret you couldn't have kept for a little while longer?"

She laughed. "Sorry."

"Right." He pulled her up into a long, deep binding kiss, finally letting her go when he was in desperate need of breath. He shook his head. "I'm going to end up fighting this dragon, aren't I?" With a pat on her ass, he pushed her to the side and walked back to the where his sword stood, point down into the ground. It didn't matter if the blade

was dirty or dull. He wasn't actually planning to hurt the dragon. It was Kayla's father after all but there was no way he was getting out of there without facing down the dragon. His pride and the pride of the creature in front of him demanded it.

With a resigned air, he raised the point of his sword and faced her father.

A final battle for the woman he loved.

Epilogue

Sixx aimed the tip of his sword and lunged forward, sending the point deep into the chest of his opponent.

Applause filtered through the air. Sixx pulled the blade from the body of the straw man and bowed to his audience. The cheering continued but it was the sound of one voice he was searching for.

“Papa! Papa!” He found his son, sitting on *Uncle Bren’s* lap. The two-year-old didn’t quite understand what was happening but everyone was clapping so he was as well.

Rainek’s lap was filled with his own kids. Rainek and Tiana were remarkably fertile. She’d been pregnant each of the three years Sixx had known her but from the look in her eye, this was the last child.

It was strange. After a lifetime of living alone or in the company of other warriors, now Sixx had a family. A large, rather intrusive family. Within the first six moon cycles of his marriage to Kayla, Sixx had figured out that he couldn’t live in the same house with her family. He enjoyed them, respected them—would even admit he loved them but only to his wife—but he couldn’t live with them. Particularly her father and Nekane. The dragon had never gotten used to the idea of his little girl getting married. Nekane seemed able to sense when Kayla and Sixx had made love. The dragon had growled and snarled and spit fire at Sixx for hours afterward. It was annoying and dangerous. The birth of their son had helped—because Nekane was extremely protective of the children in his care—but still, the dragon had never quite accepted Sixx’s presence in Kayla’s bed.

After a year had passed, Sixx had suggested moving to someplace outside of her family’s castle. It had taken some persuading but finally her father had agreed. And the perfect solution had come to light. Terrak’s castle and lands had fallen into disarray since his death. Sixx had some claim on the land since he’d defeated Terrak in honorable battle. It hadn’t taken long to convince Terrak’s people to accept Sixx’s rule. The year had been difficult without a proper leader.

The lands bumped right up against Kei’s vast holdings, putting Kayla and Sixx within a day’s ride—or a very short dragon flight—of her family’s home. Mik and Scant and the rest of Sixx’s men eagerly signed on as the first members of Sixx’s new guard.

Sixx smiled at his family. He was a lord, a landowner. Growing up, he never would have thought to be responsible for a castle full of people, a troop of men and the surrounding lands.

But then, Hells, he’d never expected to be married—and to a woman who came from dragons.

The short distance between Kayla's family and Sixx had made a huge difference and the invitation to visit was always open. Kayla's brothers took full advantage, dropping by and reporting to their father and mother that Kayla was happy and healthy and that Sixx wasn't abusing her. Kei usually stayed away, knowing his dragon's tendency to attack whenever Sixx's scent appeared on Kayla.

But now they were all here – to celebrate Keilen's second birthday. The house was filled with people and children. A bit overwhelming but Sixx wouldn't have missed it.

The healer's gift had grown inside him, making it impossible for him to commit any true violence to another creature but as long as he deliberately didn't try to hurt any of his sparring partners, he was able to train. He'd also taken to healing where he could. Strange, after years of hurting people, he was the one they turned to when they were in pain.

"Excellent, Sixx, I see you've figured out what the pointed end of that stick is supposed to do," Bren said with a laugh.

"I'd be happy to practice on you, Highness."

A scream – followed by another scream – broke up their banter. Sixx and Bren instantly stood, herding the children in Rainek's direction. Rainek took up a position as guard and Mik stood by his side. Confident that the children were protected, Sixx and Bren ran toward the house, following the screams and shouts and moving against the flow of bodies running by him.

"What's going on?"

"Dragon!" one servant shouted as he fled.

The screams led them to the Great Hall. The room was in the first stages of decorating for tomorrow's party – and in the middle of it all stood a large green and purple dragon. Sixx skidded to a halt beside Lorrان and Kei. He mentally checked off the dragons in the family trying to figure out which one was currently stalking one of the housemaids. Nekane, Denith, Tynan, Audra and...

"Is that Zayn?" he asked his mother-in-law, Lorrان.

"Yes. Beautiful, isn't she?"

"I thought Kayla couldn't turn into her dragon."

"I think that was before she came upon a maid who smelled like you," Kei growled. The maid in question was on the floor, her eyes wide as she stared at the approaching dragon.

"We'd better get her out of here." Feeling brave and hopeful that Zayn wouldn't direct her anger at him, Sixx walked forward, putting himself between the dragon and the maid. "Let her go."

Mine! Zayn's cry rattled the windows.

"Yes, but let her go." He glanced at the woman on the floor. "Get out of here." She hesitated for just a moment then fled the room. No one in Kayla's family stopped her as she ran by.

Mine! The dragon screamed again. Fire poured over him and Sixx jumped back, slapping at the burning ends of his hair. With the flames cleared, the dragon raised its chin and he could have sworn he saw Kayla's glare staring out of those black eyes.

He glanced at Kayla's family and saw them backing toward the door.

"Wait! What do I do about her?" he asked, indicating the furious dragon that hadn't attacked but still stared at him with angry eyes.

Lorran—the family's dragon expert—stopped. "Zayn needs to be reassured that you haven't touched that other woman and that you'll only ever love her."

Sixx nodded not taking his eyes off the dragon. "How do I do that?!"

"I find being naked helps."

Again Sixx nodded, then jolted at the implication. *Naked? Is she insane? Has she seen the teeth on a dragon?* But Sixx knew that she had—she was well familiar with calming an enraged dragon.

Lorran waved her fingers and herded the rest of the family from the room, closing the door behind them. They wouldn't be disturbed.

Sixx turned his attention to the dragon.

"Now, sweetheart, you know I never touched that maid. I don't even know her name." Not that that would have stopped him in the past but that was before he met Kayla. The dragon acted like she could hear his thoughts and sprayed him again with flames. The cuff of his shirt caught on fire. Sixx patted it out and recognized the wisdom of being naked. Surely Zayn wouldn't bite anything off. She seemed quite pleased with certain parts of his anatomy. Trusting that Lorran had locked the door, Sixx stripped off his shirt, boots and reached for the waistband of his leathers. Zayn stretched closer, bumping her nose against his chest. She moved up and down his body—sniffing him.

"See, sweet, I haven't been anywhere near her. She ran into me in the hallway but that was it." He opened his leathers and dropped them to the ground, leaving himself naked before the dragon.

Taking a deep breath, he held his arms to the side, trying not to flinch as Zayn moved down his body. The huge head was almost as big as he was and the teeth could do a lot of damage, but Kayla loved him.

Mine?

"Yes. Yours. Only yours." He stretched out his hand and touched the top of the dragon's head, feeling the warm slightly rough skin tease his palm as he stroked the beast. "I don't want any other. I love you."

Zayn lifted her head and a flash of green sparkled in her eyes. Kayla was coming back. The dragon leaned forward again, drawing close to Sixx. He braced his legs apart and waited. Her tongue flicked out as she teased his skin with hot licks. She started at his knees and skimmed up, sampling him. Sixx waited, knowing what was to follow, knowing he would give whatever he had to show the woman he loved that he would never look at another.

The hot lash of her long tongue circled around his cock like a ribbon. Sixx's gasp turned to a groan. Zayn's tongue surrounded him and gently squeezed as she pulled away. The delicious suction created as she retreated made Sixx's eyes roll to the back of his head.

Hmmm, mine.

Sixx sank to his knees, his cock hard, desperate. He had no idea how much time had passed but Zayn's torment was making him blind with hunger. She'd teased and touched—circling and sucking his cock with that long wicked tongue—but hadn't let him come.

"Please, Zayn," he begged. "I need Kayla. Now."

Love us?

"Yes, Gods, please."

He opened his eyes and Kayla stood before him, naked, her eyes that strange mixture of black and green as each resident fought for control of the body they shared.

Kayla came out of the dragon's power and stared down at the naked, desperate man on the floor. His cock was hard and ready—always ready for her. Power and a little lingering anger flowed through her core. She straddled him, immediately sliding his shaft into her wet pussy. He grabbed her hips, ready to move, ready to fuck, but Kayla shook her head.

"That's the first time you said you loved me."

Sixx blinked and Kayla could tell she'd shocked him—the passion was still there but his mind started working again. "Can't be."

She nodded. "Did you say it just to appease the dragon?" She scraped one finger down the center of his chest, knowing she was torturing herself by asking but she had to know. She'd wonder forever if she didn't.

"No." Sixx looked delightfully confused at the prospect. "I've thought it so many times in my head, I was sure I'd said it out loud."

She wiggled, rubbing her pussy against him, squeezing him inside her. He groaned and his head dropped back. She loved the delicious tension that moved through his body, knowing she was the one who caused it. "You could say it again. To me."

The edges of Sixx's mouth curled up in a smile—a sensual smile she craved as part of her daily life. "I love you. I love you. I love you."

She laughed. "Once will do."

"Yes, but I should have been saying it every day that we've been together." He scraped her hair back away from her face. "I've got lots of making up to do. I love you." He pulled her down to him, planting a kiss on her lips. "Now love me."

Kayla smiled. "Always."

About the Author

Tielle (pronounced “teal”) St. Clare has had life-long love of romance novels. She began reading romances in the 7th grade when she discovered Victoria Holt novels and began writing romances at the age of sixteen (during Trigonometry, if the truth be told). During her senior year in high school, the class dressed up as what they would be in twenty years—Tielle dressed as a romance writer. When not writing romances, Tielle has worked in public relations and video production for the past twenty years. She moved to Alaska when she was seven years old in 1972 when her father was transferred with the military. Tielle believes romances should be hot and sexy with a great story and fun characters.

Tielle welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her author bio page at www.ellorascave.com.

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