

A  
SONG  
of the  
SIDHE

*Jeanne Barrack*

Loose Id

## Praise for the writing of Jeanne Barrack

### *Sapphire Flames*

*Sapphire Flames* by Jeanne Barrack is a flawless sparkling diamond among pearls. Ms. Barrack's talent for mingling romance and fantasy into a single coherent story without distracting tangents or loose ends is most praise worthy.

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Run to read this entire series, from *Silver Fire* to *Amber Inferno* and finally, *Sapphire Flames* to get a wonderful fantasy series that will keep the reader guessing what happens next! Kudos to Ms. Barrack for masterfully storytelling and exquisite writing. This reviewer is highly recommending *Sapphire Flames* for sheer fantasy enjoyment!.

-- Dawn, *Love Romances*

I think that I like this third story best of all three... the author develops the plot in several separate threads, bringing them all together skillfully at the end... I think that readers of fantasy will really enjoy this book.

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The interaction and dialogue between all the couples was great... If you like lots of hot sex scenes, this is the right book for you.

-- Joy Harrington, *Just Erotic Romance Reviews*

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# A SONG OF THE SIDHE

Jeanne Barrack

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

# A Song of the Sidhe

Jeanne Barrack

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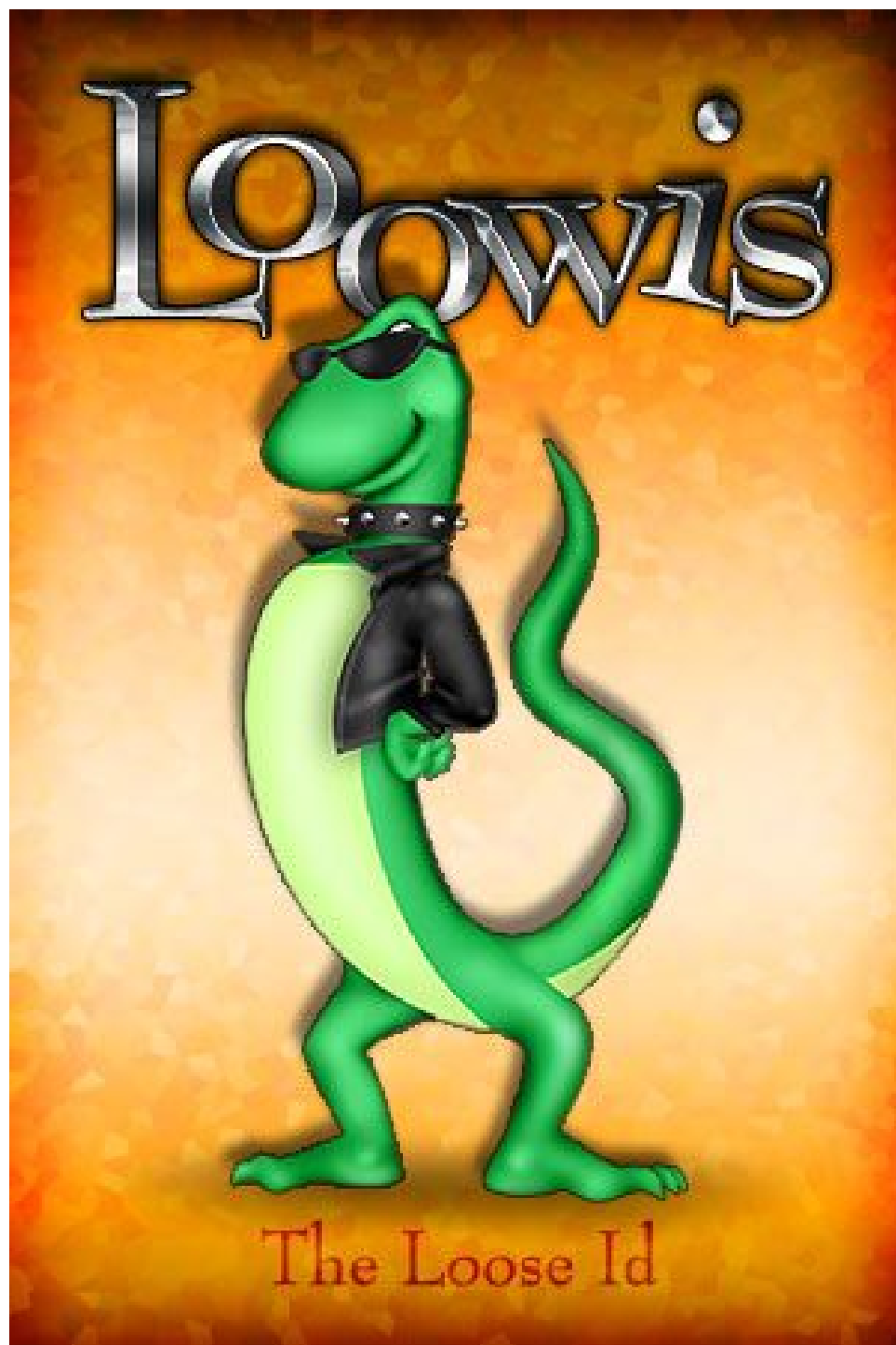
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## Chapter One

*County Tipperary -- in the realm of the Tiobraid Árann Sidhe*

“Harder, my fine young bull, and make me come.”

Donal Bawn strove with all his skill to satisfy the lust of Maire Finn, the eager young widow. Her curves called to him. He'd been tempted by her sweet, round arse shining white in the moonlight streaming in the window as she lay asleep. He woke her up, his massive erection prodding her into awareness. He had wrung her dry with the power of his lovemaking earlier, but here he was, still full of energy.

And ready to fuck her again.

Maire thrust against him, gasping with each movement. She gripped the carved headboard, the glow of the hearth fire gilding the wood. Tears of joy fell from her bright gray eyes as wave after wave of pleasure washed over her. She hadn't dreamed she'd any strength left after a day filled with so many climaxes she'd lost count, but somehow she'd found the energy.

Her aged husband had been laid in his grave just six days past, and her ten years of disappointment in the marriage bed had weighed heavy upon her. She was desperate. She burned.

Her husband had had a sharp eye, but a limp dick. Never did he leave her out of his sight, making sure the servants spied on her when he was gone on business. Soon enough she had resorted to inanimate objects to give her some surcease.

She'd spent the past decade of her life screwing herself with her fingers and, when that wasn't enough, a knife handle, a candle -- anything long and thick.

No more. The moment he died, she'd fired the servants and looked for a real live man to fuck her.

Whispers of the carpenter, Donal Bawn's, prowess passed from female to female at the market, at the miller's, at the linen making -- any place women gathered.

Hearing the tales, she'd sent round for him under the pretext of hiring him to repair chairs broken during the wake.

He'd arrived bright and early.

"Long life and good health to the woman of the house."

Doffing his cap and bobbing his head, a lock of his curly gold hair fell upon his fine broad brow.

Maire herself had opened the door, her hair unbound and falling to her waist like that of an unwed maiden. Seeing Donal's sun-bright curls, her fingers itched to touch them.

"And the same to you, Donal Bawn. Come in then. I've a need for your ... skill." Her eyes gleamed and her hand trembled as she ushered him in.

Donal saw and recognized the true need she had of him, and he locked the door behind him. He laid his tool bag and cap upon the table.

The candlelight flickered. The pure wax tapers in the silver candlesticks shone like white lilies.

Maire sighed as the light revealed the bulge in Donal's breeches. The women had not lied. He was hung like a bull.

She waited while he gazed around the room.

"And where might I find the chairs needing to be fixed?"

She smiled, displaying a set of pearly white teeth. Her minty breath, as she drew near Donal, stirred his cock.

She laid her slim hand upon his arm and drew him close so that their breaths mingled.

"Come with me, my fine man, and I'll show you what needs mending."

She led him through the door into a bedchamber. Thick wax rods lit up the room. A simple wooden armchair sat next to the bed.

"'Tis this chair -- there's one leg wobbling. 'Twill barely support my weight. Here, I'll show you."

She glided across the floor, the fine linen gown clinging to her womanly curves.

Donal sucked in his breath.

She turned and sat. Her eyes never leaving his, she spread wide her legs, flipping her dress up to her thighs, displaying her fine, downy mound.

Ah, she was quite the bold lass.

"See, should I move, the chair shifts back and forth. Come, take a closer look." Her coaxing tones brought him back to the task at hand.

Donal took two broad strides, bringing him to stand between her outspread legs.

"Kneel down, Donal, and see can you find what the trouble is."

He knelt, his face level with her curls, and inhaled her musky scent.

She pressed her slim, pale fingers between her nether lips, opening them like a flower.

"Well, and do you think you can help me?"

He raised his head, his soft words wafting between her thighs. "I can but try."

And he did. Throughout the day, he worked his magic on her needy body. Plying his tongue and teeth and lips, he brought her to one climax after another.

He impaled her with his prick and she died the little death she eagerly sought.

He took her on the chair -- which supported even the weight of two vigorous lovers. She sat naked on his lap, her plump white breasts bobbing before him like juicy apples as she slid up and down his cock. She squeezed him with her inner muscles and he groaned.

"Ah, you're killing me, my lovely girl. But don't stop. 'Tis a grand way to die."

She leaned forward, her tits within reach of his lips. He latched onto one cherry-ripe nipple and suckled greedily.

Her breath caught in her throat and a pain, sharp and sweet, darted deep within her. A wave of passion greater than any she'd known swept over her and she came.

She flung her head back and gripped his shoulders, clinging to him. As the last ripple faded away, she fell forward, tears springing from her eyes.

Donal gathered her close, his hands brushing her slim back with the tender touch of a parent comforting a child. "Hush, now, *mo mhuirnin*, my dearest. 'Tis no reason to cry."

She gulped and swiped her eyes. Her fingers caressed his chest, lightly furred with swirls of golden-colored hair. She ran her hands over the well-defined muscles of his shoulders and arms and wondered at his ability to control his grip. She compared them to the stringy, flabby arms of her late husband and her tears fled. She pressed her bosom to his chest, her nipples hardening into firm nubbins.

"Aye, there's no reason for tears now." Her smile was deep and full of joy. "Take me to bed, my lover."

And so, throughout the day they fucked.

Donal's stamina astounded her. His skill delighted her. He'd wrung her out and she'd slept for several hours.

And now, while the goddess Aine shone her countenance in the nighttime sky, he mounted her again, his vigor overwhelming her. The bed shook with the force of his thrusts. His rough hands cupped her breasts, kneading them and lightly pinching her nipples.

She whimpered and as her climax struck her, she called aloud his name and collapsed upon the mattress.

Donal rolled off her and lay on his back. He drew the widow's limp, satiated body to his and stroked her. A thin sheen of sweat glistened on their skin. The smell of sex filled the room.

They lay there, their limbs entwined, and drowsed the few hours left until dawn.

\* \* \* \* \*

The radiant sun goddess Étaín shone down upon the naked, sleeping lovers, jealous of their joy. She coveted Donal, wishing him for her own self. Seeing as that could never be, she resented the many women he took. Now, she increased the heat of her gaze and they awoke.

As Maire moved from Donal's side, he stretched out his hand and caught her around the waist. "Come back to bed, my pearl. I've yet to greet you this morning."

He tugged and she fell back, fitting her body next to his.

"Sing to me then. I've heard that you gift each woman you make love to with a song." She leaned over him, her breasts brushing his chest. "I want my song."

Donal thought for a moment. Truth be told, he gave each woman the same song with little variation, secure in the knowledge that none would share their melody with any other female.

He smiled. "Here is my song for you, woman of the house."

He cleared his throat and sang, and his voice lured the birds in the trees to hush and listen.

*“I would take you without cows or money or a counted dowry. Come, my darling, and make love with me in the valley. The streams will flow past us. The blackbird and thrush will sing in the trees. Gentle, fair girl to whom I gave passionate love, come with me. We shall live on our love and be well satisfied.”*

As the last notes died away, Maire wept. Her tears were like pearls upon her cheeks.

“That song was more beautiful than any love song I’ve ever heard, Donal *a ghrá*. And do I have your passionate love?”

“Of course.” And he kissed away her tears.

\* \* \* \* \*

The lovers reveled in the warmth of the sun shining in through the drawn-back curtains. Sunbeams gilded Donal’s golden curls and crystal beads of sweat glistened on his body, turning him into a god. He groaned with exertion as he plundered the widow of every last drop of passion.

Maire gripped Donal’s lean flanks, her nails digging into his flesh. Her breath hitched in her throat as she strove to keep up with her mighty lover. Only once before had she ever neared this much pleasure, and that had been in her dreams.

As her husband’s end drew closer, they had slept in separate rooms, she taking the smaller room next to the master bedroom. That it should have been a nursery grieved her heart, for she’d no child from the Ould One.

One night, desperate for some relief of her pent up lust, she cried for a lover.

And she was heard.

Ogma heard her plea and invaded her dream. Softly through the mists of sleep, he appeared by her bedside. He shrugged off his shirt spun of cobwebs, unpinned the gold brooch that held his kilt of soft, bleached linen and let it fall to the floor. Aine’s silver light played over his beautiful, naked form.

Leaning over, he brushed a finger across the white shoulder of the mortal woman. She awoke with a start, but he passed the veil of misty thought before her eyes so that she believed she dreamed.

“Calm your fear, *a stóirín ban*, my fair little darling. I’ve no wish to hurt you.”

“Are you a god?”

He shook his head. “Nay. I am the *Ard Rí* of the *Tiobraid Árann Sidhe*. I heard your cries and could not bear to see a beautiful woman such as yourself go without.”

Tears welled in her eyes. “I cannot break my marriage vows. As much as I burn, I cannot make love with you.”

Ogma smiled. “Ah, but ’tis a dream and nothing more. You remain true to your pledge, for I am not real.” He bent closer and pulled down the sheet covering her slim body. Kneeling beside the bed, he took her palm and pressed it to his lips, his tongue darting out to moisten the sensitive skin. “Now, let me satisfy your need.”

And Maire believed Ogma’s lie.

He made love to her and when he brought her to climax, she called out so loudly she woke the servants.

He vanished from sight and she was left to explain her outcry.

“’Twas naught, you silly fools! A nightmare, that’s all.”

A quavering voice came from her husband’s room. “What’s all this brouhaha I’m hearing?”

The scraggly frame of an ancient stick of a man shuffled through the doorway. “I was awakened from a sound sleep.” He tottered over toward Maire. “I’ll be needing some help to relax, wife.” Turning to the housekeeper and maid, he waved them away. “Back to your beds. There’s nothing for you here.”

As the servants trundled out of the room, he turned to Maire. When he spoke, his rasping voice chilled her.

“I heard your cry of ecstasy, wife. I’ve no notion where your lover went, but if it’s fucking you want, you’ll have to wait until I’m dead.” He leered. “I, on the other hand, want you to use that soft mouth on my shaft. See if you can get a rise from me.”

And Maire tried but ’twas for naught. The old man had no juice in him.

Ogma never returned to her dreams.

\* \* \* \* \*

A sparrow sat on a branch of the rowan tree that grew outside Maire’s bedroom window, but ’twas in fact Ogma. He, too, envied the lovers, but ’twas Maire he craved. That one night spent with her had not been enough, but his mate had placed a taboo upon him. Never could he visit Maire again while her spouse lived.

Étaín spoke with him.

“I see you hunger for the comely young widow. Can you not come up with a spell to break Donal’s hold on her passion?”

He shook his feathered head. “Not for no reason. ’Twould be an empty incantation. I need a just cause to curse or enchant.”

The fierceness of Étaín’s lust burned bright. “Let me think on our problem this day. Before I give up the night sky to my sister Aine, I vow to find a way!”

Étaín drenched Donal and Maire in waves of sunlight. And cudgeled her brain for a reason for Ogma to curse Donal.

“Look at her, the greedy bitch. Not grateful that Ogma desires her, she takes Donal Bawn, too. She thinks him a better lover than Ogma, I’d warrant.”

At that thought, Étaín’s light burned fiercely. If Donal thought himself a better lover than Ogma, and boasted of it, he would put himself in jeopardy.

She gathered her strength -- 'twas hard for her to communicate with mortals. They took her for granted until the winter's darkness. If she wished to touch their minds, she'd better do it now, while her power burned bright.

\* \* \* \* \*

Maire turned and looked at Donal through the sunlit dust motes that floated in the air. With his hair a golden crown and his body sleek and muscled, he looked like a god.

And Maire remembered that one night when she had not a god, but a king visit her bed.

"You're a better lover than the High King of the Sidhe."

Donal started. He'd no doubt of his skill, but this ... He reached over and touched the curve of her shoulder. "And how would you be knowing that?"

She shifted, raising her body, and idly ran her hand down his chest toward his navel. "Why, one night, he came to me in my dream. Oh, he was a fine lover, indeed, and handsome, too, but not to compare with you." Her fingers found his quiescent prick and caressed it. She licked her lips. She bent down and kissed the tip, then darted out her tongue to swipe the plumed head. She raised her eyes, full of adoration, to him. "You are incomparable."

And Donal's pride exceeded his good sense and he spoke in all seriousness. "Then worship me, *a stóirín*."

He lay on his back, his cock rising, and the widow seated herself upon him. Grasping his rod, she slowly sank upon his full length, her soft sigh a hymn of pleasure.

Étaín sped to Ogma's side and urged him to return to the widow's home.

He transformed into the sparrow and flew to the rowan tree. And listened to the lovers and smiled to hear their pillow talk. For now he had just cause to drive Donal from the side of the widow.

\* \* \* \* \*

Maire Finn bit her lip and pouted as she watched Donal dress. She didn't want him to leave yet.

He sat on the armchair putting on his boots. His shirt still lay on the bed. She admired the way his muscles flexed as he tied the bootlaces. He rose and stretched his arms as he gazed around for his shirt. She snatched it up and hid it behind her back.

"Here now, *a stóirín*, give it to me."

She shook her head and shoved the shirt beneath her bottom. "Come and get it."

He stalked to the bed and reached toward her. She scampered off to the other side. Stark naked, her long black hair streaming over her breasts, the dark curls between her thighs a striking contrast with her pearly white skin, she was an enticement hard to resist.

"*A cuisle*, I must go. I've work to do. I must earn my bread."

She shook her head. "Stay with me. I've money enough for the both of us. The Ould One had a fortune." Her voice took on a coaxing tone. "Think on it, Donal. You could have me any time you'd like." She held up his shirt in front of her breasts and let it slip to the floor. "Come to me now."

Donal shook his head. "I'll not be kept by any woman, nor would I wish to be that selfish to keep myself from the rest of the women in the county." He grinned impudently. "Am I not the best lover you've known? Am I not the King of the Sidhe's better?"

Maire bent and scooped up his shirt, throwing it at him with all the force she could muster. He caught it with one hand and put it on, tucking it into his trousers.

She stamped her foot, placing her hands on her hips. "Then take yourself off and don't be expecting a welcome from me again! Should I never see your face or hear that coaxing voice of yours, I would be well-satisfied!"

Opening the bedroom door, Donal turned and shrugged. “’Tis sorry I am, then, for you’ll never be satisfied. Good health and long life to you, woman of the house.”

And he closed the door behind him.

Maire threw herself upon her bed and gave herself up to weeping.

Ogma eyed her with anticipation. Later that day, he’d dry those tears and bring her tears of joy. For now, he had a *mallacht* to pronounce on one cocky young mortal.

Étaín smiled. Whatever the curse placed on Donal, she would stay with him and give him her warmth. She’d follow Ogma and hear what he had planned for Donal. If she could not have Donal’s love, she would have his gratitude.

\* \* \* \* \*

Donal left the widow’s house and headed toward his own cabin near the forest’s edge. He appreciated the beauty of the woods that surrounded his home, always giving thanks when he used the wood in his work and replanting to replenish the trees.

As he walked, he relished the last few rays of the sun upon his body. The noisy chirping of a sparrow that seemed determined to fly along with him as he walked through the quiet village caused him to smile.

He entered his tidy little home and hung up his tool bag. Stretching his arms over his head to get the kinks out, he was startled to hear a voice more melodious than a nightingale’s break the silence of the room.

“Enjoy your body’s freedom, Donal Bawn, for it will not last.”

Whirling around, Donal scanned the single room of his cabin.

Empty.

But there, near the door, a shimmering in the air. The shape of a man taking form.

Slim and tall, on his head a golden crown, his long hair braided with gay ribbons, stood what could only be a god.

Donal fell to his knees.

Ogma sneered. "Aye, grovel, Donal Bawn. But 'tis too late. You've insulted my prowess as a lover, used your manly form and skillful voice to coax women to believe you their own true love, yet kept yourself heart-free. No longer." He raised his right hand and sparks flew from his fingertips. "Hear then, my mallacht.

"A hunchback you shall be, with no virility. Your voice, thin as a reed that naught shall heed. Only in the forests wild or the mountains high, where man or woman seldom draw nigh, shall you regain your nature true, though little good 'twill do you. Fleeting shall those moments be, until one loves you, no matter what she'll see."

He brought his hand down and the sparks covered Donal.

He tried to rise, but couldn't straighten up. With shaking fingers, Donal brought his hand to his right shoulder. A hump, the size of a pumpkin, bent him over. He cried out, but naught emerged save a voice as wispy as a puff of smoke.

And Donal wept.

The door to the cabin flung open and Ogma pointed towards it.

And Donal scuttled past the triumphant fairy king.

## Chapter Two

### *County Galway -- The Court of the Gaillimh Sidhe*

Ceoleen gazed with little regret at the slumbering form of Lorcan, her soon-to-be former lover. Her body ached from his clumsy lovemaking. She had accepted him into her bed because he had something of value to offer her. Now that she had what she wanted, she'd no more need of him. This last time they had made love in the forest glade near her little cottage, so she wouldn't need to air her sheets to remove his scent.

Quietly, she moved into the forest to ready herself for the day's events. She knelt before a crystal-clear pool, admiring the vision she saw reflected in its still depths.

Long, curly hair, flaming as the sky at sunset, curved around her shoulders and fell to the forest floor, looping into intricate designs. Dipping her hand into the water, she flung the sparkling drops onto her hair to linger like diamonds amidst the strands.

She wet her lush, pink lips with the tip of her tongue, then bit down lightly to deepen their rosy color.

She sprinkled tiny beads of dew on the tips of her lashes to frame her brilliant emerald eyes.

Straightening, she ran her hands down her slim form, admiring the curves and swells of her hips and buttocks. Her silky-smooth skin delighted her senses. It seemed almost a shame to cover that perfect body with clothing. She compromised, be-spelling a dress made of cobwebs, more revealing than concealing her figure.

On her dainty feet she wore slippers made from tough lily pond leaves.

She was ready.

Today she'd gain the rankings of *Amhranai Ard* -- High Singer, and as *An Te Aille* -- the Most Beautiful. That is, should she pass the tests.

But of course she would.

Who else in all the Gaillimh Sidhe was as beautiful? Who else sang as sweetly? Or composed the most melodious songs?

No one.

She flashed to the Great Hall to her seat near the High Table. Filling the hall were all the Gaillimh fairy, the highest ranks and lower. And waiting in the seat next to hers, Lorcan, his eyes red with rage.

"I knew you'd be here when I awoke to find you gone. Are you ready, Ceoleen *deas*, my sweet one? You know you could have had your place assured if you'd only grace my bed ... forever." He leaned toward her, his lips a searing breath away from her ear. "Should you become my mate, you gain my ranking, also."

Ceoleen shifted away from him, casting a sneering look over her shoulder. "I need not your aid. I choose my lovers and whether I remain with them or not." She rose and placed her hands on her hips, looking down at the handsome Sidhe. "And you were not even an adequate lover. When I become *Amhranai Ard*, I'll have my pick of all the *fir-Sidhe*, all the men." She cupped her breasts, then ran her hands down her body, thrusting her hips in his face. "Look your last, Lorcan. You'll never see me unclothed again."

His voice croaked. "You took what I offered when I gave you the first three notes of the contest. You don't need my aid now, but one day you will. And I will not give it."

She laughed, shook her head and sauntered away, her hips swaying rhythmically.

Lorcan gnashed his teeth and whispered low. "You'll regret this day. I'll see you cursed before I let any fir-Sidhe become your lover."

Ceoleen paused near the empty expanse in the middle of the Hall. Arranged in a circle, the twelve tables of the *ard-Sidhe*, the high Sidhe, formed the inner perimeter. Another row of tables, the *mean-Sidhe*, the middle Sidhe, made the second ring, and the *iochtarach-Sidhe*, the lowest Sidhe, the outer ring. Her place was in the second ring. One could only gain the inner circle through proving a talent. Or being a great beauty. Graced with beauty, Ceoleen had honed her talent as a singer and composer. Now she felt ready to display both.

Ailill, *Ard Rí*, High King of the Gaillimh Sidhe stood and a hush filled the hall.

"This day marks the test for those who wish to ascend in rank. Let all contenders enter the circle and prepare for the challenge."

Moving with eager step, Ceoleen slipped into the circle.

An audible gasp greeted her arrival. Scarce had there been seen a female of her beauty. The cocks of the fir-Sidhe hardened, and the eyes of the *mna-Sidhe* -- of every female -- narrowed with envy.

Ceoleen strode with confident steps into the very center, head held high. All eyes assessed her beauty and none found her lacking.

Her gown did nothing to hide the flaming curls between her thighs, the sweet indentation of her navel, the swell of her hips, the pointy nipples and plump breasts. Her fiery hair tumbled wantonly down her back to her slim ankles. Her eyes flashed green sparks.

Every male present wished to take her and fuck her. Every female wished her dead or cursed.

A moment after she entered the circle, another slipped silently into the ring.

Scarce out of girlhood, straight, dun-brown hair curved to her shoulders. Soft blue eyes like the sky at mid-day gazed with awe at the High Sidhe. A slim figure, clad in a bleached gown of linen, a braided rope of vines around her waist, took her place next to Ceoleen. Her newly budded breasts barely lifted the fabric of her bodice. Her feet were bare. A Sidhe of the iochtarach rank, she was not known to anyone.

Her fresh innocence called to the hearts of the fir-Sidhe there. Her shyness prompted the protectiveness of the mna-Sidhe.

Whose call was stronger? Ceoleen's or the unknown contender?

Ailill spoke once more.

"We know Ceoleen, but who might you be, *mo calin*?"

Dipping a deep curtsy of respect, the unknown one replied. "I am Drimin. I seek to raise my rank."

Ailill nodded and gestured to the *Amhranai Mor*, the Great Singer, who rose from his seat next to the High King.

"Here be notes three. You've time until the grains fill this space to compose your song." He took a crystal goblet with a hollow stem and filled the cup with fine granules of sand. Slowly, a thin stream filtered down the stem and into the base. "Begin."

Ceoleen needed no preparation for these three notes had been given to her by Lorcan during pillow talk. But she waited, not wishing to appear too eager or too easy.

She opened her mouth to speak, but was cut off by Drimin's hesitant voice.

"I'm ready."

The *Amhranai Mor* gestured for her to start.

Drimin cleared her throat and out poured a tune of delicate grace. All were captivated by the melody. The *Amhranai Mor* smiled as the final notes died away.

Applause filled the hall while Drimin bowed her head in humble acceptance.

The Amhranai Mor turned to Ceoleen. "Are you ready?"

Ceoleen nodded and took a calm, steadying breath. As lovely as Drimin's tune was, she knew hers was better.

Ceoleen's voice soared with passion. Visions of lovers, sweaty and straining in the throes of desire, appeared before all within the hall. The fir-Sidhe sought out the lips of their mates and kissed them. A handful, carried away with the lustful melody, lifted their lovers onto their laps and flashed out of the hall back to their bedchambers.

As the last notes burned into ashes, Ceoleen cast a satisfied glance at her competitor. Frenzied clapping filled the hall.

The Amhranai Mor raised his right hand above his head for silence. "The test has been won by Ceoleen." He turned his gaze around the Hall at those who remained. "But since there are two seekers, and only one place open, we must have another test. Here are three more notes. You have the same amount of time to compose this song."

With a clear ringing voice, he offered another group of tones and turned over the timer.

This time neither competitor spoke until the last grain filled the bottom of the goblet.

"Since Drimin went first, Ceoleen may begin this time."

Ceoleen nodded. Unlike the first song that was fast and furious, this melody was slow and seductive. She glided around the circle, pausing at those fir-Sidhe seated alone and gazing into their eyes, silently offering not only her music, but her body should they applaud her melody.

Approaching Ailill, she boldly swayed before him, cupping her breasts. Her eyes closed in rapture, she flung her head back as she let the song take hold.

The music ended abruptly and Ceoleen opened her eyes. Ailill's gaze locked with hers, but his mate's hand clawed at his arm, and he turned away.

The fir-Sidhe stamped their feet and pounded their goblets on the tables.

The mna-Sidhe remained silent.

The Amhranai Mor once more raised a hand for quiet. "Now, Drimin. Your turn."

This tune was lively, filled with the joy of spring and the delights of nature. Drimin, too, moved around the circle, but she paused at the female Sidhe. Her tune spoke of babies and newborn creatures of the forest and fields. The women melted as they thought of innocent infants. Drimin skipped from place to place and stopped before Ailill's mate. The *Ard Bánríon*, the High Queen, longed for a babe of her own and caressed Ailill's arm. She darted a look to the Amhranai Mor and he nodded.

"Drimin wins this round. We have a tie."

Pandemonium ensued until Ailill raised his hand.

"One final test must decide the winner." He gazed around the hall. "Who shall grace our inner circle? Ceoleen, Drimin, wait outside."

Ceoleen glanced at the unassuming young Sidhe. She wet her lips in anticipation. She knew her beauty far outshone Drimin's. She left the hall with Drimin, sure that she would win the day.

As soon as the two Sidhe left, Neasa, Ailill's mate spoke. "Let the voting be by ballot."

There being no reason not to determine the most beautiful by this method, a box with small red and brown feathers was passed around from table to table. The feather of choice was then placed in a leather bag. The color of the bird magically created would determine the winner.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the outer hall, Ceoleen and Drimin paced back and forth. Ceoleen eyed the sparrow-like Sidhe with unconcealed curiosity.

"I've not seen you at the hall before? Why now?"

Drimin shrugged. "I've only my voice to rely upon. I've no family, no beauty to compare to yours. No chance of enticing a well-connected lover to raise my rank." She sighed. "'Tis little doubt that I'll have to wait another cycle; there's no way my beauty will cast the balance in my favor."

Ceoleen ran her slim fingers through her curls and wet her lips. A small dab of pity touched her heart. "There's no telling which of us will win. 'Tis in the hands of the rest of the Sidhe."

The door to the Great Hall opened then and Lorcan gestured the two Sidhe inside. As Ceoleen passed by him, he snagged her hand, pulling her to a stop. His voice buzzed like an angry bee. "You'll be mine soon. You'll beg to be mine."

Ceoleen wrenched away her hand. "We'll see about that."

The two contenders moved to the center of the circle. The faces of the Sidhe in the hall revealed nothing. The Amhranai Mor rose, holding aloft a leather bag.

"As you can see, we have not opened the bag. The bird that flies out will determine the winner." With a deft gesture, he loosened the neck. Out flew a drab little wren that darted around the hall.

Applause thundered as Drimin took a seat at one of the inner tables.

Ceoleen's scream of rage assaulted the ears of the Gaillimh Sidhe.

"No! No! 'Tis not right. I've been cheated! My beauty and talent far outshines Drimin's! I can sing better and look more beautiful any day of the week!"

The Amhranai Mor rose and pounded the table for silence. "You dare to impugn the honor of this gathering?" He shook his head. "Your overweening conceit and vanity go too far, Ceoleen. And you shall be punished." He thought for a moment, then nodded as though agreeing with some unseen advisor. "Listen to your punishment, your curse."

He stepped into the circle and stood before the seething female. With a wave of his hand, he held her immobile. Taking a small, polished copper piece, he held it before her face. Clearing his throat, he pronounced her punishment.

“All you may utter is one short phrase to give you solace the long, lonely days. Whosoever finishes this song for ye, your rightful spouse he shall be. The very last sight you shall see is your beautiful face, little comfort though it be. Until you can see and hear with your heart, this mallacht from you will never depart. All here within the hall mark this day and what I say.”

Tears fell from Ceoleen’s eyes as she realized the extent of her foolishness.

“But where shall I live? How shall I live?”

A little bullfinch appeared on the shoulder of the Amhranai Mor. “In a fairy ring in the forest. Its power shall shelter you from the harsh weather. This bullfinch shall bring you food and clothing. And this shall be your melody.” He smiled and sang, “*Dé Luain, Dé Máirt, Dé Luain, Dé Máirt,*” and stopped.

“But it’s not done!” Ceoleen cried. “I’ll go mad wanting to finish it!”

The Amhranai Mor shook his head. “Nay, you’ll not go mad. You’ll only wish you will!”

Once more Ceoleen opened her mouth to speak, but all that she uttered was the unfinished song. With a wave of his hand, the Amhranai Mor flickered the beautiful Sidhe and the little bullfinch to the fairy ring.

For a moment there was stunned silence in the hall. It had all happened so quickly. But there was a new member of the Ard Sidhe to welcome, and in the ensuing gaiety, the fate of Ceoleen was forgotten.

Except for Neasa and Lorcan. As the Sidhe mingled, these two found their way to each other. Moving to a secluded corner, they spoke quietly and quickly to each other.

“She condemned herself,” Lorcan said. “I didn’t need to lift a finger.”

Neasa nodded. “Aye, the mna-Sidhe outnumber the fir-Sidhe. None of us wished to have one as beautiful as she in our midst to tempt our mates. Drimin is no threat.”

“And the mallacht placed on Ceoleen? It seems easy to fulfill.”

Neasa smiled, though it didn’t reach her eyes. “Not the last part. And I doubt any will find her where I suggested the Amhranai Mor send her. No one will hear her song save the forest creatures. She’ll languish there forever!”

Lorcan bowed deeply to the Ard Bánríon. “You are both wise and beautiful.”

She acknowledged his words with an elegant dip of her head. “And now, none shall challenge that.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Ceoleen stumbled on a small grassy divot. She knew it was nightfall only because of the slight change in temperature. She sat down on the soft lawn and bent her head in her hands. Only one day, and already she regretted her impetuous words. She felt the thin claws of the bullfinch upon her shoulder and heard its cheerful tones.

She couldn’t even speak to it to thank it for its company. With a delicate touch, she caressed its downy head, hoping it would understand her gratitude. The bird darted its beak at her cheek and rubbed its head against her jaw, then flew off. Ceoleen smiled. She yearned to break into song to thank her tiny comforter.

Tears fell as she opened her mouth and all that came forth was her beautiful voice singing the same damned phrase. She sank to the ground and let her grief overwhelm her. High in the ash tree the bullfinch sang a sad song for its fairy companion.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Three hundred years later*

Ceoleen raised her head to the warmth of the sun and held out her hand, palm up. Her cheerful companion lit gracefully on her soft flesh. Ceoleen made the gesture for food and the winged creature pecked once for “yes.”

Moving six paces forward from her bed of feathers gathered into bag woven from the silken strands of hundreds of cobwebs, Ceoleen knelt and picked up the meal of nuts and berries placed on a lily pad leaf.

Still as young and beautiful as on the day she was cursed so many years ago, Ceoleen had learned over the centuries to communicate with gestures with her feathered friend.

Each day she would sing the unfinished song, hoping that someone would hear it and complete the tune. Though she knew it not, no mortal or Sidhe had come near her ring in all those years. It was an extra little gift from Lorcan, who had found her a hundred years after she’d been banished. Her heart at that time was still cursed by vanity and each day she bemoaned her inability to gaze upon her perfect features. Taking advantage of this, Lorcan added his own mallacht.

“No one shall hear, no one shall see. For two hundred more years alone you shall be.”

’Twas a feeble curse, but all he had the power to do.

And over those two hundred more years, Ceoleen had changed. Not being able to see her face, she began to see with her heart. She learned to share what she could with her little friend and, since it had not been forbidden, other forest creatures visited her tiny world.

She found she could change a few things about the magical notes -- the tempo and rhythm, how softly and how loudly she could sing the phrase. Often she would entertain the denizens of the woods who ventured close.

But she ached for a companion -- mortal or Sidhe -- who could give her comfort that her animal friends couldn’t.

Now as she finished breaking her fast, she sang her phrase with a longing that broke the hearts of all who heard her.

She rose, raised her hands to the gods, closed her eyes and sang over and over the same broken phrase.

“Dé Luain, Dé Máirt, Dé Lauain, Dé Máirt, Dé Luain, Dé Máirt ...”

*“Dé Céadaoin!”*

### Chapter Three

Donal Bachtcam -- Donal Crooked Back, as people now knew Donal Bawn -- pulled his coarsely woven shirt over his head and stretched. Here, deep within the forests of Erin, his body was as straight and strong as in the days before Ogma had placed a curse upon him.

The warmth of the sun filtered through the russet leaves clinging to the branches and caressed his skin. Somehow, no matter how gray the day, the sun managed to get through and warm him. Sometimes it felt as though it embraced him.

He took a moment to chant his anthem, as he did each morning, in the vain hope that one day his voice would return forever.

*“The warbling of the lark be in my voice. The nightingale’s call be in my voice. The whippoorwill’s trill be in my voice. The beat of the heart be in my voice. The tears of the heart be in my voice. The joy of the world be in my voice. May my voice ring true for those who hear it.”*

He bowed his head in futile supplication, then, taking a deep, cleansing breath, continued washing up.

He stripped off his breeches and his cock sprang free. He grimaced, praying the water in the sheltered pond would cool off his unruly penis. He cursed. Ten years. Ten years of

waking up with his prick in his hand and his hand covered with evidence of yet another wet dream.

Not even the coins he earned doing the odd carpentry job could lure a female to ease his need. He'd find a clearing in the woods or glen near a village and build a small hut. The more kind-hearted village folk would leave him a chair or two that needed mending or a request to build furniture.

But people could be cruel.

Taunts and sometimes even physical attacks would often send his spirits plummeting to the depths of despair and his body aching and bleeding.

After awhile, he stayed away completely from the villages he passed as he wandered through the midlands.

He learned to live off the land. He fished for salmon in the rivers and used the gifts of nature to augment his diet.

He could have traveled anywhere he wished, but he kept heading west toward Gaillimh -- County Galway, toward the Great Ocean, as though compelled to do so.

This day he'd made the decision to rest a while before continuing his journey. He was weary, both in body and spirit.

He stepped gingerly into the cool water and slowly struck out towards the center of the pond. He dove beneath the clear depths and swam until his lungs were near to bursting. As he broke through to the surface, the faint sound of singing whispered in his ears.

The purity and beauty of the voice smote his heart. He splashed back to the bank, and towed off his body, all the while straining to hear the music more clearly. He cocked his head, trying to pinpoint the sound's direction.

Dressing quickly, he scooped up his travel bag and, moving as quietly as he could, set out after the melody's siren call.

It was driving him mad.

The closer he got, the clearer it was that the melody consisted of the same phrase sung over and over and over. “*Monday, Tuesday, Monday, Tuesday.*” Could the singer not know the ending? ’Twas so clear to him. How could it not be clear to the musician? That beautiful female voice, for female it was, he could tell now, sang the notes sometimes fast, sometimes slow, sometimes loud, and sometimes soft. Sometimes the rhythm changed, but never the notes themselves.

The voice grew louder and louder as the trees thinned out and Donal caught glimpses of sunlight peeking through the gaps in the woods.

He became more cautious as he drew closer to the song. He crept through the bushes, gently shifting them away until he finally caught sight of the singer.

By the gods, ’twas a beauteous female Sidhe! She stood in the middle of a fairy ring, her slender arms upraised, and her head flung back, her eyes shut. Her glorious fiery hair reached the forest floor. Dressed in a simple, lacy gown, her feet bare, she looked more like a goddess than a fairy.

Around her gathered rabbits, foxes, butterflies, red squirrels, and all manner of birds. One, a bullfinch, sat on the vision’s shoulder, singing in unison with the Sidhe.

For a moment, Donal looked his fill, treasuring the sight, for he knew that should she become aware of his presence and see him, she’d run off screaming. Now, while her eyes were shut, he’d finish the song for her. His voice would still be strong and true. If he remained hidden, perhaps he’d see what color her eyes were when they sprang open with surprise.

*“Dé Luain, Dé Máirt, Dé Luain, Dé Máirt, Dé Luain, Dé Máirt ...”*

*“Dé Céadaoin!”*

\* \* \* \* \*

Ceoleen's eyes opened wide and her hands fell to her side. Who had finished her song? She peered in vain through her sightless eyes. The voice had come from just beyond the fairy ring. 'Twas a man's voice, deep and velvety. It set shivers through her body. Without thought, she called out. "Who's there?"

And gasped.

Part of the curse had been lifted! Her voice was her own again. And then she remembered the rest of the curse and her hope soared.

The voice must be that of her spouse!

She took a step forward. "Please, I beg of you, don't leave me. Please, tell me your name. You're my hero, *mo laoch*. Please, I can't see you. Speak to me, please." She stretched out her arms, blindly seeking to find the singer. She moved to the edge of the ring. Up until this time, she'd not been able to go outside it. Now, she stumbled past the perimeter and set off towards the woods, heedless of the branches that snapped at her face. "Please speak again, please."

Tears welled in her eyes and streamed down her pale cheeks as she crashed through bushes. She knew she was acting foolishly, but she was desperate. Suddenly, she tripped over a tree root and sprawled on the ground. Helplessly, she pillowed her head on her bruised arms and wept.

"Please, *mo calin geal*, my bright, shining girl, don't cry."

Ceoleen raised her head. And felt a warm hand caress her face.

"Is it you, *mo laoch*? Why did you not answer me?"

A strong hand lifted her to her feet and lightly brushed the leaves and dirt from her. She arched up under the tender touch.

"I'm no hero, just a poor wanderer. When I heard your song, I knew I had to finish it. My name is Donal ... Bawn. And you, *mo calin*, what is your name and what is your story?"

He offered his arm and led her back to the fairy ring. Overhead, the bullfinch darted here and there. All the other woodland creatures had fled.

Donal gazed intently at the glorious Sidhe leaning on him.

Blind. Her stunning emerald green eyes saw nothing. When he watched her stumble from the ring, he realized that she couldn't see him. That must have been why she heard his true voice. That must be why he still stood straight and tall. But would that situation last?

"My name is Ceoleen and here is my tale."

He reclined against the whitebeam tree while she sat near him, her legs curled under her as she told him her sad story. She leaned toward him, sensing his presence.

Her voice was husky, arousing. And frustrating. How could he be thinking of taking advantage of a blind woman?

But he was.

"Ah, *mo mhuirnin*, and I thought my lot in life was hard and long. 'Tis nothing compared to what yours has been." He smiled, hoping she could hear the smile in his voice as he teased her. "And, you not looking a day over one hundred."

She laughed out loud, the sound startling the tiny, feathered creature hovering above.

"I'm glad my appearance pleases you." She frowned. "But how came you here? I can tell by your accent you're not from this part of the world. Yet you're the first person that's ever found me."

"I've not the slightest notion why I came this way. But I've always felt the urge to journey to the west toward the setting sun. As to why I left my home?" He paused, his mind racing. He couldn't tell her the whole truth. He'd offer part of the tale. It wouldn't be a lie then. "I angered Ogma, the High King of the Sidhe of Tiobraid Árann. I boasted of my voice and he put a curse on me that my voice should sound like the screeching of a reed should any see me. I've stayed away from the villages and towns, seeking the shelter of the woods and

valleys. You're the first to have heard my true voice in ten years. When I heard your song I could not resist the temptation to finish it."

Ceoleen nodded. "So my blindness released you from your curse." She smiled and 'twas like the sun coming out from behind the clouds. "'Tis not only my hero you are, but my spouse." She giggled, a sound that tickled his ears. "Should you be as ugly as a wild boar, 'tis no matter. I am yours." She reached out her soft hand and he grasped it, placing a kiss in her palm. Her eyes closed. "Ah, that feels so good. I've not felt the lips of another in so long." She raised her other hand toward him. "May I touch your face?"

Donal took her hands and placed them on his cheeks, still lightly holding onto her arms as she traced the outline of his features. Her fingers moved over him like gossamer. She rose to her knees to more easily feel him. And he closed his eyes at the sight of those beautiful breasts straining against the flimsy cobweb lace of her gown.

He wanted to crush her in his arms. Devour her sweetness. Run his fingers through the curls on her head and between her legs. Sink his fingers, tongue, and cock in her honeyed wetness.

He was a bastard.

His grip on her arms tightened.

"Donal, you're hurting me. I want to feel the rest of you. Please, let me."

He pushed her back on her heels, breaking contact with her seeking hands. "Nay, *a stór*, I can't allow that."

She sank down, her legs giving out beneath her, and shook her head. "I don't understand. Why not?"

He hardened his heart. If he gave in to her now, and then later he should become hunched? Nay, let her think him domineering. In fact ...

His voice harsh, he answered her.

“Because I will it so.” He paused. “Do you truly wish to be my spouse? To cater to my every whim? To satisfy my every want?”

Her voice trembled but she responded at once. “Aye.”

“Then listen well. I shall never hurt you, but the only way I will make love with you is with your hands bound. Do you agree to this? Else I shall leave you.”

Ceoleen shivered. Never had she allowed any of the fir-Sidhe to restrain her. In fact, ’twas she who took the dominant position. Perhaps that was why none of her fairy lovers had truly satisfied her. She took a trembling breath. Her hands remembered the strong, proud features of Donal Bawn. Her body remembered his large, rough hands. Would the rest of him be as large? As strong? Would his cock be as powerful as his voice? She licked her lips. A fire started in her belly. And she answered him again.

“I will do as you command.”

Donal let out his breath. He had thought she would send him packing.

“Then let us get to know each other, *a ghrá*.” He trailed his hand between her breasts, dipping in the curve of her belly, down to her mound, cupping it. He could feel the soft curls beneath the wisp of a gown she wore and his fingers clutched her between her thighs.

She moaned, arching beneath his touch. Her hands reached out and he pushed them aside.

“Nay. Remember your promise. Now stay where you are. I’ll get what I need from my bags.”

Donal left the ringed mound and picked up his travel bag. Rummaging through it, he found a soft woolen scarf. ’Twould do.

Ceoleen had shifted so that she leaned against the whitebeam tree. Perfect.

She raised her head, sensing his presence as he drew near.

“Lift your arms above your head and cross your wrists.”

Obedying him without question, she drew her slim arms up, arching her back as she did so, thrusting her breasts forward.

Donal's cock stirred and he barely contained a groan. He knelt down beside her and quickly tied her hands together then wrapped the trailing ends of the scarf around the tree. There, enough play so that she wouldn't hurt herself, and tied securely so that she couldn't get loose.

"Are you all right, a stór? 'Tis not too tight?"

Ceoleen twisted her body and pulled at the bonds.

"'Tis fine. They're soft against my skin." She smiled and shifted her legs, the hem of her gown inching up, offering Donal a glimpse of her dimpled knees.

His prick hardened even more, throbbing, demanding. He pulled off his breeches, tossing them aside without care.

"I want you, *a cuisle*. You are the pulse beating in my body." His hands shook as he lifted the gown above her waist. He knelt between her legs and cupped her buttocks, raising her to his mouth, then stopped.

"Swear to me that you'll not close your legs, else I'll need to stake them open."

Ceoleen nodded. "I swear."

He thrust his tongue deep within her, seeking and finding the cream. He lapped it up like a starving man as indeed he was. She writhed within his grasp like a wild cat.

And came apart in his hands. Her climax shook her.

Donal felt every tremor, exalting in his ability to satisfy her. As the last shudder raced through her, she sagged. With infinite tenderness, he lowered her to the ground.

Her head lolled against her bound arms. She'd fainted. He crouched by her side, his face level with hers, and placed a kiss on her lips.

"Wake up, *a stóirín*, my little treasure. I've another treat for you."

Ceoleen heard his rich voice through the haze of the afterglow of her orgasm. She opened her eyes, wishing with all her heart that she could see him.

She smiled dreamily at him. “*A ghrá mo chroi*, I thought at first you were naught but a dream.”

He brushed the curls from her forehead. “Nay, ’tis real I am. And I’ve something special for you.” He grinned, his heart breaking a bit that she couldn’t see the love blossoming in his eyes. “Would you like a candy stick?”

She nodded.

“Then open wide your mouth and see how much you can suck.”

Like a fledging bird, she opened her lips. Donal stood and placed his legs to either side of her body, positioning his cock so that it hovered near her mouth. He grabbed hold of the tree, realizing that he’d need all the support it offered when Ceoleen took him between her soft lips.

“Now, *a ghrá*, lean forward just a bit and see can you find the treat I’ve got for you.”

Ceoleen smelled the scent of male arousal and knew what awaited her. Unerringly she found the tip of his cock, a drop of pre-cum at its tip. She darted out her tongue to lick it, letting her tongue swirl around his plumed head. By the gods, he was huge!

He pushed forward a bit, thrusting another inch into her willing mouth.. How much could she take, he wondered? A great deal, it seemed. He moaned. She licked him, bit down lightly. He tried a gentle thrust. She took it. Another thrust. And another. Another. Short, swift, thrusts until he came in a burst, his come almost gagging her as she swallowed convulsively. He held on to the tree so tightly he felt the splinters beneath his nails. He pulled out and she gasped, trying to catch her breath.

He caught his first. “Ceoleen, Ceoleen, *tá mo chroí istigh ionat*. My heart is within you, my sweet love.”

Tears seeped from beneath her eyes. “And mine within you, my darling.”

Donal untied her and gathered her in his arms. She cuddled against him, being careful to keep her hands pressed against his chest.

He dragged the gown the rest of the way down her arms and slipped it off, and she was totally naked in his arms. He bent his head and took one nipple in his mouth, sucking hard. Instinctively, she tried to anchor herself by throwing her hands over his shoulder, but he pushed her back. Now she lay like an offering to the gods against his arms, her hands falling limply to her side. Her crimson hair tangled beneath them as though they reclined on a bed of fire. His hard, tanned body contrasted with her creamy skin. Her tits were white as swan's down, her nipples as red as the whitebeam berries.

And she was his.

He rolled her over in his arms, admiring the curves of her buttocks. Slipping from beneath her, he grasped her wrists again.

"Should I not turn over, *a ghrá?*"

"Nay. I want you just as you are." Quickly, he looped the scarf around her wrists and tied her to the tree once more, but this time, he made her kneel.

"Have you ever made love this way, *a stór?*"

She shook her head. "Nay. I've let no fir-Sidhe dominate me. I was too proud. I rode them." She sneered. "And they let me."

Donal smacked her lightly on the ass. "No woman has ever ruled me." He bent and kissed the slight pink mark he'd left. "Unless I let them."

He lifted her until she was set where he liked her. Carefully, since she'd never been taken this way, he sank into her body. He could feel her stretching to accommodate his great size.

"Are you all right, *a cuisle?* I'll stop if you ..."

"Nay! Don't stop. More. I can take more."

Inch by inch he gave her his length until he was seated almost to the hilt. He stopped again.

“Why did you stop? I know you’ve more left to give me.”

“Tis too much. I’m too big for you.”

She pushed back. “Do it!”

“Grab hold of the knob of the tree and brace yourself.”

With one last push, he was there. A sharp cry greeted his arrival.

“Ceoleen?”

“By the gods, Donal. Don’t stop now. Fuck me!”

Grabbing hold of her hands and the knob of the tree, he began a steady pumping motion. Faster and faster until he felt like a great, crazed bull. He couldn’t stop. He felt her come, but he hadn’t yet and even as she swayed beneath him, he supported her with one arm. He wrenched the scarf from around the tree, tearing the knot and holding her limp body as he gritted his teeth and fucked her until his climax struck and he came with a triumphant roar.

He slipped from her body and she collapsed on the ground, the strands of her hair like streams of blood trailing on her white limbs and onto the ground like scarlet pools.

Finally, after ten years, he was satiated.

And ashamed.

## Chapter Four

Donal knelt by Ceoleen. Though her eyes were shut, he could tell she was awake.

“Forgive me, *a ghrá*. I’m a bastard. I have no excuse for my actions; I acted only to satisfy my own needs.”

He lifted her into his arms and untied the remnants of the scarf. Her skin was reddened. Tiny beads of blood welled up in a ring around her wrists. Donal raised her hands to his lips and kissed her bruised flesh, licking away the cherry-red drops. Tears fell from his eyes onto her hands.

“My poor darling, can you forgive me?” He bent his head, burying it in her cupped hand.

Ceoleen’s hand quivered as she caressed his thick hair. “Oh, *fíorghrá*, my true love, ’tis no reason to weep. ’Twas only a little hurt. Truth be told, I liked it. All of it.” She licked her lips. “In fact, I want even more.” She drew him to her breasts. “A great deal more.”

He leaned into her, and she sank onto the grassy mound. Pulling away, he found the torn scarf and tied her once more with a shortened length to the whitebeam tree.

He straddled her body, bringing his cock to the apex of her thighs. Spreading her open for his entry, he delved among the curls there. She was ready for him. Hot, slick, her channel

wide enough to take his thickness, deep enough to take him all in. His penis hardened. He took his slick fingers and brought them to her lips.

“Taste yourself, *a mhuirnin dilis*, my sweet little love. And ’tis sweet you are. Like honey. Taste and see for yourself.”

Obediently, she sucked on the fingers he pressed to her mouth. Salty and musky, hardly like honey to her. Maybe to him? But arousing, yes. Like some sort of love potion, it stirred her senses. Her nipples tightened and she moaned.

Donal closed his eyes as the beautiful Sidhe suckled. He’d never seen a more erotic sight than her lush lips wrapped around his fingers. No, her lips on his prick would be even more erotic. No, his cock sinking into her cunt would be more erotic yet. He shook his head. No more time to waste. Now.

He lifted her bottom onto his thighs and plunged in. His fingers gripped her slim hips as he plundered her of every last drop of cream. His seed spilled into her core, filling it.

As his cock grew limp, he slipped away. Swiftly he untied her hands and brought her into his arms, raining kisses on her face.

“You’ve made me lovesick, *a ghrá*.”

She smiled. “Then ’tis highly contagious for I feel the same.” She grinned. “And starving, too. You’ve fair worn me out. I need some sustenance.”

He hugged her close even as laughter rumbled in his chest. “Then we’ll eat. I’ll not want you fading away.”

“How about dressing me? I’ve grass poking my bottom!” She smiled. “And though the ring keeps out the harsh weather, I’ve no wish to go naked all the day.”

“And would you deprive me of the sight of your glorious body?”

“In a wink.”

Donal picked up her gown, somewhat tattered and torn. He couldn’t let her wear it in such condition. “I’ll give you one of my shirts. I guess I was a bit too rough with your dress.”

“I’ll look a fright in your shirt.”

He kissed the tip of her nose. “You’d look like a goddess should you be wearing a sack.”  
He rose. “I’ll get my traps and catch a rabbit.”

“No!”

“And why not?”

“All the creatures of the forest are my friends. There are fruits and nuts and berries you can gather instead.”

Donal shrugged. “I passed a stream a ways back. Later I’ll try my hand at catching us some fish. That is if it meets with your approval, *mo Bánríon*.” He bowed and then handed her the shirt from his bag, watching with amusement as she pulled it on and it fell to the tops of her knees.

Ceoleen smiled and raised her chin. “Since I am your queen, you are my subject. You may catch us a fish for the evening. Now, go gather our mid-day meal. My belly is growling for lack of food.”

Thus began the pattern of their days. Each night he’d tie her up loosely to the tree, sleeping with her cradled in his embrace so as not to have her strain her arms. Waking in the morning, they’d wash in the dew gathered in carved wooden cups he’d made. They’d feast on fruits and nuts. And make love. They’d share stories and make love again. Their hunger for each other seemed never to abate.

And they’d sing. Their voices joined together in harmony would make the birds hush. They taught each other the songs they knew and when those were learned, they composed new ones. The forest rang with their voices filled with joy at being released from their curses.

And throughout all the days that followed, Donal never forgot to bind her.

Ceoleen chafed at it. She ached to feel his entire body.

“Can you not trust me, *mo laoch*? I love you, not your muscles.”

“Nay, I can’t risk your leaving me.”

“And why would I be doing that? Why would I leave my big, strapping lover?”

“I can’t tell you.”

And Ceoleen would let it go, seeing as how it saddened him. But she longed to return to the Court of the Gaillimh Sidhe. She wanted to flaunt Donal in the face of all who had hurt her. Soon she began a new assault.

\* \* \* \* \*

“You are the best lover I ever had, *a ghrá*. How I wish I could see the faces of those jealous Sidhe should I return to court with you as my spouse!”

Donal responded without thinking. “Even should we return to your folk, you’d not see their faces ...” And almost bit off his tongue.

Ceoleen turned away from him in his embrace, her voice muffled as she pressed her face to his arms. “’Tis cruel you are for reminding me. You know I meant I’d sense their envy.”

He pushed her hair away from her cheek and placed a kiss on her soft skin. “Forgive me, *fíorghrá*. I spoke without thought. But ’twould kill me were they to taunt you for my ugliness.”

“Ugly? You’ve the features of a god and your voice is better than the Amhranai Mor’s!”

“To your ears. And you’ve no notion of what I truly look like. Nay, ’tis sorry I am that I hurt you, but I cannot agree to journeying to your court.”

She let it drop then for truly she had only a vague idea which direction to travel. But in her mind a seed of restlessness and longing grew. It seemed that the brighter the day, the more she ached to go home.

\* \* \* \* \*

Étaín glowed fiercely. Her spirit burned with envy. Another female had found Donal and made him her love slave. After days of listening to their talk, she had come up with a plan to destroy the hold that the female Sidhe had on him. Once more, she gathered her strength and planted the notion of returning to the Sidhe in Ceoleen's mind. 'Twas easier than what she'd done those many years ago, for Ceoleen did yearn to return home.

Ogma Rí may have been happy with the widow Finn, but Étaín could only warm Donal's body. While he stayed away from people and had no lovers, Étaín was content with embracing Donal with her heat. But now ... now her jealousy surged once more.

She had to get rid of Ceoleen.

The best way to do that was to have her shun Donal once people told her that he was a hunchback.

But how to do that?

Get her back to the Court of the Sidhe. The Sidhe hated ugliness of any kind. They'd see and hear Donal in his cursed state. For cursed was he still. Unless Ceoleen saw Donal in his true form, the curse was not truly broken.

Étaín waited, biding her time as the days flowed into months and the autumn turned to winter and the winter to the spring.

And the magical month of Bealtaine dawned.

\* \* \* \* \*

Ceoleen knelt at the top of the fairy mound. Over the years, she had learned to arrange her long hair by touch into the most intricate of patterns.

But today as the rays of the early spring sun heated her skin, she felt the compulsion to arrange her hair in a lover's knot.

Parting it down the middle with a tortoiseshell comb, she plaited it into two long, twisted lengths, like a rope. Carefully, she brought them forward so that they framed her

breasts, then crossed them beneath and tied them in the back at her waist. Tying a wisp of cobweb lace around her waist, she was ready for Donal's return.

Settling on her knees, she raised her face to the setting sun, lifted her arms, and whispered her plea.

"May my love be captive to my need. May he follow my desires in word and deed. May he satisfy my body's thirst. May he be my last love as he is my first."

She cupped her breasts and began to sway, humming a seductive tune under her breath. Her pulse quickened as she envisioned Donal caressing her. He'd kneel behind her and press his massive cock between her cheeks. His hands would twine with hers as he fondled her nipples. His warm breath would waft against her ear as he murmured words of love. Then his hand would stray lower to the soft curls between her thighs and he'd push his fingers deep within her hot, wet center. It was too much.

Ceoleen fell forward, thrusting against the forest floor as though Donal was fucking her. Then she felt her ass being lifted and a thick cock ramming her. Donal.

"I was watching you. All this time I was watching you. Watching you wrap your hair around your tits. Watching you fondle yourself. Watching you fuck the very ground. I couldn't take it any more." He withdrew his cock, then slammed it into her again. "The. Only. One. Who. Will. Ever. Satisfy. You. Is. Me. Understand?" With each word, he plunged deeper, harder, and faster until Ceoleen was screaming with ecstasy.

He came with a roar, his seed gushing. Pulling out, he lowered her to the grass and flung his body down next to hers. His heart pounding, he gulped for air.

He rolled over and gazed at her. Her mouth was slack with passion. Her flesh bore bruises around her waist where he had gripped her with so much force. She lay splayed on the soft turf, looking totally satisfied.

"What do you wish of me?"

Ceoleen turned toward the sound of his voice. “What makes you think I wish something from you?”

“And haven’t I lived with you these past months so that I’d be knowing when you’re wanting something?”

She touched his hand. “I’m lonely. I miss the court. Now that I can return there, I’m wanting to.” She placed his hand on her breasts, arching up against it. “Would you not wish to make love in a real bed with a down-filled mattress? Feast on ambrosia? Sip the honeyed mead?”

Donal rose and paced back and forth, unheeding of his nakedness. “I dislike the idea of setting off blindly with no direction in mind, save that of heading west. Is there no one who could lead us?”

All of a sudden, the bullfinch set up a racket.

“Do you think your little friend may know the way?”

Ceoleen tilted her head and lifted her hand, beckoning the bird to light upon it. “Tell me, *a chara*, can you take us home?”

And using the code they’d created she answered.

Yes.

\* \* \* \* \*

The timing could not have been more perfect to leave the security of the fairy mound. The weather was balmy and the days long. Early the next morning they prepared for their journey. Ceoleen added a shawl spun of cobwebs to her few gowns, and she was ready. Donal gathered their belongings, placed them in his travel bags, and folded her clothes in the emptied silky bag they used as a mattress.

“I’m hoping my sight will return when we arrive at the Sidhe. Until then, I’ll be dependent upon you, *a ghrá*, to take care of me.” Her voice lowered. “I hate to be so

helpless.” She raised her face as tears fell down her cheeks. “Why can I not see? Why has only part of the curse been broken?”

Donal drew her into his arms and rocked her. “Hush, *a cuisle*. I care not if you can see me. Perhaps when we return to your home, someone will have the answer.”

Ceoleen nodded, her face brushed against Donal’s bare chest. By now she knew to keep her hands in front of her. They drifted lower, searching until she found the top of his breeches. Shifting the cloth, she dipped her hand deeper inside until she found the coarse hair that ringed the base of his shaft.

His voice rumbled in his chest. “Here, now, what are you after?”

She looked up. “Why, your cock, of course. And what did you think I was looking for?”

Donal lay back, drawing her with him. He loosened his breeches and his cock sprang free. “Now that you’ve found him, why not put him where he belongs?” He lifted her up and then settled her at the tip of his prick. “Sink down upon me and take me in.”

With his hands supporting her, she followed his wishes.

“Oh, yes, that feels good.” She rocked back and forth, her hips undulating. She cupped her breasts and he reached up to join his hands with hers. She fell forward and brushed her tight peaks back and forth against his chest. He brought her mouth to his and kissed her, their tongues caressing.

He loved watching her body move. Her slight belly dimpled as she swayed. She held her hands together above her head as though they were bound.

The sight of her willingly restraining herself excited him. Her long, silky hair enveloped her body, drifting like wispy clouds over her shoulders and gathering in a pool around their entwined bodies.

If she only knew how much he dreaded returning with her to the Court of the Sidhe. He could endure the taunts and mockery, but he couldn’t allow anyone to hurt Ceoleen. If forced to, he knew he would kill any who caused her harm.

And if it came to it, he'd leave her if that were the only way to make things right.

He closed his eyes as a sharp pain pierced his heart. Opening his eyes, he grabbed Ceoleen's hands, brought them between their bodies and increased the pace of their mating. He rained kisses on her face, murmuring words of sex and desire as he made love to her with a heightened feeling of desperation.

Ceoleen sensed his anxiety, his frenzied lovemaking. She pushed off his body and felt around for the woolen tie. "Here, *fíorghrá*, bind me."

Donal stared at the bonds in Ceoleen's hand. She offered them as though she knew that he needed to control the moment. He carried her closer to the whitebeam tree and bound her. He drew her up and thrust his engorged penis deep into her receptive body. His movements were slow and steady as though he had all the time in the world to make love to her. He parted her hair so that it fell like a curtain to either side of her slender neck, revealing its sweet curve. He licked the salty-sweet skin, taking little love bites as he worked his way down to her shoulder. His hands cupped her tits, squeezing them, gently at first and then harder, tweaking the nipples, rolling them between his fingers. He twisted them a bit and she moaned.

"You like that, do you, *a cuisle*? A little harder, maybe?"

She nodded, her voice a jagged sigh. "Yes."

His motion became harder, faster, deeper. He pumped into her, only the strength in his arms keeping her from falling to the ground.

Their harsh pants grew louder as they neared their climax. Sweat poured from them as the sun's rays grew hotter. At last they could bear the sweet, painful pressure no more.

Ceoleen cried out as Donal came. His hand gripped her bound ones as she joined him in mindless ecstasy.

She sagged against the ties and he quickly released her. Holding her naked body in his arms, fondling her breasts and downy mound, he played with her almost like a child plays

with a beloved toy. Yet this was no toy, but a demanding, needy female who rubbed her body against his and begged to be fucked. Again.

“Donal, I want you. I adore you. Let me show you how much.”

She turned, moving down his body until her mouth was level with his cock. Avidly, she took him as deep as she could in her mouth and sucked. She twirled her tongue around his prick and licked the mixture of sweat and come from his skin. She started up a rhythmic suction and his cock hardened once more. One last, deep, strong suckling and he came in her mouth, filling it with his cream. She swallowed and slipped to the ground where she lay, totally limp.

“I will love you forever.”

She heard Donal’s voice and smiled.

Her heart filled with love. “As I will love you.”

## Chapter Five

Ceoleen and Donal set off the next morning. Flitting ahead of them, the little bullfinch led them unerringly toward the Court of the Sidhe.

They skirted the towns and villages, avoiding human contact. Donal feared the reactions of the townspeople were they to see Ceoleen's fairy beauty and his ill-formed body. Her blindness would leave her vulnerable should anything happen to him.

The balmy days were long and they made good time. Donal's hand on Ceoleen never left her arm and prevented her falling, but at each stumble, she'd bite her lip.

At the end of the first day, they stopped within a copse of trees. Donal built a small fire and heated some water with vegetables and herbs for a nourishing soup. Ceoleen slumped back against a hawthorn tree, her head bent.

"I cannot bear being such a burden. We should never have left the fairy ring. We were safe there."

He brought her over a cup of the broth and hunkered down before her, placing the cup in her hand. "We were prisoners there. 'Tis right you were to wish to leave."

Ceoleen sipped some broth, then shook her head. "You could have left at any time, why did you not?"

Putting her cup aside, Donal drew her into his arms and brushed her tousled hair away from her face. Cupping her chin, he gazed deep into her beautiful, sightless eyes. “’Tis well you know I love you, *a ghrá*. I would never leave you.”

He kissed her then, his tongue delving between her lips. His hand drifted down and stroked the curves and valleys of her body. She arched against him like a kitten seeking warmth, almost purring as his caresses grew more heated.

He drew her hands tight together between their bodies, bringing them toward his hardening cock. Her slim fingers found him through the coarse cloth of his breeches and she fondled him.

He moaned against her mouth. He felt her lips curve into a smile as she became more aggressive, loosening the tie on his breeches and shoving them down. His cock sprang free into her talented fingers. She played with him, her hand moving up and down his shaft. Dipping deeper, she fondled his balls.

And squeezed.

He pulled his mouth away and gasped. “Ah, now you’ve gone and done it, *a cuisle*. Seems like we’re going straight to the sweets right here and now.”

He lifted her hands from his thickness and shifted so he could get at his travel bag. Pulling the bindings from it, he quickly tied her hands together and then drew them up above her head. Looping the sash around the tree, he secured her.

“The binding isn’t chafing, *a ghrá*?”

Ceoleen pulled at it and shook her head. “Not a bit, *fiorghrá*.” She flexed her back, thrusting her breasts like an offering for the gods. She licked her lips, the moisture glistening on the plump pink fullness.

She was the most beautiful female he had ever seen and she was his.

But for how long?

Once they returned to the Court of the Sidhe, would she still want him? He sighed and then cursed softly. He wouldn't waste his time with Ceoleen wondering about the future. He'd take each day as it came.

And thank the gods.

Her petulant voice broke through his musings. "Have you fallen asleep then?"

Donal's raucous laughter filled the air, startling the little bullfinch. "I was merely admiring your beauty, *a ghrá geal*."

Pouting, Ceoleen tossed her head, her soft strands falling across her shoulders. "Well, now, you can admire me a bit closer!"

"As you command, *mo Bánríon*. Let me kneel before you and worship you."

Shucking off his breeches, he knelt between her long, white limbs. Savoring the delay, he slowly raised the hem of her gown. The shifting flames of the campfire revealed the deep shadow between her thighs, the secret core that lured him to fold the lacy material above her navel.

The scent of her arousal assaulted him. He bent, burying his face in that beckoning snatch. He stroked her, his tongue flicking her nether lips.

"More." She moaned, writhing against the bonds. Her legs moved restlessly as Donal's agile tongue brought her to sobbing out her need. "More! Don't stop now!"

He raised his face, shifted position, and cupped her buttocks. His prick was so hard it felt like iron. He slipped first one, then two fingers into her wet, warm center.

She whimpered. "Donal? Don't make me beg." Her voice was hoarse. "I'm burning."

He grinned. "Then 'tis up to me to quench that fire."

He lifted her, guided his prick to her pussy, and plunged his cock deep within her. Gods, the feel of her tight sheath surrounding him, welcoming him, gripping his prick and squeezing. His thrusts grew more frenzied as his climax drew closer.

"Too sweet, *a mhuirnin dilis*, my sweet darling, too sweet."

Ceoleen twisted against her bonds, arching against the restraints. She was wet, so wet, creaming for him, coming for him. No other lover could match him.

She licked lips suddenly dry. “Kiss me, *a ghrá*. Hard.”

He bent low, touching his lips to hers, forcing her mouth open. His tongue tangled with hers, his lips bruising her lips.

She moaned against his mouth, inhaling his intoxicating breath. She shifted, brushing her aching breasts against his chest. This was passion, this was desire, something she’d never experienced with any of the Sidhe.

This was love.

Donal’s movements quickened, grew rougher, more frantic yet. Ceoleen met each thrust eagerly. And when their climax struck, it hit them with the strength of a thousand blows, leaving them spent and panting.

As Donal untied her, she smiled like the cat that drank all the cream.

“They’ll be thinking I’ve lost my mind with all the smiling I’ll be doing.”

He frowned, for once thankful she couldn’t see his face. “They surely will, after seeing me.”

Ceoleen reached up and touched his face. “You’ll see, *fiorghrá*. They’ll beg me to share you with them.”

Donal shook his head. He’d already made up his mind. He’d see her to the outskirts of the Court of the Sidhe, then bid her farewell. The little bullfinch could lead her the rest of the way.

\* \* \* \* \*

They crossed the river Shannon their second week out, following, it appeared, in the footsteps of earlier travelers. A rough bridge spanned a narrow length of the river. Their feathered guide urged them on, twittering encouragement.

The days flowed along with nary a drop of rain or rough wind to slow them down. The closer they got to the edge of County Gaillaimh, the more lighthearted Ceoleen became. And the more insatiable.

In that, Donal shared the same feelings. Knowing that soon they'd part, his hunger for her grew more demanding each day.

Their sprightly leader goaded them on more and more. Donal sensed that they were nearing their goal and asked Ceoleen to find out if 'twere true. Using the signs they'd developed over the past three hundred years, she questioned the tiny creature. At her answer, Ceoleen's face lit up and she laughed aloud.

"Oh, *a ghrá geal*, we're almost there. One more day and we'll be at the High Gate!"

Donal's spirit crashed to the bottom of his heart. One more night. 'Twas all he had.

And he'd have to make the best of it.

He made camp swiftly. The fire glowed like amber. Ceoleen hummed the song that had brought them together as she combed out her long hair. Her feet tucked beneath her, the firelight playing on her face, was a sight Donal committed to memory.

It would have to warm him over the remaining lonely years of his life. Already, his cock was aching with need -- a need that would never end.

"Put down the brush, *a cuisle*. I want you. Now."

She stopped, dropped the brush and raised her arms above her head.

"Nay. Turn around and kneel, I want to feel those soft round cheeks between my thighs."

She heard the urgency in his voice and did as she was bid, waiting for him to bind her.

Donal stared at her bowed figure. How he wished he could make love to her just once without binding her. He shuddered. Could he chance it? She swore she loved him. She heard his true voice. Would she not feel his true form? But should she not, should it be that the

love she bore for him was not deep enough, not strong enough ... No. Though it grieved him, he couldn't chance it. He took the bindings from his bag and moved toward her.

Donal bound her hands and knelt behind her. He lifted her ass, flipped over the lace, saw her creamy white skin, and moaned. Fuck it. He yanked down his breeches, his cock springing free, and rammed into her. He held her tightly, pounding into her, keeping her up as he took his pleasure from her. And gave her pleasure.

For the last time.

Ceoleen sagged to the ground, spent, aching from the savagery of Donal's lovemaking. He'd been wild, his arms so tight around her she could scarcely breathe. But she loved it. Loved the wildness, the frenzy, the lack of control. Loved him.

He raised her, her hands still bound, and carried her closer to one of the hawthorn trees nearby. With the swiftness of practice, he secured the ties to the tree, leaving a length to support her weight.

Her breasts were covered by the top of her dress, but the neckline dipped low enough that all he need do was drag it down to reveal the lush globes.

He did.

Her nipples were tight, the areoles pink. The bunched up top of the dress pushed her breasts up, making them even fuller, softer, more succulent.

He straddled her, bent, and took one pointy bud deep into his mouth. He suckled her like a starving man, taking first one then the other into his mouth.

Ceoleen wept with both joy and frustration. Her hands near burned to touch him, hold him. Not just his shaft -- she yearned to embrace his body, draw him near to her heart.

But he wouldn't let her.

So she'd take what she could get and hope that once they entered the High Court, he'd reward her obedience. She felt his cock nudge her thighs apart, felt him sink inch by inch

into her. Her breath hitched as he plumbed her depths. And began to move. His mouth left her breasts and his fingers clutched her waist, then moved upward, holding her.

The two moved faster, mortal and Sidhe, the silence of the night disturbed by the sounds of their lovemaking.

And their cries were so loud they knocked at the High Gate.

And awoke Lorcan.

\* \* \* \* \*

Though it had been three hundred years since Lorcan had heard the voice of Geoleen raised in ecstasy, he recognized the sound. Bolt upright he sat in his bed, the female Sidhe next to him slumbering on.

“Tis not possible. She’s miles and miles away, the bitch.” He shook the *iochtorach*-Sidhe awake and shoved her off the bed. “Out! Now.”

The lower ranking Sidhe blinked eyes filled with sleep dust. Naked and bemused, she stared up at her lover. “*A ghrá*, what’s the matter?”

He tossed her her shift before answering. “Dress yourself. Not only are you a disappointment in bed, but you’re deaf, too! Did you not hear the sound of a woman being fucked?”

The little Sidhe shook her head. “I heard nothing, Lorcan. You fair wore me out. I slept like a rock.” Dressed, she rose and walked to the bedroom door. “As for me being a disappointment in bed, ’twas only because you yourself are a horrible lover!”

With that, she flickered out of the room.

Lorcan threw on some breeches and flickered away to the woods outside the High Gate. Over the past two hundred years, he’d gained some skills, one of which was the ability to become as small as a flea. Doing so now, he flitted towards where the passionate sounds came from.

He hid atop a mushroom as his former lover writhed in the throes of passion, her hands bound, beneath the hulking form of a hunchback!

Still blind, then, and desperate to be fucked. But why had she returned? Had the hunchback finished her song for her then? All he heard from her now were moans and whimpers, not a single word. He remained motionless, watching as she finally sagged, spent, and the hunchback released her. Lorcan listened intently, waiting to hear them speak.

*“A mhuirnin, my darling, a stóirín, I’ll never forget this night.”*

The voice of the hunchback smote Lorcan’s ears. ’Twas thin and reedy, as cracked as his back. Why was Ceoleen with him? How could he have released her from her curse? But he must have for she spoke, her voice filled with tenderness.

*“Fíorghrá, ’twas as wonderful as the first time. But why do you sound so sad? Come, and sing with me. ’Twill ease your spirit.”* Adjusting her gown, she began a lilting love song and the hunchback joined in, his voice a croak.

So, then, blind she still was and deaf to the sounds of the mortal’s voice. ’Twas more than likely that she was unaware of the man’s deformity.

Lorcan forced himself to listen through to the end of the tune, then waited to see what would next transpire.

*“Tomorrow, when we reach the High Court, I want you to sing the song that saved me. ’Twill make an excellent introduction.”*

A sorrowful expression crossed the man’s face. *“A cuisle, I will not join you at court.”*

*“Donal, no!”*

He shook his head. “I will not give them the chance to mock you. You’re close enough so that your little friend can guide you. I’ll tie the scarf to your hand and she’ll carry the other end in her beak. ’Twill only be for a short while.”

Lorcan smiled. There would be a chance for more revenge in it for him were the hunchback to return with Ceoleen. He knew not what form it would take, but he'd think of something! Taking a breath, he willed himself to his full form and strolled into the clearing.

*“Cead mile failte, Ceoleen. Welcome home!”*

## Chapter Six

“Lorcan?”

He bowed, his bent head shielding his look of revulsion. “Indeed, *a ghrá*.”

Ceoleen sneered. “*A ghrá*? Never was I your love! Were you spying on us?”

Donal took a step toward the handsome Sidhe, his fist raised. “Aye, why *were* you lurking about?”

The handsome fear-Sidhe laid his hand on his heart. “Why, I heard your voice, Ceoleen and came rushing to welcome you and your ...?”

Ceoleen raised her chin. “My mate, Donal. ’Twas his beautiful voice finishing my song that saved me.” She raised her chin another inch. “And now we’ve returned so that I may introduce him to the High Court.” She sighed. “And, truth be told, I missed my home.” Her voice took on a tone of disgust. “But not you.”

Lorcan tried to contain his anger at his former bedmate’s distaste. He never thought he’d have another chance to vent his hatred for her. Now that he had risen in rank, he had even more influence in the court. For a time, he’d even been the *Ard Bánríon*’s lover. Until he was discovered by the *Ard Rí*. Fortunately, he had been able to convince the regal Sidhe

to overlook his transgression. It took only the mention of a certain assignation of the king with a lowly *iochtorach*-Sidhe for Ailill to let him leave with his life.

So he tamped down his animosity. “I’ve learned forgiveness, *a chara*. Please, return to us with your ... noble lover. I’m sure all will welcome you to the court.”

Donal trusted not the fear-Sidhe, but he knew how eagerly Ceoleen yearned for home. He couldn’t leave her now. He drew her into his arms and whispered in her ear. “Take us to your home, *a stóirín*.”

Ceoleen nodded and whisked them to her cottage, leaving Lorcan alone and fulminating with anger.

\* \* \* \* \*

The cottage was as if she had just left it. A brass-bound trunk rested at the foot of her bed. An elegantly carved open cupboard held bowls, jugs, and plates. Chairs with woven rush seats and cunningly incised backs sat around a table polished so that you could see your face in the smooth ash wood. Donal described it all to her so that she knew ’twas so.

And all the items were carved, engraved, gilded, studded with jewels.

He gawked at the display. The beauty and wealth that Ceoleen possessed boggled his mind.

She cocked her head. “Well, then, what do you think of my home?”

“It’s like nothing I’ve ever seen before. ’Tis glorious.” He sighed. “I could ne’er approach the skill of the craftsman who created your things.”

Ceoleen smiled. “Ah, but they use magic as the finishing touch. You use your love of the craft, do you not?”

He drew her into his arms, resting his chin atop her head. “How would you be knowing this? I’ve not put hammer to nail in all the months we’ve been together.”

Ceoleen snuggled closer to Donal. "Because of the care and love you gave me. 'Twould make sense that you do everything else with the same loving touch."

"There's no doubt that I love to touch you, *a stóirín*." He raised her head and kissed her. "Tell me where to put our gear and then I'll show you just how much I love touching you."

Ceoleen giggled. "'Twill have to wait. 'Tis almost time for the High Court to gather. We'll be needing to dress in our finest to present a good image." She smiled. "Now that I'm home, I can whisk you an outfit fit for a prince, *florghrá*."

Before he could demur, Ceoleen made a pass with her hand. Draped over the chair lay a silky shirt, blue as the waters of Lough Derg, breeches of the softest suede, and knee-high boots of shiny black leather. A gold chain, at the end of which dangled a large ruby, lay on the table.

"For you, *a ghrá geal*. And you've no need to worry about the fit. 'Twill stretch where needed." She stepped toward him and ran her hands down his front until she found his shaft and stroked it. "And I think you'll be needing some here."

Donal picked up the garments Ceoleen had created for him. Shucking off his worn, travel-stained clothing, he held the new ones against him. They were a perfect fit. For the moment.

A basin and pitcher of water popped out on top of the table.

"Freshen up, *a ghrá*. 'Twill have to do for now."

With a good deal of trepidation in his heart, he complied. After splashing water on his body, he donned the new clothing. They clung to him like a lover's grip, outlining his masculinity. The boots molded to his calves with ample room for his toes. He clasped the chain around his neck, the ruby falling to his collarbone. The open neck of his shirt framed the jewel and revealed the fine hair on his chest.

He seemed the very image of royalty.

He felt like a fool.

While he was dressing, Ceoleen had neatened up her appearance. Using her Sidhe skills, she fashioned a gown that took away Donal's breath.

It was made of some gleaming gold material that shaped itself to her luscious form. Every curve, every line was displayed for all to see. Her hair was curled in intricate swirls and whirls atop her head. She twirled around and he saw that the back of the gown dipped way down to the base of her spine. She moved back and forth across the room, her hips swaying to some unheard melody.

He wanted to rip the dress from her body, throw her onto the floor, and have his way with her.

He wanted to fuck her until her voice was hoarse from screaming with ecstasy.

And he was damned if he'd let her appear before a group of slaving fir-Sidhe in an outfit like that.

"You'll be taking that off right now."

She undulated to him, a sultry look on her face. Leaning into him, she raised her hand to his face. "Later, *mo laoch*. After the court."

He gripped her hand. "Nay, I'll not have some lecherous male see you in that dress. They'll be undressing you with their eyes."

She chuckled. "The very effect I wanted. I want all of them to see what they're missing. And wish I was theirs."

"And I'll be needing to beat them off with a stick."

He raised her hand to his lips and kissed her palm. "You are a little demon. And all there will be wondering how one such as I could have your affection."

She shook her head. "I cannot understand why you insist on diminishing yourself. You'll see. All will be well. Now, hold to me, *florghrá*, and we'll away to the court."

\* \* \* \* \*

The next thing he knew, they were in a great room. Rings of tables filled the High Court. Seated were all the Sidhe, from lowest to highest ranking. The colors and jewels dazzled the eye. Ceoleen had taken them directly to her place in the middle ring.

Donal gazed all around, speaking his thoughts aloud. "'Tis beyond belief!" And he snapped his mouth shut. His voice sounded as a croak to his ears. He turned to Ceoleen, but she seemed not to notice any change.

All eyes turned to them. Some with astonishment, but all with loathing at his hunchback.

The High King moved to stand before them.

"We are happy to have you in our midst again, Ceoleen. 'Tis pleased we are that you've been freed of your mallacht. You've learned humility, it seems. But who is this creature that you've brought with you? His voice and form are an affront to us!"

Ceoleen rose from her seat. "'Twas his singing that saved me for he finished the tune I'd been cursed to sing all these many years. He is my spouse and though I cannot see him, he is my true love, my *fiorghrá*. I know not why others are repelled by him. But I will not doubt him. Only listen to the song he sang that freed me." She turned to Donal. "Go ahead, *a stór*. Sing for them."

Donal sighed. He had dreaded this moment. How he wished Lorcan had never found them outside the gate. If he had not, he might have convinced Ceoleen to go on without him. Now he couldn't leave her to face the court alone. He opened his mouth to sing, but before he could, Lorcan's voice rang out.

"Have him stand in the center of the circle as befits a hero."

Donal cursed under his breath. There'd be no hiding from any of them now.

A collective gasp of horror washed over the room as he shambled to the center of the hall. All present saw him as a hunched-over figure.

Except one.

Little Drimin, the winner of the contest so many, many years ago. A hundred years ago she had become the *Amhranai Mor*. The former Great Singer had grown weary and bequeathed the position to her before setting off for Tir na n'og, the land of the ever young, where there was no jealousy nor obligations, and each day passed like the one before.

Drimin's heart was pure and she saw Donal's true form. When he began to sing, she heard his true voice and she knew why Ceoleen's curse had been lifted part way.

His beauty of physique and voice would rival any of the fir-Sidhe. But none saw or heard him as such. Obviously, he too, had been cursed and, since Ceoleen remained blind, some part of her mallacht also was unfulfilled.

Yet.

And Drimin could do nothing about it for she had not been the one who had cursed the two. She could only watch and wait. And prevent the court from ousting Donal.

The Sidhe all broke into derisive laughter as he sang. Ceoleen heard the shouts and couldn't believe her ears.

"Ugly as a toad and as horrible sounding!"

"Bent as a reed with a voice to match!"

"Banish him!"

"Oust him!"

"Now!"

The *Ard Rí* made a move to do just that when two voices rang out as one.

"No!"

Ceoleen rushed to the center, stumbling over the unseen obstacles in her way. Donal stretched out his arms, catching her before she fell.

Drimin stepped down from the raised platform and joined them inside the ring. Standing to her full, diminutive height, she lifted her hands and the room hushed.

"These two are under my protection. Until their curses are lifted, they may remain with us. They may leave any time of their own free will, but none shall force them."

"Drimin?" Ceoleen whispered.

"Aye, Ceoleen, I'm *Amhranai Mor* now."

Ceoleen shook her head. "I know not why you're helping us, nor why the Sidhe should be lying ... save that they are jealous of me." She spoke slowly. "Aye, 'tis that. They've always envied my beauty and skill. Now they envy me my lover!"

Donal spoke in an undertone to Drimin. "You seem to see more than the rest of the Sidhe. Can you not convince Ceoleen to send me away? Their words and actions will hurt her should I stay. I could not bear that. Better that I leave and perhaps her sight will return."

Drimin shook her head. "Your leaving will not heal her sight, nor will it break your own mallacht, for cursed you must be."

Donal nodded. "The High King of the Tiobraid Árann Sidhe cursed me. And I'll never be completely rid of it for Ceoleen can never truly love me."

"Don't give up hope, mortal," Drimin murmured then raised her voice once more. "Now, show these two a proper welcome!"

Ceoleen and Donal returned to their seats and a group of eight fir-Sidhe and mna-Sidhe entered the center and began to dance. Harps and pipes played and voices joined in a lively jig.

Lorcan gritted his teeth. He'd hoped that the reaction of the Sidhe would hurt Ceoleen, but she seemed to slough it off. He'd have to do more. Shrinking down to the size of a fly, he hovered near her ear and whispered so softly that only she could hear him.

“Why would they all lie? What would they gain from it? There must be some truth in it. Think about it.”

She started. Where had the voice come from? In her head? In her mind? She shrugged it off. But a tiny little seed of doubt had been planted.

\* \* \* \* \*

Donal watched as Ceoleen, with the familiarity of being in her own home, undressed, folding and placing her clothes in the trunk at the foot of the bed.

Her movements were slow and seductive, totally unselfconscious. She shook her head and her hair fell down in a cascade of curls. She raised her arms to stretch and her breasts rose.

His rod hardened.

He tossed his clothes without care onto the floor. He spoke to her, his voice harsh with lust.

“Get on the bed and lift your arms. And spread your legs.”

She obeyed without thought, anxious, nay, dying to make love with him. She inched toward the headboard and leaned against it. Bending her legs, she opened them wide enough that Donal could see her wet, pouting lips.

His mouth went dry. His cock was as rigid as a hawthorn branch. He gazed around the room, frantically seeking something with which to bind her hands. Spying the curtain sash, he grabbed it.

“You enjoyed it today, flaunting your beauty for all to see. Let’s play a little game now, shall we? I am your master and you, my slave. Will you play?”

She nodded. “Your wish is my command, Master. I only live to give you pleasure.”

Donal wrapped the tie around her wrists, and affixed them to the headboard. Moving onto the mattress, he brought his cock to her lips, a pearl of arousal glistening on its tip.

“Take me in your mouth, slave. And suck me. Hard.”

Ceoleen waited until she felt the tip of Donal’s prick enter between her lips. She loved the smell of him. The taste of him. How could he not be perfect?

\* \* \* \* \*

Lorcan watched from the window. So, ’twas not only the once that they made love with Ceoleen bound, but all the time. No wonder she’d not known how hunched her lover was. Lorcan need only find a way to ensure that she felt his broken back when they fucked and she’d be horrified. Revolted.

And his. To please or to punish.

## Chapter Seven

The next day Ceoleen whisked them to the home of Keady, the Master Craftsman of the Gaillimh Sidhe. Knowing where he lived, she could get them there without any trouble. They appeared outside his cottage, waiting for him

Keady came to the door, but did not invite them in.

“Welcome, Ceoleen. I’d heard that you’d returned to us.” He frowned at Donal. “And so ’tis true? This creature is your mate?” He shook his head. “I’d not believe it of you.”

Ceoleen drew up to her full height, her chin raised imperiously. “He saved me and I’ll not have you say a word against him. He’s a master craftsman as are you. I thought you’d welcome him.”

Donal stepped toward the elder Sidhe, hand outstretched. “It’s honored I’d be if you were to teach me what you know.”

Although his voice grated on Keady’s ears and his hunchback offended his eye, his respectful demeanor mollified him. Gingerly, he accepted the mortal’s hand.

“You may watch and try your hand at a small project.”

Ceoleen clapped her hands. "I knew you'd be kind, Keady." She turned to Donal. "I'll be after leaving now, *a ghrá*. I've hundreds of years of songs to learn. We'll eat the mid-day meal together." She grinned. "I'll come get you."

And she vanished.

Donal spoke to Keady. "You need not tell me I'm not deserving of her. I know it well, but she's enemies here, that I also know." He heaved a sigh. "And I know one day I'll be going from her -- for one reason or another. If you'll help me, I'd leave her with a remembrance of me."

Keady gazed intently at the mortal. 'Twas difficult, for his image constantly shifted. His voice, too, fluctuated. Was the mortal cursed? He shrugged. He'd bide his time and see what transpired.

"What is it you'd be wanting to make for her?"

Smiling with relief, Donal responded eagerly. "A box with a brush and comb. And a mirror in the lid, for I know in my heart that she'll be getting her sight back one day."

Keady grinned. "Let's pick out a good piece of wood and get started."

\* \* \* \* \*

Ceoleen stood for a moment outside the entrance to the Hall of Music. Sounds of pipes, harps, drums, and voices drifted in the late spring air. She squared her shoulders. She needed not her sight to enter the hall for she knew precisely the number of steps leading to the door. What she needed was courage to face the other Sidhe knowing they'd be judging her every note. Taking a deep breath, she marched up the four steps and entered. Immediately, the cacophony grew louder.

To her right were the sounds of pipers practicing the Uilleann pipes, the droning tones an accompaniment to their tapping toes. To her left, the harpers plucked the strings of the clarseach, holding them, she knew, close to their hearts, making them the most beloved of all

the instruments. Drummers, beating on handheld bodhrans, joined in with both groups of players.

Straight ahead were the singers. To those not in the room, the many different voices made for a discordant crashing noise. Once inside, though, and each song would fall distinctively on the ear.

Ceoleen steeled herself again, strode forward and opened the door.

Dead silence greeted her entrance.

Then, breaking the dearth of music, came the sound of one pair of clapping hands. And Lorcan's sneering voice.

"And so the talented Ceoleen graces us with her presence. Where is your pet, *a chara*? Tied to the bed?"

Ceoleen started. Why had Lorcan said that? Could he know ...? No, 'twas just his venomous nature speaking.

"Donal is with Keady improving his skills. And 'tis why I'm here now. I've many a new song to learn."

A gentle hand touched her elbow.

"'Tis Drimin. And we are pleased that you're back with us to join in the music. Come, sit by me and we'll start."

Drimin guided her to a low stool near a window. Ceoleen felt the warmth of the sun on her face and the soft caress of a breeze against her skin. "Thank you for your graciousness. I'm not worthy of it. I wasn't very kind to you that day so many years ago."

Drimin lightly touched Ceoleen's knee. "But how could you not think you'd be *Amhranai Ard*? You'd not only the talent, but the beauty, too." She chuckled softly. "And 'twas your beauty that caused you to lose. You were and are a threat to the *mna-Sidhe*, *a chara*. None of the females believe you truly mated to Donal for all they can see is his deformed body and all they hear is his cracked voice. They don't know him as do you."

Ceoleen ventured a sigh. "So, then he is not ...?"

"What do you think?"

Ceoleen took a deep breath. "I think he is my true mate and he loves me."

Drimin patted her knee. "Then 'tis all that matters. Now, listen and let's add some songs to your cache."

For a while then, Ceoleen was happy. Drimin was a patient teacher, and soon Ceoleen felt comfortable enough to share some of the many melodies she'd composed during her exile. Other singers drew near to listen in and added their voices.

Across the room, Lorcan seethed. He was an *Amhranai Ard*, a member of a select group, not Ceoleen, yet they gathered around her like bees to honey. Moving closer, he insinuated himself into the circle.

"'Tis good to hear your voice again, Ceoleen. Will you try once more to win a place in the high ranks as an *Amhranai Ard*? We've been shy a singer since Drimin moved up as *Amhranai Mor*." His voice dripped venom as he continued. "But perhaps your lover may wish to compete since his voice is so ... unique."

Ceoleen fisted her hands while all the singers tittered. "Donal cannot compete since he's not of the Sidhe and well you know that, Lorcan!"

"Were he of the Sidhe he would be banished and well you know that, little bitch!"

"Silence!" Drimin commanded. "Lorcan, spew your poison elsewhere. Your voice grows unpleasant upon my ears." She clasped Ceoleen's shoulder. "'Tis time for my private counsel with Ailill. Don't be heeding him, *a chara*. Listen to your heart."

And she left.

With none there who cared to bar his way, Lorcan took the seat Drimin had vacated. He leaned in close to Ceoleen, his voice hissing. "Drimin is too kind, too sweet, too giving. She must want something from you. Perhaps your mate? I heard he was a powerful lover." His voice grew ever quieter. "I *heard* he was a powerful lover ... for a hunchback."

Without thought, her hand whipped out to slap him. Lorcan moved out of range and grabbed her by the wrist. “Do not try that again, bitch. You will not always be having others here to stop me from punishing you as I’d like.”

She moved to strike him with her free hand, but he caught that one, too. He shifted so that his mouth was by her ear. “You see how far I can go with others present. They hardly care what I do. And if I get you alone ...” His voice trailed off and he jerked her close. “I’ll show you what being captive really means.” He flung her back and flickered from the room.

Ceoleen turned unseeing eyes that welled with tears toward the silent witnesses. “Cowards.”

And she disappeared from their presence.

\* \* \* \* \*

Donal put a finishing touch on one side of the gleaming wooden box. Keardy had started to accept him once he had seen and heard Donal’s expertise. The care that he showed his tools also impressed the Sidhe craftsman. As the sun reached the noontime high, Donal carefully cleaned his tools and covered up his work.

“Will you be holding this for me? I’d like to surprise Ceoleen with it when ’tis done.”

Keardy nodded and placed the unfinished piece inside a locked cabinet. He placed the key atop the door lintel. “If I’m not at home, you’re more than welcome to come and work on it.” He grinned. “Though I’m always at home.” His grin grew more lascivious. “Except when I visit the bed of a certain ban-Sidhe. But that’s usually at night when you yourself would be otherwise occupied.” He shook his head. “’Tis strange. Your appearance does not repulse me as it did earlier. Ah, well, ’tis getting used to your ugly face I must be.”

Donal didn’t take umbrage for he sensed that the fear-Sidhe meant his words to be teasing. Before he could respond with a jest of his own, Ceoleen flashed inside the cottage.

Tears ran down her face and Donal immediately gathered her in his arms.

“*A cuisle mo chroi*, tell me who made you weep and I’ll kill them!”

She shook her head against his broad chest. Tears stained his soft linen shirt and struck his heart like blows. ’Twas already happening as he feared it would. He knew that he must have been the cause of her pain.

Her hands were pressed between their bodies. Ceoleen could feel the strong pulse of Donal’s heart beneath them and she felt comforted. She couldn’t let him challenge Lorcan. In a fight between the two, she knew the fear-Sidhe wouldn’t fight fair.

“’Twas naught, *fíorghrá*. ’Twas a sad song I heard and it made me weep. See, the tears are drying even so. Just hold me for a bit before we share our meal.”

Donal looked over to Keady and shook his head. He could see that the Sidhe didn’t believe Ceoleen either. He brushed his lips against the top of her head.

“Shall we go home then, *a ghrá geal*?” He forced a chuckle from his throat. “I know a way to make all those sad thoughts disappear.”

She burrowed her head deeper against his chest then whisked them away from Keady’s sight.

He gazed at where the couple had just stood and sighed. “Their love is almost strong enough to break their cursed state. But I hope ’twill not be too little too late.”

\* \* \* \* \*

As soon as they appeared within Ceoleen’s bedchamber, she pressed her breasts against Donal and kissed him through his shirt.

“Make love to me, *fíorghrá*. Please. I hunger for you.”

“I am yours to command, *mo Bánríon*.”

Lifting her up, he carried her over to the bed and laid her down on the soft mattress. Wasting no time, he stripped. He was hard for her, his cock stiff and aching to feel her sheath him in her tight, hot pussy.

He grabbed the binding from where it lay over the chair and placed it at the foot of the bed.

“Take off your clothes or I’ll rip them off.”

She licked her lips and arched her breasts. Her legs moved restlessly, her ankle-length skirt twisting about her slim legs.

“Would you be ripping them off? Tear them from my body?”

He stepped closer until he stood right by the mattress’s edge. “I would.”

“Do it then.”

He climbed atop the bed, straddled her, and gripped her blouse, tearing it off her easily and throwing it to the floor where the fragile lacy material lay in shreds. He found the waist of her skirt and jerked downward, destroying it, also.

She lay nude before him, her nipples tight and begging to be kissed. Reaching behind him, he took up the length of cloth and tore it in two. This time he tied one of her hands to each post at the head of the bed.

Ceoleen pulled at her bindings. “Donal? You’ve never tied me this way. I’m not sure I like it.”

He took a deep breath and let it out slowly. “I don’t care. I like it.” He ran a hand down the valley between her breasts and paused to cup one of them. “I like it a lot.” And he fondled the other, tweaking the nipple.

Ceoleen moaned. “By the gods, *fíorghrá*, I like it, too.”

He bent, replacing his fingers with his lips and suckled. Hard. He kneaded the breast that was free of his mouth and rolled the turgid nipple between his fingers. Back and forth, he suckled and teased her flesh.

Ceoleen tossed her head and thrashed her legs. Tears seeped from beneath her shuttered eyes. Pain and pleasure mingled as he grew more aggressive, nipping at her breasts.

He moved down her body towards her navel, licking, kissing her sweet, soft skin. He lifted her buttocks and bent his mouth to her mons. He inhaled the scent of her, her arousal assailing him. Then he pressed his mouth to her and ate her, his tongue delving deep between her lips, tasting the cream that welled within her. A roaring filled his ears as an ecstasy so deep struck him. As if from a distance he heard Ceoleen's voice.

"Take me, *fiorghrá*, take me now!"

Needing no further urging, Donal pulled back, lifted her, and impaled Ceoleen on his penis. She was wet, so wet, so hot, so ... perfect.

She bucked beneath him, twisting back and forth as though trying to escape the assault on her senses. Desire threatened to overwhelm her. And she decided to let it.

She crossed her legs around Donal's and held on for dear life.

As the tempo of their mating increased, their cries grew louder. Donal flung his head back, the tendons in his neck distended as he strained to bring Ceoleen to climax. Her voice begged for release.

"Faster, *a stór*. Don't stop. Not yet, not yet, not yet, not ..."

Their cries of completion echoed in the air, bursting from the confines of the cottage and climbing to the sky high above the Gaillimbh Sidhe.

And all within the court heard them.

## Chapter Eight

The days sped by and a pattern developed. Most mornings Donal spent with Keady working on the box for Ceoleen. He took his time, making sure every curve and swirl was perfect. Perhaps he gave more consideration than needed, but then the longer he worked on the project, the farther away the day when he might be leaving. So he smoothed the wood with loving care, made the corners so tight they'd never separate, and tried not to think about the days fleeting by.

Ceoleen continued to attend the singing groups. Though Lorcan grabbed every opportunity to taunt her and mock Donal, Drimin served as a buffer between the two. But Drimin couldn't be there all the time. Often she would be engaged in counsel with Ailill or his mate. The Gaillimh Sidhe and the Sidhe of Maigheo would often challenge each other to increase their boundaries. Competitions involving singing, playing instruments, dancing, and poetry would be planned and judges from other Sidhe would determine which clan would add woods, hills, lakes, rivers, and other wondrous things to their territory.

Drimin coached the *Ard Rí* and his mate in singing.

A contest loomed to secure additional hills and the upper lake of Lough Derg. Drimin practiced in private with the *Ard Rí* to hone his skill and hers.

Thus, when Drimin was gone, Lorcan would wield his poisonous tongue. And sometimes, whenever he got the chance, he'd transform himself and whisper in Ceoleen's ear. "What does she have to gain? Was she not your rival? Why then should she now be your friend? Does she hold lust in her heart for your mortal lover? Is that the reason she pours honey from her mouth?"

Slowly, Lorcan's insidious persuasion wore down Ceoleen's trust.

Drimin sensed the ban-Sidhe's dwindling ease but failed to determine why their initially growing friendship was changing. Then she came up with an idea. The next time they gathered in the singing room, she put it forth.

"*A chara*, I've had a thought. Would you be willing to compete against the Maigheo Sidhe this next contest?"

With Lorcan's darts still jabbing in her ears, Ceoleen's immediate reaction was distrust.

"Why? So that others might mock me for my rusty talent?"

Drimin gasped. "Why would you be saying that? You've the most beautiful voice here!"

"Oh? Then why am I not *Amhranai Mor*?"

Drimin stared at her with growing sadness. If only Ceoleen could truly see and hear with her whole heart. Someone was weakening her trust and love in Donal and her belief in her abilities. She'd seen a gradual change in the beautiful ban-Sidhe and thought at first 'twas Lorcan's doing. But he was seldom nearby. No matter how it was happening, if Ceoleen were not careful she'd lose the precious gift she had in Donal's love.

Drimin attempted to lay a placating hand on her arm as they sat on a cozy cushioned bank in a dormer window, but Ceoleen shrugged it off. "I'll be leaving now."

"Think on my suggestion."

"Perhaps."

\* \* \* \* \*

Ceoleen whisked away to the garden in front of Keardy's cottage. She never entered without permission, and stood now waiting to announce her presence.

She'd no idea what Donal was working on. He hadn't offered to tell her and she hesitated to ask for fear of appearing too inquisitive. How she wished she could see!

She called out to let them know she'd arrived. "Hallo within the house! 'Tis mid-day. Are you not hungry?"

She heard Donal and Keardy's laughter grow louder. What were they laughing about? Or, maybe, whom? Were they mocking her inability to hear Donal as others did? Oh, she was heart-sore! Then she felt Donal's strong arms around her and for a moment, her doubts fled.

"*A ghrá geal*, Keardy and I were laughing so loudly for my stomach began to rumble just as you called out." He chuckled. "Seems my hunger is timed to start the moment you arrive." He hugged her tighter and bent his head to whisper in her ear. "*All* my hunger."

He pressed his groin against her and she felt the rise of his prick. All thoughts of Drimin vanished and a deep, voracious need to feel those soft ties around her wrists and Donal's hard cock within her body flared up.

Without a word of farewell to Keardy, she flickered them back to her cottage. And into her bedchamber.

The moment they arrived, she attempted to put her arms around him, and Donal shifted away.

"Why will you not let me hold you? 'Tis true, then -- you are a hunchback?"

Grief filled Donal's heart, and he took a moment to answer. "Are you dissatisfied with our lovemaking? Have I failed to give pleasure? Have I hurt you in any way?"

Ceoleen flung her body onto the bed and wept. "Ach, *a ghrá*, I'm so confused! 'Tis sorry I am that I made us come here!"

Donal drew her into his embrace, kissing her tear-stained cheeks. “Hush now, *a stóirín*. ’Tis my own fears that are hurting you. ’Twas right that you ended your exile. Let me love you. Let me ease away your pain. Let me give you pleasure.”

With infinite tenderness, he lifted her gown over her head. Her eyes were still red from crying and she sniffled a bit. Her tousled hair fell in waves around her shoulders. She looked like a bereft child.

Until she raised her arms above her head and arched her back. The long, curly strands of hair fell behind her as her breasts, the nipples pouting, begging for his mouth, were presented for his taking.

She licked her lips, her voice sultry, her arousal sending a message as strong as a mare in heat.

“Aye, *fiorghrá*, make love to me. When I feel your cock inside me I no longer can think.” She swayed toward him. “Bind me to you.” She lay back and bent her knees, spreading them apart and revealing the damp, alluring curls between her thighs.

Donal threw off his clothes and grabbed up the bindings. His breathing grew harsh. His penis throbbed. All he wanted to do was sink deep inside her.

He tied her, pulling the ties taut so that her back was bowed. She panted as though she’d run a race. His ragged breathing matched hers.

He could barely speak. “My love is within you, *a cuisle mo chroí*. You are the pulse beating in my heart. I will love you forever. No matter what.”

“Then love me now. Make me forget everything but us.”

He knelt, lifted her buttocks, and settled her upon his thighs. The feel of her silky skin in his rough palms incited him, but he resisted the urge to plunge in. Instead, he inched within until he could go no further and slowly built up a steady rhythm that gradually increased until they were bucking together, racing toward their mutual climax.

As his seed filled her, she cried aloud, Donal’s cries of satisfaction joining hers.

But one creature in the room was unsatisfied. Lorcan, transformed into the size of the most insignificant insect, seethed. He had hidden himself in Ceoleen's cottage, knowing their routine. For the first time he had had hope that she would know Donal for the misshapen mortal he was. But yet again, he had escaped detection.

He could no longer wait. He had to find someone who could help him achieve his goals -- make Ceoleen his slave and get rid of or destroy Donal.

And he thought he might know just the Sidhe who could help.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Is it crazy you are, Lorcan, to come here?" The incredulous *Ard Bánríon* paced the secluded gazebo where he had found her. He knew the spot well, since it was one of the many where he had made love to the seductive ban-Sidhe.

"We have a mutual problem that needs fixing."

Neasa sneered. "I have no problem. *I* have no wish to bed that slut."

"Aye, but perhaps your mate might be wanting to."

Neasa's look turned venomous. "I'd slice off his balls!"

"I can think of a better way to control Ailill's lust. Get rid of that mortal creature. If Ceoleen had a fear-Sidhe for a lover, one who could keep her busy, you'd have no fear that Ailill would stray. If she could be convinced that Donal lied to her, if she could feel that hump upon his back, she'd cast him out!"

"How comes it that she doesn't realize he's bent over?"

"He ties her up whenever they make love. It appears that our little ban-Sidhe likes it rough."

Neasa's smile was pure evil. "Let me think on it a bit. I'll contact you when I'm ready."

"I knew I could count on you."

\* \* \* \* \*

The next three days, Ceoleen and Donal never left the cottage. They'd awake, make love, eat, rest and make love again. Trying to keep their problems at bay, they spoke to no one.

Finally, after the third day, Drimin approached Keady to see had he any ideas about what was happening with them.

"I'm concerned, *a chara*. They're refusing to deal with their problems. They think that making love is enough. They still bear too much distrust in their hearts."

Keady shook his head. "'Tis not your affair, Drimin. Their love will either endure or fail because of what they do or say." He laughed. "But you're right about one thing. 'Tis more than time for them to face the rest of the Sidhe. I'll knock on their door and force them out of their little refuge."

With a nod, Keady flickered outside Ceoleen's cottage. Through the closed door came the sounds of a male and female in the throes of passion. Despite his resolve, he couldn't help but listen.

Inside, her hands tied together to the headboard, Ceoleen faced the wall, her creamy, white bottom raised in anticipation of feeling Donal's prick deep within her again. She wriggled her sweet little arse, enticing him to thrust his flesh deep between those round cheeks. With fierce possessiveness, he pushed in and then slowly withdrew. Over and over, his grunts as he pumped her sounded more musical than any song she'd heard.

They climaxed together and she sagged against her bonds. Donal released her and drew her against his chest. "Rest, *a ghrá geal*."

"If only we could stay like this forever."

"If only we could."

Then the knocking came and a voice hailing them. "'Tis Keady. You've sequestered yourselves long enough. 'Tis time now to be joining the rest of us."

Ceoleen and Donal turned toward each other. Her sightless eyes peered at his face as though, if she looked hard enough, she'd see him.

Donal gripped her shoulders. "Keardy's right. We change nothing by staying here, no matter the joy of making love with you. Come. Tonight we'll feast in the hall with the others." He patted her arm. "Don't worry, *a ghrá*. I'll be with you."

Ceoleen spoke out to Keardy. "We'll see you at the hall tonight, *a chara*. And our thanks for bringing us back."

Keardy smiled and raised his voice. "Till then!"

\* \* \* \* \*

Lorcan found Neasa behind the Great Hall. She'd sent him a message by way of a dragonfly to meet her there. Nothing more was in the message. He spoke first, his voice filled with impatience. "What is it? Have you found a solution?"

She nodded. "Aye. Here." She opened her hand and on her palm lay a small vial filled with a clear, bubbling liquid. "Sprinkle this on the bindings they use now. When it dries, the ties will ne'er keep a knot. Her hands will be free, she'll touch him, and she'll know what she beds."

Lorcan smiled. "I'll stay and watch them fuck. 'Twill be enjoyable seeing their expressions."

\* \* \* \* \*

Ceoleen and Donal arrived at the Great Hall in time for the evening meal. The hall was full, an undercurrent of anticipation buzzed through the air.

As they took their place in the middle ring, Drimin came over to them. Donal took in the graceful steps of the nut-brown ban-Sidhe. Although far from beautiful, her sweet expression and dignified air were very appealing. He whispered softly to Ceoleen. "Drimin is

coming towards us. She's a fair looking lass. 'Tis a wonder that she's not mated with someone."

A shaft of jealousy so sharp struck Ceoleen that she could scarcely speak. Was that little voice that whispered in her ear right then? She bit her lip and put on a pleasant expression.

Drimin reached the couple and held out her arms to them. Donal grasped her firm, cool hand and smiled. "I think 'twas your doing that Keady came to get us today."

Drimin smiled back. "You've found me out." She nodded toward Ceoleen. "Perhaps you can convince your mate to compete for the Gaillimh Sidhe."

Ceoleen interrupted, her voice sharp. "I've no longer the need to compete. You'll have to try to win on your own. Or ask Donal to compete." And she turned away from her.

Drimin spoke softly to Donal. "She loves you. I know she does. And you love her. But if you don't give her your trust, your love may not be enough." She moved away from them, back to the dais to sit with the *Ard Rí* and his queen.

Donal found Ceoleen's hand and held it tightly. "*A stóirín*. Drimin meant no harm. She's a good friend."

Ceoleen ripped her hand from his. "And just how good a friend is she?"

And she whisked out of the hall.

\* \* \* \* \*

Lorcan slipped behind the bowl of fruit left on the table in Ceoleen's bedchamber. He'd already poured the potion on the ties in her cottage. Now he had only to wait until they used them. In his transformed size, he could watch unimpeded.

He'd just settled himself when Ceoleen flickered into view. Alone. She flung herself on the bed and threw a pillow across the room.

"Bitch! Playing the sweet caring friend. How could he look at her? He'll have to go down on his knees should he wish to make love to me again!"

Lorcan exulted. This was even better than he'd hoped. Her distrust was almost as great as her lust. He watched with avid desire as she stalked around the room, stripping off her gown and sitting nude atop the bed, brushing her hair vigorously.

She was still brushing when Donal hobbled in. With Lorcan watching, his form was that of a hunchback. The mortal moved over to her and grabbed the brush from her hands, tossing it aside.

"You had no cause to say what you did to me, nor to hurt one of the few friends we have here."

She sprang off the bed, her hands on her hips. "Friend, is it? How good a friend?"

"She's a friend, nothing more." He moved closer to her, his hand reaching out to touch her. "You know full well, 'tis you who I love. Who I desire."

"Oh?" She grabbed his cock and squeezed. "Show me."

She turned and glided away, her hips moving seductively from side to side, her hair falling to the floor like a train of fire.

Lorcan took in the fierce look on Donal's face. The mortal stripped, took up the ties, and stalked to the bed. Within moments, he had her tied.

Lorcan watched as Ceoleen's nipples tightened and her breathing quickened. Her voice was harsh as she commanded the hunchback. "Show me, Donal. Show me how much you desire me. Fuck me. Make love to me."

He fell upon her, taking no time for foreplay. With one thrust, he plunged his cock deep within her and began to move.

At first Lorcan thought that the ties would hold. Then Ceoleen arched her back, pulled against the bindings, and they fell off.

She flung her hands around Donal and felt the hump that Lorcan saw.

And screamed.

## Chapter Nine

“Off! Off of me!”

Ceoleen shoved Donal to the floor with a strength she didn’t know she possessed and scrambled to her knees. He rose stiffly and stood by the bed.

“How could you? You lied to me!”

He extended a trembling hand, not quite daring to touch her. “*A mhuirnin*, never did I lie. In the forest, I always felt that I was tall and straight, but ... I feared that it wouldn’t last. ’Tis why I bound you when we made love. And then when we entered the Court of the Gaillimh Sidhe ... I ne’er from one moment to the next knew what form I might be in. Many’s the times I felt as though we were being watched ... like now. And at those times, I felt myself grow hunched.” He clenched his hands, willing himself not to weep. “But, you’re right, *a cuisle*, though I never lied to you, I never told you the whole truth. I’d not blame you for hating me for my lack of trust in you.”

“Oh, Donal, how can I be knowing what I would have done had you trusted me with your secret? ’Tis true, though, what you said about feeling watched.” Tears welled up in her eyes. “Sometimes ’twas if some evil demon whispered in my ear, urging me to trust no one ... not even myself.” She took a deep, shuddering breath and her shoulders slumped. “I cannot

bear to be around you now. I don't know what to think." She lifted her head, her eyes drowning with tears. "Just go. Please."

Reluctantly, as if he moved too fast he would break, he gathered his gear together. He'd stop at Keady's before he left and ask him to give Ceoleen the box, brush, and comb he'd just finished making the other day. He sighed. Perhaps it had been an omen that he'd carved the last swirl in the comb.

Ceoleen sat at the edge of the bed. He moved to her, to feel her skin one last time. As he touched her shoulder, she flinched, and something within him died.

"*Slan leat, a cuisle*, my heart is within you. I'll always love you. I pray one day you'll love me again."

Ceoleen lifted her head and looked toward the sound of his voice. "I pray so, too."

And in his hiding place, Lorcan danced a little jig. The taste of victory was like honey in his mouth.

\* \* \* \* \*

Donal trudged down the narrow lane toward Keady's. Every step was another knife in his heart. Would things have been different if he had told Ceoleen from the start that he was hunched? But, 'twasn't always so. Ah, if only they had remained in the forest, at the fairy mound.

As he neared Keady's house, he saw a light in the parlor. Fireflies gathered in the crystal chimneys of lamps placed here and there in the room. 'Twas a warm, homey sight. He'd miss Keady.

"Hallo, the house. Are you awake, Keady?"

The fear-Sidhe came to the door, took one look at the grief-stricken mortal, and ushered him in. "Tell me what's ailing you, *a chara*."

Donal eased his body onto one of the finely wrought chairs in the front parlor. Letting his tool bag fall to the floor, he buried his head in his hands, trying to get a grip on his feelings. "I've left her, or more to the point, she told me to leave. She felt my hump and called me a liar, then sent me away." He raised his head, sorrow ravaging his handsome features. "I cannot be blaming her. I ne'er told her the entire truth." He sighed and shook his head. "But, 'twas bewildering to me. When we were alone, I stood straight and tall. But still I feared 'twouldn't last. Then, when we returned here ..." He gazed at Keady earnestly. "Sometimes I felt as though we were being spied upon. At those times I was Donal Bachtcam. And I never knew when 'twould happen." He smiled sadly. "Keady, will you give her the gifts I made and tell her that I made them with all the love I bear for her?"

He nodded. "I wish you weren't leaving, Donal, for 'tis the strangest thing, but over these past months, I've come to see and hear you in a new way." He paused. "You became as you once told me you were -- straight as a birch. I'll give your work to Ceoleen. And tell her your words." He laid a fatherly hand on the mortal's shoulder. "May Aine look down upon you and bring you the love you deserve."

Donal rose and they shook hands, Keady gripping Donal's in both of his. Donal picked up his bag and slung it over his back. "I hope I'll be after seeing you one of these days, *a chara*."

Keady smiled. "I have a feeling you will."

The forlorn mortal crossed the threshold and set off toward the High Gate. He knew where he was heading -- back to the fairy mound, the one place where he had known the greatest happiness.

\* \* \* \* \*

Lorcan bided his time though he wanted to appear to Ceoleen as soon as Donal left. He knew if he seemed too eager, she might be suspicious.

He flitted to the Hall of Music where Neasa practiced the clarseach, joining her as she tuned the instrument.

“’Tis done. Donal has left and Ceoleen is bereft.” He grinned maliciously. “I ne’er knew I was so good *a file*. Perhaps I should challenge Drimin for *Amhranai Mor* since my words are so quick. Now, ’tis up to me to force Ceoleen to see the light.”

Neasa acknowledged Lorcan’s words with a slight nod, then turned back to her music. A satisfied smile spread across her features as she plucked a victorious tune on the harp.

\* \* \* \* \*

A few days later, Drimin stood outside Ceoleen’s door, drawing upon every shred of courage she possessed. Keady had told her of what had occurred between Ceoleen and Donal. She had given the ban-Sidhe time to mourn, but knew ’twould be wrong to leave her to wallow in despair. She only hoped that she would trust her enough to listen to her.

She knocked twice loudly and entered without waiting for a reply. She found Ceoleen sitting in a chair in her bedchamber, fingering a length of cloth. As she heard Drimin approach, she turned her head toward her, but didn’t get up.

Drimin wasted no time on pleasantries. “We’ve missed you in the Singers’ Room, *a chara*.”

“I suppose you’re here to say I told you so.” Ceoleen gripped the cloth tighter. “But he lied to me! He ne’er was as he seemed!”

“Oh? ’Twas always thus? I’m thinking that there were more times than not when there was naught but the truth of your love between you.”

Ceoleen shook her head. “Perhaps I hoped for more. He should have trusted me.”

“And would you have loved him if he told you he was hunched? Do you not know never to accept things as they appear to be, for much may hide below the surface.” She sat down opposite Ceoleen and leaned forward. “And do you not remember that one of the

reasons you wished to return to us was to flaunt your lover's looks and skill? And when you heard the whispers that he was not as you thought did you not absent yourself from most gatherings?" She shook her head. "Oh, *a chara*, you still are guided by what others think and by outward beauty. Will you never learn?" She stood. "I hope you'll look into your own heart ... and soon."

Without another word, she flickered from the room.

Lorcan watched and cursed below his breath. If Ceoleen was struck with remorse, she might think of leaving the Gaillimh Sidhe to try to find her former lover. If he wished to have her writhing in pain and ecstasy beneath him he'd need to act quickly.

\* \* \* \* \*

Ceoleen sat in stunned silence after Drimin left. Her words had drawn blood. She thought of Donal, of all their time together. In every instance, he had shown her nothing but love and care, and more passion than she had ever experienced in her life. He had known her better than she had known herself. He'd seen how shallow her love was, and he'd been right to fear her response. Burning tears seeped from beneath her shuttered eyes. How she wished he were here with her now!

Then she sensed another presence in the room. Could it be Donal? She rose, her eyes still closed, her arms outstretched. "*Fíorghrá?*"

Rough hands grabbed her hands and shoved the tie in her mouth, gagging her. "I doubt sincerely that I'd be your true love, bitch, but I will be your lover."

Dragging her by the hair, he drew her to the bed and threw her facedown on the mattress. He pulled out a length of twine from a pocket in his breeches, wrapped it around her wrists, and attached it to the headboard. He stepped away from the bed and started to remove his clothes, his voice filled with venom as he spoke.

“I know you like it rough, little bitch. I watched as you and your misshapen lover fucked. I knew once you’d feel his back, you’d revile him. All I needed was some way to release your hands.” He chortled with glee. “Neasa was more than happy to help.”

He climbed upon the mattress and straddled her. Pushing up her dress, he exposed her naked flesh to his view. She bucked and squirmed, trying to thrust him off her back.

He laughed and took his cock in hand, positioning it near her unwilling body. “I’ll keep you busy until I have enough of you, bitch. And you’ll not say a word. Who’d believe you?”

“I would!”

Lorcan whipped around, his limp prick still in his hand. Keady stood in the doorway of the bedroom, his hands fisted on his hips. “You get of a pig; you’ll be banished for sure once the High Sidhe hear of this!”

Lorcan stared for a moment at the enraged fear-Sidhe then vanished even as Keady cursed aloud. By the trickster Goibniu, he should have crept up on the pig and restrained him. A muffled moan from the bed redirected his attention. He rushed over and untied the trembling ban-Sidhe, draped the sheet from the mattress around her, and laid a tender arm across her shoulders. Her face was red and her eyes were gummy with the tears she’d shed.

“’Tis thankful I am that I was bringing you the gifts that Donal made for you.” He hugged the trembling female to him, patting her back. “Did I hear a-right? Was Neasa involved with this?”

Ceoleen nodded mutely.

Keady sighed. “We’ll be needing to call a High Council. The *Ard Rí* will not be liking this, but ’tis no way else to deal with it. Shall I have Drimin come to you, *a chara*? I’m sure she’ll be of a comfort to you. Try to rest now. I’ll take care of everything.”

Finally Ceoleen was able to speak, her voice a thready whisper. “My thanks, Keady.”

“She’ll be here in a flash, *a chara*. Rest easy.”

He flickered from the room and Ceoleen was left alone. Though Lorcan had not violated her, she still felt dirty. She moved to the pitcher of fresh spring rainwater and poured some on a soft cloth. Gently, she dabbed at her face, cleaning the tears from her cheeks and eyes. Laying down the cloth, she opened them wide. She blinked twice, then blinked again.

She could see!

She shut her eyes once more, then raised her trembling hands, her fingertips touching her closed lids. Slowly, she opened them again. A blurry outline of a beautiful jewelry box sitting on the table appeared before her. She picked it up and fingered the swirling, curling designs engraved on it. Carefully opening it, she stared at her reflection in a polished copper mirror cunningly fitted in the lid. A tear-stained face looked back at her. Her face.

Lying on a piece of soft velvet as green as her eyes were a brush and comb carved from the same wood. On the back of the brush were her initials and Donal's lovingly intertwined. Precious gems were imbedded in the wooden handles. Soft boar's bristles swiped against her skin as she picked up the brush.

"For me. He did this all for me." She clutched the brush to her breasts. "Oh, Donal, what a great, blind fool I've been. If only I could see your face, I'd not care whether you stood tall as an oak or bent like a frog."

"'Tis glad I am to hear you say that, *a chara*." Drimin came into the room, a smile filling her face. "For now your mallacht is no more." She laid a consoling hand on Ceoleen's and sat down. "Keardy told me what happened with Lorcan. He's not within the court, but still he'll be judged." She sighed. "And Neasa, too. Come, finish getting ready. The judgment will begin shortly."

Hair neatly brushed and combed with Donal's gift, a sedate gown of soft linen adorning her body, Ceoleen left with Drimin for the Great Hall.

All noise ceased as they appeared within the circle. Ceoleen sat upon a carved chair set in the middle, while Drimin stepped up to the dais. Ailill and Neasa sat in ornate thrones, carved and gilded and massive.

The *Ard Rí* rose and cleared his throat. "Charges have been brought against Lorcan of violence to another, trickery, and deceit." He paused and took a deep breath. "And charges of trickery have been brought against Neasa."

The beautiful *Ard Bánríon* turned away from her mate as he stated the accusation. Her face revealed nothing.

Ailill continued. "The *Amhranai Mor* will conduct the proceedings."

Drimin stood and gestured for Keardy to enter the circle. "Here is one we all know and trust. He is witness to the charges brought against Lorcan. Keardy, please tell us what you saw and heard in Ceoleen's cottage."

He moved to stand next to Ceoleen, at ease, sure in his knowledge. "Earlier this day, I came to give Ceoleen a gift crafted by Donal, her mortal lover. When I arrived at her home, I found Lorcan had bound and gagged her and tied her to her bed. When I entered, he was just about to rape her. He exulted that somehow he'd been involved with Donal's leaving." He paused. "And he implicated Neasa in his scheme."

Keardy nodded at Drimin and returned to his place in the high rank. Drimin turned to Neasa. "What have you to say to the charge that you assisted Lorcan in his plan to dishonor Ceoleen and her lover?"

Neasa stalked down the few steps to the center of the circle. Her diaphanous gown clung to her body. Her beauty was unmatched. Her deviousness, unparalleled. She lifted her chin and spoke. "There is no proof of my part in this plan of Lorcan's. He mentioned my name out of jealousy, more likely." She placed her hands on her shapely hips and thrust out her breasts. "He has always desired me." She turned and looked down at Ceoleen. "Since he

couldn't have me, he took second best and tried to implicate me in his plotting." Without another word, she glided back to her throne and resumed her seat.

Drimin looked at her with distaste, but shrugged her shoulders. She raised her hand and pronounced judgment.

"Lorcan shall ne'er be welcomed within our gates. Banned he shall be from the courts of the Sidhe. His powers are gone. His life will go on, but shortened. Hear you all and mark it." She turned to Neasa. "'Tis right you be, Neasa, there is naught to link you with Lorcan save his own words. But he spoke when there was no one save Ceoleen to hear. His word cannot be trusted, true, but ..." She paused. "Some taint dirties you. So, here is a warning." She drew herself up to her full height. "Your words shall be weighed. Your actions watched. Take care." She motioned Ceoleen to rise. A concerted gasp arose from the hall as they realized that the ban-Sidhe could now see. "What say you Ceoleen, are you satisfied with the judgment this day? Will you stay with us in contentment?"

Ceoleen nodded. "Aye, I agree with it, but still must I leave." She gazed around the room. Some could not meet her gaze, knowing how they'd mocked her and Donal. Her eyes rested on Keady and he smiled and nodded. "I'd rather give up all the beauties of the Gaillimh Sidhe to be with my *florghrá*." She looked at Neasa and sneered. "I pity you, *Bánríon*. You still believe yourself better than Donal. You forget that everyone, regardless that they be ugly, is equal to all. When your beauty finally leaves you, what will you have?"

With that, Ceoleen vanished from the hall.

\* \* \* \* \*

Ceoleen looked around her cottage. Never would she have imagined that she'd be willing, nay, anxious to leave it again. But now, all the beautiful things she owned were worth naught if she didn't have Donal. The only things wanted were the gifts he'd made her and a few bits of clothing. Her jewels? Well, she'd give them to Drimin. She'd not be needing

them in the forest. She gathered her things and sent notes for Drimin and Keady at their homes.

And then she set off after Donal. As she left the High Gate, who should be following her but her little friend, the bullfinch. Not only could she hear his cheerful tune, but now she could enjoy his flitting about.

“Greetings, *a chara*, might you be knowing which way Donal traveled? ’Twould be of immeasurable help were you to guide me to him.”

Swooping down, the little bird landed on Ceoleen’s extended open palm and pecked. “Yes.”

## Chapter Ten

The sun goddess Étaín observed the three lone travelers as they journeyed eastward through the midlands of Erin. She'd waited all these months while Donal and his fairy lover had been within the Gaillimh Sidhe, unable to influence any of the events that may have transpired.

First Donal had left the High Gate and she'd greeted him with all the caressing warmth at her command. She sensed his grief, but refused to acknowledge the reason, though she heard him sing songs of lost love in a mournful tone.

Nay, soon he'd forget Ceoleen and be hers once more.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Damn them both to the bowels of the earth! When I get my hands on them, I'll make them pay! That hunchback and his slut will pay for their part in my exile!"

Lorcan cursed soundly as another tree branch whipped his face and hands. Without his Sidhe ability to transform into a swiftly moving fly, he had no recourse but to travel on two legs.

He'd known the moment judgment had been passed upon him. Hidden outside the hall near an open window, he'd heard Drimin curse him.

The little bitch.

He'd left before any of the Sidhe had realized he was still inside the High Gate. Only one thought kept him from screaming in rage.

Revenge.

He knew Ceoleen was heading to the ring where she'd first met her mortal lover and was aware of a shortcut. He'd get there before her and lay in wait for the right moment to surprise the pair.

The sun shone hot on his skin, the beams filtering through the trees like gleaming swords. Sweat poured down his chest, drenching his linen shirt. Soon, he'd be sweating over Ceoleen's nubile body.

And Donal would be dead.

\* \* \* \* \*

Donal leaned his back against the whitebeam tree in the fairy ring where he had first met Ceoleen. He toyed with a scrap of lace that he'd found lying neglected on the grass. In the few short days since he'd returned, he had not had one moment of surcease from sorrow. With a mournful voice, he sang of lost love.

*"I would take you without a counted dowry, oh, my share of the world. 'Tis my black grief that you and I, oh, passionate love of my breast, are not here together.*

*"Come, a ghrá, and lie with me in the clear morning air. The stream will be flowing past us under the branches of the trees. The blackbird will be close to us, and the song thrush, too.*

*“My treasure has a shapely throat and a bosom white as snow, her curling ringlets reaching down to the grass. My bitter grief that I was not laid in the grave before I went wandering with my love left behind.”*

He bent his head, the loss of Ceoleen a greater burden than he'd realized.

*“A ghrá,* why did I not trust you? From the moment I met you, I loved you. When I heard your sweet voice singing ...” His words faltered. He took a shuddering breath and softly intoned the first melody he'd heard Ceoleen sing.

*“Dé Luain, Dé Máirt, Dé Luain, Dé Máirt ...”*

*“Dé Céadaoin!”*

With total disbelief, he raised his head and beheld his love. “Ceoleen? How? *A ghrá geal*, how did you make it back here?”

Ceoleen stepped onto the fairy mound and showed him her right hand. A braided cord was attached to her wrist and from there to the leg of the little bullfinch.

“See, he would tug me once to go right, twice to the left and three times to go straight.” She chuckled. “Sometimes he'd forget I can't fly and we had some close calls with branches. And I'd a stumble or two, but we're here at last.”

The little bullfinch swooped down and Ceoleen untied the cord from its leg, setting him free. The other end she left tied to her wrist.

Donal gazed at her in stunned silence, then rushed to embrace her. She clung to him, her hands resting against his chest. He led her over to the whitebeam tree and sat with her in his arms as he leaned against the trunk.

“Ah, my sweet darling, I ne'er thought to see you again. And that you found me without letting your blindness stop you.” He held her tighter. “I'm not deserving of you.”

“That's not true! And, *fíorghrá*, we were right to think something was amiss. 'Twas learned that we *were* being tricked!” Quickly she related the events that had transpired after

he had left, leaving out her near rape. She knew that he would want to track Lorcan down and kill him and that Lorcan would scarce play fair.

One more thing she didn't share: her new-found sight. It was the hardest thing to keep from exclaiming out loud when she first saw Donal. He was the handsomest male she'd ever seen, but she'd have loved him were he as hunched as he was once. Before she revealed the truth, he'd have to demonstrate his trust in her.

She whispered to him, her voice filled with emotion. "I'll never leave you. 'Tis you I love no matter your shape."

Joy coursed through Donal and he clasped her even tighter.

"There's no more need to bind you then when we make love."

Ceoleen turned within his embrace and placed a slim hand upon his mouth. "But I like it when you do." She pressed her breasts against his chest and arched against him. "I like it more than anything." She rose to her knees and gazed at him, then pressed a kiss to his tented breeches. "Shall I show how much I like it?" She grinned. "I won't use my hands at all. Watch."

She placed her hands behind her back and, using her teeth tugged to loosen the placket in his breeches and pull it open. His cock sprang forth, hard and thick. He spread his knees a bit so she could take more of him in her mouth.

And she went to work. Her tongue swirled up and down his length. She sucked hard, loving the way he filled her. Releasing him, she delved beneath his cock and nudged his sacs, licking him with the delicate touch of a cat licking cream.

He groaned. "Oh, *a ghrá*, that tongue of yours could cause a grown man to cry, 'mercy!'"

She raised her head and her grin was wicked. "Well, then, prepare to beg!" And she whipped her tongue around his prick, laving his flesh.

She suckled deeply and soon his seed filled her. She swallowed it all, relishing it. Finishing, she leaned back on to the grass and gazed at him. For the first time, she was able to see Donal's satisfied face.

So that was what true passion looked like.

He smiled at the beautiful ban-Sidhe sitting at his feet. "*A cuisle*, I do cry mercy." Rearranging his clothing, he rose to his knees and lifted her up so that she faced him. With a gentle hand, he brushed a stray lock of hair from her forehead. "You are so very beautiful to me. Come, my sweet girl," His voice took on a teasing tone. "I fear our desire overtook our good sense. You must be fair worn out."

Ceoleen answered his smile with a small one of her own. "I wish nothing more than to lie within your arms." Her smile blossomed further. "We've all the time in the world now."

After they rested, the loving couple spent the day singing together, wading in the stream that ran nearby and making love. Each time they did so, Donal bound Ceoleen's hands.

Ceoleen poured out her love whenever they touched or kissed or embraced. Now that he believed in the depth of her love, she could reveal to him the return of her sight.

Tomorrow.

\* \* \* \* \*

Hidden a short distance away, Lorcan strained his ears to hear the two lovers conversing. He was gritty, damp with sweat, and his feet were aching, but he'd arrived just an hour or two before Ceoleen. The sun had beaten down upon him, the heat burning him, searing his eyes, but soon 'twould be night, and then while they were fucking, he'd kill Donal and possess Ceoleen.

Reluctantly, the sun goddess, Étaín relinquished the sky to her sister Aine. She had tried in her own way to delay the fear-Sidhe once she had heard his mutterings of his plan.

How she wished she had never interfered with Donal's life! Now she could only wait till 'twas her time again to rise.

And pray that Donal lived through the night.

\* \* \* \* \*

The last sup of broth had been consumed, the last bit of biscuit devoured, and the two lovers lay together upon Ceoleen's down-filled pallet. She wore Donal's shirt and naught else. His chest was bare, his breeches loose enough so that they lay low on his lean flanks.

"'Tis late, *a ghrá geal*, and you'd a long day." Donal caressed her shoulders as she reclined in his embrace. "We should prepare for bed."

Ceoleen rose and went toward where she'd set down her bag. Opening it, she withdrew the box with the brush and comb Donal had made for her. Bringing them back, she sat down before Donal, untied the ribbon that held back her hair, and began to brush out the snarls.

"Oh, my sweet girl, you kept the gifts."

She turned and smiled at him. "And would I not keep what you made with such loving care for me? Oh, *fíorghrá*, 'twas your love which is the greatest gift."

Donal took the brush from her hand, placed it in the box, and put it aside. He drew the shirt up over her head and her body gleamed silver in the moonlight.

The cord was still attached to the whitebeam tree and he drew the free ends around Ceoleen's hands and wrapped them around her wrists.

She lay facing him. Her hands bound, she licked her lips in anticipation. Her legs moved restlessly. Her breathing grew more erratic as she thought of him kneeling between her legs, lifting her onto his thighs, drawing her closer to his hard, long prick.

He stood before her, unaware of his effect on her and let his breeches fall to the ground. The moonlight lovingly outlined his body, defining his muscular thighs and arms.

And his cock. His big, stiff cock.

Ceoleen moaned. "I need you, *fíorghrá*. Please."

He smiled and ran his hand along his penis. "As you wish, my queen."

He knelt, totally concentrating on the woman before him, oblivious to aught else.

Lifting her, he saw that the curls between her thighs were damp.

She was ready for him, more than ready.

He plunged into her, fitting his cock deep within her and began to move.

She closed her eyes and he smiled. Soon, her eyes would open wide in sightless pleasure, the pleasure only he could give her. A surge of desire rushed through him and he flung his head back and shuttered his eyes.

Ceoleen let the physical ecstasy wash over her. His hands gripping her waist, his rough hair abrading the soft skin of her legs, his cock pumping her.

She opened her eyes, looked up, and gasped.

Lorcan stood above them, a stout, thick branch in his upraised hand. Without pausing for thought, she called out, "*A ghrá*, behind you, 'tis Lorcan!"

Donal turned his head and shifted as the fear-Sidhe brought down his makeshift weapon, smashing his shoulder.

As he raised the branch again, Donal withdrew and rolled off her in one smooth movement. Lorcan stumbled and Donal took swift advantage, shoving his legs between Lorcan's feet. He fell, giving Donal the opportunity to grab the branch from his faltering hand. Donal rose to his knees, Lorcan prone between them, and pressed his arm across the fear-Sidhe's shoulders, pinning him to the ground.

"Bastard, and would you creep up on a man's back while he lay naked with his woman? And after you killed me, would you hurt my love, rape her? You worthless piece of dung, here's my spit in your face and the back of my hand!"

He tossed the cudgel aside and backhanded Lorcan with all his strength. As his hand struck him, he heard the satisfying crunch of the fear-Sidhe's nose breaking.

Donal stood, Lorcan still lying in the dirt, blood spewing from his face. He rolled back and forth, writhing in pain and moaning. Finally, he heaved his body to his knees, but could rise no further.

"Aye, you slimy bastard, leave us. But before you do, I offer you this curse. May you scuttle along the ground like the maggot you are! Should you dare show your face again, I'll kill you!"

Without saying a word, Lorcan crawled away from the fairy ring into the darkness of the forest. Donal watched him leave, a grim smile of satisfaction on his face.

"*A ghrá*, untie me!"

Donal whipped around. In his anger, he'd forgotten Ceoleen. He moved to her side and quickly released her. She fell into his embrace, her arms clinging to him, wrapped around him. All around him.

"*Fíorghrá*, when I saw him. Oh, *a ghrá geal*, I thought he would kill you."

"You saw him? You saw me? How? Since when?"

"While I was still within the High Court. The bullfinch did lead me here, but I could see his darting path." She raised a hand to his face, caressing it. "Oh, *fíorghrá*, from the moment I realized how much I loved you and how much you loved me, I could see. I hope you'll forgive me for not telling you, but I was waiting for you to trust me enough to let me make love to you unfettered. When you told me that earlier, my heart sang." She shook her head. "I'd planned to tell you in the morning after this day of making love the way I love best. But seeing Lorcan -- I had to call out." She burrowed her head deeper against his chest. "Please forgive me for not telling you sooner."

He raised her head and looked deeply into her brilliant green eyes, knowing that she could see all the love he held for her.

“My heart is within you. You are the pulse beating in my body. My joy it is that you can see me. 'Tis naught to forgive for 'twas right that you waited until I trusted the strength of our love.”

Ceoleen smiled. “Then nothing stands between our love now.”

“Aye. And will you stay with me here until all the world slips away?”

She nodded. “And the stars grow dark.”

And so they vowed.

And so it was.

And in the morning, the goddess Étaín sent the healing balm of her rays to shine on the lovers, reconciled to a love she'd never have and awed by the strength of Donal and Ceoleen's passion.

## Afterword

'Tis said that if you wander through the midlands of Ireland and should you stumble upon a fairy ring on the first day of May, hush and listen.

Listen to the whispering on the wind and you just might hear the voices of two true lovers singing the song that first drew them together.

And if you're lucky enough you just might hear that song from start to finish.

*"Dé Luain, Dé Máirt, Dé Luain, Dé Máirt, Dé Céadaoin ..."*

 THE END 

## Jeanne Barrack

Jeanne is a native New Yorker, married for thirty-odd years (and they have been odd) to her high school sweetheart. Although they haven't been blessed with children, they still have heard the pitter-patter of little Tibetan Terrier paws all their married life.

She studied voice privately and sings everything from folk music to Grand opera and in ten languages, including Gaelic and Hebrew.

Jeanne's love of fantasy began at the age of ten when she got her hands on her older brother's Ray Bradbury books. Her love of romance started when she read the galley proofs for a steamy Rosemary Rogers romance. Dealt a double whammy by her mother's death in 1997 and being downsized from her job, Jeanne turned to her dreams and lo and behold, found *Silver Fire*, which combined her two loves of fantasy and sexy romance. Rewrites, edits and contests followed. Life and other projects put it on the back burner until 2004, when, all spiffed up, she sent it off to Loose Id where it found a home.

Visit Jeanne on the Web at [www.jeannebarrack.com](http://www.jeannebarrack.com).