

ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS

ELLORA'S CAVE

# *Quickies*

*Naughty Nuptials*

# *Wedding*

# *Sitters*

Brynn Paulin

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



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Wedding Jitters

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# ***WEDDING JITTERS***

**Brynn Paulin**

## *Acknowledgements*

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## **Chapter One**

The breathing wasn't working to calm her nerves. At this rate, Dara knew she'd be a quivering mess by tomorrow morning. That couldn't happen. She'd never be able to put on her dress. If she didn't get a grip, she might as well not attend her own wedding because when she got nervous, bad things happened and people got hurt. That's why she did her best to keep everything in order. She'd chosen a job filled with predictability. She never procrastinated—she'd even picked the milk-toastiest of men to marry. Everything was on schedule and predictable. Yep. She had her life under control. And with the control over her life, she controlled her “problem”.

It wasn't working so well right now.

Alone in the reception hall where guests would gather tomorrow to celebrate her marriage to her fellow accountant, Tom Smith, she took a few deep breaths to cleanse away the familiar tightening across her shoulder blades. She would not get jittery about the proceedings. Marrying Tom was the right thing to do. Sure, he didn't “light her fire” to borrow a phrase from her Aunt Mary, but as far as Dara was concerned, that was perfect. She didn't want Tom to rouse her passion. If he did...it would be disaster. As soon as she lost control of her emotions he, and anyone nearby, would learn her secret.

She'd have to save her passion for the vibrator hidden in her bedside table. It didn't care what she was as her cunt gripped it in exquisite orgasm. She almost wished she had brought it with her on this trip to Tom's hometown. It might calm her—after a fashion—and help her forget. Dara Farine, pillar of the left-brain, feet-firmly-on-the-ground accounting community, was a fairy. A wing-sprouting, pointy-eared, magic-wielding fairy.

It was the bane of her existence.

A sudden vision of her wings tearing through the satin back of her wedding gown sent her into another round of breathing. There was nothing to be nervous about. Yards of tulle perfectly draped about the room set the mood for the day to come while empty crystal bowls sat amid gold-rimmed place settings on each table. Tomorrow morning the florist would fill the bowls with floating candles and flowers.

Dara ticked off the list in her head. Party favors. Check. Personalized napkins. Check, check for both sizes. Gift table. Enough place settings. Proper placement of the wedding party's table. Check. Check. Check. She considered rechecking the rest of her list, but she knew all was in order there too. Besides, the hotel staff would be irritated if she re-questioned them. After all, it was three in the morning.

She couldn't sleep. Jitters kept creeping up her spine along with questions about whether she was doing the right thing. Of course she was. She knew she was. She'd considered it for ages before she'd chosen her groom. Sure he'd thought it was all his idea...

Right.

So what was her problem? She hadn't had a single nerve outburst in ages and now she could barely control herself. She had to or else. She couldn't direct the magic disguising her fairy-nature if she didn't. The dumb spell would disintegrate.

Last time that happened, there had been a fifteen-car pile-up in the middle of downtown. Thank God her Uncle Stefan, who just happened to be a full-blood fairy and married to her aunt, had been able to magically adjust the witness's memories of what had happened.

So, again, what was her problem? It was Tom's fault. He'd wandered into her final dress fitting last night. Dara had clearly heard what he'd said over the din of all the women blustering about dresses and bad luck. While he'd ignored her mother's shoving, he'd stared awe-struck at Dara.

"You look like a fairy princess."

Why on earth would he choose *those* words? And why had her body immediately reacted to them? Mercy, she'd nearly melted into a puddle of satin and lace and begged him to fuck her without a care for the others in the room. No good. This was no good. She didn't think of him that way, even though she meant to marry him tomorrow.

He didn't know how close his words were to true. The fairy part of course, not the princess. She was no princess, only the fifth daughter of a fifth-generation woodsman, though her family assured her the lineage went on for countless generations before that. It was part of her curse. The fifth daughter of the fifth generation was always a fairy. So now she'd been born with wings and pointy ears because some ancestor of hers had boinked a fairy maiden and stolen her from the Fairy Kingdom.

Why couldn't her two-day-younger cousin, who pretended to be an elf at every possible Ren-fest, be the fairy? Why couldn't her great-great-whatever-grandfather have kept it in his pants until he'd found a lusty non-fairy wench? Annoying. Damned annoying.

She scowled at one of the fat white candles on the main table, then sighed. She could almost feel its thickness sliding through her quivering folds, her climax heightened as she tried to hold back the physical reaction that would have her flying a few inches above the mattress. She'd fail. She always failed to hold back.

She knew why her ancestor had yanked his cock from his trousers. He'd had the same unquenchable thirst for sex that plagued her—only hers was due to her fairy blood. Her ancestor had no excuses. Life with ever-so-staid Tom would be a trial, but she'd have her sex toys to help her through. And someday maybe, just maybe, she'd learn to control herself enough to keep her wings from erupting when she exploded. Then she'd really show Tom a thing or ten about sex. He wouldn't know what hit him.

She took a few steps toward the candle, eyeing its ridges. "Will anyone notice if I borrow one?" she mused. After all, she was paying for this whole shindig. Even the ever-so-tempting candles.

"I think they might," said a deep voice behind her. "May I offer myself as a substitute?"

Dara spun around, shocked to see the dark-haired man who'd entered the hall and now stood so close to her. Talk about "light your fire"! He instantly ignited her with an intent green-eyed gaze. And frightened her, although she had to admit the fright was more from her reaction than from his appearance. Her folds wept as she backed away from him, her already damp panties torturing her aroused flesh.

He followed and trapped her against the main table. Her accelerated breathing had nothing to do with wedding jitters and everything to do with the wide-shouldered man who loomed over her, topping her average height by at least six inches. The scent of the forest and sex wafted around her and she moaned as she leaned away.

"What do you want?" she managed though it was obvious what he wanted. Irrationally, she considered a last hot fling with this man she'd never see again, but discarded the thought. He'd learn of her nature, and it wasn't fair to break her commitment to Tom.

"You," he answered. "Forgive me my haste, but now that I've found you, I'm overcome."

Found her? "I think you've found the wrong person."

His hand slid up her thigh, shifting aside her skirt until his fingers rested on her hip, bare except for a miniscule strip of silk.

"I think not." His fingers slipped beneath the edge of her panties and down into her slippery folds. "I think not."

A cry escaped her pressed lips as he massaged her needy flesh. He lifted her to sit on the edge of the table then insinuated his slim hips between her legs when she thought to press them together. Wild sensations tightened her belly, all centering in her pussy until he lowered his head and bit the nipple poking against her blouse.

She cried out, arching against his hand.



"More?" he murmured. A thick finger delved inside her, and he sucked the peak of her breast deep into his mouth, sending an electric bolt to her core. Mindlessly, she pressed her hands onto the table behind her and lifted into him.

"Yes!"

She moaned in protest when his fingers immediately left her.

"I want to see you," he rasped. He pulled her skirt to her waist and pushed the excess fabric behind her. A hiss of fabric ripping followed, leaving her trimmed sex open for his view. "Don't move," he ordered when she reflexively moved to cover herself. Trembling, she planted her palms back on the table, her fingers curling into the crisp white linen.

Outside the room, she heard the squeal of the janitor's cart as he wheeled past the doorway. "What if someone comes in?" she whispered, though she knew her question should be who are you? Suddenly knowing his identity wasn't all that important.

"The door's locked." His lips feathered across hers. The first kiss that should have come before the rest. "You'll have to be quiet, though, or they'll find their way in." As if to illustrate his point, he parted her and slowly slipped two fingers into her honeyed recesses. She watched mesmerized as he moved in and out, his knuckles shining with her cream.

Not content with that sight, he yanked at the vee neck of her blouse, pulling it aside and popping the first two buttons in his haste. He sucked in a harsh breath at the sight of her translucent lace bra and the aroused tan nipples peeking through. In a single motion, he yanked down the garment and cupped her breasts. He pushed them together, an offering for him. He descended on them, sucking first one then the other into his mouth as he tasted her. His teeth dragged along the crinkled flesh as he released each with a quick nip at the point.

His free hand yanked the tail of her shirt from her skirt and snaked beneath where it flattened against the place where her wings would erupt if he brought her to orgasm.

That space between her shoulder blades tingled, signaling danger. Her breath trembled unevenly through her. She had to get away. She couldn't transform before him.

Fabric bunched in her hands, and a candleholder fell over, clattering onto a china place setting. She was helpless to do anything but watch as he dropped the arm at her back and reached around her. And her heart stuttered out of control when she saw his objective. The candle. She clenched around the fingers still stroking her. What did he intend to do with it? From the look in his heavy-lidded eyes, she could guess... He intended to do exactly what she'd envisioned earlier.

Her ears nearly burned at the tips where she fought to hold her disguise. She tried to push her legs together, but he held them as they were. A trickle of apprehension amplified her tension and her resulting distress. She'd envisioned using the candle alone, locked in her hotel room, not here with this stranger not only looking on but wielding the wax cylinder.

"I can't do this."

Slowly, he dragged the wick along the side of her neck and across her lips. "Yes, you can."

Tipping the candle slightly, he nudged it against her mouth until she drew it partway inside. Her lips stretched around it as he mimicked fucking her mouth as she'd like him to with the cock that pressed against his black pants. Her stomach muscles pulled tight as she pretended it was him pressed to her tongue. Releasing the tablecloth, she reached forward and dragged her fingers over his tight muscled belly. Staring into his eyes, she toyed with his waistband then cupped her hand over his straining fly. Playing with fire, she ran her fingers along the long ridge and gauged his length and girth. The candle would be small in comparison.

His skin went tight over his cheekbones at her unexpected caress. He yanked the candle from her mouth. Her tongue darted out to smooth her lips before she dragged the bottom lip between her teeth.

"You want it?" he asked, his voice sandpaper rough. He dragged his toy between her breasts and over her belly. The waxy surface pulled at her curls and she whimpered, tilting her hips toward the tip.

She'd have to control her transformation—there was no turning back now. She had to do this. She had to have him too. And if disaster happened...she closed her eyes as the top of the cylinder nudged her cleft and she tried to think. If disaster happened, she'd have to confess to her family and obtain the magic to fix this stranger's memory. She'd have this memory and he'd vaguely remember great sex.

"Oh!" she cried, her voice loud in the empty room as he pressed the broad tip of the candle into her cunt and her eyes went wide. He paused and she thought she'd cry from want. Smiling slightly, he shook his head. He was stopping now? He'd changed his mind?

"I warned you to be quiet, little one." Deftly he grabbed a set of silverware from beside them and shook out the napkin, letting the utensils rain onto the china with a metallic clatter.

"What are you doing?" she breathed, hardly able to form words for the sensation of her wings threatening to burst forth and the girth spreading her pussy.

He balled the cloth napkin and held it in front of her. "I warned you to be quiet. Open your mouth."

Her eyes went wide but she complied, still hardly able to believe this was happening as he pushed the linen inside.

"Now close your mouth as much as you can." He nodded. "There, now you can make all the noise you want, but I'll be the only one to hear." He leaned close until his lips touched her ear. "And I'll like to hear you scream your pleasure."

Another rush of moisture flooded her while her thighs quivered.

Slowly, he worked the candle inside her and she fought the uproar screeching within her.

Merritt Fae watched Dara fight for control and wondered if she had any idea how beautiful she was. She loved sex in any way she could get it. He'd known she would. All their people did. He couldn't wait to take her. Not now, though. Later. First, he wanted to watch her fly apart and shed the dreadful shade she wore to disguise herself. Then once she'd shed the spell, he'd bury himself inside her sheath.

That hadn't been his intention when he came here. He was on a mission, sent by his father to bring her home to their people, the Fae. When he'd seen her fighting herself and sensed her desire as she'd stared at the candles, he'd known he would do more than take her home. He'd take her himself.

Gently, he removed her hand from his manhood and pressed her palm back to the table to give her the support she'd need when her orgasm took her.

Her curling red hair streamed over her shoulders pooling on the table behind her as her head tipped back. Plump breasts pushed toward him in a creamy slope of temptation. He never had been one to fight temptation. As the prince of the fairies, he took what he wanted. And he wanted Dara. Leaning over her, he pressed the candle deeper within her tight passage, his cock growing harder as the object moved easily through her slick arousal.

Dara's muffled cries filled him, strengthening his resolve to make her truly his. Bending, he drew hard on her nipple, the texture as supple as spring leaves and as sweet as the nectar of the wildflowers near his home. Soon he'd take her there amongst the blooms, their heady scent blending with the spice of her arousal.

She shuddered in his embrace. Her moans changed pitch. She writhed, her eyes wide and her folds clutching at the candle as she rode her climax. He wished it were him within that grasp. Next time. Next time it would be.

As her vision cleared, Dara stared up at the man still bent over her. He was beautiful. She itched to reach up and stroke her fingers over his chiseled cheekbones or

bury them in the luxurious sable-colored hair framing his face. And those eyes. They captured her in the moment after her orgasm and held her immobilized under the realization of what she'd just done.

She knew two things at once. She'd never reacted as deeply to anyone, or anything, if she counted her vibrator. The other was that she'd controlled her wings. Sort of. She felt them protruding slightly against her blouse, but they weren't full flung.

Quickly, she retracted them as the stranger set aside the candle and reached for his fly. His intention shone clear in his steadfast green gaze. Suddenly, her senses plowed back into place.

What the hell had she just done?

She had to get out of here. *Now*. If she let him inside her, it was all over. She'd never control her reactions. She'd never be able to settle into a tame marriage with whatshisname either. *Tom...yeah, Tom*. That was his name. And she didn't even know this stranger's name, or anything about him.

A tremble snaked along her limbs. He was dangerous, and he had some sort of an agenda. That was apparent. Why else would he have come here and done what he'd done, made her feel...

It was nothing short of a miracle that she'd managed to keep from transforming before him. It was a miracle she wouldn't squander.

Hastily, she drew her shredded spell around her and yanked the cloth from her mouth. Taking him by surprise, she shoved his chest. Hard. She may as well have shoved a wall for all he moved. Drawing back her feet, she kicked them into his belly before he could react to her first volley.

She'd lost a shoe somewhere, but in the whole scheme of things, it didn't matter. He'd moved just enough that she could dodge around him. She dashed to the door, gimped into a stumbling shuffle by the low-heeled-pump-bare-foot combo. Thank God, he'd ripped her panties and they weren't around her ankles. That would have made for a short-lived escape. She'd be flat on her face and he, she suspected, would be over her.

An inappropriate rush of arousal tightened her womb. Why the hell did that errant thought excite her? She should be running faster. A guilty part of her wondered if she'd even protest if he caught her. Even a little?

She couldn't let him catch her. She was engaged. Tomorrow morning, she was marrying a man who loved her—well liked her a lot anyway. There was probably a special place in hell for women who slept with other men the night before their weddings.

But she wanted to. She didn't, however, want to show this stranger her wings and if she slept with him... She was fairly sure there would not be a repeat of the earlier miracle.

Why was the door so far away?

He growled in outrage at her move and thundered after her, the thunder less sound than tension from his irritation and her sense of the storm about to overtake her. She added speed. If she could make it to the door... Safety waited on the other side. She skidded to a halt before she slammed into it and frantically turned the knob.

Locked!

She felt the man's warmth as she fumbled with the mechanism. Finality licked at the edges of her hope for escape. As two powerfully muscled arms caged her, palms flat on the wood on either side of her shoulders, she dropped her forehead to the cool surface of the door. His hard body pressed behind her. His thick arousal tucked against her buttocks sent rampant panic pounding in her heart.

"Let me go!" she demanded. To her horror, her plea sounded more like a half-hearted request than a demand for release. She choked back hysteria. If he gave her the release she really wanted, too many people would be hurt.

Tears pricked her eyes as she struggled to escape his arms.

"I know what you are, little one," he whispered. His lips brushed across the tip of her ear, the flutter of ashes before a lick of flame when his tongue traced the undeniable point.

Her ears! Oh God! Her ears! In her preoccupation with hiding her wings, she'd forgotten something just as vital.

"And what do you think I am?" she demanded, determined to haughtily brazen her way from this situation. She was a fool to let things go this far. She would not be controlled by her lust for this demon of seduction no matter how beautiful he was.

"Mine," he replied. His surprising response battered her newfound determination, and she knew the decision of how they'd proceed had been taken from her hands as soon as he'd entered the room.

The possession in his tone roused a long-held desire that had nothing to do with her need to have him fuck her. She wanted to belong. Wasn't that what her marriage to Tom was about? She wanted to belong to him. She wanted to belong as she never had in her family where she'd always been the oddball with the wings.

She sagged against the door, the cool wood against her cheek in opposition to the heat burning against her backside. His arms snaked around her as his body pushed flush with hers. His cock ground into the crease of her ass, claiming that spot as he claimed her.

"But I'm engaged..." she trailed off as she felt him shrug. His arms tightened. No matter what happened tomorrow, she knew she'd be forever bound to him and this moment. Even if – when. When – she married Tom, she wouldn't forget.

She took a deep breath as the world seemed to shimmer around them, turning to silver waving threads. Either she was passing out or relocating. She fervently hoped for the former, though the latter happened occasionally when her emotions ran too high and she had to escape. It never happened when she wanted and she hated it when it did. Suddenly materializing in another place made it awfully hard to deny the spirit within her.

A knot gripped her stomach. The tight clasp of her lover's arms and her heightened sensations did not bode well for passing out. The silvery strands cleared to reveal her hotel suite.

A sob shuddered through her. She'd lost control. The fairy part of her had taken over. And she wanted this man badly enough, she'd brought him to the place where she could have free rein over his body without threat of disturbance. What was worse, exposing her wings or magically relocating them?

He didn't seem overly surprised to suddenly be in another room.

He looked around, taking in the luxury of the bridal suite where she was to spend tomorrow night with Tom in the canopy bed with its heavy drapes. Guilt settled in her stomach. Every moment with this man was a betrayal of the relationship she'd built with Tom. Was she willing to sacrifice that for a quick tumble with this stranger who –

She stumbled a few paces away, needing to breathe without being intoxicated by his masculine musk. She leaned against the heavy dresser, fighting herself. If she refused this man, would he stop? Would he go away? Could she make herself stop him?

His face was shadowed in the room illuminated by a single dim lamp beside the bed. The smudgy shadows gave him a greater air of danger while the faint light caught in his sensual gaze.

Her mouth went dry.

She didn't believe he'd hurt her. Physically. But some impressions left indelible marks. Instinctively, she knew this nameless man would never be long removed from her thoughts.

Her fingers curled on the edge of the dresser. Her future obsession at least deserved a name. "Who are you?"

"Merritt." His look assessed her, lingering on her tight nipples.

He pulled his shirt over his head. She caught a wobbling breath at the sight of the lightly furred perfection. Black runic symbols were drawn across the top of his chest, running like an interlaced proclamation from arm to arm. Another knotted black design resided above his navel.



She fought the urge to go to him and splay her fingers over his pecs while she traced those marks with her lips. Her belly muscles curled and stretched in reaction. She wouldn't stop at his chest. She'd continue downward and trail her tongue along the thin line of hair that ran from his navel to disappear beneath his low waistband.

"You want to take me?" he murmured. The look in his eyes when she dragged her gaze from the bulge in his pants hinted that his question held more importance than the words indicated.

She couldn't lie. He'd know. Wasn't her desire obvious? Besides they'd come this far. Who knew what her fairyself would do if she attempted to deny it. And if she took him as, he'd said, she'd be in control, wouldn't she?

"Yes, I want you," she admitted.

"You want to take me?" he repeated.

Her brows furrowed. "Yes, I want to take you."

He smiled and her earlier sense of danger once again bombarded her middle, frenzied moths trying to get to his flame.

"I will take you as well," he answered.

A surge of power zinged through her veins, leaving her weak in its aftermath, and she nearly collapsed as her knees buckled. She stared at him wide-eyed.

What had she done?

## Chapter Two

Triumph flared through Merritt as Dara repeated the ancient mating declaration. He'd tricked her but felt no guilt. Though she had no idea what she'd done, now she was his. His mate. She'd have no choice but to abandon her ridiculous notion that she could actually unite herself with a mortal. She'd have no choice but to return home with him now. And once she saw how normal her wings were, how much he loved them, she'd *want* to come with him too.

But first he'd coerce her to drop the deteriorating spell she held about her. Her gorgeous ears already poked through her disheveled red locks. He had only to unveil her enticing wings. He'd already felt them. Their pulsing had sent a rush of blood to his cock when they'd rested against his hand earlier. His own wings had almost unfurled in response. Even now they wanted to fly free at the remembered sensation. Purposefully, he kept them down. Later, he'd reveal them. Too soon and he'd never experience her wings brushing his shoulders while he buried his face between them.

He straightened and rested his hands on his hips. "I want you to do as I say. Do you trust me enough for that?"

Dara hesitated, then nodded. Once she had agreed, a glint entered her eyes. He could almost see the thoughts running through her head. She was a strong one, unwilling to kowtow to anyone – unless she chose to.

"Should I call you master too?" she offered, her tone anything but docile. In fact, it was a bit mocking.

Not for long. There'd be no mocking in the way she cried his name.

He lifted an eyebrow. "No, but you can call me Your Highness."

"Your Highness, huh?" she muttered and made a face. "Okay, whatever."

He crossed his arms over his chest, not at all pleased with the mockery. She'd pay for it later. Without speaking, he waited.

"You're serious?" she asked.

Royalty never explained themselves. He waited for her realization to sink in.

"Okay." Dara sighed. She blinked rapidly, obviously trying to hold back a grin. "Yes, your highness. What do you wish of me?"

"Take off your blouse." Missing two buttons, the garment fell over the place where her breasts were still propped above her bra. Those knotted nipples called to him where they poked the sheer fabric of the shirt. He wanted to suck them until she screamed for mercy and then suck them some more until she came on another kind of scream. And then, as she still quivered from the orgasm, he'd thrust into her. She'd milk him until he released his seed deep within her welcoming folds.

"Yes, your highness."

His cock throbbed at her soft words. The rightness wrapping around them, strengthened him for the task ahead. She wouldn't like it. She'd fight releasing the cloaking spell with everything in her.

Her blouse was already torn. Dara lifted the edges then apparently deciding not to bother with taking care with it, shucked it over her head. Without waiting for his direction, she removed the bra and her lovely breasts bounced free to rest firmly against her chest, proclaiming they'd barely needed support.

His breath caught while his pants became increasingly uncomfortable. His skin prickled with the need for her contact—to feel her smooth skin under his palms. If anything, he needed that as much as he needed to be inside her.

She shimmied from her skirt and the destroyed panties then kicked off her remaining shoe. Bravely, she held her hands to her sides, though she wasn't brave enough to meet his eyes, and let him peruse her naked figure.

He didn't want to look. He wanted to devour her.

"Come here."

Her teeth sank into her full lower lip.

"Yes...your highness," she added. She was deep into the game she believed they played, though he could still sense her resistance in each hesitation and flitting eye movement. She fought herself and her need for him. Her subconscious recognized him for what he was. One like herself. Magical.

Without his instruction, she knelt before him. "Dara," he murmured.

She looked up at him, then, and the strength radiating from her gaze rocked him backward. Strength and willing supplication. She'd shed her indecision along with her clothes. What she'd decided was clear. She'd take him, no matter the ramifications.

Relief eased his breathing until she leaned forward and clasped her fingers on his thighs. Her open mouth pressed to his arousal. Even through the confining cloth of his trousers her touch seared him. He buried his fingers in her silky hair, forgetting to exhale when she pressed her tongue to him.

His cock jerked in response. Her very touch nearly brought him to release. Merritt swore under his breath. He would not lose himself in these damnable human garments. He'd known many women, beautiful women, both fairy and human. He'd even lain with a few elves, though afterward, he'd always regretted succumbing to their evil wiles. Never, even under an elven spell, had he responded like this.

He now understood what the elders had told him since childhood. This pull in his middle, this uncompromising need, this rush of sensation at Dara's touch, at her breath on his skin... Dara was his mate and his essence knew her.

His blood had barely ceased pounding through him since he'd entered the reception room downstairs and seen the lush curves of her backside as she'd stared longingly at the candles. Each thump-thump of his heart sang with it. *Take her, take her, take her...*

He would take her. Now.

Merritt pulled her to her feet, letting her feel the strength of his body as he drew her along it. She whimpered, bowing into him.

"Take me," she begged. Her hand slipped between them to caress his aching cock.

Grabbing her hand, he pulled it to his chest. His other hand threaded into her fiery hair. It swirled around them, an out-of-control flame, before he took her mouth. Roughly, he threw all his frustration and need into the thrust of his tongue against hers.

She wouldn't be in charge. He was the prince. He had a task to perform. Even if she shook him to the tip of his cock, he'd maintain control.

For both their sakes.

How could he not? Given her way, she'd deny the very existence of their people. With that denial, she denied him. She denied their union.

He drew her toward the bed.

"Come," he commanded.

She laughed, a musical tinkle possessed only by those of fairy blood. "Pretty soon, I'm sure. Merritt, I need you now."

"You'll have me until you fall apart."

She sucked in a breath and tensed, attempting to pull away her hand. His grip tightened. She wouldn't run from him now.

She shook her head frantically. "I won't."

"We'll see."

She took a deep breath, visibly regaining control of her frayed emotions. He'd run her through the gamut. He knew that. More was to come before they were finished and she accepted her nature.

Her tongue dampened her bottom lip, beckoning him to sample the nectar.

"So...um, Merritt...take off your clothes and get on the bed."

She was so brave, his little one. He gestured toward the mattress. "You first."

"But—"

He lifted an eyebrow. "You promised."

"I—you said I could take you."

He shook his head, a prick of guilt at knowing he'd tricked her. "We take each other. Now...on the bed."

"But—"

He frowned. No one disobeyed the prince of Fairy, even his mate. "You'll be punished if you do not."

Excitement lit in her sky-blue eyes. Obviously, she liked the thought of that. He saved away the discovery for future use. He didn't believe in harming females, but a little pain for mutual pleasure would be acceptable if they both desired it. The thought of her bent over his lap, her wings fluttering while he spanked her nearly undid his tenuous hold over himself.

"How?" she breathed. She pressed her thighs together. Her nipples pulled so tight they had to be painful. She rolled her shoulders and he recognized the action for what it was. She was attempting to hold back her wings. Soon she'd discover how fruitless the action was and how unnecessary.

She was so aroused and fighting it. It pleased him that words alone had almost forced his responsive mate's wings free. The temptation to turn her and pull them loose himself nearly overwhelmed him. He could not. Like the butterfly, Dara had to release them. If she did not, on her own, she'd never survive her doubts. Her strength would crumble.

He could only assist without touching them until they were free.

"On the bed," he repeated without answering her question. "On your stomach."

Her eyes went wide. "Merritt, couldn't we—"

He stepped back. "I won't touch you until you comply."

Her face was so open and the mental war she fought so obvious.

"You're safe," he asserted, adding fire to her battle.

She shook her head.

"I see," he said and turned away. He crossed to where he'd dropped his shirt. His hair would hide the telltale ridges next to his spine where his wings folded back. As he reached for his garment, the mattress creaked and the bedding shuffled as Dara climbed onto the bed.

"Your highness," she whispered almost choked by fear but unable to deny her desire to couple. It was like that with his people.

Carnal.

Sensual.

Necessary for existence. She never would have survived marriage to the human.

Hastily, he flicked open the buttons holding his pants and removed the rest of his clothing. Crawling onto the bed beside her, he pulled her into his embrace. She needed comfort before what was to come. She pressed her face into his chest.

"It will be all right," he assured her, stroking her hair and rubbing his hands over her pulsing back.

"No it won't but I want you too much." Her voice rasped as her fairy side fought with her human mind. "Please. I need you."

He couldn't respond. The time was now. Before the sun rose, she'd be free and she'd be his.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dara thought she might tear apart. Desire and fear fought for dominance within. She had to let Merritt take her. The way he wanted. She couldn't deny the rush of arousal flooding her cleft and leaking onto her thighs. She would forever regret it if she said no. Yet, if she continued, she might have larger regrets. He'd find out her secret.

And what if he did? She didn't know him. What if he took advantage of her condition? Handed her over for experiments? Everything in her told her to refuse him.

Say no. Run away as fast as she could. She'd be a fool to go on. Why should she risk her biggest secret to this stranger?

For all her misgivings, she was powerless to say no.

"Trust me." He gently guided her back to her stomach. An arm around her, he pulled her to her knees. She pushed her face into the pillows, both embarrassed to be so open to him and wanting to hide from her wholly primitive need. She felt rather than saw him move behind her.

His thumbs spread her cleft. "You're so beautiful all over."

Lightly, he ran his fingertips over her clit, sliding along through her cream. Being so aroused and having him find her that way added a sensuality that served to arouse her further. She spread her knees slightly to give him better access. His fingers continued their stroking while her mind became a haze of sensation. There was nothing but this moment, his touch, the tremors sliding through her.

Suddenly, he dipped forward and darted his tongue along her folds. She screamed into the pillow while he drank from her and suckled her clit. She clenched the pillow and tried to keep her breathing even as her wings vibrated against her back. *Stay hidden, stay hidden*, she begged.

"Let go," Merritt urged. How could he know the mental battle she waged? Did he know the ragged shred of control she clutched to her?

Reaching beneath her, he molded her breast while he continued to eat from her nectar. She lifted as high as she could to him, determined to offer him all she could while he nipped her exposed pearl and pressed his tongue against it.

"Merritt!" she cried. A strong tremor raked down her thighs. She tried to stop it. She clutched at control.

She flew apart. Nearly *really* flew! Nothing could stop her red and brown wings from bursting forth. They flapped wildly as she careened through a storm of sensations that left her mind behind. Colors danced behind her eyes.



"Yes!" Merritt exclaimed rising over her, his hands clamped on her hips.

She pressed back, searching for his cock, knowing he'd find her if she offered herself. She needed him in her now while this surging energy rippled through her. Her limbs were weightless and her mind so full of bright light she could fathom nothing but Merritt and the cataclysm taking place within her. Her head thrashed from side to side on the pillow. She couldn't take another ounce of pleasure. She'd die if he left her now.

A moment's panic took her. What if her wings repulsed him? What if he ran from her? Merritt didn't seem the running type. His nails lightly raked between her wings, soon followed by the trail of his lips.

The wings, untrained from years of being hidden, continued to beat wildly, flicking the sheets beside her shoulders then folding backward over Merritt. Incredible sensation flooded through the thin membranes to overwhelm her consciousness.

"Yes, little one," he hissed. "Wrap me in your wings."

"Please," she moaned. She was burning for him, the heat in her pussy almost unbearable with her need for him to fill her emptiness. The more she touched him this way the greater her arousal. Her internal muscles clenched in preparation for what was sure to come. It had to. She needed his penetration, deep, hard.

The wide head of his cock pressed to her opening, parting the tight flesh. Dara gasped at the pressure. She hadn't gauged how thick he was. Thick and hot and hard as granite. He was so large! Inch by sweet inch he slid into her, parting her needy channel with a girth that far outdid any vibrator she'd ever owned. By the time he sank to his hilt, Dara was crying out and writhing beneath him. White hot striations of pleasure sizzled through her, almost unbearable in their intensity.

His hard hands tightened on her hips and held her firmly to him while she squirmed for more. She expected him to pull back and thrust again, but instead he surprised her. Releasing her, he lightly traced her wings. His touch was light as a feather as he traced over the thin membranes which trembled at his caress.

"Perfect," he said. "I knew they would be."

Adoring them, he ran his palms along the top edge to the tips. He cupped the ends and pulled the wings to their full span while kneading them.

Dara winced at the unfamiliar stretching. She'd kept her wings hidden for so long. Even when alone, she didn't indulge herself and let them extend. The discomfort did little to dampen her arousal. In contrast, her muscles spasmed around Merritt's cock still lodged so deep within her. Oh God, she wanted him to move. The more he treasured her body, even her damnable wings, the more she softened to him. He hadn't rejected her or been repulsed when she'd lost control of the spell and her wings had burst forth. He actually seemed to like them. He couldn't stop touching them.

Delicious ripples, starting at her wing tips, vibrated through her. They rolled continuously through her from his palms to her womb until unconsciously she began to sway, riding his staff while he fondled her.

As she'd promised, she was taking him. Why did he delay completely fucking her? Why was he so still, while she wantonly gloved him?

Her nipples tightened. Even the brush of the bedding against the oversensitive peaks made her moan. She couldn't stop her movement. She couldn't stop impaling herself on him. An ache built deep within her and she needed Merritt's cock pistoning in and out to soothe her.

What had he done?

He lightly pinched a wing tip. Pleasure stabbed through her and she almost exploded around him.

"You're most sensitive here," he told her, accompanying his words with a few rhythmic strokes. "Even more sensitive than your clit."

She panted wildly and tried to focus on his words, a near impossibility when his rubbing made her mind fuzzy.

"Merritt, please," she begged. She tilted her pelvis hoping to entice him to move. Could he get a clearer invitation? How difficult was it to know what she wanted, her

head in the pillow and her ass raised to him, her body open to him? Having his cock in her was nice, but she wanted him to move, damn it!

He pressed his mouth between her shoulder blades. His lips slid along the ridges of her spine, exploring each tiny notch before he turned his head and trailed his tongue along the crease where one wing met her back.

She shivered at the sheer eroticism of his action. She'd never envisioned how this shunned part of her could be a part of sex play. She'd never guessed, either, how sensitive they were. Like a virgin discovering the ecstasy of sex for the first time, she marveled in the exquisite knowledge Merritt opened to her.

How did he have the knowledge? The question pierced the arousal fogging her brain. How did he know? How had he come to be in the reception room and how had he known exactly who she was?

Suspicion combined with his lack of movement sent her heart racing with panic. What was she doing? Anxiously, she shifted away from him, but with his grip on her wings, she couldn't move forward enough to free his cock from her body. She yanked at them. Pain rocketed into her, nearly knocking away her breath.

"Dara!" Merritt exclaimed, concern sharpening his tone. "Little one. Just relax. You're safe."

He pushed forward into her, reclaiming the moist folds where he'd been moments ago. She groaned, reluctantly accepting him. Despite her fear, she couldn't stop the pleasure or the way her body hastened to lubricate around him.

"How did you know about...me?" she managed when all she wanted to do was to urge him to fuck her hard and *now*.

He kissed her shoulder. "I told you I knew."

"How?" she repeated. When this was over his memory would have to be banished. Knowing where he'd obtained the information about her would assist in keeping him from gaining it again. Though they wouldn't be together, she regretted they wouldn't at least share the remembrance of these stolen moments together.

"You're thinking too loudly," he chuckled. "Your body is tense with whatever is flying through that beautiful head." He pinched the ends of the wings where he still held her. Both tips at once. A lightning bolt zinged through her and she screamed into the pillow, almost collapsing in the aftermath.

"Relax. Just feel," Merritt commanded.

"Don't do that again," she pleaded. It was too much. She wouldn't survive if he continued on.

"I will." And he did.

Dara slammed backward on his staff, her clit colliding with his balls as they slapped forward. "No," she moaned as he continued to torment the untried tips. Mindlessly, she worked against him, her hungry cunt taking all of him she could get.

Pleasure built upon pleasure, not lessening when Merritt abandoned his grip, sliding his hands halfway along the top of her wings. Gently he folded the fragile extensions into their natural fan-like position against her back and wrapped his fingers completely around them. Firm. Inescapable. She couldn't turn or struggle away without hurting herself, not that she'd even try while he rode her, her wings as his reins. She was effectively bound as he finally, finally, pounded into her in long, smooth strokes, reaching deep inside her.

"Ah God, you feel so good," he groaned. He throbbed inside her, seeming to grow as she tried to keep up with him. Always before she'd almost been bored by sex, and with her vibrator she could control the rhythm. She tried to adjust, to take control, but Merritt nudged her knees farther apart, knocking her off balance. Here, he was in charge. He seemed determined to set a mind-blowing pace that would keep her on edge.

Pleasure continued to claw along her body. It taunted her with what was to come, what she couldn't yet reach and wracked her body with tremors of gratification. She tripped over peak after peak as she sought promised fulfillment with Merritt as her unrelenting guide.

A gentle tug on his “reins” brought her up on all fours. She didn’t know how long she could stay up on her arms with the tremors weakening them.

Suddenly, Merritt released his grip and slid his arms around her, pulling her back until she was sitting on his knees, his cock still lodged deep with in her and her wings trapped between them.

He pushed so deep she wondered that he didn’t split her apart. She took shallow breaths while her body adjusted to the way his girth filled her in this position. Her eyes drifted shut as he molded her breasts, pulling the points. He rolled each nipple until the hard, needy beads burned for his mouth, as desire unfulfilled in this position.

Wantonly she pushed into his touch. Her hand dropped between her legs to her saturated folds. Two fingers slid easily over her clit. In this position she couldn’t easily ride his cock, but that wouldn’t stop her from milking it when her strokes shattered her.

Her head tipped back to rest on his shoulder. To breathe as he breathed. To feel as he felt. Her lips parted as she inhaled shallowly, sucking in air heavily scented with sex.

His hands slid to her hips and guided her up and down his engorged staff. She moaned as he lifted her, the flared head of his cock nearly coming free, stretching her opening.

“Oh!” she exclaimed. “Oh God! Merritt!”

He shoved her down again, driving deep. Spots blinked across her vision as her clit slammed into his base. She arched, a scream strangled in her throat.

“You’re so beautiful,” Merritt whispered.

A caress feathered her breasts. *How?* His hands still guided her hips. Dara’s eyes went wide and her head shot up. Wings in a hundred shades of green and gray wrapped around her, brushing her tight nipples.

Wings!

Merritt had wings!

Turning her head, she saw he had pointed ears as well. Delightfully sharp-tipped ears. No wonder he wasn't horrified by her transformation. A relaxation that transcended and heightened her pleasure fell over her. Her mind closed to the shadow of worry that had plagued her.

He was a fairy. She'd never had a fairy before. How different was he than the average man? He'd proved his differences in myriad ways already. She'd bet there were more.

If her ears were super-sensitized, she wondered if his were as well. Experimentally, she reached up a hand and traced the triangular flesh with her fingertip.

Merritt bucked, his grunts of satiation louder.

She smiled. So he liked that. Enjoying his reaction and the resultant shocks pulsing through her body, she pinched his ear tip. He swore. His body stiffened behind her, his fingers digging into her hips.

"You're a very naughty fairy," he muttered. And he liked that too. The smile in his voice couldn't be disguised. Neither could the burning desire in his green eyes when he pulled from her and flipped her to her back.

Dara gasped seeing him in his full fairy glory. Large wings rose up behind him while he knelt over her. Their green-gray blurred as they fluttered. His dark hair fell about his face down to his upper chest. Distinctly pointed ears poked from beneath the strands, proclaiming him as the otherworldly being he was.

How had she missed that? Obviously, she'd been more taken with other thoughts and he'd hidden his nature from her, just as she always hid hers.

He trailed a finger between her breasts and down her belly. "Naughty fairy," he whispered.

Why the hell did her cunt muscles clench when he rumbled his accusation? When he called her a fairy?

"Yes, terrible," she agreed, letting her thighs fall open. Watching his bottomless green eyes, she cupped her breasts.

"Not so terrible." He leaned forward and licked one of the nipples she offered. "Just wonderfully, wonderfully naughty."

He sucked the peak into his mouth. Dara bowed toward him, gasping at the intense tug at her womb, a tug he immediately touched with his cock as he plowed back into her. Her body reacted immediately, plummeting into the depths of a swirling storm that electrified her muscles. Her scream echoed through the room as the climax rushed over her.

More. She needed more.

Her hips thrashed beneath him as her fingers dug into his shoulders. "Yes, Merritt. Yes. Fuck me!" she cried.

His fiery brand slid easily through her well-lubricated channel. They fit together so well. Her cunt throbbed as she jerked against him, tremors shooting to her fingertips.

"Merritt!" she cried. She wrapped her legs around his hips and met his relentless pounding thrust for thrust.

He grunted and she felt his muscles shudder beneath her fingers. His arms slid behind her, pressing her to him as searing bursts of seed erupted into her.

"Yes!" she cried. Wave after wave rolled within her until her world seemed to drop away. She forgot to breathe, or maybe she couldn't. She couldn't feel the bed, the pillows, anything but Merritt's body over hers, his heavily muscled arms around her and his wonderful cock inside her.

A storm seemed to rage around her. Suddenly she realized, it came from his wings flapping rapidly above her. Brushing the ceiling. *The ceiling?*

She stared down at the bed a good eight feet below them and let out a startled shriek, clutching at Merritt.

"Shh. It's all right, little one." He nuzzled her neck. "You'll soon grow accustomed to flying. With me."

Her face pressed to the middle of his chest. How embarrassing. A fairy afraid of heights. But she was. Somewhat.

"Take me down," she demanded.

"Go down on you? Okay." He began a trail of kisses down her neck.

"No, you idiot!" She smacked his shoulders, terror rising at his aerial antics.

"That's Your Highness."

"What!" Why the hell weren't they on the mattress yet?

"It's 'Your Highness' not 'you idiot'. Do try to get it right. My people might be outraged if they think you've been disrespectful to me."

She glared at him. She didn't care an iota what his people thought. If she didn't have solid earth beneath her in a moment, she'd have a full-fledged panic attack.

"I'll give you disrespect! Put me down! Your Highness," she added belatedly.

"As you wish."

In a moment, they were on the bed. Dara tried to scramble away but he held her firmly to his chest. One arm looped beneath her breasts while a hand pressed above her mound.

She scowled.

Her traitorous body wondered if there was more sex on the way.

No way. There was not. She'd made a colossal mistake. Sex with a fairy! Never mind that she was one too. And flying. *Dear God!* Her stomach pitched.

This was not the way the night before her wedding was supposed to go. Her eyes closed. Her wedding. Tom. Oh man, she'd screwed up.

She winced. Perhaps screwed was the wrong word. Whatever word was used, she'd failed at being a fiancée.



Oh Tom. Poor, poor boring Tom. He didn't deserve what she'd just done. Guilt flooded through her, turning her arousal to a deep chill.

How would she explain? Her lips pressed together. She couldn't. She just couldn't. How could she explain that his embrace didn't feel right but a stranger's did?

Merritt pulled her tighter. "You're thinking loudly again."

"Can you read minds?"

"No. Just bodies." His hand stroked the flesh above her pubic hair. Tingles seemed to emanate from his palm.

A tear trickled from the corner of her eye and rolled onto the sheet. Why did Merritt's embrace have to feel so right?

A knot formed in her stomach as she envisioned a future without the rightness she'd just experienced. And not just the sex. Merritt seemed to know what she needed, yes, but even when he merely held her as he was now, warmth blanketed her. She felt protected and cherished as she'd never been before.

Her future loomed before her a bleak expanse of forever. It was a future she needed to choose. She knew what it entailed. She'd planned it and committed to it.

Turning her head, she kissed Merritt's shoulder.

"You'll love Fairy," he commented. "You'll never have to hide what you are again. And you won't have to fly if you don't want to. We walk. Often."

She smiled at his reassurance, false as it was. She'd be an oddball in Fairy, just as she'd always been in the human world. At least in the human world, she knew how to operate. She could manage here.

She simply nodded in response to Merritt. He didn't need to know right now that she wasn't returning with him. She'd call her uncle to work his magic. Merritt wouldn't even remember he'd met her.

Sorrow shredded her. Why had she found the one with whom she felt normal on the night before she'd promised to marry another? Inevitability taunted her. She'd have

to say goodbye to Merritt. Wearily, she sank back into the warmth of his chest. A few more minutes. She'd allow herself that and then she'd say goodbye.

## **Chapter Three**

It had been perfect, but something had gone terribly wrong. Merritt pressed his forehead into the back of Dara's neck while she receded emotionally further and further away.

Later after they'd rested and he'd returned to Fairy with her, she'd feel better. She'd see how wonderful being a fairy was, especially when he began to teach her of their people's magic. He had a feeling she'd revel in all she could do but didn't now because she lacked the knowledge. When she began to fly, she'd realize she'd never need be afraid of heights again. Why be afraid when one had wings? Why be afraid when he'd never let her fall?

His arms tightened around her and her soft wings prodded his chest. She hadn't tucked them away. That was an improvement.

Already aroused enough to take her again, he palmed her breast. He suspected it would be a long time before he'd had enough of her to slake his constant need and even then, it wouldn't be long absent. So it was with true mates.

His cock bobbed against her smooth ass. He'd take her in that tight portal soon. The temptation to dip into the honey in her channel and smooth it over himself so his entry to the untried passage would be easy almost overwhelmed him. That and a little fairy magic and he'd be tucked deep between the alabaster globes tempting his staff.

His fingers flexed as he fought off the urge. She wasn't ready. She'd retreated too far to trust him to take her there. His groin tightened. Soon they'd experience that coupling together as well.

After their return to Fairy.

He'd have garments specially made for her. Clothes to accommodate her wings and show off her alluring attributes. They'd befit the fairy princess she'd become when he'd taken her as his mate.

Shifting slightly, he pulled a blanket over them. By the afternoon, they'd be home, but first they had to rest.

"How did you find me?" Dara asked. "Some sort of spider sense, or something?"

Spider sense? He had no spider in him. But he had sensed her. "Fairy magic," he answered.

"Like a global positioning system that homes in on my fairy genes?"

"Something like that." More like a system that located his mate. His brows drew together. He'd thought it odd that his father had sent him in search of the fifth daughter instead of sending the seekers who usually took on such tasks. The king must have known Merritt would have no trouble finding her. The royal oracle must have predicted the union.

He rested his cheek on the back of her shoulder as she yawned and snuggled into the pillow they shared. They had so much to discuss and learn about one another. They'd have a few hundred years for that.

\* \* \* \* \*

Merritt's smooth deep breaths assured Dara he was sleeping. She'd slept, too, though she wasn't sure for how long. Stealthily, she slid from the bed. A glance at her watch told her it was late enough to call her uncle. Uncle Stefan would fix this mess.

Her belly clutched in rebellion.

She had to do it.

Turning, she watched Merritt sleep. The thick blanket barely covered his behind as he lay on his stomach, his beautiful wings spread against his back. They fluttered slightly with each deep breath. She wanted to touch them but didn't dare for fear of waking him. Careful not to disturb him, she pulled the blanket and comforter to his

shoulders to disguise what he was from her uncle. She didn't want to admit that she'd surrendered to lust racing through her blood. Admitting that she'd surrendered with another fairy was just too much.

She bit her lip. Covered, Merritt almost looked human. Almost. At least his hair covered his ears.

Snatching up a white terrycloth robe provided by the hotel, she padded into the other half of the suite and closed the door between the sitting area and the bedroom. Quickly she dialed her uncle's room. The line seemed to ring interminably while she stared apprehensively at the doorway.

"lo? Dr. Sullivan," he answered.

"Uncle Stefan?"

"Dara, darlin', what is it?"

"I need your help. Can you come to my room?"

She'd barely said the words and he stood beside her, clad in red silk pajamas, his white hair sticking up in a zillion directions. She averted her eyes from his front where an obvious erection tented his pants, and found wings tenting the back of his shirt.

Uncle Stefan was a fairy, too, though not of the same line that had cursed her family generations past. He'd merely married her aunt twenty-some years ago. Thankfully. Had he not, he wouldn't have been there to get Dara out of so many messes.

"What is it? What's wrong?"

Mutely, she pushed open the bedroom door and pointed, unable to stop the tears from trickling down her cheeks. She wasn't sad for what she'd done, only for what she had to do.

"Oh, child," Stefan whispered sympathetically.

She'd known he would understand. He always seemed to understand all the stupid things she did.

"I need you to make him forget." Her words choked as her throat protested. Her heart beat erratically while her lungs refused to take in air. She didn't want to do this to him. To make him forget. She wanted to go to the Fairy place with him. See what it was, meet others like herself...be with Merritt.

That's not what he'd asked. Sure he wanted her to come with him. She'd be more convenient to sleep with if she was with him. She couldn't accept that.

She'd chosen to marry Tom. It was safe. Familiar. Planned.

Stefan nodded, raising his hand toward Merritt. A fuzzy gold light swirled at his palm.

"Go to your mother," he instructed. "She'll help you get ready for the ceremony. When I join you later, this will be done."

\* \* \* \* \*

Dara sat at the counter in the hotel's café and ignored her breakfast while she watched Tom read the paper beside her. He'd turned toward her while they waited, but was more intent on the news than their conversation. She stifled a sigh as she envisioned years of similar mornings stretching before them. He'd stare at his paper while she was slowly smothered by boredom. Such was the price of being normal.

Idly, she swiveled the tall stool where she perched and twirled her finger, making the spoon in her coffee swirl without touching it.

For years, she'd hidden who she was and what she could do. She should still do that, but she couldn't help herself. She jerked the same finger and the utensil lifted from the cup and settled onto the paper napkin beside it. No one noticed.

She wondered if Tom would. Ever.

In four hours she'd be married. In thirteen, her new husband would discover the weird runic symbol over her groin. Her pussy heated when she thought of the odd tingle she'd experienced when Merritt put it there. How would she explain it to Tom? A tattoo gotten in a fit of madness one night? That was close to true.

She'd been stunned to find the mark when she'd dressed earlier in clothes she'd hastily purchased at the hotel boutique. Explaining why she was dressed in only a robe had been embarrassing and difficult, but the sales clerk seemed unsurprised. Perhaps things like that happened often.

The whole time she'd worried that Merritt had woken before her uncle was through with his spell. She'd kept a tense watch on the lobby almost expecting him to come storming down the stairs, demanding she go with him. A traitorous part of her hoped he would.

She'd given in to that part of her once. She couldn't again.

As the morning progressed, bone-crushing sadness settled into her middle. Today should be the happiest day of her life and instead she wanted to burst into tears. At this rate, she'd be sobbing as she trudged down the aisle.

Dara gave herself a mental slap. She had to snap out of this. One night with Merritt didn't equal years with Tom. Didn't long-standing friendship override a few hours of lust? She had to get Merritt out of her head.

She wondered where he was.

Futilely, she tried to banish the desire that immediately rose at the thought of him. She was marrying Tom. Nice, kind, predictable, boring as hell Tom. She couldn't be panting after a man who didn't even remember her this morning.

And whose fault was that?

"It's supposed to rain Monday," Tom commented.

"We'll be in Cancun."

Restless, she shifted on the tall stool and glanced around the crowded restaurant. Her skirt's silky fabric slid along her over-sensitive skin. Would anyone guess she wasn't wearing panties? It had seemed a waste to purchase any when she had special lingerie waiting in her room to go with her dress. Going commando for a morning hardly seemed a sacrifice, especially since she still throbbed from fucking Merritt.

She sucked in a shuddering breath and tried to disassociate herself from her nether regions. Perhaps if she could ignore how heated she still was. Perhaps if she could get that damned Merritt out of her thoughts...

"Are you all right?" Tom lowered his paper and regarded her with inquisitive brown eyes. He was really quite handsome. Too bad he didn't raise her arousal level above tepid.

It was a good thing there was more to marriage than that.

She nodded and reached to smooth back a thick strand of his pale blond hair. "Yes, of course."

"You seem...*different* this morning."

"How so?"

He shrugged, going back behind his paper. "Just different, that's all."

How definitive.

"Different..." she mused. "Do you want to call off the wedding?"

Please say yes.

He dropped the paper again. "Of course not." He laughed. "You must be nervous. That's why you're acting so strange."

It couldn't possibly be that she'd spent last night fucking another man. She sighed. What was wrong with her? This was Tom. Her fiancé. Why was she so out of sorts? He certainly didn't deserve her bitchiness, even if she didn't voice her thoughts.

He patted her hand. "Don't worry, sweetheart. Everything will be back to normal in no time."

"I know." The thought weighed on her. A lifetime of normal. Of hiding what she was. Of planned and predictable. Of normal. She had to remember it was normal. That's what she'd chosen and what she wanted. Normal.

"Are you excited?" he asked. "You've got the wedding of your dreams, everything you've always wanted for your special day, even if it cost a small fortune."



"I told you I didn't need all the frills."

"It's your special day. It will all be perfect."

It was supposed to be *their* special day.

"Are you sure you want to marry me?" She pushed her eggs around some more, not looking at him. He wouldn't notice anyway. He was busy scanning the stock page. She wouldn't be surprised if he made a few business calls after breakfast.

"Of course, I do. It's the natural next step. I think we —"

Dara looked up as he stopped mid-sentence. Her brow furrowed. "Tom?"

He didn't answer.

"Tom, what's wrong?" Pushing down the middle of his paper, she found him frozen, his mouth open. Perplexed she waved her hand in front of his face. Nothing. Panicked, she turned to the waitress to ask her to call 911 and found her frozen as well, coffeepot perched over her cup. Another patron held a doughnut halfway to her mouth. Frozen. So were the dozen or so other patrons in the restaurant. Everyone but her.

"Oh God," she whispered. Trepidation trembled down her spine, raising goose bumps on her skin.

"Dara!"

She startled, spinning on her stool in the direction of the bellow that shook the restaurant. Her heart pounded against her chest. The traitorous fairy part of her cheered.

Merritt.

Fury blazed in his green eyes as he stood in the doorway staring at her, his countenance thunderous. She shrank back against the counter. Her elbow sent her plate sailing to the floor beside the waitress's feet.

Would he hurt her?

Instinctively, she knew he wouldn't though anger vibrated along his tensed body and into his clenched fists. A muscle ticked above his rigid jaw.

Her folds moistened as he sauntered toward her. She was getting turned on? Shouldn't she be running?

He didn't pause until he'd wedged himself between her slightly parted thighs and clasped her hips in an iron-like grip.

"You're not supposed to be here," she said. "My uncle was supposed to make you forget."

"We will discuss *that* later."

She didn't doubt they would. Her body thrummed with anticipation of their "discussion" and her wings threatened to sprout from where they were once again hidden.

He shook his head. "You have much to learn. Fairy magic doesn't work on fairies. Even if it did, I would not forget you. You are my mate."

She glanced at Tom who still stared straight ahead, frozen as a result of Merritt's magic. "But I'm supposed to marry Tom."

"Do you love him?"

She considered lying but couldn't. Merritt would know. She shook her head. What she felt for Tom was nothing compared to what she felt for Merritt. She didn't know if the overwhelming emotion tightening her chest was love, but it was far stronger than her lukewarm reaction to Tom.

Sympathy mingled with triumph in Merritt's gaze. Gently, he stroked his thumb along her jaw.

"Marriage to this human would be captivity. Captivity kills fairies. Captivity will kill you."

He closed his eyes, hiding the pain that suddenly filled them. His head tipped down as he continued to speak, his voice low. "If you won't consider my offer of union, please, I beg you, refuse to marry this man." He touched the place on her groin where

he'd left his mark. "You're my mate. If I must live without you, at least give me the peace of knowing you are safe."

Tears pricked her lids. She leaned forward and pressed her face to the top of his head, breathing in his scent.

"Merritt," she whispered. She opened her legs farther, her skirt hiking up, and pulled him closer. Chest to chest with him, she pulled his head down and pressed her lips to his. Languidly, she explored his mouth and poured all her relief into her kiss. Their tongues met and mated. Their breath mingled. At last, peace and belonging settled within her.

She'd almost made an awful mistake.

"Merritt," she said again. "I didn't know what you meant. I thought you just wanted me for a while."

"I want you forever. Say yes."

"Convince me." She grinned, meeting the devil in his eye. The fairy within her danced with glee. Free at last!

His fingers tightened before sliding down her thighs. He slipped a hand beneath her skirt to slide through her drenched folds. Two fingers delved into her eager channel.

"I have a feeling it won't take much convincing."

She stretched catlike, resting her elbows on the counter and catching her feet on the bottom rungs of the stool while she pressed into his touch. "I've felt so bad all day. Make me feel better, Merritt."

He rasped his thumb over her clit in response and a zap of energy ricocheted through her veins. She arched with a strangled cry, lifting completely off the chair.

"We shouldn't do this here," she gasped. "There are people—"

"They won't remember. And if they did, all they'd remember is how beautiful you are when you surrender to your passion. My beautiful princess."

"What about Tom? The wedding? I'll have to explain."

Merritt sighed and stepped from between her legs, smoothing down her skirt. He dropped a lingering kiss on her lips when she protested his departure.

"I've already conferred with your uncle. Your family and friends are expecting you at the wedding at the appointed time. With a substitute groom if that is your desire."

He wanted to marry her. A tender feeling riffled through her. "But I thought... Aren't you angry with me?"

"Angry enough not to marry you? Little one, who are the people you've associated with to develop such an idea? Nothing will ever keep me from wanting you."

"Really?"

"Really." He stretched out his hand and touched his fingers to Tom's temple.

"Should hurry with breakfast so that we can meet my parents in the lobby," Tom continued as if he hadn't been frozen at all. He glanced at Merritt over the top of the paper. Slowly folding it, he set it aside, his glance going from Merritt to where his hand rested on Dara's thigh and back to Merritt. "Who are you?"

Merritt smiled.

"Tom, there's something I need to tell you," she jumped in before Merritt could answer.

"I should think so." Her fiancé's lips pressed together as he watched her with inquisitive eyes, obviously more curious than angry. She was sure the anger would come shortly. Who could blame him? She was cutting out with another man on their wedding day.

She took a deep breath. The sooner she got this out, the sooner Tom could kill her and they could be over this.

"I...I can't marry you. I'm in—" she glanced up at Merritt. Was she? Was she really in love with him? She thought of how bereft she'd been all morning. "I'm in love with someone else."

Merritt squeezed her hand, answering her declaration with the devotion in his gaze, before he turned his intent stare back on Tom.

“Um-hmm,” Tom replied. “Well, I’d like to say I don’t understand but my God, Dar, you never looked at me the way you look at him. I can see now we would have been content but never very happy together.”

What the hell was the matter with him? He should be ranting. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah. Why wouldn’t I be?”

*Did someone drug his coffee?*

“Are you going to marry this guy?” he asked.

Why wasn’t he yelling? She’d heard him more angry when the deli had given him tuna instead of chicken.

Merritt stepped behind her, wrapping his arms around her waist. His warmth sank into her and her core heated. Marry him and have him touch her every day? “I think so... If you want me to call people, let them know...”

“No. No, I’ll handle it,” Tom interrupted. “All our friends are mutual so they’ll still come to your wedding. There’s really only my parents and my aunt.”

Was he under some kind of a spell? She glanced askance up at Merritt who still stared at Tom, his green eyes slightly closed. Perhaps there was more to Tom’s easy complaisance than met the eye.

“Oh and two cousins—they weren’t even sure they were coming,” he continued. “I’ll just take them out to dinner and we’ll catch up before I fly back home.”

“I’m not using the tickets for Cancun...”

“Hmmm. Well maybe I’ll use them.”

“Wow, I wouldn’t mind going to Cancun.”

Dara’s eyes went wide as she realized Merritt had reanimated the waitress, Beth by her nametag, who’d set aside the coffeepot and now listened intently to their conversation.

Interest sparked in Tom's eyes and he showed more life than Dara had seen in the years she'd known him. "Really? You want to come with me? Can you get time off?"

"Sure. I just have to pack." Beth shrugged. "I'm not all that into this job anyway. Sex on the beach sounds a lot better."

"I think that could be arranged."

Without another glance at Merritt or Dara, whose mouth hung open in shock, Tom left the restaurant, his fingers linked with Beth's. They barely made it to the lobby before he had her pressed to the wall while they frantically kissed.

"Did you do something to Tom so he wouldn't be hurt?" Dara asked.

"Maybe a little magic."

"Thank you." She couldn't help but stare at the couple. If Tom had been like that with her, perhaps she wouldn't have been quite so hungry for Merritt. She turned back to him. No, she still would have been ravenous for him, she admitted.

"Anything for my princess. I will always attend your needs. And you will always obey me."

She had a feeling they'd have many arguments in their future, followed with a lot of sex and making up. She could definitely handle that as long as it was always with Merritt.

And who could really mind being a princess. Well, duh!

Merritt's hands slipping beneath her skirt again halted all thought. "Now where were we?" he murmured. "Oh right. You were about to say yes."

"Was I?" She laughed, feeling more light-hearted than she ever had.

"Have you more for me to attend before you make your decision?"

"I have this itch... I need you in me."

"As you wish, my sweet mate." He released the catch on his fly and his erection sprang forth. With a groan, he pressed near her. The tip of his cock prodded her cunt. "I have a need for you to attend, as well."

"Tell me."

"Say yes," he urged. Slowly, he pushed beyond her portal and paused, the wide head just inside.

She whimpered, trying to take more. Her internal muscles pawed at him. Pulling. Dragging. Failing. His tight grip held her still.

She growled in frustration.

"Say yes."

*What?* She couldn't comprehend anything beyond his wide cock parting her.

His hands inched beneath her, spreading her ass and stroking across the tight hidden bud. She trembled as her cream seeped down the narrow flesh separating the two passages. It dampened his fingers and slowly, he worked one inside the virgin passage.

White hot sensation streaked through her. She gasped, trying to hold back a scream. He worked in a second finger and she imagined his cock.

His staff surged forward, the intrusion stretching her swollen cunt wide. It seemed too tight with his fingers in her along with his cock. Too tight but altogether right.

Eagerly, she took him as he slammed forward, the desperation he'd felt at waking alone evident in each claiming stroke. She was his. She knew. He had to prove it.

There was no walking away—if she could even walk when he was finished with her, and she had a feeling finished wasn't the right term. They couldn't get enough of each other.

His free hand slid to the black rune he'd left on her groin and he flattened his palm over it. Electric pulsations rocketed through her womb. She constricted around him, her reaction almost painful in its intensity.

"Yeeeeeees!" she screamed. "Yes, Merritt, yes, yes, yes!"

Her vision grew silver and she knew he was transporting them. At that moment she was hardly capable of thought, let alone magic. When her sight cleared, she lay beneath

him on a silk-draped bed, mountains of soft pillows cushioning them. Her clothes were gone. He was naked as well, his beautiful wings furled behind him as he pounded full force into her.

Her fingers curled into his shoulders. Desperate to strengthen their newly formed union, she attempted to meet his every surge. Each collision of their pelvises sent shimmering ribbons of pleasure weaving through her. She ground into him, wanting more of him as deep as possible.

"My mate," he groaned.

"Yes! Oh God, Merritt! Now. Please!"

Her climax washed over her. She thrashed while Merritt called out and emptied his branding seed within her. All too soon, it was over. She was ready for more.

"Well done!"

"Long union!"

Dara's eyes went wide at the cheers going up around them. Myriad fairies, all in scandalously abbreviated dress surrounded them. She turned her shocked gaze on Merritt. He knelt over her, still between her legs. His fingers traced lightly over the mark he'd left on her.

"My mate," he said quietly. "They've come in their wedding finery to witness our joining. We've been married. The fairy way."

"We're married?" she asked in shock. It was that easy?

He nodded. "We'll return to your land to participate in the planned ceremony with your family and friends. Later." With a wave of his hand, he shooed the celebrants from his chamber. "Welcome home to Fairy."

She threaded her fingers through his hair and drew him back down to her. She really was home. And she never needed to worry about what she was again. She was a fairy.

She was Merritt's.



## About the Author

When it comes to books and movies, Brynn Paulin has one rule: There must be a happy ending. After that one requirement, anything else goes. And it just might in any of her books.

Brynn lives in Michigan with her husband and two children who love her despite her occasional threats to smite them. They humor her and let her think she's a goddess...as long as she provides homemade chocolate chip cookies on a regular basis.

She attributes her writing success to Seventies music, her local road construction crews, a trusty notebook, and of course, her husband and willing research subject, AKA Mr. Inspiration.

Brynn welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her author bio page at [www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com).

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