

Love Magick Willa Okati

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ISBN (10) 1-59596-528-9
ISBN (13) 978-1-59596-528-8
Formats Available:
HTML, Adobe PDF,
MobiPocket, Microsoft Reader

Publisher:
Changeling Press LLC
PO Box 1046
Martinsburg, WV 25402-1046
www.ChangelingPress.com

Editor: Crystal Esau
Cover Artist: Karen Fox



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Prologue

"Oh, yes."

"Just like that. Right there. Oh..."

"Want you so much."

"Hot."

"Wet."

"Tight."

Three voices united as one: "Perfect..."

Jace yawned, wriggling underneath the thin linen sheet that he and his partners had casually thrown over themselves at the end of last night's -- this morning's -- festivities. Arms and legs were everywhere, and he wasn't entirely sure which ones were his.

Eventually, he sorted out the tangle. No rush, though; he had nowhere in particular to go and nothing to do until his bedmates woke up. They were sleepyheads, both of them, not like Jace. He got up with the sun, having chosen to worship it in his own way of giving thanks for the life that he'd been granted.

He especially wanted to be up to greet the dawn on that particular day. It had been exactly one year since he'd stumbled onto his good fortune, and anniversaries were not to be taken lightly. Jace knew he owed a hell of a lot to forces beyond his imagination, and he wasn't about to let the day go by without making it special.

"Mmm," the female in the bed moaned as Jace carefully slid his arm out from beneath her head. "Where are you going?" Her voice was sleepy.

"Shh." Jace placed two fingers to her ripe lips and smiled as he felt them being kissed. "I'm headed outside. You and the Master wait for me in here. Keep the bed warm."

"We could do more than that." Her smile was infectious as she woke a little more and raised herself slightly on the bed. It was the look of a woman who had not one, but two men wrapped around her little finger, and knew it. "Don't stay out long."

"I won't," Jace promised. He leaned in for a real kiss, a gentle morning kiss, tinged as was everything else with the Love Magick that he strived to learn each and every day. He ran his hand down the ripe swell of one full breast, then across the curve of her stomach. He lingered there, stroking, until she gave him a light push.

"Go on, if you're going." Her hand gentled on his chest. "The sooner you leave, the sooner you'll be back."

"And the sooner you're gone, the sooner I can get back to sleep," a third voice grumbled, with a delectable pout in the tone. Jace's grin widened into a broad smile. The Master didn't like being woken, even when it was time to get up, but his bark was much worse than his bite.

Jace bent over to give the Master a good morning kiss as well. Although he hadn't quite stopped grumbling, the man kissed Jace back, bringing a hand up to tangle in his hair, turning a simple embrace into something rougher and more passionate. Jace let himself get swept away, but pulled back when the Master would have tugged him into place on the bed.

"I have to go and greet the sun," he said gently. "Keep her warm while I'm gone."

"I used to sleep alone, you realize. I don't know, you wake up one day and there's a whole army in your bed..."

Jace laughed. He pushed a stray lock of the Master's hair out of his face. It twined around his finger as if alive, shining like the coat of a healthy fox. The woman snuggled in closer, wrapping her arms around the Master. Her lips tilted in a smile. "Go," she whispered. "I think I can soothe his temper."

“Temper? I’ll show you temper. I --” The Master’s speech was cut off in a kiss as the woman pressed her mouth to his. Watching them, Jace grinned and moved himself wholly off the bed. He stood for a moment, watching the two start rocking together in a slow and primal rhythm that was a prelude to the ways of a woman and a man. Then, he turned to go.

Although he was naked, it took only a thought to summon casual clothes -- a light sweatshirt, a pair of jeans, some sneakers. He saved time by having them appear on his body, a neat trick when it came to getting dressed. His hair, bound in a long black braid, was messy, but it’d do. He smoothed down the stray curls that insisted on pulling loose, and re-secured the clasp holding the braid shut.

Then it was out the door -- the one neither the female nor Master ever used -- and down a richly appointed hallway to a gilt-edged elevator. Jace pushed the button and yawned, waiting for the thing to speed its way up twenty-five stories. When it arrived with a ding, the uniformed attendant gave him a nod. “Good morning, sir.”

Jace favored him with a grin. “It is.” He hummed to himself on the way down, a song he’d heard on the radio the other day when working in the Master’s rooftop garden. Had a good hook to it, pretty catchy. And he didn’t have a bad voice himself. Jace would have sworn the attendant was nodding his head slightly to the beat when they reached the main lobby and he got out.

Other people might have to wait their turn, but someone wanting to travel from the Master’s lofty palace got first-class service. He had a key card that he could insert on the bottom level, too, letting the operator know when he wanted to go back up.

From humble beginnings...

Jaunty now, Jace walked briskly toward the imposing steel-and-glass main doors, and pushed them open. The two doormen, as usual, looked affronted that he hadn’t waited for them like a proper gentleman should. Jace grinned at them, loving their discomfiture, and sailed on past.

He stopped at a coffee cart that had pulled up on the sidewalk and bought two cups of hot black java. Taking a sip from one, he carried the other over to a newsstand and knocked on the shuttered windows. "Harley! Harley, are you in there?"

The shutters creaked open. "So where the hell else would I be? And I hope that's my coffee you've got there. I didn't get a chance to brew any this morning before I left. Early hours, man, they chap my ass."

"Everything chaps your ass, Harley," Jace said affectionately as he passed the coffee over. "Glad to see you're here."

"Yep. Been one year to the day, if I remember right."

"You do." Jace turned toward the rising sun, and made an ancient Egyptian sign with his hands. He stood for a long moment, Harley watching him while drinking his coffee in noisy slurps, and let the generous rays fill him with calm warmth.

When he felt full to the top, Jace moved out of position with a silent prayer of thanks, and took up position leaning on Harley's stand. He drank his own coffee, savoring the rich taste of fresh brew, and paged through a copy of the Daily Edition to check last night's football scores.

"Eh, kid. Somethin' you might wanna check out, there."

"What?" Jace looked up. Harley had a particular look on his face, one that Jace had seen before, exactly one year ago. The older man tapped the side of his nose, and pointed down the street.

Carefully making her way up the sidewalk was a young black female, her hair done up in a dozen long dreadlocks. She looked as if she owned nothing but the clothes on her back and her name, but she carried her shoulders high with pride. She was a beauty, no mistake, and probably tough as nails.

"You think so, Harley?" Jace asked. "She'll be a handful."

"I think." Harley nodded sagely. "There's just somethin' about you kids. I can tell."

"Female. That's rare, even nowadays. And it must be pretty well known on the grapevine that my Master is... unusual. She must know everything. Hmm." Jace tapped his foot thoughtfully. "Looks like she's good and determined to plow her way in here."

"She's been through the trials, kid, just like you. Probably went to one of those academies that turn you out as demi-mages, right onto the streets, and now she wants to specialize in one of the Higher Magicks. To do that, you gotta have a Master. And from the looks of this one, she wants a challenge." Harley tipped his coffee cup at the approaching girl. "Oh, yeah, she's a hellcat, but you three can handle her."

Jace eyed the young woman's appealing curves and the fine lines of her near-ebony face. "I think the Master is going to be happy with this new student, if she passes the tests," he said. "But we've got to do this the right way. I'm heading back inside with the other two." He thumped the newsstand with the ball of his fist. "You know what to do."

"Don't I always?" Harley cracked as Jace took off, bounding up the stairs and breezing past the doormen. God, he loved his life.

And to think that one year ago he had been a hapless, ignorant demi-mage whose only thoughts were of getting *warm* and *dry*...

Chapter One

Jace had never been colder or wetter in his life, and it didn't seem that his day was going to be looking up anytime soon.

"Are you sure you're going to be all right?" His traveling companion almost had to shout over the sounds of the heavy rainfall pouring down around them. Fat drops splattered off his umbrella and hit the sidewalk with a heavy *smack*. Jace, who wasn't lucky enough to still have such an object to his name, shivered hard and tried to retreat further into his hoodie. Wasn't working.

"I'll be fine," he lied. "This is the place, right? Tomnas?"

Tomnas tilted his head to look up at the twenty-five-story building, all done in white and gold, that they were standing beneath. "Can't say for sure," he admitted. "All I know is this is where the Love Magick Master is *supposed* to live. Kind of makes sense, doesn't it? Love is a many-splendored thing and all that."

Jace shoved his hands into his pockets. It took some work, since they were red-knuckled from the cold and his jeans were sopping. "This Master had better be worth the effort," he joked, eyeing the two doormen under their sturdy umbrellas.

They were, very decidedly, not looking back.

Not that Jace could blame them. After making his way through several states, some of them by boxcar, he'd lost almost everything he had to his name and he hadn't been able to wash in a few days. Ye gods, but the rainwater should have made him clean, though. He shuddered and sneezed.

"Hey, now. Are you sure you want me to just leave you here?"

Jace looked at Tomnas with as much fondness as he could muster in his frozen state. The young man hadn't been a bad companion on the road, and they'd shared a

few fucks when one or the other was cold or bothered by bad dreams. Tomnas had a nice, easy-going way about him that made it easy to be his friend.

He did, however, have a tendency to mother-hen a man to death.

"I'll be fine." Jace waved away Tomnas' hand, held out as if he were going to help in some way. "You have your own Master to find. Go on, and good luck. All I have to do is get inside and this Master will have to take me as an Apprentice. You know the rules. Then I'll be warm and dry at least."

"Yeah, but what about fed? The rules don't say anything about room or board," Tomnas pointed out. "What if he takes you on, then kicks you right back out and says 'come back tomorrow for your lessons'?"

Jace wiped rainwater away from his face. "It's just a chance I'm going to have to take." The hoodie was useless, so he pushed it off his head and let his hair get well and truly soaked. "But I'll be fine. Promise. Now go on, would you?" He gave Tomnas a light push. "Move it, buddy. You're blocking the sidewalk."

Tomnas' grin flashed out. The smile turned his face from a good honest boy-next-door into a devastatingly handsome man, one Jace could easily have fallen in love with if he weren't carefully husbanding all the Love Magick he had to his name.

Saving it all for the Master, who from what he'd heard was supposed to live on the top floor of this building. Jace tilted his head to look up at the top, got water up his nose, and sneezed again.

Tomnas shook his head. "All right, if you're sure." He made certain his own knapsack with a few possessions was shouldered, and started to turn, then reached out and clapped Jace on the back. "Good luck, huh?"

"And to you." Jace watched Tomnas turn to go, standing in place despite getting wetter and wetter, keeping an eye on the young man until he was out of sight. You could never tell with Tomnas. He meant well, but he might have stuck around until he was sure Jace had a warm welcome. That wouldn't have worked at all. Jace knew he had to do this on his own.

So. First things first. He had to get inside the fortress. Shouldn't be too much of a challenge -- right? Right. Hoping that neither of the doormen were the rough-and-tumble type, Jace mounted the white marble steps one at a time, being careful not to slip. The men eyed him, looking doubtful, but said nothing. Jace managed a nod to both, who didn't return the gesture.

Okay, fine, be that way. Jace pretty much doubted that the doormen would open the place up for him, and in a joint like this there was no way anyone could just buzz themselves on in. He scanned the set-in entryway for what he hoped would be there... and voila! An intercom system with a keypad. You could buzz anyone in the building, and if they were in, they'd answer. He hoped.

His Love Master's name was Tal. Jace wasn't sure of a last name, but sure enough, none of the occupants had "T" names until he hit the twenty-fifth floor listing. *Bingo.* T. Lleu. Sounded Welsh. Jace cocked his head, running the name over his mental tongue. It didn't seem bad. His button looked sparkling new, as if no one ever used it, but then again Jace guessed Tal must not have gotten a lot of traffic. Masters of Magick could summon up anything they needed, and Jace would have bet Tal led a pretty self-sufficient life up there in the sky.

He pressed the button. The doormen glanced at him again, one of them raising an eyebrow. Jace grinned back, only to have the man turn away. *Nice.* He heard a faint buzzing as his finger rested on the button, and then pulled back.

"Yes?" The voice sounded crackly and peevish, as if the Master were an old, old man. "Who is it? Who's there? What do you want?"

Jace winced. He'd hoped he wouldn't have to state his business in front of outsiders -- those who didn't know about the world of Magick and all it contained. "I'm sorry to bother you," he said, raising his voice above the increasing noise of the falling rain. "Are you T. Lleu? Tal Lleu? Taliesin, maybe?"

"Could be. What do you want?" The voice sounded suspicious.

"I've come to see if you're taking on any new students." Jace tried not to let his desperation show in his voice. Good *God*, he was soaked, and fucking freezing. He needed to warm up and in the worst way.

The tinny voice burst into cackles. "Students, sure, but you're doing this the wrong way around!"

"I'm what?" Jace frowned. "I thought that if I asked, you'd have to --"

"Yeah, yeah, but I'm not Tal. You won't find him by pressing any buttons."

Shit. "Well, can you tell me where he is?" Jace chafed his hands together. "I need to find him before they start marching by two by two out here, you know?"

"Oh, oh, disrespectful, are you?" The voice wasn't pleased. "Just for that, I won't tell you anything. You can find your own way to the Master."

The intercom line disconnected. "Damn it!" Jace pressed the buzzer again, but got no answer. A third time, and still nothing. "Fuck!" He kicked at the wall, bruising his toe inside its well-worn sneaker.

Finally, he got a response from one of the doormen. "Move it along," the taller of the two said, not even turning to look at Jace. "If you had business here, that'd be one thing."

"But I --"

"But nothing. If the person you've come to see doesn't want to let you in, you don't get in. Now move it. Am I making myself clear?" The man took a firmer grip on his umbrella. Thick and sturdy as a baseball bat, it'd make a hell of a weapon if he decided to beat Jace down with the thing.

"Okay! Okay, I'm going." Jace held up his hands, moving away -- out of range. "See? This is me, gone." He turned his back on the man only because he had to, not wanting to slip and fall on his ass as he made his way down the stairs. There seemed to be a lot more of them than there had been when he was climbing up. Without a handrail, it was hell trying not to bust his butt.

At the bottom, Jace made the effort to shove his hands back in his pockets. "Shit," he said, looking up at the building. "Find the Master myself? How am I supposed to pull that off if I can't get *in*?"

"Hey! Hey, you, on the sidewalk!" Jace turned to his left in surprise. He hadn't noticed it before, but a newsstand stood just to one end of the building. Its owner had pulled the racks of magazines and newspapers in out of the weather, but the man himself was leaning out of the window, waving one arm. "Get your ass over here, would you? You're gonna catch your death!"

Jace frowned and shook his head, but... ah, hell, any port in a storm. He jogged to the newsstand and put his arms on the counter, shedding water like a dog after its bath. The small awning above the stand kept off the worst of the rain, and he could feel warmth coming from inside. Lucky bastard probably had a space heater.

The man grinned at him as if he knew a secret. "So you do have ears. Good. I wasn't sure."

Jace scowled. "I don't have any money for a paper," he said, just to make himself clear. "What do you want?"

"Oh, he's got fire!" The newsagent held his hands up as if warding off danger. "Look out, Tal, you got a firecracker on your hands."

Jace leaned forward in a rush. "You know Tal? The doormen wouldn't let me through. I can't get in where he lives."

"Sure you can. You just tried to go in the wrong way. Look, come inside here. Tal pays me a little to watch out for his students, and he'd kick my ass if he knew I was lettin' one of them freeze his buns off in this storm." The newsagent lifted aside a stack of the Daily Edition and opened the lower half of a Dutch door. "Come on inside. Just try not to soak everything, huh?"

Jace blinked. "You're... oh, hell, stand aside." *Any port.* He rushed into the small booth, heading straight toward the heat he could feel pulsing from a small unit on the floor near the back. Chafing his reddened hands over the warmth, he struggled for a semblance of his manners and turned with an apologetic grin. "Um... thanks."

"Yeah, yeah. It's not a problem." The agent winked at Jace. "Name's Harley, by the way. Pleased to meet you. And you are..."

"Jace. No last name right now. Which you probably know if you know that I've come to --"

"See the Master, yeah, sure." Harley grinned, hopping up onto a stool. "See, kid, you gotta learn one thing about these Masters. The easy way in is never the way to go. You've gotta take the low road."

"A low road to someone who lives twenty-five stories up?"

"Ah, you kids. No imagination." Harley shrugged expansively. "I mean, take the road less traveled by. Get in through the main entrance? Please, give me a break. Use your brain."

Jace sneezed again. Harley passed him a tissue from a box. Jace blew and tossed the offending article away, then accepted a silent offer of hand sanitizer. "You healthy?" Harley wanted to know. "Sick, or is it just the cold?"

"I'm healthy. I think." Jace resisted the urge to wring out his hair. He'd gone way too many months without a cut or a trim, the traveling hadn't helped, or the rain, and his long, straight black lengths were tangled up in elf-knots around his shoulders. "Just freezing."

Harley leaned down and turned a knob on the space heater. "There. That any better?" When Jace sighed as the waves of heat wafted up, he grinned like a mischievous leprechaun. "Thought so. Now, normally I'd keep you around to pass the time of day, but on a day like this, what's to pass? It's fucking cold and wet. End of story. So. You've come to find the Master." Harley tapped the side of his nose. "Well, I know where he is."

Jace turned all in a rush from his baking over the heater. "You do? Where is he? How can I find him?"

"Easy, kid, take it easy." Harley leaned back. "Look, it's like this. Tal's a Master of Love Magick, right? Okay, fair enough. But Love aside, a Master is a Master is a Master, and no, don't go and ask me how I know about these things. I'm just the

doorkeeper for the portal through which you need to pass, not that big fancy thing up there." He waved a hand in disdain. "You want to get in and start your learning, you have to pass a few tests first."

Jace nodded. He'd been warned that this could happen. "All right. What tests?"

"Not the kind you took in grade school, and that's for damn sure," Harley cracked up. "Okay, you're used to Magick, right? So don't jump when I do *this*."

Harley pressed a button underneath his counter. Jace did jump, backwards, bumping his hip against the counter as the entire back wall of Harley's newsstand cranked open to reveal a lush chamber.

"Not a bad trick, huh, kid?"

Jace shook his head dumbly. The room wasn't huge by anyone's standards, but it was done in shades of red -- all sorts of hues, from crimson to carmine to blood -- and had hints of gold and silver. The air smelled like chocolate... and sex.

Oh.

Jace blinked and blushed as he saw a bed pushed up against the far wall of the small room. A man and a woman were lying in it, although he wouldn't have said they were *resting*, not by any stretch of the imagination. Pretty far from the truth, as a matter of fact. He couldn't see either of their faces, but the woman was kneeling astride the man, the perfect curves of her ass gently riding his bare legs. His toes were curled as if what she was doing was the best thing he'd ever felt, and his hands stroked her hips, encouraging her on.

Jace watched, his lips parting softly in amazement. He'd seen his share of porn, but that was all fake orgasms and fluffers and silicone implants. He'd had his share of lovemaking, but it had all been hurried encounters or fly-by-nights with someone he knew wouldn't end up being a part of his life.

This couple, though... they looked like two halves of a whole. Jace forgot himself as he gazed at the sight of their lovemaking, admiring both as if they were statues in some gallery dedicated to the *Kama Sutra*.

The woman drew his attention first as she tossed her head and a cascade of wheat-colored hair came tumbling down her back, smooth and shining as a waterfall. It brushed skin the perfect color of peaches, a rose-brown that made him think of full ripeness. He could see the curve of her breasts from his vantage point, and both were round and ripe as small melons.

She turned halfway, her eyes shut, and he spotted one red raspberry nipple, hardened into a nub. Her skin glistened with a light coating of sweat, and her long, slender fingers ran from her hips down her thighs, as if just the man's touching her wasn't enough.

Even as he watched, she drew up tight with a soft cry like the sound of a dove in a cage, and shuddered hard. The man stroked her hips harder, urging her on through her orgasm. When she relaxed again, she bent down, and hid the man entirely. From the soft sounds that were suddenly clearer than the rain, they were kissing.

When she drew back, Jace got his first look at the man himself. His breath caught in his throat. If the woman had been beautiful, wondrous as Aphrodite herself, this man was nothing less than Michelangelo's *David*. Tall, definitely topping six feet, and well-muscled through the chest and arms, not to mention his perfectly defined calves, he was the picture of vital health and masculine beauty.

And his face... Jace licked his lips, wishing to God he'd been the one doing the kissing. This man had the face of a fallen angel, from the proud arch of his eyebrows to the curve of his lips and the cut lines of cheekbone and jaw. Long red hair flowed down around him like silk, and he had eyes of such a green that Jace could tell their color as they glittered up at the woman.

Together, they were perfection, and caught in the middle of making love, they could make a grown man, especially one who swung both ways, weep.

The woman slipped off the man and Jace caught a glimpse of an unfulfilled erection, shining with female juices, standing up tall and proud. The man didn't seem disappointed at not having come, though, and leaned over for another kiss. Jace could see the woman's face now, a soft and gentle sort of look to her, and the perfect blueness

of her eyes before they fluttered shut. Their lips met and mouths sealed together, the man reaching up to touch the woman's cheek.

It was a gesture that spoke of perfect tenderness and adoration...

... and it made Jace realize exactly what the hell he was doing. He stumbled back, his cheeks on fire. God! A couple in love was having sex, and he'd been perving on them like a dirty old man. He'd completely lost track of the mission to find his Master of Love Magick.

"What the hell, man?" he pleaded to Harley. "For God's sake, close the door already, before they realize we're here. Give them some privacy!"

Harley didn't seem so inclined. Watching the two kiss, he gave a low whistle. "Looks like the guy you want is otherwise occupied at the moment," he said in a respectful voice. "She's a pip, ain't she? Still, no reason to let that stop you."

Jace's eyes opened wide. "That's the Master? But I can't just --"

"Sure ya can." Harley gave Jace's arm a pull, and then a hearty push to the small of his back. He stumbled forward, nearly tripping on the laces of his sneakers, and fell to one knee. As he hit the ground, he heard the sound of the wall closing behind him.

Oh, shit. "Harley, wait!" he blurted, turning around.

"Harley knows what he's doing," a rich voice said in reply. Jace shut his eyes tight before turning around and opening them again. Yep. The man and the woman in the bed were sitting up and looking at him, seeming pretty amused by the whole thing, if their smiles were anything to go by.

Looking at them, Jace's mouth all but watered. The woman's full breasts begged to be sucked, and so did the man's luscious cock, thick and hard against his stomach. "I'm sorry, oh, God, am I sorry. Harley just shoved me in here."

"It's all right." The man slid off his bed and stood up, seemingly uncaring about his nakedness. He put his hands on his hips and tilted his head at Jace. His hair reached all the way down to his hips, red as a fox's coat and shinier than a new penny. "Would you like to join us?"

"Fuck!" Jace blurted. "I mean -- my God, you're pretty occupied already, which I probably should have expected from a Master of Love Magick -- you *are* the Master, right?"

"He is." The woman slid off her side of the bed and stood up. She crossed her arms beneath her breasts, but not defensively, more as if she were showing them off. A thatch of wheaten curls dampened with moisture showed at the meeting of her thighs. Her legs were long and made for worshipping, one kiss at a time. She wasn't what you could call skinny, but Jace had never gone for the coat-hanger look on a woman. The few he'd had encounters with had all been well-padded, like this one, with rich curves in all the right places.

"I am," the man reinforced his partner's words. "Tal Lleu, or Taliesin, if you want to be formal-like." His voice did have a trace of a Welsh accent to it, as if he'd been in America for most of his life, but had enjoyed a childhood in the rolling hills of that far-off land. "And the offer has been made. Do you want to come and pass the time of day with us? It's better than standing out in the rain, at any rate."

Jace swallowed hard. He ran his hands down his wet hoodie and slapped them lightly on his soaked jeans. His own cock, just like Tal's, was hard and ready to go. He'd started swelling the instant he looked at this pair, but hadn't wanted to admit it until the present moment. It must have made an impressive bulge inside his pants, because he felt the woman giving him a pleased once-over, and Tal dealt him a frank appraisal.

"Yes, or no?" Tal repeated. "It's not such a hard question. Will you come and enjoy Love, or will you sit outside with Harley until you're dry?"

Jace looked from one to the other. This seemed like an honest enough question, and any red-blooded male would have jumped at that bed without a second's thought. Trouble was, though, he had to stop and consider -- was this a test? Did his Apprenticeship depend on his saying yes or no?

"Come to bed with us," the woman said, her voice soft and sweet as honey. She sat down on the edge of the mattress, smoothing the sheets. "I'd enjoy getting to know you, stranger. And what better way to pass a rainy afternoon?"

"There's nothing to worry about," Tal followed up gently. "We're both safe, and we won't cause you any harm. But the choice is yours. All the same, let me assure you that you'd definitely be welcomed."

"I'm -- I'm soaking wet," Jace stammered, feeling the last of his resolve dissolve like sugar left out in the rain. "If you have a towel, or something..."

"Let us dry you off," Tal suggested, coming closer with his hand outstretched. "Come and spend some time with us, young -- what is your name?"

"Jace." His mouth was dry, now. "I'm Jace. And I hope I'm your new Apprentice."

Tal's gaze was frankly appraising and assessing, and there was a glimmer of approval in his green eyes. "I hope you will be too." He came close enough to touch, and took Jace's hand in his own. "This is the third time I'll ask, and it'll be the last. Will you come and join us?"

This was nuts. Insanity. It was the definition of nutso insanity. But faced with the harvest-time ripeness of the woman and the rich autumn warmth of the man, Jace knew he couldn't have said no if he'd wanted to -- which he didn't.

Instead, he took Tal's hand in his own and squeezed the fingers. "All right," he said, surprised to hear his voice coming out steady and clear. "I have no idea what I'm doing, but I'll come and play."

He felt Tal's approval like a sheet of warmth from Harley's space heater, only much higher on the sexy end of the scale. Tal's smile was broad and white, not at all threatening, and welcoming to someone who'd just come in out of the cold. "Then come with us," he said. "We'll take care of you."

Giving Tal and the woman another glance, Jace nodded. Whatever else happened, he had no doubt that these two would definitely make sure he was taken care of.

Chapter Two

"You *are* sopping," the woman said, standing up again to walk around closer to Jace. She lifted her hand and pressed the back of it to his cheek. When he blushed, she smiled. "Innocent, no matter how many times you've done this, aren't you?"

"Never a threesome," Jace admitted.

"Then we'll break you in nice and slow." She winked. "Starting with names. I know yours, and you know his, but you don't know me. I'm Selwyn."

It didn't seem right to shake her hand, but damned if Jace could think of anything else to do. Then, in a burst of inspiration, he took that hand and pressed a kiss to the palm, praying she wouldn't smack him for it.

Instead, she chuckled, a warm sound. "Oh, that's good. A nice start. Now what do you say we get you dry?"

Dry sounded like heaven. Jace nodded eagerly. "Yes, please?" He tugged at his soaking clothes. "If you have a bathroom and something I could change into, I'll be right back with you."

He felt Tal's hands on his shoulders. Damn, the man could move fast. Jace hadn't even seen Tal come around behind him. "Who said you'd be putting anything back on?" the man asked, sounding amused. Hard to tell without seeing his face. "If you're really going to play with us, you should be sky clad too."

"We're indoors."

"Are we?" Tal covered Jace's eyes for a moment, then lifted his hand. "Where are we now?"

Jace blinked. "Holy shit."

"Watch your mouth," Selwyn chided -- then softened, tucking her hand in Jace's. "It's amazing, isn't it? He's a marvel."

"I'll say." Jace turned in a slow circle, looking around him, up and to the sides. Instead of the small room off Harley's newsstand, they now stood in a glass pagoda on what looked to be the top of the twenty-five-story building. The room was decorated with rich cushions in what looked like jewel-toned velvets, more gold and silver, and hanging bells. Jace remembered reading about the symbolism of the bells. One was for love, he thought.

The Master of Love Magick, Tal, rang the bell with his fingertip. "How do you like my castle in the sky, then?" he asked, gazing first at the rain pelting down around their sanctuary, then turning to cast a teasing glance at Jace.

"It's amazing," Jace answered honestly. He looked and found the bed, an even bigger one, taking center stage. Someone had covered it in a rich red-and-gold tapestry spread, with creamy white sheets underneath where it had been turned down. Tall posts stood at all four corners. Jace swallowed. The thought of making love in a bed like that... well, it made him, in his current state, feel like a mangy dog who ought to sleep at the foot.

"I'm not in any shape to..." he started.

"All you need is to be dry," Selwyn chided. Her look became cunning, although it was by no means malicious. "Why not start by taking off those soaking clothes?"

Jace blushed, and looked at the Master of Love for guidance. Tal leaned against one of the glass panes of his pagoda, and gestured to his own nakedness. The move drew Jace's attention to the man's own erection, not faded in the least. He had to admire Tal -- the guy had stamina, and staying power. What would he be like during sex? The thought made his knees weak. God, he loved a man who could give and give. Bottoms up, baby, bottoms up.

Turning back to Selwyn, Jace nodded. "All right. Do I just take them off right here, or...?"

"Where's the fun in you taking them off?" she asked, winking at him. "I'll undress you. And then I'll comb your hair dry. Unless you want to do any of this, Tal?"

Tal shook his head. One hand came down to stroke his erection, lazy sweeps up and down. "I'll watch," he said, with enough meaning in his voice to make Jace's skin turn warm. He wondered if steam would start to rise from his body, he felt so hot.

Selwyn, still gorgeous as a wood nymph, enough to take Jace's breath away, stood next to him. "Arms up," she said, tickling down their length. "This comes off first." The hoodie peeled off with difficulty, but Jace was glad as he could be when it landed in a wet pile on the floor, because then Selwyn's hands were on him.

She made a murmured sound of appreciation, running her fingers across his chest. "Muscles," she purred. "You have a good body, Jace. Healthy body, healthy mind, isn't that the way it goes?"

"I -- I like to work out," Jace said, horribly aware that this was the worst foreplay talk he could possibly come up with. "And swim."

"Do you, now?" Selwyn didn't seem to be bothered by his clumsiness. In fact, she bent down and took one of his flat nipples in her mouth, biting gently. Jace sucked in a breath, his hands going automatically to her hair. He forced himself to be gentle, stroking instead of grabbing, but it was hard when her wicked little tongue was lashing his nipple into a hard nub, and her sharp teeth were nibbling at him until he wanted to cry out. His erection, already hard, began to pound.

God. If the woman could accomplish so much with one taste of his chest, what could she do to the rest of him?

Jace was gasping by the time Selwyn let go, rubbing her thumb over the other nipple. "You taste like rainwater," she said, running her tongue over her lips. Her eyes were heavy-lidded. "Now," she added, pushing her thumbs beneath Jace's waistband, "the jeans come off, too. I want to see what you have hiding inside there."

Jace took another look at Tal, who was stroking himself a little harder now. The Love Master's eyes were at half-mast as well, as if he were enjoying the show. "I'll do this for myself," he said, stepping back a pace or two. "Will you watch?"

Selwyn backed up until she was sitting on the edge of that gorgeous bed. She let her hands rest in her lap. "By all means." Her voice was full of laughter, not a bit of it mean-spirited, meant to urge him on.

If she intended encouragement, it was working. Jace's erection strained at the zipper of his jeans. He'd lost his last pair of underwear on purpose a couple of cities back, tossed out of a boxcar window in his enthusiasm to get at Tomnas, who'd been in a particularly frisky mood. He put his hands to his waist, then hesitated. The jeans, already tight, were molded to him like a second skin. God, the last thing he wanted to look was awkward in front of this graceful couple. A shimmy-shake and hopping around like a deranged rabbit -- nuh-uh.

He'd have to take the slow road, then. Unzipping his jeans, Jace couldn't help a sigh of relief as his swollen cock slipped out. Selwyn made a noise of appreciation, and so did the Master -- a low rumble encouraging him on. "That's a fine piece you have on you," Tal said. "Turn around, now. I want to see the other side."

Jace obeyed without question, shifting around until his back was to Selwyn and Tal. He hooked thumbs into his belt loops and pulled the wet denim down until it peeled off his backside. The warm air hit him like the caress of a hand, making him sigh in appreciation. Selwyn and Tal made small noises that he took as approval. He had a good ass, he knew -- round and well-shaped, as Tomnas had said, just right for cupping in the hand.

Bending over so that his audience could enjoy the view, Jace stripped off the rest of his jeans, prying them off first one leg and then the other. When they were in a pile around his ankles, he toed off his wet sneakers and stepped out of them. Then, with a small prayer that his body would be well-received, turned around to face the Love Master and Selwyn, his arms spread a little to show off his goods.

"Oh, very nice," Tal said, his accent even stronger. *Verra*. "I've half a mind to come over there and taste you to see if you're as good as you look." He held up a finger. "But you're still wet. Selwyn, a towel?"

Selwyn smiled and stood, walking over to a small trunk in the corner of the room. Her ass swayed enticingly as she moved, Jace's eyes following it as if it were a magnet. When she bent over to open the trunk, he almost moaned.

"She is a sight, isn't she?" Tal asked, that accent still thick enough to cut. Jace glanced back and saw Tal stroking himself a little harder still. He marveled at the man's ability to hold on to his hard-on without coming for so long. Years of practice, or natural ability? "Selwyn, please dry the would-be Apprentice."

Selwyn stood, a thick terrycloth towel of crimson in her hands, as well as a wide-toothed comb. As if it were second nature, she crossed to Jace and began rubbing the towel over the length of his body, gentle on his groin, and hard everywhere else. The teasing made him grit his teeth and choke back a groan, but Selwyn's devilish smile told him she knew what he was thinking.

And praying. As soon as Jace's body was dry, Selwyn knelt and, putting her hands on his thighs, took his cock into her mouth. He did cry out then, partially in surprise, and partially because her mouth felt as good on his prick as it had on his nipple. She had an incredible tongue and she put it to good use, flicking around the bulbous crown and then down the length of the veins underneath, taking more and still more of him into her mouth until he felt the soft back of her throat.

Then she swallowed, and Jace yelled. Tal burst into laughter. "Selwyn, greedy, greedy," he chided. "Save him for the three of us together."

Selwyn made a small noise and burrowed against Jace's groin, her clever tongue working him hard. Deep in the back of his mind, Jace knew that he should have agreed with the Master of Love Magick. After all, he was there to please the man in hopes of getting an Apprenticeship. But God, who could think when they were getting the blow job of a lifetime?

"Mmm," Selwyn voiced again, licking Jace's cock as if he were the best popsicle ever. Jace felt pre-come bubbling out of his slit, which she took on her tongue like pearls of sugar, rolling them around. "Mmm."

Tal laughed again. "Oh, all right. He's young enough that he can get it up a second time. Go ahead and do what you want."

Selwyn purred around Jace's erection, which was like the feeling of dipping his cock in champagne. He gasped and reached out blindly for something to hold on to, landing on Selwyn's sturdy shoulders. She rolled them in his grasp, letting him know she was comfortable with his hold -- and resumed her sucking.

Things began to grow hazy for Jace. All he could think about was the heat and pressure on his cock, the wet warmth of Selwyn's mouth, and the fact that Tal was watching them, dick in fist, a lazy observer to his own frenetic striving not to come.

"Don't be holding back," Tal said, his own voice slow and lazy. "Go ahead, Jace. Give her what she wants. She's a lusty lass, Selwyn is, and she wants your spunk on her tongue. Let go and give it up. Fuck her mouth."

The dirty talk coming in that edible accent undid Jace. Bucking forward with a groan, he emptied himself into Selwyn's mouth, pouring pulses of come onto her hungry palate. She swallowed around him time and again, licking his cock as if she wanted to encourage more and still more out of him.

When Jace had finished coming, he stood panting, his arms shaking where he'd braced himself on Selwyn's shoulders. She drew off his cock and gave the tip a kiss, then waited patiently for him to recover himself. "It's all right," she whispered. "Take as much time as you need." Her mouth quirked up in a bow. "You've never had anything like that before, have you?"

His lips still parted, Jace shook his head. "You," he managed. "Best ever."

"You haven't had Tal yet," she reminded him. "And you're not completely dry. Come here."

Standing carefully, taking Jace in hand so that he didn't fall down, Selwyn led him backwards until they were at the bed again. She sat down on the comforter spreading her thighs wide. Jace's eyes opened all the way, drinking in the sight of her thick thatch, hoping that she wanted him to return the favor.

She laughed. "Not just yet. Soon, though." Patting the comforter, she said, "Sit here and let me dry your hair. Tal, do we have any more of that cream?"

"We do." Tal sounded amused.

"May I have it? I've never seen such tangles."

Tal chuckled. As Jace arranged himself a little awkwardly cross-legged between Selwyn's calves, he heard Tal crossing the room to the chest Selwyn had gotten the towel out of. The man's step was light and springy, as if he had all the energy in the world and then some.

Jace endured the next few minutes as best as he could. Selwyn had gentle hands, but not even the most delicate touch could unsnarl his hair without some pain. The cream, which felt slippery and thick as come as she daubed it onto his scalp, seemed to dry his locks even as it aided the slide of her comb through them. She didn't stop until his hair was as much of a shining curtain as hers and Tal's, fanning out over his chest and his back. The aroma was sweet, like cinnamon and cloves, filling the room but not overpowering the scent of her pussy, still damp behind his head.

"Now," Selwyn said, giving Jace a light push between his shoulders. "You're ready for us. Both of us. Stand up."

Jace obeyed, feeling a little uncertain. "I told you I've never been in a threesome before," he said a second time. "I'm not sure..."

"What goes where, and when?" Tal's voice rippled with amusement. "It'll all come naturally. And so will you." The man crossed to Jace, coming closer until they stood chest to chest, and gazed down into his eyes. Jace met that look with one of his own, measuring up the Master until something twinkled in Tal's eye and he bent down for a kiss.

Jace moaned into the Master's mouth. If he'd thought *Selwyn* had a talented tongue... Tal thrust between his lips as he would press a cock into his ass, each push invading a little further, no yielding. Taking a deep breath through his nose, Jace began to tangle back, twining his tongue around Tal's and tugging, urging him on. His hands

moved of their own volition, bringing his arms up around Tal's back, his fingers twining in Tal's shining red hair.

When they parted, Tal's lips were slightly swollen, and the smell of sex drifted up even more strongly between them. Jace took a glance downward and realized that his own erection was reawakening fast, pressed against Tal's own. He let out a second moan as their cocks bumped one another, and hung on tighter.

"Plenty of time for that," Tal said, pulling away gently. Jace's hands slid free of his hair as if it were running water. "Get onto the bed, Jace. Lie on your back, I want to see your face when I fuck you."

Jace's heart gave a jump. He'd been wondering how they would do this, but like Tal had said, everything was coming naturally. Careful not to do what he wanted, which would have been to fling himself into the center of the bed with a whoop of "Geronimo!" he climbed in, deliberately showing off his ass until he was able to turn and lie down, spreading his legs for the Master.

From the look on Tal's face, he'd gotten the move exactly right. "Good," Tal murmured, beginning his own leisurely crawl up the bed. "You know just what I want, and you deliver, don't you? You'd make a fine apprentice."

Jace gazed at the Master with something like the beginnings of Love, and definite appreciation. The man found the spot that suited him best, braced over Jace, and bent down for another hungry kiss full of tongues and nibbling teeth, then turned his head to ask, "Selwyn?" He reached out a hand. Selwyn, who must have been busy when Jace wasn't looking, pushed a small jar into Tal's hand.

Bracing himself on one elbow, Tal opened the jar and scooped out several fingers' worth of something clear and sweet-smelling. "Don't worry," he said, smiling down at Jace. "This will be warm. It's Magickal in nature."

As his fingers touched the crevice of Jace's ass, Jace gasped, but not from any shock of cold. The Master had long fingers, talented as any fine artist, and he knew how to play a man like the finest of instruments. He stroked the lubricant deep into Jace's ass, running a finger in circles around his hole.

"Do you need to be stretched, or can you take me as I am?" Tal asked in between kisses along Jace's jaw. "I know you're not a virgin, but gods, you feel so tight. I wouldn't hurt you."

"A little bit would help," Jace said, mostly honestly. He could use a little foreplay, and he wanted more of those fingers. With a chuckle, Tal obliged, pressing first one and then two into Jace's hole, then scissoring them wide. Jace moaned and arched, all but writhing on those talented fingers, and wondering if he'd manage to survive the blast of pleasure that would come with the man's cock.

Tal withdrew, and poised the tip of his cock at Jace's entrance. "Lift your legs," he directed. "One around my waist, and one on my shoulder. Yes, that's the way. You've done this before."

"A time -- or two," Jace panted.

"You have a sweet mouth." Tal kissed it. "Put your lips to good use. Selwyn?"

The woman climbed onto the bed, moving so lightly that she didn't press down on Jace's newly neatened hair, and knelt above his face, the wet lips of her pussy above his lips. His mouth watered at the sight and smell of her. Her hands came down to rub his chest, and then her fingers plucked at his nipples. Jace heard the sound of Tal kissing her above his head, and then, oh, then the real fun started.

Tal began to push into Jace one slow inch at a time, delicious torture when he would have cried out for the whole thing. He knew better, though, and used his mouth as he'd been directed, licking Selwyn from clitoris to vagina, plunging his tongue in like a small cock. Her soft cries of approval were all the reward he needed, but the taste of her was enough to drive him wild. She had the flavor of peaches, just the way her skin looked, and of salty womanhood. At the touch of his tongue she began to flow, and he slurped up every drop.

When Tal was fully at rest inside Jace, the action paused for a moment. Jace tickled at Selwyn's clit with his tongue, then hesitated himself. "Ready?" he heard the Master ask, and wasn't sure who the question was for. He nodded all the same, and breathed a "Yes" against Selwyn's pussy. He heard her agreement above his head.

Tal withdrew in one long stroke and then slammed back inside. Jace sucked for air and then began eating Selwyn's pussy in earnest, drinking down her peach and salt like the finest nectar he'd ever drunk. He would have loved a chance to suck Tal's cock, but this was just as good, and Tal's cock was doing just fine on its own, each thrust hard and punishing enough that Jace knew he'd be sore for days afterwards. Just the way he liked it.

As he played with her clit, wrapping his tongue around it, somehow able to carry on despite the explosion of sensation in his own nether regions, Jace heard Selwyn's muted exclamations of pleasure, and the sound of her kisses with Tal. Her breasts, which he'd longed to taste, hung around the level of his waist, which gave Jace an idea. Reaching for the raspberry-colored nipples, he began to play with them, pinching and stroking, imagining them decorated with rings of silver and gold.

To his surprise, those rings materialized. Selwyn gave a long, ragged gasp. Jace blinked. Was this his Magick, or the Master's? Was Tal able to read minds, as well?

No time to waste, though. Jace seized the rings and began to tug and twist at them, careful not to hurt Selwyn, but sensing from her moans and thrusts of encouragement that she loved this. Tal slowed down his own movements, as if he were enjoying the show a great deal himself.

Then, Jace felt Tal's hand wrapped around his own cock, swollen to full ripeness, ready to burst. One touch of the Master's fingers stroking him from balls to tip was all it took, and he exploded into warm, wet stickiness between his belly and Tal's. Desperate for more sensation still, Jace tugged hard on Selwyn's new piercings and wrapped his tongue around her clit, sucking hard. She, too, stiffened, and came with a gush over his face.

Then finally, finally, Jace felt the Master begin to shake. His hips snapped forward once, twice, three times, and then a heated gush filled Jace from the inside out. The Master had a copious load, and he emptied every pulse into Jace's channel while kissing Selwyn, the noises of their triple lovemaking echoing off the glass walls of the room.

Jace gave a groan and let his body go slack. Selwyn climbed down off the pillows as Tal eased Jace's legs off his shoulder and waist. Together, one on either side, they tucked themselves close to Jace's body. The smell of sex was heavy in the air like the finest of perfumes, the sheets were soft as silk beneath Jace's exhausted body, and he had two sources of warmth pressing in on either side.

I could fall in love with these two, Jace thought drowsily. The Master, Tal, and whatever Selwyn is to him, I could love her too. He must be a powerful practitioner, or they're just that damn good. I can still taste her on my tongue and I can still feel him in my ass. They're both wondrous creatures. And if this sort of thing goes on all the time, then I'm damned glad those snotty doormen wouldn't let me in.

I wonder who's answering the intercom? An old servant? That would make sense. Harley probably keeps an eye out for new students. I owe him one. Jace smiled at the thought of the curly-haired, impish newsstand operator. It's a clever ruse. If Harley hadn't taken pity on me, I'd still be out in the streets, soaking to the skin, instead of lying in this gorgeous bed with these two amazing creatures.

I wonder what Selwyn is to the Love Magick Master? A servant, too? Or an ordinary lover? I've never heard of a Master taking a lover before -- they're supposed to save all their Magick up for their students -- but then again, Tal isn't what I was led to expect, either.

He's better.

Jace made a noise of appreciation as Tal nuzzled into his neck, and Selwyn kissed his cheek, light as thistledown. He felt like a king lying between them. Turning first to the woman and then to the man, he shared a long, gentle kiss, toying with tongues and sucking lightly on lips. Both purred in appreciation, sounding almost genuinely catlike, a noise that shot straight to Jace's groin, which tried to rise for a third time. What if the Master could make his tongue feel like that of a cat's? What would *that* be like on his cock?

"Oh, yes," Tal was murmuring. "You'd make a fine Apprentice, and no mistake."

Jace was floating. "I'll serve you well," he promised. "I might mess up from time to time, but I'll be as good as I can. Out of bed, I mean. And in it, if you want me here."

"I do want you here, as often as I can get you. If you're willing." Tal nipped at Jace's lower lip. "But you see, the thing is, I already have an Apprentice."

"What?" Jace's eyes snapped open. "You -- who?"

Selwyn kissed his cheek again, flickering out her tongue. "Who do you think?"

Jace's heart sank and his temper rose. The Rules stated that no one Master could have more than a single Apprentice at a time. If Tal had known that, and he must have, then taking him to bed had all been a game. And keeping him around, what kind of ruse was that? Did he plan on Jace being the servant, summoned to bed whenever Tal and Selwyn got an itch for a third?

Pushing the two aside, Jace scrambled out of bed. He stood, naked and angry, at the foot, staring hostilely at the two, who looked surprised by his actions. Selwyn sat up, her generous breasts spilling over her chest, and Tal raised himself on his elbows, throwing his cock, still long and impressive even when soft, into sharp relief against his hip.

"Jace, I don't think you understand," he started.

"I understand plenty," Jace seethed. "You played me. *You played me!* I'm out of here. As soon as I get my clothes back on, I'm gone."

"No," Tal said, sitting upright. He waved a hand, and Jace's clothes disappeared from the floor. "You're not going anywhere. Not yourself, alone."

He made another gesture. "We're all going for a ride."

Chapter Three

Jace stared around himself. For the fourth time in one single day, his surroundings had changed. *From humble beginnings...*

Shaking his head, Jace counted off the changes he'd been through. He'd started off in the pouring rain, moved into the newsstand, then the back boudoir, and up to the glassed-in pleasure dome. Now, the fourth change, had brought him down into what he'd always imagined a country gentleman's bedchamber would look like.

Tal, fully dressed, sat in a sturdy oak chair opposite Jace. His hair had been neatly braided into a rope of coppery red silk that trailed over his right shoulder and down his chest. He wore a suit in the latest fashion that Jace had seen, one of the kinds that had a collarless neck. Cut to fit every single line of his body to perfection, he was a mouthwatering sight and probably knew it.

Selwyn stood behind him, her own fall of golden hair braided into a hundred small plaits cascading over her left shoulder, with a few coming down like wisps on the other side. She wore an outfit that would have been popular over a hundred years ago - some sort of gown, long and white, made of silk, with the waistline just beneath her generous breasts. A corset of brown suede encircled her middle, emphasizing how small it was compared to the rest of her lush loveliness. Again, every inch a beauty, and from her small smile, well aware of the fact.

Jace looked away from them and found himself facing a long mirror on a stand. He blinked, unable to believe what he saw there. He'd always thought of himself as a decent-looking guy, but the man looking back at him was as gorgeous as Tal and Selwyn. He had wide, slightly tilted brown eyes, the color of good coffee. His hair was in a single braid of black velvet, small curls escaping down the length of the weave. He,

too, wore a suit in the height of fashion. He sat in a chair just like Tal's, good hard wood and comfortable padding the color of crimson roses.

Positioned like this, dressed as they were, they all looked like equals. And Jace thought he knew why. "It's still a trick," he accused, jabbing a finger at Tal. Selwyn slipped her hand down, and Tal took it. "You know there can't be more than one Apprentice at a time. Why did you invite me in and all but promise I could have the place?"

"Jace," Tal said, "be quiet. There are many things that you do not know, and the first of them is your place. I am the Master here, and I do not take kindly to young dogs biting as if they were seasoned warriors. How have I treated you badly, that you snap at me so? I invited you in out of the rain, with the offer of some pleasant company. I never once said that you would be *my* Apprentice."

Jace started to make a reply, then wilted. Tal was right. He'd said Jace would be a fine Apprentice, but he'd never laid a claim. *God, I'm a fool.*

Tal nodded. "But the fact is, young Jace, things are changing. Who makes the rules that a Master can only have one apprentice at a time?" He kissed Selwyn's hand. She smiled at him and smoothed her fingers down the length of his braid. "Selwyn came to me almost a year ago, and passed her entry tests of Love Magick with ease. She was not so beautiful then as she is now. Now, she glows with Love, and it lights her up from the inside out. She is my rose."

Jace wished he could crawl into a hole and disappear.

"But you..." Tal said, gently putting Selwyn aside and standing, "are my thorn. No, no, don't look so sad and dejected, Jace. What is a rose without a thorn? You cannot have one without the other. And a thorn is a beautiful thing, when you look at it. Sharp and pointed, and masculine to the feminine beauty that it supports."

Tal walked to Jace and lifted up his chin. "I cannot have one without the other," he said seriously. "These old men who say that you can only have one Apprentice at a time, who are they? They sit in their high chairs of wisdom and have no clue about how things work in the wider world. Here, look."

He made a gesture, and a swirling pool appeared in the air to their side. Fascinated by this use of power, Jace looked into the vortex's heart, saw it clear, and looked at the pictures it presented.

A young man, no older than Jace himself, with long blond hair, strode across the floor of a cave. He wore jeans with more holes than denim, but his well-muscled legs were no shame to show off. He had an ass as good as any Jace had ever seen. He wore an emerald heart around his neck, and in his hands, he carried a wooden bowl of apples. His smile was saucy, as if he knew a secret.

Walking jauntily, he crossed to where another man sat -- no, sprawled -- naked on a chaise made out of stone. "Here. I called these for you. They're from the best orchard within range."

"And what makes you think I'll want them?"

"Because I brought them to you." The young man leaned down to kiss the older one. As he drew back, Jace realized that the naked man was wearing a pendant of his own, a small diamond heart.

"But they're..." he stammered. "They're both..."

"Masters? Yes, they are." Tal dissolved the image just as the man with the apples set them aside and knelt between the other man's spread legs, parting his own lips to take an amazingly vigorous erection between them. "That would be Pedri and Dominic, Masters of Lust. Their Order states that there can only be one Master at a time. When an Apprentice wins a battle between himself and the current Master, that Master must hand over his heart and stand down. But not these two."

Jace shook his head. "I don't understand."

"I can see you don't." Tal's warm hand came to rest between Jace's shoulder blades. "But this was just a demonstration. Times as we know them are changing. The rules are shifting, and what was once solid as concrete is now crumbling like sand -- and no bad thing. The Orders have become hidebound, and too tied up in their own rules to make any good use of Magick. I am not one of the old school thinkers, and

neither is Selwyn, and I hope --" he tilted Jace's chin up with his free hand "-- you will not be, yourself."

Jace closed his eyes for a moment, concentrating hard. Fighting against all that he had been taught, that was ingrained into him, he asked, "Does that mean I can be your Apprentice too? Learn under you along with Selwyn?"

"Yes!" Tal took both his hands and clapped them together once. "Now you understand. I can break with the rules as long as I do not break the Magick, and I can have both of you at the same time." He paused. "That is, if you still want to be my student."

Jace hesitated. Words like *yes*, *absolutely*, and *are you kidding?* hung on his tongue, but he couldn't quite say them out loud. He knew, after having had Tal once, he couldn't bear to go back to being a stranger brought in out of the rain. And maybe it wasn't fair, since Tal was so damn obviously in love with Selwyn, but he wanted to be a member in good standing in Tal's bed as well.

And Selwyn's.

He shook his head, unable to speak. Tal settled himself on the arm of Jace's chair and tilted his chin again, moving Jace to look up at him. "I know," he said soothingly. "You think that this means an end to what we've just shared. But no, Jace, by no means. I might have taken another Apprentice and simply taught him or her, but you? You've passed your own entrance exams with a shining light. Look at yourself in the mirror." He directed Jace's gaze. "Can you not see, man, how you have changed? You've become more with the powers of Love Magick, and you will never be the same again."

Jace reached up to touch his own cheek. His skin felt finer than it had before, with no trace of roughness from where he occasionally had to shave. The flesh had a fine, silky texture. His hair felt soft and smooth as mineral water, and he could feel a new flex of power and tensile strength in his muscles.

"I have changed," he said slowly. "Did I do this? Or did you?"

"We all did," Selwyn spoke up at last, moving from her place behind Tal's chair to stand on the other side of Jace. "Love is good by itself. It is better, doubled. Tripled?

It's amazing. All three of us are equals in health, strength and beauty now. Together, we can do anything."

"But we're not Masters, you and I? I mean, Master or Mistress. Not yet?" Jace asked Selwyn.

She shook her head. Jace noticed that she had small golden bells attached to her braids, so that a faint musical chime rang when she moved. The Magick must have put them there, as well as arranged every other thing about them. "We're not Lords and Ladies of our domain -- yet," she said. "But Tal is a *wonderful* teacher, and an even better Master. I've come so far in a year. And I don't plan on leaving his side when I gain my own full powers." She brushed his cheek. "You don't have to, either."

"You see, Jace, it's more than wanting you as a student, although I do that, for you've talent bursting at the seams." Tal moved closer. "You're a gorgeous man, and one that I'd be wanting in my bed."

"And mine," Selwyn said, moving a little closer. She put her hand on Jace's shoulder and bent to kiss him, her lips light as thistledown on his own. When she moved up, Tal moved in, his kiss harder and masculine where hers had been purely feminine. Not that he would ever call Selwyn "weak." She was as strong as she was beautiful, and about that Jace had no doubt.

"So..." he said slowly. "You want me as part of a triad, *and* you'll take me as an Apprentice?"

"I'll take you in any way that I can get you, and I think I speak for Selwyn, too." Tal kissed Jace again. "What do you say? You have to answer me out loud. Will it be yes, or will it be no?"

Jace kissed Tal back, letting his tongue play with the Master's for a long, glorious minute before answering, "Yes. I'd be a jackass to refuse. I say yes."

Selwyn threw her arms around Jace and hugged him tight. Tal rumbled the top of Jace's hair. Looking in the mirror at the three of them, Jace had to admire the sight. He wondered what they had looked like in bed together.

"I can show you," Tal whispered. Jace decided that the man *was* able to read minds. He waved his hands again, and the mirror's image changed to an overhead view of the three of them in bed in the pleasure palace. Jace could hardly make out his own body, but he recognized his legs wound around Tal's and caught glimpses of his own face as he devoured Selwyn's pussy. He quickly passed by himself, though, and focused on both Selwyn's exquisite breasts and Tal's delicious buttocks, both flexing and moving as they thrust and rolled, savoring his body and writhing in their own pleasure. The sight took Jace's breath away.

"And we can do this whenever we want?" he asked faintly, as the mirror faded back into a regular reflection. "Any time we choose?"

"You have only to suggest it. But," Tal said as he tweaked Jace's ear, "not during lessons. I'm a good Master, but it's not all fucking around with me. You'll learn about the ways of Love Magick, and you'll come up with some of your own theories as well."

Jace groaned, but couldn't hide his grin. "That's fair enough." A thought struck him. "What about Harley? Does he know what goes on up here?"

Selwyn laughed. "Of course he does, the old lech, and he also knows who buys a copy of every issue of each blue magazine that comes out." She wriggled. "I like to watch. A picture is worth a thousand words."

"Speaking of which..." Jace let his fingers crawl up her laced bodice and toyed with the knot holding it closed. "You did say any time, didn't you?"

Selwyn leaned back with a saucy look. "I did. Master Tal?"

"I think we could be persuaded to go again," Tal allowed. "You'd like having Jace inside you, yes? And I want my turn at that delicious mouth of his."

Jace felt his erection springing up for a third time, and this go-round he took the time to savor the slow, building ache in his cock and his balls. "We're all wearing too many clothes," he pointed out.

Tal grinned, and it was a wicked thing. He waved his hand, leaving them all bare. "Not now, we aren't. And there's a great big bed over there just waiting for us to explore it."

Faced with a choice once again, Jace gave in to his automatic reaction and leapt into the bed in three bounds with a whoop of glee. He opened his arms wide, welcoming in the two that prowled close, both man and woman. "What are you waiting for?" he asked cheekily. "An engraved invitation?"

"A kiss will do," Tal growled, leaning over to seize one as Jace felt Selwyn begin to stroke down his legs. Her soft hand encircled his cock, running cool fingers up and down the heated shaft while Tal and Jace pressed their mouths together, thirsty for one another and drinking deep.

This would be like no Apprenticeship ever before, or since, of that much Jace was certain. But with a golden beauty like Selwyn and a fire-fox like Tal, it would be the experience of a lifetime.

Would he ever want to leave, even when he was a Master?

With both of their hands on him, Selwyn's and Tal's, Jace doubted it.

"Let's get to it," Tal urged, pressing against Jace in a way that left him in no doubt that the Master was up for new adventures, and wouldn't say no to anything Jace had in mind. Fortunately for him, what Tal had mentioned suited Jace just fine.

"Can I give commands? Make requests?" he wanted to know.

Both Tal and Selwyn nodded. "Anything you like." Selwyn bent for her own crushing kiss. She tasted of berries now, as if she'd painted her lips with the crushed juice of something wild and wonderful plucked straight from the vine. "Do you want me on my knees or my back? Do you want Tal's cock in your ass or your mouth? Whatever you want, suggest it and we'll play this game your way."

Jace grinned, and raised himself on one arm. "Then I want exactly what you suggested," he said. "It's been over a year since I was with a woman, and I've never had one who possessed her own Love Magick. Even if you didn't, I'd want you, Selwyn. I'm aching to be inside you." He captured her hand and pressed it down on his groin, where her naughty fingers quickly went to work. "Or had you already noticed?"

"I had an idea or two," she said mischievously, giving his cock a light squeeze. "And in case it hadn't occurred to you, I want you inside me as well. If you don't take

me, I'm prepared to put up a fight." She made a small fist with her free hand and lightly bopped Jace's chin. "Are we on?"

Laughing, he rolled her over. "It's a deal. And it's a date."

"Mmm." Selwyn moved beneath him with the experience of a woman who knew how to please, and loved every second of what she was able to do. "Name the time and the place."

"How does here and now sound?"

She wound her arms around his neck. "Just about perfect."

"Here," Tal protested. "Don't be leaving the Master out of this equation."

Jace laughed along with Selwyn. "I wouldn't think of it. Why don't you position yourself where Selwyn was before, up on the pillows?"

"I could..." Tal stroked his chin. "But I think I have a better idea." He did get up onto the pillows, but with the long reach of his arms and legs, managed to maneuver himself into an almost-kneeling position over Jace so that his heavy, thick cock was in reach of Jace's mouth and his own hot lips were nibbling at Jace's ass. "Share and share alike," he said, breath warm against Jace's skin.

Jace shut his eyes briefly in bliss, then looked down at Selwyn. "Are you ready for me?"

"Can't you feel me?" Selwyn lifted her legs, pushing the soft curls of her pussy against his cock. She was wet, soaking with feminine juices. As the tip of his cock pushed against her, she coated him with nature's lubricant. He could feel how hungry she was for him, aching to have him inside of her.

"I can." He kissed her again, licking at the sweet berry taste. Even her tongue was flavorful. Amazing. To have come so far -- from a street rat freezing in the rain -- to a luxurious feather bed with two willing, nay, eager partners -- it was a hell of a journey for one day, but one he was glad he had taken. "I am. I do. I will."

"Then hurry up," Selwyn breathed, licking at Jace's own lips.

"Do I have a flavor?"

"Mmm. Brandy wine." She half-closed her eyes in pleasure. "I could get drunk from kissing you."

"Let's put that theory to the test. But first..." Jace carefully braced himself, and eased inside her soaking passage. As she closed around him, velvety soft yet hotter than anything he'd felt in ages, he thought that he had surely died and gone to heaven, because this was better than anything anyone could ever experience down on earth.

"No," Selwyn purred. "You're still a mortal, and you're with me."

"So it's not just -- oh, God -- Tal -- who can read minds," Jace panted, struggling for control. "You?"

"Me," she agreed. "Now fuck me, Jace. Fuck me like you've never fucked a woman before."

Jace was more than happy to obey. Pulling out and then pushing in a slow glide, he built up a rhythm and then reached, with his mouth, for Tal's patiently waiting cock. From the way their Master hissed, he was doing this right. Tal's nibbling and kissing faltered, as if he hadn't quite built up the same level of control as he had earlier.

Good.

The three of them moved together, back and forth across one another, Jace thrusting into Selwyn's warm pussy just as he drew back on the Master's cock, and pulling out of her sheer heaven as he slid his mouth forward, tonguing a bulbous head and tapping a pattern out on the rosy veins underneath.

The Master seemed to have given up any and all attempts at making this last as he had before, and his eager tonguing of Jace's ass cheeks showed with every stroke and each nip of his teeth. Selwyn was a minx, writhing beneath him, her generous and shapely legs hugging Jace by the hips. Jace felt the Master catch her by the ankles and hold her in place.

Joined thus, they fucked in perfect harmony for one long moment, a shimmering expanse of time that seemed to stretch out forever -- and not nearly long enough. Jace couldn't hold himself back, and sucked hard on the Master's cock as he felt himself

starting to erupt deep inside Selwyn. She cried out, grinding up against his pubic bones, her own orgasm seizing and shaking her.

As for the Master... he stiffened and called out the names of long-forgotten gods as he flooded Jace's mouth with seed. Jace swallowed every drop that he could while still coming through the white-hot tunnel of his own climax, and licked his chin for the drops that he missed.

When it was all over except for the sounds of three people catching their breath, the Master climbed away from Jace and came down to rest at his left side. He reached for Jace's braid and wound it around his wrist. Jace looked up wearily from where he'd laid his head to rest on Selwyn's generous breasts, and had to smile. "So are you going to keep me?" he cracked.

The Master's lips quirked into a smile. "I'd have to go a long way to think of a reason for getting rid of you. The three of us fit together as if we were matching pieces in a jigsaw puzzle. But we haven't heard from the third member of this triad. Selwyn, what do you say?"

Selwyn's arms tightened around Jace. "Let him escape, and I'll kill you," she said sleepily. "Jace, roll us over so you're in the middle between myself and the Master."

Slipping out of her, Jace carefully did as his lady had ordered and was soon caught in the middle of a male/female sandwich. Selwyn's breasts pushed against his arm just as Tal's hard chest did on the opposite side. Their sweet breath kissed his cheeks.

Jace closed his eyes in pleasure. He was, he knew, finally home, and he had no plans to leave. This was the experience of a lifetime, and he would never want to leave it behind.

This was Love Magick, and it ruled the day.

Epilogue

The dark girl stared at herself in the full-length mirror of the country estate chamber, seemingly unable to believe her eyes. Jace stood behind her, running her hair, now braided into a hundred tiny strands with silver bells on the ends, through his fingers. Through the pure white cloth the Magick had clothed her in, he could see gold rings decorating her nipples.

She put a hand up to touch one of them, unashamed to cup her own breast, and gave the mound a slight squeeze. "It's real," she said, her accent slightly Caribbean. "Everything you showed me. All of what you told me. This is real."

"It's Love Magick," Jace said, lowering one hand to Aisha's shoulder. "And it can all be yours, if you want."

Her chin lifted. "And if I *don't* want? What if I say no?"

"You're always welcome to leave, pretty one," Tal, the Master, said from behind them. Aisha raised her shoulders at his appearance there, but Jace could tell from what he knew of her already that Aisha was a tough cookie, and her defiance would soon melt under the influence of Love. "We wish you wouldn't, though. There's room here for another student, and I can take on the extra teaching."

"And your bed. It's big enough for four?" Aisha half-smiled.

"More than big enough," Selwyn reassured, bending down to kiss the ebony cheek. She had been garbed in indigo velvet, and the play of white on black and dark purple on gold all but took Jace's breath away.

"I'll help out with your teaching," he offered. "Selwyn helped me. And I'll be glad to show you what it's like living up here with Love."

Aisha toyed with one of her braids, making it jingle with light chimes of music. Jace could see amusement sparkling in her eyes, but she kept it well hidden as she asked seriously, "So when do my first lessons begin?"

Jace laughed, hugging Aisha from behind. "They already have."

"You're joking."

"Oh, no. You're here, aren't you? And you're clothed in Love. You've come a long way already."

"Although there's still a good piece of traveling left to do," Tal warned. He and Selwyn crowded in, both touching Aisha as well as Jace. "It can take a lifetime to become a Master or Mistress of this Magick. You're welcome to leave any time, as I said, but if you choose to stay, know that we'll want you here for the long term."

Aisha's eyes glittered with amusement. "To go back out on the road and hunt down another Master who isn't at all kind or handsome, not to mention one without two students who rock my world... or stay here." She slapped at Tal's arm. "Are you crazy? I'm here, and I'm staying."

Jace laughed and rocked Aisha in his arms. He had a feeling things would be special between the two of them, in the way that Selwyn and Tal had that extra something...

And he couldn't wait to find out what.

Willa Okati

Willa Okati is one hundred percent in love all things vampire and supernatural. However, she's an even bigger fan of stories that feature beautiful men exploring their desires for one another. Casually known as the "blue-haired, tattooed wench" among Changeling folks, she lives for the fun of acting just as young as she feels. She'd love for you to visit her website at <http://www.willaokati.com> or join her reader's loop for fun and chatter at willa_okati@yahoogroups.com. Happy reading!