

Throne of Mercy

Emma Ray Garrett

All rights reserved.

Copyright ©2006 Emma Ray Garrett

No part of this e-book may be reproduced or shared by any electronic or mechanical means, including but not limited to printing, file sharing, and email, without prior written permission from Changeling Press LLC.

ISBN (10) 1-59596-381-2

ISBN (13) 978-1-59596-381-9

Formats Available:

HTML, Adobe PDF,

MobiPocket, Microsoft Reader

Publisher:

Changeling Press LLC

PO Box 1561

Shepherdstown, WV 25443-1561

www.ChangelingPress.com

Editor: Crystal Esau

Cover Artist: Karen Fox



This e-book file contains sexually explicit scenes and adult language which some may find offensive and which is not appropriate for a young audience. Changeling Press E-Books are for sale to adults, only, as defined by the laws of the country in which you made your purchase. Please store your files wisely, where they cannot be accessed by under-aged readers.

Prologue

"Amaliel, it's good to see you." God opened Her arms to the girl who only three mortal years ago had been a baby.

God looked down at Her child and was glad. Amaliel was special. Born the daughter of the Archangel Raphael and the powerful demoness Obozikan, she was a vampire. She was also the adopted child of a powerful mage, a Paramount, who happened to be a werewolf as well. In fact, it was thanks to her unique parentage, biologically speaking, that Amaliel had matured at an accelerated rate.

God suppressed a smile. All vampires were unique, and some, like Amaliel, whose parents were especially powerful, developed certain abilities. Called a Singularity, vampires who came into one were blessed with a special gift all their own. In fact, a few years ago, the landscape of destiny found itself changed by the arrival of another vampire. A vampire whose Singularity marked him as more than exceptional. Much as Amaliel's Singularity marked her. He had the ability to call and control demons. She had the ability to resurrect the dead. Two such opposing powers, living at the same time, signaled one thing without question. Change was near.

Amaliel pushed her thick, strawberry-blonde hair out of her face and stepped closer to God's embrace. "My Lord, you know why I've come." God nodded and Amaliel sighed with relief. The choice she'd made was a complicated one, but in the end, Amaliel knew it was right. She took a moment to simply enjoy being in God's presence.

"Yes, my dear. I know." God blessed Amaliel with a conspiratorial grin before taking the girl into a warm hug. "Don't worry. You still have much to learn before you are ready. Besides, my girl, free will is a gift. There's always a choice. Nothing is ever guaranteed."

Amaliel laughed. She, better than most, knew the truth of those words. Sobering, she looked deeply into God's eyes. "I have a feeling you already know how this will turn out. Is he really as, uh, as handsome as they say? I'd like an idea of what I have to deal with." Amaliel blushed prettily, but resolve shone brightly in her smoke-gray eyes.

Physically, Amaliel was close to fifteen in mortal years, though mentally she'd been much older than that for a long time. In fact, her wisdom was part of the reason for her visit with God. Though the meeting was bittersweet, Amaliel trusted her insight and the guidance of her heart.

"Indeed, he is." Worry clouded Amaliel's eyes, but God hushed those thoughts. "I'm sure you'll be fine. If you need anything, all you have to do is let Gemma know. You can come home and talk to your mother or father, anytime." God pressed a kiss to Amaliel's forehead as the girl slipped from her arms.

"I'm going to be busy with all of this. You'll have to help keep an eye on Mom and Dad. Those two get crazy without me around." They both chuckled.

"I will. I might even have to get some help. Honestly, without you around, your father won't be able to continue to compartmentalize your mother. Raphael's stubborn, but mark my words, Amaliel, he's got nothing on me."

Amaliel dissolved into a fit of laughter, and God had to join in. She was sure watching the pitfalls and foibles of a werewolf-witch and the stubborn Archangel, who'd been stuck with her, would be some of the best entertainment She'd had in ten thousand years.

Chapter 1

Three years earlier...

"We're *home*," Raphael sneered at the tiny woman by his side. She dropped his wrist and moved away, holding the child close in her arms.

"I apologize for my actions, Archangel. I couldn't chance an errant demon pouncing on us outside Ms. Joyce's home. We've been in danger for so long..." Soluna trailed off, carefully avoiding eye contact with Amaliel's father. The Archangel grunted, and she forced herself to go on. "I did what I thought was best, in order to get our child to safety as quickly as possible." He snorted at her use of 'our', but Soluna ignored it. Instead, she looked down into the wisest eyes she'd ever seen and smiled. Amaliel cooed back at her. They were finally safe, and Soluna heaved a loud sigh of relief.

"What are you sighing for?" Raphael was irritated beyond measure, and the frail looking woman's sigh spiked his blood pressure. Hadn't he done what she wanted? What she and the child had coerced him to do?

"I'm sighing with relief, Archangel. We're safe for the first time in many months." The frown on Raphael's face eased a bit, but Soluna wasn't stupid. He wasn't happy with the situation and she imagined he'd soon leave, probably after handing them off to someone else.

Don't worry, Mommy. Gabriel is coming. He won't let Daddy do that. The airy words danced on a giggle in Soluna's mind. The tinkling sound of infant happiness was hard not to respond to. She forcibly swallowed the laughter in her throat, sure Raphael would like it less than her sigh. Instead, she gave Amaliel a wide, toothy grin and hugged her close.

“What? What did she say?” Seeing the woman’s radiant smile, Raphael couldn’t help but feel like the joke was on him. He pivoted to face his child and her guardian fully, intent on getting in on the secret.

A shock of attraction bolted through Raphael’s body. Soluna’s features transformed with the smile. She didn’t look weary or worn. No, she looked ethereal, beautiful beyond words. His cock stirred, but Raphael ignored it, chastising his outrageous libido.

“Raphael. Good, you brought them.” Raphael stilled at the voice of God’s General, thankful for the distraction but aggravated at the intrusion. Sighing softly, and not with relief, Raphael schooled his features and turned to greet the Archangel Gabriel.

“Gabriel.” Raphael raised an eyebrow at Gabriel, not bothering to hide his annoyance.

The Leader of God’s Armies had entered the receiving chamber at the Protectorate without a sound. He’d wanted to watch the byplay between his brother and the unique woman at his side.

Gabriel had a decision to make. It wasn’t a difficult one. Nevertheless, things would go much smoother if Raphael responded to Soluna as a man instead of as an Archangel. When the slender woman had smiled, a spark of lust had flashed in his brother’s aura. Raphael’s nostrils had flared, and his chest rose and fell quickly, sure signs of desire. Satisfied with his observations and the surety of his choice, it was time Gabriel met the woman and informed Raphael of his decision.

He approached the woman and child, ignoring Raphael’s irritated huff. Gabriel understood how the Archangel felt, to a point. For his brother, nothing came before God and everything else came in a distant third behind his dedication to his gifts. Regardless, Gabriel wasn’t going to give Raphael the opportunity to discard his child or her guardian.

Gabriel stopped within arm’s reach of Soluna, taking a moment to really look at her. She was waif thin, and he was certain even if she ate regularly, she’d still be slender. Her hair was dark silver, like liquid mercury, the purity of the color blemished

only by two jet-black strips that fell on either side of her face. Those distinctive strands marked her as a werewolf.

She was tall, though not overly so, standing just above the midpoint of Gabriel's chest. Her clothes revealed nothing of the shape of her body, but he wasn't interested in that. He really wanted to see her eyes, bright violet eyes declaring her, unmistakably, as a witch. Soluna was a witch with unparalleled command of magic. She didn't make eye contact, instead looking at him covertly from the corner of her eye or through her lashes.

Based on her deferential body language and her earlier apology, Gabriel would bet money she was an omega wolf. He stifled a smile. At one time, this woman was what he'd thought he needed for himself. Thankfully, Malina had changed his mind, but he nearly envied Raphael the gift he'd been given. A true submissive.

As an omega wolf, the lowest rank of the pack, Soluna would have cared for the young. She'd have been the life of a pack, her humor and compassion holding the family group together. For a Paramount, her submissive mindset would have made her an eternal apprentice, her gifts always at the disposal of a dominant witch. Gabriel knew in his bones that Soluna would be loyal to the death, and dedicated to the happiness and well-being of those she took as family. However, she'd need an alpha, a dominant, to lead her in order to be happy. Gabriel prayed Raphael had it in him to be what Soluna required.

A shiver of magic across his skin brought Gabriel out of his thoughts. Soluna was smiling down at the baby in her arms, little sparks of magic dancing between the two of them, delighting the child. According to Gabriel's information, Soluna was the most powerful Paramount in ages. He could tell that meant nothing to the woman adoring her child.

Gabriel knew Soluna's parents were dead. Right or wrong, the magi and the werewolves strictly forbade interbreeding. Their familial lines, already thinned by human genetics, grew weaker and weaker with each generation, and neither group was

interested in becoming extinct. The penalty for creating progeny outside of the native race was death.

If Soluna hadn't been a Paramount, the magi and the werewolves would have killed her as well. According to the information Gabriel had been able to dig up, the leaders who'd murdered her parents chose to leave her to die of exposure rather than take the chance that she'd use her powers against them.

Another *zip* of magic got his attention and a broad, warm grin curved his lips. The baby cooed and her chubby arms shot out toward the large, winged man beaming like a fool above her.

"Well, hello there, little one." Gabriel looked to Soluna for permission. Without meeting his eyes, she gave a slight nod and held Amaliel out for Gabriel to gather close. He took the small bundle into his arms.

"You are just the prettiest little thing! I'm your Uncle Gabriel." Amaliel chortled and wiggled in glee, and Gabriel rumbled with laughter in response. Abruptly, his chuckles stopped and his eyes widened.

Soluna snuck a peek at the powerful man holding her child. His face held awe and she wondered what Amaliel was telling him. When his mouth dropped open, Soluna smothered a giggle with her hands. Everyone seemed to have a similar response to Amaliel's telepathy.

"You certainly are something, Amy." Gabriel's eyes met Soluna's and he gave her a wink. She looked away quickly, a smile curving her lips. Amaliel had shared their secret, she was sure.

Gabriel settled Amaliel in the crook of one large, masculine arm before moving closer to Soluna. When his other arm came around her, she stiffened. Gabriel released her from the half hug without comment, saddened that she'd had so little human contact that a brief hug from him made her uncomfortable.

Soluna reached out with her senses, afraid the Archangel was angry with her. She didn't feel any anger, so she tilted her head up toward the powerful man. She

didn't meet his gaze, but she saw a gentle smile curve his lips. She grinned in return. Thankfully, her reaction hadn't upset him.

"It'll get better. And you'll get used to it. Malina, my wife, is very touchy feely."

His perfect teeth flashed, and Soluna relaxed even more. There was no judgment in Gabriel's voice or actions, and the flicker of hope in her heart burned brighter.

"Soluna, Amaliel, why don't you go out those doors over there? Malina's on pins and needles, waiting to see the baby. Raphael will meet up with you later and get you two settled in."

"Yes, Archangel." Soluna held her arms out to Amaliel, pleased when Gabriel pressed a kiss to the giggling baby's forehead.

"Call me Gabriel, Soluna. The doors are right there." She followed the length of his arm with her gaze, locating the massive, white double doors to the chamber.

A quick glance at Raphael, his jaw ticking with irritation, assured Soluna that her child's father knew what was coming from Gabriel and he blamed her for it. Dropping her eyes back to the floor, she hurried toward the doors and away from Raphael's accusing eyes.

Chapter 2

The heavy doors opened without much effort. Soluna stepped through them, hefting Amaliel up onto her shoulder.

“Hi!”

The silky soft voice came from Soluna’s left. She whirled, sliding the baby down to cradle in her arms. The most alluring woman she’d ever seen stood to the side of the doors. She had flame red hair so long it hung past her waist, falling in soft waves. Her locks shone with energy, as if they could come alive at any moment. The woman’s skin was a pure, almost alabaster white, unblemished by any mark. The other woman’s eyes were as striking as Soluna knew her own to be, though the redhead’s were a remarkable and vibrant blue.

“I tend to sort of overwhelm folks.” The woman’s laughter was as infectious as Amaliel’s, and Soluna reciprocated to the chiming sound, giggling softly. “I’m Malina, Gabriel’s wife, or the thorn in his side, depending on the time of day. You must be Soluna.” Those cerulean eyes sparkled as Malina looked down at Amaliel. “And you must be Amy! Oh, you’re adorable! Look at those cheeks, I just want to pinch them.”

Malina leaned into Soluna until her nose was inches from the baby’s face. With another laugh, she rubbed her nose against the baby’s, drawing a jubilant giggle from the baby. Happiness flowed from Amaliel into Soluna, pushing away her worries and fears. If Amaliel was happy, Soluna didn’t need anything else.

“Can I hold her?” Malina’s hands slid under Amaliel’s arms, lifting the girl from Soluna’s embrace. She gave the girl a little squeeze, before turning her gaze back to Soluna. “So, your name is Soluna. I have a friend, her name is Gemma, and she loves to give people nicknames. I was wondering would you mind if I called you Luna?”

“I don’t mind.” Soluna offered softly, and Malina gave her an enormous smile.

"Then Luna it is! Say, not to be rude, but you look like you could use some food. What do you say?" Soluna hesitated, and Malina took her arm in a warm hand.

"Don't worry about them. Gabriel will know where we are. Come on." Malina tugged on Soluna's arm, leading her away from the massive doors and down a hallway.

Soluna looked over her shoulder, wondering if Raphael would be angry to find her gone when he came out. She doubted it. Her stomach chose that moment to growl loudly, the faint aroma of hot food calling to her from up ahead. Moving her feet faster to keep up with Malina, Soluna forgot all about Raphael as her mouth watered and her blood pounded at the thought of food.

Down one winding hall and into the next, the smell of meat grew stronger. By the time they reached the cafeteria, Soluna and Malina were nearly jogging. Malina settled Soluna and Amaliel at a table, creating a booster seat for the baby out of thin air. She sat Amaliel in it, pushing her chair close to the table.

"Okay, so I'll go into the kitchen and get the cooks to load us up. I'm guessing you'd like red meat, rare."

"Yes, please. I need protein, badly." Soluna blushed at the needy sound of her voice. Malina's gentle laughter comforted her.

"I'll be right back." Malina took Soluna's hand in hers, squeezing firmly.

Soluna didn't know what to make of Malina. The other woman had confidence and then some. She hadn't worried about whether Soluna would like her or not, she simply plowed ahead. Soluna knew who Malina was. Despite all the odds, it seemed the Daughter of Lucifer had decided to befriend Soluna, no strings attached. Soluna shook her head, confused.

She'd had no contact with humans, or human-type creatures, after her parents died. At six, Soluna had known the only way to survive or defend herself was to live as a wolf. It wasn't until Amaliel came into her life that she'd retaken a human form. Learning to speak again, and to leave behind her animal instincts, hadn't been easy. However, she'd done it for her child. She didn't know why Malina was being so nice, and the animal in her was wary, but Soluna was glad for it.

She's funny, Mommy. And she smells good. Amaliel's light voice floated into Soluna's mind.

"She is a bit funny, but I think I like her." Soluna smiled at her daughter. With a flick of her fingers, tiny horses appeared on the table in front of the baby, trotting about and frolicking for her amusement. Amaliel clapped and giggled, entranced by the sounds of tiny nickers and whinnies.

"That's awesome!" Malina's reappearance startled Soluna. Her concentration broke and the small equines disappeared. Amaliel's smile fell and her eyes welled.

"Oh, I'm sorry. Hey, little one, how about some pudding?" Amaliel's tears evaporated and she clapped her hands for the bowl Malina held. Lucifer's Daughter threw her head back and laughed before setting the dish in front of Amaliel.

"Thank you." Soluna smiled brightly.

"No problem. You better sit back, I ordered you a bit of everything and then some."

Soluna sat back and looked around Malina. Her jaw dropped as she saw a line of people carrying plates and pans and pots toward their table. "I don't think I can eat all that." Soluna was hungry, but the amount of food that had been prepared boggled her mind.

Malina couldn't help but laugh some more. Soluna looked at her with wide eyes, her mouth slightly agape. "Don't worry about it. Nothing goes to waste. Now, dig in. I'm famished!"

Chapter 3

"Raphael." Gabriel faced his brother.

"Don't say it. I know what you want, and my answer is no." Raphael swung his arms in an x in front of his body, clearly telling Gabriel he wasn't interested. Too bad.

"I'm not asking. I'm telling. You *will* take those two females into your home and you *will* be a father to Amaliel. You aren't some seraphim without higher brain function. I refuse to tolerate one of the Archangels abandoning his child. I couldn't do anything about Remiel, but I can and *am* doing something about you."

"Yeah, you let Remiel get away with it because you were too busy feeling sorry for yourself!" Raphael regretted his words the moment they left his lips.

"You're right, Raph. I was. But I'm not anymore. You will do as I say, or I'll make sure you don't have any opportunity to study, teach, or use your precious magic again." Gabriel crossed his arms over his chest and waited for Raphael's argument to begin.

"Gabriel! You can't do this! You know I only just got my powers back. I can't afford to lose them again!" Desperation poured from Raphael, but Gabriel steeled himself against compassion.

"I think you've learned your lesson. Unless you mean to put your magic before God again?" Gabriel hated to say it, but as he himself had so recently learned, God forgave quickly. Raphael, alone, had made his penance last longer than necessary.

"No." Shame and rage at Gabriel's cruel comments surged through Raphael. He spun away from his brother before he gave in to the urge to punch him in the mouth.

"Look, I know how you got your magic back. So does God. You hoped to get it with no strings attached. Well, obviously that didn't work out. Get over it." Gabriel had his hands full with the information the child had imparted, plus the news of Michael's

covenant with Gemma, and Malina's recent bomb-drop of wanting to have a child. He didn't have time to deal with tantrums from an Archangel.

"How did you --" Raphael started to ask, but Gabriel cut him off.

"It doesn't matter. I know."

"Obozikan swore she wanted nothing to do with me after we... made the child. Why did she have to die?"

"She died protecting her child from demons bent on using her to take over the world! What in Hell is wrong with you, Raphael? You've always been the most juvenile of us, but this is taking it too far. I gave you an order. Go obey it!" Gabriel shook his wings out in anger, gave his brother a cold, hard glare, then spun around and left the room.

Raphael watched him go, embarrassment and fury coloring his cheeks. He knew Gabriel was right, but the unholy fear that he'd lose his strength, his power again, was overwhelming. He couldn't survive it, not a second time. He took a deep breath and made an oath to follow Gabriel's order in all ways but one. He refused to feel anything for the woman or the child. It was the only way to ensure he kept his gifts.

Chapter 4

Now...

The low growl startled Uriel. "For Heaven's sake, Luna, you have to stop doing that!" The delicate Archangel whirled to see his friend hiding beneath a desk in the Magic 101 room.

Soluna whimpered and crawled from beneath the desk, rolling to her back and showing her belly when she reached Uriel's feet. He knelt down and rubbed her furred tummy, letting her know that everything was okay. Giving her a thump on the chest, Uriel stood and walked to one of the nearby student desks. He rested a lean hip against the wooden top, crossing his arms over his chest. He gave Soluna, the wolf, a thorough once over.

Her coat was magnificent. It was a pure, clean silver marred only by the two jet-black stripes decorating her head. Her eyes were the one thing to remain unchanged in this form. They were a violet, so brilliant and exotic one couldn't help but notice them. To those who knew what to look for, those eyes were a sign of her massive power and her heritage. Only Paramounts, witches with the ability to control two or more elements, had eyes such a vivid amethyst.

"C'mon, Luna. Shift back so we can talk about this." He waited, breath stilled. Uriel still found unimaginable awe in watching his closest friend transform herself. A silver cloud of twinkling magic and mystery swirled around the large beast in front of him. Power raised the hairs on his arms as the glittering blur enfolded Soluna, obscuring her from his sight. In but a moment, the magic dispersed and a beautiful woman stood where the wolf had been.

"I wasn't really hiding, Uri. I just --"

"Yes, you were!" Uriel cut her off. Laughter bubbled from him as he recalled why Soluna was hiding. "You can't just pee on people! Goodness, girl, the look on his face!" Full-bellied guffaws erupted from him as he recalled the look on Raphael's face when she'd peed on him.

"Well, I couldn't *help* it!" Heat bloomed in her cheeks, the embarrassment of what she'd done overwhelming her. After all, Uriel didn't know what Raphael had said to get her all riled in the first place.

"All right, what happened now?" Uriel uncrossed his arms and moved to his friend's side. He whipped off his T-shirt and handed it to her. As always, she was nude after changing shape, but no matter how many times he'd seen her beautiful body, Uriel never allowed himself to react.

"Thanks." Soluna reached a delicate arm out to his offering, slipping it over her head. Uriel watched the soft cotton slide over her pert, peach colored nipples, dancing across the slightly raised bones of her rib cage, and down her taut stomach. He was glad her bones had finally lost their prominence, but he still thought she could stand to put on a few pounds.

When the shirt fell into place, just hiding the smooth triangle of her pubis, Uriel looked back into those haunting violet eyes. She met his gaze, her expression tinged with compassion and sorrow.

"One of these days, you'll meet someone who can give you what you need, Uri." He shook his head and wished for the umpteenth time that his cock could get hard without direction. He gave her a half smile and shrugged. It was just his luck that the only semi-unattached female around, the only one he could fall for, was slightly less submissive than he was. "We can talk about me later. Tell me what he did this time."

Soluna frowned and pursed her lips, looking away from him. She grumbled something under her breath before sighing loudly. "Okay, so when he got in today, I told him I needed to go for a run. You know how it is, Uriel. I've spent so much of my life in wolf form. I need to shift on a regular basis. Amaliel left yesterday to go to Haven. She's training with Gemma. It's so quiet at home, with just Raphael and I.

Protectorate classes are in recess right now, and he hasn't asked me to do anything for the last week. I can't stand the silence." Soluna pushed one of her black streaks behind her right ear.

"Anyway, I was already out the door and down the hall when he came bellowing out of the apartment, hollering at me to get back there. I turned around and shuffled back to him like a good omega wolf. I was almost inside when he leaned down and grabbed my scruff. I could feel him scowling at me, and then he said, 'your *fun* will have to wait'."

"Uh-oh."

"Yeah! I mean, sheesh, Amaliel's gone. I made supper. What else does he want from me?" She sighed and turned away from Uriel, wrapping her arms around her body. "I know what he wants. Sometimes, I wish I'd never offered to use my gifts to help him with his work. Maybe if I hadn't, he'd see me as a woman and not as a tool." Warm hands cupped her shoulders and Soluna leaned against Uriel, taking solace in his understanding.

"What else did he say?" Uriel had seen the exchange between Raphael and Soluna, and he'd been worried. The energy he'd felt from the other Archangel had been different, but Uriel couldn't put his finger on how.

Uriel had been in his rooms, at the opposite end of the hall from Raphael's, when he'd heard the bellow. He'd opened the door and peeked out. Soluna had been slinking back into the apartment she shared with Raphael, her body low to the ground. Raphael had leaned down, grabbed her by the scruff of her neck and said something to her. Though Uriel hadn't caught the words Raphael used, when he released Soluna with a jerk, Uriel had heard her yelp and seen the puddle she'd left behind on Raphael's feet and the floor as she'd hightailed it. Thankfully, Uriel had ducked inside his own apartment before Raphael had seen him.

"I was going to go back inside, but then he said, all nasty like, 'I don't want you here, but I'm stuck with you. Now get inside. I have things to do and I need your help.'"

Uri, his voice was like ice. Worse than that, what he said held truth but it was so hurtful.

"All of these emotions were rolling through me. I was scared, angry, hurt, and damn it, horny. Being in wolf form kicked my instincts into overdrive. There I am hugging the ground, trying not to whimper, and the next thing I know he's tossing me aside. I yelped and peed all over both of us. Then I ran."

Uriel turned Soluna in his arms and hugged her for all he was worth. His friend was right. Raphael's words were unnecessarily cruel. Especially when the other Archangel knew Soluna had been unwanted from the time of her parents' death. And Raphael knew Soluna hadn't even felt safe until she'd come to the Protectorate.

The Protectorate existed outside of Heaven and Hell. A police force made up of angels and demons, and everything in between, the Protectorate made sure that neither good nor evil outweighed the other on Earth. It was the Protectorate's job to keep everyone in line and take care of problems quickly. However, the Protectorate was more than just a checks and balances for Heaven and Hell. It was also home to thousands of creatures, all of them accepted as they were, without contempt.

Over the last three years, Soluna had settled in and gradually opened up to Uriel, Malina, and Gemma. She'd even taken Raziel and Malachi, two of the most obnoxious demons known to man or God, into her circle of friends. She'd shared with all of them her awful past and the hardships she'd suffered before finding Amaliel. Through Raphael's infant daughter, Soluna had finally found a place of acceptance here at the Protectorate, and Uri knew she'd do anything to maintain the peace being here gave her.

"I wish I could help you understand Raphael, Luna, but I don't understand his attitude any better than you do." He heaved a long sigh and tightened his embrace. Placing a kiss on the crown of her head, he let his arms fall to his sides as he stepped back from her.

Soluna's violet eyes shimmered with tears, but she clenched her jaw tight. Uriel knew she wouldn't cry, especially not in front of someone, for any reason.

“Thanks, Uri. I suppose I should head back and deal with his anger. Thanks for being the best friend I’ve ever had.” Her perfect teeth flashed at him as she gave him a grin.

Uriel smiled back, unable to resist. “You make it very easy to be friendly.”

She took his hands in hers and squeezed before turning away and heading out of the classroom. Uriel watched her go, a small smile on his lips and wistfulness in his eyes.

Chapter 5

Soluna opened the door to the apartment slowly, hovering in the doorway. Not for the first time, she almost wished she wasn't submissive. If she wasn't, then yelling at Raphael might make her feel better. In truth, though, she didn't want to argue with Raphael. What she wanted was for him to see her as a woman, for him to be the alpha she needed, not just the one she had by default.

Shaking her head at things she couldn't change, Soluna thought back over the past few years. Despite the fact that Raphael had mostly ignored Soluna in the beginning, he hadn't been able to remain distant from Amaliel. Raphael had become a wonderful father. One who Soluna knew loved and missed his daughter as much as she did.

Within a month of their arrival, Amaliel had begun to grow at a remarkable pace. Raphael had been right there when the pain from growing bones and muscles had caused his daughter to cry, doing what he could to ease Amaliel's agony. It was during the hard times that Raphael had begun to teach his daughter the basics of magic.

He'd taught her herbs, their uses and how to grow them. He'd taught her potions, turning Amaliel into a fantastic potions master. The two of them had spent hours debating magical theory and application. Those conversations had grown to encompass just about everything under the sun, as father and daughter bonded.

Raphael had only a few words here or there, over the course of those first two years, for Soluna.

Soluna closed the door behind her, stifling a sigh. She'd been in love with Raphael since the first time she'd seen him kiss Amaliel's pain away. As God's Great Healer, he had always done what he could to make his child's pain less, despite the fact that he hadn't wanted her in his life at first. It wasn't until a little more than a year ago,

when Amaliel had been about ten, physically, that Raphael had started to interact with Soluna.

Amaliel was precocious, and one afternoon Soluna had returned from a run to find a full-grown horse in the living room. Her daughter had been trying to recreate the magical miniatures Soluna had often entertained her with as a baby.

They'd laughed for hours over that. Soluna had decided to help her daughter understand spell casting before Amaliel brought something worse than a horse to fruition. Raphael had come home that night to find Amaliel and Soluna playing with a miniature circus. His reaction had been strange, as if he'd forgotten that Soluna was a Paramount.

Later that night, Raphael had told Soluna she was to continue to teach Amaliel about spells. She'd been relieved he wasn't angry with her for doing so in the first place. She'd also been beside herself because Raphael had actually talked with her for more than three seconds.

Shortly thereafter, Raphael had started to call on Soluna for help preparing spells for his classes. Then he'd begun asking her to work spells with him, to help him create new spells. Before long, Raphael started conversations with her about magic in general. He'd asked her to look over ancient grimoires, to help him decipher the primeval languages in search of new magic or better history. Then he entrusted his herb garden to her and told her to keep his potion stock full. Even through all of that, though, he still hadn't looked at her as a woman. Soluna's hunger for him had grown beyond frustration, but as far as Raphael was concerned she was a valuable asset, nothing more.

That was why his earlier words were so hurtful. Soluna was sure Amaliel's leaving upset him more than he'd admit, but he'd never touched her before, especially not in anger. He'd never questioned her need for a run, either. In fact, he'd never been emotive toward her at all. Raphael had always been cool, distant, and polite. Soluna was terribly confused, and tired, and sad. She needed to go to bed and put tonight behind her.

She scanned the living room, the muted light of two burning lamps not quite dispelling all the shadows, but found no sign of Raphael. She wasn't about to wake him up to apologize. She'd ask for forgiveness in the morning. With a heavy heart, Soluna headed for her bedroom, intent on sliding beneath the covers and blanking her mind. She wouldn't cry with Raphael near at hand.

"Where have you been?"

The softly spoken words made Soluna cry out in surprise. She whirled around, searching the darkness for Raphael. She found him, standing in a darkened corner of the room. Her heart pounded in her ears, her body shaking from the surge of adrenaline.

"I went for a run, Archangel. I'm sorry about what happened earlier. It was an accident." Soluna kept her eyes downcast. She heard the shifting of his weight from foot to foot, a sure sign of his agitation.

"We can discuss that later. I want to know where you've been, Soluna." His words were angry, the heat of them dancing across her skin. She didn't know what he wanted. She'd told him where she'd been.

"Archangel, I don't know what you mean." Soluna was at a loss to figure out what was going on. Her brow furrowed in confusion and concentration, and her ears were on high alert, listening for movement from Raphael.

"Where did you get that shirt, Soluna?" Raphael's voice was low, the words strained and guttural.

"I, uh, Uriel gave it to me." What difference could that make? Surely a being with as much mystical knowledge as Raphael had would know that werewolves lost any clothing during a change. He'd never mentioned it before. Why was he so angry about it now?

"So, you were with Uriel."

Soluna's fear was coming close to consuming her. Raphael's emphasis on *with* was too blatant to ignore. She didn't know how to proceed. Her interpersonal skills were too underdeveloped for this type of situation.

“Yes, Archangel. He came to find me. He was being kind, giving me his shirt to cover myself. Nothing else.” The hard exhale of his breath preceded the heavy fall of his feet on the floor. Soluna stilled her shiver of apprehension as he drew closer to her.

From the corner of her eye she watched him approach, shocked to see most of his golden skin exposed to her gaze. A small towel, tied about his waist, was all that kept her from seeing him in full. His hair was the color of summer wheat, gold and caramel brown swirled together. It fell to just above his shoulders, the bangs feathered back to blend with the rest of his hair.

She knew his eyes were a rich, toffee brown, but she didn’t dare meet them now. His face reminded her of the hero in one of Amaliel’s childhood movies. The cartoon was about a man, cursed to live as a beast, and the young woman who loved him despite his appearance. Raphael looked as the beast had looked when the girl’s love had set him free.

His face was aristocratic. He had a long, Roman nose and a strong defined jaw. His shoulders were broad and his chest was deep. Curly hair covered his chest, making Soluna yearn to stroke it, to find out if his pelt was as soft as her wolf’s fur. Long, muscled arms tapered into capable hands that had seen a hard day’s work. His stomach was flat, the musculature defined. His powerful, well-built legs continued the theme of strength that characterized Raphael’s body. As he came within arm’s length of her, she tore her gaze away from his form, closing them in an attempt to keep her desire hidden.

“Nothing else happened?”

The heat from his body made her nipples peak. His growled question brought the place between her legs to liquid life. Soluna’s stomach rolled as hormones and emotions poured into her system, setting her world on its edge.

“No, nothing else, Archangel.” She tensed, unsure where this was heading. Raphael brought his hands up over her body and a flash of magic temporarily blinded her.

“If nothing else happened, Soluna, then why does your body glow from the touch of his?”

Chapter 6

Raphael had been mournful yesterday, watching his child leave the safety of his home. Against his will, Amaliel had burrowed her way into his heart and soul, and Raphael thanked God every day that she had. His life was better now than it had ever been. He had control over his gifts beyond what he'd hoped, all because his daughter had refused to let him keep her at arm's length.

Through love for Amaliel, he'd found the balance he needed. He'd realized he'd punished himself far more than God ever had. Even with that knowledge, he'd been unwilling to allow his attraction for Soluna to manifest. After all, his lusty antics were what lost him his powers in the first place.

When Obozikan had offered him a way to regain his magic, he'd agreed. The fact that she had wanted a child had been of little concern. They had come together with a purpose in mind, and instead of being cocky and arrogant, Raphael had been dedicated and focused. The ritual he'd done with Obozikan hadn't been about his skills, since he'd had only rudimentary magic at the time, but about being reverent to the power. The respect and humility he'd shown the act was what had given him his abilities back. Through his daughter, he'd finally understood the truth.

Amaliel was special and her destiny just as unique. If Raphael hadn't been where he was when Obozikan had approached him, he would never have understood how lucky he was to have the gifts he did. Thanks to the unselfish acts of Obozikan and Soluna, he had the opportunity to realize that. But he was only willing to change so much. Fear that lust would corrupt him again moved Raphael to ignore the lure of Soluna.

Moreover, it had been easy to keep Soluna in the background. Her deferential attitude made it simple to dismiss her. Despite what she'd done, and continued to do,

for Amaliel, Soluna wasn't one to beg for attention. When he'd felt himself losing focus or concentration, when his desire for Soluna eclipsed everything else, he had sent her away. Out of sight, out of mind, or at least out of the way so he could deal with his aching cock alone. However, he no longer had a barrier between himself and the object of his lust.

Last night, without Amaliel, Raphael had been hard pressed not to find out if the fire he felt simmering beneath Soluna's surface was for him. He'd stopped himself, barely, but all day today his thoughts had run to visions of her naked body writhing beneath his. In Raphael's imaginings, his rock hard cock had hammered deep into Soluna's welcoming cunt until she screamed with release, her juices coating them both, and begged for him to give her respite.

Looking at her, the light green of Uriel's touches glowing against her skin, Raphael's emotions raged. His body shook from the force of his reaction to the offending stains on Soluna's body. For the last three years, he'd ignored his body's craving, treating Soluna with polite disinterest most of the time and reserved respect when necessary. But with each passing day, month, year it had gotten harder and harder to ignore how much he wanted to take her to his bed and gorge himself on her body.

The very idea that she might have been giving herself to Uriel for all these years made him see red. Even if she'd only tonight turned to his brother, Raphael knew he'd lose it. He wanted to hunt Uriel down and choke the breath from him for touching Soluna. God help him if they'd done more.

"I'll ask you one more time, Soluna. Why is Uriel's mark on your body if nothing else happened?" He clenched his hands into fists, the nails digging into his palms.

"Archangel, he hugged me. We are friends, nothing more. I swear." Despite her fear of this unknown Raphael, her desire to please him and ease his anger moved Soluna to let down her protective barriers. She allowed him to see her aura, to see the truth of her words reflected in the colors dancing around her.

“Do you really think I’ll believe your aura? You’re the most powerful Paramount in a millennium. It’s well within your ability to obfuscate.” He spat the words at her. “There’s only one reason for you to run to another man. If I’d known you wanted a bed partner, I’d have offered my services long ago!” Raphael reached for her shoulders, his rough palms brushing against the soft skin of her neck.

He tore himself from her side before he shook her, storming from the kitchen and into the living room. He couldn’t believe he’d said that, but jealousy had branded itself onto his brain, making him act irrationally. He’d never laid any claim on Soluna. How was she to know he was interested? Moreover, how could she initiate anything between them when her very nature demanded she follow his lead?

She knows because you’re her alpha. She assigned you that status from the beginning, but you were too blind to see her actions for what they were. The truth comes out now, when you have no more excuses. The voice in his mind was not his own, and Raphael couldn’t determine whose it was. Despite the unknown presence, his gut clenched, unable to deny the rightness of them.

“Archangel, I assure you, I am untouched.”

Her words interrupted his thoughts, shutting down higher brain function. His cock, already so hard it ached, throbbed painfully, and his balls drew up. Raphael could feel the explosive spark of orgasm gathering in his spine, all because she claimed no carnal knowledge.

“Get *his* clothes off of your body and come here, Soluna.”

Soluna felt faint. She whimpered, unable to control her reaction to the man who waited for her to do his bidding. This Raphael, this strong, dominant man seething with jealousy and lust, had her on the verge of release. She could only guess at what had changed, but after three long years she almost didn’t care. This Raphael made her wary, unsure, and so excited she couldn’t breathe. This Raphael didn’t treat her as a tool or acquaintance, and this Raphael was unabashedly dominant. In that moment, Soluna wondered if he’d had the ability from the beginning, buried beneath his aloof façade.

“Soluna, I said come here.”

Soluna started, so entranced by the wild flood of thoughts and feelings she'd been rooted in place. Quickly, so as not to anger him by her sluggish response, she tore Uriel's shirt from her body and moved on light feet toward Raphael.

"Stop there. Spread your legs apart and put your arms over your head." The sight of her naked body tripled the level of his arousal. He bit his lip to stifle a groan, fighting to draw his gaze from her pert breasts and hairless pubis, and failing miserably. "You are to stand there, still."

She lifted her arms in the air, crossing them and resting her forearms on the crown of her head. Soluna bit her tongue to keep from asking if she would still be untouched when he was done.

A little shock of terror zinged through her, but she forced it away. Her instincts told her to do as Raphael commanded. She hoped he wouldn't hurt her, but the wolf inside, the animal instincts that made her the submissive she was, didn't care about getting hurt. All the wolf knew was that its alpha had given a command and it was to obey.

Raphael had no idea what was driving him to do this, to torture himself with her nudity, but he couldn't stop the words from coming out of his mouth. If she were truly a virgin, he shouldn't do anything to change that, yet she called to him. The scent of her lust perfumed the air.

He stepped closer to her body, filling his lungs with her scent, letting the warmth of her bare flesh tease his. The slender column of her neck drew his eye, the gentle curve of her jaw beckoning his lips. He held himself back, watching her pulse pound at the base of her throat. He caught the soft glow on her upper arms, where Uriel had laid his hands, and he couldn't stop a growl.

"If you're lying to me, Soluna, I'll know it when I'm through. This is your last chance." He placed his mouth on the shell of her ear, delivering his statement in a near whisper.

She shuddered, her body swaying into his, the hard tips of her breasts scraping his chest. "I don't speak untruths, Archangel." Somehow, she managed to respond with

words, despite the fact that her body was screaming at her to drop to her hands and knees and beg him to top her. Having spent more than twenty years as a wolf, her instincts were sharp and hard to ignore. They told her without question that she and Raphael would mate this night.

Chapter 7

Unable to stop himself, Raphael touched his tongue to Soluna's soft earlobe. She tasted slightly of sweat and the wild. Her hot breath puffed against his cheek in a staccato rhythm. Slowly, he traced the shape of her ear, leaving a light trail of moisture along her skin. He pulled back and blew on the flesh, relishing in the hard quiver of her body and the moan that spilled from her lips.

Placing his hands on her elbows, Raphael smoothed his palms over her skin. Up her triceps, around her shoulders, and across her clavicle, he spread his magic, his mark, blotting out all signs of Uriel. He watched Soluna's face as his hands descended, slipping along the outsides of her breasts, around her rib cage, and back along her spine. She bit her lip and held still, though her nipples tightened into impossible points and the aroma of her lust grew stronger.

Down over her flat belly and the gentle curvature of her hips, Raphael stroked her flesh. She was warm and soft, just as he'd imagined she would be. "Turn around."

Soluna immediately did as he bade, pivoting on the balls of her feet. His rough palms slid up over her shoulders and down her spine, stopping short of caressing her ass. His hands fell away, and she mourned the loss of his touch. She bit her tongue, unwilling to speak for fear that her words would break the spell of what was happening.

She felt the air around her stir a moment before his hard body pressed against her back. Her knees grew weak, the fulfillment of three years of fantasy making her dizzy. When his strong, hair-roughened arms came around her body in a tight hold, she moaned in pleasure. The feel of his skin against hers, the coarse friction of his hair on her smooth skin sent a lightning bolt of need straight to her engorged clit.

Raphael pulled her harder against him, his erection pressing into the small of her back. Soluna pressed back, wishing she could absorb the hardness of his body into her own. His palms shifted, gliding up from her stomach, cupping her breasts. He teased her areolas, circling the sensitive flesh until the need for him to touch her aching nipples obliterated all sense.

"Please, touch them!" As aroused as she was, Soluna couldn't remove her arms from their place on her head without Raphael's permission, not while clear thought was still possible. Instead, she writhed against him, hoping her movements might gain his touch where she hungered for it, if only by accident.

"Soluna, I know what you want. What you *need*."

His low voice whispered against her exposed neck and her cunt clutched in response. The slippery juices of her desire coated the insides of her thighs. Soluna whimpered in sexual distress.

With very little attention, only the feel of his body against hers and his darkly uttered words, Soluna was on the brink of her first orgasm. She felt the ball of heat growing between her legs, spreading out through her limbs. Her legs shook with the effort to stay upright. She gripped her forearms in white-knuckled desperation. She heard the loud moan, the one she was unable to hold back. Soluna's mind was a tangled, swirling jumble of desire and heat. She wanted to tell him something, but she simply couldn't put together a coherent thought.

Raphael had never felt hunger like this. Soluna vibrated with need and every shudder of her body only made his cock grow harder. He circled her nipple, not touching the hard point begging for his caress. Wrapped around her as tightly as he was, he felt the moment her legs went out. He tightened the arm hugging her waist, pulling her off the ground and aligning the rounded cheeks of her ass against his throbbing prick.

Her arms fell from her head and she wound them behind her and around his neck. Her dainty hands clutched at his head, the slim fingers weaving into his hair, searching for purchase. Raphael spun them around and walked the short distance to the

front door. He slid his knee between her thighs, her wet slit riding the hard muscle as her untried body sought release. He no longer doubted she was virginal. There had been no sign of Uriel's touch on her lower body, but he knew, deep inside, she was pure.

He pushed them against the door, moving his hand away and letting the cool wood surface tease her erect nipples. She cried out at the cold contact, her hips bucking against his leg.

"Put your forearms on the door. Place your palms face down against it."

He growled low in his chest at the speed with which she released his hair and obeyed. Soluna's forehead rested against the wood, her arms framing her head, hands flat to the door.

Raphael moved her a bit higher on the door, bringing the thick head of his cock to the weeping opening of her pussy. "Press your breasts against the door. I'm going to hold your hips in my hands, Soluna, as I fill you with my cock and you are going to stay exactly as I've said. I'm going to slide into you as deep as I can. Then I'm going to stay there, buried to the hilt, until the juices seeping from your cunt make my balls wet. Don't move."

Soluna felt the contractions begin low in her body. "Archangel!" She screamed as the orgasm began, her body shuddering, her empty pussy clutching around nothing. His words were too much for her inexperienced mind.

"Did you come?"

Soluna shook, striving to hold herself, as he'd demanded, unsure how to answer his question. "I... I don't know. I need something more, please, Archangel, please!" She nearly sobbed, unsure what was happening, only knowing she had to have something else to find fulfillment. Her body felt weak and sated, but not, at the same time.

"You did. And you're going to again, with each inch of cock I slide inside of you. I want to feel your hot pussy ripple around my flesh as I take you. Can you feel my cock? Can you feel how hard I am? You're so wet, so ready to be taken. Aren't you, Soluna?"

"Yes, Archangel!" She moaned loudly, and Raphael felt the contractions of her cunt against the head of his cock. He pushed forward into her body and she greeted him with the fire of her lust and the decadent call of her passion-roughened voice. The intensity of gliding his flesh into hers burned his mind, his memory, his skin.

Raphael threw his head back with satisfaction as inch by inch he slipped inside the tightest pussy he'd ever known. She was indeed coming with every movement, the moans of her pleasure loud in the otherwise quiet room. Each wave of her release made his entry easier, the slippery friction of her release helping him push forward. Her bottom rocked against his pelvis, Soluna's body instinctively swallowing more and more of his rock hard erection. When he couldn't stand the slowness a moment longer, Raphael dug his hands into her hips and rammed himself home.

"Oh!" Raphael's entry burned, the sharp spear of pain emphasizing the reality of what was happening. His body stretched hers to its limits. Soluna hadn't known being with a man could be this powerful. She was delirious from the bliss bombarding her system. His cock felt enormous, buried as deeply as it could be inside her. She felt impaled, invaded, taken. She couldn't stop the swell of orgasm that crashed over her as he pressed even deeper.

Soluna felt the soft rub of hair against her ass, teasing her already replete body to a new level of hunger. Curling her hands into fists, she tried to roll her hips, tried to get him to move inside her, but his grip was like iron. He held himself still, as she contracted around him in an ever-slowng rhythm. She felt the juices of her orgasms trickle over the lips of her sex, dampening his balls.

"Yes." His fingers dug painfully into her hips as her wetness slowly seeped down his cock and onto his balls. She was beyond anything he'd imagined. Raphael opened his eyes and looked down. The sight of his sun warmed skin, so dark against her paler tones, sent a hot surge of lust from his brain to his cock, to his toes. Looking up, he saw her hands fisted on the door.

"Did I tell you to move your hands?" Raphael held her motionless as he slowly slipped from her hot body.

“Nnn... No, Archangel.” She uncurled her fingers and laid her palms flat once more.

Her body shuddered as he pulled out, the walls of her sex trying without success to hold him inside. With just the head of his cock buried inside her tight hole, he released one of her hips and slid his arm around her body, curving his strong body over hers. “If you move again, I’ll stop. I’ll make you watch me bring myself pleasure, but I won’t allow you any more. Do you understand?”

He needed her to obey. He was hanging on by a thread as it was. If Soluna so much as slid a finger over his skin, this long-fantasized moment would be over before it really began.

“Yes.”

That one word was all he needed. Holding her tightly to him as he readjusted his grip on her hip, Raphael eased back to watch his cock glide into Soluna’s pussy again. One last slow stroke satisfied his conscience, releasing him to take her as they both wanted.

Without any hesitation, Raphael took up a strong, steady pace of in and out. He gazed at the shaft of his cock, saw it grow redder. He moaned at the sight of her juices coating him until his cock glistened in the soft light of the lamps. He felt her body tighten around his, heard her scream as she came again, but still he continued to fill her and retreat, until his balls felt as if they’d burst and his muscles cried out at him for relief.

Soluna wanted to beg Raphael to stop. She wanted to beg him to never stop. Her untried tissues were sore from his unchanged pace, but she didn’t care. Pleasure couldn’t even come close to defining the flood of gratification spilling out of her body. She screamed until her voice cracked and still he went on, until Soluna felt her consciousness slipping.

Just as the hazy edge of nothingness crept into her mind, Raphael abruptly pulled out of her body, set her feet back on the floor, and spun her around. He held her upright when she collapsed against him.

“Look at me.”

Soluna opened her eyes and looked at him. His face dripped with sweat, his toffee eyes burning with need. Her gaze traveled downward to his mouth, and she licked her dry lips, wishing she could taste his. Raphael slid one hand up her back, fisting the thick strands of her silver hair in his hand. With his left, he pulled her body close to his and lifted her off the floor.

“Wrap your legs around my waist.”

It took a moment for her jittery limbs to comply, but she managed. The cool press of the door against her back took her breath, and Raphael took advantage of her open mouth. His lips covered hers, and for a moment, they shared a breath. Then his tongue touched her lower lip, not seeking entrance but seeming to taste her. Soluna hummed her delight at his technique, loving the slide of his tongue against her skin. She closed her mouth, hoping he would treat her upper lip to the same touch.

Raphael hadn't wanted to kiss her, but he couldn't stop himself. He hadn't wanted to see her face. Something inside told Raphael he could pretend this hadn't happened if he didn't see her response to his possession. But he needed it. He had to see her face as he filled her, took her, found release in her.

Her lips were soft and tasted faintly of the beef stew she'd made for supper. Underneath that, the unique flavor of Soluna, the wild flavor he'd tasted on her skin, pulled a groan from him. She closed her mouth and he softly licked her upper lip as well, trying to get more of that essence into his body. He nipped her bottom lip, knowing she'd gasp, using the catch of her breath to gain entry into the warm cavern of her mouth.

He pressed her harder against the door as his tongue slid between her lips. Her slim arms wound around his neck, her long fingers burrowing into his hair. He moaned at her touch and at the feel of her lips beneath his.

The addictive taste of her went straight to his head and his prick, both of them screaming for him to finish this. Raphael tightened his fist in her hair and pulled her head back. He fluttered his tongue against the roof of her mouth before pulling back

and pressing only his lips to hers. Press, release, the slip of his tongue, the scrape of her teeth, their kisses grew harder, more fervent. Tugging on her hair to get better access, Raphael left her mouth, sliding his lips along her jaw and behind her ear. He grazed his teeth against the column of her neck, and then nipped her hard. She keened in surrender.

"Hold on." He released her hair and slid his right hand down to join his left, cupping her ass. Then he slammed his cock home.

"Raphael!" He speared her deep and hard and she rejoiced. She let her earthy cries ring out, unchecked.

Raphael buried his face in her neck and pounded into her mercilessly. The force of his thrusts alone held her against the door. He pounded into her hot, wet cunt. His body shuddered with every silken ripple of her body around his. His balls drew up but still he hammered into her, until the smell of sex filled his nose, until his ears rang with her wails of ecstasy, until he felt the gush of liquid fire as she came one last time.

He lifted his head and watched her face as she came. The pleasure pain of glorious release etched itself on her strong features. She bit her lip hard, trying to hold back her screams. It was too much, it wasn't enough, and with a bellow of pure gratification, Raphael exploded.

"Ah!" He came so hard his eyes rolled back in his head and his breath lodged in his lungs. The contractions of his balls were painful, but each jet of come, of ecstasy, he shot into her scorching core made it easy to ignore. He filled her pussy with his release, his pleasure, his hunger.

When the last flutters of her body caressed the last drop of his orgasm from his body, Raphael sagged against her. The weight of their bodies and the strength of the door was all that kept them upright.

Their lungs heaved, air bellowing in and out of their bodies. Within moments, the adrenaline and hormones that had flooded their systems wore off and both of them began to shake uncontrollably.

Raphael managed to keep hold of Soluna as he staggered to the small couch in the middle of the living room. He turned his back on the sofa and carefully lowered them onto it. Holding her close to him, he laid down, keeping her draped on top of him. With the last of his strength, he manifested a blanket.

Soluna sighed contentedly and turned her head to press a kiss to the middle of Raphael's furred chest. He grunted, she smiled, and they both went to sleep.

Chapter 8

Soluna woke to the clear light of day, her body sore and stiff. She lifted her head from the hair covered skin beneath her cheek, blinking her eyes to adjust them to the morning brightness. Getting her bearings, she carefully slid out of Raphael's arms and onto the floor.

Her hips throbbed from hours spent sleeping with her knees spread on either side of his body, but giddy delight filled her nonetheless. She smothered a giggle as she lay on her back, staring at the ceiling and remembering the passion with which Raphael had taken her. It had been beyond fantastic, and she hoped they could do it again soon.

With a quiet sigh, Soluna pulled herself off the floor, standing on wobbly legs. She wanted a shower first, but then she was going to cook something hearty for breakfast. With a smile on her face and a spring in her step, she made her way to the bathroom.

Soluna still marveled at the way life worked at the Protectorate. Everything here ran on magic. From the refrigerator and microwave, to the toilet and shower. She'd asked Malina about it once, and her friend had said the Protectorate functioned the way the people who lived and labored here wanted it to. Without conscious thought, they willed things to be as they were. The Protectorate created its own existence, and sustained itself the same way. Everyone gave up an insignificant piece of their power every day in order to keep things going smoothly.

Soluna had still been confused, which made Malina laugh in sympathy. Malina had given her a hug and told her, "It is because it is." Soluna had understood that much better.

She turned the tap on the massive claw foot tub, testing the water against her skin until she found the perfect temperature. With only her thoughts, she turned the

rain-style showerhead on and stepped into the basin. The water was just this side of too hot, perfect for easing sore muscles and getting the blood pumping.

Soluna poured honey-almond scented shampoo into her hands and began the process of washing her long, silver hair. She was in the middle of the second rinse, when she heard the tiny squeak of the wooden door. She opened her eyes to see Raphael, nude and fully erect, gripping the door.

She knew by the look on his face that he wouldn't be joining her, and the smile she'd been about to give him died on her lips. She finished bathing, making quick work of washing her body. His hot, hungry eyes branded her, made her weak with desire, but she ignored her needs. With a flick of her wrist, she stopped the shower. Calling a towel from nowhere, she avoided his eyes as she wrapped up in it and stepped from the tub.

"Soluna, look at me."

She raised her head slightly, just enough to see his face without really looking at him. Her heart ached, each beat sending pain through her body and making it hard to breathe. She didn't want him to speak. The voice in her head screamed at her to tell him not to speak, but she said nothing.

"I can't afford to make what happened last night into a regular occurrence." Raphael's throat was dry and thick. Not just from the eroticism that watching Soluna bathe offered, but also because something inside of him was reluctant to say the words he spoke. Deep in his head or heart, Raphael wasn't sure which, a voice was berating him for being a fool.

"However you like it, Archangel." Raphael felt sick at the blankness of Soluna's face. He hated to upset her. He always had. Now, after he'd been sheathed inside her virgin body, after he'd achieved a release unlike any before, it bothered him even more.

This is why you can't afford to be attached. Already lust is clouding your mind. Do you want to be powerless again? Raphael shook off his sympathetic feelings as he moved out of the bathroom doorway.

“Good. I’m going to need your help when I’m through in here. Gemma asked me to look into some new spells for tracking wraiths. I’m having trouble getting it to work for more than a few minutes.” Best to move on to normal business, of that Raphael was confident.

“Yes, Archangel.” Soluna turned her face from him and hurried from the bathroom.

Anger, disappointment, and sorrow beat at her from inside. She refused to let him see her cry, to let him know how much his indifference hurt her. She wanted to strike out at him, to deal him as painful a blow as he’d given her, but she had no real motivation. She’d exerted her will on him once, to protect Amaliel, but this time she wasn’t protecting anyone except herself. Since this wasn’t a life or death situation, there was no way to justify attacking her alpha. And Soluna knew that hurting him would only make her pain worse.

With stilted movements, she made her way into her bedroom and dressed. She heard the shower start again, but she pushed away the images of water gliding over Raphael’s skin. On autopilot, she left her room and went into the kitchen to begin the morning’s meal. By the time Raphael finished bathing and dressing, Soluna had breakfast ready and her emotions controlled once again. She gave him her usual polite smile as he settled in at the table and began to devour the meat and eggs she’d prepared.

They ate in silence as they always did, each of them pointedly not looking at or thinking of the other, at least on the surface. When he was finished, Raphael excused himself and went into the workshop. Soluna scraped the rest of her meal into the garbage and cleaned up the dishes before joining him.

“Damn it!” Raphael raked his hands roughly through his hair. He’d been round and round with this spell, but it continued to elude him. He’d tried rewording it. He’d added sea salt and jade into the potion, attempting to enhance the effects of water, and through the element, intuition. Finally, he’d added mistletoe, calling on the name of

God, but nothing worked. When he heard the door shut, he jerked his gaze toward the sound and saw Soluna.

For a moment, he wanted to blame her for the lackluster magic he was performing. Still, he felt the sizzle of power, so he knew it wasn't her fault. He was missing something and he simply couldn't find it. "Come take a look at what I've done. See if you can determine where I went wrong."

She nodded and made her way to the table, just as she'd done a thousand times before.

Chapter 9

Watching her advance, he finally realized just how reserved and controlled she kept herself. Opening his senses, Raphael was shocked to find her aura was just as flat and even as her demeanor. If he hadn't seen the slight tightening of her hands into fists or the gentle clench of her jaw, he'd have let himself believe that nothing was different. Seeing her small tells, however, made him wonder if he'd always overlooked those things, or if he was simply hyper alert now.

Jackass, you've always ignored them. His conscience was right, and Raphael knew it.

The weight of his gaze as he tracked her movements unnerved Soluna. Closing her eyes briefly, she took a calming breath and approached the cauldron bubbling at the opposite end of the table from Raphael. She picked up the wooden spoon next to the pot and stirred it carefully, lowering her face over it and inhaling the essence that wafted upward. Her acute sense of smell told her immediately what was wrong.

"You've used too much sea salt. What exactly are you trying to do with this potion, Archangel?" She kept her words level and soft, as she always did.

"I was trying to call more to water to enhance the intuition. Damn. Now, I'll need to start over again."

Soluna nodded and set the spoon down.

"You're a whiz at incantations. Maybe if I can get this right, I won't need the potion." Raphael slid the sheet of parchment he'd written the spell on across the worn maple top of the table.

Her delicate fingers brushed across his knuckles and Raphael struggled to hide his shudder of response. Fire licked up his arm, down his chest, and grew into an inferno at the base of his cock. It lengthened, thickened, and began to throb. He bit his lip to stifle a groan, wondering whether inviting her in had been such a good idea.

Soluna reveled in the spark of connection she felt as her fingertips glided over his hand. Careful not to show her reaction, she picked up the paper and looked over the words of Raphael's latest spell.

*Formless beings trapped between,
Lost to God and all unseen.
Troubled soul traveling blind,
Reveal your trail for me to find.
Strength from fire, air, land and sea,
As I will so mote it be.*

She had to purse her lips to stop from laughing. Though the spell itself had all the elements it needed, the wording of it guaranteed it would fail. Even after a year of careful tutoring, Raphael still didn't quite grasp the delicate balance of language and intent a good spell needed.

"Hmm. It's a good incantation, Archangel. The only things I might change are the second and third lines."

While she'd been reading the paper, Raphael had been fantasizing about throwing Soluna onto the table and plunging his tongue deep into her pussy. He'd been close to tasting her orgasm, in his imaginings, when her words interrupted him. He jerked back to the present with unmerciful speed.

"Oh, uh, what's wrong with it?" His voice was rough with lust, and he cleared his throat self-consciously.

"Well, when you say 'all unseen.' Without a definer in front of it or a pause, the magic is uncertain exactly what to do. Therefore, it shows you the trail of the wraith, but only for a short time, before everything becomes 'unseen' again. I'd change the last to read 'and to all, but me, unseen.' I'd also remove the 'lost to God' and make it 'amorphous.' The third line is confusing. Who's traveling blind, you or the wraith? That also works against the magic. I might use something like 'troubled soul, of mischief

mind.' It keeps the rhythm smooth and your intent clear." Picking up a nearby pencil, she wrote the changes down.

"I see. Thank you." He set the corrected version aside. He didn't want her to leave yet, but he didn't really need anything else. Raphael scanned the room for something to keep Soluna with him. "Do you mind looking over that grimoire, there?" Raphael pointed to the thickest book on the table. "You seem to have a knack for languages. It looks like an ancient Cyrillic text, but I can't be sure." He offered her a light smile.

Raphael's smile did wonderful things to Soluna. Her blood thickened and her heart felt light. Instead of sighing and ogling like a fool, Soluna pulled the book to her with a nod and sat herself on one of the nearby stools. Cracking the old spine, she began to leaf through the pages.

She laughed silently to herself. Raphael thought she could read the language, but he was wrong. She was no better with languages than anyone else. In fact, she was probably worse, given the many years she'd spent not speaking a word.

Then, that didn't matter. She wasn't reading the words. She read the magic. Each spell, written or spoken, left its mark. To one with sight as clear as Soluna's, it was easy to decipher the intent of the magic by the signature left behind. Whether by color, or emotion, or sensation, Soluna instinctively knew what spells meant what.

She asked him for a notebook and pen, and began translating the spells. She ran across a few for soul stealing, which she pointed out to Raphael, but nothing really stood out as new or unusual until she got to the end of the grimoire.

"Archangel, do you recognize this spell? It says 'retegere pinnas'."

"What?" Raphael jerked his face up from the potion he was brewing. Soluna saw something in his eyes, shock and an emotion she couldn't quite define. Laying her hand over the spell, she focused her mind and her power on it.

"Retegere pinnas. Sicut mei volo envello." Her rough understanding of Latin didn't exactly stand up as 'expert,' but as a Paramount, her intent carried as much weight in an incantation as her terminology. The moment the words left her mouth,

power coalesced inside her. She directed the energy at Raphael, opening her eyes to watch the spell envelop him.

Raphael felt the tingling of magic on his skin, revealing that which he kept hidden most of the time. The shocked look on her face tickled him. In fact, he surprised himself by not being angry at her actions. "Soluna, what did you do?" He closed his eyes and let the magic work her will.

It was too late to take it back, but Soluna was more than relieved that Raphael's words carried no malice. In fact, he seemed to be on the verge of laughter. As her spell worked itself, she widened her eyes in astonishment. His wings were taking shape!

"I thought you didn't have wings!" Soluna covered her mouth, too late to stop the outburst.

Raphael started to chuckle, but as the spell finished, his small laugh turned to a guffaw. "All Archangels have wings. I keep mine hidden nearly all the time because they get in the way." Careful of the many ingredients, books, and liquids on his worktable, Raphael moved to the middle of the room and stretched his wings.

They were a bit stiff from years of disuse, but in a few moments, he'd loosened them up. Raphael hadn't bothered to stretch them much of late since he'd had no reason to use them. He spread them as far as they'd go, stretching to work out the kinks. An ache started in his shoulders, but it was a good kind of pain. He'd neglected this part of himself for a long time, and it was wonderful to enjoy it again.

Raphael searched out Soluna's face. Her beautiful violet eyes shimmered with emotion and her mouth was open in a perfect 'o' of awe. He felt the warmth of a blush caress his cheeks. "Pretty impressive, huh?"

His lips parted to reveal white teeth. He grinned broadly, the smile giving him a boyish enthusiasm she'd never seen before. Soluna could only nod at him though. He was magnificent.

The plumage on his wings was so different than the others she'd seen. Gabriel and Michael's wings were the pure, untarnished white most people thought angel wings to be. But Raphael's were opalescent, like the color of liquid rainbows on

bubbles. Dragging her eyes away from his wings, she licked her lips and swallowed. "Your wings are gorgeous."

"Thanks. I wield magic and it gives my wings the mother-of-pearl effect." Raphael noticed Soluna had set the grimoire down. She'd folded her hands in her lap, and was wringing them slowly. Her body leaned toward him, and then away, as if she wanted to touch his wings but wasn't sure how to go about doing it. "You can touch them if you like. I don't mind."

Soluna blushed hotly at his words. Keeping her face averted, she slid off her stool and slowly walked toward Raphael. She wanted to run, but she didn't think he'd appreciate her enthusiasm. When she was within arm's length of his right wing, she warily reached out her hand.

She couldn't stop the soft coo she made. The feathers were warm to the touch and softer than the finest silk. If a cloud had texture, Soluna knew it would be this. As she stroked her fingertips over his wing, the colors changed, blending and swirling in response to her skin. Desire coursed through her as she imagined Raphael's feathers stroking over her body, touching the aching tips of her breast, sliding against the sensitive flesh between her legs.

The sight of her hand on his wing was the most erotic thing Raphael had ever seen. His blood heated, though he carefully kept his cock in check. Her eyes slid to half-mast, and her breathing grew shallow. His cock twitched when her pink tongue darted out to wet her lips.

"What?" He didn't necessarily want an answer, but he couldn't stop from asking.

"Oh!" Soluna's exclamation was heavy with need. Raphael's voice had startled her, making her hand flatten against his wing in reaction.

Neither of them expected the pulse of magic that struck them both when her skin fully connected with his feathers. Magic fueled by hungers and needs only the fusion of flesh and souls could satisfy.

Chapter 10

Soluna instinctively tried to draw her hand back, but she couldn't pull it away. Her eyes met Raphael's, his brown ones as confused and shocked as she felt. Another bolt of power struck them both and they fell to their knees.

Soluna cried out in pain at the hard contact with the stone floor, and Raphael grabbed her free arm to steady her. A third strike of magic beat through his body and into hers, and he found he couldn't let go of her either. Closing his eyes against the circuit of lust-heavy power ebbing and flowing from her to him and back, Raphael tried to focus his thoughts.

"Soluna?" His throat worked hard to issue the word, but he forced it out. Her striking violet eyes were wide as they met his own and she shook her head.

"I don't know, Archangel." She didn't seem to be having as much trouble speaking as he was. A fourth pulse came and Raphael pulled her into his arms for fear that she'd smack her face on the cold rock beneath them. Thankfully, with their clothing between them, their bodies didn't stick to each other.

Each subsequent beat of magic was hotter, more insistent than the last. Raphael had been struggling with arousal since Soluna had joined him in the workroom, but as the heat between them increased, so did the blood flow to his cock. It was hard as a pike now, verging on painful. Raphael's mind scrambled to figure out what was going on before he exploded from the pressure between his legs.

Soluna had no idea what had gone wrong with her spell, but she was sure it was the source of the problem. Her mind scrambled to think under the onslaught of magic. When she realized what had gone wrong, the urge to laugh nearly overwhelmed her. It wasn't the wording, but her *will* that had been not quite right. She wanted to see what the spell would do to Raphael, yes, but she also hoped the magic might tip the scales in

her favor. She hungered for him, for his possession. She'd been fixated on it since she'd awoken this morning.

"Archangel, focus the magic on me. I'll shift. It should stop the circuit." Soluna breathed slowly, ignoring the tightness in her breasts and the moisture between her thighs. With the next round of magic came a hard shudder, and she couldn't stop the moan that ripped from her mouth.

"What will happen?" Raphael's fingers itched to touch the hard tips of her breasts. They surged against her cotton blouse each time the energy surged. His mouth watered to taste them. He couldn't think clearly enough to do what she asked.

Soluna's body was on fire with need, her wolf howling inside her head. It wanted to shift, to mate, to run. She was torn and overwhelmed, but she needed to focus, to be strong and fix what she'd wrought. Raphael would blame her, and rightly so, if they acted on the hungers bombarding them. Another pulse of magic, this one so strong Soluna's pussy contracted with a small orgasm. "Archangel!"

Her shameless cry drew a growl from Raphael. With each new wave of magic, common sense was lost and animalistic urges fueled. Neither of them had the ability anymore to turn the magic to something else. Raphael stopped fighting the energy, pulling Soluna closer to him.

"Don't fight, Soluna. Accept." His words were hard, forceful. He demanded she obey, and Soluna's mind cleared. Her alpha had given her an order. The moment of clarity amidst the storm of magic gave Soluna the will to pull the magic inside her.

She'd spent so many years as a wolf that her transformation was fluid and smooth. Where flawless skin once was, in a flash, thick, silvered fur sprouted. Her delicate hands thickened and changed into padded paws tipped with black nails. Soluna's nose and mouth lengthened, becoming a long snout and jaws filled with razor sharp teeth. Her violet eyes grew larger and wider set, but the striking hue remained the same. The small amount of pain was easy to endure.

Once her metamorphosis was complete, Soluna shook herself and moved away from Raphael. By channeling the current of power, she'd broken the link between them.

"Soluna, you're magnificent." Raphael had never seen such an elegant shape shift. The magic had rippled over and through her. As a wave washes clean the marks of man from a beach, her human flesh receded to reveal the wolf within.

She gave an ululating reply, ducking her head low and tucking her tail between her legs. She lowered herself to the ground and slowly made her way to Raphael's side. Her mind was a wolf's, yet not. She could speak to him, mind to mind, but it wouldn't be like speaking with a person. The conversation would be stilted, full of images and emotions. A werewolf wasn't a man in a wolf body, but a wolf with a touch of man in mind, and nothing else. Higher reasoning, better interpretation skills, and the ability to understand humans were all the humanity that made the change into wolf form.

"I won't hurt you, Soluna. You don't have to crawl." The fierce boiling of passion in his blood had lowered to a simmer, but Raphael was still painfully aroused. Seeing Soluna in her wolf body should have cooled his ardor, but it hadn't. Though he had no desire to mount her, the difference in her appearance did little to affect his attraction. She was gorgeous and sensual, in either form.

No hurt. Omega lower to alpha. Soluna sent him images of wolves in a pack, reassuring him that her actions weren't fear based, but natural.

Raphael was surprised at the wealth of information she was able to convey. Many who worked in the more mystical areas of life still believed the werewolf to be an inhuman predator, with no logical thinking present. The teacher in him wanted to study her, but the man wanted Soluna to change back. Because he knew she'd be naked.

Soluna reached his thigh and gave his skin a tentative lick. His flesh was salty and warm, and flavored with the ozone-like taste of God's work and magic. Beneath it all, she detected musk, the true essence of Raphael. She whimpered in response to the strength she sampled there.

Her silver fur beckoned his touch, and Raphael stopped worrying about consequences. He wanted to dig his fingers into her coat, he wanted to lose himself in her wildness. He shifted so he could kneel on the stones beneath him, resting his weight atop his heels. "Sit up, Soluna."

She rose off the floor, coming to sit on her haunches. It brought their faces into perfect alignment. Raphael curled his right hand around her scruff and buried his fingers in her silken fur. He watched her violet eyes as they darted to his face and then away, careful not to make direct eye contact. He brought his other hand up to her head, stroking the pelt between her ears.

"Look at me." She whimpered, but Raphael tightened his grip on her neck. Amethyst eyes met his, and he stared into them as his hands slid over her fur. "Change back, Soluna."

The hum of magic buzzed in his ears as her fur receded and her human body emerged once more. She was smaller in this form, her face level with his chest. Raphael dropped his left hand from her arm, where he'd seconds before been buried in deep, thick animal coat. She watched his hand as he moved it over the bulging crotch of his linen pants.

Soluna mewled when his hand pulled the waist of his pants down and his long, thick cock sprang free. The heavy, erotic perfume of aroused male assailed her senses, and she couldn't stop the tiny sound of joy that escaped her. She raised her small hand, reaching out to him unconsciously.

"Yes." His left hand encircled the base of his cock, and his right slid over her shoulder and into the hair at the base of her neck. The first touch of her fingers on his hot flesh released a hum of pleasure from his throat. Raphael delighted in the silken glide of her fingers, teasing him to insanity. It was more than he could take and it wasn't enough to push him over the edge.

"Archangel, show me how to do it right." Soluna's timid request coaxed a bead of opalescent liquid to the tip of his cock.

"Hmm, tighten your fingers around me. Hold my cock in your hand as if you mean it. Yeah, that's it. Now slide it up and down. Oh, God! Just like that!"

Soluna stroked his cock from balls to tip, fascinated when she twisted her wrist and he gasped. Her motions quickened and he stopped giving her instructions. Instead,

lust sounds of masculine bliss rolled from between his lips. The moisture seeping from him drew her. She wanted to taste it.

"Luna!" Raphael shuddered hard when her hot, wet mouth closed over the tip of him. Her mouth was as soft as her pussy, but the undulating rhythm of her tongue against his cock was unbelievable. He released his hold on his shaft and buried both hands in her hair. He couldn't speak, but he showed her how to take as much of him in as she could. He guided her mouth along the length of his throbbing flesh, letting her mouth provide the magic while his hands set the pace.

Soluna's pussy quivered with excitement. The coil inside her body drew tight as she followed Raphael's lead. His groans were getting louder, more explicit as he told her how good she sucked cock, how hot her mouth was, how close he was to coming. The air in the room caressed the dampness between her thighs, and she began to hum and moan around him, unable to remain quiet.

The wet sucking sounds of her mouth on him drove him to the edge, but when she hummed, the vibration caressing his cock as surely as her tongue and lips, Raphael had to clench his jaw to hold back his orgasm. He pulled her mouth off his cock and brought her face to his. His lips covered hers, devouring the soft skin. He knew his kisses were hard, that her lips would be swollen, and it only made him hotter. He nipped her lower lip and she made the tiny mewl again.

"Turn around."

The emotions and desires building between them guided Soluna, and she needed no further instruction. She turned around and balanced herself on her knees and elbows, waiting for her mate to mount her. She didn't have to wait long.

The thick head of Raphael's cock speared into her body as he seated himself deeply. She cried out, her body still a little sore. She didn't care, though. His size spread her open, pushed deep, filled her to the limit and she loved it. He drew out slowly, but she knew by the pressure of his hands on her hips that this would be a fierce, rough taking.

Raphael tried to keep his eyes open to watch his cock tunnel into Soluna's pussy and back out, but it was sensory overload. Pleasure besieged every pore in his body, whether from the earlier magic, or something else completely. Soluna thrust her ass back at him, laboring to breathe and moaning with satisfaction until the sound resonated in his ears. He tightened his grip on her hips and began pounding into her. He felt his cock hit her cervix and she screamed. Thinking he'd hurt her, he stopped, opening his eyes.

"No!" Air heaved in and out of her body. "Harder, please!" She turned her head to look at him over her shoulder, those remarkable eyes capturing his.

He pulled out and slammed back in. He watched her eyes lose focus and flare with power. He repeated the motion, trying to ignore the tight grip of her cunt, watching magic flash again in her eyes.

Soluna felt energy gathering inside of her. She knew what it was. If she'd had the ability, she'd have yelled her thanks to God at the top of her lungs. Finally, her wolf and her mage had found their balance. She wanted to tell Raphael what was happening, to tell him her love for him was about to grant him a gift unlike any he'd received before, but both of them were too far gone for explanations. As his cock hammered harder and deeper into her core, the magic built and built.

Raphael felt the building power, but it was nothing compared to the pressure filling his balls. Each stroke into Soluna, each reverberation of his powerful thrusts through her body, drew him closer and closer to culmination. He released her right hip and slid his fingers around to the front of her body. Delving between the lips of her pussy, he found the rock hard nub of her clit and he began strumming it. Violent, powerful motions flooded her cunt with cream and made her scream his name as she came.

The sound of his name on her lips was all he needed. Orgasm ignited in his brain and shot like lightning down his spine. His balls drew tight and he bellowed as the first jerk of his cock spewed come deep into her cunt. Raphael pulled out and slammed back in, opening his eyes to see the sticky white juices of gratification coating his cock.

Raphael looked up the line of her back, and over her head to the mirror on the opposite side of the room. Her face reflected in the glass with flawless perfection. Raphael saw her mouth open wide, her eyes screwed tightly shut. He thrust his hips against hers, his cock pumping another round of release into her. His balls pulsed until with one last heave, he reached the end. The wondrous, blissful, contented end.

Raphael felt her orgasm slow and tried to pull out, but the muscles of her body held him tightly inside. Her pussy clamped down around him, the tissues swelling, refusing to let him go. Soluna's orgasm continued to ripple through her, and around him, stimulating his cock to near pain. She'd worked every drop of come from him, but still her cunt gripped his cock, until he thought he'd scream.

"Soluna, stop! I can't take any more!" He searched her face, in the mirror, but she was serene with repletion. Trapped inside her body, bliss overrode his common sense, and Raphael moaned when her pussy fluttered around him again in strengthening waves.

"Raphael." She could only whisper his name. Bent as she was, she couldn't turn around and face him. She opened her eyes and her gaze collided with his in the reflection of the massive mirror that hung on the far wall. She shuddered hard. Magic grew within Soluna until the power was ready to explode from her, but she needed to touch more of him. Unable to speak coherently, Soluna labored to draw herself to her knees.

He heard her whisper, saw her struggling to right herself. Raphael leaned into her, wrapping his arms around her stomach and filling his palms with her breasts. He pulled her into his lap, wincing when the ironclad grip of her body made the movement difficult. When he had her back flush to his front, Soluna placed her hands over his and began to speak. In his mind.

What is mine is now in you.

Your body and spirit shall my power imbue.

Nevermore, only mine to wield.

*To you, my alpha, I do so yield.
I call to air, earth, fire, and sea.
As I will, so mote it be.*

Magic poured into Raphael, power that was not his own. Her hands burned where they touched his. Fire poured through his skin and into every vessel, tissue, every cell in his body. If Raphael had been capable of opening his eyes, he was sure he'd have seen flames licking across his flesh.

Her body throbbed around him, each pulse bringing his cock back to virile life. As the power hummed through her and into him, lust grew until he was thrusting his hips against her ass, striving to reach the ultimate bliss inside Soluna once again. She tightened her hands on his, and moaned loudly. The blaze of magic continued to fill him.

He slid his thumbs over her taut nipples, growling as the flesh gave under his touch only to bead harder. Her cunt contracted firmly around his cock, and Soluna's breath left her in a rush as she began to come. He moved his fingers against her nipples, fitting them between the thumb and forefinger of each hand and pinching them hard. Her pussy copied the action, swelling even more, crushing his cock in a most pleasurable vise.

With all the breath gone from her body, Soluna couldn't scream her gratification. When Raphael pressed her nipples between his fingers, the last of the spell rushed from her with the beginning of her climax. She felt his cock harden impossibly more inside her, the sensitivity of her engorged pussy letting her feel every ridge and vein along his length. Her eyes rolled back in her head and her body tingled, both from lack of oxygen and from power. When she felt his cock pulse, the spell finally finished, air rushed back into her lungs.

"Yes!" She yelled the word as loudly as she could while he filled her with his seed. His fingers tightened around her nipples one last time and he cried out her name.

“Soluna!” Though he’d known it was coming, Raphael was as blown away by his second orgasm as he was by the first. His cock jerked one last time, giving up what little come he had left.

When it was over, muscle spasms wracked both of them. Their bodies were so drained it took everything they both had to remain sitting up. His thighs and arms shook with exhaustion and Soluna’s body reciprocated, shivering with exertion.

“We can’t lay on this floor.” Raphael’s voice broke from the dryness of his throat. Soluna mumbled something, and before he could ask what was happening, she had transported them into his bedroom. They were lying on their sides, spooned together under the covers.

“Better.”

Her words whispered across his skin, and Raphael felt goose bumps rise. Neither one of them was in any state for more sex, but desire flared to life inside him again. He groaned partly in dismay and partly in pleasure when he tried to pull his softened prick from her cunt and found he still could not.

“Sleep.” Soluna’s wolf was content and at peace, and it was the only part of her capable of coherent speech. She snuggled back against Raphael’s hard chest and growled softly.

Raphael fought the urge to laugh when he heard her tiny growl. Regardless of what his urges said, he was tired and satiated. Sleep sounded pretty damn good to him.

“Love. Home,” she mumbled. If her human mind had been better able to function, Soluna might have been worried about what she’d just let slip. It wasn’t, and her wolf didn’t care.

Raphael heard her muffled words, but he told himself he’d misunderstood. Surely she didn’t mean she loved *him*. She loved the sex. He did as well, and with a satisfied smile, exhaustion overtook him like a flash flood.

Chapter 11

"Finally!" Amaliel squealed and pumped her fists in the air, loud enough for all of Haven to hear her. Her exclamation whipped Gemma's head around.

"What?" Gemma looked at the girl's flushed faced happy dance and laughed.

"They did it!" Amaliel's eyes sparkled and her face turned beet red.

"Your parents? Good God, it took them long enough!" Gemma set down the knife she was sharpening and walked to Amaliel's side, chuckling.

Gemma Joyce was the three thousand year old vampire who ran Haven. She'd built it from the ground up as a home for abandoned vampires, children born of half angel and half demon. Gemma was determined to give these precious beings all the safety, acceptance, and knowledge she'd had to fight for, in order to survive.

"Well, I mean, Mom finally linked her power to Dad's. It's something mages do with each other. I think it's called the Rite of Immersion."

"And how do you know all this, young lady?" Gemma had heard of the rite, but she had no idea what it was. It sounded like the covenant she and Michael had entered three years ago. She laughed silently to herself. She hadn't been particularly thrilled to be tied, soul to soul, to Michael in the beginning. Now, she couldn't be happier, even if he did still piss her off from time to time.

"It's not like your covenant." Gemma's eyes widened, and Amaliel blushed harder, embarrassed at being caught reading her aunt's thoughts. Gemma raised a brow, but let the slip pass, motioning for her to continue. "Their spirits aren't bound together. In fact, Dad's not bound at all. It's a gift one mage gives another, though it's usually their spouse or mate. It's a magical manifestation of trust and loyalty." Amaliel laughed, her happiness boundless.

"Oh, so she created a conduit between them, from which Raphael can draw on her power." Gemma couldn't hide her curiosity, but she didn't really want to pry. *Oh, bullshit. Yes, you do.*

"Exactly. Since she's part werewolf though, I know the only way that would happen is if Dad proved his dominion over her." Amaliel's face heated again. She didn't really want to think about her parents having sex. What kid did? Nevertheless, the fact that they'd surely done it lifted a heavy burden off her shoulders. Now, she was free to choose her destiny.

"Amy, why do I feel like you aren't just happy that your parents may finally be getting together?" Gemma could see the wheels turning behind Amaliel's storm gray eyes. She wanted the girl to trust her enough to open up, but a part of her was uncertain of Amaliel's answer.

"I don't know if I should tell you, Aunt Gem. Let's just say that now the Throne of Mercy won't be waiting for me." Amaliel was careful with her words.

"Ah, more cryptic statements. You're good at those." Gemma laughed away her unease and slid her arm around Amaliel's shoulders.

"I don't mean to be cryptic." Amaliel smiled shyly and reached down for the chain mail project she was finishing. Her Ancient Fighting class was a blast, but the intricate detail of mail was a challenge.

"Uh-huh. So, can I ask you a question?" Gemma had noticed something on the sparring field of late, and she wanted to change the subject anyway.

"Sure."

"You've been on Earth for several months now, and you seem to have assimilated pretty well, right?"

"It took me a while to get used to time. I mean, for Mom and Dad it's only been a couple of days that I've been gone."

"Like I said, it's about time." Gemma gave Amaliel a wicked grin and the girl laughed aloud. "What I meant was it seems like you've really taken to being a teenage girl. I'm talking about you and Luc. What's going on there? The boy might be blind, but

I'm not. You have a crush on him, don't you?" Gemma laughed at Amaliel's embarrassed giggle.

"Well, he is very handsome. But he can be such a jerk! He thinks he's better than me, and I'll admit, I get a thrill out of proving him wrong."

"Ah, Amy. You two spark off each other more brilliantly than Michael and I do. You know he and Lily were quite a pair, for a while." Gemma stroked her hand down the girl's back before stepping away.

"I know. But she's decided to assume her mother's role. They'll always have something special between them, but it won't be anything like..." Amaliel cut herself off. She didn't want to show too much of her hand, so to speak.

"Anything like what, Amaliel?" Gemma waited for her to respond, but the girl shook her head. "All right, you don't have to tell me. So, would you like a hand with your mail?"

Amaliel smiled brightly, glad for the offer of help, and ecstatic that Gemma didn't push her for information. "That'd be great! You know, you're the best aunt!"

Gemma smothered a giggle. "Well, I won't tell Malina if you won't."

Amaliel snorted, thinking of Malina's reaction. Gabriel's wife had the perfect sense of humor. Malina wouldn't take the statement to heart. No, she'd just say that of course Amaliel liked Gemma better, now. After all, who wouldn't love the person that let them play with knives?

Chapter 12

Raphael had awoken long before dawn. He'd extricated himself from Soluna's arms and taken a shower, trying to ignore the buzz of power surging through his body. He wasn't sure exactly what had happened between them last night. Regardless, the weight of magic filling his body wasn't all his own. Somehow, his Paramount had given him access to her energy.

Raphael's mind tried to process this information, but having no experience in this area of magic, he couldn't wrap his brain around it. What she'd done seemed to negate all of his objections to being with her. While the part of him that had wanted her for so long rejoiced, another voice whispered to him about wariness. Was this change a two way street? Could she use this to control him? He needed answers. Though, he honestly didn't know if he wanted them.

Raphael decided not to wake Soluna, and not to analyze last night just yet. Instead, he went to the workroom and picked up the revised wraith-tracking spell. As quietly as he could, he left the apartment and made his way to the Cell in the lower levels of the Protectorate.

The Cell was the Protectorate's jail. It housed those beings under suspicion of crimes against the balance, either to await permanent deportment to their proper home or for questioning. It was also part limbo. If a creature escaped its warded cubicle, it still couldn't break out from the Cell. Both God and Lucifer had set powerful spells to hold those detained.

Last week, a wraith had escaped its prison. Gemma had been investigating a cell of wraiths wreaking havoc, as they were prone to do, in New York City. She'd managed to capture one, an amazing feat which spoke highly of her skill. She'd agreed to allow Michael to bring it into custody. They'd hoped to question the wraith and find out if

this was simply large-scale mischief, or if plans more sinister were in the works. When it disappeared, Michael and Gemma had asked Raphael to track it. So far, all attempts to find it had been a bust.

Raziel and Malachi were on guard duty as Raphael approached the entrance to the Cell. As he drew abreast of them, Raziel whistled loudly.

"Damn, Raph. If I didn't know better, I'd say you'd acquired the abilities of a succubus. You're practically glowing, there's so much magic in you." Raphael merely shrugged his shoulders. He didn't want to talk about what had happened.

"And, it looks like..." Malachi's eyes flared. "I'll be damned, Raz! Raph here got laid!"

"No way! Well, look at that. He sure did." Raziel and Malachi bumped shoulders, both of them displaying identical, shit eating grins. Raphael ground his teeth and tried not to growl at them.

"Guys, let me in. I need to try out a new wraith-tracking spell. You can fuck with me all you want later." Raphael gave Malachi a pointed look and motioned toward the door. Malachi straightened, all business once more, and opened it.

"We'll hold you to that, Archangel." Raziel bowed slightly to Raphael as he passed by.

"I have no doubt, Lord of Subterfuge." Raziel gave him a cocky smile.

Raphael waited until the door closed behind him before preparing himself for spell casting. When the last lock clicked and he felt the Cell's magic settle back into place, he closed his eyes and began meditative breathing. The in and out rhythm helped him focus on the power within him, blocking out extraneous noise and light. It didn't take him nearly as long as normal to submerge himself, ready to perform the task.

Formless beings trapped between.

Amorphous, and to all, but me, unseen.

Troubled soul, of mischief mind,

reveal your trail for me to find.

*Strength from fire, air, land and sea.
As I will so mote it be.*

Raphael held his arm out in front of him and opened his hand, palm outward. Magic poured out of him, illuminating the entire space with a shimmering, golden powder. He watched, surprised, as the sparkling dust settled, highlighting a distinct trail. He folded the spell and tucked it in the waistband of his pants.

He followed the magical road through the corridors of the Cell, finding the missing wraith in no time. The creature was so surprised it'd been tracked, it put up little fight as Raphael bound it and took it back to its prison. Normally, the Archangel would have been tired after performing the tracking and binding spells. Instead, Raphael was refreshed and rejuvenated.

He left the Cell, filling Raziel and Malachi in on what had happened. Raziel headed off to inform Michael, and Raphael two finger saluted Malachi as he headed back to his apartment.

On the way, he stopped by his classroom to pick up a couple of textbooks. One was *A History of the Mages* and the other was *Werewolves: From Alpha to Omega*. He was woefully undereducated on both species, mostly due to his own arrogance. He'd spent so many years being cocky about his gifts, and then mourning their loss, that he hadn't bothered to learn more about two of the most powerful magic wielding groups on Earth.

Daylight was just beginning to filter into the apartment when he let himself back in. He checked on Soluna, sighing when he saw she slept on peacefully. He headed into the small kitchen and started a pot of coffee. While it brewed, he got a notepad and pen from the workroom.

With hot cup in hand, Raphael settled in at the table and began taking in depth notes from the mage history book. Mage history was long and as troubled as any one group could be. Fighting amongst themselves, with humans, with other creatures had

dwindled their numbers greatly. As he made his way through the book, he came across a tidbit that made goose bumps rise all over his body.

"The Rite of Immersion. A spell used, generally between married or mated partners, in which one mage merges their gifts with another. Rarely, this rite has been used to bind all members of a coven, or family, to its leader. The mage who initiates the incantation links their abilities to one other person, effectively bestowing their power on another." Raphael sat back in his chair, stunned.

"Are you angry with me?" The smell of coffee had roused Soluna from bed. When she'd realized she was alone, terror and worry had knotted her stomach. She couldn't take back what she'd done. She wouldn't, even if she could. However, she was sick with the idea that Raphael would be angry, or worse, aloof once again. Now, standing in front of him, waiting in the silence for his answer, Soluna thought she might faint.

"No, Soluna. I'm not angry. But why? You can't take it back?" Raphael didn't know what to say. Thank you seemed woefully inadequate, and he couldn't ignore the guarded part of himself, wondering what he'd have to give to keep this gift.

"It's where my instinct guided me. I know the elders of my parents' clans allowed me to live because they feared my powers. I'm an omega, Archangel. A submissive. You understand what that means, don't you?" In order to hide her nervousness, Soluna moved to the kitchen counter.

She pulled a cup from the nearby cupboard, then went to the refrigerator and took out the pitcher of orange juice. She poured a glass and put the pitcher away. When she'd avoided turning around for as long as possible, she walked to the table. Pulling out the chair opposite Raphael's, she sat down and looked into his face.

He cocked an eyebrow at her, his dark eyes a jumble of mistrust and gratitude. Soluna lifted the glass and took a gulp, and choked. The look of desire on his face was blatant. Her stomach pitched again and her blood heated. Her hands began to shake and she quickly put the cup down before she made herself an even bigger fool.

"Go on."

"It's fairly simple, really. I've lived as a wolf most of my life in order to disappear. The beast inside doesn't look for the nicest alpha to follow. It only cares about strength and dominance. In human form, I would have been manipulated by another mage and my magic used for things less than kind."

"I understand what you're saying, but you haven't explained why you did that spell last night." Raphael got up from the table to warm his coffee. He knew it would be easier for her to speak if he weren't staring so intently. If she couldn't see him gaze at her as if she were a tall glass of water to a man who'd been in the desert for eight days, Soluna might be able to finish faster.

"I've never had an alpha, though I've longed for one. For the past three years, I've treated you as one, by default. Last night, however, my wolf fully acknowledged you as alpha, and my mage could only follow suit." Soluna purposely left off the part about how much she loved him. She hoped he hadn't heard her mumbled words, but even if he had, she didn't think he'd want to hear those words again.

Lacing her fingers together, she continued. "Of course, my incantation for the Rite of Immersion is a bit different from most, reflecting my dual heritage. And that's the long and short of it. You'll never have to worry about losing your power again, because you'll always be able to draw on mine."

Raphael didn't know what to say. The last two days had been intense, no doubt. He wanted Soluna, had craved her as flora craves the sun since he'd brought her here. He'd fought his hunger for three years, but what she'd done had set him on his heels. His own jumbled feelings made things worse, because after all this time, Soluna was a part of his life. He relied on the little things she did so much, it made him dizzy to think of life without her.

Moreover, the way Soluna spoke of the rite, emphasizing instinct to the exclusion of feelings, bothered him. Regardless how she laid the information out, she wouldn't have done it if she didn't feel some softer emotion for him. Soluna's instinct may have ruled, but certainly not without the guidance of her heart.

Something else jabbed at his conscience. She wanted him to believe that she'd have allowed herself to be manipulated into using her magic for bad things. Nevertheless, he knew she'd never have used her gifts for evil's gain. Why would she try to minimize what had happened? Unless, she was afraid he couldn't, or wouldn't, reciprocate her... *Her love, you idiot. Can't you even say it?*

Chapter 13

He kept his back to her as he argued with himself. How arrogant was he to assume Soluna loved him? He was making too much of this. If that was true, then why did he want to challenge her explanation? Raphael stopped himself from doing so, but he yearned to nonetheless. The cowardly part of him was content to believe what had happened was a happy accident of fate. For now, he'd leave it at that.

"All right, Soluna. I have some questions about this rite. Will you answer them?" Raphael turned and sought out her violet eyes, letting himself fall into them. He was connected to her. He could feel it.

"If I can, yes, Archangel." Soluna covered her sigh of relief with a small smile. Thank God, he hadn't questioned her explanation of the rite.

"When I draw on your magic, do you feel it? Does it make you weak?"

"No, not like you think. I can feel it, I can even send more to you if needed, but it doesn't tap my strength. And the rite doesn't work both ways, unless you chose to do it as well. Then our magic would be like a huge lake holding us afloat."

"Is that common?" The idea intrigued Raphael, though he refused to acknowledge any emotional response. His interest stemmed from magic, and nothing more.

"I only knew one couple who performed the rite for each other, and it seemed to me like their gifts were exponentially greater. It made them both very happy, though in the end it didn't save them." Soluna's voice broke, and she closed her eyes against the pain filling her heart. She tried not to think about her parents. The images of their bloody, lifeless bodies tainted all her happy memories.

"Your parents?" Raphael ached to take the pain off Soluna's face. He hadn't meant to bring up sad thoughts. He set down his cup and walked to her side.

Crouching down next to her, he laid his hands over hers, pulling them from the table. He wrapped his palms around hers. "Soluna, what happened to them wasn't your fault."

"Yes, it was!" She tried to jerk her hands free, but Raphael tightened his grip. "If they hadn't had me, they might still be alive."

"Soluna, do you think in their last moments they wished to take their love back?" He smoothed his thumbs over her knuckles. Her eyes were red rimmed, but he saw only the barest hint of moisture. He knew what it was like to hold the hurt so close that tears refused to fall.

"I don't know. I don't know what they thought, but I know what I wished." Soluna couldn't stand his compassion. Her heart wanted to call his softness love, or close to it, but her brain pointed out what foolishness it was. She struggled to pull her hands free from his, but he refused to let go.

"Luna, your parents loved you very much. You are the embodiment of how deeply they loved each other. You can't blame yourself for the hysterical reactions of their races." Raphael stood. He needed to give her solace. He wanted to take her in his arms and make her forget the past.

"Raphael, please. I... I don't want to talk about this." She pushed him away and leapt from the chair. Wrapping her arms around herself, she kept her back firmly to him.

"Soluna, it's all right to be upset." She'd used his name, thrilling Raphael. He loved to hear her say his name, but the bleakness beneath her words tore at him. He shouldn't have brought her parents up. He should have left this alone. Raphael cursed himself for hurting Soluna. He cursed his need for answers.

"No, it isn't. Crying and raging won't bring them back or make me feel any better. It's wiser to face the truth than to delude myself. I was unwanted from conception, by all but my parents. They were punished horribly for wanting me, and that's the way of it." Soluna laughed humorlessly.

"You're wrong, Soluna." Raphael tried to reason with her, but she ignored him.

"In truth, no one has really wanted me. The mages didn't want me, though they'd have loved to have my power. The same can be said for the werewolves. The true wolves, in the wild, didn't want me. They were frightened of my differences."

"Amaliel wanted you." Anger began a slow burn through Raphael. He couldn't stand the way Soluna was belittling herself.

"Amaliel wanted, she needed, a protector. She found one in me. She loves me. I don't doubt that for an instant. If fate had given her another savior though, she'd have done the same thing with them to survive." Soluna fought the rising surge of crushing pain swelling inside. Her eyes filled with tears, and she swallowed hard, trying to force them back.

"Fine, but she wouldn't want any other mother, Soluna." Raphael walked slowly toward her. He was inches behind her, trying to think of a way to comfort her when she spoke.

"You didn't want me. You accepted me into your home because Gabriel forced you to, and eventually you found my presence helpful. Like I said, I'm unwanted for anything but my gifts." Her voice was a whisper, as if she hadn't meant to speak.

Raphael's hands stopped in midair, hovering over her shoulders. Her words hit him like a punch in the gut. She was right. He'd only wanted her around once she'd proved herself an asset, hadn't he?

He thought back over the last three years. No, he hadn't wanted Soluna or Amaliel in the beginning. What he hadn't wanted was the complications he thought they embodied. He remembered the first time he'd seen Soluna, holding his child to her breast, protecting Amaliel. He'd been furious with Soluna, but his body hadn't cared. He'd wanted Soluna, and just Soluna, from that moment.

As the years had passed, he had begun to want more than her body. He'd looked forward to the time they spent in the workroom, he'd been delighted when he could make her smile or laugh. He relied on her judgment and her intuition. He trusted her guidance and leaned on her unflagging support. Raphael wasn't ready to admit he

loved her, but he didn't just want her. He needed her in his life. He'd stopped seeing her as an asset or a tool a long time ago, though he'd failed to tell her so.

"I need to go out, Archangel." The pressure was too much to bear any more. She didn't allow herself to wallow in self-pity, but the only way to escape this was to run as the wolf, leaving behind her humanity. Raphael didn't respond, and Soluna headed to the front door posthaste.

He hadn't heard her words. He'd been mulling his own thoughts, finally accepting that even if he didn't love her, yet, he wasn't far off. He had to tell her the truth. She needed to know how special she was. But in the time it'd taken him to realize all of that, Soluna had left him.

"Soluna!" He stepped out from the kitchen and saw the front door standing open. If she'd changed, which he was certain she had, he might not find her for hours. This couldn't wait. He needed a way to track her down. Something she'd said the other night came back to him.

Uriel.

Chapter 14

The resounding knock on his front door broke into Uriel's consciousness, interrupting his fantasy. Another set of succinct taps pulled him from his erotic musings. He'd been close to release, and he was beyond irritated at the intrusion. This particular daydream was his favorite. It starred a faceless woman who dominated him completely, until he begged, for anything, everything, and all for her pleasure.

In his mind, he buried his face between her legs. His tongue, lips, and teeth worshipped her flesh, sloppily swallowing the fluids of her release. Groggy, aroused, and irritated, Uriel released his rock hard cock and fought his way free of the bed. He stalked, naked, from his room to the front door.

"What?" he growled. The remnants of his fantasy deserted him when he registered who was at his door. "Raphael? What the hell are you doing here?"

Raphael raised an eyebrow at the state of his brother, but he didn't comment. "I need to talk to you. May I come in?"

Uriel scrubbed a hand across his face before stepping back from the door. "Sure. I'll just go get some pants on."

"Thanks. I'm hoping someday I'll be able to obliterate the image of your saluting prick from my mind." Raphael laughed when Uriel scowled.

"Hey, you came knocking early in the morning. What do you expect?" A blush stained Uriel's face. He then showed just how much time he spent with humans by flipping Raphael the bird before going to clothe himself.

Uriel emerged from his bedroom, his lower half covered, and headed to the kitchen. He opened the refrigerator and took out a bottle of sports drink. "So what is it that's so important you had to wake me up?"

"It's Soluna. We were talking and she got upset. I think she went for a run, but I have to find her, Uriel. Where would she go?"

Uriel wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. "What makes you think I have any idea where she'd go? And even if I did, why should I tell you? If you've upset her enough to make her run away, I'd be a poor friend to lead you to her so you can hurt her more." Uriel took another swig of the lemon-lime drink before recapping it and setting it on the counter. He folded his arms over his chest and waited for Raphael to answer.

"Uri, I didn't mean to hurt her! We were talking about her parents, and then the conversation changed. It wasn't intentional!" Raphael raked his hands through his hair.

"Seems like most of what you do to hurt her is unintentional. I think you're better off if you let it go. Hell, Raph, let her go. You don't want her anyway." Uriel left the kitchen and headed into the living room. He turned on one of the end table lamps, not that the room needed anymore light, but he needed something to do.

"Uri, just tell me where I can find her!" Frustrated at his brother's meddlesome words and pissed at how right they might have been, Raphael stalked to Uriel's side. He took Uriel's upper arm in a tight grip. "Look, I don't care what you think. I do want her!"

"You just don't want someone else to have her. There's a difference." Uriel saw rage flare in Raphael's eyes. He jerked free from Raphael's hold and moved to the opposite side of the room. "I have news for you, Raph. Anyone with a touch of sight knows what's happened between you two. Shit, anyone who can feel the flow of power will know that she performed the rite. You don't have to worry. It can't be undone. So why don't you just leave her alone?"

"Uriel, you're really pissing me off. If you fancy yourself in love with Soluna, I'd suggest you forget it. She's mine." Raphael clenched his hands into fists. He didn't want to discuss his private life with his brother.

"Of course I love her. How can you not? But this isn't about you, Raph, or me. It's about Soluna. She's had enough pain for a hundred lifetimes. Stop being selfish for once!"

"I'm not being selfish. Damn it!" Raphael threw his hands in the air. "This is about her. I have to tell her that I've always wanted her, just her. I have to tell her I love her!" The words exploded from Raphael without warning.

Uriel's eyes bugged out. Then his lips lifted with a gratified smile. "It's about time. God knows, we thought you'd never admit it."

"What? Who's we?" Raphael couldn't believe Uriel had goaded him into confessing.

"Michael, Gabriel, and I." Uriel took a step to the left and perched himself against the back of the chair at his side. He watched, gleefully, as Raphael's anger dissipated, turning from surprise into curiosity.

"I don't know what to say. Look, please, just tell me where she is."

"I'm right here, Archangel." Soluna stepped into the living room and Raphael felt like he might pass out.

Uriel laughed to himself. He knew Raphael would be hot when he realized Soluna had been in his home the whole time. In fact, Raphael would be furious once he put Uriel's unclothed state into the picture. But for now, Uriel knew he wasn't needed. He caught Soluna's eye as he made his way to the front door, giving her a thumbs up sign before leaving.

"Soluna, I, uh." Raphael was stunned. He couldn't help but notice the misery and sorrow shining in her violet eyes, and his gut twisted.

"It's fine. I know you didn't mean to say what you did. I won't hold you to it." She gave him a sad smile.

"Yes, no, wait! I don't want to take it back, Luna. It was the truth. I have wanted you all along. I compartmentalized it, pushed it to the back of my mind, but it's always been there. Why do you think I was so jealous when you came home the other night in Uriel's clothes?"

"I don't really know. I thought it must have been because you think of me as a possession." Soluna rubbed her right arm down her left.

When she'd heard Raphael's bellowed declaration of love, her heart had almost burst from her chest. Her elation didn't last long, though, as she realized Uriel's goading was the only reason for Raphael's words. Now, she wanted him to leave her alone. If he'd just give her time, she'd be able to shove all her longing away and they could go back to behaving however Raphael wanted.

"Soluna. Soluna, look at me!"

She shook her head, keeping her face turned down. Despite all her logical reasoning, she refused to look in his eyes. No matter what she saw there, whether love or not, she didn't want to know.

Chapter 15

Raphael sighed when she shook her head. In three short strides, he took her in his arms. She struggled, but he held her resolutely. Her soft curves pressed hard to his body, and his cock hardened. Raphael sighed at the rightness of Soluna in his arms, and lowered his face to the crown of her head.

He inhaled deeply, firmly imprinting her unique smell on his memory. No one else could ever blend the untamed perfume of a predator with the soft, warm aroma of woman and magic the way Soluna did.

"I'm your Alpha, Soluna. Do as I say." She shivered in his arms, but her head tilted back. When her face revealed itself, Raphael smiled. "You're so beautiful. You're so strong, and smart, and patient." He laughed softly. "Infinitely patient. And supportive. You give of yourself without asking for anything in return. Soluna, I don't think of you as a possession."

"Archangel..." Soluna tried to interrupt him, but he brought his index finger to her lips, stopping her words.

"Listen to me. Look at me. I'm unguarded, here. I've opened myself up to you. Luna, your nature, and mine," he chuckled, "say you belong to me. But, you also belong *with* me. And I belong with you." Raphael stroked her soft lips, his eyes boring into hers. "I want you. Just you. Not your talents or your power. I love you, Soluna."

Soluna fought belief. She didn't want to be wrong. Her eyes filled with tears as she opened her mind and soul to Raphael. His love for her was buried deep inside, but it was there, touching everything he was. It took all she had not to let the tears fall. "I've loved you, Raphael, for a very long time." Her words hiccupped as she struggled to control her emotions.

"I know. I think I've known, on some level, for a while. The Rite of Immersion just stopped me from ignoring it anymore." He leaned down and kissed her gently. "I was an asshole in the beginning, and cold for most of the time. But, Luna, you and Amaliel are the best things that ever happened to me."

Soluna stretched upward and pressed her mouth to his, pulling her hands from between their bodies and threading them through his caramel colored hair. She thrust her tongue into his mouth, needing to be inside of him at least a little. He groaned, his tongue tangling with hers, and desire ignited between them.

Raphael tore his mouth from hers. Without thinking, he began to strip Soluna. Her hands tangled with his as she divested him of his clothing just as furiously. They could have used magic, but neither of them was thinking beyond pressing their naked bodies to one another.

As he stripped her pants from her legs, Raphael went to his knees. He slid his hands from her ankles, up her long legs, to her ass. He buried his face in the smooth triangle of flesh at the apex of her thighs.

"You smell hot, Luna. Do you want me?"

His husky voice danced across her flesh. Soluna moaned and her clit throbbed. "Yes, I want you, Archangel."

He nipped the sensitive flesh and she gasped. "My name. Say my name." With rough movements, Raphael shoved his hands between her legs, spreading her thighs, revealing her wet pussy to his gaze.

"I want you, Raphael." He growled his approval against her clit, the sensation strumming the responsive nub and making Soluna's pussy contract.

Leaning forward and in, Raphael buried his face between her thighs. Her excitement tasted just as wild as Soluna smelled. Her juice was hot, earthy, and copious, quickly spreading across his face when he shoved his tongue into her opening. He laved the flat of his tongue from her slick core, up through her lips, finally flicking rapidly against the hard knot of her clit. Soluna moaned loudly, her hands gripping his hair.

Raphael continued to feast upon her slippery flesh. His tongue did amazing things to her body, and Soluna couldn't keep quiet. With every swipe of his tongue, Soluna begged him to lick her harder, to plunge deep inside her body. When his fingers plunged into her from behind, she swayed on her feet. When he pulled away, she cried out for him. His dark chuckle made her shiver as he tugged her to the floor. Once she was on her back, he bent over her and encircled her nipple with his mouth.

"Raphael!" Soluna writhed beneath him. He was as thorough with her aching breasts as he'd been between her legs. His mouth attended one nipple while his hand teased the other. When she felt his fingers plunge inside her, she keened her pleasure.

Raphael immersed himself in Soluna's body, in her responses. His mouth plied the turgid tip of her breast, his teeth scraping and his tongue tasting. His left hand twisted and plucked the other nipple, while his right plumbed the wet depths of her pussy. She bucked beneath him, overwhelmed, and her cunt tightened around his fingers. He lifted his head and watched as orgasm shook her body. Her teeth bit deep into the plump flesh of her left hand to hold back her cries of completion. Her back arched with the power of sexual release.

Raphael coated his fingers with her essence. He pulled them from her still quivering body. Her body relaxed and her violet eyes fluttered open. He caught her gaze with his own and made a show of licking her juices from his hand.

"Mmm, so good." Her tongue darted out to wet her lips, and Raphael leaned down. He kissed her hard, forcing her to taste herself on his tongue. She whimpered with desire and opened her mouth wide.

Soluna loved the flavor of herself mixed with Raphael. She wound her legs around his waist, lifting her hips from the floor and brushing the hard head of his cock against her lower lips. He ended the kiss and bent his knees. Sliding his hands beneath her bottom, Soluna panted as he lifted her toward him and impaled her with his cock in one demanding thrust.

Raphael watched her face as he lodged himself deep in Soluna's hot cunt. Her small hands gripped her breasts, and her violet eyes filled with need and love. He

tightened his hold on her and began a pounding rhythm of deep, hard penetration. Her body grew slicker, easing his way, making each wet slide hotter, more erotic, more pleasurable. He knew he wasn't going to last long.

"Come with me, Luna." Raphael released her lower body and leaned forward, bracing his weight on his hands. She rocked her pelvis against him, tightening her legs around him. His balls drew tight.

"I'm coming, Luna! Come, now!" He pounded into her as hard as he could, his cock exploding with the first wave of her orgasm. Her cunt took hold of him and pulsed, rippled, milked him dry.

Soluna shattered. She let go of her breasts and dug her hands into Raphael's forearms. She held on for dear life as he hammered away inside of her, filling her up, making her whole. She wailed his name, torn apart and remade under the pressure of her love for him and his for her.

He collapsed on top of her, his body numb from the power of his gratification. Her pussy still contracted around him, and he moaned. Rolling to his side, he carefully extricated his cock from her warmth and tucked her back to his front. He slid his right arm beneath her head and wrapped the left around her waist.

"You didn't swell up that time. Was it not that good?"

Soluna giggled. "That only happens at specific times. It was beyond a simple good, and you know it." She took a big breath and fought the rush of giddiness making her lightheaded. She felt wonderful, loved, and free. It was amazing.

"Oh, really? What specific times?" Raphael nuzzled the nape of her neck, feeling her shiver and smiling. He felt like he could take on the world with this woman at his side, with her love filling him up.

"Well..."

"Well, what? Tell me, Luna."

He felt her tense. "When I'm fertile."

Shock speared through Raphael. Fertile? His jaw dropped, but he tightened his hold on her. "Does that mean what I think it means?"

“I don’t know yet. We will soon, though. Are you angry?”

Raphael thought about it. He was shocked, but hope blossomed in its wake. He might get another chance to be a father. Soluna was the perfect mother. What was there to be mad about? “No. I’m not. I want more children with you.” He kissed her head, then promptly fell asleep.

Soluna sighed and with a thought, transported them to their own bed. Uriel would never let Raphael live it down if he found them naked, asleep, on the floor.

Soluna cried silently. For the first time in her life, she allowed herself to do so. Her tears, though, weren’t of sorrow. They were tears of thanks, of love, and of hope. She finally fell asleep, tucked close to the body of her alpha, her Archangel. Her Raphael.

Epilogue

"If we could have everyone's attention!" Gabriel stood at the head of the table and looked around at his ever-expanding family. They'd gathered at Haven today to celebrate the elopement of Raphael and Soluna. He'd wanted to wait to deliver this news, but Malina wouldn't have it.

He looked at his wife, his love, his mate. Their beginning had been rough, but he knew he was a better man for loving her. She beamed at him, the look in her eyes both wicked and happy. She had decadent thoughts on her mind, he knew.

"Malina and I hate to intrude on the happy couple's day, but we wanted to tell you that we're having a baby." The table erupted in delighted squeals from the women and brotherly teasing from the Archangels and Luc Seraph. Raphael, Uriel, Michael and Luc got up from the table to shake his hand and clap him on the back. The women surrounded Malina, hugging and kissing her, sharing in her joy.

Soluna leaned in close and whispered something to Malina.

"Luna! That's terrific! Oh, our babies will grow up together!" Malina hugged Soluna close and kissed her on the cheek.

Gemma, Angela, and especially Amaliel seemed shocked by the news. When Malina released Soluna from the hug, Amaliel threw herself in her mother's arms tears trekking down her face.

"Sweetie, what's wrong?" Soluna smoothed Amaliel's hair and held her close.

"Nothing's wrong, Mom. I'm just so happy I can't help myself!" Mother and daughter held each other tightly. Raphael looked on, as proud and pleased as could be.

"So, you're going to be a dad again. Are you ready?" Michael looked at Raphael with a quirked brow.

"With Soluna at my side, I'm ready for anything."

Uriel laughed aloud and Raphael joined him. The men turned back toward Gabriel to rib him and chat.

"Mom, can I talk to you for a minute?" Now that her father was no longer watching, Amaliel wanted to talk about girl things with Soluna.

"Sure, baby. Will you excuse us for a moment?" Gemma and Malina gave Amaliel knowing looks, smiling broadly. Amaliel blushed, ignoring them. She tugged on Soluna's arm and the two of them left the banquet hall.

"What is it you want to talk about, Amy?" Soluna sensed her daughter's hesitation.

"You'll see. Just follow me." Amaliel led Soluna down a long hall. "In here." She pulled her mother into the library and led them to one of the leather couches surrounding a fireplace.

"Okay, Amy, tell me what it is." Soluna gave Amaliel a gentle poke in the ribs, getting a tinkling laugh in response.

"MOM! Sheesh. Okay, here it is. Did you see Luc?" Amaliel looked down at her hands.

"Lucifer's son? Yeah, sure I did. He's quite handsome, isn't he?" Soluna had a feeling she knew where this was going.

Amaliel tried to suppress a dreamy sigh. "Yes, he is. Mom, I need some advice. Luc and I are equally matched, in just about everything. You know what I mean?"

Soluna smiled and nodded. "Yes, I know why the two of you are balanced."

"Okay. The thing is, I've been thinking about the Line of Ahura Mazda and free will a lot lately. I know, in my soul, what I'm here to do, and it isn't what everyone thinks." Amaliel raised her eyes to her mother's. Soluna looked a little surprised, but it quickly faded. She leaned forward and kissed Amaliel on the cheek.

"I assume you've talked with God." Amaliel nodded her head. "Well then, I'd say your mind is made up. Your father and I love you and will support you, no matter what choice you make. But that isn't why you dragged me away from the party." Soluna took one of Amaliel's hands between her own.

Amaliel smiled and then sighed. "No, it isn't. Here goes," she chuckled. "Can a guy like a girl he can't best? I mean it seems like he thinks of me as a thorn in his side. Other than when we have to, like in class, he doesn't talk to me at all."

"Oh, sweetheart! You're a beautiful girl. And you inherited your strong will from your father and your natural mother. I think Luc will come around, eventually. I'm not the best to give advice about getting his attention, since I'm not the take charge kind. But you are. I know you'll figure out a way to get him to notice you." Soluna laughed heartily. "Or there might just be Hell to pay."

Amaliel giggled loudly, feeling much better. "Let's go back to the party. All of a sudden, I have a couple of ideas."

Emma Ray Garrett

I took the road less traveled by, and let me tell you it's a wild roller coaster, this life I live. Through it all, though, writing has kept me (moderately) sane. I'm the ultimate alpha female and my husband loves me anyway. I have three beautiful children who keep me busy but I always find time to get words on paper. Fans can contact me at emmaraygarrett@yahoo.com or visit my website at http://www.freewebs.com/emma_ray_garrett. I love reader feedback!