

FELICITY
HEATON



DARKNESS &
LIGHT

Darkness & Light

Felicity Heaton

Copyright © 2006 Felicity Heaton

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means mechanical, electronic, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior written consent of the publisher, nor be otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

The right of Felicity Heaton to be identified as the Author of the Work has been asserted by her in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First printed October 2006

First Edition

Layout and design by Felicity Heaton

All characters in this publication are purely fictitious and any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

ISBN (pdf version only):

1-906023-09-3

978-906023-09-6

“Oh Gods, oh Gods, oh Gods!” Kyra dashed into her room and almost skidded on the rain dampened floor. She glared at the window that had blown open in the storm and ran to it. Pulling it closed, she didn’t look when she put the latch down.

She muttered under her breath, grabbed an armful of ingredients off the side and unceremoniously dumped them on her table. Flicking through the spell book, she waved her hand frantically as though that action alone would speed things along. She was already going flat out.

What had he been thinking?

She flicked back a few pages and smiled when she found what she was looking for. Running her finger down the page, her eyes switched between it and the various bottles she’d gathered. She picked out each ingredient, adding just the right amount to the beaker in front of her, and then growled in frustration when a gust of wind blew the casement open again. Slamming the window, she clawed her dark brown hair from her face and then leafed back through the book to find the spell it had been on before the breeze had lost her page. She hurriedly put in the rest of the ingredients that the spell mentioned and then stirred it as fast as possible.

“Come on,” she said, urging it to change colour so she knew it was ready.

The second it went from green to black, she poured it into the phial, spilling some of it down the sides in her haste, and corked it.

What on earth had he been thinking?

Her heart raced along with her feet as she skidded out into the hall again and bolted along it back towards the other end of the house where she was needed. She tried to swallow, but her mouth had gone dry and her head ached from all of the thoughts swimming around it.

She couldn't lose him. She had worked hard to get the position as his apprentice and keep it for so long. If the Black Sleep killed him, her mother wouldn't let her hear the end of it. She already thought he was lowest of the wizards in the Tri-Kingdom area.

Her mother was just jealous of his talent.

So Isaac didn't have the greatest of reputations, but that was only because he was a recluse. In fact, he made recluses look like outgoing people. But she didn't mind. If he went out all of the time to the tournaments and soirees that most wizards and witches attended, she'd never see him. This way, she got to spend hours sitting in his company.

She only wished he'd teach her something for once.

But at least she was still here. She'd lasted longer than all of his apprentices so far. Usually the moment an apprentice achieved trial level, he let them go. She was ready to take the first trial that would bring her the rank of third-level witch if she passed, and he showed no signs of ditching her, yet.

She wondered what the Black Sleep was like. She had a lot of trials to go through before she made it to the rank of seventh-level witch and only then would she be allowed to take the eighth and final trial. No one

survived it. The Black Sleep was the after effect of passing if you were a dark magic user and it drove you insane until you finally died. The light magic users suffered a similar fate.

She hurried down a set of dark wooden steps and then stopped suddenly when she lost a shoe. She didn't have time to go back. Kicking off her other one, she bolted up the corridor. The stone flags were freezing underfoot but she didn't care. All that mattered right now was getting the spell to him so his suffering would ease.

A distant cry of pain made her redouble her effort. She was so tired and her legs were starting to ache but she had to keep going. She cursed the size of the mansion. Why did he live in such a big place and why did he insist on using his magic to make it even bigger on the inside? He didn't need this much room. The only people that lived in it were him and herself.

Grinding to a halt in front of his door, she went to barge straight in but stopped herself. He demanded calmness at all times and she didn't want to anger him when he was hurting so much. Smoothing her appearance, she took deep breaths and tried to steady her heart. It was going like a jackhammer against her chest. Her throat was dry and sore, and she wheezed with every breath.

Her mother's words rang in her head.

"Why work for him? He's the most foul tempered, dark wizard in the Tri-Kingdom."

She knocked on the door.

She had her reasons.

The door opened without any assistance and she walked in at a slow pace, not letting herself hurry like she wanted to.

She swallowed and looked at him. He was reclining on his bed now wearing only his black trousers. She tore her eyes away from his slim legs and toned chest, and raised them up to his face. They traversed the curve of his jaw to his thin lips, up to his straight nose and to his fine dark brows and tousled black hair.

She had her reasons all right, just like every other apprentice witch in the area. Even some apprentice wizards, too.

There were countless girls that would give their right arm to work with him. He was gorgeous.

“Did you pass?” she asked.

His violet eyes were heavy with fatigue when he looked at her. A pang of concern stabbed her heart and she shut out the words that were running around her mind.

No one survived the Black Sleep.

There was no cure.

“Of course,” he said in a deep silken voice that seemed so relaxed. She was surprised at how well he hid the pain while she was around. The only sign of it was the occasional twitch of his lips or darkening of his eyes.

“Will the nightmares ease in time?” she said but didn’t hold out hope that his answer would contradict what she already knew. He closed his eyes, his brows knitting and

his lips compressing. She hurried forwards and held the spell out to him.

He opened one eye and looked at it.

"Sleep will not come, and I am so tired." His tone was heavy, showing her the tiredness he spoke of.

She knelt beside the bed and offered the spell to him. "I have made what you asked for."

He smiled but she could see straight through it. The gratitude he felt was marred by the pain he was experiencing. The Black Sleep made his nightmares real and even with his eyes open they haunted him, tormenting and racking his body with pain.

He took the spell from her and she reached out and uncorked it for him.

She stood up and stepped back while he sat up a little, propping himself up on one elbow, and drank down the black liquid. When he was done, she took the half empty phial from him and placed it down beside the bed. He closed his eyes and she waited, holding her breath and trying to steady her fluttering heart.

She'd never made a spell like this before.

He looked calm at first and then his face contorted. Sitting up, he glared at the phial on the small table beside the bed and then at her.

"What in the Gods names did you put in that? It's disgusting!"

Her eyes widened in horror over his outburst and the obvious anger in his voice. She picked the phial up and stared at it, trying to remember the ingredients.

"Exactly what it said." Her heart sounded loudly in her ears and she struggled to recall what the spell had listed while he was staring at her so intensely. Raising her eyes up to the ceiling, she took a deep breath. "Burdock, Lavender, the green stuff...um...Wormwood, and Black Rose Hip Seed."

When she dropped her eyes, she didn't need to ask in order to know that somewhere along the line she'd gone wrong. He was looking at her with eyes so dark that they looked black and his expression would have put thunder to shame.

She knew she was in serious trouble when he spoke and his voice was as smooth and calm as a mill pond.

"The wormwood will dull the pain, but it should have Digitalis and Belladonna in it. Are you certain that you put the right ingredients in?" He swung his legs around and she jumped backwards to avoid them as he moved to sit on the edge of the bed. His slim fingers grasped it tightly, the tips of them digging into the covers and scrunching them up.

Panic lanced through her. She had done exactly as the spell had told her. She'd put in each ingredient and had even kept her finger on the page as a marker so she wouldn't miss one. Her eyes widened.

"Oh no," she breathed.

"What?" His tone was losing some of its calmness and it only made her tremble even more inside. If he was

angry now, he was going to be furious when she told him.

"The wind blew the casement open. I swear I flicked back to the right spell but in my haste...I might have messed up." She hung her head and then jerked it back up again, her voice full of determination. "I can fix it!"

She went to dash from the room but he grabbed hold of her wrist, grasping it tightly and stopping her from moving. She looked down at his fingers where they were wrapped around her arm and then up into his eyes.

"Don't worry. It doesn't matter now," he said.

The last of the threads holding her emotions in place snapped on hearing the resolute and resigned words uttered on his lips. They made the reality of the situation hit her so hard that her bottom lip trembled, but sorrow was swiftly erased by anger.

"If you had told me you were going to take the final trial I wouldn't have let you go! You're stupid! You'll die now and then what happens to me?" she shouted the words, ignoring the tears that streaked her cheeks and the fact that he would know now how she felt about him. Her knees trembled and she yanked her arm free of his hand. She furrowed her brows and shook her head when she looked into his eyes, her voice dropping to a solemn whisper. "You'll die, Isaac...what am I supposed to do if that happens? How am I supposed to go on?"

His brows knit and he leaned towards her, trying to catch her wrist again but she evaded his hand.

He sighed and sat back. "You can go home to your mother and she can say that she told you so."

"I don't want her to be able to say that. I want to be the one telling her that I told her so," she said and stared into his eyes.

His look softened and then the corner of his lips twitched. On seeing the pain in his eyes, she wanted to offer to get him the right spell, but she knew he would refuse.

"You argue with her often about me? She never has liked me," he said.

She nodded and gave him a slight smile. "Every time I go home we argue about you."

"Which is less and less often I've noticed."

He was right. She had been spending less time at home over the past six months. It wasn't just because her mother had been becoming more infuriating with her derisive comments about Isaac. She just didn't feel as though she belonged there any more. Her mother and two sisters were all light magic users. She wanted to be a dark magic user. If she was one of those, then she was sure that Isaac would definitely keep her around as his apprentice while she studied and took the trials.

She reminded herself that he probably wouldn't be around long enough for her to even start the trials as his apprentice. The Black Sleep moved swiftly.

"I have work to do here," she said, answering his observation about why she hadn't been home as much recently. It wasn't a lie. She really did have work to do. The house didn't run itself and she had a lot to learn before her first trial.

He smiled, his long dark lashes almost hiding his violet eyes, and then held his hand out to her. She looked at it, wondering what he wanted her to do. She knew what she wanted. She wanted to put her hand into his and never let go of it. She wanted to find a way to save him from death and make him the first eighth-level wizard to survive the final trials.

"Come." He beckoned her. "I have been a poor tutor for you. I have neglected your needs out of my own selfish desire to hold you back long enough for me to see just what burns in your heart."

"Why?" She trembled when she placed her hand into his.

Isaac smiled again. She was still so very pure and innocent. He knew that she thought she was ready to face the first set of trials so she could achieve the rank of third-level witch, but he wasn't so sure. She still hadn't realised what burnt in her heart. She was so caught up in wanting to be a dark magic user for some reason that she hadn't realised just what she really was.

He looked at her small hand where it rested in his. He could feel it shaking against him, trembling the tiniest amount but just enough to tell him what he really needed to know.

She feared for him. She was scared of losing him. She'd said it herself during her outburst. Not only that she would have stopped him had she known he was leaving that night to submit himself to the final trials, but that she was frightened of what would happen to her if he died. She didn't want to be without him, didn't want to be alone.

He ran his eyes down the length of her slim body. She hadn't been eating enough recently. He swore she was a little thinner every time he saw her. He'd have to do something about that. He couldn't have her fading on him. The black dress she wore didn't really suit her, it didn't suit any female apprentice, and he couldn't see why they had to wear such a lowly outfit. It was plain, boring, but did nothing to take away from her beauty. She had such a sweet pair of cherry lips that were currently washed out by her worry, and a little button nose that leant her a mischievous look. His eyes came to rest on her feet. Maybe it wasn't just worry that was making her so pale.

"Your feet are bare," he said and stared at them.

She wriggled her toes. "I lost a shoe when I was running here."

"You ran? In just your stockings? Over that floor? You'll catch your death." He frowned at her feet.

"I'd rather catch my death than let you suffer," she said in a quiet voice.

He smiled inside and drew her hand towards him, leading her to the bed. She sat down without instruction and the height of his bed raised her feet off the floor. His eyes wandered back up to her face and he studied her for a moment, waiting for the blinding pain inside of him to pass so he could speak again without her seeing it.

"Do you know what spell you made?" he said and she shook her head. He picked the phial up and swirled the black liquid around. "I didn't think so. Instead of Clarity of Mind, you gave me Clarity of Vision. I see everything

now, through every deceit and through your eyes into your soul. Look into mine.”

She did as instructed. He struggled against the stab of pain that ripped through his heart and clenched his teeth, steeling himself against another one. Time was running out for him. He had to move fast if he was going to save himself.

Tears swam in her dark brown eyes. He was tempted to wipe them off her delicate ashen cheeks with his thumb but didn't dare do such a thing, no matter how much he really wanted to. He had to maintain his focus so this would work. He stared into her eyes and resisted the temptation to let himself get lost in them. She was so young. Slim and fragile looking. He'd never understood why she wanted to be his apprentice, not when her mother could teach her everything she needed to know, but from the moment he'd laid eyes on her, he'd known that she was the one and the past year had proven he was right.

“You fear me, yet you work for me? Why? It can't be because I'm a good tutor, all I do is shout at you or leave you to your own devices. Why did you want to be here?”

She went to look away but he didn't let her. Placing his hand against her cheek, he brought her eyes back to his. There was so much fear and doubt in them. Maybe he'd misjudged her. If he had, he would have sealed his fate.

“Your mother is powerful. She could have taught you everything. Why me?” He could see she wasn't going to answer still. He paused and then added, “Your mother hates me.”

"I don't care what my mother thinks of you," she said with venom and frowned at him.

He could see in her eyes that she was telling the truth. She really didn't care what her mother thought. Holding her gaze, he tried to think of a way of making her tell him the reason why she had wanted to be his apprentice. He had to be sure.

His hand immediately moved to his stomach as it twisted and turned, burning with pain and making his heart skip a beat.

Small hands appeared in view and pressed against his shoulders, supporting him. Raising his head, he saw the weight of concern in her eyes and wondered why she bothered voicing her feelings when he could see them all so clearly.

"You need to rest. You're killing yourself, Isaac. Please?"

He took hold of her hand and brought it away from his chest while shaking his head.

"There's no time for rest, Kyra. Do you work with me because of my standing within the Tri-Kingdom court?"

She shook her head this time. "No. What does it matter to me if you're revered by the Kings and their men? I am never there."

"I didn't think so," he said and then picked up the phial. He held it out to her. "Drink."

She leaned away from him, her expression darkening. He didn't relinquish his grip on her hand.

"You've given me clarity, Kyra. It's time you got some of your own. I command you to drink."

"No," she said with another shake of her head.

"What are you afraid of? That you will finally see me for what I am and not what you wish me to be? You know the dark places to which I go at night. You've seen me as the wretched creature I can become when the magic takes me. You're my apprentice and this is a lesson, so drink." He pushed the phial towards her and she stared at it with wide eyes and then looked back up into his, silently pleading him.

He kept his hand steady and waited to see what she would do.

She took the phial, closed her eyes and drank down the rest of the potion.

Taking the empty glass bottle from her, he placed it back on the side and waited for her to open her eyes. Her hand still trembled in his, betraying her nerves.

Capturing her cheek with his free hand, he held her head up so there was no way she could turn away from him.

"Look at me," he whispered, anticipation curling itself like a writhing snake in his stomach. "Tell me what you see."

She slowly opened one eye and then the other, until she was staring straight into his. She held his gaze for what seemed like the longest time and then blinked.

"You're the same."

He smiled but it was short lived. Pain raced through every vein and he gritted his teeth. Her look became one of worry again and she opened her mouth to speak but he held his hand up and silenced her.

"I thought so. You know what a monster I am, yet you remain with me. Why?" He frowned when she tried to look away and held her steady, keeping her eyes facing him. "If you don't tell me, I'll find a new apprentice."

Her eyes flew wide and he could see that she was mortified by his ultimatum. He regretted saying it, but it soon disappeared when she raised his hand up, lowered her eyes, and pressed a light, tentative kiss to it.

His heart missed a beat and the pain inside him subsided a little.

"Why did you have to take the trials?" Kyra whispered and pressed her cheek against his hand. She sighed and closed her eyes, causing the tears in them to slip onto his hand. It felt so bittersweet to have all this now that she was going to lose it all.

He shifted on the bed but she didn't open her eyes. She felt him lean towards her and breathed in sharply when he smoothed the hair from her face.

"What if I said there was a cure?"

Her head shot up and nearly collided with his. Staring into his violet eyes, she searched them to see whether he was telling the truth. She had the advantage of clear vision now, just like he did. There was no way he could lie to her.

"Really?"

“There is a book—”

“And it has the cure?” She interjected.

He frowned at her. “Let me finish.”

She nodded and leaned forwards, eager to know what the cure for the Black Sleep was. Whatever he had discovered, it was something that no one else in the Tri-Kingdom area knew of or there would have been an eighth-level witch or wizard in the court already.

“There is a book that I have read, long before I decided to take the trials. It speaks of a cure to a great sickness of mind and body.”

“What is it?”

There was a hint of uncertainty in his eyes and she wondered just what it was that could cure him.

“I’ll need your help,” he said.

“I’ve been studying your books. I can do dark magic. I can make any spell that you need me to. I won’t mess up this time. I won’t.”

He smiled at her. “I don’t need dark magic, Kyra. I need something stronger.”

“Stronger?”

“Old magic,” he said. “I have something to ask of you and you can say no if you wish.”

She shuffled closer to him and kept her eyes fixed on his. "What is it?"

He paused for a few seconds and then leaned towards her, bringing his mouth close to her ear. He whispered, "Will you take my burden?"

The Black Sleep? He wanted her to take it from him? She stared at the ornate wooden headboard of his bed and considered what he was asking of her. There were so many questions she had to ask but she couldn't get hold of them. They seemed to slip through her grasp whenever she tried to voice one.

Drawing back, she looked into his eyes. He was so close to her, as close as she'd often thought about. She'd spent countless hours thinking about being next to him, about having him touch her like he had tonight.

"Will I...?" she trailed off when he shook his head in answer to her unfinished question.

"I wouldn't risk you," he said.

Warmth spread through her on hearing his words and the affection they were spoken with. It was all she needed to know. She could live with his burden if she wouldn't die from it.

"Then I will take it, only I don't know how," she said and then looked down at his hand when his grip on hers tightened.

"There's a reason I chose you that day, Kyra, and a reason I've been such a poor tutor to you. I've been distracted. You've distracted me. I can't concentrate when you're in the room with me." He drew her towards

him and her heart leapt into her throat when she saw the fire in his eyes. His gaze dropped to her mouth. "There's only one way to take this pain from me."

Her eyes moved to his lips and she wetted hers. She had to be dreaming. She may have spent countless hours just thinking about being close to him, but she had spent the whole of her adult life dreaming about what she was sure he wanted from her now.

He edged closer, his mouth nearing hers, and each passing second made her heart beat a little bit faster until she felt dizzy. She'd heard of rituals that required a physical connection, but she'd never once in her life thought she'd be taking part in one. The feel of his lips brushing lightly over hers made them tingle and her eyes grew wide before dropping shut when she started to kiss him back.

Tentatively raising her hands up, she held them at a distance for a few seconds, unsure of whether to go through with what she wanted to do, and then ran them up his arms when she found her courage. She slid them upward to his shoulders and then around the back of his neck, burying them into his dark hair. She gasped when he pulled her closer to him, his hands resting firmly on her waist. It made her stomach flip to feel his fingers against her, holding her tight enough that she could make out each one. She sighed into his mouth and was surprised when he did the same.

She didn't stop him when he leaned towards her, gently laying her down on the bed. She opened her eyes and stared at the canopy of the four poster bed. Her heart pounded against her chest, her body trembling with anticipation. She waited, silently pleading him to come to her and make her feel like she knew he could.

Her eyes widened when her whole body felt light for a moment and she looked across at him. He smiled at her and she frowned when she realised that she was somehow level with his shoulders. Panic raced through her when she looked down at the bed a few feet below her. She scrambled in mid air and then felt her cheeks flush with embarrassment when she fell.

He laughed.

"I..." She stumbled on her words and went to sit up, but he pressed a hand to her shoulder, forcing her to remain where she was.

"Don't apologise, really. I'm flattered by your reaction." He leaned over her again and she smiled up at him.

Was he really flattered? She hadn't even realised she was floating. She'd done nothing to call such magic. She'd just been thinking about how wonderful it was and how she felt as though she was in heaven.

"Isaac?" she said in a tight voice, attempting to control her nerves. He looked at her, his head cocking to one side and his violet eyes filling with curiosity.

"Yes, Kyra?"

Her heart skipped a beat over the low voice he'd spoken her name in. There was so much desire in it and it matched the hunger she could see in the depths of his eyes.

"You're certain I won't?"

He nodded and ran the backs of his fingers down her cheek, looking into her eyes the whole time. There was so much affection in them that she blushed again. "I'd never risk you."

Her heart swelled when he leaned towards her, his mouth moving nearer to hers at an aching slow pace. She wanted him to hurry, but at the same time she didn't. This moment had been nothing but a fantasy for so long that now it was becoming a reality she wanted to make the most of it in case it never happened again.

She kept her eyes open when his lips touched hers and a jolt of pleasure ran through her, seemingly warming her whole body and relaxing her until she felt as though she was melting into the bed. Bringing her hand up, she ran the tips of her fingers down his cheek and delighted at the feeling of his skin under them. It was soft and warm, but rough at the same time. She kept kissing him while her hand ventured a little lower, tracing the curve of his throat and teasing his collarbones. She swallowed hard and closed her eyes when he joined in the exploration.

Isaac smiled at her sharp intake of breath when he drew the hem of her dress up to reveal her black stockings. He looked down at them. Boring as they were, there was still something sexy about them. He grimaced when pain lanced through him, reminding him that there wasn't time for taking it slow like he wanted to. Drawing back, he watched her face when he ran his hand up her shin. She bit her lip but he could see the sigh coming. Her teeth lost their grip on her lower lip and her mouth opened a fraction, enough for him to see her tongue. He slid his hand around the underside of her thigh and reclaimed her mouth, tackling her tongue with his own. She moaned into his mouth and he frowned, resisting his desire to groan at the sound of it and the feeling of her

silk stockings. His hand slipped over the satiny material and he couldn't stop the moan that escaped his lips when he left the stocking behind and hit the soft warmth of her skin.

Was a little more time too much to ask? He wanted this to go on forever, wanted a quiet exploration of the girl he'd watched grow into a woman over the past year, a girl he'd craved from the moment he'd laid eyes on her. When he'd realised a few months ago that Kyra had feelings for him in return, he'd decided to take the trials and risk her rejection. If she had rejected him, his misery would have been short lived. The Black Sleep would kill him before a day had passed.

His only hope was with her.

Pushing her dress up a little more, he was pleasantly surprised when she responded by trailing her fingers down over his chest and kissed him more fervently.

He wondered how she'd respond to what was coming next.

He ran his hand up over her dress while he continued to kiss her, his tongue playing against hers while her hands roamed his torso. She traced her fingers down his arm as he undid the top button of her dress. Leaving her mouth, he placed light kisses along her jaw and then trailed his tongue down the curve of her neck. His fingers worked their way downward, unbuttoning her dress, until he'd reached the hem of it. He raised his head and looked down the length of her body. She sighed when he slowly pushed the two sides of her dress apart to reveal the milky white skin of her stomach and chest.

She was beautiful.

Shifting on the bed, he suppressed the pain that twisted his stomach and trailed kisses down from her neck to her breasts. He peeled the dress away from them, revealing them to his eyes. He groaned when he hardened in his trousers at the sight of them. They were small, perfect mounds tipped with the palest pink.

He closed his eyes and kissed around the underside of one, working his way in a spiral to her nipple. He ran his tongue over it and blew on it, teasing it to hardness. She moaned and arched her back, forcing her breasts up towards him. Sliding one hand underneath her, he traced the index finger of his other one down from the notch between her collarbones to the point above her heart.

"Ouch!" Kyra said when a streak of pain followed his finger. She frowned and looked at him with questioning eyes. He was staring at her chest.

Looking there, she saw a thin purple line exactly where he'd ran his finger.

"What?" she said and he held his hand out to her.

"Come." He stood up and she slipped her hand into his, letting him help her to her feet.

Her cheeks blazed when she looked down at herself and she felt suddenly self-conscious. She wished that the lights weren't so bright.

Her eyes widened when the lamps around the room dimmed.

Isaac raised a brow at her and smiled. She swallowed when she realised that he probably thought she'd done it on purpose to heighten the mood. Her eyes followed his hands when he stepped towards her and gently pushed her dress off her shoulders. She felt it slip down her back and pool on the floor near her feet.

Her heart was beating so fast that she felt sick. She wanted to cover herself but couldn't move. She wanted to do so many things, half of which involved the man standing in front of her and all of which she didn't have the courage to go through with right now. Standing in front of him, she waited for him to make a move, because she certainly couldn't.

He reached out towards her and ran his finger down her chest. She watched the thin threads of purple appear on her skin wherever he touched.

"How are you doing that?"

"There is no how...the magic is doing it all by itself, just as it is with you."

He was right. She hadn't commanded the magic to make her float or dim the lights. She hadn't even really thought that hard about it to make it happen. It just had.

She watched him kneel on the bed and followed his lead. Every time his eyes dropped to her body, she wanted to blush and desire raced through her. Her gaze traversed his chest, travelling over every muscle that tensed when he moved, settling himself into a comfortable position. She went to reach out to touch him, but he caught her hand.

"Follow my lead," he said and moved her right hand so it was halfway between them. He spread her fingers and turned her hand so her palm was facing upward. He brought his right hand forwards and held it over hers so their palms were almost touching. "Keep it there, understood? Don't let them meet, no matter how strong the attraction becomes."

She nodded and nerves flipped her stomach. She'd been enjoying how easy everything had been and now it seemed so difficult. She focused on keeping her hand steady but the moment he made a small noise of pain she looked up at him. Leaning forwards, she stopped when he shook his head and managed a smile.

"All you need to do is concentrate," he said and raised his left hand.

"But..." She wanted to ask him what she was supposed to be doing but he shook his head, silencing her. Looking at his left hand, she realised that she was supposed to be doing the same as him.

"Ready? Just relax and don't resist it."

"Resist what?" she said and he answered her by moving his left hand towards her. She gasped when hers mirrored its movement.

All she could do was watch as his eyes flashed a vivid shade of purple and her fingers began to move against his chest. She could feel the lines he was drawing against hers. They burned like fire against her skin and she resisted her desire to flinch away. She had to be strong and do as he'd instructed. No matter how painful it became, she was going to take everything he was

passing to her through the spell, because if she didn't, he'd die.

Swallowing down the pain, she focused on the magic that was passing between them. She could feel it entering her body and could feel the strength that was controlling her movements. Her right hand trembled and shook, but she held it away from his, keeping the distance between them steady like he'd told her to. She tried to keep her eyes on her hand, watching it draw the eight pointed star against his skin. The mark she was drawing on him wasn't purple like the one he was giving her. It shone bright white, visible only by how dazzling it was.

When the room seemed to grow darker, she looked around them, her hand still moving of its own volition against him. The shadows in the room began to grow long and twisted, and she shrank away a little when they took on shapes and moved towards her.

"Stay with me," Isaac said and she looked straight at him, right into his eyes.

He smiled at her, trying to show her that everything was going to be all right. The things she could see now were just figments of her imagination and would pass. She had to remain focused or the spell would fail. Moving his hand faster, he put the last of the symbols in place on her chest and then pressed his index finger and forefinger against the mark. She cried out in pain and the room went black for a moment before the lamps flickered back into life.

Catching her in his arms, he held onto her, giving her a moment to regain her strength. He held her right hand tightly in his, his thumb gently stroking the back of it.

Letting go of her, he ran his left hand down over her chest. His fingers paused briefly on the mark. It was fading now, but it would return. The spell had been cast, now they had to finish it. He closed his eyes when her fingers brushed against his chest, her nails teasing his skin.

He was relieved when she raised her head and looked into his eyes, her own showing no sign of pain.

She smiled at something and he looked down to see her drawing patterns on his skin, her fingertips leaving a trail of white fire wherever they went. Drawing her right hand towards him, he knelt on the bed and snaked his arm about her waist when her body was flush against his. He looked into her eyes for a few seconds, absorbing the tender look in them and then brought his mouth down to hers.

Kyra closed her eyes the moment their lips met. She dug her fingernails into his chest when his tongue brushed against hers and she delighted at the feeling of his bare skin against hers. Laying down with her head resting on the pillows, she kept hold of his right hand and pulled on it, luring him towards her. He didn't offer any resistance, not even when she ran her hand up over his bicep and around the back of his neck, bringing his head down to hers. She smiled against his lips when he kissed her and the room seemed a little brighter. She kept her attention fixed on him, not wanting to see the nightmare creatures that lurked in the shadows. She wanted to lose herself in the moment and forget they existed for a while.

She moaned when his mouth left hers and he kissed her neck, nipping at it slightly while he did so. Threading her fingers into his hair, she guided him slowly downwards,

arching her body into his. She bit her lip when his tongue circled her nipple and held him there. Her stomach tensed and warmed when she felt his fingers coursing up her legs. They tickled the inside of her thigh, teasing her and tempting her to clamp her legs shut on his hand. When she went to move, his fingers pressed harder into her flesh and intense need filled her. She moved a bit more, forcing him to hold her a little harder. She was surprised by the thrill that ran through her because of it.

Feeling a little more confident, she caught him under the jaw and drew him back up so his face was level with hers. She stared deep into his eyes, trying to silently convey what she was feeling. When she saw the hint of tiredness in his, she pushed him onto his back.

Isaac swallowed hard and lay stretched out on the bed. He wondered what had happened to the shy girl that had been his apprentice. She was looking at him with such hungry eyes that shone with desire that he barely recognised her. He hadn't meant her to see how tired he was. The magic needed to cast the spell had drained him of what little strength he'd had left after the trials.

"Kyra—"

She pressed a finger to his lips and silenced him.

"I know what needs to be done," she said.

He swallowed again when she leaned towards him. Her breasts swung alluringly and he couldn't help but stare at them. He brought his hand up, cupping them and watching her bite her lip when his thumbs teased her nipples into sensitive peaks. He ran his thumbs around in circles, making her moan and her brows furrow in

pleasure. When she opened her eyes and looked at him, he narrowed his eyes and tensed his jaw.

She seemed to see immediately what he wanted and all he could do was reach his hands up above his head and grab hold of the spindles of the headboard when her fingers grazed his stomach. He sucked it in, praying they would take the bait and go lower. A moan left his lips when he felt her unbuckling his trousers and he leaned his head back when she unbuttoned them.

Closing his eyes, he savoured the feeling of her fingers lightly brushing against his hips while she removed his trousers. His heart thundered against his chest, his fingers trembling where they gripped the headboard. He uttered her name when her hands coursed up his legs, leaving a trail of heat in their wake. He felt as though he was going to burn up. He was so hungry for her touch that he was on the verge of pleading her.

Kyra felt empowered when he tried to raise his body into her hand. She withdrew it, enjoying the control that she had and the way it made her feel. Lowering her fingers, she teased him by drawing a lone one up and over his hip to his stomach. It was fascinating to watch him writhe beneath it, his lean muscles twisting and bunching underneath his pale skin.

Never in her wildest dreams had he been like this. She reminded herself that there was still a spell to complete. Her eyes strayed to his erection and heat flooded her thighs. She squeezed them together, attempting to suppress the desire she felt but only heightening it instead. She was sure she was going to wake up tomorrow and this all would have been some delicious fantasy.

Leaning over him, she replaced her fingers with her lips. She placed small, wet kisses against his stomach, feeling the muscles of his abdomen tense beneath each one. She smiled and moved gradually upwards. Her breasts brushed against his chest when she reached his mouth. His hand slid down her back, coming to rest against her backside while his other one caught hold of her wrist.

She smiled against his mouth when he kissed her and rolled her onto her back. His fingers teased her breasts, tracing over the mark that had faded and reminding her that although she couldn't see it, it was still there. She closed her eyes and relaxed into the bed when his lips left hers and he sucked one of her nipples into his mouth.

They shot open again when his hand slipped over her stomach and into her underwear. She raised her hips into his hand, her lips parting and her breathing becoming heavy. Her abdomen tightened and she arched her back into him, her pelvic muscles tensing when his fingers slid in between her fleshy lips. She moaned breathily and swallowed hard.

Isaac smiled down at her where she was laying half beneath him, her arms out by her sides and her knees apart. Her eyes were closed, her mouth was wide open and her brows were furrowed in pleasure. He kissed her neck and licked her earlobe while he teased her pert nub with his fingers. Dipping them downwards, he groaned into her ear over how slick with desire she was and brought some of the lubricant back up to her clit. He teased it with a slow circling of his fingers and listened to her heavy breathing as a guide. When it began to quicken, he withdrew his hand and looked at her.

She frowned, her eyes full of need and anger over his denying her. He drew a sharp breath when pain stabbed deep in his chest and the look in her eyes told him she'd noticed it. She caught hold of him around the back of his head and brought his mouth close to hers. When his lips were brushing against hers, her hand slid down over his arm and took hold of his. He followed her silent instructions when she moved his hand to the side of her underwear. Kneeling, he slowly drew them down her legs, his eyes taking in the full splendour of her where she lay stretched out in front of him with only her stockings on. She went to remove them, but he shook his head and she stopped.

Running his hands back up her legs, he trailed kisses along the inside of her thighs and over her stomach. He smiled each time she moaned. Taking hold of her waist, he rolled onto his back so she was sitting astride him. He brushed the hair from her face and gave her a reassuring smile when she looked a little nervous. He ran his hands up over her thighs to her stomach, pressing his thumbs into her supple flesh as they continued to move upward. Reaching her breasts, he cupped them both. She leaned her head back, her brows knitting and a moan issuing from her lips. He lowered one hand and his eyes with it. Teasing her nipple with one hand, he waited until she moaned again before sliding his other one over her mound. He slipped his fingers in again and ran them lightly over her nub.

She opened her eyes and fixed them on his. He frowned, wondering what she was thinking and then groaned when she reached around behind her and took hold of his erection. The feeling of her warm fingers running over it made him buck his hips up and he saw her eyes widen when his actions made it brush against her backside. Her eyelids dropped, hooding her eyes, and

her teeth teased her lower lip while she stroked him. He forgot what he'd been doing and lost himself in the delicious feeling of her hands against his flesh.

"Kyra," he whispered and she curved her hips so her buttocks rubbed against his erection.

He swallowed hard and moaned, giving her a pleading look as it all became too much. He was her prisoner, too tired to take control and desperate for her to put him out of his misery. Sliding his hand down underneath her, he took hold of himself and teased her with the tip of his erection. He smiled wickedly when she moaned, a frown creasing her brows, and then raised her hips, bringing them closer to him. He teased her again, the head of his cock slipping just inside her opening. He ached to be inside of her. He'd been aching for this moment for so long. So many lonely nights he'd spent thinking about her where she slept just down the hall from him.

He watched her face contort in pleasure as she eased backwards a little, forcing his length deeper inside of her. She was so hot and wet. He struggled to keep control of himself, wanting to let her set the pace of their lovemaking. Her hips rotated a fraction, making him moan and grit his teeth. He moved his hips up a little, pushing himself further into her, and was rewarded by her sinking slowly onto him until he was buried inside of her.

Kyra pressed her hands into his stomach while she sank down onto his cock. She moved her hips around in a circle, adjusting to the feeling of him filling her up, and then tentatively raised her eyes to meet his. He was looking at her through his eyelashes, his violet irises barely visible. She smiled, licked her lips and then spread her legs a little further in an attempt to get all of

him in. She groaned at the same time he did and sighed when she raised her hips back up, letting him slide almost all of the way out of her before she eased slowly back down the length of him.

“Oh Gods,” she moaned and he chuckled. She couldn’t see what was funny. Her abdomen felt like it was going to burst it was so tight and she was so desperate with need that all she wanted to do was race to the finish, but something kept telling her to go slow.

She clenched her muscles around him and he bucked his hips up, a harsh groan escaping him.

She chuckled.

Running her fingers up his stomach, she leaned forwards, stretching her hands up to catch hold of his. She threaded her fingers into his and sat back on him, moaning when he thrust his hips up. Pressing her palms into his and tightly grasping his hands, she moved against him, rotating her hips at the same time. She kept her eyes locked with his and tensed her muscles every time she drew her hips up. She groaned and dug her nails into his hands.

Isaac couldn’t take his eyes away from hers and he couldn’t stop himself from thrusting up into her, forcing their hips to meet. He gripped her hands tighter and tried to steady his breathing when he felt the magic weaving through his veins. He looked at their joined hands at the same time as she did. He could feel the magic passing between them and his eyes were drawn to her chest when the mark appeared again. It glowed, pulsing with light that raced along the lines of the eight pointed star and the symbols that surrounded it.

She moaned and her muscles tensed, gripping him hard and making him groan with each meeting of their hips. He leaned his head back into the pillow, his whole body stiffening as his desire spiralled. He pushed his hands against hers, counteracting her movement and steadying her as she increased the pace of their lovemaking.

Closing his eyes, his breathing came quicker, his desire building to a crescendo.

Kyra furrowed her brows when the feeling in her abdomen intensified. She could feel the magic flowing through her, her own mixing with his. She struggled to keep her eyes open, wanting to watch him while tingles coursed through her, all meeting in the pit of her stomach. Her heart fluttered when he thrust his hips up and she tightened her muscles around him, milking him and making the most of each plunge of her hips to meet his.

When he opened his eyes and looked deep into hers, she breathed out heavily and her abdomen ached in response. She groaned, moving her hips faster and faster and making her strokes longer. She leaned her head forwards, tensing her thighs and pushing harder against his hands. He pushed back and she looked at him. His whole body was tensed below her, every muscle tightened and strained. She could see the bright white marks she'd placed on him and they seemed to call to hers. Leaning her head back, she closed her eyes and bit her lip as the feeling inside of her exploded. A warm shiver raced along every nerve and she convulsed forwards when she came. She leaned into his hands, using him to support her and struggled to keep her momentum going. She breathed heavily when he thrust his hips up, plunging himself deep into her and making her moan when he came, spilling himself inside of her.

Collapsing against his chest, she closed her eyes and listened to the thundering of his heart as it beat against her ear. She sighed out her breath, her fingers still locked with his and the magic now quietening.

She smiled lazily when he rolled her over, his arms snaking around her waist and holding her to him. He brushed the hair from her face. She squeezed her thighs together to make the most of the feeling lingering there and moaned.

Opening her eyes, she frowned when she sat up slightly and looked around the room. The shadows were gone and when she closed her eyes, the nightmare creatures didn't appear like she expected them to.

Her eyes dropped to Isaac when he lay stretched out beside her and she noticed the mark on his chest. It was black now. She looked at hers and traced her fingers over the mark there. It looked like a tattoo. When she looked back at him, he was smiling.

"What does it mean?" she said with a curious frown.

He placed one arm under his head and ran the fingers of his free hand over the mark.

"It means your mother will kill me," he said and his smile broadened.

She gave him a confused look. Her mother would kill him?

"Why?" She propped her head up on her hand and traced the star on his chest with her fingertips. When he'd drawn it during the spell, she'd expected it to

disappear once they had completed it, but it was still there and by the looks of things, it was permanent.

He gave a little laugh that sounded a lot like nerves to her. The whole of the Tri-Kingdom area knew how powerful her mother was and that she was someone to be feared. Was he scared of her mother? He was far more powerful than her and even if her mother did try something, she'd never let her hurt him.

"I married our hearts," he said at last and her eyes widened.

"You joined them?" she said, not quite believing what she was hearing. Her heart raced.

"I had to in order to share my burden." He brushed his fingers against her cheek and looked into her eyes. "You did say yes."

"I know." She smiled and then frowned. "Why don't I see the nightmare creatures when I close my eyes?"

He leaned back, drawing her close to him. She nestled between his side and his arm, enjoying the peacefulness and the way his fingers felt as they toyed with her hair.

"Because the Black Sleep has no ill effect on you. Your light negates it. It is a balance of power that we will always share." He brought her free hand to him and pressed a kiss to it.

She went over what he'd said in her head, interpreting it in every possible way but always coming to the same conclusion.

He'd bonded them. He'd seen what she couldn't and realised that she was a light magic user, and it was that power within her that had balanced his own through the spell.

She smiled and rested her head against his chest, looking up at him.

"What is it?" he said when she'd been staring into his eyes for a few minutes.

"You're the first eighth-level wizard," she said and he smiled at her. "It means I get to tell my mother that I told her so."

"Is that all?"

She ran her fingers lightly over the mark on his chest.

"This is real? You really married our hearts? You married us?"

He nodded. "I really did. There's a bonus."

She sat up a little. "What?"

"Not only do you get to spend the rest of your life with me, but you will also be the first witch to take the eighth-level light magic trial and live." He toyed with her fingers and she moved closer to him.

He pressed his hand against her chest and took hold of her hand, placing it over the mark on his.

"This bond between us, this balance of darkness and light it creates, will mean you'll never go through the

pain and torture that comes after the final trial, when we get you there of course,” he said.

She stroked his chest. “Go back to the bit about spending the rest of my life with you.”

He smiled and craned his neck to kiss her. She closed her eyes while her lips played against his. As appealing as the idea of not suffering after taking the final trial was, it was nothing compared to the idea of being with him always. He pulled back a little so their mouths were a few centimetres apart.

“I love you,” he whispered against her lips.

She smiled and kissed him again. “I love you too.”

Drawing the bedcovers over them both, she curled up next to him. She rested her forehead against his neck and closed her eyes. This evening she’d been on the brink of losing her whole world, but somehow she’d wound up with everything she’d ever dreamed of instead, and even more besides.

She smiled when Isaac wrapped his arms about her, pressed a kiss to her hair and rested his cheek against the top of her head.

She’d never dreamed she’d end up with Isaac in love with her and being bonded to him.

When he was strong enough, he would have to attend the Tri-Kingdom court and show them that he had survived the trials and become the first true eighth-level wizard. She’d have to go with him. It would be her first time at court, but she wanted to see her mother’s face first hand when she heard about Isaac and she wanted

him with her when she finally got to tell her that she told her so.

Her mother had been wrong about him.

He was talented and clever, he had proven that tonight, and he did care about her.

Until he was strong enough to leave the bed, they'd just have to spend some more time bonding. She got the feeling that it wasn't just magic he could teach her and she wanted to learn everything.

Hooking her leg over his, she yawned and drifted off to sleep, wondering what tomorrow would bring.

Safe in the arms of her husband.

The End

About the Author:

Felicity Heaton is a great believer in love at first sight and the romantic ideal. Having grown up reading extensively, she developed a deep love of classical literature, ranking *Jane Eyre*, *North & South*, and *Persuasion* amongst her all time favourite reads. The most romantic moment of her life was when her husband got down on bended knee on the steps of *Sacré Coeur*, Paris, at night in front of several hundred spectators and proposed. She was too drunk on love, and subsequently champagne, to care about the audience. All she could see was the man that she loved. A writer of emotion and life, she always strives to touch a chord of familiarity in her readers and give them characters they can love and a read to remember.

To see her other novels, visit:

<http://www.felicityheaton.co.uk>

Other short stories in this series:

Eternal Kiss

Nicholas has spent centuries doing what he does best-hunting and killing. A Halloween masquerade seems like the perfect place to amuse himself and grab a quick bite to eat, but he gets more than he bargained for when he sets eyes on the beautiful Anna. He's a vampire who is happy being alone in the world but is Anna about to change all that?

Anna has had a tough life and her luck with men is dismal. When she finds herself swept up into the seductive embrace of a sinfully handsome man, she thinks that luck is finally changing, but things are not all they appear.

Caught up in their masquerade, Anna and Nicholas both find it impossible to deny their attraction to the other and they succumb to their desires. Anna takes everything in her stride, convinced that she's either dreaming or about to die, and wanting to make the most of it regardless. Nicholas starts out wanting nothing more than her blood and her body, but things soon change. What will happen when reality comes crashing down around them? Will love last forever if it's sealed with an eternal kiss?

<http://www.felicityheaton.co.uk/eternalkiss.php>

Hunter's Moon

Scott Hudson has a secret but he's not the only one on the mountain with something to hide.

The brink of winter is a bad time for hunting, but the hunter's moon attracts them anyway. Scott Hudson curses the drunken huntsmen that disturb his peace and seals himself away in his cabin, waiting for the impending storm to drive them back down the mountain. The snowfall is heavy and he's convinced that nothing could disturb his solitude now.

Then a gunshot punctuates the air, echoing around the mountains.

And a noise on the porch makes his heart pound.

But not as fast as the naked woman he finds lying outside does.

Neoma has watched Scott since he first arrived on her mountain years ago but has never dared to speak to him for fear of him discovering what she is. Shot by the hunters, she has no choice but to place herself in his care and hope that she can hold the wolf inside at bay. When she notices his attraction to her, she can't help acting on her own and prays that he won't turn her away because of what she is. Can Scott's secret be the answer to Neoma's prayers? Can a human ever love a werewolf?

<http://www.felicityheaton.co.uk/huntersmoon.php>