



Isabella
Jordan

SAY

STAY

...His mouth slanted down over hers, halting her words and claiming her with a kiss that wiped her mind clean of all else. It was different from the patient, nurturing kisses he'd treated her to before. This kiss was demanding, masterful. It revealed the darker, dangerous side of the man who had been in her bed last night.

That kiss, combined with the heat that had built in her body as she watched him battle the wolf creatures, sent pulses of pure heat racing through her blood. With an urgency that surprised her, she wanted him. She had to have him now.

Kelly began to kiss him back with demand that equaled his, and he crushed her to him. Halen went wild, tearing at her gown and his clothing, growling with the same desperation that she felt.

Ignoring the wound that must have hurt like hell, he roughly turned her away from him and pulled the gown off her body. The sunshine was bright as she stood there in the grip of the most powerful lust she'd ever experienced, aware that he was pulling off the last of his clothes behind her. Halen's rough hands pulled her back against him, the feel of his naked flesh pressed tightly to hers a powerful sensation that made her pussy walls quiver.

Kelly's skin quickly heated and his burned her back like flames. Halen bent her forward and thrust his cock fully into her until his balls slapped against her...

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Accidentally Yours
Electrical Storm
Elegant
Every Breath You Take
Gypsies, Tramps, and Heat
The Legend Of Black Robert Flynne
Midnight, Madness, and Naughty Things
Sache's Consort
Sister Moon
Stiff Competition
Waiting For You
Woman In Chains

STAY

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STAY
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For Jim...

She lay upon the clear blue ocean, like a string of pearls on a silk azure sheet. And like the pearls she awaited the pleasure of those who sought her out. For one thing that could never be denied, when you visited Desirata you definitely got what you needed...not necessarily what you wanted.

CHAPTER 1

“Where are you going, Kelly?”

Kelly Burrows looked back over her shoulder at the sound of her friend’s voice. Patti was only trying to make things better for her with this cruise and Kelly loved her for it. She just couldn’t take the cheery throng of dancers and drunks that made up the bulk of the ship’s passengers any longer. If she started drinking, she was afraid she wouldn’t stop. And dancing required happy thoughts, and she had none of those left.

“I’m going to stroll the deck for a few minutes. I’ll be back.”

Patti smiled, but it didn’t quite reach her eyes.

Walking as quickly as she could in the strappy heels she wasn’t used to wearing, Kelly made her way to the railing of the cruise ship that was taking them on a “fantasy island getaway.” It was her first night on the cruise ship with Patti and Rachel. A girls’ vacation they called it.

STAY

Kelly stared out into the darkness. The waters of the Atlantic at the moment looked black. Her mood was black.

How the hell could you do this to me, Jared?

Jared Wells was the greatest mistake of her life. No one had to point out to her that a relationship with a married man was a bad idea. She knew that. Yet when he'd turned on his irresistible charm and flashed her that sexy smile, all her common sense went by the boards. Kelly had been completely mesmerized by him, willing to do anything to make him hers.

And he'd dangled that very hope before her for five years, promising her that one day, he'd be hers forever. He just needed a little more time. He and his wife would be separated any day now. They'd both known the marriage was a mistake from the start. His wife wanted kids and lots of them immediately. Jared had wanted to wait, to grow their relationship. And that had all sounded so romantic to Kelly, to have a man love you so much that he wanted to be selfish and enjoy you a few years before kids came into the picture.

Days turned into weeks, weeks turned into months. He assured Kelly that he and his wife no longer shared a bedroom because she was already having an affair on him. He was waiting for proof, for her to make the first move.

Months turned into years. And by that time, Kelly was just as good at making excuses as Jared ever was. She'd explain his absence at the Christmas parties at work, the vacations with her sister, and the dinners with her friends where she always ended up the only one without a date.

Through it all they'd met for sex. Sex in his car. Sex in her car. Sex in his office where he worked hard toward becoming a partner at the law firm. There were secret rendezvous to motels and late night romps at the public park by the Winter River. He kept making promises and she kept believing them, and the whole time they fucked like rabbits.

STAY

Kelly had never seen the end coming.

Maybe she could have understood it if he'd told her he was staying with his wife after all. The rejection still would have hurt like hell, but it would have made sense.

When Jared had explained there was a third woman, another girlfriend he'd been seeing for a year who was pregnant with his baby, Kelly's devastation had been indescribable. Worse, he finally did leave his wife for *that* woman and the engagement ring on her swollen little finger let Kelly know they'd be married the moment the ink was dry on his divorce.

Her first impulse was to beat herself up over why she hadn't thought of getting knocked up. She knew he loved children despite his telling her it was part of the reason his marriage wasn't working.

Then Kelly realized how pathetic she'd truly become. Why had she been his fool for so long? Why had she stubbornly held on to the belief that he would be with her and *faithful* one day? Hadn't he cheated on his wife with *her*? He'd cheated on Kelly with the woman he'd gotten pregnant. He'd be unfaithful to the third woman, too, one day.

Five years of her life gone. He was back in New York with his little pregnant fiancée and she stood at the railing of the cruise ship, staring into the black water with a broken heart.

It was going to take a hell of a lot more than a two week cruise to some tropical island with her friends to pull her life back together. What was a girl to do when she'd spent the last several years planning her life around those stolen moments and secret trysts? How many hours had she spent waiting for his phone calls? Making explanations to her friends, her family, her coworkers...

Now he was gone. What the hell was she supposed to do?

"Come away from there now, miss."

The deep voice intruding on her thoughts startled her into whipping her head around. Behind her stood the bartender she'd seen earlier on

STAY

the deck. His accent told her he was Jamaican, his skin was dark as the night. He was an old man, painfully thin in his crisp white uniform and stooped slightly. His eyes were sharp as he pinned her with a warning gaze.

“Sorry?” Kelly was a little wary, a little annoyed by the man.

“You’d best be going back inside with the others or back to your cabin, miss,” the man explained.

Kelly sensed that he only meant to help, but she was still irritated with his interruption of the only private time she’d had all day.

“I’m not drunk,” she assured him. “I haven’t had a drop.”

Shaking his head, he walked the rail and placed one thin hand on it as he stood next to her.

“These are strange parts here, miss. And the moon is full. There are islands out there, in this part of the sea, that most folk don’t know about. People disappear sometimes, end up on those islands.”

Kelly met his gaze, taken off guard by his cryptic words.

“Wow.” Kelly really didn’t know what to say to that. “Does this happen often?”

The bartender nodded. “Often enough. Another missy like you disappeared off this very ship about nine years ago on a night like this one here.”

“I’ll bet that’s not in the travel brochures.” *Was he serious?*

“Come with me now,” he urged her. “I’d feel better knowing you were safe. I’ll take you back to your friends inside.”

Kelly stared at him, unsure what to think. She didn’t feel physically threatened by the man at all. The intensity in his eyes was another matter. Either he really believed she was in some sort of danger, or he’d been on too many cruises.

Still, she wanted a few more moments of privacy. And the last thing she wanted to do was go back into the loud crush of drunken people.

“I appreciate your concern. I just want another minute to myself and

STAY

then I promise I'll go straight to my cabin." She meant it. Maybe a sleeping pill and a few hours of rest were just what she needed. "Thank you."

The old man hesitated, studying her before he nodded and moved on.

"Good night, miss. Be safe. Don't stay long."

Kelly waited until she could no longer hear his shuffling steps over the restless sounds of the ocean.

The bartender meant well. Yet the only danger she actually faced was the great hole in her life that losing Jared had created. How easy it would be to lose her head, drink with her friends, and add to her misery by doing something stupid like hopping into bed with someone.

Or throw herself overboard.

Kelly stared down into the shining black water. The sound of the party was a dull roar behind her.

What do I do now?

Her head jerked up at a sound in the distance. Was that a horn blowing?

I must be depressed. Now she was hearing things. A horn blowing? From those mysterious islands? Hell, if she stood there too long, she'd start believing the old man's story.

Deciding to head for her cabin and sleep, Kelly turned away from the deck. The quick movement caused her to lose her balance in the ridiculous heels she'd let Patti convince her to wear. Her body fell back against the metal bars of the railing and her head hit the top bar sharply. Pain flashed in her skull as she realized in horror that the bars behind her broke free of their anchor on impact.

Kelly screamed as she hit the cold water. That and the fading din of the party was the last thing she remembered before darkness claimed her.

CHAPTER 2

“She lives,” a deep male voice said in the darkness.

Kelly gagged and coughed, spitting up water as she struggled to breathe. A strong hand thumped her on the back hard as she spat out the salty water she’d sucked in. Harder still were the male thighs beneath her chest as her fingers clutched desperately at the wet sand. Sharp pain knifed through her ribs as she fought for air.

The guy whose lap she was lying across wore tall, black boots, glistening with water, over wet black pants. Was he a fisherman or something? Zorro?

“My lord, we must hurry,” another male voice said from behind her.
My lord?

“Can we not give her a moment for pity’s sake?” The voice of the man who held her was a deep rumble that brushed warmly over her cold, wet body. “She nearly drowned.”

“Yes, my lord, of course. But the hills will be crawling with fangs

STAY

in moments. They will have heard the horn. We musn't stay long."

The horn? Could he mean the horn she'd thought she heard back on the cruise ship?

The cruise ship! Kelly had fallen on the deck and then apparently had gone overboard.

Where was she now? Had this man rescued her? Why were they talking like extras in an old Errol Flynn movie?

The blows to her back stopped as she continued to cough and sputter. When she finally managed to open her eyes, she discovered it was still night and very dark. Only the light of the moon shone down on Kelly, the man she lay across, and the two people standing before her who also wore strange boots. She didn't have the strength to crane her head up to see more of them, and her body hurt like hell. All she could see was dark, shady sand all around them. All she could think was that she must have made it to an island, because the cruise ship had been in the middle of the Atlantic when she'd fallen from it.

"We have to get back to my city now." The deep voice of the man who held her was low and by her ear now, his strong hand lightly caressing her back. "Once we reach Josara, you will be well cared for."

Kelly tried to speak and found she couldn't. Weakly she managed to nod before dropping her head back to the ground. If they could make her feel better than she did at the moment, she'd be agreeable to going most anywhere.

Consciousness was slipping away again and Kelly's eyes slid closed as she was rolled onto her back and scooped up into strong male arms. Whoever held her was running with her. Finally she was hoisted up into another set of arms and onto a hard seat with a solid male body at her back to lean against for support.

"We must ride fast." The man behind her was the one who'd spoken to her before. The seat beneath them shifted to and fro, a living thing. Were they on a horse? "It will be morning before we reach my home.

STAY

Try to sleep.”

They *were* on an animal. Kelly’s eyes flew open when it lurched beneath them and began to run. She shivered in the cold as they cut through the night, and she burrowed into the man’s body for warmth. The black horse that carried them lowered its head as they gained speed, its dark mane flying wildly in the wind.

“Sleep,” his voice was a harsh whisper that she barely heard over the pounding of hooves and rushing of air.

Closing her eyes, Kelly let her head fall back against his shoulder, and sleep she did.

* * *

As promised, Kelly had been cared for very well. She didn’t remember arriving and must have slept for hours, wrapped up in soft blankets and warmer than she had been. She’d found herself in a cozy room with a single large window and a huge bed. Her clothing was nowhere to be found, but she imagined it had been ruined in the ocean anyway. The locket Jared had given her that she hadn’t been able to make herself to take off was gone, too. Stretching had revealed there was still soreness in her body, but she did feel rested.

And she most definitely *was* on an island. The only problem was, she would have expected a tropical island, considering the cruise ship was supposed to be taking her on a fantasy island getaway. Didn’t that mean palm trees? Coconut trees?

The view outside her window revealed a beautiful city of white stone. Ancient structures that looked like small castles spread out as far as the eye could see. There were cracks and signs of wear in the courtyard below her window and in the center of that a majestic tree, apparently withering of old age or neglect. How long had this place existed? Where was she? It looked like a medieval kingdom out of a fairytale book.

A chorus of happy bird songs filled the air along with sounds she’d

STAY

never heard before. A couple of women in long gowns carried buckets of water along the edge of the courtyard, but it took several moments for her to notice them with the sun setting in the background. Red and pink stained the sky in a stunning display of color and it was breathtaking.

That meant she'd lost an entire day since she'd gone overboard.

It wasn't long after that the woman had arrived, speaking of getting her dressed and helping her become accustomed to her new surroundings. She'd introduced herself as Corrine and she'd brought a tray of freshly cut fruit and several different cheeses for Kelly, which was most welcome since she was starving. She seemed nice, until Kelly began to talk.

"No, you don't understand," Kelly emphasized again to the older lady who stood patiently before her now. "I don't need to become more familiar with this place. I don't want something to calm my mind. I want a phone. I need to call my friends and let them know I'm okay."

What was so hard to understand about that?

Kelly could almost believe the woman didn't understand what she was saying. She had the same blank look many of her first grade students wore the first day of school at the elementary school where she taught. The woman spoke English at least. Strange, very proper English, as though it wasn't her first language. That was odd, too, because she had no accent as far as Kelly could tell.

Stranger still was the woman's dress. She had on a long gown just like the women in the courtyard had worn. She looked like she was dressed for work at Medieval Times. Still, she had to admit the long, green gown was truly lovely, embroidered in golden thread. The detail was incredible. Yet who were these people that they dressed like that in this day and age?

The man who quietly entered the room behind the woman was dressed just as oddly. He had long, dark hair, a mustache and beard. He

STAY

wore a dark gray tunic over black pants with those tall, black boots she'd noticed before. A dagger in a carved leather sheath was strapped to his boot.

Was this the man whom she'd ridden with by horse?

He walked around the older woman, bowing to Kelly as he held out an old fashioned pewter cup with steaming liquid in it.

"My lady," the man spoke clearly. His voice was deep, but not the voice of her rescuer. When he rose to his full height, he extended the cup a little closer to her. "I am Lisandur and I am at your service."

Whatever was in the cup smelled wonderful, spicy. Kelly eyed the soft curls of steam that rose from it. The warmth would be a welcome relief because the cold of the ocean still clung to her despite the soft blankets that she clutched to her body.

While everyone was being kind—in a Twilight Zone sort of way—Kelly needed to know where she was and how she could get back home.

"What's going on here?" Kelly decided to quiz him since she wasn't getting anywhere with the woman who now stood behind his shoulder. "Where am I?"

"You are safe now, my lady." The man towered over her, but his demeanor wasn't menacing. "We will be happy to provide anything you need. You only have to ask."

"Well, I need a phone." Kelly's tone was sharp. "My friends will be worried about me. I need to let everyone know I'm okay. Do you have a cell? Anything?"

The man angled his head at her in question. "Cell?"

"Cell phone?" Kelly blew out her frustration in an exhale, waving away the steaming cup he still held out to her. The guy hadn't heard of a cell phone? Where the hell had she landed?

The man placed the cup aside on a small table by the wooden door.

"My lady, your friends are other women?" Corrine asked.

STAY

What the hell kind of question was that? Well, it was one she wasn't about to answer. If she happened to be in some sort of danger and just didn't know it yet, she wasn't about to hand out her friends' information so they could nab them, too.

"My lady," the man spoke before Kelly could. "Forgive us. I will see to your wishes immediately. I will return in moments."

Again the man bowed before he headed swiftly for the door, pulling the older woman with him. Why were they bowing to her as if she were some sort of important person? The confusion she felt was mirrored in the woman's face as she was yanked out the door. Yet Kelly hardly had time to wonder what her deal was before they were gone.

Well, the man said he'd do as she asked. That was a good thing, right? Maybe he'd find a way for her to make a few phone calls.

Kelly stared at the cup the man had placed on the table. Her stomach growled as she stared at the food on the tray Corrine had brought, cut into curious shapes.

What the hell? She hadn't sensed that these people were out to harm her. Why shouldn't she enjoy the food and drink they offered her? Whoever they were, they might have very particular customs. What if she insulted them by not eating? Kelly knew from teaching in a university town and dealing with parents and children of many cultures and backgrounds that you had to be thoughtful when dealing with others. Being unfamiliar with their ways was no excuse.

First, she grabbed a few pieces of cheese and popped one into her mouth on her way to the table by the door. The cup was still steaming when she picked it up, smelling the contents. The drink smelled sweet, of fruit and spice. Kelly took a sip and the taste filled her mouth. Nice. It tasted like fruit juice with something added, something she couldn't place. It complemented the cheese nicely.

Taking a healthy gulp of the warm drink, then another, Kelly went back to the tray of food. Finally, she began to feel *warm*. The deep cold

STAY

was fading from her bones and now she felt comfortable in shedding one of the blankets she'd wrapped around her body. Much better.

Now if the guy would just get back here with a phone.

CHAPTER 3

Halen had plenty to do now that he'd returned, but instead found himself waiting beneath the tree at the center of the city for word on the woman's condition.

The tree was sacred among their people. It had been planted by their first queen, Sabe, many generations ago with the promise that as long as the tree flourished, children would be plentiful in the city of Josara.

Yet the great tree had started to die before his mother ever gave birth to him. It hadn't taken his people long to realize that the number of women among them was ever decreasing. When he was a child there had been few young women and those had given birth to sons, no daughters. Now that he was a man, there were no women left in his city young enough to bear children while men and boys were plentiful.

It clearly spelled their doom.

One of the older women, cousin to Corrine, came from a long line of conjurers. According to the ancient scripts of her fathers, there was

STAY

one slim chance that their people might survive. There were no women who could bear daughters on their isle. That meant they had to find women elsewhere, and the old writings told them how.

They discovered an ancient rite that, if successful, could summon a person from another time or place into their world. There were even things they could do to increase the likelihood of summoning a woman of the right age.

The first time they'd performed the ritual they'd found in those ancient writings, it had been at his father's command. The incantation had been said with all of the required items and the correct number of people in place, the symbols drawn. The same night a mighty storm had swept the island leaving devastation in its wake. Yet no woman had materialized.

Years had passed since that first attempt. The council had been reluctant to call upon the old magic again, considering it had taken years to recover from the aftermath of the storm. Their argument that they might conjure another devastating storm or something worse was a compelling one. They decided to give it a few more years, to see if any daughters would be born. Some even acquiesced and said that nature had targeted their people for extinction and asked why they should fight it.

No daughters had been born during Halen's lifetime. Unrest grew and the few women left in the city, even the very elderly ones, had to be well guarded. Some of the men became pederasts, some became increasingly violent. One dangerous group in particular coveted his father's throne, convinced that if they were in power, they could find the solution to this grave threat to their people.

Halen's father, King of Josara, enraged by an attempt from this group to overthrow him, had his heart attack him and slid into a sleep from which he'd never awakened. Yet he still lived. Halen had ruled in his stead for the last few months, hoping to find a solution by trying

STAY

things his more conservative father had been unwilling to. Most especially sending out their best warriors in search of the other islands or even distant shores in search of women to bring back. Only a few had returned from these ventures and they'd found nothing.

When none of his ideas worked, he'd proposed the summoning ritual again and had met with resistance. Somehow Halen had convinced them that if they failed in this attempt, they needed to accept their doom.

Yet if the ritual worked, they could repeat it to bring more women to their city. Much time had been spent examining the ritual, ensuring each part was as close to what was prescribed in those old scrolls as possible.

This time, much to Halen's great relief, the ritual had worked. When they'd spotted the great burst of light from the water's edge, they'd feared another punishing storm. When there'd been no more noise or sound, his glass had revealed something struggling out there in the dark waters. They'd immediately taken out a boat and were barely in time to save the woman their rite had supposedly conjured.

Supposedly. Though no one dared say it, Halen realized the spell wasn't producing a new soul, a fully grown woman with no previous life for their use. The woman came to them *from* somewhere else. The magic solved only half of their problem. It brought the woman here. It didn't, however, guarantee she'd be agreeable to saving their people any more than it guaranteed she'd produce a single daughter if she were. Nothing was certain.

Except that this woman's life had been disrupted for their purposes. That didn't sit well with him.

"My lord." Lisandur's deep voice calling to him broke into his thoughts. "She is ready."

Halen turned to face his approaching kinsman and dread welled up in him at the satisfied look on the man's face.

“Ready?”

Lisandur came to a stop before him, bowing.

“Corrine and the women prepared the potion discussed by the council,” Lisandur explained. “I gave it to her to make her more...receptive to our plans.”

Halen glared at him and at Corrine as she came up behind them like a skittering mouse.

“I made my wishes clear,” Halen snapped at them. “I didn’t want any sort of witch’s brew used on her. Is it not enough we brought her here from a life she already knew?”

“But my lord, she *is* a woman,” Corrine stepped around Lisandur. “It could take months to convince her to help us, if she agreed at all. And in that amount of time, who knows what could happen. The fangs could take her, sire. Or someone among our own kind could harm her. The sooner you can get her with child, the better for all of us.”

“How will getting her with child protect her?” he wanted to know. “It wouldn’t stop any man in this city from trying to claim her. It wouldn’t stop the fangs from trying to take her for the same reasons we brought her here.”

The fangs lived on the dark, shadowy half of their isle. A sinister, wolf-like race, their own female population was diminishing, though more plentiful than Halen’s own race according to scouts. They’d stolen two of their young women when Halen was a boy. The fate of the women in the hands of those monsters was unimaginable to him.

No woman would suffer that fate while he lived.

While all of Corrine’s arguments about why it had been necessary to use the potion on the woman they’d summoned were true, the thought of plying a woman with magic to make her insane with lust bothered him. Especially considering she had no idea why she’d even been brought there. They were completely taking away her choice in the matter.

STAY

The last time such a concoction had been used on one of their women who had defied the council and refused to have children because of the urgency of their situation and the pressure that would be placed up on her, Halen had been sympathetic to her feelings. He'd been her lover for a time because the king should have heirs before other children were conceived.

The council had willed the act done despite his protests, and the potion was given to her. It had taken ten men to final satisfy the woman into exhaustion. And then she didn't conceive.

What had they done now?

"How strong was the dose?" Halen demanded.

"Potent, my lord," Corrine offered.

Marching around them, Halen headed in the direction of his father's hall where the woman was being kept in a heavily guarded room. If the dose of the lust potion she'd been given was strong, the woman was likely miserable at this moment.

There was only one thing he could do about it.

CHAPTER 4

Kelly glared at the door when it slowly opened, wanting to take the head off of whoever walked into the room. Damn it, they'd given her something to make her sick. Why had she drunk that stuff? It was some sort of drug. It had to be. She felt like she'd come down with the mother of all fevers, her nipples were as hard as diamonds, and her pussy was throbbing with a force she'd never known even in her most excited moments. Huddled on the edge of the bed, she trembled, feeling as if her skin was on fire. The knowledge that someone could walk in at any moment was the only reason she clutched the last thin blanket to her body, even with the heat that was burning her from the inside out.

The man who walked in wasn't the one who'd given her the drink. He was dressed in the same way, wearing a dark blue tunic over blank pants and boots. His hair just reached his shoulders and was the color of wet sand, his eyes were dark brown. Like the other man, he wore a short beard, but unlike the other man, he was striking. There was no

STAY

other word for it. He was tall and well-built, but his physical size wasn't out of the ordinary. His face was very handsome, his features strong but not too harsh. Nice high cheeks, a sensual mouth.

Yet something about him captured her attention in a way that she couldn't name.

"How do you feel?" he asked in a voice she recognized.

It was *him*. The man who'd spoken to her the night before and that she considered to be her rescuer.

Well, rescuer or not, she had something to say to him.

"How the hell am I supposed to be feeling?" Kelly's voice shook as she continued to glare at him. "What did you people give me? Look at me. I'm sick."

After closing the door gently behind him, he turned back around to her. Was that concern she read in his eyes or just her imagination.

"You aren't sick."

The hell he said!

"How would you know? I'm the one who drank it! What did you people do?"

"What is your name?" He kept his voice calm.

Kelly shook her head. Her breath hissed in as a spasm low in her belly nearly made her double over. Wetness seeped from between her thighs easily now and perspiration beaded her forehead. She wasn't about to tell him her name.

Slowly, as if he were approaching a wild animal, he came closer. Truthfully, she felt like a wild animal. *One in heat*. Her thighs squeezed together as he approached; the walls of her cunt convulsed.

"I am Halen." When she made no move to stop him—honestly she couldn't have moved now if she'd wanted to—he sat down beside her on the bed. "I'd like to help you."

"Yeah? That's what the other guy who gave me this shit said. He told me he would bring a phone and I haven't seen him since. Why

STAY

should I believe you?"

"You're right," he admitted. "We've given you no reason to trust us."

Damn, she wanted to pull the blanket off. Drops of perspiration rolled down her sides now and gathered in the valley between her breasts. The man wasn't sitting particularly close to her, but it almost seemed as if his proximity made her condition worse. The tips of her breasts were aching unbearably and heat pooled low in her belly, intensifying the sensations she was losing the battle to.

The man lifted his hand slowly and pressed it to her forehead. His hand felt cool and good against her skin. Within seconds the horrible craving in her body doubled at that innocent touch, and Kelly whimpered as he pulled his hand back to push a pale, wet strand of hair from her cheek.

When he drew his hand away, Kelly's entire body clenched in something like pain. What the hell was the matter with her?

"I feel so bad," Kelly whispered.

"I know."

"Why did you do this to me?" Kelly's eyes squeezed shut.

"I didn't want this. I would do anything to take it from you, but I can't now."

"Did you say you could help?" Did she remember that right, or was it wishful thinking?

"I can."

"Put your hand back on my forehead." Kelly didn't like the pleading she recognized in her own voice. She only knew that his touch had somehow made the strange affliction lift even while it made it worse.

His hand shook slightly as it moved toward her forehead. Kelly groaned as the rough pads of his fingers slid across her skin. Again it was heaven and hell. The tension and heat in her body eased and yet it

grew worse. She needed something more. Something...

Grabbing his wrist roughly, she pulled his hand down over her face and tipped her head back so that his fingers glided over the column of her throat. That was *nice*. Ever so slightly his fingers caressed her skin and she jerked at that.

She didn't know this man.

You're the one pulling his hand over your neck.

Moving of their own volition, his hand pulled free of her grip and slid down her chest to the tight mound of her breast. Kelly should have been shocked as shit and slapped his face. Yet the intimate touch was like a lightning strike sending unbelievable currents of pleasure racing through her body. Her nipple strained in his palm, hard as a small stone. Her hands released the blanket she held, letting the thin fabric slide down around her waist.

Kelly was losing the battle against the fog of lust she was caught up in. It no longer mattered that she was sitting God only knew where with a man she'd never met before, letting him fondle her breast. All that mattered was the relief his hand offered from the punishing sensations flooding her body.

She cried out when his hand drifted across to the other breast, plumping it in his large hand. It helped, but it wasn't good enough. She wanted his weight on her, she realized. Surely that sort of pressure would help her fight this thing.

Clutching his shirt in her hands, Kelly fell back across the bed, fighting to take him with her. He didn't resist. He seemed to understand what she needed and settled his body over hers, the bulge of his erection burrowing into the seam of her naked thighs. The heated length of his body, the hardness of it pressing her into the bed, made her feel like she would burst into flames, the heat was so intense. With a will of their own, her hips began to grind against him, her thighs spreading in an effort to rub herself against his hot, swelling cock.

STAY

And he gave her that. When she wrapped her legs around his waist, he began to nudge against her in an irresistible rhythm that had her panting and squirming beneath him like a wild woman.

“What did you say your name was?” She should at least know that.

“Halen.”

Her mouth was so dry. She was so hot.

“Halen? I need you. I need...”

“I’ll give you what you need,” he promised. “I’ll make this as good for you as I can.”

When he lowered his mouth to hers, Kelly didn’t resist his kiss. His lips were so gentle, enticing as they slid over hers with infinite care. Kelly’s hands slid up into the cool locks of his hair, losing herself in that kiss. Drugged or not, she couldn’t remember anyone ever kissing her like that, with such finesse. His tongue met hers for a delicate duel until she was bucking beneath him, willing to do anything to speed up the easy rhythm his hips tortured her with.

She wanted him to fuck her. She needed to have him fill her, to help her end this storm of nearly excruciating pleasure. Frantically, she tried to reach between them to find him, but to her surprise Halen broke the kiss to grab her hands. Collaring her wrists in his hands, he pressed them to the bed on either side of her head.

“I wouldn’t last with you doing that,” he explained.

“I don’t want you to last.” *Damn him!* “I want you to fuck me. Now!”

“I will.”

His mouth lowered to the tip of her left breast, and Kelly thrashed beneath him as his tongue began to gently lash the taught peak of her nipple. He continued to rock his cock against her, the rough fabric of his pants rasping against her clit. Then his lips began to draw on her breast, sucking on her so hard and strong that orgasm came upon her fast.

STAY

Kelly shattered. Wailing and bucking against his hold, the brutal convulsions ripped through her body. Her pussy walls clenched as the orgasm shook her again and again.

* * *

An unfamiliar desire raged to life in Halen as he stared down at the beautiful woman they'd pulled from the sea. Her blond hair was a wild tangle about her head, wet with her perspiration, and her green eyes were bright with carnal fire. Her fair skin was flushed pink in her excitement and as his gaze raked down her body, his cock hardened like stone. She was all slender curves with high full breasts and long legs that he couldn't wait to have wrapped around his waist.

It would be hours before the potion wore off and the possibilities were infinite as the night stretched out before him. He would taste her as she came again and again, until she begged him stop. He would hold her down, something he hadn't realized he liked until he'd pinned her arms to the bed as she came, and fuck her again and again.

And she'd love every moment it.

Quickly shrugging out of his clothes, Halen could barely fight his hunger for her. Her green eyes burned with desire as she watched him. When her thighs fell open to reveal the glistening patch of pale curls and pink folds of her pussy, he knew he couldn't wait to be inside her. He wanted in now.

Climbing between her legs, he nudged them wider with his own. She cried out and tried again to grab for him, but he caught her hands and pressed them to the bed on either side of her head. If she touched him now, he'd explode and he didn't want that. She didn't want that either. Not when her body burned to have him fill her.

Halen lowered his body onto hers and she hissed as the tip of his erection nudged at her entrance. He'd barely pushed the sensitive head into her and had to stop and fight for control. The heat and wet warmth of her were exquisite.

STAY

As he began to push into her, her body convulsed. She threw her head back and cried out as her pussy walls quivered around him in her release. He'd thought, at least this first time, to keep his loving slow and bring her to orgasm a few times. If he was going to get her through this by himself, he'd need to pace himself.

Yet her unrestrained reaction unleashed his passion. Halen slid easily inside her body until he was balls deep, while she shuddered and trembled beneath him. He began to drive into her, moving forcefully back and forth. Her hot juices bathed him as she reached one extreme pinnacle after another, screaming and calling his name with little time between orgasms.

She became so sensitized that she came at the smallest sensations. The brush of his lips against an overly responsive nipple brought on more spasms. The push and drag of his cock in her eager pussy seemed to drive her into madness.

Finally he couldn't take more and, with one powerful thrust, he allowed himself release and filled her with his seed. Halen collapsed next to her, gasping. Reaching out, he pulled her to his side as they both struggled for breath.

After all, they would only have a few moments before her body stormed to life again and demanded carnal satisfaction.

CHAPTER 5

The scent of sex still lingered in the air when Halen visited her room a short time later. He could have waited until later in the day to look in on her, but the truth was, he could think of nothing else but her. She'd dazzled him with her passion the night before and he didn't believe for an instant it had all been the potion she'd been given.

She had been well and truly used, but he'd managed to get her through the night on his own. He'd paced himself. It had been easy to let her come while kissing her breasts or to use his mouth between her legs when he didn't have his cock buried in her to the hilt. It had felt so good to be inside her. Her body had been tight like a heated fist around his flesh.

Halen wanted to know what she would be like in his bed without the potion. Would she be as passionate? Would she even want him without it?

He'd give anything just to know her name.

STAY

Her back was to him as he walked quietly in the room. The way her spine straightened as Corrine laced up the back of her sky blue gown let him know she was aware of his presence. He loved the way the shiny locks of her damp blond hair gleamed in the morning sunlight. No steam rose from the water filled tub by the window, telling him she'd enjoyed a long bath.

Halen spotted the small cup on the table by that tub. He knew they'd offered her tea to relax her as she bathed. It wasn't the only reason that cup was there. Peering into it, he studied the pattern of the leaves at the bottom idly. The older women would want to study the leaves, mysteriously gathering information from them. He had no idea how to read such patterns or even what to look for.

Corrine did and the gleam in her eyes when her gaze met his was knowing. She nodded to him as the woman turned around to face him.

What had her nod meant? Had Corrine read in the leaves that the woman was pregnant already with his child? Could it be possible?

There was no gleam in the eyes of his blond beauty this morning. If he had to guess, he'd say it was shame that darkened her lovely face to deep pink as her gaze briefly met with his.

"Corrine, could you leave us please?"

"Yes, my lord." With a bow, the older woman reached for the cup, no doubt eager to report to the others what she had read there, and left the room quietly.

Halen didn't like the wariness he read in her face as she watched Corrine leave.

"I only want to talk," he explained, keeping a distance from her by moving to stand by the window.

Her deep sigh filled the room as she returned to the bed and sat down.

"Weren't we supposed to talk *first*?" she asked.

Halen fought back a chuckle at her sarcasm. She was right, of

course.

“Ideally, yes. I apologize for how things have gone for you so far.”

She nodded but said nothing to that.

“What is your name?” He really wanted to know. “Surely you can tell me that now?”

That earned him a stern look, but Halen didn’t look away.

“Kelly.”

“Like the color of your eyes. It suits you.”

Those green eyes were full of fire as she frowned at him. She wasn’t having any of his flattery, he could tell. Halen respected that. He’d always admired a woman with a strong will and a sharp mind.

“Look, I appreciate you saving my life. But ever since you brought me here, I’ve been asking for a way to contact to my family and friends and no one has helped me. And you guys drugged me last night, didn’t you?”

Halen didn’t blame her for being upset. He also didn’t know what he could possibly say to her now. How he could make her understand. They had no way to let her contact the people where she came from unless they sent her back forever. And the potion that had been used on her...

“Kelly, I’m sorry. It wasn’t my wish that the potion be given to you.”

“Your wish?” She easily picked up on his use of those words. “Who are *you* here?”

Truth was best, was it not?

“My father is the king.”

Her eyes widened at that.

“The king? Where is this place?”

“Josara.”

“Is that a country?”

It was a strange question.

STAY

“It is a kingdom on our isle.”

Slowly she shook her head, the color in her face deepening in her agitation.

“Am I a prisoner here?”

She took a very direct approach, and Halen again had to admire her. Many women in her circumstances would have fallen apart by now. Even after the experience last night with him in her bed, her back was straight and she met his gaze bravely.

“You are...our salvation,” was all he knew to say.

“What?”

Now her confidence was fading and wariness replaced the dimming fire in her eyes. Halen didn’t like that. He had to think of what to say and he had to think fast.

She was going to think he was insane.

“Kelly, come to the window and stand by my side, please.” Stepping back to make her feel safe, he motioned with his hand. “I only wish to show you something.”

While she was looking at him as if he had two heads with six eyes between them, slowly she stood and moved to the window. He made no move to touch her.

“Do you see the tree at the center of the courtyard?”

He watched her throat work as she swallowed hard, her gaze set on the glass before her.

“Yes.”

“That tree is dying and my people are dying along with it.”

That drew her gaze back to him.

“Why?”

At least she was asking.

“Our first queen planted that tree, Kelly, along with the promise that as long as that tree flourished in our courtyard, there would be many children in Josara. That tree started dying before my birth and it

continues to fail.”

Halen took a step closer. She didn’t move back.

“There have been no daughters born in Josara in many years and now there are no women young enough to conceive a child of either gender.”

Confusion clouded her gaze as he waited for her to take in what he’d said.

“How many people live here?”

Halen shrugged. “There are a few hundred souls in our kingdom.”

“How many are women?”

“Nine,” he answered easily. “Corrine, whom you’ve met already, is one of them.”

Again she shook her head. “You can’t seriously believe this is all because that tree is dying. There must be some other reason. Something in the environment?”

“I do believe it, Kelly. It is part of the magic of our land. A promise forged in magic. The tree is dying and so shall we if we can’t find a way to save ourselves.”

“If you believe in the magic part so much, no offense, then wouldn’t you accept your fate? That you weren’t going to make it *because* the tree was dying?”

Halen had to smile at that. She had a good mind indeed.

“We could. But is not the nature of man to fight for survival?”

“I guess so.” Her gaze dropped and returned to the window. She nodded. “You said I was your salvation. I guess you really do believe in all of this to resort to drugging a woman you pulled out of the sea.”

“It’s more than that, Kelly.”

Alarm had those green eyes back on him.

“There was no coincidence to your arrival here. We summoned you.”

The haunted expression that formed on her face made him want to

take her in his arms and comfort her somehow. He didn't want to scare her, but he wanted to be honest. She deserved that at least.

"Oh, my God!" she whispered seemingly to herself. "The old man's story...the islands."

"What old man?"

Shaking her head, Kelly's expression was anxious.

"So you brought me here to save you. You drugged me so you could knock me up and try to save your people? Even if I had a daughter, it would take years before she... Shit! What am I saying?"

He knew exactly what she meant.

"You *were* brought here to be our salvation. Since we were successful in bringing you here, we know now we can summon others."

"What right do you have to do that?" she demanded.

"None."

"And you'll pass us around like whores to save yourselves and your precious tree?"

"Never." Halen took exception to that even though she had no reason to believe they didn't intend to do exactly that. "No woman will be mistreated here. I told you that I wouldn't have used the potion on you. That was done without my approval. I would have given you a choice."

"A choice? According to you, my choice went by the boards the minute you *summoned* me."

He couldn't argue that point.

"I would have tried to court you, Kelly. I'd still like to. To convince you that life as my princess could be a happy one. I wouldn't have used more magic."

"You brought me here with magic, right?"

Halen was a little worried about the higher tone of her voice when she asked that, but he nodded.

"Right."

STAY

He shouldn't have been surprised when she made a dash for the door, but it startled him into action nonetheless. More out of instinct than anything, he was on her heels, pulling her away from the door just before she could reach it, and turning her to face him as he hauled her body against his.

Halen loved the scent of her, the softness of her pressing against him.

"Don't hurt me," she whispered, her lips slightly open.

It would have been so easy to have kissed her then. Halen wanted so much to do just that. Yet he wanted her trust and he wouldn't earn it if he simply took what he wanted.

"Kelly, please, you will not be harmed." Halen did his best to keep his voice reassuring, calm. "I promise."

"I haven't been harmed already?"

The slightest hint of anger returned to her gaze. Good. He'd much rather deal with that than her fear.

"Do you mean last night?"

"It was not consensual. I didn't invite you to my bed."

Halen tightened his hold on her, wishing more than anything they were back in bed with him inside her.

"You found no pleasure in my arms last night?" he wanted to know.

Her eyes searched his face, but there was a conspicuous lack of loathing or revulsion. If she'd considered herself violated, shouldn't she be glaring at him with hatred?

"If I enjoyed any of it," she said slowly, "it was because of whatever drug you gave me."

"But you *did* find enjoyment?"

When she didn't immediately answer, she lost her opportunity when shouts erupt outside.

Fangs!

Halen released her immediately, darting around her to the door and

STAY

shouting at his men posted outside.

“Guard her with your lives! She is to be untouched when I return!”

She looked beautiful standing there in that beautiful gown, staring at him in confusion and fear. If he was lucky enough to return, he decided he would court her. He’d do anything to claim the heart of the women whose body he’d claimed last night.

CHAPTER 6

Kelly stood on the stone roof of a huge stone building overlooking the city like a woman standing on the edge of her own sanity.

Okay, here she stood wearing a long gown in a stone city that was supposedly on an island. In the distance she could see the ocean. That was something. Considering that the cruise she'd been on was supposed to have been traveling to a tropical location, she was surprised at the lack of sandy beach and palm trees. Where the hell was she? Halen had been very vague in his answer to that question.

The rest of what he'd told her...well, she was still trying to wrap her mind around it as she stared at the tree in the stone courtyard.

The tree *was* dying. There were no leaves or flowers on it and it stood there sad and gray, ancient. Halen tried to convince her that the fate of his people was tied by magic to that tree, that they had no women to produce offspring. And that was why they'd brought her here magically. To be their salvation, he'd said.

STAY

Basically she'd washed up on Insane Asylum Island.

I would have tried to court you, Kelly. I'd still like to. To convince you life as my princess could be a happy one...

Oh, how could she even think about that? Like she was going to trust another man after what Jared had done to her. Hadn't they brought her here, drugged her? Hadn't Halen spent the entire night in her bed doing everything sexual one could imagine with and to her? Without her consent?

Ah, who was she kidding? You couldn't rape the willing and she'd definitely been willing last night. Drug or no drug, it had been the best sex she'd ever had in her life. There wasn't a single night with Jared she could recall that could even come close, and it disturbed her a little when she realized why.

The difference had been how Halen had treated her, the care he'd taken. Again and again he'd brought her to climax throughout the night while seeming not to focus on his own needs. He knew she'd been drugged, he'd owned up to that. He could have done what he wanted with her and not given a rat's ass about her needs through it all. She couldn't have stopped him.

Yet Halen had helped her through it.

When the shouts had rung out in the city earlier and he'd left her abruptly, she'd automatically gone to the window to see what was going on. What she'd seen through the glass horrified her.

At first she thought a pack of black wolves had entered the city, and then she saw that they were...something else. As she watched, they began to walk upright on their rear legs, baring their teeth and lunging like rabid dogs at the men who came running out of the city toward them.

It was the strangest, scariest scene she'd ever witnessed. The men fought against the horrible creatures, whatever they were, with swords and bows. *Swords and bows*. They didn't have guns here? Who fought

like that in this day and age?

The battle had been brutal and bloody and at the end of it bodies had littered the ground and blood had stained the courtyard. True to what he'd told her, she'd heard no screaming women or saw any imperiled females running about in the chaos. She had caught glimpses of Halen throughout it all, fighting bravely with great skill. She knew firsthand what a powerful body he had, but here was something so thrilling about watching him engaged in battle, wielding a sword like a medieval warrior that had excitement coursing through her.

The guards outside her door answered her when she called to them.

"Yes, my lady?"

"What's going on? Why do I have to stay in here?" she demanded.

"To protect you, my lady."

My lady. She was pretty frickin' sick and tired of being called my lady and of being told no in this place. She pounded on the door until one of them opened it and she had someone to talk to face to face.

"Yes, my lady?"

"Why can't I get out of here? I can help or something."

The large beefy man shook his shaggy head.

"The fangs are here, my lady. It's too dangerous. It is you they are after."

The creatures had come there for *her*?

The man had shut the door in her face before she could ask more, but she didn't hear the door latch because she heard more shouting. Kelly waited a few seconds before trying the door. She managed to open it and found it unguarded now, too. They'd been called away apparently. Now she could run. But where?

With no idea of where she was going, it was no surprise she quickly became lost. That's how she'd ended up on the roof of the great building where she'd been staying, and she had to admit the view was breathtakingly beautiful.

STAY

All except for the carnage on the ground below.

Were the creatures gone now? Where was Halen?

When she spotted him, her heart lurched in her chest. One of his men was helping him from the ground and the sleeve of his tunic was torn. He was bleeding.

Why should she care?

Because he was defending you?

Kelly ran back for the door, back down what she thought was the hall she'd used before. She surprised two men as she ran down that hallway. Once their surprise wore off, she didn't like at all the way their gazes raked over her.

"Don't just stand there." Kelly quickly decided that being timid or polite wasn't a good idea. "I demand that you take me to Prince Halen."

That got their attention. One of them automatically turned around while the other hesitated. It appeared he was trying to think of what to say.

"Now," she added with emphasis.

That got the both men moving and she followed them through the building to a lower level. Finally they stopped at the doorway to a large chamber and Halen sat just inside being tended by two other men.

He was sweaty, dirty. His hair hung in damp tangles around his face. They'd torn open his sleeve to tend to his arm and she was reminded of the size and strength of him.

She couldn't help think how wonderful he looked.

"Halen?" Kelly dashed into the room until she stood before him, staring at the arm that was being stitched. When her gaze met his she saw he didn't flinch, didn't seem to notice that a needle was diving in and out of his flesh. His gaze was riveted on her and a mixture of emotions crossed his expression.

"What are you doing down here?" His voice was calm.

"I watched the battle," she told him. "I saw you were hurt."

STAY

His expression hardened and his color darkened.

"I told them you were to be guarded carefully."

"Yeah, well, they did, but I found a way out."

He hissed at the final push and pull of the needle through his flesh and watched with a muscle ticking at his jaw as the man finished tending the wound while a younger man who was obviously his assistant began to pack away their belongings.

"Leave us." Halen's tone was curt.

As the two men made their way out, Halen nodded to two men outside of his door.

"We are not to be disturbed."

One of the men nodded. The other man's gaze moved from his prince to her and back again.

Once the door was closed, Halen's dark gaze fastened on her.

"While your concern for my welfare pleases me," he began slowly, "what were you doing running about the hall with my men? Did you hear none of my story?"

"Excuse me?" Hadn't she found a way out of that room, demanded those men bring her to him because she was concerned?

"Kelly, do you not remember my telling you there are very few women here. On a large scale, do you know what that means? Do you think any of the men you've encountered thus far have women of their own to satisfy their needs?"

Well, yes, she did remember his story, but she hadn't thought of that. And why should she? Where she came from there was no shortage of women, no wolf-looking creatures, and no magic trees.

"Do you know what could have happened?"

Oh, she wasn't sure she liked the menace that had crept into his expression. It made her want to cringe, to take a step back. What she did was stood her ground and placed her hands on her hips. Being timid was something she'd never been accused of. And she wasn't going to

start backing down from anyone now.

“Why should I be expected to think that way and be so aware?” she wanted to know.

“To prevent your rape at the hands of my men?”

Okay, he had a point there.

“I’ve been here for two days and that wasn’t *my* idea,” she pointed out, “so don’t think you can start telling me how things are going to be because you’re not. I came down here because I actually cared that you got hurt, idiot that I am and—”

His mouth slanted down over hers, halting her words and claiming her with a kiss that wiped her mind clean of all else. It was different from the patient, nurturing kisses he’d treated her to before. This kiss was demanding, masterful. It revealed the darker, dangerous side of the man who had been in her bed last night.

That kiss, combined with the heat that had built in her body as she watched him battle the wolf creatures, sent pulses of pure heat racing through her blood. With an urgency that surprised her, she wanted him. She had to have him now.

Kelly began to kiss him back with demand that equaled his, and he crushed her to him. Halen went wild, tearing at her gown and his clothing, growling with the same desperation that she felt.

Ignoring the wound that must have hurt like hell, he roughly turned her away from him and pulled the gown off her body. The sunshine was bright as she stood there in the grip of the most powerful lust she’d ever experienced, aware that he was pulling off the last of his clothes behind her. Halen’s rough hands pulled her back against him, the feel of his naked flesh pressed tightly to hers a powerful sensation that made her pussy walls quiver.

Kelly’s skin quickly heated and his burned her back like flames. Halen bent her forward and thrust his cock fully into her until his balls slapped against her.

STAY

Oh, yes. He stretched her, filled her in a way she'd never been filled before. When he began to move within her, she gasped in pure pleasure. The angle at which his cock filled her pussy was amazing and devastating, hitting sensual triggers inside her that she never knew existed.

Her hands clutched at the coverings of his bed as pleasure and pain collided. His mouth and hands were everywhere and his cock was so deep inside her she didn't know if she'd ever be free of him. It took her a moment to realize the high keening wails all around them were coming from her.

"Is this with your consent, Kelly?" Halen's voice was rough behind her.

"Yes!"

"You want this?"

"Yes! Don't stop!"

Drops of perspiration beaded on her forehead and ran down her sides. The sound of their bodies slapping competed with the their moans and cries as they filled the room.

"Come, Kelly," he commanded. "Now!"

And, oh, she did. When her pussy closed around him like a fist, he began to pound into her furiously. Kelly screamed as her body trembled and pulsed. The orgasm ripped through her with an intensity she'd never experienced and it shook her to her core.

Halen was far from finished with her. Dropping to his knees behind her, he buried his mouth in her overly sensitive cunt. With great patience, he licked and sucked her. When she didn't think she could take more, he tongue fucked her until she came again. Nearly mindless with ecstasy, Kelly's trembling legs gave way until she dropped to the floor before him.

Not giving her a moment's respite, he lay down on the floor and pulled her body on top of his. Her mind was still spinning when he

STAY

seated her over his thick shaft. Halen pushed into her until she could feel him at her womb.

“Ride!”

Eagerly, she did just that, though she had little strength left. Halen’s hands gripped her hips, moving her on him and lending her strength. Halen groaned as her hands clutched at his chest, his hips bucking beneath her in a way that created the most delicious friction against her clit.

Halen threw his head back and shouted in his release. Kelly came only a moment after that, the orgasm tearing through her as his seed shot up into her body. They thrashed and cried out until they slumped against each other in a warm, damp pile on the floor. The sound of their ragged breaths floated on the air.

“Stay, Kelly.” His whisper was so low, she almost didn’t hear it. “Stay with me.”

CHAPTER 7

The faintest light filtered in through the window of Halen's chamber the following morning and Kelly awoke, cradled in his arms. She loved the warmth of his body against her back, the feel of his heavily muscled thighs behind her own. She could get used to this, having a man of her own who didn't have to leave as soon they'd made love and return to his wife. In the entire time she'd been with Jared, they'd only stayed together overnight two times.

And he'd never made her feel in all those years as special and desirable as Halen made her feel in less than a week.

Pulling out of his embrace, she pulled on the gown she'd been given yesterday and walked to the window, staring out at the rising sun. Her body was sore in good places and odd places. Halen had loved her until the early morning, pushing in and out of her pussy for hours.

So what happened now? She hadn't had much time since her first night with him to stop and consider the tale he told her yesterday and

STAY

what that meant for her future. They had summoned her through magic. Did that mean she could never return to her real life? Her friends, her sister, her coworkers at the school, her students—they would all think she was dead if that were true.

And if she couldn't return, could she accept that?

She'd miss her loved ones. Her sister would miss her, but Shannon had a family of her own. A nice husband—a man so unlike Jared—and two beautiful sons. Most of her friends had husbands and families, too. And the school? It was so dog-eat-dog they'd have her replacement in the classroom by the end of the month.

As she looked out again at the ancient beauty of the courtyard, she realized she could be happy here if this was where she had to stay. She was the prince's lover, maybe he intended more from what he'd said, and what woman wouldn't want to be pampered and taken care of as if she were royalty?

The expectation would be that she bear his children, preferably daughters. Well, Halen and the others had to realize she couldn't guarantee that. Whatever unseen magic or force prevented the birth of daughters to their kind could prevent her from having a daughter, right? Couldn't it prevent her from having children at all?

Children.

Did she want that? Was she ready for that? She used to fantasize so many times about the time when she and Jared would finally be married and the children they'd have.

She might like that. If she had been willing to have children for that faithless son-of-a-bitch Jared, she could certainly consider it for someone like Halen. Someone who considered her to be valuable and worth fighting for.

She could even be pregnant now, couldn't she?

Just below in the courtyard, she spotted Corrine, who waved to her. Kelly waved back, glad now that she'd decided to get dressed before

she stood at the window. As she watched, Corrine headed into the hall.

She wasn't surprised at the soft knock at her door, and when the door opened, Kelly nodded at the guard to allow the other woman into the room.

"It is so good to see him sleep," Corrine spoke softly, tipping her head toward Halen who lay stretched out in his massive bed as she approached. "He has rarely rested since his father fell ill."

"The king? What happened?"

Corrine nodded.

"A group of men in the city challenged his father over the current state of affairs in Josara, claiming they could do better and save our people. His father was so angry that his heart attacked him and he fell into a deep sleep. He's never awakened. It is all we can do to get nourishment into him and keep him clean in this state. But he won't last long."

A coma maybe? So Halen was responsible for the kingdom then?

"None of us will last long unless we find a way for our people to continue," she told Kelly. Then the woman smiled, her expression nearly as bright as the rising sun beyond the window. "Now that you are here, we have hope. We will not speak of your child until close to the time of its birth. That will be such a day of celebration here."

Kelly's hands flew to her tummy.

"What?"

The woman had the good grace to smile at her impishly, the delicate lines of her face deepening.

"How could you possibly know that?" Kelly asked, terrified and awed all at the same time in that moment.

"I read it in the leaves of your tea yesterday," Corrine explained.

Okay, Kelly relaxed a little. She didn't believe in old wives tales like reading tea leaves, so the woman's belief didn't mean anything to her right now.

STAY

Yeah, well, you wouldn't have believed that you could magically summoned somewhere a couple of days ago either.

"What if it's a boy?" Kelly asked the woman. "Will I still be this great hope for you and your people?"

"Of course." Corrine's eyes twinkled as they moved over her. "Even if you were to be childless, which you are not, you make our prince happy. You make this kingdom a better place. I will be proud to serve you."

Well, what could she say to that? She wasn't used to this sort of treatment. She was accustomed to being the one less important, the one willing to make the sacrifices. How long had it been since she felt like she really mattered?

"I'll go and see to your bath and your breakfast, my lady." Corrine casually scooped up a basket that sat on a table by the windows on the other side of the room. Something about the way the woman's knuckles turned white as she clutched it let Kelly know that the basket, or whatever might be inside it, was very important.

"Thank you," Kelly told the woman as she watched her walk to the door of Halen's room and knock. The guards let the woman out and she was gone.

Oh, my God! Am I pregnant?

She'd never been pregnant before so she wouldn't know what it felt like. And this early on? No way! Corrine had to be wishful thinking. That's it!

And she really wondered what was in the basket now.

Kelly started to climb back onto the bed where Halen was still sleeping and get more rest when something golden winked up at her from the rug near the door. As she got closer, she recognized her own locket! The one Jared had given her and that she thought had been lost in the sea.

As she picked it up with her fingers, she wondered if it had fallen

STAY

from the woman's basket. How else could it have gotten there?

Glancing back at Halen where he still slept, she felt the need to get out. To walk, to think.

Guess I'll have to ask permission.

When one of the guards answered her knock at the door, she remembered what Halen said and asked if she could go briefly to the beach and that Corrine accompany her.

* * *

Kelly wasn't surprised when Halen followed them down to the shore within the hour. She was almost relieved really, because while the two guards maintained a respectful distance, Corrine was really getting on her nerves by wringing her hands and endlessly pacing on the sand. At first Kelly thought it was guilt. Had the woman deliberately taken her belongings, including the locket? Was that why she was so upset?

Kelly had asked her if there was anything she'd like to talk about and the woman just said no unconvincingly.

Finally, she'd decided to sit in the sand at the edge of the water. The sun felt good on her face even though the water was surprisingly cold this morning. Much too cold to even dip her toes into.

"Kelly?"

The sound of Halen's voice warmed her even more.

"How are you this morning?" His shadow blocked her sun when he reached her, but she really didn't mind. "What do you have there?"

"My locket," she told him. "I thought I'd lost it in the sea."

Did she dare tell him how she found it? That she wondered if Corrine had taken it?

"What is inside?" he asked quietly.

Using her thumbnail on the tiny clasp, she opened the locket to reveal two small oval photographs. One of herself and one of Jared. Her former lover had placed them there and given it to her on their last

“anniversary.” Like that word meant anything to him.

“Who is he?”

While his voice was calm, she could read the displeasure Halen’s eyes as they moved over the pictures.

“He was my lover,” Kelly explained. “A cheating ass is what he really is.”

Halen dropped to his knees on the sand to sit by her side. “He betrayed you?”

“It’s worse than that.” Kelly shook her head as she closed the locket and clasped it in her hand. “Believe me, I’m no great asset to your kingdom, Halen. I helped him betray his wife. Then he left us both for another woman and I was actually hurt and surprised by that. I’m a complete idiot.”

“All of us are made fools by love at times, Kelly.”

She laughed bitterly. “For five years?”

“What does he mean to you now?”

Kelly looked into his dark eyes, loving the warmth there, the concern. This strong, brave man was waiting for her to tell him whether or not her heart belonged to another, and she could read the worry in his expression.

Her heart squeezed in her chest.

“He means nothing to me.” And she meant it. “I could throw this locket into the ocean and never miss it.”

Corrine’s cry erupted from behind Halen and he closed his large rough hand around hers that held the locket.

“What is up with her?” Kelly had to ask.

“It’s part of the magic we used.” His hand closed around hers tighter. “That’s why Corrine came to collect your belongings from your other life.”

Corrine came running forward at that.

“You aren’t going to tell her, are you?”

STAY

His gaze never left Kelly. "It's her choice."

"But my lord—"

"Leave us!" he commanded. "Take the guards with you."

Still wringing her hands, Corrine slowly turned and made her way back up the beach, the guards following her.

"Tell me what, Halen?" Her eyes met his dark ones. "What's my choice?"

"Kelly, if you throw that locket back into the sea, or anything you brought with you from the world you came from, you will be returned to that place."

Now she knew why Corrine had been so upset.

"I'll be returned to the cruise ship or to the ocean?"

"I don't know."

So she could go back. She had quite a choice to make.

Slowly Halen released her hand.

"I never liked the idea that you were brought here by no choice of your own, Kelly. So I give you a choice now. I'll release you back to the life I pulled you from. But I'm asking you to stay here, with me."

He had to ask, she knew. The survival of his people was at stake. What if she was pregnant? What if she did have daughters?

"To be your salvation," she whispered.

"To be my princess." He traced a finger along her cheek, the simple touch sending pulses of excitement racing through her body. "To allow me the chance to win your heart, to make you happy. I know nothing of the world you came from, Kelly. I do know that we could be happy here together and have a good life."

"Corrine thinks I'm carrying your child, do you know that?"

Halen smiled. He really was wonderfully handsome when he smiled.

"Yes."

"If I went back, would I still have a baby?"

STAY

A pained expression crossed his face. "I don't know the answer."

It was obvious he believed Corrine's story that she was carrying his child. If she left and took that child with her, his plans to save his kingdom would have failed.

He would be devastated, too, she realized. There was more than desire shining in his eyes, more than just hope for his people. Unexpected that Kelly could recognize the beginnings of something deeper after playing the fool for another man for so many years.

If she *were* pregnant she didn't even want to think about losing her baby's father forever, did she? Going back to her old reality to be a single mom didn't hold much appeal. Not especially when compared to life with Halen, who was handsome and brave. She'd live a wonderful life as the princess here.

"Not that I'm complaining about everything so far, but will there be anything meaningful for me to do if I stay besides having little princesses and..." Oh, the way he was staring at her mouth now. "And what...you and I do."

Halen laughed, obviously relieved. "You are blushing."

"Shouldn't I be?" Kelly had to laugh with him.

Gently he opened the fingers of her closed hand to reveal the locket, and she allowed him to remove it from her palm. Halen pulled off his tunic and laid it on the sand, tucking the locket carefully into it.

Then he pulled Kelly into his lap and she wrapped her legs around his waist, her gown riding around her thighs. Her excitement grew by leaps and bounds as his mouth slammed down on hers. His kiss was hungry and demanding, forceful as the waves of the sea beyond them.

He had the gown off her body in seconds and his hands were everywhere. His mouth soon followed until Kelly thought she'd melt into the sand beneath her. The long, silky locks of his hair tickled her skin as he touched and tasted her. Halen shifted beneath her enough to push down his pants. When his cock pressed against her wet center,

Kelly gasped, her inner walls quivering in anticipation. He didn't push into her as she wanted. No, he made her wait, rocking them back and forth to create a delicious friction against her clit that made her want to scream.

Halen lowered his face to her breasts, plumping them and pressing them together so he could lick and suckle her nipples with abandon. He nipped at the tight peaks with his teeth, then soothed them with gentle lashes of his tongue. Kelly moaned in heated desire as her fingers speared into his hair. She held his head in her grasp as she rubbed her wet heat against him, wanting to drive him as crazy as he was making her.

"I can't endure much of that," he murmured, pulling his head back and positioning her over his ready cock. "I need you now, Kelly."

Kelly eased down on him, her heated flesh closing around him, and his fingers dug into her hips. Their eyes met and their breaths mingled as a gentle sea breeze eased past them. She gasped, trembling as Halen thrust up, pulling her down at the same time. Her sharp cry sent gulls leaping into the air from the sand as her body adjusted to his deep penetration. Halen was sheathed balls-deep within her.

She couldn't speak. The emotion in his eyes and her desire to be with him filled her heart and soul as his cock filled and stretched her pussy. Kelly rode him, pressing a kiss to his mouth. She undulated over him slowly at first, then building into faster movements. She knew Halen wouldn't be content to let her control the pace for long and she was right. He took control from her, driving into her with a force that should have hurt but left her only wanting more and more of him.

The force of their thrusts drove them deeper into the sand and she didn't envy him that. Halen groaned over and over as he neared his release. Kelly tightened the walls of her cunt around him, making him throw his head back as his fingers dug into her flesh. His thrusts gained in speed and strength. He was so deep she felt split in two and it sent

STAY

her flying over the edge into climax.

Halen came a moment later, her body milking his cock as they rocked gently against each other. Kelly was filled with his cock, his seed, and she realized for the first time what it was like to be really loved and cherished by a man.

After they were spent, he cradled her in his arms. His heart was pounding so loudly she could hear it above the surf nearby.

“You will stay with me?”

The sincerity in his voice had her heart shifting in her chest. In that moment, she hoped she was pregnant with his child.

Kelly pulled him closer to her heart.

“I’ll stay, Halen.”

ISABELLA JORDAN

Isabella Jordan is a lucky lady who spends her days with her family, doing volunteer work and writing. She loves creating new stories of all kinds and chatting with readers and friends. Visit her online at <http://isabellajordan.com>.

* * *

***Don't miss Sache's Consort, by Isabella Jordan,
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