



Elemental Elves 1: Horse Play

By

Mary Winter

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Prologue

If everything went well, the handsome guy beneath her would bring in twenty thousand dollars for Green Earth Farm's therapeutic riding program. Grinning, Clarice Davenvic leaned forward and patted the horse's neck, his coat the color of spun gold. She'd taken to calling him Flynn, after the actor famed for his pirate movies. After all, the gelding at five acted more like a roguish colt than a horse well into training.

The steady pounding of hooves against the firm arena footing and the rhythmic snorting of the horse's breaths filled Clarice's ears. Overhead, the cerulean blue sky melted into the verdant green pastures. The perfect day for a ride on her new horse.

A tiny rabbit bounded from the grass. Beneath her Flynn exploded, twisting his hindquarters into the air.

“Easy,” she crooned as she gripped the reins, sawing at them in an attempt to calm the gelding.

Flynn wanted none of it. He leapt sideways, flinging his body away from the startled bundle of fur racing back toward the grass on the other side of the arena. Clarice’s foot slipped from the stirrup, and the iron banged against her ankle. Her heart leapt in her throat, and she slid her hand down the right rein to pull the gelding’s head around for an emergency stop. The horse wrenched the rein away and bolted across the arena.

The beast swerved, nearly missing a brightly painted jump. Clarice’s leg brushed against the standard, and rails clattered to the ground. “Shit,” she cursed under her breath.

Flynn snorted and whirled like a fiend. Another mighty buck and Clarice hung from the side of the saddle. She should just let go, take her lumps, but falling off wouldn’t teach the horse a damn thing. She grabbed his mane and wrenched herself back into the saddle.

Flynn veered. His weight shifted. Sliding to one side, Clarice ducked her head against the jump as Flynn hurried too close to it again. Her foot slipped from the other stirrup, and her gloves slipped on the reins. The world spun a crazy topsy-turvy, sky and ground

churning until Clarice couldn't tell which way was up. Her body twisted, arm flinging forward to try and break the fall.

She hit the ground with a solid thud. A sickening crack filled the air. She lay still. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw Flynn still cavorting around like something possessed. She groaned with pain and her eyelids fluttered.

* * *

Now he'd done it. Forcing his equine instincts back under control, Flynn D'Artange, Earth Elf, halted at the end of the arena. Sweat streaked his coat. Foam flecked from his mouth and his sides bellowed as he sucked in breath. He knew his playboy ways would get him into trouble, always living in the moment and never thinking about the future. Sent here to protect Clarice, to nurture the magic she held within her, he'd done exactly as the Elven Council and his father expected -- fucked up.

Clarice. His charge, the one woman he'd been sent here to protect. He trotted to where she lay in a heap in the center of the arena. With his muzzle, he touched her shoulder. She groaned with pain. Her arm lay twisted beneath her at an awkward angle, and she lay on the edge of a ground pole.

Her eyelids fluttered, but she didn't move. He'd failed. Head hung low to the ground, he blew gently against her cheek, willing her to wake up. He'd shied -- his equine nature had taken over -- but then he'd lost himself to the pure joy of movement. It had been fun. The power inherent in his equine form... except he'd forgotten he had a rider on his back, a rider he was supposed to care for and teach.

On the ground Clarice groaned. She needed medical attention, more than he could give. Flynn closed his eyes, felt for the spark of his Elven form deep inside him. He shifted and his saddle and bridle fell to the ground. He stood naked, not bothering to conjure his clothing. Long flaxen hair fell past his buttocks. His pointed ears and slanted cat-like eyes -- the same color as the pastures in which he roamed -- were the only visible evidence of his Elven race.

He knelt by Clarice's side and pulled her cell phone from its belt holster. "You'll be all right," he said as he dialed 911, summoning an ambulance to her farm. Let them ask about the tack, about the man who had called for help. He didn't care. He checked her pulse and found it strong, though she remained unconscious. He loosened the strap on her riding helmet, thinking to leave it on, but decided she needed the breathing room more. Satisfied he'd done all he could, he stepped back, reached for his other form, turning back into Flynn the

horse. He stood sentry over her and waited.

How ironic! He'd come here to show Clarice how to have fun. Working too hard shortened lives, but with the good Clarice did, she spread love and joy into the world. That's why he'd been sent. Right now, the world needed all the happiness it could get. The Elven Council recognized Clarice's special gifts in working with children, and it was his job to keep her from working herself to death. Now, he'd hurt her and lost her the chance to win prize money she desperately needed for her farm.

His first assignment, the one attempt he had to prove that he wasn't just a playboy, and he'd fucked up. He stood there, muzzle just barely brushing her shoulder, and hoped the ambulance would arrive soon. And when she woke up, he hoped like hell she'd forgive him, because he didn't know if he'd ever forgive himself.

Chapter One

The pink fiberglass cast on Clarice's arm reminded Flynn of his folly. She slept in an oversized T-shirt with a fat horse on it and little else. She lay on her side, her broken arm flung out of the way, her other hand tucked beneath her chin like a child. Next to her, a fat orange tabby cat with a fluffy white belly slept, and on the floor between the bed and the door lay a German Shepherd.

From outside her window, Flynn watched. In the dark of the night he had two options -- stay in his stall or go to Clarice. On this night his choice came as easily as it had every night before. At least here, watching Clarice through the window, he could keep an eye on her and protect her in a way he couldn't on that fateful afternoon three weeks ago when he'd dashed her hopes.

She'd told him about it as she groomed his horse form or petted his muzzle, telling him she didn't blame him for her accident. Of course he didn't quite believe her. He'd have blamed himself had their situations been reversed. After all, his moment's inattention and reveling in the joy of exuberant expression had gotten her hurt. A broken arm, two cracked ribs, a concussion, and no riding for at least six weeks. He knew the diagnosis like an accusing litany.

In sleep her lips parted. Rosy red, full, lush, perfect for wrapping around his cock and sucking him deep and

hard. She rolled to the side, flinging her other arm against the edge of the bed. With her legs spread she looked like an offering, ripe and ready to be devoured. The thin shirt pressed against the rounded globes of her breasts, her nipples tight against the fabric.

The sheets fell away, revealing her long, tanned legs with their toned and muscled curves. It took all his willpower not to try the front door and see if he could enter her house, her body. He could, however, enter her dreams.

Flynn smiled. He hadn't tried before. He really hadn't felt the need. However, no sooner had Clarice broken her arm than she was back struggling to work twelve-hour days, driving herself to exhaustion each night. Right now, he doubted fun even entered into her vocabulary. And that, in his opinion, was a crying shame.

Flynn sat beneath the window with his legs crossed and his hands resting on his knees. He inhaled the lush, damp smell of a humid Virginia night. Insects filled the air with an undercurrent of noise. He focused on the woman lying inside, on the steady rise and fall of her chest with each breath, on the patterns of her mind. Even in sleep she didn't relax, her mind abuzz with subconscious thoughts. Reminders to order feed, to reschedule her doctor's appointment, to find someone

to help her with her riding therapy calls, her mental to do list grew and grew.

On the bed, she shifted restlessly. Flynn. His name was in her thoughts, though she saw him only in his equine form. Her admiration for his form, his grace, his beauty filled her mind. By falling off and breaking her arm, she thought she'd failed him. She thought she needed *his* forgiveness, not the other way around.

“Oh, Clarice,” he whispered, sliding easily into her thoughts. Her need to apologize touched him. The Elven Council cared nothing for thoughts and feelings, not when their goals were on the line. Even his parents fit the aloof image the Council projected. His father worked hard on the Council and tried to mold his only son into the perfect image of Elven obedience. His father saw only how Flynn's reckless behavior impeded his goals. He didn't know what it would take to bring his mother out of the dream-like world in which she lived. No, no one had ever cared for his feelings before.

He appeared in her dream in his Elven form with his hair bound in a leather thong, his pointed ears clearly visible. He knew he looked like Legolas come to life with his green cat-like eyes, his green vest and his tight leather pants.

Clarice raised her hand from his equine form's neck

and stared at him. Her gaze lingered on his ears, then on his trousers, and the hard bulge of his cock against the butter soft leather. “Who are you?” In the dream realm her voice held a mystical quality. Hearing her speak here, in the veiled place between the worlds, he knew why he’d been sent.

Clarice held power. The power to change lives, shaping them for the better. Her work with disabled children molded their lives into something better, and those she brought into her operation needed the same kind of healing touch the children did. What she didn’t realize was that she too needed healing, and that was why he was here. To help her heal, not physically but emotionally, from the wounds that drove her day after day.

Shock hit him like a two-by-four to the solar plexus. Clarice possessed magic of the kind long thought to be gone from the human realm.

“Think of me as your guardian angel.” He stifled a chuckle at his foolishness. He’d known a few angels, and a more arrogant, vain creature he had yet to find. Yet, Clarice would understand his intentions if he called himself her “guardian angel” and so long as he fulfilled his mission, what harm could misnaming himself be.

“You look like an Elf.” Clarice grinned. “Like my very own Legolas.” She licked her lips. “Is there a reason why you’ve come into my dreams?” She patted the horse on the neck as it, being part of him, stood completely still.

With a thought he dismissed the image, and the horse vanished into thin air.

“How’d you do that?” She strode forward with a shake of her head. “Maybe I brought you into my dream. Maybe I wanted to have my wicked way with you.” Her hips rolled when she walked, a seductive sway that drew his gaze and kept his cock standing at attention.

Flynn swallowed hard. He’d entered her dreams and expected to be the one ensnaring her. Not the other way around. “Magic,” he said at last, as she stopped before him. Staring at her fall of curly red hair and the black lace negligee she suddenly wore, he knew who held the magic, and it wasn’t him. “So how’d you do that?”

She toyed with the ribbon tied between her breasts and skimmed her fingers down her front. “This?” She winked. “Magic. The same way I brought you here.” She caressed his chest, her fingers sliding over his pectorals, down the ridges of his abdomen to brush against the soft leather of his pants. “Lots and lots of magic.”

Her pouty lip called to him. He leaned forward and captured it. With a groan he melted into her. Wrapping an arm around her waist, he pressed her against him, letting her feel the extent of the way she affected him.

* * *

Her dream spiraled out of control. Pressed against an Elven-looking Flynn she became acutely aware of her femininity. With her breasts crushed against his chest and the heavy throb of his erection hard against her stomach, every inch of her yearned for him. If she'd dreamed him here, then she had dreamed him into a damn fine kisser too. His tongue swept her lower lip, an invitation, a claiming, and she parted her mouth to invite him deeper inside.

He slid a hard thigh between her legs. With a scrap of lace between them, her pussy burned against the supple leather of his pants. Wet, hot, needy, she whimpered as his tongue swept inside her mouth, and wished he were buried deep inside her cunt. She clenched her fingers against his back, one hand sliding up to tangle into his white-blond hair.

Her dream, her power, and yet, with his lips demanding on hers, his tongue thrusting into her mouth, his cock hard against her, he swamped her senses. She clung to

him. Her knees weakened, and she swayed against him. Her world spun, vertigo taking her deeper and deeper into herself until she could do nothing but cling to him and wish his body would penetrate hers.

His big hand closed over her breast. In the flimsy negligee, the heat from his palm burned her flesh. She arched into it, a tiny mewl of need escaping her lips. His thumb brushed her turgid nipple, and the point hardened with a painful intensity.

“Please,” she whimpered. Her body throbbed with the beat of her heart. Her juices soaked through the crotch of her negligee and into the soft leather of his pants.

Clarice slid her hands beneath the vest, tracing the planes and sinew of Flynn’s chest. Down to his narrow waist, and then to his hips. Sliding her hands around, she grabbed the high, firm globes of his buttocks, and pulled him closer. She thrust against him in an attempt to gain relief.

Flynn lowered her to the ground. How she got there, she didn’t know, but suddenly his body was hard above hers, shielding her from the starry night sky. Her dream, and she wanted him buried balls-deep inside her. Wrapping her legs around his hips, she pressed her heels into his buttocks and pulled him closer.

“Not yet.” His husky words inflamed her senses, made her think of delights dark and forbidden.

He grasped the strap of her negligee and with a tug snapped it. Black lace fell forward, revealing an expanse of her creamy, white skin and the swell of an exposed breast. His lips followed, exploring the newly bare territory with little nips and bites. A shove of his hand pulled down the bodice and her breast popped free.

He wrapped his lips around her nipple and suckled. Dear God in heaven, the warm, wet suction of his mouth tugging at her nipple sent an answering tug to her clit. Her juices filled her hungry channel. Skimming his large fingers over her ribs, her hips, Flynn found her slick clit and labia.

Her mind, her dream, and she had control of it all. A simple thought dissolved her clothes. Naked to Flynn’s hungry gaze, she arched her back and stretched wantonly. She desired Flynn’s clothes gone, half expecting them to dissolve the way hers had. They didn’t. He remained stubbornly dressed.

She sat up, the motion pressing her clit harder against his thumb. “You. Naked. Now!” she gasped between strums of his fingers against her drenched pussy.

Flynn's husky chuckle filled her ears. "You don't hold all the magic." He shrugged off his vest, then rose to his feet and stepped from his leather trousers.

Clothed, Flynn made her mouth water. Naked, he clenched her womb and tightened her nipples. He embodied pure, masculine perfection, from the white-blond hair sweeping past his buttocks, to the planes of his chest. Her gaze lingered on his abs, then traveled lower to the curls at the junction of his thighs and his thick, hard cock. Damn, when she dreamed, she dreamt well.

Flynn returned to her, bracing his weight on one arm. His legs tangled with hers, his hair-roughened skin rubbing against her smooth flesh. "Now, we can create our own magic."

Clarice stifled her laughter at the corny line. Flynn cupped her breast, her nipple pressing against his palm, and all thoughts fled. Instead, she drowned in sensation. His thick rod pressed against her stomach, his hand on her breast, his lips at her neck, her shoulder, licking and tasting her. She whimpered.

Need coursed through her veins too strong to be denied. She cupped her hand on his broad shoulder, her other hand going to the taut globe of his ass. Here. Now. Deep inside her so close they merged into one.

Flynn replaced his hand with his mouth. Warm, wet suction created a pull that went straight to her pussy. She arched beneath him, pressing her breast into his mouth. Reaching between her legs, he slid first one finger, then two, into her tight channel.

Oh yeah, right there. Curling his fingers, he stroked her sweet spot, and her pussy clenched around his digits. Slow, torturous thrusts gave her the mental image of dancing on his fingers. Higher and higher he pushed her until the graze of his teeth against her nipple and a third finger sent her orgasm spiraling through her body.

Her body quaked and exploded. Her breath gasped between her parted lips, her mewling cries filling the room.

Flynn stilled, waiting for her quaking to cease. She looked up at him, and for one moment, wondered why she only found men like him in her dreams. The show, her farm. She had too many things on which to focus, and then Flynn kissed his way back to her lips. He drank from her, his tongue sliding into her mouth. She stroked it, legs twining around his waist, hips lifting in silent invitation.

In a dream, the need for air became irrelevant. She sucked on his tongue and drew it deeper into her

mouth. Sweat slicked their bodies, facilitating the silken glide of flesh against flesh. Him. Her. She knew nothing except the two of them, and the burning, ever present need to become one.

Flynn moved. The head of his cock brushed against her labia.

Clarice moaned. Pleasure rippled through her body, her channel clenching with anticipation.

One smooth thrust and he buried himself balls-deep inside her.

For a moment she held him, her hands on his ass, his cock deep inside her. It might be a dream, but she wanted to remember it after the sun rose and life intruded. And then, he began to move.

Long, deep thrusts, making sure he brushed her clit with each stroke. Clarice gave herself up to the pleasure coursing in her veins. Dreams, magic, hell, even his pointed Elven ears didn't matter, not right now, not when they fit together so good and so right. He stretched her, filled her.

She struggled to increase the pace. Fingers digging into the flesh of his buttocks, trying, needing to feel him pounding into her, and yet, Flynn kept his pace steady.

She whimpered. Her channel tightened around him. “Please. Fuck me, please,” she demanded.

The base of her spine tingled. Release was so close, yet Flynn wasn’t giving her any quarter. Then, with a guttural cry he thrust forward. Whatever restraint he had fled as he plunged his cock into her, over and over again. Yes! Exactly the way she wanted it, hard and fast, so deep she tasted him.

And then, she saw nothing but the swirling colors behind her closed eyelids. An orgasm the likes of which she hadn’t felt in a while washed over her. Over and over her body convulsed its pleasure. Her breath caught in her throat. Her mind tumbled toward blackness.

Above her, Flynn stiffened. He roared as he came, hot jets of his seed shooting inside her. Clarice forced her eyes open to watch. He looked like a god. Face etched with pleasure, sweat coating his body. He slumped onto her.

She relished the sound of his heart pounding next to hers, the twitching of his cock inside her body. He rolled to the side, still cradling her in his arms.

“Flynn,” she whispered, reaching up to brush a lock of hair from his forehead. “Just like my horse.” Then, she drifted toward blackness and the haven of sleep.

* * *

Damn, that had been good. No, better than good. The best fucking sex he'd had in a long time, dream or real. He sat outside the window, noticing Clarice lying on the bed. The covers had been pushed down toward her feet, her legs spread. Her casted arm reached across the bed. With a wistful smile, he wondered if she sought him. He imagined her scent on the breeze, the scent of a woman well satisfied. In her dreams, at least Clarice had no problem having fun.

Except what happened in her dreams didn't translate into real life. Flynn rose to his feet, reluctant to leave. He sensed the waning night, knew he needed to return to the stable and to his other form. That he had control over her dreams and power in them thrilled him. It would make his job easier if he could be his true self when she was awake, as opposed to his elemental form.

Flynn smiled, turning away from the house. To think, an Elf tied to the earth, in the form of a horse. He chuckled with the knowledge Clarice wouldn't believe it. And she, with her power for good, so important to their mission. He sighed heavily. In spite of what they'd shared tonight, or maybe because of it, he knew his mission was more important than ever.

Once in the barn, he stepped back into the twelve-by-twelve stall he called home. He closed the stall door behind him. On the freshly swept concrete aisle floor, no telling footprints were evident. With a thought, he teleported his clothing to his home in Underhill, and then he shifted. Once more Flynn the horse stood where Flynn the Elf had been.

He lipped at the tepid water in his bucket, wishing he'd thought to drink before changing forms. The hay he'd already dispersed to the other horses, and he made it a point to make a few circuits of his stall so the shavings looked disturbed. Already Clarice commented on how neat a creature he was. She'd never believe the truth.

* * *

Four hours later, sounds of the barn waking for the day stirred Flynn from his sleep. The whickering of horses greeting Clarice filled the air. Horses milled in their stalls. A chicken crowed outside, and a dog barked. Flynn snorted and shook himself awake.

He glanced through the bars of his stall, watching Clarice push the wheelbarrow loaded with grain buckets down the aisle. With only one good arm, getting the buckets up and dumped took a bit of maneuvering. He nickered softly, the only way he had of telling her he was sorry.

“Hungry?” she crooned, dumping the mixture of sweet feed and supplements into his feed bin. She reached in through the open feed door and patted his neck. “I’m sorry I won’t be able to ride you for a few more weeks. You would have done so well at the show.” With a lingering rub, she moved to the next stall.

I’m the one who’s sorry. I’m the one who ruined your chances. He knew she didn’t hear him and wondered if perhaps, in another dream, he might get a chance to tell her. Then, the smell of molasses tugged at his equine senses. *Well, when in a barn, act like a horse ...* He buried his nose in the feed bin and ate. Apologies and another chance to get to know Clarice could come later. After all, it wasn’t like he could shift and reveal everything to her. And a part of him really wished he could. There was something about Clarice and it wasn’t just her magic. He thought about his mission and, yet again, hoped he hadn’t ruined everything.

Chapter Two

Being so close to Clarice and unable to reveal his true self or his mission hurt more than Flynn expected it to. A member of the earth Elf contingent, his father holding a seat on the Council, Flynn D'Artange never had to explain himself to anyone. He never wanted to before Clarice. After polishing off his breakfast like a good little horse, he waited to be let outside. Now he stood in the pasture, nose-to-nose with the only other earth Elf on the premises.

An older gelding, Jake looked as rough-and-tumble as his name. Scars crisscrossed his hide, his knees swollen from too-hard work. Stuck in his equine form, Jake happened to be another rescue for her farm. He'd lacked the ability to communicate with anyone in Underhill, and from what he'd told Flynn, it'd been years since he'd walked on two legs.

"You shouldn't have done it." He spoke telepathically in the way of the Elven people. Jake swished his tail and reached down to snatch at a succulent patch of grass. "I mean, you've got it made. You can go back if you want. You have a mission, contact with anyone in Underhill. I can't go back now even if I wanted to. I've lost my connection."

The connection, a mental path that allowed him to send

his clothing to Underhill or, if need be, communicate with Elves there, was as natural and a part of him as breathing. Losing it seemed abhorrent, unforgivable, and he had no idea how to help Jake get it back. “I told the Council about you. That’s all I can do.”

“Well you shouldn’t have dumped Clarice. You broke her arm!”

Flynn winced at the accusing tone in Jake’s voice. “I didn’t mean to.” He hung his head and snorted into the lush grass. “My horse self got the better of me. But it felt so good to run, to buck, to play. I couldn’t help myself.”

“You were sent here with a mission, watch over Clarice and teach her not to work so hard. Surely even someone like you, who lives for the moment, can manage to focus and do that.” Jake snorted, his disdain reminding Flynn so much of the old Elves on the Council that he nearly turned away and trotted across the pasture.

“I know,” Flynn insisted. “I know.”

“You don’t want to make them forget about you,” Jake said softly. “You don’t want to lose that tie.” He shook his head and kicked at a fly. “You don’t know what it’s like being unable to talk to Underhill, unable to change

form. You don't know what it's like to be trapped in this form. People are cruel. I used to think the Elven court cruel, but they, in all their superior beliefs, have nothing on humans. It's people who are the cruelest of all." Jake fell silent.

Flynn had nothing further to say. Instead, he thought of Clarice, her kind and gentle nature. There had to be a way he could make it up to her. His ears twitched when he heard the gate opening and closing, then Clarice's singsong voice. With no chores to do because of her broken arm, and no horses to ride, she had leisure time, too much if she were to be believed. Giving a whinny of greeting he trotted in her direction, hoping to make it up to her.

* * *

Clarice stared at the horses in the fields, her gaze going to Jake, the old gelding whose walls she hadn't been able to breach. He wasn't a mean horse or unkind, but he did what he wanted to do. He didn't listen to her cues, and she'd started to take him back to the basics, but she got the impression that he hated the work -- that he simply wanted to be left alone.

She empathized with the horse. With her cast heavy around her arm she wanted to be left alone too. Except out here, with the horses, she could forget her problems

for a while. The matter of coming up with prize money to help expand her therapeutic riding program weighed heavily on her mind. So many kids, disadvantaged and disabled, relied on the service she provided. There simply wasn't enough to go around.

Flynn trotted across the pasture toward her. She paused, noticing his floating gait, the way his silver mane bobbed on his golden neck. The horse's mane, the same color as the man's -- or whatever he was -- conjured images of her dream. She flushed red with embarrassment, thinking of the way his lips, his tongue, had caressed her body. His cock had filled her. He had brought her to heights of passion she'd never felt before, at least not with anyone physical. Lucky her that her perfect lover existed only in her mind.

Flynn slowed to a walk. He stopped in front of her and stretched out his nose to touch the cast. His big, soulful eyes looked at her. Reaching up, she scratched behind his ears. When he looked at her like that, she couldn't blame the horse for her accident. Though really, she knew she shouldn't blame him at all.

Why he'd ignored his training and been so full of high spirits, she didn't know, but until she could read the horse's mind, she doubted anyone could either. No, it wasn't his fault that his exuberance had broken her arm and ruined her chance at a nice, fat show purse.

“I wish I could stay,” she said. “But I’ve got things to do.” She turned and walked away. Flynn followed her for a few steps and then halted, as if he realized she was leaving. With a snort and a shake of his head, he turned back.

Clarice stepped from the pasture and struggled not to feel as if she’d let Flynn down. The show would have been a perfect opportunity to showcase his skills. She couldn’t show him with her broken arm, and she had no one else to ride him. The girls who worked in the barn hadn’t the riding skills to take on such a high-spirited horse, and other people who might ride already had horses entered and couldn’t ride another. Frowning, she went back to the house and her den with its near-toppling stacks of papers and plans.

Once inside, she sat down in the plush chair behind her desk. Smoothing a strand of hair behind her ear, she contemplated the estimates of work it would take to expand her therapeutic riding program. Unable to face them right now, she slid the papers into the folder and hid it in a desk drawer.

Coward. The entry form for the show sat on the desk. Red writing on her blotter, with the date circled, reminded her she only had a few days left in which to send in her entry fees. Clarice sighed. A glance out the

window showed the horses in the pasture, Flynn grazing close to the fence. She watched him for a moment, wishing she could wave a magic wand and heal her arm. She couldn't.

Clarice balled her good hand into a fist and pounded it on the desk. Damn it! So many hopes and dreams lost in a moment of inattention. Her arm ached. She contemplated getting a saw, anything, and slicing off the cast so she could ride Flynn in the show.

In the end common sense won out. Well, common sense and the fear that if she hacked off her cast, she might slice her arm open. She had to be honest with herself. She wouldn't be going to the show. Dragging her fingers through her hair, she stared for a long moment at the entry form.

Clarice breathed deeply. She picked up the blank entry form and held it over her shredder. Outside, Flynn raised his head. He appeared to look into the window. "I'm sorry," she said, blinking away the sting of tears. "I'm so sorry." She lowered the paper and the shredder turned it into confetti.

Through her window, she watched Flynn as he stared at her for a long moment. Then, he turned and trotted away. Clarice knew he couldn't have known what she'd done. After all, horses had no notions of entry forms

and paperwork. Yet, on some level, she sensed that he did know, and that he was sorry too.

She picked up a stack of bills and fired up her computer. There'd be time enough for other shows. Right now, she had to focus on keeping the farm afloat. She and Flynn would have their moment in the show ring, she had no doubt.

* * *

Out of the corner of his eye Flynn watched Jake amble in his direction. He snorted, not wanting to be bothered. When night fell, he'd switch forms, and go to her. Perhaps in her dreams he could lend comfort that he couldn't provide in his equine form.

Flynn turned his rump toward Jake, hoping the other horse received his message loud and clear. There'd been a reason, a damn good one, why he'd retreated to the far pasture. He'd expected Jake to respect that. Apparently, he'd been wrong.

“You should tell her.”

Those weren't the words he expected to hear from Jake. Flynn whirled to face him. He pinned back his ears and swished his tail. “What do you know? You've lost your connection to Underhill.” As soon as he said

the spiteful words he regretted them.

Jake lowered his head. “You’re right. I did lose my connection. You can choose whether to believe me or not, but I think you should tell Clarice exactly who you are and why you’re here.”

Flynn snorted. “That’d go over as well as a fat horse trying to leap a tall jump.”

“You’re not going to know until you try. And you certainly don’t want to incur the Council’s wrath by failing your mission.”

Bugger it, but Jake was right. “You know, for being away from Underhill for so long, you have an uncanny grasp of their politics.” He stilled his swishing tail. “But how? And to tell her I’d been sent to make sure she doesn’t work so hard, and I chose to do that by breaking her arm? She’d probably just send me to the glue factory.”

“If you believe that, then you’re not giving Clarice enough credit.” Jake reached out and nipped Flynn’s shoulder.

Flynn squealed with protest and lashed out with a front hoof. Jake nimbly jumped aside. “What the hell did you do that for?”

“Because you needed it.” Jake pinned his ears back. His tail lashed from side to side like an angry pendulum. “If you think Clarice doesn’t care for all of us then you’re crazy. She’ll understand. She has to. After all --”

“She has the power to spread good in the world. I know. I know.” Flynn snorted. He hated being told what to do. Hated it when he lived in Underhill under the watchful eye of his father, and he hated it now. Underhill housed the Elves. Magically made, the otherworld catered to the noble and the most dour of the Council members. Like a land perpetually wrapped in rules and tied with expectations, Underhill stifled him. With his Elven powers, he teleported objects and himself between the two realms. Flynn frowned. Jake had left Underhill behind, and in doing so, had lost his connection. What could he know about Flynn’s job to make Clarice slow down and have fun?

Unless Jake had been given a charge and failed. Flynn stilled. That’s what it was. It had to be. Jake had been given a mission by the Elven Council and hadn’t accomplished it, so they’d cut him off. He felt the tug inside, as clearly as Flynn did, the knowledge that a thought and a dream carried him home. And yet he couldn’t go home.

“I think you see now,” Jake said, neither confirming nor denying Flynn’s thoughts. If the other Elf knew the conclusions to which Flynn had come, he gave no sign. “Tell her. Show her the good she does.”

“And if she doesn’t believe me?” For the first time since accepting this mission that he’d at one time thought was oh so easy, he was scared. More than just his reputation in his father’s and the Council’s eyes was at stake. His connection to Underhill, to the very things that made him Elven, and not a horse. To think Jake had been punished by being forced to remain in this form. Flynn shuddered to think it might happen to him.

“Then make her understand.” He glanced over his shoulder. “And this might be your chance.” Without saying anything further, he trotted toward the horses waiting at the gate to be brought in to the barn.

Flynn lagged behind. He heard Jake’s querying whinny, gave his own back. “Don’t worry about me,” he said. “I know what I’m doing.”

“I hope so,” Jake replied grumpily, and then Clarice slipped a halter over his head to lead him back to the barn.

Truth to tell, Flynn hoped he knew what he was doing too. In his Elven form it would be too easy to sweep

Clarice off her feet. A few kisses, some caresses, and he'd have her naked with the grass cushioning her body. He'd bury his cock balls-deep inside her, each stroke making her come apart beneath him. Oh yeah, if he were in his Elven form that's what he would do.

The swish of booted feet in the grass warned him of her approach. Steeling himself against the pull of her presence, the need to rest his muzzle against the soft mounds of her breasts, Flynn swished his tail and acted bored. He snatched at a tall blade of grass, more to give her the appearance of disinterest than from hunger.

“You too good to come in with the others?” Clarice slid the headstall from her shoulders. “Are you being a pouty horse tonight?”

A merry game of chase would be fun about now. He'd lead her around the pasture, toying with her, until she finally caught him. And then what? Once again his sense of fun would have overridden his common sense, and once again she'd see him as nothing other than an equine pain in the ass.

Flynn turned to face her. He flicked his ears back and forth.

“That's a good boy,” she crooned, approaching his shoulder. With practiced ease, she slipped the halter

over his head and buckled it.

Flynn brushed his muzzle across her shoulder. He inhaled her floral scent and probed at her mind. There, amid the maelstrom of worries about the show and her plans to expand the program -- he'd really fucked those up hadn't he? -- she thought of him.

Don't worry. I'm not sad you can't ride me in the show. He projected his thoughts, needed to be close to her. On the heels of his mental words, he projected an image of him as he was last night, down to the green vest and leggings. In her mind, he strode toward her.

"Hey, how'd you get in my mind?" Clarice asked. She tried to step back.

Flynn knew what she saw. In her daydreams he stood in his Elven form. Beside her, his equine form stood like a statue, the lead rope slack in her fingers. He pulled her deeper into her daydream and wrapped his will around her. *I wanted to see you again, to touch you.* He stopped before her and trailed his fingers down her arm. *Don't you want to touch me?* He tangled his fingers with hers and flattened them against his bare chest.

Clarice shivered. Behind her thin T-shirt her nipples pebbled, making their desires known through layers of

bra and shirt. Not releasing her hand, he stepped close enough to wrap his arm around her and, with his palm flattened at the base of her spine, pull her against his body.

Surely she felt the hard ridge of his cock pressing against her stomach. He slid his hand lower, cupping her buttock. It fit his palm nicely, and he squeezed a generous handful. His breath teased strands of her hair.

In his arms, she stiffened. “I -- I don’t have time for this.”

“Sure you do.” He spoke the words in her mind.

“You’re not real, and I have horses to bring in.” Her reproachful words warred with her soft curves pressed so invitingly against his hardness.

“If I’m not real, then how can I do this?” He pressed his lips to hers with a demanding kiss. His tongue traced the seal of her lips, venturing inside as she opened her mouth. The hand on her ass brought her closer to him, and his other hand skimmed her side, finding her breast and cupping it.

Clarice moaned. He swallowed the needy sound. Sliding his leg between hers, he rubbed his hard thigh against her pussy. He flicked his thumb across her

nipple, the hand on her rear sliding lower so he stroked her through denim and cotton.

He caught fragments of her thoughts. She believed this to be a daydream, a nice one, but a daydream nonetheless.

“This isn’t a dream.” He pulled his mouth from hers long enough to voice the words. “In fact, if you want, I can lower you to the grass and love you until you beg for release. Do you want that, Clarice? Do you want me?”

“It’d be nice, but --”

“No regrets, no questions.” He pressed his finger against her lips. “It’s a beautiful day. Let’s enjoy it. Let’s enjoy each other.”

She sighed and sagged against him. Taking her actions for capitulation, he captured her lips once more.

Chapter Three

Clarice struggled against the delicious lassitude Flynn evoked in her. His mouth coaxed her, teased her, until she opened beneath him. She pressed her palm flat against his chest. Tiny whimpers emerged from her throat, and Flynn swallowed them.

It would be easy, too easy, to give into the sensual pleasures he promised. Except she stood in the pasture and Flynn existed only in her mind. She had to be going mad.

No, you're not crazy.

His voice filled her mind, deep and resonant, strong like the man standing before her. But, he wasn't a man, not exactly. Pointed ears showed through his fall of blond hair. Clarice stiffened in his arms.

No! She wouldn't do this, refused to give into her carnal need here in the middle of the pasture. She stepped away from his embrace, her breath coming in shallow pants, her nipples bereft after contact with Flynn's hard chest. Her pussy throbbed.

"I'm sorry," she said to the apparition of Flynn in her mind. "I have things to do. I can't dally like this."

You work too hard. Enjoy yourself. You're a beautiful, sensual woman. Come play with me. Flynn reached for her and tangled his fingers with hers.

Clarice stared at their joined fingers. How easy it would be to forget the duties of the farm. In the cast, her arm ached. Before she never worried about the fiberglass cast, and she realized this wasn't just another dream. Somehow, this was different.

"I can't. I have things to do, people who depend on me. I can't just have fun." She crossed her arms over her chest, noticing that once again the heavy weight of the cast covered her arm.

All work and no play makes Clarice--

"Stop it! Just stop it!" Clarice stepped back. In her hand, the thick weight of Flynn's lead rope rested. She closed her fingers around it. "I'm taking you back to the barn, and I'm going to stop this foolish nonsense right now. You. Do. Not. Exist." Angry at herself for letting her mind run away with her, she turned away.

The halter dropped into the grass. A hand closed over her shoulder. "Clarice, turn around, please." Instead of in her mind, Flynn's deep voice spoke directly behind her. She stopped, uncertain if she really wanted to turn

around.

She remained standing with her back to him, her shoulders square, her arms crossed in front of her. The lead rope dangled uselessly in her hand. Resisting the pressure to turn around and see what she suspected with her own eyes, she concentrated on the lost money, the lost opportunities for her farm.

“Please,” Flynn repeated, squeezing her shoulder. “You’re not going crazy. Don’t be angry with me.”

“Why not? First that horse breaks my arm, and then you start to enter my dreams.” She whirled to face him. Her jaw dropped. Before her stood Flynn from her dream in all his Elven glory. He looked more scrumptious in life than he had in her fantasies, and her mouth went dry. She gasped, quickly recovering her composure. “Who the hell are you? And where’s Flynn?” She glanced around, searching for his equine form. “He’s gone! What’d you do with him?”

“Flynn, the horse, is just fine. You shouldn’t worry about him. Besides, didn’t you like it when I entered your dreams, when I suckled at your nipples, and caressed the soft petals of your pussy? Didn’t you want my cock deep inside you? Didn’t you like it when you came?”

A red flush crept over her cheeks. His words conjured heated images of their coupling. “That doesn’t matter. And what did you do with my horse?”

“Yes, it does matter. We want the same things. I want you to have fun, to relax, so you don’t work so hard. I want you to enjoy life. You’re a good woman. Your work here with the children spreads an innumerable amount of good into the world.” He stepped forward. Cupping her cheek, he caressed her lips with his thumb. “I’m here to make sure you continue to do that good.”

“You’re not answering my questions.” Her eyelids fluttered closed at his gentle touches. Abruptly, she shook her head and stepped back. “Don’t distract me.”

“I am Flynn D’Artange. I am an Earth Elf from a long and noble line.”

“And what about Flynn the horse? What’s your connection to him?” Her voice shook as she hefted the lead rope with its dangling halter.

Silence stretched between them. She opened her mouth to demand an answer when a popping noise filled the air and before her stood Flynn the horse. He stepped forward and nickered low, blowing gently against her face. Then, he stepped back and returned to his Elven form. “I am he.”

“Oh, God,” she said as her knees buckled. She sank to the ground. She looked at him, pain filling her gaze. “Then you broke my arm. Why? Why?” Tears welled in her eyes.

Oh hell, she hadn’t wanted to cry. Flynn sat down and reached for her. She ducked away, not yet ready to face his touches. He frowned and plucked a clover bud, twirling it in his fingers. “I didn’t mean to. Sometimes when I’m in my horse form, I get lost. Such power, to feel the play of muscles and run, and buck for fun. I didn’t mean to do that. I didn’t mean to hurt you, and if I had some sort of Elven magic to fix it, I would.” He held out his hands. “But I don’t, and I’m truly sorry.”

“So how --” Clarice dashed away tears, “-- do you intend to help me when I needed the prize money from the show to expand my operations? Prize money I won’t win because of this.” She held out her cast like an accusation.

“No one knows for sure that would have happened.” Flynn shrugged. “And I’ll still help you.”

The rational part of her mind knew the truth in his words. Horses were unpredictable creatures. She stifled the bubble of laughter rising in her throat. No one knew that better than she did. “Then you’ll find me some

funds. Look, Elf, horse, whatever you are, and I don't even know if I'm hallucinating right now, I don't need help having fun. I have fun every day I'm out there with those kids. When I'm on the back of a horse, taking a jump, that's fun. I have plenty of fun, and I don't need you to help me." She pointed to her cast. "I think you've done quite enough."

"I was sent here --"

Clarice held up her hand. Rising to her feet, she picked up the halter and lead rope. "Horse. Elf. I don't care. I spent \$4500 for you, and now I'm out money too. Do what you want, stay in whatever form you want. I'm done. Just stay the hell away from me." Before he had a chance to reply, she whirled on her heels and stormed away.

Furious. Blood pounding, vessel thumping furious. No one had ever made her madder. First, she was out the possible -- and okay, so Elf-boy had a point -- the possible prize money from the show. But she had spent good, hard-earned money for that horse, a horse she thought she could take places. And speaking of horses, she'd have to find out how in equine form he was a gelding, when clearly, as an Elf, he wasn't.

A muzzle nudged her in the back.

“What?” She spun around to find Flynn, horse Flynn, standing there giving her the biggest, saddest horse eyes she’d ever seen.

Oh hell, she never yelled at her animals. She couldn’t start now. “I’m sorry,” she said, though wondered why she, and not the creature who broke her arm, was apologizing. Unthinking she slipped the halter over his head. For an Elven horse Flynn accepted it quite well. She led him back to the barn, certain she was losing her mind.

Elves. They were something out of a fairy tale, or Orlando Bloom with damn fine hair extensions, not something she found in her pasture. And why her? Why now? And when he talked about fun his words eerily echoed those of the girls who worked in her barn, who claimed she never had any fun.

Because you do good in the world. You spread good, and the world really needs more positive energy.

“Will you not interrupt my thoughts? An Elf? You’re really an Elf?” She snorted. “And I would have said you made love like a god.”

Thank you, my lady. It was my pleasure.

“I just bet it was.” She glanced back at him and

smoothed a hand over his copper coat. “Well in either form you’re a pretty boy, but we’re at the barn now and you have to behave yourself.”

Clarice heard nothing in her mind as she led Flynn to his stall. At least now she knew why it was so clean. He never even used it. She had no doubts he changed forms and let himself out as soon as she closed up the barn for the night.

An Elf who wanted to teach her how to have fun. She glanced down at her casted arm and wondered if their ideas of fun were even in the same universe.

* * *

Night fell, leaving Flynn standing in a quiet barn. He listened to the horses milling in their stalls. Just three doors down stood Jake. To think about going to Underhill when Jake stood there unable to do so felt wrong somehow. He shifted, then reached through to unhook the latch and stepped into the aisle.

He walked down to Jake’s stall. “You sure you don’t want me to mention you?” Of course, coming from him, it might not do any good. After all, he’d totally messed up his assignment, gotten his charge mad at him, and now he hungered for her sweet body.

“No. You have enough to deal with. Best of luck to you.” Jake nosed in his grain bin.

“Thanks. I have a feeling I’ll need it.” He paused for a moment, then reached for the other, and instead of a barn, he stood in the entranceway to the Council Hall.

Blue-green stones the color of a tranquil ocean lagoon lined the walls, blending into yellow, crystal-bright ones that faded to a deep, earth green, and then a fire red. Black stones covered the floor, while the sky above appeared like a starlit night.

An Elf in a white robe bustled forward. “The Council will see you now. You are expected.”

How the Council knew of his arrival, Flynn didn’t know. He held Clarice’s image in his mind, remembered her petal-soft lips and her silken flesh. The heat of her pussy and her breathy sighs filled his blood. He was here for her. He would not let her down.

Flynn strode forward, not bothering to change from his trousers and vest. He stopped in front of the twelve members of the Council. On the right, the three Earth members, his father included, sat followed by the Air, Water, and Fire members. His father scowled.

Flynn bowed deeply.

“Flynn D’Artange, why have you abandoned your post and sought us? What tidings do you bring of Clarice Davenvic?” his father said.

Flynn faced the man whose image and power he’d been held to all his life. “I come to ask for a boon. Clarice will be unable to attend the show to gain funds for her therapeutic riding program. Without this expansion, she will not be as happy as she might have been, and I --” His voice faltered. “I feel responsible. I ask that the Council, in its infinite wisdom, contact those in the world above and make a donation to her program, so that she doesn’t feel a loss. To make Clarice happy.” He bowed deeply again.

“You have failed in your mission.” His father’s condemnation rang in his voice.

“I have not failed.” Flynn straightened his spine. “I am here to ensure I do not fail. If you want Clarice’s happiness, then you will do well to listen to me.”

“You presume to tell us, the Council, what to do?” His father sat straighter, but gave no other indication of his displeasure.

Flynn stepped forward. “Yes, I do presume. You’ve given me a mission. I’ll admit there’s been some

unexpected setbacks --”

“Like your breaking your charge’s arm,” his father growled. “I don’t believe you’ve comported yourself very well, my son. As usual indulging in your own happiness and pleasure and not thinking about the greater good.” He waved his hand dismissively. “I should have known you’d fail.”

Flynn tamped down on his rising anger. Standing before the Council, it’d do no good to lose his temper, especially when he asked them for a favor. “I would appreciate the assistance. I will not fail in this mission. You desire to keep Clarice happy. So do I. Should someone come through with a donation to her therapeutic riding program, it will go a long way toward easing Clarice’s worry. Considering that we’re both working for the same goal, I thought I’d mention the opportunity available to you. If you choose not to seize it, then that is your decision.” Flynn bowed again. “I’ll not trouble you further.”

He straightened, then turned and, shoulders square, head held high, strode from the chamber. He refused to beg for them to help Clarice. After all, he’d made his job more difficult. He needed to clean up the mess. Behind him, the muted tones of conversation erupted as the Councilors spoke amongst themselves. Flynn waited until he stepped into the hall then with a thought

returned to the barn, and to Clarice.

Once back at Clarice's farm he ignored the barn in favor of her bedroom, her dreams. Before, he'd waited outside her window, the polite visitor to her dream. She'd taken the dream farther than he'd expected, pleasantly surprising him. Now, he wanted her to know the truth, to be wide awake and know Flynn loved every inch of her delectable skin.

He paused at her threshold. About the only true Elven magic he possessed was his ability to change into his elemental form, the horse, and travel to Underhill. Still, he held the ability to manipulate physical objects, like the tumblers in a lock. Holding out his hand he concentrated on the lock.

Let me in. His mental command passed through wood and metal and the slight click announced the releasing lock. He opened the door, stepping inside, before closing and locking the door behind him.

He sensed her. Like a siren song, her presence called to him from her bedroom. Unbidden, an image came to him, of Clarice lying there in bed, the pink horse nightshirt tangled around her endless legs, her hair surrounding her like a halo. She lay sprawled on her side, a book resting on the blanket. He strode forward.

Mine. Mine. The need to possess her, to claim her as his, burned in his veins. Since facing his father and the Council, he burned with a new intensity. Given Clarice as his charge, his mission, Flynn vowed to fulfill his orders and ensure her happiness.

Clarice looked up at his arrival. Her surprised gasp filled the room, and her mouth formed a perfect oval. Flynn's cock tightened just thinking about her sweet lips sucking him to completion.

Dog-eared the page of her book, she sat up and tugged the hem of her shirt down over her thighs. Several inches of creamy, white flesh still showed, and Flynn kept his gaze focused on it as he strode toward the bed and sat down behind her.

“What?” Clarice's voice caught. “What are you doing? How'd you get in here?”

“So full of questions.” Leaning forward, Flynn allowed his breath to tease across her ear. He closed his fingers over her shoulder and began to knead. Soon, his firm, strong strokes had her leaning back against him and making tiny moans of pleasure.

“Strike that. I think I know what you're doing, and I don't care about the rest.” Clarice sighed. “Damn, that feels so good.”

“I aim to please you.” With his fingers working on her shoulders, he leaned forward and placed feather-light kisses against her neck. The sensitive nape, with its erotic curve, drew him, and he pressed his lips to it. He licked and kissed her as his hands ventured from her shoulders, down her arms. His fingertips grazed the sides of her unbound breasts, and through the cotton shirt, her nipples pebbled. “My goal is to make you happy. Very, very happy.”

Clarice leaned into Flynn’s touch. He skirted the edge of her cast with his fingers, regretting that he’d ever caused her injury. Caressing her breasts, he wanted her to think about him, only him.

“Make me happy, Flynn. Just for tonight, make me happy,” she whispered.

His fingers closed over her breasts, and his low voice rumbled in her ear, “Your wish is my command.”

Chapter Four

Clarice knew she should be mad. This Elf, man, whatever he was, had ruined her chances at the show. And, if Flynn wasn't a real horse, then he'd cost her thousands of dollars. But it was, as her mother used to say, so much water under the bridge. And right now she had a handsome man in her bedroom, pleasuring her, and it had been so long since either of those things had happened -- the man or the pleasure.

Tomorrow. She'd play it like Scarlett O'Hara and worry about it tomorrow. Reaching for the hem of her shirt, she pulled it over her head. The material caught a bit on her cast, but she worked it free, and then leaned once more against Flynn. The leather of his vest pressed against her skin, and suddenly, the barely-there cotton panties she wore seemed too much.

Wet and needy, her pussy ached. Flynn's gentle touches drove her wild. She arched her back, pressing her breasts into his palms. He rolled her nipples between his fingers, his lips and tongue laving the place where her neck met her shoulders. Pressing against him, she noticed his erection poking against her lower back. Oh, to have it deep inside her.

"Flynn, please." She rose onto her knees, her

movements dislodging his hand. She turned, presenting him with her breasts, grabbing his wrist and guiding his fingers to her slick labia.

He stroked her, his teasing caress making her thrust her hips against his hand. "Harder. Deeper." Licking her lips, she longed for him to part her folds and slide his fingers against her clit. His free hand curled around her hips, stilling her movements.

Clarice shoved at his vest. She managed to slide one side down over his shoulders, the leather skewed against his skin. Flattening her palm against his chest, she stroked his nipples, loving the way they rose to attention against her palms. She leaned forward, tilting her clit into his palm, and pressed her lips to his.

Open-mouthed, she kissed him, swallowing his groan. Her tongue delved into his mouth, and she savored the spicy, sweet taste of him. His scent, a woodsy, outdoors blend that made her think of lying on a plush carpet of grass beneath a canopy of trees, filled her nose. She stroked the length of his tongue with hers, inviting him deeper into her mouth, her body.

Flynn pulled his arms away long enough to remove his vest.

Clarice traced the front of his trousers, working at the

lacings. Behind the smooth, supple leather, his cock pressed against the opening. Hard and insistent, it tightened the laces and made it difficult for Clarice to seek her goal -- wrapping her fingers around his smooth flesh.

“Let me,” Flynn growled. He tore at the lacings, pulling them free. His cock surged through the opening.

Clarice circled his girth with her fingers. They barely touched, and all she could think about was getting his width buried deep inside her. With gentle strokes, she worked his shaft until a tiny drop of fluid emerged on the tip. Flynn’s husky groans of pleasure urged her onward until his hand stilled hers.

“Any more and you’ll make me come.”

“Good. Because I want to make you come.” She pushed down, and his answering moan echoed in the room.

Flynn bent her back until he captured her nipple in his mouth. Any more words she might have said were cut off by the pleasure coursing through her veins. Her channel clenched, the knowledge she could have Flynn’s cock deep inside her aching pussy making her nearly cry out with need.

No tomorrow, no regret. The cast on her arm barely got in the way, and then his fingers strummed her clit.

“Ahh... Ahh...” Clarice cried out. Tiny spasms darted through her pussy. “Flynn. Please,” she panted. “Fuck meeeee.” The last came on a wail as her body clenched and her orgasm tore through her. Ripples pummeled her, and Flynn’s fingers stilled, though they didn’t leave her swollen and wet flesh.

He released her nipple with a soft pop. “That’s just for starters.” He lifted her easily, pulling her forward so his cock pressed against her labia.

Even in her dreams he never conjured anything like this. As he slid into her inch by delicious inch, Clarice closed her eyes and let her head fall back. A contented sigh escaped her lips.

“Beautiful,” Flynn breathed. He brushed her hair away from her shoulder, trailing his fingers in a gentle caress down her shoulder and over her breast. He licked her puckered nipple. “Do you know how beautiful you are?”

Denials leapt to her lips. But here, with Flynn’s cock buried deep inside her, his lips on her flesh, she felt like the most beautiful woman in the world. “Only when you tell me.” She cupped the back of his head. “I

don't hear it enough." She grinned as the head of his penis brushed against her cervix.

Flynn cupped her waist. His strong hands holding her, his thumbs nearly touching, burned against her skin. His teeth grazed her nipple, licking and suckling first one, then the other. She cupped her hand against his biceps, trying to steady herself and keep her cast out of the way at the same time. And then, he began to move.

Slowly, oh so slowly, each inch of him sliding from her, wet and glistening with her cream. A moment of bereavement and then he filled her again. Over and over, deep, slow thrusts designed to keep her on the edge.

Clarice whimpered. Her pussy ached. Each brush of the base of Flynn's penis against her clit sent spasms of pleasure through her. She tightened her fingers around his arms. Pleasure be damned, he turned her into a pulsing, writhing mass of ecstasy. If she didn't come soon, she feared she'd implode.

Flynn worked her on his shaft, never wavering in his thrusts. Each one slid the full length of his cock inside her and each one held just as much force as the last.

"Harder," she breathed. "Fuck me harder."

Flynn grinned in response, then bent forward to suckle her nipples once more. “All in good time. Enjoy the ride.” He licked the slope of her breast. “This time I won’t buck you off.” His husky chuckle slid along her already sensitive nerve endings, sending a long shudder racing up her spine.

She burned. Each caress, each lick, each one sent her higher and higher. Her pussy clamped onto his shaft, and when he reached between her legs Clarice screamed at the touch of his fingers against her clit.

Her orgasm hit her hard and fast, barreling through her like a freight train. Her pussy clamped onto his cock, the ripples milking him for everything he had. Back bowed, her screams of pleasure softening into whimpers of sated need, Clarice danced on the end of Flynn’s magical cock. Elf or not, his mighty staff packed a hell of a punch.

His cock rock hard, Flynn stilled inside her.

Catching her breath, Clarice looked at him. His hair fell over his shoulders, partially obscuring them. His blond curls mingled with her red ones and the smell of their combined juices filled the air. Never before had she experienced anything as erotic. She rocked her hips. “Your turn.”

She kissed him, lips and tongue tasting, devouring, trying to become as much a part of him as he was of her. Suckling on his tongue, she thrust against him, taking the pace slow, as slow as he had, and then faster. Flynn let her lead. How could he not when it was her pleasure? And then she lost herself to their coming together, the slide of skin against skin. His taste. His scent. He surrounded her, filled her, and the steel of his cock inside her brushed against her sweet spot and drove her over the edge.

She came with a series of whimpers, her cries echoing in the room. A moment later, Flynn thrust. The cords on his neck stood out, a low, masculine growl erupting from his throat as he spilled his seed inside her.

She slumped against him, and he lowered them both to the bed. She lay there, limp, sated, as he pulled the covers over them both. Tucked against his body, she listened to their mingled breath slow and the pounding of his heart. With the heavy weight of his leg across hers and his arm wrapped around her, she floated on a sea of contentment that carried her into the abyss of sleep.

Morning sun slanted through the curtains. Snuggled against Flynn's body, Clarice ignored the nagging voice telling her he had to be in the barn soon. It wouldn't do for Flynn-the-horse to be out of his stall, and explaining

the reasons why to the barn girls wasn't a task she wanted to handle, at least not this morning.

Gently, he extracted himself from underneath her arm, the soft puffs of her breath caressing his nipples.

"Flynn," she murmured. "Don't go." Her eyelids fluttered open.

"I'm sorry. Flynn can't be out of his stall." He pressed a kiss to the top of her head.

She chuckled and sat, glancing over at the clock on the nightstand. "I should have been awake an hour ago."

"You needed your sleep."

She grinned. "Yeah, someone wore me out." The edge of the sheet slid from her breast to pool in her lap.

Flynn hesitated, one foot on the floor. "I've got to --" He swallowed hard.

"Yeah. I know." She waved her hand at him.

"Although I loved waking up with you, I know you need to go. I'd hate for the barn girls to have a heart attack." She reached for her nightgown, watching avidly as Flynn stood and pulled on his tight leather breeches. He'd allowed her an enjoyment of her body she hadn't

experienced for a while.

He strode to the door, then turned. “I’ll see you soon.”

She smiled. “And when this cast gets off, I’ll really make you work.”

“I’ll count on it.”

After waking snuggled next to Flynn’s warmth, Clarice struggled to face the day. She’d puttered around the house in an attempt to avoid going outside. Her barn crew wouldn’t expect her to help with the chores, not with a broken arm, and frankly, the prospect of seeing Flynn again in his horse form kind of weirded her out. But then one of her girls told her Clancey, an old gelding, had a swollen hock.

In the barn her gaze immediately landed on Flynn. He stood in his stall, copper-colored head and flaxen white mane hanging over the stall door. He whickered when he saw her, the familiar equine greeting warm and welcoming. “Hey, buddy,” she said, stroking her fingers across his neck before concentrating on the stout bay horse standing in the cross-ties.

After checking Clancey’s leg and pulling him out of rotation for therapeutic riding, she had the girl put him back in the stall, then slipped a halter over Flynn’s head

and led him out for a walk. It was time for the two of them to clear the air.

In her mind, she mulled over what she wanted to say. Previously, Flynn had popped in with come-backs and thoughts. Whether she held her thoughts closer or he simply chose to respect her privacy, she appreciated the distance he gave her. She led him along the pasture fence, back to some trees behind her house where she liked to sit and think.

As soon as she was certain voices wouldn't carry to the barn, she stopped Flynn. Clarice dropped the lead rope. He wouldn't walk away. "Okay," she said. "We need to talk, and I want to talk to the horse first."

Flynn snorted, then lowered himself to the ground, legs folded beneath him. Clarice sat beside him, draping an arm over his back, trying not to get comfortable with the solid, warm weight of him beside her. "You dumped me," she said, determined to get her words out in the open. "Any other horse, I probably wouldn't have minded. I'd have chalked it up to inexperience or a fluke or even something I did. But you're not just any horse. You're -- and God I feel stupid for saying this -- an Elf. You*know* what you're doing in both forms. So why did you dump me?"

Flynn turned his head and rested his muzzle against her

legs. It was an accident. I never meant to hurt you. The last thing I'd ever want to do is hurt you. I just got caught up in the moment. I was wrong. I'm sorry.

“I accept your apology, but do you really understand what this has cost me? Do you know what this cast has truly cost me? Do you know what your being an Elf cost me? I paid money for you. Good money that could have gone other places.” That’s what she needed to know. He was an Elf, not even from her world. Did he truly glean what her farm, what riding in the competition, one she’d never qualified for until this year, meant to her?

Make me understand. I want to know how this affects you.

“I don’t want to make you feel worse, or feel like I’m beating you over the head with it.” Reaching forward, she scratched Flynn behind his ears. If anyone had seen her sitting here having a conversation with Flynn, they would think she was nuts.

You won’t make me feel worse, and I want to know. I was sent here to ensure your happiness, Clarice. How can I know what makes you happy if you don’t tell me?

“Well, you sure made me happy last night. But why were you sent here?”

Flynn's proud, masculine chuckle filled her mind. *I'm glad to hear that. I was sent here because you change lives for the better. Every good deed we do, no matter how small, sends ripples into the universe. What you're doing here is a waterfall of goodness. Think of it as sunlight in a world perpetually dark. Just as the sun gives life to the earth, so too your good deeds power positive change in people's lives. You're needed, and working yourself to death won't accomplish anything but allowing the darkness to gain a stronger foothold in the world.*

His somber words shook her. She thought back to a teenaged girl standing at the side of the road, listening to the squeal of a critically injured horse. She remembered the horror of watching her sister die. So she told him about the car accident where her sister and her sister's horse died. Clarice's injuries had been serious enough to make the doctors pronounce her crippled, and her mount had to be euthanized.

The perfect, angelic daughter had been taken from her parents, while Clarice in all her wildness and tomboy ways had survived. Clarice didn't tell him about those long agonizing months of rehabilitation when she oftentimes wished she'd died. Instead, she spoke about the horses that had helped her rehabilitation. And now she offered that same kind of help to others through her

therapeutic riding program.

She wanted nothing more than to operate a full-time therapeutic riding center, but right now needed to take in boarders and show horses to keep the bottom line afloat. “I couldn’t save my sister,” she said, tears choking her voice, “but perhaps I can keep her memory alive by helping others.” Clarice sighed. “My mother, she wanted nothing to do with the horses after my sister’s death. I think --” Her voice broke. “I think my mother always wished I had died instead of my sister.” Her grief overwhelmed her then, tears she hadn’t allowed herself to shed for so many years.

Flynn shifted into his Elf form. Strong, masculine arms surrounded her, held her, rubbed her back while she cried on Flynn’s shoulder. The loss of her sister, the loss of this chance to gain money for the farm, the failure... the overwhelming sense of failure that once again she was letting her sister down. Clarice shed tears for it all.

Flynn spoke to her, soothing, nonsensical tones that calmed her sobs. He cared. She felt it in his touch, the stroke of his hands across her back. And she was falling for an Elf. Clarice pressed her lips together. She loved him. In his arms, she stilled. She loved an Elf. If he weren’t here, holding her in his arms, she’d check herself into an institution. “Thank you,” she breathed

against his shoulder. She sat back, putting some space between them. “I guess I, uh, needed that.”

“My job, my mission if you want to call it that, is to see to your happiness. You see, Clarice, you are doing good here, great good that spreads light into a world drowning in darkness. I’m to help you with that.” He brushed his fingers across her cast. “I hate myself for bringing you harm. I should have been protecting you, and instead, a moment’s foolishness --”

Clarice pressed her fingers against his lips to silence him. “I think we both have things for which we feel we need to atone, whether we really do or not.”

“But you had no control over your sister’s death.”

“And the one thing I’ve learned from that is that no one is in control one hundred percent of the time. I forgive you, Flynn D’Artange. I forgive you for my arm. I forgive you for the money buying your sorry, copper equine ass cost.” She grinned, and Flynn’s answering smile was all the answer she needed.

“I’m glad,” he said. “And you know how we can seal the bargain?”

“How?” Several ideas went through Clarice’s mind. A kiss on the lips... or lower. Out here, away from the

barn and the house, they weren't likely to be seen. And she shouldn't be needed for at least an hour, though she should check on Clancey. The other older horse, Jake, needed some attention too. One of her barn girls had been wanting to take him for a ride, and Clarice wanted to be there to watch over them.

Then Flynn's mouth slanted over hers, and thoughts fled. Just Flynn. His taste, his smell, the feel of his warm, strong body against hers. Clarice wrapped her arms around him, holding him close as his tongue slid into her mouth. He swallowed her moan, and then he lowered her to the grass, covering her body with his.

Clarice wrapped her legs around his hips. Through her jeans the ridge of his erection pressed against her pussy. Overhead, birds chirped. Wind rustled the leaves. It was almost like Flynn and she existed in their own, private glen.

Would you like that?

She ended the kiss and drew in a shuddering breath. "We could come back?"

"We could come back."

Clarice smiled. "Maybe later. Right now, the only magical thing I want is your cock deep inside me. I

want to know you're real, that this is real." *So I can cherish the memories for when you leave.*

If Flynn heard her thoughts he said nothing. "As my lady wishes." He lowered his lips to hers once more.

His tongue traced the seam of her lips, a soft caress that had shivers dancing down her spine. She moaned and arched against him. Walking her fingers down his back, she cupped the hard globes of his ass and pressed against the ridge of his erection. She opened her mouth and invited him inside.

Like being bathed in warm sunshine. Aware of the soft grass beneath her back, the leaves overhead, the smell of the woods and loam and sun-warmed air filling her nostrils, Clarice figured it didn't get any more real than this.

Flynn tugged her shirt from the waistband of her jeans. His palm flattened against her stomach. His touch burned her, filled her womb with heat and need.

"Flynn," she breathed as he pulled his lips from hers and rained kisses over her neck. Open-mouthed, he kissed her, the gentle suction sure to leave a mark. Clarice wanted Flynn's brand, wanted the world to know she belonged to him.

She helped him pull her shirt over her cast and then over her head. Plush grass cushioned her, the blades almost ticklish against her skin. Each caress made her aware of her surroundings, the fact that anyone could walk up to them at any moment, and somehow, that only made her more aroused.

Flynn cupped her breasts through her cotton bra. Plain and white, not something she would have worn to a seduction, but then his lips were there, replacing his fingers. Through the material, he drew her nipples into his mouth. Flynn suckled at the hard nub, his other hand palming her breast. She speared her fingers into his hair.

Pleasure shot from her nipple to her pussy, and like a bowstring drawn tight, each pull of his lips against her nipple made her vibrate all the higher. With his lean, hard thigh between hers, she rubbed against it, seeking satisfaction. The friction, her jeans against his soft leather pants, the ridge of his cock against her yielding flesh, it all combined to fill her body with pleasure.

Flynn released her nipple, then suckled the other one. A gentle breeze chilled her damp bra, and her nipple hardened even further. Her pussy tightened with anticipation. He reached behind her and unfastened her bra, pulling it down her arms and tossing it aside.

One look at his face as he stared down at her bared breasts took her breath away. He reached for them, reverently closing his hands over the globes. “Beautiful. Just beautiful.” He plumped them, then leaned forward to kiss the valley between. Open-mouthed, he laved her skin, trailing lower to swirl his tongue into her belly button.

Clarice whimpered. She yearned for his touch, each inch of her skin ultra-sensitive. From his warm breath against her abdomen, to his fingers squeezing her nipples, to his legs, framing hers, he cocooned her in a world of sheer pleasure. If this is what forgiving him gave her, then she wished she’d never been mad at him in the first place.

Flynn unfastened her pants. He pulled her jeans and panties over her hips, paused long enough to remove her shoes, then divested her of the last of her clothing, even her socks. Suddenly, a plush blanket appeared beneath her. She curled her fingers into the fabric.

Flynn knelt between her thighs. He unlaced his pants, and the sight of him had her pussy creaming for him. Anticipation filled her, and when he stroked along her labia with his thumbs, she cried out with pleasure.

He inhaled audibly, then he leaned forward and pressed his tongue along her slit. He drew her clit between his

lips and sucked. Her fingers speared into his hair. Her breathy cries filled the air. As if he read her mind, and perhaps he did, he knew exactly how to lick, where to taste her to have her channel clenching, her hips rising to meet his hungry mouth.

He pulled away only to spear her with his tongue. “Flynn,” she screamed as she came. Her pussy convulsed against his lips and tightened around his tongue. He lapped her juices, waiting until the aftershocks lessened to raise his head and pull away.

Clarice whimpered. She reached for him, beckoning him back to her body. She’d had one orgasm, but she wanted another, and another until they were completely sated.

After removing his pants, he knelt between her legs. “Now,” she pleaded, realizing that ever since he entered her dreams, he’d pleased her fully. She feasted her gaze on his hard cock, watching it twitch beneath her regard. She imagined what kind of picture she made with her dripping pussy and her hair tumbling loose from her pony tail. She lifted her arms over her head and offered him her breasts.

He crawled between her legs and nestled his cock against her drenched folds. Bracing his weight on his arms, Flynn looked down at her. She reached up and

cupped his cheek, marveling at its smoothness. Brushing her thumb across his lips she captured a drop of her juices, and she sucked the moisture from her finger.

“Do you want me?” Flynn’s voice rumbled from his chest.

“Yes, I want you. Now.” Clarice twined her arms around his neck.

He surged forward. Clarice bit back a scream as Flynn’s cock filled her. One thrust, and inch by inch, until the head brushed against her cervix, he joined them. So hard, so tight, so full, she thought she should be able to taste him. Her hands clamped onto the globes of his ass. She held him deep inside her.

He withdrew. She clung to him, her pussy reluctant to release the one thing that satisfied it. Better than her favorite toy, better than anything, Flynn made her feel... complete. She refused to dwell on the thought, not when the thrust and retreat of his body from hers sent her flying once more. Higher and higher, body tightening as her nipples brushed against his chest. Flynn knew how to fuck.

He surrounded her, filled her. With the blanket soft beneath her, and his body hard above hers, he

enveloped her in his world. And she tumbled willingly.

Clarice lifted her neck to claim his mouth. She wanted the taste of her juices on his lips. She kissed him, and when he thrust his tongue into her mouth, she sucked on it. He tasted like her, all salty sweet and underneath it, his own, unique taste.

Flynn shifted his angle. Each stroke brushed against her sweet spot. Ahh, right there, yes, yes... she lifted her hips to invite him deeper, then locked her ankles behind his back. Her heels pressed into his buttocks.

Flynn lowered his weight onto her. She gladly accepted it, needed that full body, chest to groin contact. The rasp of her nipples against his chest, the root of his penis stroking her clit with each thrust, all of it.

Reaching around, Flynn slid his fingers through the juices dripping from her pussy and soaking the blanket. He cupped her ass, his finger probing. And then, he rubbed her own moisture around the tight hole. The end of one finger slid inside.

Full, tight, Clarice cried out, the orgasm she'd been holding back bursting over her. Her pussy milked him, muscles spasming. Flynn recaptured her lips as he slid a second finger in, his thrusts increasing their pace.

Harder. Faster. Clarice bowed to her body's demands. She became a mindless bundle of nerves, intent on only one thing -- ultimate release. Above her, Flynn groaned. The wet slap of flesh against flesh filled the air. No longer able to contain her cries, Clarice didn't care who heard.

His fingers thrust into her, a delicious counterpoint to his cock. Over and over he surged into her. Her cries churned into mewling, needy whimpers, and then, suddenly, she was there, exploding into an orgasm so hard and fast it ripped the breath from her lungs. She dug her fingers into his back, her nails scoring his skin.

Above her, Flynn stiffened. He roared, his release slamming from the base of his spine, his cock erupting inside her. Jet after jet of his warm seed filled her. He buried his fingers to the second knuckle inside her, then slid them out with a soft pop. He lay draped over her, his cock still semi-hard inside her.

Clarice snuggled against him. Her breath filled her parched lungs. Sweat coated her skin, and her arm lay against Flynn's back. Damn, if she could do this with a cast she could probably ride in the show.

Clarice grinned. "I've got it!"

Flynn rolled to the side and gathered her in his arms.

“What do you have? Besides the fact that you’ve just been --”

“No, not that. Though, yeah, I have. It’s been four weeks. I bet I could ask the doctor to give me a brace or something, and I could still ride in the show.” She inched from his arms and sat up, reaching for her bra and undies.

“But your arm? What if you hurt yourself again?”

Clarice stared at Flynn and wondered if he really understood. “I have to do this. For the kids. For me.”

“You’d put yourself in danger. Damn it, Clarice, don’t you understand that is exactly why I was brought here. I’m supposed to keep you from working too hard.” Flynn pulled on his pants.

Clarice struggled into her jeans, then sat down to pull on her shoes and socks. “This isn’t work. It’s what I love, and I’m having fun every minute of every day.” She sighed, fumbling with the laces of her sneaker with her casted hand and arm. Beneath the fiberglass and cotton, her skin itched.

“It’s not fun to risk your health.” Flynn knelt by her feet and finished tying her shoes. Cupping her chin, he tilted her head so she looked into his eyes. “I can’t let

anything happen to you.”

“Then don’t. You’re the horse I’m going to ride.” She bolted to her feet. “I’ve got to get the entry form off the website. I’ll have to pay a late entrant fee, but I should be able to make it. Might want to shift forms. Once I get the entry sent in, I’m making an appointment with the doctor, then I’m on your back.” Giddiness bubbled up from her solar plexus. “I can do this! I’m really going to do this!”

She picked up the halter and lead rope off the ground. She heard a pop, and when she turned back, Flynn the horse stood in Flynn the Elf’s place. The sound of thundering hooves and a cry of “Jake” filled the air. Quickly, she haltered Flynn and led him forward.

The big grey gelding halted in front of her. Blowing, with sweat dampening his flanks, he looked as if he’d taken off in a dead run from the barn. Clarice reached out and patted his neck. “What is it, big guy?” She looked over his shoulder to Haley, one of her workers, following behind. “I’ve got him,” she called, and Haley nodded.

The sight of Jake running hell-bent in his direction had Flynn standing at attention. Jake stretched out his neck, touching noses with him. *Elven Council member in the barn. Whatever you did, he looks mad as hell.*

Human form?

Yep. I don't envy you, buddy. Jake lowered his head. The barn worker who had been chasing him slipped a halter over his head and buckled it. He snorted.

"You've been a bad boy, Jake. Running off like that. You're just lucky Clarice was here to catch you," the barn girl said.

Silly thing thinks that I just ran off, Jake told Flynn. Jake butted the woman with his head, and she just chuckled.

"It's all right," Clarice said. "I don't think Jake would have run very far. He's an old guy." Her hand tightened on Flynn's lead rope.

Listen to them. Just because I've been in this form a while. I'm not all that old. He snorted with the indignity of it all.

Flynn gently nudged Clarice. He shook with the need to see which member of the Council had shown up and why.

"Yeah, it's odd. This man showed up, asked to speak with you. I was headed to the house to find you when

Jake just took off. Broke the cross-tie and ran from the barn as if the devil were after him. Very strange. He acted more like a three-year-old than a horse in his teens.” She chuckled and patted his neck as she turned Jake back toward the barn. “Well, at least I found you. He sounded really insistent.”

“What’s his name?” Clarice fell into step.

“Guyas D’Etienne. He said he’s with the Silver Ashwood Foundation.”

A shudder raced through Flynn’s body at the news. Could it be that the Council listened to him? Did they perhaps think upon his words and decide to take action? He refused to hope, but feared Clarice’s calling the doctor to get her cast removed. He’d been responsible for hurting her. If he could keep her from further injury, Flynn considered it his duty.

Ever since Haley told her the name of the stranger, Flynn had acted odd. He’d pranced in place, worry evident in the taut line of his neck, his tail clamped down against his rump. Even Jake, good old dependable Jake, acted twitchy. Clarice frowned. Anyone who made her horses nervous did the same to her.

The sleek, silver luxury car caught her attention first. The car radiated money and status. The vanity license

plates read *ASHWOOD* . Clarice struggled against the frown threatening to emerge. She didn't know who this man was, and her horses acted nervous. With a broken arm, her chance at the show pretty close to nil, she didn't need any further complications.

“Would you mind putting Flynn and Jake in their stalls?” Clarice asked, handing the lead rope to Haley.

“Sure. Want me to send him out?”

Clarice sent a silent prayer of thanks that Haley knew she wanted to meet this man away from the horses. Her office was a mess at the moment, making it off limits, so out here would be the best place, the best neutral place, to meet this stranger. “That'd be great. Thanks.” Through the doorway, she saw an impeccably dressed man standing at the bulletin board full of photos. Children, with various physical or emotional disabilities, sat on or stood next to horses. Each one had a smile as bright as the sun, and Clarice prided herself on the pictures, knowing she'd brought joy to these troubled children's lives.

Guyas turned. He stopped Haley as she led Jake and Flynn into their stalls, passing her what looked like a business card. She frowned, hurrying Flynn into his stall and slamming the door with more force than necessary. If he angered or harmed one of her

workers... Clarice strode forward.

“Clarice Davenvic.” She held out her hand. “I’m sorry I wasn’t here when you arrived.”

“Guyas D’Etienne. I’m on the board of directors for the Silver Ashwood Foundation. I’m glad to finally meet you. I’ve heard such good things about your operation, and your pictures only reinforce that.” His carefully modulated voice had an old world flair. He reached into his tailored suit jacket that probably cost more than her monthly feed bill and pulled out a small portfolio.

“Thank you. Would you like a tour? I’d be happy to show you our facilities.” Potential donor, her mind said, put on the niceties, even though his very name appeared to make the horses uncomfortable and Haley couldn’t get away fast enough.

“That’s fine. Thank you. I’m sure you’re a busy woman. I wanted to drop by this check.” He removed a bank check from the portfolio and handed it to her along with his card. “Consider it a small token of my organization’s esteem for your efforts. I hope this will assist with your expansion plans.”

How he’d heard about her plans, she didn’t know, but looking at the five figures -- not counting the zeroes

after the decimal point -- Clarice stood in mute shock. “Thank you,” she managed. “I’m honored. Are there papers, a receipt? Anything I can get you?”

Guyas waved his hand. “You can mail it to the address on the card. I’m afraid I have another engagement. I will ask though for a chance to try that large grey horse. My daughter is looking for a mount, and he looks as though he might do. May we return to perhaps inquire about purchasing him?”

With the check held in her hand, Clarice knew she couldn’t deny this man anything, even as she wondered what use this man’s daughter might have for a horse like Jake. “That would be fine. Simply let me know what date and time would be convenient. I’ll admit, I had hoped to use him in my program, but if your daughter likes him...” In truth, she hadn’t given much thought to Jake’s future career. Her entire focus had been on Flynn.

“Thank you.” Guyas shook her hand, then turned and strode back to his car.

Clarice watched him go. Mouth dry, she contemplated the check in her hand. With that much money, she didn’t need to ride in the show. She could expand her farm, even work on doing it full-time. Perhaps she could afford to pay a grant writer to help her apply for some

grants, maybe train more volunteer staff. Already her mind reeled with the possibilities.

Gravel crunched beneath the car's tires as Guyas pulled away from the barn. No sooner had he left than Clarice hurried into the barn. She saw Haley in Jake's stall, grooming the gelding to within an inch of his life. "You wouldn't sell him, would you?" Haley asked.

Clarice looked from Jake, to Haley, then back again. The old gelding appeared content, eyes half closed, hind leg cocked as he sighed contentedly at the rub of the brush against his sides. His ears dropped, and his lower lip hung slack, the signs of a truly content horse.

The sight tugged at her heartstrings. The very thought of parting Haley and Jake when she saw them together like this made her think of what would happen if someone tried to buy Flynn from her. "I'll do my best. I'm sure we have other horses that might suit his daughter better."

Haley sighed her relief. "Thanks. So what did he want?"

Clarice held out the check. "He made a donation."

"Wow," Haley whispered. "That will help out, won't it? Maybe you can even afford to hire me full-time."

Clarice nodded. “It’s certainly one of the things on my list. You’ve been more than patient with me.” She glanced at the clock at the end of the barn aisle. “You’ve got the stalls cleaned?”

Haley nodded.

“Everyone has hay and grain and water?”

She nodded again.

“You want to go for a ride? I think I’ve got everything under control here.” Besides, Clarice wanted time alone to talk to Flynn. Perhaps he had some insights into Guyas, and his money. Folding the check, she shoved it in her pocket.

“Sure. Want me to see what Jake can do? That way you can make a better decision when that man returns?” Haley’s cool demeanor toward Guyas startled Clarice. Normally the young woman was warm with everyone.

“That’d be great.” Clarice waited for Haley to halter Jake, then lead him to the end of the hall. She took a few moments to add saddle, blanket, and bridle, before walking him to the big outdoor arena.

Clarice slipped into Flynn’s stall. “Okay. She’ll be

gone for a while. I think we need to talk.”

Flynn shifted. “You’re right. What did Guyas want? What did you tell him?”

“You know, my first question was going to be how come you shift wearing that same outfit, followed quickly by how come you’re a gelding in horse form, but since you mentioned Guyas, who is he to you? He seemed... different somehow. Is he an Elf?” Clarice sat on the clean shavings, stretching her legs out as she rested her back against the stall.

Flynn sat beside her. He curled his arm over her shoulders, the warm weight inviting. “Guyas is a member of the Council. The Council contains twelve individuals, three Elves from the four ruling clans. They make policy and rule us all.” With his free hand, he stroked her cast. “I, um, kind of failed in my job by breaking your arm. I thought he was here to punish me.”

“Punish you, how? I don’t think you failed. A lapse of judgment to be sure, but you more than made up for it. You said your job was to make me happy.” Her brow furrowed. “Wait, if he’s an Elf, and he wants Jake, then is Jake an Elf? Because otherwise it doesn’t make sense. Jake doesn’t strike me as a mount a wealthy person would want for his daughter. He’s not a flashy

hunter.”

“For punishment I could be locked in my horse form or banished from Underhill. There’s many ways to punish an Elf, especially one of the long-lived clans like mine.” He frowned. “Yes, Jake’s an Elf. He’s trapped in his horse form, and I don’t think he wants anyone besides me to know.”

“I won’t tell anyone,” she promised. “But I’m glad to know. You said you were long lived?”

“I’m fifty-six, and I’m considered quite young. More like a twenty-year-old human than someone with wisdom and maturity.”

“So I’ve got a younger man, huh?” Clarice chuckled. “So you know Guyas. Do you have anything to do with the check in my pocket? I know you don’t want me to try to ride yet.”

Flynn nodded. “I cost you so much. I went to Underhill hoping to convince them to do something to help. You’re so happy when you’re with the horses, and I’ve seen you with the children. You have an inner light, a glow. You’re not mad are you?”

“Mad?” Clarice hugged him. “Why would I be mad? You brought funds into my organization. You make me

happy. You've fulfilled your mission." Her voice grew somber. "So now what? I'm not mad, and I don't want to think about you leaving. But you're going to leave now, right?"

"Why would I leave? I suspect I have to make sure you're happy every moment of your life for the rest of your life. And I owe you at least one horse show. I don't want to leave, Clarice. I love you." He brushed his lips across hers, a gentle kiss that held so much warmth, so much love, it brought tears to Clarice's eyes.

"Really?" she asked when he pulled away. "You love me?"

Flynn nodded. "I've loved you pretty much from the moment you purchased me at the sale."

"That's so wonderful. I love you too. But what are we going to tell Haley? I can't keep you as a horse and an Elf, can I?"

"Haley's going to figure it out eventually. I think she knows more than you realize. And I was kind of hoping you'd let me move into the house." Flynn grinned a boyish smile.

"I think that can be arranged. But first, you owe me a ride." Clarice rose to her feet. "Come on."

“You could always bring me into the house. I could give you a ride then.” His husky voice sent shivers down her spine. The teasing notes hardened her nipples and made her clit throb.

“Later. I trust you not to hurt me. So come on, shift. It’s been too many weeks since I’ve been on horseback.”

“All right, but just for you,” he answered. Moments later Flynn the horse stood in his place, and Clarice led him from his stall.

Twenty minutes later, astride Flynn, she cantered around the arena. His joy filled her mind, and she shared her own love of being on horseback. Flynn’s horse play might have gotten her into the cast, but right now she couldn’t wait to get out of it. She’d give him a run for his money, but in the end, they’d both win. Because without his need for fun, she wouldn’t have found love. He added a playful hop into his canter, and she laughed. Oh, yeah. She couldn’t wait to get out of her cast.

Mary Winter

Mary commutes between her dream home near the Mark Twain National Forest in Missouri, and her current residence in Iowa. She lives with a menagerie of animals including an opinionated horse and a cat who was a dog in a past life. When not writing spicy tales of erotic romance, she enjoys writing science fiction and fantasy, spending time with her horse, and enjoying the outdoors. Lucky for her, her partner (hero) shares these same passions, and usually both of them can be found in their respective dens writing.