

The book cover features a close-up of a young woman with blonde hair and blue eyes on the left, and a young man with dark hair and green eyes on the right. They are both looking towards the camera with slight smiles. In the center, a hand holds a lit firework that is exploding into a bright purple and red starburst. The background is dark, making the fireworks stand out. The title 'Rainy Delight' is written in a yellow, ornate, gothic-style font at the top, and 'Fiery Magic' is written in the same font at the bottom. Below the title, it says 'Mardi Gras Publishing Presents...' in a smaller, white, serif font.

Rainy Delight

Fiery Magic

Mardi Gras Publishing Presents...

Mardi Gras Publishing, LLC

133 Lake Front Dr. #204
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This is a work of fiction. Names, places, characters and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to any actual persons, living or dead, organizations, events or locales is entirely coincidental.

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Dedicated to the one man who spurs me on when I hit a roadblock, cheers me on when I hit a milestone and loves me unconditionally. This one is for you, sweetie!

Fiery Magic

Welcome to the 150th Annual Devon Falls Founders Day Festivities

Join us in the many activities planned as we celebrate our founding families.

*A chicken BBQ is in the park, games a plenty at the carnival in town, rides,
plus local treats at our business district will have your mouth watering for
dessert.*

*Also join us at 6 p.m. as we have the big parade marching down Main Street
and then a fireworks finale at 10 p.m. to enjoy as well.*

*So get ready to celebrate the birth of our town and the families who started it
all for us here in Devon Falls!*

Chapter One

Driving on Route 98 toward Devon Falls, Damien Dracon looked at the familiar landmarks as he got closer to Devon Falls. With his inky black hair waving in the wind that blew around his shoulders, his jungle green eyes narrowed in anticipation at being with his family and friends again, and finally making things right with the only woman who made him feel complete and loved him unconditionally. Sighing, he slowly throttled down his electric blue corvette as he saw the town limits come into view. He whistled softly at the growth along Main Street as he spied several new businesses that looked prosperous and seemed to thrive in such a small town. Seeing the Dew Drop Café, he arched an eyebrow at the bright flowers along the windows and the steady stream of people coming in and out of the place. Musing, Damien wondered who owned such a lively place and made a mental note to find out from his brother, Rodrick.

After driving by, he spied the Dragon Inn ahead, a flagship of sorts in the town. Feeling his breath hitch after being away for three long years, Damien still marveled at the magnificence of it. It stood three stories tall, majestic in appearance and painted a blue that seemed to change colors if you looked at it just a certain way. What no one knew was that the Dracon Family were the original owners and were shape shifters, who guarded that secret with a fever that would have given Fort Knox a run for its money. Each member was something different, and they didn't grow into their powers until they hit twenty years of age. Damien sighed at the way his grandfather ran the family before his death three years before. His grandfather believed that the family was

supposed to be quiet, not make waves, and follow any order the patriarch gave, regardless of who got hurt by it though it was unavoidable that someone got hurt no matter what.

Damien tried to relax as he finished driving up the long and winding driveway, which seemed to go on forever. He saw the family home and business was quiet for a change. Normally it was a bustling place, and according to his twin brother, Rodrick, the town was growing in leaps and bounds that caused him to wonder if they should grow with it or fade away. It was something to ponder now that his grandfather was not around to cause trouble or make his displeasure known if family members did something to make him notice them, Damien thought as he pulled near the house.

Damien stopped the Corvette next to his brother's Harley, a bike that exemplified his free spirit and rough edges as well as the power that lurked under his skin. Shaking his head, smiling at the way the bike seemed to exude power as he got out of the car, Damien wondered what awaited him in Devon Falls, and as always, his thoughts strayed to the one woman who he was determined to be with, so he could show her the sweetness of love again!

Walking to the front of the Inn, Damien again took stock in the way the Dragon Inn seemed to pulse with a power that only immortals or shape shifters felt in their veins. It was old, imposing, and full of secrets waiting to escape into the unsuspecting town, unless it was managed right. Opening the door, Damien walked into the front hall and blinked as his eyes adjusted to the dimness of the house from the bright sunshine that lay outside. The coolness was a welcome escape from the relentless heat that seemed to sap the energy from a person's bones if he were out in it for long periods of time, Damien thought as he wiped the sweat that beaded on his face and neck. His full lips smiled slightly as his jungle green eyes spied the way his mother moved with an inner grace he remembered from his youth. Suddenly, she spied Damien lounging in the doorway and launched into a run, laughing as he caught her up in his arms.

"Welcome home, my son," Sarah Dracon whispered in his ear. "It is about time you stopped running from your destiny and your pain."

Damien couldn't stop the smile that seemed to split his face in two. Seeing the joy in his mother's face was an enjoyment he only seemed to appreciate now. "I couldn't shake Europe's dust fast enough when Rod finally told me to come home and help run the place. What is dad going to do now that he doesn't have the Inn to run?"

With a disbelieving tone, Sarah said, "Your father decided to learn to play golf and drive us nuts as he throws the drivers around. I think he broke two windows already from letting go of the driver as he 'practiced' or so he says. I will let you be the judge of that though, my son." Laughter was prevalent in her sky blue eyes as she hooked her arm in his and led him to the kitchen to relax with a bite to eat. Smiling into her eyes, Damien felt his sorrows and insurmountable problems ease back. As he inhaled the fragrance of baked apples, cinnamon, and roast beef in the background, Damien felt like he was truly home for once. Smiling with inner happiness, he inhaled the familiar scents, and his eyes closed as memories found their way to the surface. Alicia laughing as she threw flour at him while she helped his mom bake for one charity or another; the way he first kissed her face, sweat covered and oh so achingly beautiful from the way she threw herself into life and anything else that hit her fancy. His cock hardened from the memories, and Damien tried to calm the heated blood from it all. It was enough to know Alicia was still single yet very private. That was all the information his brother would give him, cryptically saying that he should find out for himself if Alicia would be willing to listen to his explanation after all this time. Sighing, Damien reached for the sandwich his mom made and saw she was watching him with a knowing expression. It made him wonder what she knew after all these years.

"You miss her, don't you? The way she smiled no matter what life threw at her, the love shining in her eyes whenever she looked at you, the softness that came from being loved by you and relishing in it. Why now, my son, do you come back to Devon Falls and with a determined air about you? I can tell that you are on a mission of some importance."

His green eyes widened at the insight his mother received just by looking at him; then, shaking his head, he remembered that she was empathic and able to feel his

emotions better than anyone else, even Alicia. "Yes, I do, the memories are overpowering here yet filled with a sweet nostalgia that makes me ache for Alicia and hunger for the love we once shared. In all my years in Europe, studying, learning, and enjoying what it has to offer, I never was able to recapture what we once had with someone else. It made me realize that she was my true mate, the one I was destined to be with, yet I threw it away because grandfather said to. Now, I wonder what would have happened if I had told her my secret and let her judge how she would deal with it instead of making that decision for her." Sighing, Damien took a bite of his roast beef sandwich and swallowed before continuing, "I need her in my life again, and I am going to do all I can to make up for the hurt I caused her so long ago."

Shaking her flame red hair, Sarah tried to decide whether to let her son know that Alicia was stronger than he realized and that she hid a secret that would cause him pain and maybe lose him the love he craved from her. "With each word, I can feel your resolve, and the determination is making itself known. Just be careful you don't think she is the same as she was so long ago. Alicia is stronger than she has ever been, and she has powerful family connections that can harm you or make your life better. Go carefully, Damien, and don't let your brother goad you into doing something that will harm you or Alicia. Be very sure this is what you want because once you tap into your powers, Damien, there is no turning back from your destiny here in Devon Falls." Sarah's blue eyes worried as she took in the grim face that looked at her and the determination that would either bring her son his heart's desire or break it in two yet again.

Damien wondered what his mother meant with her cryptic words. As he finished his sandwich and apple pie, he wondered what Alicia was doing now and if she thought of him.

* * * *

The sun was shining brightly; it was a perfect summer day though the heat wave was continuing to raise the temperatures to a staggering one hundred degrees. It was enough for Alicia Stevens to wish for indoor air conditioning at the Dew Drop

Cafe. Dropping wearily in her office chair, she wiped the sweat that seemed never ending and prayed there was a lull since she just could not take any more customers right now. Contemplating closing for a spell just to replenish the cases and clean the place had her brightening a little. Hearing the door jingle merrily, she groaned softly as she trudged to the front. Smiling wearily, she spied her sister, Jenna, weaving her way merrily and spied the closed sign on the door. She was extremely grateful to have a sister do what she, herself, was thinking.

"Hey, sis, you look kind of wiped out, and this place won't burn down if you take a break," Jenna said as she saw all the empty areas in the cases and knew her older sister had a long evening ahead of her trying to refill everything for the next day.

"Yes, I know, Jenna. I just wasn't expecting all the business we did. It was unbelievable, and we just couldn't handle it anymore. I am grateful you put the closed sign up since all I feel like doing is taking a shower, drinking something extremely cold, and finally getting something to eat that isn't loaded with sugar!" Alicia said as she wiped at the base of her neck with a cloth. It was enough to make her head ache with all the work she would have to do to get ready for the next day's operation, but then she spied a bright sparkle on her sister's finger.

Squealing, Alicia grabbed Jenna's hand and put it up to the sunlight. "Oh my God, honey...he asked you, didn't he? This is freaking unbelievable! YEAH!! A wedding is in the works!" Singing and jumping around, they must have looked like crazy loons to the people outside on the sidewalk. Alicia was thrilled her sister finally found her soul mate, and they were ready for the next step.

Laughing, Jenna sat down and tugged her sister to the seat next to her. "You're a loon, you know that, sis. Mom would tell you to settle down and let me speak." She smiled at the excitement in Alicia's eyes instead of exhaustion. "Marc asked me last night, and I already called Mom. She is off and running, planning the wedding now. I hope you can be my maid of honor, sis. It is only fitting since you saw the beginning of Marc's 'courtship,' and it is only right that you be by my side as we celebrate our new life together."

Alicia only nodded as her blue eyes welled up, and tears slowly fell down her face. Her baby sister was getting married, and she was a maid of honor. It was enough to brighten anyone's day, and Alicia knew she would make this day the best day Jenna ever had. "Set a date yet?"

"Nope." Jenna laughed. "We figured we would figure that all out later in the week as we calm down, and as Marc's family is flying in this weekend, we figured we would decide and announce it then when everyone will be there. So plan on closing the café for the day and going to an engagement party at the Dragon Inn." Jenna saw the pain flair briefly in Alicia's blue eyes as she mentioned the Dragon Inn. *She still isn't over him. I could kill Damien for the pain he has put her through the last three years. She hasn't stopped loving him nor gone on any dates with anyone else. Just like a man to break a girl's heart and then go off to parts unknown.* Patting her hand, Jenna knew that to tell her the rumor of Damien coming back to town would cause her even more pain. "Now, let me get something cold to drink for us both, and we can settle some things about the wedding."

Jenna got up, and as she walked across the Dew Drop, her sister's pride and joy after Damien dumped her, she spied the man himself driving up to the Dragon Inn. Determined to make sure he would never hurt her sister again, she was going to do all she could to shield Alicia from Damien and pray her sister was strong enough to handle seeing him in town.

Chapter Two

Alicia locked up after she showed her sister out and wearily leaned against the door, wishing for a cool breeze to blow through the windows or a magic wand to make everything ready for the next day's business. Shaking her head, she blew the air through her red cherry lips and ran a hand through her damp red-blond hair. *Maybe I should have hired more help, but I can't seem to let go of the thought that if I am not here 24/7, nothing will get done. At least the day went fast and closing early helped me relax a little. I am thrilled Jenna is getting married to her love, but it hurts to know the wedding I planned to Damien will never be, but he did leave me the one gift he will never know about, and that is his daughter, Danielle, who would have been three this year.* Feeling the same lance of sadness each time she thought of her daughter, Alicia shook her head and walked to the back.

Deciding she needed to get into baking mode, Alicia walked to the kitchen for a night of baking and creating the delicious treats that Devon Falls seemed to love so much! Turning the CD player on, the soft strains of Bon Jovi sang around her as she mixed, prodded, and measured the baked goods that soon filled up her cases. It went on for a few hours, and as she finally got enough stock to start the next day, Alicia heard the one song that always made her weep inside at the memories it brought out.

*(You want to) make a memory
Want to steal a piece of time?
You can sing a melody to me
And I can write a couple of lines
(You want to) make a memory*

Thinking of Damien always brought her a mixture of pain and regret. Regret at the life they could have had, the pain at his leaving her, alone, pregnant, and unprepared to deal with life's twists and turns. Pain at the way he left, making sure all the time they were together was nothing but a joke to him and, in the process, breaking her heart as well as firming her resolve to never let any man have that power over her again, especially since with the death of her daughter also died the dreams of having any children of her own in the future. Sighing at the way life decided to treat her heart and life, Alicia grumbled, *I need to get back to work. The day is not over by a long shot, and Damien will never know he had a daughter who died only three hours after she was born and was loved so fiercely by me. If he ever comes back to town, I will hopefully not have to deal with him too much.*

Hearing the CD sing again of living on a prayer and love gone right, Alicia pushed away the sadness of her daughter's death and Damien's fickle heart and got back to work, letting the soothing chores of baking heal the tiny breaches in her defenses. Never knowing the one man who caused so much pain was back in town and thinking of the one woman who he knew would kill him with one glance if she spied him.

* * * *

Damien looked at his twin brother, Rodrick, as he lounged by the bar, checking out the women who flocked to hear the local band, Johnny and the Rockets. He smiled as he saw a dark haired brunette pause in front of his brother, look him up and down, and then walk away. Hearing his brother wolf whistle at her ass was enough to know that at least something was the same in Devon Falls. The smile left slowly as he spied Jenna Stevens walk in with her fiancé, Marc du Bree, smiling and glowing with an inner happiness that even he envied. After seeing Jenna settle Marc at the bar, she was walking purposely toward him. With the smile off her face, a cold, determined look replaced the happiness he saw moments ago.

"Damien." The coldness that emanated from Jenna's eyes as she spoke to him in clipped words would have caused a snowstorm if it wasn't the beginning of summer.

"Hi, Jenna, been a long time. Congratulations on your engagement." Damien tried to keep his voice even and cordial though the coldness he heard in her voice had him wincing inside. He should have known he would run into someone from Alicia's family, and he could tell forgiveness, if any, was a long shot by the next words out of her mouth.

"How long are you here, Damien? Going away again anytime soon? Planning to break anyone's heart while you're here?" The words came out like bullets being fired, each with more venom than he could ever remember hearing from Jenna before. Pausing before he could answer, his thoughts scattered like the wind as he watched the frigidness creep into her face and eyes, locking onto his with a ferocity that had him almost backing up from it all.

Damien tried to form his words so they would make sense, but his green eyes widened at the hate that seemed to focus on him. Jenna was pissed off at him, and he could only figure that it was about Alicia and their break up.

"Jenna, if this is about Alicia and our break up, please not here and not between you and me. I am not here to cause any pain for her," Damien said, his heart beating like a bullet train. He wished he knew the easiest way to ease the hurt feelings he caused when he chose to honor his grandfather's dying wish and leave Alicia, but he figured she would be with someone new and have a house full of kids by now. Knowing that Jenna didn't exactly have warm, fuzzy feelings for him anymore caused him to wonder if Alicia hated him as well.

"Jenna, mia Cara, leave him alone and come celebrate with me, please. Let your sister deal with him if she decides to." Damien jerked as he heard a masculine voice caress this spitfire's name out; seeing the coldness leave as suddenly as it came from her eyes, Damien knew it was her fiancé who caused the warmth to leap into her face before hearing her sigh at his expression. A warning light came over her face before she

decided to leave with Marc. At the apologetic look from Marc, he dipped his head in acceptance and watched as Jenna made her decision.

Jenna sighed softly as she took Marc's hand, looked back at him, and then walked away without a glance at the man who still felt the pain of leaving the one woman who loved him so completely that he came back to town determined to right the wrongs he made with Alicia and maybe have a life together like they planned so long ago. Damien heard Rodrick whistle as he came over to where he sat and patted his pocket.

"I got that sexy thing's number, bro. She didn't seem to have much backbone after I charmed my way into her good graces." Laughing, he signaled for another beer. "What happened with Jenna? And who is the warlock with her?"

Damien sighed as he sipped a frosty mug of beer and watched as another blonde bombshell gravitated toward his brother. He had to chuckle at the pleased expression on Rod's face as he got a glimpse of her ample charms. *It never changes when we go out. He gets the ladies, and I get stuck with the bill*, Damien thought as he took a long swallow of his beer.

"Rod, that was Jenna's fiancé, and how did you know he was a warlock? I never picked up on it," Damien asked as he felt the flutters of his own shape shifter ruffle under his skin, aching to be let out for a bit.

"That is because you're not able to feel what another person's magical ability is like. I can." Rod smirked as he caught the eye of a gorgeous brunette and sighed at the wonder of all the beauty in the place. "If I was you, Damien, I would see Alicia sooner than later, and that is before her family closes ranks and fights you tooth and nail to see her. She deserves to know the truth about you and if you plan to give your relationship, providing she lets you that is, another try. Grandfather was always a straight-laced ass some days, and he didn't do you or Alicia a favor when he forced you to choose between family and love. Now bro, I am off to hunt and find one...two...or more women to give me an enjoyable night. I will see you tomorrow at the homestead and good luck with Alicia. Have a feeling you will need it, brother." Gulping the last of his

beer, he moseyed off into the smoke filled room, and Damien listened to the shrieks of laughter as he spied Rod leaning against the busty blonde who caught his eye earlier.

Finishing his beer, he felt the dragon itch along his shoulder blades return with a vengeance as he got up and walked through the throngs of people in the Dirty Diamond Bar and Grille. Rotating his shoulders as he stepped out in the clear, cooler night, the stars twinkling brightly and with a full moon out, he decided to walk through town before heading home. Feeling a breeze ruffle his hair lightly, Damien spied a light on at the Dew Drop Café and decided to see who was about this late hour.

His long legs strode across the sidewalk. As he spied the window of the Dew Drop softly glowing, a shadow walked around the place. Curious as to who ran the place, he jogged lightly to see and almost fell through the glass pane at the sight of Alicia, weaving her way around the cases. He watched the way she moved, all fluid like and with a grace that he could never find, no matter how hard he tried, in other women; her reddish blonde hair was in a loose ponytail that he itched to take down. His eyes widened when her lush, voluptuous body came into view; it was the most desirable body he had ever seen, and he felt all the blood rush to his cock straining the front of his jeans. Whistling softly, he never thought she would grow up to be so voluptuous and sexy! It was quite an eye opener to say the least, especially when she bent over to clean the case of pastries and her jeans tightened around her rounded ass. Groaning at the vision in front of him and feeling his blood begin to burn with suppressed desire, Damien tried to still his racing blood. *My god, she is gorgeous and sexy. Why has no one caught her attention after I left? She is like one of those 1950's silver screen bombshells, all rounded curves and long legs. What man wouldn't be lucky to have her as a mate and mother of his children?*

Watching her dance to a tune only she could hear brought Damien's attention to her ass and legs. She moved like a ballerina, yet it was more graceful to his thinking, and as he watched her dance around the cases and tables, he found himself longing to go in and dance with her. Thinking how her body would curve around his made him shudder with a hot need that had him rock hard and aching for something that he

hoped he hadn't lost after all this time. After seeing the lights go dim and then off, he heard a car start up and drive off in the distance, and he sighed at the loneliness he felt even more acutely. Damien started walking again and sighed at the thoughts that raced through his brain like a wild fire out of control. *Why can't I give in and talk to her? Am I being an utter ass thinking I am going to be welcomed with open arms by her?* Damien muttered softly as he tried to calm his heated blood and his aching rock hard cock. *I have to see her, touch her, explain things, and hope she will forgive me enough to give us another try. This time I won't leave her and fly to parts unknown.*

Blowing a breath of pure exasperation out of his full lips, he spied a vacant field, shielded from the road. Knowing if he didn't shift soon, the itch would consume him, and it would happen when he had the least control. Feeling his skin stretch and ripple, he made sure to take all his clothes off, so he didn't ruin them and run into anyone he knew naked as the day he was born. Now that would be hard to explain to anyone he knew since he guarded this secret like a soldier does Fort Knox or the White House. In the shadows, ripples and power were felt as he crouched and felt the change happen. Scales came over him, greenish in color, like a dark emerald with a blue sheen on his under belly. His tail curled around him after the second change, and he blinked as his eyesight got used to being a dragon. His jungle green eyes now glowed with a blue fire in the irises, and anyone looking at him would be hard pressed to see anything of Damien Dracon.

Shifting about, he spread his wings and jumped into the sky, smiling at the freedom of a dragon. He felt free for the first time, and thankfully he was able to make himself invisible to people who might have spotted him in the sky. Blowing softly through his nose, Damien glided for hours, flapping in the wind and enjoying the breeze against his scales. Soon though seeing the false dawn coming, he sat back down in the field and changed back into his human form. Shaking with laughter at the rabbit he scared and the wolf watching him change, Damien marveled at the feeling of contentment that crept over him from the flight. *It was just what I needed. Now, I need*

some sleep and then off to woo the woman who just might give me a chase worthy of being a Dracon Heir's bride.

Chapter Three

The next day

Alicia gasped as she felt her body ripple in an orgasm as her alarm rang at six am. She wondered what caused such a reaction and had her aching for something. *Must be the heat*, Alicia muttered as she swung her legs over the side of the bed and tossed on a t-shirt before padding to the bathroom for a shower and dress for the day at work.

Knowing the coffee would be done soon, Alicia lathered herself and wondered what caused her to dream such erotic and randy thoughts. *My God, I know I haven't had sex in three years, but I've always been able to use my trusty BOB to help ease any aches I had before now. What is going on, and why do I feel like today something will change for me? I've definitely been in too much heat lately if it is causing me to think weird things and dream odd dreams I can't remember except leaving a feeling of utter confusion and anticipation. I definitely need a vacation now.* Sighing, she got out of the shower and dried off. *I bet this has to do with my thoughts and memories of Damien, though why now is beyond my comprehension. It is like my mind is trying to warn or tell me something, and it is giving me another weird morning. Now, I need to get my butt moving, and I smell coffee perking. I got a full day and with Founders Day coming up, it is only going to be busier. Damien will just have to be put in a box in my head and banished again.*

Alicia got to work just before her cousins did. Hearing them chatter about the latest gossip, Alicia paid them no mind until one mentioned seeing Damien at the Dirty Diamond Bar last night with his twin, Rodrick. Feeling like her gut was punched; she

tried to suppress the shudder of pure desire that raced through her body at just the mention of his name.

"Who did you say was at the Dirty Diamond, Jax?" Alicia asked, dread building in her stomach as it overcame her desire for the one man who turned her on with a touch.

"Damien Dracon is home, Alicia, and I thought Jenna mentioned it to you. She saw him last night there and had a few words with him. Could have frozen an ice cream cone between them if you get my meaning, and it was more Jenna than Damien." Jax said as she got the cases full and coffee perking while Alicia stood there still digesting the news. Her sister knew Damien was here and never bothered to tell her, regardless if it was at two am in the wee hours of the morning or not. Finally, feeling a slap in the head, Alicia turned to glare at her other cousin, Dixie.

"What was that for?" Alicia snapped at the petite Dixie.

"Are you going to stand around with your jaw to the floor so flies can fly in or get to work? We got people already at the door, and we are not even open yet. Leave Alicia alone on Damien, Jax, and let's get rolling. These customers won't feed themselves you know," Dixie said sternly though laughter danced at the expression on Alicia's face after slapping her on the back of the head, and she saw Alicia scuttle in the back to put her things away and get ready for a day of customers, baking, and the relentless heat. *It is so good to be the youngest cousin and able to push my older cousins around,* Dixie thought as she got the door unlocked and the regulars came pouring in, chatting about the heat, Founders Day, and other local gossip.

* * * *

Rodrick looked at Damien and wondered what he was going to do with Alicia. He didn't know what happened after he left, yet Damien was so wound up, it was like watching a tiger stalk its prey, waiting to jump on it unsuspectingly. With a shake of his head, he knew to even bring up the past with him was like getting bit by a rattler. Rod didn't want to stir things up, but he thought it was for Damien's own good to see Alicia now instead of later when she had time to build up her defenses against him.

"Will you please go see Alicia, Damien? Your pacing is giving me a headache, and besides, your muttering and mean looks are scaring the housemaids trying to do their job!" Rodrick said as he saw his brother pace yet again in front of the window, searching for something. It was like watching a man fight an inner battle, and there was no way he could help him in any way. Damien could only help himself this time with the woman he loved with all his heart and soul.

Damien turned around and stared at Rodrick. "What the hell would you know, Rod? You never had a serious relationship in all your life. Frankly, I am at a loss on how to show Alicia that I mean to stay around and spend all my days making her happy. How can that happen when I know her family is ready to string me up by my toes and then whip me till I am bloody? And that doesn't sound pleasant even to my ears." Damien shuddered at that awful picture in his head.

Looking at the anguish in Damien's eyes, Rodrick pushed aside the jealousy that wormed its way around his heart and tried to be as supportive as possible. "Damien, do you even know if she will talk to you? If you love her as you say you do, then go to her, talk to her, and make her listen to why you did what you did three years ago. Why not go down to Dew Drop and see if she is open to talking to you for a little bit? Let her decide, for a change, what she wants to do. Grandfather forced you to make the wrong decision, and it caused heartbreak for you both. Let her into your life and show your secrets to each other. It is only right and for God's sake, man, go shave. You look like a pirate who has been on the seas for months!" Rodrick said as he laughed at the stunned expression on Damien's face. Some days it is so nice to be able to get a jump on his twin. "Well, are you going or are you going to continue to scare the employees? I can always get mother to put her two cents in as well on this if you want."

"No, I am going," Damien said as he walked over to Rod and gave him a hug that conveyed his appreciation and thanks. Then bounding out, he started whistling a song that he just heard on the radio.

* * * *

Alicia worked nonstop until close, she was contemplating leaving for a bit to take a cold shower, grab something cold to drink, and maybe relax for a change before coming back in to do some early baking for the next day.

Hearing the door jingle, she came out to see who came in and saw Damien walking toward her. Her eyes widened as his pecs rippled. His muscles bunched and flowed with each step. If anything, he grew more handsome and sexy as the years went by. His black hair was down to his shoulders now and tied back in a ponytail. His sunglasses were pushed up on his head, and he wore tight jean shorts that caused her breath to catch at the sight of those muscular legs. As he grew closer, her eyes traveled to his face after feasting on his body. Seeing a smile quirked on his full lips, she quickly moved to his eyes, the eyes that reminded her of a jungle, full of shadows and secrets.

"Hi, Alicia," Damien said as he felt those blue eyes of hers make their way over him, having his cock harden and his blood simmer at the way she seemed to check him out. "I hope I am not intruding, but I thought we should talk if you will hear me out for a few minutes."

"Damien, been along time, and why now do you want to talk?" Alicia still couldn't believe he was here in front of her. She tried to get her racing thoughts in order, but she could feel the simmer of her heated blood make its way through her veins and center on the core of her femininity. *Oh my god!! He is here, and hot damn is he still good looking!* Alicia felt the hurt coming up, like bubbling lava through a crack in the earth's crust and felt her heart harden though it was hard not to hurl herself into his arms and kiss him all over. "Didn't you say enough three years ago?"

Damien knew this wasn't going to be easy, but the way she closed herself off to him almost as soon as the words came out of his mouth had him wincing inside at the hurt he caused her. "Can I get you a drink, or can we go somewhere to talk, Alicia? I know I hurt you, but can you give me ten minutes to explain things to you?" Damien hated the pleading tone in his voice but hoped she would let him have the time he needed to explain what he was and why he left her three years ago.

Alicia looked at the one man she had loved since the age of seven when he pulled her pigtails in the playground and felt herself weakening at the love she still had inside her heart for him. It was seeing the anguish, hurt, and hope peer from his eyes that had her making her decision; though to her thinking, it might be the wrong one. Turning back, Alicia tried to stop her racing heart and gripped the countertop in an effort to stop the illusion she carefully built around her heart, though the weaving cracks were in there. Just seeing Damien hurt yet also made her long to be in his arms again.

“Fine, we can go upstairs to my office. Please be aware you have ten minutes to tell me what you want; then, you’re gone, Damien,” Alicia said. Hearing the harshness in her voice, she winced inside at the pain that lashed at Damien, and a part of her was glad he felt it as well. Turning around, Alicia marched over and strode up the stairwell, knowing Damien would come no matter what.

Chapter Four

Damien followed and tried not to stare at the rounded ass that swayed with each step and felt the way his body reacted to just being around her. With his furious need building, Damien tried to keep his emotions on a short leash, and he let his breath out slowly to still the raging lust that threatened to consume him.

Alicia pointed to the couch. "Now, what is it, Damien? I am a busy woman, and frankly, you told me three years ago what you thought of me. What makes it so different now?"

Damien winced as he felt the hurt, pain, and disillusionment creep into his love's voice. Her azure blue eyes filled with unshed tears, and the pain lanced him straight through the heart. He tried to get his thoughts in order, yet it was hard when he could smell the rose of damask perfume she wore. That innocent yet seductive scent was enough to drive him wild whenever he was near her.

"Alicia," Damien started. "I didn't mean those words all those years ago. I still love you, and I am so so sorry to have hurt you like that. Please forgive me for being the ass that hurt you like that. What I can say is I was told to break up with you because we were getting too serious, and that my grandfather decided to make me choose. It was either you or my family. How could I choose? Yet I did and in the process hurt you all the same."

Trying to keep from jumping from the couch to hold her, Damien continued, "When my family came here, they had a secret that they jealously guarded night and

day. It is a secret that no one in Devon Falls knows, and we have to keep it that way. I was told to choose, Alicia: it was both you and the love we shared and be banished forever from my family, or I turn my back on you and break our hearts."

"What secret, Damien?" Alicia asked as she gazed at the heartbroken man in front of her. It was a sight she had never seen in Damien before. He looked broken, scared, and yet a hint of love, desire, and hope peered from his eyes. "What caused you to say those hurtful words to me? The words I hear each time I go to sleep, in my memories and in my heart. What caused you to destroy our lives and break our hearts in the process? What gave you the power to make a decision for me?"

"We are shape shifters, Alicia. Immortal beings that when we hit age twenty, our shape shifter comes to light. I am a dragon; Rod is an empathic and a wolf. It was for this secret my crusty old grandfather told me to choose. He was determined to keep our line pure, and he was the ruler of our family at that time. When he died a few months ago, my brother convinced me to come home and see if I could make things right with you." Damien pleaded with his eyes for a hint of warmth, compassion, or understanding to sneak into Alicia's eyes. "My love, I never stopped loving you, wishing for you, and hoping to be with you. Can you forgive me for being a foolish young man who threw away the one woman who would give him the most important thing she had: her heart?"

Alicia was stunned at this revelation. Feeling her heart crack at the news and the naked need in Damien's face, Alicia felt herself weaken. Tears slowly slid down her cheeks as she grappled with the pain of the memories, the love that was still inside of her for this enigmatic man and tried to find the words she so wanted to say to him.

"Damien...I don't know what to say except why now?" Alicia asked as she pondered everything. "It has been over three years, and in all that time, I heard gossip that you had models, actresses as your lovers. How can I trust you now after all the past hurts between us?"

Damien looked at the woman who, if he was given that all important second chance, would be his mate in all ways and saw the yearning and the anguish in her

voice. "I can't say I won't hurt you again, but I can say I am so deeply sorry for the last three years. I never meant for you to be hurt like that, and it hurts me to see you holding on to that hurt like a shield against me. Let me in again, sweetness. I am your destiny and your life. I promise to make your days the most romantic time of your life, and I will do my damndest to make you happy, sweetness. I love you, Alicia. Now and forever. Please give me another chance. I need you. Can't you feel the love I have for you? It has never wavered, and those other woman never had what you had all along: my heart, body, and soul!"

It was enough to know he was sorry, but to hear those words again drove the wall of ice around Alicia's heart to the ground. With a cry, she ran to his open arms, and as she felt them close around her, peace settled around her like never before.

"Please, Alicia, give me, us, a chance to bask in our love again. We need each other, and you know as well as I do that we are meant to be together. I need you like I never needed another woman. Let me show you how love is a second time around," Damien said as he marveled at the way she felt against his body, nestled in all the right places. It made his body hum with a desire that threatened to explode if Alicia didn't give him the answer he waited for with bated breath.

"Please..."

Alicia heard the pleading and looked up into the one face that haunted her these three years and knew she would have to tell him about Danielle, but feeling the hardness that lay against her thigh, Alicia felt her own desire heighten as she struggled to form the words she wanted to say to Damien.

"Kiss me, Damien. I need you." And with those words, Alicia felt all the heartbreak and hurt melt away as those firm full lips settled on hers, and she got lost in sensations that had her moaning with a need that built with a feverish pitch.

Damien felt a lightning bolt fly between them and knew he was going to love this woman until he healed the heart he broke and then give her everything she ever desired. Feeling her tongue come out to touch his had him groaning and waiting for something more. Soon his hands began a leisured descent, capturing the curves and

molding her ass to his body. It was enough to know she desired him too, but he knew this flame that was between them was going to consume them both if they didn't get to a bed, couch, or floor, someplace soon.

Groaning, he dragged his lips away from Alicia's. Looking at her swollen kissed lips had him dreaming of other ways she could use those lips. "Are you sure, Alicia?" Mentally hoping she was sure, Damien tried to reign in the raging need that was like trying to handle a forest fire. It was making his skin itchy, and jumping this woman right now would not be a good thing, even if it were mutual.

Alicia felt her body shudder in need as desire raced through her veins like a fast train building speed, and with her love shining in her eyes, she told him the one word she knew he wanted to hear. "Yes, and take me to bed, Damien. I need you."

"Where, sweetheart?"

"On the sofa. No one will disturb us, and we can talk later. Now, love me dammit," Alicia said as she dragged his head down for another soul scorching kiss that left them panting for more. Damien dragged her to the couch as he nipped at her lips, ears, throat and found himself grow increasingly harder from her arousal mixing in the perfume she wore. It made him want to bury his cock deep inside her and not let go.

"Now, you are mine, Alicia." Damien ripped her t-shirt off her body and feasted his hot gaze on the tits he knew so long ago. "No one else, do you hear. You belong to me as I belong to you," Damien said as he kissed her again, making sure to brand her as his with each kiss. His love poured from his body, and he felt like a teenager with his first woman, all eager yet fumbles as well.

Damien kissed her eyes, throat, nipped her lips before plunging his tongue to duel with hers and made sure to make it known deep in her heart that she was his in all ways. Soon it wasn't enough. Damien slid down and feasted on the fullness of Alicia's straining breasts. The nipples looked like ripe red strawberries, all juicy and waiting for his kisses, and they fit just to overflowing in the palm of his hands. Alicia moaned as he traced his finger from the hollow of her throat down to the tip of her nipple. It caused a sensation that had her arching off the couch with a gasp.

"Please, Damien." Damien heard the whimper but made sure not to rush it. He wanted to brand Alicia like he never had before. She was his, and that was the fact everyone would have to get used to.

Soon just teasing her with feather light touches on those magnificent breasts wasn't enough. Damien slid his tongue around the aureole and felt the nipple grow beneath his ministrations. Soon a low whimper from Alicia told him that she was ready for more, and he slowly licked then suckled each nipple, drawing gasps of pleasure from Alicia. It was like a blind man feeding after a fast. He never expected to be given the chance to be with his love again, yet she was so damn responsive that he couldn't get enough of her.

Growling low in his throat, Damien captured her hands before they tangled with his hair and slid lower as he kissed his way down her stomach.

"You are so lovely, Alicia. I can't believe what a fool I have been." With nips, he slid the zipper down and traced just the seam of where her thong peeked above the rim of her jeans. Smelling her arousal, Damien wolfishly smiled. *She is so ready for me, but I am going to taste each inch of her, and before I am through, she will be mine body, heart, and soul.* Damien slid her jeans and thong off and tossed them aside. He feasted his eyes and senses on the beauty in front of him and felt his cock grow even bigger; it was almost painful the way it rubbed against his jeans.

Chapter Five

Alicia couldn't help the feeling that Damien brought out of her, the wantonness, and the way he played her body like a master violinist. It was maddening and oh so arousing. She could feel the wetness pool in her pussy and slide down her legs. She yearned to feel his hardness deep inside of her, to feel the thrust of his hard cock bringing her to that special place that only Damien could.

Gasping, Alicia felt the cool air hit her heated flesh, and she waited for Damien's next move. Soon feeling his hands on her body was like water to a dying man. He traced, kissed, and nipped his way to the center that wept for his touch. Bypassing her pussy, she withered as the need inside her grew higher and higher with each touch from him.

"Please, Damien, I need something, anything," Alicia pleaded as her body felt like it was on fire, and Damien did nothing to quench its thirst.

"In a minute, my dear. I am not wasting another minute on a fast hurried affair." Damien looked up at the woman whose face was flushed a rosy hue, and passion peered from her blue eyes, clouding them as they pleaded for something, anything.

Then before Alicia could form a coherent response, she felt a feather touch of his tongue against her slit, and it brought a scream to her lips. It was exquisite torture, and she wanted more. Her hips arching, she begged with her body for more. Seeing that plea, Damien latched on her hips with his hands and slid his tongue up and around her

clit, flicking back and forth, driving her higher on lust's train. Then before she could gasp another gasp, he latched on it and suckled hard. Alicia felt stars explode behind her eyes as she screamed with a sudden orgasm. Her hands tore into his shoulders, her nails leaving marks as she bucked and whimpered at the onslaught.

"Please, Damien, I need you...inside me. Please," Alicia huskily said as passion exploded inside her.

Damien ripped his jeans off and cursed whoever invented zippers as it snagged on his underwear. Then before Alicia's eyes he was gloriously nude, his cock jutting forcefully out with a drop of pre-cum waiting for her hot, wet hole. It was longer than she remembered, almost twelve inches long, thick, and so damn beautiful with those balls behind it. She ached to feel it inside her, to hear his slapping balls against her. Before she could look her fill, she felt him slide up her body and then felt his cock seek the entrance to her pussy. It made her whimper in need as she felt him ease just the tip inside, and she arched her hips to get more of him.

"Not yet, my sweet." Damien huskily laughed. Holding her face in his hands, he smothered her lips with soul stirring kisses that left her gasping for air and wanting more. "Tell me you want me, Alicia, heart, body, and soul. I am yours, and you are mine." He teased her with the inching of his cock into her pussy, stretching her and feeling her juices coat his cock, as he tried not to pound into her.

Alicia could barely focus. As she tried to push aside the passion that he conjured inside her for a minute, she saw the naked need in his green eyes and felt her heart tumble as the love shone free, and hope poured into her own heart.

"Yes, Damien, I am yours, now and forever. Now, fuck me, dammit. I need you inside me!" Alicia said as desire caught her in its maelstrom again.

Damien needed no other encouragement and thrust hard and fast. Sheathing himself to the brink, he could feel her pussy squeeze his entire length, and it made him groan from the power of it. It felt so damn good to be here again. With a growl, he thrust slow and steady, drawing gasps of pleasure from Alicia, and soon it was driving them both nuts.

Alicia felt his cock stretching her even more, and she marveled that she could even handle his entire length. It felt so right having him there. She could feel the oncoming orgasm building higher and higher. It was not enough as she moaned, gasped at the sensations he brought from her body. Long scratches soon covered Damien as Alicia lost herself in the meeting of his thrusts. Wrapping her legs around his waist, she brought him even deeper. Before she knew it, her orgasm ripped through her, waves of pleasure reaching between them both. Damien felt the way her pussy squeezed his cock and lost himself in her orgasm, and then before he knew it, it triggered his own. As he bellowed her name, he faintly heard her own scream as another orgasm slammed into them both with the furious speed of a runaway train.

Shaking, sweat glistening on their bodies, Damien locked Alicia in a hug and vowed to never let her go. Hearing her breath come back to normal, he wiped the tears that came from her eyes and wondered what caused her to cry.

"Everything okay, sweetness? Did I not please you?"

Alicia looked at the man who brought her exquisite pleasure and knew she had to tell him of their child and hoped he could forgive her for not telling him.

"I am fine, Damien. I also have a secret to tell you, and please hear me out before you get all angry and grumble like a bear or should I say dragon," Alicia said as her lips turned up at the tips a little at this quip.

"Okay, my love. What is this secret you have to tell?" Damien wondered what had the look of anxiety in his love's eyes but patiently waited for her to begin.

"Do you remember that night you told me that you didn't love me anymore?"

"How could I forget? It is etched in my brain forever as the dumbest thing I ever did as a youth, and I hurt each time I remember the pain in your voice and eyes when I told you," Damien said as he cuddled Alicia closer to him. He couldn't stop touching her as if she would disappear if he let her go.

"What I didn't tell you was that I was pregnant, Damien, with our child. She would have been three this month, and I named her Danielle." Alicia looked up at the man she had loved for so long. "She had an enlarged heart and came too early. Her

lungs were not developed, and she lived less than three hours after her birth. I am sorry I didn't tell you, but I had no way of knowing either where you were or what you would do. You made it very clear that you didn't love me anymore back then, and I was hurting so bad that I let my pride carry me through it all."

Damien looked at Alicia with despair and naked loss on his face. "We had a daughter? Why didn't you let me know? Rod never said a word and neither did my mom for that matter."

Alicia tried to still the quivering of her chin as memories of Danielle's birth and death came to the surface. "I made sure your family never found out. I went away for a while, letting people think I was at college learning to run a business. I had Danielle, and she had the most marvelous blue-green eyes, Damien, and your hair as well. She just wasn't meant to be here so said our pastor. He said God needed his angel back, and though I loved her so fiercely, I had no one to lean on except Jenna. You were gone from me, and I learned then I couldn't have anymore children after Danielle's birth. It just broke me in two."

"You could have called for me, Alicia. I would have come, grandfather's edict or not. You were my life, and I lost the time with you as you ripened with our child and then wasn't there to comfort you when you lost her as well. For that I can never forgive my grandfather."

"Can you forgive me for not telling you? I can take you to her grave tomorrow if you want. Show you the picture I have of her right after the birth. Please say you can forgive me for not telling you," Alicia begged as she felt the tears leak down and her body quivered in anxiety at Damien's response.

Damien smoothed his hand down the face that haunted his dreams for the last three years and wondered if he could ever make up to this strong, passionate woman the mistakes he made to her. "Ahhh, my love, of course, I can forgive you. I love you for all eternity. No matter what the past held, it is in the past. We need to move forward and make a new future for us and maybe we can have kids, and if not, then we deal with it together, Alicia, my sunshine. Never forget that I love you. {and Delete} I plan to

make all your days and especially the nights special while showing you just how much I love you.” Kissing her deeply, Damien marveled at the strength and love this woman had and knew he would never throw away something like this again. Alicia was his mate, his love, and he would do his damndest to make up all the wrongs he did in the past.

Alicia sighed happily as she kissed Damien back and knew that love was indeed sweeter the second time around. As she lost herself in his arms, she marveled at life’s twists and turns and saw a life she envisioned before with Damien was finally coming together.

“Damien,” Alicia said before she lost herself completely in his passion. “Can you change for me, so I can see the dragon sometime?”

“Sure, my love, but remember, don’t tell anyone else, and not even your sister. This will be the secret we both keep,” Damien said as he dragged his lips from hers and looked deep in the azure blue eyes that showed hints of happiness and love that almost humbled him. Damien was grateful he didn’t lose the one woman who gave him her heart once again. “Now, my dear, can we proceed to making more memories?” He playfully growled, and they both lost themselves in passion’s delights.

The End