



## Chapter One

Excitement was the byword for the country castle of King Karl of Borogia. The Crown Prince, Paul David Johan Karl Lange was returning home after a three-year tour of the world. A student always at heart, his lust for knowledge was insatiable. Learning the world beyond the Circle of Borogia had precipitated this tour. Paul was also handsome to the eye, tall, blonde, and muscular. Prince Paul was built very much like his father, the king. Paul took his mother's deep blue eyes, the color of sapphires.

His mother, Queen Louise Janette was a flurry of activity ordering the servants to prepare for her son's arrival at the castle. His room had to be prepared, the chefs notified to prepare his favorite foods, and preparations made to house his personal guard and retinue of servants.

"Send for Rigan," Queen Louise ordered. "I have another of those sick headaches that she cures for me so well."

"At once Your Royal Majesty," Camilla answered subserviently. I know just where to find her. In her room reading another book on science, not even poetry to impress a man. That ugly spinster has no chance at all in marriage. Why she is already twenty-five and content to be a lady in waiting.

Camilla walked briskly on the deep red carpet of the halls on the east wing, moving past the gilded portraits of the Royal Lange ancestors lining the halls. The candelabras were waiting to light the halls at night and the mirrors reflecting the midday sun's bright lights. Flowers always fragrancd the old castle as they were brought in from the greenhouse and arranged by Rigan every few days. Camilla turned the corner to take the stairs up to the chambers of the ladies in waiting. Her pannier of pink satin rustled as she walked down the hall. Two doors on the left from her rooms were Rigan's suites. Camilla didn't bother to knock. She knew Rigan would be alone. "Her Royal Majesty has another of her headaches and has called you."

"I'll get my crèmes and teas and be right down," Rigan said immediately. "Do you think you could ever learn to knock?"

"I would bother if I thought you might be occupied," Camilla snickered sarcastically. "Your love is centered around stupid books. Hardly a chance of a compromise there."

"It is only good manners I request, Camilla," Rigan requested quietly.

"I'll think about it. Do hurry," Camilla urged nervously. "The Crown Prince is only an hour away and I do want to prepare myself."

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"Why would you prepare for Prince Paul's arrival?" Rigan asked in surprise.

"Are you daft or just severely lacking in understanding? Prince Paul is reputed to be the most handsome man in all the Circles, and is quite the catch of the kingdom," Camilla replied haughtily. "He is also going to be given the ultimatum by his father to settle down, marry and produce heirs since next week is his thirtieth birthday."

"Where did you hear that?" Rigan gasped in surprise at such personal knowledge of the royal family.

"The day Queen Louise received his letter telling her of his return. King Karl was in residence and they argued over it," Camilla responded. "King Karl won the argument of course."

"I doubt the Queen would argue in front of you or servants," Rigan quickly retorted.

"Of course not silly. I was listening," Camilla smiled wickedly.

"You listen to private conversation?" Rigan gasped in shock.

"Don't look so indignant. How else can a Lady in Waiting know what is going on, and besides I am delighted to know that King Karl is forcing the issue of marriage for Prince Paul," Camilla stated as she brushed a wayward curl from her forehead while she stared proudly at her reflection in Rigan's mirror.

"And just why is that?" Rigan asked wondering what trick Camilla had up her sleeve this time.

"Why simply because I am the only possible candidate of course. I do intend to become Royal Princess," Camilla replied not trying to hide her vanity. "He won't be able to resist me. I am sure he is tired of all those paramours by now."

"Prince Paul is your intended prize?" Rigan chuckled as she walked with Camilla down the stairs towards the queen's suite. "His brother Aleck is closer to your age and just as handsome I am told."

"Aleck is safely in England receiving his education. Too far removed for me to tantalize," Camilla cooed. "Besides, I intend to be Queen of Borogia in the future."

Rigan could only smile at the fate that would await Prince Paul. Camilla was beautiful beyond the words of the greatest poets. She was petite, had flowing blonde hair the color of saffron, violet eyes, a perfectly shaped face, pert chin, lush red lips, and the perfect Grecian nose. Her form was perfect in size with small rounded breasts rouged slightly just above the corset line for accent, with a tiny waist. Yes, Camilla was perfect in every poetic sense. What man wouldn't desire her?

Rigan on the other hand was broad shouldered and heavy boned. Her breasts were voluptuous as a kinder word for large. She had long deep auburn red hair and gray eyes that were called witch



eyes because they changed colors with her moods. In her homeland, the children of County Cale in Eirinn used to make fun of her witch's eyes. Rigan's eyes were gray when happy, green when angry and blue when she cried. Her looks were average with no outstanding features other than her eyes. Her waist was hardly tiny and her proportions were all around average. Rigan was neither petite nor tall, but Rigan liked herself just the way she was. Her happiness was in knowledge, not money, not power, not men. The only man she ever loved was her dear Athair. Sean O'Cullenan was the Earl of Fanore, her beloved father. She was so grateful he had once known King Karl. Sean contacted King Karl about Rigan when she was twenty one and knew she did not want to marry, especially the Aran men that did consider her with the local matchmakers. Rigan and Sean knew they would not treat her well, but were after her inheritance of his estate. Sean also knew his son Chaluim could not take care of his sister since Chaluim would have to seek a Sasennach wife immediately to maintain their estate. Sean knew he was dying so he sent her off to live with his friend King Karl to be lady in waiting for his wife, Queen Louise.

Rigan wanted to travel and see the world. She became immediate and fast friends with Queen Louise. The royal family of Borogia offered knowledge, culture, and arts that were impossible back in Fanore. Their library in this castle alone was extensive and Rigan's greatest joy was sitting there in the afternoon reading. She had been ousted today because of the frantic preparations surrounding Prince Paul's arrival.

"There you are Rigan!" Queen Louise Janette sighed. "Make this headache go away before my darling arrives."

"I'll make some peppermint and chamomile tea," Rigan answered softly and she moved to the silver service on the tray to seep the mixture. As it simmered Rigan took out the crème from her bag and dabbing a smidgen on her fingertips rubbed the peppermint, lavender, and chamomile blend on the temples of the queen's head in gentle circles.

"My precious child, I am so grateful you have come to our court," Queen Louise sighed gratefully. "I have suffered these headaches my entire life and now you come and have relieved me of them."

"My nanny was well trained in nature's ways and I am grateful she taught me many of her potions and remedies," Rigan whispered quietly. "It gives me pleasure to help others."

"Our people are grateful also," Queen Louise said as she relaxed under Rigan's gentle massage. "Everyday I hear how you have helped one of the servants complaints and many times gone to the village to offer help to a colic child or ill peasant."

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"As I said, it gives me pleasure to help others," Rigan smiled as she turned to get a cup of the peppermint and chamomile tea for the queen. "Here drink this, it will help."

"Thank you my dear. You know I am just simply overwrought in anticipation of Paul's arrival. He has been away from me for three years," Queen Louise informed. "You never met him. He left just before you came to us."

"I sense how happy you must be to see him again," Rigan answered as she again applied the crème to Queen Louise's temples and massaged gently.

"I do love him so. He is so special to Karl and I," Queen Louise admitted thoughtfully.

"Your Royal Majesty, may I be excused," Camilla beckoned for attention. "I too look forward to greeting Prince Paul and do so want to prepare for his arrival."

"You couldn't be more beautiful if you tried, dear Camilla," Queen Louise replied with a touch of sarcasm. Camilla was not one of her favorite ladies in waiting. Camilla was only seventeen and an air headed little chit who couldn't differentiate between a sonata and opera and certainly didn't know the difference between Leonardo da Vinci and an El Greco. An intelligent child she was not. A selfish and egotistical child she was. Camilla was her problem since she was the fourth daughter of her friend Duchess Sophie. It was Queen Louise's silent hope that her darling Paul would not be enthralled by the little chit's beauty alone. That was simply not enough to base a marriage on, and Queen Louise certainly could not see Camilla capable of handling the role of Royal Princess, although Queen Louise felt that was Camilla's plan.

"I feel so much better now," Queen Louise smiled as she removed Rigan's hands from the gentle massage. "Paul will be here shortly. Don't you want to prepare before you greet him?"

"With your permission, I would prefer to attend the cobbler in the village. He has a horrible cough and his wife asked me to bring one of my decoctions and teas to ease his illness." Rigan requested politely.

"Of course you have my permission. I would not be so selfish to keep you from helping others," Queen Louise Janette beamed with pride at Rigan's caring and helpful nature. "I admire your talents, my lady."

"You are so kind," Rigan blushed in embarrassment. "I will leave right now."

"Make sure you return before dark. The woods can be dangerous at night," Queen Louise warned as Rigan walked to the door. "Do you require a horse?"



"No thank you your majesty. I never learned to ride very well and the cobbler's house is only a short distance from the castle."

I will have to see Rigan is trained in the arts of equestrians. Queen Louise promised herself while watching Rigan disappear through the door.

Rigan returned to her room and packed her medicinal bag. Retrieving her mantel for the evening chill she heard the commotion of the arrival of Prince Paul and looked out her window that viewed the castle gate. Four men surrounded the Prince on horses as the Prince entered the gate on his Hanoverian stallion. A fifth man hatless with sandy brown hair rode behind the royal troupe wearing a black Inverness coat and riding a gray Percheron.

Prince Paul looked like a fairy tale prince, tall, blonde muscular with expansive shoulders that looked like he could carry the weight of the world. As he dismounted Rigan could see the muscles of his thighs outlined by the leather riding breeches. The breeches were like a second skin. His black shiny Hessians accented the fairy tale image of the Prince. His jacket was black with gold trim and his hat the fur choice of the Prussians.

A man that beautiful has to be the most arrogant, egotistical, and unfeeling dredge. Rigan couldn't help but think to herself. He would definitely be a Narcissus.

Then she saw Camilla run to greet the Prince. Rigan watched as Prince Paul extended his arm after she had spoken to him. Camilla took it and led Prince Paul into the castle. They could be a perfect couple. Rigan snickered to herself as she turned around to begin her walk to the cobbler's house. They are both magnificent beautiful Narcissians.

Rigan walked down the back stairs to avoid the activities of the servants and any possible required extra duties. Rigan was concerned for the ill cobbler and her duty to help others when she could. She couldn't get the scene of Prince Paul and Camilla out of her mind. Rigan didn't care much for Camilla. Camilla was one of the most self centered, selfish egotists she had met in court. Even that was saying a lot since Rigan had met so many in the nobility of the Habsburg Court on her visits to King Karl's Court in Brogav Castle and her visit to Vienna with Queen Louise Janette. It seemed so strange to Rigan that the lesser noble women were vicious, self serving and backstabbing wenches, while the Archduchess Teresea Marie and Queen Louise Janette were intelligent, kind, selfless and giving angels of mercy.

The walk to the cobbler's home was short and Elaine, the cobbler's wife, greeted Rigan. Worry covered Elaine's tear stained face. A crying baby in Elaine's arms only added to the commotion evident. "My Lady you've come at last."

"Is the cough worse?" Rigan asked worriedly.

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"My Lady the cough is worse and my husband is burning with fever," Elaine replied fearfully.

"How long?" Rigan questioned calmly.

"This morning," Elaine sobbed as she pulled Rigan into their home.

Rigan was taken to room on the side nearest the kitchen. She heard the cobbler's cough. It was deep and he was congested. The room was dark and smelled of illness. Rigan spotted the cobbler on a small narrow cot. He was covered with blankets and quilts, shivering with perspiration and hot to the touch.

"You have done well to cover him in this condition," Rigan commented taking command of the situation. "We will need to bring his fever down and use expectorants to rid the congestion in his lungs."

"What can I do?" Elaine asked in less of a panicked tone. Elaine felt more secure now that Lady Rigan was there.

"Does your oldest son, Gustav, know the different trees in the woods?" Rigan queried taking Elaine's hand reassuringly.

"Yes, he is a fine intelligent boy," Elaine replied proudly. "We send him to the village school."

"Good, ask him to peel some bark from the white birch trees and bring it to me," Rigan requested as she walked to the window by the cobbler's cot.

"Gustav!" Elaine called to her son and after quickly giving him Rigan's request, scurried him out the door.

Rigan opened the shutters on the window to allow sunlight and a soft breeze to enter the sick room. "It is warm and sunny today, we close these shutters only for the night chill. Josef should breathe the freshened air for now."

Then Rigan took a cloth and soaked it in the bowl of water on the dressing table. She walked to Josef and gently washed his face, arms and legs. "You will bath him like this until his fever breaks Elaine. Come now, I need you to help me make a decoction of black elder, angelica and dandelion. I also need some honey for a tincture of fennel. When did Josef eat last?"

"He hasn't eaten for two days now," Elaine told the Lady Rigan.

"Then first we will give him the fennel and you begin to cook a nice hardy stock broth for him. He needs his strength."

Rigan prepared the tea from her supplies in her medicine bag noting that she would need to replenish her supply of dandelion leaves.

Elaine washed her husband carefully as instructed by Lady Rigan and carefully spooned the fennel decoction into Josef's mouth.

Rigan noted Josef's request for the chamber pot. That is a good sign.



Young Gustav returned from his errand and handed the white birch bark to the Lady Rigan.

"Here you are my lady," Gustav stated proudly.

"Well done, Gustav," Rigan said accepting the bark. "Now I have another errand for you."

"Anything my lady," Gustav looked up to her, a bright twinkle of responsibility shining in his eyes.

"I think it is best I stay the night with your father and family, so I need you to take my note to the castle and have a footman deliver it to Queen Louise Janette," Rigan requested. "I wouldn't want her to worry and I must let her know where I am in case she needs me."

"I'll do it now and be home before sunset," Gustav boasted.

Rigan used a quill pen and paper from the desk in the parlor of the cobbler's home and quickly scribbled a quick note to Queen Louise Janette. Sealing the note and addressing it to the queen Rigan handed it to Gustav.

Rigan returned to the kitchen taking the bark and scraping the oily inside. Rigan then took the oily scrapings and put it on a small plate. Rigan took the scrapings and tea into Josef. He was sitting up now and drank the tea willingly between his coughing. He chewed the oily bark as directed and swallowed it with his tea.

"I'm hungry," Josef stated a short while later and Elaine cheerfully went to the kitchen to get him the solid beef and vegetable broth she had made.

Just before sunset Gustav returned home declaring proudly the note had been delivered. The entire family listened as he related his great adventure.

"When I arrived the castle yard was full of servants, trunks, cases, wagons and well just everything! No one would pay attention to me at all and I tried talking to the footmen, soldiers and servants. No one would listen to me," Gustav related.

"What ever did you do?" Elaine asked her son.

"I turned around to try to walk into the castle when I walked right into... well... believe it or not I don't care. I walked right into Prince Paul who was coming out to direct the unloading of his belongings."

"What happened?" Gustav's younger sister Marianne gasped. "Did he beat you?"

"No, he asked why I was in such agitation. I showed him the note and said it was important to give to Queen Louise Janette." Gustav inhaled catching a breath. He continued with his story, "He smiled at me and said if it is that important, I should take it to the queen myself."

"Then what?" Josef joined in feeling a little better after the care and medicines he had been given.

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"Why the Prince took me to Queen Louise himself and I handed her the note. Queen Louise offered me chocolates and tea while she read the note and then told me to tell Lady Rigan to stay as long as she was needed."

"That was indeed an adventure, Gustav." Rigan smiled at the boy. Queen Louise was always very kind, perhaps a little of that may have rubbed off on her sons.

"Oh there's more. Prince Paul wrapped some sweet cakes in a napkin and told me to take them home for the family and then walked me down to the castle yard." Gustav opened the large white napkin with the sweet cakes. His sister grabbed one and started to eat it. Gustav grinned, "We met King Karl himself on his way up to royal suites," Gustav bubbled on. "The Prince and King embraced and Prince Paul told him I was an important messenger to the Queen and he needed to escort me to the courtyard. The King laughed and gave me a gold coin, see!"

"I do see," Lady Rigan and the family said in unison. Rigan began to have second thoughts about Prince Paul of Borogia. Perhaps he wasn't so narcissus as she thought. The Prince was kind to Gustav, not arrogant at all.

"It has been a long and tiring day for you Gustav, so eat your supper and then go straight to bed," Elaine ordered her son.

"Yes, Mutter," Gustav obeyed dutifully.

Rigan slept on and off through the night caring for Josef with Elaine. Josef's coughing now expelled clear sputum and all knew Josef was on the mend. In the morning Rigan would return to the castle and her duties as lady in waiting to Queen Louise Janette.



## Chapter Two

"The country castle is just ahead, Damon!" Prince Paul pointed out to his companion riding by his side. "Are you as weary as I?"

"If one could measure the levels of weariness it would be interesting to see our ratings," Damon replied exhaustedly. "I am quite saddle sore for certain."

"This journey is soon over and I personally cannot wait for a hot bath and cool brandy," Prince Paul offered joyfully. He had missed his home and his family.

"What, no hot woman Your Royal Highness?" Vladimir his first bodyguard roared jokingly.

"He never needs to ask for them. They fall at his feet," Auguste, another bodyguard joined in. "And then he casts them aside to pay the professionals for his relief."

"Quiet cousins. I am too tired to even take the effort to lift the wenches off my feet," Prince Paul chuckled.

"I have always wondered what it would do to His Royal Highness if a woman didn't want him," Percy one of the royal guards spoke up.

"Since that will never happen, we will never know," Jean, the last of royal bodyguards present offered.

"It is rumored that your Papa intends to force the issue of marriage upon you with your return," Vladimir said seriously.

"I know," The Prince sighed. King Karl's letters recently had indicated his concern that Prince Paul still had not chosen a wife. "I am still happy to be home. I have searched the world for that one special woman to become part of my life and I still have not found her."

"Well, a lot of them found you on this trip. You are nearing your thirtieth birthday, does marriage frighten you so?" Vladimir questioned boldly. Only Vladimir his cousin so like a brother would dare ask such a question.

"Marriage doesn't frighten me as much as finding the right woman to share my bed with the rest of my life," Prince Paul replied wearily.

"With all the women falling at your feet, you certainly have had a vast selection to choose from," his companion Damon spoke boldly. "Perhaps you are too critical."



"Damon, I have yet to find a woman that excites me. All the women I have known were hopeful adventures, some lasting longer than others, but always the same. For the bed there was nothing, no stimulation, no lust, no wanting. The paramours took care of those needs satisfactorily," Prince Paul confessed.

"Just what are you looking for? An intellect may not always be stimulating in bed," Vladimir proposed. "I have found most educated women, cut my tongue out for the words, are cold in the bed."

"I guess that is what I am looking for. I want a voluptuous, intellectually and physically stimulating woman," Prince Paul declared as he nudged his horse into a faster gait. This conversation was becoming irritating. He had been disappointed at not being able to find that special woman more than anyone could have imagined. Prince Paul had wanted to settle down and love a woman enough to have children with her. He wanted a Princess to share his life with.

"Impossible to find," Vladimir scoffed.

"My Mamman, and Archduchess Teresea Marie are such women," Prince Paul argued.

"Then they broke the mold," Vladimir sneered.

"Are you going to tell your Papa the King, that you are still looking for this perfect woman?" Damon queried.

"Not a perfect woman. Just special. My friend," Prince Paul said reflectively. "And yes, I will tell Papa I am looking for love and the image of my Mamman."

"That may or may not satisfy your Papa," Vladimir volunteered.

"It will have to. I will not endure a typical court marriage. Papa has love and he cannot deny the same to me," Prince Paul said decisively. "There is the castle! I look forward to seeing Mamman. She is waiting there for us." The Prince urged his Hanoverian black stallion into a full run.

The group raced to the courtyard. Guards and servants greeted the troupe as their presence was noticed when they neared. A beautiful young woman approached the Prince.

"Welcome home Your Royal Highness," Camilla breathed sweetly with a perfect courtesy. "Her Royal Majesty waits for you in her suites."

Camilla raised her head slowly and seductively devouring the handsome prince from head to toe. This is the man definitely worthy of me.

"And may I have the pleasure of introduction?" Prince Paul responded automatically. He stopped his voice from groaning. Another air headed self-centered wench out for my title. He recognized the movements and could even smell those types of



wenches a mile away. Courts were always full of them. This was the reason why he chose to leave Borogia and travel. He watched her eyes and felt her seduction. Everywhere it is the same, he sighed inwardly. You'll never get into my bed. I want a lot more than your body in my life.

"I am Camilla. Lady in Waiting to Queen Louise Janette, your Mamman," Camilla cooed seductively.

Politely Prince Paul extended his arm. "I am aware the Queen is my Mamman. Please take me to her." He couldn't stop the bit of sarcasm escaping his mouth.

The subtly of Prince Paul's sarcastic statement was lost on Camilla. Again the perfection of grace and seduction, Camilla took his arm and placed her hand on his. Camilla gently moved the pads of her fingers on the top of Prince Paul's hand. It was a signal to a man that the woman was available for lovemaking and the touch to excite the libido of a man.

It didn't work with Prince Paul. He was long immune to such enticement and feminine wiles.

Camilla continued her well-practiced flirtation through the castle corridors right up to the Queen's royal suite. Prince Paul removed her hand at the door when the footman opened the doors for them. "Thank you for your escort, Lady Camilla."

"Darling!" Queen Louise Janette exclaimed as she rose from her chair. "Darling, I have missed you so much!"

"I have missed your dearly as well, Mamman," Prince Paul said as he embraced his mother tightly. His long muscular arms encircled his mother in warmth and love.

"You must tell me all about your travels, where you have been, and what you have done. The people you have met. Just everything!" Queen Louise said when she took her son's arms and led him to the divan to sit with her.

"And also what I have brought you, Mamman. I wrote you letters all the time you know," Prince Paul teased.

"You also sent me lovely things, but it is not the same as you being here," Queen Louise reprimanded lovingly.

"No not the same, but the tour was stimulating," Prince Paul explained. "I have learned so much about other people and their societies."

"I won't be too selfish yet," Queen Louise told her son taking his strong chin in her delicate soft hand and looking deeply into his eyes. "You look weary and in need of a hot bath."

"Mamman you are the kindest most unselfish woman I know," Prince Paul complimented. "I wish there was another one like you. Then I would be married already."

"I love your compliments my darling, but there will be time later for them," Queen Louise replied happily. "Your bath is already

## *Smitten*



being prepared. Your suites are ready in the west wing for your privacy and guests."

"Hasn't Papa made you a general yet? You are such an organizer, especially for troop movement and comfort," Prince Paul told his mother. He gently kissed her on her cheek and then rose from the divan.

"My son, the witty one!" Queen Louise Janette laughed. "Now go get cleaned and rested so you may join me for a quiet dinner in my suite."

"At your command always, Mamman," Prince Paul smiled genuinely. "May I invite my companion Dr. Damon Sheffield to dinner? A very interesting man I have become friends with in my travel."

"Of course darling, and your cousins Vladimir and Auguste."

"Mamman you are perfection."

"Hush darling and go now, don't make our dinner too late," Queen Louise flushed in embarrassment.

"I'll escort you to your suites, Your Royal Highness," Camilla breathed out seductively. I'll weave my web of charm around you. She thought triumphantly. Who else in the vicinity could compare to my beauty.

The subtle seduction was not lost on Queen Louise any more than Prince Paul.

"I have need of you here, Lady Camilla. Prince Paul can find the suites himself. He knows the way," Queen Louise said curtly.

Bless you mother! Prince Paul exclaimed in his mind. As tired as he was he didn't need a wench fawning all over him and using his constraint to fight off a noble woman intent on compromise. "I'll be ready for dinner, Mamman," the Prince replied and retreated from the suite faster than even he thought possible to get away from the designing Camilla.

A hot bath and clean clothes made the Prince feel like a renewed man. Securely tucked away in the west wing his privacy from designing women was guaranteed. "Bless you Mamman," the Prince whispered in gratitude. The Prince's entourage was and had been all male and they were arriving in the courtyard right now. His valet, and trunks were arriving. In a few swift strides he was down the stairs and in the courtyard as a young peasant boy ran smack into him.

The young lad let out "Oomph!" as he struck the solid muscular body of Prince Paul.

"And who are you young man?" Prince Paul asked the agitated and now winded young boy.

"My name is Gustav. I have been sent by the Lady Rigan to deliver an important note to anyone that can take it to Her Royal



Majesty, Queen Louise Janette," Gustav uttered above a whisper and politely bowed to the well-dressed nobleman.

"And why is this note so important?" The Prince asked in a quiet tone to calm the young man.

"Lady Rigan said it is important," Gustav replied as if that was the only answer to the question.

"Is that why you are so agitated?" Prince Paul asked with concern.

"No one will listen to me," Gustav explained nervously.

"I'm listening," Prince Paul cajoled.

"Can you take the note to the Queen?" Gustav suddenly beamed with hope.

"I should think that if Lady... what did you say her name was?" Prince Paul chuckled.

"Lady Rigan, a saint on earth," Gustav replied looking to the heavens with adoration.

"Well if the sainted Lady Rigan thinks this note is that important, perhaps I should take you to the Queen and let you deliver the note," Prince Paul said seriously although he was quite enchanted with the boy's devotion to this Lady Rigan.

"I couldn't! I'm just a peasant," Gustav replied with fear. He was startled at the prospect of being taken to the Queen.

"You could, and I shall take you to Her Royal Majesty personally," Prince Paul commanded and took Gustav's hand.

"Forgive me my lord, but who are you?" Gustav asked curiously while looking up at the tall handsome man.

"Gustav, I am Prince Paul of Borogia at your service," Prince Paul stopped and answered. He clicked his boot heels together and bowed politely.

"Uhhhhh...." Gustav turned white and tried to breathe.

"Come with me Gustav," Prince Paul ordered taking his hand leading him into the castle, up the stairs, into the corridors and to the royal suites.

"Mamman, may I introduce Gustav," Prince Paul said as he pulled the boy into the room. "He has an important note from the sainted Lady Rigan for you."

"Sainted?" Queen Louise Janette arched a brow.

"So young Gustav says, Mamman," Prince Paul quipped in delight. A small smile spread across his lips.

"My darling. I do so adore that little devil in you," Queen Louise teased admiring her son's striking good looks when his face radiated with that impish smile.

Gustav offered a polite bow, "Your Royal Majesty, a note from the sainted Lady Rigan."

Queen Louise Janette accepted the note and before she opened it she offered, "Come Gustav, sit down and eat some chocolate



and have some tea. Rest awhile as I read this note and perhaps will respond to it."

Queen Louise read the note and smiled.

"Is everything alright with the sainted Lady Rigan?" Prince Paul asked indicating his humor at the boy's opinion of the lady.

"The sainted Lady Rigan is perfectly alright, as usual," Queen Louise quipped back in the same humor. "Gustav, you may tell Lady Rigan to stay as long as she is needed."

"May I be so bold as to ask just who Lady Rigan is, Mamman?" Prince Paul asked in curiosity. "Is this a real person or a new spiritual icon?"

"Lady Rigan is very real, darling. She is a new lady in waiting to me and well skilled in the healing arts. I no longer suffer my sick headaches because of her administrations and she has become valuable in the Circle because of her knowledge and skills," Queen Louise enlightened. "She is invaluable to me and well loved in the villages and city in the short time she has been with us."

"I would like Damon to meet her then," Prince Paul said thoughtfully. "Will she be available to join us for dinner?"

"No darling, I just told Gustav she may remain in the village with his father to see to his recovery for as long as she is needed."

"Do let me know when she returns. I know Damon would enjoy an engaging conversation with a naturalist. It is that medicine he is discovering and learning."

"Of course darling. When Lady Rigan returns, I will let you know."

"Thank you Mamman, and now Gustav, take these sweet cakes for your family and let me escort you to the courtyard so you may hurry home before sunset."

The Prince and Gustav had no sooner left the first flight of stairs than they were met with the presence of King Karl. "Paul!" he bellowed and ran up the steps to embrace his eldest son and heir.

King Karl was still a striking and handsome man at the age of sixty. There was no doubting the parentage of Prince Paul. His son was the image of King Karl as a young man.

"Papa!" The Prince returned the embrace.

"Who is this young lad?" King Karl asked his son noting the peasant boy still holding Prince Paul's hand.

"This is Gustav, an important message carrier from the sainted Lady Rigan," Prince Paul introduced as he pulled Gustav forward to meet his father.

"So she is sainted now in the village," King Karl chuckled noticeably.



"You know this Lady Rigan, Papa?" Prince Paul choked. His father never took that much notice of any of Queen Louise's ladies in waiting other than manners and appropriate behavior.

"I know of her, Paul. Lady Rigan's work and support in medicine and education for the villagers and citizens of Brogav is greatly appreciated and acknowledged in the Circle. I hear reports weekly of your Mamman's lady."

"I definitely must meet this Lady Rigan, and so must my friend Damon," Prince Paul vowed.

"Here you are young Gustav for your efforts," King Karl offered a gold coin to the astonished young man. "Now off to home with you. Paul, you will join your Mamman and myself for dinner."

"I will be there, Papa, just let me escort young Gustav here out to the courtyard," Prince Paul excused politely.

"Thank you, Your Royal Highness, for all your kindness," Gustav said politely as he turned to run through the courtyard. He had such great adventures to tell his family when he returned home.

Prince Paul began to direct the dispersion of his luggage to the servants and welcomed his valet, Maurice.

"Maurice, we are staying in my childhood suites in the west wing," Prince Paul explained. "Will you ready my telescope? I understand the night will be clear."

"As you wish," Maurice bowed dutifully fully aware of the Prince's interest in the science of astronomy since childhood.

"I will go with you now to rest a bit before dinner. I am weary," Prince Paul confessed. The ride home had been tiring and the hot bath made him relaxed as well.

The two entered the Prince's main suite to find Camilla waiting on a divan near the fireplace.

"I have prepared tea and brandy," Camilla said breathy and low. "I know you must need some refreshments."

"You know?" Prince Paul said sarcastically.

"A woman should always be aware of the needs of the man. All needs," Camilla replied seductively.

The Prince's sarcasm was again lost on the self-centered strumpet, and her seduction was all too apparent with the suggestive innuendo.

The sarcasm and the heavy sigh from his Prince were not lost on Maurice. "His Royal Highness has already had refreshments and only wishes to retire for awhile. I will show you out."

Camilla rose from the divan and was irritated with the shooing of the rude valet. I will dismiss you when I am Princess.

Maurice whispered to the footman, "Make sure this lady no longer has access to the Prince's private suites."

"Thank you Maurice," the Prince said gratefully when his loyal valet returned and assisted removing his boots and jacket.

## *Smitten*



"I am quite attuned to your tastes in women and she is definitely not your type, Your Royal Highness."

"Quite," Prince Paul agreed. "A potential irritant I am sure."

"An irritant that I have left word not to be allowed access to your suites again," Maurice chortled knowingly.

"Maurice, give yourself a raise," Prince Paul told his valet placing his hand upon Maurice's shoulder.

"Your Royal Highness already is generous to me," Maurice grinned.

"I want you to know how much I appreciate you, Maurice."

"You do, Your Royal Highness, many times every day."

"Wake me in time for dinner. I need to rest now," Prince Paul instructed as he walked into his bedchamber.

"Yes, Your Royal Highness," And with those words Maurice slipped away to unpack the luggage, arrange the gifts for the Prince's family and set the telescope up for the night.



## Chapter Three

That night Damon met Prince Paul outside the Prince's suites. Damon was quite a dashing figure dressed in burgundy velvet waistcoat, black satin breeches, white stockings, black velvet buckled shoes, white silk shirt and cravat.

"My Damon, I haven't seen you attired like this since I met you in England," Prince Paul admired openly. "You set a dashing figure. Would you be trying to impress the Lady Camilla?"

"Hardly," Damon refuted. "Lady Camilla types and I don't mix. I'm not royal and rich enough for their kind. I just want to impress your mother and father."

"That you will do," Prince Paul snorted quite unprincipally. "That you will do." Prince Paul then led Damon to the private dining suites in the country castle. Prince Paul had chosen more casual attire. He was dressed only in a silk shirt, white calfskin riding breeches and his black Hessian boots.

"Mamman and Papa, I would introduce Dr. Damon Sheffield, my friend and traveling companion for the past two and one half years," Prince Paul said to his parents when they entered the private dining room.

"We are enchanted Dr. Sheffield," Queen Louise Janette responded. "Just what is your field of doctorate?"

"I am a doctor of medicines, but have not established a practice as I find I have a wanderlust and became fascinated with the natural remedies of simple cultures around the world," Damon explained for the royal parents.

"Damon is writing journals of all his finds in primitive and natural medicines," Vladimir offered as he entered the suite.

"Vladimir, Auguste, do come in. It is good to see you," King Karl welcomed. "I am looking forward to your reports on your travels with Paul."

"Papa, I did send letters from everywhere I went," Prince Paul interjected. "I did keep you informed."

"Indeed you did, but I enjoy hearing other sides of adventure," King Karl chuckled. "I would especially like to hear a more detailed account of your encounter with the red Indians in the Colonies."

"Excuse me Your Royal Majesties, the servants are about to serve dinner," Camilla interrupted sensually.

## *Smitten*



"And who do we have here?" Vladimir bowed politely. "Dear beauty, a sonnet would lay waste in your divine presence."

"The goddess Venus would envy your beauty, my lady," Auguste followed in line.

"Gentlemen, receive your introduction to Lady Camilla," King Karl said politely although he was irritated with Camilla for interrupting their private conversation.

"I am at your service," Vladimir offered immediately.

"And I," Auguste again followed.

"I am enchanted gentlemen, should I need assistance or escort I would ask your availability," Camilla answered seductively. Good, these men are veritably falling at my feet. The Prince should be getting jealous soon.

The dinner proceeded with conversation of the Prince's travels and Dr. Sheffield's interests.

"Damon, I heard today of a lady in waiting to Mamman named Lady Rigan, oh excuse me, sainted Lady Rigan who shares your same interests," Prince Paul mentioned to Damon during the conversation at dinner.

"Indeed?" Damon responded taking another bite of pheasant.

"I have asked Mamman for an introduction to you when Lady Rigan returns," Prince Paul stated as he took a sip of fine French wine that had been served with the meal.

"I would be delighted. She has left somewhere?" Damon directed to Queen Louise Janette.

"She is in the village taking care of our cobbler," Queen Louise replied dabbing her mouth with a white linen napkin. "Not only does she care for our servants and villagers, she takes my care as well."

"After years of sick headaches, the lady has successfully administered relief to my queen with a crème of peppermint, lavender and chamomile," King Karl stated quickly. It was obvious he was impressed with the saint.

"Her knowledge of decoctions, tinctures and teas has become legendary with the easing of complaints by our servants," Queen Louise added.

"As well as cured several ill peasants," King Karl finished his wife's observations. "Our peasants in the Circle villages near the castle call on her regularly and our physicians are grateful for her assistance to administer help to them. Our physicians are no longer spread too thin for smaller complaints."

"I would very much like to meet this sainted Lady," Damon agreed. This Lady Rigan sounded fascinating and would help fill many of his journals, he was certain.



Camilla sat quietly through the meal, extremely bored with the conversation. The conversation was especially boring with talk of Rigan. She didn't understand why she was not the center of attention. After all, she was the most beautiful and closest to royalty the Prince would need in a wife. She was always the center of attention when among men, young and old. Her only fun at the table this evening had been sitting across from Prince Paul and brushing his leg with her stocking foot. She enjoyed his blush whenever she did it.

Queen Louise Janette was observant and the childish game of Camilla's did not miss her keen eye. She felt the discomfort of her son and ended dinner quickly.

King Karl ordered the servants out of the room with a wave of his hand and a nod. It was the unspoken signal for privacy. Camilla left reluctantly at the intense dismissal stare of King Karl. She would not be a party to the conversation tonight, just the Queen and the men. Camilla was miffed and disappointed.

"Since I am not family, perhaps I should retire for the evening," Damon volunteered.

"That won't be necessary, Damon. You already know about the discussion about to take place," Prince Paul said with dread. "You have become like family to me."

"Are you saying I need not bring up the subject delicately?" King Karl grinned mischievously.

"No, Papa," Prince Paul answered boldly. "I will tell you in a direct fashion, it is not marriage I am against."

"Then why have you avoided your responsibility so long?" King Karl demanded.

"I haven't avoided it, Papa. I simply cannot find that one special person," Prince Paul excused and pushed back from the table to look at his father.

"Your aim might be too high. You might target a little more reasonably," King Karl suggested lovingly.

"I am only asking that love be involved," Prince Paul replied while folding and refolding his napkin nervously. "And I simply have not found anyone to love yet."

"The reports I have of your female acquaintances and their letters to you are overwhelming my secretaries. Do you mean to tell me of these hundreds of women, you have not found one to love?" King Karl questioned in disbelief.

"At least I keep looking," Prince Paul offered jokingly to his serious Papa.

"I could arrange a marriage for you," King Karl responded to his son more seriously. King Karl's frown indicated to his son that he did not appreciate Prince Paul's lighthearted comment.

"Kar! You wouldn't!" Queen Louise Janette gasped. "You would deny your son and heir what we have, love?"



"I would and will if you do not find this love soon," King Karl replied belligerently. "You have obligations to fulfill. A wife must be chosen and heirs created."

"Papa! I only ask what you and Mamman share," Prince Paul pleaded.

"This sounds like an excuse to keep tasting the candy. I won't have it Paul," King Karl argued.

"It has nothing to do with tasting the candy. I truly want to live happily like you and Mamman," Prince Paul declared. "I simply could not endure a typical royal court marriage."

"Even the Empress and Emperor have created many offspring in their love marriage," Vladimir interjected in defense of Prince Paul.

"Oh ho! So Vladimir, you defend your cousin!" King Karl acknowledged.

"I do. I know he is being honest with you. He truly wants love and for the past years has only used paramours for his manly needs," Vladimir informed absentmindedly as he continued to partake of the cherry strudel offered for dessert.

Queen Louise covered her mouth with her napkin in shock at Vladimir's statement. One did not discuss women of the less desirable profession in the presence of women, much less a queen.

"Forgive his bluntness, wife. He seeks only to defend your son," King Karl reassured and placed his large hand over her small one.

"I beg your pardon Your Royal Majesty," Vladimir requested now embarrassed at his faux pas.

"Your pardon given," Queen Louise Janette nodded graciously.

"I on the other hand enjoy the candy," Vladimir smiled impenitently. "May I court the Lady Camilla?"

"Are your intentions honorable?" Queen Louise asked blushing crimson at the audacity of her nephew.

"Of course not! I just want to taste the candy," Vladimir grinned wickedly.

"You are a libertine rogue," Queen Louise sighed with a subdued chuckle.

"I think I need to speak to my brother about your marital status as well, Vladimir," King Karl laughed.

"The duke has an older son that has already provided an heir for the dukedom. I need not worry like Prince Paul here," Vladimir laughed loudly. "I can continue to taste the candy. So may I court the Lady Camilla?"

"Absolutely not!" Queen Louise said firmly.

"You would live to regret your feast," Prince Paul warned. "I can guarantee you would get a bellyache with those sweets."



"Ah such a waste of beauty. Are you saving her for yourself, Paul?" Vladimir winked devilishly but knowing his cousin much better than that.

"Nephew of mine, you are a scamp, and I love you," Queen Louise smiled.

"I love you too. So, are you saving Camilla for old Paul here?" Vladimir pushed.

"Indeed no! My son would be bored with her in a day!" Queen Louise volunteered in a serious tone. "I want my son to wed and have children. But, I want him to wed well and be happy."

"I hardly think Lady Camilla is Royal Princess material either," King Karl agreed.

"You see Papa! The world of the royal courts is filled with Lady Camillas. How could I possibly love someone shallow like that, and hope they could rule as a proper queen?" Prince Paul protested.

"You have valid points, son, but you need to settle down and produce heirs," King Karl again reminded his heir.

"I could step-down and you still have Aleck," Prince Paul suggested hopefully. Aleck enjoyed women more than he did.

"Now you make me angry, Paul," King Karl shouted. His face had turned crimson in anger.

"I apologize Papa," Prince Paul said sheepishly.

"As well you should. I still have several more healthy years left on the throne, but as the Crown Prince you must set the example," King Karl raged angrily. "The people of Borogia must respect you as a strong family man. You must have a strong marriage blessed by the church. It is your duty."

"I haven't stopped looking or hoping, Papa," Prince Paul stated quietly attempting to calm his father's anger.

"Well, there is going to be a time limit on this. I will give you one more year," King Karl conceded controlling his anger. "You must be married before your thirty first birthday or I will arrange a marriage for you."

"My question would be where do you intend to look? You have been around the world and still not one woman has kept your interest longer than a week," Damon asked the young Prince. Damon was wondering if the Prince would again tour. Damon had been hoping to settle down for a while to begin compiling all his notes into one journal.

"That will also be part of the agreement. You will look in your own courtyard and no further," King Karl commanded. "I will not have your Mamman's heart broken with both of her sons absent."

"Papa!"

"It's done Paul. I have given in too much already," King Karl stated not allowing any more conversation on the subject.

"Mamman?" Prince Paul beseeched his mother.

## *Smitten*



"Your father has been more than patient and generous. I dare not ask any more of him," Queen Louise replied. She knew when and where to stop disputes with her husband. This was one of those times to cease discussions.

"I will give it my first attentions," Prince Paul relented but was unsure of just where and how he would find his special princess in the world of Camillas.

"We do intend to help a little, Paul!" King Karl offered to his evidently bemused son. "Your Mamman has arranged a birthday ball for you next week and she has already invited all the dowagers and their eligible daughters."

"As well as many of your childhood friends," Queen Louise interceded. "It will not be all female."

"And many of my close associates and their sons," King Karl added.

"What a shame. I would prefer the all female party," Vladimir snorted.

"You would, rogue!" Queen Louise reprimanded quietly laughing at her nephew's impudence.

"I am sure I will enjoy myself," Auguste offered.

"Let us drink to success. Paul. Pour us all some brandy," King Karl ordered.

The rest of the evening was small talk and concluded amicably.

The Prince walked with his cousins and his guest to the west wing asking if their accommodations were comfortable and pleasant.

"I could live here forever. I am that comfortable," Damon teased. "Perhaps I should marry and open a practice."

Prince Paul and his cousins all slapped his back in reprimand.

"If you'd marry it would be difficult to put together that medical journal you so desire to write," Prince Paul teased.

The group took their leave of each other and Paul went to his suites.

"I thought you would never get back! Please tell this insolent footman to let me in!" Camilla snapped at Prince Paul as he approached.

"My lady, please! I am tired and weary from my journey and my servants have been given instructions not to let anyone enter my private suites," Prince Paul responded coldly.

"I'm not anyone. I am Lady Camilla Ashburtman."

"You are anyone, and I will take your leave. Goodnight!" Prince Paul cracked angrily and literally stormed into his chambers. The insolence of that woman! How dare she speak to me in that tone? You would think she thought she was already married to me or



something? That is exactly the kind of wife I would never have. Never!

With the door slammed behind her, Camilla immediately made excuses for the Prince's lack of interest and temper. He must be very tired this evening. Tomorrow he'll be in a better mood.

"Was the subject at dinner too difficult?" Maurice asked as he responded immediately to the slamming door.

"Why do you ask?" Prince Paul said despairingly.

"The slamming door and the scowl on your face, perhaps," Maurice noted.

"I'm not scowling!" Prince Paul refuted.

"Quite."

"I'm not scowling," Prince Paul contradicted.

"Yes, alright."

"Okay I am scowling. The subject at dinner was difficult and I am not sure what to do about it. Add the to the facts, Lady Camilla hounding me is nerve wracking," Prince Paul admitted.

"Was she at dinner?" Maurice asked in surprise.

"At dinner and in front of my suite waiting to pounce on me like a tigress," Prince Paul complained as he sagged down onto the settee to have Maurice remove his boots.

"Perhaps you should tell her exactly what your feelings are towards her," Maurice suggested as he pulled off the Prince's boot.

"It wouldn't stay long enough between her two ears even if I did. I've tried it before with little chits like her. It doesn't work," Prince Paul said resignedly unbuttoning his shirt.

"Is there anything that does?" Maurice conceded to the Prince.

"My only solution for all my difficulties is marriage with my special dream woman. Bloody Hell Maurice, I simply can't find her!"

"That is a problem," Maurice agreed and pulled off the remaining boot.

"Do you think you could station a footman in front of the west wing to keep Camilla away?" Prince Paul requested. He then removed his shirt and breeches with Maurice's assistance.

"I will do it," Maurice promised and handed the Prince his silken trousers he wore at night.

"Thank you Maurice. Is my telescope set up?"

"Yes, Your Royal Highness. It is set up waiting for you in your old nursery."

Paul adjusted his silken trousers and walked barefoot to his old nursery. He fingered his old toy fondly and stared out through it to the stars.

A shooting star rushed past his field of vision and he sighed.

## *Smitten*



"There is an old tale that says a wish can come true if you wish on a shooting star," Maurice spoke to the Prince quietly standing behind him. "Perhaps you need to make that wish."

"I do. I do indeed." And the Prince made his wish. It was a wish to find that special woman to love and her love him in a spiritual, an emotional, and a physical sense of the word love.

Maurice left the Prince gazing into the heavens for several hours before he suggested it was time to retire.

Maurice prepared the soft bed by folding down the white satin quilt with the embroidered crest of Borogia. Prince Paul fell into his enormous four-poster bed.

"Leave the bed curtains open Maurice. It is a beautiful night. You are dismissed for the evening." In a short time the Prince was sound asleep.



## Chapter Four

As Rigan was leaving the cobbler's home and giving final instructions to Elaine as the Prince was rising from his bed.

"Maurice!" the Prince beckoned and instantly Maurice was by his side. "A bath and walking clothes for today."

"My Prince is in need of nature's solitude today?" Maurice questioned. He was well attuned to the Prince's needs and moods since he had been valet to Prince Paul for twenty years.

"In great need of some quiet time," Prince Paul yawned rising from the comfortable large four-poster canopy bed. The white satin sheets were strewn aside as the Prince swung his legs over to the floor. He was still wearing his East Indian style silk pajama pants

"You will not have your friends with you?" Maurice next queried the Prince. "Where do you plan on walking? Will it be safe for you?"

"My friends will not accompany me this morning, Maurice," Prince Paul replied and stretched to awaken his sleepy muscles. "It is perfectly safe. I promise you."

"Your bath is ready, since I anticipated your request. The earlier you leave, the less likely you might meet company," Maurice informed his charge. He remained stone-faced when he added, "I am presuming it is certain female company you wish to avoid."

"You are correct as usual. You are as efficient as usual and you have breakfast ready?" Prince Paul grinned.

"Indeed I do, my Prince," Maurice replied unabashedly proud of his accomplishments.

"Well done! You are my personal marvel, Maurice."

While the Prince was bathing, Maurice answered a knock on the door. A footman of King Karl's handed Maurice a note.

"Who is it Maurice, and please don't tell me it's Lady Camilla," Prince Paul groaned.

"Thankfully it is not Lady Camilla. It's a note from your Mamman and Papa asking if you would like to join them for breakfast and a ride this morning," Maurice told the Prince upon returning to the bathing room with note in hand.

"Please send them my regrets. I will see them this afternoon," Prince Paul instructed his valet as he soaked in the tub.



"Very good Your Royal Highness, I will tell them you are still resting from your long journey," Maurice acknowledged and penned a quick reply note he sent back to the King.

Prince Paul finished his bath and let Maurice dress him in the casual attire one usually wears for a quiet walk. He donned a loose fitting shirt, calfskin breeches and riding boots. For the morning chill Maurice added an Aran woolen knitted sweater they had purchased when they visited Eirinn on his world tour. Actually the Prince bought several in different styles because he felt so comfortable in them.

Spring mornings were often chilly in Borogia.

Prince Paul left the castle using the servant stairs to avoid any accidental meetings with Lady Camilla or anyone else. Using all the servant's entrances and exits he knew so well as a child when he snuck away from his tutors and guards, he was soon walking in the road leading to the village next to the forest. The fresh air was brisk and invigorating. The Prince amused himself watching the wrens and falcons soar in the sky. He watched as rabbits and squirrels dashed in and out of the forests' trees. He was at peace with the world, for the moment.

Rigan was walking the same road on the way to the castle when she decided it was time to enter the forest and pick some wild angelica and dandelion to add to her medicinal bag. It was such a clear and sunny beautiful day. She thought she might spend a little time for herself enjoying nature. The chill of the morning was gone and the sun was warm on her skin.

Rigan came across a clear pond while gathering wild angelica and tree moss. Glancing around she saw large hedges and trees on one side and a cliff on the other hid the pond. The cliff offered a small waterfall that looked heavenly and inviting. I haven't bathed yet this morning. I might take a little swim and clean myself. Rigan said to herself removing her juniper-scented soap out of her bag.

Quickly Rigan removed her clothes and waded into the pond formed by the river. She walked under the waterfall and enjoyed the invigorating energy of the falling water. Her skin was pink with motion of the falling water upon it. Quietly and efficiently she cleaned herself and was just walking towards her clothes when she heard a disturbance that sounded very much like a man running in the woods. Grabbing her clothes and taking cover behind the hedges and under a tree, she tried to get dressed. In the short time she had managed to put on her chemise and petticoats, but her chemise had not yet been buttoned.

Prince Paul had been enjoying the solitude when he heard Camilla running behind him beckoning him with "Yoo Hoo, Prince Paul, Yoo Hoo!" Sweet Jesus I hate Yoo Hoos. Prince Paul made a mad dash into the forest interior and decided to run until he couldn't



hear the Yoo Hoos anymore. After running for several minutes, he turned his head back towards the road listening for the Yoo Hoos. He ran into an obstacle when he ran into the hedges for cover and ended up lying on top of it.

Rigan had made the error of rising above the hedges to peek when a brick wall slammed her into the ground. Half dressed and quite embarrassed, she found the head of a man implanted between her breasts and a fist putting pressure on her diaphragm.

Rigan was the first to speak. "Excuse me sir, but would you mind terribly removing your body from mine. I'm having a difficult time breathing."

Prince Paul raised his head and the first thing he saw were those haunting gray eyes. The second thing he noticed were two large inviting breasts peeking through a lacey gauze chemise. He scanned those breasts with scrutiny befitting a general studying a battlefield and the next thing he knew his libido was running in overactive mode. This had never happened to him before. Prince Paul noticed her scent immediately. She smelled like juniper. It was a very pleasant fragrance indeed. That particular fragrance was one of his favorites.

Closing her eyes to her embarrassment Rigan choked out a plea, "Please sir, I cannot breathe."

"A thousand pardons," Prince Paul apologized and rolled over to the side, but unconsciously he didn't want to move. He had felt warmth and comfort on top of this woman and he had liked it. "What in the devil are you doing in the woods my lady?"

"I was taking a bath! If you must know!" Rigan snapped defensively her eyes now green.

"Obviously." Prince Paul looked at the water drops sparkling like little rainbows dancing over her skin in the sunlight. He watched her intently as she quickly ribboned her chemise, and fiddled with the closures on her simple cloth dress. "May I help?"

"Certainly not, and a gentleman would turn the other way, not leer at me the way you just did," Rigan snapped at the man. Under normal circumstance Rigan would never be so rude to a stranger, but she was quite embarrassed at the moment and it seemed fitting to take it out on the brick wall that slammed into her.

"A gentleman would also offer to help as I have just offered." Prince Paul reached for her stockings, garters and shoes.

"I can handle that!" Rigan growled as she watched him snake up her stockings.

"I would prefer to help you, fair maiden in distress," Prince Paul taunted. In reality he was never so immediately attracted to any women before. He enjoyed these feelings also. Prince Paul stared at her and then confused asked, "Your eyes are green? Just a moment ago they were gray."

## *Smitten*



"I am hardly in distress, and you sir are hardly a knight in shining armor," Rigan snarled blushing a crimson. "My eyes can be any color you choose. That is not the matter."

"I thought I was being quite chivalrous," Prince Paul feigned hurt and offered his hand to raise her from the ground.

Then they both heard the Yoo Hoos.

"Hide and protect me please! I beg of you fair maiden," Prince Paul pleaded like a child play-acting a fairy tale. "Do not tell Camilla where I am. I beg of your mercy."

"Sweet Jesus, you are Prince Paul!" Rigan said in shock. I should have recognized him. He is more handsome up close. No wonder Camilla wants him. Rigan felt she could only give in.

"Yes, how did you know?" Prince Paul asked with surprise of his own. He couldn't remember seeing her before.

"Camilla has her sights on you. You poor man, you don't have a chance," Rigan laughed. This was so humorous. The fair and beautiful Camilla was chasing her Prince. And he didn't want to get caught. This must be some new romantic game.

"Then have mercy on me dear fair maiden. Do not let her find me. Let me have some respite. Please give me a chance," Prince Paul once more begged of Rigan. There were innuendos in that give me a chance meant for Rigan.

"I won't lie for you," Rigan replied not picking up on Prince Paul's innuendo.

"Don't lie, just don't let her know I hide under your skirts," And he crouched near the hedges under the tree. Prince Paul picked up her petticoats and crawled under them. He didn't know why he partially went under her petticoats, but he certainly enjoyed Rigan's womanly scent.

"Sweet Jesus!" Rigan exclaimed in horror when Prince Paul's nose touched her upper thigh. "What do you think you're doing?"

He was tempted to start playing with her when he first noticed she was not wearing drawers. God, she is enticing. "Hiding!" Prince Paul gave as a simple response. "Shhh, she'll hear you."

Camilla appeared out of the woods and walked briskly to Rigan when she spotted her standing behind the hedges.

"Hello Camilla, what brings you into the woods?" Rigan greeted eloquently hiding her disdain of the current embarrassing situation.

"Have you seen Prince Paul running through the woods here?" Camilla asked craning her neck looking from one direction to another.

"I have not," Rigan answered honestly. She heard him running through the woods. She saw him falling on her in the woods, but did not honestly see him running through the woods.



"Rigan, you are half dressed. What were you doing out here?" Camilla noticed as her eyes glanced upon Rigan when she scanned the landscape for the Prince.

"I was bathing, Camilla."

"Well do cover yourself. If the Prince would see you like that, you would scare him to death."

"My intention was dressing myself when you interrupted me," Rigan smiled insincerely. The insult was more deeply felt than she could let on. It was too late, the Prince had seen her half dressed and fortunately he didn't die of fright.

The Prince wanted to laugh. Scare is hardly the word I would use for instant lust. But then again, I have never wanted a woman like this before, maybe that should frighten me. No, I think I am enjoying this feeling far too much. Prince Paul lips brushed Rigan's thighs lightly in a gentle kiss.

Rigan flushed red at the intimate and surprise kiss on her leg. "Ohhhh!"

"What is wrong with you?" Camilla demanded to know. "You are quite flushed!"

"Just a chill," Rigan shuddered violently. The intimacy and warmth of the Prince's kiss sent shock waves throughout her entire body. Suddenly Rigan felt warm all over.

"Well, get some clothes on!" Camilla ordered and lifted her blue taffeta pannier to again begin her search for the missing Prince.

Rigan watched Camilla march off still looking for the Prince and moved her petticoat away from Prince Paul. "She's gone now. You are temporarily safe."

"A thousand rewards to you sweet maiden. How may I show my gratitude?" The Prince offered, but in his current lustful state he was hoping she would ask for him and fall begging him to love her as most women did. He was a bit unnerved when she did not.

"Enjoy your rest of the morning, but allow me to dress and finish collecting my herbs in peace," Rigan requested angrily. She was still upset by the strange sensations this Prince had just invoked.

"I'll help you collect your herbs. I will enjoy that. What are you collecting?" Prince Paul suggested eagerly.

"You really needn't help," Rigan protested reaching for the rest of her clothes.

"But I want to!" Prince Paul insisted enthusiastically.

"Alright then. Would you turn your back so I could put my stockings on."

"Dear Lady, since I have already enjoyed the sight of your magnificent breasts and inviting legs. I would be more than happy to assist you putting on your stockings," Prince Paul grinned wickedly. He loved the strange feelings this woman invoked.

## *Smitten*



"Oh my!" Rigan gasped covering her wildly beating heart with her hands.

"Dear Lady, are you blushing?"

"I sense I am," Rigan admitted.

"Then let this humble and grateful Prince assist you. That is a royal command. I am quite adept at it really," Prince Paul persisted and took the silk stockings from Rigan.

"So I have heard. Your reputation precedes you," Rigan taunted allowing the Prince to take her stockings and garters. After all it was a royal command.

"You shouldn't believe everything you hear. I am really quite innocent of all the tales about me," Prince Paul defended testily. He really hated the stories made up about a libertine lifestyle that he never participated in. A libertine was his brother, Prince Aleck.

Prince Paul gently took her leg and slipped her stockings on. As his hand touched her calf, her knee and her thigh he felt something he had never felt before. It was more than lust. It was tenderness and want. It was protectiveness. These were all new feelings. He tied the garter and put her shoe on. Then he did the next leg and the feeling was stronger. He felt the desire to kiss the lips of the wood nymph with the auburn hair and haunting eyes. To hell with hesitancy, I am going to kiss her.

"Bloody Hell!" is what Rigan heard.

Rigan was also feeling a stirring in her body that she had never felt before. As cool as the morning was, she was feeling quite warm and sensations started attacking her brain, tactile sensations as the Prince slowly and carefully put the stockings on her legs. Suddenly, his lips were on hers and she was on the ground again, under the powerful body of the Prince. The Prince was kissing her passionately and deeply as his tongue delved into her mouth. He tantalized her sensations relentlessly, recklessly and mercilessly. Rigan felt herself falling into an abyss of pleasure. She started wanting him, wanting his body, wanting his tongue. I can't let this happen. He thinks he can just have me because he is a gorgeous Prince. No! No by God! And she pushed him away.

"Do we have to stop?" The Prince sighed heavily with disappointment.

"Yes we do!"

"Quite. Let me help you collect your herbs. Just what herbs are you collecting?" Prince Paul was not about to let this woman leave him. He was enjoying being near her and all these new and wonderful feelings he was experiencing.

"I need the leaves and yellow flowers of the dandelions and wild angelica," Rigan wasn't sure if she was even breathing. Rigan



didn't really want him to leave. This Prince took her breath away. Literally!

"I'll collect the dandelions for you. I have no idea what wild angelica looks like," Prince Paul confessed taking his lacy kerchief out to hold the dandelions.

"That surprises me not," Rigan grinned while she was slowly gaining control of her senses once more.

"Damon would know. Wait a minute. What is your name? What did Camilla call you? Sweet Jesus, you are sainted Lady Rigan!" Prince Paul's eyes began to open wide in surprise.

"I am Rigan."

"You aren't at all what I expected you to be. Especially with those tempting breasts," Prince Paul commented scanning the area of discussion.

"How do you know my name? Just what were you expecting?" Rigan stammered taking a hand to shield the area of Princely perusal.

"You're blushing again. I think that is so sweet," Prince Paul remarked. He removed Rigan's hand from covering her breasts by taking her hand in his. He took her hand and touched it to his cheek. Oh how he adored the scent of Juniper. The scent was Rigan's.

"You didn't answer my questions," Rigan demanded catching her breath. Even his tiniest touch sent her knees wobbling and her world spinning.

"Ah yes. Since my arrival I have befriended a young man named Gustav who refers to you as a sainted Lady. My Mamman the Queen praises your skills, and my Papa the King that is grateful for your talents. I had visions of a middle aged dowager close to God in age with angel wings sprouting out her back."

"That is quite a vision indeed. I've never been described like that," Rigan laughed at the conceived visage.

"I am not the least bit disappointed. I much prefer your magnificent endowments and your much younger age," Prince Paul said approaching more closely. "You're blushing again."

"I am not!" Rigan denied and stomped her foot into the meadow grass.

"Yes you are," Prince Paul countered and grabbed her to crush her into his hard muscled body.

"I am not!"

"You are not!" Prince Paul agreed holding her tightly against his soft warm Aran sweater. "Blushing becomes you. I like it on you." And he really did like it.

"I don't!" Rigan was embarrassed at her body revealing her feelings. Rigan struggled and broke free of the Prince's hold on her. Rigan needed to breathe fresh air. The scent that was Prince Paul became intoxicating. Rigan had never smelled so enticing a man. The

## *Smitten*



Prince smelled of leather, sandalwood, and his kisses tasted of sweet honeyed oatmeal.

"I promised my friend Damon an opportunity to discuss your natural remedies. He is a doctor of medicine and quite interested in your supposed field of expertise," Prince Paul casually stated backing away from the obviously agitated Rigan. He wasn't about to push his good fortune just yet. "Would you have time to meet with him?"

"It is not supposed," Rigan retorted angrily.

"What is?" Prince Paul raised his brow in confusion.

"My field of expertise, it is not a supposed field of expertise. I was trained by my nanny," Rigan rejoined and quickly changed the subject realizing one should not speak to a Prince in such a manner. "By the way, that is a beautiful Aran sweater."

"Thank you, I like it as well. I bought several when I was in Eirinn. Would you like one? I apologize," Prince Paul offered impenitently. "Damon would enjoy a conversation with you regarding your expertise."

"Yes, I would appreciate a lovely Aran knit sweater," Rigan grinned at the banter game Prince Paul had begun. It turns out this Prince is actually fun. "I would be glad to meet with your friend Damon."

"They would look lovely in the sweater?" Prince Paul noted once again scanning the personal area of Lady Rigan.

"They?"

"Your magnificent breasts," Prince Paul answered and held out his hands to touch the mentioned subject.

"Could we end that part of the discussion?" Rigan snapped and stepped back several steps.

"I would rather not," Prince Paul disagreed and stepped forward to match her steps.

"I would," Rigan barked and brushed aside the Prince's wandering hands.

"I'll collect the dandelions," Prince Paul conceded reluctantly. There was definitely something about this woman. He was smitten.

"Good," Rigan crowed and walked into the meadows bending and picking the angelica plants.

"Are you from Eirinn?" Prince Paul began another conversation.

"Yes, County Cale, the village of Fanore," Rigan declared proudly.

"I thought I detected a small accent. Are you any relation to Sean O'Cullenan?" Prince Paul questioned as he plucked the dandelions.

"I am his daughter. How do you know him?"





"My Papa spoke of him often, and how much he enjoyed Sean's company and country. It was one of the reasons I spent some time there."

"Did you enjoy my country on your tour?"

"Quite. I enjoyed it immensely."

"That's enough dandelion."

"Do you have enough wild angelica?"

"Yes."

"Then we should be heading back to the castle. It is near midday, and you could get freckles," Prince Paul warned reaching for Rigan's hand.

"I have crèmes," Rigan countered increasing her stride avoiding his grasp.

"We still should return."

"I agree."

"Do you always need the last word?"

"I do."

Prince Paul walked back to the castle with a smile on his face. Was it possible my wish was answered? Lady Rigan fascinates me and I would love to explore that body of hers more closely. His libido acted up again and he was grateful he could walk it off before she noticed. This was a woman that excited him in every way; she was intelligent, gentle, kind and sensuous.

At the castle none other than Damon greeted them.

"Dr Damon Sheffield, please meet the sainted Lady Rigan," Prince Paul introduced pulling Rigan into his arms.

"You are the sainted Lady Rigan?" Damon choked in surprise.

"Don't tell me you also were expecting a middle aged dowager as well?" Rigan chuckled. This time she did not fight the Prince's embrace. It felt good and comfortable.

"Actually, yes. It would give your knowledge and capability more credence," Damon replied awkwardly.

"I'm sorry to disappoint you," Rigan responded testily. That was twice someone had expected an old hag.

"I'm not disappointed," Damon quickly stated. He found himself looking deeply into the enchanting gray eyes. "Do you have time to discuss your decoctions, tinctures and teas?"

"I have a little time. I will meet you in the library shortly. I must change into some fresh clothes more befitting the royal household," Rigan answered and removed herself from the Prince's embrace. In almost a run she escaped into the halls of the country castle.

"We'll be there." Prince Paul shouted after her.

## *Smitten*



"We'll?" Damon turned to look at Prince Paul cocking an eyebrow.

"I'm interested in the knowledge as well as you," Prince Paul countered.

"Since when?"

"Since always. I love knowledge, I just let you write it all down," Prince Paul smiled smugly.

"Aren't you afraid you'll run into Lady Camilla?" Damon warned in jest.

"I have a feeling that the library is one of the few places in the castle that is Lady Camilla proof," Prince Paul countered in the same jest. He rested his hand on Damon's shoulder and they walked in the castle heading toward the library.

"I fear you are right," Damon snorted following the Prince's lead.

"Good, then let's go hide."

A short while later Lady Rigan joined Dr. Sheffield and Prince Paul in the library. The three spent a delightful afternoon together as Lady Rigan shared her knowledge and her notes with the doctor and the Prince. None of them were aware they missed lunch and neither of them really was hungry. They enjoyed the food of knowledge more. Prince Paul was becoming more captivated by this sainted lady. Rigan's knowledge and intelligence intrigued the Prince. Paul wanted even more of her. Was it possible he was falling in love?

Maurice found them in the library and served tea and sweet cakes. Maurice informed them that the King and Queen were giving a small dinner party this evening and that all three of them were expected to attend.

## Chapter Five

No sooner had Prince Paul descended the stairs of the west wing dressed for the dinner party when he found Lady Camilla attached to his arm. Camilla was a vision of perfection in a white corset accented with white ribbon, white satin pannier and matching contouche. The gown itself had small seed pearls in a flower pattern across the hem of the skirt and lace edging the contouche. The sleeves of the contouche were tight fitting and straight opening up at the bottom to allowing the delicate hand lace of the chemise flow in decorative folds.

"You are quite handsome in your formal dinner wear, Your Royal Highness," Camilla complimented Prince Paul. He was wearing his military jacket of deep blue wool with brass buttons. Epilates and braid decoration in gold adorned the jacket. A red ribbon with the crest of the Circle accented with a large emerald surrounded by diamonds and rubies. His slacks were white linen in contrast to the black polished Hessian boots. Expecting a return compliment Camilla was quite disappointed not to receive one. "Are you going to be so silent throughout dinner?"

"I hope not."

"Must you always scowl?" Camilla pouted clinging to his arm like ivy upon stone.

"I must."

"What am I to do with you?"

"Leaving me alone would be a good start."

"Are you still so tired and grumpy from your trip?"

"I am still tired and grumpy, but that is my usual habit," Prince Paul indicated in an attempt to warn off the Lady Camilla.

"You didn't look and act grumpy with your Mamman."

"Maybe it's just you then," Prince Paul stated sarcastically.

"Oh you are such a tease."

"Vladimir!" Prince Paul bellowed to his personal guard when he spotted him in the great hall talking to Auguste.

Vladimir turned to see the lovely Lady Camilla attached to Prince Paul's arm and his Prince looking quite unhappy about it.

"Time to rescue the Prince again, Auguste." Vladimir whispered to his cousin and nodded to the Prince.

"A fate I will enjoy this time," Auguste snorted eyeing the Lady Camilla.



"Do you get the first dance, or do I?" Vladimir asked walking towards the Prince.

"Allow me dear cousin," Auguste requested. This was one of their favorite games. They received the company of the females the Prince discarded.

"After you, Auguste. I'll take the Prince away for a discussion," Vladimir agreed. "I get the lovely Lady Camilla later.

The two rescuers moved in on the Prince.

"Your Royal Highness, I was just looking for you. Damon and I were having this debate on the revolution propaganda being spread in the Americas. Would you care to join in the discussion and perhaps refresh our memories?" Vladimir interrupted the Lady Camilla in mid sentence.

"It would be most interesting," The Prince replied amiably.

"Would you excuse us then Lady Camilla? I promise to return the Prince later," Vladimir said taking her arm off the Prince and replacing his with it. He started to lead the Prince away.

"I would prefer not, your grace." Camilla balked angrily.

"I would love to enjoy this next dance with you, Lady Camilla. I won't take no as an answer," Auguste cajoled and swept the lady in his arms and on to the dance floor.

As Auguste was dancing with Lady Camilla, Rigan entered the ballroom. Prince Paul saw her upon her entrance and couldn't take his eyes from her. Her auburn hair done in delicate ringlets framed her face like a Renaissance portrait. The green silk of her contouche accented her ivory complexion. The green silk skirt matched the contouche, but she did not wear the pannier, only her petticoats. The tartan scarf she wore across her bodice with the family crest as a pin gave her a regal quality. Her décolletage was in the latest fashion, very low and Prince Paul was mesmerized by the memory of those tantalizing breasts. He was still staring when Lady Camilla came and attached herself to his arm again.

"Do you see Rigan? What terrible taste to wear that barbaric fabric across her contouche to this ball," Camilla criticized loudly for all to hear including Rigan.

Damon approached Rigan and took her hand to the dance floor. Prince Paul had a sudden surge of jealousy. This was a new emotion to him. It was new emotion but real nonetheless. His face was beginning to turn crimson and he felt his fist clenching as he watched Rigan dance with Damon. He barely heard Camilla's next vicious statement.

"Dear Rigan, perhaps you would entertain us with one of your country's barbaric dances as long as you are wearing such a barbaric costume," Camilla called across the room as the musicians had ended their minuet. "Maestro, can you play one of those barbaric Aran



whatevers?" Camilla requested waving her hand in exasperatingly motion.

The maestro nodded and the sweet gentle music in the strings brought back Rigan's homeland memory. Their music was lovely and their dancing beautiful. Camilla had made an affront to her homeland and Rigan would accept the challenge in the name of honor and Eirinn.

Damon stood aside as the music moved to the rapid movement and Rigan kept in perfect time. Her legs kicked and danced to the tune.

Prince Paul could bear no more. He detached Camilla from his arm and joined Rigan on the ballroom floor in a swift movement.

Camilla's mouth dropped in shock that the Prince left her to join the plain and simple Rigan on the dance floor. Closing her mouth she vowed Rigan would pay for this humiliation. The court would not know the Prince was kind hearted and just trying to see Rigan was not embarrassed. At least Camilla told herself that is why the Prince left her side.

Prince Paul knew the Aran reel well and the two kicked and tapped in perfect syncopation. They twirled together and his arm held her waist tightly as they enjoyed the music and the dance. Their audience was spell bound as all watched in awe. The Prince was smiling and looking at his partner with a joy they had never seen on him before. He was actually beaming and radiating.

Rigan was looking at her dance partner with a large smile spread across her face. She was enjoying this dance tremendously and feeling somewhat obligated to Prince Paul for joining her in a direct slap to Camilla's rudeness. She was also smiling at Prince Paul with an emotion she had never felt before. Rigan felt good with the Prince. Rigan found herself delightfully happy for the first time since her Athair's passing.

"I am enjoying this dance with you," Prince Paul whispered to Rigan as he twirled her in his hand.

"I thank you very much for the pleasure of your company," Rigan whispered back. "It means a great deal to me. More than you could know."

"I understand. Lady Camilla needs her tactless nose tweaked a little don't you think?" Prince Paul chuckled.

"I agree."

King Karl and Queen Louise watched their son and Lady Rigan on the ballroom floor. King Karl began clapping to the rhythm. "I haven't enjoyed this music since I last saw Sean. We really must request this music more often, don't you agree my dear?"

"The delight in your eyes takes me back to our youthful years," Queen Louise confirmed squeezing the King's hand. "Yes, my darling husband. We should request this music more often."



"Do you see that look in Paul's eyes?" King Karl asked bending over and whispering to Queen Louise.

"I think perhaps he may have found that special lady and we will have a daughter in law soon enough."

"We can hope, can't we?" King Karl wished.

"Do you approve of my lady in waiting, Rigan?" Queen Louise asked looking into the deep blue eyes of her beloved husband.

"I do indeed. She is royal princess material for certain. She is loved by the people already and she certainly maintains the unruffled chin up grace of nobility when attacked."

"Camilla has been cruel lately," Queen Louise shared with her husband. "I don't know what has gotten into her of late."

"I really want you to address this vicious quality she has my dear. Her tactlessness is something I will not tolerate in my court," King Karl warned his wife. He rarely interfered in the Queen's household. Sometimes he was forced to. The court had related its distaste for the childish Camilla on her last visit to Brogav Castle.

"I will write to her mother tomorrow," Queen Louise promised. "Perhaps Sophie can come and offer some guidance."

"Look everyone is enjoying the dance! They are all clapping along," King Karl said guiding the change in conversation. He never liked upsetting his precious queen.

"Heavens Karl, I don't remember enjoying myself so much in a long time."

"This is an omen, my dear. I tell you it is."

Out of breath, yet extremely happy. Prince Paul bowed to Rigan and Rigan curtsied to the Prince. Camilla came in for the attack immediately.

"I should like the next dance with you, my Prince. Something more refined for us," Camilla flapped reaching for the Prince's arm once more.

"I think not Camilla," Prince Paul rebuked brushing her hand away and reached for Rigan's arm.

"Why not, may I ask?" Camilla asked haughtily.

"I am not comfortable with a tongue as vicious and tactless as yours. It affronts me and quite frankly I am abhorred," Prince Paul rebuffed sharply. "I am also out of breath."

"How rude!" Camilla snapped angrily. The Prince couldn't possibly be speaking to her like that.

"No Camilla, you are rude! I would like to take a breath of cool air," Prince Paul hissed. Prince Paul tucked Rigan's arm safely under his and asked, "Lady Rigan would you do me the honor of accompanying me on a brief walk outside?"



"Tis I that would be honored," And Rigan took Prince Paul's offered hand.

As Prince Paul and Lady Rigan left the ballroom, Camilla stood in shock for a few minutes and fled the ballroom in a pique. That mouse Rigan won't get away with this, not in her lifetime. The Prince is mine and mine alone. She would have to change tactics. Camilla needed time to think. The cold snub of Prince Paul left her stunned.

The night was cool and clear. Rigan was grateful to walk outside but the cool of the night did give her a chill. Prince Paul saw her shudder and removed his jacket gently placing it over Rigan's shoulders enclosing her body in his arms. This feels so right. Prince Paul mused. This feels so right. Rigan feels so right in my arms. I want to kiss her again.

"Venus is especially bright tonight. We should take care not to be caught under her influence," Rigan broke into the silence.

"You know the stars?" Prince Paul choked out in shock.

"Not much, but I was studying your Papa's copy of Kepler's journals in the library. The theory of the elliptical path of the planets around the sun was interesting."

"It is a fascinating theory. Would you like to learn more?" Prince Paul asked trying to suppress his exuberance.

"I always love to learn more, and more, and more. I'm afraid I am insatiable for learning," Rigan confessed. It was not yet acceptable for a woman to pursue knowledge on the levels Rigan did.

"In that we suit well," Paul said hoping Rigan felt the same. "Astronomy is my favorite subject. I wager you would enjoy looking closer at the stars through a telescope."

"You are right of course. I would enjoy looking at the stars through a telescope. I am assuming you have one."

"Of course."

The Prince turned Rigan around and pulling her close to him bent over crushing her breasts to his chest and began his kissing attack against her senses once more. In short order Rigan was senseless, her body felt like a jellyfish in the ocean and she was just floating with the tides. She felt her nipples harden against the pressure of his chest. How could one man, or any man do this to her?

Prince Paul opened her mouth to his tongue by nipping her lower lip and then her upper lip. His tongue slipped inside her mouth and tasted the fresh clean mint flavor of Rigan's mouth.

Not knowing what to do, Rigan pressed her tongue against Prince Paul's. The results were a groan and deepening of the embrace and kiss from Prince Paul. Rigan felt her head swimming and noted the Prince tasted delicious. She liked this far too much.

Rescue came in the form of Damon Sheffield. "Ahem. I have come out to inform you that dinner is now being served."

## *Smitten*



"Thank you, Dr. Sheffield," Rigan replied after catching her breath and fleeing Prince Paul's arms she almost ran into the great hall.

"Our friendship is being tried here," Prince Paul complained to Damon irritably.

"Bloody Hell, Paul. I didn't know what you were doing out here with her when I was looking for you," Damon defended.

"It's my fault. I should have taken her to my room right away."

"You aren't planning on what I think your planning," Damon choked. This was quite out of character to the Prince he knew.

"Damned right I am. Look at me Damon, I have to count backwards from a thousand to get control before I can go back in there." The bulge in his breeches was evident.

"Sweet Jesus, don't do this to Rigan. She's a fine lady," Damon protested. He found he liked and respected the Lady Rigan. He could not see her as a paramour for the Prince. That would have been intolerable.

"I want her."

"Paul, I won't stand by and let you hurt her," Damon warned.

"I need her."

"Did you hear me Paul, I'll call you out if you hurt her."

"Damn it Damon, I'm in love with her!"

"Are you sure?"

"These feelings are all so new to me. I am sure!"

"You certainly are acting differently. I've never known you to act like such an ass about a woman before."

"I fell at her feet you know."

"What?" Damon exclaimed nearly spilling his brandy.

"That's how I met her. I tripped and fell at her feet in the woods this morning," Prince Paul revealed to his friend.

"Now that is a first," Damon responded raising his brandy snifter in the motion of a toast.

"As a matter of fact I even fell on top of her. I fell right into those luscious breasts of hers."

"I'm not sure I want to hear this," Damon contested. He had his own visions of the proper Lady Rigan.

"We collected dandelions and wild angelica," Prince Paul related bemused.

"You did?"

"We did. I love her."

"I think I am witnessing the phenomena of a man hopelessly smitten."

"She knows about the stars, and planets, and Kepler!" Prince Paul added to his diatribe regarding the Lady Rigan.





"There is no doubt she is an intelligent woman," Damon agreed.

"And sensual too!"

"You think you have found this special woman at last?" Damon chided. "All of this perfection found in one kiss."

"I know I have. Now I just have to woo her and get her to love me too."

"She doesn't love you? There's another first," Damon chuckled and tipped his brandy snifter in salutation once more.

"Oh she loves me. She just doesn't know it yet."

"You're going to educate her?"

"Damned right I am. I have found my royal princess."

"Are you going to tell your family?"

"Damned right I am. I need their advice. They know the sainted Lady better than I do."

"Can we eat now?"

"Yes."

"Thank you, sweet Jesus!" Damon exclaimed throwing up his hands in prayer toward heaven. "The Prince will have a Princess and I will have food."

Neither of the men had realized Prince Paul was only in his shirt and waistcoat. Prince Paul had forgotten he placed his coat on Rigan for protection against the night chill. Rigan had also forgotten she was wearing it when she fled into the hall. Rigan remembered it as she was walking in and quietly withdrew waiting for Prince Paul to enter.

Prince Paul's scowl changed to a smile when he saw Rigan at the doorway.

"Your coat Your Royal Highness," Rigan offered the folded coat from her arm. "Your chivalry was appreciated."

Prince Paul took his coat and Damon helped him put it back on and straighten his waistcoat. When they were finished, Rigan had already disappeared into the great hall. As Damon and Prince Paul entered, Paul's scowl returned when he saw Rigan being seated by a footman, far away from his seat by his parents. Damon took the seat next to her.

"You're scowling Paul." King Karl leaned over to whisper to his son at dinner.

"I know."

"Would you care to stop? "

"Not likely." Prince Paul didn't even notice his hands were in fists as he watched Damon in animated conversation with Rigan. Damon was pushing their friendship.

"You're scaring the guests."

## *Smitten*



"I don't really care, Papa," Prince Paul responded. He felt there were times that being a Prince was inhibiting. Especially now that he really wanted to pull Rigan away from his friend. He couldn't make a scene because he was the heir to the throne. Somehow and someday he would make Rigan his and his only. He would do it very soon.

"I think you and I need to talk," King Karl commanded noting the unusual behavior of his eldest son.

"That we do. I need your advice," Prince Paul accepted. His mother and father knew Rigan better than anyone. They would give him the correct advice to make her his bride. Jealousy was new to him. His parents would help with that. Possession was new to him and he had in mind that Rigan would belong to him only. His parents could help with that also.

"I'm returning to Brogav in the morning, perhaps a conversation with Mamman and myself at breakfast?"

"I'll have Maurice wake me," Prince Paul responded still watching Damon and Rigan closely. His teeth were grinding now.

"You are truly smitten!" King Karl observed.

"Fatally."

"Mamman and I are pleased with your choice."

"You are?" Prince Paul questioned happily. It was important to him that his parents could love Rigan as he had done so instantly.

"Delightfully, she is royal princess material."

"It's decided then."

"On our parts, yes. Tread carefully with Rigan; she is not an ordinary woman by any means. Try not to make a fool of yourself, and definitely avoid embarrassment for her."

"That's why I need your advice."

"Breakfast then."

The meal was finished without incident, but the scowl remained on Prince Paul's face throughout the evening. Damon had escorted Rigan out of the hall and had not returned. Prince Paul had to endure the prolonged small talk in the drawing room with his father's associates, ministers, and friends.

After unbearable hours Prince Paul excused himself and went to the west wing. He burst into Damon's chambers. If Damon wasn't there, or with Rigan, Paul would throttle him with his bare hands regardless the scandal or friendship.

Fortunately, Damon was there and alone copying one of Rigan's remedies she had written for him.

"What's this?" Damon looked up with a start at the sound of the door slamming against the wall.

"Did you enjoy your dinner partner?" Prince Paul snarled angrily.



"Lady Rigan is one of the most intelligent and gracious women I have had the opportunity to meet beyond your Mamman."

"Did you enjoy her company?" Prince Paul accused.

"Good God man, control yourself, and get your mind out of the Parisian streets. Lady Rigan is a woman of quality."

"Keep your mind off my Rigan."

"Paul, I know you are in love with her. I know she is this special woman you have been waiting for. I would not jeopardize our friendship, and you need not worry. I am not in love with Rigan. I do admire and respect her," Damon told Prince Paul as he laid down his quill pen upon the parchment journal.

"The conversation seemed more than admiration at dinner," Prince Paul growled refusing to release his possessiveness. He wanted to make sure Damon understood that Rigan would be his alone.

"One cannot help but be enthusiastic around her. She is the most knowledgeable and interesting person I know save you. She has even studied the anatomical drawings of Leonardo Da Vinci," Damon explained enthusiastically.

"I'm sorry, I just don't understand myself these past hours," Prince Paul finally relented.

"You are fatally smitten."

"So it seems."

"When you cannot be near her, be assured I will do my best to be. Just look at me as your personal duenna for your fair lady."

"You won't woo her?" Prince Paul asked for reassurance.

"I value my life too much," Damon answered humorously.

"You'd better," Prince Paul chuckled.

"I can still learn and share so much with her. Will you allow me that?"

"As a celibate priest?" Prince Paul questioned putting on the restriction.

"As a celibate priest."

"Agreed."

"Now go to bed and let me finish my work, Lady Rigan loaned me these notes. I am to return them to her in the morning."



## Chapter Six

Lady Rigan was styling Queen Louise's hair in the morning. Usually this was Lady Camilla's duty. Lady Camilla had sent word that she was ill. Queen Louise Janette didn't seem concerned about Camilla's absence and was humming.

"Tis a fine mood you're in Your Royal Majesty," Rigan noted swirling a lock of the Queen's hair around the hot iron.

"I have so much to be happy about," Queen Louise bubbled. She was very happy Prince Paul not only had fallen in love, but also had fallen in love with Rigan. The Queen could not have chosen a more suitable wife for her son.

"I have noticed how happy you are whenever King Karl is near," Rigan observed about the Queen's gay mood.

"Although my happiness right now is not just Karl, you are right child. I love my husband very much."

"I am pleased to share in your world of joy as your lady in waiting. It was a good and happy day that brought me into your court," Rigan commented. She herself was in a wonderful mood this morning. Damon had been a delightful intellectual partner last evening. Those kisses of Prince Paul still had her tingling. "I have not heard of too many happy noble marriages such as yours."

"Those happy royal marriages are rare. I treasure mine," Queen Louise agreed completely. "Paul has waited all this time because he feared an unhappy marriage. To our joy, he has found that someone special. Someone that Karl and I already love. And that is why I am so happy." Queen Louise was under the impression Rigan would know she was talking about her and wanted Rigan to know that she and King Karl were happy with this match. Queen Louise was also under the impression that Paul had revealed his feelings to Rigan.

"Many Blessings upon them," Rigan sighed. A twinge of jealousy crossed Rigan's heart. She herself had come to enjoy the Prince's company, arms, and kisses.

"Upon them?" Queen Louise was puzzled.

"Prince Paul and his betrothed, whomever she may be," Rigan replied as she adjusted the last curl in place.



"Oh dear, I've put my foot in it," Queen Louise huffed realizing Rigan was not aware of Prince Paul's feelings toward her. The boy had not discussed anything of this matter with Rigan.

"I don't understand," Rigan questioned. This certainly was a strange conversation.

"You needn't worry about it for now. My hair looks lovely dear. You may leave if you wish. Bridgett and Helene will finish my dressing," Queen Louise excused and attempted to hurry Rigan off. A matter of a royal marriage needed to be discussed with her son. Queen Louise was appalled that her future daughter in law was not aware of her future.

"I will be in the gardens and greenhouse this morning, if you need me. Dr. Sheffield is interested in the herbs and condiments I grow there."

"I appreciate you letting me know where you'll be. I have a feeling I will have a headache after breakfast. I will be having a stern discussion with my son," Queen Louise replied shaking her hand at Rigan in dismissal.

As Rigan opened the door she ran right into Prince Paul about to enter his mother's chamber. "I beg your pardon, Your Royal Highness."

"Good morning Lady Rigan," Prince Paul smiled broadly, as he picked up her chin up with his thumb and forefinger. "I hope that you will save some time for me later today. I would like to discuss Venus with you."

Gazing into his sapphire eyes Rigan felt all those strange feelings again. Afraid to speak lest she stutter she forced out, "As you wish."

"I do wish. And happy my wish has come true," Prince Paul beamed wanting to take Rigan in his arms and kiss her passionately.

"Excuse me Your Royal Highness. I must be leaving," Rigan pulled back from that seducing smile and fled down the stairs. Good Lord, how can she stop these feelings when he's near? They are sinful. The Prince is going to be married. The Queen said so. He must have chosen Lady Camilla. The poor man, she is such a shallow a vicious person, spoiled since a child and so sure her beauty is the answer to everything. He really could never have a happy marriage with Camilla. Should she say something? No, that is not her concern. He has such kind eyes and he was so nice to Gustav. He has been so gentle and tender with me, and those kisses. Oh dear, I just simply must stop thinking so much.

Prince Paul had his own thoughts. Why does she run from me? Am I so repugnant to her? I usually run from women, not they from me. I must make her fall in love with me.



"Would you kindly inform Dr. Sheffield that Lady Rigan is now available in the gardens." Rigan requested of the footman guarding the west wing of the castle. She turned to leave to the gardens as soon as the footman nodded his acknowledgement of her request.

Before Prince Paul entered his mother's chamber her mood had changed from happy to pique.

"Good Morning, Mamman," Prince Paul greeted cheerily.

"Don't good morning me, you scoundrel!" Queen Louise glared at her son. "Bridgett and Helene please leave my chambers. My son and I are about to have a private discussion."

"I hope I am included," King Karl said as he entered the chamber. "What has put you in such a pique, dearest?"

"Your scoundrel son!"

"What have I done, Mamman?" Prince Paul asked innocently.

"You brute, that poor child doesn't have an inkling of your feelings towards her," Queen Louise reprimanded.

"I haven't had much time to court her, Mamman. She always seems to be running away from me."

"You have already decided to marry her, and she doesn't know it!" Queen Louise stormed. "It is important to have a woman know when she is the bride!"

"Why does she run from you?" King Karl asked in astonishment. What could Paul have done to Lady Rigan to frighten her so? They looked so happy dancing.

"I don't know why, Papa. She just ran away from me again as I entered Mamman's chamber."

"This is strange," Queen Louise mused. "You haven't told her your feelings, so she must be running from hers."

"Everything is strange and upside down for me Mamman. This is why I wanted breakfast with you and Papa. You know her better than anyone. I want your advice on how I can make her love me."

"Who wouldn't love you, Paul?" Queen Louise questioned in a more loving tone.

"She wouldn't." Prince Paul complained. "So tell me everything you can about her. What she likes. What she doesn't like. What is important to her? Tell me about her life before and here. I only know I love her and she is the daughter of Sean O'Cullenan, Earl of Fanore and Mamman's Lady in Waiting."

"She loves knowledge most of all. Just like you. When I send for her she is usually in the library. She takes pleasure in ministering to the ills of all regardless of rank or title, and she has a loving and giving heart. In the winter she takes time to bring books to



the village and city schools that she has purchased with her own stipend," Queen Louise volunteered.

"Sean always told me how intelligent his daughter was. And how proud he was of her. He told me that the angels put her on loan to him," King Karl paused remembering his friend. "He knew his illness would take him soon and he wanted to protect Rigan from any unhappy restrictive marriage since that was all that was offered in Fanore. Sean told me Rigan wanted to travel and had an insatiable appetite of learning. He asked if I would take her in and protect her. I did gladly. Little did I ever think my son would fall in love with my best friend's daughter! It couldn't have worked out better if we had betrothed you two. I am very pleased."

"Look at the facts, darling. You both have an insatiable appetite for knowledge. You both are very intelligent, love traveling and feared unhappy marriages. You both are kind and giving. The two of you were meant for each other. Work on that foundation," Queen Louise offered. "It is very important to let you know you love her and she will be your wife. Even if that takes a royal command."

"Your Mamman is right. The two of you have so much in common, loving should be easy," King Karl agreed. "If you were king today and she was queen, what would you desire the most to accomplish for the Circle. What mutual project would you wish to share with her?"

"I would want the two of us to build clinics that would be accessible to all. They would be in cities and villages. Damon and I talked of it when we were traveling."

"Then begin there!" King Karl suggested.

"What is her favorite flower, Mamman?"

"She loves the lilac. Her favorite color is green. Her favorite scent is juniper. She even makes her own juniper scented soap."

"Papa, can you have a betrothal ring made for her? I would like it to be an emerald surrounded by diamonds, with matching necklace and earrings," Prince Paul asked his father. His mind was already racing with his proposal. He had searched for his special love almost ten years. Now that he found her, he wasn't about to let her go.

"You've thought about this jewelry already, haven't you?" King Karl grinned broadly in understanding.

"Yes, the emeralds represent Eirinn and the diamonds represent the endurance and strength of my love for her."

"You can be romantic after all, darling."

"Yes, Mamman. I fell in love with her the moment I saw her in the woods."

"In the woods? That is a story I would love to hear, Paul," King Karl remarked bending over his wife and issuing a soft kiss upon his wife's neck.



"I'll tell you another day, Papa. Right now I want to find her," replied Prince Paul anxiously. He wanted to find Rigan and propose to her.

"She's planning on being in the gardens this morning," Queen Louise volunteered. "Now let's eat breakfast."

"I'm not hungry, Mamman." Prince Paul excused and started toward the suite door.

"Hah, the boy is lovesick," King Karl laughed heartily. "I'll send for the jewelry and the license as soon as I return to Brogav. You, Paul, better wed this woman quickly."

"I will Papa, believe me I will," Prince Paul promised his parents and himself.

On those words of advice, Prince Paul left the chambers to return to his suites. Prince Paul wanted to retrieve the promised Aran knit sweater for the Lady Rigan. Then he would find her in the garden. It was his intent to spend the entire day with her. He would first declare his love for her and then ask her for her hand in marriage. Having all things settled he would discuss his vision for the village and city clinics. A mutual interest that would help her learn to love him and benefit his people. I can't believe I have found a woman so capable, caring, and sensual to surpass even my hopes. It is a miracle. I must say prayers to the saints at mass.

"You should begin looking for another lady in waiting dearest," King Karl was heard to tell Queen Louise as he departed for Brogav. "As Paul's betrothed she becomes princess and will commence her duties as wife of the Crown Prince."

The servants that overheard it spread the gossip like a brush fire in the woods, around the castle, including the ears of Lady Camilla Ashburtman. Who of course automatically assumed she was the lady in waiting under discussion. Prince Paul will marry me. His temper of late must be the fault that he simply does not know how to show his love. Imagine, trying to get me jealous with that drab and plain Rigan. Silly man! Her health suddenly returned and playfully prettied herself for the evening meals.

While the family discussion was going on in the castle, Dr. Damon Sheffield was having a conversation of his own.

"Why did you leave Eirinn?" Damon asked Rigan as they sat in the garden and Rigan had handed him several samples of her garden herbs.

"How did you know I was from Eirinn?"

"I'm English and I can tell by your accent. Although there is only a trace of it now."

"I left because my father was dying and I did not want to be trapped in a restrictive and loveless marriage. I knew that





would be my end if I did not leave," Rigan confessed to Damon. In the short time she knew Damon she knew she liked him. He was quickly becoming her trusted friend.

"You are so afraid of marriage?"

"A restrictive, confining, choking marriage of convenience and greed. Yes!" Rigan stated adamantly.

"All marriages don't have to be that way. Look at King Karl and Queen Louise."

"They are the exception," Rigan denied firmly.

"Prince Paul had the same fear as you. Did you know that?" Damon questioned carefully. He wanted to prepare Rigan a little for the ardent lover Prince Paul had become.

"Well, he isn't that afraid and had is the key word. Queen Louise told me in so many words he would be betrothed very soon," Rigan revealed.

"Yes, I know. He has fallen in love. He is so in love that he has been making an ass out of himself lately," Damon responded. He was starting to wonder if Rigan had any inkling of the Prince's feelings toward her.

"You mean like kissing me last night?"

"That is one of the few times he hasn't made an ass out of himself." Damon laughed.

"I don't think that's funny! A man, Prince or not, shouldn't be kissing a woman in such a manner if he is betrothed. I am sure Lady Camilla would be in high pique if she knew her betrothed had kissed me."

"Sweet Jesus, you think Prince Paul is going to propose to Lady Camilla?" Damon choked in shock.

"Who else?" Rigan replied demurely.

Damon started laughing hysterically. He laughed so hard tears were streaming from his eyes and his ribs started to hurt. "I'm sorry, Lady Rigan I must gather myself before we continue our lessons in medicinal plants. It's just so funny!" And he started laughing again. "Ow, Ow, oh this hurts."

Hearing Damon's laughter, Prince Paul located Rigan and Damon quickly.

"What is so funny?" Prince Paul inquired as he approached.

"I have no idea whatsoever!" Rigan said disdainfully.

"In that case, I will borrow Lady Rigan," Prince Paul said and took Rigan's hand in his.

"Please do. I need some time to collect myself," Damon gurgled still trying to contain his laughter.

## *Smitten*



Prince Paul purposely led Rigan into the center of the garden. He remembered her favorite flower. Lilac bushes in full spring bloom surrounded them. He sat on a stone carved bench and brought her down next to him. "Here is your sweater my wood nymph. I did not forget I promised it to you in the woods, and I keep my promises."

"I thank you. It is a touch of my home," Rigan sighed. "I will treasure it. Tis a lovely gift." Rigan felt herself trembling again. She always did in his presence and she didn't know why. She got up to run, but he pulled her back down.

"Why do you always want to run from me Lady Rigan?"

"I do not run. Your time is important and I do not desire to waste your time," Rigan replied shaking uncontrollably.

"You run from me, Lady Rigan."

"I told you, I do not wish to linger and waste your time."

"Rigan, listen to me carefully. You do not waste my time and please stop running from me." Each word was enunciated slowly. "Even right now, I wish to talk to you about something important, to both of us."

"I'm listening." Rigan began to tremble noticeably.

"You're trembling."

"Yes, I'm afraid so."

"Are you afraid of me?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I don't know, that is the worst of it. I don't know why. I get all knotted up and confused when you are near. It is unsettling," Rigan told the Prince as tears threatened to flood her eyes.

"It's called love! You love me, Rigan. As I love you."

"No! I can't! It would be a sin!" Rigan protested.

"Why a sin, Rigan?" Paul was more than surprised at the answer.

"You are to be betrothed."

"I know, betrothed to you! Am pos thu mi?"

"What did you say?"

"Am pos thu mi?"

"Do you realize you just asked me to marry you in my language?" Rigan gulped.

"Yes I do realize that. I love you, Rigan. Mamman and Papa know it and they are happy with my choice. Say yes, Rigan."

"I have only known you two days."



"But it has taken us an eternity to find each other. Say yes," Prince Paul countered.

"I can't, my head is spinning. I am so confused. How can you possibly love someone so simple and plain like me? You could have the beautiful Lady Camilla with a word or a glance!"

"Lady Camilla is only pleasing to the eye. You my lovely Rigan are beautiful through to the soul."

"What do you see in me?" Rigan asked as her eyes brimmed in tears of happiness. The Prince had asked her to marry him and she knew she had fallen in love with him as quickly as he with her.

"I see the two of us reaching to the stars. I see us seeking wisdom, truth and knowledge. I see us building clinics and schools for the villages and cities. I see us traveling together and discovering new and wonderful things. I see our children and you as their mother. I see us discussing philosophy and you being my strength when I will rule the Circle. Say yes, Rigan."

"I must be dreaming, I wish someone would wake me before I die," Rigan said and shook her head in disbelief.

"Say yes, Rigan!" Prince Paul demanded. He knew the next words out of his mouth would be a royal command.

"Since this is only a dream, Yes, Your Royal Highness!"

"Yes, Paul!" Prince Paul insisted. There was no need to be so formal anymore. His future wife would not need to refer to him in such a manner.

"Yes, Paul."

"Now tell me you love me!" Prince Paul didn't give Rigan a chance to answer. He had her in his arms and his mouth covered hers completely. This kiss was passionate but tender as his tongue gently played inside her mouth. He tasted the sweet honey of her lips and the succulent invitation of her tongue.

Rigan turned into the jellyfish again. His kisses made her completely boneless. Only this time a fire started to build in her body. The little knots became one big one. Her arms encircled Paul's neck and she started kissing back. She suddenly felt warm. "I think I am to die now."

"Not until you say you love me," Paul demanded insistently. Paul felt her response. His tongue answered hers in play. Her arms around his neck invited him to break the kissing and he stared at her. Her décolletage was low and revealing the flush in her inviting breasts. Sweet Jesus I want to take her here. What did Papa say, 'don't make a fool of yourself, and avoid embarrassment'? Is that why she runs away? I embarrassed her, first half dressed in the woods, next kissing her under the stars when Damon came in. Mary Mother of God I want her, restrain me. His prayer was answered when he heard Damon calling for them. "Say you love me."

## *Smitten*



"I love you," Rigan whispered breathlessly

"I love you, Paul!" Prince Paul requested huskily.

"I love you, Paul."

"We're over here Damon," Prince Paul called to his friend. Prince Paul was happy for the diversion. If Damon had not come he could have ravished his future bride in the lilac bushes.

"Is Damon in my dream too?" Rigan asked hesitantly.

"Yes, my love. Damon is in our dream too."

Damon approached the two sitting on the bench and sat comfortably down on the bench across from theirs. "Lady Rigan, your lips are a bit swollen. Dare I think the Prince has sinfully kissed you again?" Damon teased.

"You may dare to think this Prince has indeed kissed his betrothed. But I promise you not sinfully," Prince Paul answered the question for Rigan. His arms were surrounding her possessively.

"You have asked her then?" Damon inquired.

"I have asked for marriage and she has agreed. She also loves me as I love her," Prince Paul radiated proudly.

"Lady Rigan, do you see why I laughed so hard at your absurd assumption that Prince Paul would wed the Lady Camilla?" Damon asked.

"Being eaten by a pack of wolves would be more humane than a marriage to her. Rigan, whatever gave you such an idea?" Prince Paul inquired.

"As long as I am dead or dreaming, I shall answer you most honestly. I cannot fathom a man so handsome as you being attracted to someone as plain as I. Lady Camilla had set her sights for you and her beauty the most seducing and enticing magnet. How could you resist?"

"The courts are full of Camillas, and it is her type that terrify me the most when it comes to marriage. Until I found you, I had given up hope that there was a beautiful woman left on the face of the earth," Prince Paul told his Rigan thoughtfully. "You are my beautiful woman, Rigan. All and only mine."

"But Camilla is beautiful."

"Pleasing to the eye, not beautiful. You are beautiful. You are all that a royal princess should be, and all that a royal prince would want," Prince Paul maintained.

"Well done, Paul! I can see you are going to stop making an ass out of yourself!" Damon added to the conversation. "But forgive me, this is all a bit maudlin for a bachelor. I will wait for my lessons Lady Rigan and take my leave."



"Do not leave us, Damon you are very much a part of our future plans," Prince Paul commanded and turned to look into Rigan's eyes.

"I would like to adjourn to the library. Another important thing I wish to discuss is a project of mutual interest. The Circle is in need of health clinics in the village and city. I thought we could begin the project in this village. It would be a clinic for the peasants to take the ill and obtain medicines for their ailments. We would supply medicines, treatments and would train midwives and nurses."

"A book on nursing!" Damon declared emphatically.

"A book on medicines and dosages," Rigan stated enthusiastically. "I truly have died."

"You are not dead, Rigan. I won't let you die," Prince Paul said quietly and brushed his lips against her hair.

"You are serious about all of this?" Damon asked still in disbelief. They had discussed the potential, but Prince Paul had every intention of carrying it out. Damon had found a home.



## *Chapter Seven*

"Examination rooms would be here." Damon inked several small boxes into the larger one he had drawn.

"The reception area large and in the front. Here," Prince Paul pointed to a spot on in the box. "Double doors at the entrance."

"It should have several floors. One floor should be for birthing, female and children ailments. Another floor should be for surgical matters. Another for chronic ailment," Rigan added. Her enthusiasm was radiating like the midday sun. After so many years of fear, I am going to wed a fairy tale prince. Good as he is handsome, and he is offering a full partnership. No restraint. No containments.. How shall I thank the saints in mass? Are you looking down on me Sean O'Cullenan? Are you smiling? I want no one to wake me from this wonderful dream. A tear suddenly appeared followed by several others.

Prince Paul had been looking at Rigan throughout the conversation and full with contagion of her enthusiasm noticed the tears immediately. "What are these for, my angel?" He was quickly at her side and brushing the tears from her cheeks ever so gently with the back of his hand.

"Papa used to call me angel," Rigan choked in memory. More tears filled her eyes.

"Perhaps because you are. Why the tears?"

"It is so silly."

"Tell me what is so silly that makes you cry?"

"I cannot stop the flow, because I did not know one could be so happy," Rigan told the Prince and fell into his embrace.

"Then perhaps we should cry together and create a new lake in the Circle," Prince Paul pulled her into his arms and softly stroked her hair brushing his lips on the top of her head.

"Do we announce the betrothal at your birthday ball, darling?" Queen Louise asked as she entered the library and saw the tender scene.

"Indeed we will, Mamman," Prince Paul answered his mother with a smile radiating from his face. "I have found my royal princess, my angel."



"Welcome to the family darling, Rigan!" Queen Louise radiated herself as she walked towards them with open arms. Taking Rigan from Prince Paul, Queen Louise embraced her warmly. "I have a thousand things to take care of now. I fear I shall busy right up to the ball. First, I brought lunch."

With a nod of the queen's head, servants began bringing in trays laden with meats, cheeses, breads and fruits. Services contained tea and coffee, the favorite of Rigan, as well as wine and brandy.

"How did you know to bring lunch in here, Mamman?" Prince Paul asked grinning.

"When I sent a servant to check on your progress in the garden and you weren't there, he proceeded to find you here. I knew once Rigan was in the library with you, and heard that Damon was also there, well lunch would be forgotten. I just took care of it."

"Papa should make you a general, Mamman."

"Regarding troop movements, I'll see to it that your belongings are moved to the lady's suites next to Paul's royal suites, Rigan," Queen Louise announced to her future daughter in law.

"Moved?" Rigan gasped.

"Of course! Now that you are betrothed to the Crown Prince, you are a princess. You and Paul should be quite near each other so you may be available to each other for planning the nuptials. You shall be quite busy now, Princess Rigan."

"My duties? How can I?" Rigan squeaked. It then suddenly dawned on her that she was being referred to as Princess.

"I will also be sending requests out for a new lady in waiting, darling. I should think the Paul's birthday ball would offer some new choices for that problem. You may want to consider choosing some ladies in waiting from this ball. Your duties as my lady in waiting ceased when you accepted the proposal and became Paul's Princess. You have all new duties now."

"What are they?" Rigan asked placing her hands to her temples. Her world had begun to spin again.

"Don't fret darling. You do most of them already. In your caring for the gardens and flowers for the castle, and importantly your administrations of care for the peasants. New duties like attending ceremonial functions for the Circle, royal charity dinners and sponsorships, as well as functions that require you to be at the side of your Crown Prince. You will be quite busy. You will need time to select your own ladies in waiting, and my dear you and I must purchase your trousseau. There will be fittings for new gowns and dresses. We will spare no expense, darling Paul."

"I have no doubt for that, Mon General Mamman. Please feel free to spend as much as you like. You have Carte Blanche," Prince Paul said sending a special twinkle of his eyes to her. "I will have a part in the selections of some of those purchases however."



"Can we eat now?" Damon interrupted.

"You are always thinking of your stomach, Damon!" Prince Paul chided.

"I don't have love to nourish me. Like you do," Damon quipped. "Not all of us are so fortunate as to fall before the feet of a wood nymph."

"I must hear this story." Queen Louise commented.

"You will Mamman. Someday."

After the meal and the servants began clearing the library table, Damon returned the parchments of paper they were working on.

"What are all these drawings?" Queen Louise asked.

"We are working on the health clinics for the Circle. Beginning with the design of one here in the village, Mamman."

"We will be offering care and medicines to all those who are less fortunate than we are. Dr. Sheffield will develop an instructional book on nursing the ill and diagnosing ailments," Rigan beamed.

"We will be publishing Rigan's healing scripts and my notations on herbal remedies. The plants and the decoctions, tinctures and teas for the different ailments will be logged. Her records are quite detailed. The only thing missing are etchings to identify the plants." Damon added.

"Can I help you in such a Christian cause? I do etchings very well I am told. As a child I so enjoyed etching flowers and scenery," Queen Louise asked hopefully. "A patron of the arts is stimulating, but to aid in your endeavors would be most gratifying."

"Every day I shall bring an herb for you to etch, Your Royal Majesty!" Damon promised. "Your assistance is most appreciated."

"Oh how wonderful. You see children how a little spark creates a giant warming fire? My darling Princess Rigan, already you are bringing great happiness to this family and it is spreading like ripples in a pond." Queen Louise prophesized.

"You are overwhelming me, Your Royal Majesty," Rigan blushed in embarrassment.

"You are deserving. I simply cannot wait to write Adriane and Dominique that they must come to their brother's wedding. What a cherished prize he has chosen. They will be as delighted as I am. I will take your leave."

"Before you leave Mamman. I would have dinner sent to my private suite for Princess Rigan and myself this evening. We should like some quiet time alone."

"Of course darling. Oh that reminds me. Starting tomorrow morning I have arranged for the royal groom to give you equestrian lessons, Rigan. It is important for a princess to set correctly on certain Occasions of State when you will be required to be at Paul's side."





Queen Louise started walking out the door when she turned and added. "We will also go to Brogav tomorrow and start selecting your trousseau and begin gown selections. I thought we might spend two days in the city then return here in time for the birthday ball."

"I will be accompanying you, Mamman," Prince Paul wanted to be a close companion to his betrothed and be a part of all her selections. He found her and was not about to be separated from her now.

"I expect you to be," said the queen as she left down the corridor.

Prince Paul turned to look at Rigan. "Mamman will be occupying a lot of your time, my angel. I want to share it as much as possible now that you are no longer running from me."

"I don't want to wake from this dream. I really don't!" Rigan said softly.

"Neither do I," Damon agreed. "Let's get to work on the inventory of everything that will be needed."

The trio spent the rest of the afternoon, planning, drawing, designing and costing the health clinic for the village.

In the other part of the castle, Camilla was involved with herself she did not notice Rigan's belongings being moved. Camilla was waiting when the queen returned from lunch. Camilla had chosen her prettiest pink-skirted pannier with white lace and seed pearls around the edgings and hem. Her contouche and corset matched the pannier and white ribbons were the corsets ties. A gold chain with a ruby pendant accented her creamy milk throat. Prince Paul will be so impressed when he sees me for dinner.

"You are feeling better, Camilla?" Queen Louise asked when she saw her.

"Oh ever so much better," Camilla purred.

"Run along then and enjoy yourself. I won't need you until later. I have letters to write to Adriane and Dominique."

"Yes Your Royal Majesty."

"Oh I forgot, tomorrow I will be leaving for Brogav Court and will stay there for two days. Bridgett, Helene and you will stay behind and follow my instructions for Paul's birthday ball. You will also see to it that when the guests start arriving they are taken to the North Wing, I have assigned everyone a specific room or suite."

"Will Prince Paul accompany you?" Camilla asked.

"Of course he will accompany me, such a silly question," Queen Louise replied testily. Camilla never ceased to be an irritant and ask personal questions of a royal.

"Could I not go with you to court? It has been a fortnight since I have enjoyed the city," Camilla pleaded. She wanted to be near the Prince.



"You will stay here and attend to your assigned duties. Now run along. Oh yes, I must also write to Aleck."

"Your Royal Majesty." Camilla was in a pique as she left the royal suite. How can Prince Paul court me if he is going to Brogav with his Mamman? When will he have the time to propose to me? He must be waiting until the birthday ball and is going to Brogav to fetch my betrothal ring. Yes, that must be it. I should be kept here tucked away safely from other men seeking my attentions. Prince Paul must be ever so jealous of me.

Camilla entered the sewing room and took her chair by her embroidery hoop. She had been working on the same leaf since she arrived as lady in waiting just over a year ago. The sewing was just a place to sit and dream. Camilla had no interest in embroidery. It was a ruse to daydream. Camilla's happiness was shopping for gowns, dresses, jewelry, especially jewelry, and shoes. When I am Princess I shall buy two of everything and in every color. Prince Paul will cover me in jewels to match my beauty. Camilla was so involved in her own little fantasy she did not hear the whispers of the other ladies in waiting that Lady Rigan was being given the lady's suite next to Paul's royal suites in the west wing.

A formal dinner in the great hall was in honor of Queen Louise's Patrons of the Arts Society. The guests were discussing such notables as Johann Sebastian Bach, the great composer of music and Geoffrey Chaucer and the Canterbury Tales as they waited for the queen's arrival and dinner. Another favorite subject was the artist and writer Benvenuto Cellini and his wicked life.

"My favorite of course is Jean de La Fontaine," a patron offered.

"He had few equals when mocking human foibles," noted another.

"What do you think of La Fontaine, Lady Camilla?"

"Who?"

"The fabled French poet Jean de La Fontaine?" a guest asked trying to get the obviously preoccupied lady in waiting involved in the conversation.

"Such a bore actually," Lady Camilla answered not even knowing or caring whom La Fontaine was.

When the queen entered the receiving parlor Camilla looked for Prince Paul. She had expected him to accompany his Mamman. He was nowhere in sight. This is getting somewhat irritating. I really don't like the Prince playing such games with me. He will certainly pay dearly on our wedding night for this. It shall be fun to have him beg for me. Yes, that is what I'll do. I will have him beg to take me on our wedding night. That will teach him.



"Camilla!" The stern voice of the queen broke into Camilla's fantasy.

"Yes Your Royal Majesty?"

"Do come in and be seated for dinner. Are you sure you are not still ill?"

"I feel well. Perhaps I just had a short relapse."

"Well come to dinner, some food will do you good. You are looking a little pale."

"Isn't Prince Paul going to join us for dinner?" Camilla questioned not hiding her anxiety.

"No child, he has requested his dinner be brought to his suite tonight. He wanted some privacy this evening," Queen Louise informed the young woman patiently.

"Has Vladimir and Auguste returned?"

"Why no dear. We don't expect them back until the birthday ball. They have obligations to visit with their families for a while. They have been gone three long years as well. Why do you ask?" Queen Louise asked. Why does Camilla persist in this interest in my son?

"I just thought that is the reason Prince Paul preferred to dine in his suites tonight."

"No child, presently he has much more important things on his mind. Pleasant things I am sure," Queen Louise replied hoping that would be the end of the subject. She did have guests to attend.

"I see," Camilla quirked a smile. He probably is thinking how he can ask me to marry him. Yes those are pleasant thoughts, to have such a beautiful wife.

"I am so proud of him. He has begun working on building a health clinic for the village with Damon and Rigan. They spent the entire day working on it," Queen Louise said as they walked into the royal drawing room.

"Rigan?" Camilla sucked in her breath. I am so tired of him using that poppet to make me jealous. I really will make him pay dearly for this. I will make him buy me a diamond necklace, bracelet and earrings for this one.

"Speaking of Damon, he is joining us now," Queen Louise noticed and extended her arm graciously to the doctor.

"Your Royal Majesty," Damon addressed the queen with a bow.

"How did your planning for the health clinic end this evening?" Queen Louise asked with interest.

"It ended knowing we have just begun. There are so many details to take into account," Damon shared.

"It is so exciting and such a wonderful a plan."

"I am most grateful for your offer to help with the etchings."

## *Smitten*



"I am delighted to assist. I am looking forward to being part of such a noble undertaking," Queen Louise responded. A small twinkle of enjoyment was seen in her eye.

"Clinic?" Camilla blurted. "A clinic for peasants?"

"A noble undertaking don't you agree?" Queen Louise asked not liking Camilla's tone. I am so glad Sophie is coming tomorrow to talk to her daughter. Camilla's behavior is most inappropriate for the royal court.

After the faux pas, dinner remained cordial and Damon discussed artists, musicians and poets with the other guests. Lady Camilla was excused and sent to her suite for the night. Queen Louise would have no more embarrassing scenes with her guests.

"I don't know what has gotten into the child." Queen Louise complained to her closest lady in waiting, Bridgett, in the privacy of her royal suites as she prepared to retire for the evening.

"I think now that Prince Paul has returned she has let her young imagination run wild," Bridgett analyzed. "She is such a child living in her own self centered fantasy world."

"A selfish spoiled child," Queen Louise added. "Her Papa should have warmed her bottom a few times."

"She is also very beautiful and she thinks that gives her the right to be the center of everyone's attention. Especially Prince Paul's attention."

"Sweet Jesus, how will she behave when she learns he has chosen Rigan?" Queen Louise gasped and placed her hand upon her throat.

"We can be grateful her Mamman will be here to control her. I think she has gotten everything she has ever wanted. Not getting her Prince will create a major display of a temper tantrum," Bridgett predicted.

"You were also aware of her attempted seductions towards my son, Bridgett?"

"You would have to be blind not to see those cow eyes when she stared at him, attached herself to his arm, and attempted footsie under the table."

"We can hope she will grow up. Sophie will not get here fast enough for me. Even Karl is upset and appalled at Camilla's behavior."

"His Royal Majesty has mentioned her erratic behavior to you?"

"Mentioned? He told me not to allow her in the Brogav Court."

"This is bad, very bad."



"Bridgett, do try to keep her busy preparing for the ball and try your best to make a lady of her."

"You have my promise to try, but it is difficult to make fine silk out of coarse cotton."

The two women giggled at that statement.



## Chapter Eight

Prince Paul had not let Rigan out of his sight. When the trio concluded their planning for the evening, Prince Paul had attached his arm around Rigan's waist and kept it there. They left the library and went to the lady's chamber to inspect what had been accomplished by the queen's order. Everything was organized and in its proper place.

"I should change for dinner," Rigan suggested realizing she was still in her simple linen gown.

"No, I don't think so," Prince Paul whispered in her ear.

"Your Ro..."

Rigan couldn't finish her sentence as he put his fingers on her lips, shook his head and said. "Paul!"

"Paul, why not change my gown?"

"Because Rigan, for propriety's sake I would have to leave you to change and I don't want to leave you right now."

"What will the servants think?"

"They will think the Prince is really in love and extremely happy with his betrothed."

"They will think that? You're sure are you?"

"Absolutely."

Maurice broke into the conversation as he entered the lady's chamber. "Your Royal Highness, your private dinner is waiting you on the table in your suite."

"Good! Maurice, will you see to it that all the servants leave after dinner? Later secure the lady's and my suite for the night. I do not want any interruptions this evening. None! For the entire night!" Turning to Rigan he said, "My angel. I would escort you to dinner!" He offered his arm.

"I am honored my Prince," Rigan said placing her hand in the crook of his arm and smiled.

Prince Paul led her to the table and to the chagrin of Maurice seated Rigan himself. With a nod he sat down. Champagne was poured into two glasses.

"A toast to us, my angel."

"A toast to us, my Prince."

"May we walk our paths together in happiness."

"Salute."



"Are you really happy, my angel?"

"Deliriously. Are you truly happy?"

"Insanely! I never would have believed that after traveling the world I would find my special princess in my own home."

"I will try to be a good wife, but I have a very independent mind," Rigan warned playfully.

"I've noticed. I love your mind. I love all of you. Your intelligence! Your kindness! Your charm!"

"I also have a terrible temper."

"I hope I never see it."

"Do you have a temper or do you just scowl?" Rigan teased.

"I have never had to lose my temper. I hope I never will lose it. I think I just scowl."

"The scowl is very threatening."

"I'll use it on you if I ever need to threaten you. Like when you run away from me."

"I'll scowl back."

Silence for a few minutes as the servants served the soup.

"You would. You should read Rousseau," Prince Paul suggested as he leaned over the creamed potato soup.

"If you mean Jean-Jacques Rousseau? I have read him."

"He has interesting theories on the placement of a women."

"Rousseau is a dogmatic sexist! Women should stay in the kitchen. Indeed! The only interesting thing he has ever written is The Social Contract."

"I rather enjoyed Confessions. You're blushing again. You must have read that also."

"Your...Paul, you are an incorrigible tease."

More silent moments as the entrée was served.

"Have you read The Kama Sutra?" Paul taunted in good humor. "Good God, look at you! I think you're almost red."

"I didn't think the human body could contort into so many positions."

"It would be interesting to try," Prince Paul hinted huskily. "Blushing does become you, my angel."

They finished the rest of the meal in silence each of them trying to stop the need for each other that was becoming more powerful by the moment.

As the dessert plates were removed and the servants removed all the trays, they were left quite alone. Maurice saw to it that no one would be bothering the Prince and his Princess this evening.

Prince Paul rose from the table and pulled Rigan up into his arms and crushed her against his chest. "We will be discussing Venus tonight my angel, and how she has cast a spell over us."

Rigan's heart was pounding. She thought it would burst out of her chest.



Paul suddenly grabbed her hand and pulled her into a room on the other side of his suite. It was a nursery. The room was filled with toys, a wooden rocking horse, a bassinet, and a telescope set on the balcony that overlooked the courtyard.

"Come and share the stars with me," Prince Paul offered with a twinkle in his eye that revealed the deep passion growing in his body. "Kepler's solar system."

"The elliptical paths of the planets," Rigan uttered knowingly.

"The universe of Nicholas Copernicus."

"Alfonso X or Alfonso the Wise was the first master. He crafted The Alfonsine Tables or charts of the movement of the stars and planets."

"He needed fifty astronomers to do it for him," Prince Paul countered.

"Touché!"

"Rigan my love, life with you is going to be very interesting. Do you want to view the stars?" Prince Paul radiated. Rigan was the perfect woman for him. He enjoyed sharing knowledge and especially with her.

"Yes, I would like to very much."

Prince Paul and Rigan spent the next hour looking at and identifying the known planets, stars and constellations. Late into the night the moonlight entered the nursery at just the right angle and Rigan was bathed in its luminary.

"I love you Rigan," Paul said as his mouth closed over hers. He delved his tongue to open her lips, nibbled her bottom lip and then sought her tongue. She tasted divine. His hands began to untie the bindings on her linen gown and as it fell loose, he pulled the shoulders down over her arms. His large hands pulled Rigan's breasts free from their hiding place in the chemise. Paul wanted Rigan. He needed her and lusted for her. Slowly Prince Paul laid her on the plush carpeting.

His lips were drawn down to her exposed femininity. He suckled one breast while his hand flayed over the other. Grabbing her nipple he squeezed it between his fingers. "God, I love your breasts."

Rigan was in near oblivion by the time he had undone her gown and his lips left hers. Rigan simply could not believe this Adonis of a prince loved her. She was sure she loved him. She became totally lost when he began his siege on her breasts. She felt him pull off her dress, then her undergarments. He stopped kissing her only to remove her chemise. Somehow he had removed most of his own clothing. Only his breeches were left on. Rigan was naked under him.

Paul put his hands on her hips, massaging and touching. He began at the top of the thigh, upwards to the hips then her arms, her face. He would kiss her lips, her eyes and then retreat to her breasts to





play and suckle. He put his hands behind her back and under her buttocks and she felt the hardness of his manhood. He pushed his manhood on her loins and rubbed it back and forth. Only the breeches separated the skin. Paul heard himself groan. It was time. He knelt and picking her up had her in his bed in a few short strides. I love this woman. I must have her. I can't wait.

Rigan was beyond all logic, sensibility, or propriety. Feelings of passion and lust were heating her body. She felt her body move in erotic rhythm to its needs and his. There was no control, only wanting. Wanting him! Wanting him inside her! She was burning for him. "Ohhhh" came from her mouth as he knelt by her knees and kissed her woman's nub. His tongue sought, delved, tortured and excited her. Rigan grabbed for his shoulders and dug her nails deeply into his skin. Her body was riotous and beyond control.

"You're ready for me aren't you? Your sweet juices are pouring out to welcome me," Paul tempted as he moved up and again began his attack on her lips. His inserted a finger into her sensitive womanhood now hot and lubricated. He pumped rhythmically pushing her to the edge. Another finger and her scream was lost in his mouth as he made her climax. "It gets even better, my angel."

Panting and gasping for air she squeaked out, "Better? How can it be any better?"

"Do you want babies, my angel?" He asked as he unbuttoned his breeches and started sliding them off still kissing her and suckling her breasts. "Your magnificent breasts are made for nursing."

"Do you want babies, Paul?" Rigan whispered breathlessly in oblivion again as her body was pink and flush in need.

"I want our babies, Rigan." His hand was spreading her legs and he positioned his body on hers for lovemaking and procreation. "Tell me you want our babies, Rigan."

The searing heat and desire uncontrollable now left only one answer for Rigan, "I want our babies, Paul."

Paul slowly entered her and cautiously teased, entering and withdrawing. "If you are ready, my angel, I must warn you it will hurt a little and then it will never hurt again."

"I'm ready Paul."

On those words he covered her mouth with his and drove in hard breaking the barrier. Paul felt the tug as he broke the maidenhead. Her scream was muffled in his mouth, and it had hurt. He stopped and looked down at her. "Open your eyes, Rigan."

She obeyed and opened them.

"I'm sorry Rigan, but it won't hurt any more. I promise."

"You always keep your promises. You told me so." Rigan pulled him down to kiss his lips.

"Thank you for your virginity, Rigan. I know no man, save I, has touched you and no man will ever touch you. You are all mine



and I will keep you happy. I promise you." Possession was strong in his voice. Rigan was his, and only his. Paul thrust in deeply and her warmth and juices excited him to lose control. He thrust and thrust again in rhythm moving his hips like rolling waves, deeper and deeper until he exploded and spasms ejected his seed into her womb. "Oh God, Oh God, Sweet Jesus!" he cried as his moan vibrated the air. He felt her tremble as he released. Rigan had joined him in climax. "And now I have delivered my seed to make our babies."

"Paul I love you!" Rigan whimpered in joy and agony.

Paul rolled to the side of the giant bed and pulled Rigan with him. He gently slid his hand from the top of her shoulders, swirled around her breasts, down her abdomen and up her arm to her shoulder, repeating the pattern for sometime. "You won't be getting much sleep tonight, my angel. I shall be having you all night. I have waited my life for you."

"Paul, I thank you for the pleasures you have introduced to me. I will be needing you all night." Rigan meant that. She had never thought a man could be a part of her life or bring her happiness. In a matter of only two short days she had met the man to bring her happiness. Rigan was in sheer pleasure.

Her words were enough to bring him to arousal instantly. He took her again just as instantly. Their climaxes arrived together. This was heaven! This was bliss! This was ecstasy. All the others before his Rigan were just a physical release. With Rigan he knew what was joy and spiritual joining in the physical body. His Rigan was everything he dreamed of and everything he wanted. Rigan was that special woman, sensual and intelligent, loving and kind. He could cry a lake of tears. He was so happy.

"You are crying Paul."

"It is silly isn't it? I am a happy man."

"Not silly at all."

He rested his head in the curve of her neck and she stroked his face, his temple, and his hair. His skin became alive with her touch. Paul was feeling every tingling nuance. They said nothing to each other for a long time.

When he finally rolled over onto his back and brought Rigan with him, she spoke,

"Have we sinned? Should we have waited a while longer until marriage?"

"What we have with each other is no sin, my angel. I couldn't wait a moment longer to claim you. We are married already. We just need the ceremony for others."

"Should I go to my chamber?"

"Starting tonight you will sleep in my bed always."

"I take that as a No! I will not return to my chambers."



"Your intelligence is remarkable," Prince Paul winked and pulled her closer to his muscular chest.

"And your pleasures are addicting. I cannot resist you," Rigan confessed and twirled a small lock of his chest hair in her finger.

"Who cannot resist who? "

"I am a wanton. I should have resisted. We should have waited."

"I couldn't wait to create my heirs. I will hear no more of it."

"As you wish."

"I did wish, and there you were in the forest waiting for me, a wood nymph."

"A wish comes true then?"

"Most definitely!" Prince Paul answered and covered her mouth with his.

It was well into the night and they were still succumbing to the passions of their love. It was early morning when Rigan closed her eyes and did not open them for the sleep it brought her. Paul pulled her tightly into his arms and resting his head on hers, he fell asleep contented.

Maurice entered the room quietly and began his list of nevers in his mind. Never had the Prince's room smelled so heavily of sex. Never had he seen the Prince look so contented in sleep. Never had he entered the Prince's room to find a woman still in bed with him. The Prince had usually dismissed his sexual partner after conjugation. Never had Maurice witnessed a view of love and devotion. Prince Paul's head was resting upon a mass of deep auburn hair. The Prince was bent in a semi-circle surrounding Rigan's body that was curled contentedly in a fetal position, and his arm covering her body in a protective, no, possessive position. A tight grin curled on Maurice's usually stoic mouth. He would need to get used to this scene. The Prince and his Princess.

Silently Maurice moved to the patio glass doors and opened them. The breeze immediately swept through the room and freshened the air. Just as stealthily Maurice moved to the cabinet and retrieved two of the Prince's silk robes. Moving to the Prince's side of the bed and nudged his Prince gently.

Prince Paul felt something pushing on his shoulder. He raised his hand and made a 'go away' gesture. The nudging continued and he rolled over opening his eyelids to the sight of Maurice with a finger over his mouth indicating silence.

"The Princess has been summoned for her riding lessons."

Maurice handed Prince Paul the two robes.

Prince Paul nodded in acknowledgement.

"I will send for her bath," Maurice whispered so as not to wake Rigan, conscious of her potential embarrassment.

## *Smitten*



Prince Paul again nodded and watched as Maurice disappeared into the lady's chamber without a sound. Maurice messed the bedcovers of the bed in the lady's chamber and called the servants to prepare the bath. Maurice would leave no evidence for servant gossip.

Paul leaned over Rigan and gently pulled her on her back. Studying her, memorizing her face and body. She did look angelic as she slept. His hand cupped her breast, kneading and playing with it. Then he bent down to suckle the other. Rigan moaned. "Are you dreaming my Princess?"

"Oh yes, a wonderful dream," Rigan responded still in a partial dream state.

Paul slid his finger into the warm wetness of her womanhood. "Tell me your dream." He stroked teasingly inside her.

"I am making love to a magnificently wonderful Prince."

"Magnificently wonderful handsome Prince," Paul teased as his thigh spread her legs and positioned himself for love.

"Magnificently wonderful handsome Prince," Rigan repeated dreamily. Then she was suddenly wide-awake as Paul drove into her. Her eyes opened to find his staring into hers.

"A pleasant morning, my angel." Paul smiled not breaking his thrusting rhythm.

Rigan responded with soft inaudible sounds as she enjoyed the pleasure Paul was waking her with. Her body and mind were now fully alert and responding to his lovemaking.

Paul increased his rhythm and he was soon lost in his passion, driving deeper and deeper touching the cone of her womb. He released in climax, spasms shaking him, a moan emitting from his mouth. Rigan was beneath him shaking in her own spasm of climax. He rolled over taking Rigan with him and he still inside of her. He sat her up balancing on his manhood. "Your riding master has sent for you to begin your lessons."

"I would prefer to ride you, my Prince," Rigan ribbed.

"What a wanton woman I will marry," Paul laughed.

"A regret forming in your mind due to my tenacity?"

"Not for a moment! Although I would prefer you do ride me, Mamman has arranged for your lessons," Prince Paul reached for one of the robes Maurice had given him. "Wear this, your bath is being drawn for you in your chamber."

"Your obedient servant my Prince," Rigan replied as she moved off the prince and bed. Rigan put the robe on and wrapped the sash tightly. As Rigan turned she received a loving swat on her behind.



"It is more that I am your obedient slave my Princess," Paul countered as he watched Rigan leave the room. "You will ride me this evening or sooner if possible."

"Yes, my Prince." Rigan grinned glancing back.

The Prince lounged in bed for a few moments inhaling the fragrance of Rigan. It was juniper he smelled. He hoped they had remembered to bring her soap when they moved her. He liked that scent. When he rose to put on his robe he noticed he was covered with blood. He glanced to the bed and saw the large dried puddle of virgin blood on the sheet.

Maurice walked in at that moment and Prince Paul said to him quietly, "Remove those sheets and dispose of them. I will not have our private life the discussion of servant gossip."

Maurice nodded knowingly. He was already protecting his Prince and new Princess. As the Prince entered his bath, Maurice discreetly removed the sheets, folded them and placed them in one of the drawers of the cabinet. The sheets might be needed as evidence at a later date. Again, uncharacteristically a smile cracked the stoic lips of Maurice. The servants will be quite confused as to the disappearance of the sheets when they come to change the linens.

"Maurice, is that a smile on your face?"

"Of course not Your Royal Highness."

"Impossible for you?" Prince Paul observed laughing.

"Quite."

## *Chapter Nine*

When Rigan entered her bedchamber she noticed the riding habit laid out for her. She had not owned one and was puzzled. Her bath was waiting, warm and inviting. Rigan opened the sash, dropped the robe and entered the tub hidden behind an ornately carved wooden screen.

Relaxing in the warm water, she realized she did not have her soap and was about to rise from the tub to retrieve it when a servant appeared holding a chemise cloth and her juniper soap. "Shall I bathe you Your Highness."

Rigan took a moment to respond. This was all so new. Rigan was the one who had assisted in bathing the queen. She had aided the queen in dressing for the day. She had always bathed and dressed herself. "No, that is not necessary."

Leisurely Rigan soaped herself, washed her body and her hair. She allowed the servant to rinse her hair and wrap the chemise towel around her when she rose from her bath. "Where did the riding habit come from?"

"It belonged to Her Royal Highness Princess Adriane. You are approximately the same size and stature," the servant replied.

"What is your name? Are you from the castle here?"

"I am Eloise. I was promoted from lower chambermaid to your servant. Hopefully you will be pleased and I can become your lady in waiting."

"Thank you, Eloise. I will dress myself," Rigan replied. All of this was so new to her.

"I will get in trouble if I cannot help you. Please let me dress you."

"Who would trouble you?"

"The steward Your Highness."

"Don't fret Eloise. You may help me," Rigan knew it took little for a servant to be corrected by switch or belt. Anyone with small authority could be cruel and get away with it until a royal caught them abusing a servant and stayed their hand or dismissed their service. Rigan would not be the cause of pain for anyone. It could not be guaranteed that Rigan would catch a steward punishing Eloise.



With Eloise's help, Rigan slipped on her chemise, underwear, and petticoats. Rigan donned the black satin riding skirt and Eloise tied it in the back. A gold cloth corset with black ribbons accented the red velvet-riding coat with black velvet collar opening to the sides. The sleeves belled out at the elbows. The trimming of the sleeves matched the black velvet pattern of the collar. Eloise combed her hair and styled it with a natural talent. She combed soft ringlets about Rigan's face and tying her long auburn hair in a large black ribbon. Rigan was pleased. Eloise then topped off her riding habit with a black tri-cornered felt hat complete with white feather plume.

Rigan would talk to Queen Louise later and request that Eloise be the first of her selected ladies in waiting. Eloise would then no longer have to fear any steward. As Eloise did her hair, Rigan learned Eloise was married and had two small children, a boy and girl. As a servant to the royal household and her husband's pay as footman, they lived comfortably for peasants.

Rigan rose to leave for the lesson as Prince Paul entered the lady's chamber. "You look ravishing, my angel!" Prince Paul acknowledged as his eyes scanned her from tip to toe. "I will take my morning ride while you take your lessons. Soon we will ride in the morning together."

"I will make every effort to quickly learn to ride."

"You are a quick study," Prince Paul suggested heavy with innuendo.

Maurice, directly behind the Prince, did catch the innuendo and his stoicism again lost to a constrained smile. This new relationship between Prince and Princess was leaving smiles in everyone's wake. Could it be God did send an angel on loan to the Prince and his country of Borogia?

Rigan immediately blushed. Paul looked just as ravishing in his red velvet riding coat, white ascot, cream waistcoat, white calfskin breeches and black Hessians. "You look especially handsome this morning."

"Competition with my angel. I love competition, especially in wits."

"Then you have met a challenger, my Prince."

"I know."

"You will enjoy the competition, I promise."

"And your blush becomes you. We will have breakfast together in my suite after your lessons. The carriages should arrive by that time to take us to Brogav where we will buy your trousseau and gowns."

With those words Prince Paul departed the lady's chamber. Rigan left for her riding lesson.

Leaving her chambers she stopped short seeing two royal guardsmen standing by her door.



The men greeted her in unison, "Good morning Your Highness."

"Good Morning," Rigan returned as she began to walk towards the stables. The two men were following her. As she walked faster, they walked faster. When she slowed down, they slowed down.

Rigan spun around to look at them. "Who are you and why are you following me?"

The taller of the guards spoke, "We are two of your bodyguards assigned by Her Royal Majesty, Queen Louise Janette."

The other guard spoke next. "I am Claus and he is Petar. We are assigned to protect you and must stay with you during our watch."

"There are more of you?"

"There are two men assigned for each watch. There are three watches, therefore six men total are assigned to you," Claus replied.

"What are their names?"

"The next watch is Michalek and Rolf. The night watch is Tytus and Xavier," Claus answered.

"Why do I have a bodyguard? No one ever hurt me before?" Rigan demanded. She did not like being so constricted and watched.

"It is by orders of the queen. A royal is never to be unescorted," Petar bowed politely.

"But I'm not a royal. At least not yet," Rigan argued.

"As betrothed of Crown Prince Paul, your title is Princess. You are a royal, Your Highness. It is our duty to protect you," Petar said with authority. "Your riding lessons Your Highness." Petar bowed and waved his hand outward for direction.

"You even know where I am going?"

"Your schedule is given to us," Claus acknowledged.

"Am I allowed to use my chamber pot in private?" Rigan whispered under her breath as she walked to the stables.

Claus heard her and could not hold back his smile. Guarding this Princess will be interesting.

The head groomsman, Stanislav was a Russian transplant in Borogia. King Karl had personally sought him out after a race he had attended. King Karl was impressed with the way he handled horses. It appeared they talked with each other.

Stanislav was a tall dark skinned, black haired, blue-eyed man of forty years. It was obvious by his coloring he had gypsy blood running through his veins. That is one of the reasons people believed he talked with the horses.

"Your Highness," Stanislav bowed. "I am Stanislav Petrakosky, head groomsman and your equestrian instructor."

"Pleased to make your acquaintance, Herr Petrakosky," Rigan replied cordially.

"Have you ridden before?"





"Very little. I am used to walking."

"Then we will begin at the first level. I will mount you on the tamest mare we have. She is Konik. She has a lovely blue color and a gentle personality. Her name is Danube. A groomsman will walk her for the first lessons. I will instruct you as you set the horse and teach you correct seating."

"Shall we begin?" Rigan asked with a bravado she did not feel.

Stanislav called for the groomsman to bring Danube from the stable. Stanislav saddled the horse and lifted Rigan to the saddle. He put her feet in the stirrups, handed her the reins showing her how to hold them, and instructed her on how to sit. A groomsman holding the bridle walked the horse towards an exercise pasture.

Prince Paul and four bodyguards approached on their horses ready for a morning ride. Prince Paul was riding a Lipizzaner when he approached Rigan. "A kiss before I ride for exercise, my angel?"

Pulling up next to Rigan, Prince Paul took a gentle kiss from her lips. Everyone's jaw dropped open in shock. A royal was never demonstrative in public. It just wasn't done.

"The Prince is a man fatally smitten," Stanislav later observed. "I recognize the look. He breaks the rules to show all you are his woman, not to be touched."

"I too am smitten. I love him," Rigan confessed. "I want no one else to ever touch me."

Petar and Claus closed in on each side of Rigan mounted on their horses. The groomsman walked Danube in the pasture and Stanislav gave instructions on how to sit and which way to hold and pull the reins. Rigan was actually enjoying the lesson when Prince Paul came back from his ride. He jumped off his horse and still holding the reins of his Lipizzaner took the bridle from the groomsman. "Come my angel, we will eat our breakfast." Prince Paul walked her horse to the stables.

Handing the reins of the two horses to a stable boy, Prince Paul reached for Rigan and pulled her down. He held her a moment looking deeply into her eyes, not saying a word. It was unspoken possession as Stanislav had said. He took her arm and walked back to the castle. Petar and Claus looked at each other with mouths open and stepped in line with the four bodyguards surrounding the Prince.

Duchess Sophie Ashburtman had arrived in the morning and was taken directly to Queen Louise.

"You really must talk to your daughter, Sophie. Her tongue has been outrageous lately."

"I came as soon as I received your letter," Sophie responded sitting demurely on the settee near the queen in her private sitting room.



"The child is embarrassing to say the least, and her mind starts to wander."

"What has she done?"

"She was embarrassingly loud and uncivil at two dinner parties. She issues cruel and vicious remarks to people and quite frankly, Sophie, crudely lacks manners."

"I will punish her, and remind her of her upbringing."

"I do hope you can get her under control or I will have no choice but to send her home and out of the royal court."

"I will control her. You have my word."

"I will give her one more chance. I leave for Brogav this morning but Camilla will remain behind to assist in organizing the birthday ball for Prince Paul. If she creates one more scene, especially at the birthday ball, I will send her away disgraced from court."

"I understand," Sophie sighed heavily. What was she going to do with her daughter? The family would be disgraced.

"Sophie, you are a dear friend and I want you to stay for the ball, but I am serious regarding your daughter, Camilla. No more scenes."

"Your Royal Majesty. I will see her immediately," Sophie replied and rose quickly from the settee.

"Helene, take Madame le Duchess to Camilla's suites, please."

Helene and Sophie walked silently to Camilla's suites.

"Mama!" Camilla gasped in surprise.

Sophie slammed the door shut after she had walked in and slapped her daughter on her face. "How dare you forget yourself and bring your Papa and I such disgrace. Your Papa has ordered me to bare your bottom and switch you black and blue."

"What are you talking about Mama?" Camilla whimpered rubbing her cheek.

"Your Papa was in court when King Karl returned from his visit to this castle. Your Papa was taken into King Karl's private chamber and told of your loose tongue and ill manners. King Karl has banned you from Brogav's royal court until you can behave as a lady befitting the royal entourage. To top the embarrassment in the court for your Papa, he comes home and we find this letter from Queen Louise telling of your lewd behavior."

"But I have done nothing wrong. They are all jealous because Prince Paul will marry me," Camilla excused. Blaming others always worked with her mother. It had worked once more.

Sophie could understand jealousy of her beautiful daughter. Of course her daughter was innocent. Such beauty would be envied. All she needed to do was teach her beautiful daughter control.



"You don't have his ring on your finger yet, Camilla. You won't have unless you curb your tongue and smile sweetly. If King Karl has banned you from Brogav, do you think he will let his son marry you?" Sophie reasoned.

"But I have done nothing wrong. I just made comments about plain old spinster Rigan. She wore a tartan! Do you believe that? She wore it on a silk contouche!"

"I should slap you again, Camilla. That is exactly what you are doing wrong. You are to be gracious and not say anything derogatory towards any one in public. It just isn't done. You must always smile sweetly and remain silent, remain above the plebian."

"But Mama, I just get so angry. Prince Paul is using that old spinster to make me jealous."

"If you get jealous and angry over a plain old spinster, how will you manage as queen and overlook your husband's infidelity?"

"He won't be unfaithful to me, Mama. I am beautiful."

"All men are unfaithful. As handsome as Prince Paul is, women will be fighting to be in his bed. Beauty is not enough when other candy is offered."

"Mama, I didn't realize."

"Of course not my beautiful Camilla. I am here now to instruct you more. I will help you. I will see to it that the Prince can propose to you."

"Oh Mama, I have been so upset lately. I am grateful you are here."

"Shush. Mama is here to take care of you," Sophia comforted taking Camilla into her arms and stroking her hair gently.

The two women walked to the kitchen to eat breakfast when the commotion in the courtyard caught their attention. Camilla and Sophie watched as Prince Paul lifted Rigan into the Royal Carriage. "That's her Mama! That's Rigan! The spinster! She is going to Brogav with Queen Louise. How unfair."

Prince Paul was watched as he lifted his mother into the same carriage. Six bodyguards took places near the carriage. Prince Paul mounted his Hanoverian surrounded by his four bodyguards. The rest of the servants and baggage followed the royal entourage.

"I wonder why Lady Rigan would sit with Queen Louise? Lady Rigan should be with the servants in the other carriages," Sophie commented.

"Lady Rigan administers to the queen's headaches. Perhaps she had one, Mama."

"I'm sure that's it. Tell me about the rumors I have heard regarding Prince Paul and his persuasions to marry this year."

"The rumors are that the queen will get a new lady in waiting as Prince Paul has chosen his future wife from her ladies. I am excited. I am sure he will propose to me at his birthday ball. I have

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heard a betrothal ring is being made in Brogav, and he has ordered a matching necklace and earrings."

"Are you sure you are the betrothed?"

"Who else could it be? There are only two marriageable prospects. There is plain Rigan and I. Who else would the Prince choose, but me?"

"In that case, we have to start reconstructing your image with the King and Queen immediately so he can ask you. And Camilla, remember it would never do for a Royal Princess or Queen to have a temper or loud voice."

"Yes, Mama."

"We will work together to make everything perfect for the ball. Queen Louise will hear only praises for your work and effort. Your Papa will be more forgiving when he takes his beautiful child down the cathedral aisle to marry the Crown Prince."

"I can't wait to be Royal Princess. It will suit me well, don't you think, Mama?"

"A child of your beauty can have anything she wants. If you want to be Royal Princess, then you will have it."

"And then Queen," Camilla sighed dreamily.

"We'll make it happen. Let us eat and begin to orchestrate the loveliest of birthday balls."

## Chapter Ten

Arriving in Brogav the royal entourage stopped at an exclusive dress shop when Queen Louise called to the bodyguard to stop the carriage. The trip from the country castle to Brogav took only three hours.

"Send the servants and baggage on to the Brogav Palace. We will shop now," Queen Louise ordered.

Prince Paul pulled his stallion over to the carriage and dismounted. He helped his Mamman disembark and then reached in for Rigan. She blushed when he smiled wickedly and squeezed a breast playfully helping her down from the carriage. "We will shop here for your trousseau," Prince Paul winked devilishly.

Entering the store Queen Louise Janette regally accepted the curtsy and bows of the clerks. "We wish to see patterns and cloth. Preferably satin, silk, and velvet with matching lace."

A clerk returned with several pattern books. Prince Paul took one of them and started to write down pattern numbers. He was a man of his own tastes. The pattern book he chose was for negligees. He never asked Rigan her choice. After all, these were for his viewing only and would be off before they were in the bed. Materials were brought in and Prince Paul marked the colors and fabrics chosen for the patterns he selected. Again, he did not ask Rigan her choice. He preferred white silk, for one, deep blue satin for another, and black satin for his third and final choice.

"What are you buying, darling?" Queen Louise asked her son. Nothing ever missed her sharp eye.

"Intimate apparel for my princess, Mamman."

"You do not ask Rigan, her choices?"

"She would wear them only briefly for my pleasure, Mamman," Prince Paul stated casually. "Therefore it should be what pleases my eye."

"I had no idea you were this playful, darling," Queen Louise smiled at her son.

"I have never had the desire before, Mamman."



Rigan was busy paging through the patterns. "There are so many. How can one choose?"

"Let me help you, Rigan. This is the current fashion. You should have two of these in different colors. You will need traveling clothes. Those are here. This is a lovely ensemble, don't you agree, Paul?" Queen Louise aided.

"I agree. You should get these two, as well. We will be traveling on our honeymoon," Prince Paul pointed out.

"Honeymoon? Where are we going?" Rigan piped in surprise and happiness.

"It's a surprise for you, my angel."

"What if I don't like surprises?"

"You will like surprises."

"No I won't!" Rigan pouted.

"Yes, you will!" Prince Paul insisted.

"Children, behave yourselves!" Queen Louise demanded.

The queen could barely contain her smile, when she reprimanded Rigan and Paul. They were so much in love. It was just like her and Karl.

"You must select a gown for the ball, Rigan. We will be announcing your betrothal and wedding day at the birthday ball. You will also select your wedding dress. Have you decided what day you will be married yet?" Queen Louise asked as she straightened a wrinkle in her gown.

"What is most convenient for you, Your Royal Majesty," Rigan offered politely.

"We will marry one week after the ball," Prince Paul announced. "I will not wait any longer than that."

"So soon?" Rigan inhaled quickly.

"We should keep all the birthday ball guests at the country castle. I hope your sisters can make it in time."

"We will marry in the castle chapel," Prince Paul said firmly. "All the guests may leave. I prefer a small intimate wedding with family only."

"This is Rigan's wedding too, darling," Queen Louise reminded her son.

"She may select her wedding dress, Mamman."

"You are too kind to me!" Rigan grinned. She loved the take-charge manner of her future husband. It was wonderful to love a man she could respect.

"I try," Prince Paul answered humbly.

Queen Louise rolled her eyes. This truly was a match made in heaven.

"Do you like this gown for the ball?" Rigan asked Prince Paul as she showed the pattern to him.



"A good choice, but raise the décolletage. It is too revealing for the endowments I consider mine alone to view."

"Paul!" Queen Louise gasped.

"What Mamman? I am only being a husband. I want the fabric satin and the color emerald green," Prince Paul ordered the clerk. "And it must be finished tomorrow evening. I will pay double the price if you do. But my instructions are to be followed."

"Do you want to choose the petticoats to go with it?" Rigan chuckled.

"No, my angel. You may select the petticoats."

"You are too kind."

"I try."

"Children!" Queen Louise would have to get used to the youth of today. They were a different independent lot.

"I would like these three patterns," Rigan gave the numbers to the clerk.

Paul took them and matched them to the patterns. "She will not get this one. The other two she may have. Princess Rigan will have three of each pattern in different fabrics. Do you want to pick the colors, my angel?"

"You are too kind."

"I try."

"Why can't I have the third pattern?"

"Because, my angel, it is far too revealing. I will not have other men lusting for your endowments. They are mine! Simply put, Madame."

"Paul, leave immediately before I make a scene! I am so grateful your Papa doesn't shop with me," Queen Louise commanded. In reality if her son didn't leave soon she would become riotous in laughter. That would be unqueenly.

"You may select the wedding dress. Anything you like my angel. Make sure it is not too revealing!" Paul rose and brushed his lips across Rigan's neck while he did so.

"You are too kind," Rigan chuckled in delight.

"I try."

"Paul, leave!"

"Obediently, Mamman," Prince Paul replied and bent down to give Rigan an affectionate kiss. "I will see you at the Palace."

Prince Paul spoke to the clerk and instructed that all charges were to be sent to his secretary for payment. He also told the clerk there would be a large bonus if the dresses were made in a week and they followed his instructions, no low cut décolletages.

After Prince Paul left, Rigan looked to the queen. "My Prince really has been trained well in authority and taking command."

"He learned from his Papa. Fortunately for me, Karl learned early on to use his authority and command for ruling the Circle, not

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me. Give Paul sometime, he'll learn. This is all new to him," Queen Louise spoke with great wisdom and understanding.

"I actually appreciated him taking all this in hand," Rigan gracefully moved her arms to encircle the masses of cloth and patterns laid before her. "I didn't know where to start."

"We won't let him know that," Queen Louise smiled conspiratorially.

Four patterns for the wedding dress were selected. Finally Queen Louise and Rigan agreed on the one pattern. The wedding dress would be white satin with pearls and sequins decorating the hem of the skirt. A white satin corset with white ribbons, and the contouche would be matching white satin with chiffon sleeves. The chemise for that dress would be matching chiffon. White satin bows would be strategically placed on the contouche and skirt hem. Although panniers were the accepted fashion of the day, Rigan preferred petticoats. A diamond tiara would be added to the soft veiling selected for the wedding. Queen Louise had decided the diamond tiara would be the one from the Lange family jewels. King Karl's grandmother first wore it. When they left the shop Rigan and Queen Louise were assured the dress would be ready in a week, in time for the wedding.

"Tomorrow we will get shoes and hats. Paul will not come along!" Queen Louise said decidedly.

"He will be an incredibly challenging husband," Rigan chuckled softly as they entered the carriage.

"Since we are in the privacy of the carriage, allow me to say Rigan, he will be an incredibly challenging pain in the ass!" Queen Louise stated not attempting to stop the large smile forming on her lips.

Rigan burst out laughing and so did the queen.

Upon arriving at the Brogav Palace they were greeted by King Karl who bent to kiss his queen immediately. "Welcome home, dearest."

Claus offered his hand for Rigan to leave the carriage. Rigan asked the king, "Excuse me please, Your Royal Majesty, where is Paul? He said he would meet us here."

"Your smitten betrothed has gone off to the jewelers. He will be back shortly. I dare say Princess Rigan, I have not seen the boy this happy since he was a child and he got his first pony."

"Will you have tea with us, Rigan?" Queen Louise asked graciously.

"If it pleases Your Royal Majesties, I would decline. I would dearly enjoy exploring the palace, with your permission."





"You are an intelligent and observant child. You see I would like time alone with my queen. Go explore and have fun," King Karl winked mischievously.

Claus and Petar approached Rigan.

"Your Royal Highness, the next watch. May I present Michalek and Rolf?" Claus introduced.

"My Michalek, you are gargantuan," Rigan said as she bent her neck back to observe the giant of all muscle and broad shoulders. His legs were as thick as tree trunks.

"I do have that affect on people, Your Highness," Michalek smiled.

"I hope to stay a few steps ahead of you, so I am not lost in your shadow," Rigan smiled back. "I wish to explore the Palace. Let us go."

Rigan had just finished inspecting the kitchens and came to a darkened hallway when she heard the whimpering of a frightened woman. "I'm sorry, oh please sir, mercy!"

Turning into the dimly lit hallway to the chagrin of her escorts, she saw a portly man open his waistcoat, pull out a strop and flayed it across the tiny woman huddled in the corner.

An authoritarian voice came through as Rigan stated angrily, "Stay that hand sir and identify yourself."

"Who dares address me in such manner?" the portly man asked.

"It is the Princess Rigan. She is betrothed of Crown Prince Paul. Who dare address her in such a manner?" Rolf growled.

The man turned ashen and bowed. "I am Herman Frantz. I am fifth steward to the household. At your service, Your Highness."

"What causes you to raise a hand to this poor woman?" Rigan demanded as she walked to the huddle sobbing in the corner.

"Discipline! The woman is slothful. I found her in this corner asleep, negligent of her duties."

"This woman is burning with fever, you fool!" Anger was flowing from Rigan's voice. "It is more likely she had fainted." Rigan's hand gently cupped the woman's face to look at her. Rigan recognized the illness by the dark circles under her eyes, the chalky gray of her face and skin. The woman was gaunt and pale. The woman looked half starved. "Michalek, have you a handkerchief?"

"Yes, Your Highness."

"Wrap it around your nose and mouth and tie it. Then please pick up this lady and take her to my chambers."

"Your Highness!" Rolf inhaled choking.

"I will hear no arguments, Rolf. This woman is very ill. She needs immediate attention or she will die. I fear it is influenza."



"We will take her to the physicians. You cannot expose yourself," Rolf was cut short.

"I have been tending to the sick since I was six years old under the tutelage of my nanny. Do not worry of my exposure," Rigan snapped. "This woman barely has any blood left. A physician would only leech her. She will die. Take her to my chambers, Michalek."

Rigan left no question that her orders were to be obeyed.

Michalek wrapped the handkerchief as ordered and carried the woman to Rigan's chambers. "Put her in my bed," Rigan ordered. Rolf again sucked in his breath.

"Rolf, make yourself useful. I need two woman servants to help me undress her and a cool bath brought here immediately. I must cool her body."

Rolf did as he was told and searched out the two female servants informing them of Princess Rigan's order. As he was waiting outside the chambers for what seemed like hours, Rolf spotted Prince Paul walking with Maurice to his suites. "Your Royal Highness, a word with you please."

Prince Paul acknowledged him. Rolf quickly ran to the Prince and related the story of the servant woman, and his concern for the health of Princess Rigan.

Prince Paul turned white with anxiety, turning to Maurice he ordered. "Send for Damon." In an unprincely manner, Prince Paul ran to the lady's chamber. "Rigan!" he bellowed.

"Michalek, keep the Prince out of here. We cannot expose him to this possible contagion." The female servants had already arrived, and had begun to undress the woman when Prince Paul entered the room. Michalek did as instructed and with his body blocked the Prince from entering.

Rigan looking towards the Prince moved her head toward the patient when she heard the two female servants gasp in horror. "Sweet Jesus!" Rigan cried as she saw the bruises covering the body of the woman. She had been beaten brutally. "Paul, cover your nose and mouth and come see this."

As instructed Prince Paul took his kerchief, covering his mouth he looked down upon the frail woman burning with fever. "Who did this?" Prince Paul asked as rage covered his face and bile rose to his throat.

"A steward of Brogav Palace named, Herman Frantz. I suspect." Rigan's eyes were Peridot green with rage. "I have sent to the apothecary for herbs and medicines, see to it that one of the packets is put into broth brought from the kitchens and spooned in her mouth slowly. Her cool bath will arrive and I want you to put her in it. When her feverish body warms the water, add more cool water. Continue



this until her fever breaks or I return. Paul, I would like to see your Papa about this matter."

Prince Paul literally pulled her away from the woman in relief. Equally enraged they walked briskly to his Papa's suites. King Karl and Queen Louise were enjoying a leisurely tea when Paul and Rigan came in and related the entire story. King Karl was also angry and was extremely formidable in that emotion.

Calmly he asked Rigan, "What would you do?"

"I should like to question all the servants under Frantz's charge and see if he abuses all of them. If the servants are abused, and I suspect that is true, I would give him his just desserts and dismiss him without severance and reference."

"Call my head steward here," King Karl commanded a footman. In moments the head steward was before the king. "I want all the servants under Herman Frantz brought to my parlor. You have ten minutes to bring them here."

"Immediately, Your Royal Majesty," the head steward cowered. It was clear the king was angry.

"Dearest, return to your chambers. If what is suspected is true, I do not wish you upset by such horrors," King Karl requested of his wife.

"If Rigan shall stay, so shall I," Queen Louise responded stubbornly.

"Do not argue with me, dearest. You are not Rigan! You have led a sheltered genteel life and I will keep it that way," King Karl said persuasively. His queen left the room and walked to her private chamber.

In less than ten minutes, two young pageboys and a chambermaid were brought before the king. "I cannot locate the other chambermaid," the head steward apologized.

"We know where she is," Prince Paul scowled.

Rigan addressed the boys with a calm and soft gentle voice. She could see they were terrified in the presence of the royal family and king. "Don't be afraid. We only want to check your skin for bruises."

The young boys gasped in fear.

"It's alright! No one is going to hurt you," Prince Paul said gently and knelt beside the boys. "I am going to take off your jacket, waistcoat and shirt. Don't worry, it will be alright." He touched the boy's cheek with a soft-handed stroke. "Rolf will help undress your friend." Prince Paul nodded to Rolf and the two men undressed the two boys. Paul's face turned crimson with rage. King Karl was livid with anger and his jaw twitched in constraint. Rigan's eyes widened and turned from Peridot to Emerald green in fury. The boys' bodies were bruised and welted from brutal stropping.



Rigan asked the chambermaid. "Does your body look like that?"

The chambermaid nodded.

King Karl no longer held back. He turned to his head steward. "Bring Herman Frantz here!" He roared.

"Rolf, please see that these servants are taken to a royal physician for treatment," Rigan ordered.

"By order of the King!" King Karl added. His anger still seethed in his veins.

The head steward brought Herman Frantz before the King a short time later

"I will leave justice to you, Princess Rigan," King Karl spoke looking at Herman Frantz with contempt.

"What have you to say for the bruising of innocent bodies, Herr Frantz?" Rigan asked coldly.

"Discipline is necessary for slothful peasants," Herman Frantz said arrogantly.

"Tis a mountain of difference between discipline and brutality, Herr Frantz," Rigan's voice was uncharacteristically cold and menacing. Her hidden brogue, which had rarely been heard, was slipping out her speech in vented anger. An observation noted by Prince Paul instantly.

"Hold him, Michalek," Rigan commanded.

Michalek grabbed the wrists of Herman Frantz in a flash of movement.

Rigan went to Herman Frantz's side and reached under his waistcoat where she saw him pull out the strop in the hallway. "How convenient to have this so handy," Rigan's voice still icy and menacing. "Bare his back, Michalek."

Herman Frantz was now white and frozen in fear.

Michalek ripped the jacket, waistcoat and shirt off of Herman Frantz's body in one quick movement using his free hand while his other giant hand still held the man's wrists.

Rigan lifted the strop and with all her might brought it down on Herman's back leaving a welt from the top of his shoulder diagonally to his waist. She bore down another stroke across his back in the opposite direction and calmly walked to his side. "Remember the pain of the strop and that it was delivered by a defenseless woman. Remember that when you think to brutalize those weaker and more helpless than you. You are dismissed without severance and without reference," Rigan hissed in his ear. "Be also assured Herr Frantz, if that woman dies you will be sought out for trial on murder. Let him go Michalek."



Herman Frantz ran out of the room in his undressed state with sheer terror etched on his face.

The King was not finished however. He turned to the head steward. "You will see that man escorted out of this Palace never to return again. You will also see to it that this never occurs again in my court, or you will pay in the same manner!"

The steward left and Prince Paul took Rigan in his arms. Rigan was trembling. "I apologize. I warned you I had a terrible temper." She laid her head on his chest.

Prince Paul stroked her hair trying to soothe her. "Now that I have seen your temper, I hope I am never on the receiving end of it, my angel. You were justified in losing it this time."

"You are also benevolent in your justice," King Karl smiled at her. "I would have had Herman Frantz publicly caned."

"And had Papa let me determine his punishment, his back would be stripped of its flesh after I had stropped him."

"Twas best to keep this matter amended in the Palace walls. A public caning of a royal household servant would only allow wagging tongues opportunity for speculation. And I believe brutality must never be met with brutality, or we sink to the same level," Rigan said quietly. "Public punishment would also send a statement of rule by brutality, not honor. You rule honorably my King."

"Hah, I told you Paul, did I not? Your Rigan has all the qualities required of a royal princess and future queen."

"You did, Papa. And I agree."

"Noblesse Oblige, dear Rigan. It radiates from you," King Karl remarked with pride.

Prince Paul feeling Rigan still trembling in his arms tried to bring a lighter note to the conversation. "Did I hear you say defenseless woman? I can but wish that were true, Princess. You prove quite formidable when required, hardly defenseless." Prince Paul took her chin in his thumb and forefinger to make her look up at him. "Your eyes are very green my angel, did you know that when you are angry your eyes turn green?"

"Yes, I know. I have been told."

"I hope I never have to see them green again," Prince Paul whispered pulling Rigan closer to him.

"As I hope." King Karl sighed heavily.

The royal household servants had been afraid of Herman Frantz, but dared never say any word to the head steward for fear of retribution. A steward would believe a steward. Royals would not believe a peasant servant. That changed later in the day when the head steward called all staff into the kitchens and informed all no one would be allowed to corporally punish another again. If any steward had discipline problems they were to be brought to him, the head steward's

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attention. Even he, the head steward himself stropped as a child, was abhorred at the sight of the young boys.

In the sudden absence of Herman Frantz and the new orders from the head steward, the stories of Princess Rigan spread like wildfire throughout the royal household. Princess Rigan had seen to it that Herman Frantz was punished and expelled from the Palace never to hurt another servant there again. Princess Rigan was also caring for the sick woman herself in Princess Rigan's private chamber and even in her own bed. Princess Rigan had seen to it that the pageboys and chambermaid received medical attention. Princess Rigan was an angel sent by God, all in the royal household agreed. From that day on, a love and respect poured out to the Princess Rigan from all who served in the royal household. One chambermaid was overheard by Maurice to say, "I know why Prince Paul calls her, my angel. The Lord God has sent her to all of us. Princess Rigan will bring us all smiles again."

Maurice whispered to himself, "I know."

## Chapter Eleven

Prince Paul was pacing in his suite. Rigan had returned to her chambers to check on the ill woman. Happily Rigan found the fever had broken, but she refused to leave her side. Rigan fed her the broth personally and gave the woman the medicines herself.

"Rigan, come to bed," Prince Paul would say to her through the doorway every half hour.

"Not yet," she would reply. It was nearly midnight, but Rigan would not abandon the care of the ill woman into another's care.

A slight knocking at Prince Paul's chamber door drew his attention away from Rigan for a moment.

"You sent for me?" Damon smiled delightedly not showing his weariness from the frantic ride.

"Where have you been?" Prince Paul growled.

"I was treating the mill owner's festering wound in the village when your footman found me," Damon replied defensively. "We rode here as fast as we could."

Prince Paul grabbed Damon's arm and pulled him into Rigan's chamber. "Rigan, Damon is here. You are relieved of your vigil. Come to bed!"

"Sweet Jesus! He is in a mood, Rigan! In the name of God will you go to him? Please, for all our sakes," Damon groaned as he entered the bedchamber. Damon then saw the woman lying in the Princesses' bed. "What do we have here?"

Rigan made an attempt to tell Damon what illness she suspected and was treating but was caught in mid-sentence as Prince Paul grabbed her waist. He slid her legs under his arm and carried her to his bedchamber. As Prince Paul carried her out of the room, Rigan managed. "Don't leech!"

Damon called out to the captive Rigan, "Didn't bring them with me. I'll handle it. Don't worry."

The door slammed behind them and Prince Paul removed all his clothes quickly. Never breaking contact, his sapphire blue eyes stared at Rigan with heated passion. "You barely ate dinner tonight. You will be ill next," Prince Paul scowled as he approached her.

"Are you attempting to threaten me with your scowl, my Prince," Rigan teased backing away.

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"I hope so. Is it working? Come here!" Prince Paul easily overtook her in three large strides.

Rigan's gown was nearly ripped off her, and her undergarments left white lace and linen scattered over the floor as Prince Paul backed her into his bed. "It is late, my angel. You have kept me waiting too long."

Prince Paul covered her mouth with his. Forging his tongue past her lips, attacking her tongue with his, he moaned in passion. His hands caressed her breasts.

Rigan responded to his attack. She kissed back playing with his tongue and folding her arms around his neck. She felt him entering her and welcomed him. Tonight there was little foreplay.

Rigan was startled when he put his arms under her knees and raised her legs to his shoulders, driving his thrusts deeper into her than ever before. They climaxed together in a few heat-inflamed minutes, their fervor expelled.

"Sweet Jesus Rigan, don't make me wait like that again," Prince Paul pleaded quietly into her ear when he collapsed on top of her. "I can't bear it."

"I'm sorry, Paul."

"I'm sorry too, Rigan. I didn't want to take you so quickly. I want you to enjoy our lovemaking as much as I. I love you, Rigan. I love everything about you especially your kindness. Please remember to be kind to me also. I need you as much as the people of the Circle."

"You need me?"

"I need you desperately."

"I love you and need you too, Paul!" Rigan added wearily, "I am so tired."

"Sleep, my angel." Prince Paul rolled over onto his back and brought Rigan into the crook of his arm. He pulled the quilts over their bodies and gently stroked Rigan's temple with his finger. Rigan fell asleep instantly. "My angel," Prince Paul whispered in her hair.

Prince Paul woke up before Rigan and very carefully left the bed without waking her. "I want her to sleep as long as she needs to, Maurice. I'm going for my morning ride."

"Your bath is ready sir."

The bath felt wonderful to Prince Paul and while he relaxed thoughts of Rigan kept going through his head. She is too wonderful to be believed. A woman that is good, kind, loving, intelligent, and passionate all rolled up into one package. I am afraid she might be an angel on loan and will be taken away from me. God, how could I live without her? I was a shell until I met her, and now I am whole and complete. Papa was right! She is the perfect royal princess and future queen and she is mine, all mine.





When he left his suite Prince Paul instructed Maurice to have breakfast ready in an hour.

Lazily, Rigan stretched in bed reaching for Paul. She woke with a start when she realized he was gone. Looking at the time she realized how late she had slept and pulled on her robe to go to her chambers.

Damon was sitting next to the patient asleep. Rigan pulled the bell for the servants to come in. As the servants entered Rigan put a finger to her mouth to indicate silence. Rigan did not want to wake the patient or Damon. The whispered Your Highnesses were a bit overwhelming this morning and the servants couldn't do enough for her. Her bath was drawn and waiting for her after she used her chamber pot in the private room. In the servants eyes she thought she noted devotion, but couldn't imagine why. Silently with the help of too many hands, Rigan dressed for a day of shopping. Stopping by the bed, Rigan placed her hand on the patient to feel the warmth of her skin.

The woman's eyes opened slowly trying to take in where she was, and she saw Rigan's face looking down on her. The sun was bright behind Rigan's head coming through the window and it made a halo encircling Rigan's head from the patients view. "Holy Mary, Mother of God, I am dead. Take my soul."

"You aren't dead, Arla. That is your name isn't it? The servants told me it was," Rigan smiled. "You are doing much better and all we have to do is fatten you up a bit."

Focusing in on the voice and face the impact of where she was and who was with her came into reality. "Sweet Jesus, Princess Rigan! I am in your bed!"

"Indeed Arla, and that is where you will stay until you are better."

"I can't! What will the king say? Oh my Lord! Sweet Jesus, protect me! Herr Frantz will belt me good."

"Herr Frantz is gone. You need not fear him anymore, and the king already knows you are in my bed. The only one it seems to concern is you."

"Our patient is doing well, Princess Rigan," Damon said yawning as he woke. "I am famished. I need to eat!"

"I'll have some breakfast brought up from the kitchen for you and Arla," Princess Rigan replied.

"Breakfast is already here," A familiar voice boomed from the adjoining suite.

"A thousand blessings to you, Paul!" Damon leaped from his chair nearly knocking Prince Paul down. He flew to the breakfast guided by the aromas alone.

Arla turned to see Prince Paul approaching, and trembled. "The Prince!" she croaked.



Prince Paul knelt by the bed, "If you are hungry I will get you a plate."

The servants took in a breath and held it. The Crown Prince would serve a chambermaid? It was unheard of, but how kind and humble the offer was.

"I deeply apologize to you, madam, that you had to suffer so cruelly under the roof of my Papa. We both regret it sincerely and I reassure you it will never happen again. Will you accept our apology?"

"Of course, Your Royal Highness, I accept your apology, but you have done nothing wrong," Arla pushed through her chattering teeth.

"The King and I are to blame for allowing this to happen in our house. Ignorance is no excuse. Are you hungry?"

"Yes, Your Royal Highness."

"I'll get you a plate. Rigan, will you join me for breakfast?"

"I'm honored, my Prince." Rigan was also overwhelmed by the gentleness and humility of her future husband, the Prince. He is so easy to love.

A few minutes later Prince Paul came back with two full plates of food. The plates contained breads, sausages, eggs, fruit, sweet cakes and a large glass of fresh cold milk. "Try to eat all you can," Prince Paul smiled. "You will stay here until you recover completely. It is a debt we owe to you."

The servants were in awe. This Prince and Princess were saints walking the earth bringing sunshine into the souls of the lost. Honor and dignity were the codes of these two royals, and how lucky they were to be serving in their household.

King Karl came to the Prince's suites to join them for breakfast, and later went to visit the patient. Arla. "I hear our Princess Rigan and Dr. Sheffield have returned you to us. We are pleased."

"I will leave for my quarters, Your Royal Majesty. I did not mean to lie in the bed of the Princess. I don't even know how I got here."

"You stay here until you are recovered. It is our duty to you," King Karl said with softness in his voice. "Princess Rigan, I believe Queen Louise is waiting for you in her suites to do a bit of shopping."

"I shouldn't leave Arla yet."

"Dr. Sheffield is here, you need not worry. Come my child, I will walk with you to my wife's chambers. You work your betrothed too much, Paul. She needs some recreation." Turning to Rigan King Karl whispered through a wicked smile, "Spend plenty of his money today."



Once in the carriage with Queen Louise, Rigan took a deep breath and asked, "I have picked two ladies in waiting, with your approval of course."

"Who have you picked darling?"

"Eloise for the country castle, and Arla when she fully recovers, as part of my court."

"What a fabulous idea. I approve."

Relieved, Rigan shopped all afternoon with Queen Louise and spent plenty of Prince Paul's money. They bought many gifts for the household staff in celebration of their wedding.

Prince Paul bounded down the steps of the Brogav Palace to greet the carriage and help his two most favorite women.

"How was your day, darling?" Queen Louise asked when she alighted from the carriage.

"Tedious, with all the submissions, pleas, reconciliation, writs, foreign policies, loans and paper work."

"You must learn all that is part of being a king, darling."

"Yes, Mamman." Prince Paul lifted Rigan from the carriage and brought his arm tightly around her waist. "I've missed you."

"You flatter me and I love it," Rigan offered to her betrothed. The exchanged look of love and ardor could not help but be noticed by all nearby.

"We will be having tea and coffee served momentarily in the formal dining room, Mamman," Prince Paul told his mother while exchanging looks of love with his future bride in his arms.

Prince Paul didn't let go of Rigan's waist until he had her in the formal dining room. He shocked the footman when he seated Rigan. King Karl looked at his son with a grin. "Fatally!" the king commented happily.

"Did you spend lots of my money today, my angel?" Prince Paul asked casually.

"Oh indeed, lots of it. Are you pleased?" Rigan answered.

"If you are pleased," Prince Paul grinned. "I bought something for you."

"What did you buy?" Rigan asked excitedly.

"It's a surprise."

"I don't like surprises," Rigan countered.

"You will."

"I won't!" Rigan pouted playfully.

"Children! Behave!" King Karl bellowed. "Paul, either you give her the present or I will!"



"Close your eyes and hold out your hands," Prince Paul taunted.

"Rigan, in the name of our Holy Mother, do as he asks so I won't throttle him," King Karl pleaded.

Rigan closed her eyes and held out her hands. She felt Paul take her left hand and slide a ring on her finger.

"Open your eyes, my angel and see what I have bought you," Prince Paul said with childlike glee.

On her finger was the most beautiful ring she had ever seen. It had a huge deep green emerald surrounded by diamonds. Rigan tried to speak but nothing came out.

"Our betrothal ring, and these match it. They will match your gown for the ball also."

Rigan opened the velvet boxes to find a perfectly matched emerald and diamond necklace in one and emerald and diamond earrings in the other. Rigan's breath was taken away.

"Do you like them?" Prince Paul asked eagerly.

"They are as exquisite as you," Rigan finally caught enough breath to reply. "I love them, truly."

"I retrieved our heirloom this morning for you, darling," Queen Louise said as she offered a gilded box to Rigan. "For your wedding veil. It was King Karl's grandmother's."

Inside was a diamond tiara. Rigan was overwhelmed. "Thank you."

"I bought this for you," King Karl proudly produced three boxes.

The first box contained a matching bracelet of emeralds and diamonds to the necklace and earrings Prince Paul had bought for her. The second box held a sapphire and diamond necklace and matching bracelet. "To go with Paul's shining eyes when he's with you," King Karl exclaimed. In the last box was the largest most perfectly cut diamond earrings she had ever seen.

"Thank you, Your Royal Majesty. I cannot come up with adequate words to show my gratitude," Rigan choked out.

"What we give you child pales in comparison to what you have given us," King Karl reassured tenderly. "You have brought a completeness to my son. Warmth to my wife and I, and I do believe the servants are going to petition the pope to make you a saint."

Rigan blushed with embarrassment.

"The only thing more we could ask would be a grandchild, an heir," Queen Louise said as she patted Rigan's hand.

"I understand you're working on that already, Paul!" King Karl chided.



Rigan and Prince Paul both turned crimson on that remark.

"Maurice? Papa?" Prince Paul asked.

"Maurice would cut out his tongue first. It is logic, Paul, a simple deduction. A chambermaid sleeps in one of the two beds in your suites. That leaves one bed, yours! I have never seen you so happy and contented. You smile so much I fear your cheeks will crack. Good God, you're even taking time to learn the business."

"Don't worry darling, we aren't upset. Au Contraire. We are ecstatic. The sooner I have your little child in my arms, the happier I'll be. Your Papa and I don't live in a nunnery or monastery you know," Queen Louise comforted.

The family had a quiet dinner later that evening. Rigan went to check on her patient and joined Prince Paul in his bed. They spent half the night working on creating an heir and grandchild for Mamman.



## *Chapter Twelve*

The royal entourage returned to the country castle just before noon on the day of the birthday ball. The courtyard was already full of carriages belonging to their guests. Servants were everywhere taking care of luggage, carriages, and horses.

The announcement of the arrival of the Prince and Queen sent Camilla running to the courtyard. Her mother was a short distance behind. Catching up to her daughter in the courtyard Sophie chided, "Refrain yourself from falling all over the Prince. Maintain your aloofness, and be reserved. A good Princess is reserved. The royal family will admire that."

"But Mama, I am so anxious to see him. Look there he is!" She pointed to the rider of the black stallion in the middle of four bodyguards that preceded the royal carriage.

Camilla started to run to greet him when Sophie pulled her back. "Shameless child, I will switch you!"

Suddenly a wild rider came galloping up behind the royal carriage shouting, "Mamman!" Two riders were behind him trying to catch up.

Prince Paul turned around and called, "Aleck!" He turned his stallion and galloped to his brother. They embraced each other warmly. Queen Louise alit from the carriage as a footman had assisted her.

Prince Aleck dismounted and picked his Mamman up in a bear hug and swung her around. That was very undignified, but it was the usual behavior for the vivacious Prince Aleck.

Princess Adriane and Princess Dominique then made their appearances walking from the castle. Princess Adriane holding her son, Martyn, and Princess Dominique with two children in tow, Lady Beatrice and Lady Giselle. Princess Dominique was pregnant with her third child. The entire family together created a small ado and after kisses and hugs were shared and exchanged, Prince Paul realized the royal carriage had left the courtyard and Rigan was still in it. He spotted her entering the west wing where his private suites were. Relieved for the moment Prince Paul put his arms around Aleck and walked into the castle. The family would meet in the library.

"Aleck, how did you get here so fast?" Prince Paul asked his brother.



"I was on my way home from a school holiday when I accidentally ran into Mamman's messenger. What is this about a marriage, big brother? You the confirmed bachelor, rogue?"

"Do tell us brother, who is she? Mamman's letter was cryptically written, to say the least," Princess Adriane demanded.

Little Martyn sat on Grandmamman's lap playing with her string of pearls and Lady Beatrice was laughing as her uncle Paul bounced her in his arms. Lady Giselle was clinging to her Mamman's skirt.

"Put Beatrice down Paul, and stop avoiding the questions. Who is she and where are you hiding her?" Princess Dominique scolded.

"Her name is Rigan, and she is hiding in our suites in the west wing. Our entire family together must have been too much. She comes from a small family."

"Not our entire family darling. Papa won't be here until later," Queen Louise replied holding Martyn's exploring hands on her cheeks.

"Rigan! Mamman's Lady in Waiting?" Princess Adriane exclaimed, when she remembered the name.

"Oh Paul! I just love her to pieces," Princess Dominique bubbled.

"We can't have scared her Paul. She knows us," Princess Adriane protested. "Go get her! I just adore her. You be good to her or you'll answer to me."

"You may not be good enough for her, Paul," Princess Dominique added. "Did you know the people of the village hold her in very high esteem?"

"I am aware of that Dominique," Prince Paul grinned. "And the people of Brogav and the entire household staff of Brogav Palace is included on the list of her admirers."

"When are you getting married?" Princess Adriane queried.

"Next week Saturday in the castle chapel."

"This is fabulous!" Princess Dominique squealed with joy. "Oh Paul, do get her."

"I won't promise to bring her back. She may be very tired," Prince Paul excused. "You will get to see her in a few hours anyway. The guests will start arriving in the great hall about five o'clock."

"Paul's right. We should freshen and change for the ball, sister," Princess Adriane addressed Princess Dominique.

"Adriane is right. Mamman, we'll have the nannies take the children. With Paul's marriage next week we'll stay for a short holiday. You can play with your grandchildren every day," Princess Dominique suggested.

## *Smitten*



Prince Paul entered his suites to find Rigan helping the servants and Maurice unpack the luggage.

"Why did you stay in the carriage, Rigan?" Paul asked coming up behind his love and lightly touching his lips on the nape of her neck.

"I didn't want to intrude on your reunion, Paul. It is your family," Rigan answered as a tremor of desire ran down her spine with the touch of her love's lips.

"It is our family, Rigan!" Prince Paul corrected. "Adriane and Dominique adore you."

"As I adore them. But you haven't seen your sisters or your brother in three years and I have never met him."

"Meet him now!" A voice said from behind them. "I am Aleck, little brother of Prince Paul."

"I am honored Your Highness," Rigan blushed and gave a small curtsy.

"Well big brother, aren't you going to introduce her?" Aleck reprimanded anxious to meet the woman that met his brother's rigid standards.

"Princess Rigan, meet my little brother, Prince Aleck Karl Johann Lukas Lange, and Duke of Abell. A blister on your saddle and a troublemaker from the start."

"I'm just as fond of you big brother," Aleck quipped.

"Are you taking up your suites in the South Wing?" Prince Paul queried hoping his brother would leave so he would have some private time with Rigan.

"Can't do that big brother. It seems our guests have overflowed to the South Wing and my suites have been taken. I have been assigned new suites in the West Wing by Mamman's orders. Boys on this side! Girls on that side!" Prince Aleck motioned with his arms at the division. "Besides, Paul, I need to borrow some clothes for tonight. I traveled light."

"Stay out of my wardrobe, little brother."

Prince Aleck was a younger clone of Prince Paul. He was tall, muscular, blonde, handsome, and had his mother's sapphire eyes. "But I traveled light, big brother."

"See a tailor tomorrow."

"I'll just have to wear some old rags tonight," Prince Aleck complained.

"That is a shame little brother, but you'll just have to make do."

"I still need to borrow..."

"Out, little brother. Rigan and I have to dress," Prince Paul bellowed.





Bounding out of the West Wing Prince Aleck ran past Camilla.

"Paul?" Camilla called seeing the back of Prince Aleck.

"Aleck!" he corrected turning to see the beautiful young woman.

"You look just like Prince Paul," Camilla commented.

"Well, we are brothers you know."

"Is Prince Paul in his suite?" Camilla questioned looking over Prince Aleck's shoulder.

"That's where I left him." Prince Aleck smiled broadly. Oh this little chit is an appetizer for certain. "Why would a delectable little dish like you, be interested in my big brother? He's a bore you know."

"I suppose you're not a bore?" Camilla countered sweetly.

"Care to find out my little sweet cake? My rooms are upstairs," Prince Aleck offered. He felt his libido quicken.

"You are a cad! I am a virgin!" Camilla gasped in shock. How dare he suggest such a lewd thing to the betrothed of his brother?

"I'm more than happy to change that for you," Prince Aleck said huskily.

"If Prince Paul could hear you talk to me like that!" Camilla said in a pique and spun around to leave the corridor.

"What you need sweet cake, is a good rutting," Prince Aleck called out to her. The footmen by the West Wing doors blushed in contrast to their blue uniforms.

"Aleck, welcome home!" A voice boomed from the main hall.

"Vladimir, guardian of the Crown Prince. How the hell are you?" Prince Aleck responded cheerfully.

"I see you have met the little delicacy, Lady Camilla," Vladimir noted.

"What a piece of candy," Aleck chuckled and quickly asked his cousin, "want a drink?"

"Need you ask?" Vladimir answered putting his hand on Prince Aleck's shoulder.

"Look! Papa is arriving," Aleck shouted seeing his father approach on a pure white Lipizzaner Stallion from the castle window.

Prince Aleck and his siblings worshipped their father.

"Let's go greet him, Aleck, and then go have a few drinks before the birthday ball," Vladimir proposed.



Prince Paul arranged some private time with Rigan before the servants arrived to prepare them for the birthday ball. This time was had due to the exceptionally efficient and helpful Maurice. Prince Paul and Princess Rigan never seemed to have enough of each other.

Hours later, Rigan had just finished dressing in her new emerald green gown. A flounce graced the shoulders around the neckline. A cape attached to the neckline of the gown hid a large bow in the back of the skirt. The cape also covered the ties of the bodice. Simple and understated were the clothes Rigan liked best.

Maurice had already dressed Prince Paul when she entered his chamber. Rigan was wearing the bracelet King Karl gave her and the earrings to match the ring and necklace Paul had given her. Rigan held the necklace in her hand.

"I seem to have problems latching the clasp. Would you mind?" Rigan requested sensually.

"What else are husband's good for?" Prince Paul replied huskily.

"Many things actually. Some husbands are extremely good at a certain thing! A ladies pleasure," Rigan taunted tossing her love the innuendo. I do love the loving of this man!

Prince Paul closed the clasp and started kissing Rigan's neck. "Talk like that will have us missing my own birthday ball and betrothal announcement."

"Paul?"

"Hmm!" Prince Paul replied rather preoccupied with the passionate kisses he was bestowing on Rigan's neck and shoulders.

"Happy Birthday!" Rigan giggled in delight as little shivers ran down her spine. "Paul?"

"Hmm!"

"I have a present for you, silly." Rigan chuckled turning and pushing Prince Paul away gently.

"Let me have it!" Paul said with a boyish grin. Rigan handed him the package and he opened it with the zest of a young child. He was throwing the paper everywhere. He opened the package to find a crystal globe and on the bottom of it were the charts of the constellations.

"Do you like it? I had it made for you," Rigan asked gleefully. She hoped he would like the present she had made for him in Brogav.

"Rigan, my angel, I love it! This is such a thoughtful present," Prince Paul held it up to the light, turned it round and round. "A symbol of our happy little universe together." He thanked her with a tender affectionate kiss that just happened to last several minutes.



"Shall we go?" Rigan asked gasping for air from the prolonged kiss.

"Not yet," Prince Paul replied not wanting to break away from their special privacy to the glare of public scrutiny. Paul turned and walked to his large armoire and pulled out a small box.

"Thank heavens. I'm not sure I'm ready to face all those people as a Princess," Rigan confessed and watched the prince walk to his armoire.

"Nervous?"

"Terribly!" Rigan admitted.

"This will give you courage," Prince Paul pulled out Rigan's O'Cullenan's tartan from the box. Maurice had secured and cleaned it for his Prince. Tenderly Prince Paul placed it on the flounce of her shoulder. He secured it with her clan pin. His large hand draped it over her shoulder. "You're Sean O'Cullenan's daughter! My wife and Princess of the Borogia Circle."

"I'm ready!" Rigan stiffened her back and took Prince Paul's arm. How proud she was to be Prince Paul's love and betrothed.

Queen Louise and King Karl had finished greeting all their guests in the reception line when Paul and Rigan appeared. Rigan's hand was on Paul's arm. They walked together into the great hall towards the King and Queen.

"Mama, it's Prince Paul! That .. that... that spinster is on his arm," Camilla whispered with a trembling voice. Her mother had taught her well to keep her emotions to herself. "And she's wearing that barbaric woolen scrap again, on her shoulder."

"Those jewels she's wearing aren't the purchases of a mere lady in waiting, Camilla. Something is amiss," Sophie observed.

"I'm going to give her a piece of my mind," Camilla growled and began to walk towards the couple. "How dare she walk so .. so.. so.. boldly with my future husband."

Sophie grabbed her arm and purposefully jammed her nails into her daughter's arms. "You will not make a scene, Camilla. I will not be humiliated and you will not get any prince or duke or stable boy if you are sent home in disgrace."

Camilla drew back, her eyes slicing Rigan. Camilla then noticed the emeralds draped on Rigan's neck, the diamonds in her ears, and the bracelet on her wrist. Her heart was pumping with rage. Those are my jewels she's wearing. How could Paul give them to her?

Sophie's nails dug deeper into her daughter's arms drawing blood. Camilla could barely be contained. "Wait until we find out what is going on!" Sophie was just as deluded as her daughter. Sophie believed Prince Paul would marry Camilla based on her daughter's beauty, youth, noble lineage, and virginity alone.



King Karl walked onto the raised dais where the musicians were playing. A trumpet heralded the guests that the King was about to make an announcement. A hush overtook the hall. Queen Louise joined her husband on the dais.

"Guests, we have a special announcement to make this evening on this special occasion of our eldest son's thirtieth birthday," King Karl proclaimed and took a long pause. "Prince Paul will take a bride." The great hall buzzed quietly. "Your Crown Prince has chosen a woman of beauty and charm."

Camilla stepped forward radiant with conceit. She believed the King was talking of her beauty. It would be now the Circle would learn of her betrothal to Prince Paul.

Queen Louise added, "A woman of grace from our own court."

Sophie patted her daughter's back in pride. She just knew her daughter would be Prince Paul's chosen wife. It would be wonderful to be mother of the future queen. She deluded herself with fantasy of royal parties. In many respects, Camilla was Sophie's true daughter.

Camilla was fantasizing about walking up to Rigan after the announcement and ripping off her jewels. Then she would command that Rigan be disgraced and leave the Circle forever. No longer would Prince Paul use the ugly spinster to make her jealous.

"She is a caring and well loved lady in waiting to my queen," King Karl proclaimed proudly.

Camilla and Sophie took another step forward.

"My son, will you present your betrothed?" King Karl requested.

Camilla walked towards Prince Paul for him to lead her to the king. She stopped suddenly when she saw Prince Paul place Rigan's hand in the crook of his arm and walk toward the dais completely ignoring her.

Sophie, who was behind her daughter, stopped just as suddenly with her mouth agape as she watched the Prince walk towards the King with Rigan.

Once upon the dais Prince Paul cleared his throat. "I proudly present to you my people and family, Princess Rigan. She is my love, my hope, and my dreams. She is your Princess and future queen."

"Princess Rigan and Prince Paul will marry one week from today," King Karl beamed with pride. "This happy young couple will lead the first dance with one of my favorites and theirs."

Sophie turned white. The Prince would not be marrying her beautiful young daughter. He had chosen a barbarian spinster. The look in her daughter's eyes also frightened her.

Camilla's legs buckled. Her world became blackness. All Camilla's plans and fantasies came to an end. Reality enveloped



Camilla like a nightmare. Her mind snapped. Camilla changed at that instant from a spoiled, selfish, indulged child, to a vicious, venomous, hateful woman. She began a path that teetered on insanity. Camilla fainted.

Sophie sought aide from footmen and had them carry Camilla to her suites.

Prince Paul and Princess Rigan didn't notice the stir in the crowd. They were staring at each other. The announcement had been made. Their betrothal and wedding were official. They were happy.

Prince Paul led Princess Rigan to the dance floor to lead the first dance.

"Papa has a surprise for you," Prince Paul declared.

"I don't like surprises."

"Yes you do."

"No I don't"

"Yes you do."

And the musicians started to play the Aran song that she and Prince Paul had danced their first dance together.

"Yes I do!" Rigan smiled to her love.

The Prince's hand was tight on her waist as they repeated in perfect synchrony the same dance that brought such joy to Rigan's heart.

Sean O'Cullenan, if you're watching, look down on your daughter. She is the happiest woman alive. Your love sent to me the only man I could ever love. I am grateful to you Sean O'Cullenan. Rigan spoke to her Papa in heaven as she danced with her Prince.

"Happy?" Prince Paul asked between the high steps of the Aran reel.

"It would be impossible to be any happier," Rigan glowed.

"Not impossible," Prince Paul protested.

"Yes it is," Rigan denied.

"I can think of something that would make you even happier."

"And just would that be?"

"You holding our son in your arms."

"You're right of course," Rigan conceded.

"I always am."

"No you're not."

"Yes, I am."

"Yes, you are," Rigan laughed joyfully.

"I'm getting the last word."

"No you aren't!"

"Don't fight me on this Rigan, you'll lose!"

"I always have the last word," Rigan challenged.

"Not this time."

## *Smitten*



Prince Paul stopped dancing and pulled Rigan to his chest and kissed her in the middle of the dance floor.

The guests were in shock at this break in etiquette, but soon all were clapping in approval.

At the dinner, toasts were made to the betrothed. Prince Paul and Princess Rigan accepted all graciously. Princess Adriane and Princess Dominique monopolized their time after dinner talking about the upcoming nuptials. Prince Paul took some of Dominique's time to have her assist him in his planned honeymoon.

Aleck congratulated his big brother and asked for the left over broken hearts.

"You don't need my leftovers, Aleck. I noticed every chit at the ball couldn't keep their eyes off you, and you have had three ladies attached to your arms throughout the entire evening."

"You and I were always different when it came to chits, weren't we?" Prince Aleck noted.

"Quite, I avoided the empty self indulgent air heads, preferring the experienced paramours. You on the other hand relish the intrigue and playing with their empty little minds."

"I am safe as long as I use precautions, and I always have them available," Prince Aleck bragged.

"Be careful little brother, one of those empty little minds might suck you into a vacuum."

"I'll heed your warning," Aleck replied lightly.

It was well into the dawn when the last guests left the great hall. Prince Paul and Princess Rigan retired to their private suites. Prince Paul undressed Rigan, then himself, and both collapsed in complete fatigue on the bed. Cuddled in each other's arms they fell asleep.

Camilla rose in the morning with vengeance on her mind. Sophie had started her tirades at first light and Camilla slowly turned her head towards her Mama. Her eyes dark violet with hate. "Shut up Mama!" she hissed. "I no longer listen to anyone. I'll handle this in my own way. That bitch will pay for stealing my Prince."

Sophie was shaken by the sudden venomous change in her daughter. Camilla was no longer her precious beautiful little daughter. Camilla was now a woman. Camilla had turned into a woman to be feared. Her own mother feared that new Camilla and decided to leave quickly.

## Chapter Thirteen

Lady Camilla finished her duties for Queen Louise early that day. It was an easy day since everyone was recuperating from the ball. Camilla lay in wait for Prince Aleck like a cat waiting for a mouse and her claws just as deadly.

Camilla knew she had been banned from the West Wing. She also knew that Aleck could get her in there. Who would stop Prince Aleck from bringing her? No one of course!

It was late in the afternoon when Lady Camilla saw Damon Sheffield arrive at the castle and riding with him was a young woman. She was a peasant woman dressed as a chambermaid.

Camilla's back went stiff when she saw Prince Paul greet Damon. Prince Paul seemed to know the chambermaid well.

Damon had brought Arla back with him from Brogav. Although she still was weak, Arla insisted on serving the Princess. Damon could not deny her devotion to Rigan. He understood it.

King Karl talked to them a few minutes and then Prince Paul and the king left for the stables. Damon took the chambermaid into the castle. Then Camilla saw him, her prey, Prince Aleck.

Maybe I should just wait until Rigan is alone and then I will find something to bludgeon her with. Camilla was thinking irrationally.

Watching Prince Aleck come near, she waited until the last moment and collided with him.

"Well, if it isn't the little sweet candy!"

"Your Royal Highness," Camilla cooed seductively.

"Out for a walk?" Prince Aleck inquired happy with her interest in him.

"I desire some fresh air." Camilla breathed deeply. "I'm bored."

"I could offer you some entertainment," Prince Aleck invited very encouraged by Camilla's flirting.

"You men are such braggarts. What could you possibly do to entertain me?" Camilla challenged.

"Come to my room and find out," Aleck replied securing his arms around the tiny waist of the beautiful Camilla.

"Your mind is filthy," Camilla teased batting her long eyelashes.

"And you need a rutting."

"Are you so sure of that?" Camilla invited.

## *Smitten*



"You will enjoy it!"

"What if I don't?" Camilla teased.

"I'll enjoy it. 50-50 odds aren't bad," Prince Aleck challenged.

"Odds?"

"Come on little sweet cakes, try it out. You may like it."

"I accept. Entertain me," Camilla invited taking Prince Aleck's arm.

No one stopped Prince Aleck from bringing Lady Camilla into the West Wing even though the footmen had been ordered to keep her out. Her plan was working so far. Even losing my virginity is worth getting that bitch.

"Here we are sweet cakes. I'll just pour a little wine to relax us." Prince Aleck was ready to use his finesse and savor faire to deflower the chit. He took his time going to the cabinet and pouring the two drinks. He turned around and dropped the glasses. Standing before him was Lady Camilla in all her naked glory. She laid waiting for him in his bed.

"I want to be entertained. Don't make me wait."

Prince Aleck tore his clothes off and jumped on her. This little chit was an easy take. Or so he thought.

"This hurts!" Camilla whined. She thought it would be worth the sacrifice of her virginity to get rid of Rigan, but she was not ready for conjugation. It was painful.

"Start relaxing and it won't hurt sweet cake," Prince Aleck said trying to persuade her to enjoy it.

Camilla continued to complain of pain with every thrust Prince Aleck made.

She was as dry as the desert, and didn't even try to participate or respond. Prince Aleck became irritated with the whining and had slammed right through her barrier. Anticipating her pain he covered her mouth with his. Camilla's cry was muffled by his kiss. Continuing his thrusting he thought he would never climax. This was the worst rutting he ever had. The chit was a cold dry fish.

Camilla's hands grabbed onto the sheets. Oh God! Will this ever be over? This is horrible. I swear Prince Paul will only create one heir with me when we marry. How can any woman endure this? Rigan, you will die for this humiliation and pain! I swear you will!

Prince Aleck continued ramming his aroused manhood into her. The thrusting was difficult, but at last he climaxed. "God chit, you are frigid and unresponsive!" Aleck blamed Camilla because this had never happened to him before. Previously the virgins he deflowered were hot, wet and willing. And they also had participated.





Prince Aleck got up and used the water basin wetting a cloth to clean his body and dressed.

"You have got to be the worst rut I have ever had in my life. I pity the man who ends up as your husband. He would need a miracle and a bag of pig lard to impregnate you."

Prince Aleck tossed her the dampened towel. "Clean yourself up and get out of here."

"You're an animal!" Camilla whined. She was grateful it was over at last as she got up from the bed and perused the blood stained sheets. "You almost killed me!"

"I am a lusty warm blooded animal, and I like my meat hot," Prince Aleck snarled. "You, little miss empty head are a cold fish."

With that retort, Prince Aleck left the room.

Whimpering, Camilla cleaned herself and redressed. That bitch is going to pay even more for this horrible experience I have had to endure. She spotted a small knife on Prince Aleck's basin table. That will do.

The hall was clear and Camilla walked quietly to Prince Paul's suites. The door had been left open and there she spotted Rigan kneeling on the floor by a trunk.

Quietly Camilla observed there was no one present as she saw Rigan packing her dresses in the trunk Prince Paul had left for her in his bedchamber. He had asked Rigan to get servants to pack for their honeymoon. They would leave right after the wedding. He had told Rigan to pack plenty of clothes for a lengthy holiday.

Since Rigan preferred to pack herself, she had dismissed Claus and Petar by assuring them of her security in the castle. So she was alone. Rigan had heard footsteps and noticed a familiar aroma. She was about to turn when a hot searing pain shot through her shoulders. Instantly blackness surrounded her. Rigan's body slumped to the floor.

Camilla held the knife steady and ran into the room and before Rigan could turn to see who it was the knife blade went into her back slashing down from her shoulders and into her body just under her scapula. Camilla pulled it out and rushed out of the suites back into Prince Aleck's room. There she cleaned the knife with her petticoat and returned it to Prince Aleck's basin table. No one had seen her. As Camilla was about to leave Prince Aleck's room she heard footsteps. Camilla found refuge in an alcove and hid there until she could escape unseen and unheard.

Arla was returning from the errand Princess Rigan had sent her on. Proudly she brought the books up from the library. Princess Rigan had described the books and where they were. Soon Princess Rigan would teach her to read. Arla opened the door and found her lady lying in a pool of blood oozing from her back. The scream she let out echoed through the castle. The scream was blood curdling.



Prince Paul was the first to respond. He had finished his ride with his father and was already taking the stairs when he heard Arla's screams. Prince Paul took the rest of the stairs two at a time and ran down the hall to his suites. There he saw his Rigan lying lifeless in a pool of blood.

Arla was still screaming. She had dropped the books and was holding her apron over her mouth as she screamed and tears streaked down her face.

"Merciful God, No!" Prince Paul shrieked viewing the bloodied body on the floor and fell next to his love.

Kneeling by Rigan's side he picked up her limp body. His hands covered with her blood. "Arla, get Damon," Prince Paul said quietly. He did not want to frighten Arla with his own terror.

Tears streaming down her face and sobs so deep she couldn't breathe, Arla ran to find Dr. Sheffield.

Prince Paul pulled Rigan to his chest and rocked her gently, stroking her hair. She was breathing. He could hear that. "Dear God, don't take her away from me. Please dear God, don't take my angel."

Arla was incoherent when she found Damon. All he heard was blood, all over, and the Princess. Arla pulled him with her to the West Wing. It was then Damon felt something was very wrong. He ran up the stairs to Prince Paul's suite and heard the Prince crying to God not to take away his angel. He ran faster and dropped to his knees next to the Prince and Rigan.

Damon heard her breathing, viewed the wound and knew what to do immediately. He took his jacket and waistcoat off, and then ripping his shirt off crumpled it into a wad.

"Let me have her, Paul."

"No, I won't let her go, God can't have her."

"God won't get her, Paul. Give her to me."

"No."

"I can help her, Paul, but I have to stop the bleeding."

"No," Prince Paul repeated cradling Rigan's head in his strong hand. Tears flowing from his eyes like rivulets.

"Paul, it's a knife wound. I have to stop the bleeding and then Rigan will be alright."

Hearing the promise Rigan would be all right the Prince gently lifted Rigan and gave her to Damon.

Damon pressed his shirt on the knife wound with all his might and held it there until the shirt stopped filling up with blood.

"Get me another shirt!" Damon ordered.

Paul went to his armoire and pulled one out. "Don't let God take her, Damon. I don't want a short-term loan. I want her for a long time," Paul said as he handed Damon the shirt.



"God won't get her, Paul. I promise. Not this time." Damon wadded the new shirt and put it on top of his. And pressed with all his life.

Damon finally saw a footman enter. He needed help. "Get Michalek!"

In minutes Michalek was in the room. "Sainted Mother of God!" he uttered in panic at the sight of his Princess.

"Michalek, hold these shirts on her back. Use all the pressure you can. Don't let go," Damon demanded. When Michalek had Rigan, Damon rose and spoke to Paul, "I have to get my bag. I need to stitch Rigan's back. I'll be right back."

Damon ran to his room and grabbed his medical bag. It was then he realized he was shirtless. He went to his armoire and pulled one out. Taking the moment he put the shirt on slowly.

Damon tried to calm himself by taking deep long breaths. He knew Rigan would be all right. He had plenty of experience with knife wounds since his internship was a battle surgeon for the British Army. Rigan's wound was not deep and the knife had not pierced any vital organ. Still, his hands were trembling. This was Rigan, that's why his hands trembled. He had developed a deep admiration and affection for her. This was personal. He was not objective. Damon continued taking the deep breaths forcing calm and objectivity. Damon returned to the Prince's suites and found King Karl, Queen Louise Janette, Prince Aleck, Princess Adriane, and Princess Dominique in the parlor. Silent and strained, the family stood together. Damon noticed tears running down the queen's cheeks and Aleck gently rubbing his Mamman's shoulders.

King Karl addressed Damon. "The prognosis doctor?"

"Princess Rigan has lost a lot of blood, that is the only danger presently. Her wound is not deep. The knife did not penetrate any vital organ."

"Knife?"

Damon heard the gasps.

"Yes, Your Royal Majesty. It is a knife wound. The blood loss is from the laceration that starts at her shoulder and ends in the wound under her scapula."

"Make her live, Damon."

"I intend too, Your Royal Majesty."

Damon walked into the Prince's bedchamber. Damon found Michalek was still holding the shirts on the wound of Princess Rigan. Arla in a corner hands folded around a rosary, praying devoutly. Prince Paul still on his knees staring at his Princess.

"Paul, you need to leave. Your family is outside and I need to stitch Rigan's wound. You can't be here for that," Damon ordered.

"I'm not leaving!" Prince Paul said stubbornly.

"Michalek, put the Princess in bed."



The massive giant lifted Rigan with little effort and placed her on the bed with the greatest of care.

"Arla, you will stay and help me undress the Princess. I need to clean her wound, stitch it, and then bandage it. You will learn how to change the bandages. Her wound will be cleaned and dressed twice a day for the next two days."

"I'll do it," Prince Paul announced forcing his mouth to work.

"No you will not! Michalek, take the Prince to his family and do not let anyone in here until I come out," Damon commanded leaving no room for argument.

Michalek obeyed the order and helped the Prince up from the floor. Guided by Michalek, the Prince was in a daze and gave little resistance as he walked to the parlor.

The family inhaled sharply with shock at the entrance of their son and brother. Prince Paul's clothes were covered in blood. His hands and knees were completely blood stained.

King Karl rose and walked to Prince Paul. His arms were wide-open offering shelter. "Son!"

"Papa." Prince Paul sought the solace of his Papa's embrace. He stayed in his Papa's arms for sometime.

"She's going to be just fine son," King Karl whispered in Prince Paul's ear during the embrace. King Karl gently rubbed Prince Paul's back in reassurance and lovingly walked him to a chair to sit on.

Aleck left his Mamman's side and strode to the cabinet, poured a glass of brandy and offered it to his brother. Prince Paul took it, sipped at it, and then stared into nothingness.

There was no doubt this was a very loving family that stood by each other in joy and sorrow.

Princess Adriane walked behind Prince Paul and began to massage his shoulders. Princess Dominique kneeled on the floor next to him putting her head on his blood stained hand.

King Karl returned to his wife and held her hand gently patting it, "Who could have done this?"

"Why would anyone do this?" Prince Paul vocally asked the question that had been running through his mind since Damon arrived to take charge.

"Assassination, Papa," Prince Aleck stated.

"Where were her guards? Michalek!" King Karl snarled as the impact of Aleck's words took hold. Crimson colored his face and anger his eyes.

"We were dismissed by Princess Rigan for the day," Michalek choked on his own bitter words. He should have known better. They were supposed to guard her day and night. Claus should have never permitted the Princess into reassuring him she was safe in



Prince Paul's suites. Why didn't I listen to my reason and come here to protect her regardless of what she told Claus. I knew better.

A scream from the bedroom shattered Michalek's thoughts and interrupted the conversation. Rigan woke while Damon was stitching and fortunately fainted again.

"That's Rigan!" Prince Paul roared and bolted from the chair.

Michalek blocked his entrance.

"Isn't it too late to follow orders? Protecting her now?" Prince Paul's anger sliced through Michalek like a sword.

Prince Aleck pulled his brother back. "Hold Paul, that is not going to help Rigan."

Prince Paul returned to his chair sinking into it. His sisters remained beside him. They all waited in silence.

King Karl again spoke to Michalek. "Who were the watch guards?"

"Claus and Petar."

King Karl motioned to one of his bodyguards. "Send for them."

Michalek tore his jacket and shirt off, walking to the wall. He took one of the whips decorating it. Bringing the whip to Prince Paul he said. "I deserve to be lashed. I ask you to do it for absolution of my dereliction in duty."

"Rigan wouldn't like that, nor would she want that," Prince Paul answered already regretting his previous harsh words to him. "Put your clothes back on Michalek. Guard the Princess."

Claus and Petar entered the parlor as pale as ghosts. They too were grieving and regretted listening to Princess Rigan and her assurances of her safety in the castle. They knelt in front of the royal family.

"We are here to readily accept our lashings for our dereliction in duty. The lashings are well deserved," Claus said for the both of them.

"What is this obsession with lashings?" King Karl snapped. "Am I such a vile King?"

"No, Your Royal Majesty. We are vile!" Petar replied.

"Your own self-inflicted punishment of regrets will accomplish more than a lashing," King Karl observed. "I called you in here to let you know that henceforth Princess Rigan's watch can only be rescinded by my order or the order of Prince Paul. No one else can rescind watch. That includes the Princess herself. Is that clear?"

"Perfectly clear, Your Royal Majesty," the three guards declared in unison.

"See to it that all her watch is informed of my edict and send for Siegfried Goetz. I want him here for investigation of this horror."

It was another hour before Damon came out of the bedroom.



"Princess Rigan is awake. You may see her, but I have given her a decoction for pain and she is not quite cognizant."

Prince Paul leaped from the chair and ran into the bedchamber. She looked so frail and ghostly pale. Her auburn hair spread across the white pillows.

Arla was by her side, a rosary clutched tightly in her hand.

Holding out her hand, Rigan strained to give a smile. "My Prince."

Prince Paul took her hand and brushed it with his lips. He sat on the side of her bed and kissed her forehead and lips. "Who did this?"

"Did what? I remember hearing footsteps, then pain and then blackness."

"You never saw the assassin?"

"Assassin? Who would want to assassinate me?"

The rest of the family entered and the questions were never answered, mainly because there was no answer. The entire family fawned over Princess Rigan, including the scamp Prince Aleck. Somewhere in between, Rigan fell asleep and the family left the bedchamber so she could rest.

Maurice coaxed Prince Paul into taking bath and into changing his clothes. Dinner was brought into the bedchamber for the Prince. He would not leave Rigan's side.

Before he left, Damon warned. "Paul, you cannot..."

"You needn't tell me. I know."

"It should be healed enough by the wedding," Damon offered hopefully.

"Thank you Damon, thank you for everything. Thank you for saving my angel."

Damon embraced Paul and left.

The news of the assassination attempt spread to the village. At night the villagers carrying candles and rosary beads approached the castle. The masses created a bright white light glowing in the darkness. At the gates they asked for entrance into the courtyard. The villagers wanted to conduct a prayer vigil for Princess Rigan.

Prince Paul looked out his window at the crowd. He turned back to the sleeping Rigan and whispered, "The people all love you Sainted Lady."

King Karl walking to the gates for greeting was aware of the strong feelings of love towards his soon to be daughter in law. Upon the King's approach, villagers repeated the request for a prayer vigil and asked of Princess Rigan's condition.

"Open the gates," King Karl ordered the palace guards. The king then turned to the priest that led the villagers. "Princess Rigan



will recover and is sleeping. I will join you in your prayers for her speedy recovery."

Welcoming the king and handing him a candle, the villagers accepted him as one of theirs. A prayer of thanksgiving was also offered by the priest leading their vigil to have such noble rulers of their Circle.



## Chapter Fourteen

"Paul?"

Prince Paul was startled awake by Rigan's voice. He had fallen asleep on the divan watching over her last night. "Rigan, you're awake."

"That's a brilliant conclusion. I am proud of you!" Rigan grumped. She was still hurting from the wound.

"Testy this morning?" Prince Paul asked grinning from ear to ear. He was so happy Rigan was awake and alert.

"Hungry is more like it. Of course that does make one testy. Just ask Damon."

"I'll get you fed quickly." Prince Paul walked to the lady's chamber. "Arla, see to it that the kitchen sends up a large breakfast for Princess Rigan."

Arla nodded and almost ran to the kitchens. Her lady was awake and hungry.

"I want a bath, too."

"You shall have it," Prince Paul grinned. "After you eat of course."

"I want the moon," Rigan teased playfully and held out her arms to her love.

"It's yours tonight," Prince Paul responded and bounded to the bed. He wrapped his arms gently around her.

"I want you."

"Not for a while," Prince Paul sighed heavily.

"Of all the things to deny me, why that one?"

"You have to heal first. Any extra activity could open your stitches. You have little blood left to lose. We can't take the risk."

"Paul, what happened to me? And why does my back and shoulder hurt and burn so painfully."

"Damon will be in later to give you more pain medications. You hurt so painfully because you were stabbed in the back with a knife. We do not know who or why."

"Stabbed in our rooms," Rigan gasped. "There is no safe place."

"You are safe in my arms," Prince Paul grinned hiding his own worries about that subject. The assassin had to be found. "You should know that Papa decreed that only he, the king, and I are





allowed to rescind orders on protection from your bodyguards. You may never again dismiss them."

Before Rigan could offer a rebuttal to the edict Maurice entered.

"Your Royal Highness, the priest is here to give Princess Rigan confession and communion," Maurice informed Prince Paul. "Your change of clothes and bath are ready as your Mamman expects you shortly to join the family for mass."

"I'm coming, Maurice. Would you see to it that Arla knows of the Princess' desire to bathe after breakfast? And also remind me tonight, Princess Rigan desires the moon."

The Royal Family entered the castle chapel for mass. Prince Paul loved this chapel. His love for the chapel was the reason he wanted to be married here. Ever since he was a child he loved the quiet beauty of the chapel. The white marble walls reflected the subtle lighting that poured through the stained glass windows. As a child he had always felt a peace and contentment in this chapel.

Servants of the household often attended with the family on Sunday. Prince Paul spotted Lady Camilla and inwardly groaned. He was in no mood for her childishness today.

The mass was said and during communion Prince Paul thanked God for not taking Rigan from him. He also asked God to protect her from further harm.

Leaving the chapel Prince Paul wanted to stop in the alcove of St. Francis and light a candle for Rigan's recovery. As he entered the alcove, so did Lady Camilla.

"Your Royal Highness. Would you express my wishes for her recovery to Lady Rigan?" Camilla whispered kneeling next to Prince Paul.

"That is Princess Rigan, Lady Camilla. I am touched by your concern," Prince Paul corrected.

"What a dreadful thing to happen. Attacked in private rooms. Who would ever think such a thing could occur in the Royal Household?" Camilla gushed. "I must admit the attack has frightened me." Camilla tried to ignore the Princess comment from Paul.

"Isn't your Mama here? Perhaps she could take you back home where it is safer."

"Mama left early this morning. I don't believe she even knew of that terrible attack. I didn't even learn of it until this morning when your Mamman and Bridgett were talking about it."

"I will be certain to tell Princess Rigan of your wishes," Prince Paul shrugged attempting to end the conversation.

"Will you have to postpone your nuptials? Your Mamman was worried that you might. Princess Rigan would be dreadfully unhappy."



"We won't be postponing our marriage. Dr. Sheffield believes Princess Rigan should be recovered sufficiently in time."

"I am sure that is good news for you both. I will light a candle in prayers for a speedy recovery. May I get a candle for you?"

"Thank you, but I have already lighted my candle." Prince Paul was baffled. Lady Camilla concerned? Caring? She is not even attaching herself to my arm, but acting like a lady and saying a prayer for Rigan. This is something I cannot believe.

Lady Camilla lit the candle, bowed her head in prayer for a minute, crossed herself and rose to leave the alcove. No more was said, just a smile to the Prince as she left.

Lady Camilla's smile was deceiving. Curse it! Rigan should have died. They are not even postponing the wedding. I have to come up with another plan. You will be mine Prince Paul.

"What do you think you are doing?" Prince Paul bellowed when he saw Rigan in her chemise walking in the bedchamber.

"If you must know, I am looking for my slippers, and you call me testy?"

Prince Paul marched to Rigan, scooped her up in his arms carefully as not to touch her wound and gently put her back to bed. "You are to stay here until Damon tells me you can leave."

"He was already here and gave me some pain medications."

"Did he say you could get out of bed and saunter around?"

"He didn't say I couldn't."

"He didn't say you could."

"That's splitting hairs," Rigan argued while Prince Paul covered her gently with a satin quilt.

"Dear Rigan, that is the end of this discussion! I thought you might get bored so I brought you Homer's Iliad to read."

"Paul, I can't bear to just sit in bed and read!"

"Rigan, I thought I lost you. I thought my world had ended when I saw you lying on the floor. I never want to go through that again. I want you safe and taken care of. I want you well. You are mine, only mine and my responsibility."

"Are you planning on locking me in my room, or putting me in a nunnery for the rest of my life?"

"Placing you in a nunnery might keep you safe but would kill me. However, my angel, just allow me to take care of you until you are well," Prince Paul requested.

"Do you realize I have yet to win an argument with you?" Rigan grinned.

"It is my plan that you never will," Prince Paul smiled and took her in his arms while sitting on the edge of their bed.

"I shall do my best to challenge that plan."



"I am undefeated," Prince Paul bragged.

"Conceited are we?"

"Confident."

"Contrary."

"Is this a private foray, or can anyone join in?" Damon chided the two verbiage contestants.

"I win!" Rigan said haughtily.

"Win what?" Damon asked, completely puzzled.

"The last word," Prince Paul snickered.

"I think my patient is having a phenomenal recovery."

"Did you expect less?" Rigan countered.

"Concerning you? Never will I underestimate you, Rigan," Damon answered. "Since you are feeling better, do you think we can start working on the clinic again? The queen has made an etching today and it is exquisite. She is a very talented artist."

"Hah, I can leave this bed."

"No, Rigan. I didn't say anything about that. I only asked if we could begin working on it again. We can do that here, or maybe tomorrow in the parlor, and I emphasize the word maybe. You are restricted to bed rest for a week. You lost a lot of blood. I am sure Paul wants you healthy and rested for your wedding and honeymoon."

"Amen," Paul agreed.

Rigan was a radiant bride. The dress shop in Brogav sent the wedding gown in time for a final fitting. Eloise did Rigan's hair and placed the diamond tiara on her veiled head. Arla helped her to dress. Princess Adriane and Princess Dominique fussed and adjusted the wedding gown until they both agreed it looked perfect. Princess Adriane put a pearl choker on Rigan's neck. "Something borrowed," she said.

Princess Dominique put sapphire earrings on Rigan. "Something blue."

"And what can I have that is old?" Rigan asked playing with the group.

"Paul!" Princess Adriane and Princess Dominique said at the same time. They all started laughing.

Arla brought out the O'Cullenan clan pin Rigan wore with her tartan. "Something old Your Highness." Arla pinned it on the contouche.

"Are you watching your daughter Sean O'Cullenan? You're invited to her wedding day," Rigan said aloud as she looked up to the sky. "She is going to marry a prince. And better yet, a man she loves."

King Karl beamed when he saw Rigan walking towards him. "You are positively radiant, my dear." Taking her arm to walk down



the aisle in the small chapel of the country castle he whispered, "I am honored to give you to my son. Sean must be glowing as he looks down to see you."

If the occasion were not momentous enough, the king's reference to her Athair brought emotions full front. Tears were falling down her cheeks. Rigan forced a smile as she acknowledged the guests in the little chapel. The royal family was there of course, a few intimate friends that had remained after the ball, the bodyguards, and some of the servants including Eloise, Arla, Bridgett and Lady Camilla. Princess Adriane and Princess Dominique were her matrons of honor.

Lady Camilla smiled at Rigan, but her eyes were sharp and piercing. Rigan shuddered for no known reason. It was just the look in Lady Camilla's eyes that made Rigan feel uncomfortable.

Prince Paul turned to see his bride walking towards him on his Papa's arm. He held his breath, She looked like an angel dressed all in white, her pearls, sequins, and diamonds dancing with light reflecting the subdued lighting of the candles.

"She's lovely Paul," Prince Aleck commented. He was Prince Paul's best man.

"The sainted lady," Damon added. He was acting as groomsman. Damon looked at Paul and said distinctly, "Bloody Hell, breathe man before you pass out!"

The priest cleared his throat on Damon's words and spoke, "Who gives this bride?"

King Karl replied, "I do in the name of Sean O'Cullenan. He has left us leaving his sainted daughter's care in my hands." While the king was saying these words, he handed Rigan's arm to Prince Paul who had extended his.

Rigan choked hard on a sob and felt her knees buckle. King Karl's homily to her Athair was too emotional. Rigan loved her father and it hurt her intensely that he could not be with her on this special day.

Prince Paul noticed her imbalance and firmly grabbed her waist with his hand. He steadied her as they walked to the altar. Kneeling before God and man they took their vows. Princess Rigan and Prince Paul both stuttering and stammering over the words. When Prince Paul repeated the words, "With this ring I thee wed." He added, "In eternity my smitten heart." The priest raised his eyebrow and continued.

Queen Louise Janette was crying openly. King Karl protectively embracing his wife allowed a little tear to fall down his own cheek.

Prince Paul raised Rigan's veil to kiss his bride and saw the tears streaming down her cheeks. "No more tears wife, you are mine



and only mine." He bent down and kissed her tenderly dwelling for a substantial time. Again the priest cleared his throat for attention, several times, until Prince Paul released his bride's lips.

"I present Prince Paul and Princess Rigan, husband and wife!" the priest announced to the assembly.

Not for long. Lady Camilla smiled with menace.

The reception was lavish. No expense was spared on food and wine. The King danced with his new daughter in law, as did Prince Aleck with his new sister in law.

"I dare say, Princess Rigan, I have never seen my big brother this happy," Prince Aleck noted.

"Never?"

"I will put it to you this way, Princess. I was beginning to believe my big brother was born with a scowl on his face," Prince Aleck chuckled.

"Paul only does that to intimidate. He is really quite loving, gentle and kind," Princess Rigan defended.

"Really? I have only known him to be obnoxious and overbearing. Are we talking about the same man, or is there a hidden twin I know nothing about."

"I think you misunderstand him, Aleck. Paul has a very strong protective instinct. I am sure what you describe as obnoxious and overbearing is only his concern for your welfare."

"If that is true, I am happy Paul now has you to concentrate on with his protection. It will give me some breathing room."

"Don't count it. You just may have two of us looking over your shoulder," Princess Rigan countered.

"Sweet Jesus save me," Prince Aleck groaned. "I'm beginning to think traveling with you on your honeymoon is a very bad idea."

"I think it is a very good idea," Princess Rigan disagreed.

"My wife, little brother!" Prince Paul interrupted.

"You love saying that don't you?" Princess Rigan smiled at her new husband when his arm took possessive control.

"My wife, My wife, My wife. Yes, I do. I really do."

"We don't sleep in sin anymore."

"We never did."

"Not in the eyes of the church."

"God didn't mind."

"You know him personally?"

"Of course."

"When did this event take place?" Princess Rigan chortled gaily. The Prince swept her around the dance floor happily.

"In the woods a few weeks ago. I ran right into a wood nymph that fatally smote me."

"What does that have to do with knowing God personally?"



"He answered my prayers that day," Prince Paul replied and brought Rigan closer to his chest during the dance.

"You asked God for a wood nymph?"

"No, I asked God for an angel to love and for her to love me back."

"If you mean me. I'm hardly an angel."

"Oh yes you are."

"I am not! You saw my temper in Brogav."

"What I saw was a righteous avenging angel, precious wife."

"An angry woman is more like it."

"An avenging angel that will share her love and life with me and our people."

"You're not going to let me win this argument are you?"

"Never!"

"I thought so."

A silence followed for a minute and Rigan looked into Paul's adoring eyes. "Hah, I win."

A big kiss followed. "Only the last word," Prince Paul grinned.

"May I borrow your wife?" Damon requested.

"Only borrow!" Prince Paul growled. Princess Dominique pulled her brother to dance with her.

Princess Rigan took turns on the dance floor with Damon, Vladimir, Auguste, and surprising everyone she pulled Michalek on to the floor to dance with her, followed by Rolf, Claus, Petar, Tytus and Xavier. Stanislav even had a turn. Princess Rigan's riding lessons would begin again in Brogav on her return from the honeymoon. After the attack on her royal person at the country castle it was decided by Prince Paul and King Karl the young couple would live in the Brogav Palace where she would be more protected. It would also be the time for Prince Paul to learn the business under the tutelage of King Karl.

Before Princess Rigan went to her chamber to change, she and Prince Paul presented the staff with the presents she had bought for them in Brogav.

Lady Camilla watched with malice during the reception, her face deceiving with the smiles pasted on her face. She feigned a happy spirit while dancing with Vladimir and Auguste. Prince Aleck gave her a wide berth, and for that she was relieved. Watching Rigan mount the stairs to change her gown, Camilla walked to the side of the hall. Wait until you come back little bitch.

"We don't have much time to change you, darling," Queen Louise told her new daughter in law. "Paul is in such a hurry to start the honeymoon. He is actually pacing downstairs."



"He has a rigid timetable, Mamman," Princess Dominique defended.

"Timetable?" Princess Rigan asked her sister in law.

"Your honeymoon is precisely planned, Rigan."

"You know where we are going?"

"Of course silly, I helped with many of the arrangements sending letters to many of my friends and their family in preparation of your arrival."

"Where are we going?"

"I promised Paul I wouldn't tell and I always keep a promise."

"Oh please!"

"No! I promised."

"I really hate surprises."

"You won't this time."

"Dominique, do you know you sound just like your big brother."

"Oh what a dreadful thought. However, that won't work, Rigan. I won't tell."

With the assistance of her new female family and the capable Eloise and Arla, Rigan was changed and walking down the corridor to her pacing new husband.

"You are ravishing! It was worth the wait," Prince Paul glowed in happiness.

Rigan was wearing a silk gray traveling suit with pink lapels and matching cuffs.

"You picked it out."

"I have excellent taste picking you!"

"Not me silly, the suit."

"Oh that's lovely too."

It was a small army that started down the road in the Circle of Borogia. Two carriages loaded with luggage housed some of the staff. Three horses were tethered on the back of the servant's carriage. Otto and Rafael were drivers and footmen. Maurice his faithful valet, Prince Aleck to return to school, Damon the personal royal physician and friend, Vladimir and Auguste, accompanied Prince Paul. Rigan brought with her, Arla and her bodyguards Michalek and Rolf who were acting as driver and footman of the royal carriage. Vladimir, Auguste, Damon and Prince Aleck preferred to ride. Maurice and Arla stayed in the carriage with the newlyweds.

Princess Rigan fell asleep in Prince Paul's strong comfortable arms shortly after they left the country castle. The gentle swaying of the carriage and exhaustion from the emotional day lulled her to sleep. Her body still needed rest to help heal her wound.

## *Smitten*



Prince Paul's possessive protective instincts had full reign over the Princess now. He motioned for Maurice to give him a blanket from under the carriage seat. Prince Paul covered her tenderly and brushed the hair away from her temples gently massaging her head with his fingertips.

"I think Prince Paul is going to be a wonderful Papa to their children," Arla whispered to Maurice.

"Of that there is no doubt," Maurice uncharacteristically replied. It was not like Maurice to make any personal observation of the Prince to any staff. The sphere of happiness surrounding the young couple changed many things in the Circle and would continue to do so.



## Chapter Fifteen

At dusk the royal carriage pulled into the yard of the Red Lion Inn just outside Borogia. Here the horses would be groomed and stabled for the night. The bodyguards to both Prince Paul and Princess Rigan unloaded the luggage and took it to the assigned rooms.

Rigan was surprised when she heard the innkeeper address her husband.

"Welcome to our inn, Herr Lange. I hope you and Frau Lange enjoy your stay here tonight."

"I am certain we will Herr Redstarts. At what time do you serve dinner?"

"We will serve in the main dining room at seven o'clock this evening."

"Thank you, Herr Redstarts. Come along, Rigan we will change before dinner."

"Oh, Herr Lange!" the man called.

"Yes, what is it?" Prince Paul responded.

"Breakfast is served in the main dining room at seven o'clock in the morning."

"Thank you that will give us an early start."

Prince Paul took Rigan's arm and led her up the stairs to their room.

"Herr Lange? Frau Lange?" Rigan looked at Prince Paul for an explanation.

"I have found that when I travel outside Borogia it is more convenient to remain anonymous."

"You shed your Princely titles?"

"Yes, it just works better for me. You aren't upset about that are you?"

"Upset? I am grateful!"

"There is our room. Michalek, Maurice and Arla must have taken our luggage in there by now."

Rigan entered the inn's room. It had lace curtains across the window, a double bed with white quilt and white linens. A full size mirror, wash stand and large tub stored in a corner behind a framed cloth screen. Two chairs against one wall held their evening clothes. Maurice and Arla had already laid them out. Against the wall with the



curtains Rigan spotted their luggage. "The room is so cozy. I love it Paul. It has a warm feeling to it." Rigan heard the door lock.

"Rigan!"

Rigan turned to look at Paul. His sapphire eyes deeper blue in passion. "Yes?"

Paul's mouth was on hers before she could take a breath. Their tongues were dueling for the taste of each other. Paul unbuttoned her jacket and his hands sought her breasts, massaging them until he felt the nipples harden. He untied her skirt and then the strings of her petticoats as his lips left her mouth and sought her neck, and then her cleavage. His hands slipped between the petticoats and her rounded bottom, he was touching and squeezing.

Rigan unbuttoned Paul's coat. He let her slide it off him without his lips leaving her warm body. Rigan then unbuttoned his waistcoat and Paul let her slip it off. Rigan's hands went boldly up into his shirt and massaged his chest. Her fingertips played with the blond hair on it.

Paul kicked off his shoes and pulled down Rigan's skirt and petticoats. Rigan's underwear was next. Rigan obliged by stepping out of her clothes and kicking them to the side. Each taking a moment to breathe, they removed their stockings. His hands roamed her bare bottom, his fingers suddenly thrusting into her. The wetness of her wanting started dripping down her legs. Paul's free hand slid off her jacket and worked on untying her corset.

Rigan's body flushed in heat, excited by the fingers massaging her inside. Boldly Rigan unbuttoned Paul's breeches and slid them down his narrow hips exposing his arousal. Paul let her slide them off and he stepped out of them.

"I must kiss you!" Rigan said as she stepped back from Paul's hands and fell to her knees. Her mouth covered him, sucking his arousal, her tongue dancing on the head, teasing and taunting and then taking him deep in her mouth. Her hands played with him, her thumbs massaging his scrotum and her fingers rubbing his inner thighs. She took him deeply in her mouth and then pulled back in rhythmic motion.

"Oh God, Rigan I am going to die." He pulled her away and with his arms picked her up and walked her to the bed. "Bend over, my angel."

Rigan faced the bed and bent over it. Paul's hands spreading her legs and positioning himself. He thrust into her deeply.

"Oh my God!" Rigan cried in pleasure as Paul began his thrusting rhythms deeper and deeper until he touched her sensitive core. He bent over her body and his hands clasped her breasts, kneading them, and using them for an anchor as his manhood thrust in and out.



"Oh God, I love you Paul."

"Sweet Jesus, I need you."

"That feels so good, you feel so wonderful inside me," Rigan gasped. She shuddered and a small cry issued from her throat that came from deep inside her flaming body.

Paul roared a guttural sound as he climaxed right after Rigan. His spasms ejaculated his sperm deep into Rigan's womb. Taking a few tantalizing moments Paul moved around in Rigan before he withdrew and fell on the bed grabbing her waist and taking her with him. Their hot flesh was sweaty and their panting was hard. Paul just held Rigan until their hearts stopped beating so fast and their breathing became normal.

"Rigan, you are the most passionate woman in the world. I am beginning to believe that a man can die of pleasure."

"A woman could die from that same pleasure. Paul, you are magnificent!"

"I have missed your pleasure."

"I have missed yours."

Paul wrapped his arms around Rigan and squeezed her to his chest. "I will protect you, my angel. I want nothing to harm you again."

Rigan responded by snuggling into his chest and making soft purring sounds of contentment.

"We really should get ready for dinner," Rigan suggested after a time of contented embracing.

"Yes we really should do that," Paul agreed.

"You need to get up."

"I can't."

"Why not?"

"You're laying on top of me and I am too spent to move you."

"I'll roll over to the side."

"You could get up."

"I want to watch you dress."

"You dress first, you take longer," Paul teased.

"I do not."

"You do."

"We'll dress together and see who takes longer," Rigan challenged her new husband.

"A race then?"

"What's your wager?"

"I win, you ride me tonight. What is your wager?"

"I win, you bend me over the bed again! God that was wonderful!"

"Bet!"

"Bet!"

They both jumped off the bed and started dressing. Paul won.

## *Smitten*



"Not fair, I have more clothing to put on."

"That's why I told you it takes you longer. Never wager against a sure thing, my angel. Your first lesson in gambling against me."

"I'm a sore loser."

"Too bad, you still will ride me tonight. A wager is a wager. I will collect tonight."

"Promise?"

"You are a little vixen!"

"And you sir, are a scoundrel."

"A well suited pair, don't you think?"

"I think."

"Dinner then?"

"Dinner."

Paul and Rigan entered the dining room of the inn. There were twelve round tables, each with six chairs. The dining room gave the same cozy essence. Each table had a clean white linen tablecloth with crocheted edgings. A large candle lit each table. The table and chairs were sturdy oak wood and simple carvings adorned them. A large window overlooked a mountain scene of ice-covered tips and a heavy forest. There was a large fireplace blazing with fire against the farthest wall. They saw Arla, Damon, Maurice, Michalek and Rolf sitting at one table. Auguste and Vladimir were sitting with Otto and Rafael. Aleck beckoned them to the table he where he was sitting. A woman sat beside him.

"Lady Margaret, I would introduce my brother and his new wife. Herr and Frau Lange."

"That would be Paul."

"And Rigan."

"Delighted to meet you. It must be so exciting, off on your honeymoon. Happy newlyweds. I remember it so well."

"You are married, Lady Margaret?" Paul asked.

"Yes, five years now. I was only fifteen."

"You were married so young!" Rigan exclaimed.

"Do tell me, pregnant when I was only a child myself."

"How many children do you have?"

"I have three. My husband didn't stop until he got his heir. I bore two girls and then a son."

Rigan blushed. It was common knowledge that when a married woman openly discussed the producing of an heir, in the presence of a single man it meant she was willing to copulate with him.

Paul scowled at Aleck. This was a blatant invitation to adultery. Paul disapproved of such casual liaisons.



"Where is your husband, Lady Margaret?" Rigan asked hoping he was nearby. That would discourage Aleck.

"Viscount James of Kincaid has remained behind in Austria for business. He decided to send me home and I am making my way back to Scotland."

"It is a shame you couldn't have stayed with him awhile longer." Rigan said sympathetically.

"That would have been uncomfortable for the both of us. His mistress was living in the same hotel and he shared her bed at night."

Paul choked on his water. His glare at Aleck could have sliced bread.

"Are you alright big brother?" Aleck said pounding his back.

"I think I need a breath of air, would you accompany me little brother?" Paul grabbed his brother and literally dragged him outside.

"You will not copulate with that woman, Aleck!"

"Give over big brother, she wants me."

"You know how I feel about adultery."

"Haven't you been wanting me to give up air headed, virgin, little chits? I recently had a very bad experience with one and would like to try something different."

"I certainly have, but I didn't intend for you to go headfirst into adultery."

"Well big brother, just what is left?"

"Professionals."

"I don't see any around here."

"Then hold your libido in check until we get to Hamburg. You can have all the doxies you want."

"It would be very inhumane of me, not to service the wanting woman in there."

"Bloody hell, what are you talking about?"

"The poor woman is used to having her body serviced and her husband now services another. She's probably desperate it has been so long."

"Blast it, Aleck. You know there are double standards. A man strays and it is overlooked. A woman strays and the husband challenges the lover. Besides it is adultery! For both parties!"

"You can afford to be self righteous big brother. You married a hot piece and have her in bed with you every night."

"Aleck!"

"I'm sorry big brother, you just meddle with my life too much. Maybe I'm jealous!"

"You can always get married."

"I haven't found that special woman yet either. As I am looking at you, it took you thirty years."

"Touché!"

## *Smitten*



"Then you'll not interfere?"

"I disapprove!"

"Noted."

The innkeepers served a fine meal of sausage, kraut, potatoes, rye bread, fresh butter, cheese, and hearty ale. For dessert a chocolate torte was served. The conversation at the dinner table was friendly but impersonal. Paul and Rigan excused themselves for the night. Aleck remained with Lady Margaret at the table. Rigan noticed Lady Margaret placed her hand on Aleck's arm and whispered into his ear.

In the privacy of their room, Rigan vented. "The brazen hussy. Inviting Aleck into her bed so blatantly."

"She can't force him in her bed."

"What does that mean? "

"It means wife of mine, that I am sure Aleck is willing."

"You would condone this?"

"I do not condone adultery, and I told Aleck my feelings on the subject."

"He wouldn't listen to you?"

"No, and I can't lock him up in a monastery."

"You men are all alike. Marry and then play around."

"We are not all alike! I have no intention of playing around ever! You will be in my bed every night until I die. I happen to believe in marriage and in the homily, As ye sow, so shall ye reap! Since I would have to kill any man that touched you, I certainly would not touch another woman."

"You don't believe in the present day double standards then," Rigan breathed in relief.

"I certainly do not. I believe in the sanctity of marriage. Why do you think I waited so long for God to send you to me."

"You never slept with a married woman."

"Never to my knowledge."

"You never copulated, ever? Until me?"

"I was no virgin, Rigan, you know that," Paul confessed. He took her in his arms and kissed her gently.

"Your experience shows. Just whom did you practice on?"

"Prostitution is the oldest profession. I paid professionals. They taught me all I know about pleasing a woman. I please you don't I?"

"Immensely, but..."

"Rigan, I do not want to argue with you tonight simply because my little brother has loose morals."

"No more said," Rigan concluded. She and her husband had more important loving to take care of.

"Good, because you have a wager to pay me."

Rigan made good on her wager. Paul undressed and laid in the bed naked waiting for his wonderful wife.

Rigan undressed and stared at her husband. He was a magnificent specimen of the male sex. His muscles rippled through his skin, his chest and shoulders wide, arms long, narrow hips, thick legs and a very large pleasuring manhood.

"Like what you see, my angel?" Paul questioned observing his wife's intimate perusal.

"Passionately."

"I love your breasts. Let me suckle them. Come here."

Rigan straddled Paul and bent down so her breasts were available to his mouth. His hand was playing with the nipple of one, squeezing and pinching it while he sucked the other ravenously. He nipped as he sucked and Rigan drew in her breath. Her skin was hot with desire. The fingers of his free hand sought out her wetness and probed deep inside of her until she climaxed. Rigan wanted more and she breathed out, "I want to ride you."

Paul released her breasts and removed his fingers. He picked Rigan up with one hand and guided his arousal into her easily with her wetness already waiting for him. When she was mounted his hands moved to her hips and pulled her up and then as he pulled her down he pushed his hips up, ramming into her.

"Your mount is saddled and ready to ride," Paul whispered huskily. "Ride me hard!"

With a wicked smile Rigan raised up, taunting she wiggled with him in her and then slammed down hard.

"Sweet Jesus!" Paul moaned.

Rigan was relentless in her onslaught until Paul grabbed her waist during her down stroke and slammed up into her. She felt every spasm as he released his climax into her forcing her to climax with him.

"Sit there for awhile." Paul ordered moving inside her. "I want to play with your breasts."

Paul put his hands on them and looked at one and then the other while his hands played with them. He rubbed them until the nipples were as hard as rocks. Playfully he squeezed them and then pulled them out with his fingers. He watched Rigan as she closed her eyes, her flush once again turning pink in desire. "They are beautiful. I swear they look like they are getting bigger."

"And more sensitive to your touch," Rigan wiggled playfully. She felt him harden inside her. "Want another ride?"

"No, I'll ride you." Paul lifted her up and rolled her to the side. "Kneel on the bed, my angel. Bend over and let your arms hold you up."

## *Smitten*



Rigan followed his instructions willingly. Rigan knew these new wonderful positions were to protect her stitches on her back from opening.

Paul moved behind her and inserted his fingers. He started slowly and then increased the speed until Rigan moaned in climax. Her passion dripping down her thighs she felt his tongue licking her slowly moving up to her wetness. Teasing and taunting, he tasted her playing with her sensitive nub and nipping it. His tongue delved deeper.

"Stop torturing me Paul! Let me have you," Rigan cried out.

"Beg me," Paul taunted needing her as much as she needed him.

"Please."

"Mean it."

"I think I shall die. Please."

"Where do you want me?"

"Inside! Please!"

He positioned himself and drove into her until she moaned. His own needs taking the fore, faster and faster until he exploded in her. She collapsed on the bed and he on top of her back, breathing heavily with racing hearts.

"Husband, you are merciless."

"I try."

"I should like to thank your paramours. They taught you well."

"Compliment?"

"Definitely. Paul?"

"Yes, my angel."

"If I ever catch you with another woman, I will kill her in a jealous rage. I won't share you with anyone else, ever!"

"You never have to worry about that, my angel. Never!"

"I don't? Why?"

"You have the habit of keeping me exhausted. I need to sleep."

"On top of me?"

"Do you mind?"

"Not really. It is rather convenient for the morning, don't you think husband?"

There was no answer. Paul was asleep.

Sometime during the night he rolled off and Rigan found herself beneath one arm and a leg. Even in sleep, Paul's protectiveness was apparent.



## Chapter Sixteen

Queen Louise Janette lay cuddled in her husband's loving arms. Still young at heart the two had just finished making love. Like their son and new daughter in law, they were very much in love. Queen Louise was still a striking beauty; her hair first showing signs of gray at age fifty and her sapphire eyes still sparkling with youthful lust. She had only put on a little weight in her middle age.

King Karl, the older and heavier version of Paul still struck an elegant pose at age fifty-eight. His hair had turned white, but that only made him look more distinguished. His face was lined with more wrinkles as the weight of being a king had taken its toll. His hazel eyes still danced and twinkled when they gazed upon his Louise.

"I noticed you brought the Lady Camilla with you, against my wishes."

"Oh, Karl. You told me you wouldn't tolerate her childish behavior. That has changed."

"Has it?"

"You have my word. Camilla has been changed since the attack on Rigan. Oh my, I still shake when I think about it."

"Then don't think of it. That is a royal command. Let me do the thinking," King Karl said softly. "Back to Camilla."

"Well the day of.. I mean, that morning Sophie came to see me. She was quite agitated. A rush to get home she told me. "

"Back to Camilla, my dear."

"Sophie told me that she switched Camilla harshly and stayed that long to make sure Camilla had learned her lesson in conduct." Queen Louise told her husband snuggling into his arms. "Sophie reassured me that circumstance, primarily the betrothal of Prince Paul also had helped Camilla realize her behavior was childish and that it was the result of a crush she had on our son."

"I didn't see Sophie at Paul and Rigan's wedding."

"I asked Sophie to stay for it, but she really was agitated and insisted she must return home at once."

"How has Camilla behaved since then?"



"A complete turn about. She seemed to change from a child to a woman overnight. Her behavior has been impeccable."

"How do your other ladies in waiting feel about her?" King Karl pursued still not satisfied on the subject of Camilla. He knew his wife had a kind and generous heart.

"Helene is impressed, and delighted with Camilla's change. Corinna's too new to say anything. Poor child, she is so nervous and concerned to do everything right. Bridgett however, still does not like Camilla and feels uncomfortable around her."

"Why is that? Did Bridgett tell you?"

"Bridgett said it is something about her eyes. Bridgett told me 'the devil' has taken possession of her soul. You can see it in her eyes."

"Such feelings could have warrant, my dear," King Karl agreed.

"Posh! Such superstition my husband! Surely you don't believe in possession?" Queen Louise protested pushing herself away from her husband's embrace.

"Of course not, but Bridgett's instinct still could have credence," King Karl suggested and pulled his queen back into his arms.

"I'll keep a close watch on Camilla. Will that do?"

"Just keep a tight rein on her, Louise."

"That sounds like another royal order."

"It is!" King Karl growled huskily.

"My duty is to serve my king," Queen Louise replied sensually.

"And you serve him well," King Karl laughed as he squeezed her tightly to his chest.

Several days later King Karl was sitting in his study reviewing pending policies for the Circle when Herr Goetz knocked for entry. Siegfried Goetz was an average looking middle aged man. He had piercing light blue eyes that seemed to look right through you. His rich black hair was graying on the sides. He was average height and heavy with weight in the middle. Siegfried was originally schooled as a lawyer, but due to his logistic mind he became embroiled with the Hapsburg Dynasty and came into the service of King Karl of Borogia. King Karl had become like a personal friend, but that would not shade the persecution of any matter so grave as this assassination attempt.

"Siegfried! Good God man, where have you been? I sent for you two weeks ago. It takes only three days on a good horse to return from Vienna," King Karl bellowed in greeting.



"My king, the news of the assassination attempt on Princess Rigan was astonishing. It required immediate attention. I rode directly to your country castle for investigation," Siegfried explained to the king.

"Why didn't you come here first?"

"My king, memory fades quickly and my investigation into this shocking state of affairs required the freshest of memories."

"Well then, what have you learned?"

"I have learned to my vexation, that the attack took place in the private royal suites of Prince Paul."

"That is true."

"An attack made on a royal person within the security of castle walls is shocking and something else, inexcusable!"

"You mean that an assassin could have such ready access to a royal?" King Karl agreed.

"Indeed," Siegfried replied and took a seat in an overstuffed leather chair.

"I agree. It has my family and household extremely upset."

"What is most disturbing is that in my following interviews with the royal staff, no one new or strange was seen anywhere near the royal suites the time of the attack," Siegfried reported while lighting a pipe.

"The assassin could have entered another day and hidden," King Karl surmised.

"Unlikely, the suites were all in use that time. There were too many servants at duty for anyone to hide for any period of time. Although I am not ruling that out."

King Karl walked to his liquor cabinet and pulled two glasses. "A brandy, Siegfried?"

"Delighted."

"Tell me more. I know you Siegfried."

"I am thinking the assassin is a member of the royal household."

"A traitor!"

"The treachery is possible Your Royal Majesty."

"Who could it possibly be? Most of the staff have worked for the household since the birth of our children, when I became king."

"What is stranger still is the emotions of love and devotion attributed to Princess Rigan by the staff and the village," Siegfried commented.

"The villagers call her sainted lady."

"I heard of the candle prayer vigil the night of her attack. You walked openly without guard into their midst."

"I felt no fear at all. I rather felt welcomed and a real part of my kingdom. I felt like a good king."



"You are a good king. The fact you felt no fear is understandable, but do not take such risks again!" Siegfried admonished. "It would seem Princess Rigan is a sainted lady and her fame is renowned with the peasants. Our people adore her."

"Paul and I could not come up with one person that would have a reason or want to harm her."

"Neither could I, and I am the expert!" Siegfried sighed and sipped the brandy.

"That leaves us nowhere."

"That leaves reason and deduction."

"Well?"

"The attack could have been directed at Paul, to hurt him."

"That is a reasonable assumption."

"I don't like assumptions. I like facts. I have started investigations of all potential enemies and associates of your son, including his new friend Damon."

"Dr. Sheffield saved Rigan's life."

"I have heard he is one in adoration of the Princess. I regret I have not had the opportunity to interview him and I understand he is part of the honeymoon party."

"Dear God, do you think? We should warn Paul."

"No Your Royal Majesty. I do not think. Dr. Sheffield has had many other opportunities to harm Princess Rigan and Prince Paul. As a doctor of medicine he could have used subtle poisonings."

"Then he is innocent."

"I didn't say that either. It could be jealousy related and we were thrown off the track considering it was an assassination."

"I am confused," King Karl snarled. This episode was very frustrating for a king and father.

"So am I. Confusion is not tolerated in my life. I will pursue all investigations and wait for reports."

"This is very troubling."

"Do not trouble yourself my king. Trouble is my job. I regret I could not interview your daughters, Prince Aleck, Prince Paul, Princess Rigan Dr. Sheffield, the chambermaid Arla and the princess' bodyguards, Michalek and Rolf. That will wait, but I can interview your wife's ladies in waiting and Queen Louise."

"You may interview her staff, but not my queen. Louise is upset enough. I will not allow her any more trepidation."

"Of course my king, I will only interview Helene, Bridgett, and Camilla."

"Why did you accentuate Lady Camilla?"

"She was seen near the West Wing with Prince Aleck before the attack. She may have seen something."



"Lady Camilla with Prince Aleck?" King Karl gasped in astonishment.

"Does that surprise you?"

"Camilla had a crush on Prince Paul. Quite childish behavior for it caused her almost to be banned from court."

"Interesting."

Herr Goetz conducted extensive interviews with Helene and Bridgett. He learned that they were in attendance to the queen when the attack took place. There was positively no information that could be supplied by them, but then there was the Lady Camilla.

"Lady Camilla, I appreciate your time."

"Really? I was ordered here for an interrogation. I do not offer my time willingly."

"You know who I am?"

"Everyone knows who you are and why you are here, Herr Goetz. Do you intend on torturing me?"

"Torture is not required anymore. Lies will usually trap the guilty."

"Is that a fact?"

"Shall we get on with it?"

"Please do. I only hope I can help you in anyway to discover the identity of this assassin. I am quite frightened you know."

"Why is that?"

"I was very near before the attack took place."

"Near?"

"You must not tell."

"Secrets are my business."

"Well, you see, well Aleck and I were making love in his suites before the attack."

"Prince Aleck and you are lovers?"

"You must not tell anyone. I would be mortified. He would be compromised and I do want Aleck to finish his schooling before we tell anyone of our love affair."

"I see."

"You can see why I am so frightened. I was very near the attack, just before it happened. Why it could have been me! I haven't stopped shaking since then."

"There were rumors that you were in love with Prince Paul," Siegfried suggested.

"Of course there were. It was a childish crush I had on Prince Paul. It was when Prince Aleck arrived at the castle and our eyes met, we knew it was love at first sight."

"You weren't seen for sometime after the attack. Not until the next day."



"For propriety, I left the by the servants stairs and returned to my suites. My Mama was visiting at the time and I didn't want to arouse her suspicions. We spent the afternoon together and I retired early. I was so happy with my thoughts of loving Prince Aleck."

"Can you recall anything suspicious, out of the ordinary or unusual that day?"

"Absolutely nothing! To think that assassin could have been so near me. I was so distraught when I heard of the attack the next day." Camilla acted distraught placing her hands upon her throat.

"Did you hear anything at all?"

"I told you, no, not a thing!"

"Didn't you hear Arla scream?"

"No I did not. I was in my suite with my Mama."

"Thank you for your time, Lady Camilla. I hope my torturous methods left no marks," Siegfried retorted sarcastically.

"Herr Goetz, your reputation does not do you justice. I thought for certain I was to be beaten," Camilla replied haughtily.

"My lady."

"Herr Goetz."

Camilla left the interview with a smug smile crossing her lips. So the guilty trap themselves with lies. I told the truth. Of course I did leave some facts out, but I can fool even Herr Goetz, Borogia's top security minister.

Siegfried returned to King Karl.

"Did you learn anything more?"

"I am only more disturbed than before."

"None of this makes any sense."

"Not yet, it doesn't, but it will. You have my word."

"I will trust you on that, my friend. This affair is most unsettling to all of us."

"I will personally see to it that more security and protection is provided for the royal family, and I will pursue this matter unto its end," Siegfried vowed.

"What more can you do, other than wait for your investigational reports?"

"Where are Prince Paul and Princess Rigan going for their honeymoon?"

"Surely you're not planning on following them for interviews?"

"I must my king. This matter is too grave."

"It's their honeymoon, man! They should be allowed their happiness before this reality is forced on them again."



"Your Royal Majesty. I must insist, I can find out without your aide, but I would prefer it the easy way. They already have a week's travel advantage on me."

"Why is this necessary?"

"A royal princess is nearly murdered, a royal prince potentially in danger and the royal family a target, and you ask me if I think this is necessary?"

"Paul takes no chances, they are traveling incognito as Herr and Frau Lange," King Karl informed Siegfried.

"Prince Paul is systematic and rigid with schedules. Where is he presently?"

"Rigan is having something of an effect on his rigidity, but they should be on the coast now. They will first stop in London and send Aleck safely back to school. Then they will tour Scotland and spend time at Rigan's home in Eirinn. It is a surprise for her."

"Where in Eirinn?"

"It is the home of Sean O'Cullenan in Fanore, County Cale. You know of it. I visited there several times in my younger years. Rigan is Sean O'Cullenan's daughter."

"Prince Paul married her quite suddenly didn't he?"

"Siegfried, the girl didn't stab herself!"

"Of course not, but all information can piece a puzzle together. Tell me about this sudden marriage."

"Paul returned after a three year tour of the world. We had a talk that it was about time he marry and produce an heir. Actually I gave him one more year before I would arrange a marriage. Paul agreed reluctantly but protested that he could not find that special person. That day he met Rigan in the woods so I am told, and was fatally smitten."

"Love at first sight?"

"I don't know about that, but Paul spent the entire day with her in the library and that evening at a dinner party it was evident to Queen Louise and myself that he was deeply in love. The next morning at breakfast he asked me to have the jeweler make her a betrothal ring. The way Paul talked, God had personally handed him Rigan. She was everything he was looking for in a wife and princess. Paul could barely wait the two weeks for the wedding."

"Such things have been known to happen," Siegfried said soothingly puffing on his pipe.

"Siegfried, my patience is wearing thin. If you could see the two of them together you would know how much in love with each other they are. Why I expect a grandchild in less than a year. You can't possibly think Rigan has deceived him in anyway!"

"I couldn't possibly believe a deception like that. Prince Paul is too intelligent and Princess Rigan's renown only justifies Paul's love for her. I am only putting a puzzle together."

## *Smitten*



"Then what are you thinking?"

"The sudden marriage, the love, a potential heir could have shaken someone trying to seek power."

"That is a reasonable assumption." King Karl raised his hand in protest. "Yes, Siegfried, I know you don't like assumptions."

"Does anyone know Prince Paul's itinerary?"

"Dominique assisted him with the travel plans and sent letters of arrival out to their friends along the way. She also helped secure hostelry when needed."

"I shall be on my way then. I will meet with Princess Dominique and follow them to Eirinn."

"Be discreet, Siegfried. Try not to upset them."

"Your servant!" Siegfried bowed and walked toward the door.

"God speed and safe trip, Siegfried," King Karl wished his friend and security chief.



## Chapter Seventeen

The long two-week trip overland in Germany was near its end. It would then be a quick three-day trip to London by ship.

Lady Margaret had accompanied them to the chagrin of Prince Paul.

"It's going to be all right," Rigan said reassuringly to her husband.

"No, it isn't. I don't like this, have not liked it and won't like it!"

"You were the one to tell me, that you couldn't stop Prince Aleck short of putting him a monastery."

"Bloody Hell Rigan. One night was bad enough, but having Lady Margaret Kincaid travel with us to Hamburg, and now travel on the ship with us to England is too much."

"That's where we going? England?"

"That's only a port stop, but we will enjoy a few days there. We can shop," Prince Paul suddenly grinned enjoying his wife's joy.

"You mean you shop and I watch while you select things," Rigan laughed remembering the shopping trip in Brogav.

"Don't change the subject on me Rigan. I'm angry. I want to tell that 'Brazen Hussy' to find someone else to adulterate with."

"You're really worried for him, aren't you?" Rigan asked placing her hand on her husband's strong chest.

"Of course I am. He's just a boy. When the husband finds out, Aleck will be called out. He isn't good enough of a shot for a duel. He'll be killed or wounded. And I won't be there to protect him."

"The husband may not find out," Rigan hoped inside but voiced out loud in reassurance.

"He will! That little tart will be sure to tell her husband when she's in a pique to get even with him for having a mistress. I've seen it all before."

"I love that protective side of you."

"I don't like her. Lady Margaret even uses Arla like her personal maid. The woman has no scruples and no morals. I hate to see what her three children will turn out like."

"Like their nannies," Rigan chuckled with the truth of the statement.

"When our baby comes, we won't let the nannies raise him will we?" Prince Paul asked in concern.



"Him? You could have a her," Rigan teased.

"No, our first child will be a boy."

"How do you know these things?"

"I just do, and quit changing the subject, Rigan. I don't want that woman on our ship with Aleck. I am going to tell her she can't come with us no matter what Aleck told her. I 'll even pay for her passage on a different ship."

"I'll try to talk to her," Rigan volunteered.

"Don't get sucked in by her childish ways, Rigan. She is a full-fledged, sharp clawed, and sharp-tongued woman. You have been way to kind to her. Be sure you get Arla back from her. I don't think Arla likes having to be her chambermaid either."

Rigan left their room to go to the adjoining rooms where Lady Margaret and Arla were staying.

"Oh do come in Frau Lange. Arla be a dear and get us some tea, then you can finish pressing my travel suit," Lady Margaret ordered after Arla had answered the door.

"Arla, I didn't realize Lady Margaret was making you do all this work," Rigan whispered. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"I'm not one to complain Your Royal Highness. You asked me to assist Lady Margaret, and I would do anything you ask."

"What are you talking to Arla about Frau Lange? Really, conversing with staff. Your country must be quite backward."

Rigan's eyes turned bright green. "Arla is my staff, not yours!"

"Hmpfh! You shouldn't get into a snit about it."

"Arla, we will return to our rooms. Assisting Lady Margaret is at an end!"

"I beg your pardon! I need assistance traveling all alone with just a driver and footman."

"You can beg all you want. You won't get my pardon!" Rigan sneered because of the rudeness of Lady Margaret.

"Why I never! Such rudeness and lack of manners is inexcusable. This is completely barbaric."

"I have reached the end of my tether with women like you. Calling sensitivity and caring barbaric, while your pompous, self indulgent, self centered, whoring, and unchristian behavior is worse than barbaric, it's sinful and heartless!"

"Whoring?"

"Don't act innocent! You have been seducing my brother in law to your bed every night. You and your adulterous lusts."

"Adulterous?"

"You never learned the word? In the time of Christ you would have been stoned to death, Madame!"



"I just needed solace."

"You just needed lust! You chose an innocent vulnerable young man to pull down with you in your dark hole of sin."

"Why shouldn't I enjoy the pleasures like my husband enjoys his mistress?"

"Do it with your footman and driver for all I care, which I am sure you already have! You will not have Aleck!"

"That is a cruel insult!"

"Cruel but true I am certain. Two wrongs do not make a right, Lady Kincaid. Perhaps if you were a better wife, your husband would not wander. You will leave our company and find a ship other than ours to depart on. You will never see Aleck again, ever!"

"You can't do this to me! I am Lady Kincaid, Frau Lange! I have title and land, you are a nobody."

"Lady Kincaid, did you ever wonder about just who might be traveling with a grand carriage, a luggage wagon, four bodyguards, a chambermaid, valet, footman, groomsman, and doctor? Certainly a peasant would not, Lady Kincaid. I dare say you should watch your tongue. Especially to my husband, Crown Prince Paul of Borogia."

"He is the Crown Prince?" Lady Margaret gasped.

"He is the Crown Prince who does not like you. I have half a mind to write to your husband about your behavior and suggest he beat you for your transgressions. He is in Austria is he not? I am sure he could be easily found with the help of the Hapsburg Royal Court."

"Oh, please Princess, don't do that!" Lady Margaret inhaled fearfully.

"Go home and take care of your children, Madame and leave Aleck alone. I want you gone from this hotel today!"

"I'll pack immediately."

"See to it! Another thing, if you say anything to your husband about your liaison with our Prince Aleck, I will have you dragged from your home in Scotland and taken to Borogia for a beheading. Now, that is barbarism!"

"You are a frightening woman."

"Formidable and determined, Madame. Don't try my patience any further!"

"Rigan, your eyes are green!" Paul commented when Rigan walked into their hotel room with Arla. "What happened?"

"I merely had a conversation with Lady Kincaid," Rigan's voice was deceptively calm as she spoke to her husband and tried to gain control of her anger. "She is leaving our company today and finding a suitable ship for transportation to Scotland."

"Is that all?"

"Of course."



"Arla, what happened in Lady Kincaid's room?" Paul asked knowing his wife did not tell him the entire story.

"A conversation just like Princess Rigan said."

"Arla, we call her Frau Lange while we travel, and I don't believe you. I am ordering you to tell me what happened."

Arla hesitated a moment and then with a broad grin told Prince Paul. "Lady Kincaid never ran up against a real lady, like my Princess. A smart and pure lady, like my Princess."

"Arla, that is quite enough." Rigan tried to interrupt. She was always ashamed of herself when she lost her temper.

"Continue Arla!" Paul spoke quietly. "Rigan, stay out of this!"

"Well, Lady Kincaid put on airs and got all huffy. My lady sort of told Lady Kincaid what she really was in her unchristian soul. It was kind of like holding a mirror to see one's real face. My lady made sure Lady Kincaid would never bother our Prince Aleck again."

"Just how did my wife accomplish that?"

"Besides threatening to tell Lady Kincaid's husband about her.. Ah.. loose morality, my lady warned her that if any mention of her affair with Prince Aleck goes to her husband and Aleck is hurt, well my lady would have her beheaded."

"Well done, Rigan!" Paul roared with laughter. "A beheading? That would be a sight in Borogia, that would be a sight indeed."

"I hate losing my temper," Rigan said sheepishly.

"But she asked for it, my lady," Arla consoled.

"Rigan, you only lose your temper when you are standing as avenging angel," Paul piped in cheerily. God he loved it when Rigan showed her true royalty and noblesse oblige.

"Paul, I wish you would stop saying that. I was angry, not an avenging angel."

"But you are, my angel, whether you choose to believe it or not. If my temper is ever lost, I am afraid of the consequence. My heartfelt gratitude for ridding us of that leech."

The entourage rested in Hamburg for a few days before embarking on the ship to London.

It was the first day out on the voyage to London of the short sea trip when Rigan was ill again. The past few days in the morning, Rigan would stay abed while Arla tended to her and applied wet cloths to her head. Arla had the chamber pot close by in case the nausea became worse and Rigan retched.

The first day at sea was the same as the previous days.

"I feel so terrible, Arla," Rigan sighed placing her hand upon her forehead.



"It's the child you are carrying. The sickness will go away after awhile."

"I'm just seasick, Arla."

"The sea is calm, my lady."

"We don't know if I'm schwanger yet. It is only about five weeks."

"You haven't had your menses."

"I suffered trauma with the stabbing and that is a good reason to miss them."

"You're schwanger with the Prince's heir, my lady."

"Arla, I don't want you saying that until we know it to be true."

"I can tell it is true."

"Just how can you tell that?"

"First sign is that your breasts have enlarged slightly and the nipple color has darkened. The second sign is that your breasts are sensitive to the touch. I have noticed your face when I dress you. The third is that you have missed your menses. The fourth is your morning sickness, my lady."

"We still won't know for sure until I miss my menses another month. Then I will verify it with Doctor Sheffield. Until then I want you to keep this to yourself."

"The Prince will make a wonderful Papa, and I am sure this would make him very happy."

"It might, but just think how disappointed he would be if I wasn't."

"But you are!" Arla insisted.

"Arla, I won't hear of it anymore. Oh dear, Oh my, Arla, get the chamber pot."

Damon saw Paul standing on the quarterdeck looking out into the sea. "Something on your mind?"

"It's Rigan."

"Is she in bed sick again?"

"Every day now for three days. She's retching every day. She looks gray and pale in the morning."

"Do you want me to examine her?"

"Yes, Damon I really do. Today Rigan says she is seasick. Look around Damon the sea is calm. I think she is schwanger."

"Just what makes you think that? Or, are you just hoping she is. I know you want children, Paul."

"Damon, I am not an ignorant man. She is schwanger. I know her breasts and they are swelling, filling with milk, their color darker and sensitive to the touch. I cannot play with them while we make love as I used to. She hasn't had her menses in five weeks, and



yes, I would know that. Presently, she is ill every morning and retching."

"For someone who is not a doctor, I would say your diagnosis is correct. When do you want me to examine her?"

"Would this moment be asking too much?"

"Not at all. I'll get my bag and meet you in your cabin."

"Rigan, Damon is coming to examine you." Paul said quietly as he sat next to her on the bed.

"That isn't necessary. I'm just a little seasick."

"The sea is calm."

"But the ship is moving."

"I'm worried about you, Rigan."

"You needn't be my love. I'm fine really."

"Please let him look at you. Do it for me," Paul requested taking her hands and brushing them softly with his lips.

The knock on the door indicated that Dr. Damon Sheffield had arrived.

"Arla please let Damon in and then stay here with us to assist in your lady's examination."

"Damon, this isn't really necessary. I'm fine really. I am just seasick."

"The sea is calm, Rigan."

"Why does everyone keep saying that?" Rigan pouted and crossed her arms over her chest.

"Give over Rigan, let me examine you and make sure you don't have a cold or something worse." Damon urged. "You of all people know that if it is caught early enough we can use your herbs to take care of it."

"All right. I give in. Everyone is so unnecessarily worried," Rigan finally relented. Maybe it would be a good thing to find out if she was schwanger.

"Paul do you want to leave while I examine Rigan?" Damon asked while washing his hands.

"No, I'll stay this time and don't even think of trying to chase me out."

Damon rolled his eyes and walked over to Rigan. "Open your mouth. Good girl, now I am going to check the glands on your neck. Let me check your ears. Very good! Let me check your eyes. Cough for me. Excellent."

"You see I'm fine," Rigan stated.

"I'm not done yet. Arla, please undo your ladies chemise ties for me."

"What are you going to check?" Rigan shouted in indignation.



"Calm down, Rigan. I am going to check your abdomen and breasts."

"Why?"

"To make sure everything is all right on the inside. Be a good girl and lay down for me," Damon ordered. He watched as Arla undressed Rigan. "Thank you Arla."

"I am not a good girl!" Rigan protested angrily.

"Shh!" Damon pressed on her abdomen and then moved down to the area of her womb. His gentle hands were pressing for the signs of pregnancy. The significant little bump of pregnancy was there. Damon had been taught to look for it by a Greek mid wife he spent some time with while on his trip with Prince Paul in Greece. It was in the early stages but present. He then moved his hands up to her breasts and kneaded them. Damon also noted the darker nipple color.

"Ohhhh! " Rigan cringed on the pressure.

"That hurts you?"

"Yes, Damon it is quite uncomfortable."

Damon pulled back the quilt from the bed. "I am going to examine your pelvic area, Rigan. I am going to raise your chemise."

"No, you're not!"

"Yes I am Rigan. Paul is here and he will hold you down for me if necessary."

"Why are you doing this?"

"I am checking for signs of enceinte Rigan. Paul believes you are, and now I also am certain you are. I just need to determine approximately how far in term you are. Be a good Mamman and raise your chemise and legs so I can examine you."

"She is schwanger!" Paul smiled with joy.

"Yes, she is, and now if I can just see. Rigan, raise you legs a little more for me. That's it." Damon opened her legs and looked in towards the uterus. The color had changed and when he inserted his fingers and felt the texture of the uterine lining he felt the change in the tissue. This tissue change was another teaching of the Greek mid wife. While his hand was in her, Damon pressed down from her abdomen with his other hand on the little bump he had felt prior and then moved to feel its size.

The mid wife had told him how to judge the length of pregnancy by the bumps size in relation to his fingertip length.

"This is blasted uncomfortable, Damon. Are you done yet?" Rigan growled.

"Yes Rigan, I am. Congratulations, you are about four to five weeks enceinte. Congratulations Paul, you are going to be a Papa."

"Are you certain?" Rigan asked hopefully. She did want to be a mother and most of all give her Prince a child.

"I am certain, Rigan. We have to make sure you eat right and take more of your herbals for strength and nutrition. We want a nice

## *Smitten*



healthy heir, now don't we?" Damon pulled down her chemise and recovered her with the quilt. "You have morning sickness, Rigan. It will go away eventually. We'll make you some special herbal teas for you to help alleviate the nausea."

Damon left the bed to shake Paul's hand. "Good job, old man. I know how much you wanted children."

Paul came and sat on the bed by Rigan. He cupped her face with his hands and looked into her eyes. "Rigan, you do me honor to carry and bear my child. I am delighted. I love you, my angel." Paul had a wide smile on his face and his eyes danced with delight.

"Arla! The chamber pot, quickly!" It was retrieved barely in time.

Paul jumped to get out of the way, looking quite sheepishly at his wife.

Rigan was mortified. It wasn't something a woman wanted to do in front of her husband.

Arla understood Rigan's distress. "My lady should rest until this passes. Why don't you men leave? I'll take care of her."

In the dining area of the ship Paul and Damon poured drinks in celebration. Aleck walked in on them looking for a stiff drink himself. Aleck was upset by the sudden disappearance of his libido reliever, Lady Margaret. "I don't recall ever seeing you drink this early big brother. As a matter of fact, you rarely drink. Is something the matter?"

"Everything is wonderful, Aleck. Positively, exclusively, marvelously, and divinely wonderful."

"Damon, this isn't my brother, or he must be very feverish."

"Aleck, you are going to be an uncle," Paul grinned broadly.

"Big brother, I am an uncle. Three and one half times."

"Add another half, little brother."

"You? Rigan?"

Paul nodded.

"Congratulations! I never thought I would see this day. Let me call everyone in."

Aleck dragged everyone into the dining room of the ship. "Big brother has an announcement to make."

"Thank you Aleck. Maurice, Vladimir, Auguste, Michalek and Rolf, the Princess has become even more precious, if that is possible. You, gentlemen, will be guarding two not one. Rigan, and my son!"

The applause burst out. Everyone hugged the Prince in congratulations. Vladimir kept repeating, "I don't believe it. I simply don't believe it."

Maurice's stoic face was abandoned again by his broad smile.



*Payton Lee*



"When we arrive in London, we must send word to Mamman and Papa!" Aleck said to his brother. "They will be thrilled."

## Chapter Eighteen

Paul saw to it that Aleck was sent back to school a week after they arrived in London. Paul had added a few extra days sojourn to this visit in order to take some time to shop. He was so delighted with Rigan's pregnancy he would have bought all of London for her if she had asked. Paul also doted on Rigan so much she felt smothered, but adored her husband for his sensitivity. It was embarrassing sometimes as he carried her down steps and through the hotel lobby to the waiting carriage. Rigan would bury her head in his chest as he carried her through the lobby because when people looked he would say, "she's with child." He told her this morning they would be shopping and Rigan protested. She did not want to go shopping with him. She didn't shop, she just watched him make his selections. It was useless to argue with the happy Prince.

"I'll carry you to the shop, my angel," Paul said to Rigan as he reached to lift her from the carriage.

"I'm schwanger, Paul. I am not paralyzed. I can walk."

"You're carrying my baby, I have to make sure you don't strain yourself."

"I couldn't possibly strain myself by walking a few feet to a shop. What is this store anyway?"

"We need to buy baby his things. This is the millinery. The manager of the hotel we're staying in recommended it. The British Royal Family buys from here."

"You talked about our baby to the manager of the hotel?" Rigan made a face as Paul picked her up and carried her towards the store. "Is there anyone you haven't told I'm schwanger? This morning, even the hotel maid commented. 'You look lovely Frau Lange, being with child becomes you,'" Rigan mimicked.

Vladimir appeared after reining his horse. "All of London knows, Frau Lange. I don't think there is anyone our beloved Paul hasn't told."

Michalek walked very close to Paul who was holding Rigan. Watching every step and spreading his arms across Paul's as he carried her in case the Prince tired or dropped her. Auguste and Rolf brought up the rear and took their posts outside as Michalek opened the door for Paul and Rigan. Paul seated Rigan on the divan as the clerks came



in. Michalek started to check windows and backdoors, reassuring himself he was in the proper place to watch his Princess and her son.

"Good Day," Paul addressed the milliner. "I am Herr Lange and this is Frau Lange. My wife is with child. We need to look at child bed linens!"

Rigan rolled her eyes. She was only six weeks pregnant and Paul was acting like she was giving birth. She had never witnessed any man more excited about a baby than her husband. "There is no rush, Paul. We can buy all of this in Borogia. I know of a village woman named Marta that does the most exquisite weave. I want to buy a blanket from her."

"Then I shall send word today and buy six blankets from her for our son."

"We don't know if it's a boy."

"I do!"

"I won't even try to argue with you, Paul," Rigan said resigning herself to her exuberant husband. She sank down into the comfortable divan.

"That's good sweet wife, you must not upset yourself in your delicate condition."

"Any color preferences, Frau Lange? Yellow, soft green, white?" the milliner asked.

Before Rigan could open her mouth to answer, Paul replied.

"Blue."

"Blue?"

"Of course, pink is for girls. I want blue for my son."

"These are our offerings for Child-Bed Linen, Frau Lange."

The clerk again addressed Rigan as he handed her the pattern book.

Carefully she paged through the book looking at each baby design. It started to feel real and she began to enjoy the shopping for the baby.

"Do you find any patterns to your taste, Frau Lange?"

Paul again answered. "We'll take 30 frocks in blue silk, 30 bedgowns in blue silk, 48 shirts in blue Baize Flannel, 48 blue silk caps, 48 fine bellibands, 96 clouts, and 96 pilchers, in long, crawler and walker, each."

"Four tucks in the longs, Herr Lange?"

"No, three tucks. My son will be a big baby. He will have outgrown the first tuck at his birth," Paul answered proudly. It was certainly fortuitous that he involved himself in the births of Beatrice and Martyn. He was quite accomplished with knowledge of child bed linens.

Rigan looked at the bemused clerk who was looking at her with question in his eyes. "He knows these things. Just don't even ask."



"I presume you want the bassinet and blankets in blue, Herr Lange?"

"Correct."

"Would you care to look at the different styles?" He handed the book to Rigan.

Rigan paged carefully through the book, and returned to one that had caught her eye. "Can we buy this one?" She asked Paul.

"Do you like it that much?"

"Yes."

"We'll order this one."

"In Blue!" The clerk said stoically.

"In Blue!" Paul agreed.

"And would the lace skirting and sheets be in blue?"

"In Blue!" Paul replied. "We will need seven sets. One fresh set for each day."

"The blankets, Frau Lange. We have woolen, cotton, linen, and silk."

"We will take seven of each fabric."

"In Blue! One for each day," the milliner sighed in exasperation.

"In Blue! One for each day!" Paul responded energetically.

"Is there anything else you require?"

"No, I think that covers it," Paul answered.

"No breeches?" Rigan asked a bit sarcastically.

"Do you think we should? We can stop by a tailor."

"No Paul, I do not think we should. I really don't!"

"I'll total your charges and send the tab to your hotel," the milliner interceded.

"That isn't necessary. I will pay you in pound notes as soon as you give me your total."

"Herr Lange, this is well over a thousand pound purchase," the milliner warned.

"And your problem is?"

"Quite. I'll give you a total in a few moments."

"I require all the purchases shipped to this address," Paul requested handing the shopkeeper a scrawled note.

"Brogav Palace! Borogia! To the personal attention of Queen Louise Janette?"

"My Mamman."

"I beg your pardon Your Royal Highness. We'll see to everything," the milliner fawned when he realized he was serving royalty.

"Can you tell me where the closest toy shop is located?" Paul asked.



"The shop is located across the street and two doors down to your right."

A clerk came with the tabulation and the shopkeeper handed it to Paul. Within moments Paul had paid the entire tab, with plenty of money yet to spend. Upon their arrival in London, Paul had made a visit to the bank and presented his drafts for banking notes and cash in pounds. His son was going to have the best of everything.

Michalek had scooped up Rigan in his arms and waited for Paul at the door. "Really Michalek, I am quite capable of walking," Rigan scolded.

"The Prince does not want you to exert yourself in your delicate condition. I am here to see to it that his orders are carried out."

"The Prince wants you to protect me. That doesn't include carrying me," Rigan protested uselessly.

"Oh but it does. I protect you from everyone and everything including yourself."

"Hmpfh!" Rigan said in temper.

Paul was like a child himself in the toyshop. Toy soldiers, rocking horses, clowns, and blocks were purchased. If it was a toy for a boy, it was purchased to the delight of the shopkeeper. The tab was paid in pound notes and shipped to Brogav Palace.

"It's your turn, my angel. We will go shopping for you," Paul announced as Michalek carried Rigan out the door and towards the waiting carriage.

"I don't want to buy anything."

"I want to buy you new clothes for when your tummy expands with my baby son."

"I am only six weeks schwanger, Paul. It will be several more months before I need that. I would prefer to buy them with your Mamman in Brogav."

"But I want to buy them for you."

"No Paul!"

"I won't upset you by trying to convince you. We will go to the jewelers near our hotel. I want to buy you jewelry in honor of my baby son."

"Paul!" Rigan squealed in exasperation.

"On this there will be no discussion. If I want to buy you jewelry, I will. My schwanger angel will sparkle with jewels when we visit Eirinn."

Paul jumped into the carriage. "Give her to me Michalek, on my lap."

Carrying Rigan up and into the carriage, Michalek gently placed Rigan on Paul's lap.

"You're taking me to Eirinn?" Rigan asked cheerfully. She couldn't believe her ears.



"That is my honeymoon surprise. I have made arrangements to stay near Fanore. You can visit your home and your brother." Paul kissed her cheek as he put his arms protectively around her.

"Oh Paul, you are so wonderful! You are so good to me! I love you so much," Rigan cried wrapping her arms around Paul's neck.

"I love you too, schwanger one." Paul put his hand on her tummy. "He is mine as you are mine. I will love and protect you both with all my heart and strength."

At the jewelers Paul bought Rigan sapphire rings, necklaces, and bracelets. Blue stones for his son.

They stayed two weeks in London. Paul wanted Rigan to tour the city and enjoy the theatre. They ate at the finest eateries every evening. Nothing was too good for Paul's Princess.

The next week, Paul and Rigan enjoyed a tour of Scotland's highlands and castles. They lingered for a few more days at the end of their Scottish tour before taking a ferry to Dublin.

Two weeks had passed from the time the letter was sent from London to Brogav Palace addressed to Queen Louise Janette.

Queen Louise was in her royal suites. She was sitting in the parlor working on one of the herbal etchings for Damon's medicinal book when she received Paul's letter.

Upon reading it, her eyes lit up and a large smile crossed her face as she jumped up and began walking briskly towards the offices of the king in the Palace.

"Karl! Karl!" Queen Louise called out as she ran through the corridors of Brogav Palace.

King Karl stepped out of his library as he heard her calling. "Sweet Jesus woman, what is the matter with you?"

Queen Louise was waving the letter as she approached. "It's from Paul!" she said breathing hard.

"Well what does it say? What puts you in such a lather?"

"Rigan is with child!"

"Let me see that letter!" King Karl started to read it. "Dear Mamman. I just have to write to you and Papa to let you know that Rigan carries my son in her tummy. We just found out and wanted you to know right away. I will be making many purchases for our son in London and on our trip. I will be sending them to you, Mamman. I want you to start making the most beautiful nursery that Borogia has ever seen. Put it next to my room in the suites. Your loving son, Paul. P.S. Rigan would like six, make that seven woven blankets from a woman near the country castle named Marta. I want them in blue."



"Isn't it wonderful, Karl? Just a little while ago we were worried that Paul wasn't married and now he is married and going to be a Papa. I will soon hold my precious little grandchild in my arms."

"This is wonderful news, Louise! Paul is fertile! Just like his Papa," King Karl bragged. "I remember I seeded you with Paul on our wedding night."

"Karl, shush, the servants," Queen Louise blushed.

"Yes, Louise." The king immediately obeyed the only person he would obey and spoke in a whisper. "We must write to Dominique and Adriane to let them know."

Bridgett, Helene, Corinna and Camilla had followed the queen as she ran to find King Karl. When Camilla heard the news of the pregnancy she flushed to a bright pink. Feigning happiness with the other ladies in waiting her mind went astray for just a brief moment. I will kill you Rigan, you and that little bastard you are carrying.

"Lady Camilla, are you feeling well? You are quite flushed," Bridgett asked noticing the blush taking over Camilla's body. Bridgett was not convinced of Camilla's sincerity of happiness at the announcement of Rigan's pregnancy.

"I think it was the swift movement down the stairs and through the Palace. I will be fine in a moment." I will be fine when I kill Rigan and her bastard. I will bear Paul his son, not Rigan.

The ferry was approaching Dublin when Paul spotted a familiar figure on the banks of the Dublin Ferry dock.

"Michalek, Rolf, Auguste, Vladimir!" He shouted.

The men responded immediately to the shout and the urgency in the Prince's voice.

"Surround Rigan immediately! Cover and Shield her. There is someone at the dock that I know. His presence here is most disturbing. Protect Rigan with your life," Prince Paul whispered so Rigan would not hear him.

Protecting Rigan with their lives was not a necessary order.

"Stay here with Rigan until I come get her," Paul commanded.

Paul jumped off the ferry the minute it landed and ran to the solitary figure standing to the side of the dock.

"Siegfried, what are you doing in Dublin? What is the matter? Have you learned something? Is Rigan in immediate danger? Don't tell me your presence here is accidental. I won't believe it any way."

"Your Royal Highness, if I would get a chance to even answer one of your questions I would be grateful," Siegfried laughed.

"Please call me Herr Lange or Paul. We have no desire to announce our pedigree to the local people, Siegfried."



"I have come to Dublin for my investigation on the attack on Frau Lange. There is nothing the matter, I am trying to solve this puzzle, and Rigan is in no immediate danger that I am aware of. My presence here is not accidental. I need to question all of you about that day. I will follow up with Aleck when I leave here. I am presuming you have sent him back to school since I do not see him."

"You presume correctly. Rigan does not know who you are. I do not want her upset. She is in a delicate condition. Rigan carries my son. I would appreciate you not telling her who you are and why you are here. I will introduce you as an old family friend, that is the truth, and you may interview all of us directly. Rigan I will not allow you to question."

"Congratulations Paul, on your pending parenthood. I would not want to upset Rigan in any form, especially in her delicate condition. My interview with her will be quite subtle. You have my word."

Paul and Siegfried walked back on to the ferry. Paul gave a warning glance to his bodyguards, Vladimir and Auguste. They recognized it as be silent and say nothing, especially when they too recognized Herr Goetz. His being in Eirinn waiting for them was not a good sign. They both moved in closer to Rigan. Michalek and Rolf felt the tension and closed in more as well.

"Vladimir, Auguste, you remember our family friend Siegfried? What a surprise this is. He was visiting Eirinn and was about to depart on the ferry that brought us. I convinced him to join us."

Vladimir and Auguste nodded stiffly. Michalek and Rolf felt the nuance of their fellow bodyguards. Something was amiss. Michalek would get Vladimir to tell him what was going on later.

"Michalek, Rolf, Damon, Arla, please meet Herr Siegfried Goetz, a family friend. He just happens to be here on Holiday. Isn't that fortunate? Of course you know my valet Maurice and our carriage driver, Otto."

"Aren't you going to introduce me?" Rigan asked stepping out from between the bodies of four men that had suddenly surrounded her.

"I was saving the best for last," Paul smiled taking her hand and covering her shoulder protectively with his arm. "Siegfried, this is my beautiful schwanger wife, Rigan."

"A pleasure to meet you Frau Lange, and congratulations on your child. I wish you a happy one. Children are a great joy."

"You have children, Herr Goetz?" Rigan asked.

"Six! Everyone of them is a treasure to me."

"I am so happy for you," Rigan bubbled genuinely. She was happy to carry Paul's child. She loved their child already.





"Siegfried is here on holiday. Isn't that fortunate for us to have met him here? I asked him to join us for a few days. You won't mind will you Rigan?" Paul asked.

In the carriage traveling to the O'Brien manor, a mutual friend of Paul and Dominique, Rigan started talking to Siegfried Goetz who was now accompanying them. Paul's arm remained protectively around Rigan's shoulders.

"What brings you to Eirinn?" Rigan asked Siegfried Goetz.

"A holiday as Prince Paul has told you."

"Somehow that doesn't ring true, Herr Goetz," Rigan contradicted.

"Perceptive of you Princess. I rarely travel anywhere without a purpose. It is part of my business."

"Rigan is extremely perceptive and intelligent, Siegfried!" Paul said in a low warning voice. "There is little that escapes her." Paul was definitely giving Siegfried a warning.

"Just what is your business, Herr Goetz?" Rigan asked conversationally.

"Please call me Siegfried, it would make me feel more comfortable."

"Then you must call me Rigan, and do not evade my question. I am interested."

"I told you, Siegfried," Paul warned.

"I am employed by his majesty, the king. I work for the Circle in the matter of exchanging information, money transfers, written agreements, that sort of thing. Anything that requires discretion."

"I see why you are so reluctant to discuss your work. How does your family feel about you're traveling about so much? Surely your children and wife must miss you dreadfully?" Rigan observed.

"I always make sure I am home for one full week every month with few exceptions. Then I catch up on all their news, school, hobbies, and the like. I also hear what is happening in the Circle. I just recently heard you had a very close call. An attack on your person I believe?"

Paul scowled at Siegfried and Rigan felt Paul's muscles tense as he tightened his arm around her shoulder.

"Really Paul, what is wrong with you?" Rigan asked turning to look up at him, then turning back to Siegfried. "Unfortunately that is true. I really remember nothing of it other than hearing footsteps, feeling a hot burning pain and then fainting."

"You didn't see the attacker then?"

"I didn't."

"Do you recall anything of it? Maybe you could recall the sound of the footsteps, heavy or soft? An odor, pleasant or foul?"

## *Smitten*



"Enough Siegfried!" Paul snapped. "I do not wish my wife upset with such unpleasant memories."

"I am fine Paul, you really are worrying about me too much!" Rigan reprimanded. "It is strange that you should ask that Siegfried, the footsteps were light and an odor fragrant to the senses."

"Interesting, most interesting." Siegfried smiled. "You see Rigan, you did remember something of the attack after all. It is such a challenge to make the mind work, isn't it?"

"Your business is minds as well?" Rigan grinned.

"Understanding the mind is a hobby for me. It is a very bad habit of mine to play with them even on holiday. In my business I must be very alert and capable of reading all nuances, pulling out information that my associates are reluctant to divulge. I keep my skills honed, you see."

"I see!"

"Enough of such conversations. Tell me all about your wedding and honeymoon with this most overbearing husband you have married."

"I am not overbearing!" Paul retorted.

"Actually husband, that seems to be the consensus."

"You mistake my being protective with overbearing," Paul defended.

"Only when your protectiveness exceeds parameters into smothering," Rigan countered.

"You see what I have married, Siegfried? A wife who challenges me on every count."

"You, my Prince, deserve the challenges. Especially those challenges offered by such an intelligent woman. You will be a fine queen, Rigan. Your balance to Paul here will bring the Circle a happy future," Siegfried prophesized.

## Chapter Nineteen

"Who is that man?" Michalek whispered to Vladimir as they were unloading the luggage from the carriage to allow the servants to take it into the O'Brien manor.

"Which man?" Vladimir shrugged while lifting a heavy trunk.

"The man, Herr Goetz. I know you know him. I saw recognition on your face and fear when you saw him," Michalek accused.

"You don't want to know who he is, Michalek," Vladimir warned taking another trunk from the carriage.

"Blast you Vladimir, tell me."

"Michalek, he is King Karl's Security Minister. A man that finds out everything he wants right down to your bare soul."

"What in the name of the Holy Mother is the Security Minister doing here?"

"I don't know, but it isn't any holiday. His business is dirty. Prince Paul obviously doesn't want Princess Rigan to know who he is."

"The servants are coming!" Michalek warned.

"Paul, I know you are concerned with the welfare of your lovely wife, but you really needn't carry her everywhere," Siegfried said to Paul when he carried Rigan from the carriage to the manor.

"She is schwanger, Siegfried. Rigan could stumble and fall."

"As the Papa of six children I can reassure you that schwanger women are not porcelain, and walking is good for them."

"Thank you Siegfried. I have been trying to tell him that. He won't listen to me."

"Am I really being too overprotective, my angel?" Paul asked in dismay.

"Yes Paul, you really are being too overprotective. Please put me down."

Paul let Rigan gently slip to her feet from his arms.

"Forgive me. I just love you and baby."

"I love you for caring, but you don't have to worry about me. Thousands of women have babies every day."



"Thousands of women aren't carrying my baby. Only you are!" Paul defended.

Rigan couldn't help but love her husband even more. She knew he loved her and wanted their baby. She squeezed his hand tenderly.

Doilidh O'Brien greeted them at the door, "Eideard and I are honored by your visit Prince Paul." Then she looked at Rigan. "And this must be the lovely new bride, Princess Rigan. Dominique wrote me about you. She adores you."

"We thank you for your hospitality, and if I can impose upon you?" Paul requested.

"Of course, anything you need."

"Princess Rigan is with child and the journey has been tiring. I would like her to nap before our evening meal."

"You're going to have a baby! How wonderful! You must be dreadfully tired. I'll take you to your room at once."

The O'Brien manor was a large estate house. It had been built recently and had many of the new housing amenities including a private chamber and bathroom that contained a large tub. Rigan and Paul were placed in the guest suite. Lavishly decorated in red velvets and gold braid. The furniture was delicate wooden furniture of the French design. The divan and chairs were covered with red embroidered silks. The bed was of an immense size and rose on a short dais. Paintings and mirrors decorated the walls.

"Oh how lovely! I would love a bath!" Rigan exclaimed as she saw the large porcelain tub in the bathroom.

"I'll send the maids up immediately with hot water," Doilidh promised. "I'll also send up a fresh chemise and one of my bed jackets for your nap."

Maurice and Arla scurried about unpacking necessary luggage.

Paul unbuttoned her traveling jacket and removed it for Rigan, placing it on the chair. Then he began untying her skirt as Rigan untied the cords on her corset. "Are you planning on making love, my Prince?"

The maids and footmen entered the room carrying up the hot water for the bath just then. Paul put his arms protectively around Rigan and started kissing her neck tenderly.

"No, too many servants. I will bathe you however; and then tuck you into bed for your nap"

A young maid offered Rigan a fresh chemise and bed jacket. "Will ya be needin me now to bathe your worship?"

Paul nodded to Maurice and Arla to leave as he answered the maid. "We won't be needing your help, but thank you," Paul answered. As the servants left, Paul locked the door and finished removing



Rigan's clothes. Removing his jacket and rolling up the sleeves on his shirt he carefully picked Rigan up and gently placed her in the tub.

"This is heavenly! You are just too good to me," Rigan sighed in contentment as Paul washed her hair and then soaped her body, washing her gently.

"You are too wonderful for me. Remember you were bathing when I met you? My gift from heaven."

"I remember. You kissed me and I thought heaven descended on me," Rigan reminisced.

"Now I must take care of you and my baby," Paul said as he rubbed Rigan's tummy with his hand. "Or God just might take you both away from me if I do not treasure my gift"

"Is that why you pamper me?" Rigan smiled. "God is not cruel. My God is loving and caring. God wouldn't take us away."

Paul frowned. "I won't take any chances. That day in the country castle I will never forget. When I saw you lying on the floor, not moving, I.."

Rigan put her finger on his lips. "Shush. It's over! We'll have a long and happy life and I'll give you lots of babies to spoil and pamper."

Paul lifted Rigan from the bath and dried her. He helped her put on a clean chemise and bed jacket and tucked her into bed. "Take a nice long nap. Baby needs a rest. I'll be back later."

"Where are you going?"

"I saw a bookstore back on the streets in Dublin. I want to go back there and pick up a few books."

"Will you bring me some to read? Gulliver's Travels I think."

"Jonathan Swift?"

"He's Aran, even if he is a Protestant."

"If they have it, you will have it," Paul vowed to his love.

Paul told Doilidh that he was planning on visiting the bookstore in Dublin and would return for the evening meal. Vladimir and Auguste rode with him.

"What is Goetz doing here, Paul?" Were the first words that came from Vladimir's mouth.

"Investigating the attack on Rigan," Paul replied. "He will be interviewing all of us."

"I don't understand why he couldn't wait until we returned to Borogia."

They both turned upon hearing a horse galloping behind them.

"Perhaps Siegfried can tell us why," Paul smiled as he recognized the rider catching up to them. "We were just talking about you."

"You were?" Siegfried grinned. "Nothing good I'm sure."



"Vladimir would like to know why you couldn't wait for our return to Borogia for your interviews."

"Well Vladimir, like I told the king, this attack on a royal person in the sanctity of a royal house is a grave situation calling for drastic measures. I will not sleep well until I find out just who is behind the attack. The security of the Circle and Royal Family are my responsibility."

"Do you think your trip all the way here will be worth it, Siegfried?" Paul asked.

"It already has been. Your wife have has given me more information than anyone regarding this attack."

"How can that be? She was stabbed from behind, fainted and didn't even see her attacker," Vladimir protested.

"But she did hear and smell the attacker. I am convinced the assassin was a member of the royal household and slight of build."

"How do you deduce that from Rigan?" Vladimir scoffed.

"Rigan told me the footsteps were soft and she smelled a pleasing fragrance. Soft footsteps are required in a royal house servant. A soldier, a peasant, or hired assassin does not need to be soft in their walk. A pleasing fragrance you will not find on a soldier, a peasant or a hired assassin. That is more information than I have gotten from anyone."

"A household staff? This is unsettling. Rigan could be attacked again at any time."

"I agree, and now you see why it is vital that I find this assassin before your return to Borogia. I must try to determine a motive, and I must do it quickly. I still am not sure this is directed at Princess Rigan. The entire royal family still might be at risk."

"I'll not be taking Rigan to the country castle until this villain is found," Paul vowed.

"And I must interview everyone here!"

"You think the villain could be one of us?" Vladimir asked in shock. "Impossible, all of us on this tour are devoted to the Prince and Princess."

"I must not discount anything, and I might be able to stumble upon a motive in the interviews."

"Who will you interview next?" Prince Paul asked.

"You of course, that's why I came for you. You hover over your wife so much this will probably be the only time I can get you alone. How long will you be staying at the manor?"

"I want Rigan to rest for a week before we begin our journey to Fanore. Damon has told me that continual travel is difficult on a woman in Rigan's condition. We should rest frequently." Paul reined up his black stallion. "Why do you ask?"



"That will not be enough time for me to interview everyone thoroughly. I will have to accompany you to Fanore," Siegfried explained.

"You are welcome, but I warn you Siegfried, although you got away with interviewing Rigan this time, I will not tolerate you trying a second time," Paul grunted.

"Then I won't! I'll just concentrate on interviewing you. What were you doing that day and how did you come upon Rigan in your room?"

Siegfried harangued Paul with questions to and from the Dublin bookstore, trying to get Paul to remember any tiny detail that may have been overlooked. Siegfried was grasping for anything that might put the puzzle together. Unfortunately Paul offered nothing.

Paul made sure Rigan rested for a week before he bid adieu to the O'Brien's and thanked them for their hospitality, offering them a return in kind should they visit Borogia and extended an invitation to do so. The entourage left Dublin early in the morning and would rest a day in a hostelry before continuing on to Fanore.

The next day in the afternoon as they approached Fanore, a horse came galloping towards the entourage in the distance. Clouds of dust were trailing the rider who was obviously in a hurry. Michalek pulled out his rifle and Rolf did as well. Responding in like manner, Auguste and Vladimir pulled out their pistols. Rolf spurred his mount and charged towards the rider to block access to the royal carriage. Michalek pulled in the reins of the horses pulling the carriage and bringing them to a stop.

"What is it Michalek?" Paul asked in concern and looked out the carriage window. He opened the door and jumped out onto the road. "Give me your pistol, Michalek. Do you think it might be a reaver?"

"I can't say," Michalek answered handing Paul his pistol.

Rigan peeked out the window. "What is it Paul?"

"Rigan, stay in the carriage. That is an order. Siegfried, keep my wife in the carriage!" Paul roared to be heard, understood, and definitely not questioned.

The rider pulled up his Half-Bred on the approaching Rolf with rifle aimed. The rider noticed a giant targeting him with another rifle and three pistols pointed in his direction.

"Hallo, what's doin'?" the rider said while pulling his horse to a canter and then standstill.

"Just who are you?" Rolf asked quietly still aiming the rifle.

"I would be a man looking for me sister. She sent me a note telling me she would be comin this way."

"What might your name be?"



"Look man, I might be a wee bit friendlier to ya if ya would be puttin down that rifle. I might be able to engage in a wee bit of a conversation with ya."

Rolf pulled the rifle down to his lap and studied the rider. He bore a similarity to Rigan, with her piercing gray eyes and auburn hair. The rider was average height and stocky built with broad muscular shoulders and thick legs. He was dressed comfortably in English riding boots, linen breeches and a woolen knit sweater.

"Tis much better man. Do ya always be ready to fire on a man ridin a horse down a road?"

"Just a lone rider in the middle of nowhere. You were telling me who you were," Rolf replied.

"Me name is Chaluim and I will be lookin for my sister, Rigan. Have you heard of her? She would be travelin with foreign heathens such as yourself."

"Would your name be Chaluim O'Cullenan?"

"Ach that would be me. You've seen me sister then?"

"Your sister is in the carriage, but I suggest you ride slowly with me, or you will get shot!"

"Why are you foreign heathens so jumpy and distrustful?" Chaluim said as he trotted along side Rolf.

"One reason is your sister's husband. He is very protective of his wife. The other reasons will become evident soon enough."

"Rigan's letter said she was comin with her duine. That was a big surprise to me. I never thought there would be a man that could tame that spirited sister of mine. She has a stubborn streak solid, a fierce temper toward injustice and arrogance, and too smart for most men, she is."

"You're proud of your sister aren't you?"

"I have a deep fondness for her. Athair sent her away to protect her, but I have missed her. We were close as children. Her duine had better take her care, or he'll have me own temper to face."

"If duine means husband, I can safely promise you her husband takes good care," Rolf reassured the brother of his princess.

In the carriage Siegfried had moved to sit next to Rigan. He put his arms around her protectively and kept her locked in his arms, but she still called out. "Mother of God Paul, what is going on?"

"Rigan, be quiet and stay in the carriage!" Paul said in an irritated voice.

"You've never spoken to me in that tone before!" Rigan protested.

"Rigan, for God's sake will you be quiet!" Paul was watching as Rolf and the rider approached in a slow trot.

"It's safe!" Rolf called to Michalek and Paul.





The two men on horse slowly approached the carriage. Paul walked toward them.

"How can we be of service to you?" Paul asked politely.

"You can be a big service and put those weapons away, and then you can take me to my sister. Rolf here says she's in that carriage."

"This is Chaluim O'Cullenan looking for his sister, Rigan."

Paul arched a brow. "How do we know you're Chaluim O'Cullenan?"

"Ya are a distrustin man aren't ya? You really won't know until you let me see me sister."

"Stay here!" Paul ordered and walked back to the carriage.

"Bossy isn't he?" Chaluim said to Rolf.

"He's used to giving orders," Rolf countered.

Paul walked to the carriage and opened the door. "Rigan, come to me." He lifted her out and pointed to Chaluim. "He says he's your brother."

"Chaluim!" Rigan cried and broke free from Paul's arms. She started running towards her brother.

Chaluim jumped from his horse and ran towards Rigan. He embraced her and swung her around. "Ach, tis good to see ya."

Siegfried came out of the carriage immediately. He was fearful for Rigan's safety.

"Would that be your duine, Rigan?" Chaluim asked pointing to Siegfried.

"No Chaluim. The man walking towards us with the scowl on his face would be my husband."

Paul snaked Rigan from Chaluim's arms. "I would ask you to be more careful with mo bhean and not spin her."

"Do your duine always look so mean? Does he beat ya?" Chaluim asked his sister.

"Rigan, you will not run away from me again! Do you realize you could have tripped and fallen," Paul scolded.

"Do ya beat my sister, man?" Chaluim said forcefully walking towards Paul to come between him and his sister. "Cause if ya do, I'll be having to have you feel some bruises from me and then I'll be annulling your marriage."

"What? Beat? What makes you think I would hurt my wife?"

"That scowl on your face, and scolding her so for runnin to her brother and huggin him, just like this!" Chaluim picked Rigan up and spun her around.

Paul grabbed her waist and pulled her back. "Chaluim, I will ask you to please respect my wife's condition. Rigan is with child."

"Ach, you've got this lord's child in ya! Sean O'Cullenan will be smiling in heaven on ya."



"I do, and Chaluim, you could not meet a kinder or gentler man than Po'l. His greatest trouble is that he worries about me too much."

"Ya shouldn't be frettin so much, man. Rigan is a strong and healthy one. She'll bear ya plenty of offspring. She is a sturdy caileag to birth your wee ones."

"I will continue to fret anyway," Paul grouched.

"Rigan, would ya be forgettin your manners so quickly after you left Eirinn. Ya should introduce me to your duine."

"Chaluim O'Cullenan, I would be introducing ya to Paul Lange," Rigan smiled as she started slipping in the brogue of her homeland.

"It's a pleasure to behold ya," Chaluim said extending his hand. "I should be discussin Rigan's dowry with ya now. Ya should be knowin that Rigan is not a poor caileag to be takin as a bride. She has a substantial dowry left by our Athair in case she ever wed. We'll be discussin it when ya come to rest in the O'Cullenan manor."

A smile ran across Paul's face upon hearing that Chaluim was offering a substantial dowry and that he hadn't wed a poor woman. The men surrounding them burst out laughing so hard and long that tears streaked down their cheeks.

"And just what might be so funny?" Chaluim asked seriously.

Siegfried walked up to Chaluim. He was the first to gain control of his laughter. "Chaluim O'Cullenan, I should formally introduce you to Crown Prince Paul, heir to the throne of Borogia, Circle of the Empire, eldest son of King Karl and Queen Louise Janette."

"At your service," Paul clicked his heels and bowed, but not releasing hold of Rigan's waist. "Mo bhean, your sister, is Princess Rigan, Her Royal Highness, and carries my child, my son, the next generation heir to the throne of Borogia."

"It would be my understanding your laughter then, and why you're not interested in the dowry, but it is our way so we will be discussin it," Chaluim smiled smugly. "Sean O'Cullenan certainly named you rightly sister." Chaluim was certainly non-plussed in the presence of royalty.

"What does that mean?" Paul asked curiously.

"Rigan, is meanin Queen in our tongue," Chaluim answered throwing a smile to her. "Now follow me and I'll take ya to the manor where ya can rest and visit."

## Chapter Twenty

Paul had originally rented a cottage near Fanore, not knowing if the O'Cullenan manor could hold the royal entourage. Chaluim insisted however that they would all stay in the family manor. The manor proved to be a medieval castle, probably built well over three hundred years ago. Fortunately, some new amenities had been added to it. Paul thought it quaint and impressive built on a druin near the coast with a scenic view of the dunes and the Atlantic Ocean. The limestone rock of the craggy du'n was polished to a shiny gloss reflecting the sunlight like mirrors. On the leitir, cattle and sheep were grazing, a small garden on one side of it and a river running directly behind the manor into the ocean provided the fresh drinking water for the castle and its people. Paul noted an ancient ring fort near the castle as they passed by it.

As they entered the manor's hall Paul could see the kitchens to the side. He could see oak smoked Atlantic salmon being prepared and a feast of rabbits ready to be cooked.

"You are self sufficient here?" Paul stated in surprise.

"Ach we are," Chaluim replied. "It is easier that way since the main towns are such a walk. If ya look through this window man, ya'll be seeing my stables."

"Perhaps we can look at your horses tomorrow?"

"We kin be doin that," Chaluim invited. "First let's be sittin down and enjoyin the company. Rigan has to tell me everthin that has happened in these three years and I want to reacquaint her with all the happins. I've only recently takin a wife. She's off to visit her family in a' Chumrigh with our caileag, Caitlin, who is just a year old now."

"Chaluim, you've got a wee one?" Rigan said in excitement. "How is it you never wrote me? What's your wife's name?"

"Her name is Catriona, a lovely Sasennach," Chaluim responded. "It is our way ya know."

"Your way to wed a Sasennach?" Paul asked.

"That's how we keep our holdings in this poor downtrodden land, with the Sasens takin over and the Penal laws they created to crush the people."



"We can not hold land according to their laws, but a Lord can if he is a practicing Protestant and married to a Sasen," Rigan explained. "The daoine of this land are oppressed and serve the Sasennachs. Catholicism is no longer allowed or practiced. It is a sad time for Eirinn. The doanine learn everything now in hedgerov schools. It is also forbidden to speak our tongue in the presence of a Sasennach." Rigan took a long breath and looked at her husband sadly, "In this country to practice your faith is a crime. In our country it is the accepted faith. This has always felt so strange to me."

Paul took Rigan in his arms. He was grieved at her obvious distress. "It is so wrong my love. There have been so many religious wars, so many. They are all so useless when we know there is only one God no matter his name. We shall see that, as it is now in our Circle, it will continue to be a free religious state."

Rigan snuggled in her husband's arms. He was so good and kind. Rigan was so very happy with their marriage. "Chaluim, when did you marry?"

"As soon as Athair made his way to heaven, I sought out a Sasennach to wed and Catriona would have me. So we still keep our lands."

Maurice and Arla had plenty of time to unpack clothes and straighten the room for their Prince and Princess. Rigan and Chaluim talked late into the night, enjoying each other's company and exchanging all that had happened in these three years.

Paul was of course worried about Rigan overtiring. "Would you excuse mo bhean? It is late and we have had a tiring day. Rigan should not overtax herself."

Paul left no time for dispute. He took her arm and led her up the stairs to their room as previously indicated by Chaluim. It was Rigan's old room.

Paul undressed quickly and fell into the large feather bed covered with exquisite Aran Lace coverlets, and waited patiently for Rigan to disrobe.

"I'm not even tired, Paul," Rigan complained as she crawled into bed next to her adoring husband. "I'm to excited to sleep. It is so wonderful to visit home."

"I can think of something to tire you out," Paul answered and rolled on top Rigan. He made love to her, slowly, tenderly, and passionately.

Just before dawn broke the horizon Rigan woke up. She turned to look at her sleeping husband. He looked like such a handsome cherub sound asleep. Paul had been really tired. I think his son will look just like that. Son? Sweet Jesus he has me thinking it!



Rigan slipped out of bed silently and went to her wardrobe to pull out her old walking clothes. Rigan chose a sturdy red woolen skirt, large pink blouse, and brown leather corset. She covered her shoulders with a warm woolen shawl. Silently Rigan slipped out of the manor and started walking down the path towards the dunes by the ocean. Rigan used to walk the dunes every morning at dawn while she lived here. The ocean air was fresh and invigorating.

She didn't quite make it sneaking out for her walk. Michalek couldn't sleep and was at the stables looking at Chaluim's horses when he spotted Rigan. Her disguise as a native caileag didn't fool him. He recognized her walk and her frame even with the shawl covering her head and body.

"Where are you going, Princess Rigan?" Michalek asked as he took her arm and held her firm.

"I am going for a walk on the dunes by the ocean, Michalek. You are not going to stop me. You can accompany me, but you will not stop me!" Rigan said with a firmness that barred any disagreement. "I walked the dunes every dawn when I lived here. It makes me feel good."

"It is cold this morning, Princess," Michalek warned. "You could get sick."

"I never got sick before, even in the winter."

"You were planning on walking alone weren't you? Dismissing your bodyguards again, against a direct order from King Karl," Michalek reprimanded.

"Oh Michalek! I'm as safe a baby in its mother's arms. Eirinn is my motherland. This stretch is so isolated. I am perfectly safe."

"That's what you told Claus before your attack. Please Princess, promise me you won't walk alone again."

"All right Michalek, I'll be sure to wake you or Rolf."

"Thank you, Princess."

Under the protective shadow of Michalek, Rigan took her dawn walk. The ocean air felt wonderful.

Prince Paul woke, and feeling amorous reached out for Rigan. He woke with a start when he realized she wasn't in bed. Paul focused his eyes and did not find her in the room. The clothes Arla had laid out for her today were still on the chair. Panic surged through his body, Could she have been kidnapped? Perhaps someone put a drug in his drink. Paul's mind was spinning on all the ifs. Panic allows no rational thought.

Slipping on his breeches, stockings, and Hessian boots, he grabbed a shirt and slipped on an Aran woolen sweater. Walking to the next room, Paul flung the door open and grabbed Vladimir out of bed, waking Auguste. "Get dressed! Rigan is missing!"



Paul paced frantically while he waited for Vladimir and Auguste.

"Don't worry Paul, we'll find her," Auguste reassured him.

"She may have just gone to the kitchen for food. She's been eating a lot lately," Vladimir reminded Paul. "I'm sure she's all right."

"The kitchen! I should have thought of that!" Paul said and ran out the door and down the stairs.

Vladimir and Auguste heard the Prince checking every room and his panic increase with every curse.

The two bodyguards were just racing down the stairs as Paul headed for the hall door.

Everyone stopped short when they heard Rigan's voice from the back entrance, "Paul, I thought you would still be sleeping!"

Recognizing Rigan's voice, Paul turned around to face her.

"In God's name don't ever do that to me again!" Paul shouted.

"Do what?" Rigan asked innocently.

Walking to her side in four swift strides, Paul encircled her in his arms. "Don't you ever leave my bed without waking me, ever again!"

"I didn't expect you to wake so early."

"No excuses! You will wake me before you leave my bed! Or you will stay in my bed until I wake. You have no idea the fright you gave me!"

"I only went for a walk."

"Alone?" Paul yelled, he couldn't stop the volume he was so anxious.

"No I didn't go alone! Your faithful bodyguard, under orders of yourself and the king accompanied me," Rigan said in a pique. This was the first time Paul had raised his voice at her.

"Just where did you walk?" Paul said angrily. He couldn't control his emotions. Paul loved Rigan so much and she had frightened him out of half of his age.

"To the dunes if you must know," Rigan retorted. Suddenly tears burst from her eyes and sobs started heaving from her chest. "You've never yelled at me before!" A pregnant woman's hormones were activated, her emotions would be one extreme to the next.

Paul wanted to fade into the manor's floor. He was furious with himself for making Rigan cry. "God Rigan, don't cry! I was just so worried. I love you, my angel. I'm so sorry. Forgive me?"

Rigan couldn't stop crying, but she did try. She just couldn't stop the tears or sobs. Rigan buried her face in Paul's chest and stayed there until her body stopped its crying. It was several long minutes later when the sobs stopped.

Paul felt like an absolute ogre. "Shush, my angel. Don't cry. I'm sorry. Really I am sorry. I didn't mean to yell at you."



"But you did yell at me!" Rigan pulled her head from his chest and looked up at him. Just as suddenly she pulled away from him and ran to the back door covering her mouth, and nearly knocking Michalek down.

Michalek and Paul followed her. Rigan was retching outside behind the door. Michalek grabbed her waist to steady her. "You've really upset her, Your Royal Highness. You shouldn't be upsetting my Princess like this."

"Michalek, if I find a bullwhip, you can lash me yourself. I deserve it. Rigan, forgive me."

Rigan started hiccupping. "Paul, hic I know you were just worried, I'll wake you hic up next time. Hic Oh God this is awful. I am so hic embarrassed!"

Rigan pulled away from Michalek. "I need hic an anise hic tea! This hic morning sickness hic is awful."

Paul felt even worse, and there was nothing he could do. Rigan was sick and irritable because he made her pregnant, and it was hard on her. He had no idea how he could make it up to her.

Running into the kitchen she found Ceit, a servant the family had before Rigan was born and had become Rigan's nanny and teacher.

"Child, ya is lookin as pale as the spirit that haunts this castle," Ceit commented as Rigan ran to her arms.

"I'm hic enceinte hic, Ceit. And I keep hic retching! And I hic cry for hic no reason. I'm hic a mess! I need hic some hic anise tea."

"A wee one would be doin that to ya. Let Ceit fix ya a nice cup of anise tea. Don't ya be upset no more! Ceit will take care of ya," Ceit patted Rigan's back. "Tell old Ceit what upset ya?"

"My hic duine, he hic yelled at me."

Ceit looked up to see Paul enter the kitchen. "Are you her duine?"

"I am madam."

Ceit sat Rigan down on a chair and walked to the Prince and slapped him on the face. "Don't ya be upsettin my little caileag, ya foreign heathen. It be ya that put her in this condition. Ya have no right to yell at me angel."

Ceit turned on her heels. She walked to a cupboard taking out the anise and putting it in a pot of hot chamomile tea that she was simmering.

Vladimir, Auguste, and Michalek stood in shock after witnessing the old woman slapping the Prince. Paul was also in shock. No woman had ever slapped him. For that matter, no one had ever slapped the Prince.

"Ya know ya deserved that!" Chaluim was heard to say from behind them. He had been wakened by the noise in the manor and had



been watching the entire episode. "Ya should not have yelled at me Rigan."

Ceit ignored everybody and poured a cup of anise tea for Rigan. "This will make the sickness go away and calm ya. Don't be letting that brute of a duine upset ya."

"He hic doesn't hic upset me. I don't hic know what's hic wrong."

"Don't ya be frettin, it's all right. Ceit is here. I'll be makin ya some breakfast, you'll feel even better with food in ya. The wee one will feel better too!"

"Is there any way I can be forgiven?" Paul pleaded. "God, I'm sorry Rigan!"

"Only Rigan can be forgivin ya," Chaluim replied. "But don't be yellin at her again, or ya will have to answer to me."

Paul walked to Rigan and knelt by her side. "Rigan please forgive me. I won't yell at you again. I was just so frightened when you weren't there."

Sipping her tea, Rigan looked into Paul's eyes. "I will forgive you if you promise to control your overbearing protectiveness. You are smothering me! Hic. I am not the first or only woman to be schwanger, and I am sick and irritable and sensitive."

"I'll be more careful. I promise I will try to be more understanding."

"And promise Rigan ya won't be yellin at her!" Chaluim demanded.

"And I promise I won't yell at you."

"And you'll quit smothering me?"

"I'll try."

Rigan calmed down after breakfast. Paul walked her upstairs to their room and let Arla take charge of Rigan. After her tea, breakfast, and bath, Rigan dressed and felt a great deal better.

While Paul bathed and dressed, Rigan started reading Gulliver's Travels. It was a good story with a political satire that Rigan found she enjoyed.

After the noon meal, Paul and Chaluim went to the stable so Chaluim could show off his horses. Paul admitted they were beautiful animals. He found the Aran Draught horses a sturdy breed and the sport Aran Half-Breds magnificent looking horses.

Rigan was in the Parlor reading quietly when her silence was interrupted with a booming voice.

"Hallo Rigan! What's doin'?"

Michalek and Rolf were about to enter the room and remove the strange man when they heard Rigan respond with recognition.





"Seumas Ros?"

"In the flesh! Ach Rigan, ya look good enough to eat, ya do."

"What's doing Seumas?"

Paul and Chaluim were approaching the parlor when they heard the voices.

"I was told ya was back and I'm here to tell ya that a spinster ya will no longer be. I'll be speakin with Chaluim. We'll arrange a match and chaperone, and I'll court ya proper. We'll be wed in a fortnight."

"No Seumas!" Rigan said softly. She was about to tell Seumas she was married when he grabbed her.

Paul was going to enter the parlor when he heard and saw the next scene.

"Ya don't understand, Rigan. Ya thought I was like all the others, just after your dowry, but it's not true. I'll be lovin ya, dear Rigan."

Paul's face turned crimson.

Seumas made the mistake of grabbing Rigan and planting a long kiss on her mouth.

Rigan struggled against him. "No Seumas!"

"Don't be fightin me Rigan. I'll make ya a good duine." Seumas started kissing her again.

Paul was blood red when he entered the room. "Put her down! Gently!" Paul's voice was deceptively quiet.

Rigan saw her husband's face. It had fury etched on it and rage in his eyes.

"I said put her down!" Paul roared when Seumas ignored his first request and didn't respond fast enough.

"And just who might you be, Sassen?" Seumas snickered as he let Rigan go.

Rigan ran behind the divan for safety. She had never seen Paul like this, so angry, so enraged. Paul told me he never lost his temper and didn't know what would happen if he did. Now I see it and it terrifies me.

Paul didn't answer but walked to Seumas in two strides and balled his fist to land a right cross.

The blow threw Seumas off balance, but he was used to brawls and he came up with a balled fist of his own.

Paul blocked it and rammed his fist into Seumas' abdomen, doubling him over. Then Paul gave Seumas a left hook.

Vladimir and Auguste grabbed the Prince and held him back. Michalek and Rolf stepped forward.

"Do you send the giant to do ya fightin for your Sasennach? Too much of a coward to do your own fightin," Seumas taunted watching as Michalek approached.



Paul lunged forward nearly breaking free from Vladimir and Auguste's hold. Rolf assisted Vladimir and Auguste restraining Paul.

Michalek walked to Rigan and took a protective stance in front of her, holding her behind him.

"That's enough Seumas! There won't be blood spilt in me parlor. Catriona would be upset for that," Chaluim ordered.

"Tell the men to let the Sasennach loose, Chaluim. I'll finish him off and then discuss weddin Rigan with ya."

"I won't be telling his men to let him go, Seumas. He would be killin ya for sure. Ya overstepped and touched his property!" Chaluim answered calmly.

"What would ya be talkin about Chaluim?" Seumas asked.

"Rigan is mo bhean, you fool!" Paul hissed. "And no one touches her, no one ever!"

"Seumas, ya are a fool. This is Po'l, Rigan's duine!" Chaluim reprimanded.

"No one told me ya wed, Rigan!" Seumas countered turning to look at Rigan and seeing only the giant Michalek.

"Ya still had no right to take such liberties, Seumas," Chaluim rebuked angrily. "Ya touched me Rigan improperly. Ya are just fortunate her duine got to ya first and was held back from killin ya by his men. I suggest ya leave before I decide to tear ya apart."

Damon and Siegfried had come downstairs to discover the source of the heated voices. Maurice and Arla were listening at the stairs.

"Did ya hear me, Seumas? Ya best be leavin!" Chaluim shouted.

As Seumas was walking towards the door, Paul pulled free from Vladimir and Auguste racing to Rigan's side.

"Are you all right? Did he hurt you? Did he hurt baby?" Paul looked Rigan over.

"Baby?" Seumas turned around and exclaimed. "She's carryin the duine's wee one?"

"Leave while you can, Seumas. I am tempted to get my pistol," Chaluim warned.

"I'll escort you to the door!" Siegfried said coldly. "Come with me or you are a dead man." Siegfried was not only thinking of Chaluim or Paul. In Borogia such manhandling of a royal personage could be a death sentence.

Paul spotted the bruises on her wrists where Seumas had been holding her. "I'll kill him."

Rigan grabbed Paul's arms, "No, please! You promised not to upset me. Don't do this! I'm fine, just hold me."



Paul wouldn't and couldn't take the chance of upsetting Rigan again. He folded her in his arms and held her tightly. "This is going to be a long holiday. I hope I survive it."

"Oh no!" Rigan choked and then it came. "Aaachooo!" Rigan grabbed her kerchief and sneezed again several times in a row. Her nose started to run and within a moment it was bright pink.

"Damon!" Paul shouted.

"Dr. Sheffield on duty!" Damon replied coming up to Rigan. "Let's go through the drill again, Rigan!"

Damon checked her eyes, ears and throat. He put his ear on her chest to listen to her breathing. "Congestion."

"Is it serious?" Paul worried.

"A serious cold!" Damon replied stoically. "Off to bed with you Rigan. I'll send some decoctions of wild clover and a nice hot broth for you. You should stay under the covers for a few days until your congestion clears."

"I told you! Walking the dunes this morning would get you sick," Michalek piped in.

Rigan looked at Paul forlornly. "You may not survive this holiday. I may not survive this child. I am tired of being sick."

"This cold is only temporary. I promise," Damon reassured Rigan. "Soon you'll be healthy, fat and happy. No more nausea, no more sickness, or rampant emotions. Just a big fat tummy."

"Oh really Damon? I do so look forward to that!" Rigan snapped sarcastically and sneezed again.

Arla came into the parlor and took Rigan to her bed. Michalek and Rolf following to stand guard at the door. Arla put a warm linen night robe on Rigan and covered her with several layers of quilts.

Rigan spent the next week of her holiday in bed. Paul of course was relieved, being reassured by Damon this cold was not serious. At least for a week, he knew Rigan would be secure and he knew where she would be.

"Would ya be needin a nip?" Chaluim offered the group in the Parlor.

"I'll decline," Paul declined. "I think I'll go for a quiet relaxing ride if you don't mind."

"Would ya be wantin to try me Half-Bred, Morton?"

"I would indeed"

"Then go tell me groom to saddle him for ya."

Vladimir and Auguste followed the Prince out to escort him on his ride.

Chaluim went to the cabinet and pulled three glasses. Filling the three glasses with whiskey he offered two of them to Damon and Siegfried.

## *Smitten*



"I'm really tryin to like that Prince of yours, but he's makin it a wee bit difficult," Chaluim remarked. "It bothers me that he is upsettin and yellin at me Rigan."

"Perhaps there are some things you should know about the Prince so you can understand his reactions," Siegfried offered.

"Perhaps there are. Would ya like to be tellin me?"

"Let's take a chair," Siegfried said. "This will take a little time."

"I think you should start by telling Chaluim who you are," Damon suggested to Siegfried.

## Chapter Twenty One

Chaluim took his whiskey in one swig then went to refill it.  
"I'll be needin to be fortified, I have a feelin."

"It isn't that bad," Damon encouraged.

"So then Herr Goetz, who will ya really be?" Chaluim asked as he sank down in another overstuffed chair.

"I'm really Siegfried Goetz, and I really am a friend of the royal family."

"I have a feelin I'll be hearin a but!"

"But, I am not a business man on holiday. I am the Security Minister of the Royal Court and Circle of Borogia."

"And just what would a Security Minister be doing taggin along with this assorted group of foreign heathens?"

"I am interviewing all of the foreign heathens regarding an assassination attempt on your sister, Princess Rigan."

"The devil ya be sayin!" Chaluim jumped up from the chair.  
"Some heathen tried to kill me Rigan?"

"I'm afraid it's true," Damon confirmed. "Your sister was stabbed in the back just before she married Prince Paul."

"And you still haven't caught the villain?" Chaluim questioned angrily.

"Not yet, but we will," Siegfried answered with a subtle promise.

"I'll find out for ya, and ya won't have to be worrin about bringin the bastard to trial."

"I would like to ask, how many men are there like Seumas? Ones who wanted to marry your sister for her dowry?" Siegfried started his questioning ignoring Chaluim's previous outburst.

"Every single buck in County Clare, and every one of them so poor to desperately need it."

"Would any of them hold a grudge enough to harm your sister for leaving?"

"Ach, they would be holding a grudge for her leavin, but none could do a thing about it."

"Not even have friends or relations near or in Borogia that would act on their behalf?"

## *Smitten*



"If you're sayin that one of her former suitors might have tried to get her bludgeoned, I can be telling ya your wrong. They have no money to even post a letter. Nor did any of them know where she went. Most of them think Eirinn and England are the only two countries in the world. "

"I have to check every option, Chaluim, no matter how foolish it seems."

"You'll be havin to stick with your foreign heathens."

"Indeed I will."

"I hope you can understand Paul's behavior towards your sister because of this attack." Damon suggested

"That doesn't explain why he's always yellin at her."

"Oh, but it does. Paul is so terrified for her safety he overprotects her," Damon explained. "Even more now that she is carrying his child," Damon added.

"Prince Paul is intensely and fatally smitten with your sister," Siegfried agreed. "He smothers her with his devotion and part of that smothering is losing his temper while he tries to protect her because he feels he didn't do enough to prevent her from being attacked."

"A man that smitten shouldn't be yellin, he should be lovin."

"I have known the Prince since he was a small child, Chaluim. He always acted like a Prince. I never saw him lose his temper, control, voice or calm until now. Other than his Papa and Mamman, he didn't know love until Rigan. With this new intense emotion he has to deal with, Paul's other emotions like fear and anger are new to him as well. It will take some time for him to understand them. It's all so new for him," Siegfried elucidated.

"I have known Prince Paul for almost three years and I had never seen him angry or lose control until now. He thought he would never find the woman of his dream, and then Rigan came. Paul would die for her. I can guarantee you that," Damon added. "When Rigan started crying this morning I can tell Paul wanted to dig a hole in the ground and bury himself. The last thing he would ever want to do is hurt or make your sister cry."

"If you notice Chaluim, Prince Paul didn't take your offer of a drink. He drinks very little and infrequently. The Prince believes that imbibing in excess is a moral sin. He also believes in the sanctity of marriage. Is this a man that wouldn't take care of your sister?" Siegfried asked.

"Me thinkin has been to harsh on Po'l. Rigan has found herself a good man," Chaluim allowed.

"And Paul feels he has found a good woman," Damon stated savoring the Aran whiskey.

"They suit well," Siegfried observed.

"I just want him to stop yellin at her."



"I'm sure he won't raise his voice to her again. Not after the way he looked when she cried," Damon defended. "Can I have another whiskey, Chaluim?"

"Help yourself man," Chaluim answered and turned to Siegfried. "So when ya goin to start finding this fiend that nearly killed me Rigan?"

"I'll stay here about a week to continue my interviews with my foreign heathens, and then I'll be going to England to interview Prince Aleck," Siegfried answered.

"Who is Prince Aleck?" Chaluim queried Siegfried.

"Prince Aleck is Prince Paul's younger brother. He was in the castle when the attack took place."

"You'd be thinkin he might have stabbed me Rigan?"

"No I don't, but he may have some knowledge of the event I can use," Siegfried responded. "Chaluim, Prince Paul doesn't want Rigan to know who I am. He feels that might upset her and ruin her holiday."

"Me mouth is sealed!"

Rigan woke from a nap to find a fire roaring in the bedroom hearth and as she opened her eyes a figure took form in front of the hearth. On a chair she could see Prince Paul reading a book. An oil lamp was on a table next to his chair.

"Paul, what are you reading?"

"You're awake. Did you have a good rest?" Paul put the book on the table, stood up and walked to Rigan's side of the bed and sat down next to her.

"You didn't answer me," Rigan insisted sounding very nasal.

"A book."

"Yes thank you, that would be my assumption. Does the book have a title? Or an author?"

"It's 'Emile by Rousseau'."

"Isn't that about raising children?"

"Yes."

"Why are you reading that Paul?"

"I seem to be failing at being a good husband. I was hoping to try to be a better father," Paul responded sitting by his wife on the side of the bed.

"Why would you think you're failing at being a good husband?"

"Sweet Jesus, Rigan, I made you cry and ever since we arrived in Eirinn I have done nothing but upset and yell at you. I should be more patient and understanding about your sensitivity because of your condition."

"You have been yelling at me," Rigan said followed by a succession of sneezes.

## *Smitten*



"I know. Everyone has reprimanded me, but I love you so much I can't stop myself." Paul handed her his linen kerchief. "You had scared me to wits end!"

"If I promise to stop scaring you, will you promise to stop yelling at me?" Rigan asked and taking the kerchief blew her nose.

"You have my solemn vow. Do I get a second chance to be a good husband?"

"Paul, you are a good husband! I am just overly emotional and reactive right now. Aaaachoo!"

"And sick!"

"And sick. So when you're finished reading that book, I would like to read it. I would like to be a good Mamman and a good wife."

"I doubt you could improve any more, but of course you can read it."

"Now that is a good husband talking to a good wife. I think you're catching on Paul."

"You little vixen!" Paul smiled to Rigan.

"Come to bed, husband. My feet are cold."

"They are always cold."

"No they aren't."

"Yes they are."

"Then a good husband would warm them."

"I want to be a good husband." Paul grinned and took off his clothes to join his Rigan in bed, sneezes, stuffy nose and all. He cuddled her in his arms for the night.

Paul fought the urge to take complete charge of Rigan for the next week. He relinquished her care to Arla and Ceit. Ceit brought Rigan anise and chamomile tea with biscuits every morning. This helped curb the morning nausea. Damon's decoction and Ceit's remedies kept Rigan's cold moderate and contained.

Ceit was one of Fanore's midwives and was called to birth a baby in the town nearby. Ceit had taken a liking to Dr. Sheffield and his lack of resistance to natural methods such as herbs and natural birth. Damon was unlike the doctors Ceit had met before. When Damon asked if he could accompany her, Ceit agreed under the condition he only do what she told him and not bring any of those instruments of torture to the birthing that hurt the mother and baby more than helped, like all the other doctors did. Ceit didn't have to tell Damon to wash and soap his hands with hot water, as was the practice of the midwives. Damon had learned many of the midwife practices with other tutors. Damon also was a great aide to Ceit because he had learned those lessons well.



Chaluim and Paul became good friends in that week Rigan recuperated. They spent their days together discussing agricultural methods and theories. Chaluim explained animal husbandry to Paul. Although Paul knew of it he learned many of the practical aspects of it with the manor's large herds of cattle and sheep. They even went to a few horse races together. Paul bought eight draughts from Chaluim for his stable in Borogia and even a small pony at the races for his expected son.

When Rigan heard of the pony she asked Paul, "Is it blue?"

Paul replied, "Not yet, but the tack shall be blue. I will have it custom made in Borogia."

Rigan just rolled her eyes and held back the chuckles. Paul was so serious about his expected son.

Chaluim grew fond of Paul after they spent that week together. Chaluim knew Paul loved and cared deeply for his Rigan. Chaluim also began to understand Paul's protectiveness, although sometimes overbearing, it was with a huge heart. They talked of Caitlin. She was the little delight of Chaluim's life and Paul would talk about his expected son. Chaluim shared his side of the emotional pregnancy for Paul's information. Chaluim also informed Paul of the travail of laying in, relating the hardship and anguish a husband endured while the woman only suffered the pains.

"I can't bear the idea of Rigan enduring any pain," Paul shared with Chaluim in response. Chaluim told Paul that with Ceit's herbal remedy she had even shared with a Scots doctor, Catriona's pains were greatly eased allowing for a quicker and smoother laying in. It was then and there the first discussion took place with Chaluim regarding taking Ceit back to Borogia with them.

Siegfried arrived at Aleck's school a week after his conversation with Chaluim.

"I can't believe it's you, Siegfried! When they told me who was here to see me I didn't believe it."

"It is me in the flesh," Siegfried answered and gave Prince Paul an embrace. "It's good to see you, lad."

"What trouble am I in that brings you to see me?" Prince Aleck asked. "I have been behaving myself. I even have started using professionals exclusively like big brother suggested."

"Is it working for you?"

"Oh yes, big brother was right again. It is less hazardous and frustrating." Aleck started to grin. "Actually it is more enjoyable, but I'm not ready to tell that to big brother. Not just yet."

"I'm glad to hear it. I would worry less about you. I will be getting less paper reports on your behaviors."



"What are you really here for Siegfried?" Aleck groaned. He realized Siegfried knew everything about him even here in England.

"I want to talk to you about the attack on Rigan."

"I wasn't there when it happened."

"Is there anything you can remember? The footman at the West Wing saw you go to your suites with Lady Camilla just before the attack."

"I'd rather not discuss that!" Prince Aleck said angrily. His face flushed red.

"It is not my place to question anything so personal. The footman said he saw you leave but not Lady Camilla."

"I left before she did."

"Did you have her in your rooms?"

"Do you mean my bed? Is that one of those personal questions you won't ask?" Prince Aleck snapped. "Yes, I had her in my bed and that is the end of it. I left her alone to clean her body and dress."

"I have no idea what is making you so angry, Aleck! I am just asking questions to find out any clues as to the assassin. If you or Lady Camilla could have possibly seen or heard something."

"I apologize," Prince Aleck said raking his hands through his hair. "That is a day I don't want to remember for many reasons."

"Did you and Lady Camilla quarrel?"

"You might say that."

"Do you want to tell me what about?"

"No!"

Siegfried remained silent as he studied the Prince. He was really upset about that afternoon with Lady Camilla. He didn't act like the young man secretly in love like Camilla had indicated. Was Aleck like Paul, a childish crush, or was she just lying? Did Camilla see something? What would she be hiding? Did Aleck and Camilla quarrel about marriage? Is that why Aleck doesn't want to remember and why he doesn't want to discuss it, or was there other reasons?

"It was a bad situation, actually a horrible situation, Siegfried. That is why I don't want to discuss it. The quarrel was one sided, my side. I am afraid I was quite a cad, not that she didn't deserve it, but I was a cad. It is something I promised myself would never happen again."

"We won't pursue it any more. Do you remember anything that was suspicious when you left your suites?"

"Nothing, nothing out of the ordinary. I just wanted to get away from Camilla. I walked to the stables and was preparing to ride when I heard a scream. I returned to the West Wing and I saw Arla running towards the library. I followed her until she found Dr. Sheffield. She was incoherent but I understood that Rigan was



unconscious and bleeding. I went to get Mamman and Papa. Dominique and Adriane were with them."

"As disagreeable to you as it is, do you remember seeing Lady Camilla?"

"Yes, as we walked towards Paul's suites in the West Wing I saw Camilla walking past a connecting hallway. She was walking towards her quarters in the East Wing. That is strange isn't it? She was using the servants' corridors."

"Yes," Siegfried said outwardly, but inwardly he thought it strange that she was returning to her quarters after the attack. She should have heard Arla scream and run to Prince Paul's suites. She must have heard the screams, so why casually walk back to her rooms? A young woman's curiosity would have piqued. Why did she lie to me and say she was already back in her suite by then?

"You're thinking deeply about something, Siegfried. I can tell," Prince Aleck noticed.

"I have found a loose end, and I am dreading the implication," Siegfried replied. "Implication without proof and without confession. I will have to work on it."

"Care to tell me?"

"No I do not. The implication hasn't enough evidence."

"In that case Herr Goetz, would you have dinner with me? A visitor is a great excuse to leave my classes."

"You don't like school?"

"I really don't. I'm not bookish like Paul. I only have a few more months and then I matriculate. I can't wait to be home."



## Chapter Twenty Two

"I haven't been to a Crossroads in almost eight years," Rigan bubbled as Arla helped her dress. "This is going to be ever so much fun."

"Your brother is racing his Aran Half Breds," Arla commented.

"He has a fine stable, doesn't he?"

"Yes he does."

"Aren't you ready yet, my angel?" Paul complained as he entered the room.

"Yes, I am," Rigan smiled as Arla had just handed her a cloak with hood.

"Are you sure you're well enough?" Paul queried one more time.

"Fit as an Aran fiddle!"

The couple walked to Paul's favored Hanoverian black stallion, Regal. Rigan looked for a carriage. "What? No buggy? Or cart?"

"I want to be selfish today and keep you close to me," Paul said as he mounted. "Today we will ride to the Burren Crossroads together."

"But Paul, you know I don't ride well."

"I know that, my angel."

Michalek came behind Rigan and lifted her off the ground handing her to Paul. Paul put her on his lap. "Today you will stay very close to me, my angel. I have the need to hold you tightly," Paul whispered barely audibly in her hair. His arms tightened around her and held her firmly.

"Mm that feels good, husband!"

"You feel good, wife."

"Ya'll be takin good care of me angel! Don't you be upsettin her," Ceit reminded Prince Paul. No one had yet to tell her he was a Prince. "I warn ya, if she comes home upset ya'll be answerin to me, ya will. The back of me hand ya'll be findin."

"Why don't you come along and watch over her, Ceit. You might even have a good time," Damon offered as he pulled his horse next to her.

"Such a dunce ya are. I don't ride them beasts and it's too late to walk to the Burren."



"Then you shall ride with me. Michalek!"

Ceit was scooped up in the giant's arms in a flash and placed upon Damon's lap. Ceit began screaming as soon as Michalek had picked her up.

"Ceit, you're sounding just like a banshee," Damon grinned as he held on tightly to the struggling woman.

"I can turn into a banshee for ya, heathen. Put me down!"

"You really wouldn't deny me your company, would you dear Ceit?"

"Ya certainly don't be needin my company."

"Ah but I do. I am weary of attending functions without the engaging company of a woman."

"Then find a nice caileag," Ceit growled still struggling and slapping at the strong hands of the man holding her.

"I found one and she is in my arms. Don't say no, Ceit. I won't hear of it."

"I'm a cailleach."

"You are my caileag for the day, Ceit."

"Ya are a Devil's spawn, Damon Sheffield."

"Thank you for the compliment, Ceit," Damon chuckled and rode off with Ceit still in his arms and upon his lap.

Michalek mounted and picked Arla up from the ground. She would be riding with him. Chaluim took the lead with his racing horses and the groomsman that would ride them. The troupe rode to the Burren Crossroads.

Paul didn't let go of Rigan for a minute. Chaluim had told him that this would be a good way to introduce himself to the daoine of the towns and villages as Rigan's duine. At the fair, people came from Doolin, Ballyvaughan, Kilferora, and Lisdoonvarna to name a few of the towns. Many of the people recognized Rigan and came to greet her. Rigan would immediately introduce Po'l as her duine.

A handsome lad approached Rigan.

"De' tha doi, Rigan?"

"De' tha doi, Uilleam?"

"Clamar a tha sibh?"

"Tha gu math, tapadh leibh."

Uilleam looked at the man standing next to Rigan. "Sasennach?"

Rigan shook her head.

"Duine, Po'l."

"An sibhse Po'l?"

"Is mise Po'l." Paul responded in fluent Gaelic.

"Ya understand and speak our language well," Uilleam complimented. "And just how is it ya were this fortunate to wed the elusive Rigan O'Cullenan?"

## *Smitten*



"I ran into her in the woods and she has held my heart captive since."

"Tis jealous I am. I tried for two years to court her proper. She would have nothin to do with me."

"Uilleam, you wanted my dowry, not me," Rigan said sadly.

"Ya cut me heart, Rigan." Uilleam made the mistake of grabbing Rigan away from Paul and swinging her around.

"Put her down!" Paul snarled.

"Uilleam, I will ask you to respect me duine and me condition. I am with child."

"The devil ya say?" Uilleam put her down immediately and Paul snatched his wife back.

"Mo bhean is carrying my wee one, if you are a little dense to understand. Let me also make it clear that no one but me touches mo bhean in familiar fashion."

"I apologize completely. Rigan it was good to see ya. Will ya be staying or are ya goin back to the netherworld ya hide in?"

"We'll be staying only another seachdain, and then return home."

"Eirinn is your home, Rigan darlin."

"No longer, Uilleam. Po'l is my life and my home, and where he dwells, I dwell."

"If I have permission, I would like to visit ya at the manor before ya leave," Uilleam requested hoping to visit the manor again.

"Paul?" Rigan looked to her husband for the invitation.

"It is not for me to say yea or nay. You should discuss the invitation with Chaluim. It is his house. I will honor his wishes."

Uilleam left heading towards the race, after he bid his farewell.

"Will we have to go through this where ever we go?" Paul complained.

"Go through what my love?" Rigan asked.

"Just how many suitors did you have?"

"About a dozen I think."

"Wonderful! I have ten more to go," Paul moaned.

"Oh Paul, no you don't. I am sure most of them are married by now and besides all they wanted was my dowry. You wanted me!"

"I still want you, Rigan." A look of intense passion sparkled in his eyes. "It is amazing what jealousy can do to a man's libido."

"Jealousy makes you arbitrary, contrary, and..."

"Is possessive the word you're looking for? I confess I am."

"Just think how I feel when all the woman make puppy eyes at you."

"Puppy eyes?"



"You know what I mean, those little 'Ooh I'm so helpless, I need you, I want you.' Looks."

"Rigan, you never once let on you were jealous," Paul laughed boisterously.

"Do you expect to have any different feelings than I do?" Rigan snapped and stamped her foot.

"I think I just learn to love you more each day. Jealous are you? I like that."

"Here ya be Rigan, I brought ya some mead to drink. Tis good for the babe and will help make good milk for feedin," Ceit said as she walked to Rigan handing her one of three mugs she was carrying. "I brought one for the duine in case he might need a little fortifyin."

"Thank you Ceit, I appreciate your kindness," Paul accepted graciously.

"Don't get cocky. I still don't be trustin ya yet. I'm tryin to make allowances towards ya because Damon Sheffield here likes ya," Ceit warned the Prince.

"Come on, the races are going to begin!" Damon beckoned as he started walking to the lines.

The rest of the day was joyous. Rigan and Paul sampled the food, watched all the races, and looked at the fine linens with Aran lace. Paul bought several for their bed in Brogav Palace. Rigan of course protested at the cost.

Paul just smiled and said. "Coma leat a' phris." Paul was thinking how Rigan would appreciate a little of her motherland as she snuggled next to him after they had made love. As the day wore on, Rigan was wearing out. Paul looked at her and asked, "Tha thu sgi'th, nach eil?"

"Yes, I am tired," Rigan said looking up at Paul. "You amaze me with how well you speak our language."

"Our family roots begin with the Celts and Gaelic is very close. Your language is easy enough to pick up," Paul replied. "But let's get you home and to bed, my angel. We don't want to upset baby do we?"

The next morning Paul rode with Rigan on his lap to the cliffs of Moher. Rigan and Paul brought a picnic lunch and enjoyed the majestic view of the cliffs rising for more than 200 meters, extending for as far as they could see. Together they viewed the Aran Islands' beauty and talked of their future. Michalek and Auguste stayed close, but a discreet distance was kept. Behind a rock in the soft green grass, Paul and Rigan made love.

The following day they went to visit the Aillwee Cave with Damon, Arla and their ever-present bodyguards. Their last visit was to the Pol na Brone Domen, the great stone tombs of the ancients.



Paul finally discussed Ceit with Rigan as they sat in the dining hall after dinner.

"You're serious aren't you?"

"I've talked to Chaluim several times, and it is on Damon's insistence as well. We all agree Ceit should stay with you. We would like to take her back to Borogia with us."

Damon nodded his head in agreement. "I want Ceit to come with us. I have developed a fondness for her, and her knowledge would be a great assistance in training midwives for the birthing floor."

"Oh Paul, that would make me ever so happy. She was like my own true mother."

"I want nothing more in life than to make you happy, but you must help us convince her to come with us."

"She'll protest, but I know she will come. I just know it. How could a mother say no to her daughter who is carrying a wee one," Rigan bubbled happily.

"You never speak of your true mother, Rigan. I have never heard you or your brother speak of her," Paul noted. It had puzzled him.

"We never knew her. Athair forbade us to ask about her. His memory of her hurt him so. Sean O'Cullenan loved his, Ealasaid."

"What ever happened to your Mamman? How did she die?"

"Athair never told us, nor were we allowed to ask. I just knew that my mother died shortly after I was born. I always felt guilty for that somehow, so I tried to learn Ceit's ways and help others, to sort of make up for killing my Mamman."

"Ya didn't kill your Mama, child. Why didn't ya ever tell me you felt that way?"

"Ceit, we were just talking about you," Rigan gasped. She was surprised at Ceit's sudden appearance. "How much did you hear?"

"I heard ya blamin yerself for ya Mama dyin, but it wasn't ya that did it. She died of childbed fever. It was that filth doctor who pulled ya out nearly killin ya with them torturous forceps. It was him that kilt Ealasaid. Them forceps that tore her up inside so she lay bleedin heavily and his dirty unwashed hands that spread the sickness. She was weak from loss of blood, and he bled her more. Ealasaid was too weak to fight the sickness. The Lord took her a week after ya were born."

"Rigan's Mamman died in childbirth?" Paul choked as fear ran through him like a knife through soft butter.

"Not in childbirth Po'l, from the filth doctor that tended her. Ealasaid went into labor early. I was tending a birth in Doolin. The





doctor was visitin Sean when it happened. I wasn't there to protect my darlin. Tis I am to blame."

"You are not to blame Ceit, but that is the most vital reason you must come with us to Borogia. You can stay by Rigan and birth our son. Protect my Rigan from harm," Paul entreated.

"And you can help train women in our hospital and apothecary, the Prince and Princess are funding," Damon suggested.

"And just who might this Prince and Princess be, Damon Sheffield? I am a low commoner, didn't ya know? I wouldn't ever be found in the presence of such daoine."

"Ceit, Ceit, sweet Ceit. The Princess is your Rigan. The Prince is Paul here. You have been in their presence all this time. You even slapped the Prince's face and have railed him ever since. So you can't use that as an excuse not to come with us," Damon chuckled his eyes twinkling in delight and devilry.

Ceit O'Halloran went white. "Rigan is a princess?"

"Yes, Ceit. And my duine is Prince Paul of Borogia, son of King Karl of Borogia."

"Would that be the royal king friend of Sean O'Cullenan?" Ceit asked and her memory of Karl's visits with Sean from school as young men grew vivid.

"It would. He is my Papa!" Paul smiled.

"Ach, ya must be forgivin me Your Grace. No one told me. I would not have slapped the royal person."

"A well deserved slap, Ceit. I will forgive you if you come with us to Borogia and protect my Rigan and baby son."

"I just don't know. This is all so sudden," Ceit answered twisting her apron in her hands.

"Ceit, if I weren't a solemnly sworn bachelor, I'd be down on my knees proposing to you. We need you and all your knowledge," Damon pleaded.

"This old cailleach ya really would be needin?"

"With all our hearts," Damon answered for everyone.

"Ceit, Please!" Rigan begged. "I want you to be there with me for my laying in."

"Well, I should see to it that the boy is brought into the world healthy."

"Then it's agreed. You'll come with us to help Damon and birth my son," Paul insisted clapping his large hands on his legs.

"I will."

"Ceit, don't encourage the Prince about having a son. He only thinks that's what it will be," Rigan chided reaching across the table to take Ceit's hand in hers.

"Rigan, ya are goin to birth a boy," Ceit declared knowingly.

"Hah, I love you already, Ceit," Paul smiled broadly. "Listen to your Ceit, my angel."

## *Smitten*



"Just how can you tell that, Ceit?" Damon asked.

"She'll carry the babe high, that's why she isn't showin yet. And the heartbeat showing on her throat is beating quickly. Tis a boy! A girl's heartbeat is much slower."

"I have much to learn from you, Ceit," Damon grinned.

"You certainly do," Ceit returned Damon's smile. "But I don't think I will be able to ready meself so quickly."

"I'll help you, and we have Arla and Michalek to help us as well," Rigan beamed. "They won't let me lift a finger to pack my things. They have us all packed, so that is no excuse either."

"I have to say Latha Math to me friends."

"Do so quickly. We'll start your packing," Paul smiled and held Rigan tightly in his arms.

"Saint's preserve us. I'm leavin Eirinn for a foreign heathen land."

"Oh Ceit, it is foreign, but not heathen. In Borogia you may practice your faith, not hide it in fear. Our palace has a chapel with a priest to hear confession and celebrate mass everyday," Rigan blurted out.

"Ya wouldn't be fibbin to me, would ya Rigan?"

"It's true Ceit," Paul answered for Rigan. "Go say your farewells, and we'll see to it your things are packed. Damon will help."

"I'll make sure all your medicines are packed with care," Damon promised. "Dear Ceit, I think you've run out of excuses."

## Chapter Twenty Three

The evening before the royal entourage was scheduled to leave, Chaluim took Paul's arm. "There's something we've been needin to talk about that ya have been avoidin. Ya will be comin with me."

"Where are we going?"

"We're goin to the keepin hole," Chaluim said as he walked to the kitchen and stood by the hearth. "I know ya be a Prince and all, but the dowry is the dowry and it is our way. I'll be havin ya take Rigan's dowry. It would be an insult to her if ya did not." Chaluim reached for a stone on the hearth in the back of it, near the wall and removed the stone. Inside were several leather pouches that could be seen, and more behind them in the deep secret hole. He handed three of the pouches to Paul.

"What are these?" Paul asked curiously staring at the leather pouches in his hands.

"The first is deed rights to a parcel of land, givin by Athair to Rigan. In Eirinn a woman can have land holdins, but under the Sassen Penal Laws she cannot, nor can a Catholic as ya well know, but keep the deed in possession and pass it on. These hard times will not continue forever. The second is the dowry money Athair had set aside for Rigan. It is a draft for a 100,000 pounds. The third is a listing of her rightful belongins to set up a home. "

"I can see why Rigan was pursued relentlessly by suitors. It is a substantial dowry for the lads of this county."

"Tis the rightful dowry of Rigan, ya have in hand. Take care of me Rigan."

"I will, with all that I am."

"Ya may be a foreign devil, but ya have the arduous heart of our lads."

"I take that as a compliment."

"May I see ya with a silver head and combing the wee ones hair."

"May the good Lord hold you in the hollow of His hand, and may He not close His fist too tightly on you."

"Ya know our ways well, Po'l"

"In my position I must be careful of cultures, so I do not offend."

## *Smitten*



"I like ya Po'l. I truly do. Ya consider an open invitation to share my bread and hearth any time."

"I like you too, Chaluim. We have one strong thing in common. We both love Rigan. I do hope you, Catriona, and Caitlin will have the opportunity to visit us in Borogia. You will be welcome in my Papa's palace any time."

"I won't be seeing ya off tomorrow. I cannot abide farewells. It breaks me heart to let ya go."

"We will miss your company, Chaluim," Prince Paul said as he embraced his wife's brother.

"May the road rise to meet ya, and the wind be at yer back," Chaluim blessed returning the embrace.

The next morning after a large breakfast of bangers, rashers, eggs and fried tomatoes, toast, porridge, and tea, some biscuits were packed and the entourage left for Dublin.

Ceit turned and gave a blessing to her Eirinn, and took Rigan's hand in hers. "I'll be takin good care of ya, me angel."

"I know. We'll make you very comfortable and keep you happy. You'll see," Rigan responded.

"I'll keep you quite busy, dear Ceit," Damon promised. He was riding in the carriage with the two women. During the ride in the carriage, Damon would talk to Ceit and take mental notes on her remedies. At night in his room he would carefully write down everything he could remember.

Paul had decided to ride one of the Half-Breds he purchased from Chaluim. The draught horses he purchased were pulling the two carriages. Fine animals, really fine.

Paul decided to stay at the lavish King's Inn, in Dublin for four days. Paul was not going to take any chances with Rigan and her pregnancy. He did not want the trip to overtire her in anyway. They would take their time returning to Borogia.

Paul and Damon spent a great deal of time together for those four days in Dublin, doing research work for the clinic, and consulted with local physicians and apothecaries. They purchased many fine hand blown glasses and flasks for gifts and for the clinic. Eirinn was well known for it's fine glass and crystal. They purchased fine linens, bed sheets, and covers in Dublin for use in Borogia's first village clinic. Paul also established credit with the shops so a letter could purchase more from Borogia. When they were ready to leave Dublin, they had a long list of purchases to make in London, furniture such as beds, cabinets, desks, and spice cabinets. They would require cotton fabric for uniforms for the clinic staff, and surgical tools and equipment. They would need at least two weeks in London.



The trip through Scotland took two weeks, because Paul insisted on short trips, no longer than eight hours a day on the road, with layovers in inns every night. Sometimes they would stay two or three nights. "Rigan must not get overtired," Paul would say. Maurice and Arla would do whatever was needed to make the Prince and Princess comfortable. Ceit remained at Rigan's side until Paul came to the room at night. Then Maurice would appear and Ceit would leave.

On the days it was decided to spend two or three nights, Paul and Damon would scour the towns they stayed in looking for doctors, clinics, and hospitals they could inspect and review.

Paul had kept his promise not to smother Rigan, but with all the attention Ceit and Arla gave her, Rigan still felt she had little breathing space. Paul still continued to pamper and overprotect Rigan, and she knew that would never stop. After all, that was one of the reasons she loved him so much, he was intelligent, kind and gentle. Just like her ancestors, marriage and children meant everything to him.

Rigan kept her promise not to scare him out of his wits again. Of course she had no choice in the matter. Rigan was kept under a watchful eye of Arla, Ceit, Michalek and Rolf. She couldn't do anything if she tried, and she did want to try. When I get to London, I will take a long walk just to walk.

The day they arrived in London, Paul saw to it that Rigan was settled in their suite and leaving her under the watchful eye of Ceit, left with Damon to buy some furniture for the clinic. Paul didn't return back to the suites until very late. Rigan was already asleep and he found Ceit asleep in the chair by the fireplace. Maurice silently helped the Prince undress and as Paul climbed into bed with Rigan, Maurice gently woke Ceit to leave the room with him.

Paul put his arm over Rigan and just stared at her for the longest time. He wanted to make love to her, but didn't want to wake her. He took his hand and gently slid it across her tummy. Baby is growing. Her tummy is finally getting bigger.

Rigan felt the slight touching and slowly opened her eyes. "What time is it?"

"It's late, shush. Go back to sleep."

"How late?"

"Nearly midnight."

"Where have you been?"

"Damon and I met a former classmate of his. We ate dinner and talked for a while. Is that alright?"

"I was worried. You didn't send word. Ceit finally insisted I go to bed. I must have fallen asleep."

"Bless Ceit. She is so good for you. I feel you are safe in her care."

"In her own way she is as smothering as you."

## *Smitten*



"I love her even more. I will do something nice for her."

"What are you thinking, dare I ask?"

"You do not. I'll surprise you tomorrow."

"I don't like surprises."

"Yes you do."

"No I don't."

"Yes you do. Rigan don't argue, I want to make love to you right this minute."

"You do?"

"I do, my angel."

Paul covered her mouth with kisses and gently stroked and massaged her breasts. "They are getting bigger. My son will eat well."

Rigan just moaned, Paul was exciting her, making her want him and need him.

Paul let one hand slip down her chest to her abdomen and stayed there moving his fingertips over the growing baby. "Rigan, I love you so much. I love my baby. You are so precious to me. Thank you for carrying my baby."

Rigan pulled him over her and groaned in relief when he entered her. Their lovemaking had changed since her pregnancy. Paul took his time; he was more methodical in foreplay and slow in his penetration rhythms. It actually was more tantalizing and erotic for Rigan. She would orgasm several times before she and Paul would together. "Thank you for being my baby's Papa," Rigan whispered in his ear.

Paul rewarded her with a very long passionate kiss.

It was unusually early in the morning when Paul called for Maurice to dress him. "I need to make preparations, Maurice. That is why I woke you so early."

"I am always at your service, my Prince."

"I appreciate that, which is why I like to follow a schedule, but things have changed."

"Indeed they have my Prince. May I be so bold to say, changed for the better?"

"Is it that obvious?"

"Yes my Prince. While you have always been kind and gentle. Princess Rigan has brought your best qualities to the forefront, and I have never seen you so happy."

"Never?"

"One of my long list of Nevers I have started since you met Princess Rigan."

"She does make me happy."

The soft conversation woke Rigan. "Getting up and dressed so early? The sun hasn't come over the horizon yet."



"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to waken you."

"Well you have, what are you planning to do today."

"I'll think of something we can do together."

"I would like a picnic in a park."

"Then we shall do that also."

"Also?"

"I'll be back later to gather you." Paul bent down to kiss Rigan on her forehead and then walked out of the room with Maurice directly behind him.

Maurice went to wake Ceit. Rigan was not aware that even Maurice had an overprotective side. Maurice felt more comfortable when Ceit was with Rigan, just like Prince Paul. Arla was a good companion, but Ceit was formidable and Rigan would not dare use her authority over Ceit.

Paul left to arouse Damon. The two men were in mutual conspiracy for the surprise.

Ceit helped Arla draw Rigan's bath.

"Ach, me angel. Your wee one is starting to show," Ceit commented as she rinsed Rigan's hair after soaping it.

"I'm starting to get fat."

"That is supposed to happen."

"I don't need to get fatter."

"The wee one will see to it."

"Ceit?"

"Yes me angel?"

"Is it understandable for me to be a little frightened?"

"Of course it is, but the lyin in is God's greatest miracle and gift to women. Did ya notice? A man couldn't do it?"

"What if I get so fat, Paul won't want me anymore?"

"Ya needn't be afraid of that. A true man doesn't love the female body. He loves the soul of a woman. It don't matter to him what the package is as long as he loves the woman's soul. When you give birth to his son, his wee one, you are the only beautiful thing in the universe save his wee one. Ya will see that ya will."

"I have heard that laying in is so painful."

"Ya needn't worry about that either. I have medicines to ease the pain that won't hurt ya or the wee one. Dr. Damon will be there with me and we'll see to it that the layin in goes quickly and easy with ya. I'll be with ya the entire time. It will be fine, ya must trust me on it."

Rigan took Ceit's hand and rubbed her cheek against it. "I'm trusting you, Ceit."

Arla sighed, "I'll be with you too!"

Rigan was dressed in her deep blue satin day dress when Paul came into the room. "Breakfast is being served in our private dining



room. Everyone is invited and required to be there since I ordered the place settings."

"I can't be goin down there. I'll eat in me room. I don't have the proper dress for such a thing."

"You will eat with us Ceit, and you look lovely," Prince Paul ordered. "As for your excuse of attire. That is the first item on the agenda today to remedy."

"Paul, what are you planning?" Rigan had a sick feeling of doom in the pit of her stomach. "Paul you're not answering me."

"We are planning to have a quiet day together, and a picnic for you later in the afternoon."

"We?" Nothing more was said as they approached the dining room. Prepared for the entourage was a feast of breakfast foods.

Rigan's instincts proved to be correct as she discovered shortly after breakfast.

Paul took Rigan's arm and walked through the lobby of the hotel to a waiting carriage.

Ceit of course followed but Damon took her arm. "Ceit my sweet, today you and I are going to have some fun."

"Damon Sheffield, you are the Devil's spawn with the flirtin that ya do with this cailleach."

"You know how to break a man's heart, don't you sweet?" Damon countered. "Today however, you shall be under my command and I will hear no protests or as your escort you shall shame me to peril."

"What are ya blubberin about, Damon Sheffield?" Ceit demanded. "What do I have to protest about?"

"Nothing, absolutely nothing! Remember I said that," Damon replied curtly.

Paul sat next to Rigan in the carriage and Damon next to Ceit on the opposite seat.

"Where are we going?" Rigan asked extremely suspicious, especially with the grin on Paul and Damon's face.

"A surprise, Princess." Damon answered.

"I don't like surprises!"

"We know," Paul smiled.

"You're getting good at this, Paul."

"What?"

"The last word."

"I know."

Rigan playfully swatted her husband. Paul responded by taking her hand and kissing it tenderly.

The carriage pulled up to a renowned London dress shop.

Paul jumped out and took Rigan's hand.





Damon then jumped out and took Ceit's hand.

"We're going shopping today," Paul announced. "New dresses for our ladies."

"I shall help you select a new wardrobe, my Ceit. Paul here will help Rigan," Damon concurred.

"I want to change partners," Rigan said playfully. "I don't think I could survive another shopping expedition with you, Paul."

"I'm crushed madam."

"Ceit got the better deal."

"Rigan!" Paul blustered.

"Oh, alright. Let's go in."

"I'm not goin in there!" Ceit protested.

"You have no choice, dear Ceit. It's a royal command," Damon chuckled.

"Are ya daft lad? Just why would the Prince here command me to buy a wardrobe at his expense?"

"This Prince would command it!" Paul turned to respond. "You are now a member of the royal household staff. I have criteria to be met for the staff's appearance. You Ceit must meet these standards. That is a command."

"You see dear Ceit, you must do as the Prince commands. To disobey the Prince would cause great punishment or discipline. Why, you could be whipped! Drawn and quartered! Beheaded! I would be devastated should that happen," Damon exaggerated.

"Ya should have been born in Eirinn with the tales you spin, Damon Sheffield. With such fibbin it's hard to believe ya are a Sasennach."

"I also should have been born a lot sooner so I could have stolen your heart, Ceit."

"With that smooth tongue of yours Damon Sheffield, a woman that tickles your fancy will fall at your feet beggin for your mercy."

"Strange, I don't see you begging Ceit, and you tickle my fancy."

"Damon, your body may be Sasennach, but that mouth belongs to Eirinn."

"Do I take that as a compliment, sweet?"

"Ya'll make some caileag a fine husband some day. Ya mark me words, Damon Sheffield."

"Today is not the day, for today I am devoted to you. Come Ceit. Let us buy you some new clothes. I find I am enjoying spending the Prince's money."

## Chapter Twenty Four

This time Prince Paul had sent a messenger to prepare for his arrival as Prince of Borogia. It was Damon and his plan that they should be treated with the respect due his title and leave no room for challenge from either woman on their wishes.

The shopkeeper had bolts of fabric already brought into the room and pattern books lay on the table in front of the enormous divan. Paul and Damon sat in the middle with Rigan next to Paul and Ceit next to Damon.

The two men started paging the pattern books.

"This will not do for me." Paul said handing the book to Damon. Paul addressed the shopkeeper, "I want to see the sacque dresses, with front ribboned stomachers and the morning gowns. "I will have room for my son to grow properly and not be constrained."

Rigan turned pink and she felt her cheeks warmed. "Paul!"

"What is it my angel?"

"We don't speak in public of my growing waistline."

"But we must. Damon and I were discussing it last night. We agree the current women fashions are not designed for comfortable confinement. It must affect the child's development. So from now on, you will wear only the short stomachers with sacque dresses, and comfortable morning gowns."

"Actually it was Ceit who had mentioned the constriction of fashionable ladies gowns during pregnancy and afterwards for nursing," Damon added. "Didn't you Ceit?"

"I recall a similar conversation, but I did not mean for ya to take it so close to heart."

"Hah! But you are right as always Ceit. Damon and I agree completely," Paul volunteered.

"Speaking of gowns, Ceit would look wonderful in this satin gown with fine gauze and lace wrapped across the bosom. I think that burgundy satin over there, don't you agree, Paul?" Damon asked the Prince showing him the pattern.

"Absolutely, except I think that it should be mauve silk instead. Or I think maybe the blue satin over there. It would match her eyes."



"I agree, the blue satin then."

"No, I think Ceit should have all three. Order them," Paul declared.

"Beggin the pardon, Royal Highness, but has ya gone mad?" Ceit questioned innocently.

"Why would you think that Ceit?"

"I'm just a servant, I would never dream of such fine dresses."

"You're not just a servant Ceit. You forget that you are a member of the royal household staff. You will midwife my son, and be his nanny. I will not have my heir grow up thinking I did not take good care of his nanny. There will be no argument here, Ceit. Not another word."

"It's useless Ceit. Believe me, I know. Just let the men buy our clothes. On occasion we do get to select the color or fabric," Rigan sighed.

"Forgive me, Ceit. Is there a color you would prefer? We'll order four gowns then," Damon offered apologetically.

"The men are daft, Rigan. I'll be quiet and let them go as they will," Ceit whispered to Rigan rolling her eyes towards heaven in silent prayer for the mad souls. "I would suggest all that finery is impractical for function. A sturdy fabric of cotton and linen would serve me better."

"Thank you Ceit, you are correct again. We'll add three more dresses to that style in that beige cotton, and two more in that brown linen," Damon instructed the shopkeeper. "I like this open robe with trimmed narrow pleating. It has scalloped edge on the sleeve flounces, over triple lace flounces. And an apron of sheer fabric."

"It suits Ceit. Order four, but each in a different fabric and color."

"I will do so, Paul. Do you have any preference my sweet?"

"None at all, Damon," Ceit replied taking her finger and circling it around her temple as gesture of insanity.

"We'll take four, one brown linen, two white cotton, and one in that pretty flowered satin," Damon ordered. "And I shall order this rose pink open sacque gown with matching underskirt, trimming of pleated soft material, with lace edged gauze ruffles at the neck and sleeves. It has the mixed flower posy on the bodice. The fabric shall be satin," Damon looked at Paul. "Ceit will look lovely in this at the christening."

Paul nodded in approval. "Don't forget the petticoats, Damon."

"Ah yes, we'll add one dozen petticoats. Three will be brown linen, three white cotton, two white satin, and one red silk."

"Red Silk!" Ceit abruptly interrupted. "In the name of the Holy Mother, why would I wear red silk?"

"For me," Damon smiled.

## *Smitten*



"Why would I wear it for you?"

"Because the sound of the soft rustling red silk as you walked would bring a smile to my face, sweet."

"Spawn of the Devil, ya are Damon Sheffield."

"Why thank you madam. Make that two red silk petticoats."

"Rigan, are ya not goin to say anythin to these daft men?"

"I told you, Ceit. It is useless to even try," Rigan offered sympathetically and then realized it was her turn as she watched the shopkeeper approach. Rigan swallowed hard.

"Hah, there are the books I'm looking for!" Paul said triumphantly as the shopkeeper handed him the morning gown and sacque dress, short stomacher design books. "I want this sacque gown design in that floral patterned brocade over there, one in the blue floral and one in the green floral. Do you like any of the fabrics, my angel?"

"Why yes husband. I like that striped satin in lavender. And that yellow floral cotton over there."

"We'll have it made in those two choices also. Have the ribbons and bows match the main colors of the patterns."

"Why thank you husband."

"Anything for you, my angel. I'll take five of this sacque gown design with short stomacher in sapphire, gold, and burgundy silk. One will be that embroidered silk and the other that deep green satin, I think. What do you say my angel."

"Of course I concur."

"I will order three of these morning gowns in white silk, and three in yellow silk. I should like two of these morning gowns in pink satin. You do look lovely in pink, my angel. I'll take five of these front buttoned morning gowns in the blue striped satin, embroidered silk, gold brocade over there, this pink flowered silk, and that dark blue silk. We will also order one dozen white silk petticoats with larger waists and pull cords. I want plenty of room for Edward to grow in his Mamman's tummy and only the softest of fabrics to touch her skin." Paul patted Rigan's waist.

Rigan blushed in embarrassment, and then it struck her, just exactly what Paul had said. "Edward? You've named him already?"

"Of course I have. I have thought about his name since I learned you were with child. Edward is a fine name. Edward William Charles Karl James."

"Don't I have any say in this?"

"Don't you like it?"

"I didn't say that."

"Then what say do you want?"

"I don't know, but I want to have some say about some thing, anything!"



"My angel, he grows within you for nine months. You will nurse him with your breasts. I can do none of these things. I have no say in that. I should think you would allow me to have say after he is born."

"Paul, you pick my clothes, buy his child bed linens, his toys, a pony and now you name him. Not once have you asked me about anything. I should have rights before and after he, or she is born."

"He, my angel. You just let me know what you want discussed and it will be discussed. Fair?"

"I want to discuss his name."

"Go ahead. Discuss it."

"Her name will be Elizabeth Mary Louise Patrice Anne."

"Done! When we have a daughter that will be her name. You see how cooperative I am."

"If we have a son, we will remove the Charles and replace it with Patrick. Edward William Patrick Karl James."

"Conceded. Are we happy now?"

"I want to pick a dress of my own."

"As long as it is sacque with short stomacher."

"It is! I want this one in that light blue satin, matching gauze and accented with matching blue satin ribbons and little rose bud flowers in white silk." Rigan turned to Paul "For the christening, husband."

"A lovely choice, wife."

"We've completed our shopping. How soon can you have these gowns made?"

"I could have one of each made in three days. It would take almost a month for all your purchases to be sewn."

"We will take all you can in three days. The rest you will send here." Paul handed the shopkeeper a slip of paper.

"As you wish Your Royal Highness. I'll give you a total shortly." The shopkeeper pleased with the large sale was grinning broadly. "We will need to take the measurements. I'll send in the maids to assist the women in undressing for the measuring."

"What? I don't think ya'll be undressin me in front of no one," Ceit protested adamantly.

"Ceit, they need to measure you," Damon said automatically.

"Then ya men better get out of here, cause ya'll not see me in me privates!"

"I see more than my wife's privates, Ceit," Paul attempted at reason.

"Paul!" Rigan gasped in indignation. "Please don't embarrass me like that."

"That be the right of a duine, but ya are not my duine, and neither are you Damon."



"Ceit, your modesty becomes you, but it is not necessary with the Prince or me, your Doctor. So please hush and give us no more talk."

"I do this in protest."

"So noted," Paul affirmed.

Belligerent was a kind word for Ceit as the maids undressed her to the chemise and took her measurements. Rigan was more acceptable since it was her husband and her doctor. They had certainly seen more of her than the chemise and Rigan was used to the procedure for new gowns. Rigan was however, self conscious about her growing waistline. After the measurements were taken, Paul kissed her tummy and then helped her down from the measuring stool. The maids helped Rigan and Ceit dress quickly and finally they left the shop.

"On to the picnic!" Paul announced as they entered the carriage. "We'll arrive just in time."

Within a few minutes the carriage pulled into a wonderfully green park, full of flowers, trees, birds, butterflies, and children playing. "It's beautiful, Paul!" Rigan exclaimed joyfully.

"I'm glad you approve," Paul answered as the carriage stopped. Vladimir dismounted and opened the carriage door for Paul to step out.

"Your Royal Highness! I thought I recognized your Vladimir. It has been almost three years! I never thought to see you in London again, darling." Rigan heard a female voice say outside the carriage to Paul.

A little green monster took hold of Rigan. She couldn't resist looking out the carriage window. Rigan saw the most beautiful woman she had ever seen, save Camilla. The woman had long black hair, crystal blue eyes, creamy pale peach skin, and a perfect slim figure in a red and black velvet riding habit. The woman's face was perfectly shaped, her eyes beguiling and sparkling rich brown. Her cheeks were classic, her nose straight and Grecian, and her mouth perfectly shaped, colored with red rouge, wet and inviting. The woman was riding a white mare.

"Lady Marian," Paul recognized her and was somewhat surprised to see her. "How are you?"

"I am so much better today, since I have seen you."

"It is pleasant to see you. How is your brother?" Paul returned politely.

"Andrew is off again on some adventure, this time in the Colonies."

"Please be sure to give him my best."



"Aren't you going to be a lamb and help me off my horse so we can talk awhile? I am sure there is so much to catch up on. Have you returned to Borogia yet? Or are you still on your adventure?"

"I don't want to interrupt your ride, Lady Marian."

"I should hope you would. I want to have you all to myself for a while. We can surely find something to do," Lady Marian offered suggestively. "We didn't have one moment alone with Andrew under foot, and surely you must have known how attracted I was to you."

"No, actually I wasn't aware," Paul answered feeling a little nervous about her suggestive attitude. "Lady Marian, you should know..."

"Shush, my Prince. I will make every effort to make you aware of my feelings, darling."

"Lady Marian, I am here on my honeymoon," Paul blurted out.

"With a wife?"

"That is the person a honeymoon is usually shared with," Paul replied with a sarcastic humor. Marian was another woman out for a title. An empty headed self centered beauty that believed she could get and have anything with her looks and charms.

"You're teasing me! The last I heard you were looking for that perfectly impossible to find special person."

"I found her," Paul said as he walked to the carriage door triumphantly and opened it. "Come Rigan, meet Lady Marian. Her brother Andrew is a fellow adventurer I met when I first arrived in London."

Rigan stepped down from the carriage. "Lady Marian, my wife, Princess Rigan."

"Why, she's plain and fat! Hardly perfect I would say," Marion said contemptuously.

"And you are air headed and rude, mademoiselle!" Rigan responded before Paul could open his mouth in retort.

"Well said, Rigan," Damon applauded as he stepped out of the carriage. Damon turned and lifted Ceit from the carriage to the street. "Marian, you always were a self centered, bitch. Rigan was kind."

"I never!" Marian choked in a pique.

"No, you never had manners," Damon chided.

"You cad! I never liked you Damon Sheffield and I never knew why Andrew liked you as his friend."

"Probably because I was the only one that ever put you in your place. By the way, Rigan is with child, Prince Paul's heir. So you should show a little respect for the Princess. Since she accomplished whatever you could never hope to do."

"You bastard, just what did she accomplish that I couldn't?"

## *Smitten*



"Such language from a lady. Tsk! Tsk! Isn't it obvious? Rigan sleeps in Paul's bed. Something you tried to get into, but failed at miserably."

"Damon Sheffield, you are ..are.."

"A cad. You told me Marian. Now go home so we can enjoy the rest of the day."

"Damon, ya did not tell me ya were knowin a Banshee in person," Ceit said with intent to insult the Lady Marian. "And here I thought they lived only in Eirinn."

"Banshees cover the earth sweet Ceit, regretfully."

Lady Marian rode off in a pique.

Rigan felt a little ashamed. She was losing her temper more often. Rigan felt self-conscious about her growing waist because her pregnancy was becoming obvious. Her jealousy was not constrained either.

"I'm sorry my angel. Did she upset you?" Paul apologized and quickly cloaked her in his embrace.

"Of course she did. How many women do you have about? Are they all that beautiful?"

"Not nearly as many lads as you had, dear Rigan. And how could you call that air headed, self centered, rude woman, beautiful?"

"I am finding I can be a jealous woman, Paul Lange."

"Then you understand how jealous of you I am, Rigan Lange. Let's take baby to eat lunch. He must be hungry."

Paul led her to a blanket laid out in the grass. Four picnic baskets were upon the blanket with bottles of wine and glasses.

"Paul, what did you do?"

"A surprise. The hotel has provided us with a catered picnic. Come sit down and eat. Everything is ready."

"I'm starved," Damon announced eagerly eyeing the banquet.

"You're always hungry, Damon," Paul teased.

"That I am. I admit my weakness for food, and Ceit of course."

"The Devil's spawn ya are," Ceit laughed and sat down on the blanket next to Damon and the picnic basket.



## Chapter Twenty Five

The remainder of the week in London was a blissful one. Paul and Damon spent the mornings together purchasing equipment and materials for the clinic. They spent the afternoons interviewing physicians and visiting hospitals and clinics in London and surrounding areas.

Rigan, Ceit and Arla enjoyed walks in the parks and on the streets in London under the watchful eyes of Rolf and Michalek. Rigan also bought presents for Paul's family and servants in Brogav Palace. Rigan couldn't resist buying a warm woolen coat for Gustav. She was very tempted to buy a pair of breeches for Edward, but resisted deciding she didn't want to encourage Paul any more than the enthusiasm he already enjoyed over their baby.

In the evenings Paul and Rigan would spend a quiet dinner together where they would discuss all of Paul's purchases for the clinic and what their plans were for the clinic when they returned to Borogia.

Paul loved sharing with Rigan. If it were possible their nightly conversations created more love between them. They enjoyed each other's intelligence and communication as much as they enjoyed making love with each other.

Two dresses arrived for Ceit, the one burgundy satin and one was brown linen. The two red silk petticoats arrived with the cotton and linen ones. The rest would be freighted to Borogia. Ceit couldn't resist trying on a red silk petticoat. She wore it with the burgundy gown for dinner with Damon one evening. They usually spent the evenings together discussing the old ways, while Paul and Rigan spent evenings together.

"Ceit sweet, you are ravishing this evening!" Damon exclaimed as he held her at arms length approving his own choice in fashion.

"I must be admittin, I do like the lovely soft dress. But don't ya be gettin no more ideas, ya Devil's spawn."

"Wouldn't think of it!" Damon lied. Tomorrow he and Paul would stop at the shop and order a few more, in different satin fabrics for Ceit.

Damon took Ceit's arm and walked down the hallway towards the stairs when he stopped suddenly. "Good God, Ceit what is it that I am hearing."

"What would ya be hearin?"

## *Smitten*



"It sounds like the soft rustle of silk with your walk."

"That it could be."

"Sweet Ceit!" Damon exclaimed and raised the skirt of her dress to view the red silk petticoat.

"Ya stop that now! Tis improper!" Ceit growled and slapped Damon's hands.

"Sweet Ceit! You make me so happy," Damon laughed and put the skirt down gently smoothing the folds.

"The Devil's spawn, ya be Damon Sheffield."

"So you keep telling me, sweet Ceit, but you can't deny that you love me dearly."

"I will admit tis fond of ya I am. Like a son I never had. I guess it is the Devil within me that could've spawned ya."

"Sweet Ceit, I love you dearly too." Damon bent and brushed his lips over Ceit's cheek.

The 720 km sea voyage to Hamburg was uneventful, other than Ceit being violently seasick. Damon took care of her with remedies he had learned.

Arriving in Hamburg, Paul immediately procured a suite and rooms in the most lavish hotel in the city. Damon and Paul spent a week in Hamburg procuring more equipment, tools and furniture for their clinic. They also spent two days on inspections of city clinics. Paul queried the clinics on size of wards, patients per doctor, and patients per nurse. He also questioned hours worked by doctors, nurses, and orderlies. Damon reviewed medicine availability, storage, and how dispensed. Damon also inventoried medical equipment.

The overland trip to Borogia was prolonged to three weeks. Paul and Damon stayed over in the towns along the way inspecting the German clinics and interviewing physicians. Surprisingly, one interview resulted in the acquisition of the first surgeon for their clinic. It turns out Johann Krantz did not care for city life and preferred the country life. Johann would be happy to move to Borogia. Prince Paul would notify him upon the completion of the clinic. Although Prince Paul knew the structure would be completed by now, the equipment, furniture and apothecary needed to be set up.

Vladimir rode ahead of the royal entourage to enter the city of Brogav and the Palace.

The people of the city recognized the lone rider as his horse pranced through the streets. The whispers began throughout the city. The Prince and Princess would be returning to Brogav momentarily. The people stopped their work, and their activities to start lining the streets.



As the carriage entered the city the people started cheering and waving for their Prince and Princess. Cheers were the loudest for Princess Rigan welcoming her home.

Prince Paul was riding the Aran Half-Bred alongside the carriage and accepted the bouquets offered to the Princess. Rigan looked out the carriage window and waved to the delight of the throng.

Vladimir had met with King Karl to tell of him of Paul's imminent arrival. King Karl sent for his wife Queen Louise.

"That must be them approaching now," King Karl smiled. "The people of the city are announcing their arrival."

The cheers of the city were loud and Queen Louise nearly ran to the courtyard of Brogav Palace waiting for her son and daughter in law to arrive. King Karl in a more kingly decorum arrived to stand next to Queen Louise.

The crowd was thick and loud at the Palace courtyard. Auguste called the mounted Palace guards to clear the way through the gates. Prince Paul, covered with the floral bouquet gifts was wearing a broad smile as he entered the gates and saw his parents. In the clearing of the courtyard he spurred his mount to gallop to them. Pulling the reins abruptly on his Aran Half-Bred he jumped off and ran to his Mamman and Papa embracing them both.

Tears of happiness glistened in all their eyes.

"How is Rigan?" was the first question from Queen Louise. "Does she fare well with the child?"

"Mamman, do you think I would not take care of my wife? Especially in her delicate condition?" Paul feigned shock. "I am fine too, Mamman. Just in case you worried for me."

"Paul, you naughty boy." Queen Louise shook her finger. "Of course I worry for all of you, but now I have a grandchild coming that will grow up before my eyes."

"You'd better take care of my daughter in law, or face me!" King Karl laughed. "I don't know if I can handle your Mamman should anything happen to her grandchild."

"Papa, your grandson is in capable hands."

"Hah! Grandson! You know this as fact?" King Karl laughed.

"I do!" Prince Paul said quite seriously. "Prince Edward William Patrick Karl James is growing safe and warm in his Mamman's tummy. I have seen to it."

"Oh Paul, enough of this. Here comes the carriage. Go get us your lovely wife! I want to embrace her," Queen Louise gently chided.

When the carriage stopped. Prince Paul opened the door and lifted Rigan out. He whispered in her ear, "Dear wife, if you think you had to endure my smothering, I can only warn you Mamman's will exceed mine ten fold."

## *Smitten*



Rigan moaned, "Oh no. At least I know which side you inherited your smothering from."

"Papa's side is the possessive," Paul quipped teasingly.

Queen Louise walked briskly to Rigan's side and placed her hand on Rigan's abdomen. "Oh look Karl. Our grandchild! How long in term, Rigan?"

"She has entered the beginning of her fifth month, Your Royal Majesty," Damon answered when he jumped from the carriage and turned to lift Ceit from it.

"I'll be!" King Karl shouted. "Ceit, Ceit O'Halloran! Clamar a tha sibh?"

Ceit turned her head to see the older Karl. The man who was Sean O'Cullenan's good friend and had come to visit several times to Fanore as a young boy and young man. "Tha gu math, tapadh leibh. Is that really you Karl?"

"In the flesh!" King Karl turned to his surprised queen. "Louise may I introduce my first love, Ceit O'Halloran. Ceit, my wife Queen Louise Janette."

"I'm pleased to meet you, Ceit O'Halloran," Queen Louise said graciously.

The king smiled at Damon as he held Ceit's arm. "Damon Sheffield, just how did you ever get my dear Ceit to visit here?"

"Ceit is presently my sweet," Damon grinned. "Ceit agreed to come as royal midwife to Rigan and nanny to Prince Edward."

"Karl, you Devil's spawn!" Ceit exclaimed in surprise.

"Ceit, I thought you reserved that title to me! I'm hurt," Damon reprimanded in humor.

"Damon, you wouldn't believe how many County Clare lads desired the hand of Ceit O'Halloran when I knew her," King Karl beamed proudly.

"Oh, but I would believe," Damon countered.

"So who did win your hand, Ceit?"

"No one, Karl. I was in love with only one man, Raibert Brody. He was killed by the Sasennach and me heart was buried with him. When Sean's sainted Ealasaid passed on to her reward I took charge of Rigan here, as me own."

"Blessed be the Holy Mother, we've come full circle. Welcome to our home Ceit O'Halloran. I would not trust anyone more than you with my grandchild," King Karl stated firmly.

"I will enjoy getting to know you, Ceit." Queen Louise offered graciously. "I would love to hear the stories of my husband's youthful escapades."

"I do have stories to tell!" Ceit laughed. "But first we should get me Rigan into your Palace and clean off all the road dust."



"Of course. All of you need to come in refresh and then eat," Queen Louise agreed. "Ceit, I do think you and I will become fast friends."

Ceit looked at Queen Louise and smiled, "I think so too."

"Come Rigan," Ceit ordered as she took Rigan's hand. "Let's get you cleaned, rested and fed."

"Ceit, this is Corinna, Helene, Bridgett and Camilla. They are my Ladies in Waiting," Queen Louise introduced. "They will help you adjust to the palace."

"Tis a pleasure." Ceit responded. "I need to see me Rigan bathed."

"We'll take you to the Prince's royal suites and arrange for the servants to prepare her bath," Bridgett volunteered. "Perhaps we can help Princess Rigan and you can bathe yourself."

"That would be kind of ya."

"You help Ceit, Bridgett. I'll attend to Princess Rigan," Camilla said smoothly.

"Corinna can attend Ceit. We can see to Princess Rigan's needs," Bridgett countered. She did not trust Camilla. Bridgett didn't know why, she just didn't trust her. It was something in her eyes that made Bridgett uneasy around her.

Ceit was looking at Lady Camilla as she talked to Bridgett. Ceit saw it too. Satan possesses that girl. I can see it in her eyes. Ceit shivered. I won't be leavin Rigan alone with that one.

After the bath Bridgett and Camilla dressed Rigan in a clean chemise. "You will be feeling your babe soon. I had no idea you were so far along," Bridgett commented as she gently rubbed Rigan's abdomen. "The queen is so pleased about her grandchild."

"Paul tells me she will smother me with attention."

"Of that there is no doubt Princess," Bridgett replied. "This is the first grandchild that will be laying in for this palace and her presence. I am sure she has every intention of showering you with attention."

Ceit entered wearing her new brown linen dress and looking refreshed. "Come now, Rigan. It's ta bed ya will be goin for a quick nap."

"Ceit, I'm not tired. I want to go with Paul and Damon and start work on organizing the clinic for the village."

"That can wait my angel," Paul announced as he walked into the room. "If all you women will leave. I'll put Rigan to bed and then Maurice can help me bathe and change."

"Of course, Your Royal Highness," Camilla said sweetly. "You're back my love. I will soon have you after I rid you of this barbarian and her bastard."



Maurice turned down the Prince's bed as the women left the room. Paul picked Rigan up with ease and gently placed her in his bed. "Take a little nap. Damon and I won't be doing anything about the clinic today." Paul tucked her in and sat by her side. "Close your eyes. When you wake we'll dine with Mamman and Papa."

After Paul left for his Papa, Maurice sent for Ceit and Arla. It was an unspoken duty not to leave Princess Rigan alone even for a minute, regardless of her bodyguards outside. Claus and Petar were currently on watch.

While Princess Rigan slept blissfully in Paul's bed under the watchful eyes of Ceit and Arla, Lady Camilla was finding out about a certain dismissed steward, named Herman Frantz. Camilla had heard quiet whisperings in the palace corridor. That meant gossip and Camilla did love royal gossip. She stopped just outside of their sight to hear the conversation.

"I still think you should talk to the Princess. Monika."

"How can I approach her with this. It's my shame!"

"Princess Rigan is so kind and understanding. Look at what she did for all us in the household. We are now protected from beatings, and rapes!"

Lady Camilla remained in the shadows listening to the conversation. At first she thought it would be interesting gossip, but it turned into much more.

"Victor didn't rape me."

"Didn't he? Seducing you with his lies and flattery."

"I just know I must go home and bear this shame with my family. I simply can't work near him any more, knowing he won't acknowledge or accept his paternity."

"Princess Rigan will handle it for you. I know she will. You heard how she confronted Herman Frantz, had him get a taste of his own beating and dismissed him permanently from the household without severance or reference. I heard he is working for an old lord in the city as his valet. It was the only position he could acquire."

"I don't feel sorry for him! What he did to Arla was horrible and brutal."

"Will you go to Princess Rigan?"

"I have no other hope. I must, but how can I possibly talk to Her Royal Highness?"

"If you see Arla, tell her your trouble and she will get you in to see Princess Rigan."

Lady Camilla had a wicked smile cross her lips. I will talk to Arla about this Herman Frantz and see if I cannot locate this old lord he is valet for. I think I will have an interesting proposition for him.



Later in the day, Arla was walking toward the Palace kitchen to retrieve some coffee and biscuits by order of Ceit for Princess Rigan.

"Arla," Monika called out.

"Yes, Monika."

"A minute please."

"Only a minute. My princess would like some coffee and biscuits."

"I'm in dire troubles, Arla."

"Whatever is it?"

"I'm carrying the steward Victor's child. He won't acknowledge his paternity and all I want now is to go home to my family and bear my shame. Would Princess Rigan help release me from my tenure so I could return home?"

"Princess Rigan carries Prince Paul's child herself. I am sure she would help you."

"Will you get me an audience with her?"

"Come help me with the coffee and biscuits. You can come with me while I serve the Princess."

"Thank you so much, Arla."

"For the kindness the Princess showed me, I am duty bound to God to help others whenever I can."

Claus stopped Monika from entering with Arla. "Hold there, you are not one of the Princess' ladies."

"She's with me," Arla said trying to let Claus allow Monika entry.

"We cannot allow it," Claus responded.

The door was open and Rigan sitting in the parlor of the royal suite heard the conversation. "Who is it with you, Arla?"

"Her name is Monika, Princess. She wishes to have an audience with you. It is important."

"Claus, let Monika in," Rigan commanded.

"Your Royal Highness, Prince Paul has strict orders," Claus protested.

"Prince Paul can speak to me of it later. For now you will allow Monika entrance."

Monika entered and bowed before the Princess.

"What troubles you so to see me?" Rigan asked sympathetically. "Come sit next to me on the divan."

Monika told her entire story to the patient Princess. All of the emotions that Monika had held in check were released as she told Rigan of her love affair and pregnancy. There was something about Rigan that made Monika feel she didn't have to hold back anything.

Rigan took Monika in her arms. "Don't cry anymore. We shall see to it that things are taken care of."



"I just want to go home. Can you release my tenure?" Monika sobbed.

"Of course we can, but we must set things right first," Rigan answered and rose walking to the door. "Petar send for Victor the steward, immediately!"

In twenty minutes Petar escorted Victor into the royal suite where he came to stand before Princess Rigan.

"It has come to my attention that you have sired Monika's child and refuse to acknowledge your paternal responsibility," Rigan said quite calmly.

Victor started visibly trembling. It brought fear to his well being that a royal would know or discuss such a personal matter with a servant. That would never happen unless the royal was extremely angry.

"Cat got your tongue, Victor?" Rigan persisted.

"Your Royal Highness, how can I be sure it's my child?"

"Monika says it is. That is proof enough for me, as it should be you. It seems Monika has come to her senses and realizes you are not the love she needs in her life and wishes to return home. I have released her tenure with a sizable severance pay and proper references."

"You are generous, Princess," Victor bowed.

"You are not!" Rigan said angrily. "I enjoy the loving and caring of my husband regarding his child and I find it intolerable that any man would not love and care for his own child."

"I am at a loss of words, Your Royal Highness."

"You shall also be at a loss of a portion of your income. I will speak to the head steward and have one third of your pay taken out and sent to Monika for the care and upbringing of your child."

"Your Royal Highness," Victor bowed in concession. He was relieved the Princess didn't have him terminated from his position.

"My husband the Prince is a loving family man. I know he would find your actions repulsive and I am sure he would have provided a more severe punishment. I think it best if none of us speak of this to him, and you Victor make no complaint to the head steward of your monetary allotment to Monika."

"Yes, Your Royal Highness. You are gracious."

"You are dismissed, Victor. Return to your duties."

"Petar, make arrangements for one of our carriages to take Monika and her belongings home to her family. Take out 2,000 guineas from my funds for her severance pay." Rigan then turned to Monika and addressed her sympathetically, "That should help you and your family for a while. Your allotment will be posted weekly."





Monika knelt before Princess Rigan and kissed her hand. "May God Bless you, Princess, and keep you and your child healthy and free from all harm."

Ceit and Arla observed the entire affair and were filled with pride for their Princess.

Soon the palace was whispering again about the kind and wise Princess Rigan. How lucky they all were to serve in her household.



## *Chapter Twenty Six*

In the evening King Karl, Queen Louise, Prince Paul and Damon joined Princess Rigan in the parlor of Prince Paul's royal suites.

"Before dinner, Rigan, there is something I want to show both you and Paul," Queen Louise said as she produced a key.

Queen Louise led them to the locked door adjoining the Prince's bedroom. What had once been Paul's nursery had been completely redecorated.

"It's so blue!" Rigan exclaimed when she walked into the nursery behind Queen Louise.

"It's lovely, Mamman. You decorated just the way I wanted it," Prince Paul beamed upon entering the room.

"When everything arrived, it was all blue. So I did make the assumption you wanted the nursery decorated this way," Queen Louise bubbled brightly. "Do you like it, Rigan?"

"It's so blue," Rigan repeated. Her eyes scanned the room. Blue silk curtains on the windows matched the sheets and skirt of the bassinet. Three armoires were stained blue to match the bassinet. A desk was stained blue in one corner of the room and several small chests of drawers were stained in the same blue hue. A large canopied bed was positioned against one wall. The bed was stained blue and had the same matching blue silk of the curtains as its coverlet. Toys were scattered on the floor near the window. The toys for boys Paul had purchased and also his precious telescope. Even the walls were painted a light blue.

"You don't like it then?" Queen Louise asked with disappointment.

"Oh I do like it. It is beautiful, but what if we have a daughter?" Rigan asked.

"Blue is a peaceful color. A princess will sleep comfortably in here, just as a prince would," Queen Louise replied in understanding.

"You put a lot of work and love into this room," Rigan commented.

"It was no work, just love. Except with all the child bed linens Paul sent home we had to order another armoire. That was a bit of work finding the artisan, since the furniture shop only had the two."

"Thank you Mamman for your efforts. Prince Edward will be very comfortable in here. I will teach him how to use my telescope. I



am happy you retrieved it from my nursery in the country castle and brought it to this the room."

Paul was ecstatic with the nursery and that his Mamman remembered his precious telescope. The very telescope he and Rigan had used to look to the stars on their first night together. It was that night when they first shared their love and created his Edward. A smile crossed his lips.

"Come along with me darlings. You too, Ceit." Queen Louise opened the door to the adjoining room. "This is your room Ceit. Your things have been moved here. Do you like it?"

"Saints preserve us. I've never seen anythin so beautiful in me life." Ceit looked at the huge bed covered with a white satin coverlet and matching pillows. The walls were the same pale blue as the nursery, but the curtains were white to match the bed coverlet. A large full-length mirror was positioned on the wall next to two large cherrywood armoires and a cherrywood chest of drawers. Ceit saw a small cherrywood writing desk in the corner near the door with a private chamber for the privy and the bath.

"I picked all neutral colors for this room because I didn't know who the nanny would be. You may pick your own colors and redecorate if you like, Ceit," the queen offered graciously.

"Holy Mary, Mother of God, have I died? Entered heaven and not know it? Or perhaps I'm dreamin."

"That's odd Ceit, That was the same way I felt when I was asked by the Prince to be his Princess," Rigan shared laughing.

"Ouch, what caused ya to be pinchin me, Damon?" Ceit growled spinning around to the devilish Dr. Sheffield.

"You're not dreaming, Ceit. The pinch would have woken you." Damon took her wrist in his hand. "You aren't dead, either. I feel a pulse."

"That's a relief," Paul laughed. "I would hate to return to Eirinn to look for a new nanny for Edward."

"Let's sit down to dinner, children," King Karl ordered holding back his desire to participate in the antics, but that would be unkingly.

While the meal was served for the royal family, Ceit and Bridgett talked quietly in the corner as they sampled their meal.

"Where is that Lady Camilla that serves the queen with ya?"

"She said she wanted to talk to Arla. They are in the Princess' dressing room unpacking her clothing from the trip. She never volunteered for such activities before, but she has been nothing but strange since the Prince and Princess announced their betrothal."

"That lass is strange. I saw the Devil in her eyes, I did. She's possessed with evil. I can't be lettin her near me Rigan. I fear Camilla's evil eye might hurt Rigan or the wee one she carries," Ceit shared with Bridgett.



"It's strange you should say that. I feel the same way about Camilla. I even told the queen I don't trust her. I also see the devil in her eyes," Bridgett agreed.

"We will make a pact to watch the lass, lest she do harm to your queen or me Rigan."

"We will watch her closely. Pact!" Bridgett concurred and squeezed Ceit's hand.

"Who is this Ceit that travels with Princess Rigan?" Camilla asked innocently.

"She was Rigan's nanny in Eirinn and will be the midwife for the laying in," Arla answered absently as she worked.

"Another barbarian added to the household," Camilla snarled softly.

"Barbarian? I would hardly call Ceit a barbarian. She is rough on the edges, but her age allows that. She really is a sweet person," Arla rebuffed quite taken aback by Camilla's attitude.

"I only meant the word in an endearing way. Not at all like the barbaric tactics I heard you endured under a steward. What was his name?"

"A name I'd sooner forget. He was a beast, a cruel and savage beast that enjoyed beatings." Arla shivered in memory as she went about smoothing a dress she had just unpacked.

"Oh do tell. I wasn't here with the queen when this happened. I first learned of it today," Camilla said feigning interest in Arla.

"It is not a subject usually discussed in this household. Where did you hear it?" Arla questioned in surprise.

"Oh give over Arla, do tell. You know as well as I do that we all love to gossip," Camilla urged.

"Princess Rigan found Herr Frantz beating me in a little used hall off the palace kitchen. He found me there collapsed from my burning fever and went into a rage. She stopped him and had her bodyguard take me to her chambers. I don't know much after that since I was in a delirium, but the other servants told me what they saw."

"Oh do tell," Camilla requested stopping her smoothing of gowns and sat on a chair near the armoire.

"Prince Paul and Princess Rigan saw my bruised body while I was in the delirium and went to talk to the king. The other chambermaid, Alice and the two pageboys were brought in to see the king. They said the Prince undressed the boys and saw all their bruises. The lot of them went to the physicians for care by order of the king. The head steward was sent for and ordered to bring Herman Frantz before the king, Prince Paul and Princess Rigan. The next thing that happened was that they heard Herman Frantz scream in pain and



later run out the room half naked with a cross-shaped welt on his back. The head steward followed him with palace guards and he was escorted out, never to be seen again," Arla related hoping that would be enough and Camilla would again assist in putting away Princess Rigan's gowns.

"Does anyone know what happened to him?"

"The gossip is he still lives in Brogav working for an old lord, named Oelsteff," Arla answered smoothing another gown.

"The terror you must have endured," Camilla said in false sympathy. "How did you come into the Princess' service?"

"The Princess herself saved my life with her knowledge of sickness and natural remedies. Then Dr. Sheffield took care of me until I was completely well. By that time Princess Rigan had returned with the Prince to the country castle. I begged Dr. Sheffield to take me to the castle so I could serve the Princess with my life. He agreed and it was that day, the Princess was stabbed and I found her. When the Prince rushed in because of my screams, I thought he would go insane. The Prince was holding her limp body and rocking her. Why the Prince wouldn't even let her go so Dr. Sheffield to care for her."

"You have been through a lot," Camilla pretended to care. They finished unpacking all the Princess' clothes and Camilla took her leave to return to her suites. Camilla was developing a plan to rid Prince Paul of that barbarian, Rigan, permanently. Princess Rigan had made another enemy, Herman Frantz. I will find him and discuss revenge. He surely would want to seek revenge on the Princess. After all, Rigan had destroyed his life, like she destroyed mine, but only temporarily.

The next morning Camilla woke early. She would go into the city later today and locate the residence of Herr Oelsteff. She would have a conversation with Herman Frantz and discuss her well thought out plans of revenge to rid the Prince of Rigan permanently.

Camilla had nearly finished all her duties to the queen when she overheard Siegfried Goetz talking to Bridgett. "I request a brief audience with the queen."

Bridgett somewhat surprised by the request turned to speak to Queen Louise. Herr Goetz rarely if ever came to the queen's chamber for an audience. Their acquaintance was social.

"Siegfried, how nice to see you. I last heard you were spending time with your children and wife."

"I had promised them I would take them on a vacation to the country when I returned from England."

"I hope your vacation was pleasant."

"I enjoy my family very much, but my mind still weighed heavily with the attack on the Princess, and my fear for the royal family," Siegfried replied looking around the suite and decided to



remain standing. He would not take much of the queen's time. He had promised King Karl to be quick.

"Absolutely nothing has happened since. The assassin must have run away."

"Or is waiting for an opportunity to strike again," he warned.

"How dreadful a thought, Siegfried."

"Have you returned to the country castle since then?"

"Just twice for brief weekends. Karl doesn't like me going there since the attack. The dear says he wants me close to him more."

"Nothing unusual happened on those weekends?"

"Nothing, why do you ask?"

"With information from one of my interviews in England, I have theorized the attacker could have been on the royal household staff."

"This is shocking!" Queen Louise gasped and picked up her fan to provide moving air with the rapid movements of her hand.

"I am currently investigating the possibility of a connection with Herr Frantz. Perhaps a friend of his on the royal staff tried to seek revenge. The attack on Rigan occurred shortly after his dismissal. I understand the dismissal was not amicable."

"Hardly, the man was a beast. He brutalized some of our staff. Rigan discovered it and of course King Karl dismissed him," Queen Louise informed the Security Minister.

"Just the type of beast that would seek revenge."

"You are so right. Do you think it was he?"

"As I said I am investigating that possibility. I ordered my men to take him into questioning. I will be going there later today to question him myself."

"He still lives in Brogav?"

"Unfortunately yes. We located him in the service of Lord Oelsteff on Banter Street."

"Your position is trying to say the least. Do have some tea with me."

"I would love to Your Royal Majesty, but I came here first to interview your Lady Camilla. My investigation in England has left a loose end, and I would like to discuss it with her."

Camilla had been listening to the conversation and was just thinking how convenient it was to learn from Herr Goetz exactly where to find Herman Frantz. She also heard that he was in custody for interrogation, which meant Herr Goetz would have him watched for sometime. She would have to wait for a while until it was safe. Then she heard him ask to speak to her. She almost dropped the tray she was carrying.

"Lady Camilla!" Queen Louise called.



Camilla responded gathering her wits. She knew the queen was calling her so Herr Goetz could speak to her again.

"Yes Your Royal Majesty," Camilla answered dutifully walking into the royal suite with a courtesy.

"Lady Camilla, Herr Goetz would like a few words with you," Queen Louise instructed.

"Of course. Where would you like to talk?"

"I would like to take you for a walk in the royal gardens. I find it quite relaxing there," Siegfried indicated the door with an out swept arm.

Herr Goetz led Lady Camilla into the gardens and then asked her the questions that had been troubling him.

"Lady Camilla, in my interview with Prince Aleck he mentioned something that disturbed me."

"You spoke with Prince Aleck?"

"That was one of the purposes of my trip to England."

"He didn't deny I was with him, did he?" Camilla asked nervously.

"Quite the contrary. He confirmed you were with him before the attack."

"Then I don't understand why you must question me again."

"Prince Aleck said he left you and went to the stables for a ride. He heard Arla's scream and returned to the West Wing. He followed Arla to find Dr. Sheffield and then retrieved the Royal Family before returning to the West Wing. That was well after the attack took place is when he saw you leaving the area of the West Wing."

"I guess that is possible."

"You told me you had left the West Wing before the attack, and you were with your mother when the attack took place," Siegfried reminded her.

"I really don't remember much of that day. I was upset you see. Prince Aleck and I had words."

"Yes, he told me."

"Just what did he tell you?" She asked again nervously.

"I usually ask the questions, Lady Camilla," Siegfried replied cocking a brow.

"I'm sorry. It's just so much for me. I just recently received a letter from Prince Aleck breaking off with me," Camilla sighed dramatically.

"May I see this letter?"

"That sir is a private affair!"

"Lady Camilla, private affairs are my business."

"Well you can't see it. I was upset after I read it. I tore it up and burned it," Camilla answered haughtily.

"That is unfortunate."



"Why?"

"Prince Aleck indicated that time with you on that day was most unpleasant. It appeared to upset him tremendously. What happened that day between the two of you?"

"That I will not discuss. It is none of anyone's business and has nothing to do with the attack on Princess Rigan."

"Why did you lie to me about your location during the attack?"

"I didn't lie. I was confused."

"Are you unconfused now?" Siegfried pursued.

"I don't know. I don't remember. Can't you leave me alone?"

"I am afraid I can't until I figure out where you were. Why you were there and what you possibly might know."

"I don't remember things."

"Do you remember Arla's scream?"

"No, I didn't hear it."

"It was quite loud I understand."

"I told you I don't remember it. I was quite upset with the words I had with Prince Aleck. I think I was dazed for a while," Camilla insisted stamping her foot.

"What happened between you and Prince Aleck to upset you so much?"

"Since you insist upon prying into personal affairs, I'll tell you! Prince Aleck raped me!"

"You said you and he were in love."

"We were in love. I was innocent enough to trust him when he took me to his room. He told me he wanted to talk to me privately. I assumed it was about our future together. He told me he couldn't wait to have me. I refused and he turned into a savage, tearing my clothes and taking my virginity quite brutally. We had words after and he left in a rage. I was so distraught I didn't know what to do. How long I was in his room, I don't remember. I was in a daze. I didn't see or hear anything. Certainly you can understand my confusion."

"Yet, you still wanted to marry him?"

"Of course, I loved him. He just couldn't hold back his need for me. I forgave him."

"You don't love him anymore?"

"Love and hate, it's such a fine line. After his letter, I don't know how I feel."

"Do you still love Prince Paul?"

"Why do you ask that?"

"Remember Lady Camilla, I ask the questions. Answer me, do you still love Prince Paul?"

"Yes. No. I don't know how I feel about anything. A woman's emotions can be a tangled mess."





"All emotions are a tangled mess, Lady Camilla. I will walk you back to the queen."

"That isn't necessary. I think I have had enough of your company for a lifetime. You have stirred hurts and pain I was trying to forget."

"You must never try to forget hurt and pain, but face them honestly," Siegfried decreed with wisdom.

"Thank you for your advice!" Camilla retorted angrily and left quickly.

Prince Paul was returning for his morning ride with King Karl when they spotted Lady Camilla leaving Herr Goetz in a pique.

"What happened here?" King Karl asked as he approached Siegfried.

"My interview did not go well with the Lady," Siegfried replied bowing before the king.

"Didn't you interview her before?"

"New information required that I re-interview."

"What did you learn?"

"I learned what the Lady says does not ring true."

"That sounds a bit ominous," Prince Paul stated.

"Ominous to say the least. I am not liking what I am thinking."

"Just what is it you are thinking?" King Karl questioned his friend.

"Nothing I wish to share at this moment. I will watch and wait. Excuse me because I have an interview with Herman Frantz this morning."

"Frantz! He is still here in Brogav?" King Karl questioned in a surprised voice.

"I have him in custody right now."

"Do you think Frantz might have been involved with the attack on my angel?" Prince Paul asked in deep concern.

"That is a possibility."

"If he was, I will shred his back with his own strop before I let you hang him, Siegfried."

"Everything remains to be seen," Siegfried Goetz replied and tried obtain to his leave from the King and Prince.

"I'm coming with you!" Prince Paul said with the air of command. His words left no argument.



## Chapter Twenty Seven

"I cannot prevent you from accompanying me, but I can prevent you from interfering in my interview, Your Royal Highness," Siegfried admonished Paul as they rode side by side to the city offices of Herr Goetz.

"I have no intention of interfering. I just want to be present."

"Remember you said that." Turning to Vladimir and Auguste, his ever-present bodyguards he said to them, "I will expect you to help your Prince keep those words."

A clerk met Herr Goetz at the door and was handed the reins for the Prince and his employer. Vladimir and Auguste tied their own horses and followed the Prince and Siegfried up the steps to the interview offices.

Another clerk met them at the top of the stairs. "We have him in here." Pointing to the door next to him. "He is uncooperative to say the least. He is quite belligerent."

"Have you told him anything? Why he was brought here?" Siegfried queried.

"We only informed him that Herr Goetz wished to question him on a matter."

Siegfried nodded to the clerk and entered the room. Herman Frantz sat by a table running his hands through his thinning hair.

"Herr Frantz, we appreciate the time you have taken for us," Siegfried greeted cheerfully.

"Appreciate! Appreciate! I didn't come here willingly! I was arrested and brought here. What the hell is he doing here?" Herman Frantz bellowed every syllable while glaring at Prince Paul. "I haven't bothered anyone. Are you out to completely destroy my reputation? You want me dismissed from this job? What do you people want of me? Can't you let me alone?"

"Herr Frantz, if you would calm yourself. We waited to ask you to come for our interview on your day off," Siegfried said soothingly.

"You know which day I have off? You've been watching me?"

"We have, and we have not arrested you. We require a short interview, that's all," Siegfried assured the man.

"What is he doing here? Hasn't my life been destroyed enough, Your Royal Highness?" Frantz spat out venomously.



"The Prince has a personal interest in this case," Siegfried answered before the Prince could say a word. "I have not introduced myself, Herr Frantz."

"I know who you are, everyone knows who you are, Herr Goetz. If my employer finds out that you have taken me into custody for an interview, my employment would be severed. Just to be questioned by you indicates guilt."

"Strange, I have been questioned by Herr Goetz and I bear no guilt," Prince Paul commented sarcastically. He drew a raised disapproving eyebrow from Siegfried. It was a keep your tongue look. Prince Paul backed off and found a chair to sit on in the corner and observe.

"I find no guilt until lies trip on the truth," Siegfried murmured softly. The challenge and softness in the voice drew Herman Frantz's complete attention.

"What am I here for?"

"As a former steward in Brogav Palace, are you aware of the country castle?"

"Of course I am. It is the favorite place of Queen Louise Janette and a weekend retreat for King Karl."

"Have you ever been there in conjunction with your former duties?"

"No! My previous stewardship revolved around Brogav Palace only! Wait! I get it now! You think I was the one that attacked Princess Rigan!"

"We are interviewing you regarding that attack, yes."

"That attack occurred at the country castle, didn't it?" Frantz growled.

"It did. Do you know anything of it?"

"Only what I heard. I had nothing to do with it. I swear!" Frantz uttered nervously and was obviously shaken.

"It was Princess Rigan who had you dismissed. Do you hold any animosity toward her?"

"The Princess did more than have me dismissed. The Prince over there knows. Whether I hold animosity or not really doesn't matter does it? You need a villain and I'm it."

"Quite the contrary. I insist upon facts and guilt without doubt. I do not lay blame on innocent men. I would be shirking my duty to my king to allow an assassin freedom to try again, because I merely wanted a villain named."

"I had nothing to do with it. When the attack was made on Princess Rigan, I was drunk in my sister's attic room right here in Brogav," Frantz expelled quickly hoping for exoneration.

"Are you aware of any one else who might have an antagonism towards Princess Rigan? Other than you, of course," Siegfried queried calmly.

## *Smitten*



"I never said I have an antagonism toward her."

"Do you?" Siegfried grinned and his lips curved into a smile.

"If I do, I know better than to admit it, especially with him over there," Frantz grunted nodding toward Paul.

"You seem to have problems with respect towards the royal family."

"I have a lot of problems with a lot of things. You're one of them."

"Back to the attack on Princess Rigan. What do you know of it?"

"I only know she was attacked, wounded I heard."

"Where did you hear this?"

"It was all over the city. Everyone was talking about it."

"You said you were drunk, sleeping in your sister's attic room," Siegfried reminded.

"That was the day of the attack. When I sobered up I went looking for jobs. I heard people talk."

"Now that's smooth Frantz," Prince Paul uttered in disgust.

"It's the truth!" Herman Frantz yelled toward the Prince. "I wasn't anywhere near your precious new wife. Nor have I been since the dismissal. It's not my doings that your wife got shot in the castle!"

"We never told you how Princess Rigan was wounded, Herr Frantz. How did you know she was shot?" Siegfried asked with great interest. He knew for certain now Frantz was innocent.

"It was an assumption. A person can't get that close to a royal, so a pistol would have to be used, wouldn't it?"

"Didn't you ever get close to a royal while you were steward at Brogav Castle."

"Close enough to shoot one of them, yes I suppose I did."

"Do you know where in the castle Princess Rigan was shot?"

"No I don't, but it would have to be outside someplace wouldn't it? If you suspect me, it would've had to be outside since I wouldn't be allowed 10 meters near the Palace or Castle."

"Or one of your friends may have helped," Prince Paul snarled impatiently. "Someone in the royal household, maybe owing you a favor."

"I never had any friends. I don't need them. Besides, Your Royal Highness, friendship couldn't carry far enough to attack a royal. That is a death sentence."

"None of your friends would risk their life for your revenge?" Siegfried asked too quietly.

"No one would risk their life for my revenge. That is really a stupid question, Herr Goetz," Franz snarled.

"Even stupid questions need to be asked, like why do you think someone would try to shoot the Princess?"



"Possibly because she upsets the current comfort zone in the court. Her thinking is different from others and their established life, like mine."

"An established lifestyle like yours? What was your comfort zone?"

"I was master and I had slaves, to do with as I desired. I had power and control and I loved it. People with power and control are lustful of it and won't let it go to easily, they aren't happy when it's disrupted."

"You are very angry at Princess Rigan?"

"Yes."

"Angry enough to shoot her?"

"I think I could if I had the chance," Frantz admitted.

Prince Paul sat balling his fists and seething with anger as he listened to Herman Frantz. He wished he were not a Prince but a mere man so he could pommel Herman Frantz.

"But you didn't have the chance?" Siegfried continued.

"No, some one else shot her," Frantz replied coldly.

"Some one else shot her in the castle garden?" Siegfried pursued.

"Yes," Frantz answered irritably.

"It wasn't you that took aim at her in the garden and shot her?"

"No, it wasn't Herr Goetz. I was nowhere near the castle garden. I told you where I was."

"Thank you Herr Frantz, this interview is concluded. I appreciate your time. You may leave."

"I can just go?" Frantz gasped with widened eyes. He had been certain he would hang for this attempt just because the royals needed a scapegoat.

"Yes, of course. I told you we only wished to interview you," Siegfried dismissed.

After Herman Frantz left the room, Siegfried called in one of his clerks.

"Contact Josef. I want Frantz followed for a few more days. Just in case he does try to contact someone," Siegfried issued the order for his clerk to carry out.

"You still hold him in suspicion?" Prince Paul questioned

"Not anymore. He thinks Princess Rigan was shot. If he had any part of this, he would have known she was stabbed, and in your room, not the garden. No Paul, he is innocent of the attack."

"Then why have him followed?"

"Because I still have this hope he might contact another in the royal household, someone that might lead us to or be the assassin."

"He could be lying, just a ruse to throw you off track."



"I can tell the difference between a lie and a truth, my Prince. The subtle movements, reactions, and a look in the eyes will reveal the truth, or reveal a lie. I have known the differences for some time."

"I was hoping it was him. I would have gladly peeled the skin off his back," Prince Paul pouted.

"That type of thinking is not going to find the assassin, Paul."

"I know, that's why we have you to do the investigations. Find the assassin Siegfried. I find myself worrying about Rigan constantly, and now my child is growing in her."

"Your child is all the more reason I pursue this so doggedly, my Prince. And the fact I want Princess Rigan to live to be queen. She will be a good queen for this Circle."

"I will leave and let you get on with your work. You do a fine job, Siegfried. I apologize for interfering. I just had so hoped it was Frantz. It would have put my fears for my wife to rest."

"You will have your worries put to rest, my Prince. I will see to it. This clouded stream of mystery will clear."

"Do you have any other suspicions?"

"Only one suspicious connection. I will work on that confidentially. It is too grievous even thinking of it."

"If I can help."

"I will let you know."

Prince Paul nodded to Vladimir and Auguste. They returned to the Palace and left Siegfried Goetz to his job.

"How are you feeling my angel?" Prince Paul whispered into Rigan's hair as his one hand gently rubbed her growing abdomen.

"Fat!"

"Beautiful!" Prince Paul disagreed and kissed his child tenderly by way of Rigan's tummy.

"Ceit, how is my son's Mamman doing?"

"Healthy and strong. Your son will be a big lad, just like his Athair," Ceit crowed happily.

"Ceit, will you and Arla prepare Princess Rigan for bed. I am quite tired today and will be calling Maurice in momentarily to undress me."

Ceit immediately set to work removing the sacque gown Princess Rigan was wearing, stripping her down to her comfortable chemise. Gently Ceit brushed Rigan's long red hair the one hundred strokes to keep it shiny. Arla prepared Princess Rigan's bath.

Paul stayed in the room watching his wife. Everything was so peaceful, and Rigan so beautiful to him. Paul forgot the disturbing interview of the day. Here his Rigan was safe. Ceit and Arla to guard her and of course he felt the most comfortable when he was with her.



Who would want to harm Rigan? Rigan was intelligent, wise and completely wonderful.

"I'll take it from here, Ceit. Thank you and Good night," Prince Paul acknowledged. As Ceit left the room, he picked Rigan up from the tub and dried her with the soft cotton cloth. Rigan allowed him, enjoying the feeling of Paul's hands on her body. Rigan felt safe and secure and loved. He stared at her intently and then put one arm around her waist and the other arm slid under her legs carrying her to his bed. Gently he laid her in it and rubbed his hand over her abdomen. "You are too beautiful for words." His other hand caressed her breasts and his lips covered hers.

Rigan responded to his kiss and caress, wanting him and needing him. She needed his reassurance physically that he still found her attractive. "I love you so much, husband," Rigan murmured.

Paul broke away and covered her with the quilts. He called Maurice.

After Maurice undressed him and he had his bath he climbed into bed next to Rigan. She had fallen asleep so he just watched her. As he started to drift to sleep he felt her snuggle to him. He rolled over to face her, pulling her close to his chest. He felt her warm breasts on his chest and her larger abdomen pressing against his. This truly is bliss. I want you so badly. But I must let you sleep. I'll love you in the morning. Prince Paul resisted his need and soon fell asleep next to her.

"Mother of God!" Paul shouted as he jumped from the bed.

The shout quickly awoke Rigan with a start. "Paul what is it? What is the matter?"

"Your son just kicked me!"

"My son? What?"

"Madam, your son just kicked me!"

"Is that how it's going to be? My son when he's naughty? Perhaps you deserve to be kicked," Rigan shook her finger menacingly.

"I didn't mean it that way. It was just the shock. I haven't felt him move before."

"I haven't either. Are you sure you felt a kick?"

"I am positive. It was a good strong healthy kick. Right there!" He pointed to a bump in her abdomen.

Rigan lay back on the pillows. "Really Paul. I haven't felt anything, why would you?"

"I did feel him Rigan." Paul lie back down next to Rigan and put his large hand on her abdomen. "He kicked! He really did. He kicked in your tummy."

"Ohhhh!" Rigan gasped.

"There I felt it again!"



"Ohhhh!" Rigan gulped for air again. "I feel him, I mean her, I mean I really feel the wee one moving. Ohhhh."

Paul bent over and started kissing Rigan's tummy all over. As he kissed he felt tiny movements. He laid his cheek on her abdomen and the baby kicked. A broad smile sneaked across Paul's face.

"Paul this is so wonderful! The wee one is so active. Ohhhh."

Rigan put both her hands on her pelvic area and started rubbing gently, closing her eyes to concentrate on every little movement. She suddenly felt Paul on top of her, and just as quickly she felt him enter her. Opening her eyes to Paul's twinkling sapphire ones.

"My angel, my little Mamman. Is it possible to love you more and more each day?" Paul asked as he gently started his rhythmic pulsing. Slowly, methodically and tantalizing his arousal grew in her wet welcoming warmth.

"It is possible my Prince, for I love you more each day."

"I remember the first time I made love to you, I asked you if you wanted my baby," He breathed huskily as the rhythm of love making increased in desire to match his racing heart.

"That was the night you gave me your baby," Rigan panted in return matching Paul's rhythm with her own hip thrusts. "You feel wonderful inside me."

Paul bent his head back and laughed. "One body, two males to share it. Both of us feeling wonderful inside of you." Thrusting deeper and in greater need he covered her mouth with his, kissing her deeply and passionately.

Rigan's moan came first as she quivered beneath him surrounding his manhood with a flush of warm fluids. Paul reacted and his spasms released his seeds deep inside her with a powerful groan.

Laying on top of her, and breathing hard Paul whispered, "Sweet Jesus, Rigan. Can a man die of happiness?"

"I hope not! I should miss this," Rigan wiggled underneath his pulsing manhood.

Paul was about to answer when Edward gave his Papa a determined kick.

"That boy has a temper like his Mamman!" Paul rolled over onto his back laughing. "I can see that as his Papa I will have to control him at a young age."

Rigan did not respond, just smiled and snuggled into Paul's arm and enjoyed the movements of their baby.



## Chapter Twenty Eight

For the next two months Rigan was busy with the clinic. Directing the organization for the clinic in the village near the country castle had been difficult because Paul would not allow her to leave Brogav Palace beyond visits to hospitals, orphanages, asylums and inspections in the city itself. Even then she had her bodyguards, Arla and Ceit, but also twelve palace mounted soldiers as escort. The twelve mounted soldiers were by order of King Karl on a suggestion by Siegfried Goetz. Siegfried was still frustrated by the anonymity of the assassin. He had Lady Camilla and Herman Frantz followed for two months and had learned nothing. Siegfried felt his only recourse was to see to it that Princess Rigan was adequately protected until he found the assassin, and he vowed he would.

Every two weeks Princess Rigan would visit The Royal Brogav Hospital. Everyone adored her visits. She always brought candy and a toy for the children, flowers and a warm hug for the sick women and a friendly caring smile and a gentle touch for the men. The doctors and nurses kept her apprised of all the patients.

Once a week Princess Rigan would faithfully visit the Royal Brogav Orphanage. She would sit down with the director to discuss the weekly expenses and review the records. Donations were noted and the Princess sent a handwritten note to the Donor in appreciation. Princess Rigan saw to it that the children were properly fed, dressed and educated. She often would spend hours playing games with the children. Rigan was very grateful the child she carried would have her and an adoring Papa. When a birthday was celebrated in the orphanage, Princess Rigan would see to it that the palace chef sent a decorated cake from the Palace kitchens. Whenever possible, Princess Rigan would celebrate with the children.

On her first visit to the Brogav asylum Rigan was horrified at the conditions. The violent patients were mixed with catatonic and physically afflicted patients. Architects were sent for to redesign the building, separating the patients and allowing for more sanitary conditions. The doctors and nurses of the asylum as well as the director participated in the designs for final approval by Princess Rigan. It was funded by donations of the nobles of the Circle of Borogia. Princess Rigan would attend private dinners and plan royal



dinners to discuss the donations. Not one noble refused the Princess a contribution for the asylum. In one month the restructure would begin, and in the mean time the patients of the asylum were kept cleaner, separated as much as possible, and more nurses were hired for their care. A dispatch was sent to all asylums in the Circle regarding the necessary reforms.

The day arrived when Princess Rigan would be given a tour of the prison in Brogav. It was a place that no royal had ever inspected, and Rigan had heard about the horrible conditions there. Princess Rigan would find out for herself. A more determined woman the Prince could not have found anywhere.

"Rigan, you simply must cut back on your charities," Paul insisted as Maurice finished dressing him. "You are heavy with Edward and all of this is too much."

"You're wrong Paul!" Rigan's looked directly into his eyes. "All of this is too little. There is so much to be done for the people that they cannot do for themselves. It is our responsibility to them."

"You can't solve everyone's ills or pain, Rigan."

"I know I can't, but I can offer understanding and love to a few."

"Papa has noticed your schedule and has ordered me to restrain you."

"You can't! You have already restricted me too much. You won't let me go to the village and help organize the clinic. Poor Damon is doing it alone, " Rigan sighed and placed her hand over the increasingly robust unborn child.

"Rigan, you orchestrate everything here. Don't try to tell me Damon is doing it alone. Once a week I ride to the clinic and check up on it. Your work schedule is early in the morning to late at night. I agree with Papa, you must cut back on all your charities and functions. No more private dinner parties! That is an order," Prince Paul commanded. He was truly concerned over Rigan's welfare.

"I will cut back on those. I promise. I have engagements nearly every night for the rest of the month and then I will cut back to one a week. "

"Those will stop today! I will send your regrets!" Prince Paul growled.

"Paul! You can't do this. I need contributions for the orphanage," she pleaded. Rigan recognized her husband's body language. There would be no arguing or persuading him this time. She really loved him so much and understood his worry.

"There is no discussion Rigan. You can send letters from now on."

"Is that all?"



"No, Siegfried is very unhappy about your inspection of the prison today."

"As well as all your public appearances Your Royal Highness," Siegfried's voice suddenly emerged finishing Prince Paul's sentence. "You are out to much and a target that is becoming more difficult to protect."

"I am guarded by two ladies in waiting, overprotective bodyguards and twelve of the Palace's mounted soldiers. Just how pray tell am I difficult to protect?"

"You may be angry with me Princess Rigan, I will bear it to protect you," Siegfried bowed politely clicking his heels together.

"Answer my question Herr Goetz!" Princess Rigan pouted stubbornly.

"The people adore you so much they swarm around you, touching you and wanting to be near you. You stop and allow the children to come to you and this allows the adults to swarm around you. The mounted soldiers cannot keep the mob back, even with their horses. Your bodyguards have to push through the mobs to allow you to walk. There are too many people surrounding you. It is a problem."

"I wish I would have known who you were in Eirinn, I wouldn't have been so nice to you," Rigan scowled.

"Yes you would have. You're too nice in every way, and I adore you. My wife adores you. My children adore you. All of Borogia adores you. That is exactly the reason you have become too difficult to protect. You must stop all these appearances. Besides, it isn't good for your confinement."

"You defended me in Eirinn, now you tell me it's bad for me?"

"Princess Rigan, walking during schwanger is one thing. Exhausting schedules is quite another. I would never have allowed my wife to keep such schedules when she was schwanger."

"You see Rigan. I have no choice but to cut back your schedule," Paul took Rigan's hands and brushed his lips against her soft knuckles. "We have to protect you and Edward."

"I'm feeling fine. I don't feel tired at all," Rigan protested. She knew her cause was lost.

"Rigan, no discussion. I will send your regrets. You will be confined to the Palace."

"You will not! I refuse to be a prisoner in this Palace! Paul, you knew when you married me that I am not the type of woman to sit idly and embroider."

"Once Edward is born, you can continue with some of your charities on a limited basis."

"You know very well that once our child is born, boy or girl, I will be kept busy taking care of him or her," Rigan replied angrily.

"I should hope so!" Paul retorted.



"Ohhhh, you're impossible! Both of you!" Rigan screeched clenching her fists and stomping her foot.

"You wife, are stubborn!"

Seeing that this was a no win situation against two formidable men, Rigan tried plea-bargaining. "Can we compromise?"

"I doubt it, but try," Prince Paul said trying desperately to suppress a smile. Lord he loved his wife, stubbornness and all.

"I'll cut back appearances. I'll go to the orphanage only once a month. I'll still visit the hospital once every two weeks. I'll wait until the asylum restructure is completed before I visit. I will attend no more private dinners, nor give them, and I still go visit the Prison today."

"What do you say Siegfried? I know it is impossible to keep Rigan in this Palace other than binding her legs with shackles and attaching them with iron chains to a wall."

"What a splendid idea! I should have thought of the shackles myself," Siegfried said thoughtfully and stroked his jaw.

Rigan took a pillow and threw it at Siegfried. "If you did that the servants and people of Brogav would tear down this Palace brick by brick and stone by stone to rescue me from your medieval brutality."

"She has a point, Siegfried," Prince Paul chuckled and ducked a pillow flying at him.

"Unfortunately she does. I concede to the compromise Princess, but you must keep it!"

"Ohhhh!" Rigan sat down suddenly.

"What is it Princess?" Siegfried asked with concern.

Paul walked to Rigan's side and knelt next to her. He placed his large strong hand on her abdomen. He talked to her tummy. "It's all right, Edward. Mamman is sorry she upset you. She knows better than to lose her temper. She knows it makes you kick. She won't do it again, will you Mamman?"

"Unfair Paul!" Rigan groaned.

"I take what I can get. Now calm down, my angel. Or Edward will continue kicking and you definitely will not be able to inspect the Prison today."

"I want to increase your guard to twelve mounted and six foot soldiers," Siegfried added.

"Will it put your mind at ease, and not restrict me so?" Rigan asked turning to him.

"It will somewhat. I will not rest until I find out who attacked you."

"Do you realize that nothing has occurred since then?"

"Because you were on holiday for more than three months, and you have never been left unguarded in Brogav since your return."

"So you see! Nothing can happen."



"That is mistaken thinking, Princess," Siegfried warned.

"Oh you are exasperating! I will be late for my inspection. Give me a kiss, Paul," Rigan declared rising and straightening her sacque dress.

"I should come with you," Paul suggested.

"You have your appointments already set. I love you." Rigan stretched on her toes to give Paul a kiss on his cheek and then waddled into the corridor. She was quite large for her seven months. Rigan called for Arla and Ceit, then they left for the Prison.

Rigan was distressed seeing the conditions in the prison. The complaints had been truthful and accurate. Sanitary conditions were horrible to say the least. Violent criminals were in the same yard and prison cells with minor infraction violators. Idleness was encouraging temper and violence. Princess Rigan had heard that one prisoner was killed by another every month or two. The Princess talked to the director of the prison and questioned him on many things. She was not happy with the answers. This is something she would bring to the attention of King Karl. Something was amiss and something had to be done.

"You wished to see me, Princess Rigan." King Karl said benevolently as she waddled into his private audience room.

"Your Royal Majesty. I have just come from an inspection of the Brogav Prison, and I must speak to you about the unpleasant conditions there."

"Rigan, conditions in prisons are not supposed to be pleasant. The prisons are there for punishment," King Karl replied while signing documents on his desk.

"Yes I agree, but should the same punishment be endured by a young boy that stole a slice of bread, as the man who murdered? Should their punishments be equal, or the murderer more severe?" Rigan asked logically.

"Your point?" King Karl questioned looking up and completely focused on Rigan.

"Your Royal Majesty, the prison is unsanitary, filthy is a more apt word. Rodents and insects thrive in the filth. Disease could run rampant and infect all of Brogav. A young boy that stole a frock is in the same cell with a man that murdered another man. They share the same rotten food, and they walk the yard aimlessly during the day."

"Those are not the reports I receive."

"Of course not, Your Royal Majesty. You are lied to. I checked some of the prison books; your personal accountant should review them. I can guarantee he will find fraud. The director is pocketing prison funds. The prisoners starve and kill each other to eat rotten bread."



"I will dispatch an accountant today. The director will be replaced if the accountant finds fraud. What else, Rigan?"

"The crimes need to be reviewed so the prisoners are celled with same levels of criminal. Those that are of lesser crimes like the boy who stole the frock should be allowed to work in prison."

"Just what do you suggest, Princess?"

"They could clean streets, apprentice at liveries, or other positions are optional. We could talk tradesmen into the free service of the lesser criminals. Some could remain in prison and grow gardens for their own food. The murders kept in confinement, separate from others."

"I will put some one on it immediately."

"I could arrange..."

"Enough Rigan, you try me too much!" King Karl cut her short raising his hand symbolically for silence.

Rigan stood shocked. She certainly did not want to anger King Karl. "Your Royal Majesty I did not mean to anger you in any way."

King Karl stood up and walked to Rigan. He opened his arms and embraced her. "Dearest Rigan, you try me because Queen Louise and I worry about you. You do too much for your condition. Look at you girl. You're as big as a house! You can't keep up this pace. It will hurt you and our grandchild. I won't have it. I simply won't."

"I only wanted to help the reforms start," Rigan reasoned.

"I have reliable people who are capable of such feats. You must learn to delegate Princess, and have trust in those people you select. As I do. I will see to it that this prison issue is addressed. Do you have so little faith in me, your king?"

"I have great faith in you, Your Royal Majesty."

"Then let me handle this and you go to your suites and take a rest before dinner. That is a royal command."

"Yes, Your Royal Majesty."

"Oh and Rigan, you will curtail your appearances and charities. That is also my order."

"Yes, Your Royal Majesty."

"If I am disobeyed, I will command my son to spank you!" King Karl said as he winked to her.

Rigan smiled and waddled to her suites. Arla and Ceit joined her to walk down the corridor. The afternoon nap was pleasant, but she woke up to the wee one violently kicking her again. Ceit massaged Rigan's abdomen and that seemed to calm the wee one.

"Ceit, this is a long confinement," Rigan complained.

In these two months, Camilla had waited patiently for Siegfried's watch on her to end. She knew that Herman Frantz was no



longer suspect. Camilla had listened to Prince Paul and King Karl discussing the interview the day after Frantz was taken in to questioning by Herr Goetz. Now was her time to strike. Every one was easing up on restrictions and Rigan was getting too close to having Paul's baby. Camilla also overheard Queen Louise discussing with King Karl the edict he had given Rigan regarding cutting down her appearances. The closer it came to the baby being born, the less chances Camilla would have to accomplish her plan. Herman Frantz was a part of that plan and she would meet with him this week.

Camilla gave the excuse to Bridgett that she needed to go shopping in the city. Taking the carriage to a dress shop, she told the driver she would be in the shop for several hours deciding on a gown. He could go where he wanted, but to be back in two hours. Camilla then walked into the front door of the dress shop and out the back. This dress shop was located close to Banter Street and the residence of Herr Oelsteff. Camilla had bribed a young boy to find out the location a few weeks ago.

Appearing at the front door and knocking, the old majordomo answered.

"Yes, my lady?"

"I am here to see Herr Frantz."

"Whom may I say is calling?"

"His baby sister, Emily."

The old majordomo went to find Herman Frantz and announced to him a beautiful young woman was there to see him, claiming she was his baby sister.

"Show my little sister to my room," Herman Frantz lied. He couldn't wait to find out just who this beautiful young woman was, and how daring to come to a bachelor's room claiming to be a sister.

As Camilla was led to Herman's room she beamed a fraudulent smile and cried happily, "Brother!"

"Ah, little sister," Herman responded hugging Camilla for the observation of the majordomo, who left right after the embrace.

"All right, little beauty. I recognize you. You're from the Palace. Just what do you want with me?"

"We have a mutual enemy, Herr Frantz. It is an enemy that we can join forces, allies if you will, to eradicate her permanently."

"We do? How interesting. Just who is this enemy?"

"You know very well, who. Are you ready to talk?" Camilla demanded.

## Chapter Twenty Nine

"Go ahead pretty woman, start talking." Herman Frantz told Camilla.

"We are running out of time. Soon the Princess will no longer make public appearances. The bastard she carries grows larger and she will be restricted."

"What does any of that have to do with me?" Frantz growled.

"You, Herr Frantz, have little time to accomplish her death."

"Why would I want to kill Princess Rigan?" he snapped.

"Because you hate her as much as I do. She ruined both our lives."

"That hardly warrants me killing her to lose my own life. Herr Goetz already suspects me in the first attempt."

"After your interview he no longer suspects you. I overheard Prince Paul and the King discussing it. You are the perfect one to accomplish it now."

"I still have no reason to do this. Once accomplished, where would I go and how would I live? It was difficult enough to find this contemptible position."

"I have purchased two pistols for you and I have 1,000 guineas now for you to prepare your flight. After you kill her I will meet you wherever you say and give you another 1,000 guineas. Once I marry Prince Paul I will send you a monthly stipend."

"That's what is in it for you! The Prince!" Frantz laughed wickedly.

"She stole him from me. She filled herself with the bastard child and tricked him into marriage. Prince Paul was mine! He belonged to me and he will belong to me."

"From what I heard, the Prince is fatally smitten with her."

"She's an Aran witch! She dabbles in potions and herbs. She bewitched him, tricked him. He'll forget her in my arms soon enough. The potions will wear off."





"A practicing witch must be stopped. A good christian would not allow a witch to practice the devil's deeds," Frantz suddenly became serious.

"Of course not. Imagine the Circle with the Witch Queen. The seductive voice of the Devil whispering into the ears of the King of Borogia." Camilla knew immediately she had struck a raw nerve. Frantz was a fanatical religious zealot.

"Ungodly."

"You see we must do something about it."

"Give me the pistols and the money. I'll take care of it. Satan will not rule Borogia," Frantz vowed.

The fact that the two of them were contemplating the act of murder did not faze the two that they were breaking the commandments of God, 'Thou shalt not kill.'

"The Princess is scheduled to visit the hospital next week Tuesday, as she does every two weeks."

"I am aware of that. I have seen the crowds. Herr Oelsteff was ill and went to the hospital the one day the Princess visited. He is bewitched by her as well."

"The crowd always surrounds her at the door. She seduces the little children to come to her. Probably sizing them up for a tasty meal. It is at this time when the crowd surges on her that you can get close enough to fire upon her."

"No one would let me near with pistols in my hand."

"Of course not you dolt. You will have them in your hands covered with an embroidered linen sheet, a gift you will be bringing to the hospital."

"I see."

"I could meet you the following day at the Brogav Inn and give you the other 1,000 guineas. You will need to let me know where you have gone."

"I could also just go to King Karl and tell him of your plot. I would receive a substantial reward and not have to hide."

"I would tell him that you were a part of the conspiracy, and it was you that gave me the idea to attack Rigan the first time."

"You shot the Princess in the country castle."

"Shot? Wherever did you get that idea? I stabbed the bitch. I tried to end her witchcraft; the devil is more powerful than I. A man must fight this devil, a stronger man. Don't you see? It is more than money. It is Satan you must fight!"

Camilla was smart enough to know she would have to persuade Herman Frantz by using his Christian hypocrisy and twisted self-righteous wicked mind. Little did Ceit and Bridgett know how right they were, the devil was in Camilla's soul. Yes, it was always smart to use Christ's name for the most foul of deeds.

"I will see to it next week."



"Good, here is the package. It contains your money and the pistols." She handed him the bundle she was carrying.

"I'll see you the day after the deed."

"I'll be at the dress shop on Banter Street the next day waiting for you. Herr Frantz, do not attempt to contact me at the Palace. It would be too dangerous. The Devil must not suspect we are going to eradicate Him."

"I will pray on it tonight."

"As I will every day," Camilla laughed inside at how stupid this man was, and how gullible.

"You took a chance coming here into my room beautiful lady. I could have taken advantage of you."

"I have such faith, that I knew I would be safe coming to you. The Lord is in your heart, and you would not harm me in any way."

"That is a battle I am in right now, my beautiful lady," Herman Frantz said huskily.

"We will pray that your aim is sure." Those were the last words she spoke to Herr Frantz as she hurried out the door.

Camilla walked briskly to the dress shop. She hurriedly purchased a dress and then went to the waiting carriage. An evil smile crossed her lips. One more week and Rigan would be dead. One more week and Paul will be mine.

The following Tuesday, Herr Frantz was waiting in front of the hospital with the sheets on his arms. Under those sheets were the two loaded pistols Lady Camilla had given him. His heart beating strongly, his hands sweating, Frantz was in a zealous fever to destroy the Aran witch. It was the witch that beat him and cost him his employment in the Palace. The witch controlled the Prince. He, Herman Frantz, would destroy the black magic of Princess Rigan.

Frantz was very near the door of the hospital. He moved in closer as he heard the people of Brogav cheering the Princess. He saw her carriage and mounted guards approach. Frantz found himself breathing heavily, sweat was pouring down his brow, but he could not wipe it away, or he would reveal the pistols.

Frantz watched as the giant of the man he knew as Michalek lifted the Princess from the carriage. Frantz looked at her, she was large with child. The child of Satan she carries. Prince Paul believes it is his. I shall rid this Circle of her evil.

The crowd pushed forward and he with them. Princess Rigan stopped many times to talk to a little child, accepting a bouquet, or hugging the child.

The witch, she will eat you. Frantz thought as he looked at Princess Rigan hug a small child and rise to kiss a baby on the cheek that a woman had held out to the Princess.



Surrounding him, Frantz heard the people cry. "God Bless you Princess Rigan, God Bless your Child Princess Rigan, Blessings to you." Frantz snickered, God will bless you Princess Rigan, and He has put the power in my hand to send your evil soul to hell.

Rigan walked towards the door, towards him, Frantz the avenging angel. She looked at the sheets he was carrying and smiled to him. Frantz raised his hand to shoot. Michalek saw the flash of the pistol, recognized Frantz, and leaped forward putting his body between Rigan and Frantz. Frantz fired. A puff of smoke momentarily blocked Frantz's vision. A blur passed Princess Rigan's eyes. She heard the loud bang. She had seen the pistol as she saw Michalek fall in front of her.

"Oh God!" Princess Rigan cried as she saw Michalek fall on the ground in front of her. Blood was pouring from a wound in the chest. Princess Rigan automatically started to bend to the ground to offer Michalek comfort. Rolf was pushing forward in the crowd to get to Princess Rigan.

Frantz's vision was now clear. He aimed the second pistol just as Princess Rigan started to kneel. The second shot rang out and Princess Rigan fell, blood coming from her head.

Princess Rigan had started to bend down over Michalek to offer aide, when a sound suddenly buzzed by her ear. Looking up she saw Herman Frantz with the pistol. She whispered to him, "Why?" A wave of dizziness swirled around her as she felt the searing pain along side her head. Blackness followed quickly.

Rolf leaped over the children and pounced on Princess Rigan covering her body. Rolf was yelling frantically to the foot soldiers and the mounted guard for help as he lay prostrate over the Princess. Two of the foot soldiers had protectively shielded Arla and Ceit as the first shot rang out. Ceit was fighting frantically with one of them, trying to loosen his grip on her so she could run to the Princess. The foot soldier would not release her, but dragged her back to the carriage. The other soldier had brought Arla who was also kicking and screaming to be let go so she could go to the Princess. Both Ceit and Arla were physically taken and held inside the carriage screaming for their Princess. The driver was ordered to return to the Palace. Unfortunately, the carriage could not budge for the crowd surrounding it. The horses were barely kept under control.

The second shot was enough for the crowd to see it was Frantz that did the shooting. The men in the crowd surged forward grabbing him. Frantz was suddenly pulled back by his hair. The crowd was slamming fists into his body. Frantz was soon down on the ground being pounded and kicked unmercifully. Curses were thrown at him. Frantz was picked up by a giant of a man that took his bloodied head and twisted it sharply in his hands. It was over for Herman Frantz. The giant had broken Frantz's neck and he died



instantly. The limp body with the crooked head sagged to the ground and the people spat upon it, cursed it and continued to kick it.

The bedlam was uncontrollable. Four foot soldiers fought their way through the crowd trying to reach the Princess, the screaming Rolf, and the assassin. The mounted soldiers were trying desperately to disburse the crowd, or at least control it.

Two of the foot soldiers made it to Herman Frantz. His face was nearly unrecognizable. The soldiers had to draw their sabers to move the mob and get the body of Herman Frantz away from them. The soldier called for a mounted soldier as he made his way through the crowd and lifted the body, with the contorted head hanging, on to the mounted soldier's horse. "Take this body to the Palace and notify Herr Goetz immediately."

When Rolf was certain the soldiers had the assassin and soldiers surrounded him, he removed himself from the Princess. Rigan was unconscious, stunned by the pellet that had grazed her head. A wound on the side of her head bled profusely.

Michalek was conscious, holding his hand over his wound he looked to Rolf. "The Princess, is she safe?"

Rolf terrified himself answered quietly, "I don't know."

The staff of the hospital had been watching the Princess' approach and saw the melee. Doctors and nurses rushed out to aid Michalek and Princess Rigan.

Rolf picked up Princess Rigan and carried her into the hospital under the directions of a doctor who led him to an examining room.

Several soldiers helped pick Michalek up and two doctors led them to another examining room.

Rolf stood outside the room as the doctors began their examination. In a daze, Rolf turned to one of the mounted soldiers who had helped bring Michalek in. "Go, bring the Prince."

Outside the hospital, there was still pandemonium. The mounted soldiers were trying desperately to control the crowd that was surging around the hospital. The mounted soldier retrieved his horse and with the help of his comrades was given passageway out of the crowd to get the Prince. As he proceeded towards the Palace he heard from his comrades, "Bring reinforcements. We need help here."

Finally free from the crowd, the soldier spurred his horse and raced to the Palace through the streets of Brogav. The mounted soldiers cleared a path for the carriage to leave the mob. Ceit and Arla both protesting vehemently as the foot soldiers held them in the carriage as it returned to the Palace.

The mounted soldier entered the courtyard of the Palace and reported to the officer in charge. The officer turned visibly white as



the soldier explained to him what happened and what was needed. In moments, a company of mounted soldiers was on their way to the hospital for mob control.

The soldier entered the Palace asking for Prince Paul. Prince Paul was located in the private study of King Karl. The two royals were discussing a trade agreement with Sweden. The Swedish consul was speaking when the soldier was given admittance to the room. The soldier's message warranted the interruption.

As the soldier entered, he felt the surprised stares of King Karl, Prince Paul, and the Swedish consul. The soldier swallowed and looked Prince Paul directly in the eye.

Prince Paul knew something was wrong from that stare he received.

"What is the meaning of this interruption?" King Karl asked.

"I have been sent to retrieve the Prince, Your Royal Majesty," the soldier addressed the king and returned his stare to Prince Paul. "Princess Rigan has been shot."

Prince Paul felt like a he had been bludgeoned when he heard those words. He lost his balance and nearly fell as he grasped for reality. "Where?"

"It happened outside Brogav Hospital. The Princess is there."

"Take me."

Prince Paul grabbed the soldier's arm with those words, both for a stable balance and a guide to take him to his wife. Never did the Palace corridors seem so long as that fast walk to the courtyard.

The soldier mounted his horse and Paul spotted Vladimir's mount ready to go. The Prince grabbed the reins and mounted Vladimir's horse. Vladimir cursed as he saw the Prince take his horse. He would have to take time to get another. Auguste jumped on his horse and pursued the Prince and the soldier.

The Prince and soldier had spurred their horses on mounting and both were off in a heat down the streets of Brogav.

The Prince spotted his wife's carriage and reined in Vladimir's horse as he neared it. He was hoping against all hope, Rigan was in it and she was safe. Instead, he heard Ceit and Arla protesting their captivity, loudly!

Upon seeing the Prince, Ceit screamed, "Tell this beast of a heathen to unhand me, and then let me ride with you to my Princess! They have shot my Princess! Mary Mother of God, they have shot my Princess! I must be with her to see to the wee one!"

Paul's heart sank into the bile pits of his stomach as he heard Ceit's cry. Paul looked up at the driver and told him to take the carriage to the Palace. "I'll bring you later, Ceit. Everything is going to be fine, you'll see," Prince Paul yelled to Ceit as he again spurred his horse on, racing to the hospital with the soldier. Prince Paul told Ceit everything was going to be fine, but in his own mind, everything



was in turmoil. Fear, anger, rage, sorrow were all mixed up in his head.

Auguste had reached the Prince before they stopped at the carriage and Vladimir had reached them, just before the hospital. Vladimir did not saddle another horse; he grabbed one of the mounted soldiers, knocked him off, and took the soldier's horse. Vladimir shouted back to the soldier, ordering him to bring another company of mounted soldiers to protect the Prince.

One street before the hospital, the Prince, his bodyguards, and the soldier had to rein up their horses abruptly. A massive crowd blocked their entry not only to the hospital, but also the entire street. The Prince cursed in frustration, just how could he get to his wife?

The company of mounted soldiers was doing their best to control the mob at the hospital itself, and could not get control beyond. When the company saw the Prince they tried to move out and make a pathway for the Prince, but simply was held back by the crowd of people.

It was the people of Brogav who took over. They turned and saw the Prince. They started pushing back on sides to make the path for their Prince to be near his Princess.

As the Prince edged his horse forward down the path the people made for him, he heard their soft voices. "God bless you, Prince Paul, our prayers are for you and the Princess. We love her so much. We pray for her. God is with you. God is with Princess Rigan. God is with your child." Paul looked to see their faces streaming with tears and the look of terror and unbelief that he was feeling inside.

Vladimir and Auguste rode directly behind the Prince, ready for any attack. They were worried for Prince Paul's safety. An assassin had shot the Princess, could another be waiting for their Prince. Could this be a coup?

## Chapter Thirty

Slowly the crowd moved for Prince Paul's horse as he neared the hospital. The silence was deafening. Only the clicking of the horse hooves on the cobblestone road was heard.

A woman approached the Prince and touched his leg. The woman gave the sign of the cross. Paul stopped for a moment and reaching down lifted her chin up and looked into her eyes. Her eyes were filled with the emotion of sorrow, they were swollen from crying and tears stained her cheeks. "That such a horrible thing should happen to the sainted lady," she whimpered. "I pray for her, I pray for your child."

It was times like this Paul hated being the Crown Prince. He wanted to let his emotions flow. Paul wanted to dismount and grab the woman to cry with her. He wanted to unleash all his emotions, but as Prince Paul he could not. Instead he let her face go and simply said, "Thank you."

Vladimir took this opportunity to place his horse in the lead. The Prince was then protected front and back. Both his bodyguards looked ahead, behind and side-to-side, watching for any unusual movement.

Within the close range of the hospital doors, the mounted soldiers had cleared a path for the Prince. Paul dismounted and slowly walked to the hospital. Paul was torn between running and tearing the place apart looking for his wife or not entering to keep reality at bay. If he did not go in there, none of this was happening.

Vladimir jumped from his horse tossing the reins to a foot soldier, and created a clear path for the Prince. Auguste came from behind and gently pushed the Prince forward. Vladimir had opened the doors.

As Prince Paul entered, a nurse took him to the large marble floored waiting room outside the examining rooms. Paul was so dazed, everything was surreal, and he didn't even understand the woman talking to him. He didn't hear her name he just followed her.

It was then Prince Paul saw Rolf, and the anger he had controlled burst out. "How did you let this happen? You are to protect Princess Rigan with your lives. I shall have you flogged to an inch of your life for this. Where is Michalek?"

## *Smitten*



Rolf looked at the Prince in a daze himself. "Michalek is in surgery. He took the first round. He was wounded. The pellet is still in his chest."

Prince Paul was devastated. He had said unkind and hateful angry words that were unjustified. His wife's bodyguards would sacrifice their lives willingly.

"God, Rolf. Forgive me," Prince Paul whispered as he embraced Rolf. "What of Rigan?" Paul did ask even though he was terrified of the answer.

"I don't know my Prince. The doctor has not come out to tell me anything."

"Which room?" Paul asked.

Rolf pointed, and Paul walked towards that door. A nurse stood in his path and would not allow him entry.

"Either get that doctor out here, or I will physically throw you across this room and break the door down. That is my wife in there. My wife and child," Prince Paul roared in anger once more unleashed.

Rigan heard her husband outside the door. "Doctor, you had better let him in, or he will tear apart this lovely hospital of yours."

"I believe he would Princess Rigan," Dr. Hauptmann agreed. "I'd better speak to him. I'll be back to finish bandaging that nasty cut on your head."

Dr. Hauptmann opened the door and bowed to Prince Paul. "At your service. It will not be necessary to bruise my nurses or destroy the hospital."

"My wife?" Paul asked anxiously. In two simple words his fears released.

"Princess Rigan is perfectly fine. She received a nasty cut from the pellet that grazed her head. We have kept her down to make sure the baby was in no danger from the shock."

"I must see her."

"Understood! She is right in here. I was just finishing bandaging the head cut."

Paul entered the room and saw Rigan sitting on the table. The nurse was finishing the bandage for her head. "Oh God. Thank you," Paul breathed heavily.

"Paul!" Princess Rigan greeted.

"You really are all right? And the baby?"

"The wee one is kicking powerfully. I shall have bruises all over my ribs," Rigan reassured her husband and reached out to him.

Paul rushed to her side and held her in his powerful arms, squeezing so hard Rigan was barely heard saying, "Paul, let go. I can't breathe."

Dr. Hauptmann cleared his throat several times until Paul looked at him and released his grip on Rigan. "Princess Rigan may





leave with you. Other than the shock of the event, I do not believe Her Royal Highness requires any more medical care. As for shock and distress, I do believe that you, Prince Paul will be the best medicine."

"I'm taking you home," Prince Paul said to Rigan with stern authority.

"Not yet, Paul. I must find out how Michalek is. He put his life in jeopardy for mine. He was shot, Paul. I saw the blood."

"I was told Michalek was in surgery. He will get the best of care, Rigan. I promise you. Let's go home."

"No! I will stay here until I know Michalek will be all right." Rigan slid off the table and crossed her arms over her expanded abdomen in a stubborn stance.

"Your Royal Highness, we must get you and the Prince back to the safety of the Palace. This attempt on your life could be anything. It might be a political coup. We can't take any chances with you or the Crown Prince," Vladimir scolded speaking behind the Prince. He had entered the room right behind Prince Paul.

"Political coup?" Rigan looked astonished. "Vladimir, it is no political coup. Herman Frantz was out to get me, not the royal family. It is simple revenge."

"Frantz!" Paul bellowed looking at Rolf. "Where is that coward? I will tear his flesh off his body, and remove his entrails with my bare hands. When I am finished Siegfried can shoot him, hang him, and behead him."

"I believe he's already dead," Rolf answered. "At least he looked dead when they put his body across the horse to take him to the Palace. The mob outside didn't leave very much of him left."

Rigan crossed herself, "May God forgive his soul. Violence always breeds violence."

"Rigan, let's go home," Paul pleaded wanting to take her away from all this turmoil.

"Doctor, can you please find out about Michalek's condition for me? We'll wait for you outside."

"Your servant, Princess Rigan," Dr. Hauptmann bowed.

Paul took Rigan in his arm and kept her sheltered there. Paul did not release her from his protective grip while they waited.

Rigan moved slightly when their baby started kicking again. Paul put his other hand over the baby to feel it move. Reassured his son was all right, Paul smiled at Rigan. "Edward had a long trying day. We should put him to bed directly."

"Not until we find out about Michalek."

"You are a stubborn woman!"

"I was born that way, what is your excuse?"

"I'm not the one who is stubborn."

"Oh yes you are! One example is how you stubbornly order me around."



"Protectively order you around."

"Stubbornly."

"Dutifully."

"Stubbornly."

"Lovingly."

"Stubbornly."

"Rigan, if I don't get you home and in bed, Ceit will eat me for lunch."

"I'll provide the salt and pepper."

"Rigan!"

"Oh all right Paul, but I want constant information on Michalek. You must promise me that."

"I'll keep runners present day and night. I'm worried about Michalek too!"

Just then Dr. Hauptmann reappeared. "I have word that Michalek is doing well. The pellet lodged in soft tissue. There was no damage to any vital organ. The pellet was easily removed and the wound dressed. He should recover in a few days."

"Thank you, doctor. That is such good news. May we see him?" Princess Rigan asked in relief.

"I think that can be arranged. They just took him to a private room."

Dr. Hauptmann led the Prince, Princess, and Rolf to Michalek's room and opened the door for them.

Michalek was wide-awake. "Princess, you are all right. They told me you were, but I am glad to have my own eyes see you."

"Michalek, you dear. I was so worried for you," Princess Rigan said as she walked to the side of the bed and bent over to kiss Michalek's cheek. "You saved my life."

"I merely did my duty. I saw Herman Frantz, then the pistol. I knew what he was going to do. I only did my duty."

"And in doing your duty, you saved my wife's life. I will be eternally grateful to you, Michalek. I will see to it that you are properly rewarded, and while you recover you will receive the finest of care," Prince Paul promised.

"The only reward I need is to see that Princess Rigan is unharmed."

"That is only your first reward. I will see to the others, and you dare not defy me, I am the Crown Prince."

"That means the end of the discussion, Michalek," Princess Rigan explained. "Get well soon. I shall miss you hovering over me."

"I will be back to hover in a few days, my Princess."

"Is that a promise?"

"My word. This is just a little bee sting."

"That was a mighty big bee, Michalek!" Rolf admonished.

Prince Paul kept his arm around Rigan as they left the waiting room and walked down the corridor to the doors. "Don't be too surprised by what you see outside."

Vladimir and Auguste had opened the doors and motioned for the horses to be brought to the door.

Rigan gasped when she saw all the people surrounding the hospital. "What is this?"

"They are all here for you Princess," Vladimir offered.

Safely snuggled in the crook of Paul's arm, they walked outside together. A loud cheer rose up from the throng. Prayers of thanksgiving were heard clearly. As they made their way to the horses, the people nearest to the royal couple reached out to touch the Princess. Rigan smiled and waved to the people who were so desperately trying to touch her. The mounted soldiers were keeping the mob in control.

Paul mounted his horse and Vladimir lifted Rigan up to Paul's arms.

Securely cradling his wife in his protective arms, the Prince reined the horse to move out into the crowd. Again a pathway was made by the people for the Prince to leave the hospital grounds. Paul kept his horse in a slow trot edging his way through to the open street. "Wave to them, my angel. They need assurance that you are well."

In her most regal manner, Princess Rigan waved. Cheers and applaud rose from all.

Vladimir, Auguste, and Rolf surrounded the Prince and Princess. The entire company of mounted soldiers rode in a circle surrounding them all. It would have been impossible for anyone to get near the royal couple as they headed for Brogav Palace once they reached the open streets.

Prince Paul rode his horse at a slow trot and it took a much longer amount of time to return to the Palace than if Rigan had taken a carriage.

"We can go a little faster husband."

"I don't think so."

"Why?"

"Precious cargo."

"Where?"

"In my arms."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, and besides I want the mounted ones to feel like they are really earning their pay."

"You are so kind."

"I try."

"Paul, you can be impossible."

## *Smitten*



"Me? I only take being impossible lessons from the master, my angel."

As they entered the courtyard they recognized the small figure pacing.

"Lord bless and keep me. Rigan, child! Are you all right?"

"I'm fine, Ceit."

"And me wee one?"

"The wee one is active and kicking."

"Oh child, I was panicked. You must never worry a cailleach like that."

"I didn't mean too. It was circumstance."

"Well, from now on, ya will not be leavin this place. Ya will be stayin in your rooms."

"Listen to Ceit," Paul ordered. "She's the ruler in this family."

"I will not be a prisoner, Ceit."

"Ya are! I'll sit on ya if I have ta."

"There are always the leg shackles, I am sure Siegfried will help with those," Paul said wickedly.

"Get down off that beast, and come to Ceit. I am goin ta put ya in bed."

Paul dismounted and lifted Rigan off the horse. "Listen to Ceit."

Ceit ran up to Rigan and put her arms around Rigan and suddenly began to cry. "Don't ya ever be scarin me like that again."

Paul placed his arm protectively around Rigan and took Ceit in the other arm. "Let's get Edward to bed. He needs his rest."

Just after Ceit and Arla had prepared Rigan for bed, King Karl and Queen Louise entered the Prince's private bedchamber. Queen Louise ran to Rigan and smothered her with affectionate kisses. "When we heard we so worried. I went to the chapel and started praying for your well being and the care of my grandchild."

King Karl pulled Paul aside. "I forbid Rigan to leave this Palace again until after the baby's christening."

"They tell me Herman Frantz is dead," Paul told the King hoping for a concession. Paul knew Rigan would not stand to be so restricted.

"I have already been in conversation with Siegfried. I know it was Frantz. I know he is dead, but I will not risk her life or my grandchild's life again. Anyone like Rigan, good and kind, is in danger from evil constantly. My order stands. Rigan will be forbidden to leave the Palace until after the christening."

"I agree with you Papa, but Rigan will be difficult to handle in this matter."



"You will see to it my order is carried out. It is your duty and responsibility to me, your wife and your child."

"I am fully aware of my duty, Papa. Especially aware of my duty to my wife and child."

"Siegfried is not as confident as we are that Frantz acted alone. He believes there is a co-conspirator," King Karl shared.

"So Rigan is still in danger?"

"There is no doubt in Siegfried's mind."

"Oh God, Papa. When will this evil leave my Rigan alone?"

"When the core of the evil is found, son. Siegfried will find that core, or the rotten core will reveal itself with its own stench."

Paul sighed heavily. He did not know how much longer it would take for the evil to reveal itself. All Paul knew was that his precious wife and child were still in danger. Paul also wondered just how he would keep Rigan in the palace and somewhat secure. Rigan would fight the restriction, but it had to be.

## Chapter Thirty One

"Where is Siegfried?" Paul asked.

"After inspecting Frantz's body, he hurried to the hospital. He should have been there before you left," King Karl told his son.

"I didn't see him."

"You would have if I wanted you to see me," Siegfried said as he walked through the door and towards Princess Rigan. "That was a fright, my Princess. I understand you were only wounded, and your Michalek is recovering nicely."

"Siegfried, I appreciate your concern, and I would hardly call this little scratch a wound," Princess Rigan responded as she pointed to the bandage on her head. "As for Michalek, I am grateful he is recovering. He took the pellet meant for me."

"You see how mistaken your thinking has been, Princess?"

"Indeed I have Siegfried. I am especially disturbed that ones so close to me were in danger because of me."

"Were?"

"What are you talking about Siegfried? Of course were. It is regretful that Herman Frantz had to die so horribly, but the danger is now over. It was simple revenge."

"I am not so comfortable with that assumption Princess. The danger to you is still not over."

"Of course it is, why wouldn't you believe it is?" Rigan insisted.

"Yes, tell us why Siegfried," Prince Paul demanded.

"I went to the hospital immediately upon seeing Herman Frantz's body. I began interviews when you arrived, Paul. I was well hidden in the crowd. I retrieved the pistols he used. A foot soldier had fortunately taken possession of them."

"Must we discuss this now, Siegfried?" King Karl snapped. "The ladies may not be up to hearing all this."

"Au contraire, I feel it is important the ladies hear what I have to say. Princess Rigan must be aware that the danger is to her is not over yet. I feel another attack is quite imminent."



"You should be discussing this with me. It is my duty to protect my wife and child. I don't need her upset," Prince Paul growled quietly, a scowl deeply imbedded on his face.

"I feel Princess Rigan should be aware of her precarious situation. It is comforting to know that she realizes the dangers it places all near to her."

"Continue, Siegfried. How did you come to this conclusion after your brief interviews and finding of the pistols?" Prince Paul commanded.

"Well Princess. It was obvious he was waiting for you. He knew exactly when and where you would be today."

"It is my practice to visit the hospital every two weeks."

"Ah yes, but it is always an unofficial visit. You vary your times, and sometimes your days for the visits. The hospital staff never really knows when you will turn up."

"I don't understand what that has to do with Frantz?" Prince Paul questioned irritably.

"How could a man working for an old man as valet possibly know of the Princess' arrival? To wait for her would cost him his employment."

"He was told, by someone."

"You are extremely astute Princess. And there is more. A dead man does tell tales. Examination of his body revealed a money belt holding 800 guineas, and a ticket to the colonies."

"He couldn't possibly have that much money on his own."

"Exactly Princess, some one paid him to fire on you. There is money and power behind this plot."

"God, Rigan! You won't leave these suites!" Paul cried.

"Prince Paul, the first attack was made in your private suites. There is no where that is safe," Siegfried reminded the prince.

"I'll put Rigan in a convent. No one will know where she is."

"For the rest of her life? You can't hide her, my Prince. She will be found. This plot is from within the royal household."

"Nor will I live a life of fear. I will not hide and cower. I will face this head on," Princess Rigan pledged.

"That is the only way to approach it. Princess, I do adore you. We think alike, and you are skeptical as I," Siegfried praised.

"Just what do you think is going to happen next?" Paul asked in frustration.

"I don't know, but there will be another attack. I am sure of it."

"Don't you have any idea of who in the royal household is behind all this?" Paul was embroiled in anger and fear. He thought his wife and child dead only a few hours ago. Knowing she was alive and well and believing the assassin dead he thought it was over. Now he



was told it was not and Rigan was still in danger. His child was still in danger. Was there no mercy, did God punish him for his happiness?

"I only have suspicions on a potential connection. I cannot tie it together, yet!"

"We can only face each day, one at a time my darling husband." Rigan looked up at the strong, muscular, and handsome man who was hers. "It will be fine. I've cheated the villain twice, the third time will be the charm."

"Or the end," Paul visibly shaken by the discussion showed fluid glistening in his eyes.

A silence followed, there seemed nothing more to say. Prince Paul and King Karl were stalwart in their belief they could protect Princess Rigan by keeping her locked up in the royal suites. Queen Louise was in shock that Princess Rigan and her grandchild were still in mortal danger. Ceit and Arla were determined to thwart all attempts to harm Rigan and her child.

"Rigan, you will not leave these suites," Prince Paul finally broke the silence with an order of authority. "You will have no more public or private appearances. You will have no contact with anyone or anything save the family, these rooms, Ceit, Arla and your bodyguards."

"You can't be serious! Will you and Siegfried shackle me? Perhaps tie me to the bed?" Rigan objected angrily.

"Princess, your schedule must be curtailed, but my Prince, I disagree to keeping the Princess locked up in these rooms. With the first attack as an example, it is imperative that Rigan moves freely in the Palace. A moving target is harder to hit."

"Oh Siegfried, that is comforting," Prince Paul said tongue in cheek, making every attempt to control his emotions and anger.

"May I interrupt this heady discussion?" Damon interjected as he walked into the private suite. "I would like to examine my patient."

"Really Damon, I'm fine. Dr. Hauptmann was quite thorough," Rigan protested.

"I was working diligently on our clinic my Princess, when a villager rides up to the front door screaming at me that you had been shot in Brogav," Damon related as he quirked an eyebrow. "I race to Brogav Hospital because I was told that is where your wounded body was taken, only to find out you were gone."

"You found me, didn't you?"

"Alive, yes, but well? I should like to make that determination. More importantly, as your personal physician from the early diagnosis of your confinement, I want to make sure nothing is amiss."

"I believe that is our edict to depart the suites and leave you and your patient alone?" Siegfried asked almost in a certain statement.





"That is what I have always liked about you Siegfried. You are a reader of the sublime, a master of innuendo, and a thorn in everyone's side," Damon replied taking Princess Rigan's hand.

"I think I will depart, as we all should be doing," Siegfried said grinning at the doctor.

Everyone left leaving Damon to his work with the exception of Prince Paul and Ceit who refused to leave. Ceit was invited to stay and help.

Damon took his time examining Rigan's wound. He redressed it because it did not satisfy his stringent requirement. He took even more time examining the health of the baby. Ceit assisted him with every order of turning, moving and positioning Rigan and the baby for examination. Well acquainted with the baby's heartbeat, Damon listened carefully.

"Well?" Paul said impatiently as he watched the robe once more placed on his wife.

Rigan sat up in her bed. "I don't believe there was a place on my body you didn't examine, Damon Sheffield!"

"I may have missed one or two," Damon retorted flashing her a big smile.

"Well?" Paul asked more sternly.

"Princess and baby are well. I am happy to say. I just wanted to make sure."

"I told you that," Rigan teased. "Damon, you worry over me as much as Ceit and Paul."

"Paul found you and fell in love with you first, that doesn't mean I love you any less. That's twice now you have made my heart stop beating. If Siegfried doesn't solve this soon, I may never live to be an old man. I should also add that if anything did happen to you and the baby, Ceit would not let me live to be an old man anyway."

"One scare is more than enough for this cailleach! Come Damon, we should be leavin. I can tell by the creases burrowin into the Prince's brow and his scowl growin."

"That's his natural look," Damon chided.

"I may not get the chance to kill ya Damon, if ya keep this up."

"Love me Ceit and I'll die a happy man."

"Ya are so full of blarney, are ya not sure ya mum wasn't Aran?" Ceit chuckled as she took Damon's offered arm and left the bedchamber.

"What is it Paul? You do look fierce."

"Siegfried irritates me," Paul walked to Rigan and began untying her robe. "Let's take all this off. I like you natural in bed with me."

## *Smitten*



"Siegfried isn't the problem, you know it." Rigan allowed Paul to remove her robe and lifted her arms as he removed her chemise.

Paul threw her robe and chemise on the floor. His large hand cupped her face and gently parted her lips. His kiss was deep and loving, moving his tongue gently inside her sweet mouth, playing with her tongue. Gently with his kiss, laid her down on her back.

She opened her eyes to see him staring at her, moving from her breasts, across her extended abdomen, locking on to her pubic mound with a return trip back to her eyes. His hand began a gentle massage on her huge baby filled waist. "I am so.."

Paul didn't let her finish. His lips brushed hers as he spoke, "Beautiful, you are so beautiful and wonderfully filled with my Edward."

Edward started kicking as if in response to his Papa.

Paul's hand massaged the particular area baby was kicking. "You see he knows his Papa. He wants to born Rigan."

"He will be. You must not doubt that." Rigan reached over her huge stomach and ran her fingers through his hair. "Is that what is troubling you?"

"What is troubling me is my faith in God. I was the happiest man in the world when I found you. I thanked Him for answering my prayers and then as if in punishment, He almost took you. Teasing me, He let my seed grow in your womb. Again I am the happiest man. You are so close to giving me a son and He terrifies me again. Every day I love you more and more, only to be more frightened that you and my son will be taken away. What kind of God is this?"

"A loving and kind one. God has nothing to do with the corruption and sins of man. It is our own doings that trouble this world, and that includes the horror we inflict on each other in His holy name. I sometimes think God looks down on us and cries, 'that isn't me children, why do you blame me? I sent my son for you to learn and instead you killed him'."

"You are telling me that the evil in man destroys goodness."

"Yes, and that has nothing to do with God. The evil also invades our thoughts to turn us away from the goodness that God asks of us."

"In my arms is such goodness." Paul bent his head and kissed the large stomach that held his baby. "Why can't my God protect us?"

"Why Paul, how ungrateful you are. Two attempts and we are still in your arms. You must make confession."

Tears swelled in Paul's eyes. He had to be Prince throughout this tumultuous day. Laying here next to his wife he could be a mere man. "I am helpless to protect you. I cannot bear the thought of losing you, of never holding my son in my arms."



"What if an accident or someone killed you? What would I do without you, your love? I would live on with all our wonderful memories, our love. If anything happens, that is what you must do. Please Paul, don't blame God and make God responsible, not for what man does. You must promise me that."

"My angel," was all Paul said as he buried his face into the soft curve of Rigan's neck and wept releasing all those pent up emotions he had endured this day.

Rigan kissed Paul's hair as her hands gently stroked his head. "Weep my husband. I understand," Rigan repeated soothingly over and over as Paul released his emotions in the arc of her neck.

"I love you," Paul repeated nearly inaudible between the flowage of emotion.

Earlier that day Camilla had been humming in her duties as Lady in Waiting to the queen. Bridgett had noticed the odd behavior in contrast to the recently intense perfection of Camilla, and asked her what happiness she had.

Camilla only responded glibly with a phrase that it was a beautiful day.

At the time appointed for Rigan's fate, Camilla watched for the signs of her well-made plan. Soon she saw the commotion of the frantic mounted soldier riding into the courtyard. She watched the frenzied movements after the soldier had addressed the officer. He has done it. Camilla smiled and nearly ran down to the courtyard. As she neared the door to the courtyard she saw Prince Paul racing down the corridor with the soldier. Standing aside she was nearly run over by the pair, and unrecognized by her Prince. His face, why does he look so taut? He is free of her now!

Waiting a few moments to control her excitement Camilla went into the courtyard and addressed the officer, "Whatever is happening? Why is there such turmoil and where is the Prince off too in such a hurry?" Camilla asked all the proper questions. Camilla already knew the answers.

The officer recognized her and dutifully bowed. He had been enamored of the beautiful Lady in Waiting since he first saw her. Most men were completely enamored of her beauty. "Lady Camilla, it is such tragic news. Princess Rigan has been shot and her bodyguard grievously wounded."

"Oh how dreadful!" Camilla gasped in acting worthy of a Grecian drama. "Is the Princess dead?"

"I don't know. We were just instructed to send reinforcements for crowd control."

"Crowd control?" Camilla asked with true surprise. Of course she's dead. That close even a fool like Herman Frantz couldn't miss.



Why would they need crowd control? The Princess was dead, who cared?

"There was a large crowd at the hospital when the Princess was entering. They are near rioting at the shooting of the Princess."

Before Camilla could respond, their attention was drawn to a mounted soldier riding into the courtyard with something laid across his horse.

The officer recognized it as a corpse and turning Lady Camilla's head with his hand. Softly he said to her, "Don't look. This is too horrible. Please my lady, go back inside the Palace."

The officer then went to the horse to help pull the body off and find out what had happened.

Camilla naturally ignored the officer and came behind the two men as they were communicating. When the body was laid down unceremoniously she screamed at the sight. "My god! How horrible!"

It was the bloodied unseeing face of Herman Frantz, his neck crooked. Nearly unrecognizable but she knew who he was.

The officer turned around to catch her as she began to swoon. "My lady, I asked you to return to the Palace. This is too dreadful for you." He put his arms around her and shielded her face in his broad chest. The officer started walking her to the Palace door.

"Who is that?" Camilla questioned, although she already knew the answer, but was not surprised when the officer replied.

"I really don't know who he is, just that it was he who shot Princess Rigan and the mob got to him before the soldiers did. You must not even think of this dear lady."

"I shall try not too," Camilla said whimpering. She could put on an act very well. Camilla even trembled a little to give an effect.

The officer walked Camilla to her suite and gave a polite bow. As soon as Camilla entered her room, she spun around in glee. It is done and no worries. Frantz is dead and there was no way to connect her. She didn't have to worry about another meeting and the second half of the payment. A large smile careened across her face.

Secure in her imagined glory she stayed in her suite for the rest of the day, feigning shock at the accidental sighting of the body brought in. Of course the officer confirmed her story when asked by Bridgett.

So secure in that glory, Camilla did not see the Prince return with Rigan in his arms.

## Chapter Thirty Two

King Karl had summoned Siegfried Goetz immediately upon hearing the news of Rigan's attack. After Siegfried was apprised of the current situation, he was heading into the courtyard when the body of Herman Frantz was brought in. He stopped short when he saw Lady Camilla being led away from the scene by an officer.

"What is going on with that?" Siegfried asked the soldier while he pointed to the officer and Lady Camilla.

"The lady was talking to Lieutenant Krausman when I rode in. Unfortunately she saw the body as it was taken off my horse. I am afraid she swooned. Lieutenant Krausman is taking her to her rooms."

"Who is this?" Siegfried asked as he approached the now covered body and picked up the blanket to see the face. Siegfried froze. It was Herman Frantz.

"It is the assassin, Herr Goetz. I am afraid the mob got to him before we could. We will not be able to question him. The crowd's vengeance has seen to that."

"Herr Frantz will tell us many things," Siegfried contradicted.

"Sir, he is dead. You know him?"

"Dead men do tell tales, my young friend. Take him to the guard infirmary and send for a physician. Yes, I am intimately aware of Herr Frantz."

"Herr Frantz may have killed the Princess."

"I hope that is not true. The King has told me she has been taken into the hospital. As soon as my interview with Herr Frantz is completed I will go there post haste."

"Interview? Sir, this Frantz is dead," the soldier told Siegfried wondering why in the world the Security Minister did not understand dead men cannot talk.

"I am aware of that, you do not listen my young friend. Perhaps if you did concentrate and listen more carefully, the dead could speak to you."

"I do not want the dead to converse with me sir, no thank you!" the soldier quickly replied now wondering if the Security Minister was a warlock or not quite sane.



Siegfried could only laugh, partly out of nervousness and concern for the Princess. He had been so certain Herman Frantz had nothing to do with the first attack on Princess Rigan and here he was, the assassin who shot her. What was going on? This simply did not make sense.

"You have need of me?" The surgeon of the guards asked as he entered the infirmary examining room.

"Yes doctor. I need you to examine this body and determine cause of death."

The doctor went to the corpse. "This is a bloody mess." Slowly he started to take off the clothes and Frantz's head swayed unnaturally to the side. As the clothes came off a money belt was revealed and handed to Herr Goetz for examination. In the belt Siegfried found a travel ticket for a ship bound to the colonies and 800 guineas. A man like Frantz couldn't conceivably save that much money in a lifetime, not gold guineas.

"My first guess at cause of death is a broken neck, and judging by the bruise on his neck, it was a giant of a man with hands twice the size of mine."

"Thank you doctor. I will await your full report later. I must leave now for Brogav Hospital."

"Someone is sick?"

"Princess Rigan has been shot and that bloody mess was the assassin."

The doctor paled. "Princess Rigan?"

"I shall expect your thorough report, doctor," Siegfried said with no indication of emotion and proceeded to Brogav Hospital.

Before Prince Paul walked out with Princess Rigan, Siegfried had been informed the Princess was only wounded and was receiving treatment. The pistols had been turned over to him and he had finished interviewing witnesses to the assassination attempt. It was clear in his mind that Herman Frantz had been standing there waiting for the Princess to arrive less than thirty minutes before. Frantz knew she was coming that day and there is only one way for him to know. Someone from the royal household was giving him this information. That someone also had hired Frantz to do this with a substantial sum. Siegfried was convinced beyond any doubt there was a conspiracy afoot and it was someone in the royal household that wanted Princess Rigan dead.

A knock on the door brought Camilla out of her musings. Camilla was planning to meet Prince Paul, quite accidentally of course, this morning and relay her deepest sympathy on his loss. She



would be available to comfort him and soon she would have him begging her to marry him.

"Bridgett?"

"Good morning Camilla. The queen has sent me here to let you know she is concerned for your well being after your shock yesterday."

"You told her Bridgett?"

"Of course, someone needed to explain your conspicuous absence yesterday evening and your purpose for remaining in your suite."

"That was kind of you," Camilla purred in unrecognized sarcasm.

"The queen has given you leave of duty for a few days. This will allow you to recover. And we will be going to the country castle for those few days."

"Is the queen feeling well, the shock and everything about Princess Rigan?"

"How nice of you to ask of another," Bridgett relayed with her own sarcasm. There was no love lost between these two women. "The queen is quite shaken and upset. A few days in the country castle will calm her."

"I will see the queen on her return. Please do thank her for my leave," Camilla deferred with politesse.

"It will be my pleasure," Bridgett expounded the syllables with her own politesse. Bridgett was happy not to be near this child of Satan for a few days. Bridgett left to warn Ceit that Camilla would be left to her own devices for the next three or four days. Be sure to watch out for Camilla was the warning Bridgett gave to Ceit.

Camilla of course was still not aware that Princess Rigan was alive and well. Camilla was still under her own assumption that the assassination had been successful and Prince Paul was now a widower.

Pasting on a somber face, Camilla placed herself in a position where she knew Prince Paul would pass this morning. The corridor to the king's private study had a small alcove she remained hidden in, behind the luxuriant deep blue velvet draperies covering a large balconied window.

Prince Paul came walking down the hall. Camilla eased herself out gracefully at the precise moment to run directly into the Prince.

"Oh! Prince Paul, my regrets. I was so lost in thoughts as I looked out the window."

"That is quite all right. Are you hurt, Lady Camilla?"

"I am not," Camilla assured him. "I was just contemplating the sorrow of the Palace at the attack on Princess Rigan, and of course the horror I endured upon seeing the body of that horrible assassin."



Prince Paul looked at her with amazement. "The body of the assassin?"

"Yes, I was in the courtyard when the soldier brought it in. It was horrible. I have never seen such a horrible thing. And that he shot Princess Rigan was too much to bear." Camilla forced tears from her eyes.

"My regrets, Lady Camilla. You should not have witnessed this." Prince Paul bowed courteously.

"I am sure it is nothing compared to the shock and sorrow you must be enduring," Camilla remarked in confidence, but happy the Prince was not showing a deep sorrow for his dead Princess.

"Yesterday was indeed trying," the Prince responded politely. "Excuse me, I have an appointment to keep."

"If you need someone to talk too, I am here," Camilla offered innocence in her voice.

"Excuse me, please," Prince Paul repeated looking at her quizzically. Why did she say that? Paul mused.

"Paul, There you are my love, we are waiting."

Camilla heard the all too familiar voice and went white. It was Princess Rigan! The princess was in King Karl's study, or was it Rigan's ghost haunting her?

"I'll be right there, my angel," Prince Paul acknowledged. "Do excuse me, Lady Camilla. The King and Princess are waiting."

Rigan is alive! That fool Frantz had missed. I must do something else. That woman has more lives than a cat! Damn, damn her to hell! Camilla looked at the Prince obviously in a hurry. "Of course, my Prince."

Camilla turned in a pique to leave the corridor. She was in the hall when she heard Queen Louise address her.

"Lady Camilla, I'm sorry to bother you but King Karl is waiting for me with Prince Paul and Princess Rigan. I am already late. Prince Paul and I went to confession this morning. Could you be a dear and take these etchings to Dr. Sheffield for me?"

"It would be an honor," Camilla smiled fraudulently. "Prince Paul has just arrived. I met him in the corridor."

"Thank you my dear," Queen Louise acknowledged. "Would you tell Dr. Sheffield that I will be back in a few days and will bring more etchings?"

"I shall be happy to," Camilla lied with a smile pasted on her face. She didn't want to do anything right now but sulk. Camilla wanted to sit quietly and start thinking of how she could get rid of Rigan permanently. A plan will come to me if I can think.

"Then get a nice rest. What a horrible thing for you to go through or see. We'll be back in a few days."





Camilla walked slowly and absentmindedly towards the suite Dr. Damon Sheffield was occupying whenever he was in Brogav. Think, think Camilla. There must be a way to get rid of Rigan, forever!

She knocked on his door, but there was no answer. Tentatively she tried the door. It was open. Good, I don't want to spend the time trying to find him. Camilla entered and walked to his desk. After she put the etchings on the desk, she looked for a piece of paper to write a note to let him know the queen was going to the country castle and would be back in a few days.

Camilla moved the journals on Dr. Sheffield's desk looking for a blank paper. One of the journals fell on the floor and opened. Camilla picked it up and read 'Monkshood, Anodyne, febrifuge, sedative. Used for the pains of gout, nervous fever. Do not use without medical direction under any circumstances. Various species of monkshood in small doses can cause painful death in a few hours.'

"Poison!" Camilla whispered to herself. She paged through more of the journal. Camilla read about different herbs and their uses, the decoctions, tinctures and teas.

Fascinated by the different healing medications that could be deadly poison, Camilla did not hear Damon enter his room.

"Lady Camilla! Is there something you're looking for?"

"Dr. Sheffield, you startled me."

"So I see. Can I help you?"

"Queen Louise sent these etchings for you. She asked me to tell you that she will be spending a few days in the country castle, but will bring you more when she returns."

"Thank you for the information, but why were you going through my desk and why are you in my room?"

"When I knocked and you didn't answer, I found your door open. I thought to leave you a note when I read an open journal. This is so fascinating."

"Somehow I never imagined you could be interested in herbals," Damon related. He couldn't believe the Lady Camilla would be interested in anything except herself.

"I knew nothing of them, nor were they ever discussed."

"I am still surprised that you took the time to read."

"You think I cannot read?" Camilla said angrily.

"Let's just say you never showed an interest in knowledge."

"Well surprise. I find this fascinating. I would like to learn more."

"I'm delighted. You may study them if you wish."

"May I take them to my suite?"

"I'm afraid not, they are rather precious at the moment. I haven't had them published yet. You may come in here to study them when I am not present. I will leave some of them out for you."

"I am grateful. You are most kind Dr. Sheffield."

## *Smitten*



"You are most surprising, Lady Camilla."

"More surprising than you can imagine," Camilla replied thinking of how the plan to poison Rigan was dropped in her lap. "How interesting all of this is."

"I am happy you can appreciate this knowledge," Damon answered with discomfort. There was something about this that made him uncomfortable. He didn't know what it was. He just felt uncomfortable, but he wouldn't prevent anyone from gaining knowledge. "If you would excuse me, I have come to bathe and dress for my day. I just came back from my morning ride."

"I shall leave, but may I come back this afternoon?"

"If you come about 1:00 today, you may have some time. I will be in meetings with the Palace physicians for several hours. Will that do?"

"I find myself with plenty of time. Whatever is convenient for you is acceptable to me."

"We will arrange for scheduled visits then when I am not present."

"I don't mean to evict you from your suites," Camilla said apologetically but her thinking was caustic.

"It would be unseemly to be together in my private suites at the same time. It could lead to compromising gossip," Damon said nervously. He was feeling very uneasy with her in his suites.

"Whatever do you mean? You are a doctor, surely you deal with female patients and their maladies in most personal ways."

"That my dear is always in the privacy of their rooms or an examining room with attendants of some kind always present."

"I certainly would not want tongues to wag because of your generosity, Dr. Sheffield."

"Thank you. Now if you excuse me. I really would like to bathe."

"Damon?" Ceit was heard at the open door.

"Come in Ceit, my love," Damon smiled with relief. Why he felt uncomfortable with Camilla he did not know. He just did.

"I came to tell you..." Ceit stopped in mid sentence. "Why Lady Camilla, what are you doing here?"

"Just leaving, actually. Thank you again, Dr. Sheffield. I do look forward to my readings."

Ceit watched as Camilla sauntered out the door.

"Damon Sheffield, just what was that possessed woman doing in your rooms?"

"Giving me a message from Queen Louise, actually."

"Don't trust her Damon. She is evil incarnate."

"Now Ceit, just how would you even know what evil is? You are far too sweet and angelic."



"Don't be smotherin me with flattery. I'm tellin ya, don't be near that woman, even Bridgett can see the evil in her."

"I will take your warning very seriously. I do not plan to be in her presence for any length of time. She has taken an interest in herbals, and I told her she can read here when I am not present."

"Damon, her sudden interest in herbals makes me uneasy."

"When someone seeks knowledge, that is supposed to be a good thing."

"Not when she does. I just know it," Ceit said stubbornly and crossed herself.

"Well, I promised. Now what did you come here to tell me, precious one?"

"Ach, you keep dazzlin me. How can I remember?"

"Oh Ceit, if I didn't desperately need a bathe I'd smother you with my kisses."

"Hah! Such promise!"

"Just for that!" Damon moved quickly to Ceit and planted a powerful kiss on her cheek. He put his arms around her to squeeze her and then held her tight with his eyes sparkling in mischief.

"Ach, you smell like a horse."

"I told you I needed a bath."

"I only came to tell you that Princess Rigan is askin to meet with ya and the physicians this afternoon regardin staffin of the clinic."

"Tell Princess Rigan, we would love to have her participate if she feels up to it."

"The Princess is more at ease with the terror she endured than her husband, Prince Paul. That man is visibly shaken," Ceit said to Damon. She couldn't hide her concern anymore than the Prince.

"Prince Paul thought she was dead. That is twice now he thought he had lost her. This time it would be the death of his child as well. We know he is fatally smitten and I can't imagine him wanting to live if anything happened to her."

"I agree. Would ya be lettin me go, so ya can warsh the horse off."

"It breaks my heart to let you go, but I do smell like a horse and I do think that would be offensive to Princess Rigan in her condition, not to mention the physicians."

Ceit flashed one of her bright smiles and twinkling eyes at Damon as she strutted out the door.

Damon called out to her, "Next time Ceit, I promise I'll make you mine." He laughed quietly to himself. Damon adored the sweet Ceit. If only he could find a woman like her. He would be a happy man. There was always a twinkle of happiness and self-assurance he saw in those deep blue eyes. He couldn't help but imagine her as a young woman, a most tempting and alluring young woman.

## Chapter Thirty Three

Camilla returned to Dr. Sheffield's suites exactly at one o'clock. Damon was cordial and showed her the first volume of his journals on herbal remedies. Damon left a few minutes later for his meeting with the physicians and Princess Rigan in the Palace's audience room.

Camilla spent a few moments studying the suite Dr. Sheffield was using. The room was opulent in decoration. The parlor had a gilded fireplace with ornate stone hearth with an equally ornate brass screen to protect the expensive oriental carpeting. A large divan upholstered in green damask and gold crest design with two matching smaller ones surrounded the table in front of the fireplace. On the table were the dishes and remnants of lunch. The servants would return momentarily to retrieve that.

Camilla looked into the bedroom. The bed was a gigantic four-poster bed raised on a dais. The coverlet was green satin matching the window's curtains. The next room was the dressing room. Two large mahogany armoires were on one wall, two chest dressers, on another. Another door led to the private chambers. In the corner she spotted a spice chest. How curious! I wonder what is in there. A spice chest is usually found in kitchens.

Camilla walked to the chest to and opened it. It was filled with herbs of several varieties. They were all labeled with Dr. Sheffield's handwriting. As Camilla started to look at the labels more closely, she heard voices outside the suites. The door had been left open. Quickly she ran back into the parlor and grabbed the journal sitting quickly on the large divan in front of the fireplace. It was just in time as Damon returned to his suite.

"I forgot my papers," Damon said to Camilla as he walked to his desk and opened his desk drawer. "I am sorry if I disturbed your reading, Lady Camilla."

"Not at all," Camilla murmured barely looking up from the journal. "Have a good meeting."

Just as Camilla did actually start to read the first journal another presence entered the room.



"Lady Camilla, what a surprise to find you here."

Camilla looked up and drew a deep breath. "Herr Goetz! Are you following me?"

"Lady Camilla, why would I be following you?"

"I have no idea, why," Camilla snapped sharply returning her eyes to the journal.

"I was looking for Dr. Sheffield. Is he here?"

"Obviously not!" Camilla snarled.

"You did not answer my question, Lady Camilla."

"What question?"

"Just why are you in Dr. Sheffield's suite?"

"I'm reading. Surely your astute art of observation would determine that quickly!" Camilla retorted.

"Most people read in the library or the privacy of their own rooms."

"What are you intimating?"

"I am not intimating anything, dear lady."

"You most certainly are!"

"A single woman in the boudoir of a single man, reading! Who would question that?"

"You sir, have a filthy mind like most men!"

"I am just surprised at where you turn up Lady Camilla. In the most unusual places," Siegfried observed.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Yesterday in the courtyard, and being escorted by a handsome young lieutenant. This morning you were in the corridor with Prince Paul and now in the boudoir of Dr. Sheffield. You seem a bit flighty, Lady Camilla."

"You have been following me!" Camilla snapped sharply.

"Absolutely not! Should I be?" Siegfried asked nonplussed.

"What type of question is that?" Camilla was getting angrier by the minute.

"A simple question. I fail to understand your sensitivity."

"You call chance happenings a flighty personae and you don't understand sensitivity. I certainly did not want to see that horrible mangled body. The lieutenant was being a gentleman. Which you certainly are not! I was still upset this morning and lost in my thoughts when I just happened to run into Prince Paul. The queen sent me with etchings to give to Dr. Sheffield and he is allowing me to read his herbal journals. I have to read them here because he does not want them out of his room. As you can see, I am quite alone since he is not here! Have I answered everything, Herr Goetz?"

"Everything except why you were in the courtyard to see that mangled body as you call it." Siegfried was consistently amazed that Camilla always seemed to have an answer to everything.



"Simple female curiosity. I saw the commotion and wanted to know what it was about. It was after I was in the courtyard that the soldier brought Herr Frantz's body."

Siegfried stiffened noticeably when she mentioned Herman Frantz. How did she know that name? When the body was brought in, no one knew whom the assassin was. It was he, Siegfried who identified the body.

Camilla was in such a pique she did not realize the blunder she had made.

"I am sorry your curiosity availed you to such a horrible sight." Siegfried would not reveal to her the error she had made. It was Siegfried's plan to watch this woman with more scrutiny. Siegfried was certain he had found the connection to the loose ends, but it required proof. Until Siegfried had that proof he would tell no one of his suspicions.

"I was very sorry also. It is a nightmare that is difficult to shake from my mind."

"What do you think of Dr. Sheffield's journals, Lady Camilla?" Siegfried changed subjects immediately to throw the lady off balance.

"From what I have read, interesting to say the least."

"Do you think there is any benefit of this reading for you?"

"Does everyone think that Princess Rigan is the only saint? Perhaps others might want to learn such medicines?"

"I am pleased you wish to learn for such noble goals. Will you be assisting in the clinics when they are built?" Siegfried's suspicions were more aroused when Camilla had used the reference to Princess Rigan. It showed she had an intense jealousy towards the Princess.

"I might. Perhaps, I just might."

"I have enjoyed our conversation, Lady Camilla. When Dr. Sheffield returns will you tell him I was looking for him?"

"I will, and I sir, have not enjoyed our conversation."

Siegfried made no response. He walked out the door and went directly to his office. Siegfried intended to have Lady Camilla watched day and night by his best operatives.

Later in the day, Siegfried met with Damon.

"What do you mean lock up my herbal remedies?" Damon asked.

"Exactly that. Lock them up. All placed in your spice cabinet in your room. I want them locked up and do it today!" Siegfried ordered.

"How do you know of my spice cabinet?"



"Your room had been thoroughly searched and the reports given to me."

"You had my room searched?"

"Don't be so sensitive, Damon. Everyone's rooms are searched on a regular basis. It is done for your safety," Siegfried reassured the good doctor.

"Safety?" Damon bellowed incredulously.

"The living areas are checked for booby traps, bombs, just as there are regular inspections of food stuffs for poisons."

Damon raked his hands through his hair. It was a habit of his when he was upset or confused. "Dare I ask the reason for this?"

"Damon, is it not true that some of these herbs in the wrong dosage can be lethal?"

"It is true. You suspect me?"

"If I did, I would take those herbs away, not ask you to keep them locked up."

"You want them locked up so another can not get to them then," Damon assumed.

"My suspicions have always been that the assassin has been a member of the royal household with access to many things and places that are not accessible to others. My suspicions are that you will be used for access to those poisons."

"The next attack will be poison?"

"That would be my summation in general." Siegfried was certain the assassin was Camilla, but he had no proof. He only suspected that she was studying the journals to find poison.

"All herbs will be locked in the spice cabinet tonight. My word, but I am sure you will have that checked tomorrow."

"You can be assured of it," Siegfried stated somberly and left the good doctor.

The next day Camilla came to finish reading the first journal. When she was quite alone she went to the dressing room to obtain the monkshood to poison Princess Rigan. The cabinet was locked. Camilla was not going to break that lock. It would be too suspicious. I will spend every opportunity reading these medicine journals until I can find the poison easily obtained and not suspected. It took Camilla another month and one half to find that perfect poison. It was something she could easily obtain herself in the storehouses of the village. She would mix it with another herb that she could obtain just as easily in the gardens of the country castle, and of course the queen visited the castle regularly.

It was also in that month and one half that Prince Aleck returned home from schooling. He would again be a permanent resident in the Brogav Palace.

## *Smitten*



Chance meetings between Lady Camilla and Prince Aleck were uncomfortable to say the least. Everyone in the Palace, especially his big brother Paul, observed it.

It was on a ride early in the morning that Paul spoke to Prince Aleck about the strong negative emotions between Aleck and Lady Camilla.

"Little brother, I hope you would talk to me about Lady Camilla."

"I never care to discuss her!"

"I am aware she is extremely irritating, caustic and childish. I had to deal with her myself until I married Rigan."

"You had to deal with her? In what way? She was a virgin!"

Prince Paul raised his eyebrow. "How would you know she was a virgin little brother, unless? Dear God, you bedded her?"

"I don't call the unpleasant experience a bedding!"

"Confess to big brother. What happened that she turned you so sour? "

"Little miss virgin came to me like a wanton. Camilla was nude in my room before I unbuttoned the first one on my breeches. It was the most horrible experience of my life. The girl was as dry as a desert and penetration was difficult. I thought I would never climax. I couldn't bear her whining and complaining. I lost my temper with her, something I never did with a girl or woman before. I was crude and a beast actually. Camilla brought out the worst in me. It was after that I tried the more experienced married woman and that didn't work. So I took your advice and started using the paramour. You were right big brother. They provide pleasure, training and pure enjoyment of new and different methods without demands. They only request payment for services rendered."

"If you are content with the paramours, why is there still such animosity between you and Lady Camilla?"

"It is hostility from both sides, big brother. I told you I was a beast. It is something I am not proud of. She has a right to have distaste for me as I do her."

"Since our return from the honeymoon, Lady Camilla has had a change in her personality. Perhaps you might try talking to her and make amends."

"Just what brought this entire subject up big brother?"

"Mamman, of course. Everyone can feel the hostility between the two of you. When you visit Mamman in her chambers and Lady Camilla is present the tension is so thick it upsets Mamman. You are coming to visit her less and less. Mamman asked me to talk to you."

"You've talked to me. I no longer wish to discuss it."





"We will no longer discuss it, but for Mamman's sake, you must do something about it."

"I'll think about it. How is Rigan? She looks like she is going to burst any moment. I never realized how big a schwanger woman could get."

"How many schwanger women have you seen near the end of term?"

"None, big brother. None."

"I know Edward will be a big baby when he is born. Just last night I could actually see his foot as he kicked out in Rigan's tummy. It was big."

"You still sleep with her? I thought that was forbidden with confinement this deep into term."

"Ceit has fits that we still sleep together, but Rigan and I need each other and neither of us want to sleep anywhere else."

"What does Damon say about it?" Aleck asked reining in his horse to head back to the castle.

"Sleeping is fine and dandy, but no love making. To quote him exactly."

"I can't imagine you being that close to Rigan and giving up a husband's pleasure."

"In that fact you are astute, little brother."

"Don't you risk hurting the baby or Rigan with rutting this late in term?"

"Little brother, one does not rut one's wife, especially if he is madly in love with her. And as for the other, there are other positions and methods for pleasure less dangerous. Start paying attention to the lessons of the paramours. Someday you will be an expecting Papa."

"Not soon I hope!"

The two brothers enjoyed the rest of the morning ride in good spirits. Prince Aleck would try to make peace with Camilla. Not today, and maybe not for awhile, but he would not upset his Mamman any further.

Camilla was in her suite preparing the dried herbal concoction to put in Rigan's morning coffee the next time Rigan came to join Queen Louise for breakfast. It didn't matter to her what the dosages were, it only mattered that she knew what they were supposed to do. She was generous in her proportions.

A knock at her door startled her and she nearly dropped the packets she was making. Quickly she hid the packets in the desk drawer.

Camilla stood in shock when she opened the door. It was Prince Aleck.



"What are you doing here?" she demanded angrily. "I thought it was clear to you I never wanted to see or speak to you again!"

"Nor I you, Lady Camilla. My big brother suggested we try to make amends because our dislike for each other has upset Mamman."

"Prince Paul sent you here? You told him of us?"

"Don't be surprised, my dear. He is my brother you know, the Crown Prince?"

"You animal, you beast, you bastard!"

"This isn't helping Lady Camilla. Big brother said you had changed. Obviously you have not! I do not care to take your insults any further."

"Wait! Come in, we needn't let others hear us." Camilla was surprised when Prince Aleck had said that Prince Paul wanted him to make amends and that was after he knew about Aleck bedding her. Prince Paul had told his brother she had changed. Oh this was too wonderful for words. Prince Paul was concerned for her, even telling his brother to make amends.

"I don't know if I should, Lady Camilla."

"Prince Aleck, it is a little late to worry about compromising situations and we both know how horrible that experience was. That was painful for me as well as humiliating. I should not like to ever repeat it." Camilla took his arm, brought him into her suites and closed the door. She pointed him to the divan where they both sat down.

"Nor I, Lady Camilla. I am grateful to you however for showing me how dreadful it can be on certain occasions. It has caused a reformation in my life."

"You treated me badly, Prince Aleck. When I wanted to stop for the pain, you were barbaric."

"In the course of our rutting my dear lady, your penetration was painful and uncomfortable for both of us, but a man can not simply stop once a woman has enticed him."

"Did you ever think I could have wanted love and tenderness? Instead you humiliated me and took me as an animal does."

"Love and tenderness? Lady Camilla, you were naked and waiting before I had the chance to take a drink. You deliberately enticed me, and for that I am still uncertain for the reason."

"I lost my virginity."

"You wanted to, for your own reasons. Just what were they?"

"I think we have discussed this enough. We just need to agree that it was an awful experience that both of us, and we learned a great deal from the act. Is that amends enough?" Camilla needed to change the subject. She didn't want to get into her reasons.



"I believe it is suitable. I should not want to upset Mamman any further. We can just ignore each other gracefully."

"I would not want to upset Prince Paul," Camilla said mentally. "I shall tell him when we marry that it was you that raped me and told him about it to cover your guilt in the matter. He will feel only sympathy for me to be so mistreated by his own brother. Yes, that is what I will do."

"Then that is the end of it. Good day, Lady Camilla!"

"Good day Prince Aleck."

Camilla immediately retrieved the packets of Ergot and Lovage she had blended together. She put them between her breasts, out of sight, but available at a moment's notice, since Camilla nor anyone knew when Princess Rigan would have breakfast with the queen.

Princess Rigan was nearing the end of her term. Camilla had little time left to send that witch and bastard to hell. This had to be done soon. The baby and Rigan must die. Her plan was perfect, this time. Camilla was more encouraged now that Prince Aleck had been sent to apologize by Prince Paul.



## Chapter Thirty Four

"My dear, you are just blooming with beauty today. You look so healthy and radiant. I do believe you will have your lying in sooner than expected," Queen Louise commented as Princess Rigan entered the queen's private suites.

"I finally got a full night's rest last night. The wee one didn't kick last night at all," Princess Rigan smiled in return to the queen's statement. Rigan couldn't wait for their child to be born. She imagined many times holding their child in her arms.

"That means the wee one will be born any day, my Princess. You have already dropped to preparation," Ceit announced happily. "Just wait until Damon sees you today. He will agree with me."

"It isn't the right time yet, Ceit. It is too early."

"Wee ones don't come on time schedules. They come when they are a wont to."

"When will Dr. Sheffield examine you?" Queen Louise asked her favored daughter in law, very anxious to hold her grandchild in her arms.

"Damon said he will fetch me this morning when he has completed an interview with a nurse for the clinic."

"He is doing wonders with the clinic for the village by the castle. Even though it is still incomplete, the clinic is already caring for many," Queen Louise said proudly of the clinic's success. She picked up her teacup for a sip.

"Oh dear, that reminds me," Princess Rigan said aloud. "Ceit, would you be a lamb and get the inventory of surgical tools for the clinic I finished for Damon."

"I will, but don't be wanderin off until I return. Ya won't be leavin this suite without me."

"I promise Ceit. I will even make Damon wait if he comes to fetch me."

Ceit nodded her head and left.

"I simply don't understand how you let that woman talk to you like that, Princess Rigan. She actually orders you!" Lady Camilla voiced her observation.

"She orders me like a loving mother, Lady Camilla. I would certainly never chide a loving mother for caring."



"I see," Camilla said softly, intent on her plans with the victim so conveniently appearing. "Would you like a cup of coffee, Princess?"

"Why thank you, Lady Camilla. I would love one before breakfast."

"It is still hot from the kitchen. I will fix you a cup," Camilla volunteered and rose quickly from her chair.

"Please no cream or sugar. I enjoy it just as is from the bean," Rigan requested.

"Of course." With a touch of herbs, Camilla mused. It is apropos for Rigan to die of her own medicinal knowledge.

"We have made it a habit to bring coffee with the tea in the morning, just in case you do stop in to see me, darling," Queen Louise explained.

Camilla poured the hot coffee into the bisque porcelain cup. Silently and unnoticed, or so she thought, she pulled out the paper packet from her cleavage hidden by the décolletage. Quickly she poured the herbs into the cup. Before she turned around she stuffed the now empty packet back into her cleavage. With a sharp turn and four swift strides she handed the cup to Princess Rigan.

"You will be surprised to know Princess that our Lady Camilla has taken up learning the herbal medicines under Damon's tutelage. She is becoming quite knowledgeable," Queen Louise told Rigan conversationally.

"Thank you Lady Camilla," Rigan acknowledged as she took the cup. "That is wonderful. You could help in the hospital here." Rigan attempted a small sip of the coffee when the cup went flying out of her hand spilling the coffee on her, the carpet, the small table, breakfast and some splattering the queen.

"Don't drink that!" Damon screamed as his arm stretched the distance to smash it out of her hand.

Damon spun around and grabbed Lady Camilla by her wrists. "It's you, isn't it?"

"What are you doing? What are you talking about?" Camilla barked out loudly in protest.

"Let's just see what you have hiding in there." Damon said as his free hand reached in her décolletage between her breasts and pulled out three tiny paper packets.

"Dr. Sheffield, just what is the meaning of this?" Queen Louise nearly shouted. She was shocked at the pandemonium in her suite.

"This is our little assassin, Your Royal Majesty," Damon stated smelling the packets. "I think Herr Goetz will find these packets as interesting as I. Bridgett, send for Herr Goetz and some soldiers to escort the Lady Camilla to Brogav Prison."



Bridgett jumped up responding to Damon's Orders. Running to get some footmen, Bridgett ordered them immediately.

Damon was still holding onto Lady Camilla tightly. Bruises were appearing on her wrists as she struggled, crying insanelly.

"Bastard, bastard. She must die! The Prince is mine!" Camilla screamed repeatedly. "The witch Rigan and the bastard she carries must die. Paul is mine! Paul is mine."

Rigan froze. The continuing obscenity and ramblings uttered from Camilla's hysterical mouth left her shocked and saddened. Camilla hated her, really hated her. Rigan could not stop her tears knowing that it was Camilla who had tried to kill her, because Camilla loved Paul and she, Rigan, had married him. Sobs began and tears flowed in sorrow and pity for the screaming frenzied Camilla.

Queen Louise frozen in the same shock did not even see Rigan's distress. Bridgett was completely focused on Camilla as one hand stayed on the queen's shoulder as an anchor of reason for Queen Louise. Helene and Corinna stood transfixed staring at Dr. Sheffield trying to control the frantic Camilla.

It was a few minutes later when Ceit arrived into the bedlam of the suites. Her first thought was her Rigan. It didn't matter what happened, only Rigan's distress was apparent. Ceit saw her bent over trying desperately to breath between the free flowing sobs and tears. Ceit ran to her side and all eyes then focused on Princess Rigan.

"It's all right, my baby. Ceit is here. You must look at me. Look at me Rigan. Ceit is here. I always make things better. I will make it better," Ceit promised as she calmly stroked Rigan's hair and softly kissed Rigan's forehead.

Rigan looked up through the tears streaming. "Ceit, hic. Oh Ceit, she loves Paul, she loves him so much she she...hic. Oh God! Hic."

The ten minutes it took for soldiers to come seemed an eternity, while everyone was frozen in time.

"Take her and hold her here until Herr Goetz, arrives," Damon ordered. He quickly turned his attention to Rigan, who was in deep distress. Her breathing was difficult with sobs, tears, hiccups, her own hysteria, and sudden racking pain.

Damon grabbed Rigan's wrist and checked the pulse. It was erratic, her breathing labored. "Are you in pain?"

Rigan nodded. "It is coming and going. Hic.. I fear, oh God...Hic." A wave of pain shot through her.

Damon shouted at Lady Camilla, " how much Lovage and Ergot did you blend for the coffee?"

Camilla suddenly stilled at the voice. "Enough to kill the witch and her bastard!" she said maniacally.



This is what Herr Goetz heard when he rushed into the queen's suites with two more palace guards. "Take her to the Palace confinement room. Keep her there and guard her well."

The palace guards took Camilla away. She was laughing wickedly. "You are too late Dr. Sheffield, the witch and bastard will die."

Siegfried turned to Damon and addressed him while the doctor was timing the length of the band of pain jutting across Rigan's abdomen. "Poison, Damon?"

"Just as you said Herr Goetz," Damon acknowledged.

"What?"

"Lovage and Ergot, both effective together to commence uterine contractions and severe hemorrhaging. Even in small doses catastrophic for a woman in the final term of pregnancy. The odor in these packets so pungent, it indicates overdose."

"Is my, hic.. baby.. hic.. going to die?"

"Rigan, before I knocked the cup from your hand, how much coffee did you sip?" Damon asked. Concern threaded his voice.

"I didn't hic..really, just my hic.. lips touched the hic.. coffee to drink it when you knocked hic.. it from my hands."

"Oh merciful Jesus!" Queen Louise cried out.

"Damon, we be needin to get me Rigan out of here and ready for lyin in," Ceit had wanted to move Rigan away from the pandemonium and get her to a quiet calm place as soon as possible.

"Is my hic.. baby going to hic.. die? Damn you, answer me!"

"The wee one is going to be just fine, just like you are. Ya must believe Ceit. Ya must trust in me. Damon and I will see ya through this, we will!"

"Dear Sweet Jesus.. hic.., I will gladly die.. hic.. if you save.. hic.. our baby. Paul wants .. hic... our baby .. hic..so badly."

"Hush child, ya needn't be sayin such things. The wee one and yerself are goin ta be just fine. Ceit promises ya."

"Rigan, I need you to stand one moment so I can grip you to carry you to your suites."

"She needs to walk, Damon. She must walk to bring the wee one faster. The wee one could get the poison in him and hemorrhage before he's born," Ceit ordered derisively.

"I don't think she had that much, Ceit."

"Give me those packets, Damon. I need to see them," Ceit demanded.

"Ceit, I must have them as evidence," Siegfried said softly.

"Have them all well and good, but I will be lookin at the one. Give it to me Damon!" Ceit's voice allowed no disagreement or discussion.

Taking the packet Ceit opened it and examined the contents. She then smelled it carefully. "That possessed child of Satan could



have killed half the palace with this one packet. It was put in hot coffee, which immediately deterred its potency somewhat. This decoction is usually poured into wine. Rigan didn't sip any, but the poison on her lips is enough to start her pains."

Queen Louise had begun to hyperventilate.

"Tea, Bridgett hic.. give her chamomile tea hic.. " Rigan called out to Bridgett. Even in her own distress, Rigan thought of others. But thinking of others seemed to help Rigan gain an inner strength to be calm.

Ceit looked directly at Damon and with intense anger asked, "Just where would the Lady Camilla be learnin about herbs, Dr. Sheffield? Just where could she have learned about this mixture?"

"From my journals, Ceit."

"The knowledge of healin taken by Satan's hand to kill. Ach Damon, ya are too trustin."

"It is a loving nature that tries to help and see only good in people," Siegfried tried to excuse.

"I should have known when you told me to lock all my herbs and even when I did lock them all up, I never surmised how easily obtainable Ergot and Lovage are. I should have known. You knew all along Siegfried. Why didn't you stop her?"

"I only had suspicions. I had no proof. "

"Ohhhh..." Rigan moaned as another wave of pain banded her abdomen.

"There will be time to discuss this later," Damon mumbled as he walked quickly back to Rigan. Placing his hand on her abdomen he timed the contraction by feeling the muscles harden. "When it eases, we'll walk you to your lady's chamber, Rigan. We are going to deliver your baby today."

Ceit was also by Rigan's side after Ceit had taken Siegfried's hand and slammed the packet into it. "Suspensions, and you did nothing to prevent this." The glare he received from Ceit could have sliced a giant to shreds.

When the contraction was over, Damon took Rigan's hand to lift her from the chair.

"Ya need to walk, my precious. Ya must walk to help the wee one come faster."

"Do as Ceit says Rigan. Take my arm and walk with me," Damon said as he put his right arm in front of her to hold and wrapped his left arm around her back, grabbing her other arm to steady her.

Ceit walked on the left side of Rigan extending her right arm around Rigan's back and they began the slow walk to Rigan's chambers.

Queen Louise was reciting her rosary, as she and Bridgett walked behind them.





The group hadn't gotten very far when Prince Paul spotted them and left the palace guards and Prince Aleck standing still in amazement as he ran to Rigan's side. The palace guards had been sent by Bridgett to locate Prince Paul. The guards had found the Prince returning from his morning ride with his brother. When Paul saw Rigan, alarm bells rang in his head. It was obvious she was being carried partially and was in some type of distress.

Still wearing his riding clothes, Paul was by Rigan's side instantly. "I'll take her Ceit. You go on to my bed and prepare it for her."

"We'll take her to the lady's chamber," Damon countermanded.

"Like hell you will. Edward was conceived in my bed, and he'll be born in my bed," Paul growled.

"Paul, you don't understand," Damon was cut short as Rigan stopped and moaned again.

"Get out of the way Damon so I can pick her up. What the Bloody Hell is she walking for anyway?"

"We need Rigan to walk. Don't argue Paul. There is a reason," Damon told the prince.

"I don't need the two of you.. hic.. arguing at the moment. It doesn't matter where I am going at the .. hic..moment... or how I get there....as long as I get there," Rigan breathed heavily.

Damon's hand came to her abdomen again to time the contraction.

Paul turned white as he saw his wife bend in the pain.

"My bed!" Paul shouted to Ceit as she left hurriedly. Ceit wasn't really worried about the bed just yet. She needed Arla to go to the kitchens and get water boiled, the freshly cleaned linen sheets, the cord, the knife, and the candles. Ceit went into her room to retrieve the stool and then cut across the nursery into Paul's bedchamber.

Placing the stool in the bedroom. Ceit called for Arla. "The wee one wants to be born today. Ya must go to the kitchen and see that they have plenty of hot water ready for cleanin."

Arla choked and Ceit grabbed her, "It's all right Arla. This will be the first lyin in for ya. Ya will see the wonderment of it. Then ya can help at the clinic." Ceit didn't want to tell Arla about the fear raging in her own head. The fear the poison might create problems in the child's birth. "We'll be needin some hot water right away to wash ourselves and the knife, so get some servants to bring us some right away."

Ceit had plenty of time to prepare everything. It was two more contractions later when Paul and Damon brought Rigan to the bedchamber.



Paul had no idea what had transpired earlier. He was only aware that he was sent for and Rigan was having his baby. He assumed that was the reason why he had been summoned.

Once they were in the bedchamber, Ceit began to undress Rigan. "Ya can leave us now, Paul." A simple cotton shift chemise was brought out to put on her. All of Rigan's other clothing was removed.

"Bloody Hell I will! I'm staying here and don't even try to get me to leave. It won't happen," Paul protested loudly. He was overwrought with concern over Rigan.

Paul helped remove her clothes. Ceit had explained some of the things that would be happening. He was somewhat prepared for the lying in.

"Ya will be restin while we will be massagin ya, and then when I tell ya to walk, ya will walk with me," Ceit instructed the Princess.

Rigan nodded her understanding.

Prince Paul picked her up and gently put her into his bed, just as another contraction hit.

"Ya can be leavin us now, Prince Paul!" Ceit told him once again as she went to squat on the bed next to Rigan.

"Bloody Hell, Ceit. I will damn well be staying here with Rigan! You have prepared me for this. I won't leave."

"I wish you would stop your profanity!" Ceit hissed. "I didn't prepare ya for everythin."

"I'm staying, Ceit!"

"Fine, ya stubborn ox. Then help me here and do as I tell ya to do!" Ceit raised the chemise past Rigan's abdomen to just under her breasts. "Start massaging like this." Ceit applied pressure during the contraction starting at the top of Rigan's abdomen and pushing each hand movement downward toward the birth canal.

Paul complied and copied Ceit's hand motions. Ceit knew Paul's strength would benefit Rigan in massage more than her. "That's right, keep doin it."

"Paul that feels wonderful." Rigan purred as she breathed slowly during the contraction. Then Rigan gasped as she felt Damon's fingers inside her during the contraction. It hurt!

"How many finger spreads, Damon?" Ceit asked.

"It's only three."

"Any blood?"

"No, thank God."

"The fluid?"

"Not yet."

"Don't let my baby die!" Rigan cried softly.



"Our baby isn't going to die, Rigan," Paul comforted.  
"Edward is going to be big and healthy, you'll see!"

"She loved you! She loved you so much!" Rigan cried. "And hated me as strongly. God, I am so sorry Paul."

"Rigan what are you talking about? Never mind! Nothing matters but you and Edward."

"We need you up Rigan. We must walk for awhile," Ceit ordered.



## *Chapter Thirty Five*

Six more hours went by as they walked Rigan, laid her in bed and massaged her abdomen alternately.

They had just taken a measurement. It was a six-finger spread. The pains were closer and lasting longer.

Ceit had just ordered her to get up and walk when the fluid poured out. The pungent aroma was unmistakable. "That's my girl, it won't be long now! We can keep her in bed until the crownin."

"I'm with you Ceit," Damon agreed. "I'll take a turn massaging Paul. Take a break."

Ceit gently washed the fluid and towed Rigan's legs before she put Rigan back to bed, and Damon began the massaging. Paul stood aside, breathing heavily himself. How much pain would Rigan endure so stoically? How much longer is this going to take? God help us, I can bear no more. Chaluim was right, this is hell on earth for a man to realize what pain he causes with his love and pleasure.

"Ya don't have to be brave! If ya want to moan and cry Rigan, go ahead. It's the pains getting harder. We all understand. I'm goin to prepare ya some pain decoction. Ya will need it soon."

"I think you might give some to Paul as well, Ceit," Rigan remarked. In the brief interim of no contractions, she had been watching Paul. Regardless of the current pain, Rigan had not lost her sense of humor. "He looks like he could use it judging by the paleness of his face and the dread in his eyes."

Several hours later Damon called over his shoulder to Ceit. "Give her the decoction, she's eight finger spreads."

Ceit walked to Rigan and offered the spoon containing the relief she would soon need. "This won't stop the pains, but it will help ease them. In a little bit ya will be crownin the wee one, and ya will have to help push the wee one out into the world. That will be hurtin ya when the head and shoulders come out."

"Oh Ceit, don't let my baby die," Rigan whimpered with that fear staying in her heart. Rigan would not be comforted until her child had been born.



"Our Edward is going to be perfect. Don't worry my angel. Just trust me," Paul reassured her and himself. "Trust us!"

In the growing agony Rigan cried out in pain. Rigan looked to Paul, "You don't understand. She loved you and hated me for marrying you. In her hate she wanted to kill the baby and me. The poison..." Rigan didn't finish but screamed loudly.

"Poison? What Poison?" Paul looked at Damon.

"Not now, Paul. For God's sake not now!" Damon bellowed as he went to check Rigan. "She's crowned Ceit. Nine finger spread!"

"Get her on the stool. You and Paul start massagin that belly strong. Arla, get that knife boiled." Ceit walked to the washstand where some fresh hot water was placed and washed her hands, drying them on the clean linen towel.

Paul and Damon lifted Rigan to the laying in stool and sat her down. Paul raised her chemise and massaged downward as Ceit had instructed with Damon assisting.

"Do ya feel like pushin yet?"

"God yes," Rigan screamed. Her hands curled on the edges of the laying in stool, her knuckles white with the effort to push.

"Then push, my precious," Ceit ordered. "Push again!"

A little piece of head with blond hair appeared. "That's good, precious. When ya feel like pushin, do it again."

A scream and the head came through.

Paul felt dizzy and almost fell over. Dear God, that scream!

Ceit held the baby's head in her hands. "Push again Rigan, harder. With all the might God gave ya."

Another scream and the shoulders came through. "Ya can stop massagin gentleman. Rigan is fine on her own." Ceit had complete hold of the baby and told Rigan, "One more push and I'll be helping ya."

Rigan gritted her teeth and pushed once more. She felt her baby slide out. Ceit helped gently pull as Rigan pushed. Paul was completely focused on the little baby Rigan had just ejected from her womb.

"It's a boy, Rigan. A big boy, almost born a man he is. Just like his Papa said," Ceit laughed. "Damon, let her recline against ya. I can see Papa is useless because he is watching his son right presently." Ceit turned around and grabbed the candle she had waiting nearby and lit it in the presence of Edward. Ceit brought the candle forward to Edward's face. His little eyes looked at the flickering flame.

"What is that for Ceit?" Damon asked

"Protection for the wee one," Ceit replied.

"An old Aran superstition," Paul explained

Edward let his presence be known immediately with a loud wail. It was cold out there and he wanted the world to know he was here in that cold out of his Mamman's nice secure warm tummy.



Rigan leaned back on Damon and Ceit placed the baby on Rigan's stomach.

Rigan threw back her head and laughed. "Look Paul, he's blue!"

"Blue, bloody and beautiful!" Paul smiled. "My son! Welcome Edward, I'm your Papa!"

Edward wailed louder.

Paul bent down and kissed Rigan and then kissed Edward. He whispered looking at his newly born son, "Thank you my angel."

Ceit took the boiled knife from Arla and cut the umbilical cord six fingers up and tied it with a cord. "Damon, do want to take care of the afters while I clean up the wee lad?"

"I'm so happy you are finally letting me do my job, Ceit. I will take care of the afters. You take little Edward and change his color from blue to pink for his Papa." Damon went to a freshly placed washbasin of hot water and thoroughly washed his hands before returning to Rigan.

Ceit was mumbling, but Damon overheard and chuckled. Ceit was complaining that men were useless in the laying in. This was the first time she had midwived a child with male attendants and it would be the last, especially the father himself being one of the attendants. It was unheard of, but he did do well. She gave Paul some credit.

Ceit took the baby to the lady's chamber with Arla following carrying the hot water. Ceit had put the newborn oils in the lady's chamber with the child bed linens and blankets. Ceit had chosen one of the many blue silk gowns and a soft blue blanket. Ceit really didn't have much choice in the colors anyway.

"You wait here!" Ceit ordered Prince Paul. "Go hold your wife's hand. You don't know how close you came to losin her."

Paul was going to get some answers. He was confused about the comments Rigan had made, but more so with Ceit's remark. Unfortunately it had to wait even longer as he watched Damon helplessly.

Damon was pushing heavily on Rigan's abdomen and the afters were ejected. The bleeding was heavy, as Damon had feared, due to the Lovage and Ergot. "Get me those linens over there Paul!" Damon ordered.

Paul handed him the clean white linens and Damon started packing them on Rigan. "Close your legs around these Rigan. I'm going to put you in bed and I don't want you to move. Later when you have the need, we'll bring you a chamber pot and change the linens."

Paul pushed Damon out of the way and picked Rigan up gently. He carried her to bed and treating her like the most precious delicate bisque porcelain, he laid her on his bed. With a glow of love



radiating from his eyes, he covered Rigan with the quilts and tucked her in.

"Are you sleepy my angel?" Paul asked.

"Very sleepy, but extremely exhilarated," Rigan answered.

"Get some sleep. Later we'll bring Edward back and Ceit can help you learn how to nurse him, unless you want a wet nurse brought in," Damon said thoughtfully.

"Bite your tongue, Damon. Edward is mine and I will nurse him! Isn't he beautiful Paul?"

"As beautiful as his Mamman," Paul replied as he bent again to kiss Rigan gently and lovingly. "Our son!"

"Big and healthy like you said," Rigan's voice was getting weaker. She slowly closed her eyes and fell asleep.

Paul sat on the bed next to her and brought up the quilts to cover her more, tucking and smoothing the quilt as he did. "Thank you Rigan. I love you!" Paul whispered in her hair.

Little Edward could be heard crying in the next room. Paul looked to Damon as he was washing his hands again. "Is Edward okay? He is crying a lot."

"The more Edward cries, the better chance he has. He clears his lungs of the fluid as he cries. The crying is good for the newly born."

"Can you tell me what Rigan was talking about? What about this poison? And who is this she that loves me and hates her? I have heard women curse their husbands and say strange things during laying in, but Rigan seemed to be in good control and did not seem hallucinatory at all."

"She wasn't hallucinating, Paul. You are right, she was in complete control of her faculties," Damon responded drying his hands in a towel.

"Then what exactly was she talking about?"

"Lady Camilla gave her herbs that were in toxic doses. I am worried about Rigan's bleeding. It fortunately is not hemorrhaging, but it is too heavy. I'll be staying the night with her."

"Lady Camilla! What the hell is going on here?" Paul's voice rose substantially. Rigan stirred and Damon put his finger to his lips to quiet Paul.

"It seems Lady Camilla was the assassin. It was Lady Camilla that took a knife and tried stabbing Rigan in your suites. It was Lady Camilla who found and hired Herman Frantz to shoot Rigan, and now she tried to kill her and the baby with herbal medicines in toxic doses."

Paul sat down immediately. The color drained from his face. "How do you know this?"



"I caught her just in time, before Rigan took a sip of the toxin. It was a lethal dose, but the hot coffee reduced some of the potency and Rigan only got a little on her lips. I pushed the cup away in time."

"How do you know it was Lady Camilla?" Paul was near choking.

"I grabbed her and confronted her with the poison packets I pulled from her décolletage. She is near insanity and between her rantings of hate for Rigan, love for you, she cursed Frantz for his ineptitude and swore oaths in disgust that the knife didn't kill Rigan the first time."

"Oh God!" Prince Paul bent over in his own mental pain. It would have been easy to accept a male assassin, a Herman Frantz, but a woman? Lady Camilla? That was difficult to bear, especially because she claimed to do it for the love of the Prince. Paul felt dizzy and put his head between his legs trying to get the world to stop spinning. "Thank you for stopping her, Damon. Does this mean its over? We finally have this threat to Rigan at an end?"

"Siegfried says so."

"Sweet Jesus! Where is Camilla?" A rage suddenly was emerging from Paul's face.

"Safely in custody, Paul. Let Siegfried handle it."

Ceit came in just then holding newly arrived, Edward William Patrick Karl James. "Your son, my Prince. He is all dressed and beautiful for the presenting. Your family is waiting in the parlor for Edward's entry."

Edward was exhausted by his rude cold arrival into the world and his lusty crying for the bath and oiling. Paul took possession of his quiet sleeping son. In Paul's eyes, his son dressed in the soft blue silk gown and the softer blue blanket was a vision of heaven.

Walking into the parlor with Edward in his arms, all in attendance focused on the Prince.

"Bring me my grandson!" Queen Louise ordered without hesitancy.

Paul went to his mother and bent down on one knee. "Mamman, your grandson, Edward William Patrick Karl James."

"Is Rigan all right?" Queen Louise asked her son as she took Edward into her arms.

"She is resting, but Damon says we must watch her closely. Her bleeding is quite heavy."

"We'll pray for her speedy recovery," Queen Louise offered. Then her attention quickly changed to little Edward in her arms. "Paul, he is beautiful. He looks just like you did when you were born."

King Karl bent over to look at his brand new grandson, "He does look just like you!" Little Edward opened his eyes at the voices and grabbed the extended finger of his grandfather. King Karl





laughed, "Bright boy! You know already how to wrap yourself around your grandfather's heart."

Siegfried and Aleck came to congratulate Paul as he stood up, shaking his hand and slapping him on the back.

"How about a drink, big brother?"

"I could really use one presently."

Aleck went to Paul's liquor cabinet in the parlor and poured brandies for Paul, Siegfried, Karl and himself.

Queen Louise looked at her youngest son. "You'd better fill a snifter for me also, Aleck. I intend to be part of this celebration!"

King Karl toasted his son on the birth of Paul's heir and then briskly went to the doors ordering a footman to ring the palace bells and send the word to the cathedrals to peal the bells in honor of the birth of Prince Edward William Patrick Karl James. He also personally invited Michalek, Rolf, Vladimir, and Auguste into the parlor for the celebration.

Prince Paul took the snifter and drank the brandy in one gulp. He returned to his Mamman still cradling and cooing her new grandson.

When Ceit and Arla entered the parlor, King Karl ran to Ceit, kissed her on the cheek, and spun her around like a cloth doll. "Thank you, thank you, Ceit. You have given me a healthy grandson. I knew only you could bring such a miracle into this world safely."

"We should be all thanking the Holy Mother for her blessins, not me! Rigan isn't safe yet. I will be celebratin when I know for sure me Rigan is fine and healthy."

King Karl went stiff, and everyone became silent. "Might Rigan die? The poison?" Bridgett, Siegfried, and Queen Louise had told him and Aleck what happened in the morning.

"The poison is makin her bleed excessive, but she is in no danger if we keep her calm, quiet and abed for a few days. Damon tells me it isn't that bad, but yet he wont be wantin to leave her side tonight."

"Paul, you didn't tell us."

"Rigan is sleeping, Papa. I won't allow myself to think anything else other than she is resting and will be fine. She has gone through many dangers and still lived to smile upon us. That is what I believe and I will believe no other. Rigan now has our son who needs her. She won't let go. I just know it."

Paul went down on his knees in front of his mother, staring at his son. He couldn't keep his eyes or hands off Edward. Every so often, his finger would rub Edward's soft cheek, or smooth the blue silken gown.

"Babies are such miracles, aren't they?" Queen Louise asked Paul.

"Miracles to be treasured, Mamman," Paul agreed.

## *Smitten*



In the parlor they heard the faint sounds of cathedral bells  
ringing in celebration for the birth of an heir.

## Chapter Thirty Six

"Quit monopolizing my grandson," King Karl teased Queen Louise. "Give me a chance to hold him."

Queen Louise reluctantly gave her charge over to the King. "Don't drop him, Karl," she warned. "Watch his head!"

"Silence Woman!" King Karl growled back. "I held four children of my own. I am not without experience."

King Karl held the tiny package in his arms with radiant pride. "I swear Paul, he is your image. Come Aleck, come hold your nephew."

"No thank you! I have no experience. I am sure to drop him."

"Tell me Paul, how many babies did you hold until your son?" the King demanded.

"None until my son."

"You see Aleck, you have nothing to be afraid of. I think you should feel the warmth of a new child, and feel its innocence and tenderness. It will do you good."

"Is that a command?"

"It is!"

"Oh all right. Let me hold Edward." Aleck took him and held him as instructed. Queen Louise fearful in the background reminded him to hold the head, watch the neck, and don't drop him. Aleck was looking at the little Prince when Edward opened his eyes and appeared to gaze at Aleck. A little mouth movement like a smile and then little movements in the crook of the arm. "I'll be! How marvelous you are little one. You will also have an extremely doting uncle."

Siegfried walked up to Aleck. "May I?"

"Now I don't want to give him up. But you may."

Siegfried took Edward with the ease of a professional father of six. Siegfried walked him over to Michalek, Vladimir, Rolf, and Auguste. "Any of you want to hold the new prince?"

All three of the giant and massively strong bodyguards shook their heads in fear of the tiny babe.

Siegfried only chuckled.

Prince Paul retrieved his son and sat down with Edward in the crook of his arm and a brandy in the other hand.

## *Smitten*



The conversation about the delivery and Edward went on for several hours. Then Edward made himself known again with loud wailing. He was hungry!

Ceit recognized the hunger cry and came out of the bedchamber to retrieve him. "Give over Prince Paul. I will be taking the wee lad to his Mum for feedin now."

"Is Rigan awake?"

"Not yet, but she will be. Edward here will be needin his milk."

"I'll take Edward in to his Mamman."

"By the saints, Prince Paul. I believe if you could nurse that babe, you would."

"Don't doubt that for a moment. I surely would," Paul laughed happily.

Damon was still hovering over Rigan. He had just changed her linens and had finished taking her pulse.

"Let me hold our son!" Rigan said to Paul as she looked up seeing them enter the room.

"Our son, that is a wonderful phrase. I like that as much as I like, my wife!" Paul teased handing her the crying Edward. "Ceit says he is hungry. Are you ready to feed him, Mamman?"

"I'm going to try."

"Let Ceit help ya." Ceit loosened the strings on the chemise and pulled out a breast. Pulling the teat against Edward's mouth to touch it. The little lips responded. This went on for a few moments and at the right time, Ceit placed the teat in little Edward's mouth and he was sucking. "Ya will have to do this a few times more, but he'll catch on quickly."

"I have no milk. Is there something wrong, Ceit? He might starve," Rigan asked afraid something was wrong with her.

"It will take a day or two for the milk to come in. You are giving him a serum that is full of all the nutrition he'll need. Don't ya worry! See?" Ceit squeezed the other teat and a clear fluid dripped. "The Lord's nature is a smart one. A newly born stomach can't handle too much, so a little fluid comes out until the milk comes in. Then the wee one's stomach will be ready for it by then. 'Tis the cycle of nature."

"Ceit you are so intelligent and wonderful," Rigan praised her dearest friend, confident, and nanny.

"Here, here," Damon joined in with admiration. "I learned a lot in this lying in. You are incredible Ceit. I love you. Will you marry me?"

"Devil's spawn!" Ceit laughed and threw linen at him.

That night, Rigan slept comfortably alone in the big bed. Paul held Edward most of the night until he started to nod off in the



chair he had next to the bed. Ceit retrieved Edward and took him into the nursery and laid him in the blue bassinet. Ceit then stayed in the nursery and slept on the bed near Edward. Damon took a chair in the bedchamber and stayed there the night as well napping. When he woke from naps he would change Rigan's linens, give her a coagulating decoction and check her pulse.

The next morning, Ceit came in with a crying Edward and took him to Rigan. "Tis time to feed the lad."

Paul watched in wonderment.

Rigan looked up at Paul as Edward latched on to his breakfast. "Happy?"

"If I were any happier, wife.... I am sure I would burst."

Maurice came in at that moment, bringing servants with bath water for the Prince. Ceit pulled up the quilt so the servants could not see the Princess nursing the little Prince.

It was obvious to all that Maurice was truly embarrassed.

"Things are a little different now, Maurice. Until Rigan is well enough and out of confinement, we will have to use the lady's chamber for dressing and bathing," Prince Paul calmly said to the red-faced valet.

Maurice nodded and led the rest of the servants with the bath water into the lady's chamber.

"I plan on a meeting with Siegfried today. Will you be joining me?" Paul addressed Damon.

"Indeed, wouldn't miss it. I'll bathe, change and be with you momentarily."

"And Rigan?" Paul asked Damon knowing he understood the meaning.

"Rigan is fine and on the mend. The changes of linen have revealed a lessening of the bleeding. I feel confident."

True to his word, Damon returned quickly. He and Paul both kissed Rigan.

Rigan was beaming, as she looked at little Edward fast asleep in her arms. "Hurry back, Papa!"

Paul smiled broadly. "I will, mo bhean."

Damon and Paul caught up with Siegfried in his palace offices.

"God man, you look like hell!" Damon told Siegfried when he entered Siegfried's office.

"Didn't your mother teach you politesse?" Siegfried chuckled.

"My mother? No! My nanny tried to. It doesn't agree with my delicate stomach."

"No politesse?" Siegfried's chuckle turned into a belly laugh.

## *Smitten*



"Come now, Siegfried. Understand how useless politesse is with a doctor. Excuse me sir, but your gout is only a touch unsightly. I beg your pardon Madam, but your cough is not a cold. I am afraid you have contracted consumption."

"I give over, Damon. I look like hell! Perhaps it could be because I haven't slept or even eaten yet."

"Come to think of it, Paul we haven't eaten yet either. Could we send for some breakfast now?" Damon asked rubbing his stomach.

"Certainly Damon, I know better than to stand in the way of your delicate stomach on both counts."

"Ouch!" Damon gurgled out defensively.

Ignoring Damon, Paul asked Siegfried, "Why haven't you slept?"

"I have been reviewing all of Camilla's answers to my questions. I spent most of the night talking with her in the confinement room here."

Damon turned and his expression changed rapidly. "Why in the bloody hell didn't you put the twit in prison yesterday?"

Siegfried answered Damon's question first. "I did not Dr. Sheffield because I prefer to interrogate assassins in their live forms. I will interrogate dead assassins, but I prefer live ones. I can get more information that way."

"What does that have to do with anything?" Damon snapped.

"Don't you recall the condition of Herr Frantz? I did not want a repeat performance with Lady Camilla. Surely you realize the people of Brogav would tear her to bits, and if not them the criminals in the prison itself."

"It would save the expense of a trial," Damon snarled.

"Dr. Sheffield! I am sure you really would not want that to happen to the lady."

"Of course not! But she is no lady!" Damon shouted.

"Why haven't you slept or eaten?" Prince Paul repeated.

"I spent most of the night and part of this morning with Lady Camilla. The woman is beyond hysterical and quite near the realm of insane. I am trying to learn what I can without pushing her over the edge into insanity."

"What have you learned so far?"

"Her motive for assassination has been a twisted and sick love for you my Prince."

"How is this? I never met her until I returned from my trip abroad. The little twit suddenly appeared and started to hang on me. The next day I met Rigan and was fatally smitten. I made no pretense to any one regarding my love for Rigan."

"I am assuming it has to do with her upbringing, based on my conversation with her. She was led to believe she could have anything



she wanted because of her ravishing beauty. She wanted to be queen, therefore she wanted you the Crown Prince. What she wanted, she always got, until you!"

"Why did she want to kill Rigan?"

"In her confused mind she convinced herself that Rigan stole you away from her. If Rigan were eliminated, she would have you. She really believes she was meant to be queen and that you were her personal possession."

"She really has a sick mind," Damon agreed.

"I think more like a child's mind. Camilla has always lived in a fantasy world that came true for her. When you announced your betrothal to Rigan and then when you married Rigan, I am afraid her fantasy world collapsed and she couldn't deal with it."

"So now the child's mind will die for her fantasy," remarked Prince Paul sadly.

"Unfortunately that is true. The punishment is death for conspiracy against a royal."

"Is there going to be a trial?" Damon asked.

"There will be. There is the chance the court will be moved to be more lenient for the sake of her age, sex, and mental state."

"Good God, I forgot. She is only a child. Camilla is only what? Eighteen?" Prince Paul gasped.

"Yes, only eighteen and I had the palace physician with her all last night. We finally had to give her a strong sedative to calm her. This morning she was nearly cohesive."

"I want to know for certain, Siegfried, is this over? There are no more suspicions or plots against Rigan? She is safe?" Prince Paul asked finding it still hard to believe a young woman child could have been the assassin.

"Camilla in her own way has confessed to every attempt made on the Princess. Yes, I am confident this was the only threat to Rigan's person."

Paul sat down on the chair in Siegfried's office and heaved a sigh of relief. "Thank God!"

"One more thing."

Paul looked up at Siegfried a hint of fear in his voice, "What?"

"The Lady Camilla has asked to see you. "

"Just why would I want to see her?"

Siegfried was sitting on the corner of his desk, one leg straddling the corner of it and the other leg on the floor balancing his frame. He responded casually, "Perhaps to put your own mind at ease. You would make certain for yourself that Camilla was the only threat to your wife, and you are the Crown Prince."

## *Smitten*



"And as Crown Prince, it is my duty," Prince Paul snarled. "It is my duty to hear her out. Do you know Siegfried, there have been too many times recently when I have regretted that title?"

"He really doesn't have to respond to her request, does he?" Damon asked.

"No, he does not," Siegfried replied.

"But I will."

"Thank you my Prince. Let us get some breakfast and then face Camilla."

The three men entered the security room in the palace. They saw the tiny frame of Camilla bent over a table, her head in her arms weeping.

"Lady Camilla," Siegfried said softly. "The Prince is here to see you."

Camilla looked up. Prince Paul could not help but be moved. Her eyes were swollen and red still stained with tears. Her dress was wrinkled and disheveled and her hair uncombed.

"Thank you for coming," Camilla choked out. "I am becoming aware of the things I have done. I don't know why I did them. It is as if I were two people living in one body. I am sorry for.. for everything. I know only one thing for certain. I love you."

"You don't love me, Camilla. You never have. You were in love and happy with a dream, a fantasy. True love is caring for the happiness of the other. Your love, as you call it, was completely selfish. You only considered what you wanted," Prince Paul said gently.

"I would have made you happy."

"Just how could you have done that? You didn't know who I am. What I enjoy. Unfortunately, it also takes two people to share feelings. A love cannot be one sided, that is not love. That feeling is identified as infatuation. In your case, purely self gratifying, egotistical infatuation," Prince Paul said rather harshly. He still could not believe this little chit almost took away his happiness.

"Rigan is different?" Camilla asked.

"Camilla, when I met Rigan my entire world changed. I wanted to bring the sun from the sky and lay it on her lap in worship. Rigan shares my world of interests. We talk of the celestial sky, philosophy, medicine, and obligations to the Circle. We care deeply for each other. We share our emotional, intellectual, and physical beings. And now, we even share a son."

"I don't understand that."

"No, you don't Camilla, and that is why you can't love me or anyone else. You never will until you feel all those things with someone else."





"And all those feelings? Is that what you felt when you met Rigan?"

"That is how I knew I loved Rigan. I felt all those things and more. I had been searching for that some special for more than ten years. I searched for those feelings with someone, and then I found Rigan."

"And you are happy," Camilla stated with a calmness that surprised everyone. "I will never know that happiness. I think even if I had a different fate today, I don't think I would have ever known that happiness, or love."

The three men remained silent. What could one say to a young woman who tried to murder another in the name of love? What could one say to her, knowing the punishment for her crimes was death?

Prince Paul thought to himself. There is no doubt the Camilla I had met would never know happiness and love, but this one in front of me now, might have had a chance.

"I am truly sorry for you, Camilla," Is all the Prince could say as he turned to walk away. But he had to say this one last sentence. "I am sorry for you. I am also grateful you were not allowed too, or ever will be allowed to hurt my Rigan or son."

## *Chapter Thirty Seven*

Lord Ashburtman was nervous as he waited for his audience with King Karl. He had reason to be. The king had ordered his appearance and not a word of explanation. Heinrich Ashburtman had been told by one of Herr Goetz's men only that it was of dire importance and they must leave immediately. Heinrich was taken from his house yesterday afternoon and driven non stop by carriage to arrive this mid-morning. After his arrival he was taken straight to the audience room, and while he waited he was offered a small breakfast.

A footman called Lord Ashburtman into the audience room. If Lord Ashburtman was not nervous already, the audience chamber was imposing and added to the nervousness.

It was a large chamber room. A huge mahogany highly polished desk in the center of the room captivated a visitor's immediate attention. The carpet was of oriental design in deep reds and gold. The walls were decorated with flocked red wallpaper, numerous portraits, landscapes of Borogia, and gilded mirrors were hung on the walls. A gilded throne chair was placed near the center of the mahogany table. Other simple chairs were scattered throughout the room.

Anyone brought in for audience would be kept standing. Heinrich thought his knees would cave in they were shaking so much. He couldn't imagine what had precipitated the audience from King Karl and Herr Goetz. Especially Herr Goetz! Would he be accused of conspiracy, falsely? Terror and dread raced through his mind.

The king entered and by his side was his son, Prince Paul. Siegfried Goetz followed.

"Heinrich, please be seated," King Karl instructed showing his arm to one of the small chairs in the room. King Karl seated himself on the throne. "You will need to be seated during this audience."

"Your Royal Majesty." Heinrich bowed as he took a seat. "I was brought here with no explanation."

"I thought it best if you were told personally. I did not want you to hear of this from rumors."

Heinrich was confused and struck dumb. What was this?



"There is no gentle or subtle way to say this, so I shall be direct to the point," Herr Goetz said with no emotion in his voice. "Your daughter, the Lady Camilla, is being held and will be tried for sedition and conspiracy in the assassination attempts on Princess Rigan."

Heinrich Ashburtman visibly shaken started choking. "My God! Merciful Father, what has she done?"

"On her first attempt almost a year ago, Lady Camilla successfully stabbed Princess Rigan in the back. Two months ago, she had conspired with Herman Frantz to kill the Princess with pistol shot. Fortunately, Frantz only wounded the Princess slightly and wounded her bodyguard. Frantz was paid by your daughter to carry out the plan. Two days ago, Lady Camilla tried poisoning the Princess," Siegfried related in a factual tone.

"I can't believe it."

"I am afraid you must, Lord Ashburtman. Your daughter has confessed to all of it and will stand trial within the week," King Karl responded in the decorum of a ruler.

"Why? Why would she do such a thing?" Lord Ashburtman gulped hard.

"Your daughter lived in a fantasy world in which I belonged to her. When I married Princess Rigan, the reality was too much for her. Your daughter came near to insanity," Prince Paul told the distraught father. "In her mind, destroying my wife would put me back in her possession."

"Then my daughter is unstable, and I beg for mercy on her behalf. She is still a child."

"Camilla had no mercy for Princess Rigan or Prince Edward," Siegfried replied coldly.

"Prince Edward? Who is Prince Edward?"

"Prince Edward is my son, born just two days ago. My wife went into early partition as the result of some of that poison touching her lips," Prince Paul answered trying with difficulty to remain the Prince and conducting himself accordingly. "Camilla would not only have murdered my wife, but my son and heir as well."

"Would you like to see your daughter?" Siegfried asked thus ending the hearing. The white pallor of Lord Ashburtman told him it was time to talk to this daughter. He might not have another opportunity to do so.

"Yes, I would," Heinrich replied. He could only stand up with Siegfried's help, and Siegfried escorted Heinrich to the security chamber of the Palace where Camilla was being held.

King Karl turned to Paul after the pair had left the audience room. "What shall we do? I do not want to take that girl's life. She is young and we have never carried out a death sentence for a woman since this Circle was founded."



"We must let things take their course and decide then," Prince Paul offered, shaken by such a possibility. However, she did try to kill his wife and son.

Camilla was brought before the courts just three days later. Her trial was swift and with her peers in judgment it was determined she was guilty and her sentence was death by hanging. Camilla fainted upon hearing the verdict and her father was taken from the court in near hysteria. The sentence was to be carried out one week to the Day of Judgment.

Prince Paul was in the nursery holding Prince Edward when the footman came to tell him of the verdict and sentence. He spent a lot of time with his new son and enjoyed carrying him everywhere when he could. When Ceit wouldn't stop him that is. Paul would bring him back for feeding and then sit and watch his Princess feed his son. Princess Rigan was at the nursery door out of their sight. She heard the footman tell Prince Paul of the verdict in the trial of Lady Camilla. She had been watching her husband with their son.

Princess Rigan walked to Paul and took his arm, "What is this? What trial? Why didn't you tell me? You can't do this. It is wrong to take her life."

"An act like this cannot go unpunished. A trial was inevitable. We had hoped the court would be lenient, but obviously they felt her crime so great it warranted the maximum sentence."

"Sweet Jesus, Paul. Camilla is just a child. It is wrong to take her life. Just as it was wrong for her to try to take my life. Two wrongs do not make a right. There must be something you can do."

"Rigan, she tried to kill you and my son. She must be punished," Prince Paul told his wife half-heartedly.

"I agree, but death? No Paul, that is demanding too high of a price. I beg of you don't let this happen. There must be another more fitting punishment."

"Only the king can reverse sentence and pardon."

"Then I will speak to King Karl. I will beg him not to let this happen!" Rigan turned quickly and headed toward the door.

"Rigan, Damon still has you confined to the suites. Even though you are about, he doesn't want you walking to far. My Papa is too far for you."

"Do you stop me?" Rigan said with a defiant look in her eyes.

"I dare not try to stop you when you get like this. I know better," Paul smiled to her and rubbed his finger softly down her cheek. "I end up yelling at you and then matters are worse!"

"Then come with me, right now."

"If I agree with you, will you promise to walk slowly?"



"I will."

"Promise?"

"Paul!"

"Shhh, you'll wake Edward."

"You're not taking him are you?"

"Whither Mamman goest, there goest Edward and I."

"Have I told you lately how impossible you are?"

"Not in the last twenty four hours," Paul laughed. Lord he loved his wife.

Prince Paul and Princess Rigan were admitted to the king's private study. King Karl spent most of his day there working on papers, legislation, policy, and numerous other tedious responsibilities.

"Papa, you heard the verdict?" Paul asked to clear the way for Rigan.

"I just read it."

"Your Royal Majesty, I beg you to reverse that death sentence. In the Holy Name of Jesus, I beg of you to reverse it," Rigan pleaded and went on her knees in supplication. "Camilla is only a misguided and confused child. Death is not the right way."

"What would you have me do, Rigan? To pardon her would invite any lunatic to threaten the person of all royals. Not just you and me, but our children, our family."

"I am asking for you to reverse the death sentence, not grant a pardon."

"Just what punishment would you have? Camilla simply cannot be pardoned alone. The Circle would justifiably have my crown, Rigan. I would not be a good king if I allowed personal beliefs to interfere with justice."

"You don't want her to hang either, do you?"

"What I want is not relevant, dear Rigan."

"What I would do is make her punishment fit her crime."

"Just what do you have in mind?"

"Marry her."

"What?" King Karl and Paul bellowed at the same time.

"A punishment of marriage and banishment."

"You are beyond my fathoming, Rigan," King Karl objected in his kingly manner.

"Find someone in Russia, or some other far place. She wanted a Prince. Find her a Russian Prince. Then banish her from the Circle. Let this Prince be a husband like she would be a wife."

"This just might work! I know of a Russian Prince, he is a self-gratifying, egotistical, selfish man. His wife just died in childbirth and he is looking for another wife to be mother to his first sixteen children."



"First sixteen children?" Paul and Rigan questioned in synchrony.

"Yes, the man is extremely self-gratifying, insatiable actually. He is looking for a young woman to bear more children. Well actually a young woman to satisfy his lusts. I had heard his first wife was always pregnant, every nine to ten months. It was amazing she lasted as long as she did."

Paul looked at Rigan, "Insatiable I understand. Will we have sixteen?"

Rigan narrowed her eyes, "I want your babies, but not that many. No, I think not."

"Our Archduchess had sixteen."

"Goody for her, Paul. I think not!"

"We could try!"

"No!"

"No?"

"No!"

"How many?"

"Three or four will do nicely."

"No less than six."

"What?"

"I am giving over here Rigan. That is ten less."

"What if we have three and just practice for the other three."

"I think not."

"Maybe six."

"Definitely six. We must keep Ceit busy."

"Paul!"

"Look at this beautiful bundle in my arms. Can you say no to such wonderments as he?" Paul holding the sleeping Prince Edward looked sheepishly at Rigan.

"I give over, six. But no more."

"Deal! Six and then constant practice."

"You are insatiable!" Rigan grinned.

"I said I understood him."

"Have you decided the sex of the children, perhaps three boys and three girls?"

"No, four boys and two girls."

"Just like that? Why four and two?"

"Two brothers to protect each sister. Quite logical actually."

Rigan didn't even try to get in the last word. She playfully punched Paul in the arm.

"Children!" King Karl barked. "The subject here is Lady Camilla."

"Papa do you think you could contact this Prince and arrange the marriage. It would also include banishment to Russia."



"He is in Vienna this week. I just heard of him this morning. I will send a messenger to him at once. I am sure he would be most agreeable to her. She is young and beautiful."

"Do you think Lord Ashburtman will agree to this?" Paul asked as he rocked little Edward in his arms.

"What choice does he really have? If he doesn't agree, his daughter will die."

"You really wouldn't! I can't believe you would let that happen," Rigan strangled on the words.

"I would not, but Camilla's Papa doesn't have to know that, and neither does she. Do I make myself clear, Rigan."

"Crystal."

"Good, I will send for Prince Krotsky and call Ashburtman to meet with me. We will make all the arrangements."

"Thank you my king." Rigan brushed her lips across her father-in-laws cheek.

"Be off with you. Take care of my new grandson, and my son," King Karl blustered with his face blushing in embarrassment. King Karl was always a good king. Rigan made him benevolent, and he appreciated her for that. She will be a fine queen!

Prince Krotsky came immediately to King Karl's court. The entire story of Lady Camilla was revealed to him. There would be no surprises for Prince Krotsky. No one tried to coerce him. If Prince Krotsky agreed, it would be his choice.

"Is she as lovely as you say?" Prince Krotsky asked King Karl.

"Even lovelier."

"And she is young?"

"Eighteen."

"I must keep her in Russia?"

"She must be permanently banished from this Circle. Would that be a problem?"

"It would be a delight. She would be mother to my sixteen children and would produce more for me. It will be easy to keep her confined in my home. My oldest is twenty, two years her senior. She will be kept occupied. You have my word."

"We would like this finished quickly."

"Where is your priest? I will marry her today. And if you provide a carriage, I will take her to Russia today after the ceremony," Prince Krotsky agreed immediately.

"We will also provide an escort. I'll see to it," King Karl promised.

## *Smitten*



Lady Camilla and her father, Lord Ashburtman arrived the same time as the priest. Sophie Ashburtman, Lady Camilla's mother was not present. Heinrich had sent orders after his first meeting with the king and learning of his daughter's crimes that Sophie was to remain at home.

Heinrich had spoken to King Karl earlier and agreed to the marriage. Heinrich would have agreed to almost anything to prevent his daughter from hanging. A large dowry was ready for Prince Krotsky, which had been tripled by King Karl and Prince Paul.

Prince Krotsky was pleased with the beauty and youth of his new bride. Lady Camilla was veiled after the wedding to hide her person for the trip by order of the king. Prince Krotsky and Camilla had left the territory of the Circle by the end of the day. Princess Camilla was soon in the Prince's home in Russia, where she met his children. Princess Camilla did not know it then, but she had already been impregnated and would give birth nine months later.

Princess Rigan's punishment was clearly working.



## Chapter Thirty Eight

Prince Paul and Princess Rigan emerged from the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. Prince Paul was holding his son, Prince Edward. Princess Rigan was holding Prince Paul's arm and fussing over the bundle in his arm. The christening of the new heir was met with interest by nearly everyone in Brogav and many more from outlying villages.

Rigan smiled at her husband. "Have I told you today how much I love you?"

"Not today, but I have also been remiss in telling you how much I love you."

"And Edward."

"And Edward."

"No you won't"

"Won't what?"

"Won't get the last word. Not today."

Paul smiled broadly. He adored his wife with all her vivacity, caring and goodness. He would enjoy his lifetime with her. There was no doubt of that. Today he would let her have the last word, but tomorrow? Well, that would be a different story.

In attendance were Princess' Adriane and Dominique with their husbands and children. Escorting Queen Louise were her husband, King Karl and her youngest son, Prince Aleck.

Dr. Damon Sheffield and Ceit O'Halloran were the godparents.

Damon received special dispensation by the pope to be the godfather, as he was non-Catholic. Ceit teased him about it. "I must live longer than you now, Damon Sheffield, for I will not be havin my godson be raised by the likes of you. Devil's spawn that ya are."

"Ceit, you will live longer than that. Prince Paul told me that he plans on keeping you very busy by adding to his family on a regular basis."

The cathedral bells pealed throughout the Circle of Borogia that day and the cheering of the people gave an indication of the approval and happiness for their monarchy.