

**A.O.E.M.: Carousel**  
**Aubrey Ross**

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## Chapter One

*D'Arcy Aiden*  
*Unseleighe realm*

Prince Lyell Karlis stood waist deep in warm water, his hands pressed together in front of his chest, wet hair streaming down his back. Wavering candlelight danced on the smooth marble walls of the ceremonial chamber and gilded the symbols carved in the rim of the pool. Elementals surrounded him; their heads bowed, chanting softly.

The Earth Master stepped forward, activating his symbol. Lyell turned to face him echoing his words. Warmth washed over Lyell, soothing him, augmenting his strength. An ancient evil had returned, one the Sidhe believed long vanquished. Lyell was a Sutrotha Master, the last of his kind. Mystic and warrior, he would need both skill sets to combat this enemy.

Raising his arms, the Water Master joined the evocation. The symbol in front of him glowed, causing his robe to shimmer. Water churned around Lyell and the temperature rose. He braced his legs and lifted his arms, accepting the Water Master's blessing.

Mistress Air unfurled her wings and Lyell turned to face her. She called upon the power of her element, punctuating each phrase with a staccato flap of her translucent wings. Her words stirred the warrior in Lyell, savage, fierce, and undaunted.

With a forceful command that echoed off the walls, the Fire Master ignited the pool. Lyell closed his eyes as flames lapped at his torso. Searing pain mocked his determination. His muscles jerked. He ground his teeth and clenched his fists, absorbing the heat, embracing the fire.

His people needed him. He must be strong.

Focus.

Lyell relaxed his jaw and opened his eyes. Golden light ringed the pool, engulfing the Elementals. Slow deep breaths purged the last of Lyell's fear, centered his being, and calmed his spirit. He waited, panting and receptive. Nothing happened.

The Elementals continued to chant. Golden light receded until only their symbols glowed.

"The evocation is complete." The Fire Master stepped off the pool's rim. "The vision will come. Give it time."

Accepting his assessment with a stiff nod, Lyell climbed from the pool. The Elementals departed without another word. Lyell heaved a frustrated sigh. An evocation had never failed to bring forth a vision before and he needed direction desperately. He pulled on a simple robe, tightened the belt around his waist, and left the ceremonial chamber.

"So what's the plan?" Dezmon, Lyell's master-at-arms and closest friend, loitered in the corridor.

"I don't know yet," Lyell grumbled.

"The evocation didn't work?" Concern lit Dezmon's dark blue eyes. He pushed away from the wall and fell in step beside Lyell. "That's never happened before."

Lyell shot him an annoyed glance. "I'm well aware of the fact."

They paused on the covered bridge linking the temple with the palace. Purple twilight colored the scene with a soothing haze. D'Arcy Aiden sprawled as far as the eye could see in a majestic jumble of white buildings and lush trees. Lyell glanced at the people below, strolling along in tranquil oblivion, unaware of the danger. His heartbeat accelerated and he squared his shoulders. The future of these people depended on him.

The Raonull were the vilest creatures to ever threaten the Unseleighe realm. Lyell's father and the other Sutrotha Masters had pledged their lives to defeating the evil sorcerers. Before they departed for the final offensive, Lyell had been chosen to guard the secrets of the Sutrotha order. Neither Sutrotha nor Raonull survived the mystic battle. Only Lyell remained; the guardian of a future secured through sacrifice.

The Elementals tutored him, helped him hone his skills, and accept the scope of his responsibilities.

The current generation barely remembered the name Raonull, but Lyell understood.

"Do we just wait around until you have a vision?" Dezmon's dark brows drew together revealing his frustration. "Is there nothing we can do?"

"Either the evocation will reveal a course of action or I'll depart at dawn for the realm of mortals." Lyell turned and continued toward his private quarters, Dezmon at his side. "The Sutrotha order is secret for a reason. I've probably told you more than I should have, but the Elementals only interact with each other."

"And you."

Lyell stopped outside his bedchamber and faced his friend. "I'm taking Sekarrah and Iomar with me." Dezmon crossed his arms over his chest and narrowed his eyes, but he didn't argue. "You understand the nature of the threat. I need you here."

"Why Sekarrah?"

Lyell averted his face, fighting back a smile. He'd misunderstood the cause of Dezmon's irritation. "She's fast on her feet and shrewd. I'll bring her back safely. I promise."

"She'll be thrilled." Dezmon sounded anything but. His affection for Sekarrah had developed steadily over the past few years. Only his position as her mentor prevented him from pursuing their attraction. "This is the opportunity she's been waiting for. She won't disappoint you."

Before Lyell could respond, Dezmon inclined his head and continued down the corridor. With a distracted chuckle, Lyell opened the door and entered his private suite. He needed to sleep, muster his energy, and focus. But how could he focus without a specific purpose?

Shedding his robe, Lyell folded the garment and knelt beside his bed. Pressure closed in on him from all sides. The Elementals had advised him not to inform his brother, King Gainnon, of the Raonull's reappearance. Only another sorcerer could

combat the Raonull and the king had his own battles to fight. Lyell wasn't sure he agreed with their decision, which compounded his anxiety. If he could purge his mind of everything but the Raonull threat, perhaps the vision would come. He closed his eyes, folded his hands in front of his chest, and cleared his mind.

Emptiness crept in, banishing each thought, each concern. He welcomed the calm, embraced the darkness. His breathing slowed. Sensation faded.

*You seem surprised to see me.* A man's voice disturbed the quiet.

*I... They told me you died in the fire.* The response came from a woman.

A pinprick of light appeared within the void, dilating, revealing the scene. The woman knelt before the man, her back to Lyell. Long, dark hair flowed to her waist. A reddish corona radiated from her, illuminating the man. Was it a trick of the vision or was she transmitting her image from another dimension?

*Sorry to disappoint them, but the Raonull are known for their resilience.*

A violent shudder passed through Lyell. The Raonull were known for their ruthlessness and brutality. Their induction ceremony took them into the afterlife and back. Lyell shifted the image, focusing on the sorcerer. Tall and thin, his body emerged from the crimson glare, but his face remained concealed.

*Does the Halfling believe I'm dead?*

Lyell stiffened at the question. The Halfling was Marissa, Lyell's adopted sister. The sorcerer had used her as bait to draw out his assassin. The assassin had escaped the fire as well, but he died in the arms of one of the Elementals after warning them of the Raonull threat. Lyell hadn't spoken with her since the previous winter, but the Elementals assured him she was out of danger.

*Everyone believes you're dead.*

*Good. Let's leave it that way until I'm ready for my next move.*

The woman nodded. *Would you like me to track the movements of the Halfling?*

*No. She served her purpose, at least for now.*

*Then how can I assist you?*

The sorcerer sneered, his face coming into focus. Bright red burns and blisters distorted his features. One side of his head was bald, his dark hair consumed by the fire. His black eyes flashed with maniacal command.

*Come to me. I need the comfort of your body. You have denied me sexual tribute. I demand it now.*

*I'm sorry, sir. It's impossible. I have worked too hard to earn the trust of those around me. It would compromise my position. I'll send a concubine --*

*I don't want a whore! I want you.*

*It's impossible.* She stood and brushed off her knees.

The image wavered. Lyell grasped the edge of his bed, fighting to maintain the vision. He needed more information. The sorcerer obviously had a spy, but what good was that tidbit if Lyell couldn't find her? He hadn't seen her face.

Light flashed within his mind. Pain erupted a second later. Images rolled in a sickening rush. He frantically struggled to slow the vision, to absorb the images. A lovely blonde woman sat with Marissa in a restaurant or bar. Who was the blonde? How was she connected to the sorcerer?

They spoke, as friends often do, relaxed and at ease with each other. A carousel came into view behind them. Winged horses, unicorns, and other unusual creatures made the apparatus unique.

The scene shifted. He had the blonde woman pinned beneath him, naked and writhing, her wrists bound in fur-lined cuffs. A mixture of fear and desire swirled through her emerald eyes. Why would he restrain her? It had been years since he indulged his desire to dominate. Few Sidhe females would allow it.

Desire twisted through Lyell. His belly clenched and his cock hardened. Satiny skin slid against his as she arched and twisted beneath him. He caressed her breasts, stroked her thighs, inciting her senses, and mastering her desire.

Cries of passion filled his ears as the image shifted again. He gulped in air, dizzy from the sensations assailing him. A dark-haired woman joined the scene. Blood pounded through Lyell's veins. Could she be the sorcerer's spy?

He had the two women arranged so he could pleasure them both. The brunette was bent over a padded rail; her legs spread wide. He eased two fingers into her slick pussy, waiting for her throaty moan before working his thumb into her tight ass. She bucked against him, taking his fingers deeper. He pumped his hand, stimulating her body with ruthless determination.

Continuing to finger-fuck the brunette, Lyell turned to the blonde. She hung suspended slightly to the right of the other woman, her knees bent, thighs parted, helpless. He grinned. His dark nature surged and expanded as he covered her sex with his mouth.

*Mine! They are mine.*

The vision ended abruptly and Lyell cried out, tormented by the interruption. Possessive passion twisted through him, savage and dangerous. He could feel the brunette's body squeezing his fingers, begging for his cock. The taste of the blonde's cream lingered in his mouth, making him wild for more.

Unashamed of his need, he closed his hand around his rampant erection and stroked his fingers up and down his cock.

Marissa would lead him to the blonde, and the blonde would lead him to the brunette. But was the brunette the spy?

*Mine! They are mine.* His own voice echoed through his mind and he sped the movement of his hand. He needed her. He needed *them*. He pictured the blonde's lithe body arching, her features tense with pleasure. He hadn't been able to see the brunette's face, but her long legs and firm ass quivered as he fucked her with his fingers. Slick and hot, her body welcomed him, encouraged his mastery.

His balls drew up tight, the pressure painful. He stroked faster, trembling with his need for release. His cock throbbed within the firm circle of his fingers. These two women would know his touch, learn his taste, feel his cock. Excitement unfurled, pushing him over the edge. He threw back his head and clenched his teeth, coming in shuddering waves.



Panting harshly, he collapsed against his bed. Never before had one of his visions been so overwhelming. Why had he chosen sexual interrogation? Though fully trained in its use, Lyell had never been comfortable with the practice. Aftershocks of pleasure mocked his hesitation.

He must find the carousel.

## Chapter Two

### Falls Church, Virginia

"Aurora." Marissa's voice sounded very far away. "Aurora, are you all right?"

Aurora Burton could feel his hands, his mouth, his tongue pushing into her core. She trembled, shocked and frightened by the intense desire still throbbing between her thighs. She crossed her legs and blinked until her eyes focused.

Marissa reached across the table and squeezed her hand. "Should I call an ambulance? I think you just had some sort of seizure." If worry hadn't sharpened Marissa's tone, Aurora would have laughed.

"I'm fine. Just give me a minute." She rushed across the dance floor and into the office she shared with Evette. Her legs trembled every step of the way. His dark eyes mocked her, lured her, caressed her. Where had she seen that face before? He seemed familiar, yet she was certain she'd never met him.

Shutting herself inside the office, she leaned against the locked door. She pressed her hand over her heart, determined to calm her racing pulse. Her traitorous fingers curved down and stroked her nipple. Sensation curled deep into her chest. The memory of his commanding expression wouldn't leave her mind. He'd only used his mouth, but she'd wanted his big body covering hers, his cock filling her, stretching her...

"Aurora, let me in." Marissa tapped on the office door. "What's wrong with you?"

"I'm fine, really." She forced her voice to sound calm, despite the sensations overwhelming her body. "Have Tom get you another soda. I'll be out in a minute."

Waiting for the subtle tapping of Marissa's retreating footsteps, Aurora moved to the leather sofa and hiked up her skirt. Her desperate need banished modesty. She had to have relief. Slipping her hand inside her panties, she delved between her thighs and

groaned. Her folds were sopping wet, swollen and sensitive. How had he done this?  
*Who was he?*

With her lips pressed tightly together, Aurora rubbed her clit. She pictured him there, licking, sucking, fucking her with his tongue. Pleasure released with painful intensity, dragging a strangled cry from her throat. She panted, pressing her fingers over her mound as heated sensations rippled through her body.

Shaken and confused, she tugged off her damp panties and crumpled them into a ball. She opened the closet and tucked her panties into the pocket of her coat. Warm currents of air wafted against her flesh, sending echoes of pleasure zinging through her abdomen.

What the hell was going on?

Marissa sat at the table; her drink untouched. She stood as Aurora left the office. Marissa had recently discovered she was compatible with Aurora's brothers Sam and Thane. Aurora hadn't known Marissa long, but she trusted her. Marissa understood the unique challenges every Dichotomy faced.

"What just happened?" Marissa asked as Aurora reached the table.

"I don't know." Glancing around the empty bar, she assured herself Tom was out of hearing range before she explained. "A man... barged into my mind. If I'd been asleep, I would have suspected a Discernment."

"Delano is still in sleep state." Marissa's brows drew together over her bright blue eyes. "Can a Discernment be done without a Guide?"

Delano was Aurora's oldest brother and one of the few Dichotomies who still moved in the mystic gifts. He brought potential mates together on a metaphysical level to test their compatibility. A potential mate must accept both halves of a Dichotomy for the Dichotomy to reproduce.

"A Guide is necessary for a Discernment," Aurora said, "but I don't think this man was a Dichotomy."

"Did you see the intruder?" Marissa drew Aurora's attention away from her speculation. "Were the images... unpleasant? There are penalties for telepathic rape."

Aurora shook her head. "It wasn't like that. It was definitely erotic, but I wasn't being forced." She paused, heat curled through her belly on the heels of embarrassment. She'd been bound, helpless while the man feasted on her pussy and she'd loved every minute of it. "I think he might have been a Dark Elf. He looked sort of like Yamir."

"Dark Elves have a variety of mystic abilities, but I don't know of any who could barge into someone's mind. Unseleighe powers don't work that way." She tapped her thumb against the tabletop, her gaze searching Aurora's face. "Describe him for me, in as much detail as you can."

"He had long, dark hair. His eyes were more black than brown. He had sharp, angular features."

Marissa smiled. "You've described three-fourths of the inhabitants of D'Arcy Aiden."

"I would know him if I saw him, but..." She rubbed her temples and released a sigh.

"Yamir could scan your mind. I can't guarantee he'd recognize your uninvited guest, but he could try."

"Isn't he out on Chimera Island?"

"Yes. Winter is one of our busiest seasons. Everyone wants to escape the cold and no one wants to be alone during the holidays." Marissa lifted her glass and took a sip of her soda, her expression gradually relaxing. "Are you going to be okay?"

"I'm fine. It just took me by surprise." If this wasn't a Dark Elf ability, perhaps Delano would know what it was. Evette had been in the vision as well. The man must know what they were. Clearing her throat, she motioned toward the stack of papers they had just begun to review when her mystery man interrupted. "What would be involved in making The Carousel an outpost for the agency?"

"It's simple really. The agency is always looking for innovative new programs. When I asked to move my headquarters to Virginia, the council suggested I approach you and Evette about opening an outpost. You already welcome otherworldly beings without restriction or prejudice."

"So long as they adhere to the house rules," Aurora reminded her.

Marissa smiled. "You would just expand on that concept. If a patron is interested in finding a mate, you would refer them to me."

"An in-house Matchmaker for The Carousel." Aurora returned her smile. "I like it."

"Good."

Her smile faded. "All I have to do now is convince Evette."

\* \* \*

"Absolutely not!" Evette crossed her arms over her chest and scowled at Aurora. "The Carousel has an exclusive clientele. I will not stand by and watch you and Marissa turn it into some cheesy dating service."

"Was Chimera Island cheesy?" Aurora shot back. "Oh, that's right, you wouldn't know. You spent the entire week sulking in the bungalow!"

Thane tapped on the open door drawing the attention of both women. "What are you two shouting about?"

"We aren't shouting." Evette's angry gaze never left her day-dwelling half. Thank gods she only had to put up with Aurora for an hour during each transition. It was harebrained schemes like this that made Evette want to strangle her. "We were having a disagreement."

"It was one *loud* disagreement." Thane leaned his shoulder against the door, relaxed and indolent.

Evette turned away from Aurora and marched up to Thane. "Your mate has convinced Aurora that The Carousel would make a good outpost for that ridiculous agency."

"I doubt Delano and Ray find the A.O.E.M. ridiculous." He cocked his head and smiled into her eyes. "In fact if it weren't for the agency, I wouldn't have met --"

"Unbelievable! You're on *their* side now?"

"Do you think Dichotomies are the only otherworldly beings who struggle with this? The Agency of Extraordinary Mates provides an opportunity many would --"

Pushing past him, Evette hurried down the hall. Emerging from sleep state was always disconcerting, but unusual images and sensations had accompanied this transition. Restless and anxious, she walked out onto the second story balcony and closed her eyes. The fresh tang of impending rain teased her nostrils. She grasped the molded railing and took a slow, deep breath.

Faint, jumbled images swirled through her mind. Strong hands bent her over and deftly buckled her wrists into cuffs. She couldn't see him, could only feel his warm fingers teasing her, pushing into her, moving hard and fast.

Someone touched her shoulder. Evette gasped and spun around. Aurora stared at her silently, guilt and desire smoldering in her gaze.

"Where did you spend this afternoon?" Evette demanded. "Who was he?"

"It wasn't real. I was talking with Marissa when I... I can't explain it, but it wasn't real."

"You had a vision?" Aurora nodded. "Are you sure it wasn't a Discernment? Delano isn't the only Guide."

"What do you remember?"

Evette stiffened. Only when the potential mate was compatible did the passive parties remember the interaction. Even emerging from sleep state she retained vivid, stimulating memories. This couldn't be good.

"I remember being bound and mastered," Evette whispered. Her pulse leapt again as she spoke the words. "You've never enjoyed that sort of play."

"But *you* have." Aurora started to say more, but transition interrupted her. She trembled, her arms wrapped around her middle, and light burst from her body. For a moment she hovered between shape and shadow, then her form disintegrated and Evette absorbed her energy.

"Did the A.O.E.M.'s proposal upset you this badly or is something else going on?"

Evette turned to face Thane. Nocturnal Dichotomies naturally gravitated toward other nocturnal beings, but she and Thane shared a bond deeper than sibling affection.

They were rebels. Their views and ideals seldom corresponded with their conservative, day-dwelling halves, so they stuck together, defended each other. Or they had until today.

"I think the agency's proposal is ridiculous, but Aurora had some sort of vision." Pushing her hair over her shoulders, she walked back into the house. "Where is Marissa? Aurora said they were together when it happened."

"Downstairs. She was waiting for Delano to emerge from sleep state. I bet she wants to ask him about this very thing."

Evette hurried down the sweeping front staircase and crossed the elegant foyer. Their grandparents had built the mansion in 1850 and Burtons had inhabited the stately home ever since. Though not immortal, a Dichotomy's immunity to sickness and disease prolonged their lifespan far beyond that of humans.

"Aurora said he was a Dark Elf."

Evette paused in the doorway to Delano's office, stunned by Marissa's casual statement. A Dark Elf? "When did you plan to share this with me?"

Marissa pivoted in her chair; Delano simply shifted his gaze.

"You remember Aurora's vision?" The sudden interest in Delano's tone didn't bode well for Evette.

"Like all information exchanged during transition it was more impression than anything." Evette looked at Marissa. "Why are you discussing this with Delano instead of me?"

"Aurora asked me to wait until she'd spoken with you before I mentioned what happened."

Thane moved behind Marissa and put his hands on her shoulders. The gesture made Evette smile. He had it bad, there was no doubt about it.

"Aurora started to explain and then she transitioned," Evette told them. "What exactly happened this afternoon?"

Marissa took a deep breath and scooted to the edge of her chair. "We were going over the contracts --"

“What contracts?” Evette narrowed her gaze.

“I know Aurora told you about the offer. I heard you yelling all the way down here.” Thane chuckled and Marissa continued, “We had barely started when Aurora slumped in her chair. She closed her eyes and her body trembled. I was about to call 911 when she just came out of it. I thought it might have been a seizure, then she told me about the images.”

“I don’t think this was a Discernment.” Delano pushed back his chair and stood. “Are you sure Dark Elves can’t instigate shared visions?”

“The Sutrotha could do all sorts of things, but all the Sutrotha are dead.”

Delano exchanged a glance with Thane and chills danced down Evette’s spine.



## Chapter Three

Lyell's gaze swept the bustling nightclub. His pulse leapt each time he glanced at the carousel. A fanciful backdrop for the circular bar, the sculpted creatures were exactly as he'd seen them in his vision. The bar separated the two main rooms. One area accommodated those wishing to dance, while pool tables and high backed booths had been situated in the other.

He sat with his two companions in one of the booths. At his request, Sekarrah had dressed provocatively. The doorman had taken one look at her curvaceous figure showcased in spandex and black lace and motioned their party inside. She carefully schooled her features into an expression of bored indifference, but her eyes remained sharp and assessing.

"Do you see her, sir?" Sekarrah's voice barely reached his ears over the pulsing music.

Lyell shook his head. "Not yet and drop the 'sir.' We can't afford to draw too much attention."

Iomar nodded toward her generous cleavage. "Then she better change into something less revealing. I never realized how much she was hiding beneath her uniform."

Lyell smacked his younger brother on the back of the head before Sekarrah could deliver the threat promised in her gaze.

"Dare I leave you two alone?" He made the question a reprimand. "I need to scan the tables by the bar."

"I'll make sure he behaves." Sekarrah grinned at Iomar.

By the time they'd arrived in the realm of mortals, Marissa had left The Carousel. The muscle-bound doorman informed them the club opened in twenty minutes, so

Lyell decided to wait. His real interest was in the blonde woman, but he sent two of his guards to observe Marissa. The sorcerer told his spy he was no longer interested in Marissa. Still, that could change in the blink of an eye.

He scooted out of the booth and crossed the gaming room. Heads turned and conversations paused. Few people here were human. Hadn't they seen an Unseleighe Sidhe before?

The table at which Marissa and the blonde had been sitting was now occupied by two couples. As Lyell approached, one of the men stood and stepped into his path.

"Can I help you?" Belligerence emanated from the man, though his head barely reached Lyell's chin.

Lyell took a deep breath. *Vampire*. He sensed Sekarrah just behind him and motioned her back with a subtle wave of his hand. A barroom brawl was the last thing they needed.

"I didn't realize you worked here." Lyell smiled. "Could you please see that our drinks are refilled?"

"You arrogant --"

The vampire's words were cut off as one of his companions grabbed him from behind. "Lance suffers from delusions of grandeur whenever he's had too much to drink." The second vampire met Lyell's gaze over the smaller man's head. Colorful tattoos disfigured both his arms and small loops pierced his flesh. Why would anyone intentionally do that to their body? The larger vampire shoved his companion back into his chair. "Do I know you? Your face seems familiar."

"It's highly unlikely."

"My name is Phillip Noir." The vampire crossed his arms over his chest. His dark eyes narrowed with speculation. "It's been many years since I visited the Unseleighe realm. My appearance was different then."

Lyell reached for the vampire's mind and collided with a psychic barrier. Phillip grinned and shook his head. The Unseleighe Sidhe were fiercely territorial. A vampire would never be tolerated among them, yet Phillip's words rang true.

*He's a member of Pyrite. Sekarrah's thought sounded in Lyell's mind. The rock band everyone's been talking about. They're getting ready to launch an interdimensional tour.*

Phillip stepped around him and took Sekarrah's hand between his. "That's right. Something tells me you venture to other realms more often than your boss."

"What makes you think he's my boss?" She smiled as he brushed the top of her hand with his lips. "Perhaps it's the other way around."

One of his dark brows arched as he looked from Sekarrah to Lyell. "Not a chance. Your boss wears his authority like -- royalty?" Phillip's gaze narrowed again and then he smiled. "I think I knew your father."

Lyell tried again to slip beyond Phillip's mental barrier and determine if he were a threat. What had a vampire been doing in D'Arcy Aiden? Lyell's investigation would be hampered if his identity were revealed. It was imperative the Raonull Master not realize others knew he was alive.

"Phillip. Can we get out of here?" The redhead beside him simpered. "I'm bored."

Phillip ignored her. Releasing Sekarrah's hand, he turned back to Lyell. "What brings you to The Carousel?"

"Boredom." Lyell nodded toward the redhead. "But it sounds like we came to the wrong place."

"Not necessarily." He looked Sekarrah up and down. "Your companion has far more potential than mine."

"You better hope she'll bang you both, you asshole!" The redhead shoved past Phillip and headed for the door.

"Are you finished with Julie?" Lance asked, his words slightly slurred.

"Have at her."

Lance scurried after the redhead, his giggling companion in tow. Phillip's gaze never wavered from Sekarrah's face.

Lyell stepped between them. "She's on duty."

The vampire chuckled. "Is she your bodyguard?"

"Something like that."

"Unfortunately, I've got other plans for the evening. How long will you be in town?"

"Not long enough for you to sink your fangs into her throat."

He laughed and flashed Sekarrah a roguish smile. "That wasn't where I planned to sink them."

Lyell shook his head as Phillip disappeared into the crowd. "Vampires are nothing but trouble."

"How did he know who you are?" Sekarrah stared at the spot where Phillip had been moments before.

"Lucky guess." Lyell dismissed the issue with a casual shrug. They had more pressing matters than a vampire's presence tainting the Unseleighe realm.

Lyell sat and splayed his fingers across the tabletop. All he sensed was lust and hunger. He recalled the images from his vision as clearly as he could. His mind wanted to skip the scene in the bar and rush right on to the part where his face was pressed between her thighs. A distant smile curved his lips and heat expanded within him.

"Maybe she was sitting over here."

He traded places with Sekarrah and tried again. Warm, urgent pulses gripped his abdomen. *Oh, yes.* He could sense her confusion and her frantic need for release.

"Stay close to Iomar. This is his first trip beyond D'Arcy Aiden."

"Yes, sir."

"If I'm not back in half an hour, check in to the hotel down the street."

"But, sir, if you haven't returned --"

"If I need you, I'll call out. I'm not sure how long it will take to follow her trail."

Sekarrah straightened in her chair and met his gaze directly. "I'm here for your protection not to babysit Iomar. You already sent half our contingent after Marissa. I'm not --"

"Going to argue with your superior? Glad to hear it." He chuckled. "The vision gave me a pretty good idea what to expect." He'd described the blonde woman to his

guards without revealing the nature of their interaction. "I don't need your help with this. Protect Iomar."

"Protocol requires that you check in at least once per hour."

"Fine. I'll check in." Sekarrah accepted his capitulation with a solemn nod and Lyell pushed away from the table. He contained his smile until he turned around. A little more field experience would teach Sekarrah flexibility. As the vampire said, she had great potential. His smile turned into a grin. Dezmon would skin the vampire alive if he found out about that comment. Dezmon had staked his claim, even if Sekarrah didn't know it yet.

Filtering out everything except the blonde's reaction to the shared vision, Lyell followed her trail across the dance floor. He'd never sensed such strong emotions. Her desire vibrated through him, stirred his body, and flooded his senses with urgency and want.

He looked around, searching each face he passed, expanding the scope of his scan. Why could he still feel her, if she wasn't here?

Evette watched the Dark Elf weave his way across the dance floor, her heart pounding in her chest. Her pulse had kicked into high gear when his party arrived an hour before. What were Dark Elves doing at The Carousel? Secretive and inhospitable, Dark Elves only left their home realm when absolutely necessary.

Bound loosely at the nape of his neck, raven-black hair covered his ears before disappearing beneath his burgundy dress shirt. Immaculately tailored slacks showcased lean hips and long legs. At a glance he appeared Asian or perhaps Native American, but Evette recognized the slash of his eyebrows and the sculpted contours of his features as something far more exotic.

Slipping off the barstool she skirted the dance floor intercepting him just before he reached her office. "Good evening." She couldn't manage a smile as his dark gaze settled on her face. Her breathing hitched and her pulse accelerated another notch. This

was better than aerobics. Gods, he was spectacular. Beautiful, yet savage. She slowly licked her lips. "If you're looking for the restrooms, they are --"

"Do I look like I need rest?"

His tone swirled around her like smoke, an unusual inflection in his words. How had she heard his husky whisper over the music? She motioned to the door behind her. "This is a private office."

He narrowed his gaze and paused, his head tilting just a bit. "Good. I suddenly feel the need for privacy."

"That wasn't an invitation." The corner of his mouth quirked and tingles sped down her spine. What was wrong with her? Her libido had been working overtime ever since she transitioned with memories of Aurora's erotic vision teasing her senses. "What brings you to The Carousel? I don't think I've seen you before."

"Do you know everyone who has ever visited this establishment?"

"It's my business to know." She proffered her hand. "Evette Burton, proprietress."

"I'd be happy to answer your questions, but the music is rather overwhelming."

His voice suddenly blended with the noise, making it hard to distinguish his words. She smiled and shook her head. The longer she stared at him, the easier it was to picture him naked. Her breasts ached and the pressure between her thighs made her want to squirm. She really did need a distraction; she just wasn't sure conversation would keep her from using him to scratch her itch.

She entered the code into the keypad above the latch and opened the door. He motioned for her to precede him. As he strolled about the office with his hands clasped behind his back Evette locked the door and admired his tight ass. This was not a good idea. Her skin tingled and her bra abraded her sensitive nipples. Was there a polite way to ask a complete stranger to get you off? There was no way she was going to fuck him, but damn she needed an orgasm so badly...

"I'm looking for someone." He turned as he made the statement, his gaze colliding with hers.

Fascinated by his exotic accent and her body's escalating need, she lost track of the conversation. "Pardon me?"

"You asked what brought me to your club."

*That's right. Get your thoughts out of his pants!* "Who are you looking for and what's their connection with The Carousel?"

He paused in front of the leather sofa. His eyes suddenly stared through her. "Do you share this office with someone else?"

The flutter in her belly tightened painfully. He was psychic! Marissa had said no Dark Elf could have initiated the shared vision, but this one clearly had mystical abilities. Her heart skipped a beat. Was this the sorcerer who'd abducted Marissa? No, the sorcerer was dead.

*Think! Calm down and think this through.*

"Why do you ask?" She crossed her arms over her chest, forcing calm into her voice.

"You said this was a private office, yet I sense another's presence."

"Sense? I didn't realize Dark Elves were capable of psychic sensitivity."

He stalked toward her, his expression demanding. "What do you know of Dark Elves?"

"Not much." What little Marissa had told her certainly hadn't prepared her for him.

His fingers circled her upper arms and he backed her against the front of her desk. "Are you creating this frenzy? What sort of being are you?"

She swallowed hard. His pelvis pressed against her, the distinct ridge of his cock searing her belly. Had he sent the vision or was he searching for the person who had? She couldn't think with him rubbing against her. Desire thundered through her veins. She panted, each ragged breath filling her head with his scent. She needed... She needed *him*!

Scooting back onto her desk, she wrapped her legs around his hips and pulled his head down to hers. She parted her lips for the bold thrust of his tongue, eager for his

aggression, anticipating his taste. He cupped her butt in both hands and aligned their bodies as his tongue moved in her mouth. Evette cried out, clenching her inner muscles, wanting him there. She sucked on his tongue as he ground her body against his, rubbing her mound against his shaft.

Through the burning urgency she sensed his presence slipping into her mind. She tore her mouth from his. "Don't! I don't... want you in my mind."

"Would you really rather fuck me?" His tone snapped with displeasure and impatience. "I can use your release to disperse my need if you allow me to touch your mind."

She trembled. She didn't even know his name. He could be the sorcerer's apprentice. He could wipe out her memory or -- His chuckle interrupted her muddled thoughts.

"I'm not going to hurt you, Evette." His lyrical accent caressed her name, called to the dark, elemental part of her nature. "It's dishonorable for a Sidhe to casually spill his seed. Let me use your pleasure to defuse this frenzy, unless you're doing this intentionally."

"I'm not." She moved her hands to his broad shoulders, trembling as a fresh wave of desire assailed her senses.

"Close your eyes." She did. "Now accept me into your mind."

She pressed her lips together and tried to relax as he joined his mind with hers. Her nipples peaked and her clit throbbed, welcoming his penetration.

"Don't be frightened." He pulled her against his chest. She wrapped her arms around his neck. "I'm going to create an illusion that will allow us to defeat this compulsion without dishonor."

Nodding her agreement, Evette kept her eyes squeezed shut.

The image formed with such intensity that she cried out. One moment she was wrapped around him fully clothed, the next she was naked, suspended by some unseen force, spread-eagled, bound and helpless.



## Chapter Four

"It was you! You sent the vision." The woman bucked and twisted, attempting to break his telepathic hold.

Lyell's cock jerked in anticipation. It made sense now. Evette left him no alternative but to interrogate her sexually. She had attempted to seize control with her compulsion. His aching body reminded him how close she'd come to success. If she wanted to play sexual games, he was happy to oblige her.

"What sort of being are you?" He circled, assessing her body from every angle, deciding how best to begin. Her hair gleamed with rich red highlights. The spy's hair had seemed darker, but he couldn't be sure. The strange glow could have distorted her true coloring. Evette's upswept style made it impossible to determine the exact length, but it was certainly long.

"Is this an illusion or did you transport us -- somewhere?" She followed his movement with her hostile gaze, her face flushed, breasts heaving. "Why are you doing this?"

"Why indeed." Taking one of her nipples between his thumb and forefinger, he squeezed with increasing pressure. "I will stimulate your body to the point of orgasm, then I'll ask you a question. If I like your answer, I'll let you come. If you lie to me, I'll punish you."

"I don't know what you're hoping to learn, but you've got me confused with someone else. I run a nightclub for gods' sake. What do --"

He pinched her nipple, ending her protest. "You will only speak to answer my questions. Is that understood?" Fear flickered within her gaze and Lyell eased his hold on her nipple. She'd started this. If she wasn't the sorcerer's spy, she knew who was. Why else would the vision have revealed her?

*You must not be swayed by her beautiful face and innocent eyes. The safety of your people depends on you.*

Bending to her breast, he suckled her nipple, soothing the tight bud with his tongue, while he stroked her other breast with his hand. Soft and warm, the texture of her flesh sent desire spiking down his spine. Damn it! He was supposed to be arousing her. Transmitting their beings into the Ether realm should have purged her compulsion from his system.

She trembled beneath him and twisted her torso, avoiding his teasing touch. He glanced into her eyes, gauging the level of her arousal. His cock throbbed and his balls ached. How was he going to resist this temptation? He longed to hear her cries of passion as he thrust between her thighs. Her pupils dilated, her lips parted, and those full, round breasts filled his hands so delightfully.

"The blonde woman in my vision, who is she?"

"I don't know what you're talking about."

Good. She was going to be stubborn. He moved between her thighs. "You mentioned a vision." He dragged his fingertips along her inner thighs, stroking from knee to groin in a sustained caress. "What did you see?"

"I saw a punisher demon cutting your balls off while my brothers watched."

He squeezed her firm ass with both hands as he fought back a smile. It wouldn't do for her to know how much her courage pleased him, how intriguing he found her spirit. Teasing her silken cheeks with his fingers, he brushed his thumbs over her damp folds.

"You were bent over a rail in my vision and my fingers --"

"My brothers will kill you for this. They have some very dangerous friends."

Parting her folds with one hand, he flicked her clit with the other. It would be so easy to bury himself to the balls and give them both what they wanted. She trembled, her thighs clenching, cream seeping from her cunt.

"Who's the blonde?" He coated his fingers with her cream and painted a trail to her tightly puckered anus. "Just tell me her name and I'll let you come."

"Fuck off and die. I'm not telling you anything."

He chuckled. He couldn't help himself. His warrior soul applauded her defiance. She would be wild and passionate once he... This was not about sex! He was not going to fuck her. He had to find the Raonull Master and she was his only lead.

"Have you ever been fucked up the ass?" He circled the opening in question and she jerked her hips as violently as the metaphysical restraints would allow. If she hadn't been sopping wet he wouldn't have pursued this technique. Her mind might resist his demands, but her body had already surrendered. "Talk to me, Evette. Tell me her name."

"Fuck me. I want you to. Shove that long, hard cock up my ass and fuck me hard."

The sensual purr in her tone nearly brought him to his knees. *Damn her!* He tried to conceal his panting as he pushed his middle finger past the collar of muscle and deep into her ass. Hot and incredibly tight, there was no way she'd ever taken a man here. He clenched his teeth. If he gave in to the desire pounding through his body all was lost.

*Concentrate. You must not lose sight of your mission.*

"You're bluffing, little liar." He moved his other hand higher, flicking her clit. Her back passage clenched with each brush of his fingers. "You like that." He slowly withdrew his finger, then thrust it deep again. "Tell me her name!"

With a harsh cry, she arched, her back bowing. Heat seared his fingers. Lyell jerked his hands away and stepped back. What sorcery was this? He moved to her side, studying her face. Her features contorted; her eyes squeezed shut.

Light dissected her body, blinding Lyell. He instinctively reached for his sword before he realized he was naked. Fear tingled down his spine. Had he produced this... reaction by forcing her body to respond? She'd been wet and moaning. He hadn't meant to cause her any harm.

The glare receded. Lyell blinked, fighting to clear his vision. A shadow separated itself from Evette. He bent his knees, his gaze fixed on the shadow, ready to strike or defend as soon as he figured out what the hell it was.

Unfurling like a flower opening to the sun, the blonde woman emerged from the shadow. She staggered forward, her expression muddled. "What... where are we?" She blinked several times, then her gaze focused on him and she screamed.

"He's the one. Isn't he?" Evette's voice cut through the shrill sound.

"Why are you doing this?" the blonde demanded. "How did you trigger transition? What the hell is going on?"

With a thought Lyell bound her and forced her to her knees. The blonde had emerged from inside the other woman. He'd never seen anything like it. "Are you some sort of symbiote?"

The blonde looked at Evette, her eyes brimming with tears. "What did you do to piss him off? He wasn't like this before."

"Fuck you! He's *your* fantasy. You explain this to me."

Lyell gazed from the blonde to Evette and back. He was losing control of the situation. Evette had no intention of cooperating and he had to get to the bottom of this quickly. He gagged Evette and focused on the blonde.

Cupping her chin with his hand, he gently raised her face. "I will not hurt you, little one. I only need you to answer a few questions."

Evette shook her head, her protests muffled by the gag.

The blonde glanced at Evette, then turned her emerald gaze on him. "Why have you brought us here?"

"Tell me your name."

After a short hesitation, she said, "Aurora."

He suppressed a triumphant smile and drew her to her feet. Brushing his fingers against her cheek, he looked into her eyes. "A beautiful name for a beautiful woman. Does your species have a name or are you a random mutation of the human race?"

She laughed and pushed his hand away, shrewd intelligence replacing her insipid expression. "The beautiful part was smooth, but you need to work on your delivery. Random mutation? Do you really think any *species* would find that flattering?"

"What sort of being are you?" Annoyed by her deception, Lyell moved his hand to the back of her neck.

"Our race is called the Dichotomy. Even though I feel your fingers wrapped around my neck, I'm presuming we're in a non-corporeal dimension. Or is this simply another shared vision?" Her eyes flashed with wary rebellion. She might seem more malleable than Evette, but he had obviously underestimated her.

"Why do you presume we're in another dimension?"

"Because we're hours away from our usual transition. I should still be in sleep state."

The warmth of her skin fascinated him. Fine hairs tickled his knuckles, making him long to run his fingers through the soft strands. He pulled her closer, his gaze settling on her lush, red lips. He wanted to taste them, stroke them with his tongue, and feel them wrapped around his neglected cock.

"I've never before encountered a Dichotomy. Explain what you're talking about."

"Evette has a physical body at night and I have a physical body during the day. At dawn and dusk we switch."

He raised his gaze to her eyes. His fingers brushed her shoulder then the upper swell of her breasts. "You look completely different. You are not sharing a body."

"No, we're separate and yet we're the same." She arched away as her nipple tightened. His touch obviously affected her. "It's hard to explain. Ordinarily, an hour from now Evette's body would disperse and I would absorb her energy. I don't know if that will happen, wherever this is."

As fascinating as he found the discovery, the Dichotomy were not his concern. Pushing the unanswered questions to the back of his mind, he refocused on his

assignment. "What is your connection with Marissa?" He cupped her breast, stroking his thumb over her nipple.

She ran her tongue across her lower lip. "I'll answer your questions. You can stop touching me."

"I don't want to stop touching you." He firmly rolled her nipple. Her eyelids lowered and her lips parted. "You're enjoying my touch."

"It was... like this before." She leaned into his caress. Her belly brushed against his cock. "Are you making us crazy?"

He hesitated at her intoxicated expression. Was Aurora susceptible to Evette's compulsion? Desire still pulsed through his body. His balls ached and his muscles tensed, restless energy demanded release. Honor alone kept him from burying himself in one, or both, of them. He could position Aurora on her knees below Evette and take her from behind, while he feasted on Evette's slick pussy. Or he could -- No! He must identify the spy.

Conjuring a padded table, he dissolved Aurora's bonds and scooped her into his arms. Warm and soft, she cuddled against him for an instant, before she realized his intent. She kicked and shoved against his chest, her gaze darting to Evette.

"You don't need to bind me." She wrapped her arms around his neck, clinging to him. "Marissa is our brothers' mate. Why do you know her name but not ours? Who is Marissa to you?"

Curious to see Evette's reaction to Aurora's cooperation, Lyell paused and glanced at the other woman. She narrowed her gaze and mumbled something behind the gag. A rosy flush had spread across her breasts and her nipples were tightly drawn. Why would she create a compulsion that affected her own body? None of this made sense. Perhaps what happened in her office hadn't been a ploy. Another wave of guilt assailed his composure. Had his manipulation of her desire been unwarranted?

Aurora touched his face, drawing his attention back to her. "What do you want from us? We've done nothing to you."

He set her on the table and raked his hair with both hands. What a muddle this had suddenly become. "Are you aware of everything Evette does while you're in sleep state?" He had expected to follow Marissa to Aurora and Aurora to the spy. His vision hadn't indicated a connection between Aurora and the Raonull, unless she was protecting Evette.

"What do you think Evette's done?" She ran her hand from his shoulder to his arm, her fingers light and teasing.

Heat exploded in his chest, spiraling down through his abdomen. Why did their slightest touch set his senses on fire? He gazed into her wide green eyes and ached to kiss her, possess her. It had to be a spell.

"Answer the question," he ground out, pushing her hand away.

Her gaze narrowed and she raised her chin. "Marissa is part of our family now. If you mean her harm --"

He gagged her and lowered her back across the table. Her breasts quivered and she tugged against his hold as he secured her wrists in cuffs above her head. Her concern for Marissa gave him pause. When had Marissa met their brother? The Elementals had summoned Lyell from his mountain fortress. He'd not had contact with Marissa since the previous winter.

Turning to Evette, he studied her angry face. Was she the spy?

Evette glared at the psycho-Elf. She could still feel his fingers teasing her. Transition had blended with her orgasm, creating sensations unbelievably intense. Still, he had no right to touch her, use her desire to manipulate her. If he would just release her bonds... What the hell would she do then? She had no way to return them to the realm of mortals; she had no idea where they were.

"Is she aware of your actions while she slumbers?" he asked.

It was better to keep his attention focused on her. Aurora was no match for an arrogant Dom. Aurora had already told him their life story. Evette shook her head.

He made a bland gesture with his hand and she floated to the floor. Her body sank several inches before the fluffy surface provided enough resistance to support her weight. He hadn't dissolved her gag, so she yanked it down and scrambled to her feet.

"Who the fuck are you?" She made the question as demanding as she could, while standing naked before a Dark Elf. His long black hair flowed about his shoulders and down his back. Without the trappings of civility he looked more comfortable and far more dangerous.

"Take down your hair and turn around."

"Why?" He was crazy if he thought she'd passively play along with these perverted games. Never mind that her body was more than willing to accept whatever he had in mind. She stubbornly kept her gaze focused on his face, his savagely handsome face.

"If this were about pain you would be in agony. If I had wanted to slake my lust, I could have fucked you in your office. Take down your hair."

She licked her lips. His arrogance should offend her, but his commanding expression accented the ache deep in her core. It had been so long since she'd been with a lover who understood her need for mastery. As she hung bound and helpless he'd brought her only pleasure. She didn't understand his motivation, but he didn't mean her harm.

Raising her hands to her upswept hair, she fumbled for the pins securing her thick tresses. He seemed confused by the attraction raging between them. If he wasn't causing this, then why did she burn? Aurora watched them from her position on the table, her gaze bright with awareness and concern. Despite their frequent disagreements, they instinctively banded together against any threat.

"Now turn around and kneel."

The command made her tremble. Many Doms liked to tangle their hands in their partner's hair as they took them from behind. Her pulse leapt and a warm melting sensation accompanied the thought. But he'd said he wasn't going to fuck her.

"I need to see something. Just turn around."



She didn't move fast enough to suit him. He faced her away from him and dragged her hair over her shoulders. He combed his fingers through the thick strands, tugging gently until the waves spread to the middle of her back.

"It wasn't you." He sounded almost disappointed. "Her hair was longer."

Whirling to face him, she glared into his eyes. "If you ever touch me again without my permission, I will kill you."

"When a woman is so wet she soaks my fingers, permission is implied."

She swung at his face. He caught her wrist before her palm connected. "I didn't hurt you, Evette. But I was mistaken. I apologize for the way I... questioned you."

Tense silence descended as she glared at him. Not only had she enjoyed his "questioning," she'd longed for him to do more than touch. Her pride surged and she jerked her wrist out of his hold and crossed her arms over her breasts.

"Does this have something to do with the sorcerer who kidnapped Marissa?" As Evette's anger subsided desire returned in urgent pulses. If he wasn't causing this ache, there could only be one explanation. He was compatible for a soul bonding. Her being surged with a longing more potent than physical desire. She'd convinced herself that finding a mate wasn't important to her, that she could be content without a man to complicate her life. Breathing in through her nose and exhaling through her mouth, she fought back the unwanted yearning. "I saw protectiveness in your eyes when you mentioned Marissa. She's important to you."

He released Aurora without glancing away from Evette. "I don't understand my vision. Why were you there if you aren't the spy?"

"Isn't the sorcerer dead?" Aurora scooted off the table, but remained well out of arm's reach. "We would never do anything to harm Marissa. Is that what you thought?"

"If we return to the realm of mortals, will Aurora go back into sleep state?"

"More than likely." Evette tried not to stare at his naked body, but, damn, he was impressive.

"I treated you badly. I thought my actions justified, but apparently I was wrong."

His expression was so contrite, Evette couldn't help but smile. "Why don't we start over? I'm Evette Burton. This is Aurora, my day-dwelling twin." She paused expectantly, then prompted, "And you are?"

## Chapter Five

"I'm Prince Lyell of the Unseleighe Sidhe." He made a formal bow that should have looked ridiculous given his state of undress. Still, Evette couldn't drag her gaze away from his striking figure. With a graceful wave of his hand silk robes materialized on all three of them. Evette was grateful for the gesture, but he had looked damn good naked.

"Then you're Yamir's brother," Aurora chimed in.

"How do you know Yamir?"

"Yamir and Bianca frequent The Carousel when they're not on Chimera Island." He'd directed the question at Aurora, but Evette provided the information. "Do they know you're in the realm of mortals?"

His expression grew pensive. He crossed his arms over his chest. He didn't trust them and something was definitely wrong.

"You said something about a spy." Evette tried to capture his gaze, but he stared off into the distance. "Is the sorcerer still alive? Are you afraid he'll come after Marissa?"

"Tell me what you know about the sorcerer."

It was a test. Evette shrugged. They had nothing to lose by reviewing events that had already happened. She studied his features. He really did look a lot like Yamir.

"Marissa kept calling him something, but I don't think it was his name, more like a title or some sort of affiliation."

He looked at Aurora as she spoke, his gaze guarded. "Can you remember this title?"

"Ray-o-not or Ray-o-nole," Evette tried. "How do we know you're who you claim?"

"The sorcerer who abducted Marissa is a Raonull Master."

"How do we know you're not him?" Evette challenged. "You clearly have abilities uncommon in Dark Elves."

"Because we're talking. If I were the Raonull Master, I would have defiled both of you and harvested your energy. The Raonull are pure evil. If you met one, you'd know it."

"Then this sorcerer is still alive?" Aurora persisted.

"Yes." He sighed, clearly reluctant to reveal too much. "I belong to a mystic order dedicated to combating the Raonull. After we learned he had survived the fire, we summoned a vision to give me guidance. I saw the spy kneeling before the sorcerer. It was a woman with long, dark hair. He demanded that she return to him, which indicated she was in a different realm."

"You really thought I was the spy." Disappointment banded Evette's chest. Couldn't he sense her nature? She'd known he wouldn't hurt her even before he revealed his identity.

He averted his gaze. "I saw the spy, then I saw Marissa in The Carousel with Aurora."

"Then we were all here," Aurora said, "and you were -- Are your visions always so graphic?"

He shook his head, glancing from Aurora to Evette and back. "I don't understand the reaction we're having to each other. This has never been part of my visions before."

Evette looked at Aurora. Should they tell him? Did they really want this arrogant Elf as their mate?

*Let him take us back and see if it subsides.* Aurora's voice sounded within her mind.

"See if what subsides?" he asked.

"You heard that?" Oh, this was bad. Telepathy generally developed *after* a soul bonding.

He moved closer to Aurora, his mouth curving in a gentle smile. "What were you talking about?"

Why was he willing to play charming suitor with Aurora when he was all rough and tumble with her? Evette shook her head. She'd never respond to gentleness and he knew it. Lyell was either an expert seducer or he was destined to be their mate.

"The Dichotomy were all but extinct on Earth, so our genetics adapted." Aurora slipped her hands up inside her sleeves and tentatively met his gaze. "When we encounter a person who is compatible with our physiology our bodies exude a powerful pheromone that stimulates sexual desire. It's a biological mechanism that helps ensure the continuation of our race."

"Then this... frenzy is not intentional?"

"No," Evette replied. "We thought it was a byproduct of your vision. If you're not doing this, it must be the pheromones."

"I'm compatible with your physiology." Sarcasm tinged his tone. "What exactly does that mean?"

"If we mate with you, we would be able to have children," Aurora explained. "This doesn't happen very often for Dichotomies. That's why the reaction is so intense."

"This is unacceptable." His dark head tilted at an imperious angle. "I'm a royal prince. I will be expected to mate with one of my own kind."

"Yeah, well, explain that to your cock." She nodded toward the obvious erection tenting the front of his robe. Once triggered the attraction would build until the compulsion was nearly impossible to ignore. He didn't reply to her jibe, so she said, "You've determined I'm not the spy, so how do we help you find her?"

He heaved a frustrated sigh. "I'm not sure. I need to meditate. I obviously misread the vision."

\* \* \*

By the time they returned to The Carousel it was nearly dawn. Aurora stood in the middle of her office breathless and uneasy. Their arrival triggered Evette's transition, which left Aurora alone with the Dark Elf.

He materialized in charcoal gray slacks and a burgundy dress shirt. Aurora glanced down at her flannel pajama bottoms and knit camisole. At least the club was closed.

"I need to speak with Marissa." Lyell glanced at her then looked away. Awareness sizzled. Teleporting had done nothing to ease the sexual tension arcing between them. Should she tell him it would only get worse? Why bother. He'd figure it out soon enough.

"She's probably still in bed, but I can take you to our house."

"Marissa lives with you?"

Opening the closet, she grabbed Evette's purse off the hook and dug out her car keys. "Our family has found it advantageous to live under the same roof. Blending in with humans can be more challenging than you'd imagine."

"Especially when you change form every twelve hours?" His teasing smile caught her off guard. His stance relaxed; his gaze turned watchful. The domineering brute had subsided for the moment.

"That's part of it." She returned the purse to its hook and fiddled with the keys. "Secrets are easier to maintain when you don't depend on outsiders."

He moved closer, resting his hand on the closet's open door. She wasn't fooled by his nonchalance. The predatory gleam had returned to his eyes. He'd simply exchanged demand for seduction. She liked easygoing men, with a great sense of humor, and a tendency to spoil her. Why would her genetics predispose her to someone like Lyell?

Hooking his index finger in the slender strap of her camisole, he tugged it across her shoulder and down her arm. "Do the Dichotomy have many secrets?"

"Other than our existence?" She released a nervous laugh and grabbed his wrist. "What are you doing?"

"I must progress carefully." His voice sounded hushed, intoxicated. "The sorcerer doesn't realize anyone knows he's still alive."

Did Lyell realize he was undressing her? "You're pulling down my top."

He released the strap and reached for the hem. "Would you rather I push it up?"

"I thought we were going to talk to Marissa."

"Marissa is still in bed."

His mouth settled over hers as his hand slipped beneath her top and cupped her breast. Aurora expected his kiss to be urgent and consuming. Instead he caressed her lips with his, teased her, lured her. He wrapped his other arm around her, cradling her head in the bend of his elbow. His fingers squeezed her breast, stroked her skin, and circled her nipple.

Her momentary control disintegrated in a heated rush. Dropping the keys, she pressed her hands against his chest, unable to push him away, unwilling to pull him nearer. Her pussy throbbed, aching for the fullness of his cock. She moaned into his mouth, stumbling back against the closet door. She didn't like aggressive men. This was not going to happen!

He traced her bottom lip with his tongue, then nibbled at the corner of her mouth. She pushed her hands into his hair, releasing a strangled moan. If he'd just be forceful like he'd been with Evette she'd be able to resist him.

"If we give each other pleasure, will the frenzy ease?" His lips moved against hers as he spoke.

She gulped in a breath, her breast rubbing against his fingers. Gods, she needed to come. What was the harm in... Did she dare? "The demand will return more urgently each time. This will only postpone the inevitable."

"We only need to postpone this craving long enough for me to find the Raonull Master and return to my realm. Are you opposed to a little foreplay?"

He sounded so sure. Aurora didn't contradict him. Distance would have no effect, if they were meant to bond. "What did you have in mind?"

"Mutual gratification." His mouth drifted down along her throat. "Are you agreeable?"

"I think I might be persuaded." More like she'd been fantasizing about touching him and being touched by him ever since he insinuated his image into her mind. Her

belly quivered and her nipples peaked. Giddy anticipation unfurled within her. It was all she could do not to rip her clothes off and pounce on him.

Dark hunger burned away his civilized veneer. He might rein in his nature with her, but it didn't change who he was. "Raise your arms."

She didn't hesitate. He pulled her camisole off over her head and guided her hands to the top of the closet door. Cupping both breasts, he paused to suckle her nipples before turning his attention to the drawstring securing her pajama bottoms.

"Don't let go." His gaze commanded though his tone remained soft.

"I thought... we were going to do each other."

He tugged her bottoms down her hips and she kicked them aside. His gaze moved over her naked body with leisurely intensity. Heat pooled between her thighs and her heart thudded erratically. She'd never realized that anticipation could be so stimulating.

"Part your thighs." He stared into her eyes waiting for her to obey. Inching her feet apart, she spread her legs. "More."

Tension coiled through her abdomen. She never let her lovers command her. They worshiped her body with tender care, gentle and respectful.

"Do you want release?"

"Yes." The word escaped in a breathless whisper.

"Then offer yourself to me." She turned her face to the side and parted her thighs, angling her feet outward. "Much better. Now part those lovely lips and let me kiss you."

Dizzy with wanting, Aurora opened her mouth and arched her back, thrusting her breasts forward. He sealed his mouth over hers, sliding his tongue between her parted lips with infinite care. She whimpered, aching and needful. His shirt abraded her nipples, while his cock teased her belly through the coarse fabric of his pants.

He framed her face with his hands and deepened the kiss, tasting her, stroking his tongue against hers. "I awakened from my vision with the taste of your cream in my



mouth.” With no further warning, he knelt and draped one of her legs over his shoulder.

She gasped, clutching the top of the door. He licked and sucked her folds, traced her slit with his tongue, then he thrust inside. She was overwhelmed by his intensity, swept away by his demand. His hands grabbed her hips, anchoring her body against his mouth. He flicked her clit, then thrust into her core. Flick, thrust; flick, thrust; over and over. Her abdomen clenched, tension building painfully. She whimpered, torn between excitement and fear. It had never been like this before. Her breasts ached, her nipples burned and he kept right on fucking her with his mouth.

“Please!” she cried out.

He closed his lips around her clit and sucked, pushing two fingers into her throbbing core. With a little nip, he sent her over the edge. She surrendered to the sensations, her entire being focused on the spasms pulsing through her body. Long before the last tingle faded, he stood and unfastened his pants. Would he take her now? Raise her legs to his waist and fill her... He eased his cock between her thighs, sliding against but not into her. Aurora shuddered, echoes of her orgasm skittering along her nerve endings. He was hot and incredibly hard. His shaft teased her folds, moving easily in her cream.

“Clench your thighs, squeeze me tightly.” His thumb found her clit as he moved between her folds.

“I need you inside me,” she cried. “I can’t come like this.”

“Sure you can. Feel me. Close your eyes and concentrate.” He matched each rhythmic slide with a distinct flick of his thumb. Aurora arched into him, her head tossing against the door. It was so close to what she needed, yet so cruelly different.

His thrusts slammed her against the door. She gasped, pleasure building with each impact. There was nothing gentle in the way he touched her, yet she had never been so turned on. Her senses sizzled, her heart pounded, and her pussy throbbed.

He shifted his hand, catching her clit between two of his fingers. He thrust faster. His fingers rubbed and pressed. Sensation spiked into pain. She cried out, trembling

helplessly. For an instant she hung suspended, nothing existed except for him. Then the tension released in spasms of pleasure. She clutched the door until her fingers ached, wave after heated wave sweeping through her. He shuddered against her, his mouth claiming hers in a lingering kiss.

“Stay there,” he whispered as his lips left hers.

Shaken, Aurora didn’t think to protest. He grabbed a box of tissues off her desk and returned, gently wiping her inner thighs. The gesture was so unexpected and so tender, tears gathered in her eyes.

“Are you all right?” He pressed a kiss to her forehead.

Aurora could only nod.

## Chapter Six

"I can't believe you're actually here." Marissa hugged Lyell and offered him a blinding smile. Aurora had driven him to Burton Manor after their passionate interlude in her office. Desire simmered within him, but touching her soft body had reduced the sexual compulsion to a manageable level.

Marissa crossed to a sofa in the sunny parlor and sat beside a blond man who watched their exchange through wary eyes. This was Marissa's day-dwelling mate, Sam. Aurora had explained how Sam hired Marissa as a Matchmaker six weeks before and the romance that developed as a result.

"And I can't believe you've fallen for one of your clients," he teased. "That's not like you at all."

Marissa glanced at Aurora, question clear in her bright blue eyes. "Did you tell him about..."

"I witnessed their transformation," Lyell informed her as he sat in one of the chairs facing the sofa. "I know all about the Dichotomy."

"What brings you to Virginia?" Sam asked. "It was my understanding the Sidhe seldom leave their home realm."

"I wish this were a social call, but you're correct. The Sidhe prefer to stay close to home." He looked into his sister's eyes and said, "I need to know everything about the Raonull Master who captured you."

"That creature is dead," Sam objected. "I see no reason to revisit the --"

"We have reason to believe he's still alive." Lyell scooted to the edge of the chair and rested his forearms on his knees. "Both the Raonull Master and his assassin escaped the fire."

"My father is alive?"

The hope in Marissa's eyes tore at Lyell's heart. He shook his head, not wanting the misconception to cause her any more pain. "Your father endured hours of agony as he traveled to D'Arcy Aiden and warned the Elementals that his master yet lived. His life might have drifted off course, but in death he was brave and selfless."

She accepted his explanation with a stiff nod. "Do you know how he escaped his Raonull Master? Sam told me Father didn't remember."

"His memory was still fragmented when he arrived in D'Arcy Aiden. All we know is the Raonull Master enslaved his mind shortly after he concluded the induction ceremony." He paused for a moment, gentled his expression. "I know these memories are painful and I would spare you if I could, but I must know everything you can tell me about the sorcerer."

Marissa licked her lips and leaned closer to Sam. "He forced me to transform into my Faerie self and trapped me in a containment sphere. I was only with him for an hour or so before I was rescued."

Sam explained in more detail what her father had done to bring about the rescue. Lyell took it all in, analyzing each detail.

"If my father is dead, am I still at risk?" Marissa asked.

"Everyone is at risk until we understand what the sorcerer is after." Lyell glanced at Aurora. She sat in a chair beside his, silent and attentive. He returned his gaze to his sister. "Did the sorcerer identify himself to you?"

"No. His only interest seemed to be locating my father."

"During the years her father was enslaved, the sorcerer used him as an assassin." It wasn't really a question, but Lyell nodded at Sam. "Who did he assassinate?"

"The deaths of many have been attributed to him, but only eight can be proven."

"Is there a pattern to these victims?" Aurora asked. "Some connecting factor?"

"Yes. They were all of the House of Karlis."

"The sorcerer's assassin was systematically killing off members of your family?" Aurora pivoted to face him, her eyes wide and luminous.

"It's not that simple." He looked at Marissa. She didn't appear to be upset by the topic, but Marissa had always been adept at hiding her emotions. "We have no reason to believe the sorcerer is motivated by a personal vendetta against my family. We could simply represent Unseleighe nobility. There have been other victims and other assassins. Politically prominent families are always targeted in these sorts of attacks."

"Does the Karlis family have any skeletons in their closet?"

His gaze returned to Aurora, his eyebrows drawn together. "I'm unfamiliar with that colloquialism."

"Relatives you've disowned," she said, "disgruntled former mates who feel they've been wronged."

"The Karlis family is vast and lesser clans are continually attempting to seize our lands and claim our wealth."

Aurora crossed her legs and averted her gaze. "How civilized."

"The political structure of the Unseleighe court is not that different from the realm of mortals. D'Arcy Aiden is the capital of the Forest Realm, which is the most prosperous province in our world. Those who have less than the inhabitants of the Forest Realm grow discontent and try to better their situation. Generally those efforts are peaceful, but violence is not unknown to the Unseleighe Sidhe."

"Let's focus on this particular threat," Sam suggested. "When did you become aware of the sorcerer?"

"While my father was still alive, the Raonull were many. We believe this sorcerer was their leader."

"What became of the others?" Aurora asked.

"Sidhe with mystic abilities banded together to combat the threat. They formed a secret order called the Sutrotha."

"Why did they feel it necessary to meet in secret?" Sam wanted to know.

"The Raonull used fear and manipulation to control their victims. Keeping the population unaware of the Raonull's true power limited their abilities."

"He's right," Marissa put in. "The sorcerer used this sort of manipulation to control my mother. While I was his captive, he told me he tricked my mother into taking her own life."

Sam slipped his arm around her shoulders and pulled her close against his side. "The Sutrotha were able to eradicate all but the leader?"

"In a mystic battle that shook the Unseleighe realm the Sutrotha challenged the Raonull. It was believed that everyone perished. Now we know their leader survived."

"He survived the mystic battle and the assassin's attempt to end his life." Sam paused, his expression tense and uncertain. "How do *you* intend to kill him?"

Lyell stood and clasped his hands behind his back. Only with the Elementals had he spoken of those long ago events. He had trained, prepared his body and his mind, all the while hoping he would never need his skills.

"On the day of the mystic battle I was chosen to carry on the Sutrotha traditions. The entire order gathered in the temple and linked their beings with mine. As each mystic surrendered their life on the battlefield, their power and experience passed to me."

"You have the mystic power of the entire Sutrotha order?" Sam's tone was hushed with awe.

"The Raonull Master will die at my hand because it's my destiny to kill him."

\* \* \*

"It may be Lyell's destiny to kill this bastard, but we're going to have to find him first," Aurora grumbled.

Marissa smiled. "Mystic power and common sense don't necessarily go together. Where is Lyell?"

"He went upstairs to meditate. Needless to say he's not happy that he misread the vision." Sam had departed for work, leaving the women alone in the parlor.

"He actually thought you were the spy?" Marissa shook her head.

"Well, not me, Evette, but it's basically the same thing." Aurora shrugged, trying to downplay the entire situation. Lyell had hunted them like prey and devoured them

like... She licked her lips and forced the memories aside. "He doesn't know us. The vision summoned our images. What else was he supposed to think?"

Marissa arched one of her eyebrows, her mouth curving with the hint of a smile. "Why *were* you in his vision, doing things you confused with a Discernment? Is it possible Lyell is your mate?"

Aurora fidgeted. Lyell wasn't what she'd expected at all. In the vision he'd been fierce and domineering. Yet in her office he'd caressed her with a combination of enticement and demand that left her hungry for more. He mastered Evette without hesitation, but he'd seduced her.

"I'll take that as a yes." Marissa chuckled.

"He isn't interested in bonding with us. I think he feels we're beneath him."

"Well, he does have obligations to the Sidhe." Marissa's eyes sparkled with speculation and mischief. "Still, I think you and Evette might be just what he needs."

Ignoring the dull ache between her thighs, Aurora crossed her legs and met Marissa's gaze. "Why do you say that?"

"Lyell has never known what he wants in a woman. I once heard Yamir tell Lyell all he expects in a woman is someone as innocent as a virgin with the skills of a courtesan."

Aurora laughed. "Surely you're not casting me in the role of virgin."

"You must admit that compared to Evette you are rather subdued. That's not necessarily a bad thing. The contrast will keep Lyell interested."

"Your profession is showing."

"Occupational hazard." Marissa smiled. "I think I've got a handle on you too. You surround yourself with men who don't engage your emotions so you're not disappointed when they leave."

Lyell certainly engaged her emotions. She'd never felt so conflicted in her life. Her body craved him, while her heart knew he had no interest in a serious relationship.

They had known each other less than a day and yet she felt as if she'd been waiting for his arrival her entire life. Pheromones! She rubbed her eyes and pushed the issue to the back of her mind. "My love life can wait. We have to locate the sorcerer."

"Isn't Lyell reassessing the vision?"

"Yes, but I'm more comfortable with facts. Doesn't the A.O.E.M. run background checks on potential clients?"

"They use the Interstellar Security Network, but how do you run a background check without a name?"

Aurora tapped her fingers on the padded arm of her chair. "The Raonull are able to travel through time. Are they able to travel from one dimension to another?"

"There are only four dimensions compatible with Sidhe physiology. One of the dimensions leeches their energy. Somehow I doubt the Raonull would set up his headquarters there."

"Then that narrows our search to three?" Aurora tucked a lock of hair behind her ear, reviewing all the things Lyell had told her about the sorcerer and his spy.

"Not necessarily. The sorcerer is likely still in the Unseleighe realm. It's not necessary to leave your home dimension when you can manipulate time. The spy, on the other hand, could be almost anywhere. Do we even know that she's a Dark Elf?"

"We know she's female, with waist-length dark hair. We know she's capable of communicating with someone either in another dimension or more probably in the Unseleighe dimension, but in another time. What sort of being can communicate through time?"

Marissa shook her head, her delicate features tense with frustration. "All I can think of is another Raonull or a Sutrotha."

"Isn't Lyell the only Sutrotha?"

"According to Lyell. And as far as we know the only Raonull to survive the mystic war was the one who kidnapped me."

"Are there no soothsayers or visionaries left among the Sidhe?" Aurora stood, anxious energy setting her in motion.



“There are some, but the most powerful are the Elementals.”

“The Elementals?” Aurora paused and looked at Marissa. “How do I make an appointment with one of them?”

Marissa chuckled. “You don’t. They only communicate with a select few. Let’s see what Lyell’s meditation reveals. If he still needs direction, he will likely request an audience with the Master of Fire.”

## Chapter Seven

Naked and shaking with frustration, Lyell knelt in the bedchamber. The room was small compared to his accommodations in D'Arcy Aiden. Though elegantly decorated and welcoming he resisted the room's appeal. He didn't want to like it here, wanted to find nothing desirable in the realm of mortals. He was here to destroy the Raonull Master, then he would return to the world he knew.

He closed his eyes and saw Aurora clutching the closet door. She arched into his caresses, surrendered to the passion consuming them. He felt the slick heat of Evette's snug passages, imagined filling her with more than his fingers, ached to finish what they'd begun in the Ether realm.

What was it about these women that made him irrational? Why couldn't he banish their images from his mind?

Adjusting his position on the carpeted floor, he summoned the likeness of the spy. Pouring mystic energy into the vision, he slowed the scene, and examined every detail revealed to him.

A faint mark marred the skin above her shoulder blade. He focused on the familiar design. It couldn't be, and yet he recognized the symbol of the Sutrotha order. Only after an apprentice had mastered the entire skill set was their skin marked to honor their proficiency. She tilted her head and her hair swished across the mark. Had he only imagined the sacred design?

He returned the vision to its original speed and listened carefully to the spy's voice. The rhythm of her speech washed over him. He absorbed the timbre and tone of each word. His mouth dried up and he clenched his fists. He knew this voice. Why hadn't he recognized it before?

The vision skewed, twisting in on itself to form another image. He sprawled on his back across a wide bed, Aurora and Evette kneeling on either side of him. Their up-thrust asses angled toward his face, slender thighs framing slick pussy folds. Evette firmly sucked his cock, while Aurora licked his balls with teasing delicacy. Desire pounded through his body, so intense he could scarcely breathe. His muscles constricted, dragging a moan from his throat. He pushed two fingers into their cunts at exactly the same time. They trembled, their inner muscles gripping him greedily.

With cruel velocity, the vision released, leaving Lyell breathless and wanting. His cock throbbed, his balls drawn up and aching. Damn it! He was *not* meant to be their mate. He would join with an Unseleighe Sidhe.

Heaving a frustrated sigh, he pushed to his feet and stomped into the adjoining bathroom. He turned the shower faucet so it blasted cold water and stepped beneath the spray. His erection demanded attention. Pride alone kept him from wrapping his fingers around his shaft and pumping himself to release -- again. He was not a slave to his bodily functions. Even his errant cock would bow to discipline.

Cold water saturated his hair, clearing his mind, and driving back the frenzy. He scrubbed his face and body vigorously, determined to master his raging emotions.

His years with the Elementals had taught him to appreciate distant realms and ancient cultures. They were visionaries, seeing far into a future the ordinary Sidhe could hardly imagine. They emphasized the importance of keeping an open mind, of considering different ideas. He paused, turning to face the spray. Had they known about the Dichotomy? Could their teachings have been preparing him for his destiny?

*No! Evette and Aurora are not my destiny. I am destined to kill the Raonull Master, then return to the Unseleighe realm.*

Stepping out of the shower, he wrapped a towel around his hips and threw open the bathroom door.

Evette stood just inside the doorway to the corridor, a bundle tucked under one arm and a tray balanced against her hip. "I brought you a change of clothes and thought you might be hungry."

He glanced out the window, shocked to find night had fallen while he meditated. "What time is it?"

"About eight-thirty." She crossed the room and put the tray on a small round table, then tossed the clothes onto the bed. "Two of your guards are lurking in the trees, trying to be inconspicuous, and someone named Sekarrah keeps calling. I have no idea how she got this number."

"Sekarrah is head of my security team." So much for checking in once an hour. "I'm surprised she didn't order the guards to kick in your doors. What did you tell her?"

"Sam let her talk to Marissa. I hadn't transitioned yet, but I guess it was touch and go there for a while. Marissa finally convinced Sekarrah you were safe, just unavailable."

"Did she leave a number?"

"It's on the notepad." She motioned toward the tray.

"I need to give her a full update. Do you mind?"

"Of course not." She turned toward the door. He stepped in front of her and ran his knuckles along her jaw.

"Don't go." Longing and hunger resonated through his words.

She waited silently while he talked to Sekarrah, then hung up the phone.

"Did you have any luck?" Evette slipped her hands into the back pockets of her jeans. Her sweater outlined her trim torso and full breasts.

Lyell swept her body with a slow appreciative glance. Was her pose deliberate? Did her body burn for him like he burned for her? Ambling across the room, he closed the door to the corridor. "That depends what you consider lucky." He knew who the spy was now, but had no idea how to act on the knowledge without tearing his world apart. Ignoring the food, he picked up the crystal goblet and took a sip of the rich red wine. "Is Marissa still in the house?"

"Yes. Would you like me to go get her?"

He sighed. "I suppose it's the best place to start."

She ducked into the bathroom and returned with a robe. "If you don't want to get dressed, you're welcome to use this."

He assessed the size of the garment. His gaze narrowed and his fingers clenched the fabric. "Why do you have a man's robe in your bathroom?"

"This is the guestroom. There are an assortment of robes in the closet. Not that it's any of your business. Eat something. I'll be back in a few."

He indulged in a lazy smile as she left the room. He knew exactly what he wanted to eat and if he let his body have its way everything she did would soon be his business. What a tangle.

Slipping into the borrowed robe, he waited for Evette to return. He depended on the accuracy of his visions. Understanding why he kept seeing Aurora and Evette didn't make it any less stimulating, but at least he knew why they kept appearing in his mind. His image of the spy left him shaken. He must be wrong. There had to be another explanation.

"What's going on?" Marissa asked as she joined him a few minutes later, Evette a step behind.

"I know the agency compiles detailed information, not only on their clients, but their employees."

"You want the agency to investigate someone?" She stopped just inside the doorway, forcing Evette to scoot around her.

Crossing his arms over his chest, he lowered his voice. "I need you to utilize every resource at your disposal and no one must know who I'm about to ask you to investigate."

"Who are you talking about? Lyell, you're frightening me."

"I have saved many lives by accepting the images in my dreams without reservation. When I filter them, shape them according to my own preferences, that's when my visions fail. I need you to find out everything you can about Bianca. I must know if there is any indication that she --"

"Bianca? Our Bianca?" Marissa pressed her hand to her chest, her eyes wide and disbelieving. "You can't possibly think she's the spy."

"I will not act without justification."

Evette shot him a challenging glance, but didn't say a word.

"The spy is a Sutrotha Master. This much I know for a fact. What I need to establish is if Bianca has revealed any abilities that would identify her with the Sutrotha order."

"The Sutrotha are the sworn enemies of the Raonull." Marissa shook her head, unable to accept the possibility. "Maybe she's trying to destroy him too. Maybe she..."

"I don't want you directly involved and no matter what, the Raonull Master must not learn that we know he's alive. I'm trusting you with the future of our people. You must use your contacts at the agency without indicating to anyone what this investigation is about."

"It may take some time." Her lips pressed together and sadness clouded her eyes. "It can't be Bianca. She's kind and good and Yamir sacrificed everything..."

Lyell pulled her into his arms and held her as she fought for composure. He met Evette's gaze over the top of his sister's head. The same pained disbelief marred her beautiful features. He'd almost forgotten she knew Bianca too.

Marissa pushed away from his chest, wiping her tears with the back of her hand. "What about Thane and Sam? Can I tell them?"

"Until we know more, it's better if we tell no one." She nodded and turned toward the door. He lightly caught her arm. "It's imperative that the information be objective. Let someone else do the actual investigation."

She opened her mouth to protest, then snapped it shut and agreed with a sharp nod. "They will prove you wrong. But I'll let someone else do the proving."

"I hope you're right, sprite. I really do."

"You haven't called me that in years." With a bittersweet smile curving her lips, Marissa left the room.

\* \* \*

The sorcerer paced beneath the entwined branches of his leafy canopy. Forest creatures scurried through the underbrush, mocking his anxiety. Dried leaves crunched beneath his boots. The destructive sound pleased him, soothed his restlessness. Why must she always keep him waiting? He needed another spy. One more malleable and willing to --

Preceded by a scarlet glow her image materialized before him. She knelt with her head bowed, naked to the waist, her hands folded neatly in her lap. It was an artificial show of submission. He sensed her defiance, her contempt, despite her serene façade.

"Where have you been?" Instinctively he reached for her, snarling when his hand passed through her shimmering image.

"Waiting for instructions." Her tone was calm, emotionless. Her tone was always infuriatingly calm. "You told me to wait."

"While you were *waiting*, Lyell Karlis left D'Arcy Aiden. Do you happen to know where he went?"

She lifted her dark eyes for just an instant, before remembering her place. "I... have no idea." Her surprise seemed genuine, but the sorcerer no longer trusted his spy. "I'll find out his whereabouts and report back to you as quickly as I can."

"Don't bother with another pointless report," he sneered. "This is your assignment. Bring Lyell to me and be prepared to make the final sacrifice or I will come to you. You have put me off long enough. It's time you proved your loyalty one way or the other."

"But, sir, why would you doubt my loyalty? I've done everything --"

"It's not what you have done, sweet Sutrotha, it's what you haven't done. If you are really so eager to join the ranks of the Raonull, then why do you hide yourself from me. I am the last gatekeeper. The only way to survive the induction ceremony is through me."

She stood, slipped her skirt from her hips, and pushed her hair behind her shoulders. "I have nothing to hide."

“Then bring Lyell to me and we will feast on his energy as soon as I have guided you back from the other side.”



## Chapter Eight

Evette watched Lyell silently. No wonder he was so agitated. Bianca was his brother's wife. He'd come to the realm of mortals expecting a stranger to lead him to his enemy. Instead he found a sexual entanglement with a race of beings he didn't understand and implications that the traitor was someone dear to him.

"If Bianca is --"

He cut her off with an upraised hand. "I will speak no more of Bianca until I hear Marissa's report." Stalking across the room, he stared into her eyes. "You were in my vision again." He caught her wrist and dragged her hand to his crotch, curving her fingers around his hard shaft.

"I see." She didn't move her hand, nor did she pull away. Her heart took on the rhythm pounding against her palm. *Soon*, her soul whispered, soothing her aching body.

"You're always with Aurora in my visions, so why do I still want you when we're alone?"

"The compulsion makes you crave a soul bonding." She squeezed him ever so gently. "That's different than just having sex."

"So I can fuck you until we're both too weak to move and I'll still feel like this?"

She licked her lips and slipped her hand inside his robe. "Did you feel better after you touched Aurora?"

"I thought you didn't know what happens while you're asleep." She dragged her fingers up his length and circled his flared head with her thumb. When she started to ease her hand away, he closed his fingers over hers. "Don't stop," he whispered.

"Aurora wanted me to understand how powerful the compulsion had grown, so she sent vivid images during transition." She moved closer, pumping his cock with slow, sustained strokes.

"Does this... need ease while you're in energy form?"

She shook her head. "I need you as much as you need me, but we can't make love unless you're willing to bond with both of us."

"Wanting you both is not the problem." He pushed her hand away and closed the robe. "My eldest brother is king of the Forest Realm. He has three sons who should follow after him, but in their absence I would be king."

"The Sidhe have never accepted an outsider into their nobility?"

He raked his hair with both hands, revealing his frustration. "How well do you know Yamir and Bianca?"

"They are more acquaintances than friends. They seem genuinely happy with each other and never cause trouble when they're in town."

Releasing a soft, mirthless laugh, he shook his head. "Yamir is three years my senior. He should be next in line for the throne. When he chose Bianca as his mate, my father disowned him."

Evette just stared at him. This was the twenty-first century for heaven sake! Did things like that still happen? "I don't understand. What's wrong with Bianca?"

"Her mother was of a minor clan in the *Seleighe* court."

"She's a Light Elf? What difference does that make? Isn't an Elf an Elf?"

He threw his hands up in the air. "You know so little of our ways. We keep to our home realm for a reason. The bloodline must be kept pure."

"Not only is that an antiquated concept, genetics has proven it's dangerous. Inbreeding weakens the bloodline, it doesn't strengthen it."

"And cross breeding results in sterility. Have you ever heard of a fertile mule?"

She'd had all of his arrogance she could stand. Whirling toward the door, she jerked it open. He slammed it shut, pressing his palms to the door on either side of her head.

"I'm sorry. I've never been this out of control and I need all the control I can muster right now."

"I can promise to stay away from you, but it won't help. These urges will grow until we bond or we all go insane."

His ragged breathing stirred her hair. He wasn't really touching her, but heat seeped through their clothing. "Forget about the interracial complication for a moment." Pushing off the door, he turned her to face him. "We just met. What if this madness wears off and we find out we don't like each other?"

"Then we go our separate ways. The frenzy accelerates until we bond. Once the bond is formed the pheromones will stabilize." The soul bonding itself would take over after that, allowing them to connect on a level far deeper than sex. Still, they had options. "You don't need to feel trapped."

"How many bonded mates have you known who went their separate ways?"

She smiled. He was too damn perceptive for his own good. "I haven't known that many bonded mates, and the ones I do know were recently bonded. Ask me in ten or twenty years."

Pushing his fingers into her hair, he combed through the thick strands as his gaze caressed her face. "If I'd come in contact with these pheromones first, this whole thing would be easier to dismiss."

"What do you mean?"

"You were in my vision, and I wanted you desperately, *before* I was exposed to either you or Aurora." He leaned in and pressed his mouth to hers, touching, mingling their breath.

"On a mystical level you've accepted us already." She nibbled at his bottom lip, savoring the playful moment. "Would a future with us be so bad?"

"If something happens to Gainnon and his sons, I will have to take a wife from among the Sidhe. How do you feel about bigamy?"

He was trying to scare her, drive her away. Reaching for the belt binding his robe she shrugged with a nonchalance she didn't feel. "As long as you don't mind my finding a consort among the Sidhe. Your people are quite beautiful."

He growled, his intense expression turning savage. "You are mine and mine alone. I will share my mates with no one."

Had he realized what he'd just said? "I'll share my mate with the other half of my being, but bigamy is out of the question." Pleased by his reaction, she parted the robe. His cock arched toward her, hard and begging for attention. "It seems to me we have a more immediate crisis than what *might* happen if Gainnon dies. Your poor cock is about ready to burst."

His gaze narrowed and his voice lowered to a throaty whisper. "I've wanted your mouth on me since I first saw you in my vision."

She laughed. "Oh really? If memory serves me, you couldn't see my face in your first vision."

He tangled his hand in her hair, his eyes igniting with domination. Her insides quivered, melting with immediate response. *Yes! Command me.*

"I want you naked and on your knees." His mouth covered hers, his tongue claiming with bold thrusts. "You're going to suck my cock, know my taste, swallow my cum. Then I'm going to lick your pussy until you scream." He captured her moan with his open mouth, his tongue sliding over hers. "And when you think I've had my fill of you, I'm going to fuck your virgin ass."

She trembled in his arms. His rough tone and graphic words sent desire stabbing through her pussy. Not until they bonded with Aurora could she have him there, but he offered her everything else.

He shrugged out of the robe and stared at her expectantly. "Do I need to remind you of our agenda? I'm not a patient man."

Tugging her sweater off over her head, she unfastened her bra and tossed it aside. His dark gaze followed everything she did, but he made no move to help. Aurora

would be shocked and appalled by this behavior. She didn't understand Evette's need for complete surrender.

Lyell obviously understood. Not only did he understand what she needed, but he knew how Aurora would react. He'd waited until they were alone to fully master her. Evette lowered her zipper and wiggled out of her jeans. He was the perfect combination of savage arrogance and shrewd diplomat. Even if he hadn't accepted it yet, he was their destined mate.

Lyell assessed her naked body, determined to feel only lust. "Raise your arms and lock your hands behind your head. Hold your hair up so I can see all of you."

Her gaze burned with desire, her lush lips parted, cheeks deeply flushed. The position thrust her breasts forward and exposed the underside of her arms. Trailing his fingertips from her elbows to her armpits, he watched her pupils dilate and her breathing hitch.

"Do you want me to touch you?" he whispered the question into her ear.

"You know I do."

"Say it."

"I want you to touch me."

He cupped her breast. Her nipple beaded without any encouragement from his fingers. He smiled. Warmth curled through his chest and settled low in his belly. She wasn't just accepting the passive role because that's what Prince Lyell required. Despite her fiery spirit, Evette was a true submissive.

His pulse leapt and he moved behind her, unwilling to reveal how much the realization excited him. His dark nature surged and for once there was no reason to restrain it.

The long, elegant line of her back fascinated him. He would lick his way down her spine and explore her delectable ass, but not until he'd established his claim. Schooling his expression, he moved back in front of her.

"Lower your arms." She stared into his eyes, her gaze simmering with warmth and anticipation. She knew everything he intended to do to her and she wasn't afraid. He captured a lock of her dark red hair and rubbed it against his cheek. "There is a wild forest creature in this realm with coloring like your hair. Are you wet for me, vixen? Is your body wild for mine?"

She didn't say a word. Adjusting her stance, she guided his hand to the apex of her thighs. Her feminine curls were damp. He cupped her mound, easing his middle finger into her slit. Hot, wet, ready, her folds enveloped him. With a soft groan, he pushed into her core; her inner muscles rippled in response.

He dragged his hand away and she reached for his wrist, closing her hand into a fist just before she touched him. *Good girl.* She lowered her hand to her side and licked her lips. He chuckled. Was she reminding him of their agenda?

"On your knees and lock your hands behind your head again. I only want to feel your mouth on me." She sank to her knees and raised her arms; her gaze focused on her target. He wrapped his fingers around the base of his cock and angled it toward her mouth. "Lick me first, just the tip, lavish me with your tongue."

The first stroke of her warm, wet tongue sent heat spiraling up his spine. He clenched his teeth and flexed his thighs. He would not lose control!

Moving his hands to frame her face, he pushed into her mouth. Gods, this was going to be over before it began. Desire clawed at his balls, making his cock jerk and throb. Lights danced before his eyes. Her eager mouth sucked firmly, her tongue swirling as he slid between her lips. Thrilled by her eagerness, her willingness to embrace their roles, he held nothing back.

He arched his back and tightened his ass as he fucked her mouth. She stared up at him, her eyes wide and luminous. Beneath the surrender he recognized a spark. *Mine.* He wasn't sure he heard the word or just read it in her expression. She tilted her head, taking him deeper, swallowing with each thrust.

"Yes!" he panted, his fingers tangling in her hair. She was so beautiful in her submission. His chest ached with unexpected tenderness. Driving to his balls, he

shuddered violently and exploded down her throat. She swallowed and licked prolonging his pleasure until he could barely stand. "Oh, sweet vixen, what a prize I've found."

Evette was still shaken and breathless when Lyell swept her into his arms and carried her to the bed. Never before had giving pleasure affected her so intensely. She wasn't sure exactly what he and Aurora had done, but the emotional bonding had already begun. As his cock moved in her mouth, she'd felt his release, sensed the depths of his desire and the possessiveness in his passion.

"Lyell, I..." If she told him what she'd sensed, what she suspected, it might push him away.

He laid her on her back and stretched out beside her. "What's wrong?"

"I can sense your emotions." She paused, giving him a moment to absorb the importance of the statement. "I think you and Aurora triggered the soul bonding."

"How is that possible? I thought the three of us have to be together for the bonding to take hold."

"We do. It must have started before that. When you teleported me out of my office, where did we go?"

"To the Ether realm. Mistress Air took me there often during my years of training."

"It triggered Aurora's transition and brought us together on a metaphysical plane. That must be it. All I know is there is a telepathic link between us that wasn't there before. I came when you came and --"

"Maybe you just enjoyed the emotional dynamics of being mastered." He flashed a sexy smile and flipped her onto her stomach.

"Lyell! Listen to me."

He dragged her to the edge of the bed, crawling off the side as he went. Positioning her on her hands and knees, he knelt beside the bed and nipped her butt. "Talking isn't on the agenda. Lower your head and spread your legs."

"If you fuck my ass, it will seriously strengthen the bond. I think --" She yelped as his hand smacked her bare bottom.

"Thinking wasn't on the agenda either. Now fold your arms and lower your head."

She'd tried to warn him. If he wouldn't listen, that wasn't her fault. The sting of his palm mellowed to a teasing warmth, making her wiggle her bottom. Desire simmered through her blood. The slightest encouragement would set it ablaze again and she was ready to burn. Folding her arms, she lowered her torso and rested her cheek on her forearm.

His warm breath wafted against her inner thighs. Evette smiled. She'd dreamed of a lover bold enough to command her, strong enough to subdue her without harm. He caressed her bottom, squeezing her cheeks and teasing the cleft between, while he pressed his face close against her. Parting her folds with one hand, he found her clit with his tongue, flicking and circling.

She arched into his kiss, savoring each firm stroke, each gentle swirl. He licked then nibbled, and finally sucked her clit between his lips. Tension gathered in her core. Her fingernails bit into her palms and her breasts ached.

The first tingling ripple of her orgasm began and he pulled his mouth away. "No!"

"Don't be impatient." He chuckled and spread her bottom cheeks. Before she could guess his intent, he pressed something warm against her anus.

"What is that?" Her voice cracked conspicuously.

"It will ease the way for my cock. Surely there are similar substances in this realm."

Sure they had lube here, but where the hell had his come from? He pushed deeper and heat filled her ass. Even after he withdrew the mysterious applicator, her back passage tingled with warmth.

"Now, where were we?" He raised her hips and covered her mound with his mouth. She gasped and clutched the bedding, surprised by his sudden aggression. His



tongue thrust into her pussy as he drove a finger up her ass. Raw, dark sensations unwound through her. He claimed her body with savage intensity. Sucking her juices into his mouth, he worked another finger into her ass, pushing her ruthlessly toward release.

He took her clit between his thumb and forefinger, rolling and pressing as he eased his mouth away. Pleasure hovered just out of reach. A flicker of fear sparked within her as she remembered the long, thick slide of his cock in her mouth. His fingers withdrew and he positioned himself against her.

“Push out against me, *now*.”

She obeyed and his shaft spread her, stretched her, and filled her. Burying her face in the bedding she screamed. Pleasure blended with pain and she trembled. He was so fucking big! The familiar tingling warmth circled her stuffed hole. He was applying more lube. She gasped and panted, waiting for the sting to ease.

He pulled out slowly. “Better?”

She could only nod. When he pushed deep the second time, her body relaxed, accepting the invasion with a little flutter of pleasure. She released her breath in a ragged sigh and braced herself for his forceful movements.

His fingers drifted across her ass, over her hips and beneath her. Contouring himself to her back, he cupped her breasts and teased her nipples. “You have to relax, vixen. You’re gripping me like a vise.”

“I can’t help it. You’re too damn big.”

“Trust me.” He pulled her hips up, until his groin cradled her butt. His cock stretched her so tight the throb of his shaft echoed through her core. “You said the telepathic link has been established. Can you sense how good this feels to me?”

All she could feel was the stinging pain of his penetration. *Focus, suppress your discomfort and reach for him*. She pictured his big body covering hers, his hands gently stroking. Warmth pervaded her mind, not the uncomfortable pinch of her own body, but the breath-stealing grip of her body around his cock.

“I can... feel it now.”

His fingers settled over her clit, circling slowly. "That's it. Relax and your body will adjust."

The urge to rut thundered through him. His control hung by a thread. He might want to master her as badly as she needed his mastery, but he would never hurt her. He held back his own desire with an iron fist, waiting for her to accept him. She shifted, releasing the tension inside her body, and he slipped deeper. He groaned, his finger circling faster.

"Try it now," she encouraged. He pulled out inch by tantalizing inch. Tingles swirled along her passage and burst in her abdomen. Oh, that was nice. "More." He drove in just as carefully. Her body took him, welcomed him with rhythmic flutters.

"Oh gods, vixen. You're killing me."

Choked with emotion, she braced her legs and raised her upper body enough to free her hands. He followed her lead, lifting his weight without separating their bodies. She crossed her arms at the small of her back, praying he'd understand.

His strong fingers closed around her wrists and she let out a shuddering moan. He drove in and paused for an instant, before he pulled nearly out of her. Sliding easily now, he held firmly to her wrists as he moved in her ass.

She arched her back, her hair streaming across her face. Sensations built in her, passed across the telepathic link and burst in him. He thrust deeper, faster. She pushed back into each drive. Her breasts quivered and she tossed her head. Wild, earthy sensations surged through her. This was what she needed; this was what she'd always craved.

She tugged against his hold, needing a firmer resistance. He tightened his fingers and slammed into her over and over again. "Come for me, vixen. Let me feel your ass squeeze my cock. Come for me, now!"

The demand in his tone made it impossible to resist. She cried out, shaking as her body pulsed with wave after wave of release. His arms circled her, anchoring her against his chest as he pumped his seed deep inside her.

They collapsed in a sweat-slick tangle and he rolled them to their sides. Evette panted, amazed at what had just transpired. How could a soul bonding be more intense than this?

## Chapter Nine

Lyell didn't remember falling asleep, but a firm knocking at the door awakened him. Evette snuggled against his side. They were both naked. He eased his arm out from under her neck and scooted off the bed. After folding the covers over her sleeping form, he slipped into his robe and opened the door.

Marissa stood in the corridor looking utterly miserable. "I didn't think they'd get back to me until morning, but I just got the call."

"What have you learned?"

"They had no record of Bianca ever being involved in anything inappropriate."

"Then why are you so upset?"

"She sent an encrypted transmission shortly after I called. Because I'd just asked one of the investigators to look into her, he checked out the destination of her transmission. She contacted someone in the Unseleighe realm, but the investigator said the transmission was distorted as if it had shifted through some sort of temporal displacement."

"Bianca sent a message through time?" Evette asked from behind him. He glanced over his shoulder and found her sitting up in bed, pressing the covers to her chest.

"What makes this even more damning," Marissa went on, "is I told him nothing about temporal anomalies. I just asked him to run her name through their system."

Lyell scrubbed his hands over his face. "If she just contacted the sorcerer, I have to move now."

"Move how?" Marissa demanded. "What do you intend to do with her?"

"I intend to confront her with what we know and escort her back for trial."

"This is high treason." Marissa's worried gaze eclipsed her other features. "The penalty is death."

"Do you think I don't know that?" he snapped. "I care about her too. But if she's in league with the Raonull Master I will have no choice."

"That's why I told them to expect you."

"You told her I was coming?"

"Not Bianca. The head of security on the island. Do you honestly think they'll allow you to materialize without clearance? Chimera caters to otherworldly beings. You're not the only one who can teleport."

"Thank you," he muttered.

"I'm coming with you."

"No you're not. The sorcerer used you once. He will not have the opportunity to do so again."

Marissa didn't argue. She turned on the ball of her foot and stomped off down the hall.

"She'll fly to Chimera Island." Lyell slammed the door. "The stubborn chit transformed as soon as she turned the corner."

"You know or you suspect?"

"I know her well enough to suspect. Can you contact her nocturnal mate and let him know Marissa is up to mischief?"

Evette nodded and slipped out of bed. "Thane can't teleport. He can give her a telepathic ration of crap, but there's not much he can do to stop her."

"Then I must reach Bianca before Marissa. I can travel faster if I have someone who knows the destination showing me the way."

"You really think Bianca is the spy?"

"It's my sworn duty to pursue all suspects, regardless of how distasteful I find the possibility."

Lyell dressed as Evette warned her brother that Marissa had taken off for Chimera Island. Evette redressed as well and finger combed her hair. "I guess I'm ready." Her expression was tense and sad.

He opened his arms to her, amazed by the wave of tenderness that accompanied the gesture. "Wrap your arms around me and picture a place near to where she's likely to be without dropping us in on top of her."

Closing his arms around her soft body, he eased into her mind and accessed the image. There was no resistance to his mental touch and the image was remarkably vivid. *Can you hear my thoughts now?*

She smiled. *I tried to tell you the bonding had begun.*

Wonderful! He didn't have time to consider all the ramifications right now. He had to determine if his brother's mate was the sorcerer's spy.

He focused on the image Evette was showing him, a small, primitive dwelling slightly offset from a larger structure.

*The main building is their gift shop. They live in the bungalow out back.*

*A royal prince lives in a bungalow?*

*You're a snob, you know that, don't you?*

Clasping her tightly to his chest, he absorbed the image into his mind and projected them across the astral plane. Her arms clutched his back and her body trembled, then physical sensation faded away. Static crackled in his ears, color faded to gray, until he was only aware of velocity.

They materialized with jarring impact, collapsing into the sand. Evette's sharp cry was muffled against his chest. He took a moment to catch his breath, taking in the moonlit beach. Balmy air caressed his face and the call of an unseen bird drew his attention to the surrounding trees.

"We were close." Evette pointed to the structures silhouetted in the moonlight. The smaller bungalow set back from the gift shop just as she pictured.

"Is this place as beautiful as it seems?" He stood and helped her to her feet. "I think we're over dressed for the climate."

"I didn't see much of the island when we were last here. I was pissed off at Aurora."

"I wish this were a social call." He nodded toward their destination. "I'll not be long."

"Wait a minute. You're just going to knock on the front door and have a chat with her? What if she attacks you? What if she summons the sorcerer?"

"If she summons the sorcerer, it will make my mission infinitely easier. The Unseleighe High Council must deal with the spy. My focus is and has ever been the Raonull Master."

"You need backup. This is a bad idea."

He touched her face and smiled. "I'm unaware of any being capable of providing backup for me. I've been empowered by the entire Sutrotha order for the sole purpose of destroying this man. You, however, are vulnerable. I must insist you remain here."

*Like that's going to happen.*

*I heard you.* "Stay here or I will render you unconscious."

Evette watched him walk across the beach. He was either the most powerful being she had ever encountered or certifiable. She couldn't decide which. Her heart pounded faster with each step he took. There had to be something she could do to help. Where was Yamir? Would he be a help or hindrance?

Damn! She hated being helpless. Instinctively she reached for Lyell's mind. If this mission went south, the very least she could do was run for help. She might be virtually powerless, but there was no telling what sort of beings were on Chimera Island.

*I know you're there.* He sounded more amused than annoyed. *Let me stabilize the link so you don't distract me.*

Her vision faded to black, then refocused from his perspective. He was almost to the bungalow. He activated something that made Evette's head pound. Oh, he was scanning for Bianca.

*Yamir is alone.* Lyell turned toward the gift shop. Soft yellow light illuminated one of the windows. Candlelight? If Yamir was in the bungalow, that ruled out a romantic interlude, she hoped.

*Hush,* Lyell cautioned. *Try to calm your thoughts.*

Calm her thoughts? Right. Don't think. *Shit!* Now she was thinking about not thinking.

*I'm going to sever the link.*

Evette clasped her hand over her mouth, then shook her head at the ridiculousness of the impulse. She couldn't distract him. She was only along for the ride.

He crept closer to the gift shop and peered in the window. Bianca knelt in the center of four candles. Around each candle was an elaborate symbol.

*What is she doing? Sorry!*

*She's meditating. The candles represent the Elementals. This is a ritual cleansing the Sutrotha undergo before undertaking an important task.*

Bianca suddenly looked up, her gaze colliding with Lyell's through the window. She smiled, then her gaze narrowed. Crossing the room, she pushed open the window and said, "Damn, you're good, Lyell. I was just about to summon you."

Evette could sense his confusion. This wasn't the reception he'd anticipated. "Summon me for what? What are you doing?"

She glanced behind her and chuckled. "As if you don't know. I'm preparing for battle. Isn't that why... Why are you here?"

One of the candles flickered then flared, blinding Evette with its brightness. Translucent wings unfurled as she frantically blinked, bringing the scene back in focus. Evette pressed her hand to her chest as a being materialized, ethereal and terrifying.

"Mistress Air." Lyell inclined his head for a moment robbing Evette of her view.

"As usual, you completed your task more quickly than we anticipated. Call to your mate and join us. We have no time to lose."

\* \* \*



Evette did her best not to stare but the Elemental was the most beautiful being she'd ever seen. Silky hair flowed to her hips, color dancing in the ebony strands like black opals.

"If you knew Bianca was the spy, why send me on this quest?" Lyell crossed his arms over his chest, his gaze moving from the Elemental to Bianca and back.

Shortly after they entered the back room of the gift shop, he'd erected a mental barrier. Evette understood his anger, but she missed the intimacy of knowing his thoughts.

"The vision was meant to give you direction. If you jumped to the wrong conclusion, that's no fault of ours." There was no mistaking the amusement in the Elemental's silvery gaze. Then, her elegant features sharpened and the hint of a smile vanished. "We have much to do, Lyell. Two pieces of your future were about to collide. We chose to orchestrate the collision. You will be stronger and more grounded once the soul bonding is complete."

"You sent him to the realm of mortals believing I was the spy," Evette objected. "What if he had --"

"It is not in his nature to harm any woman. You were never in danger." She looked directly into Evette's eyes and smiled. "He never would have left D'Arcy Aiden if we had told him the true purpose for his quest."

"I thought we already had a Matchmaker in the family." A bit of the tension melted from his stance.

"You need this. More than you know."

"Have you known where the sorcerer is all along?" Lyell continued to stare at the Elemental, his emotions carefully guarded.

"Only since Navid Frayne returned."

"Who is Navid Frayne?" Evette asked.

"Marissa's father," Lyell informed her. He suddenly turned on Bianca, his expression inscrutable. "Did you sever the sorcerer's hold over Navid?"

"The sorcerer sent him after Yamir." A menacing light ignited in her dark gaze. "I was trying to kill him and ended up scrambling his brain."

"If you had killed Navid, the sorcerer would still be at large," Mistress Air pointed out. "Failing to kill the assassin was the best mistake you ever made."

Lyell shook his head, his expression dazed. "Yamir was never banished, was he? You trained Bianca in secret just as you trained me. They've been -- undercover all these years."

"The protection of our people was far too important to trust to just one person. You have the benefit of the order's empowerment, but we also enacted a contingency plan. Bianca needed a reason to hate your family, to seek the power of the Raonull."

"Bianca isn't a spy, she --"

"Sure I am." Bianca grinned. "The sorcerer just doesn't know which side I'm really on."

"Does Yamir know about your activities?"

"I have no secrets from Yamir."

"This reunion will have to wait," Mistress Air cut in. "Bianca has been given an ultimatum. She is to bring *you* to the sorcerer or he has sworn to come after her."

"What are we waiting for?"

"You must complete your soul bonding before you will be ready for this fight."

## Chapter Ten

Aurora was jarred out of sleep state to a dizzying rush of sensation. Her heartbeat thundered in her ears and shivers shook her body. Fear tumbled over desire and frustration. Still, none of it made sense.

Lyell wrapped his arms around her as her legs gave out beneath her. "You did it again." She panted. "It's the middle of the freaking night."

"Sorry, sweetheart. This couldn't wait."

"What's going on?" She looked around the fluffy, cloud-like room and rolled her shoulders, trying to dislodge the knot of tension wedged between her shoulder blades. "What is this place anyway? You brought us here before."

"It's called the Ether realm," Lyell explained. "Our souls touched when I brought you here the first time, which triggered the bonding. We need to complete it tonight." His voice was warm and coaxing. He stroked her hair and pressed her against his naked chest. Naked? She glanced down. Sure enough they were naked. Didn't clothes exist in this realm?

"They know where the sorcerer is and Lyell needs our help fighting him."

She looked from Evette to Lyell, forcing her sleep-muddled brain to function. "You found the spy? Marissa was going to run some information through --"

"Bianca is the spy, but she isn't really a spy." Evette threw her hands up in a helpless gesture. "It's a long involved story and we only have so much time. We need to solidify the bonding so Lyell can perform the ceremonial cleansing before morning. I'll explain everything while he meditates."

"Why don't you two get started while I wake up?"

A slow, sexy smile parted Lyell's lips. "Why don't I help you wake up instead?" His mouth moved against hers as Evette circled around behind him. Evette caressed his back, while he focused his attention on Aurora.

*Feel my cock hardening against you. I've wanted this since you appeared in my vision.*

Aurora gasped and turned her face to the side. "What did you two do while I was in sleep state? The telepathic link is wide open."

"Nothing you'd be interested in trying." Evette's wicked chuckle gave Aurora a pretty good idea what they'd done. Sleep's haze gradually receded leaving Aurora warm and anxious. Evette and Lyell were bonding too rapidly. She had to actively participate in this stage or the bonding would be uneven.

She splayed her fingers across the back of his head and pulled his mouth down to hers. "We've got some catching up to do." His lips parted at the first brush of her tongue. He swept both his hands down her back and cupped her bottom, fitting her snugly against his body.

Emotion flowed across the telepathic link. Evette's impatience made Aurora all the more determined to take her time. Her Nocturnal twin had monopolized their mate long enough. She wrapped her arms around his neck and took the kiss deeper. Inhaling slowly, she imprinted his scent, absorbed his taste.

Evette pressed against his back, her arousal growing, spreading to Aurora. She couldn't let Evette take control. If she wanted an equal bond, she had to be bold.

"How do we do this?" Lyell paused. "I only have one cock."

"But you have ten fingers and one very talented tongue." Aurora nipped his neck and Evette offered an encouraging smile. "We can only come together and you have to come inside each of us at least once. Think you can manage that?"

"You're being rather saucy." He pinched her bottom and the floor rose, transforming into a massive bed. Aurora pushed him over backward, earning a delighted laugh from Evette.

"I think she's awake now," Evette said.

"And I think we should devour him." Aurora wrapped her fingers around his cock and stroked his entire length. "I get the top, you take the bottom."

"Fine by me."

"Hey, what am I supposed to do? I can't reach either of you."

"You just lie there, and be devoured," Evette instructed. "But remember you can't come until we do."

Aurora closed her mouth around the head of his cock. His fingers pushed into her hair. "No touching. Clasp your hands behind your head." Evette's burst of laughter made Aurora wonder why that was so funny. He reluctantly obeyed.

His long, lean body spread before them, his gaze smoldering. Evette moved his legs farther apart and knelt between his thighs. Aurora watched as Evette squeezed his balls, her touch firm, yet careful. His cock jerked and bobbed, eager for her attention. Lying down on her stomach, Evette began to tease.

Aurora took his shaft into her mouth. Sliding the hot, smooth column of flesh between her lips, she circled him with her tongue. Long, thick, potent, his cock aroused her, excited her, sent anticipation spiraling through her belly. She sucked firmly, her cheeks drawing in with each pull. His eyes drifted shut, his lips parted.

*How does that feel?* She sent her thoughts to his mind for the first time.

*Like you better stop, if we're supposed to come at the same time.* Searing desire blasted across the telepathic link. He wasn't kidding, he was nearing release. She eased the pressure of her lips and slipped him from her mouth.

"Now what?" he panted. "You're running the show."

She wasn't sure if he understood her need for control or if he was enjoying the attention. It didn't matter, as long as he was willing to indulge her. "I'm going to ride that marvelous cock while Evette enjoys the attention of your mouth."

"Are you sure?" Evette touched her shoulder. "He won't be able to be gentle until we take the edge off his desire."

"I'm not a china doll. I want him wild and willing."

"Figure it out or I will."

"He's not a patient man," Evette finished for him. She crawled up the bed and brazenly straddled his face. Aurora watched her movements with envy. Would she ever be so uninhibited with Lyell or would he always prefer --

*Part of your appeal is the contrast. If you were both feisty vixens, it wouldn't be nearly so much fun. Now, I thought you were going to be the first to feel me inside your sweet pussy.*

The telepathic link was a tricky thing. Aurora wasn't sure if Evette heard his reassuring words or not. She certainly didn't seem to care one way or the other. She teased him with her sex, keeping her pussy just out of reach.

*It's your turn, Aurora. He's not touching me until you're riding that rather impressive erection.*

Aurora swung her leg over his lean hips and settled on top of him. She took his cock and guided it toward her opening. This was the first time she'd taken the initiative with a man and the first time she'd shared a lover with Evette. So many new sensations. Her head spun and her pulse leapt. Everything would change with this one act. Was she ready for this?

*Aurora, we are meant to be together.* Lyell sent a wave of soothing warmth along with his reassurance. *Only bonded will we feel complete. Join our bodies. There's no reason for your fear.*

Her heart fluttered and her hand trembled. Time itself seemed to pause, paralyzed by her hesitation. His shaft throbbed against her fingers and heat curled through her abdomen. She rubbed the plush head of his cock against her clit. Her core clenched, ready, waiting.

She sank onto his cock, filling the void inside her body, sending pleasure across the telepathic link. Evette lowered her pussy to his mouth and Lyell went wild. He bucked beneath Aurora, driving his cock deeper, and pushed his tongue into Evette.

Sensations bombarded Aurora. She cried out, overwhelmed by the intensity. He grasped Evette's hips, holding her firmly as he licked her folds and circled her clit. His legs flexed, his heels fighting for purchase against the bed.

Aurora reached back, bracing her hands against his thighs. Though a bit awkward, the position gave her leverage and forced him to accept her pace. She took him into her body again and again, tightening her inner muscles at the apex of each stroke.

Evette sent a scalding surge of desire across the link. She was holding off her orgasm, afraid Aurora wasn't ready. Aurora savored the thick slide of Lyell's cock, knowing this was only the beginning.

Tension coiled in her pussy, building to a fever pitch. She rocked forward, grinding her clit against his abdomen. She came in shuddering waves. Evette cried out and Lyell arched beneath her, his cock pulsing as he released his seed.

Lyell groaned as his mates crawled off his trembling body. This would never do! Aurora needed tenderness to feel secure. He understood that. But she had to accept his dark nature or this bonding would never work.

Pushing to his feet, he commanded the Ether realm to reform. Two padded rails appeared in front of him, wrist and ankle cuffs ready to be buckled. Evette smiled, her eyes reigniting with passion.

"Take your place, vixen. I've been more than patient."

She paused for a kiss, then bent over the rail. He guided her ankles into the cuffs and secured the buckles, then moved to the other side of the support and confined her wrists.

Aurora watched; her arms folded over her breasts. He approached her slowly, his gaze caressing her face. "I will never hurt you."

"Can't I just watch?" Her voice hitched as she glanced beyond him at the rail waiting for her.

"No." He framed her face with his hands and looked into her eyes. "I lay beneath you because you needed that from me. I need this from you."

His mouth dried up as he waited for her response. If she refused all was lost. This bonding was meant to be. He no longer had any doubt. But he couldn't force her. She had to submit willingly.

She licked her lips and lowered her arms. "I trust you, Lyell."

He took her by the hand and led her to the rail. She spread her legs, moving her ankles into the cuffs. His hands trembled as he fastened the buckles. She was doing this for him. He secured her wrists, then stepped back and released a shuddering breath.

They created a spectacular tableau, contrasting hair flowing to the floor. He paused to admire his mates as his cock thickened and lengthened. Trailing his fingertips down their spines, he savored their silky skin.

"You are both so incredibly beautiful. I will treasure you." He moved around behind them, caressing their bottoms and the backs of their thighs. He pushed two fingers into their cores and smiled as they responded. Evette moaned, arching into the touch, while Aurora gasped, her inner muscles fluttering.

He continued his lazy pumping with Evette as he manifested a dildo in his other hand. Activating the vibration, he traced Aurora's slit, teasing her clit and caressing her folds.

"Oh, where did that come from?" Her ass clenched and she twisted her hips.

"You can't come until we do, so don't enjoy it too much." He moved the device away from her clit and pushed it deep into her passage.

They were his, his to touch, his to fuck, his to protect and cherish.

Dragging his fingers out of Evette, he traced her slit with his cock.

"Please. I ache, Lyell. I've waited too long." She opened her mind, revealing the desperate need pounding through her. The orgasm he'd triggered with his mouth only accented her need for penetration.

He'd meant to take her slowly, to arouse her by degrees. They were beyond foreplay. The bonding must be secured. He thrust hard and deep. Evette cried out, her pussy tightening convulsively.



Heat swirled around him, speeding his already racing heart. Emotions passed between them, eagerness, surrender, and possessive pleasure. It was impossible to tell the source of each.

He mimicked the thrust of his cock with the dildo, joining their bodies and their minds. Evette squeezed him, accelerating his excitement with each forceful stroke. He pushed the intoxicating sensation across the telepathic link, blending the feel of his cock and the dildo into an indistinguishable blur. He drove into both of them, moving as one.

Pleasure unfurled, capturing all three with its sweeping intensity. Evette whimpered, Aurora screamed, and Lyell threw back his head and roared.

\* \* \*

Tension pulsed through the temple. The Elementals took their places on their symbols as Bianca led Lyell into the center of the ceremonial ring. His wrists were bound behind his back and Bianca held the leash attached to the collar encircling his throat. Though the woven cord was enchanted, the spell had been cast to bind the Raonull Master, not Lyell.

"To offer Lyell the purest concentration of energy we must maintain an open link with him," the Water Master explained. "This means the sorcerer might be able to sense chaotic thoughts or strong emotions. The more energy Lyell expends filtering these out, the less he will have to combat the sorcerer."

Lyell took stock of the people surrounding him without lifting his gaze. Marissa and Sam were at his back; Aurora and Yamir stood to his right. Tenderness and encouragement flowed from Aurora, her emotions concentrated and calm.

"Are you ready?" Mistress Air asked.

Lyell gave an assertive nod, balancing his spirit, preparing for battle.

The musical chant of the Elementals chimed through the air. He absorbed the evocation, opening his mystic conduits, ready to receive energy. The temple floor dissolved beneath his feet. He focused on the challenge ahead. Prepared by the wisdom

of the Elementals, empowered by the sacrifice of the Sutrotha order, and supported by a loving family, Lyell opened his eyes.

Shadow gave way to the verdant green of a primordial glen. Not a sound disturbed the unnatural hush. Lyell sensed the sorcerer before he saw him. Bianca raised her head and they turned together to face their enemy.

"I didn't think you'd come," the sorcerer said. "I was looking forward to killing you."

"Sorry to disappoint you." Bianca tugged Lyell forward by the leash. "I told you I would come and I always keep my word."

"Boldly spoken, Sutrotha. Why are you still dressed?"

Lyell searched the sorcerer's face, forcing himself to ignore the burns. His features, the shape of his eyes, he should know this man.

The sorcerer's gaze shifted to Lyell. "You think you know me, boy?" He paused, moving closer, hands clasped behind his back. "We met once... a long time ago."

Images swirled within Lyell's mind, memories blended with mystic vision. He was a lad of twelve standing at his father's side as the Raonull invasion was exposed before the Unseleighe court.

"Our fathers were brothers." Lyell insulated himself from the memory, accepting the facts without reliving the incident. "You were once Phelan Karlis, my cousin."

"The strongest are meant to rule. Is that not the way of the Unseleighe Sidhe? My father was stronger than your father as the Raonull are stronger than the Sutrotha. We proved it in battle that day. But your brother refuses to accept our victory."

"You proved nothing, Phelan, but the depravity of your own nature."

"The names we were known by before our transcendence have no meaning to the Raonull."

Lyell slipped his hands from the cord and snapped it like a whip. The woven strands coiled around the sorcerer, trapping his arms against his sides.

His furious gaze flew to Bianca. "You bitch!" He disintegrated the cord in a puff of silver smoke and sent Bianca flying into the trees.

Lyell felt energy saturate his being, supplied by his loved ones and channeled through the Elementals. He visualized a containment sphere. *"Tyratha tu dey du."* He spoke the incantation with authority and a solid sphere encased the sorcerer.

Bianca crept out of the trees. Lyell kept his gaze fixed on his enemy.

The sphere exploded, razor-sharp fragments bursting outward. Lyell raised a shield, deflecting the debris back on the sorcerer. Each pointed piece passed through the Raonull without slowing down.

The sorcerer laughed. "I've had centuries to perfect my skills and each soul I destroyed augmented my power."

*End it now, Mistress Air decreed. His life was forfeit long ago.*

"The Sutrotha order finds you unworthy of existence." Lyell raised his hands and trapped the sorcerer within a mystic stream. The Raonull screamed, his eyes blazing flames. Searing pain shot along Lyell's arms, burning into his chest. Panting, he braced his legs and adjusted the stream. Sweat beaded his brow. He gritted his teeth. The sorcerer flailed, writhing against the punishing bombardment.

Lyell groaned. Energy flowed out of him faster than he could siphon it from the Elementals. Bianca pressed her hands to the middle of his back, supporting him, offering her energy. The sorcerer sank to his knees, his features shriveled, contorted into a cadaverous husk.

*He has been dead for two centuries. You must disperse his energy.* Again the advice came from Mistress Air.

Gathering the last of his strength, Lyell burrowed inside the sorcerer and detonated a mystic charge. The sorcerer's emaciated body exploded, scattering across the glen like ash. The wind kicked up, driving the particles apart, until no trace remained of the Raonull.

## Epilogue

Lyell soaked in the ceremonial pool resting between his mates. Aurora rubbed his shoulders, while Evette knelt between his thighs, her teasing massage moving ever closer to his burgeoning erection.

"I'm supposed to be relaxing," he reminded her.

She laughed and circled his cock with her hand. "You don't find this relaxing?"

"You are wicked and you know it."

"You wouldn't have me any other way."

He couldn't argue with that.

"Can we explore D'Arcy Aiden for a few days before we return to Virginia?" Aurora asked.

Lyell pulled Evette's eager hand away and looked back at Aurora. "Return? Why would we return to Virginia? D'Arcy Aiden is my home."

Evette turned his face back toward her. "But it's not ours. We have a prosperous night club, friends and family, all in the realm of mortals."

He sighed. "I suppose we'll have to work out some sort of compromise."

"Chelsea spends her weekdays at her house and her weekends at Burton Manor. Maybe we can do something like that," Aurora offered.

"We have to stay in Virginia through the holidays." Evette sounded emphatic. "The club is booked solid through New Year's Day."

He considered their suggestions, remembering the Elementals' insistence that he remain open to new ideas. It might do him good to spend time beyond the Unseleighe realm and once they returned he could introduce them to the wonders of his world. "I spent so many years preparing for a task that's now complete. I should feel liberated, but I feel... obsolete."

"Obsolete?" Evette chuckled. "Your skills are still intact. As soon as your energy levels return you'll be as formidable as before."

"You need a new quest," Aurora suggested.

"Or at least a new mission." Evette looked beyond Lyell and met Aurora's gaze. "I think he'd make a fabulous bouncer."

Lyell laughed. "Then what will Tom do? You already have a bouncer."

"You're just being obstinate." Evette shot him a warning glare. "We're trying to find a new purpose for your life."

Leaning his head back against Aurora's breasts, he smiled in contentment. "Like keeping you two out of trouble won't be challenging enough."

"Joint custody it is," Evette decided. "We'll split our time between your world and ours."

"We have the rest of our lives to explore the possibilities." Lyell closed his eyes and surrendered to the pleasure of their caresses.

**The End**

## **Aubrey Ross**

Multi-award winning author Aubrey Ross writes an eclectic assortment of erotic fiction. From sinister power struggles between demonic clans, to adventurous Mystic Keepers, her books are filled with passion and imagination. Release your inhibitions and let her stories take you where only dreamers dare to soar.

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