



Lynn Crain

Book 3 in the
Santa's Elves Series

An Elf's
DESIRE

An Elf's Desire—

Book 3 Santa's Elves Series

By

Lynn Crain

The unauthorized reproduction or distribution of this copyrighted work is illegal. Criminal copyright infringement, including infringement without monetary gain, is investigated by the FBI and is punishable by up to 5 years in federal prison and a fine of \$250,000.

Please purchase only authorized electronic editions, and do not participate in or encourage the electronic piracy of copyrighted materials. Your support of the author's rights is appreciated.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events or locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

An Elf's Desire - Book 3 Santa's Elves Series

Copyright © 2007 Lynn Crain

ISBN: 1-55410-828-4

Cover art by Angela Waters

All rights reserved. Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilization of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, is forbidden without the written permission of the publisher.

Published by eXtasy Books

Look for us online at:

www.extasybooks.com

Dedication

Tina - Thanks for always being there for me no matter what.

As always to the boys, Gordon, Tom and Kyle...you're the best.

And to Kim, you're the best daughter-in-law and assistant ever. Thanks for the MySpace. It wouldn't be there without you.

Glossary of Terms

beloved - muileach

darling - àilleagan, cagaran

druaightagh - druid, occult, charmer, charming, magician, druidic(al)

good morning - Dia dhuit ar maidin

heart - cridhe, crìodhe, croí

I love you - Tha gaol agam ort.

I'm sorry - Tha mi duilich

loinnir - literal translation is shining glade; the area where elven magic exerts the most influence. In this area, elves are undetectable.

love - bàidh, gaol, gràdh, liobh, seirc; báidhe

May all your days be happy ones. - A h-uile là sona dhuibh's gun là idir dona dhuibh

mouth - beul, gionach; bél, béal

nor'ahkeem - process of bonding together lovemates for all eternity. Once the process is completed the lovers will have eyes only for each other with a love that transcends beyond forever.

scathach - (Scau-ahch) The Celtic goddess of healing, magic, martial arts and of prophecy. She is also known as the Shadowy One and She Who Strikes Fear. She was a woman warrior who lived in Albion and possibly on the Isle of Skye who taught those with the need to defend themselves using martial arts.

slànaighear - healer

The babe is mine - An naoidhean thà e leamsa

Prologue

The energy came off the woman in waves, almost knocking him down with its intensity. He looked around again knowing without a doubt that it was here and Aingeal Locklin was the person responsible. Fearghus had first felt the energy surge when he had been in his home located next to Scotland's main loinnir and seat to the Elven Council. At first he had tried to ignore it, but then the council had called him and they were an entity which couldn't be ignored.

Sighing, he slammed down the whiskey he had ordered at the wedding reception of Angie and Ardan Locklin. While it had been a beautiful wedding, he knew no one understood the danger Aingeal put them all in. It would not do to have the whole world know about the elven realm. Humans weren't known for their acceptance of outsiders even amongst themselves. And if they knew there were more outsiders than ever imagined serious issues for both species would

come to the forefront.

So when the council had given him the task of taking care of this ‘problem,’ he didn’t want to have anything to do with it. He had seen what could happen when things didn’t go as planned and there had been serious consequences. And those consequences had almost killed him. Still, the council had been relentless in their pursuit of him taking care of this issue until he was finally compelled to do what they requested. This wasn’t something they would allow him to hand off to an underling. He basically had no recourse in the matter and would have to take the assignment himself.

Then the fun part had started. Gathering every bit of data on the Locklin family that he could find, he could see problems from the start. Bevan Locklin had married the human Janice Paine and they had met over thirty years ago. He had found out she had left a very prominent family in Boston to come here to the North Pole. The why would have to be explored later as there wasn’t much in the elven record.

The Locklins were very prolix and had had six children during the course of their marriage. Fearghus didn’t care that they supposedly loved each other. Sipping on his second whiskey of the afternoon, sometimes that shouldn’t even enter the equation, as he well knew. For their children to

have so much latent sexual energy meant it had to come from somewhere. And that somewhere always started with the parents.

Spinning on the bar stool, he turned to look out over the crowd, spying Janice Locklin. The woman was in her fifties and as beautiful as the pictures he had dug up from before her marriage. He could see where Aingeal had gotten her good looks and tall stature. He watched her a few more moments realizing that she would be the one he had to convince why he needed to take her daughter back to Scotland. There was no way he could do his research nor cap Aingeal's sexual energy if he were here. Here wasn't safe.

Sure, Santa had managed to keep them all out of the public eye, but things could change quickly. Still, the old man wasn't an elf. He was something different, something no one had ever been able to put a title on. But the council had a profound respect for him and demanded all elvenkind show him the same respect.

"Mind telling me what your business is here, Fearghus?"

He was brought out of his thoughts by the very man he speculated about. "Kris."

Santa placed his hand on the bar and leaned in. "I'd rather you call me, Santa."

He frowned at the old man. The council had been very specific in their instructions. The man

was the ruler of his realm and he was to do anything and everything the old man said. "Yes, sir, Santa."

Smiling, the white bearded man, patted his arm. "Much better, but you still haven't told me just why you are here."

"The council sent me." He didn't want to get into it here. This was a place for celebration not confrontation.

"Ah...the council...and the purpose of this visit?"

Lifting the glass again to his lips, he looked at the reflection in the mirror behind the bar. The woman with the long beautiful, black tresses twirled on the dance floor and, if he didn't know better, he would have thought she was the object of his very own desire. What desire, he thought to himself wryly.

"The council told me that they had sent you notice of why they wanted me here. Surely you got it?"

The old man impatiently tapped his hand on the bar. "I want to hear it from you."

Turning back to the man, he smiled. "I'm here to see why there is such a prolitheration of sexual energy in the new world centered right here in the North Pole."

"And I suppose you think you're the best one to figure it out?" Suddenly, Bevan Locklin stood

beside the old man.

"Bevan."

"Fearghus, I hardly expected the council to send you here."

"Who did you expect them to send? You and I both know it has to be a family member as well as a sex therapist. And as you both know, unfortunately, I'm the manager of anything concerning the minds of elves."

Frowning, the older elf looked at him. "Just because we share an ancestor somewhere back there doesn't mean that you're really a family member. And while you may think you're a sex therapist, it doesn't mean you are one of those either."

"Gentleman, this doesn't answer my question."

Sitting down his glass, he turned fully toward both men. "I'm here to fix your daughter, Locklin, because she can cause the elven community great harm. People are already snooping around the edges of the loinnars worldwide."

He barked out a sharp laugh. "Because she likes sex?"

"That's not it and you know it. We're allowed to like sex, but unchecked sexual energy can reach some humans and then they start looking for us."

"I doubt that's true. Santa has put a safety spell on all my children. He had too because they were half human. You of all people should know just

how hard it is to train the human half. There was no other way to really protect them."

Fearghus opened his eyes wide. He had heard about the power of the old man, but had never experienced it at all. "Well, it's not working."

"What do you mean it's not working?"

Turning to Santa, Fearghus looked at him. "Did your protection spell include anything about repressing unused energy? Specifically sexual in nature?"

Santa rubbed his chin. "It was pretty much a standard protection I put on them when they were each born. I never realized one of them would be so powerful."

Bevan's looked surprise. "What do you mean?"

Santa turned sad eyes to them. "I mean that I too have limited power in some areas. If I didn't know that one of your children would be very powerful with elven as well as human magic, I couldn't very well protect them from it as it's part of them. And if that power was sexual or some other latent form of magic, then I would have needed someone like Fearghus to actually help me to place the cap on that energy in certain areas. If it were another type of energy, it would need to be another type of healer."

"Why him?"

"Fearghus is a slànaighear and druaightagh. Just what he said, a druidic sex therapist or healer.

It depends upon who you talk to on the subject."

"A druidic healer? Those are people of legend. And I've never heard of a druidic sex therapist." Bevan turned to Fearghus. "Are you telling me what happened with Gemma was because you were a druidic healer and a sex therapist?"

Fearghus nodded because there was no defense. He did what he needed to do and never looked back. Damn his calling! "There's nothing I can say."

"There's a lot you can say, but nothing you are willing to tell us about. It explains so much except why you are here."

"I need to take your daughter home to the old country. She needs to come with me to the ancient loinnir in Scotland. The council wants to meet her and evaluate her."

Bevan ran a tired hand through his hair. "Her mother will have my hide."

Santa snorted. "She knew the risks of having half-elven children, Bevan. Just be honest with her and I'm sure that everything will be fine."

"I guess I better go explain why we need to send our oldest daughter to Scotland." He walked away slowly, turning to cast a wary glance at Fearghus one last time.

"Then I better go see what I can do to prevent a total meltdown." The old man patted Fearghus's shoulder before he turned and moved away.

Motioning to the bartender to pour him another one, he tried not to let his mind wander to Gemma and what had happened. He should have been paying better attention to his surroundings. The perfume wafted to his nose and he would have known her erotic scent anywhere. His calling should have made him impervious to her yet his cock jerked in response. This was not going like he imagined it.

"Hi." Her voice came out as a breathless whisper. "I don't think I've ever seen you before at any of our family gatherings."

He swirled the ice around in his glass. "Nope." He turned and fully faced her. Aingeal Locklin was even more beautiful close up with wide blue-violet eyes and ruby red lips. And that flawless skin. He wanted to touch that skin. Touch it in ways, which no druidic healer should touch a woman. Ever. And heaven forbid a sex therapist would want to touch a client. Thank goodness the elves looked at things a little differently.

She reached out, pulling an olive from the container on the bar, and popped it in her mouth. "Guess you don't talk much."

He watched her luscious pink tongue almost feeling it rim his cock then saw a flash of silver. He really needed to pull his mind out of the gutter. "Do you have a tongue piercing?"

She sighed heavily and turned to lean her

elbows on the bar. "Not you, too."

"I'm not criticizing it. I hear it's really hot in the bedroom." He slowly took another sip of his drink, imagining just what it would feel like on his body.

"I wouldn't know."

He sat down his glass and turned to look at her. "Are you telling me you've never performed fellatio?"

Her face scrunched up. "What is that? I'm not good with big words." She gave him a sly smile.

He looked at her surprised. "I guess I was wrong." This was something totally unexpected.

"I guess you were." She chewed on another olive.

He stuck out his hand. Might as well start from the top. "I'm Fearghus Brodie. Your father and I share an ancestor."

She chuckled. "Really? But I can tell from your accent you're not from around here."

"You've got that right. I'm from Scotland. And you?"

"Here, right here until a few years ago when I decided to escape my shackles. I went to college for a while and now live in a nearby Eskimo village."

"Shackles?"

"Yeah and they're called my mother."

"Ah...I take it that you and your mother don't

get along."

"That's an understatement. We're more like water and oil. I'll be amazed if we ever get along."

"You will some day. Sometimes when the two are a lot alike it can take a while."

"Thanks for your kind words of encouragement."

"I don't know you well enough to know if that's sarcastic or not, but you're welcome. Have you ever thought about traveling?"

"Traveling? Now just where can I go? The furthest I can seem to get away is to that Eskimo village about three hundred miles from here. Like I said before, the only other place was college in Anchorage while I studied geology, social work and anthropology. Anywhere else and I'll never hear the end of it."

"How about if you went with a relative type?"

"You?" She arched an eyebrow.

"Why not me? Is there something wrong with me?"

"There's nothing wrong with you, but I don't really know you. You're quite handsome and well...I'm sure you're something in the sack...but I really can't seem to get away from my family."

"What if I tell you it wouldn't be a problem at all? What if I told you I already have their blessing?"

Her smile brightened the room. "If you can do

that, I'd pay you handsomely."

He had his in.

Chapter 1

She couldn't believe her good fortune. It might have taken six years, but she was finally out from under her mother's thumb. And she owed it all to the man in the seat next to her. Or rather slept next to her. They had boarded the plane in Anchorage, Alaska because her mother insisted she get the full travel experience since this was her first major trip away from her home. No sleigh ride for her.

Aingeal Locklin thought about the whirlwind three weeks she'd had since being in her brother Ardan's wedding. The wedding had been wonderful and she had done her part. But the moment she had seen Fearghus Brodie, her focus changed. Suddenly, here was a man who actually turned her on, making her want to take the plunge and actually 'do it.'

She knew everyone thought she was anything but a virgin. But virgin she was and at twenty-four, it was time she changed at all of that. And

Fearghus was just the man. It took some convincing on both their parts to get her mother to agree, but once Aingeal made up her mind no force on this world would change it. In spite of everything, her mother understood that aspect of her personality. Even her father even sided with her on this one pushing for the once in a lifetime trip to Scotland.

So here she was seven miles above the surface of the world with the most handsome man she had ever met. And he was asleep. It would be a while before she could jump his bones. Sighing, she frowned to herself and rose to go to the restroom. It would take more than a drink to take the edge off. Smiling at the steward as she walked down on the aisle, she had to stand in line for a few minutes for a free cubicle. Once inside, she stared at herself in the mirror. She should stop doing this, but she couldn't help herself. She needed to feel the surge of sexual magic that an orgasm brought.

Maybe there was something wrong with her. She shook her head to herself. Aingeal refused to believe that at all and knew all she needed was a good fuck. A really good fuck. But anything would do in the interim between now and when she actually had the chance to get into Fearghus's pants and touch all parts of his glorious body. Smiling, she closed the lid and sat down on the

narrow seat and pulled up her dress. She had insisted on wearing it as it was the easiest thing to push aside when necessary. But under it she wore one of the sexiest thongs she could find in anticipation of what might happen. Unfortunately, the opportunity never presented itself.

Lifting one leg, she braced it against the wall and began to stroke herself, watching her reflection in the mirror. Plucking her hard nub like a guitar string, her hips lifted gently to some internal rhythm, feeling every move as the friction brought her closer to self-fulfillment. Licking her lips gently, she moaned slightly and was stunned at a tug on her mind.

Aingeal, what do you think you're doing?

Brought out of her self-induced haze, she opened wide eyes and sat straight up. It just wasn't possible. Swallowing hard, she made a pretense of finishing her business and washed her hands. Looking at herself in the mirror, she leaned against the shiny surface and closed her eyes. This would never do. Her face was flushed, her pupils dilated and even her lips had a pouty look as if they had been kissed more than once. Stomping back to her seat, she stood and glared at the man who now looked innocently up at her.

"Is something wrong my dear?"

"You know exactly what is wrong," she hissed. "That was *totally* unfair."

His green eyes darkened a little. “No, what would be totally unfair would be the fact that everyone on this plane would have felt your energy if I had allowed you to find fulfillment. Some of them would have even gotten horny because they had been blasted with a sexual energy unlike anything they had ever felt. And this is a really confined space. What if it had been the pilot and something had happened to these people?”

Aingeal was taken aback. She had never thought about any other person except herself when she had pleased herself. “What do you mean?”

He sighed. “Have your parents never talked to you about anything?”

She bristled at his tone. “My parents talked to me. We just never talked much about sex. They only seemed comfortable with just the basics.”

“Well, if they couldn’t talk to you about elven magic and sex, they should have called on someone else who could have.” He gazed at her for a few more moments before returning his attention to the drink in front of him. “Just what *did* they tell you about sex?”

She flopped down in her seat and frowned. This is so not going like she had thought it would. If truth be told, she had hoped to have the man accompany her to that small cubicle in the first

class area of the plane. "I'm sure it was the usual stuff."

"By usual stuff, I suppose you mean they told you about how elven sexual energy affects everyone around them no matter what species they are then. Is that correct?"

She looked at him, watching just how his lips caressed the ice cube in the glass. Her nose practically twitched with his heady scent, all woodsy like after a refreshing rain in a forest. Her sexual awareness of him grew with every passing minute spent with him. She didn't know how much more she could take of being together without touching the man. And it had all started at the wedding reception. She had tried to watch him unnoticed and couldn't help but stare at him. With his green eyes and dark hair, he was every woman's wet dream. Tall, broad shouldered with muscles in all the right places, it made her want to get to the one muscle hidden from sight. Her hand itched with the desire to reach into his pants and find out just what his dark pants hid from view.

"Did you even hear me?"

"Huh?" His chuckle sluiced over her like a warm shower making her feel safe and secure. Nothing bad would ever happen while she was with this man. How she knew was beyond her, but she knew. "I heard you, but I'm not sure what you're getting at, Fearghus. Please explain it to

me. Be specific."

"An elf must be careful with their sexual energy. It is the one thing a human can feel as far as elven magic is concerned. Everything else, the elf must be willing to share with a human. I believe that is what your parents have—a special bond which allows them to share your father's magical energies and everything else in life."

Well, it was one thing her parents never had talked about with her or her siblings that she could ever remember. She could see the truth of what he said. "Really? It explains some things then."

"I'm sure it does. Now the first thing we need to talk about is how you can control your sexual energy no matter what the situation."

She blinked rapidly. Did he really know what she was doing in the bathroom? "I'm not sure what you're talking about."

He took another drink. "I take it then you didn't realize you are a walking pheromone."

"Pheromone? You mean the supposed smell that entices us to be attracted to each other? The ones our bodies know about, but we don't really have a clue it's happening because the smell is so subtle?"

"Yes, those. See, once we have ours excited any elf within a thousand miles can detect them and sometimes even a larger distance if they are

attuned to that person. It may be subtle, but we know it's there. Add to that the magic sexual energy which is released once an elf achieves fulfillment and suddenly, not only can the elves feel it depending on the strength of the magic, but every human within the same distance feels it. It makes everyone, elf or human, feel horny when orgasm isn't achieved and if the elf manages to have an orgasm, the feeling is just like the afterglow a couple feels after making love."

Aingeal's breathing came faster. The thought left her horrified. That meant her siblings felt the sexual energy every time she rubbed her body to orgasm. Sure she had felt her brothers' when they had first made love to the women who became their wives, but she had always assumed it was because they were all family. That meant her parents...heavens...her eyes got wide. "Oh my god. Are you telling me that every time...that means...are you horny now?" her voice trailed off into a stunned silence.

Smiling slightly, he nodded. "Every time you've ever had an orgasm they can feel it if you haven't learned to suppress or shield most of it. And yes, I'm feeling your lack of discretion right now."

Her chest hurt and her eyes drifted to the bulge she definitely saw in his pants. This wasn't good. This was bad, very bad. Now she understood just

why everyone looked at her strangely, why so many boys couldn't keep their hands off her. God, just how many orgasms had she had since she was sixteen? She sunk lower in her seat. They probably thought she was some slut who slept with every male she could get her hands on. Heaven only knew just how many times they had commented to her she seemed to like sex. "Every time?"

"Every time." Fearghus reached over and squeezed her hand. "But don't worry. We'll train you how to shield and suppress the majority of the magic and then you'll be able to go back to your life. Your very rich sex life."

She looked up at him from her slouched position and sighed. Aingeal wondered if she should tell him now or later of her virgin status. She wondered about her wisdom in not listening when she were younger. She supposed there came a time in every person's life when they came to grips with the fact their parents just might know what they were talking about. "Maybe we should talk about that."

He held up his hands, palms out. "No, we shouldn't. I don't need to know who your sexual partners are at all. I just need to make sure you can enjoy every other sexual experience you ever have in your life. Once we get to my home in Scotland, I will begin my training process."

Pulling herself up, she frowned at him. "Does

this include any hands on experience?"

"Only as much as we need." He swirled the cubes in the glass with his finger.

Her attention was drawn to his hands. They were strong with nails neatly trimmed. And she wanted to feel them on her in all the intimate places. "Would it be rude to say I'll probably need a lot?" She could tell she had stunned him with her question. Still, if they wanted her trained, they would have to do it her way.

And her way was to get Fearghus Brodie to separate her from her virgin status first. Then hopefully, the rest would work itself out.

* * * *

This would be the death of him yet. Sure, he was young by elven standards and had the stamina needed to do the task at hand. But he didn't want to do anything with this woman. He didn't want to do anything with any woman at all. But the job would require a certain amount of hands-on contact. And he if remembered anything about hands-on it would include touching and kissing and caressing. Then there would be more touching and kissing and, if one were lucky, total fulfillment as the trainer would discover all the secrets the elf in question had. Intimate secrets. Secrets meant for lovers and not for casual

acquaintances. He had never understood the detachment a human sex therapist needed with a client because being a druidic healer required he combine the duties of both. When one talked and discovered things regarding sex, no one could remain in a detached state.

Taking another drink, he watched her for a moment before saying another thing. "If the signature of your sexual energy was read correctly, you won't need very much hands-on anything. You seem quite knowledgeable. Matter of fact the only problem the council has is that your energy is not hidden from everyone." He felt surprise that she flushed bright red. This woman was a contradiction in terms. It seemed as if she ran hot and cold then put on this unknowledgeable little girl act. Maybe that's how she got other men, but she wouldn't be getting that from him. No, he would take the professional high road. He would do what was necessary to get the job done, do what was best for the given situation and leave her to do her own devices.

Looking at her, he knew it would be not much of an imposition at all. The woman was beautiful and he felt sure he could compete with whoever had had her before. Compete, hell, he was better than anyone she had ever had sexually. He knew his prowess in the bedroom and no one had ever left his bed unsatisfied. Her face still had the soft

glow of her blush, making him want to reach out and touch her cheek, making him want to do more with this woman.

Reaching out, he brushed one finger down her cheek and finally cupped her cheek. Leaning down, he brushed her lips gently, surprised his cock twitched in response as his heart skipped a beat. That hadn't happened in a long, long time and, while not unpleasant, it was certainly unexpected.

But it wasn't enough and he pressed his lips more firmly to hers, his tongue sneaking out to lick her bottom lip. She tasted like a just ripe melon and it was sweet nectar to his taste buds. Pulling her closer, he began to delve into the soft recesses of her mouth with his tongue. It was like a burst of sensation on long unused senses, almost too much to bear, but he wanted more. And if the butterflies in his stomach were any indication, this would not be satisfied by just some quick jump in the hay. No, this would only be satisfied by a long, slow afternoon with kisses that lasted for hours while licking and nipping each other before he put his hard cock into her, riding her to total fulfillment for both of them. If he had this way, the afternoon would mellow into night and he would have her again and again and again until he had totally worked her out of his system.

Pulling away, he saw the shocked look on her

face. He wanted more and saw that she too wanted the same. However, he might not be able to give her exactly what she wanted or needed to fulfill her dreams.

Chapter 2

The rest of the trip proved uneventful even though the kiss made Aingeal hornier than ever. She should have insisted they come the quickest way by Santa's sleigh. It would have limited her exposure to Fearghus if they had gotten here sooner. As it was, she spent almost fifteen hours confined with the man in a small space. Now, it wouldn't have been so bad if she would have gotten something she had wanted. But, no, all she got for her time and hassle was being more sexually repressed than ever. She should have just ignored him while she was in the bathroom.

And according to the man, the more she let that sexual tension build up, the better it would be when she finally got around to having sex. Aingeal felt it was all hogwash, just another ploy for him not to have sex with her. Now, she knew nothing was wrong with her at all. She was attractive and sexy and men adored her. So what

was wrong with Fearghus Brodie?

Turning to him, she sized him up again in the limousine. The man was an enigma, a handsome enigma granted, but still there was something she felt she missed. She would find out just what made him tick and then she would make him squirm. Smiling to herself, she moved her hand to rest on his thigh. "Just where are we going?"

"The council has a compound near the loinnir which we use. As far as the humans are concerned, I'm a very rich man with a very big country estate. The gateway to the elven realm is located there. I have some very good human friends who will do anything to protect us and our kind. Add to that the villagers and anyone with the knowing to make our community very strong."

Her eyebrows rose. She hadn't meant to put him on the defensive and crossed her arms. "I didn't mean to offend you. It sounds as if you don't like humans very well even though you will use them when you need to do so. You know my brother Ardan used to be that way."

"Really? And just what made him change his mind." He stared at her, but she was in no mood to back down.

"A very special woman named Angie Hudson."

He gave a short laugh. "How could she have been special? She wasn't even part elf."

"That may be true, but the Elders gave her their blessing. The Elders also knew about Tessa and her parents, too. Not all humans want to expose us and our magic. We do have some real friends."

"We still have to be careful with humans. Not all of them can be trusted."

Aingeal looked out the window at the beautiful scenery passing by. She had to get away from this conversation and back on track to what she really wanted. "You could say the same of some elves."

"But elves don't try to screw each other the way humans do."

"I don't know about that since the only exposure I've had to elves are those at the North Pole. Both of us know those elves aren't a good cross section of the population as a whole."

"True, but they are the ones who have kept Santa going for all those years."

"But the majority of them look like Eggther. Very few look like my father."

"Again true. But every branch of the species have their quirks. The elves of the North Pole are no different." He turned to look at her then, his green eyes bored a hole through to her very soul. "Your father's family actually have ties to this loinnir and were late comers to Santa's workshop. It's my understanding the break between this loinnir and them came at the time of your father and my common ancestor. Since that time, your

father's family has been part of the North Pole loinnir."

"You might be correct. I tended to not pay attention to the family history when Dad recited it."

"Is there a chance you didn't pay attention to your lessons on how to keep your sexual magic in check also?"

It was always going to come back to this. Her ineptitude on keeping her sexual magic under wraps. How was she to know playing solitaire would cause this many problems? Sighing heavily, maybe she should just admit her guilt. "Look, maybe I didn't pay as much attention to my lessons as I should have, but you can't continue to blame my parents for my shortcomings. I am an adult now and I was a pain in the ass as a kid. I'm the one who has to learn everything the hard way. So I probably did ignore anything they said on sex, too."

"I'll keep that in mind when we begin our training."

Frowning, she squeezed his leg. "I'm trying to confess here and you're making it very hard."

He flashed her a brilliant smile and his eyes brightened. "I'm not supposed to be your confessor. I'm supposed to be your teacher."

She shrugged. "Confessor, teacher...what's the difference?"

"Tell me you just didn't say that." He frowned.

"I did and from where I sit I don't see much difference between the two. Both want you to bare your soul in some way. One by confessing your wrongs and the other to open yourself up to the learning process."

Aingeal watched his face for a few moments. The emotions seen were fleeting at best, but still there no matter how hard he tried to hide them. This could be fun if she wanted it to be. She definitely knew he was the one to take her virginity. He was so handsome and she was so drawn to him. Maybe teasing this guy wouldn't be such a bad thing. After all, teasing could heighten the experience according to him and she wanted the best experience possible.

"The learning experience can be filled with awards. Lots of wonderful rewards." He took a hand and ran it up her arm, making her shiver in anticipation. Caressing her shoulder, he put his hand behind her neck and pulled her forward. Snaking his tongue out, Fearghus ran it along her lower lip much like he had done on the plane. Nipping her gently, he kissed her once before taking her mouth completely, his tongue sparring with hers, feeling the round ball of her tongue jewelry.

She wondered briefly if he speculated just how it would feel on his dick. Her heart raced, her

crotch clenched and she knew in that one moment, she wanted much more from this man. And it scared her to death, but not enough to stop. Kissing him back, she pressed herself even closer and began to caress his chest through his shirt. Aingeal knew what to do even though she had never practiced it on a live person much. A real live person was so much better than dreams. Sure, she had boyfriends and she had come close, but not one of them had ever turned her on like this man.

But then again, that was the point, Fearghus was a man and would demand a give and take type of adult relationship. Teenage boys were easy to push away, but it had been years since she had even gone out on a date. There was no one at the North Pole and the boys, both Eskimo and whoever visited the small village, found out real quick she wasn't ready to put out. A few had tried to last beyond a couple of months, but as soon as they found a pretty girl willing to have sex, she was totally out of the picture. It was hard for them to be allowed to grope her and then not get something for their effort. Now she knew more, she at least understood their issue with her.

Putting her leg over his, she gyrated her body against him. It would be so easy to let loose. To give into those baser needs that she had been denying herself for so long. Doing one's self just

wasn't the same as having a one-on-one experience with another person. All Fearghus would have to do was to put his hand up her skirt and he would know her wet slit awaited his touch.

Pulling away, breathing hard, he leaned into her, forehead to forehead. "We can't do this here. We need to be in the loinnir or at the very least the estate. Both will protect us."

"Protect us from what?" she questioned, her breath coming out more heavily than she intended.

"From the human's finding us during our most intimate moments when our magic is at its highest peak."

"I need...please..." she panted. Aingeal didn't know what was wrong with her, but she needed to feel this man's hands on her naked body, on her breasts, even on the most sacred of places that only she had touched, her clit. Realizing where her thoughts were going, she sat straight up. What was wrong with her? Moving her leg from his, she pushed herself away from him. "I'm sorry...I didn't mean..."

"Don't worry. The lessons will go slow and I'll be happy to be your teacher. Each step will have to be mastered before we can go onto the next."

Turning away from him, she leaned her back against his muscular body. Even though she couldn't touch him just yet, she needed to

continue her contact with him. "Tell me about what I'm seeing."

"We landed in London, as you know, and took a private jet from there to Inverness. Once we landed at the Dalcross Airport we were met by the limo from my estate which is located on the edge of the Black Wood of Rannoch."

"What an interesting name."

"It is one of the few remaining parts of the Caledonian pine forest which used to cover over eighty percent of the land here. It's one of the last of the ancient loinnir sites in the world. We have so few places where we safely practice our ancient magic."

"Why is that? I mean it's not as if our magic is harmful or anything. Would it be such a bad thing to just do it in the human world and let them think it was something miraculous?"

"Were it that simple there wouldn't be a problem." He sighed and wrapped his arm around her, pulling her close. "Human people have been susceptible to our charms in the past. But those who have found out who we were only wanted the power to enhance their own lives. Our oath is like a doctor's, we aren't allowed to do any harm to any creature. All our skills are to be used for good, to keep us safe or even the humans safe. And there have been elves who use their magic for bad things. Don't think there aren't."

"I didn't know about bad elves. I just know there is always good and bad in anything. And I understand it can happen, I just don't understand why an elf would use their magic to do someone, be it human or elf, harm. Then there's the thing with the human population...there are just so many more of them than us...but just why are elves so against the humans?"

"It's not we're against humans, we just don't want them to exploit us or our magic."

"Why are you assuming the worst about the humans? I'm half human and while there are some of them who are bad, not all of them are."

He frowned. "I'm not saying all the humans are bad, but a fair share seem to have that tendency."

"Are all purebred elves like you? I just thought it was Ardan who had issues and he's not even a purebred. At least, I could understand that his hang-ups were all wrapped up because he fell in love with a horrible human woman. Just what is your issue?" Aingeal wasn't sure she wanted an answer from the man, so she concentrated on the scenery outside the car window.

It was so different than the bleak, white landscape of the North Pole. Here it was green and lush with all sorts of trees around them. They went up and down some small hills and there were even some mountains in the distance. She saw few houses on the way, supposing where

there were more than one home that it must be a village of sorts as there were really no signs she could see.

"I don't know if other elves are like me. I haven't taken a poll on their feelings recently. We could ask them when I introduce you to the community."

Her head snapped around and pushed herself from him. "The community? Just how many are there?"

"Every where there is an ancient forest, there's a loinnir and a community of elves. I thought I had made that clear. Some have a large group and some have smaller ones. It depends on just how strong the magic of the elves is within the loinnir. And occasionally, we have a group of elves to start a new loinnir."

"I'm glad we're getting more elven communities. I just didn't realize each loinnir's magic is fueled by those living there." She swallowed hard, thinking. "Does this mean that the North Pole is in danger? Are they in danger because I'm not there?"

"Hey, I don't think you have to worry at all. I believe that the place is protected because of Santa more than anything else. I'm sure the elves there contribute something to everyone's protection."

"I understand Santa has his own special brand of magic, but how does that factor into what you

were just saying about the loinnirs?"

"How much did your father teach you about the elven ways?"

"I've told you I didn't pay much attention whenever my father tried to train me. I assume that's one of the reasons why the council sent you."

He threw her a sly smile. "The council sent me to harness your sexual energy. It could pinpoint our locations for the human hunters."

"Human hunters? What are you talking about?"

"There are people we've designated 'human hunters' who are in the business of finding elves."

"And what do they really have to do with me?"

"They seem to zero in specifically on that type of energy. There's even been some casualties."

"Do you mean deaths?"

"Of a sort. Now getting back to Santa. No one knows just how he does what he does as he is very, very ancient. I believe some of our oldest elders were children when they first met him. But the elves under his care have always been safe. The loinnir has always been tight and secure. That is until you came along."

"I can't believe I've caused so much trouble with my...with me doing...you know." She felt flustered and could feel the heat in her face yet again. This wasn't what she had wanted this conversation to be.

“You really weren’t paying attention.”

Rolling her eyes, she was reprieved by not having to answer as they turned into what appeared to be a private drive. She understood she hadn’t been paying attention when her father tried to teach her the elven way, but in her experience, men didn’t understand period. “Why would I lie about that? I said I wasn’t and I meant it.”

“Well, you seem quite decisive.” He watched her with hungry eyes and a heavy dick wanting her more with each passing moment. He needed to be put out of his misery and soon.

Chapter 3

Aingeal chuckled and shook her head. This man called her indecisive when she saw him as a contradiction in general. Sighing, she realized he probably tried pulling her chain because he seemed to like to do that whenever he could. Plus if she had been correct in her earlier assessment of the situation, he was hornier than hell. "Quit being so sarcastic about it. I didn't want to learn anything from my parents. Like I told you, I was a very difficult child."

"I've heard that before." He rolled his eyes.

"You have? Then why are you asking me?" She crossed her arms over her chest. She hated this type of confrontation as it was like what she had had with her mother. It just went round and round and no one made their point. She needed to get away from this type of behavior. She knew if she could learn to let things go, she would be much better off.

The car stopped and she knew the conversation

would have to wait because they had arrived at the entrance to the huge estate where they would be staying. Aingeal watched as they drove up the tree lined lane to the circular drive. The house looked to be with Victorian in nature, huge and lumbering. She only hoped the inside showed as well as the outside. "How old is the house? What's it like?"

"Young by elven standards. It was built in the 1850s."

"That only answered part of my question. I wondered what the house looked like inside. It must be pretty unique."

"Oh. I'm sorry, you're right, I didn't answer your question. It's very large and has many features which were typical of the time."

She shook her head and threw him a questioning look. "And those are?"

"Tell me, you didn't study your history either, did you?"

"I didn't really like some subjects at all. I just felt they were boring and didn't deserve my attention. Certain eras, like the Victorian age happen to be one of them. I understand elves have long lives and can live more than a generation or two. But personally, I like the here and now better. I've never been one to look to the past for guidance."

Well, that would partially explain why she was

the way she was, but not fully. It was definitely something she would need to work on if she were to blend in totally with any society he thought briefly before speaking. "Alright, then, a typical Victorian house included high ceilings and had a lot of ornate woodwork with cornices and crown molding. There were many fireplaces and paneled doors in most rooms of the larger homes. The original windows usually were the slash and case type. There were the occasional windows which were large and almost went from floor to ceiling. Those are rare. This house has belonged to the council since it was built as does the land."

"Did they purchase it or was it handed down through some lineage?"

Fearghus looked at her. "This piece of land has been in elven hands for generations. The council is the steward of the land and always leaves a member of the original owner's family as its contact with the outside world."

Aingeal looked at him with a curious look. "You're ancestor was the original owner? Does that mean my father's ancestor was an original owner, too?"

"No, the past owner isn't our common ancestor. It was someone different and a lot closer."

"Who was it?"

"Didn't your father..." He trailed off when he saw the look on her face. "Okay, I get the hint and

won't ask again. Our common ancestor was a grandmother six generations back."

"Dad came from the Scottish elves?"

"All of us come from the Scottish elves. This is the land of our ancestors. We are like the Scots and we really consider ourselves Scotsmen as far as nationality goes."

She sat back in her seat as the car came to a halt in front of the stairs which lead to a set of ancient-looking wooden double doors. Getting out when the driver opened the car door, she stood and looked. This would be a dream for any human woman. The home may be Victorian, but it was huge with a center section and two wings off to either side. "Was it always so huge?"

"Actually, the two wings were added over the years. It has twelve bedrooms and bathrooms, game room, ballroom, offices and even facilities which can accommodate a small conference. It can accommodate the whole council and some of their family if necessary."

"Has that ever been necessary?"

"Only once I can remember."

Slowly, going up the steps, her eyes went up the front of the house taking in the ornate spires which started on either of the door ending above on the third floor. Finally, she turned and faced him. "What was the reason? Or am I not allowed to ask?"

"You can ask all you want, but it's something we can discuss later." Fearghus came up to her and gently turned her toward the door. "Right now, I want to get you settled first and then we can start teaching you all those things you missed." He lightly shoved her forward as he pushed the doors open.

"Wow." It was the only thing she felt appropriate. The hardwood floor was dark with a reddish hue and the fireplace to the left of the side of the hall was almost as ornate as the front of the house. The wide staircase to the right side of the large enclosure wound around the interior, hugging the wall as it went up the full three stories. The dark wood had been polished to a high shine and made the space even brighter.

"We've actually been working on modernizing the place. This area we lightened up as the original wood on the walls made it extremely dark as was common practice during that time."

"This foyer is beautiful, light and airy. I'm glad you changed it, but you should maintain some of the rooms in their original state."

"We have kept a few rooms in their Victorian state. I'm sure the council will be glad you approve of their decision to keep some things original." He gave her a brilliant smile.

Frowning, she contemplated him for a moment before speaking. "Fearghus, are you telling me

that they know what we're saying?"

"The common areas of the house are all monitored because we do a lot of functions in this home. The only rooms which aren't monitored are the bedrooms and the bathrooms. The public ones do have limited monitoring in the washroom portion."

She smiled at him wryly. "At least you know just where to draw the line."

"We do have some scruples."

"Really? Then maybe you can tell me just why you are monitoring people anyway?" She looked at him then and prayed her eyes weren't smoldering as she wanted to be doing something else. Aingeal hoped he would just get on with it and take her to her room. Once there, she knew what she wanted, but she wasn't sure how to get it.

"We monitor everyone who enters this house, elf or human, because this home has a historic past for all of us. There are artifacts here on display that we want to make sure stay with the elven community."

"Point out one."

He walked to stand under a painting of a traditional Highlander. "Take this piece for example. It's a work from an early 19th century artist of some renown, Andrew MacLeod. He's not well known, but that painting has been valued at

almost a hundred thousand pounds. It's pretty typical of the times."

She arched an eyebrow at him. "Little hard to sneak out the front door, isn't it?"

Fearghus laughed. "Point taken. How about this then...the snuff box on the sideboard there is from 1830 and has a picture of the second French Revolution...beautiful, isn't it?"

Aingeal walked over and looked at the small inconspicuous box there. It was indeed beautiful with a small painting in the center of what appeared to be a set of flags. "How was it made?"

"I'm not quite sure, but I know the center piece is brass and it was painted in the manner of the time."

She turned and smiled at him. "If you have other things like this then yes, your paranoia is justified I supposed. Other than when I went away to college at Anchorage, I've never lived in a place where you had to lock your doors or worry about people stealing things."

"It's an unfortunate circumstance of being in the humans' world. They don't place the same value on things as we do."

"That's where you are terribly wrong, Fearghus. There are those humans who value the world as much if not more than we do."

"Give me an example...just one...and maybe I'll believe you."

She watched him for a moment and wondered why he was so down on humans and their view of the world. There were so many beautiful things, so many wonderful people and all anyone, human or elf, had to do was make themselves a part of it. "The Eskimo for one. The Native Americans for another. Those two groups are doing everything they can to preserve their natural worlds. Just like elves. You don't own the desire to save the world from its own people, Fearghus, some of the very people you are scorning want the same thing."

He looked taken aback, as if she had slapped him. The human world was part of her and she couldn't deny it. She had always hated when Ardan would get nasty about the 'human problem' as he called it occasionally. Thank god he had changed his tune the moment he had fallen in love with Angie. The humans weren't the only ones who had caused the problems. After all, the elves stood by and let it happen. They had the power to change it and chose not to do so. They were as much to blame as the humans in her mind.

"Touché," he murmured. "I have been thoroughly chastised. Let me show you to your room." He turned and started up the stairs.

Realizing she might have been a little too harsh, she scrambled to follow him. "Look, I just wanted to point out some things I felt important. My older

brother Ardan has always made me mad by his assumption all humans don't want what is right and good for the earth. That's just not true." Aingeal continued to watch his back as they approached the second floor landing. She could tell he was tense, but she wasn't sure if she had caused it or not.

He stopped and she ran right into him. He turned to her, grabbing her shoulders and balancing her. "You're right. There are those among the humans who have embraced the conservationists' attitudes. My only fear is it will be too little, too late."

Without warning, he swooped down on her like a bird of prey, intent on taking what he wanted. She squeaked in surprise and put her hands on his waist to balance herself against him. She could feel every bulge and muscle as he pressed her up against the wall behind her. His lips captured hers without tenderness, his lips hard against her soft ones. But something changed and suddenly what had been hard turned tender as he began to gently suck at her bottom lip as he began to watch her. His eyes deepened in color.

This was no boy. He would not allow her to tease him like she had done others. This man would expect fulfillment of his need and somehow she knew only she would do. Her body clenched in excitement as she realized this just may finally

be the moment when everything was right, when everything would come together.

“Not here,” he murmured and began to take the stairs two at a time, dragging her with him.

He went up another flight of stairs, ending on the third floor where apparently the visitor suites were. Going along a dimly lit hall, he finally stopped in front of a door. “Everything will change when we go in this door. I will become teacher and you student. You will be required to abide by my instruction once inside. Will you do that? Will you acquiesce to my wants, needs and desires as I train you to fulfill yours without letting the whole world know?”

Her heart almost beat out of her chest. Here it was. If she went through the door, she would be his in more ways than one. She might even fall in love, an emotion she’d never really had all her life. And while she felt terrified things might go wrong, she was hopeful things would go right. “Yes, I want to go with you. I want to be your student.”

Again, he pulled her to him this time seeking entry into her mouth with his tongue, pushing her open to him, to all the promise of what he would offer. Her crotch began to ache and weep with need as the feelings began to grow within her. She had never felt this way ever before. The tender gropings of her teenager years couldn’t prepare

her for this as his hand slid under her shirt to pinch at her nipple ending in a caress which soothed as much as the pinch surprised.

Thrusting his knee between her legs, she felt him rub her with the smooth fibers of his pants. "Ah...you have a thong on...don't you?"

"You couldn't tell before now?" she asked breathlessly.

He chuckled and pulled her hard against him, pushing her skirt out of the way to caress her bare butt cheek. "I tried my best not to pay attention to you before we got here."

"Why?" she whispered harshly and tried to grind her hips into his leg.

"Because this couldn't have happened anywhere but here." Reaching around her, he opened the door and practically shoved her inside. "Take one good look around because I plan to occupy all your time for the next few hours."

Chapter 4

Aingeal didn't care about the room. All she cared about was getting rid of this burning need that she felt low in her body. Grabbing his head, she pulled him to her again, allowing her tongue to wander inside his mouth. Although she basically knew what to do, she wanted to get it perfect this time. A girl only had one first time and she needed to make it as wonderful as possible.

"You haven't looked at your room," he murmured.

"I don't want to." She pulled his shirt from his pants and ran her fingers up his chest. "I want to touch you."

"You will. Right now I want you to look at your room and tell me if you like it."

She groaned aloud and let him turn her around. She noted the wood floor was covered in small period rugs in gold and greens. The curtains were in matching colors and pulled back to allow the sunlight to stream in the room. Against the far

wall, a canopied four-poster bed stood made of a dark wood with the linens matching the rug and curtains. Also in the room was an armoire, washstand and a dressing table made of the same dark wood as the bed. "Okay, I've seen the room. Can we get back to it? Please?"

He chuckled. "Tell me what you saw."

"What?" She couldn't believe her ears.

"Tell me what you saw." He shook her slightly as if to get her attention.

"Why for heaven sakes?" she questioned frustrated, turning back to lean into him.

"It's part of the learning process. You've got to always know your surroundings and how it affects you. You can't control it if you don't know it. You promised you would do whatever I said. Tell me what you saw."

Trying to control her breathing, she closed her eyes and tried to envision everything she saw. "The rug is a green and gold. The furniture was made of a dark wood, I don't know what it's called. I think the lines on the bed linens and the window coverings match the rug. There is also an armoire, what appears to be a washstand and I think a table. I'm not sure exactly what type of table it is. "

"That wasn't too hard, now was it?"

She looked up at him. "No, that wasn't too hard...but are you always in the habit of making a

lady wait?"

He smiled. She learned fast. "Are you a lady, Aingeal?"

"What does that mean?"

"Or a devil?"

Pushing away from him, she stood tall and stared. If this was what he had meant when he had told her she must obey him, then their relationship would be a short lived one. She understood the dichotomy of her name and her actions. She remembered her parents saying much of the same thing. "You aren't endearing yourself to me."

"I understand that, but you did promise to obey me."

"I didn't think you'd do anything stupid. I would never obey stupid people or their stupid requests." She glared at him. "I want you, I want you bad, but I won't be insulted by the man I'm hoping to take to my bed."

"I didn't mean to insult you at all. I just needed to establish who would be in charge of this relationship."

"Relationships are a two sided thing. Those in the relationship are in charge. No one else. That means we would both be in charge here. Not just you."

"Good answer. And you are absolutely right. We are both in charge of it. But when I am the

teacher, I'm in charge. I need you to be aware of your surroundings for you to be in control of your magic."

Sighing, he was right. She knew she needed to control her magic, had known for quite a while. Still, she wasn't aware just how much others were affected by what she had done until he had told her on the plane. That was the only part of her magic she needed to control as every other part was already controlled and managed as far as she could tell. "Okay, okay. There are certain aspects of my magic I do need to control. I've felt it when it surges, but I didn't have any idea about everyone else feeling it. It just never occurred to me."

"How do you feel, now that you know?"

"Awful. Just awful. I feel for all those guys when I didn't want to do anything...when..." she stopped and looked at him. She just almost told him her secret, a secret she had thought was hers alone. And it still was since no one knew the particulars of her sex life. But she couldn't warn him as she knew he would find out soon enough.

"You sound like you're really sorry for all those wrongs. But first, we're really going to have to see just what level your magic is at when you orgasm."

Her eyes opened wide. "And just how do you want to do that?"

"The usual way." Sweeping her up into his arms, he walked to the bed and gently lowered her to the soft mattress. "First, I want to undress you piece by piece. Then I'm going to caress, tease and lick you all over your body. Once I have you in a heightened state of arousal then I will think about allowing you to orgasm."

"What do you mean, *think* about allowing me? I don't think I'll be able to stop it."

"That's true, but I have to get you to that state before I can even know just how much sexual energy you release when you get off."

Sighing, she closed her eyes. That was something she didn't know. Sure, she had talked to her sister-in-laws and heard from them about the colors during release. All of them had a special connection with each other. She had yet to find hers and she had hoped to find it in Fearghus. But if truth be told, he didn't know her secret and would never find out unless she finished what he wanted her to do. "Okay. What do you want me to do?"

"Nothing. I just want you to be an active participant."

She looked up at him sure she peered at him with lust laden eyes. "By active, I take it you mean assertive?" Aingeal watched him nod slowly. While she had been an active participant in most of her encounters with boys, she just wasn't sure

what this man meant. She might know all the moves, but in reality, she didn't have any practical experience and yet her original thought popped back into her mind. This was a man and would not want any of the childish things she might have done in the past.

"But let's start slow." He levered himself away from her. "I take it you like music?"

"Of course."

"Then you won't mind if I put on something soothing and relaxing." He waited until she gave a nod. "I personally like some of the Celtic artists of today. The music is different and refreshing."

Soon the sounds of a mellow strain could be heard in the room. She was immediately put to ease by it. She watched him as he came from the area of the entertainment center. He reminded her of a predatory bird ready to swoop down on his prey and knew she was his prey. She licked her lips because they were dry and did everything she could to still her fluttering heart. This was something she had wanted for a long, long time. And while she might fool herself into thinking the man before her was just a means to an end, she knew better because she felt the first stirrings of an emotional attachment.

Three weeks of companionship, although actual time spent together was sparse, was enough to tell her this man was someone she could be with for a

long time. However, it didn't take her long to know he considered her an assignment only. At least that was what he told her, but she felt there was something more. She had caught him more than once watching her as she went through her paces of family life. He had watched her put her mother in her place when even she had felt the woman overstepped her bounds.

And every time she had seen his eyes darken in approval with each hard won battle. She loved her family, but sometime they interfered too much and that had been one of those times. Her attention was brought back to the situation at hand as she gazed at him standing by the bed. His shirt was unbuttoned to reveal a smattering of dark hair and his hands were at his side. Those hands amazed her in their gentleness which belied their size as they were as huge as the man himself.

Large hands, large...she couldn't allow herself to finish that thought as she didn't want to even think about the fact he might not fit. She didn't care. All she wanted was to feel the hard thrusts of his body inside hers. Getting up on her knees, she reached for the rest of the buttons of his shirt, slowly undoing each and running her hands on his tight abs. Rewarded with a sharp intake of breathe, she smiled and leaned in to kiss his chest, laughing when the hair tickled her lips.

Pushing his shirt down his arms, she knew this

man worked out as much as possible by the toned nature of his biceps and abdomen. She hadn't really thought about it, but he stood very tall at about six-five and while she was no shrimp at five-nine, she felt dwarfed by his being. "Aren't you a little tall for an elf?" she murmured.

"I could say the same for you." He leaned in and she could feel his hot breath on her neck, arousing her even further.

"I know where my genes came from. I have some very tall Vikings back in the family tree on Mom's side."

"Viking marauders...interesting," he murmured before moving closer.

Fearghus grabbed the edges of her shirt and pulled it over her head. Her gratefulness at wearing a simple shirt and fashion t-shirt justified itself as he removed the item quickly. His hands went to her bra and with a flick, the latch in front sprung open to allow her tender breasts free. She had never thought much about them, just extra flesh as far as she was concerned and she had never felt much when the boys caressed them.

But this—*this* was different—sexy and compelling as she arched into his hand. His thumb swirled around the dark aureole and all she could do was hang on for dear life as her body responded in a way never before felt. There was a niggle in the back of her mind, warning her of the

danger, making her aware she was on a high precipice even though all the man had done was caress her.

And when he touched the juncture between her legs, she thought she would die, it was so sinful and delicious with unspoken delights. He rubbed her through the skirt still hanging on her body. She knew she was wet and ready, but she liked the feel of his hands on her even if it were felt through a piece of cloth. Leaning in, he began to kiss her neck and work his way down her body, stopping to take her nipple in his mouth, sucking gently. Rolling his tongue around the dark aureole, he made the peak stand, blowing air on it and making her jerk with pent up need.

She moaned then and knew she needed to return the favor. Pulling him back up to her, she took his lips deeply thrusting her tongue inside his mouth, warring with his for supremacy of the situation. She nipped him on his bottom lip and chuckled when he gasped. It was her intention to make him understand she knew what was to be done. Kissing his neck and moving down lower, she felt like a mimic for a brief second as she caressed the hard nub of his flat nipple with her tongue. His body stiffened for a moment, before he pulled her head up.

"I need to get you out of these clothes. I need to see your whole body."

Nodding in agreement, Aingeal allowed him to pull her skirt down her long legs, caressing each inch of her until it pooled around her knees. She wanted the same and began to uncinch his belt when she stopped. "I wanted to touch you first, just like you've done me." She slipped her hand down the front of his pants, pausing to caress his rapidly enlarging cock. "And I want to see you...do you mind?"

"Mind?"

She chuckled lightly. "Don't worry...you'll like it." Slowly, she unzipped his pants, surprised to find the man wore no underwear. Moving her hand inside the front of his, she stroked his cock and reached down even in further to gently squeeze his balls. She was rewarded with a groan as he leaned more into her hand.

"Lass, what are you doing to me?"

His accent came as easily as breathing and she loved it. She loved the very sound of it as it made her body respond in a way she had never done. Moving on down his body with her mouth, she pushed his pants out of his way, reaching around to grab his hard butt cheeks for a quick second before enclosing his dick in her hand. She wasn't surprised the circumference was more than her hand could go around. Leaning down, she put her mouth around the huge purple head and felt his hands in her hair, pushing himself even further

inside her inner recesses.

Rimming it with her tongue, she sucked on him, eliciting another moan as the ball of her tongue jewelry slid along the mushroom head. Licking up and down the hard shaft brought even more moans as he grew bigger with every stroke and nip of her mouth. Sliding her hand up and down, she continued on the sensitive head for a few more moments, his breathing coming faster while she stroked his shaft up and down.

Chapter 5

Breathlessly, he pulled away from her to look into her eyes. “My turn,” he murmured and pushed her down on the bed.

Pulling her skirt completely out of the way, he tossed it on the floor. Moving down her stomach, he made a wet trail as he kissed her body, slowly working his way to her crotch. Her body quivered in anticipation of what would soon happen. He pulled her thong out of the way, breaking the thin band of elastic holding it in place. He exposed her hard nub and stopped to look as if inspecting his prize. A low moan of need escaped her as his tongue skimmed over her wet flesh, his fingers pushing inside her.

Her body felt tight around him as she arched to feel him deeper inside her. Leaning down, he placed his scorching mouth on her and she knew a heaven she had never felt from her own touch. This was different—*luscious*—in a way only a man could touch a woman. So this was what all the

fuss was about when the girls talked about their exceptional sexual encounters. Moaning loudly, she pushed herself more into his face. The expectation was killing her. She wanted to feel the overwhelming sensations which came with the release of an orgasm, but when she felt she was about to fall into the abyss, he stopped short. Moaning in frustration, she tried to pull him back to her.

"We need to do this together so I can show you how to control the magic." Pulling himself from her, he crawled up to her to kiss her harshly on her mouth.

She could taste herself on him, an almost sweet taste and wondered what he had felt when he had tasted that most sweet of places. Moaning, she ground her body against him, anything to give her relief from the aching need building in her crotch. The tension she found in her body, while pleasant, merely tightened itself around her. Never had she felt this type of stress building in her body because she felt as if she would be split asunder and she had never allowed it to get so far before.

Gasping as he spread her legs, she realized the moment of truth was upon her. "You will be gentle with me, won't you?" she teased, her voice husky with wanton need.

"I will do my best to please you in every way, Aingeal. But your lessons must continue," he

whispered into her ear. "Can you feel the magic inside yourself? The building tension...it almost feels harsh in its nature."

Sighing, she tried to get herself around the feeling he described. It wasn't hard since it was right on top, the one that made her body glisten with sweat, the one that was aching to escape the confines of her tightly wound body. "I-I think so. But, I'm not sure...I just have the feeling of..." she could find no words to describe what happened within her.

"That's understandable. Even though you aren't a virgin, you are still untrained. And part of the fault is that your mother was human. And it isn't a slur at all. All elven mothers know exactly what they must say to their daughters and just how to prepare them for the ultimate culmination of their love with a soul mate."

Her heart clenched. Two more faux paus that he soon would find out. One she had had no control over and the other she had had no intention of it ever being known by the elven community. "Maybe the council should have trained my mother. Surely, there are other elves who have married humans."

He pulled away for a slight moment before settling once again between her legs, the head of his cock between her slick folds, not penetrating the inner sanctum. "Maybe we should have tried.

And yes, there are other humans and elves who have married." His voice sounded terse. Rising up on his elbows, he looked at her and smoothed her hair from her face. "Do you feel what I'm talking about? The internal struggle?"

Breathing deeply, she nodded. Reaching down, he put his arms under her legs, spreading them even wider. Rubbing his cock up and down her slick folds, he spread the cream which had slid from her body. Slowly, the head of his cock pressed against her. She tightened for a quick second and tried her best to relax. True, a vibrator had penetrated her before, but its size was nothing in comparison to this.

With a little effort, he entered her tight sheath, causing her a moments struggle. It wasn't so bad an experience so far as he stopped to allow her to accommodate him. Gasping, she wiggled a little trying to get him fully inside her. He placed his forehead to hers.

"Do you feel it?" he whispered.

"What...you...or is it something else I'm supposed to feel?" she asked in a quivering voice, her eyes closed.

"Look."

The colors began to swirl above them. She had heard about the magic that would swirl around two lovers who were compatible in every way. Not every encounter would produce this she was

told by other elven women within the North Pole community. But she had felt it were a myth, that any orgasm would produce their effects and she could have sworn to have seen their approach on other occasions. However, this was unlike anything experienced before, any feelings she had ever had. It was as if they were made for each other and only each other.

"Is it always like this?" Aingeal whispered.

"When the lovers are passionate about each other."

"Breathing heavily, she kissed his neck, stroking her tongue along the taut muscles. "Are there other lessons or can we finish this one?"

His response was swift and final, one hard push and the deed was done. She stilled and closed her eyes, squeezing them shut tight against the initial stab of pain which got better with each passing moment.

* * * *

He felt the barrier the moment he touched it and, while it provided some surprise, the fact it was still intact brought him a moment of satisfaction. The very fact it existed at all changed everything about the situation. The council had sent him to bring back an irresponsible elf who allowed their sexual energy to wander unchecked into the

general environment. Now all he had was an untrained virgin and not the sexual vixen he had been told about. Something was amiss here and he would need to try to figure it out later.

Now...*now*...he needed to make this woman's first experience the thing she had dreamed about all her life. "I'm sorry, it hurt this time. I know I am larger than most men and with this being...well...I thought you were prepared enough."

She panted under him. "I'll be fine. I want...I want...to come, to lie under you feeling like I'm going to blow apart. Please...please..."

Slowly, he began to move in and out of her tight body. She fit like a glove, all tight and snug, each thrust rubbing the head of his cock erotically and intensifying his pleasure. Sitting back on his knees as his cock remained inside her, he stroked her breasts, bringing each to a bud. Moving lower, he spread her lower lips with gentle fingers, amazed at seeing their bodies attached, and began to rub the hard nub there.

"I'm going to bring you close and then will complete my task with the wild abandon I'm sure you are expecting."

She laid there, her lips half parted looking like the seductress he had thought she was. Her eyes grew darker as his thumb swirled around her clit. Leisurely, she lifted her hips, rotating them

slightly, increasing and decreasing the pressure of his touch while slowly moving his dick in and out of her. Closing her eyes, she began to breathe heavily as the tempo of her hips intensified. He had always enjoyed giving women pleasure, but there was something special about this one. With that thought, the colors escalated in strengthen as he felt the desire build in his groin making his cock grow even bigger. As an added touch he reached up and stroked her breasts, knowing that she could feel all the way to her crotch.

"Fearghus, I'm about-I'm almost-there-please..."

Leaning over, he kissed her deeply and pounded her with his body, filling her with long deep strokes. Soon he had a fast-slow rhythm going as he strove to bring her to her greatest heights of pleasure. He would prove to her playing solitaire was not for her. She was made for love and sin and if he had his way, he would teach her everything he could.

Grabbing his head, she pulled him back down to her, kissing him deeply. Fondling his chest, she pulled his tongue into her mouth and sucked on it briefly before reaching around and clasping his buttocks. He loved the way he filled her, that she clasped him dick so tightly, that her slick folds took his pounding as the delight flowed over him and that she tried to pull him even deeper inside

her.

Her breaths became shorter and shorter, as he thrust into her in a slower cadence. The colors churned and invaded his very being, bringing him closer and closer to total and mindless fulfillment. Each stroke drove him deeper and deeper into his warmth, knowing he would plant his seed deep within her. Aingeal began to make low keening sounds as her pushed her ever closer.

Suddenly, the colors flared in what reminded him of fireworks and he was hurled over the edge of a deep crevasse, the feeling making him thrust his hips into her a couple of short times. Slowly, he pumped wringing more moans from her before her activity became as frenzied as were his strokes. He felt possessed as he pushed them even further to hear her cries follow him over the edge, tumbling nearly out of control. Hell, who was he kidding, he *was* out of control.

It took him a few minutes to recover and roll away from her, pulling her to his side.

"Fearghus, I want to..." she began.

"Not now. We need to rest. Shh...everything will be okay." He lay there touching her cheek, her hair and gazing into her eyes. He used his elven magic to still her restless mind. He needed her to sleep so he could work out the implications from what had just happened.

Watching her eyes gradually close, he felt

relieved to not have her watching him. How could the council have been so wrong in their assessment? This was all wrong. Now he had to teach her everything and the consequences could be harsh indeed. When two elves mated, things were done differently even though this were modern times. Still, he needed rest as much as her and while her body pleased him immensely, he would need to confer with the elders before he could have her again.

And have her he would.

* * * *

She woke up to an empty bed. Clutching the blankets to chest, she lay there wondering what her next move should be. Obviously, her secret was no longer a secret. And still, the lovemaking had been the most amazing thing ever. Sure, she felt sore and knew it would take a while until she could walk straight, but the orgasm she had had made up for any discomfort she had felt. Even though she didn't want to, she knew she would have to get up and face the world sometime so now was better than later.

Stretching, she felt every ache in her body and stayed unmoving for a moment longer before bouncing out of bed, going to the window and looking out. The green landscape was so different

than the white of home. There was a light fog on the ground with the mist swirling in gentle eddies in various spots. The forest seemed to go on forever behind the house. Aingeal felt drawn to it. There was something there that she wanted to visit, to learn about and feel the wonderful embrace of nature.

Shaking her head, she realized she had just felt the first magical tug of the ancestral loinnir. Turning away from the window, she made her way to her suitcase which she found to be empty. Fearghus must have done so or had someone else unpack for her. Going to the huge armoire, she opened the door and pulled a silk shirt and jeans from the hangers. The nearby chest of drawers held her lingerie and at first she hesitated about wearing anything at all as she had a feeling it would be taken off her.

Taking her clothes into the large bathroom, she was amazed at all the modern conveniences including a walk-in shower, a huge soaking tub and granite counter tops. While they had all the best of everything at the North Pole, this room alone made her realize just how isolated they were. There was a huge world outside the pole and even though she wanted to stay near home most of the time, there was something to be said about traveling.

Standing in the huge shower space, she let the

water sluice down her body as the warm liquid sprayed her from four shower heads. Soaping her body, she noticed some new places where the muscles would be tender for a while. She allowed the water to flow over her for a minute longer before getting out and briskly drying. Putting on her clothes, she looked at herself in the mirror and she realized she couldn't put off the inevitable any longer. She had to go down and greet her lover.

Chapter 6

Slowly making her way down the stairs, she stopped to look out every window and at every antique she could see. Going to see Fearghus proved to be more difficult than she had originally thought. Aingeal never felt remorse from any of her relationships. But this was different. This man had taken her virginity and she had never even warned him. Sighing heavily as the first thing she would need to do is to apologize to the man. And somehow hope he might forgive her for her deception because she knew she wanted more of what they had shared last night.

Still, it wasn't all her fault. They had all assumed because they felt a sexual release from her she was no longer a virgin. No one, including her mother, had even asked her what her situation really was. Maybe if it had been explained to her a long time ago when the birds and the bees had been first explained, she would have been more

diligent in keeping her hands off herself.

Finally, she arrived on the bottom floor and wandered in the general direction of what she assumed was a kitchen and, if truth be told, her stomach was actually growled. Pushing the door inward, she found Fearghus talking softly into a cell phone sitting at a large round table. She closed her eyes and prayed he hadn't called her parents. Some things were meant to be a woman's decision alone. And she had choose him. Nothing he could say would make her think her decision was wrong in any way.

Closing the phone, he turned to face her, scooting his chair around, his eyes sweeping over her, top to bottom. "First, I want you to know your secret is probably safe with me."

"Only probably?" This was not going the way she wanted as she wanted total secrecy. "Can you explain probably?"

"Aingeal, you have to know I need to talk to the council as they were going under some false assumptions."

Sighing, she nodded her head in agreement, pulled out a chair and plopped down next to him. "What do you think they are going to say? My intention was never to make everyone think...well...you know."

Sitting back down, he picked up his tea cup and took a sip before answering. "We'll have to talk

about that part of it later. And I know what they are going to say. You have a lot of latent sexual energy and you need to learn to channel into more productive things."

"What do you mean?"

"Surely you know we can actually work magic. Some of us though are more natural in using it. We won't know until we get you into the loinnir just what your magical capacity is."

"It called to me...you know...this morning when I looked out the window. It's hard to describe, but it was as if the forest were alive." The only way to describe his look would be stunned. "What? People can't feel it?"

He sat down his cup unhurriedly. "Not normally. Most of those who can are usually purebreds."

"Back to the purebreds again." She eyed him cautiously. "I guess I got more of the elven genes than anyone else in my family. Or maybe not. Maybe I just got lucky and got the magic gene. But that can't really be true since I know Ardan uses it in his medical practice and Jedrick has told me about magical things as well." She looked down at the floor and closed her eyes. "Or maybe I'm just some strange mutant," she said almost in a whisper. She could feel his eyes on her. Looking up, she saw him watching her carefully.

"Elves aren't mutants."

"Well, you make me feel like one sometimes. The look you just gave me said you thought I couldn't do what I had said."

Fearghus shook his head. "I'm sorry. That is not what I meant at all. It just surprised me an untrained elf would be called by the forest."

Sighing, she had to agree. "I would agree that I am untrained, but this is not the first time I have felt this way."

"I must say it surprises me as well. What else has made you feel this way?"

"Could I get something to eat first? I haven't had anything since the plane."

"Pardon me, I usually have better manners. This whole thing has put me a little..." he paused for a moment and then continued, "...a little off my paces."

She chuckled. "I bet. And I owe you an apology. I should have told you on the plane my situation." She sighed again and rubbed her head slightly. "I realized once you told me about the power of our sexual energy I had a bigger problem than what was on the surface."

Looking at her, he held up a cup and filled it when she nodded. Sitting it down in front of her, he joined her at the table. "Your sexual energy may be the least of our problems."

"You think the forest calling me is a problem?" She brought the cup up to her lips and took a long

drink. "Good tea."

"Thank you. And I'm not sure what to call it. The forest only calls people when it is in trouble. Or at least that's the way the myth goes."

She frowned. "Myth?"

"Maybe myth isn't the right word. Legend may be a better one. But let's feed you first. Are waffles okay? That's about all I can do and only because the housekeeper leaves the batter in the refrigerator for us when she's not coming to the estate right away."

"Waffles are good. It's food, right?" She smiled at him, happy they were at least communicating in a positive way.

"Of course, it's food. Our housekeeper, Alma, has family in the village. She's wonderful and efficient, but her family has always comes first which is as it should be. She is just one of the many workers we have here and the only one that is elven." He got up, went to the fridge and pulled out a large mixing bowl with waffle batter. "So tell me about the other time when you had this feeling."

"Well, it was the strangest thing. I was in the Eskimo village and it's located mainly in the tundra. But part of this village's area happens to be on the front side of the Brooks range. It's a very beautiful part of Alaska with streams and trees and lots of green trees."

"I've never been to the part of Alaska you're talking about. I mean, we were in the North Pole and then Santa made sure we got sight unseen to Anchorage via Fairbanks. The ride we took between those two places was my only exposure to Alaska at all."

"Well, there's a lot of beautiful things in the area. My favorite is in the Kenai Peninsula and, from what I understand from Santa and others, is it looks a lot like the highlands. I just haven't seen enough of the highlands to know for sure."

"I wonder why they think it looks like Scotland."

"It's because of the glaciers, I think. Alaska still has them and Scotland's disappeared around ten thousand years ago I believe."

"That's one of the few disciplines I never got around to studying. I mean, I know about geologic time and how the world has changed throughout time. I know the climate we have now was totally different during the time you're talking about. The world is always changing, it's in constant flux. And it's been that way since the beginning of time."

"I totally agree. I think people aren't the reason things change. Sure, they can help it out, make it happen faster, but I think the world has more secrets than we can ever know."

The beep of the waffle iron got their attention as

the smell permeated the room. Aingeal's stomach growled again and she looked at Fearghus with a slightly horrified look. Fearghus laughed and put the waffle on a plate. Gathering it, some syrup and utensils, he brought them to the table and sat the meal down in front of her.

She smiled up at him. Leisurely, he leaned down and kissed her on the lips lightly, promising more with just his light touch. "Thank you."

Sitting across from her, he looked at her quizzically. "What for? The food or the kiss?"

"Ho bout boh," she said around the bite of food in her mouth. "Sorry." She wiped the syrup from her lips. "I said how about both. I mean, the food is good and the kiss...well...I think it speaks for itself."

He laughed, his face filled with mirth. "I think that was a compliment. But I have some other questions for you and I'd like you to answer me honestly as I really need to know these things."

Swallowing slowly, she placed her fork on the table. "Alright."

"That doesn't mean you have to stop eating."

"You sound serious. I can't eat and be serious especially since I'm this hungry. So I'll answer a few questions first and then get back to my food."

"Okay then...just how many men have you kissed? I mean, you seem to think I have a great kissing technique."

She grinned. "My mother brought me up to not kiss and tell."

"I'm just asking in my capacity as a sexual therapist. It will help me to decide exactly what to tell the council."

She frowned. "So, we're back to the council."

"I have to ask the council what they want me to do. You weren't exactly what was expected."

"I am never what one expects. But if you meant about the virginity thing, you never asked me or explained just what would go on. Besides," she waved her hand, "it was high time I changed that particular aspect of my life anyway."

Now it was his turn to frown. "And you had chosen me for that task?"

She licked the syrup from her fingers very conscious of the fact he watched her carefully. "Why not? You're very good looking and definitely do something for my blood pressure. Basically, you turn me on." She looked at him more closely. "Unless, you're married or something...you aren't are you?"

"No...there's no one." He shifted uncomfortably. This wasn't supposed to be about him at all. "The council wanted me to train you because they had thought you were untrained as far as your sexual energy was concerned. They assumed you had had many sexual encounters."

She rocked her head side to side. "Well...you

could say I have had lots of them...if you want to look at it that way."

He stared at her for a moment and saw her cheeks grow pink. "You can't mean...we were fooled by..."

"Don't say it! My mother would kill me if she knew I had been faking it for all those years."

He let out a low whistle. "Lady, if that's faking it I would like to know what happened when you aren't."

She laughed, a low deep chuckle rumbled in her throat. "I think you found out last night when we got here, don't you?"

"Actually, since that was your first time, that's not even the maximum amount of sexual energy you can release. My god, this could make you one of the strongest elves alive as far as magic goes, sexual or otherwise."

"Really?" She looked at him surprised.

"Yes, really, on both counts. The council needs to know about this."

"Can't we wait to do that for at least another day or so?" She slid her chair closer to his and ran her hand up his thigh. "I can think some things I want to do without the council knowing my particular circumstances."

Fearghus groaned. This young woman tempted him more than any other woman he had ever known and that included his ill-fated romance

with Bevan's second cousin Gemma. He stopped her by placing his hand on hers and stopping its upward motion. But it was too late as his body had already started to respond. Hell, who was he kidding. He had started to respond the moment she walked into the room, the moment he smelled her light floral scent indicative of her presence. "I really shouldn't..." his voice trailed off.

"Well, maybe we shouldn't." She leaned into him and tilted her lips to his. "But I will." Pressing her lips to his, she sucked gently on his lower lip then soothing it with her tongue. Teasing him a little more, she finally took his lips in a hard kiss.

Pulling her head even closer to him, he kissed her again and again, as if he were a starved man. It was as if a floodgate were opened and only Aingeal would fulfill it. Getting up quickly, he pulled her along with him without a word, shoving her inside what looked like a pantry. Pushing her to the back of the small enclosure, he locked the door before turning to face her, leaning back against the door. "Are you sure this is what you want?"

She nodded, her lips slightly parted, looking thoroughly kissed. "Yes, I am sure this is what I want. I've never been more sure of anything in my life."

Going to her, his hands went to her jeans and unbuttoned them, pushing down then of the way

along with her underwear. Lifting her up, he put her on the counter and spread her legs wide. "I'm not going to be gentle this time at all. It's going to be quick and hard and...wicked."

She smiled. "I like wicked."

Leaning down, he ran his tongue along her wet slit causing her to moan. Pulling back, he took his thumb and rubbed the hard nub, watching the slight quivers taking place in her body. Leisurely, he pushed his thumb against her, rubbing her cream in her tender spots.

"I've got to taste you, again." Getting on his knees, he leaned and rubbed his tongue along her body never quite touching her clit yet making her wiggle as the excitement built higher.

"That feels wonderful..." she murmured and arched her body toward him with a little shudder.

Fearghus answered her by lightly sucking on her clit. Stroking her with his tongue, he inserted two fingers inside her and moved them in and out as she moaned in response. Continuing his assault on her body, he licked her from top to bottom enjoying immensely the sounds she made deep in her throat.

"Oh, god, that's...that's..." She grabbed his head and tugged on his hair. "Come here," she whispered hoarsely.

Standing, he kept his fingers inside her and took her lips in a hard kiss. "What do you want?"

Looking at him through heavy eyes, she smiled lazily. "I can taste myself on you. And to answer your question, whatever you want to give." Kissing her again, his hands went to his pants when she stopped him. "Let me."

Unhurriedly, she unbuckled his belt and looked into his eyes. She would play this slow dance as long as she could. Leaning forward, she pushed his jeans out of the way, not really surprised when he had no underwear. Reaching around, she squeezed his buttocks and rubbed her body against his hard cock. Taking him in her hand, she stroked him up and down, stroking the mushroom head with the drop of precum she found there. "I love the way your skin feels here."

"You've never touch a man's cock before?"

She shook her head. "Does that surprise you?"

"It surprised me when you were a virgin," he answered. "But I'm done with touching."

Pulling her to him roughly, he rammed into her and she gasped loudly. He was big and it just wasn't because she had very little experience. This man filled her completely as if he were made for her and only her. Startled by her train of thought, she hoped it didn't show on her face. If she weren't careful, she would fall in love with the man and for some reason she wasn't sure if that would be wise.

But she didn't have time to think beyond the

moment as he thrust into her over and over again, bringing her to higher heights than before. The colors didn't shock her this time as she watched them swirl in beautiful eddies away from them to return to wrap them in their embrace. Soon, she matched him thrust for thrust and the ferocity of her orgasm took her as they both cried out and they fell over the edge of sanity into the abyss of total satisfaction.

Chapter 7

Aingeal waited by the front door. It had been almost a half an hour since Fearghus said they would take a walk in the forest. She didn't understand, but she knew she had to get there today. Something compelled her to get there and she needed to go now. But he had gotten a call from someone in the council and he said he had to take it.

Sighing, she looked at the beautiful green trees in the distance. She could go alone she supposed, but then she didn't want to do anything she wasn't supposed to do. Sitting down on a bench, she breathed in deeply of the fresh air. This place was so different from home, all green with blooming flowers and vines. Then again it was early spring and she knew the rest of the world was very different than the North Pole during the same season.

Sure Santa had made the residents as comfortable as possible and simulated the various

seasons, he also required everyone except a very few visit somewhere else in the off season. She could remember those family vacations, sometimes awful and sometimes fun, which they had been forced to endure. Still, it had given her a sense of the world at large. They had gone to places like Disneyland and various national parks and even to visit her mother's family in Boston.

So lost in her thoughts, she didn't hear the front door open.

"I'm thinking you might be a little hungry. It might take Fearghus a while. He's moved into the main office to speak to them."

Turning, she smiled at the woman standing there. "You must be Alma."

"Aye, that I am. And you must be the from the American elf family, the Locklins."

"I didn't know we were famous." She laughed. "I'm sure not all of it is true."

"If you're asking me, I never believe anything until I see it for myself."

"Thanks. That makes me feel better." She gazed again at the forest. "What's it like?"

Alma sat beside her. "Magical."

Aingeal looked at her. "Really?"

"That's the best way I can describe it." She watched her for a few moments. "If you and Fearghus plan to go into the forest, you'll definitely need to eat lunch first."

"Why's that?"

"The forest won't let go of you until it wants to."

She looked at the woman concerned. "Really?"

"It is one of the few elven magical places. No one, not even us, know why it is the way it is. People go in there and a lot of them lose track of time."

"What's the longest that a person has been in there?"

A look of concentration crossed the housekeeper's face. "I do believe there is a legend of a couple who were in there for a couple of years."

"A couple of years! That's impossible...what would one do in there for a couple of years? I mean...how would you live?" She couldn't believe her ears. There was no way people could disappear in a forest for that long.

"You must be a very young elf and you have a lot to learn. They didn't know they had been in there for a couple of years. When they came out, it was as if it were the next day for them. The forest skews time and place unlike anything else on this earth." She gazed at her and frowned. "But then again, you're an elf and should know all this. I know you live in a loinnir at the North Pole."

"Fearghus did say Santa's loinnir was special and not like a normal elven one. Maybe that has

something to do with it.”

“Don’t you think it a little strange Santa never seems to age? Nor do most of the elves?”

She was taken aback. She had ever thought about it before, but Alma was right. Santa was just the same as when she was a kid. Come to think about it, her own Dad hadn’t aged that much. “Does it extend to anyone within the loinnir?”

“I don’t know. You’ll need to ask someone with more knowledge of them. Someone like Fearghus.”

“Fearghus knows that?”

“Besides that sex therapist thing, he does he’s a druidic healer. He understands more about magic and what to do when an elf’s magic goes wrong than anyone else I know.”

She sat back and looked at the woman. “So what does that mean?”

“That means Alma is saying more than she should.”

Aingeal thought she would jump out of her skin. “Don’t sneak up on me, please.”

Alma gave him a hard look. “That’s another thing he can do really well. You’ll never know he’s there until it’s too late.”

Fearghus gave her a warning look. “So can you, if you get my drift. Why don’t you put together a basket for us, Alma? I want to take Aingeal into the forest.”

"I'll be back in a little bit." She got up and started to go inside. "It was good talking to you, Aingeal."

"Yeah, me, too," she answered distractedly.

"That's all, Alma."

He sat down and looked at Aingeal. She had seen that look before and it probably wasn't good. "Well...I've talked to the council."

"And?" Her gut clenched almost in fear as every horrid thing imaginable ran through her mind.

"They are really interested in knowing why the forest is calling to you."

She clutched at his arm and sat straighter. "Please don't tease me."

"I explained what had happened with you and, while the need isn't as great as before, they still want me to train you in how to contain your sexual energy."

She didn't know whether she should feel relieved at all. "Are they going to keep this quiet? I mean, my family isn't going to find out...right?"

"No one needs to know what happened here except us."

Sighing, she sat back against the wall. "Thank you."

* * * *

Grabbing her hand, he squeezed it a little. "Do you want to know what else they said?"

A surprised look crossed her face. "There's more?"

"Yes...and no."

"Okay, spare me the drama."

"I am so glad you are such a practical girl." He laughed at the look on her face. She was adorable when she wanted to be. "I already told you they had an interest in why the forest is calling you."

"Yes, you did."

"Well, they feel you may have a very special heritage and be one of a select few."

"A select few of what?"

"There are a group of elves who are actually attuned to the earth."

"Attuned to the earth? I'm not sure I get your meaning." She looked at him confused as it wasn't making any sense to her.

"You can feel when something is going to happen to the earth, you can predict when it's going to rain, when there is going to be an earthquake, when a volcano was going to erupt." He sat and watched her take in everything he said.

"Does knowing when there's going to be a landslide fall in that category, too?" She turned to him. "Remember when you started to ask me about other times I said I felt something calling me. Well, the Eskimo village was in a place, which

had been known for mudslides before. One morning, after it had rained for days, I got this feeling of dread and couldn't shake it. This was in the summer and sometimes the top layer of land gets really saturated. It doesn't happen often, but occasionally. Most of the time the ground is frozen. I guess this was one of those times."

"What happened?"

She sighed deeply. "Like I said, I couldn't shake the feeling and it got worse the more the rain came down. Finally, I went to the Eskimo elders and told them what I felt. He looked at me for a long time and then asked what they needed to do. I asked them if they could evacuate the school as that was the area I felt worst about. Later that evening, the hill broke away and the mud slid about a half a mile. The school was covered. There was supposed to be a basketball game that night."

He nodded his head slowly. "Have you been called to any other village?"

"No, I've always been compelled to go to this village."

"Is there anything special about that village?"

"Not really...I mean I did go to college with a couple of people from there...Mom and Dad actually made each of us go to high school there."

"I thought you were home schooled."

"Most of the time we were. But when we started high school, Mom insisted that if we were

ever to survive in the human world, we needed to learn how to socialize. I mean we were pretty sheltered and everything. And spoilt, if you get my drift."

"No...you?" She scowled at him when he chuckled at her frown. "Now, why would I ever think you were spoilt?"

"Quit it. You know what I mean. Mom thought we really needed more than what we could get at the North Pole. She wanted us to be as normal as possible. She had been exposed to so many snobby people in her life and she wasn't that way at all. So we came up with a cover story and the sleigh dropped us off at the bus stop a few minutes before it showed."

"Sounds interesting."

"It was actually really fun. I mean we pretty much had a normal upbringing. Sure, we knew we were different, but in that environment, we were like everyone else."

"Why would you want that?"

"You really have to get up to speed. If you haven't noticed, there are more of them than there are of us. It's time we really blended in."

"You think telling the Eskimo elder was blending in?"

They were interrupted by Alma at that point. Hanging from her arm was a huge picnic basket. "I've put in some chicken and potato salad."

"Your homemade stuff?" Fearghus asked rather anxiously.

"Would I give you any different?" Alma gave him a sly smile.

"Great...what else?"

"There's a blanket and a bottle of wine along with some sweets. I've also included some bread and butter. I think that should be enough to hold you over until supper."

"It sounds great, Alma. Thanks a lot!" Aingeal practically licked her lips in anticipation. "What? I didn't finish breakfast, if you remember."

"So it was your dishes on the table?" Alma asked.

She rolled her eyes. "I'm sorry I forgot to rinse my plate. I was totally distracted."

Alma chuckled. "I think I can understand totally distracted. Don't look at me Fearghus Brodie...I'm married to a healthy Scotsman myself...I can understand a healthy sexual appetite."

Aingeal smirked. "Don't look at me. She told me she already knew why I was here."

"How did you know?" he asked Alma.

"It's a small community first of all and the second is that I'm an elf. I'm magical, too. We can't keep things from each other, you know that. Everyone has their place and while mine may not be high up, I do watch what goes on around me.

I'm a very good observer."

"It can't be that easy."

"We have an extensive library, I know about our magic and how things work."

He frowned at her. "I don't understand."

"Good, you don't need to. I do know how to keep a secret, you know. I've been the housekeeper here a long time."

"I'm sorry. I know you have, this is all just a little..."

"New? Well, it must be hard to be a sex therapist on one hand and the other a druidic healer. Things probably get screwed up all the time."

"I would think you're probably more one than the other," Aingeal commented. "Can we get going now? I just really feel we need to get going."

"By all means." He took the basket from Alma and headed toward a path leading around to the side of the house. "We always go in this way as if we go in from the main lane, there's always a chance people can see us from the road."

"I still don't understand why people just can't walk in the forest. I mean, isn't this part of a park or something?" She walked fast to catch up with him.

"It is and most parts are open to people. It's just when we go into the forest, we don't want anyone other than the elves to know about the gateway to

the loinnir."

"Why didn't you say so in the first place?" She frowned at him. Maybe because he had to be careful with what he said to everyone as he made it difficult to understand just what his meaning might be. "I mean, most people know where the North Pole is though most have never seen it. They all assume it is cold and white then they never get as far as our gateway."

He stopped and waited for her. "Isn't your gateway kinda in the sky?"

"Yeah, I guess it is when I think about it. I just know we have never had anyone stumble into it at all. At least I don't think so."

"Yeah, the only way they could get in is if they were in a private plane and got off course."

"And then the gateway would have to be open for them to even get in." She chuckled then. "What would happen if the gateway opened and it closed suddenly? I mean would the plane bounce off it?"

He laughed hard. "Are you serious?"

She glared at him. "Of course, I'm serious. I've never asked that question before and I don't ever remembering any of my siblings asking either."

"Wow, you're serious." He turned to look at her before continuing on at a much slower pace. "To be honest, I'm not sure what would happen. I would think if you were in a plane, it would toss you off like a bull does a rider. I know this forest

gate has a redirection spell which will allow someone to pass through the gate, but then it guides them off in a direction out of the loinnir."

"Actually, that seems correct. I mean aren't places like Sedona and the Bermuda Triangle part of our loinnir system?"

"Yes, they are. I thought you said you didn't pay attention in elven school."

"Well, maybe I paid more attention than I thought." She stopped suddenly as they had reached the edge of the forest. Turning, she looked at the house, which was some distance away by now. Fearghus had told her when she entered her bedroom yesterday with him in tow that she would be changing her life. While the sexual act was profound in itself, this would be even more life changing than anything she had experienced so far.

Chapter 8

“Why did you stop?” Fearghus came back to stand next to her. “The gateway is not too far from here.”

She looked up at him. “Remember when you said about you and me profoundly changing my life?”

“I remember.”

“This is going to be bigger than that.”

He looked at her. They weren’t even inside the forest and she knew it would change her. “Are you sure?”

She nodded. “Very sure. It’s alive in a way I can’t begin to describe.”

“Maybe you should try to explain what you’re feeling. We know the forest talks to people in very different ways. And I think the better we understand how it talks to you, the better we will understand it.”

“That could be true.” Slowly she walked into the trees, stopping to touch one then another.

"They're sad." Aingeal turned to watch him. "And I'm not sure why at all."

"We'll let's get to the gateway and inside the loinnir. Maybe the council can help answer your questions."

"Alright." She continued unhurriedly down the path. "Even though they are sad, I feel safe and warm and welcomed here. It's as if I belong here."

"Is that belonging because of the loinnir or the forest itself?" He walked along the path beside her and watched her silently.

"I'm not sure at all. I think it's a little of both." A look of concentration crossed her face. "Are there other elves like me in the loinnir? I mean I know they won't exactly be like me because I'm half human."

"Even though you're half human, you are a very special person. You do realize that don't you?"

She flashed him a brilliant smile. "In case you haven't noticed, self esteem has never been my problem."

"That is something I can believe."

"How much further do we have to go?"

"The gateway is just a little further. Would you like to have a picnic once we get inside the loinnir?"

She put her hand on her stomach for a quick second. "That would be great. I am really hungry

since we didn't finish breakfast."

"If I remember, we were otherwise engaged." He grabbed her hand and affectionately tugged her along after him. After walking along about fifteen minutes more, Fearghus stopped. "This is it."

Aingeal stopped and looked. This area seemed no different than anything she had already come through. "It doesn't look any different than it does at home."

"Did you expect something different?"

"I don't know what I expected. I mean, the whole idea is that the gateway is where you go from the human realm to the elven realm."

"Yes, that's all it is. It's a magical gate and it protects each of the races."

"I understand why we need to have it. Think of all the kids who would want to invade the North Pole." She chuckled then turned serious. "But when you were talking about how humans didn't value the earth like we do, all I wanted to do was shake you."

He looked surprised. "Why?"

"Because if we are so better than them, why didn't we make it our responsibility to teach them to value this place like we do? Why didn't we steer them away from their destructive path and make sure this whole thing didn't happen?"

He sighed then. No one had ever said this

before as far as he knew. "We didn't want to get discovered or exploited."

She leveled her gaze at him. "You know...it's kinda like watching someone commit a crime...and not doing anything about it. Makes me wonder what supposedly makes us better than them."

"We can't use our magic to interfere."

"Is it really interfering when we're trying to prevent the very thing we don't want to happen?" She looked at him once more and, dropping his hand, stepped forward on the path. Her senses were immediately assaulted with smells and sounds that she hadn't noticed in the ancient forest outside the loinnir. Looking up, she felt surprised to see the sunlight streaming through the tall trees. The birds sang and she could hear sounds of people off in the distance. She felt Fearghus's body press into hers and she took a step forward.

"What do you think?"

"It feels magical and special." She turned and smiled at him. "So where are we going to eat?"

He smiled back. "I have a private place just over here."

Following him into a small glade, she felt surprised at just how private it was. "This is really secluded."

His eyes gleamed. "We can make it even more

private. I can show you just how to put up a privacy shield. It's part of your training anyway and it's something I should have already done."

A horrified look crossed her face. "No one has felt anything that's happened between us, have they?"

Fearghus laughed loudly. "I might have seemed out of control, but I wasn't that out of control."

His answer disappointed her a little. "I don't remember you casting a magical spell or anything."

"And you wouldn't. It's part of the difference between being a good lover versus a great lover."

"How so?" She watched him with shining eyes. He was a great lover.

"Great elven lovers make it all seamless to the person they are making love with. And with you being a virgin, I needed to be able to concentrate on you and not the fact that sexual energy would escape."

Again, that's not quite the answer she wanted to hear, but it would do for now. "Thank you."

"No problem. What do you think about this place?" He indicated a spot on the ground with soft grass and flowers nearby.

"This looks good." Aingeal stood while he spread a blanket on the ground. Sitting down, she crossed her knees and closed her eyes absorbing

the energy around her. She could feel the warmth of the sun on her face and the trees. She knew the trees were reaching out to embrace her with their gentle grace. The feeling was profound and as far as she was concerned, awesome. This was what she needed, this connection with nature and all it involved.

"They say the beetles are bugging them. They don't want them harmed, but they don't want them eating them any more either." She gauged Fearghus's looked as she continued. "They say they love the fact the loinnir is still here, but have somehow lost their voice. The people don't listen to them like they used to and even the elves aren't as attentive as they used to be. They want to know about their relatives outside the loinnir."

He looked at her aghast. "They are talking to you that much." She nodded in agreement. "Wow, I don't think the council will believe this. We haven't had a woman who can talk to the trees like this in a long, long time. You just seem so natural doing it."

She smiled. "It's not really that they are 'talking' to me in the normal sense of the word. It's more of feelings I'm getting and I'm having to put them into words we'll understand. It's a very strange sensation." She shivered a little and ran her hands up her arms.

"Are you okay?"

She saw a concerned look cross his face. "Yeah, it's just all very different. And like you said, I'm new and untrained at this. But I want to eat before we go any further. I can't think on an empty stomach."

"I think I can do that."

She watched him take the plates and glasses from the huge basket. Handing her a wine glass, he opened the bottle Alma had packed. Filling the glass halfway, she swirled it and took an unhurried drink. One of the few things she had done in college was learn how to taste wine. "It's a little sweet, but very good for a rosé. I like it."

"Good."

She continued to watch him as he sat out pieces of chicken, the bowl of potato salad as well as big chunks of a white bread. "What kind of bread is that?"

"It's a shepherd's bread. The recipe has been around for a long time."

"It's been a while since I've had homemade bread. Does Alma make it?"

"She makes most things we have at the estate house. She's a great housekeeper and cook."

"I know the waffles you made this morning were really good."

He didn't answer right away and she watched as he dished out the chicken first then the potato salad. Drinking her wine, she once again looked

around the glade they were in. She loved the green of the grass and trees, so different than everything she had known at home. True, it was similar to her place in the Eskimo village, it had a charm and magic surrounding it unlike any she had ever felt. Then again, every place in the world had some magic if people could only see it.

She supposed she was one of the lucky ones being able to feel what nature felt, to know when the earth was angry. Still, she was glad to do what she could to help both mankind and elvenkind. Whether the man with her believed it or not, both people need to be helped in every way possible

“Earth to Aingeal, are you even listening?”

Her attention was abruptly brought back to the present. “I’m sorry, what were you saying?”

“I asked if you needed any more wine.”

She looked at her empty glass, not realizing she had drained the glass. “Ah...yes, I do actually.”

He poured her another glass. “Are you afraid to meet the council?”

“No, not really.”

“I remember the first time I met them. I was terrified.”

Aingeal smiled lightly. “Why? They are just people.”

“True, but they are powerful in the elven magic and know more about us than any other group alive.”

"Well, whether you want to believe it or not, we will become them one day. We'll become the ones who are wise and that the youth turn to when they need help."

He smiled at her. "Eventually. They seem to live longer than any other group of elves."

Frowning, she answered him. "I wonder why. Have all of them lived in the loinnir all their lives?"

"No, not really. They actually seem to live wherever they need to...I mean if there is a crisis in a loinnir in the main part of Europe, they will go and live there until it has passed. All of them have homes in this loinnir as it is the most of ancient of places, but not all of them came from this area."

"Where did they all come from?" He had piqued her curiosity.

"From other elven communities around the world. While those areas are diminishing, we still have many, many communities left."

"That's good they come from all over."

"I do believe one of them even comes from the North Pole."

This surprised her as Santa never mentioned the fact. "Really? That's the first I've heard of it."

"Well, I don't think Santa would advertise the fact he actually lost one of his elves."

She nodded her agreement. "I would have to

agree he seems a little territorial of all of us. I think Eggther is the one who has been with him the longest." She bit into her chicken and allowed the flavor to glide over her tongue. "This is wonderful. The spices are just right."

"Told you it would be good."

They stopped talking for a few minutes and continued eating the food which had been packed for them. Sated, Aingeal leaned back on her elbows and relaxed. It would be so easy to fall asleep. "When is our audience with the council?"

"Whenever we get there." Fearghus lay on his back with his hands behind his head. "Don't you find this to be one of the most relaxing places you have ever been?" he asked quietly.

She let out a yawn. "Geez, I didn't know I was so tired still."

"Well, we did travel half way around the world. We're bound to be a little tired." Placing his hand over his mouth, he tried hard to stifle the yawn that was forthcoming. "Sorry, maybe we should just take a little nap...I mean...we want to present our best when we go to the council chamber. And I don't know about you, but I can't do that if I'm tired."

"I would agree." She yawned again. "But I don't understand how they can all be here. Didn't you just call some of them earlier?"

"That I did, but I need to leave it to them to

explain those things to you."

"Okay...so does that mean a nap is in order?"

"I think so...why don't you come over here?"

He held up an arm and indicated she should scoot over.

She didn't hesitate a second and moved over to fit herself snugly into his side. "Mmm...I like this...you're all nice and warm," she murmured.

"Are you cold?"

"Maybe a little."

"Here, let's roll up in the blanket."

"Thanks." She snuggled closer to him and allowed him to pull the blanket around them both. She lay there, drifting somewhere between being awake and asleep, loving the fact she was next to a very special man.

Aingeal woke up with a start. Laying there, she luxuriously stretched, hands meeting with a hard object. Looking at the man next to her, she thought just how handsome he really was with his dark hair and green eyes. He looked like some Roman god of old and she wondered just what was in his ancestral line. She turned to her back and just enjoyed the beautiful sky and trees she could see.

Suddenly, a bright streak went over her. Sitting up, she looked the way it went which was the opposite from the way they entered. While she hated to do it, she pushed at Fearghus.

"Hey...Fearghus...wake up. I saw something

weird." She watched him as his eyes opened slowly.

"What?" He lay there, rubbed his eyes and stretched. "What did you see?"

"Didn't you hear what I said? I said weird...meaning...I don't know what I saw."

Fearghus sat up. "Describe it to me."

"It was a weird flash and it kinda sparkled." She shivered. It wasn't scary at all, just strange and it was that strangeness which had her shivering. He shook with mirth. So much so she wanted to hit him. "This isn't funny. It made me feel strange."

"Well...I'm sure the fairies would like to hear that."

"Fairies...there are fairies in this forest?" She shook her head slightly to clear her senses. No wonder she was off kilter. "I didn't even realize they existed."

He gave her an almost contemptuous look. "You are an elf."

She frowned. "That wasn't what I meant and you know it."

"Then just what did you mean?"

"Oh, I don't know...I guess the next thing you'll be telling me is there are unicorns and griffons?"

"Not in this forest."

Her eyes opened wide. "I am just not going to

go there right now."

"Well, I can tell you they are here because the council is wondering where we are. They have just taken a report back to them in which they told the council they have found us sleeping together in a blanket."

Wrinkling her brow, confusion etched on her face, she asked. "This is a bad thing?"

"It can be...we need to go." Standing up, he reached down a hand to help her up.

Placing her hand in his, she could feel the strength ebbing from the man. "Not a problem. Would you care to explain exactly what will go on?"

Chapter 9

Fearghus watched her a moment as she packed up the picnic basket. It would be hard to explain to her what would happen because every encounter with the council was different. The good thing about the council was they judged each individual elf on their merit. And he didn't want to tell her they planned to check her out and make sure she wasn't a threat to all elven communities as a whole. There had been a few occasions where they had actually had to cap an elf's magical powers altogether because of the threat they posed.

Aingeal was no threat and if they couldn't see that, they were fools. She also had a special power which was rare among elves. The power to communicate with Mother Earth or Gaia as some of the older elves called her. This was something very special even in the elven realm. And the council knew this world needed something special.

"I'm not sure what you're asking. But I can tell you every council meeting is different for every elf."

"So nothing is the same then?"

"Not really. The council house is an older thatched roof home. It looks like some of those which can be found more in the center of Scotland. Very old fashioned. But then again, that's the way they like it."

"How many council members are there?" By this time she had cleared everything, packed it away and handed him the basket to carry.

Taking it from her in one hand, he reached with his other to gently take hers. "There are seven of them. Three women and four men. They range in age from a little older than your father and I to what I'm sure you'll think is almost ancient."

She scrunched her eyebrows. "Just how old can elves live?"

He continued along the path to the community, but slowed his pace. "Now we don't know if this holds true for elf-human hybrids, but the oldest member on the council is about three hundred I think."

A surprised look crossed her face. "Three hundred years old?"

"Yes, I do believe that's how old he is."

"Wow. Can you believe the things he's seen in his lifetime? Most major wars like the Revolution,

Napoleon, the US Civil War, both World Wars and then there are the good things too. Like the discovery of penicillin, the telescope, the rise of the scientific world, just...just everything."

He smiled. Maybe this wasn't going to be so bad after all. "You sound excited."

She nodded slightly. "I know I'm not a history buff, but to actually talk to someone who was there for all those events...now, that's different."

"I can see your point. I've never really thought about it that way."

"You can thank my geology studies for that. Geologists truly have a skewed sense of time."

"How so?"

"Well, first of all they don't think in terms of human years, but on the order of millions of years. Long before mankind or even elvenkind was even a drop in the bucket. They think about things in order of when the rock was deposited or when an event actually happened. So, they don't look at it in relationship to how it fits in with people at all. It was one of the disciplines I liked studying."

"Did you even get a degree?"

"No, at least not yet. I just didn't feel comfortable with the situation, my parents and being an elf. Not that it bothers me to be in the human population at all. That wasn't it."

He frowned at her. "Then what was it?"

She looked at him for a minute. "I think I was

afraid my family would come in and try to rescue me if they felt the situation I was in didn't suit them. I don't need saving at all. If anything, I needed their support and wanted to find my own way."

"I can see where everyone needs to learn about themselves."

"How about your parents?"

"My parents died quite a few years ago, but they always let me find my way. They did direct me in good directions, but I was always allowed to make my own errors in life."

"Then it must be a guy thing because they are so protective of me it's ridiculous. I mean they always want to know what I'm doing and a lot of the time, why. It seems as if I can't have anything to myself."

He laughed. "I would have to agree that people or elves seem to be protective of their daughters."

"Well, that proves it then. Some are just way too protective of their daughters." She laughed then, a rich sound which filled the forest.

They continued walking in silence for a while and eventually came to the edge of the village. It reminded Aingeal of a quaint Scottish village in the early part of the twentieth century with its thatched roofed homes and wide streets. There were flowers almost in every yard and in various places along the paths. The main meeting hall was

at the end of the path they were on. It had served several purposes over the years according to the times they were in.

During the Second World War it had served as a hospital for soldiers whether they be elven or human. A few elves had decided they needed to be involved and went to war against the advisement of their elders. All came back changed men and they brought back with them their best human friends in the world as they either demonstrated their unselfish ability to think beyond their own safety thus saving their elven friend. And once a life was saved, that elf was always beholden to them.

Walking slowly up the main village path, Fearghus couldn't help, but be proud at the way Aingeal held herself. He knew she was tense, but no one else did as she carried herself as if she didn't have a care in the world. Once at the door of the meeting house, he opened the door and ushered her inside. The room had changed little in the years he had been coming here as it still looked like the receiving room of any large manor home.

He went to the closed door at the end of the room and knocked briskly, intent on getting this over very quick. Upon hearing the command to enter, he opened the door and let her precede him into the room. And what a room it was as the

whole house was deceiving in looks. The room while large, reminded one of a huge dining room with a large oblong table in the center. On one side sat the seven council members and on the other a single chair.

"That will be all, Fearghus," Sorchá said.

She was one of the newest council members and one he did not know that well. "I would like to stay, if I may."

"Sorchá told you to leave, young man, and we expect you to do so." Césán stared at him.

Not much could make Fearghus uncomfortable, but this man did because of his longevity on the council. Although he wasn't the oldest member, he was close to it. "As you wish."

He turned and faced Aingeal. Squeezing her hand, he flashed her a warming smile. "You'll be fine. They aren't as bad as they seem."

She gave him a tremulous smile. "I know. I'll be fine." She leaned and kissed his cheek. "Thank you."

Turning, he walked away and felt horrible for leaving a young woman to her fate with the council. He didn't even want to think about the implications of these feelings.

* * * *

Aingeal stood by her chair and heard the closing

of the door behind Fearghus. She didn't know if she should sit or not and decided to wait until they gave her instructions. As much as she felt out of her element, she had the feeling the moment she let them know she was nervous, they would pounce. But about what, she wasn't sure.

True, she had been deceptive in regards of her not having had sex, but had she been aware of the problems, she would have changed her ways. And then she supposed there was some sort of impact in regards to Fearghus. After all, he had taken a virgin unawares, but it hadn't been his fault at all. It had been hers and she was more than willing to share the blame in that.

She didn't realize she had sighed until it was out. Finally, she looked at each of the council members and instead of the stern looks she had expected, she saw many smiles on their faces.

"You may sit down, Miss Locklin."

Aingeal turned to looked at the one called Sorcha. She was an older woman with fading red hair and a kind face. "Thank you, ma'am."

"You don't have to be so formal, young lady." This man hadn't spoken before and although his face was somewhat stern, he didn't seem intent on making her feel particularly uncomfortable.

"Okay," she said slowly. "Then would you like to tell me how I'm supposed to address you?"

"Conall, you didn't have to bark at the girl."

Another of the men admonished.

"I didn't bark. I can if you want me to."

"Gentlemen," Sorcha put her hand up. "Maybe the first thing would be to introduce ourselves to her." She looked around to get the agreement of everyone present. "At the end of the table, is Cesan Strachan. You've already heard from him when he got stern with Fearghus. Next to him is Aislinn Ferguson. She's the newest member of the council. Next to her is the oldest member of our council, Conall Darroch. Then there's me of course. I'm Sorcha MacInnes."

Aingeal smiled at each one as she was introduced. Aislinn reminded her of her father in the manner which she held herself. And Conall Darroch was exactly like Fearghus had said. He did look ancient, but on him, it seemed as if it were right. "I don't know if I'm supposed to shake your hands or not."

"Why don't we finish the introductions first? Then we have some questions for you. To my right is Kelvin Sturrock, next to him the final woman on our council, Lorna Preston. And the last member of our council, Merlin MacBain. Won't you please be seated?"

She nodded and sat in the chair in front of the council table. Sitting there, the palms of her hands began to sweat and she closed her eyes to get hold of her feelings.

"There's nothing to be nervous about. We know of your ruse with the sexual energy."

Blushing, she nodded again. "I'm really sorry about that. I didn't understand the ramifications of what I did. Hopefully, Fearghus told you what I told him."

"And that was, young lady?"

She rubbed her hands on her pants again. "Aingeal, sir, my name is Aingeal."

"I know what your name is and I asked you a question."

"Right. I told Fearghus I wasn't very good at my lessons. I usually did everything in my power to not listen to what my parents told me. And it didn't matter the subject. I just ignored them for the most part. I guess you would say I was their problem child."

"You can say that again."

She turned to look at the woman who looked so much like her father. "You look like my father."

"I should. We share a great-grandmother. I remember when you were little and Bevan would complain to Nana as he didn't know what he was going to do with you."

"Really? I didn't know they even contacted you. I mean I was under the assumption he never spoke to anyone in the old country at all. He left when he was so young."

Aislinn laughed. "He told you that?"

"No, that's not what I said. I just thought he didn't talk to anyone over here at all."

"He talks to us all the time. Many of us came to your parents wedding."

Aingeal just stared. She obviously didn't know everything about her parents. "I never knew."

"Didn't you just say, young lady, that you really didn't pay attention to your parents at all?" Conall watched her with a critical eye, making her squirm in her chair even more.

"Yes." She swallowed hard.

"Then just chalk it up to this being one other thing you didn't pay attention to at all."

"Alright, now that is out of the way, let's get on with it then. So, the issue with the sexual energy has been resolved?" Sorchá asked.

"If you mean, is Fearghus still training me on how to make it so my energy is contained?" She looked at the council to see some of them nod. "Yes. He's training me on just what to do in those situations." She cleared her throat.

"It must be working as we haven't felt anything at all. I take it all went well."

She opened her eyes wide and sighed, willing herself not to blush. Just thinking about their encounter made her go weak in the knees and her crotch get wet if truth be told. "Yes, all is going well."

"Good. I am tired of talking about all this sex

stuff," Conall said rather sarcastically.

"Then I take it you have more questions for me."

"Fearghus said you could 'feel' the forest, that it talked to you. He said you had your experience this morning as you were looking out the estate windows. Can you explain that to us?"

She sighed deeply as she thought about how to explain what she felt. "Well...it's like it's speaking to me...just like we are talking right now. I can feel it as well as intercept random thoughts."

"Have you ever had these types of feelings before?" Cesan asked.

"Yes, and be specific," Kelvin added.

Their faces held a mixture of concern and awe. "Yes, I've had this type of feeling before at home. I was in the village when I felt this overwhelming urge something would happen, something dreadful. It just kept pressing on me all day and finally I just had to go to the Eskimo leader and let them know there would be a landslide coming."

"And just how did you know this?" Kelvin seemed to be sitting on the edge of his chair.

"Well, the land just sort of...I'm not sure how to explain it...it just told me it was getting oversaturated with water. We had more rain than normal that spring and the tundra was pretty unfrozen. I just kept feeling it and then knew the outcome would be very bad if I didn't take

action."

"Did they ask you to explain how you knew?"

"No, they never did. Inuit's are very in tune with the land. They might ask me questions as to what I felt and what had given me my ability. But since I couldn't explain it, they just acted on what information I gave them. They activated their emergency plan and we managed to save everyone."

"I'm glad all the humans were saved. We don't want anything happen to them although there are those of us who would like us not to be so proactive in that area."

"It's possible she's an earth-intuitive. It would be the first one in a couple hundred years. Wasn't there a thought at one time Gemma may have been one, too?" Sorcha looked down to Aislinn.

"I think she had hoped she was one, but she isn't. Her powers are different."

"Isn't Gemma my father's cousin?"

"And my daughter. I know she's part of Fearghus's past. But she's in a different place now and has a new family."

"I didn't ask anything about her." Aingeal threw her a cautious look.

"I just want to get that out in the open."

"Oh." She didn't know what else to say. "Do you have any more questions?"

"A few. Just what did our forest say to you?"

Merlin asked.

This was the first time he had even acknowledged she was in the room. "It's sad. Apparently, there are a couple of loinnirs that are dying and it's sad."

"Where are the loinnirs that have the problem? Can they be saved?" Merlin seemed a little agitated and actually got up. He began pacing, occasionally tossing her a look and muttering to himself.

"Is something wrong with him?"

"When we were talking about an earth-intuitive, we knew you would be the first one in about two hundred years. Merlin is one also and it's very rare when you run across one period. To have two, one male and one female, is incredible. Between the two of you, we'll be able to keep the elven communities even more safe for future generations."

"So what does this mean for me?"

"It means young lady you will be working with me while you are here. Just how long will that be, Sorcha?" Merlin stopped his pace and clasped his arms behind his back.

"That will be up to the young lady, I would think." Conall added. "Just what do you want to do?"

This surprised her. She hadn't expected to have any input with their decision. "I don't know...I

mean...how long will I need to be here?"

"I will need you as long as you can stay."

She nodded her head. This would allow her to get closer to Fearghus and see where the relationship headed. While she didn't expect anything, she felt it might be something worth exploring. "I'm not sure how long I can or should stay, but I'll stay for a while."

"Good. Have Fearghus bring you to my home tomorrow morning so we can begin our training."

"What are you going to teach me?"

"How to listen more closely to the earth, of course. You'll need every bit of your elven magic to learn this successfully."

"How much more do I need to know? I mean, it already talks to me."

Merlin came around the huge table and stood before her. "I agree. You do have a natural talent for it. But that talent can be honed even more so you can understand what it's saying to you more clearly."

"That would be great. Sometimes it was hard to understand exactly what it tried to tell me. I seemed to be getting some other chatter as well."

He turned and stared at her. "Other chatter?"

"Yeah...other chatter...you know, like the animals and birds. I could hear some of them too."

"Oh my goodness." Merlin practically giggled with glee. "She can do it all."

Aingeal turned surprised eyes to the other council members. "What does he mean?"

"Interesting," Aislinn murmured. "You have more than just being an earth-intuitive. You just might be a life-intuitive."

"What's that?"

"You might be able to hear any living creature."

"Oh. Wow. That's different, huh?" She felt concerned even though she shouldn't be. She would just learn how to use and understand her gift. And that was exactly how she looked at it.

"Yes, this is very different." Cesan agreed with her. "You have no need to be concerned."

"I'm not. I'm just surprised. Is there any one in my family like me?"

"There are instances that have been listed in the family histories. Maybe now would be the time to read those histories."

"You're probably right. It will be like going to school again." She frowned.

"You don't like school?" Sorcha questioned.

"I like school, but I get bored easily."

"You'll like your classes with me, young lady."

"I hope so."

"I think that will be all for today, Aingeal."

"Alright. Thank you." She rose to leave.

"You'll need to visit us once a month as long as you are here. Is that clear?" Sorcha stared at her.

"Yes, ma'am." Aingeal got up and slowly

walked to the door. "I'll have Fearghus show me your home on our way to the estate so I can find it tomorrow."

"Very well. I'll see you first thing in the morning. The earlier the better." He turned and went back to his seat and she could tell she had been dismissed.

Going out, she closed the door and leaned against it for a moment. The whole thing was surreal because it seemed to her nothing had even happened. She saw Fearghus at the end of the hall coming toward her.

Chapter 10

“You seem no worse for the wear. I take it that the session went well?”

She nodded distractedly. “That was so very odd. I mean they asked me a bunch of questions and not very much about the sex thing.” She frowned up at him.

“Well, I would take that to mean your secret is going to be safe with them as well. It should count for something.”

“You know, I’ve never been really worried they were going to tell my family. They think the worst of me anyway. The weird thing is they want the one called Merlin to start training me. Apparently, they think I’m an earth-intuitive.”

“Wow. That’s pretty rare as far as elven magic goes. I suppose they told you Merlin was one, too?”

“Yes, they did and they said it was very odd to have a male and female one within the same time period. What did they mean by that?”

"It's not a normal thing at all. I think previous thinking was there could only be one because the earth didn't know how to talk to more than one elf. Now, when there is a complimentary pair, male and female, then the earth can be completely honest because it could hide no secrets."

"You know, I really am into karma and new age stuff, but this goes way beyond that. I just really don't understand what it all means."

He grabbed her hand and slowly began to lead her out of the house. "That's why you're training with Merlin. Did they tell you how long you needed to train with him?"

"Not really. They just said I was to train with them for as long as it took."

He chuckled. "That's just like the council. If they gave you a definitive answer, then they would have to make sure your training was completed by that time. Now tell me just what they said about the sex thing."

She gave him a covert look. This was something she felt they needed to talk about more in private. But she supposed they would really be close to being alone as they would be on the path out of the forest shortly. "Basically, they asked me if everything was okay and that it all went well."

"And?" Fearghus closed the door behind them, carrying the picnic basket in his other hand.

"I told them it had, but I wasn't very specific on

anything. Though they didn't come out and say it, I could tell they expected my training to go on with you until you said I could contain my sexual power without any problems. They were just so much more interested in my ability to talk to the earth or Gaia if you want to call her that."

"Think about this, Aingeal. Think about how the world is today, how little the world's scientists really know about what is going on with the earth. Sure, they can come up with some thoughts and theories, but imagine if the earth could talk to someone and tell that someone it's problems."

"Okay. I would have to agree it would be invaluable to have. But why do I have it? I mean, is it in my family history?"

"We could stop so you can look in the elven records if you want."

"I'd rather leave it for another day. I think I'm still a little tired from traveling all the way around the world."

"Fine, we'll go back to the estate so you can absorb everything you've been told."

"I appreciate that." She squeezed his arm and looked at him. He was one handsome man and she liked being with him. It did bother her a little about what Aislinn had said, but that would need to be explored another time. She really was tired and wanted to just eat dinner and go to bed. But the sun was still fairly high in the sky. "I sure am

going to be tired when the sun goes down here soon."

"I can understand that. You've had a lot to take in during the past couple of days. Plus using magic is draining."

"I've never really had that happen before." She looked at him as they picked their way along the forest trail when she saw his arched brow. "The magic seems to be more draining here than at home. At home, it just seems a natural extension of myself whereas here it seems I have to work more for it."

"You'll have to ask Merlin because that may be related to the fact you aren't in your home loinnir. Everyone is tuned into the loinnir and elven community to which they belong."

"I guess I can understand, but this seems different." They continued on in silence for a few minutes. "There is one question I meant to ask you. Why is it so warm here? I mean I know we're almost in the dead of winter."

"That one is easy. Our loinnir, much like yours, has been programmed, for lack of a better word, to maintain near constant seventy-two degrees for the inhabitants."

"We don't really do that at home at all. For Santa, it's really important to allow the earth to do it's natural thing."

"We allow that here, too, but when we go out,

it's like a bubble around us as we move from place to place."

"And you think that's being discrete?"

"Well...I'm not the one who thinks about those things...the council does."

"I think they are really wrong for having that type of attitude. Maybe that's the problem I'm feeling."

"I supposed it could be something like that." He stopped. "We're at the barrier."

"Good, I'm starved." She stepped through and found there was a chill in the air. "You're right. It's almost dark."

"Alma should have dinner made."

Aingeal smiled at him and they made their way to the estate. She didn't know how she felt about everything she learned today. It certainly was outside of her realm in many ways, but she wasn't going to be put off by this. Somehow she knew it would make her stronger over all. She would have to see what Merlin planned to teach her to understand what exactly was expected of her. She yawned and rubbed her eyes with her free hand.

"Tired?"

Yawning again, she tried hard to stifle it. "I guess so. I know we had a long day, but I am so much more tired than I want to be."

Fearghus smiled. "It's the travel, I assure you. You should be back to normal in a day or two."

"I just don't think they are going to give me another day to recover. I'm supposed to be at Merlin's home first thing in the morning. He said the earlier the better."

"Let's see what happens." He led her up the steps and opened the door.

The aroma's assaulted her senses the moment they walked into the door and her stomach growled. "Geez, sorry about that. I knew I was hungry, but I didn't realize just how much."

He chuckled. "Not a problem. You're allowed to have some normal body functions."

She made a face. "That doesn't sound nice." Laughing, she followed him into the dining room and stopped up short. "It looks as if we're having a state dinner or something."

"Aye, we are or at least the elven equivalent to it." Alma came in from the kitchen wiping her hands on her apron. "They didn't tell you what they had planned for tomorrow night."

A rippled of relief went through her. "I thought this was going to be for tonight. I just wouldn't be able to stay awake for that at all."

"I'm sorry to give you a scare. We'll be having dinner in the kitchen like your breakfast."

"Sounds good to me. And it smells great."

"Well, some of it is for tomorrow night. But I did manage to put in a small roast with some potatoes."

"It sounds wonderful, Alma. Is it ready now?" Fearghus asked, placing a hand in the small of her back.

That little touch sent her body into over drive. Aingeal did everything she could to keep it under wraps, but she felt Alma knew exactly what went on. "I sure hope so, I am starved."

Alma sent them a skeptical look. "I would say that wasn't the only thing you're starved for."

Aingeal's eyes went wide and she felt her cheeks getting red. "I-don't-ah-know"

Alma put up her hand. "You don't have to explain anything to me. I just won't act like I'm blind."

Fearghus laughed loudly. "We hear you, Alma. Now let's get something in this woman before her stomach growls again."

Alma chuckled. "Follow me. I have the table already set."

They went into the kitchen and Aingeal was pleasantly surprised. The kitchen glowed with candlelight giving the room an almost dreamlike look. It was very romantic and it made her wonder about Alma's comments. She turned and gave the woman a smile.

Alma leaned forward to whisper. "I'm not unfeeling and I totally understand. So get to it."

Fearghus had gone over to the table and had missed the exchange. "This looks wonderful,

Alma. Are you done for the day?"

"Aye, I am. The smells are from my earlier cooking and the food I made for you. Everything is put away for tomorrow. If there's anything left from your meal, you know how to bag it up."

"Thanks. Tell Andrew his wife is a wonderful cook."

She went to the coat rack, putting on her light jacket. "He knows that, silly man. Enjoy yourselves tonight. I'll be back in the morning."

Aingeal watched her go and turned back to Fearghus. "I think I like her."

He barked out a laugh. "She can be hard to take sometimes because she's really outspoken. I've been told you're that way a lot." He walked over to the table and pulled out a chair for her. "Madam?"

Smiling she went over and sat down. "Thank you." She looked at the amazing spread before her. There was the roast Alma had talked about surrounded by cooked vegetables. There was also a bowl of clear soup and a salad as well as pieces of cakes to complete their meal. "It looks good."

"Aye, it does."

She smiled at him as she placed her napkin in her lap. "I don't think I've really heard your accent since we've been here."

"That's only because you've become used to it."

"That may be true. Are we going to start with

the soup?"

"Sounds good to me. I'll just hand you my bowl."

She took his bowl, ladling the clear liquid into it. "This is different. I didn't expect to have a soup like this here."

"Alma doesn't always stick to traditional fare. I could almost bet the dinner tomorrow will have a wide variety of dishes."

"Why is that?"

"For a lot of reasons. One being not all the council members are from here."

"Really? I would have thought they were."

"No. We have loinnirs all around the world and many of the council members are leaders of some of those loinnirs."

"I knew about the loinnirs of course from what you've told me, but they don't look like they are from other parts of the world."

"Most of them were born here and then they went with parents off to foreign lands. Some of them went on their own because they had a task or job to do. Sorcha is the only one not born here as she was born in India."

"India?"

"Yes, her parents were there and the family in charge of keeping that loinnir safe. Once she was old enough, she came here to study with the elven community here."

"How long ago did that happen?"

"I'm not sure she'd like me to speculate on just how old she is."

"You don't know?"

"No."

"But you know how old Conall is."

"Everyone knows how old Conall is because he tells us all every time something doesn't go his way."

She laughed and handed him back his bowl. "Now that I can believe."

"So what did you think about the oldest elf alive?"

"He seemed to be a grumpy old man. But then again, I really didn't get to talk to him or any of them very much. They just all had questions they wanted answered. They really didn't ask anything personal or offer anything. Not really." She took a spoonful of the soup. "This is wonderful."

"It is, isn't it?" They ate in silence for a few moments. "So who talked about the personal stuff?"

"Actually, I had noticed Aislinn looked like my father, but I wasn't going to say anything since I didn't know. But Sorcha brought up the fact Gemma at one time had been tested for being an earth-intuitive." She watched Fearghus carefully and seeing nothing wondered what Aislinn's comment even meant. But she was just too tired to

try and figure it out tonight.

"I don't remember, but it may have been before I came here."

"I thought you'd always lived here."

"I did go to university in Edinburgh."

She vaguely remembered the city as they left one plane and got on another immediately. "Did you like it?"

"I did. University is somewhere everyone should have the opportunity to go to as it helps them grow."

She nodded her head in agreement. "I understand that. I loved my time in Anchorage and in some ways feel it ended way too soon."

"Let me take your bowl."

She quickly took her last ladle of soup and handed him her bowl. "Do you want me to fill your plate?"

"Sure. I just need to put these in the dishwasher. I know Alma would like us to turn it on tonight as she always does."

"That sounds reasonable. I know my mother expects the same thing."

"I wanted to let you know I did call your family yesterday to let them know we had arrived safely."

She frowned. "You didn't have to do that. I would have called them eventually."

"I told them you'd call them when you were

ready.”

She nodded thinking about what he had taken on himself. Aingeal wasn't sure she liked him taking that responsibility at all.

Chapter 11

The warming fire made her drowsy and she wasn't sure just how much longer she'd stay awake. The meal had been excellent, especially the dessert. Aingeal had never been plagued with a love of chocolate so the light delicate cake had been right up her alley. Watching, Fearghus through slit eyes as he prodded the fire making it jump even higher.

"There, that should take care of it while we talk for a while."

"I don't know just how long I'll last," she murmured as he sat next to her.

"That's not a problem. I'll carry you up if I need to." He came and sat on the couch next to her.

She kept her eyes on the fire even though her heart rate jumped as she thought about him touching her. If truth be told, making in love in front of a warm fire had been something she had always thought she'd like. "I don't think you'll need to do that."

"You never know." He was much closer than he had been when he first sat down. She closed her eyes the moment he touched her cheek, sliding his fingers down her face in a caress which made her body wet. "I want to make love to you in front of the fire. Would you like that?"

"Yes," she whispered and turned to look at him.

Leaning in, he gently took her lips, stroking the bottom one with his tongue. Gathering her in his arms, his hand went under her shirt to stroke her breast through the light material of her bra. Her nipples responded immediately becoming harder with each stroke, making her lean into him even more. He pulled her into his lap and continued to kiss her. It didn't take long before she felt his cock pressing against her thigh.

Placing her hand on him, she rubbed him until he moaned with pleasure. Smiling, she gripped his shoulders, pulling him even closer.

"I like the way your body grows under my touch," she murmured against his lips.

"I like it too. I need to get a blanket for us. The carpet is too coarse and may mar your beautiful skin and I don't want that at all."

Nodding, she allowed him to place her back on the couch. She watched her receding back before she got up quickly and began to remove her clothes. Aingeal swiftly folded her clothes and

placed them beside her before sitting back down on the sofa. And she was just in time as Fearghus came back in and stopped dead in his tracks.

"I...I've got the blanket."

She smiled at the catch in his voice as she was happy she affected him this much. "Why don't you spread it in front of the fireplace."

She watched as he put the blanket down on the floor before turning to her. Coming to her, he placed a quick kiss on her neck before pushing her more fully into the couch and pulling her to the edge of the sofa. Kissing her face, he continued his path down her body ending on her abdomen right above her thatch of dark hair.

Leaning back, he looked at her and had a sudden intake of breath. "You're beautiful," he said quietly.

She smiled because she had waited so long for someone to say those words to her. This man certainly had all the right words which made her a little cautious. But caution needed to be thrown to the wind as she allowed her body to enjoy everything.

Fearghus lifted sexy, seductive eyes to look at her. "Thank you for taking off your clothes. Not that I wouldn't have enjoyed doing it myself."

"So you would, would you?" she questioned huskily, grabbing his head with her hand.

"Yeah...I would have...it would have been like

unwrapping a much wanted present."

Aingeal gave a low laugh. "I've never been anyone's present before."

"You are definitely a present to me," he whispered.

She lay there, waiting for his next move and was surprised the mere touch of his hand sent a warming shiver through her. He kissed her urgently and she responded with an eagerness of her own because she couldn't get enough.

But he didn't stop there. Suddenly, his hands were everywhere on her body, touching her breasts, her abdomen, her crotch. The feeling was profound and she allowed them to rush over her as it heightened her pleasure.

"I'm going to lick you till you scream my name. I want taste you and feel your body shiver under me."

Aingeal's eyes widened because his statements brooked no arguments...this man knew what he wanted and how he planned to get it. Still, she had a searing need which only this man could satisfy. He continued to place sloppy kisses on her body before settling between her legs and starting a leisure path toward her crotch.

"Don't worry...I expect you to return the favor."

She smiled lazily. "You do...do you?"

"I do." He nibbled her inner thighs and spread

her legs even further. Breathing hotly over her, he replaced his breath with his tongue. Slowly, he licked and sucked her labia before spreading it with his fiery tongue. Burying himself in her, he ran his tongue over her from her clit to her vagina and back up again, causing her to shudder in delight.

Soon, she clutched him to her, her breaths coming in long surrendering moans. Pulling her even closer to the edge of the couch. It felt as if he tried to pull every ounce of pleasure he could from her pliant body. Sliding his fingers into her, he rubbed her clit with his thumb, stroking it occasionally with his tongue as well. A moan escaped her as her body writhed in pleasure, each push or prod pulling her every closer to the edge.

"Please tell me you've put up our shield so we won't be blasting everyone," she whispered.

Fearghus just grunted and continued his attack of her body, stroking her in and out as his tongue and thumb strummed against her clit. Soon she convulsed as she was thrust over the edge of sanity, the colors flaring briefly before fading out.

"Fearghus!" she cried as her body arched up and down, wringing the last bit of pleasure from her very satisfying orgasm.

"See, you could play solitaire and not be caught," he whispered, looking up at her with dark eyes.

Chuckling, she answered, "I don't think I'll ever be able to do it again. You've shown me there is something much, much better." She stroked his head as rested his chin on her abdomen. "Now, it's your turn." She pushed him back and stood, pulling him to stand next to her.

Leisurely, she put her hands under his shirt, wanting to feel his warm flesh against her along with the bristle of his chest hair. She smiled to herself. "I want this gone," she stated. Hearing his deep chuckle, she felt glad she knew what she wanted and demanded it. Sinking on her knees in front of him, she rubbed her hands over his body. "And these too," she gazed up at him and tugged on his jeans knowing he would have no doubt as to what she wanted.

Aingeal could feel the large bulge beneath the fabric, but she was not prepared for what she saw. The man was a virtual god and she loved the fact he filled her completely. Staring at his penis for a moment, she did a double take and tentatively looked up at him wanting to complete this fantasy voyage with the one man who totally turned her on.

Her tongue snaked out and touched the head of his member, slowly rimming the edge. The salty taste encouraged her to do things she had not considered last night. Ever so slowly she pulled more of his shaft into her willing mouth spurred

on by the moans she could hear him utter. Reaching around she grabbed his buttocks and squeezed, reveling in the smoothness of the skin beneath her hands and feeling them tremble in response to her very touch. Without realizing what she did, she pulled in as much as of his body as she could take feeling him throb on the back of her throat while reveling in his apparent weakness as her mouth stroked response after response out of him.

He acted as if he were in a strong wind, trembling with every stroke. Her tongue flicked around the head of his penis, feeling the rim and concentrating on the area as it seemed to affect him even more. He grabbed her head and held her still for a moment. "Aingeal, be careful."

She pulled away from him. "Why? Don't you want to come in my mouth?"

"I'd rather come inside you."

Nodding, she pulled him down on the blanket next to her, kissing his body as it slid down hers. Face to face, she gazed at him, taking in his wide pupils and hoarse breathing. "I like that I turn you on as much as you turn me on."

"Good, then you won't mind this so much."

Turning her around, he shoved her forward and entered her in one hard motion. Leaning into her body, he caressed her back for a few moments then reached around her body to caress first her

breasts and then her clit. Sensations came and went as he thrust into her hard then slow, each movement making her moan out loud in pleasure as wave after wave washed over her. Still, he would bring her up to a peak and gently let her down, never allowing her to plunge over the edge.

“Please...please...” She didn’t mind begging as she wanted release from this exquisite torture as his fingers continued to work her body.

Breathless, Aingeal pushed her body to meet his as the tip of his penis touched her cervix and inner hot spot causing almost unbearable delight. Reaching behind her, she caressed where ever she could touch his hard body. Plunging into her again, his fingers rubbed furiously against her clit in a slow dance of enjoyment and bliss as the sensations pushed her ever higher.

She looked up as color began to swirl around and through them. With each thrust of his body, the colors intensified and spun around them like an out of control storm. Aingeal gave him as much access as she could to his body as his cock continued its slow dance. This was different than before, she felt hotter and more in tune with her lover and her own body. And in her heart she knew what happened to her. Still, the elven magic tightened its control over them and with each thrust the colors became more beautiful.

Fearghus began to moan. “I’m going to come

and I want you to go with me.”

Pushing himself even more into her, he again stroked her clit with one hand as the other touched her breasts, paying special attention to the nipple. Suddenly, he cried out, pinching both her clit and her nipple in time with his thrusts, pushing her over the edge of the abyss. Within moments, he followed her over as evidenced by his cries.

She lay where he had thrust her into the blanket, his weight a welcomed reminder of what had just happened. “That was fantastic,” she whispered, still breathing heavily. “I can’t believe it.”

Flipping her over, he looked into her eyes. “You’re like a burning need. I have to have you again.”

“So soon?” she questioned although just the very act would confirm her worst fears. Maybe worst was too harsh a word, but it was certainly concerning to her.

Dragging moisture from her, he rubbed her up and down, spreading the moisture everywhere. Leaning down, Fearghus devoured her with a heated mouth almost searing himself into her flesh. He lavishly licked her into a frenzy as if he intended making her next orgasm even more intense. Sitting up he gazed down at her, she almost came undone when his roughly slid his

fingers into her, pushing them in and out.

"I want to come. I want to feel you deep inside me." She reached up and stroked his chest, tweaking his nipples with light fingers.

"I want that, too, this time I want you close, so close that all I will have to do is to put my dick in you to have you explode. Promise me you'll do this with me."

Looking up at him, she swallowed hard. Even if he hadn't realized it yet, he had just asked her to start the process of nor'ahkeem. If she said no, he might never ask her again and her heart knew she had only one choice.

"Yes...I'll wait..." she moaned quietly.

Fearghus touched her body with hot fingers and spread her legs even further. Pulling cream from her body, he worked into her until his touch slipped over her silky smoothness. Gliding over her most sensitive areas, he slipped a hand under her and exposed her anus, working the cream into her further. She had never thought of anal sex at all, but in this moment, it made her shiver with possibility.

Leisurely, he slipped a finger into her ass and she squirmed with pleasure as he moved it in and out for a few moments. Working her clit, he brought her close, but would only allow her to hover close to orgasm as he let her down again. "I need to be inside you."

He buried himself quickly in her body as he continued to grow even larger than before. And he filled her so completely that every movement brushed up against her inner spot. With each thrust, the slow sexual build up of intense feeling left her quivering. Aingeal felt like she was on fire and knew this feeling would be even more than anything she had ever felt. "Fearghus-please-please, I need to..." she finally managed to get out.

"Not yet," he answered and leaned up.

Slowly, he began to rub her clit in circular motions, each finger rasping over her, leaving a new awareness of her body in its wake. At the same time, he occasionally worked her anus, moving his thumb in and out of her pushing her to even greater heights than before. Aingeal realized she was no longer in control of her own body and she felt she would go down in flames if not allowed to orgasm soon. With every motion, the tip of his penis rubbed up against her cervix until her insides burned as much as the outside.

"Fearghus, I just can't wait any more." She started to thrust wildly against him. She was amazed she felt him grow even larger. Soon incoherent thoughts flitted through her mind as she continued to move against him when suddenly, the dam burst as the orgasm took to her to a place where only they could go.

“Aingeal, I need your help...I’m not sure I can contain it...arghh...” he cried.

Aingeal threw all her elven magic toward their sexual shield as it swirled around them. The colors were the most intense she had even seen them and it pulled them higher and higher, slamming them into an abyss of sexual energy which enveloped them in a tight vortex. They fell into an uneasy sleep as she wondered if she had made the right decision by allowing Fearghus to start the process of nor’ahkeem.

Chapter 12

Aingeal had been here almost three months and she was bored out of her mind. She felt she had learned everything she could from Merlin. He had been a wonderful teacher, but she needed to tell him today she needed to go home for a while even though she wanted to learn even more from him.

It would be even harder on Fearghus. They had made love almost every day since beginning nor'ahkeem and yet she felt sure he didn't want to admit it to himself. But she knew she loved him and had to figure out how to make him admit it. Maybe some time apart was what would be needed to make him admit his feelings.

Sighing, she sat next to the window of her room looking out over the beautiful late spring day. Each day she had found out something new about Scotland and her family history. For that she would always be grateful. She looked out over the forest again and felt its tug. One of the major things she had learned from Merlin was how to

turn it into a dull roar, allowing it only to occupy a spot in the background. When and if she needed, she could pull it out and fully listen to what the world needed to say.

She smiled to herself wryly, wishing he had taught her how to do that with her personal relationships. Since she had been here, she had become close to most of the council as well as Alma, but there was nothing like her siblings and she missed them all very much. And she really missed her sisters-in-law. They were both really special and even though they weren't elves, they knew what it meant to be in love with one.

And that's exactly where she found herself. In over her head, way in love with a man who barely acknowledged she were there except for the great sex. She didn't feel comfortable enough to talk to Alma about it at all and she certainly wasn't going to talk about it on her cell phone. Sure, she had called her family in the North Pole and told them she was okay, but she couldn't very well spill her guts to them because Fearghus could walk in at any moment.

Getting up, she supposed she should get down to breakfast as it was one of those rare formal type things with everyone on the council attending. She didn't even know why it had been called, just that it had. Fearghus had been very vague and she hadn't wanted to pursue the matter. Sighing, she

slowly made her way down the stairs and went into the main dining room.

Putting on her best face, Aingeal was brought up short by the woman sitting next to Fearghus. Without even asking, she knew this was her father's cousin, Gemma, and it really made her wonder just how old Fearghus was although she knew him to be quite a bit younger than her father. As the other chair next to him was empty, she smiled at him and went to sit down.

"Hi," she whispered a little breathless.

Fearghus turned and looked at her, a blank look on his face. "Hi."

Looking from him to the beautiful woman next to him, she smiled again. "Hi, I think you're a cousin to my father. I'm Aingeal Locklin."

The woman turned cold blue eyes toward her and she realized this woman was nothing like her father. Her father was warm and loving, this person was cold and probably didn't have a loving bone in her body.

"How is your father?" she asked flatly.

Even her voice was cold and it took everything she had in her not to shiver. "He's good. Or at least he was the last time I talked to him. I didn't realize anyone from my family was coming here. When did you arrive, Gemma?"

"My arrival was unexpected. I hadn't told anyone I was coming."

"Oh. So you surprised your mother? My mother would be livid if I did something like that to her." She chuckled thinking about her mother.

"Aingeal, please." Fearghus sent her a stern look.

"What? Did I say something wrong?" She frowned back at him.

"I don't care what your mother would have done, Ms. Locklin, I'm here to see Fearghus anyway. My mother and I have nothing to say to each other anymore."

That fact shocked her as she knew Aislinn thought the world of Gemma. "That wasn't the impression I got from your mother. And the name's Aingeal." She reached and got the plate of eggs, realizing there were at least a couple people interested in what was happening at her end of the table.

"Didn't your mother teach you any manners?"

The coldness of her tone made Aingeal turn her head toward her. The viciousness she saw in Gemma's eyes should have made her scared, but it didn't. It made her mad. "I wouldn't try it if I were you," Aingeal stated quietly.

"And why not?" Gemma hissed.

"Because she's stronger than you, young woman, and if you had kept up with your classes you would have known that." Merlin stood behind Aingeal's chair and placed a hand on her

shoulder. "I wasn't going to announce it for a few days, but this woman is probably one of the strongest elves alive as far as earth magic goes. She can call it up at a moment's notice. And that includes anything nature can throw at a person. Believe me when I say the forest won't take it lightly if you try to take on their new found friend."

Aingeal felt honored and surprised. Merlin had never given her any indication of her talent and just made her work over and over again at her lessons some to the point where she wanted to scream. "Really?"

"Yes, really." Merlin smiled at her proudly.

"Are you telling me a nobody half-breed is stronger than me a full-breed?" Gemma's shrill voice could finally be heard throughout the room.

"I told you to mind your manners, young woman. Do you want the rest to be involved?" Merlin questioned loudly.

Gemma didn't say anything for a few moments and tried to stare her down. When she realized Aingeal would not back down, she dropped her eyes. "No, sir. I would rather this incident went no further."

"A wise choice, young woman." And as if to make sure she kept her promise, Merlin sat on the other side of Aingeal. "I'm sorry you had to find out this way. I really meant to make it special."

She smiled broadly at him. "It is special. Thank you." She turned to smile at Fearghus and was surprised he still frowned at her. Wondering what his problem might be, she was brought back to the other occupants of the table as they began to listen to Merlin tell them about her training sessions and the accomplishments she had made during the last few months. Finishing her meal, she made nice as long as she could and started to clear the dishes.

"You don't have to do that. We have servants," Gemma advised.

"That may be so, but this is one thing my mother always insisted on. I know how to help." Picking up the plates, she went into the kitchen, hoping to find Alma there and she wasn't disappointed. "What is with that woman?" she questioned, putting the dishes on the counter.

Alma turned to her. "So...you met Gemma?"

Aingeal leaned back against the counter. "Met? That's not what I would call it. She's rude."

Alma sighed. "What an understatement. You do know she and Fearghus were an item years ago, right?"

"My father had mentioned it before I left home. It seems he had some problem with Fearghus at first. I really never got the story from either one."

"Well, Fearghus is much younger than both Gemma and your father. Seems she wanted a hot young stud and focused her attention on him. He

was fresh from college in Edinburgh and felt he could help her. But she really did a number on him even though he found out what her problem entailed."

"Poor Fearghus."

"You can feel sorry for him only because he thought she was sincere."

"What?"

"Seems Gemma has a very human condition in the fact she's severely bipolar and needs to stay on her medication. No elven magic can fix that one if you ask me."

"But I thought they were purebred. I mean that's what she just shouted at me in front of everyone."

"Apparently not since she has that particular condition. It had to have happened far back in their family history. They wouldn't tell anyone at all if they had their way. I do believe it was one of the reasons your father chose to leave here after everything happened the way it did."

"But it doesn't tell me why I shouldn't feel totally sorry for Fearghus."

"She used her magic and convinced him he was wrong in his diagnosis. So instead of telling her family, he tried to help her escape. That's when your father became involved. The family thought they were eloping and that isn't something one should do in a totally elven family."

"Oh. So that's why my father was always so distant as far as Fearghus was concerned. And I suppose as far as his family is concerned."

"I imagine so. Somehow, he realized what was going on and brought her back kicking and screaming, but not before he took her to his bed. And it didn't matter she had used magic on him. They all felt he should have put a spell on her so she couldn't use her magic against anyone. But he trusted her."

"That would explain a lot."

"Still, there have been the occasional elf who is dangerous to the rest. The rules are very clear in stating the elf in question must be neutralized in order not to hurt anyone. Fearghus knew the rules and chose to ignore them."

"But they took him back. I mean they allowed him to become a druidic healer and their sex therapist. So they must have realized he wasn't all bad."

"True. They felt he had grown a lot when they asked him to do their bidding. But he wandered around for a long time before they asked him to come back."

"He never said anything at all."

"He wouldn't. It's not in him to ask for pity. They summoned him when his parents took a turn for the worst. That's when he realized there was more to this elf thing." Alma smiled at her. "Kinda

like you did.”

“Me?” Aingeal asked surprised.

“Yes, you. You really hadn’t thought of your life in terms of how you fit into the elven world, just how you fit into the human world.”

“I guess I never thought of it that way. But I can see what you mean.”

The door swung in and both women looked up to see a very mad Fearghus come storming in. Alma frowned at him while Aingeal decided to stand her ground.

“I think I’ll leave this to you two.” Alma turned and left the kitchen.

“Just what do you think you were doing in there?” He stood there, seething.

Breathing deeply, she didn’t care how much she loved this man, she wasn’t going to take any crap.

“What do you think I was doing? Playing cards?”

“You had no right to be so rude to her.”

Pushing back his hair, she realized just how handsome he had grown over the few months she had been here. Gone were the lines of tension and stress she had seen etched on his face. Until today. Now he was agitated and upset and being an ass.

“I wasn’t rude to her at all. If anything she was rude to me. I just don’t understand where you are coming from. What is it with you two?”

He stood there with a stunned look on his face. “There’s nothing with us. There can’t ever be

anything with us."

Aingeal licked her lips. "But you wish there was," she stated. She let out a forced sigh. How could she have been so dumb? Sure they had been in the process of nor'ahkeem, but it was up to the individual elves to complete the process and no matter how she had tried, Fearghus just didn't seem to get to the heights of passion he had gotten to that one day months ago.

"I didn't say that." He looked at her then with a wild, almost scattered look.

She crossed her arms in front of her and stood watching him for a few moments. "Then what are you saying?"

"Maybe you should go home and visit your family. You can come back when she's gone and complete your studies." He gave her a concerned look.

"Maybe I should." She started to walk away and turned, moving back to him quickly. "But not before I do this." She took his face in her hands and pulled him down to her to look him directly in the eyes. "Tha gaol agam ort. Promise me you'll remember that as you go about your business."

She was rewarded with a darkening of his eyes as he pulled her to him, his mouth plundering hers as tongues met and fought for supremacy. Soon his hands sought her under her clothes as he caressed and touched her body.

"We can't do this now," she whispered and pushed herself away from him. She smiled knowing she looked thoroughly kissed. "I'll leave so you can take care of things, but this is in no way finished." Smiling she stepped away from him and walked to the kitchen door. "Just remember what I said."

Walking through the door nothing could have prepared her for what happened as the energy buildup was too quick for most to perceive. Still, she wasn't caught totally unawares as the hair had stood up on the back of her neck a second before the blast hit her. Looking to where Gemma stood, she realized her mistake a second too late and took the full magical blast. Not knowing where to bleed the energy off to, she stood and absorbed some as she began to quake like she received an electrical surge. She would be consumed if she couldn't get rid of some of the excess energy.

Give it to us, we can take care of you...we'll never leave you...please.

Not knowing where else to turn, she looked at a horrified Merlin, glimpsing other stunned faces surrounding him and then allowed the flow to go through her ending in the earth below the foundation. How she managed to stand for more than a few seconds, she didn't know. Chest heaving, she turned to her assailant.

"What do you think you're doing?" Aingeal

finally managed to get out. "Don't you even care if you hurt anyone? You could have killed everyone here."

"No half-breed is going to get the man I love." Insanity shown through the rage in her face.

"Not your decision, sweetheart," she said tossing a shielding spell toward Gemma. She found Fearghus right before fainting dead away.

Chapter 13

When she awoke it was evening. Groaning, she turned to see Merlin next to her reading a book. "What time is it?"

Looking up from the book, he smiled. "Good girl. I guess you figured out what happened."

"That evil witch, Gemma, unloaded all her magical power on me. I take it that it could kill a normal person."

"Undoubtedly. But you seemed to handle it well."

Pushing herself up in the bed, she leaned against the headboard. "It wasn't me, really. The land called to me and told me to send the energy to it. I just tried to absorb it and realized almost too late that there was no way I could."

"But the point is that you didn't. Your bond with the land is complete. It will always be there to help you and guide you along your life journey. It will talk to you and you will talk to it. You will never be alone in this life journey."

Frowning, she looked at him. "I'm not sure if that's good or bad. What's going to happen when I have a family?"

Merlin eyed her cautiously. "That's already a given, young lady. We just don't know what that type of power can do to a growing fetus."

Now she was really confused. "What are you talking about?"

Pushing his glasses down, he looked over the rim. "Such a smart girl normally. Surely you realized you're pregnant?"

"What? No...that can't be I'm not..." her voice faded away as she mentally calculated dates and time. "Oh my god. This can't be happening." She chewed her bottom lip and tried her best not to burst into tears.

"Well, you are and from what we know, your child wasn't harmed in any way. At least no more than you were."

She stared at Merlin. "What am I going to do?"

"I imagine what's been done for millennia, young lady. You're going to have a baby."

"Of course, I'm going to have it...that was never in doubt...I mean about Fearghus." She scowled at him.

"The pompous ass? I'm sure you'll think of something."

"You know, we'd started nor'ahkeem, but Fearghus would only go so far and no more."

"That's because it's already completed. He's just too much of an ass to realize it."

"Already completed? I never even realized it. How could I not know?"

"The completion of nor'ahkeem is something that is done on the unconscious level. The conscious part, well, sometimes that's a little harder to complete. But your young man worries about things which shouldn't concern him."

"You don't act like you even like him."

Merlin sighed. "It's not I don't like the young man. I really do. It's just he's been pining for something he should never have had in the first place." He reached for her hand and squeezed it. "And doesn't even realize what's right in front of him."

Smiled, she squeezed back. "Thank you. Now do you mind telling me what exactly she did to me?"

"Hellfire."

"What?"

"She cast the hellfire spell and it had been years since anyone used it, so our defenses were rusty."

"What's the defense?"

"Just what you did. The force of the power has to be redirected into somewhere else. You know the four elements of magic, earth, wind, fire and water. Only an earth-intuitive has power of them all. The fire couldn't have consumed you because

of your gift."

"Whoopee for me. I still feel like crap."

"True." He sat back and rubbed his chin. "The thing that none of them knew was you have the power within you to have absorbed it all without dying."

"That can't be right."

"Normally, it wouldn't be, but because you have the ability to cast any type of earth spell, you can also absorb the energy created."

"Wow."

"Wow, indeed. The trouble with Gemma's power was it's tainted so it threw you for a loop. Combined with the fact you still haven't completed your training and the result is that you feel like crap."

She smiled at him wryly. "Thanks. Do the rest know I have this type of power?"

"I don't think any of them realize the ramifications of it yet."

"What ramifications?"

"That you are truly the most powerful elf on the planet. It's probably within you to save us all."

"Great...no one asked me if I wanted the job." Aingeal sighed deeply and frowned. While this was an awesome responsibility, she knew her main priority lie with the babe inside her. "Is it okay if I don't accept the position right away? I mean...I think my priority is going to shift here in

a little while anyway.”

“I don’t think it will matter much, young lady. I think you are to enjoy your life like every elf who came before you. Whatever is going to happen will do so, with or without your input. I think the time will come when you are needed and you will answer the call. No more, no less.”

“Thank you. Now I can breathe a little easier since saving the world isn’t going to be top priority for a while.”

“I think you should go visit your family. While you might have some issues, I think they are just normal family things. They will help you chose your path and balance your life.”

“Fearghus had said the same thing before I walked out of the kitchen. But shouldn’t I tell him first?”

“That’s a decision only you will need to make. I’m afraid I can’t help you there.” He patted her hand gently.

The door opened and Fearghus stood there, watching her for a few minutes before entering the rest of the way. “Merlin, can you give us a few moments?”

“As you wish, young man. Just know if you hurt her in any way, you’ll have me to answer to. Is that clear?” He stood and squeezed her hand once more before whispering, “Remember what I said.”

"Yes, sir." He stood by the door until the older man left.

Fearghus came and cautiously sat by her, taking her hand in his. "I never meant for any of this to happen."

"How could you even know?"

"I knew."

Aingeal looked at him sternly. "What did you know, Fearghus?"

"I knew Gemma was prone to jealous rages. I knew it wouldn't take her much to spin out of control the moment I saw her this morning. I knew and did nothing about it, just like before."

She sighed and licked her lips. "So, you have a soft spot where that woman is concerned. It happens to the best of us."

"But it put your life and the lives of every one of the council members in jeopardy."

"The woman's bipolar...for heaven's sake...just what could you do about it?"

"I'm a psychiatrist, Aingeal. I've known all along this woman was a danger to herself and others. If nothing else, I had our history to learn from."

"I thought you were a sex therapist and a druidic healer."

"I'm those, too. When I had the problems with Gemma the first time, I decided I would exclusively limit my practice to sex therapy. Later

on, I decided to study with the druids and expand my field of study. I wanted to learn how to do things in a more natural way."

She sat up in bed. "You're a psychiatrist?"

"Yes, I am."

"Oh great. Does this mean you were trying to analyze me the whole time?"

"Not the whole time," he smiled and caressed her hand. "Aingeal, I really want you to go home. I want you to be with your family while I try to sort out this mess."

"How is Aislinn taking this?"

"Very hard. She thought Gemma was under control since she was medicated. I guess she was doing so well she thought she could do without her medication and stopped taking it a couple of months ago."

"That's too bad."

"It's worse on her children."

"She has children?" Aingeal questioned in amazement.

"Yes, she does. After she was diagnosed correctly and began taking meds, she fell in love with a more age appropriate man and they married quite a few years ago. They thought they would never be blessed with children then about eight years ago, she got pregnant with a set of twins. A few years after that, she had another set. So she has two girls and two boys and a husband

all who love her very, very much."

She smiled wryly at him. "I guess twins are a family trait." She grimaced inside as the thought of twins raced across her mind. "So what's going to happen?"

"As much as I hate to do this, I'm going to have to commit her for a short period of time. Which means I'll be spending a lot of time in Edinburgh and that's is why I'd like you to go home."

"Does that mean you'll come and get me sometime?"

"That means, I don't know. I want to love you, really I do, but I don't know if I can. Look how badly this first time ended up."

She stroked his arm. "No one could have predicted this. It's my understanding no one knew the family had a drop of human blood in them. I bet my father doesn't either."

"I'm not sure your father ever wanted to know. Everyone was so snowed by Gemma no one could see the forest for the trees as the old saying goes."

"I understand all this, but can you explain to me just why she's your responsibility?"

"Because the council has asked me to take care of this for them."

Sighing, Aingeal closed her eyes and squeezed them tight. She wouldn't cry...no couldn't would be a better word...and she couldn't tell him she was pregnant. It would just add another burden to

his already overburdened mind. He would have to come to her because he wanted her, not just her unborn child. "It seems the council wants you to take care of a lot of problems they have."

"I suppose so since I'm the official therapist and psychiatrist for the whole elven community."

"How convenient for them." She turned sad eyes to him. "I'll go. Merlin said I'd need to rest for a while before I continue my studies anyway. I suppose now is as good as any."

"It will work out okay." He looked at her. "Scoot over." Climbing into bed with her, he took her in his arms. "If we're meant to be, we're meant to be. I just need to get this behind me before I can move forward. Can you understand that?"

Not trusting her voice, she nodded her head. She would give him all the time he needed. "Can you make love to me before I leave?"

Sighing, he stayed still for a few moments before speaking. "Promise you'll call for Santa's sleigh either tomorrow or the next day. I need to know you're home safe before I can concentrate on my job."

"I promise," she murmured quietly.

Gently, he took her into his arms and rained kisses upon her face and neck. His movements felt restrained and she supposed he tried to not hurt her any more than she had already been. Grabbing his collar, she pulled him down to her. "I'm not

made of glass and therefore, won't break. I think Gemma proved it."

Fearghus gave a low chuckle. "I guess that's true." Kissing her deeply, he pulled back. "Aingeal," he groaned. "I can't let you leave without thoroughly making love to you."

At first, she was shocked because it meant somewhere within him, he loved her. He wasn't ready to admit it yet, but it was there. The more he kissed her, the more she wanted his gentle, sweet caresses and his mouth everywhere on her body. She felt the change immediately in her body and only hoped her love was in every touch she gave him.

"Do you mind?" He indicated the covers over her.

"No," she whispered.

Moving the covers aside, he slowly slid his hand down along her leg and inside her pajama bottoms. Gently, he squeezed and caressed where ever he touched. Moving his leg to between her knees, he pulled her against him and continued his leisurely exploration of her body.

"Aingeal, I don't want to hurt you, but I've got to have you." His accent was thick and she could barely understand what he said. Unhurried, he reached up inside her t-shirt and caressed her breasts, rubbing his fingers across her tight aureoles. "Please let me..."

He kissed the base of her neck and she could feel the pulse there as his tongue flitted out to stroke her. Pushing her t-shirt off over her head, he glided down to her breasts with his mouth. Sucking on first one then the other nipple, he allowed his teeth to brush against each of her nipples. Reaching down, he gently rubbed her crotch making her arch even more into his hand.

"That feels wonderful," she murmured.

She could feel him smile against her and shivered when he blew warm air on her body, making her nipples pucker under his touch. Each stroke of a hand or tongue brought intense sensations throughout her body. It felt so good to be touched this way and by him. Reaching inside her pajama bottoms, his hand slipped inside and found her hard nub, massaging it with fast, hard strokes.

"Please...please let me touch you..." she whispered.

"Not tonight sweetheart, this is all about you," he answered and continued to stroke her body. Pushing her bottoms out of the way, he continued to rub her. He brought her to the edge time and time, before easing his own pants off. "Tell me you want me," he whispered.

"I want you. I need this."

Rolling over, he impaled her on him and held her there. She moaned as his cock slide into her,

making her shudder with each movement. Sliding in and out, she could feel her body clench and unclench around him as he moved her up and down again and again. Soon, he touched her inner core and the colors whirled around them as sensations went higher and higher.

“Fearghus...I love you,” she cried bucking onto him.

Hearing him groan, she continued to ride him slowly, watching him as each stroke made him harder and thicker. Soon, he moaned as much as she as each was brought to the edge of the chasm and the colors consumed them, plunging them into overwhelming pleasure.

Chapter 14

When she woke up, she was very alone. Rubbing her hand over the dent in his pillow made her want to cry. But Aingeal didn't have time for crying and got up. She needed to leave Scotland as soon as she could get it together.

As quickly as she could, she showered and packed. Placing a call to her family, she was happy when her father answered.

"Dad, how are you?" she asked.

"Aingeal, it's good to hear your voice. How are things going in Scotland?"

"There're going really well, but I need a break from here. Actually, Merlin told me to take a break as my studies were really going well."

"That's good. So you want me to have the sleigh come and pick you up?" There was an anxious note in his voice.

"Yeah, Dad, that would be good. I'll be ready in a couple of hours. And Dad, thanks."

"Not a problem. You're mother will be glad to

see you."

"I love you, Dad. See you soon."

Closing her cell phone, she sighed, happy the phone call was made. Still, she had some goodbyes to give and people to see. Going quickly down the stairs, she went into the kitchen, hoping she would see Alma. And just like every morning since she had arrived, Alma stood in front of the stove cooking breakfast.

"Well...I'm surprised to see you up and about this morning."

Grabbing a cup and pouring herself some tea, Aingeal just smiled. "Actually, so am I, but Merlin and Fearghus want me to take a break. So I called home this morning and arranged for the sleigh to come and get me in a couple of hours."

"A couple of hours? Wow, that's quick."

Nodding in agreement, she took a sip. "I agree. It felt so long when we flew here, but my mother insisted."

"Everyone should experience one true travel experience."

She chuckled. "You sound just like my mother now."

"I hope not." Alma made a face before turning a serious look toward her. "I heard what happened yesterday. I always said Gemma had a screw loose."

"I would have to agree with you. I just wish I

hadn't been in her crosshairs. But then again, I supposed if it had to be anyone, it should have been me."

"That's what I heard from Merlin. I guess you saved us all."

"Sorry if I don't sound very happy about it. Merlin told me I have the power to save us all if needed. It's a heavy responsibility to bear."

"Responsibility always is. Is there something special you want for breakfast today since you'll be gone for a while?"

"No, I'm good with this tea."

"Feeling a little queasy?" A concerned look flashed across Alma's face.

"He told you?"

"Merlin? Not really. I'm a woman and I can count. Plus, I help clean the rooms. I didn't notice protection for either one of you. Ever. In all the time you were here."

Aingeal sighed. "Please don't tell Fearghus."

Alma looked at her sternly. "You're taking something precious which belongs to both of you. Is that really a fair thing for you to do?"

"I can't care right now if it's fair or not, Alma. He needs to love me for me. Then the child will be the natural extension of that love."

Alma grasped her arm lightly. "I understand, but know I won't keep your secret forever."

Sighing, she nodded. "Alright, but give us a

little time apart. And don't tell him unless you think he isn't going to come to me. I want him to come for all the right reasons."

"I'll agree to that. No you scoot alone and say the goodbyes you need to say. Your time will go by quickly."

"Can you have someone bring down my bags?"

"Not a problem, you get on your way." She pushed her toward the front door.

Aingeal hurried to the front door and caught a glimpse of Gemma being put in a car by Fearghus. She hadn't realized they were still on the grounds as she certainly didn't want to upset the woman more. Tentatively, she put up her hand and gave a slight wave. Fearghus only gave her the slightest nod of acknowledgement and quickly got into the car.

Watching the car drive away and up the long drive, she turned away to run down the path toward the loinnir. She had to work fast and get to all those she needed to see. Soon, she was through the barrier and in the community itself. Knocking on the door to the council house, she went inside. Over the past few months, she had become close to most of them, but none as much as Merlin. Bursting into the room, she forgot all about protocol.

"Aingeal!" Sorcha admonished. "Just what do you think you're doing out of bed, young lady?"

Breathing heavily, she smiled. "I'm going home for a visit. Merlin and Fearghus both insist I need a break. I would have stayed, but Merlin's comment about me getting recharged really hit home."

"That still doesn't explain what you are doing here." Cesan came around the table and watched her quietly.

"I needed to say good bye to all of you." She looked at each council member briefly. "And to thank you. I may not like my potential, but at least I know what it is."

"Frankly, I can't believe it, young woman," barked Conall.

"Don't you ever get tired of barking at everyone?" she asked jokingly. "I'm going to miss you all terribly. Especially you." Turning to Merlin, she threw her arms around him giving him a quick hug. "Thank you for everything. I'll be back as soon as I can."

"I'll miss you, too, Aingeal." Merlin returned her hug. "I expect you back within a year at the longest."

She couldn't help but catch the twinkle in her eye. "Yes, sir, I'll be back." Taking her leave, she went back through the village as quickly as she could. Along the way, she was stopped by more than one person, each relaying their happiness at what she had done for the community. Soon, she

was back at the barrier to the loinnir. Turning, she looked back at the trees and the other plants within her eyesight. She would miss this and them.

Promise you'll return to us.

"I will," she said out loud. "I will."

Walking up the path quickly, she wasn't surprised to see the sleigh in front of the steps.

"Please tell Eggther you are ready to leave this place, Aingeal. Eggther doesn't like it here with all these trees."

"Eggther," she looked down at him and frowned. "There are trees at home."

His small face turned up to her. "Not this many, Aingeal, not this many."

She leaned down to him. "Don't worry, Eggther, they're my friends."

"That's a good thing, right?"

"That's a good thing. Is the sleigh loaded?"

"A nice lady named Alma had some big elves put them in. They grow them big over here, don't they?"

"Yes, they do. But I missed you, Eggther. Let's go home."

Hopping into the sleigh, she watched as Scotland faded from view. Wrapping the blankets more snugly around her, she pushed herself further into the plush seat. She couldn't let the little elf see her cry. She couldn't let anyone see

her cry. Not yet.

The world passed as a blur as they went from the green of Scotland to the white of the North Pole. Before long she saw the family compound below. Suddenly, she had a need to see her sisters-in-law. They would know how she could get over this dull ache already spreading through her. Aingeal knew Merlin spoke the truth, they were bonded. "Eggther, take me to Tessa's and Jedrick. I'd like to see her and Angie first."

"You surprise me sometimes, Aingeal."

"Why?"

"They told me the same thing this morning when I left. I'm supposed to drop you off there."

The sleigh came to a gentle stop in front of the home of her oldest brother and sister-in-law. Hopping out of the sleigh, she stood there for a moment. "Eggther, can you take my things to my mother's house?"

"Yes, I'll see you later."

She watched the sleigh for a moment and turned to see the door open. Tessa and Angie stood there. Running up to them, she fell into their arms, crying.

"Get in here, it's cold out there," Angie said.

"Are you all right?" Tessa asked.

Aingeal let out a snuffle. "Where are the babies? They aren't so much babies any more, are they?"

"Your mother has them. What happened over

there?"

"Tell me, does the ache every go away?" she asked forlornly.

Angie lead her into the living room and looked at her closely. "Which ache? The one associated with nor'ahkeem or the one that comes from men being jerks?"

She lifted tear filled eyes to Angie. "How about both?"

"A while." Tessa came in and sat a cup of tea before her. "Want to tell us what happened?"

Sniffing, she curled up on the couch. "I'm not sure I even know."

Angie pushed Aingeal's hair out of her face. "Do you love him?"

Nodding her head, she answered. "I do. I didn't want to, but I do. And I told him. What if I scared him away with that?"

"I remember that scenario well. You know your brother had no intention of falling in love with me."

Aingeal looked at Angie. "He was always an ass since that stupid girl in college."

"Isn't it always about a girl or something else they think is important?"

Both of them looked at Tessa. "The way I see it, you have to show them you're the best thing for them. Ardan realized it and I realized too."

"What do you mean?"

"Unlike Ardan and Angie, it was me who had the doubts in our relationship. Not Jedrick."

"That's exactly like me and Fearghus. There was someone else long ago and while he doesn't love her any more, there are problems he has to solve before he feels he can love me."

"Girl, that's half the battle. He wants to love you." Angie gave her a quick hug. "What's the problem?"

"I'm pregnant."

"Crap, girl. What were you thinking?"

Tessa sat down with a thud. "Does he know?"

"No," she answered, shaking her head. "And obviously not much else since neither one of us didn't bother to use protection."

"This is serious."

"What do you plan to do?" Angie asked.

"I plan to stay here until he decides he wants me in his life."

"Is that really fair to him?" Tessa asked.

"I didn't have much of a choice since both he and Merlin told me I needed a break from my training and Scotland." She looked at both of them. "Then there were some further issues."

"What other issues could you have had?"

"Well for one, I was a virgin."

Both women looked at her astonished before Angie started to laugh slowly.

"You mean all that time, when we

thought...you were a...you have got to be kidding." Angie raised her hand to cover her mouth. "I'm sorry, it's just too funny."

Aingeal wiped her nose with the back of her hand and smiled. "It really wasn't funny since they sent me there to be trained on how to raise a shield when I had my sexual encounters."

"You didn't know how?"

She smiled wryly. "I have a human mother and I guess I was just too embarrassed to talk to my father. I know if I had known everyone could feel it, I would not have done what I did."

"Well, that's good to know."

Tessa leaned forward in her chair. "You said there were two things."

Sighing, Aingeal didn't know just how much of the story she needed to tell them. "I'll just give you the gist of the story. Basically, Fearghus was taken in by my father's cousin Gemma. She's apparently bipolar and while he recognized it, he really didn't do everything he could to help her. She went a little nuts and everyone blamed him."

"It sounds as if it really wasn't his fault."

"I don't think so either. But Dad's family seemed a little adamant until yesterday."

"What happened?"

She exhaled noisily. "One of the things I found out while I was there is that I'm what the elves call an earth-intuitive. I can hear the earth. Every

groan and moan she makes, I can hear her."

"Wow, how cool," Angie said and smiled, reaching for Aingeal's hand. "Just imagine the things you could learn."

"It's a little bit more complicated than that. But yeah, it's got some really cool things."

"What happened, Aingeal?"

"Leave it to good old Tessa to get back to the point." Tessa look at Angie and frowned. "Sorrree."

Aingeal smiled. She missed these two. "Yesterday when I went down for breakfast, Gemma was there seated next to Fearghus. I got really frustrated and went in to talk to Alma, the housekeeper. That's when I learned all about their history."

"Then?" asked Angie.

"Then...she attacked me."

"Attacked you? How did she do that?" Tessa asked confused.

"With elven magic. But because of my training and the type of magic I have, I was able to avert a disaster." Aingeal sighed. "I certainly didn't expect to have to do anything like that to another person."

"So you decided to come home."

She turned and looked at Tessa. "I was told to come home."

"Ah."

"So much is in that word, ah," Angie quipped. Tessa smacked her shoulder. "There was."

Tessa turned back to Aingeal. "So what do you plan to do now?"

"Wait for Fearghus."

Angie glanced quickly at Tessa then back to Aingeal. "And if he doesn't come?"

"I don't know."

Chapter 15

Fearghus paced the hall restlessly. He was in a quandary as to what to do at this point. He had taken care of everything concerning Gemma months ago, but something held him back from going to Aingeal. And he didn't know what. He needed a cup of tea to try and calm his already frayed nerves.

Going into the kitchen he felt surprised to see Alma still there. Normally today was her day off and he had expected to have to do for himself. "What are you doing here? Don't you usually have the day off?"

"Actually, I've been waiting days for you." Alma sat sipping her tea.

He went and poured himself a cup. "What on earth for?" She leveled a stern look at him. It reminded him of his mother and he didn't like that look.

"Don't pull that crap with me. I want to know when you're going to quite moping around this

house and go after Aingeal."

He definitely didn't like this conversation. "I still have things to do yet."

"That's bullshit and you know it."

Sighing, he peered at his friend for a few minutes. "I have nothing left to give her."

"Again, wrong. Gemma didn't take everything from you. You might be tired, but you're still alive."

Alive, was that what they called it? he thought to himself wryly. "That may be true, but I don't think it would be fair to her. I feel used up and so very old."

"Do you know what happens to lovers who have finished nor'ahkeem and choose to live apart?" She watched him intensely.

There was no way they had completed the ritual. "Theoretically." He looked at her again to see the frown spread across their face. "Ah...no, I don't...I've never had to treat anyone with that particular problem."

"They die a little each day until their heart atrophies and they can't love another like their bonded mate ever again. That includes family and kids. Now, if the spouse dies naturally that's another thing. But I know you know this. You work with troubled elven couples every day. You aren't stupid Fearghus, but where your own heart is concerned, you're a novice."

"That's different."

"Why? Because they can admit they have a problem and you can't?"

Fearghus sat back stunned. "Doctor heal thyself," he whispered.

"You got that right. Now are you going to go get her or am I going to have to kick your butt every day until you do?"

* * * *

Fearghus knocked on the door. He knew he wouldn't be a welcome visitor here, but he had to try to find Aingeal. She wasn't in the Eskimo village and he knew she hadn't released any sexual energy in months. He felt it was a good sign as that meant she hadn't had any other sexual relations even with herself.

So, that only left her parents' house. Pulling his coat a little tighter around him, he then gathered his courage and knocked on their door.

"What are you doing here?" Bevan Locklin stood in front of him.

"Do you know where Aingeal is?"

"What if I do?" Bevan crossed his arms and looked bigger.

"I'd like to talk to her." He shifted from one foot to the other.

"What about?" Bevan glared at him.

"To tell her I was wrong." He hung his head for a moment and then raised it to look him straight in the eye.

"Wrong? That would be a first."

"Look, I need to see her, to tell her..."

"I don't think she'll see you at all." He began to close the door, but Fearghus put his hand up.

"Why not? We mean a lot to each other."

"Meant, you mean. You meant a lot to each other. You hurt her bad. I should have known with the thing about Gemma, but I let the council's wisdom override mine. And then to stand there while Gemma got physical with my daughter. But never again."

"Dad, who is it?"

Aingeal was here! He had to see her, had to tell her how wrong he was and just how much he loved her. Pushing the door wide, he pushed Bevan out of the way, not caring the man probably had more magic in his pinky finger than he had in his whole body, especially in this moment. Rushing into the house, he went toward where the sound came from.

And suddenly, there she was in front of him, sitting down. Aingeal never sat down unless something was wrong with her. She was always a bundle of energy, ready for any adventure.

"Why are you sitting?" He took a step toward her.

She put up her hand as if to ward him away. "Not one step further."

"I need to talk to you...need to explain...just how wrong I've been." He stood a few feet away for a moment before kneeling with his hands palms upward in the elven position of submission.

Her eyebrows arched in surprise. "Submission? Why are you submitting to me? What is wrong with you?"

He moved forward a little, still down on his knees with arms held wide. "Nothing is wrong with me now. I've had my eyes opened and I want to make it up to you. It would mean everything if you would allow me the privilege."

Aingeal went very still. "Make it up to me? Fearghus, you thought the problem with Gemma more important than me. Then when she did that horrible thing to me, you barely apologized at all. It was always Gemma and it didn't matter what I said to you, I was the outsider. How can you make that up?"

"By loving you every day of my life."

She sighed heavily and he wished he could read the expression on her face. "Loving me? You don't love me. You said so yourself. You're in love with Gemma, will always be in love with her."

"I'm know now I was never in love with the woman. I was in love with the idea of her. I've had my eyes opened recently by some very wise

people. Most of them promised bodily harm if I didn't return with you."

Sighing, Aingeal looked away and eventually turned shining eyes back to him. "Tell me how you know you love me."

By this time, they had garnered quite an audience with most of Aingeal's family standing around. There were her parents and her two older brothers with their human wives all with anxious faces as well as other people who didn't quite register.

"I know because I miss you lying beside me in our bed. I miss you when I take long walks in the loinnir, when I put together a healing spell and across the dinner table. I miss those little sounds you make..."

* * * *

"Stop, I get the picture." She rubbed her head and looked around at her family. Tessa and Angie nodded slightly. They knew what she was going through and how she felt. She had leaned on them heavily when she returned from Scotland. At first she had prayed and hoped, but when Fearghus hadn't shown up right away, her hope faded. Now here he stood before her, asking for her forgiveness. Pushing herself slowly to the edge of the seat, she waited for a moment.

"Please, please put me out of my misery and marry me." Fearghus inched forward.

"Not until I tell you something." A worried look crossed her face and she glanced again quickly at her family.

"Nothing can be so bad I won't want to marry you. Nothing will keep us apart."

"I stole something from you when I left. Something very precious, something I should have had your permission to do."

A puzzled look crossed his face. "I don't understand."

"You will." She pushed herself up from the chair and it was obvious she had gained weight.

But the weight seemed to be centered in one place, one specific place.

He stood in one fluid motion and was next to her in a second. He shook her slightly. "An naoidhean thà e leamsa."

"Who else's?" She looked around at everyone's concerned look. "English please," she whispered.

Fearghus didn't say another word, but dropped to his knees in front of her and clasp her to him, his mouth kissing her growing belly gently. He looked up with tear filled eyes. "Were you ever going to tell me?"

She lifted her head and closed her eyes, the tears silently making tracks down her face. "Eventually. Once they were born."

"They?"

She placed her hand on his head and tugged his hair to make him look at her. "Twins. Boys I believe. Though Ardan thinks it's one of each."

"Ardan...ah yes...the doctor. Are they well? Are you well?" It seemed as if his raspy voice couldn't quite form the words.

"We are." She shoved him away slightly. "So...what's next?"

He sat on his heels for a moment before pulling something out of his pocket. Holding it out to her, Aingeal gasped. It was his mother's ring, an ancient talisman meant only for one's true love. "Aingeal Mae Locklin, will you be my wife? Will you allow me to love you and our children for the rest of our lives? Allow me to protect you and your family for as long as I live?"

"Are you sure?" she questioned, her voice filled with tears.

"I've never been more sure of anything in my life."

"I need to sit down." Her belly moved as if agitated. She reached for his hand and pressed it against her bulging stomach. "Feel them? What do you think they are saying?" She looked into his eyes and grabbed his head pulling him to her once again. "If you're sure..."

Her breathe was a light breeze across his mouth for just a moment before she ground her lips onto

his. The color started to swirl.

"Aingeal...slow down, girl...you never answered me." He pushed her away slightly. "We need to be careful...especially now."

She pulled back dazed and saw the rainbow of colors surrounding them. "I guess we do. Ardan, will we cause any harm?" Aingeal turned to her brother.

"Ah...I don't..."

"Of course, there isn't silly." Angie smacked his shoulder slightly. "The positions might be a little different, but..." She stopped when she realized that everyone stared at her. "What? I was only answering their question."

Aingeal laughed. "We'll continue privately." She pushed Fearghus away and slowly stood.

"I still need your answer, girl." He clasped her hand as he got to his feet as well.

A mischievous light came into her eyes. "I guess we'll have to wrestle for it later. Right now, I need to properly introduce you to my whole family as my future husband. And we might as well do it now as they'll grill us forever if we don't get the talking out of the way first."

"But not before this." Almost roughly, he pulled her to him, fitting her body against his. The babies fluttered between them, but they might as well get used to the fact he would have their mother and often. Kissing her deeply, he pulled

back. "I love you."

"I love you, too."

The colors returned and enveloped them in their glow.

"Oh, great, another one. We're gonna have another wedding here and no one even asked me if Santa had time for another wedding or another birth. People just do things without ever asking Eggther."

Angie caressed the small elf's shoulder. "Eggther, you'll fall in love some day and it will be wonderful."

Eggther looked up at Angie Hudson. She was his favorite person in the world besides Santa. "Eggther doesn't think so, Angie Hudson. There aren't any women out there who could love this little elf."

"Eggther, that isn't true and you know it." Tessa switched her toddler from one hip to another. "There's a woman out there for you. There's someone for everyone."

"If you think so." He sighed and looked at the kissing couple in their mist. "Thank goodness someone fell in love with Aingeal. All that sexual energy was hard on everyone." Everyone started to laugh.

Aingeal and Fearghus came apart slightly. "Eggther, please tell me you really do have time to plan a wedding?"

"Hummmph. Now you ask Eggther."

"Please..." she smiled.

"Oh, alright. When is this wedding supposed to take place?"

"As soon as we can arrange it." Fearghus squeezed her tightly to him. "I'm not giving her another chance to get away."

The small elf threw up his hands. "Great, just great. Now Eggther is supposed to be a miracle worker." He turned and went to the front door, muttering all the way.

Fearghus's deep chuckle filled the small space as Aingeal turned to him. "Is he always like that?"

"Always."

He pulled her tightly to him and kissed her forehead. "I will never again let you out of my sight. I have so much to tell you."

"Shhh." She placed her finger over his mouth. "Tell me later. Right now our family. I love you."

"Tha gaol agam ort."

Epilogue

Guinn looked out over the crowd and wished that he could dance. Sometimes it didn't pay to be a nerd and there were other times when it was a definite advantage. There were definitely some things he was better at than the basic jock.

The wedding had been beautiful just like the last one. And it didn't matter the bride had been eight months pregnant. His sister, Aingeal had really found someone she could love and love forever. It was a good thing for Fearghus Brodie that he returned the feelings.

He knew it was rare in life to find the perfect person, but somehow all of his older siblings had done just that. Sighing, he was kind glad he decided to come home for the event as his sister had left it up to him. The last two while well attended this wedding had brought a bigger crowd because people just couldn't believe Aingeal would actually get married.

But she had and now he stood at the reception

drinking a beer. He supposed he would have to be careful since he really didn't want his mother to catch him drinking. Not that he hadn't done so before, he had, but there was a whole lot of difference between college and being here at home. College was in Boston and a whole world away. College was the place where he could act totally himself.

"Dance with me," a seductive voice said close to his ear.

"What?" he turned his head and his mouth brushed against a pair of soft pink lips.

"I said, dance with me." A pair of beautiful brown eyes stared up at him.

"Do I know you?"

"We met in Boston. You're Cuinn Locklin and I'm Lacey Sinclair. I'm a friend of your cousin's. We met at a party, had a drink and even talked about going out sometime."

His eyes opened wide. "How did you get here?"

"The sleigh picked us up."

"I mean what are you doing here?"

She flipped her honey blonde hair out of her eyes. "You mean a human?" She shrugged. "I told her she could practice her amnesia spell on me. You know the one where you make the person forget everything?"

"I'm aware of it. But you shouldn't know it.

And since she's human I know she doesn't." He tried hard not to stare at her because she was just so beautiful.

"I guess we're busted. Well, you can practice it on me. And I know a lot of things I'm not supposed to know."

He smiled wryly. "I would say so." He looked out at the dancers. "But I'm not sure I'm someone you'd want to dance with."

Smiling, she laughed. "Why not?" She looked down at his feet. "Your feet maybe large, but I can tell you don't have two left ones."

He laughed then. "Alright. But I'm not very good."

"I don't think you'll have to be good for this one. It's a slow dance."

Grabbing her hand, he pulled her toward the dance floor. Taking her in his arms, he swayed gently to the music. She felt soft against him and utterly feminine. He was taller than her by a head, but she matched his contours exactly, resting her head on his shoulder. Willing his body not to react, he could smell the exotic scent of her perfume and the way her body swayed against his.

"See, this wasn't so bad, was it?" She smiled up at him and he melted.

"No, it isn't."

"So, what are you studying in Boston? We

never really got that far before.”

“History and computers right now. I haven’t figured anything else out yet although my oldest brother wants me to help him design toys. But I’d rather have my masters in something I like not what the family likes.”

She chuckled. “At least you understand that much. It takes some people years.”

“And you?”

“I’m in pre-med. I hope to be a pediatrician some day.”

“That’s a hard thing to do. I know, my brother Ardan is a doctor and while he loves it very much, I know it was really hard.”

“Anything worthwhile is always hard. Life wasn’t meant to be easy no matter who you are.”

He nodded distractedly. She was right of course, but the only person he had ever hear say that had been his father. Looking down at her, he smiled. This woman was beautiful and she had sought him out. Maybe it was a good sign.

“Coming through, coming through,” Eggther pushed his way through the dancing couples, stopping to stand next to Cuinn. “Eggther thinks you’ve found a very pretty woman.”

Looking down at the small elf, he smiled. “I think she found me, Eggther. What’s going on?”

“Aingeal and Fearghus want to cut the cake. Eggther needs to let cook know it’s time.” He

shuffled off in the general direction of the cake.

"Is he always like that?"

His attention was pulled back to the woman in his arms. "No, he's usually worse."

She laughed softly. "I think I like your home. It's pretty outstanding here."

Frowning he watched her for a moment. "Why do you like it here?"

"Why wouldn't I? I mean you have everything you could ever want. A nice family, a wonderful community, people who care about you. I would say that's pretty nice."

Suddenly, he saw her in a different light. "I suppose it's nice when you look at it that way. I never really thought about it before."

She smiled wryly at him. "When you have it all, you don't think about it."

"You're alone." It was a statement. He remembered now when he was introduced to her. He remembered the party and how his rich Boston cousin took her around as if she were a project or something. Looking around the room, he caught a look from his father. And he knew that look.

"Yes and no. I mean I have my grandparents, but my parents died when I was twelve. The only way I was ever going to be able to go to college was to get every scholarship possible. Even now I have to work to even make ends meet."

"I'm sorry."

“What do you have to be sorry for? I mean, it’s not like any of it was your fault or anything.”

“No, but this will be.” He tapped her forehead between her eyes. “Remember me,” he whispered and gently kissed her before her eyes closed.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lynn Crain realized at an early age she wanted to weave fantastic tales as a career. She took the long way to that goal by doing a variety of things like nursing, geologist, technical writer and computer manager. She's studied natural medicine and remedies for years and is currently getting her Ph.D. in natural medicine with an emphasis on modern and historical medicine which she uses in many of her books. During her free time she writes hot to erotic fantasy, futuristic and paranormal tales for various publishers. She lives in the very hot southwest with her husband, son, one dog, three cats and three snakes, one which she named Psycho. You can visit her at www.lynncrain.com and she loves hearing from her readers at lynncrain@cox.net.