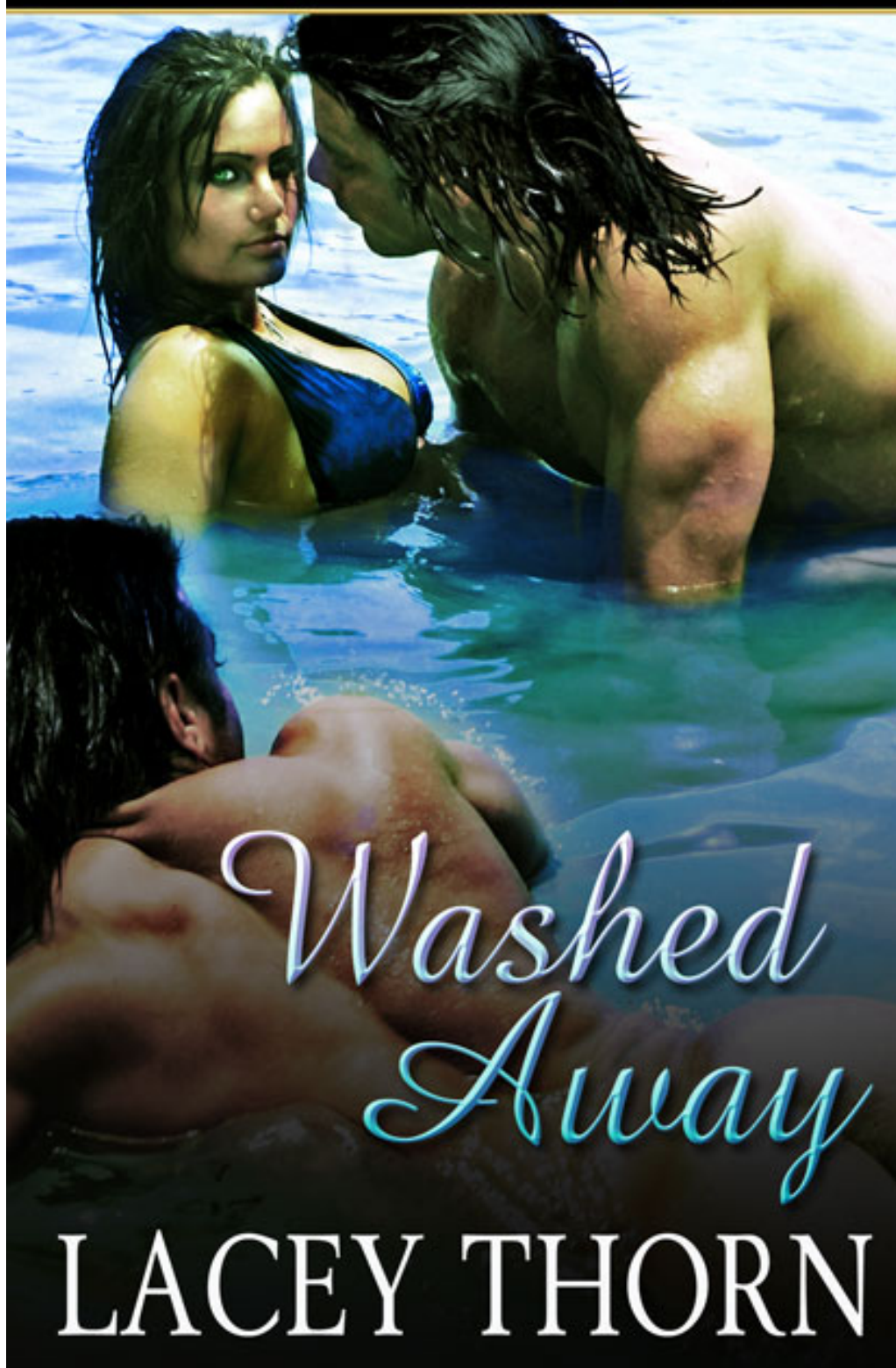


ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS



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Washed Away

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*ISLAND GUARDIANS:*

*WASHED AWAY*

**Lacey Thorn**

*This book is dedicated to the following people:*

To the faithful readers of erotic romance: I thank you for adding me to your library.

To Charlene: the greatest critique partner in the world!

To Shelly: a truer friend could never be found.

## **Prologue**

In times past...

Asme sat on the edge of the large bed, lost in thought. She remembered the words her mate Godar had spoken in her mind about where he and the warriors had come from, what they had survived. He spoke of how they had buried their women and female children. How most of the warriors had hardened with the task. He spoke of how their island had started dying as well, overcome by the disease that was plaguing their world. First the fresh island water had been contaminated and then the lush plant life had begun to fade. There was nothing these strong men could do but leave and search elsewhere for a new place to call home. A strong storm had landed them on the shores of the Isle of Altair, the only place they had seen untouched. That is how they had arrived and claimed this island for their new home. Then they had discovered that not only was there fresh water and a food supply but women as well. The warriors sought to rebuild not only their homes but their culture and way of life.

All of the claimable women on her small island home of Altair now shared homes with their new mates. Asme felt sorrow, a tortured burning in her very soul, for what they all now faced. Now they would all suffer the same fate because one of her mates, the prince, had led his men and taken by force instead of speaking with the women and asking if they would share the bounty of their unblemished island home and allow the warriors to court them.

The high priestess of the goddess's temple had placed a curse on the Isle of Altair and all who now lived there because of his actions.

"Then know this, Warrior. Because you take instead of seek, because you cause the goddess to weep. In this take heed my words to hear, for a time of reckoning soon will near. In five times five the Guardians will arise, five women marked by the goddess's

eyes. Of fire, earth, water and air, four will become the Guardians of Altair. The fifth shall ply the mystic realms and draw them together in the Valley of Elms. When the five are united in this mystic place, only then will the curse be lifted I place. Cursed to battle to hold what you take, this is the hand dealt you by fate. Warriors fierce with muscles and brawn shall pray for the day of the Guardians to dawn. For only through them will peace come at last. The Guardians united shall atone for your past. So protect and serve when once they appear, or be cursed to live forever in fear."

The prince of course had scoffed at the idea of a curse but the priestess had taken a dagger to her palm and dripped her blood on the altar before speaking the sacred words to begin their plight. "Marked with blood to seal the curse. You have sealed your own fate and that of all of your warriors, Prince. You will know no peace until they come. Remember my words and guard them well. For if one shall die all will be lost."

Asme had been given the task of making sure that all the women on Altair knew of the curse and made preparations for the coming of the Guardians of Altair. The high priestess had known that she could trust Asme to see this task done. After all, the high priestess was Asme's mother. Asme would share in the fate of her people while her mother moved on to a different plane. Instead Asme would be joined as mate to the prince and his brother, making Asme a princess, a small fact that had sent the priestess into fits of laughter as she informed him that Asme was already a princess and didn't need his help for that.

The old priestess had not been playing with words when she had informed the prince that Asme was already a princess. Asme and her mother were the last of the direct descendents of the goddess's bloodline. Asme was known to everyone on the Isle of Altair and they all knew she was the last of the line of Mahiki, Blood Princess, a title given only to the princess who was of the direct bloodline of the goddess herself. The title would end with her as the prophecy written in the goddess's book stated. Now Asme finally understood why the line of Mahiki ended with her. There would be no more daughters born of the direct bloodline and thus the line would end.

It had been one year since the mass claiming of the women by the warriors and Godar, her mate along with Prince Micah, had helped Asme to soften some of the blows of Warrior Law by incorporating certain aspects of the way things had been before. The men all joined the caste system of their mate and that way there was still a sense of normalcy for the women when they went about their day-to-day duties. At least the women were still allowed to dress in the caste colors they had each received when joining the goddess's temple.

Their caste tops cradled their breasts with two veils tied together around each woman's neck then pulled apart to each cup a breast before being pulled around and tied together again at her back. The skirt consisted of black veils sewn together, attached to a hip-hugging band of lace. The veils then fell to the women's ankles which were adorned with black sandals. Each woman's top was in the color of her caste that she had been assigned to upon joining the temple. Those who saw to the temple fires wore red, those who took care of the temple grounds wore green, those who watched over the flowing waters of the temple wore blue, those who worked with the sick and the animals wore black and then there were others that wore white.

Asme was a member of the healers. These women were trained in the art of healing the sick and wounded. They also were responsible for the upkeep and care of the animals, chief among these the *shebana* beasts, a brawny four-legged creature with long mane and tail that the warriors often rode. These women were recognized by their black veil tops, a reminder to all that they often held the decision of life and death in their hands.

And they were in great need now as the curse took hold with a vengeance. More and more ships were sighted along the shores every day, each holding untold numbers of men who sought to claim the Isle of Altair for themselves. The prince had called his men to arms and led them to the shores to stop the invasion before it could begin. They fought valiantly, fighting to the death to protect not only what they had claimed but what they had come to love. And Prince Micah had gone to the shores with them,

leaving Asme behind in the temple with Godar. He came to them when he was able but the protection of his people came first, something that Asme understood all too well.

Their beginning had not started with love. No, Micah had claimed with hunger and rage, using her body but closing his heart. He had already lost a wife and three young daughters to disease and swore never to love again. Asme would have been happy to let it be that way if Godar hadn't insisted on telling her of times before, of him and Micah as children and young men. He had given her a deeper insight into who her mate, the prince, was and how he had turned from a loving wonderful man into a ruthless one. Godar had opened her eyes to the good and made her love where she didn't want to.

Now she sat on the bed, her hand moving in slow circles over her belly that was just starting to round with the sons that lay inside. She knew they were boys just as clearly as if she already held them in her arms. She had conceived on Micah's last visit to the temple three long months ago. She hoped that he would be returning to see her soon for she wished to share the news with him, hoping that with the birth of his sons part of his heart and soul would heal.

"Your thoughts are deep, my love," Godar spoke softly in her mind as he entered their sleeping room. "What troubles you?"

Asme smiled up at him, her mighty warrior who only she was gifted to hear. For some reason he had been born unable to speak and had spent his entire life sentenced to silence. Until now. Until her. Only she was able to hear the words he spoke in his heart, the beauty of his voice a welcome presence in her mind. A true sign from the Goddess of Altair that all was not lost, that this love was meant to be.

"I think of Micah," she whispered. "I wonder when he will come again."

"Soon, my love," Godar replied. "Soon my brother will visit again and you can share with him the news of our sons."

"Yes," Asme smiled, "I will share our news and hope to heal just a small part of him."



"Give him time," Godar encouraged as he always did. "He must first admit his love for you, something which he refuses to see. Only then will he accept what is to be."

Asme knew that he spoke the truth. Micah loved her even though he refused to say the words or even acknowledge the emotion. She saw it in his eyes, in the tender way he loved her body now. He was still afraid though, afraid of losing her as he had lost the woman before. She understood that fear, understood his need to protect his heart by feigning distance. Soon, though, he would come to understand that there was no denying what the heart already knew. Change was in the air, a cry on the wind and Asme knew in her heart that things would only get worse on Altair before they could ever get better.

## **Chapter One**

Willow slipped through the trees, drawing closer and closer to the soothing waters that burst over the island shore in waves. The drums of war seemed never-ending lately, a constant echo in the air. Willow finally reached her watching place and settled in to keep her own vigil against the invaders who overran their shores. It wasn't long 'til she felt the presence of boats in the waters just offshore. Willow smiled, anticipating the flow of water through her veins, a gift from the Goddess of Altair. Eager for what she knew she could do, what she must do for her people.

She stepped from the trees, her long black hair falling to her waist in waves, the sides gathered back in a yellow sash. Just yesterday it had been bound tightly in a long thick braid that designated that she was as yet unclaimable. But today was the day that marked her twenty-first summer and her hair would be left unbound now with only the sides pulled back from her face with a yellow sash. The sash would remain until she was claimed, at which time her hair would never be bound again. Her green eyes flashed as she threw her hands over her head and called to the waters in the tongue of her mother's people – in the tongue of the Goddess of Altair.

"I call to the goddess, hear my plea. Let the waters flow through me. Fill me with thy icy cold, embrace me with warmth untold. Of salt or fresh, from earth or air, where water flows I am there. The goddess's blessing on my call." Willow threw her hands from her body and the waves broke from shore, surging back out from where they had come, carrying the boats of others far from shore. "A watery grave for one and all."

She turned to leave when her task was complete and was startled to see both Drago and Ulrik Mederra standing behind her, watching.

"A Guardian as we suspected." Drago nodded to his brother Ulrik.

"We have waited patiently for you, Willow," Ulrik told her. "You can no longer hide from us. We have already received permission to claim you and take you home with us."

"I cannot leave!" Willow shouted, angry to be trapped by these two large warriors. Willow was tall at five feet eight but the Mederras were giants at six feet ten of brawny muscle. They both had long, dark brown hair and soft green eyes the identical shade of hers. "The waters call to me and I must stay and listen."

"No," Drago stated, shaking his head and stepping up to her. He quickly wrapped her in his arms, turning her so that her back rested against his chest, her wrists locked in his grasp, her arms forming an x across her chest beneath his. "Now is the time to listen to your mates and go with us."

"I have no mates," Willow stated, hating that she could not use her powers against them, had never been able to, as she did against the other warriors who bothered her. But the Mederras had been waiting for this moment, for the yellow ribbon and what it represented.

According to Warrior Law all women who had reached their twenty-first year were claimable. Any warrior who wanted to would be given a chance to claim the woman he wanted as long as his brother also wished to claim her. For warriors were always born as twins with the occasional arrival of triplets. Because of the vast number of warriors each group of warrior brothers, be they a duo or a trio, would only be allowed to mate with one woman. Once a woman was chosen she would be claimed by the placing of the mates' clan upon her lower right abdomen just above her skirt.

Ulrik knelt at her feet and removed a cylindrical weapon from his belt. "You do now," he told her as he placed it onto the flesh of her lower right abdomen and placed the symbol of the Mederra, a white tiger, on her. "Now you are Willow Mederra."

"Never," she fired back at him. "So now I wear your mark. I am not a possession to control. I am a Guardian."

"You have left us no choice," Drago told her, refusing to feel remorse for his and Ulrik's following her and claiming her in the darkness of night. They wanted to claim her openly, had already spoken with her fathers and received their blessing and consent but Willow hid from them every chance she got. They should have headed home to their mother Erin and their fathers long ago but had stayed to wait for Willow to reach the age of claiming instead. Their baby sister Erika was mated to the Savaris now and had two children of her own that they had yet to even see. That would all change now that they had finally claimed the woman that they had both fallen so hard for. Since the first moment that they had seen her they had both felt drawn to her and as they had watched her, spoken with her, they had both learned that love was indeed possible.

Willow was everything that a warrior could crave in a mate. She was strong and beautiful on the inside and the outside. They had sensed right away that there was something different about her and had not been surprised when they had followed her one night and seen her command the water with words and gestures. She spoke the tongue of their mother and something about her called to their souls, demanding that they claim her and take her to their home. She was their other half, the one woman who could and would complete them.

"Come, Willow." Drago tugged her hand and started back through the woods toward the tiny encampment that lay hidden just inside. "Tonight we claim you as mate." He looked her in the eye so that she would not misunderstand that they meant to bed her. "Tomorrow we leave at daybreak."

"I will not go when you leave this place." Willow tugged uselessly at Drago's hold. "My place is here by the water's edge where the call is strongest and my power is most useful."

"Once it was," Ulrik told her as he reached for her other hand, brought it to his lips for a kiss and then held it tightly wrapped in his own. "From now on your place is with your mates. Trust in us, Willow. We will not disappoint you. We will not hurt you."

"You don't understand," Willow tried to explain to him, to them. She was not afraid of them, had fear of no one, it was only that she was determined in her course not to stray far from the water. She needed the water like she needed air. "I am a Guardian, the Guardian of Water. You don't realize what that means but I have lived with it since I was thirteen. I am one with the water, linked to it in ways that are not possible for anyone else."

Drago smiled down at Willow. "We know all too well what it means to be a Guardian. You will find out soon enough what I mean by that when you meet our sister Erika. You will like her and find that you have much in common."

"What do you mean by that?" Willow demanded as they urged her through the small encampment to the place they had called home since first they had come here.

"I mean that things will become clear to you if you just strive to listen and believe," Drago tried to assure her.

"Can you not feel the call in your blood?" Ulrik asked softly, leaning close to her to whisper in her ear so that no one else could hear. "Listen to the wind, Willow. Heed its call and trust in that if not in us."

"You are making no sense," Willow declared, ducking down to enter the low tent behind Drago. "Neither of you." She refused to admit that she too had felt a change in the wind lately, as if something or someone was calling her. But how could these warriors know that? And how was it that they were so calm at her stating that she was a Guardian when it was well known that no warrior believed in the curse or in the foretold coming of the Island Guardians?

"Hush," Drago urged her softly, pulling her down onto the bedding with him. "We have other things to discuss at the moment."

Willow gulped as Ulrik latched the opening tight and joined them, lying on her other side. "Surely you don't really intend to bed me here," she inquired softly, glancing at the thin walls of the tent. "Everyone will hear and know what we are about."

"Yes, Willow, we will mate tonight so that there is no conflict in the morning when it comes time to leave," Drago stated firmly, bending to her and placing soft kisses along her throat and jaw. Ulrik was doing the same on her other side.

"Please." Willow took a harsh breath, seeking to fill her lungs and clear her head. By the goddess, they felt like heaven and the things they were doing to her body were amazing. "Shouldn't we wait for the blessing? For the joining ceremony?"

"We will receive the blessing from your fathers in the morning before we leave. The ceremony will take place when we reach our village and my sister's home. For tonight we will strengthen our claim with a mating." Ulrik nipped at her earlobe when he finished speaking.

"We will claim you tonight, Willow," Drago said as he untied the blue veils from around her neck and slipped them down, exposing her lush breasts to their gazes. "That way there will be no doubting that you are truly the claimed mate of the Mederra brothers."

Ulrik skimmed down the side of her throat over her shoulder and down to her breast. With a groan he latched onto the swollen pink tip and sucked it greedily into his mouth.

She cried out, her body arching up to him without her approval and Drago chose that moment to reach under her back and release the last tie of her top and toss it aside. He looked into her eyes and she wondered if hers were as bright a green as his were before he claimed her with a kiss. His mouth soothed hers, urging her with soft nips of his teeth to open for his tongue. When she did he eased inside, his tongue taking a slow exploration of the cavern of her mouth before pressing harder, tasting deeper.

He felt wonderful to her, his kiss intoxicating. She had to admit, at least to herself, that she had found her thoughts flicking to them more than once since they had met. She was attracted to them and her body reminded her of that with every touch, every kiss. What startled her most was the intensity of her attraction. It was more than physical, more than anything she had ever felt before.

Ulrik moved from her breasts, placing kisses along her belly while he tugged her skirt down and off, tossing it aside to join her top. Drago was still kissing her, robbing her breath and claiming it for his own. Willow was bombarded by sensation after sensation and couldn't focus on any one thing. The throbbing of her nipples trailed down to her womb and exploded in white-hot heat that coursed in waves through her body and out to her fingers and toes. They were killing her slowly with such intense pleasure.

Ulrik had moved down to the dewy curls of her woman's mound and inhaled the rich musk of her desire. She was wet and ready and he couldn't resist delving his tongue into her slick folds. She tasted like the sweet ripe pink fruit of a *palona*, an island favorite. Ulrik loved *palona*, the salty taste of the skin mixed with the sweetness of the fruit inside and Willow would be just as pleasurable to eat. He wanted to gorge himself on her flavor, drown in it and in her. He gingerly spread the lips of her pussy for a more thorough exploration, thrusting his tongue deep into her for a richer taste of her nectar. By the goddess, she was delicious!

He moved his mouth up to latch around the delicate bud of her pleasure pearl and sucked it greedily into his mouth, making her buck and pull away from Drago's drugging kisses. Ulrik pushed two big fingers along her slit and rimmed the hole that offered such tempting pleasure. He repeated this several times before finally spearing inside with a slow sure stroke that drove her mad.

Drago enjoyed the cries of pleasure and need that tore from Willow's lips. Smiling softly, he moved down to her breasts and worshipped them with his lips, teeth and tongue. While he sucked harshly at one pink nipple he plucked the other between thumb and finger so that she was in constant stimulation and bliss. Back and forth he went until both nipples glistened from his mouth, the hard points reddened from his suction. Her sharp cries were like an aphrodisiac and neither warrior could wait any longer. One minute they were there and she was screaming at their combined efforts to satisfy her hunger, her clawing need and then they were both gone.

Willow's eyes flew open and she tried desperately to slow her breathing and rein in her rampant heartbeat. She looked up and was transfixed by the sight of her two new mates removing their clothes before rejoining her on the bedding. Drago grabbed a slim bottle of something from a pack next to the bed and Ulrik nodded, his eyes a deep dark green that reflected his lust. They would claim her now, she knew that and the truth was that she was anticipating it. The part of her that had always wanted them was in complete control now. No more running from what she wanted. Now she could surrender to her need, her desire, her lust.

Ulrik knelt between her thighs, spreading them wider apart with the thick muscles of his legs. She was a woman who had lived her entire life around warriors and she had no fear of what was coming, had been a voyeur too many times not to know what would happen. She knew of how a warrior would thrust his shaft inside a woman's body and spread her legs wider as she caught a glimpse of the mighty sword he wielded between his legs. Some part of her carnal hunger must have shown on her face for Drago leaned over and kissed her again, needing to taste the lust on her tongue.

Drago's kiss was deep and drugging, consuming and drawing her in at the same time. He cradled her head with one big palm while he stroked the other up and down his long, thick erection, coating it with some sort of oil. Drago and Ulrik were both proportionate to their six-foot-ten-inch height with large hands and feet and long cocks that were almost as thick as her wrist. Willow was not a petite woman. Her body was lush and ripe and perfectly suited to her own five-foot-eight-inch frame but she wasn't sure if she would be able to handle all of them comfortably this first time.

Drago claimed her mouth with another passionate kiss and Ulrik began slowly working his enormous cock in the snug tunnel of her pussy. She was wet from his earlier ministrations with his mouth and he used that moisture to lubricate his cock thoroughly before entering her. He rocked back and forth, working a little bit deeper with every stroke and she cried out into Drago's mouth until he slowly moved from her lips, allowing them both a much-needed breath of air.



Drago moved his mouth along the arched column of her neck and down her tensed shoulders to the ripe fruit of her full breasts. He took one turgid point into his mouth and sucked vigorously at it while pinching softly on the other nipple with the fingers of his hand. With the other hand he continued to lubricate his length with the fire oil that would aid in his own penetration of her once Ulrik had her in position.

Ulrik ran his fingers through the lips of her pussy which was spread so wide to accommodate his large girth. He was only halfway in and it was killing him to maintain his control and not just ram the rest of the way inside her tight, wet heat. Instead he coated his fingers with her rich cream and used them to manipulate the tightened bud of her clit. It seemed to grow with his every caress—longer, tighter, thicker. Her moans filled the air as she unknowingly fought against her body's desire for release.

"Let go, Willow," Ulrik encouraged her as he slid a little farther inside her snug heat, "let your body go. Don't fight your own pleasure."

Drago bit down gently on her nipple and the sensation traveled down to her womb and burst there, filling her body with waves of heat. She cried out as her orgasm flowed through her in waves of pleasure that left her soft and pliable beneath them, relaxed as she had never been before in her life. Ulrik had waited for just this moment and pulled his cock slowly back until just the head speared her. Then with one fierce stroke he seated his hungry cock to the hilt.

Willow's cry filled the small confines of the tent and echoed in the glen around them, one of pleasure and need. She wanted more! Drago pulled his lips from her breasts and she surged up to clasp Ulrik's shoulders with her hands, his hips with her knees. She was full, so full and it felt better than anything she had ever imagined.

Ulrik wanted to fuck her hard and fast and almost did before Drago cleared his throat, a subtle reminder of what they had planned for this, their first time mating with the woman they loved. Ulrik rolled quickly to his back, keeping his cock lodged within her so that she sat astride him. They both groaned as this new position pushed him

deeper into her tight heat so that he literally pushed against her cervix. Willow wiggled, trying to get comfortable, and Ulrik groaned and clasped her hips tightly in his hands.

“Kiss me, Willow,” Ulrik urged. “Bend down and give me your lips. I need your kiss like I need water.”

Willow smiled at his comparison and leaned down to match her lips to his. He cradled her head softly with one big hand while the other moved to the small of her back, keeping her from moving any more against him. His teeth nipped at her bottom lip, encouraging her to open wide for his tongue and when she finally did he devoured her. Both of her hands came up to hold his head in place as she took control of the kiss, sucking his tongue fiercely before pushing hers inside his mouth and exploring every nook and cranny she could find.

Vaguely she felt the hands on her bottom, her cheeks being spread and the slow glide of slick fingers against the tiny pucker that was there. She wanted to say something, to do something but she was consumed by Ulrik’s touch, his taste and didn’t have the desire to pull away. This was one way that her warriors would mate with her and she had overheard other women speaking of how incredible it was to be filled with two warriors’ cocks at the same time.

Drago worked his fingers slowly and easily, carefully working the fire oil into the snug pucker of her anus. She was tight, by the goddess, so deliciously tight that he was dying to work his way inside. He brought the bottle of oil and tilted it over her crease, letting it coat his fingers where he worked them in her flesh. He knew what the oil would do. There was a reason why the warriors called it fire oil. The oil was a natural stimulant that would soak into her flesh and make her burn for a more intense penetration and he had just the tool for the job.

Willow moaned as her ass began to burn hotter. The fingers strummed across her nerves, stretching and stroking the tight tissues but offering no release from the need that she felt riding her. She needed something, had to have it right now. She pulled

from Ulrik's kiss and, arching her back higher so that her ass was exactly where Drago wanted it, she cried out her need.

"Please," she moaned with a harsh cry, "make it stop. I need..."

"I have just what you need, baby," Drago whispered, his own voice harsh with the need that rode him. He placed the purpled head of his thick cock against the tight pink pucker and pushed firmly until the tissue parted and swallowed his flesh. They all cried out as he worked his way into her snug ass, his cock rubbing against where Ulrik's still rested in her pussy, only a thin barrier separating them.

Willow screamed. She couldn't stop the sound from bubbling up her throat and bursting out. It was too much, too intense and she couldn't catch her breath. They moved as one, filling her to the point of bursting with their thick cocks pushing her closer and closer with their every stroke toward another orgasm more intense than the one before.

Drago clasped her hips between his hands, holding her firmly in place as he increased the rhythm of his thrusts until he was pounding into her tight, little ass with hard, violent strokes of his turgid cock. Ulrik matched him, filling the snug, wet heat of her pussy with vicious strokes of his long, thick shaft.

She shook her head back and forth, muttering broken phrases and words as she felt them grow impossibly longer, incredibly thicker inside her before both cocks pulsed and spurted harsh streams of cum that burned even as it claimed her, throwing her headfirst into an orgasm so intense that it threatened to destroy her. Her body felt battered, bruised with passion as she slammed into one plane of pleasure after another, always going higher, being sucked deeper, until she didn't know where she ended and they began. It was as if they were truly one person, one being with no beginning and no end. She was drowning in them and it was the most wonderful moment of her life.

With a contented smile she let the darkness claim her as her mates and now lovers turned them so that they were all on their sides, still connected. Someone pulled a cover up and over them but she was too comfortable to open her eyes and see. She felt their

hands stroking softly over her flesh, no longer trying to inflame but to soothe, their kisses to her brow and head soft and giving instead of deep and consuming. She wondered vaguely why she had ever fought so hard to get away from them then, with a satisfied sigh, gave in to the exhausted slumber that pulled at her.

## **Chapter Two**

Willow stretched slowly awake the next morning, feeling the delicious new aches and pains in her body from a night of intense loving with her warriors. She was a mated woman now, Willow Mederra, bonded mate to Drago and Ulrik Mederra and she found that she liked that very much. She also found that she liked and trusted them very much as well. They had taken the time and effort to seduce her senses, waiting to claim her until she burned as hot as they did and that spoke well of the men who were her mates.

It startled her how right it felt to be with them both, how secure they made her feel. Her mother was gone, having died while giving birth to her twin brothers. Her fathers had little time for a young girl and that hadn't changed as she had grown older. They stayed on the coast in this little encampment to guard the shores for their prince. This was where they had brought her mother shortly after they had claimed her and this was the only place that Willow had ever called home.

She had no friends as very few women stayed here, most men preferring to leave their wives and daughters in the relative safety of one of the island villages. Not her fathers though. Willow would stay with them whether they wanted her around them or not. The bottom line was that she was their daughter, blood of their blood and that was what mattered most to them.

Now here she was a mated woman given to the Mederra brothers with her fathers' blessing. She knew that others had asked for her as mate as well and wondered what had made her fathers give the Mederras the right to claim her above the others. Not that she was complaining. Not at all. She was a very happily mated woman this morning. A very satisfied one as well.

Having grown up on the shore with mostly warriors around her Willow realized that not all women were blessed with good mates. Several of the mated women who actually lived her in the encampment were treated as *pani* by their mates and were forced to sexually service other warriors. Willow had seen the raw elements of what the warriors referred to as fucking and had witnessed a more tender lovemaking as well. Warriors were virile by nature and didn't care who saw them with their woman, often just slipping into the trees and mating on the lush grass or against the trees. Willow was grateful that her warriors had taken her into a tent at least before claiming her.

Ulrik and Drago had urged her to trust them to do what was right for her. They knew that she was a Guardian and didn't seem surprised by that fact at all. By the goddess, they had even suspected her of it. How had they known? What clue had she given them without realizing it? Why were they so believing and unafraid of her? They had both urged her to listen to the call of the wind and told her that she would enjoy meeting their sister.

The call was strong in the air this morning. They had been right and that startled her. The wind sang to her, weaving around her, filling her with a desire – nay, a need – to go to this village her warriors spoke of and to leave soon. She felt the urgency in her veins like the beating of the drums of war. It was the call that she had been waiting for and somehow the Mederras' sister was a huge part of it. She must dress quickly and find her warriors. They needed to leave quickly and travel with speed. Something was coming and she had to be there before it arrived.

She rose to her hands and knees and crawled about, slowly sifting through the bedding, searching for her skirt and top. She was just reaching for her top when she heard the flap of the tent open behind her. She gave a startled squeak and reached for a covering while she glanced over her shoulder. Drago filled the opening behind her. He was dressed already in the clothes of a warrior, brown pants that molded to the length of his muscular thighs and calves, boots and a belt that held an assortment of weapons.

"It looks as if I have arrived just in time," he said as he fastened the opening and settled to his knees behind her. He reached out and pulled the cover from her and helped her back up to her hands and knees before him. "Such a beautiful sight to see so early in the morning," he murmured, drawing his fingers through the slick moisture of her glistening pussy. "You are as hungry as I am, baby?" he asked, his voice thick with his rising lust.

"Yes, Drago." Willow shuddered at the pleasure just the touch of his fingers was bringing her. "Starving, my warrior, starving!"

His fingers slipped inside, rubbing softly against the smooth sensitive walls of her tight sheath. She heard his breathing grow rougher, louder and the rustle of clothing when he removed his weapons belt and untied the laces on his soft brown warrior pants. She tried to roll over, to lie upon the covers on her back but he stopped her with a slight touch on her hip.

"No, don't move, Willow," he urged, gently removing his fingers and running the swollen head of his thick cock through the wet lips of her pussy. "I want you just like this. I want to mate you just like the animal you turn me into whenever you are near."

"Yes," she cried, wanting whatever he wanted, so lost was she in the need pulsing through her body. "Now, Drago. Just do it now."

He placed the bulbous head of his cock at her opening and pushed until it wedged inside her, her tight sheath pulsing around him as it struggled to accommodate his large size. He wanted to be rough, to fuck her just like an animal but she was new to this and he would not frighten or hurt her. Slowly he worked his way deeper inside, stretching and burning her tight tissues until he was buried to the hilt in her sweet flesh. They both groaned low and deep with the pleasure of his possession.

"More, Drago," Willow panted, pushing her hips back at him. "Give me more."

"I don't wish to hurt you, baby," he grunted, using every bit of his control to keep his thrusts slow and easy instead of taking her hard and fast like he wanted. "Last night was your first time with a warrior. You must still be sore and sensitive."

"I'm hungry, Drago," she moaned, throwing her hips back into his strokes harder and harder. She glanced over her shoulder at him and demanded, "Harder! Deeper! Faster! Like the animal, Drago. Fuck me like an animal!"

He shouldn't be surprised at her language since she had grown up around mostly warriors all of her life and as such had probably heard things that most young girls were shielded from. He had never heard her talk like this though and it thickened his blood, thickened his cock, called to a darker need that hid inside him. He cradled her hips in his hands and held her in place, quickening his pace and slamming into her, pressing into her womb with every bone-jarring stroke.

"Yes!" she screamed, not caring who was still around and might hear her, hear them. The tent was thick with the sound of their heavy breathing, the harsh slap of flesh against flesh as he rode her to completion. "Drago! Drago!" she screamed his name, careening over the edge of the abyss that was her orgasm. Tossed and tumbled in the drowning waves of pleasure that overtook her, consumed her and left her hungry for more, she heard his harsh grunt behind her and felt the swell of his cock as he found his own release and filled her with hot spurts of his rich seed.

He stopped and she cried out at the loss. "No! Don't stop! I need more!"

He pulled out of her and she turned around, coming up to her knees in front of him. He was panting for breath, sweat dripping from his brow and coating his chest with a light sheen. His cock hung between his legs, already softening with its pleasure. She felt like crying, so desperate was her need. Instead of sating her, the orgasm he had given her had only increased her hunger, amplified her need.

There was a tug on the opening of the tent and by the luck of the goddess Ulrik filled it. Not giving him a chance to do anything other than close the flap behind him, Willow attacked. She pushed him to his back and easily straddled his hips, grinding her slick pussy against his burgeoning erection. She bent down and took possession of his mouth, eating at it with her own until he opened to her tongue play with a harsh groan of pleasure.



Pulling reluctantly from his kiss, she worked her way down the taut column of his neck with nipping bites and erotic flicks of her tongue. She drew her nails over the wide spread of his shoulders and down over his chest, leading the way for her trailing mouth. She stopped to bite and suck at the twin points of his nipples, driving him wild while her hands made quick work of his belt and laces. Then she was trailing her tongue over his rippling abdomen, leaving a trail of moisture behind while she worked him free and took his huge cock into her hands, stroking and squeezing it.

Ulrik groaned at her intimate touch along his swollen staff. He had listened to the sounds of her and Drago and had waited as long as he could before making his excuses and joining them. He didn't know what his brother had done to turn their Willow into such a sexual creature but he hoped that it happened again and again. She was a wild thing, ravenous and needy for him, his body, his mouth, his cock. He gave a startled cry when she bent and sucked him greedily into the hot, wet recesses of her mouth with a natural motion that robbed him of breath and thought, taking him all the way into the back of her throat and swallowing. The sweet contractions clamped around him and had him thrusting his hips up off the ground without thought for anything but finding more of the pleasure she offered.

He cried out with frustration when she pulled away from him, removing the wet heat of her suctioning mouth off his cock. She smiled wickedly down at him before moving back up his body and taking his swollen shaft back in her hand and guiding it into a hotter, wetter, tighter cavern. He felt his eyes cross when she slammed her hips down, spearing her slick flesh on his cock before slowly gliding back up only to slam down again.

"Who taught you to suckle a man like that, Willow?" he demanded, angry at the thought of her doing something so pleasurable with anyone other than him or Drago.

"No one taught me, my warrior," Willow breathed as she rode him, her sex clasp him tightly. "But I have watched as others have treated a warrior to the pleasures of oral stimulation. Did you not enjoy it, Ulrik?"

“Aye, woman,” he grunted, thrusting higher, deeper inside her. “You know that I did.”

Willow laughed softly. She felt power like she had never known, the power of a woman in control of both her own and her warriors’ pleasure. That power brought its own sense of satisfaction as it flowed through her veins. She plunged up and down on Ulrik’s cock, gaining momentum with every stroke until she was a whirlwind of continuous motion, rising and falling faster and faster. She felt Drago move behind her and she braced her body back against his chest, using him to help her ride Ulrik’s mighty shaft. She felt her pleasure building, the waves cresting higher and higher inside her, urging her to the waiting tidal pool that sought to suck her under, drown her in pleasure. She heard Ulrik’s cry from beneath her but couldn’t stop her fast pace.

She cried out her frustration as she absorbed the hot spurt of Ulrik’s cum but still couldn’t reach her own release. She needed more! She needed everything! Drago wrapped his arms around her and pinched her nipples just hard enough to cause a slight sting, sending a stream of pleasure down into her belly. When Ulrik used his hand to manipulate the swollen bud of her clit and pinched it with the exact same intensity as Drago that stream of pleasure burst deep inside her.

She came with a harsh cry, throwing her head back against Drago’s chest, reaching back to wrap her arms around his neck and bring his mouth down to her. She kissed him eagerly, meshing tongues and teeth as she tried to share her pleasure with him. She could feel Ulrik spurting more seed into her womb as her pussy convulsed around his cock, nursing it for any last drops.

She slowly relaxed against them, dropping from Drago’s embrace to land softly on Ulrik’s sweat-slicked chest. Drago collapsed beside them just as out of breath from what he had watched as from what he himself had enjoyed. Ulrik leaned down and kissed Willow softly on the lips and she gave a contented sigh and snuggled down into him. He and Drago shared a look that spoke clearly of just how lucky they considered

themselves to be mated to such an incredible woman. She would meet every need they had with her body and probably demand more, as she had just done.

"When do we leave for your village?" Willow asked, feeling wonderfully alive and content.

Both men groaned.

"When I can breathe again, woman," Drago told her.

"When I can move," Ulrik answered.

Willow sat up and lifted her hips off Ulrik's spent cock, shifting to her knees between them. She captured their cocks one in each hand and slowly squeezed and stroked along their softening flesh. "If we aren't leaving yet then perhaps I can still play," she said, smiling wickedly when they moaned and sat up before her, pulling their cocks from her hands.

"You'll be the death of us, woman," Drago told her and Ulrik nodded his agreement.

"At least I'll see to it that you both die happy," she informed them and laughed as they grinned and pulled her back to lie between them on the covers.

It was over an hour later before they were dressed and packing up to leave. Willow had just ducked out of the tent when the messengers came running into camp. She watched her fathers, and Ulrik and Drago, and the other warriors gather around the teenage boys. She didn't know for sure what was being discussed as there was too much noise nearby to hear very well. She could tell that something was very wrong and she didn't need to see the expressions on the warriors' faces to know that. She could feel it in the air around her, hear it in the call of the water. More invaders were coming. Perhaps more than their men could handle at one time.

She made quick work of packing food and supplies for her trip with her new mates, sensing that they would no longer be traveling to the village her mates called home. No,

something else was in the air and their destination lay closer than they realized. Willow felt a pull to the water that surrounded their island home. She was needed at the shore to help defend and protect. Since her warriors would be headed that way as well it should be easy for her to meet the demands of her soul, her call as Island Guardian.

Everything was ready when Drago headed toward her moments later.

"There is a change in plans," he told her, automatically rechecking the packs. A warrior learned at a very young age always to ensure he had plenty of supplies on hand when making a voyage. "The prince has issued a call to council. Ulrik and I are required there."

"When do we leave?" she asked as Ulrik walked up with two older men. She could tell just by looking at them that they were related and most probably the fathers of her mates. The long brown hair and fierce green eyes were the same. The only discernable change she could see other than the lines of age and flecks of gray was the smaller stature of the two older men. Where her mates stood six feet ten apiece, their fathers were only about six feet seven or eight, making them only a foot taller than she was.

"You are not going with us," Ulrik stated, catching her question and her wrath in turn.

"Of course I am going with you," she stated heatedly. "I am your mate now. I go where you go."

"No, Willow," Ulrik repeated, shaking his head. "Not this time. I do not want to leave you but we have no choice in the matter. Drago and I must go to the council to represent the Mederras." Two other men joined them. The first had long blond hair and big blue eyes but it was his smile that drew her eyes first. He was at least six feet, seven inches of muscular perfection.

"This is Alexi Donan," Drago introduced her to the big blond warrior before turning to the other one. "This is Arik Savari, one of the bonded mates to our sister Erika." This one was six feet eight with long brown hair that he had clubbed back at the

base of his neck and big brown eyes. He smiled down at her and took her hand while Drago finished up the introductions. "This is Willow Mederra, our bonded mate."

"It is a pleasure to meet you, little sister," Arik told her kindly, giving her hand a gentle squeeze before releasing it.

"Very nice to meet you." Alexi nodded his head to her.

"Yes, I'm sure we'll get to know each other better since I will be traveling with you to the council meeting," Willow replied with a tight smile.

"No," Ulrik tried to say but Willow cut him off.

"Do not think to tell me no, Ulrik Mederra." She turned to face him, her hands fisted on her hips and glared up at him. "I am your mate, not your child."

"Willow..." Drago tried to intervene but all he got for his trouble was her glare turned on him instead.

"Don't even try, Drago," she warned him. "You both know exactly why I must go. Listen to the wind as you told me earlier. If you do not trust in me listen to the call of the wind and heed its wisdom."

Drago couldn't help it. The grin just took over his mouth and wouldn't leave. What a woman he and Ulrik had bonded with. She was exquisite to look at, yet as hard as stone. She could hold her own with any warrior and he doubted that she would even have to use her Guardian powers. He had seen her in action too many times to think otherwise.

"Willow," Ulrik tried one more time but this time it was Drago that interrupted him.

"She is right," Drago stated, still grinning. "The call is there, an echo in the wind. She must come with us. She is needed."

"You are sure?" Ulrik asked his brother.

"I am sure!" Willow stated through clenched teeth. "That should be more than enough for you." She let her glare encompass all of them before she turned to walk away.

Ulrik stepped quickly into her path and, grabbing her upper arms in his hands, pulled her gently but firmly onto her toes against his chest. "I seek only that you should know no harm, little one. You are mated now and must accustom yourself to all that it entails. Part of being a mate is understanding the concern and need to protect that your warriors will feel. Do not misinterpret those feelings as possession or imply that we are treating you as a child. After what we have shared in the last night and morning neither Drago nor I could ever confuse you with a child."

Willow felt her face flame with bright red color as she blushed from head to toe. That he should mention that now, in front of his fathers and friends. She knew that every single one of them had a very good idea of what he was talking about. They were all mated warriors themselves. There was only one way to get her point across without causing more friction.

Willow slipped her arms up his, easing out of his hold and wrapping her hands behind Ulrik's head, threading her fingers through his long brown hair. She slid closer against him, letting him feel the caress of her nipples against his bare chest and pulling his head down to her, nipped his ear before answering him. "I understand, Ulrik. Just know that I have a need to protect as well. A need to comfort and," she licked his bottom lip and nipped it with her teeth, "be comforted as well. Don't expect me to sit quietly in your home and wait for you. That is not who I am and that will never change."

Ulrik knew what she was saying. She had been brought up by warriors, surrounded by warriors all of her life. So she tended to think like a warrior instead of like a woman or at least like the women he knew.

"I will remember as long as you do," Ulrik told her and gave her only enough time to nod before he claimed her mouth with his. He took her under, consuming her with

his intense passion, spearing her with the sword of his tongue and conquering every inch he claimed.

She felt Drago moving behind her, felt him push her hair aside and use his teeth and lips to torment the column of her throat from jaw to shoulder. Everyone else faded away and she was lost in that moment with her warriors, unaware and uncaring who witnessed their passionate embrace. She realized in that one moment of time that she was falling in love with Ulrik and Drago. She had been all along.

## Chapter Three

They all traveled together to the prince's meeting place just inside the shoreline, a half day's travel from where they were. Willow rode alone on a midnight black *shebana* beast. Ulrik and Drago rode on either side of her while Arik Savari and Alexi Donan rode just behind. Drago and Ulrik's fathers had gone back to the village to let Erin, the Mederra warriors' mother, and Erika, their sister, know the news of their joining with Willow. They were all to head back to the village together after the prince's call to council convened.

They rode just inside the trees, hidden from sight in the thick foliage but Willow could still hear the call of the sea echoing loudly in her ears and feel the waves crashing over her as if she walked softly in the surf. She would slip away to the surf while they were meeting later. The call was too strong to deny for long and Willow felt as if she had already been away for long enough.

They were safe on this side of the island as it was protected by large rocks that jutted out of the water just off the shore. Any approaching ships would have to turn and go around the rocks to land on a different part of the island. That was why the prince chose it as the perfect meeting place for his warriors. That was why those known as the Island Watchers resided here, keeping watch over the surrounding waters of the Isle of Altair from their homes high in the mountains on this side.

The sun was low in the sky when they arrived and the hidden glen was awash with the erected tents of all the warriors summoned. There were very few women present but Willow did see a few here and there scattered among the big warriors. She tossed her pack on the ground by where the others with her had and told Drago that she was going to gather some wood for fire while they finished putting up the tents.



The call was strong when she entered the tree line and headed to the shore. She could smell the scent of salt in the air, hear the pounding of the waves as they crashed against the shore. She felt the tingle in her fingers, a thrum in the blood just beneath the surface of her sensitized skin. She was close, so close to where she was called to be when she felt the hum in the air, a trickle of sensation down her spine like an electric jolt.

There was a rustle in the trees and Willow turned quickly, stepping behind a large tree, feeling a desire to hide and watch that was too strong to deny. A woman came through the trees, dressed differently from any Willow had ever seen before. This woman wore the brown pants of a warrior cut smaller to fit her frame and a top made of the same brown material but tied the same way that a woman's scarf top would be behind the neck and back. One arm was covered from wrist to elbow with a thick padding of the brown material and she carried a pouch of something attached to her waist. She moved stealthily, her long, dark red hair hanging to her buttocks in a thick braid, green eyes scanning the trees around her.

Willow felt the girl's eyes on her but the girl didn't come toward her hiding place. It was almost like she spoke in Willow's mind, encouraging her to stay hidden and keep quiet. The girl turned quickly and let out a shrill whistle that echoed loudly through the quiet of the trees. Three big burly warriors burst from the trees, surrounding the girl.

Willow's eyes grew bright, wondering what she could do to help this girl but then she caught the girl's wicked smile.

"What took you so long?" the girl asked the warriors.

"You do not play fair, cousin," one of the warriors said as he collapsed beside her. "You have the animal do your work for you."

All three warriors sported short black hair, shorter than Willow had ever seen on another warrior and the most beautiful aqua blue eyes. They all sat on the ground, reclining back and watching the girl with smiles of amusement.

"You have cheated us again, Alea," one of the others spoke up. "You know that we cannot beat that pet of yours."

Alea threw her head back and the sound of her girlish laughter tumbled around them. "Princess Asme did not say that I had to play fair, Tanner. I think that you and Bram and Finn are just poor sports."

"Poor sports?" Bram bolted up and threw Alea over his shoulder, spinning around and around with her while his two brothers just watched and chuckled. "I'll show you poor sport, cousin."

"Put me down, you big oaf," Alea told Bram between her shrieks of laughter. "Being this high up is making me sick."

Bram quickly put her on her feet and moved gingerly away as if he expected her to be sick at any moment. His brothers rolled on the ground with laughter.

"I won't be sick on you, Bram," she told him with a grin. "But it is too much when you are lifted seven feet off the ground and dangled over the shoulder of a giant."

"Standing seven feet does not make us giants," Finn spoke up. "It just makes us tall."

"All warriors are tall," Alea scoffed. "Seven feet makes you very tall."

"You're incorrigible, Alea," Bram said with a shake of his head as he joined his brothers back on the ground.

"That is why Mother makes us watch over her so closely," Tanner added.

"Princess Asme makes you watch over me to keep you out of trouble," she informed them with a smug smile but it only made them laugh harder.

"Think what you will, little cousin," Bram told her. "You will reach your claiming age soon and we watch to protect you."

Alea sighed, not relishing the thought of the approaching months and reaching the age of twenty-one, making her a claimable mate for interested warriors. Her mother

Larksan had died when Alea was young and Alea had been raised by her doting warrior fathers. She had never known the influence of any island women.

She had only met her aunt and uncles recently. Alea hadn't known that her fathers were the younger brothers of the prince so she had been ill-prepared when they had informed her that she was being sent to the temple home of the Princess Asme to learn the ways of a woman before she reached the age of claiming. Alea had fought tooth and nail, not wanting to leave the remote shore she had called home but her fathers had both stood firm on the decision, for the first time in her life not giving in to her.

Now she had to admit that it wasn't so bad to live with the princess in the temple and her Uncle Godar was wonderful. This was the first time that she had met the prince, her Uncle Micah Verbani, and truthfully she found him a little intimidating but she wouldn't admit that to anyone. Mostly she enjoyed spending time with her older cousins, Bram, Finn and Tanner. They certainly brought fun and laughter to her days with their constant schemes and foolery. She knew that there was more to them than most people saw. Alea had seen them kill to protect those they loved and held dear.

Unfortunately it seemed that death was dealt more and more by the island men as the invaders flooded the shores of the Isle of Altair in ever-increasing numbers. It was a life that no one wanted but all were fated to. That thought brought her attention back to the woman she had seen hidden in the trees. Alea had left the woman there, not knowing what she hid from or even what danger might exist around them. There was a fierce tingling on her skin that she had never experienced before and that alone made her nervous of this stranger. But with her cousins now beside her she felt easier about approaching the woman.

Alea had just opened her mouth to invite the woman to join them when two things happened almost simultaneously. Two warriors walked into the glen, obviously searching for someone. They were tall, maybe six feet ten, with long brown hair and eyes as green as Alea's. She felt more than saw her cousins jump to their feet and form a

wall behind her as the warriors approached. But there was no need for their show of protection.

Vulcan chose that moment to return as well. His piercing cry rent the air as he circled above her, waiting patiently until she held her arm out for him to land. He was a magnificent creature with his wide wingspan of bright blue feathers that tapered to lighter shades of blue as they flowed down his back to his tail. He landed smoothly on the covering on Alea's arm and deftly folded his wings behind him, looking at the men around her. His eyes were as black as night, his face snowy white. His silver beak was long and pointed, evidence of his status as bird of prey, along with the long vicious talons of the same color that he sported on each foot.

The two warriors who had just entered the glen gasped in surprise at the bird and backed away.

"Is that an *aqua-phoen*?" one of the warriors asked, making the Verbani brothers laugh. Every one stopped and stared with wonder and disbelief at the sight of Vulcan.

"Yes," Bram answered. "Vulcan is one of the last of his kind left."

"I thought that they were all extinct?" the other warrior spoke up.

"No," Alea answered, softly stroking her fingers over the soft feathers of her friend. "They are still around if you know where to look. Who are you?"

"I am Drago Mederra and this is my brother Ulrik," Drago spoke up.

"We are looking for our mate," Ulrik explained. "She came this way looking for firewood or so she would have us believe," he added under his breath. Both he and Drago were well aware of Willow's call to be near the water.

"I am Bram Verbani," Bram spoke up then indicated those around him one by one. "These are my brothers Finn and Tanner and our cousin Alea."

"Verbani?" Drago questioned, recognizing like others the name of their prince.

"Yes," Finn answered with a long-suffering sigh. "We are the sons of the prince."

Silence fell until another joined them.

"As you believe indeed," Willow spoke from the trees behind them as she entered the glen. "You knew exactly where I would be headed to and why."

Alea looked at the woman and felt the zing along her skin strengthen, jolting her with a charge of recognition, a soft call to her soul though she had never even seen, much less met, this woman before. "Who are you?" Alea asked softly.

"I am Willow," she stated as she approached the woman, careful to stay on the side away from the huge bird. "What an incredible bird you have."

"Vulcan is no more mine than I am his." Alea smiled at the bird and Willow was startled when it appeared that the bird smiled back. "He is my friend, my watcher if you will." Alea shook her head and stared at Willow like she was looking inside her. "Who are you?" she asked again.

"I am who you think I am," Willow answered, making the men around her wonder just what they were missing in this conversation.

"I feel as if I know you yet I would swear that we have never met," Alea confessed, confused.

"Like will know like," Willow whispered softly to her with a gentle smile. "When the time is right you will know where to find me and with me the others."

"When the time is right? The others?" Alea questioned.

"You will know," Willow assured her before turning and heading to her waiting mates. "We will leave you now but I think we will see each other again very soon," and then Willow spoke softly issuing a blessing in the tongue of the goddess. If she was not mistaken the call would come soon for this girl and fate would reveal Alea for what she was.

Willow went to stand between Drago and Ulrik and the two men immediately placed their hands on her as much to reassure themselves as to show their claim to the other men present.

Tanner laughed softly, "It was nice to meet you, Drago and Ulrik Mederra and you too, Willow Mederra."

"And you as well," Ulrik replied, nodding his head as he and Drago each took hold of one of Willow's hands and led her out of the glen back into the concealing foliage of the trees.

When they were a short distance away Ulrik spoke softly, "What did you mean by those words you spoke? Like will know like?"

Willow sighed softly, wondering what to disclose as the girl's secret was not hers to tell and one that even Alea didn't seem to realize yet. Yet her warriors were believers in the Island Guardians, knew and accepted Willow as one, so a lie would not be readily believed.

Drago cupped her face and brought it up so that he could look at her. He read the emotion on her face, the knowledge in her eyes and answered for her. "She is a Guardian. The warrior's clothing, the presence of the *aqua-phoen*. I would say that she is the Guardian of Air. Did she not call the bird, Vulcan, her watcher? I would bet that she can see through the bird's eyes when the right words are spoken." Willow said nothing and so Drago continued. "But my guess would be that according to the rest of what you said to her that she does not even know yet that she is a Guardian."

"How could you possibly know that just by looking at my face?" Willow asked him, stunned by his insight.

"Because I know you," Drago told her and kissed her softly, tenderly on the lips. "Because Ulrik and I have watched over you, waited for you and fallen in love with you."

Willow blinked her eyes, rapidly fighting back the tears as she was overwhelmed by the intense emotions that assaulted her at his confession of love. She pulled him down for a more thorough taste, plunging her tongue into his mouth and sucking his back into hers. Drago groaned deep in his chest and wrapped his arms around her, pulling her more snugly against him. Ulrik moved up behind her, placing Willow

firmly between his and Drago's bodies. He moved her hair aside and nibbled along her neck and shoulder, rubbing his burgeoning erection along the small of her back.

It was Willow's turn to moan. She rubbed her body along the length of theirs, reveling in the feel of bare chests, bulging muscles and the long, thick rods that were rubbing so blatantly back against her. Darkness had now fallen completely over the island and they were well hidden in the shadows of the trees around them.

Willow felt someone's hands move to her hips and slide her skirt down to fall in a pool around their feet. Her blue top was the next item to be removed with Drago untying it from her neck while Ulrik took care of where it joined at her back. The top joined her skirt and the hands of her warriors grew restless as they sought to caress every inch of newly exposed skin.

Willow cried out when Drago stepped away from her but Ulrik used his hand to tilt her head back onto his shoulder, enabling him to possess her mouth with a searing kiss that robbed her of breath and thought. His lips were firm and warm, his teeth hard and nipping, his tongue a blade of pleasure. His hands attended her breasts, drawing her nipples into tight pebbles of need. She wanted him — them — and she wanted them now.

Drago stepped back to them and Willow was delighted to find him naked, his thick cock glistening with the wet proof of his desire. She pulled from Ulrik's embrace and fell to her knees between them, taking Drago's swollen shaft between her hands and stroking firmly up and down its long length before slowly dancing her tongue around the large head.

"Sweet goddess," Drago cried out, placing his hands on her head and clenching them tightly in the soft waves of her hair.

Ulrik watched with hooded eyes as their mate pleased his brother's cock, licking and teasing before finally sucking as much as she could into her mouth. He made quick work of his own weapons belt, pants and boots and joined them, coming to stand beside his brother, stroking his hand up and down his shaft as he continued to watch.

Willow looked so good on her knees before them her mouth reddened and swollen from the huge cock she fed on.

Willow let her eyes drift from Drago's to Ulrik's before they slid back down to the hard, thick length of Ulrik's rod that called to her. She let go of Drago's cock with one last deep pull into the back of her throat that had him gasping for breath. She continued to stroke her hand up and down Drago's length but moved her mouth to Ulrik's glistening erection. She licked over the swollen head, running her tongue along the moist slit, tasting the evidence of his desire for her. It was salty and sweet and made her hungry for more, for everything.

Drago pulled away from her and moved behind her, dropping to his knees just as Ulrik took up the same position in front of her. Willow dropped down to her hands and knees and opened her mouth wide for Ulrik to guide his cock inside. She sucked vigorously at him, working him all the way into the back of her throat before slowly releasing him and starting all over again. His hands were wrapped around her head, her hair like an intricate web that held him entwined.

Drago ran his cock along her moist slit several times before thrusting home with a forceful stroke that had Willow gasping around Ulrik's mighty stalk. The men stole control from her then, thrusting and retreating with fast, hard strokes that had her keening on the edge of orgasm in a matter of seconds. She couldn't see, couldn't hear, couldn't breathe, wrapped as she was in the sensations of her two mates and the intense pleasure that their loving blanketed her in.

With a soft grunt of pleasure Ulrik's seed spilled over her tongue and down her throat in short, hot bursts of salty cream. Willow drank greedily of it, sucking for every drop she could, as though it was nectar fit for a goddess. Her pussy contracted with her release and milked Drago's cock for everything he had. He came with a harsh groan, holding tight to her hips and thrusting deep into her womb, filling it with the fierce jets of his seed.



Ulrik and Drago collapsed to their backs on the lush blanket of grass beneath them, gasping for breath. Willow sat up between them on her knees, her eyes flicking back and forth from Ulrik to Drago and back again. "So how soon will you be ready again?" she asked with a coquettish twist to her lips.

"By the goddess, woman," Drago moaned. "You'll be the death of us yet." But he and Ulrik were both grinning with delight as they took in the naked splendor of their woman, their mate for life. Her lush breasts were flushed red and capped with hard pink nipples. Her stomach was flat and with her knees slightly opened they could just see the curl-covered mound of her sex. Her hips were lush and full. Drago had found great pleasure in mounting her from behind and holding on to them. But it was her face that captured them and held their attention. Her green eyes dark with passion and lust, her cheeks flushed with color and her lips red and swollen from pleasure. And yet they had little doubt that even after the fierce loving they had all just shared Willow would be ready to go again as soon as they wanted. She was insatiable with them. They were lucky men indeed.

## **Chapter Four**

The meetings began the next morning and Willow found she was alone for the better part of it. She managed to slip away to the shore while Drago and Ulrik were occupied with the prince and other warriors. Everyone knew what the meetings were about, though, for there was no longer a way to hide the increasing number of men who swarmed their shores, searching for ways to penetrate their defenses. Soon it would be a call to arms for everyone. No longer would there be men left in the village to protect the women and children.

She knew that the prince was expressing the need to move all the women to the central village where the Princess Asme stayed. His thought was that if they were all together in one spot it would be easier to protect them. The prince's home had once been the Temple of the Goddess of Altair and home to a majority of the island women so there was no doubt that there was room. Willow had a feeling that all of the warriors would agree with this logic and that before long they would all be heading to a new home.

She was sitting inside the tree line, watching the water, keeping a discerning eye out for anyone who sought to approach the island this morn when she heard the sound of someone behind her. She started to move then felt the tingle along her skin and knew without a doubt just who approached.

Alea moved through the brush and came to settle on the grassy ground beside her.

"So what brings you to the water's edge?" Willow asked the beautiful redheaded Guardian.

"I have been looking for you," Alea replied, pulling a blade of grass and bringing it to her lips. "I would like to ask you some things if I can."

"I will answer what I can, Alea," Willow assured her with a smile.

"Does your skin tingle when we are near?" Alea asked.

"Yes, I feel it too," Willow stated, her eyes still on the shore before them.

"Why?" Alea demanded to know. "Why do we feel so connected to one another?"

"Like will know like," Willow whispered, "and the four shall be as one."

"I don't understand," Alea spoke, exasperated.

"You will," Willow said softly, glancing briefly at the girl and offering her a smile before her eyes turned back to the waves crashing over the shore. "When the time is right you will know and understand everything."

"I want to know now," Alea demanded. "I don't want to wait."

Willow laughed and the sound carried on the air through the gathering of trees surrounding them. "I wish that I could tell you more. I really do. But I can't. It is something that you must discover for yourself."

"When will I discover this?" Alea wanted to know.

"When the time is right and not a moment before so quit asking me," Willow stated firmly. "Instead tell me of yourself and your great bird, the *aqua-phoen*."

"There is not much to tell about me," Alea said blandly. "My mother died when I was young and my fathers raised me. We lived in the mountains here." Alea glanced longingly up to the mountains and sighed. "My fathers still do. I live with my aunt, the Princess Asme, now."

"Your fathers are watchers?" Willow asked, intrigued. She had never met a watcher before but she had heard of them many times. Watchers were the men and women who took to the mountains and, climbing to their highest points, built towers so that they could watch and see all of Altair and the water that surrounded her. These were the people who would know how many invaders came and how soon they might arrive. Birds were used to send messages to the villages, birds that were taken care of and nurtured by the women in white. It was one of the old island ways that the prince had been happy to keep though he had made his warriors the watchers.

"Yes, I grew up in the mountains."

"You are the cousin to the sons of the prince and princess," Willow stated, already knowing it for fact.

"Yes," Alea replied softly, shaking her head. "My fathers are the younger brothers of Prince Micah and Uncle Godar. I never knew of them or my relationship to them until my fathers sent me to live with them." Her displeasure about that fact was clear in her voice. "They wanted me to learn the ways of a woman before I reached the age of claiming in just a few months."

"You didn't want to leave," Willow nodded, understanding perhaps more than anyone else ever could since she too had been raised by her fathers, her mother also having died while she was young.

"Vulcan was there," Alea whispered softly, "and I had no wish to leave him or my fathers. It is the only home that I have ever known."

"Are you intended for someone?" Willow asked.

"Not that I know of," Alea responded but she didn't meet Willow's eyes. "There are very few warriors in the mountains. The young ones are sent to the villages to train and the older ones are usually in the towers. My fathers let me dress as I wanted and have had the run of the land since there was none around to say otherwise."

"I would not want to give up that freedom either," Willow smiled. "But it can't be so bad there. Your bird, Vulcan, is with you. Your cousins seem very nice and you are still wearing the clothes of your choice."

Alea laughed at that and a huge grin split her face. "Princess Asme tried to get me to change but I refused. I got really angry the one time she tried. Then this tornado of air seemed to form out of nowhere and she did something to get rid of it. She gave me a funny look and left me alone. But she has made her sons, Bram, Finn and Tanner, my keepers. I rarely go anywhere that one of them is not around."

Willow knew that Alea had caused the tornado with her anger. This Guardian of Air must be very powerful indeed and the Princess Asme must have seen that as well.

Willow couldn't help but wonder just how much longer it would be before Alea realized who and what she was. Then she wondered if Alea had even heard of the legend. After all, the girl had grown up without a mother and probably with no other female present much of the time. It was quite possible that she knew nothing of the curse or the prophecy.

"Do you know the story of how our island came to be as it is? Why we are at constant war?" Willow asked Alea.

"Of course." Alea gave Willow a funny look. "Most of the other islands were destroyed by sickness and disease and this is one of the only ones that for some reason survived intact. It only makes sense that others would try to claim it for their own."

"But do you know the legend of why we are as we are? The curse? The prophecy?" Willow tried again.

"Princess Asme told me of the curse placed by the old priestess when the warriors came here. Something about having to face war because of their actions."

"Did she tell you of the prophecy? Of the coming of the Guardians?" Willow wanted to know.

Alea rolled her eyes. "Yes, but please tell me you don't believe that nonsense. You don't really believe that four women will be gifted with powers and save us all."

Willow laughed and stood, her eyes fixed on the water where ships could just be seen in the distance, approaching. "I not only believe it, Alea. I am one of them. Look." She pointed her finger to where she could just make out the approaching ships.

"Hurry," Alea shouted, turning to leave but Willow stopped her with a firm hand on her shoulder. "We must go to warn the warriors that more come."

"No, Alea," Willow shook her head. "You must watch and learn to believe."

With that Willow turned back to face the water and stepped out of the trees to stand on the sandy beach. She threw her hands above her head and invoked her powers, asking for the goddess's blessing.

"I call upon the waters flow, where I will is where you go.

"For each who seeks to claim our shore, a wave's caress and then no more.

"The goddess's blessing on my call, a watery grave for one and all."

Alea watched as the air swirled around Willow, lifting her hair around her and playing through the veils of her clothing with a breeze that could be neither seen nor felt by anyone else. Then as she continued to watch Willow threw her hands out in front of her like she was pushing something away and the waters began to flow back out to sea. Waves that had just crashed on shore now raced away from land, headed to the ships that they could see, gaining momentum and power as they flowed. They hit the ships with a mighty shove and Alea was amazed to see the ships disappear from sight.

"Did you kill them?" Alea asked with awe.

"I only invoked the goddess's hand," Willow told her. "It is up to her what shall become of them. The important thing to me is to know if you believe in the Guardians now, Alea."

"Yes." Alea looked at Willow and fear filled her eyes as well as awe at what she had witnessed. "I believe in the Guardians and the power they possess."

Willow smiled, hoping that she had just set Alea on the path to enlightenment. She took Alea's arm in hers and they headed back to the glen where the tents were set up and the warriors were probably still discussing what was to be. Had they but turned once more and looked behind them they would have seen one ship return to sight and continue on toward the Isle of Altair.

\* \* \* \* \*

"This is the way that it must be," Bram spoke for his father, tired of the incessant arguing that got them nowhere and wasted time. "We no longer have the manpower to ensure the widespread safety of our women and children. We must either band together in one place, fortify our defenses and stand as one," he looked around, letting

his gaze meet and hold as many as he could, "or we may as well hand our women and children and anything else they want over to them and save the time and effort of continuing as we are."

No one spoke a word. Silence descended and it was more shattering than the loud voices and chaos that had preceded it. Finally Bram's father Prince Micah Verbani stepped up beside his son and rested his hand on Bram's shoulder. He looked so old and worn to Bram, Finn and Tanner in that moment, and they above anyone else save their mother were gifted with a better understanding of just what it took to be leader of a people in a time of constant war and battle.

Prince Micah was probably the most misunderstood of all warriors. He was often viewed as cold and arrogant, dominant and unforgiving, a true force to be reckoned with. But his children knew better. They knew the father who had played and laughed with them as youngsters, tossing them in the air while they screamed with joy. From their mother, the Princess Asme, they had learned of the life their fathers had once lived and how they had buried their loved ones and moved on. And it was Prince Micah who led the way, having no other choice but to remain strong despite his personal pain at burying his first wife and three young daughters.

Now Bram, Finn and Tanner were proud to stand next to him and show their unwavering faith and support of his plan, the only plan they really had a chance of using at this point. They lost more and more warriors in battles against the ones who constantly landed on their shores and tried to take away their land and their women, the very heart and soul of all they were. Bram thought of his mother, his cousin Alea and shuddered at the possibility that they could be captured and subjected to the whims of men who saw them solely as sex vessels and breeders. No matter what they had to do, no matter what the sacrifice required, that must not be allowed.

"When should we look to move our families to the central village and the shelter of the old Temple Palace?" one weary older warrior asked, his voice echoing in the quiet.

"As soon as possible," Prince Micah replied. "There is no time to lose in gathering together and setting up a new line of defense to ensure their continued safety." He was worn out and his voice conveyed it. "If there was any other way then I would do all within my power to let things stay as they are now. But there isn't. Four women were kidnapped from the village on the western shores just days ago." A gasp of outrage flowed through the air. "These invaders grow bolder every day and their numbers increase too quickly to suit me. There is no other way to protect the women and children of this island," Prince Micah admitted sadly. "There is just no other way."

Willow and Alea stood at the edge of the group, taking it all in. Alea leaned close to Willow and whispered in her ear, "What of the Guardians? Are they not the only way?"

Willow smiled at her and nodded her head. "Yes, but try explaining that to so many warriors and you will be laughed at. No man wants to believe that his fate rests in the hands of a woman," she scoffed, "much less five of them."

"But you could show them," Alea assured her. "Just as you showed me. They would have to believe what they saw."

Willow sadly shook her head again, this time back and forth. "You would be surprised," she murmured. "Besides, now is not the time or place to share who I am with any but you and my mates."

"They know?" Alea asked, surprised.

"Yes, from the beginning they have known who and what I am," Willow told her.

"And they are okay with it? They are accepting and everything?" Alea asked and was amazed when Willow nodded her head yes. "That is amazing."

"They are amazing," was Willow's heartfelt reply. "I am a very lucky woman. I wish the same for you."

"I do not wish to mate," Alea stated firmly. Too firmly, Willow thought.

"Is there something wrong with those you are promised to?" Willow inquired softly and Alea looked at her with shock. "I know that you did not tell me the truth earlier,



Alea. Your eyes spoke the truth when I asked if you were promised to anyone. What are you so afraid of?"

"I am to be mated with the Xandova warriors," she whispered as if she feared somehow saying the names would conjure the men, "Drew and Sorran."

Willow knew vaguely the name Xandova. They were well-known warriors, mostly due to their incredible height and size. If she was not mistaken the Xandovas stood at least seven feet with most closer to the seven and a half feet range. Alea was Willow's size, standing five feet, eight inches, so she could see where the girl would be intimidated.

"What is it you fear the most about joining with them?" Willow asked Alea quietly.

"They are so very big," Alea said with wide eyes, "taller even than my cousins or even your mates from what I have heard. And strong. So incredibly strong."

"You have not met them?" Willow shouldn't be surprised by this but for some reason she was. Usually a woman met those she was joined as mates with at some point prior to the joining.

"No, but I have heard about them," Alea confessed. "I have heard that they are incredibly rough and can be brutal in battle." The girl's fear was palpable but Willow could sense that there was more to it than the size of the Xandovas.

"Alea, most men are different with the women they join with," Willow spoke cautiously, not wanting to give false hope since she knew that some warriors were brutal to their mates. She had seen such behavior all too often in the camps that she and her fathers had stayed in, camps where mates were sometimes treated as *pani* and passed around to satisfy the lust of many. But not all men were that way. Her warriors weren't and her fathers had never been that way as far as she knew. "Men can be softer with their woman, giving and accepting, gentle. All warriors are rough and brutal in battle where life and death is on the line. But try not to fear what you don't know, Alea. It can be a waste of time and energy that could be better spent elsewhere on more productive things. Give these Xandova warriors a chance and if you see that there is a

need for fear than you still have Vulcan and with him the ability to leave.” She nodded toward the sky where even now the bird soared high above them. Of course more than the *aqua-phoen* was the fact that Alea was a Guardian and as such would have the others standing beside her.

“Yes, Vulcan can be very protective of me,” Alea smiled again, some of the tension leaving her shoulders before she took on a fierce expression again. “But I will not give up my clothes for anyone,” she informed Willow with a scowl. “I refuse to wear skirts and those tops. No offense.”

“None taken,” Willow laughed, thinking how funny it would be to be around when the Xandova warriors met their intended mate for the first time. They would have their work cut out for them if they intended to woo her into accepting them and Willow prayed to the goddess that that would be their intention. Alea had been sheltered in the home of her fathers and had known only older, more settled warriors who lived close to her fathers in the mountains. “I couldn’t imagine you in any other clothing, Alea.”

Alea nodded and crossed her arms over her chest, glancing back to the gathering of warriors and trying to decide what to do. “It sounds as if we will all be heading to the central village where I have been staying with my aunt. So it seems that I will be seeing you again soon.”

“Yes, so it does,” Willow agreed, wondering how this would fit in with the goddess’s plan, for it was a certainty that it must.

“Perhaps we will even travel together.” Alea sounded excited by this thought and Willow smiled again. They were so close in age yet so far apart in their lives and where they were. Alea seemed younger, more naïve in some ways, untainted by the chaos around them. It was a wonderful thing to see.

“Yes,” Willow murmured, watching as her warriors and their two friends turned and headed toward her. “Perhaps we will.”

## **Chapter Five**

They would all be spending one final night and then leave for the village home of the Mederra warriors in the early hours of the morn. None were really looking forward to the long journey ahead. It would be a warm welcome until the village realized that with their return they would all be embarking on an even longer journey. For it would take many months to move the people to the more centralized location as they would have to travel in smaller groups to better ensure the safety of the elderly and children. Plus they would have to include some of the animals on each trip as well as their stores of food and water to ensure that there were enough supplies when they arrived.

Willow sat around the fire that night, listening intently to the flowing conversation between her mates and their two friends. It seemed that tonight would be used to strategize the best way to approach the village elders with the prince's orders. It would be up to these four men to ensure that everything went as smoothly as possible and that everyone arrived at the final destination safely. Not so easy when there was bound to be dissent.

"You know that you can count on the Savaris, the Donans and the Mederras to see that things go as smoothly as possible. Between the seven of us we can ensure that people are moved safely," Arik stated confidently.

"We can go in groups of four," Alexi added. "With one of us always rotating to make up for the odd number. Either that or I am sure we should be able to come up with an eighth warrior to help us."

"We will see what we have when we get home," Drago stated. "It will just be good to be there again. To see Mother and Erika."

"Aye," Arik agreed. "It will be good to see my mate again as well as the children and my brother."

"Yes, I long for Farrah more with every passing day," Alexi replied. "It is too long that we have been gone."

"Do we leave then in the morning?" Willow asked softly, hating to intrude on the musings of the men around her.

"Yes," Ulrik stated, pulling her into his lap and holding her close to his chest. "We will leave with the rising of the sun. If we travel quickly then we will be able to make the journey in just a few days."

"There is much that I can do along the way to aid in the smoothness of our journey," Willow murmured quietly to her mate.

"And we will make use of it," Ulrik assured her. "There is something that we should share with all of you prior to our trip," he spoke to Alexi and Arik.

"Yes," Drago added, knowing what it was that his brother sought to share with their friends and brothers in arms. "We must make sure that you understand the importance of our mate, of guarding and protecting her at all cost. Our very existence depends on her safety."

Alexi and Arik shared a veiled look before either replied. "Perhaps you should just tell us exactly what it is that you need to share. I don't think that you have to worry about either of us repeating it to others," Alexi answered.

"Your word first," Drago insisted. "Your word that what is spoken here will go no further."

"You have my word," Alexi stated.

"And mine as well," Arik replied.

"Willow." Ulrik looked deep into her beautiful green eyes. "It is your secret to share so I will leave the telling to you. Share what you feel you can but know that these are my brothers as well. Drago and I would and do trust them with our lives and with our families. You can trust them as well."

Willow nodded and looked around at each of the other two men around the fire. Drago scooted closer so that he could place his hand on her neck and offer what comfort he could to her. It was not an easy secret to share. Drago and Ulrik had just known, thus making it so much easier for her.

Willow had grown up around warriors. She had long listened to the jokes and comments that were made about the curse and the coming of the Island Guardians. To warriors it was ludicrous to put faith in the possibility that five women would save them all. A warrior lived and died by his own abilities. He fought to protect his women. He did not hide behind them. And yet here she sat before them, an Island Guardian gifted with the power of water. And there was much that the goddess's gift allowed her to do.

Willow was often able to pull water out of the very earth or air if need be. But the most devastating of her gifts was the ability to pull water out of the body of an enemy. She could literally call the water from the body, killing the other person instantly. It was not a pretty way to go nor was it an easy death. She had only used it once when she was caught on her way back to the camp by a solitary warrior not from her island home.

She had been too far from the water to call to it, so she had whispered words to invoke the goddess and bring the water to her. She had succeeded all too well, only the water that had come to her had come from the body of the man. Willow had watched with huge eyes as the water spewed from the man's mouth, eyes, ears and nose until there was nothing but a shell left. She had been careful never to invoke that prayer again and luckily she hadn't needed to.

But how could she explain that ability to warriors who depended on their strength and skill with a weapon? How could she make them aware of just how powerless they really were? At least to her? Where would she even begin?

"I am an Island Guardian," Willow stated, finding no other way to say what she needed to other than just blurting the truth.

"And which power were you blessed by the goddess with?" Alexi asked matter-of-factly.

"It would have to be water or air," Arik replied and glanced at Willow, taking in the blue top. "I am guessing water."

Willow gasped with surprise. Why were they acting so calmly about what she had just shared with them? "Yes, I am the Guardian of Water. I can demonstrate if you do not believe me," she challenged, sure that there was something that she wasn't seeing.

"No need, little sister," Arik replied with a shrug of his shoulders. "Your secret is safe with us. We are already in the service of two other Guardians."

"What?" she cried out in astonishment.

"You will meet them soon enough," Alexi spoke up. "My mate Farrah came to us from the princess. She was sent to find the Guardian of Earth and fate had my brothers and me finding her first."

"The Guardian of Earth?" Willow questioned. "Farrah was sent by the Princess Asme to find this Guardian why?"

"It is a long story and probably best explained in detail by our mates," Alexi said. "But suffice it to say that Farrah, my mate, is the Guardian of Fire. She is one woman who it is best not to make angry," he stated. But the big grin on his face told how much he thought of his mate.

"And Erika, sister to your mates, is the Guardian of Earth," Arik added. "She is amazing in the things that she can do."

"Yes, Erika has been working with her powers since she was about thirteen," Drago responded and looked to his brother Ulrik, who nodded in agreement.

"You knew that she was a Guardian?" Arik questioned.

Ulrik laughed softly. "Yes, the chit about scared us to death the first time she used her powers."

"We followed her as often as we could," Drago added. "She was always scampering off and we wanted to make sure that she was okay."

"Then we saw her wield her powers and as she grew so did they," Ulrik stated. "Are you saying that you didn't know prior to the mating?" he asked Arik.

"Nay, we didn't know," Arik shrugged.

"But you followed her as often as we did," Drago stated with a frown. "How could you have missed it?"

"Apparently she was much more discreet on the times when we were present," Arik shook his head then looked up with a grin. "Erika will be so excited to meet you, Willow."

"And Farrah as well," Alexi added.

"I look forward to meeting them as well," Willow gushed, filled with a longing to leave right this moment to meet these two other Guardians. She knew who they all were now. Well, everyone except the Mystic. And that would be revealed in good time, she was sure. "How soon 'til we leave?" she asked again, turning to her mates. "Perhaps we should travel at night. The darkness would provide better cover should we encounter an enemy."

Drago laughed and Ulrik squeezed her tightly in his embrace. "Yes, and it would allow the enemy to hide better as well, my love. No, we will leave with the dawn's first light."

"Yes," Drago added. "It is time that we retire to our tent for the night. I am in need of attention before we find our rest."

"Aye," Ulrik agreed. "We are both in need of attention before we leave in the morn."

"I believe that is our hint to make ourselves scarce, Alexi," Arik said and both men got to their feet and with a bow of their shoulders took their leave.

“Attention, huh?” Willow smiled and flicked her tongue out to dampen her bottom lip, making both of her big warriors groan. “I believe that I can guarantee you all of the attention that you can handle.”

She pulled Ulrik’s mouth down to hers and captured it in a kiss of pure fire. She nipped his bottom lip and when he opened her tongue foraged deep, tasting every part of his wet cavern. She heard the tent behind them being opened and knew that Drago was watching and awaiting his turn. Reluctantly she pulled away from Ulrik’s kiss then couldn’t resist nipping his plump bottom lip one more time. She wiggled her bottom across his hard erection as she moved from his lap to crawl on her hands and knees through the opening into the tent.

She could feel the eyes of her mates on her and made sure that she wiggled her ass and kept her knees wide, giving them a view of what was in store once they were all inside and away from the eyes of others. She was barely in when she felt Drago palm her buttocks and squeeze them with his big hands. She went all the way to the back of the tent and turned quickly to face both of her warriors as they entered and Ulrik closed the tent tightly.

Sha came up on her knees and reached a hand behind her to loosen the knots of her top. “Strip for me,” she ordered and was delighted when both men made quick work of their weapon belts and the laces of their brown warrior pants. She dropped her top and shoved her skirt down over her hips and thighs as she kept her eyes glued to the two huge erections now bobbing and swaying in front of her. When she was naked she crawled over to them and immediately swallowed Drago’s huge cock into her throat.

Drago cried out and clutched her head in his big hands, reveling in the tight suction of her mouth and throat. Just when he thought he might die of the pleasure she pulled back and gave the shiny head another slow lick before moving her mouth to Ulrik. She playfully blew on his cock, her hot breath making it bob and releasing a pulse of cum from the tiny slit. Willow used her tongue to lick every drop up and teased the hole with her tongue before finally sucking his length deep into the wet cavern of her mouth.



Back and forth she went, driving both of her mates crazy with her ministrations but never allowing either of them to experience the ultimate pleasure of filling her mouth with their juices. Finally it was Drago who pulled away and moved behind her. Instead of mounting her like she expected him to he lay on his back. She pulled her mouth from Ulrik and went to glance over her shoulder. Ulrik stopped her and instead helped her to turn so that she could straddle Drago's thighs and mount his swollen cock.

Drago grasped her hips tightly in his hands and lined up the pulsing head with the slick entrance to her pussy. "Take me," he grunted out to her, "take all of me now." He slammed his hips up, shoving his cock deep inside her pulsing sheath, making them both cry out at the pleasure. "Gods, you feel so good around me," he grunted as he thrust and withdrew again.

"Yes," she hissed as she started to take over the rhythm, wanting nothing more than to ride him like a wild beast. But Ulrik's hands stopped her, forcing her to lean forward. Drago eased her forward until her sweet plump breasts dangled above his mouth and he could feast on them, sucking and nipping at her turgid nipples with mouth, teeth and tongue.

She felt the slow drizzle of oil along the crease of her ass and knew that Ulrik was readying her with fire oil. The slow glide of first one then two fingers in and out of the tight pucker of her anus was torture. Ulrik made sure to rub against his brother's cock with his fingers, allowing them all the sense of what would be in store when he pushed his cock into her sweet ass. The thin membrane of skin would allow each brother to feel the other when they were both buried deep in the hot, tight depths of the woman they loved.

"Now, Ulrik," Willow demanded, pushing back against his fingers. "I am well oiled and burning for your cock," she cried out. "Fuck me!"

Both men groaned at her crude warrior words and Ulrik quickly removed his fingers. He pushed the purpled head of his swollen shaft against the pink bud of her anus. She was still so tight here, like tongues of fire squeezing along his length as he

slowly worked farther into her silken sheath. He could feel the pulsing length of his brother filling her pussy and knew that he was tightening her sheath around Drago's cock with every new inch he claimed with his own. Finally he was buried to his balls inside her and it was heaven and hell at the same time.

He heard Willow cry out, felt the flex of her hips as she fought their hold, wanting to move against them. He shared a look with his brother and they both took up a rhythm guaranteed to pleasure their mate. In and out they moved, one filling while the other retreated only to switch places. Drago continued to suck and bite at her nipples and Ulrik leaned forward to gift her neck with the same exquisite torture.

Willow was on fire. Lust was raging in her blood like an inferno and there was no controlling her response to the loving her mates were giving her. It was pleasure. It was pain. It was a decadent mixture of both and yet it was so much more than that. She bucked between them, urging them to take her harder, faster, to surge as deep inside her as they could. She placed her hands on Drago's chest, tugging softly on the hair there before zeroing in on his nipples and tweaking and tugging on them as well.

Drago bit down harder than he intended to on Willow's reddened nipple when he felt the first hard tug on his own. She cried out, flinging her head back with pleasure and crying out "Yes" at the top of her voice. So she wanted it harder, he thought. He nipped her nipples, catching them between his teeth and pulling on them, giving her the slight bite of pain that she seemed to be demanding and in return he was gifted with a tight pulsing of her sheath as she reached orgasm.

Ulrik cried out when he felt the tight tremors of her ass as she pulsed and came all over Drago's cock. Her skin was flushed with color, her eyes aglow with passion and he couldn't stop the need to claim and mark her. He fisted one hand tightly in her tousled hair and pulled her head back toward him. He picked the pace up, pummeling his cock in and out of her ass as he felt his own release fast approaching. He felt the tingle along his spine, the tightening of his balls readying to fill her with his seed and he leaned forward and bit down on the tight muscle where her neck met with her shoulder.

Willow screamed, slamming her hips down so hard on Drago that it felt as if he filled her very stomach with his turgid length. She could feel the hot jets of cum filling her pussy and ass, hear the cries of pleasure from her mates' mouths even as her release shattered her into a million tiny pieces. It was the most wonderful moment of her life. She felt a warm bubble in her womb and felt wonder that it might be the start of a child—a gift for her strong warriors. A part of each of them that would grow and nurture inside her, the ultimate representation of their bond and love.

She felt the tug of Ulrik's arms and eased to her side to lie content between the warm sated bodies of her mates. The journey would begin for them all early in the morn and it would be a hard trip with so many of the enemy now among them. She could hear the call in the air. She knew that Alea would follow them soon and finally all four of the Island Guardians would be united in one place. It was not their destiny to travel to the central point with the others. No, their destiny lay in a different direction, one that would be forged with danger of a different kind. Willow wasn't sure exactly what they would face but she had confidence in the Mystic and in her fellow Guardians as well. The time for the Island Guardians was close at hand.

## Chapter Six

Alea sat in the tree, watching the sky for any signs of her beloved *aqua-phoen* Vulcan. He had taken to the skies earlier and she had not heard from him since. It was not unusual for the bird to disappear for days at a time but this was different. Alea could feel a change in the air, a call on the wind that could not be ignored. She was to make a journey tomorrow and somehow she was to make it alone. She had no doubt that her cousins would follow after her but her journey would begin without them. She only prayed that Vulcan would be back in time to go with her.

“You are sure that they are here?” Prince Micah questioned the young warrior before him. He didn’t recognize the boy but then there were so many new faces every day that it was hard to keep up. It was enough that he remembered the faces of all who had died. The weight of the fallen was a heavier burden to bear every day but one that he felt he deserved. It was his foolish pride that had brought this curse on his people. If only he had done things differently perhaps his brethren would not be plagued with constant battle and death.

At the boy’s nod Micah followed through the trees, eager for news of a different kind, eager for a reason to hope and rejoice.

The arrows came from all around and there was no way to protect himself from them all. He felt the first pierce his thigh. The next he took in his shoulder and then there were too many to keep track of. At least three pierced his back while many more stabbed into his chest and stomach. He fell with a harsh groan, knowing that the end was near for him. He could already taste his death in the blood that spilled from his lips. Thankfully he never glimpsed the face of the one who had betrayed him.

\* \* \* \* \*

Princess Asme slammed into consciousness from a deep sleep, the dream fresh in her mind. She could still feel the sharp pain of the arrows and patted her flesh to check for their presence. She glanced at the empty space beside her and knew without a doubt that her beloved was gone, betrayed by one he called friend, by one he called brother. Tears of rage and despair filled her eyes and she screamed her grief to the world. Gone, he was gone but thankfully she had seen that he never saw the face of the one who betrayed him. But she had and that one betrayal was almost more than she could bear. If she managed nothing more she would seek vengeance for her beloved.

\* \* \* \* \*

The old woman watched and took note of all that was unfolding on the Isle of Altair. The rise of the Mystic was coming. The first of the sacrificial blood had been spilled and let loose the flow of events that were the prelude to the dawn of the Island Guardians. Already the Mystic's call could be heard strongly in the air, pulling the Guardians of Earth, Fire, Water and Air to the sacred valley. But there was more to be done before that time came and the fertile soil of the Isle of Altair would drink more blood, swallow more bodies into its depths before destiny would intervene. More would be demanded by the Goddess of Altair before she would allow her power to be invoked. Change was in the air and it saddened the old priestess to realize that so much had changed and that soon very few would even remember the glory of Altair in times past.

## **About the Author**

Lacey Thorn spends her days in small-town Indiana, the proud mother of three. When she is not busy with one of them she can be found typing away on her computer keyboard or burying her nose in a good book. Like every woman, she knows just how chaotic life can be and how appealing that great escape can look. So toss aside the stress and tension of the never ending “to do” list. For now sit back, relax, and enjoy the ride with Lacey as she helps you to unlace and unleash the woman inside.

Lacey welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her author bio page at [www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com).

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