

ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS



MARY
WINTER

HIS
Magical
STUDENT

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His Magical Student

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HIS MAGICAL STUDENT

Mary Winter

Prologue

The bellow of a wounded *boaresk* rattled the leaves in the trees and vibrated the ground beneath Jendaya's feet. Her hands shook as she raised and pointed them at the beast, concentrating on the pull of power from the ground beneath her. Beads of sweat rolled down her face. Power burned through her veins.

She shut the heat, the danger, even the blood leaking from a shallow cut along her ribs out of her mind and focused on the battle. A bright green globe of energy formed in her hands. She flung it at the creature, listening to its angry squeal as the ball hit its left flank.

The creature snorted and charged.

Jendaya darted to the side, curling her hands into fists and wishing she still had the short sword she'd stolen from her father when she left home.

Or rather, her mother's husband—her magical talent hadn't come from a blacksmith.

She thrust her hands before her, shooting small bolts of energy at the pig-like creature. It squealed, rising onto its hind legs in defiance before rushing toward her.

Bone-deep fatigue tugged at her. She blinked her eyes against the sting of sweat, her arms nearly too heavy to lift. Bending over, she swiped a large stick from the ground at her feet, knowing if it came to a battle of strength between her and the *boaresk* she'd lose. She dared not close her eyes, though wished for some respite. Whichever mage was supposed to be watching this area of the woods hadn't shown up yet, and if she died, the loss of her life would be his fault. Snarling, she stepped forward and shot another bolt of energy at the creature.

The power threw her to her knees. She landed, pain shooting up her femur and into her hip, her hand losing the heavy stick. Biting her lip to keep from crying out, she

pressed a hand into the cool loam of the forest floor and sucked in gulps of air. The *boaresk* charged once again.

Jendaya stared at its wide, flat snout. Its mouth gaped, long fangs curling over the bottom lip. Two razor-sharp tusks protruded forward from the beast's squat, flat head. Utilizing sharp spines along its back and short legs, *boaresks* were naturals at rooting in the underbrush of the forest. Magic strengthened their abilities, giving them a mean temperament and strength beyond that of a normal boar. She tried to keep from shaking as she struggled to her feet.

"No!" she yelled, pulling power beyond any she'd ever felt before from the ground. It shot from her fingertips in jagged streaks of green lightning. The smell of ozone overpowered the creature's stench. Blood flowed in her mouth and she belatedly realized she'd bitten her cheek during her fall. Inhaling, she focused her will on the creature. If she didn't destroy it then she'd die. The magical beast would rampage the hillside and right now, she, an untrained mage, stood between it and her village.

Green sparks surrounded the creature. It bellowed and goose bumps rose on her arms. The creature continued to charge at her and, extending her hands, Jendaya knew she faced her own death.

With a scream she hurled the last of her reserves at the creature. Raw, unfettered power coursed through her veins. Her fingers burned with the strength of the energy. Pouring her will, her soul, into defeating the creature, she thought only of its destruction.

The beast fell onto its side with a solid thud. It shrieked, legs twitching as it died. Smoke curled from its hide.

Still Jendaya fed it more energy, more magic. She refused to stop until the beast remained only as a smoking pile of ash. Her fingers curled. Eyelids drooped as the power leached her life force from her body. Each breath became a labored effort.

Inhale. Wait, watching through half-lidded eyes, hoping like hell she'd killed it. Exhale.

The magic ebbed. Sparks sputtered from the tips of her fingers, no longer an endless stream of green light and energy. Her head pounded, felt as if a herd of horses had run over it and then circled around for another try. She forced air into her starved lungs.

She collapsed, her hands falling against the loam. Dead leaves crunched in the silence. The *boaresk* lay in front of her, its hide charred and eyes open, unseeing in death. She'd killed it.

Having no strength to lift her head, she pressed her cheek against the cool ground. She'd stay for a moment, but only a moment, because these creatures usually traveled in packs and where there was one, undoubtedly she'd encounter another. Exhaustion kept her limbs leaden, her head resting on the ground. Inhale. Think of the family she left behind, the mother who hated her, the father who feared her. Exhale. Think of the mage out there, somewhere, not protecting the villagers as was his duty. Inhale. Wince past the pain in her ribs, pray that the beast hadn't caused an infection with its dirty tusks. Exhale...and embrace the blessed darkness that called to her.

She'd tried. Damn it all, she'd tried. She curled her fingers into the loam and tried to stand. Her body fell and she lay there, knowing if the dead *boaresk* had brought others she couldn't muster the strength to fight them.

Inhale, forcing the air past cracked lips. Blood dripped from her nose, an aftereffect of the pure power she'd forced through her body. Uncurling her fingers, she shot a tiny, last spark of power into the air. Perhaps the magic there would call the mage, alert him to the presence of the *boaresks*. Maybe with her life, she'd have bought enough time to protect the village. Perhaps then they'd think of her as someone other than the illegitimate daughter of the village's seamstress.

Maybe then she'd be known as someone other than Jendaya Carinella, a mage's bastard daughter.

* * * * *

Unable to ride his *zardark* to the source of the magical energies, Teryn Windhorn dug his heels into his mount's ribs and urged the horse even faster. The *zardark*, a winged reptile, would have been quicker, flying over the forest instead of making him ride through it. Branches whipped into his face. The tang of magic from the same powerful source he'd sensed before, yet had been unable to locate, urged him forward. Whatever this mage fought, whatever caused it to draw the power, the magic was raw and untrained. Power like this could kill a person and he'd be damned if he'd accept another young mage's death on his conscience.

He cursed his work several leagues to the north that kept him from monitoring the magical workings in his home territory. He struggled to keep the farms and villages under his protection safe, and it seemed there never was enough of him to go around. Add to that the mage council's incessant demands that he find and train an apprentice. Teryn urged the horse even faster. He'd heard rumors of an untrained girl, yet hadn't had the time to seek them out and discover their truth.

The scream of a wounded beast tore through the forest and chilled his blood. Ducking low over the horse's neck, Teryn urged the animal faster and followed the trace of magic he sensed. Bright. Powerful. The magic held a feminine undertone and he stiffened in the saddle.

The horse leapt a small log, nearly unseating him with the powerful jump. Grabbing its mane, Teryn struggled to stay in the saddle. He clenched his legs around the animal and thought only of what he'd face when he reached his destination. With his short sword strapped to his back and his body well rested and ready for magical battle, Teryn thought not of those he couldn't save, but the ones he could. Like the farmers who had disturbed a flock of firebirds. They'd nearly lost their entire crop before he arrived and convinced the birds to roost elsewhere. Too big a territory just for him, but there wasn't much he could do about it.

A woman's scream of pain filled the air. Beneath his legs, sweat slicked the horse's coat and soaked the legs of his breeches. His mount's labored breathing filled the air

and reluctantly Teryn eased back, not wanting to ride the best into the ground. “C’mon,” he murmured under his breath, already beginning the incantation that would offer a bubble of protection around him and his horse.

The smell of charred flesh filled the air. A powerful burst of magic shot through him, nearly unseating him again as he gasped for breath. The hair on his arms rose. This close, he recognized the death cry as belonging to a *boaresk*, and he shivered. The creatures traveled in packs, the death of one calling another.

The horse skidded to a stop in a clearing. Vaulting from the beast’s back, he drew his sword and raced for the body lying on the ground. She lay on her side, one arm flung out as if to send a last, futile burst of magic. Her tangled blonde hair promised to shine like the sun. The tight vest and trousers she wore left little of her rounded figure to the imagination. Even now, with her life force ebbing, power hummed around her.

Teryn rolled her onto her back, not liking the way blood trickled from her nose. A slash across her ribs leaked blood, dirt smudging her tunic and vest around the wound. Another gore mark along her thigh promised to be painful. Rustling in the bushes pulled his attention from the unknown female mage’s wounds. A second *boaresk* rushed the clearing.

Teryn stood and leveled a bolt of magic at the creature in one swift movement. The creature stumbled and kept advancing. Stepping over the supine body of the woman, he fired more bolts of blue-hot magic at the creature. One. Two. The need to kill it and get the woman the hell out of here thrummed in his veins. If she lived, she’d be the apprentice the council wanted him to have.

If she lived.

He grabbed his sword, swinging it in a wide arc when the *boaresk* showed no signs of stopping. A quick lunge and thrust sent the blade sinking hilt-deep into the stout creature’s chest.

It reared and tossed its head, the tusks raking his torso. Fabric tore two layers deep. The third layer, a thick, heavy, woolen shirt, protected him from injury. The *boaresk*

pitched forward onto its knees, its tusks plowing furrows in the ground. With a bellow, it fell over onto its side, twitched once, then lay dead.

Teryn cleaned his sword on the beast's hide and sheathed it again before returning to the woman. He scooped her up in his arms, shocked that beneath all the padding she felt as fragile as a sapling. As gently as he could, he draped her over his mount's neck then rose into the saddle. He cradled her against him as he signaled the horse with knees and reins to hurry home. The horse willingly obliged.

As he held her, he sent tendrils of magic into the woman's unconscious body. The memory of an apprentice lying broken and bloody on the training fields filled his mind. Taking on *boaresk* alone proved most foolhardy and he feared she'd end up as dead as his last pupil. He passed a small cottage, one he'd been certain had been vacant the last time he'd traveled this way. *The woman's home?* he wondered before it flashed out of view as the horse's long strides carried them away. She'd stood up to a *boaresk*. She had to be stronger than Isvella had ever been.

She moaned and wriggled against him. His body stirred, cock hardening at the prospect of a beautiful woman in his arms.

He hoped he was strong enough to train her.

Chapter One

The warm smell of oak and hickory pulled Jendaya from the gentle space between waking and sleeping. Her body ached, each breath sending pain throbbing through her ribs. Her thigh wound stung. She lay there immobile, eyes closed, listening to embers popping in the fireplace and sending crackles and sparks into the air. The sounds reminded her of her parents' home. If it weren't for the fact she'd been living on her own for a year, she could almost imagine herself sitting fireside, listening to her father tell boastful stories of his wandering days.

The goose-down mattress on which Jendaya lay softened the wooden frame of the bed and fluffy pillows cradled her head. They didn't have niceties like this in her parents' home, nor did she in her cabin. As she attempted to feel along her body to determine the extent of her injuries, she discovered the cool touch of iron manacles at her ankles and wrists.

She pulled her left wrist and found it fastened securely to the bed frame. The same for the right and both her ankles. A chill breeze teased her nipples into hard points, bringing attention for the first time to her nudity. The side of her closest to the fire basked in the warmth.

"Hello?" she called out.

Only the dancing flames answered her. Magical energy caressed her skin, wrapping her in a healing cocoon. She closed her eyes and inhaled deeply, feeling the power, masculine, yet complimentary to her own.

The mage who supposedly protected their village was male. Some protection he'd given, since he'd apparently found her near dead, brought her back to his cabin and then chained her to his bed like she was some sort of sex slave. She expected no less from the man who ignored her village's pleas for help.

"Hello. You know I'm awake," she yelled. "I know who you are."

Still silence met her cries. If she didn't hurt so much, she'd yank on the manacles and try to free herself. She doubted she had the strength fully healed. With her body still aching from the *boaresk's* tusks, she knew she lacked the ability. She fumed and wondered if this was some sort of magical training. Harrumphing, she figured she did just fine on her own.

Jendaya tried to quell the doubt at that last thought. How many times had she listened to the men's stories of the fearsome creatures that lived in the forest? Two mages battled for power here and twisted the land, creating these fearsome beasts, many generations before. So long ago her grandmother only knew the tales, not the reality, and still people paid the price for a magic user's greed.

Hell, *she* paid the price. Whispers of hell spawn followed her around the small village. Everyone knew her mother had had an affair with a passing mage, and she was the fruit of that illicit affair. She frowned. When she became a fully trained mage, she'd use her powers for good, to protect people, and hope she could do enough to heal the land.

The door opened. Jendaya tamped down her anger at the mage, preferring to wait like a stalking cat. None in her village had ever been killed by his negligence, but several had come close. Of course, with magical beasts it usually wasn't the initial attack. Stories abounded of blood poison, from whatever warped magic the creature carried, finishing most victims in the end.

Jendaya tried to shove the bitterness away. This mage hadn't been seen anywhere near her village in recent memory. Just last month a group of men had to fight off a baby *rakin*. Had it been an adult, the five men wouldn't have had a chance against the winged reptile.

And now she lay naked in the mage's bed. She wiggled against the smooth sheets trying to find a comfortable position. A dull ache, from her shoulders down to her injuries, throbbed through her.

A chill breeze washed over her naked body. Jendaya shivered. She craned her head toward the door and watched a large man enter the cabin.

He wore a tunic and trews of deep purple, the sleeves reaching down to his pale hands. Heavy boots covered his feet and without even noticing her, he turned toward the fire and pulled them off. He shrugged out of his purple tunic, leaving it draped on the back of a chair. Wearing a thin white undershirt and heavy trews, he turned toward the bed.

Jendaya sucked in a gasp of air. The mage—she didn't know his name—looked carved from marble. White-blond hair hung over his shoulders, nearly down to the middle of his back. Golden amber eyes shone against his pale skin, his lips colorless. The thin shirt molded to strong muscles and his leather trews defined strong, muscular legs.

Jendaya's mouth went dry. Her anger fled under the sudden lust that sizzled in her veins, overriding the pain from the wounds that even now healed, thanks to the man's magic. A flash of heat washed through her body, her nipples drawing into tight beads. A rush of moisture filled her pussy. She'd never seen a man as handsome as this.

A feral smile curled the corners of the mage's lips. "I see you're awake." His gaze raked her body, as intimate as a caress.

"So you're the mage who hasn't been protecting my village," she said, using her anger to keep her arousal at bay. "At least you managed to find me and start me on the road to healing."

"I'm sorry. My duties have kept me elsewhere. How are you feeling?"

She expected indifference, arrogance even. His simple admission startled her. "I'm feeling better, thank you," she grudgingly admitted. "But why am I tied naked to your bed?"

"What is your name, young mage?" He pulled a stool over beside the bed and sat down. He reached out as if to touch her, then curled his hand into a fist and let it rest on his thigh.

"Jendaya Carinella. Who are you?"

"Teryn Windhorn. It was a brave thing you did going up against the *boaresks* by yourself. Stupid, but very brave."

She bristled at his tone. "I did what I had to do." This close, Jendaya smelled the musky, woodsy scent of him, as if he'd been walking in the woods. His amber eyes darkened as he took in her naked flesh. She never considered herself voluptuous like the other village girls and wondered if he liked what he saw.

"As I said, it was a brave but stupid thing you've done. You have the potential to be a great mage but such power needs training. You will be my apprentice and you will start your lessons right here in my bed." Teryn stood. He pushed the stool back and strode to the end of the bed.

"What if I don't want to be your apprentice?" Jendaya tensed her thighs in an attempt to close them.

Teryn glanced at her spread legs, his gaze lingering on the plump pink folds of her sex. His nostrils flared and she knew he inhaled the musky scent of her arousal. "You have no choice. Power such as yours cannot be left untrained. You have to learn surrender and you need to learn control. The first lesson is surrender. You shall surrender to your desires...and you shall surrender to me." He removed his clothes before resting one knee on the mattress.

Jendaya tried not to squirm beneath his gaze. The hot, hungry look in his eyes worried her. Never before had she been on the receiving end of such attention. In her village, the boys only saw her illegitimacy and her mage skills, never her body.

Ever since she'd discovered she had mage talent she'd longed for training. She never expected it to be quite like this.

Teryn wrapped his big hand around one slender ankle. His touch burned. She shuddered as his thumb caressed her anklebone, a back and forth movement designed to soothe.

"Uh...I don't know. I want to be an apprentice, but I've never —"

"Shh," Teryn whispered. "I know this must be difficult for you. I'll be gentle, I promise. This first step is to surrender. Know you cannot affect what I do to you, just as you cannot affect the magic flowing through you. You can only hope to control, to endure. Give yourself to the power, Jendaya. Give yourself to me."

The husky timbre of his voice slid along already sensitized nerve endings. Her soft pants filled the room, her gaze sliding over his chest. Something about him calmed her and reminded her she'd wanted training. Now she would receive it. In spite of her anger at him, anger she suspected was unfounded, she knew this mage wouldn't hurt her.

Teryn leaned forward until he rested on the bed. His breath teased the curls covering her sex. The warm puff of air curled her toes and made her shiver. Jendaya clenched her fingers around the chains binding her and tried to regain some semblance of control over her body's reactions.

Teryn braced his elbows just inside her parted knees, the hair covering his forearms rough against her tender flesh. His fingers stroked a path of heat along the edge of her labia.

"Yes," Jendaya whimpered. Arching her hips, she demanded more than the fleeting caress of his fingers. He stroked her once, twice, and then lowered his head to her.

Jendaya cried out. Closing her eyes, she rode the waves surging through her. Teryn slid his tongue between her slick folds, the touch of it against her clit nearly making her fly apart with pleasure.

Thoughts fled. The rapture rushing through her body took over, demanded her submission. She gave it, offering her body for Teryn's pleasure.

He licked her cream, the delicate laps reminding Jendaya of a kitten. She purred. Her nipples hardened into tiny points that needed Teryn's touch. As if he read her mind, and perhaps he could, he smoothed his fingers across her stomach to cup the small globes in his hand. He pinched her nipples, evoking another mewling cry from her throat.

Fiercer now, Teryn thrust his tongue into her tight channel. He licked her inner walls, touching a sensitive spot deep inside her.

Her breath came in husky pants. Coils of need clenched deep inside her, tighter and tighter until she feared she'd explode. Teryn plucked her nipples then caressed them, alternating the movements until Jendaya writhed on the bed beneath him.

He flicked his tongue across her clit.

Jendaya screamed. Her orgasm pounded through her, far stronger than anything she'd ever experienced before at her own fingers. Her breath left her throat, her screams filling the cabin.

Teryn withdrew. A smile curved his lips.

As her breath returned, she looked into his amber eyes and knew she'd do anything so long as he did that to her again.

Jendaya watched him through half-lidded eyes. Concern marred his handsome features, his lips glistening with her cream pulled into a tight line, as if he waged some inner battle with himself. He leaned forward again.

Jendaya shuddered at the mage's words. Her gaze traveled down his body before settling on his hard, thick cock. Veins roped around the shaft and the head begged to be touched. She wondered how he'd taste and whether he'd fit inside her. He looked far too large and the maiden in her worried, even as the woman needed to be taken.

Teryn moved over her, keeping his weight braced on his forearms. His cock rubbed against her thigh.

Jendaya writhed beneath him. He nuzzled her shoulder where it met her neck, finding the sweet hollow of her collarbone with his tongue. He licked her, tasted her, and the caress of his lips sparked a pull deep inside her quim.

The rasp of her breasts against his chest set her nipples to aching. Teryn nuzzled the top of her breast then drew the nipple into his mouth.

Dear goddess! I never imagined... Jendaya moaned. The needy sound echoed in the cabin and it shocked her to know she made such a noise. Her hips moved restlessly against the mattress, but trapped between it and Teryn's hard body, she couldn't move. Oh goddess, she wanted to. His cock tormented her. The head brushed against her slick pussy lips, almost dipping inside.

"Please," she whimpered. "Take me."

Teryn fondled her nipple with his tongue. With his other hand, he stroked and played with her other breast, almost as if playing a lute.

Jendaya wished she could hate this man who played her body so expertly. Sucking in a harsh breath, she almost wished he was inconsiderate and thought only of his own pleasure. Then she could continue to think of him as the selfish mage who left her village to defend itself.

Teryn raised his head and looked into her eyes. Hunger burned in the depths of his amber gaze, so fierce and hot she thought it might devour her. He rubbed the head of his cock against her slick pussy.

Teryn kissed her. The salty-sweet taste on his lips could only have come from her, and Jendaya moaned at the thought. His tongue slid between her parted lips, claiming her as his own. Jendaya kissed him back. With her tongue, she tried to reach inside him, to find something to cling to as he sent her body in dizzying spirals.

He pulled back. "I'll try to be gentle." His husky words emerged between pants.

Restraint shone in every part of his body. The cords of his neck stood out in sharp relief, his eyes full of passion.

"Just do it." Jendaya stretched her neck, wanting to claim his lips once more. "Fuck me."

Teryn groaned. He thrust forward, his cock sliding into her sheath. A brief pain, then Teryn swallowed her cry with his lips and rested balls-deep inside her.

Much to Jendaya's dismay, he slid back. Then he pistoned forward again. Pain forgotten, Jendaya met him thrust for thrust. He pounded into her body, forcing her to take all of him. She tilted her hips, wanting him deep until she didn't know where he ended and she began.

Jendaya accepted all of him. The pounding pleasure sang in her blood. Her vagina tightened around him and she came with a cry. Had she been unbound, she might have clung to him. Instead, she arched her body off the bed and pressed herself against him, afraid if he weren't touching her she might melt away.

Teryn thrust again. He stiffened above her and as she gazed at him, Jendaya knew she'd never seen a more magnificent sight. He was beautiful. White-blond hair spilled around his shoulders. The silken strands caressed her flushed skin.

With a roar he came. His cock pumped inside her, filling her with his warm seed.

His seed. She could become pregnant. Beneath him, Jendaya stiffened.

She closed her eyes, wondering if this mage would leave her with child and untrained. Surely not, but being bound to his bed left her with little choice but to consider that possibility. She wished she knew less of magic and more of herb craft. A pariah in her village, she had never imagined she'd need to study methods of birth control. Whispers spoke of female mages rarely conceiving but she'd had no way of confirming the truth of such rumors.

Teryn slumped beside her. He rolled away, careful not to crush her. She listened to his panting breaths and knew he was as affected as she.

Reaching out, he brushed a strand of hair from her forehead. "I didn't hurt you, did I?"

Jendaya shook her head. His tenderness touched her, so at odds with the picture she'd built in her mind. "Not really." The lie rolled easily off her tongue, though looking at him, she suspected he was a man who valued truth. "Well, just a bit when you entered me, but I expected that." When he said nothing, she continued, "You may

think me an innocent maiden, but I'm not. I know what happens between a man and a woman."

Lightly, Teryn skimmed his fingers over her sides. "Well, now you do. And I'm sorry I hurt you at all, though I suppose it couldn't have been avoided." He rolled away and stood.

Jendaya looked her fill, tracing the length of his long legs with her gaze. His cock rose half-erect and she wondered if he wanted her again. His broad chest promised comfort and security. She sighed as she stared at his long, flowing hair. Her fingers itched to thread through the silky strands, to comb through them then draw them across her naked body.

Teryn pulled on a pair of pants. He crossed the room to a cabinet and from a drawer, pulled out a key. He brought it back to the bed and quickly unfastened her manacles. Taking her wrist in his hands, he rubbed gently. His massage continued down her arm to her shoulders, where he kneaded her tender flesh.

"Try lowering your arms now," he said.

Jendaya complied, letting them drape on either side of her. She started to reach for her breasts, knowing even her small hands would completely cover them. With a sigh, she lowered her hands to the mattress. Teryn had already seen her naked. It was a little late for modesty.

At her feet, Teryn unfastened the chains from around her ankles and rubbed her calves and thighs. "I'll be right back. Please, relax and stay there." He turned and grabbed a bucket, then stepped outside.

For a moment, Jendaya contemplated sitting up. An urge to explore Teryn's cabin, to find out more about this mysterious mage, burned through her but a lifetime of obedience kept her lying on the bed. She propped herself up on her elbow and glanced around the Spartan room. Aside from the fireplace and dresser, she saw a couple bookshelves stuffed with urns and leather-bound tomes. The small kitchen held a rough-hewn dining table and chairs. A second door led outside.

Before she had a chance to examine his cabin in more detail, the door banged open and Teryn entered carrying a bucket of water. He brought it to the foot of the bed and set it down, dipping a soft rag in the water before wringing it out.

"What are you doing?" Jendaya asked as his fingers closed once more around her ankle. His hands, chilled from the outdoors, sent a shiver up her spine and she couldn't help the rush of moisture that filled her pussy. Gods have mercy, she wanted him again. Licking her lips, she watched him gently scrub her legs with the warm washcloth.

"Taking care of you," Teryn said. "Just lie back and enjoy it. Consider it part of your first lesson." His strokes moved higher, washing the insides of her thighs.

Jendaya struggled not to squirm against his touch. Heat filled her, an ache in her pussy that only Teryn could soothe. She bit her lip, not wanting to appear wanton.

The washcloth brushed her outer folds.

An urge to look overcame her. She started to rise on her elbows, wanting to watch the mage's ministrations between her legs. Would there be a smear of blood from the loss of her maidenhead? Would he find her nether lips swollen and pink with desire? Her breathing quickened as Teryn's quick, sure strokes washed her, then moved up her body.

"Relax," he said, though tightness filled his own voice. He washed her stomach, her breasts, until he reached her shoulders.

With his body stretched over hers, she felt the brush of his hard cock against her leg, and goddess forgive her, she wanted it inside her once more. "Teryn, please," she whispered.

He leaned back and looked into her eyes. "Please, what?"

"You're tormenting me." She shifted her hips. "I know you want me again. Will you not take me?"

Teryn started and pulled away. His sudden actions startled her. Watching him slide from the bed and pace, she wondered what she'd said or done to make him upset at

her. A sudden chill filled her and he tossed her a robe and a blanket. "Get dressed," he said. "Your body would tempt a saint and that is one thing I am not. If I'm to teach you control, I need to be conscious of my own. Besides, you must be sore." He stalked into the kitchen area and began to rattle pots and pans, presumably making them dinner.

Jendaya shrugged into the robe then slid from the bed. Her body ached and not just from the loss of her maidenhead. She stood there, her toes curled against the fire-warmed floor. As she watched Teryn in the kitchen, she noted the stiff set of his shoulders and their breadth. His torso tapered to narrow hips and an ass that begged for her touch. Jendaya licked her lips. An aura of red surrounded him, his anger leaking into his magic. She stepped forward and opened her mouth to say something, but closed it before words could escape.

He tossed a handful of herbs into a hot skillet. "Sit. You must be famished."

As if on cue, her stomach growled. "I am," she admitted with a grin. She sat down in one of the chairs and watched him move around the kitchen. Whatever inner battle he waged, he must have won, for no trace of anger remained.

He laid two thick steaks into the heated skillet then added some root vegetables and peppers. He moved effortlessly around the tiny kitchen, setting the table with two stoneware plates and forks. Moments later, he spooned a generous portion onto her plate. "Eat," he ordered.

Jendaya inhaled the aroma. Closing her eyes, she took a moment to appreciate the succulent smells. At home, the hearty but bland fare didn't even compare to this. She picked up her fork and speared a piece of meat. Chewing, she moaned while enjoying the burst of flavor on her tongue. Swallowing, she opened her eyes to find Teryn looking at her.

"Now that was worth it," he said with an impish grin.

"Oh?" Heat crept over her face, a flush she wished she could suppress.

"The way you looked. You know, I really didn't want to take on an apprentice, but I can feel your power from here. You need training and, well...I'm here." Teryn sounded resigned.

"Why didn't you want to take on an apprentice?" Jendaya bit her lip, wanting to ask why he stayed away from her village, why he made her neighbors fight against things *he* should have been fighting. "What happened to your last apprentice?" She set down her fork, her meal forgotten.

He fixed her with a hard look. "She died."

"Oh!" Jendaya gasped.

"Which you will not. Your lessons began in the bed. They shall continue after the meal. Finish it. You'll need your strength." They ate the rest of their meal in silence. No sooner had she emptied her plate than he bolted to his feet and cleared their dishes, setting them in a large basin. Offering his hand, he helped her stand and led her toward the stool next to the bed. He gestured for her to sit as he moved to stand behind her.

Heat radiated from the hands resting on her shoulders, down through her body to settle in her womb. She drew a shaky breath, knowing she needed to concentrate on his teachings, not his body. "What do you want me to do?" she asked, hoping she sounded like an obedient student.

"Close your eyes. I want you to feel the magic in you and around you." He waited while she complied.

Sitting on the stool, Teryn's hands on her shoulders, her eyes closed, made her aware of how little she really knew. Everything she had taught herself seemed pitiful in comparison to Teryn's magic.

"Take a deep breath. You're tighter than a bowstring."

She inhaled, holding it for long moments before releasing the breath.

"Better," he crooned. "Now, I want you to find that spark of power inside you. Simply hold it and know it's there."

With deep, even breaths, she sent her search inward, down just below her solar plexus. There, in the root of her body, lived her power. Like a ball she'd once seen balanced on a fall of water, spinning endlessly, the magic rolled, suspended between and just above her hipbones. Not quite her womb but high enough that she couldn't mistake her power for the sexual heat Teryn's touch incited. The energy glowed bright green like new grass in the spring.

"Good," Teryn said. A second energy joined hers, bright blue as it surrounded her mental hands on either side of her power. The bright color, like a crisp winter sky, felt solid, secure, exactly like Teryn's hands on her shoulder. She reached out to caress the power and behind her, he shivered. "Very good." A smile filled his voice.

"Why is your magic different from mine?" Jendaya asked, though she feared she'd sound simple. Her mother always said the stupid question was the one never asked, and perhaps that little bit of wisdom had been the only good thing to come from the woman who bore her.

"Because *we're* different. Magic is magic, but just as each note on a harp or lute are different, so too is our power. Follow me." With those words, Teryn sent the mystical blue hands cupping hers out into the cabin.

In her mind, she followed him. The blazing blue signature of his power drew her onward and pulled her consciousness out of her body. Like a butterfly, she found herself riding currents of air, her senses propelling her subconscious out the cabin's door and into the world beyond.

Colors assaulted her. From a barn came the bright yellow of two magical beings. A light green color suffused the land, billowing around trees and plants. Energy played and danced, musical notes like a great orchestra ringing in her ears. It tugged at her, pulling her first this way then that, until she felt buffeted by the magical powers.

Surrender. Teryn had told her she needed to learn this important lesson. She willed her body to relax, trusting that the mage wouldn't let anything happen to her. As she did, the powers slowed, stilled, until she floated on nothingness, simply there.

Jendaya gasped, the action hauling her back into her body. For a moment, she'd felt something surreal, something she'd never felt before. She desperately wanted to feel it again.

She opened her eyes. Gazing through her limited physical sight all these years, she had missed the magical beauty surrounding her. She'd thought only of the warped creatures ravaging the countryside, not of the power inherent in every living thing. "I didn't know," she breathed.

"Many don't." Teryn released her shoulders. He strode around the chair and lowered himself to her eye level. "You did well. Now you can see why we must learn control and surrender. That energy, that vital life force, is far bigger and grander than us. It's not something we can control. All we can do is hope that our will is strong enough to shape it. Rest. I'll have a test for you in the morning." He stood and walked toward the door.

Jendaya watched him leave. At one point she had thought she knew all she needed to know about magic. Fight the creatures, live another day. Now, as she focused on Teryn's broad back, she realized she knew nothing at all.

Chapter Two

The tiny creature in the wooden cage looked hardly big enough to harm a rabbit, let alone a person. Its rough brown spines stuck out at odd angles, beady black eyes staring with startling intensity at her. Long incisor teeth hung down and met upward-thrusting canines jutting from its lower jaw.

"You want me to kill it?" Jendaya questioned him. She turned to face Teryn. He stood mere feet from her, his body loose, hands relaxed at his sides. "That'd be murder. He's caged and defenseless."

"Oh, he's not defenseless. Look with your sight." Teryn stepped back farther.

Jendaya watched him go. She'd much rather take him back inside and have him teach her submission again. Waking up alone in his bed, not even a blanket on the floor to betray the mystery of where he'd slept, gave her too much time to think about him and their respective roles. The emotions churning inside her since waking in his bed yesterday felt too powerful to denote a simple teacher-student pairing. She squared her shoulders and forced her thoughts away from the man beside her.

Easier than before, she touched the magic inside her. Taking a moment to find it, she cast her glance outward.

The creature in the cage blazed. Violent red energy pulsed around him, extending a good six feet beyond the cage. The wooden bars might restrain his physical form, but his energy snapped and crackled like an angry fire. She pulled her senses back in and stared at Teryn.

"Kill it, right?" she asked again.

"If you can." He nodded grimly and took another step back.

"Okay." She returned to the center of her magic, then half-opened her eyes and saw a haze over everything. Light greens, Teryn's blue, the yellow of the barn and in the

cage, angry red spikes of power. The creature chattered his teeth, clearly not happy. She focused on it, thinking of the *boaresk* she'd killed. Extending her hand, she flung a bolt of power at it.

The ball of power hit the edge of the creature's red energy and flung off at an odd angle. Teryn deflected it, sending it into the ground.

"Again!" he ordered.

She shot another bolt of power at the creature and once again Teryn deflected it. Without waiting for him to tell her, she sent a third sphere of energy, this time directing it under the creature where she sensed the protections were weakest.

It hit. Green energy crackled and sizzled against red. The creature gave a feline-like snarl and reared up onto its stubby hind legs. It slashed at the bars with long talons.

Jendaya fired again.

Another hit, another snarl and she found a rhythm, directing shots to the underside of the creature, alternating left and right. The smell of charred flesh filled the air. The creature's quills smoked.

At last, the beast fell over onto its side. Its legs twitched once, then it stilled.

Jendaya dropped her hands to her sides, panting. A sheen of sweat covered her forehead and dripped between her breasts. Swaying on her feet with bone-deep exhaustion, she looked at Teryn. His stony face gave away nothing.

"Good. Now, you'll clean it up and help me with chores."

She swallowed in an attempt to work saliva down her parched throat. "More surrender?" she asked with an arched eyebrow.

"More surrender."

"Fine. What would you like me to do?" In the face of Teryn's orders, she reminded herself she wanted training, *needed* the training he offered.

“Break up the cage for firewood and dispose of the body in the rubbish pile. Then come back to me and I’ll let you know your duties.” He crossed his arms over his chest, as if prepared for a battle.

She nodded and mustered inner strength to march over to the cage. The charred, dead body reeked. Picking it up gingerly, she carried it toward the rubbish pile. She tried not to let her distaste show. She’d killed magical creatures before though caging them seemed unfair somehow. But she’d follow Teryn’s orders and complete her training, even the distasteful parts.

Two days later, Jendaya cast scornful glances at Teryn. Since killing the creature she’d done nothing but menial chores around his home. He sat on a stump watching her as she completed the chores he’d given her that morning, the chilly air biting through her thin shirt—one of his castoffs—and her too-large trews.

After Teryn’s revelation about his previous apprentice’s death, he’d gone cold and silent on her. The death of his last student weighed heavily on him, that much she could see. Now, as if her mastery over that caged creature triggered something within him, he worked her like a new plow horse, keeping her as far away from mage work as possible. She shivered, and not from the gust of wind whipping through her shirt. The fate of his last apprentice—and the possibility of her own death—weighed on her too.

She hefted the full buckets of water and hauled them to the horse trough. An old gray nag pawed the dirt with an equally decrepit-looking donkey. If Teryn worked either of these animals, Jendaya doubted they’d do much. She glanced back with a frown at the man who trained her. He sat there, watching, making her do the work.

“Make sure the trough is full,” he said. “I don’t want to come out later in the day and do it.”

Jendaya sneered. “Yes, Master Mage,” she growled. “Hard work makes better mages. Submit to my master and the pain in my body,” she grouched, repeating the words he’d said to her after she’d disposed of the magical vermin. When she’d lived on

her own she worked just as hard, but something about being told to do it, when she'd much rather be practicing her magic or learning how to better protect the village, chafed. She hefted the buckets, careful not to douse herself, and filled the trough. The nag lifted its head and glared at her. Picking up the empty buckets, she turned back to him. "The trough is filled. You want to check it yourself?"

Teryn uncoiled himself from his seat with feline grace. Jendaya watched him, her breath hitching in her chest. He strode over to the trough and glanced in it. With a noncommittal grunt, he turned. "I want enough firewood chopped and stacked to last a couple days, and then we'll see."

"See about what?" Jendaya braced her hands on her hips and glared at him. Damn him for making her work like a scullery maid. "You took me in to be your apprentice, not your slave. I don't see how this will make me a better a mage."

Teryn strode to her. Anger, and a grudging respect, filled his eyes. He grabbed her arm, his grip so hard it nearly bruised.

She refused to wince. Instead, she met his gaze.

"I will do what it takes," he growled. His head dipped toward hers.

Her breath caught in her chest. Her lips parted. She swayed toward him like a wave toward the shore. Deep in her being, she wanted him to kiss her. She ached for his touch, and even after all the work he put her through, she burned for him.

Teryn whirled away. He picked up an axe and handed it to her. "Take this. I'll find another one."

Jendaya wrapped her hand around the handle, brushing his fingers. A tiny jolt of energy darted through her. She followed Teryn toward the woodpile, a smile curving on her lips. Perhaps when it came to her, the tough mage wasn't so tough after all.

* * * * *

Teryn picked up another axe. Need burned through his veins and he fought to keep his power under control. Dirt crunched beneath Jendaya's boots as she strode behind

him. All morning her aura had burned like a brilliant light, shades of green that reminded him of his former apprentice. He gripped the axe handle, picked up a log and with one swing, split it down the middle. He set another log on the stand, splitting it just as easily.

Behind him, his new apprentice stopped. He felt her gaze burn along his back and he could only imagine what kind of picture he presented to her maidenly eyes. Her desire filled the air, a spark of power that called to him. He split another log, determined to keep his focus on her training. He hoped, oh how he hoped, that he might scare her off with the hard labor, but he doubted it. He'd seen what she'd done in the forest on her own and frankly, he admired her guts.

He had to admit, if she'd been his previous apprentice, she would have left by now.

Teryn set his jaw and split another log. She may think him a taskmaster now, but when it came to killing some of the creatures prowling the woods, she'd thank him and she would live. That was the important part – that they'd all live.

Jendaya stepped up beside him and picked up a small log. "I thought you wanted *me* to split the wood," she said. Three blows from the axe, and she tossed the two pieces onto his growing pile. "Though I admit it'll go faster with your help." She grinned at him and picked up another log.

Teryn stopped. He watched her split a couple more logs, taking in the firm muscles defined in her petite frame. Harmony filled her movements. He reached out with his arcane senses and felt a tiny jolt of power as it split the log an instant before her axe hit it. He grinned. "I didn't tell you that you could use magic."

She grinned, a saucy gesture that had him thinking of taking her back to his bed. "You didn't tell me I couldn't." She nodded toward a log and it split without her even touching it.

He laughed. Oh goddess, it felt good to laugh. Perhaps this little minx could help ease the guilt he lived with. He lined up three logs, then split them all using magic.

"Wanna race?" She grinned at him.

After all he'd put her through she should be sleeping for a week, not challenging him. A smile played around the corners of his lips. "Sure."

"So what do I get if I win?"

"What do you want?" Teryn asked.

"A chance to tie you up," she answered.

He watched her swallow hard and beneath her tunic her nipples beaded. "It's a deal."

Jendaya quickly righted another log. With magical power alone she didn't stand a chance at besting him, but he had a feeling he wouldn't mind being tied up anyway.

Jendaya took losing well, though he'd held pace with her until the end. A quick burst of magic split ten logs at once, a showy end to the contest. She'd laughed, and together they went inside to clean up and eat supper. Now Jendaya reclined on the bed, her head braced on her hand. She lay on her side, her other hand idly rubbing over the stitching on his comforter. Watching her slender fingers trace the neatly aligned rows of thread, Teryn fought the urge to stride to the bed and take her. With enough wood cut and stacked to last several days and the livestock cared for, the evening stretched before them, a lazy, idyllic end to the day. His cock hardened.

He rose to his feet and rested his hand on the stone mantel. Wearing only one of his undershirts, she looked so virginal, so innocent, he could hardly believe he'd claimed her maidenhead just days ago. Her breathy cries had filled his cottage. He longed to hear them again.

Teryn strode toward her. "Well you didn't win our challenge, but I hate to have you not receive anything. I think I'll train you in the art of giving." He stopped beside the bed, an arm's length from her. Closer now, he watched her nipples harden beneath the thin cotton shift. She looked up at him, her nipples tilting toward him invitingly. He resisted the urge to reach down and adjust himself. "Although some mages set themselves up as lords and ladies, choosing to do little for those who support them, the

true mage gives back. Giving is as important as receiving and serves to keep the balance."

"So that's why our village has to send out its men to chase away the magical creatures?" Jendaya's sharp question cut through the air. "And that's why I had to go out on my own?"

"You think I do nothing?" He struggled to keep his anger in check. This chit of a girl knew nothing about a true mage's work. "There are others beyond your village who also need my help. Yes, I leave the men of your village to do what they can for protection. A mage will not be everything to everyone, and I'm afraid I'm spread too thin right now to give everyone the attention they feel they may deserve. There is a world beyond your village. I'm thankful for your assistance...though I don't think that was the only reason you were living outside the village." His voice softened. A mage must never flinch away from the truth, no matter how difficult.

Hurt flashed across her face. She looked down at the comforter. Her lower lip quivered and he feared she might cry. He feared he might have gone too far. Kneeling beside the bed, he traced his fingers over her cheeks. "I'm sorry if I spoke harshly. I *have* been spread thin as of late, and taking on the training of an apprentice will only add to my work. But I am here, as are you. We should make the best of the situation and when you are better trained you can help me *and* your village."

She stared at him. Strength glowed in her eyes. "I promise you I won't be a burden. I'll help you in your duties and protect the village. No one will die so long as I am there."

"And no one has died while I've been here. I intend to keep it that way. Why didn't you live in the village?"

"Because they didn't want me." Jendaya pressed her lips closed.

"Then they are foolish, and we will protect them nonetheless. Let us continue your training." Teryn reinforced his words with a push of magic. He held out his hand. "Come and kneel before me," he commanded, rising and stepping back.

Jendaya slid from the bed and knelt, a braided rug cushioning her knees. She tilted her head to look at him. Though he sensed the anger simmering just beneath the surface, she obeyed his orders.

Teryn untied his pants. "You're to pleasure me with your mouth and hands. Do it well, and you will be rewarded."

"Perhaps you wish to keep me here as your pleasure slave." The sight of his cock surging through the opening in his trews captivated her. As she watched, a tiny pearl of fluid seeped from the eye.

He cupped the side of her head. "The thought appeals to me, but your training is best served in magic. An untrained mage is a dangerous one. Tend to me." The he stood silently, legs spread.

Her hand shook as she reached for him. She cupped his cock in her hand, measuring him with long, fluttering strokes. The delicate torture had him catching his breath. His balls drew tight against his body. Damn, he didn't wish to spill himself too soon but her gentle touches tortured him. She rubbed her thumb across the eye and he nearly wept with the pleasure of it.

Jendaya curled her fingers around him. She squeezed gently then stroked, a motion that had him imagining plunging inside her slick channel and feeling its walls convulse around him. This untried maiden worked him better than the most expensive whores. Her natural skills lay in other areas too, he knew, sensing the power running through her veins and knowing the work she'd done already. When he finished, Jendaya would be a force with which to reckon.

A brief pang of sorrow at her eventual departure stabbed him. He dismissed it as her fingers tightened on his shaft. She used his pre-cum to lubricate her hand as it moved along his length. Cupping his balls, she made small noises of approval.

She leaned forward and took him into her mouth. Holy goddess of the sun! Her lips wrapping around his hard cock felt like heaven. Surely the goddess's own harem of fifty women couldn't make him feel as good as his apprentice could. Her tongue swiped

across his head, toying with the ball of nerves just beneath. With her fingers, she traced tiny paths behind his balls, finding his sensitive skin there.

She hummed appreciation. He stared at her, unable to look away. Cheeks hollowed out, lips red around his flesh, eyes closed with concentration, Jendaya presented a picture of beauty. He pumped his hips once, struggling to keep from fucking her mouth. The smell of her arousal teased him, and the knowledge she got off on sucking him punched him in the gut. "Wait," he growled out. "I don't want to—"

Her finger pressed against his anus and drove all thought from his mind. The gentle pressure teased nerves he'd not known he had. His balls drew tight against his body and with a guttural cry, he came. Warm jets of come shot into her mouth and she licked and swallowed them all like a trained courtesan. Clamping his fingers on her shoulders, Teryn forced his legs to support him. "Gods, woman!"

Jendaya leaned back on her heels and looked up at him. Her lips shone with saliva and his juices. "Did I not do well?" She cupped her fingers around the length of him. "I could try again."

"Try again and you might kill me." He released her long enough to shed his clothing, then sat on the bed. His half-hard penis rested against his leg. "The true gift of giving is to give pleasure without thought to your own. Come here, Jendaya."

* * * * *

What sweet tortures might he inflict on her now? Her cunt ached to be touched and if she reached between her legs as she longed to do, she knew fluid would slick her fingers. Her pussy twitched. Her breath came in harsh, tiny pants.

"For more training?" She feared his answer because she didn't know how much more she could take. It seemed her training was either sexual or manual labor, both of which had little to do with her magical talents.

"Perhaps. And maybe I just want to enjoy your company. What makes you so antagonistic toward mages? You hold the power within you. Do you hate what you will

become?" He shifted, drawing his leg up to shield him from view. It helped, but not much, for she remembered how he felt in her mouth, in her body, and dear goddess she wanted it again.

She strode forward, working hard to even out her breathing. The thin shift did little to conceal her hard nipples or the curls at the juncture of her thighs. She sat beside him on the bed. Careful to keep distance between them, she leaned back on the pillows against the headboard, drew up her legs and wrapped her arms around them. "My father was a mage," she admitted.

"Tell me." Teryn stretched out beside her, his long, slender fingers caressing tiny pathways over her shins and knees. He found sensitive places she didn't know she had, and she closed her eyes to better remain immune to his touch.

Jendaya exhaled. "Apparently a mage passing through the village fathered me. My mother...she had an affair, though she never said anything. And if he hadn't passed on his mage powers, then she never would have. My stepfather found out the truth when my powers manifested. He cursed her and cursed me. From then on, they rejected me. Gave me the cold shoulder and refused to acknowledge me as anything but a bastard. I suppose I reminded my mother of her one moment of weakness." As she spoke, her anger grew, dredging up memories of being hated even as they'd turned to her for help. "In spite of all that, I want to be a mage. No one will die because of me."

"And no one has." Emotion choked Teryn's voice.

Jendaya stared at him. She studied his expression and saw the self-recrimination there. Whatever happened to his previous apprentice, he felt responsible. She bit her tongue and waited for him to speak.

"You've asked why I do not go near your village. It is because there are other things that seek my attention. Dangers lurk in the woods. I seek to remove them before they reach your village. Yes, there are things your men can handle. I let them handle what they can, so that I may try to save others. Though I have failed in the past. " He sighed and looked into the flames, as if lost in memories.

"Your apprentice?" she asked, remembering his earlier comment. Watching Teryn, Jendaya sensed the apprentice had been a woman. Jealousy twisted her heart and she pushed it away. Whether it happened long ago or recently, *she* was his apprentice now. The thought of any other woman touching him, loving him the way she did only reminded her how compelling and handsome he was.

"Yes, it was she."

His words and intense guilt filled the cabin with doom. Suddenly, Jendaya feared for her life. She knew magic was dangerous, had always known, for her mother taught her what she needed to know to protect herself and nothing more. But to hear his tormented tone made her wonder what she was doing here and why. Surely there were others who could train her, men who hadn't let their apprentices die. She had unconsciously tried to forget what he'd told her that first night. Apparently, she'd failed.

"I knew what we were doing was beyond her but she wouldn't listen. I tried to protect her and I couldn't. So you see, you're not the only one harmed by a mage, and I'm afraid to say, even if you were the best-trained apprentice in the land, you wouldn't be the last." His words faded into silence.

For long moments Jendaya sat with him, not doing anything, not speaking, simply just there for him. When he made no move to leave, she reached out and covered his hand with her own. "I won't let you down," she whispered. "I won't." She slid down the bed until she lay beside him. Fitting her body against his, she listened to his steady, deep breathing and the thud of his heart. At last, his arm wrapped around her. Jendaya snuggled into his embrace.

"I believe you." Teryn rested his chin on her head. "I've never met anyone like you, Jendaya."

She smiled. Perhaps his words weren't approval or acceptance, but maybe simple confirmation that he believed in her skills. Neither her mother nor her people had

believed her a capable mage. Yet he did. Finally, she'd found someone who believed in her. It was a heady feeling, and one she wanted to savor.

Chapter Three

After nearly a fortnight of exhausting magical training and more menial labor, Jendaya found herself tied face-down on the bed with her wrists fastened to the headboard and her ankles to the footboard, watching as Teryn stripped. His tunic fluttered to the floor with a whisper of sound, revealing his broad chest with a light dusting of white-blond hairs. Jendaya licked her lips.

She clenched her fists, thinking of all the things she'd do to him if she weren't tied. Starting with licking that arrow of hair over his navel down to where it disappeared into his pants. Teryn's hands lowered to the button on his trousers. He unfastened them, one by one, slowly peeling the fabric aside to reveal his lightly furred thighs and the thick cock residing between them.

Jendaya groaned. Cream filled her pussy. Against the bed, her nipples drew into hard, tight points. Her lips parted, her breath coming in shallow pants. She squeezed her thighs, trying to bring them together to ease the ache in her quim. "Why do you torment me like this?"

Teryn kicked out of his pants and peeled off his socks as if he hadn't heard her question. He strode forward and halted by the bed. With gentle fingers, he caressed the length of her spine. "Because it's fun."

"Fun for who? You?" She grinned. Though she lay tied on the bed, whatever happened, whether part of a magical lesson or not, would certainly be pleasurable for her. She wiggled her ass in the air.

"I'd think it would be fun for you too." His husky voice caressed her senses just as surely as the sweep of his hand caressed her from shoulders to buttocks.

Jendaya shivered.

He raised his hand and let it fall on her buttock. It landed with a smack.

Jendaya flinched. The blow stung, leaving a radiating heat that dissipated through her left cheek. "What was that for?"

"Part of your training. When you're out in the field fighting a battle there won't be time to deal with pain. You need to see it as part of your power, something to take inside yourself and make you stronger." He punctuated his words with another slap of his hand.

The impact stung. Her body jerked. Gasping, she flinched beneath the blows he rained onto her buttocks. Tensing her body sent the heat deep into her muscles.

"Relax," Teryn crooned. He ceased his spanking long enough to sweep his fingers along the curve of her ass.

She moaned. Her breath came in tiny pants and she lifted her buttocks into his touch.

Smack! He spanked her again, this time on the vulnerable underside of her cheeks.

Jendaya cried out. She never imagined something that stung so badly could feel so good. Her labia plumped, swelled as moisture trickled along her slit. She ached. Teryn's fingers curled into the flesh of her buttocks.

The swish of a riding crop filled the air. Jendaya flinched. The small leather tongue landed on her buttock. It stung, and she imagined red welts rising on her skin. He wouldn't do this if it weren't necessary, Jendaya tried to assure herself, her mental resolve failing. Behind her, Teryn seemed to take a savage pleasure in his abuse of her flesh. She closed her eyes and drew breath between clenched teeth.

She reached out with her magical senses to determine if Teryn acted truly. Behind her, he blazed with blue energy, so pure and powerful it nearly hurt to focus on it. Her own energy swirled around her, a churning maelstrom. With her arcane senses she reached for the ground. She curled her fingers into the bed and sent her energy down deep, like the roots of the tree. Calm filled her and the next time the crop landed on her bare flesh, she rode the waves of pain as they transformed into heat and pleasure.

Again leather slapped against her skin. Her pussy clenched. A gasp escaped her parted lips and she found herself rising to meet the blows, first on her left buttock, then her right. Her cream soaked the blanket beneath her.

"Yes, that's it." Teryn's husky voice urged her on.

A large fat knob pressed against her opening. It slipped inside her channel, her muscles gripping it into place. To have something inside her, filling her even just a little bit, made the pleasure of his hand and the crop against her skin even more acute.

Soft leather lashes slapped against the skin of her back. She arched into the touch, a soft cry escaping her lips. Over and over again, supple leather molded itself to her flesh. She could practically feel the welts rising on her skin, red lines that burned delicious pain through her veins. She clenched and released her fists. Her panting breaths sounded loud to her ears, interspersed with moans and whimpers. Teryn's grunts filled her awareness.

Teryn flicked the lashes across her sensitive labia. The tip of one leather strap curled close to her clit.

Jendaya screamed. Her body bucked, the instrument Teryn wielded with such power detonated an orgasm deep inside her womb. Her body shuddered as pleasure more intense, more exquisite than any she'd ever felt tore through her veins. Eyes pressed closed, she felt her body shatter into a million pieces. Around the knob in her channel, her pussy clenched, tightening down and needing the hard thrust of something high and deep inside her.

After long moments she became aware that no more blows were falling. Instead, Teryn straddled her hips, his weight dipping her slightly toward the foot of the bed. With long strokes of his fingers, he caressed her back. His feather-light touches raced along her nerve endings, almost too much to bear. She gasped for air and listened to the pounding of her blood in her veins. Her heart thudded.

He reached behind him and removed the knob. It slipped from her with a wet pop, leaving her empty and bereft.

"Teryn," she whimpered. "Oh god, Teryn."

"Easy, easy," he crooned.

Jendaya licked her lips. She tasted the sweet tang of magic in her mouth. The power hummed in her veins, surrounded her with a brilliant kaleidoscope of light. Teryn moved over her, situating his knees between hers. His cock nudged against her opening.

"Oh yes," she purred as he surged forward to bury himself with one long stroke.

His big hands curved around her hips. Warmth seeped into her skin. Along her spine, her back, her arms, soothing tendrils of magic danced. Forcing her eyes open, she saw them, little blue wraiths swirling and playing on her skin. She shuddered, clenching her muscles to hold him deep inside.

With a long, shuddering breath, he began to move. His cock plunged into her, a steady thrust and retreat that had her lifting her buttocks to him, relishing the slap of flesh against flesh. Heat from his muscled body cocooned her in a protective coil of warmth. His lips found the back of her neck and shoulders, little nips and licks of his teeth and tongue sending her once more toward the pinnacle of completion.

She never imagined magic could feel this good. Forcing air into her lungs, she admitted that until now she'd only known it as her calling, a way for her to protect the village that didn't want her. But now, with Teryn fucking her, she knew of what the bards sang when they talked about two souls coming together. After feeling his touch, she wondered how she'd ever live without it.

And then thoughts fled. A long, hard stroke of his cock sent it into the pocket at the top of her channel, and with him seated so deeply inside her, she came again. Her keening cries echoed in the room. Teryn reached for her hands and clenched them as above her, he stiffened. Hot jets of his seed splashed against her inner walls, filling her with his essence. He groaned. The swirling of his magic across her skin spun in a frenzy and then it exploded, triggering another orgasm that seemed to come from within her very soul.

She whimpered, shuddering beneath him as the powerful forces of magic and pleasure threatened to tear her apart. Her pussy clenched, released, her clit throbbing against the friction of the blankets, her ass aching for something, anything to fill it. Then she saw stars behind her closed eyelids and the world caught her up into a maelstrom of darkness and bliss.

When she came to, she lay curled beside him, arms and legs unshackled, her face tucked against Teryn's chest. She whimpered and snuggled closer.

"Jendaya, you're awake," he whispered against her hair. "Are you all right?"

"Mmmm," she murmured, unable to form coherent syllables.

"Thank goodness." He wiped sweaty strands of hair from her forehead and kissed her. "That was..." His voice trailed off.

"Magical?" Jendaya supplied, finally able to form words.

Teryn grinned. "Yeah, magical." He rolled to the side, taking her with him. "I should give you proper introductions to my riding beasts. I think you're ready to do work beyond my little training exercises."

A cold chill raced down her back. "I don't know what to say." She'd fought beasts on her own, yet Teryn's lessons showed her she knew far less about magic than she thought. She buried her face in his chest and swallowed hard. If he thought her competent, he might declare her training ended. And then where would she be? Back in her cabin in the forest, protecting a village that despised her and without Teryn's touch.

Could it be she was falling in love with him? She burrowed closer to him, even as she dismissed the notion as foolish. "When—" Her voice broke and she licked her lips. Mustering saliva, she tried again. "When will you do so?"

"As soon as you feel ready. I'll give you a formal introduction to my *zardarks* and then, once they accept you, we'll continue your training as we wait to be called. And that won't take long at all."

She glanced up at him, trying to determine if the enthusiasm she heard in his voice was because of his pride in her or if perhaps he thought to be rid of her soon. Unable to find an answer, she ducked her head again. "Let me regain my strength," she said, hoping he'd be distracted by her sexual flattery.

Gently, Teryn caressed her cheek then tilted her chin so she looked at him. "A true mage masters fear. If you do not, it will rule you *and* your power. You've fought beasts before and certainly with less training than you've received here. Your training progress well. Surely you're not afraid?" He brushed his thumb across her lips.

Jendaya shook her head. "No, I'm not afraid."

"Then what is it?"

"Are you happy I'm almost trained and I'll be going away soon?" she asked.

"Going away? Who said you were going away?" Teryn pulled his eyebrows down as he puzzled out her remarks.

"But I thought once I was trained..." She let her words trail off as she realized amusement danced in Teryn's eyes. "You're not going to send me away once I'm trained?"

"Why should I? You know my territory is too large for me alone, and you're learning quickly."

"Oh!" Jendaya gasped. She hoped she'd heard correctly.

"I don't want you to leave, Jendaya. I hope once you're fully trained you'll stay here. I could use your help." He brushed his lips across her forehead.

His words emboldened her. He didn't talk of love, not yet, but deep inside something blossomed. "All right. Let's stay here for now and maybe I'll meet your monsters in a couple days." She smiled and wrapped her arms more tightly around him. Right now, it felt good just to hold him and be held in return.

Several days later Jendaya stood behind Teryn, trying not to cower as he opened the door to the barn. From inside the *zardarks* bellowed and scratched. "They sound a lot worse than they really are," Teryn said.

Never having seen a *zardark* before, she expected a monster bent on death and destruction just like the other beasts she'd fought. She sucked in a deep breath, not wanting to appear frightened. Just like with the horses at home, she suspected these creatures sensed emotions. If they knew they scared her, there was no telling what they might do. Teryn trusted her to act appropriately around them and trusted the beasts not to savage her.

Teryn opened the door and stepped backward.

Two stalls filled the barn, closed with only a couple slats of lumber, and they held creatures unlike any she'd ever seen before. The *zardarks* had the beak and wings of a bird and long scaly legs that more closely resembled chickens' legs beneath a huge reptilian body. The bronze scales reflected the light streaming in through the door. They ruffled the dark brown feathers on their wings.

"Okay, this is going to require magic." He held out his hand, fingers cupped as if holding a ball. For long moments nothing happened – then a shimmering sphere of blue appeared that seemed to encompass his essence. Looking at it was like looking at the man himself. At the sight, the two creatures quieted. "Now you try. Hold out your hand and imagine you, only you're standing in the palm of your own hand, like someone is holding you."

"Sounds simple enough." She stepped forward to stand next to Teryn. Her hand shook as she stretched it toward the two *zardarks*.

"It's easy. Just a simple manifestation of power. This is a magical greeting, one you'll use not only with Wing and Fang but with other mages as well." He closed his hand around her elbow, a steadying touch. "Are you ready?"

She nodded. Closing her eyes, Jendaya imagined she sat cupped in the palm of her hand. In her mind, she sat there, arms wrapped around her knees, hair shielding her

face from view. Energy surged through her. It roared from the ground and penetrated the soles of her feet. The hair on her arms rose on end. Her entire body tingled. Her breath caught in her throat and she didn't release it. Instead, she focused on the palm of her hand so hard it burned.

Beside her, Teryn relaxed. Cracking open her eyes, she saw a glow as bright as a summer sun resting in the palm of her hand. She grinned and looked at the *zardarks*.

Both creatures clacked their beak together twice.

Jendaya jumped. The glow in her palm extinguished.

"They were just saying hello," Teryn said. "Try it again."

This time she didn't close her eyes, simply extended her hand and reached for the magic. It came through well-worn paths, filling her body until the glow blossomed in her hand once more. Again the *zardarks* clacked their beaks, but this time Jendaya was ready. She held her ground, continuing to pour energy into her sphere.

"Now walk forward."

Teryn's soft words pulled her from the half-trance into which she had slipped. Looking at the creatures, now no more fearsome than plow horses, Jendaya stepped forward, first one foot then the other, until she left Teryn standing behind her and entered the barn completely.

The glow in her hand wavered.

Instinctively, Jendaya knew if she let it go out she'd be in danger. These creatures, born out of magic, would only respond to those who could control magic. She directed more energy to her sphere until it burned brightly once more. She held it out to the *zardark* nearest her. It touched its beak to the sphere, nearly extinguishing it, but Jendaya held steady. Then she offered it to the other creature. Both made tiny purring noises in the backs of their throats. She stood there for long moments until she felt Teryn's presence directly behind her.

"It's okay to drop your hand now," he said. "You did well."

Afraid anything she might do would spook the beasts, she slowly lowered her arm, dimming the sphere until it vanished in a small shower of golden sparks. She stood there, unsure what to do.

The *zardark* in front of her rubbed its beak along her arm.

"I think they like you," Teryn said.

Jendaya grinned.

The big beast closest to Teryn bumped its head against him, nearly sending him backward. Reaching up, Teryn scratched it on the nape of its neck and the creature purred louder. "This is Fang. He's just a big puppy dog when you get to know him."

Hesitantly, Jendaya lifted her hand. She rested it on the beast's shoulder, thinking as with horses, that was the safest spot. Then, slowly, she worked her way to where Teryn's hand still rubbed. The scales felt smooth, like soft, hammered metal beneath her fingers. Light shone from them in flickering patterns. The other beast Teryn had introduced as Wing bumped her arm as if he, too, wanted attention, and Jendaya turned to pet the slightly smaller and less fearsome *zardark*.

A sense of accomplishment filled her. "So, when are you going to teach me to ride?"

Teryn chuckled. "Soon. Very soon."

Chapter Four

The carrier pigeon flew hard and fast. Four low notes followed by five piercing ones filled the air, a far cry from the normal cooing Jendaya usually heard pigeons make. “Teryn, look!” She pointed toward the sky as the bird descended, gliding in to land directly on the mage’s outstretched arm.

His lips settled into a thin line as he removed the small cylinder attached to the bird’s leg and unrolled the parchment. Shaking his head, he strode into the cabin.

Jendaya watched him leave, uncertain if she should follow. They’d been working through magical exercises all week and had been doing so again before the messenger bird interrupted them. She lifted her hand, focusing on the rock in front of her. Before she could erect another shield in front of the boulder, Teryn returned. He lifted his arm, launching the pigeon into the air once more.

“Come,” Teryn pointed into the open door of the cabin. “Change into something suitable for travel—trews and a tunic. Pack a small bag with two water skins and provisions for a light lunch, then meet me in the barn.” He slung a canvas bag over his shoulder and ran across the yard.

“What is it?” she asked, already hurrying toward the cabin. In her mind, she sorted through her meager wardrobe to find suitable clothing.

“Work. It’s time you went on your first journey.”

A shiver of foreboding slithered down her spine as she watched him disappear into the barn. Work meant magical beasts. She’d slain her fair share of small creatures during her weeks with Teryn, and with his help, her strength and power had increased dramatically. Why her stomach flip-flopped she didn’t know, and she shoved the disconcerting trepidation aside. She changed into sturdy leather pants and tied a long-

sleeved tunic tightly at the waist. She filled the water skins from the pump in the kitchen and packed food, then hurried to join Teryn in the barn.

She arrived to find him saddling Wing and fastening saddlebags to his tack. He didn't check her bag, just took it and arranged it in a pouch with his items. "Good. You're just in time." Teryn hopped onto Wing's broad back and nestled himself with the reins in one hand. His other he held out to her.

Jendaya's stomach somersaulted. She'd ridden a horse, but never flown.

"It's okay. I'll keep you safe." Teryn's soft words soothed her fear. She trusted him. And oh, to fly above the treetops and look down on the world below, what a wonderful sight it must be. Grasping his hand, she hauled herself onto Wing's back. Cushioned between Teryn's body and the packs, she felt as if she had a saddle of her own, though the scaly hide rubbed against her leather leggings. "Wrap your arms around me and hold on tight. We need to hurry."

Jendaya didn't need to be told twice. She slid closer to him, her thighs pressed against his, her breasts crushed against his back. Wrapping her arms around his torso, she pressed her cheek to the hollow between his shoulder blades. "I'm ready," she said, then wiggled closer for comfort.

Teryn nodded and with a slight burst of magic, they were off. The *zardark* ran faster than anything she'd ever ridden before—and then a great leap and air rushed past her face. Jendaya wanted to laugh with the exhilaration of it all, though she feared making any sounds to disturb Wing. Higher and higher, the *zardark* flew. Wings beating on either side of her, the whoosh of air around them—and the speed! She'd never traveled so far so fast before. Shivers darted down her spine and Teryn clasped one of his hands over hers.

Riding on the back of the *zardark*, Jendaya felt as if she were soaring into the very heavens. The beat of the creature's wings mesmerized her. Overhead a cerulean sky promised endless horizons.

And finally, a chance to prove her capabilities to Teryn. She knew she'd be a help, not a hindrance, on his mission. Jendaya clung tighter to the man sitting in front of her as a village came into view.

They must have flown for leagues. Looking down at the small grass-thatched huts, the village could have been her own. It wasn't.

The large communal fire pit was extinguished, logs blackened by fires long-dead. At the edge of the houses, a lone hut burned. Beneath her hands she felt Teryn stiffen. He slowed Wing.

"I don't like the looks of this." Teryn shook his head. "I'm going to circle and see if I can't see what happened. The message really didn't say."

Jendaya didn't like the worried tone in his voice. If Teryn was worried, then she figured she should be terrified. Wing rose higher into the air. Jendaya looked around, half-hoping to see a monster.

A roar split the air.

Jendaya shrieked, startled by the noise. Something huge thrashed in the trees below. A great head, scales gleaming yellow-gold in the sun, rose through a break in the foliage, towering over the grand trees. A *dragon*? she wondered, though she'd never heard of them outside of legends. The long neck swiveled, looking first in one direction then another. In front of her, Teryn remained steady. Magic emanated from him. Power tingled along her skin.

Teryn fastened the reins to the front of his saddle. "Hold on!"

The *zardark* dipped in the air. Jendaya held on tightly. Her heart pounded as adrenaline surged through her veins. Beneath her the beast bucked, fighting against the harness and Teryn's magical control. She looked down at the scaly head reaching for them through the leaves.

Jendaya didn't know what the creature was and Teryn didn't say. She hoped he had enough skill to defeat it. He had to be strong enough. After watching him work magic

and feeling his power, she wondered why she'd even doubt him. Swallowing hard, Jendaya concentrated on the beast threatening them from below.

A line from a childhood tale filled her mind. *From beneath you it devours.* She hoped it wasn't true. And she hoped she'd be able to prove to Teryn she was as capable as he.

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Teryn tried to ignore the obvious distraction Jendaya created. The *kargon* rising through the trees presented a greater challenge than he'd expected after reading the villagers' missive. Frowning, he focused his attention on keeping Wing under control. The beast wanted to fly away from its known enemy and Teryn refused to let it.

Instead he concentrated on the magic dancing between his fingers. Power, raw and new, roared through him, and it took him a few moments to figure out that he'd tapped into Jendaya's energy. Goddess, she roared to life inside him! Instantly erect, his cock pounded with the need to take her. He sucked in great gulps of air to calm his mind and body.

Steady. Whether he sent the thought to Wing or himself, he didn't know. Concentrating on the *kargon*, he sent a bolt of lightning at it.

The head twisted, the great body beneath the forest canopy thrashing in pain. Sparks sizzled on its scaly hide. A bellow of pain filled the air.

A direct hit. Wing swooped lower as Teryn readied another bolt.

"Let me try."

Jendaya's soft words tore through his concentration. "What?"

"I said let me try." Jendaya unclasped her hands from around his chest.

Teryn reached around and caught her wrists in a bruising grip.

Wing faltered. He plummeted toward the ground.

Teryn sent a quick burst of magic to the creature, just enough to remind him who was boss.

The *zardark* flapped his wings and regained a bit of lost altitude.

“Are you mad? A half-trained mage can’t fight a *kargon*. Lend me your power if you want to help, but you’re here to watch. That’s all.” He held her wrists a moment longer before releasing them and grabbing the reins, turning his attention back to the *zardark*. He directed a punishing burst of magic toward the creature, harsh in its execution. The beast lifted his wings. A brisk downward stroke and they were buoyant again.

Jendaya exhaled as Wing soared higher. Teryn hated being so sharp with her, but he needed all his concentration to fight the *kargon*. Pulling his attention from her, he directed Wing to circle the area. Beneath them, the *kargon* thrashed through the forest and Teryn feared any of his spells might harm the trees and land from which the villagers made their living. He looped the reins over a knob on the harness for that purpose and raised his hands.

Magic crackled between his palms, blue sparks rich with power. Jendaya’s bravado hammered at his senses. She yearned to battle the creature and her rash need to fight might be her undoing. What she lacked in patience, she made up for in exuberance. The combination might prove deadly – and then he would have failed again.

Teryn bit his lip. Damn it, he wouldn’t think along those lines. Jendaya wasn’t Isvella, not by a long shot. His studious former apprentice had taken to learning like a duck to water. Books, she couldn’t get enough books, but he sought to shield her from the harsher aspects of his work. *Like this*, he mused. And she’d paid the price. He swallowed hard, determined not to let that happen to Jendaya.

He refocused his attention.

The *kargon*’s head shot through the sky toward them.

Teryn fired a group of lightning bolts at it. They struck, their blue flames licking along the monster’s skin.

The beast bellowed. It opened its mouth, its throat working. Fire burst through the sky at them.

Wing screamed. The *zardark* backpedaled in the sky.

Teryn took the reins. Wing bucked.

Jendaya whimpered and held on as Teryn struggled. He seesawed on the reins, using his magic to soothe the creature. Spotting potential prey, the *kargon* rose onto its back legs and leaped, its open maw large enough to swallow them whole.

Jaws filled with needle-sharp teeth snapped mere inches beneath Wing.

Adrenaline filled Teryn. Now was his chance. Raising a hand, he leveled it even with the beast's single unblinking red eye. Drawing on the power of the woman clinging to him, he sent a fire bolt at the *kargon*.

It roared.

Teryn steered Wing a bit farther away as the head whipped from side to side, trying to dislodge the ball of flames sticking to its face. Holding both of his hands in front of him, Teryn sent lightning bolt after lightning bolt down the creature's gullet.

The thrashing grew deafening. Still, Teryn poured lightning into it. Power rushed through him, so pure and raw he thought he might burst into a million pieces of pure light. He drew energy from the woman behind him, from the air and from the ground.

The *kargon* fell into the forest, the thud shaking the trees and rattling the Earth. Tiny flames burst where it hit trees and Teryn called the rain to wash the flames away. Exhaustion pulled at him, beckoning with the darkness of rest. He couldn't give in. Not yet.

He directing Wing to the ground and the *zardark* landed in a clearing, a good distance away from the *kargon*. On foot, Teryn knew he'd be more vulnerable, as the beast was only stunned, not dead. He turned to Jendaya. "Stay here. Do *not* move. No matter what you see, what you hear, do not move. Do you understand me?"

She nodded.

"Good." Grabbing a long sword from its scabbard on the harness, he dismounted and raced toward the fallen *kargon*.

When he reached the woods he was half-afraid he'd find the creature had recovered enough to be dangerous. The long, snake-like head weaved around old oak trees, the stout trunks refusing to be broken. The beast's jaw rested on the ground. The body, with its ten short, stumpy legs, reclined in a heap, the tail twined around another large tree. Teryn ignored the long claws with their poisonous spikes, instead making his way carefully behind the creature to the head. Through the eyes lay the brain, and he needed to pierce it in order to kill the beast for good.

He reached the massive head and, using the beast's scales, climbed until he stood atop the *kargon*, now nearly level with the tops of the smaller trees. Sweat soaked him, making his hands slippery. His clothes stuck to him, his breathing coming in labored pants. He wanted to give in, to lie on the mountain of the beast and let the need for sleep coursing through his veins take over.

Jendaya. Thoughts of her kept him alert as he leveled his sword over the creature's eye.

One thrust and it was over. The beast bucked, a stream of green spittle dripping from its mouth to sizzle on the dirt as Teryn clung to his sword. Then the *kargon* lay dead.

Teryn slumped against his sword still imbedded in the creature's brain. He breathed deeply then pulled the gore-covered sword out. His descent wasn't nearly as frenzied and soon he strode back to Wing. He knew the presence of Jendaya on his back would keep the creature from taking to the skies again until Teryn returned, but he hadn't liked leaving his young apprentice alone.

Home. Each step back to Wing and Jendaya brought him closer to home. Normally he'd go into the village to obtain his reward. Not this time. This time he only wanted to be in his bed, buried balls-deep in his apprentice. His cock tightened as the rush of adrenaline gave way to arousal. The ride back would give him time to recover from the battle. Oh yes, to hear her husky cries and feel her pussy milking him, that's what he

wanted, that's what would wash the taint of killing from his skin. At the moment that was all the reward he needed. The villagers' money could, and would, come later.

He paused at a small stream to clean his blade and wash the worst of the sweat and grime from his face and torso. He returned to Wing to find Jendaya still sitting on his back.

"You're alive!" she cried upon seeing him. "Oh, thank the goddess!"

Her concern touched him. "Did you think I wouldn't return?" Teryn sheathed his sword and dropped his dirty tunic into his pack. He grabbed a hunk of bread and cheese, eating to ground the magic and restore some of his energy.

"I didn't know." She spoke so softly Teryn knew she'd feared for his life.

He helped her scoot forward on Wing's back then mounted behind her, his arm wrapped around her waist. Nuzzling her neck, he rained tiny kisses against her skin. "I'm sorry I worried you, but being a mage is a dangerous job as you well know." His hand inched higher until he cupped her breast through the thin fabric that covered it.

"I know." Jendaya shivered in his arms. She wiggled against him, her sweet ass pressing against his cock. Anxious to be home, he signaled Wing and the *zardark* took flight.

Now this was much better. With Jendaya seated before him, he cupped his other hand over her mound. Even through her trews he felt her heat and knew she wanted him. He had to get her home. When he took her, he wanted to be in his cabin, not on the back of a *zardark*.

Jendaya whimpered and a tendril of magic urged Wing to hurry. The beast flew at breakneck speeds. In record time, Wing descended into the yard and Teryn dismounted impatiently.

Hot, hard and horny. The drive to take Jendaya pounded through his veins. He hurried Wing into the barn, stripping the saddle and giving the creature a cursory rubdown. Then he took the packs and herded Jendaya into the cabin. As soon as the

door closed behind them, he dropped the packs onto the floor and grabbed her around the waist.

Teryn hauled her against him, fitting her soft, supple frame against his own. A needy sound escaped her throat and shot straight to his groin. Gods, he wanted her like he'd wanted no other woman. He slanted his mouth over hers and kissed her.

He thrust his tongue into her mouth, tasting her. Like a drugging elixir, she went straight to his head. He couldn't get enough. Turning, he pinned her against the door. *Take her now.* Passion beat a primal rhythm in his veins, one of sweaty bodies twining together and lust fulfilled. He plunged his fingers into her hair, pulling it away from the confines of the leather thong. Slanting his lips, he deepened the kiss further.

Yes, this was what he wanted, the feel of her lithe frame arching against him. Her fingers grasping his buttocks to pull him close. His balls drew tight against his body, his cock ready to explode with a single touch. He pulled away enough to release the lacings on her pants. She tugged off her tunic and kicked off the trews, then stood before him blessedly bare.

He paused for a moment to suck in a needed breath. The sight of her naked body moved him. Inside, something clicked into place. He'd feared for her life, still did, yet the thought failed to consume him. Instead, he focused on her pert breasts with their wide nipples, puckered and begging for his touch. The flat of her stomach made him long to watch his child grow inside.

Teryn reached for the laces on his trousers. Her curls and the plump lips of her sex called to him with a siren song he could not deny. He shucked pants and boots, then pinned her between him and the door.

"Teryn." She wrapped her arms around his neck and pressed against him.

Reaching behind her, he cupped the back of her thigh, lifting it around his hip. His cock brushed against her labia and he bit back a groan. "I want to fuck you," he growled. "Hard."

Jendaya shivered against him. He cupped her ass, hauled her against him and kissed her. His little minx, his own personal mage-gifted minx, that's what she was. As he allowed himself to get lost in her curves, he wondered how they'd ever go back to being just master and apprentice. What flowered between them was more, so much more.

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Jendaya closed her eyes and sank against Teryn. His cock brushed against her cunt, making her warm and needy inside. Moisture filled her along with an ache only he could fill. With her sensitized nipples brushing against his chest, she felt as if she were on fire. She couldn't get enough of him. Sitting behind him on Wing's back, watching him fight the *kargon* from the skies, she feared they both might die. Her fears increased when he'd landed and continued the hunt on foot. She shuddered at the gut-wrenching realization that he could have been taken from her. Clinging to him, she broke the kiss to bury her head against his shoulder.

"Teryn," she breathed, his name a choked cry. She squeezed her eyes closed, not wanting to let her pooling tears loose. She wouldn't cry. Not when she had him in her arms and ready to make love to her.

He closed his hand around her breast, palming the stiff nipple.

She gasped. Thoughts of Teryn's close brush with death fled from her mind, replaced only by the pleasure he caused.

His other hand trailed over her hip, down to the damp curls before parting her labia to stroke her clit. With a groan, Jendaya arched into his touch. She ached for him, needed to feel his long, thick fingers, his cock, anything inside her pussy. His tiny caresses tormented her with the promise of a good, hard loving. Against her back, the hard wood of the door rasped but she didn't care. Not when it was Teryn's hot, hard body pressing her against it and his fingers playing her pussy like an expert.

She clutched his shoulders, her leg wrapped around his lean hip. She pressed her heel into his buttocks, wishing he'd impale her on his cock. He didn't. Instead, he lowered her leg to the ground and dropped to his knees. As soon as he hit the floor he grabbed her thigh again, resting it over his shoulder. Warm breath caressed her labia. Jendaya closed her eyes and leaned against the door. Pleasure coursed through her veins. It was worth it, all of it, watching Teryn fight, learning her mage craft, if only she could be loved like this forever. Like the magic, she had to allow his will to flow through her. She was steadily learning to control her powers. She wished she could control the quaking need inside her as easily.

And then he kissed her. His lips pressed against her pussy, the tip of his tongue sliding between her labia and stroking her—one long lick that had her shuddering. Her muscles clenched. If she didn't get him inside her, she feared she might die from the ache.

His tongue speared her.

Jendaya moaned with pleasure at the bold thrust. He honed his tongue to a point and penetrated her, over and over again, until she felt as if she danced on his mouth. Her fingers curled into fists. Her cries grew bolder. Teryn worshipped her pussy with his mouth, fucking her with his tongue then sucking on her clit. Goddess, she'd never felt like this before. Her nipples tightened and she reached up to cup her breasts.

Teryn pulled away long enough to look up her body. "Gods, you're beautiful," he breathed. Lowering himself to the floor, he pulled her on top of him.

Jendaya wiggled against his cock. She moved to straddle his hips until the head of his cock played along her slick lips. Grabbing the base of him, she squeezed gently.

Teryn groaned.

In that moment, she knew she had him. She could do anything, ask for anything, and he'd grant it. Reaching between her legs, she coated her fingers with her cream then stroked him. Base to tip, up and down, pausing only to fondle his balls and the sensitive crease between. She grinned.

"I want to fuck you." Surprisingly, the crude words didn't feel awkward in her mouth. She lowered herself over his cock, inch by inch, until their bodies were flush. His balls rested against her ass. She moaned at the delicious sensation.

Then she started to move. Slowly, savoring every inch of him, she impaled herself on his cock. His hands gripped her waist, holding her but letting her set the pace. Jendaya watched him. With his eyes closed, his head tipped back, extreme pleasure etched across his face, Teryn looked like a man having a good time. She increased the pace. Her own climax neared, so painfully close, and she slid her fingers between her legs. One, two caresses of her clit and she came. Her sheath convulsed around him, ripples of pleasure soaring through her so powerful she thought the top of her head might explode. Leaning forward, she draped her body over his and continued to move slowly.

Teryn groaned. He tightened his hold on her hips as he stroked into her, harder and deeper until she shuddered again with another orgasm. He thrust with purpose, striking something high and deep inside her. With a roar, he came. Hot jets of come released inside her and Jendaya thought she'd never felt anything so beautiful. Lying draped across his chest, she listened to the pounding of his heart as together, they floated back to reality.

For long moments they lay there. Jendaya sighed happily gazing at their sweat-slickened bodies. She felt replete, satisfied in a way she hadn't ever been.

At last Teryn shifted. "Let's go to the bed," he murmured against her hair.

She nodded, the aftermath of their lovemaking carrying her halfway to sleep.

Teryn scooped her into his arms and carried her to the bed, laying her down gently before crawling in beside her. Once more, he took her into his arms. Jendaya listened to his steady breathing, felt his strong arms wrapped around her and drifted peacefully off to sleep, content to know Teryn lay beside her. He was home and he was safe.

Chapter Five

Sweat ran in rivulets over Teryn's bare chest. His pants hung low on his hips and revealed the delicious crease of muscle right next to his hips. A sphere of blue magic flew at her. Jendaya ducked. The heat from the sphere's passing blazed across her shoulder as it dissipated harmlessly behind her.

"Again!" Teryn fired another missile at her.

Jendaya ducked again. She struck back, sending two bolts of power at him. Teryn deflected them easily. Cursing under her breath, she dashed away the sweat rolling down her brow. Her shirt stuck between her breasts and at the small of her back. Her trews clung to her like a second skin and her breath heaved in and out of her chest.

She thrust out her hand, narrowly deflecting another bolt of magic. She moved to avoid a second one. Her foot caught on a rock and her ankle twisted...

Down she went, her hand automatically reaching for the ground to stop her fall. She landed hard on her side. The air whooshed from her lungs. Yet Teryn seemed not to notice for he lobbed more missiles at her.

One crackled too close for comfort. Electrical charges sizzled along her leg, having breached her own energy. Jendaya cried out. She closed her eyes, drawing air into her starved lungs. *Focus, damn it, focus! I have to show him I can do this.* She reached into the well of energy deep in her body and forced a volley of defensive fire back at him.

Teryn yelped.

She opened her eyes to catch him rubbing his arm. A triumphant grin, quickly removed, crossed her face. The last time they'd sparred had been a few weeks ago, shortly after he'd fought the *kargon*, and she'd not gotten in a hit. She jumped to her feet, ignoring the twinge of pain in her ankle, and sent another steady burst of fire at

him. As she directed the orbs of power in his direction, she erected her shields, imagining a sparkling diamond wall surrounding her.

She stopped, feet shoulder-width apart, arms dropped to her sides. Her breathing slowed. *I am stone. I am earth. I cannot be harmed. I am and I always will be.* The thoughts filled her mind with peace and calm. Just like Teryn had taught her, she grounded herself, and this time, when Teryn renewed his magical attacks, she was ready.

A flick of her wrist and his blue spheres of light hovered in the air, well away from her shields. Power flowed through her veins, rising from the ground at her command. Her head tipped back, eyes mere slits as the energy sparked and hummed in her blood, her muscles, the very fiber of her being. Her nipples budded into tight peaks, her pussy hot and wet with the magical energies filling her. Familiar ripples started low in her womb and she battled to keep them from overtaking her concentration.

She looked forward, her gaze meshing with Teryn's. A feral smile curved her lips. *You don't think I'm ready? Try this!* She forced his missiles back on him, sending them spiraling through the air like dervishes. They whipped and snapped around him, a vortex of power and energy that trapped him where he stood.

Teryn flicked his wrist. Grudging respect warring with anger flashed in his gaze. He stepped forward. "This is not a game," he growled. "This will save your life. You waste precious energy to make a pretty light show."

"If this isn't a game then quit toying with me," Jendaya countered. She drew deep, steady breaths in an attempt to keep her impatience under control. Rogue emotions ruined concentration and right now, she needed to be ready for whatever Teryn threw at her.

"I've never toyed with you," he said with a shake of his head. "And if you think that, then—"

"Then what?" Jendaya snapped. "Yes, a few of those bolts hit me or came damn close, but you're holding back. Don't tell me you aren't. If I'm to be fully trained, then I

need you to give me everything. You know as well as I the dangers that face us, the things we have to fight. I will not break. I will not die."

"How do you know that?" Teryn stormed forward and grabbed her shoulders, squeezing hard enough to leave bruises. "How do you know you won't die just like her?"

"Just like Isvella?" Jendaya asked quietly. "I'm not her. I'd already been fighting magical beasts when you found me. I'm stronger than she was. You said it yourself."

Teryn expelled a breath. He hauled her against him, his arms wrapped around her so tightly she burrowed into his chest. Nuzzling her cheek, he whispered, "I hope you won't die. It'd hurt like hell to lose you."

"I know," Jendaya replied. "Because I'd feel the same if I lost you." She expelled a breath. Not lowering her shields, she spread them instead to encompass both of them like a warm, protective blanket. Her breathing slowed, her heart resuming its normal pace. A breeze dried the sweat and chilled her, making her snuggle even closer to Teryn. What had started off as a training session turned into something more, something deeper. What it meant, she didn't know, except he'd told her he wouldn't send her away once she was fully trained. She had to believe it. Had to make him see that she could help him and stand by his side as an equal.

"I won't hold back," Teryn said after long moments. "I promise. Shall we try this again?"

She looked up at him, the calmness in his gaze serving to ground her even more. "Yes," she said.

His arms slipped from around her.

She stepped back, suddenly bereft without his touch. Squaring her shoulders, she moved until several large strides separated them. "Ready when you are," she called out.

Teryn gave her no chance to prepare. He spread his fingers. A swarm of bright bursts of energy like tiny flares shot at her in groups of three. She reinforced her shields.

Only a couple groups penetrated them, the others crackling along the edges, and still Teryn sent the rapid-fire missiles. She sent few back, instead focused on keeping herself safe. Let him wear himself out. She could take whatever he dished.

And she did. Though Teryn redoubled his efforts and left her panting and aching from the overuse of her magical skills, she never again let one of his bolts hurt her. She'd even managed a few hits, slipping in behind his shields. Rarely did she catch him unaware.

When they both stood panting in the center of the yard, sweat dripping from them, at last Teryn called a halt to the exercises. He leaned forward, hands braced on his thighs, and drew in deep breaths of air. Jendaya mirrored his actions. Neither one said a word. They didn't have to. The synchronicity of their actions showed in the attacks and counterattacks.

"You're ready for some advanced exercises," he said when at last he caught his breath. "We'll have to go hunting, but it's the only way to find some real-life experience and still keep it controlled. I'm sure the villagers won't mind." He smiled.

Jendaya beamed with Teryn's praise. "Are my *other* lessons progressing as well?" Now that she'd regained her breath, she admired the way his bare chest glistened in the reddish-orange light of the setting sun. With his thin pants molded to his body she saw every line of his muscles—and his thick erection. His balls hung full and heavy between his legs, his cock hard. It jutted toward his navel, and beneath the weight of her gaze it twitched.

He tugged the laces of his pants open. His shaft pressed against the ties until they gaped open and the head slipped between the laces.

Jendaya grinned. She strolled forward slowly, fully aware of the effect she had on him. His hands clenched and unclenched at his sides. Plucking at her blouse, she pulled the sticky fabric over her head and let it dangle from her fingertips.

Teryn's throat worked. "After so much exercise you shouldn't have the energy to do anything else."

She drew a line in the sweat between her breasts, drawing his attention to her pert nipples. She swirled her finger around one, then the other, slowly tracing a path down to her navel. "Really? Then maybe you didn't work me hard enough." She let her voice drop to a husky purr. "Do you think you can wear me out?"

"Yeah. Oh yeah." His nostrils flared, yet he remained rooted in place.

Jendaya stopped in front of him. He reached out and palmed her breasts, cupping them in his hands, caressing them, kneading them.

"On your knees, apprentice." He released her breasts to curl his hands over her shoulders and push her down.

She went willingly, bringing herself eye level with his magnificent cock. Reaching for the strings on his pants, she finished unlacing them and shoved the wet material down his legs. She inhaled deeply, bringing his musky aroma into her nose. Sweat and aroused man—her mouth watered at the scent. Her cream mingled with the sweat soaked into her clothing, the knowledge she made him this hard, this hot, making her bite off a moan. She leaned forward and drew her tongue along his length.

Teryn groaned.

Control. Who had it, who needed it and who yearned for it? As she wrapped her lips around his length and sucked him into her mouth, Jendaya knew all magic came down to that simple concept. She reached between his legs to fondle his balls. Teryn stood rigid, head thrown back, neck corded with restraint. She looked up his body, her cheeks hollowing as she sucked him deeper into her mouth. Her own desires throbbed low in her body. Her swollen clit and labia ached for his touch, her touch, any touch, and her channel clenched and released with the thought that the thick rod in her mouth could be filling her.

She swirled her tongue over his head, tasting the drop of fluid that formed at his tip. She licked his cock. Up and down, rubbing her lips along it and giving him just the barest hint of teeth against his skin. She sat back on her heels and stroked his perineum.

A strangled groan emerged from Teryn's throat. "Jendaya," he growled. "Stop."

She ignored his order. His admission that she'd mastered the magic enough to accompany him on hunts emboldened her. He sought to teach her control and use of her power. She'd submitted to her own magical powers, submitted to him, now she submitted to her desires by sucking Teryn until he came.

He slipped down her throat, the tight ring of muscles closing around his head. One finger worked its way toward his anus as he pumped his hips in and out of her mouth.

Jendaya ignored her body's needs. Right now, she gave to Teryn. Increasing the suction, she bobbed her head faster, taking him as deep as she could into her mouth and throat. With teeth and tongue she laved his cock. She opened her eyes and saw brilliant blue energy surrounding him.

The sparks of power raced along his skin, her green sparkles intermingling as the magic collapsed upon them like a warm, flickering blanket. She drew power from the ground beneath her, a thought sending it swirling around them. She used it to caress every inch of his skin. Power flicked across his nipples and traced every ridge of his abdomen. Where the power went, she went too, the awareness of the energy's intimate touch filling her mind and her pussy.

She moaned around his cock. Her finger found his sphincter. She rubbed it, not seeking entry, just enhancing his pleasure. With her other hand she fondled his balls and with the energy coursing along his skin and hers, she rode the waves higher and higher.

Teryn jerked. A hoarse shout erupted from his throat. In her hands, his balls tightened. She willed him to come. The need to feel his hot seed splashing down her throat had her redoubling her efforts. She sucked harder, humming in the back of her throat.

With lips and tongue and desire she pulled him closer and closer to the edge. She felt it in every taut line of his body. He stood rigidly before her, working his hips back and forth.

Control. She had it. He was about to lose it.

And then he came. His yell echoed in the yard, startling the *zardarks* inside the barn to squawking and calling. His come slid down her throat and she swallowed it all. Then, slowly, she pulled away from him and licked him clean.

When the *zardarks* quieted, only the sound of Teryn's heavy breathing filled the clearing. Jendaya rose to her feet. She pressed her body along the length of his and kissed him. Thrusting her tongue inside his mouth, she ensured he'd be able to taste himself. His hands clamped her waist and against her stomach, his cock hardened.

Jendaya stepped back. "Control, Master. Isn't that what you're teaching me?" She threw him a saucy smile then turned and strolled toward the cabin.

Behind her Teryn groaned, and the rustling of fabric told her he struggled to pull up his pants. She had no doubt he'd give her more lessons in control just as soon as he could.

* * * * *

In the shade of a canopy of trees, Jendaya waited. She crouched on a forked branch, staring at a clearing just beneath her. Across the way, out of her view, Teryn mirrored her position in a stout oak tree. They'd seen no magical creatures, though both sensed that something made this clearing its home. Nothing large. The tracks looked barely bigger than a raccoon's, though if warped and twisted by magic, even something that small could cause considerable damage.

She breathed deeply. The scents of forest loam mingled with the rank odor of a wild animal. Jendaya wrinkled her nose. She licked her lips, her mouth dry with the nervousness of her first battle on her own since Teryn's teaching had begun. She glanced into the leafy canopy of the tree across from her, but its leaves concealed Teryn from view. A grunt echoed loudly among the trees. Chattering birds silenced. The flutter of wings filled the air as a flock of sparrows took to the sky.

Her stomach twisted. She breathed deeply, using the tree as an anchor to ground and center her powers. She could do this. And if she couldn't, Teryn would make sure she remained safe.

No, she wouldn't need his help. She'd handle this creature just fine on her own.

A grunt filled the clearing beneath her. Jendaya gasped. Her memory flashed back to another clearing, another similar grunt and her ending up on the ground, unconscious and bleeding. She started to raise a hand to her side then stopped.

A *boaresk* waddled into the opening. Slowly, so as not to disturb the foliage around her, she dropped down from her perch in the tree, landing with a soft whoosh of fallen leaves. Spreading her fingers, she sent quick bursts of lightning at the creature.

It squealed and whirled. Instinctively, she aimed more bolts of power at it. The creature grunted. It stumbled and pitched head first into the dirt. Tusks dug into the loam, churning the bugs and decaying matter on which the *boaresk* liked to feed.

Jendaya grabbed the hilt of her knife. Pulling it from her belt, she strode forward. She bent down and with one quick slash across the twitching creature's throat, put it out of its misery, wiping the blade on the animal's bristly hide. But she knew the beasts always traveled in packs. Rustling in the undergrowth had her whirling to face the new threat.

"Watch out!" Teryn yelled.

She nodded to acknowledge his words. With one hand she sheathed her dagger, the other already stretching out to fling more bolts of power at the two *boaresks* coming to avenge their fallen brethren. The crackle of energy filled the air. The stench of sulfur filled her nose. Shoving away the distractions, she singed the beasts with her power. Great green crackles of lightning danced along their skins, their bristled hair standing on end. Still, the creatures approached.

Jendaya shoved every thought from her mind except one—defeating the two beasts before her. Warped and twisted by magic, the *boaresks* bore little resemblance to the

livestock they once were. From beneath her she drew energy, power like she'd never felt before surging through her veins. She focused her attention on the beasts.

The one on the left faltered. It stumbled, dropping to its knees on the forest floor. With an angry squeal it twisted and thrashed on the ground, angrily trying to regain its footing.

Jendaya's mouth went dry. She grabbed the dagger with her left hand, the right still shooting bolts of power at the *boaresk* closest to her. Her attention divided, she struggled to keep up the steady flow of power that would be her salvation.

The *boaresk* on the right swung its tusks.

Nimble, Jendaya danced away. Slashing with her dagger, she attempted a killing blow but the blade bounced off the creature's tough hide. She raised her hand to fire a magical missile.

A bolt of power shot from across the clearing, dropping the beast in its tracks.

Teryn had snatched her kill out from under her. His lack of trust in her skills stung. Snarling, she whirled on the other *boaresk*, still struggling to its feet. She slammed two missiles into it. She stormed across the clearing swiftly and slashed its throat. Turning to slit the other one's throat, she found Teryn already completing the task.

She swayed on her feet. Sweat stung her eyes. She was filled with bone-deep exhaustion—and anger.

Her knees trembled and suddenly he was there, arms wrapped around her, pulling her to his body. She tried to wiggle away from his too-tight grasp. She knew she'd been poised to take them both. But he hadn't given her a chance.

"You're all right. Thank the gods, you're all right." His lips pressed against her temple. His hand stroked her hair. "I'm very proud of you, Jendaya."

"You should have let me finish it," she admonished.

He pressed his fingers to her lips. "You successfully fought one *boaresk*, nearly took down another. It was time to let me step in and clean up."

She swallowed hard, eyes stinging from tears or sweat, she didn't know. Drawing a shuddering breath, she laid her head against his chest. Tomorrow there'd be more lessons and more training, but she had no doubt they'd argue about this again. "I'm glad you were here," she whispered, not sure if she said it because it was true or if it was what he wanted to hear.

"So am I," he replied. "So am I."

Chapter Six

The ride back to Teryn's cabin passed in silence. Teryn tightened his arm around her waist and nuzzled her hair. When she fought against the *boaresks* his heart had leapt into his throat. He'd acted on pure instinct. Maybe he coddled her too much, but she could so easily be hurt. Jendaya wasn't Isvella. He knew this and yet every time he watched her fight, he struggled not to see his former apprentice.

He smiled, his heart lurching at the sight of the woman in his arms. When he returned home, he'd send a missive to the council, letting them know that he had taken an apprentice and that she was progressing well. For the first time since exiling himself out here after Isvella's death, he felt confidence in his abilities to train someone, felt he could bring an apprentice into her powers and keep her alive. Gently, he guided the *zardark* to the ground.

"Wake up, sleepy head."

Jendaya blinked and rubbed her eyes with the back of her hand. "We're back. I must have fallen asleep."

"Working magic takes a lot out of a person. Why don't go you inside? I'll take care of things out here and join you." He slid off the *zardark's* back, then wrapped his hands around her waist and lifted her to the ground. Trapped between him and the magical creature, Teryn was aware of every curve of her body. Even bound and behind leather armor, her breasts pressed against his chest. Her thighs brushed against his. His cock jerked to life.

Her hand rested on his biceps, the other on his shoulder. She squeezed gently and swayed closer to him. Her lips brushed his.

Teryn bit back a groan. Behind her, the *zardark* jostled them, shoving her even closer to him. His cock roared to life with near-painful enthusiasm. He smoothed his hand

down her back, cupping her buttocks and hauling her against his body. His cock throbbed with the need to be buried balls-deep inside her. He reached behind her and unfastened the straps of her armor then pulled it over her head.

Wing closed his beak around Teryn's sleeve and plucked at the fabric. It didn't hurt, but the interruption was enough for Teryn to pull back. "I've got to..." The raw hunger in her gaze stole the words from his throat.

"Yeah, you've got to take care of Wing," she said, her voice husky. "I'll just go inside as you said."

He released her, his fingers lingering on her arms. He watched as she ducked around him and with long strides, hurried to the porch. Releasing a pent-up breath, he grabbed Wing's reins and led the *zardark* into the barn. Less than half an hour later, he had Wing settled snugly in his stall and carried the packs into the cabin.

His eyes quickly adjusted to the dim lighting and the sight that greeted him had his cock hammering and his blood pounding. Jendaya lay spread-eagle on the bed. Soft cotton ropes that she must have tied with magic bound her ankles and wrists. Logs glowed in the fireplace, casting light and warmth over her bare skin. The tips of her peaked nipples pointed at the ceiling and begged for his touch. He unfastened his tunic and pulled it over his head. Trousers and boots came next, until he left a string of clothing from the door to the bed and stood beside her.

Jendaya turned her head. "Master," she said, her eyelashes lowered demurely. "I feel in need of more training."

"And what training might that be?" he asked, deciding to play along with her game. He circled his cock with his fingers, squeezing to hold back his urgent need. His balls hung full and heavy.

"Submission. I get rebellious notions and I need you to teach me how to be submissive." Jendaya licked her lips.

His breath caught in his throat. All he could think about was her lips wrapped around his shaft, taking him deep into her throat. "What kind of ideas?" He remained

rooted in place. If he went to the end of the bed he'd see her pussy, lips pink and cream gathering along her slit...

Oh hell. Unable to stop himself, he strode to the foot of the bed.

In her submission, Jendaya was a vision. His mouth watered to taste her and he rested one knee on the foot of the bed.

"On second thought, I wish our positions were reversed. I want you here, bound for me and at my mercy. I'd lick and suck every inch of your body, take your magnificent cock deep inside my mouth, my pussy, and I'd make you beg. Oh yes, I'd make you beg me to fuck you." Her husky chuckle was like a caress against his skin.

He crawled onto the bed, straddling her leg, hands braced on either side of her body. He moved until his lips hovered just above hers. "And what if I want to make *you* beg?" he asked a moment before his lips descended on hers.

His body demanded he bury himself deep inside her wet cunt and possess her. A sweep of his tongue across her lips had her opening beneath him and he plunged his tongue inside. His lips hard against hers, he plundered her mouth. A hot mating of lips and tongue that stole the breath from his lungs. He threaded his fingers through her hair to hold her in place, his other hand skimming her side to her breast. Jendaya whimpered against his mouth.

His need for her grew, a beast inside him that fed on his power and refused to go away. Jendaya arched into his touch. He swept his tongue into her mouth and lowered his body to hers. His cock throbbed on her thigh and when she wrapped her free leg around his hip, he felt the slick juices coating her labia. She whimpered, rubbing against him like a cat in heat. He squeezed her nipple, wringing a cry from her throat.

"Teryn, please," she begged.

The fact that she could have been wounded made his hunger more acute. He kissed her jaw, licking and nipping down her throat to lave the hollow of her collarbone with his tongue. He hungered to taste her breasts, to swirl his tongue around her erect nipples, yet he turned his attention to her shoulders. He bit her, his teeth leaving red

marks in her skin. Leaning back, he looked at the mark. Pride filled him and he licked and kissed it until a dark bruise formed. His mark. His apprentice. His woman.

His.

Jendaya pulled against the bonds holding her. He debated on sending them away, yet liked the idea of her tied up and helpless beneath him. His body pounded with the need to take her, already drops of fluid formed at the end of his cock. Yet he waited. He inhaled deeply in an attempt to steady himself then kissed a trail to her left breast. He licked her nipple.

Jendaya shrieked. "Oh god, oh god, oh god," she chanted. Power flared around her, white hot and feeding his desire. She bordered on the edge of control and he wanted her to shatter. He wrapped his lips around her nipple and sucked.

He palmed her other breast, not wanting it to be left out. The nipple pressed into his palm and he circled it with his fingers. Teryn focused his attention on Jendaya and her pleasure. Though he'd interfered when she'd fought the *boaresks*, he couldn't deny her skill when facing them. No longer simply a student, she'd moved to another level. One he wasn't quite ready to accept.

He tongued her nipple lightly, listening to her cries. He shoved his thoughts and needs aside. Right now, this was for Jendaya.

She shuddered. Her hips moved frantically against him and he turned his attention to the nipple he palmed, sucking and licking it. Gods, she was beautiful. He looked over her body and her lips parted, her hair sprawled across his pillows. Her cries filled his cabin.

He willed her to come. Releasing her breast with a soft pop, he swirled his tongue around the areola before flicking the tip across her nipple. He plumped her breasts with his hands, before taking a nipple in his mouth once more. He could eat her forever, just spend his life with his lips fastened to her body. The musk of her arousal filled his nostrils and her slick folds smeared her juices on his thigh. He thought of making her lick them off.

Jendaya rode the edge of release. Teryn reached between their bodies, his fingers sliding down from her breast, over her hip to brush against the curls covering her sex. Her juices coated his fingers as he stroked her labia, evoking even more whimpers from her. So responsive, so aroused, she filled his body with heat and his heart with light. Teryn thrust two fingers inside her wet channel.

Her muscles convulsed around his digits and she cried out. Shudders ravaged her body, her breath coming in excited little pants as she came. He pressed deeper inside her body, feeling her come apart around him. His thumb brushed against her clit.

Jendaya screamed. Her body bucked, thrashed like a wild thing as wave after wave of orgasm crashed into her. Around his fingers her muscles clenched, convulsed, and it took all his willpower not to wrench his fingers from her and thrust his cock deep inside her wet heat. Instead, he slowly pulled his fingers away and released her nipple from his mouth. He licked and sucked a path to her navel, then lower, spreading her thighs even wider to accommodate his broad shoulders.

His mouth hovering just above her cunt, he inhaled deeply. Gods, she smelled like heaven, all spice and thoroughly aroused woman. He swiped his tongue along her labia. She tasted heavenly too. Swirling his tongue around the engorged bud of her clit, he took his time, flicking his tongue across it then teasing the skin around it. He hummed, the vibration ratcheting her pleasure higher.

He thrust his tongue inside her cunt. He fucked her, quick stabs of his tongue into her channel. Suddenly, power flickered over his skin and her hand gripped the back of his head. Her fingers gripped his shoulder and she arched her pussy into his face. "Mmm, you taste so good," he murmured. "I could eat you all day."

"Fuck me," she growled.

"Not until you come again." Wrapping his lips around her clit, he pumped two fingers, then three into her channel, working her until she cried out. Her juices drenched his fingers, soaking the blanket beneath her. With a groan, he pulled away and crawled over her body. His cock brushed against her labia.

"Yes," Jendaya breathed.

A single pump of his hips buried him to the hilt. He groaned. Pleasure rocketed through his veins. Her tight sheath wrapped around him like a glove, tiny muscle contractions making his cock throb inside her. Lowering his head, he kissed her. Body and soul he filled her, wrapped himself around her and never wanted to let go.

He pulled out, mourning the loss of contact, though he knew it'd be even sweeter when he returned. With the tip of his cock hovering just inside her entrance, he pulled his lips from hers. For long moments he looked at her, savoring the way she looked beneath him. Her fingers clenched on his back, her nails assuredly making tiny crescent-moon indentations in his flesh. Her heels pressed into his buttocks and he grinned as he realized she'd fully freed herself from the restraints. Holding her gaze, he thrust forward once more.

Her heat surrounded him, and he lost himself to the driving need to plunge into her body and the cocoon of power rising from them. Sparks danced across their skin. Their combined magic glowed blue and green around them, sparkling in the air like a thousand tiny air elementals. Teryn refused to close his eyes. He didn't want to miss a single moment.

The delicious slide of their bodies coming together stole the breath from his lungs. Over and over again he thrust into her hot, slick channel. She met him thrust for thrust. Her husky mewls of need mingled with his moans of pleasure, the wet slap of their bodies counterpoint to their audible sounds of lust. Tiny flutters danced along the length of her pussy. Her muscles gripped him, holding him deep inside her. Head tilted back, mouth open to pant in ever-increasing ecstasy, she thrashed as her pleasure peaked. A long scream ripped from her throat.

Teryn could only hang on for the ride as she came. Her release pushed him ever closer to his, balls tightening, his pace quickening. Gods, he'd never felt a need like this, a driving demand that he claim her, mark her, make her his own. Her orgasm went on and on, her scream softening into whimpers, her muscles twitching around him. And

then he pumped his hips, sliding into her silken depths once more, and his seed roared from him. His muscles stiffened, locking him as deep inside as he could go. Muscles taut, he lifted his head back and shouted his triumph. Wave after wave of come poured from him, and at last he drew a shaky breath and lowered his lips to hers.

He kissed her, his mouth tender against her lips. With a sigh, he rolled to the side, never disengaging their bodies, simply taking her with him. He wrapped his arms around her and inhaled the sweet aroma of her hair. Her warm body felt so good next to his. Sparks of magic still danced around them and he watched the motes float through the air.

"Will you want to leave here once your training is completed? I know how the villagers feel about you," he whispered when his breathing returned to normal. The question hung heavy on his mind. The fact she lived in that cabin on the edge of the woods, giving her powers, even her life if necessary for her village, spoke of the strong, vibrant woman she was. If she wanted to go far away from here, he'd understand, though he'd be unable to follow.

The thought of her leaving pained him.

Jendaya sighed. "I don't know," she admitted. "I've always lived here. Even though they didn't want me, I stayed to protect them. I won't let anyone die. The villagers may not want me, but they need me."

I need you. The words died in his throat, too raw to be said. "I understand," he replied instead. "I'd hate to see you go, but your training progresses well. I'm afraid there will come a time when only experience will be your teacher."

She stiffened in his arms. "But you've been doing this so much longer than I have. Surely there are lots of things I need to learn."

"There are, and I'll teach you what I can."

Jendaya reached up and brushed a lock of hair from his forehead. "You can't send me away." She grinned, though worry filled her eyes. "You need me to help you fight, whether you like it or not."

"I don't want to send you away." He brushed his lips across her forehead, her eyelids. At one time he might have thought of foisting her on another mage, but not now, not when he knew he was so damn close to falling in love with her.

With a contented sigh, Jendaya snuggled closer to him and he closed his eyes, simply savoring the moment. One day at a time. That was all he could ask for, and all he could ever hope to receive.

Chapter Seven

A rough pounding on the door woke Jendaya. After their powerful lovemaking, and then his question regarding whether she wanted to stay, she'd fallen into a fitful sleep. The idea of leaving Teryn shook her. She frowned and tugged the blankets closer to her chin. Last night she'd given not just her body, but also her heart to him in a way she'd never done before. If he weren't in her life...a lump filled her throat and she banished the thought. It was stupid of her to fall in love with her teacher anyway.

Love. Oh goddess no! Jendaya struggled against the urge to bolt from the bed, run far away and never reveal her folly. Instead, she evened her breathing, knowing Teryn would feel any disruption in her energy. The magic would tattle on her, even if she said nothing.

Teryn sat up. He shoved the blanket aside, slipping from the bed. Her hand followed him, encountering warm but empty mattress.

The pounding continued.

Jendaya squeezed her eyes closed. Whatever it was, Teryn would take care of it and then she could resume her snuggling with him.

"Mage!" someone yelled. "Mage, wake-up. We need your help."

Oh hell, there'd been another attack. She knew without hearing another word that something horrible had happened and she and Teryn would be called on to save the villagers from the magical beasts. A moment's resentment stabbed through her, quickly banked by the realization that they were all the villagers had to stand between them and the warped, twisted magic. She shuddered as Teryn opened the door.

"Yes? What is it?" Sleep fogged Teryn's voice.

Muttered words filled the air. Jendaya heard low, worried voices. She bit her lip. Rubbing the back of her hand over her eyes, she sat up, pulling the blanket with her for

modesty. The conversation continued and with each second her worry grew. "Teryn, what is it?" she finally asked, unable to take the suspense any longer.

He turned toward her. "Another attack. I have to go." He spoke to the men for a moment longer. Then he shut the door and lit the lamp.

Jendaya clutched the blanket to her chest. "Where was the attack?" She closed her eyes and sucked in a deep breath to calm her fears. With Teryn's training she had nothing to worry about and together, they'd ensure no one would die.

Teryn gave her the details as he dressed. He packed a bag with magical supplies and some food. "I want you to stay here. There are several books on the table you can read, and of course, chores to do around the house. I'm not sure how long I'll be gone. I'll be back when I can."

"What about Wing and Fang?"

"They'll be fine. The rest will do them good."

"Then I'll go with you." Jendaya swung her legs over the edge of the bed. "We'll consider it part of my training. I can help you."

"No!" Teryn barked.

Jendaya blinked. "I want to go. I won't leave you to fight this thing alone. You said yourself my training has progressed well. There's no reason why I shouldn't go with you." Thinking about the hours left alone in the cabin waiting for him to return filled her with dread. She couldn't do it, didn't know how warriors' wives did it, waiting for their men to return. "Please."

"No. You could get hurt," Teryn said.

"You could be hurt too. Don't you trust me? Don't you trust your own training?"

In the silence that followed her questions, Jendaya realized she knew the answer. "You have to trust me, Teryn. I'm not *her*. I won't die."

"I can't be sure of that yet. I'm sorry, Jendaya."

"You're wrong! You could be injured or even die! How do you think it'll be for me stuck here waiting for you? Take me with you. I can help."

Teryn stopped in front of her. "Don't make this more difficult than it has to be. I need to go and we don't have time to argue. I need to know you're safe here. There's plenty to do and I'll be back as soon as I can. But I have to heal the man who was attacked first, and then track down the creature and kill it." He dragged his fingers through his hair. "Hell, I don't even know what it is. No one saw the attack. And this sounds far bigger, far worse than anything you've ever faced before." Closing his eyes, he breathed deeply. When he opened them again, fear for her, and something else, filled his gaze.

The emotion she saw rocked her and she nodded. "All right. I'll stay here." She wrapped her fingers around his arm. "But come back to me. And we'll talk later."

He pressed a hard, fast kiss to her lips before stepping away. "That's the plan." Without waiting for a response, he hurried out the door and Jendaya heard the pounding of hooves as they rode away.

She pressed her clenched fist to her chest, swallowing hard against the tears threatening to fall. She breathed deeply in an attempt to calm herself. It was stupid to be like this. Of course Teryn would return. He'd been battling magical creatures for a long time. And he had her to return to, after all. She returned to the bed, snuggling under the covers again and hoping he'd be there when she woke.

He wasn't, nor did he come once the sun hit its zenith. Outside, hardly any breeze offered comfort from the humid air. In the barn, Wing and Fang were silent, as if they too held their breaths waiting for Teryn to return. She had tried to read, only to close the book and do chores around the cabin. Now there were no more chores left and with every moment that passed, Jendaya feared Teryn might not return. She sat at the table, a mug of cool water by her hand, one of the books he'd suggested open before her.

She read a paragraph then rose to look out the door. When she didn't see him, she decided to take the book to the porch. There she could read and watch for him. He hadn't known when he'd return. Possibly it wouldn't be for several days.

"I can handle this," she said as she seated herself on a rough bench on the front porch. "I've been alone before and I am a mage. I have power." Not even her words could comfort her. Instead, she scanned once more for signs of his return and tried to read.

By the time the sun slanted toward the horizon she hadn't read a single word and worry churned her stomach into knots. She returned to the cabin, lit a lamp and paced. She knew it'd do no good, but it didn't matter. With each step her sense of dread grew.

Jendaya stopped. *I'm only making my nerves worse. I'm sure Teryn's fine.* Her inner monologue sounded hollow. She fixed herself dinner, cheese and bread with some dried jerky, and ate at the table she should have been sharing. She breathed deeply, trying to still her mind as Teryn had taught her. The peace such meditation usually brought eluded her. She frowned and crawled into bed.

By the time morning arrived, her stomach hurt so badly she could hardly walk. All night, images of Teryn being attacked by *boaresks* and *kargons* filled her mind. Although the mage battled bravely, in each nightmare he lost. "Quit being stupid," she muttered as she drew water from the well to heat for a bath. "Teryn's powerful enough to defeat anything. He'll be fine." Her pep talk buoyed her spirits, but only until her bath finished.

Jendaya stood on the porch, dressed in clean leggings and a tunic. She stared in the distance and gave in to the truth in her heart.

Teryn needed her.

Jendaya stomped her foot. Damn it, she didn't even know in which direction he had gone. Racing inside, she lit a candle, filled a shallow bowl with water and sat before it. Divination was a skill that scared her people, yet one Teryn had taught her and that she could use to aid her now. Closing her eyes, she took deep breaths. When she opened

them again she looked directly into the water, not seeing the bottom of the bowl. Instead, she saw a fathomless well, so deep she couldn't see the bottom. "Show me Teryn. Show me the man I love."

Water rippled in the bowl. Jendaya focused as the ripples smoothed out and a picture formed on the surface of the water. Trees, lots of trees surrounded him, their leafy branches reaching high into the sky. Teryn leaned against an outcropping of rock. Blood dripped down the side of his head and sweat plastered his clothes to him. Jendaya stifled a whimper. This was exactly what she feared, and looking at Teryn, she knew he wouldn't last much longer.

A sign. She needed a sign, something to guide her so she knew where he was. There, over the ridge, huts thatched in big broad leaves instead of the straw her people used. He fought farther south in the villages that pressed up against the Spikefall Mountains. Jendaya shuddered and once more ripples covered the surface of the water.

She bolted to her feet, rushing quickly to change into more sturdy clothing and gather a pack. She filled it with rations, bandages and healing herbs. Two full water skins completed her load and she rushed outside.

She paused at the barn, looking not at Wing but at Fang. Jendaya held out her hand and formed the ball of magic. Fang seemed to understand for he stood still, his focus never leaving her. She dropped her belongings by his stall then hurried to the tack room. What care the *zardarks* needed, she didn't know. But she knew instinctively that if anyone would help her save Teryn, it would be Fang. She gathered up the harness and carried it back to the stall.

Not hesitating, she opened the door and stepped inside. Fang stood completely still. She didn't croon to the animal, didn't do anything to try to placate him. Instead, she simply told him the truth. "Teryn's in danger. We have to go help him." Fang made a chuffing noise and allowed her to tack him up. She fastened the packs onto the harness as Teryn had, then led him outside. Fang followed, docile as a puppy.

Jendaya took a deep breath as she grabbed the reins and mounted. Fang stood still, not even shifting his weight from foot to foot. As she tightened her grip on the reins, she also gathered her magic together. A quick burst, enough to tell Fang she meant business—coupled with a mental picture of where she'd seen Teryn—told Fang to go.

The great beast unfurled his wings and began to flap. Jendaya held on tightly as Fang ran down the lane, massive wings churning dust and dirt from the ground. A hop, and then they were airborne, with nothing but Fang's strength holding them aloft.

The men had come on horseback to get Teryn, which meant that the village couldn't be that far away. She looked down over Fang's shoulder at the trees and farmers' huts passing below. Keeping her magic strong, she trusted Fang to take her where she needed to go with only minor steering. Not knowing what the capabilities of these magical creatures were, Jendaya wondered if Fang might be reading her mind. Just as she thought to make a tiny correction in their course, Fang did it, leaving her to do nothing but watch out for Teryn.

The landscape changed beneath them. Deciduous forests gave way to thick trees with wide, glossy leaves. Birds of every color danced between the branches, some circling above the trees with their raucous cries. The heat grew stifling, the humidity thick. Before them, the Spikefall Mountains rose. Named for the thin rock spires that had been known to crumble for no reason, the mountains marked the border between her country, Venelon, and its neighbor. She'd never been so far south, hadn't ventured beyond her village before coming to Teryn. But now she would come to the very border and beyond.

There, she saw the tall trees reaching above the canopy of the forest. Rocks broke up the forest, making it patchy in places. A waterfall trickled, probably forming the Glassfall River where it rushed through the countryside providing water for the farmers and a way to move goods from one part of the country to the other.

Behind one particularly tall jumble of rocks, Jendaya saw the beast.

She didn't know what it was. Twin horns rose from the top of its monstrous head. A black hide so dark it gleamed covered the creature, and twin red eyes glowed. It might have been livestock or started that way, but now huge tusks grew out of the sides of its mouth and spurs ran in a ridge down its back.

Fang didn't falter. Jendaya breathed a sigh of relief that it wasn't a *kargon*, the most feared enemy of the *zardarks*. If it had been, she didn't know how she'd have keep Fang aloft. She urged the *zardark* to hold position, not wanting to get any closer. The creature lumbered to its full height, standing equal to the trees over which they flew. It roared, the bellow bending the thick-trunked trees. Behind it, the ruined village, most of the huts flattened, lay amid a path of broken limbs and trees.

Blue bolts of lightning shot at the creature.

Until that moment, Jendaya hadn't realized she'd been holding her breath, waiting for some sign of Teryn. Her heart leapt with hope. Teryn was alive. She directed Fang to fly in lower. Uncertain whether to fight from Fang's back or from the ground, she tried to assess the situation. Teryn leaned against the cropping of rock, looking even more ragged and bloody than when she had seen him in the scrying bowl. The creature held him pinned. This close, she smelled its fetid breath and saw the spittle dripping from its maw.

Jendaya raised her hand. Energy pulsed around her, called to her. In her mind, she directed it at the creature—a bolt of energy, white-hot and deadly.

The missile struck just beneath the beast's head. The beast roared and thrashed in the trees.

Fang faltered. Quickly, Jendaya willed him to stay aloft and he did, though he dropped so close to the trees that the leaves brushed her legs. No, she couldn't stay on him and fight. If she did, she'd probably end up falling to her death and that wouldn't help Teryn at all. She directed Fang lower, until he descended between the trees to land behind the rock. Jendaya dismounted and hoped Fang stayed. For the time being, it looked like he would.

Jendaya hurried around the rock. "Teryn!" She paused beside him, cupping a bruised cheek in her hand. "Are you all right?" He wasn't. She could clearly see the wound seeping blood along his hairline, and the bruises on his face and arms.

"Jendaya?" He reached for her. "Watch out!" He pulled her away as the beast lunged forward, its tusks scraping the rock just inches from where she stood.

Teryn shoved her behind him and fired several fireballs into the beast.

"What is that thing?"

"A *crowundin*. What the hell are you doing here?" He shot again, though standing this close to him, Jendaya sensed his flagging energy.

She stepped out from behind him. She fired a bolt of power at the *crowundin*. Adrenaline kicked in, her training and powers combining to turn her into a formidable weapon. A weapon with just one purpose—to save Teryn's life.

They moved into position, shoulder to shoulder. Their combined powers lit up the sky. Images of him coming from the trees to help her when she fought the *boaresks* filled her mind. Now she did the same for him.

Teryn shouted, "You shouldn't be here. You could get—"

Jendaya cut off his words by sending another bolt of power into the creature. "Apparently I *should* be here." Her body felt like a raw channel for the energy. Power coursed through her, making her feel invincible. "Let's quit arguing and fight this damn thing!"

"Be careful," Teryn warned as he called forth power.

"*You* be careful," Jendaya yelled as she faced the *crowundin*. This close, she saw that feathers comprised its sleek, black hide. She raised her hands. Sparks flew from her fingers, forming an arc of blue fire so bright it nearly blinded her. The magical flame hit the *crowundin* between the eyes. It staggered backward.

She fought to control the power, to keep pouring her energy into the beast. The flame died.

Jendaya shook her fingers. Taking a deep breath, she raised her hands and found a lightning bolt shooting from her fingers. Just one. It hit the beast in the shoulder. The creature bellowed and staggered.

The *crowundin* lunged. Teryn stepped in front of her, his sword in one hand, power streaming from the other. The blade slid between the joint where leg met body, and the creature screamed. Hot blood splashed over Jendaya as she directed energy into the wound like scalding-hot saltwater.

The beast raked its talons across Teryn. The leather breastplate he wore offered some protection as he thrust the blade hilt-deep into the creature's flesh before yanking it out. The *crowundin* reared back. It opened its mouth, revealing sharp teeth as long as Jendaya's hand. A wave of hot air blew over her and she nearly retched with the smell.

Looking down the beast's maw, she knew she and Teryn faced death. One more shot, that's all they would have and then the *crowundin* would finish them off.

She pulled magic from every living thing around her and thrust it at the beast.

White-hot lightning shot from her fingertips. It poured down the creature's throat. Teryn added his magic to her own. The smell of scorched feathers filled the air. Still she poured raw power through the creature. Her powers crackled and danced, joining with his smooth blue flames. Finally, the beast gave a deafening bellow and dropped to the ground.

Jendaya channeled magic at it. Though spots swam before her eyes and she feared she might fall at any moment, she still attacked it. The beast wouldn't get Teryn, wouldn't take his life, not if she even had to give hers to save him.

Strong hands closed around her shoulders. "Jendaya," Teryn said. "It's dead."

His words barely registered.

Teryn lightly shook her. "Jendaya. Stop!"

His harsh voice broke through her thrall and she closed her hands, shutting down the magic. The *crowundin* lay before her, its hide singed and smoking. Slowly, she turned toward him. "Teryn..." she breathed before shuddering with exhaustion.

"You did it. *We* did it." He swallowed hard and staggered with Jendaya back to where Fang had stood throughout the battle. Grabbing a water skin, he gulped several swallows before speaking again. "I'm not sure I would have had the power to defeat it alone."

Jendaya cupped his cheek. "Yes, you would have. I simply came in at the last moment and helped." She brushed her thumb across his lips. "I love you, and I would have felt horrible if anything happened to you."

Teryn's eyes shone with emotion. "I love you too," he moaned, before crushing her against his chest. "Oh gods, I love you so much!" He brushed his lips across her temple, her cheek, and Jendaya tilted her face so he could claim her lips.

He kissed her, his tongue swiping across her lower lip, and she opened beneath him. There, on the battlefield, with a dead *crowundin* behind them, she gave herself to Teryn.

Magic. She'd always been cursed for it, her illegitimacy something of which to be ashamed. But here, in Teryn's arms, she welcomed the power she wielded. It had brought her to him and it bound them together.

The need for air parted them and for long moments, neither said a word. Then Fang butted Teryn on the shoulder. He grinned. "Let's go home."

"Yes, home." Jendaya grinned in kind. After so long, she had a place where she belonged. And someone who respected the strength of her power. "For more lessons, I hope," she said as she climbed onto Fang's back.

"Of course. Your training isn't done yet, no matter how much you helped." He swung into the saddle behind her. Gathering up the reins, he urged Fang to flight.

"So how long do you think it'll take before I'm fully trained?" Jendaya leaned against Teryn's broad chest and relished his arm wrapped tightly around her middle.

“How about the rest of your life?” Teryn asked, his hand slipping down to cup her pussy through her breeches.

Heat flared through her body. “I think that’s absolutely necessary.”

She watched the scenery fly by as Fang flew over the trees, speeding them on their way back to Teryn’s cabin.

Teryn held the woman in his arms tightly. Pride filled him when he thought of how far she’d come. From a wounded waif he’d found in the woods to someone who could stand beside him battling the fiercest of beasts. He grinned, his cock hardening just thinking about the way her tight cunt gloved him when they made love.

He may have taught his magical student much, but he suspected in the years to come, she’d teach him even more. And he couldn’t wait.

About the Author

Mary Winter began writing when she was sixteen, using it as an excuse to skip gym class. She currently lives in Iowa with her pets and dreams of writing full-time. Her advice to anyone is: "Persistence pays off. Don't ever give up on your dreams!"

Mary welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her author bio page at www.ellorascave.com.

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