

J.R. MITCHELL

BORN
OF
FIRE



Born of Fire

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Dedication

To B and To my editors. Love you guys.

PROLOGUE

In the land of Tir, dragons once ruled all the people. Dying off one by one because they were forbidden to procreate. The dragons were the king of the races and they held too much power. The dragon's of old agreed that to procreate could endanger all the other races. One dragon bucked against the laws his ancestors had set upon him.

A human woman met this dragon and when she became pregnant with his offspring, the world of Tir changed. Her parents, part of the citadel, were keepers of the law. Specially blessed by the magic of the Elves, they discovered her condition and were forced to bring it before the judicial committee.

The father of this unborn child was found and brought to stand with his beloved. Together they faced a fate worse than any could imagine.

The dragon, the last of his kind, could not be executed. So instead, he was forced, after the birth of his child, to watch his beloved executed in his stead. As a dragon and the strongest of all the races, he was able to change into any form he wished. The council decided that he should be forced to change into the woman he loved. His dragon was compelled by magic from his body, and he was damned to live out an eternity as a magic-less human.

This is the story of his child and the path she takes to reclaim her destiny.

CHAPTER ONE

“Kenna get back here!” Her grandfather roared at her retreating back as she fled his humble cottage in Breakshire Woods.

As Kenna fled through the crooked path away from her grandfather, silent tears of anger spilled down her cheeks. *Why must he torment me so?* She asked herself. *I only do what he asks and still he ridicules me for it.*

She picked up speed in a final burst to clear the last of the trees, and skidded to a halt at the edge of the cliffs. If her grandfather knew she continued to come up here, he would have a fit of rage and most likely beat her, but Kenna continued to come anyway. Something about the height and the open air called to her.

Perched on the very edge, she held out her arms and let the fast-paced wind whip at her long blonde tresses and her green dress. The gauzy satin overlay spread out around her like wings, and she reveled in the feel of flying.

She wasn’t sure how long she remained like that. When a man’s voice sounded behind her, “Don’t worry I will help you down. Easy now, don’t panic. . .”

As if she needed any help. She turned her head and stared down her nose at the handsome stranger trying to talk her into his outstretched arms.

With a huff, she swung around towards him and jumped down past his reach. “Who are you?” she questioned.

“I am Finn,” he replied. “I was trying to aid you, my lady.” He bowed.

“Save me?” Her eyebrows arched. “Where are you from, Finn? You obviously weren’t taught how to tell if a lady is in need of saving. Good day.”

Kenna whirled around and started back towards her grandfather’s cottage. The winding path through the forest was always lovely at this time of day and the overhead canopy of branches gave off enough shade in these hot summer months to make the walk pleasant.

Finn rushed to catch up to her, as she walked down the meandering path. “I am sorry, my lady. Since you have given me no name by which to call you then, my lady, will have to suffice. Might I ask you for directions? I am looking for an elderly man named Ivan McCrea.”

“Ivan McCrea is my grandfather and I am on my way home now,” she responded suspiciously.

“Ahh, then you must be Kenna. Your grandfather has told me much about you.”

She stopped and looked at him. “Just how exactly do you know my grandfather?”

“I met him in the Citadel, at the Hall of Dragon’s. He was there often, long ago. Has he never mentioned his stay in the Citadel?” Finn asked.

Kenna’s clear laugh rang out into the forest, startling a few grouse from their hiding spot further up the path. With a wide smile, she asked, “Why Finn, you can be no older than I, and my grandfather has not ventured from the Breakshire for as long as I can remember.”

Finn smiled at her and not saying another word gestured for her to continue the walk to Ivan McCrea’s cottage.

Finn was quiet for the remainder of the walk and Kenna hummed in low tones while walking towards the place she had run from just that morning.

CHAPTER TWO

“Grandfather, I’m home.” Kenna announced as they walked into the gated yard. Her grandfather was waiting on the porch for her. Kenna noticed her grandfather’s eyes grow to mere slits when he recognized Finn. He remained quite for a few moments, when he spoke his voice was firm.

“Kenna, you have chores and studies to do. Best get to them.” Ivan McCrea did not even look at her when he commanded the household chores be done, but instead steeled his gaze on Finn.

Kenna spared them both one last glance, wondering what this stranger could want with her grandfather, and what they could possibly discuss. She rushed off to feed the chickens and start her meditation. She needed to concentrate her magical abilities for study.

* * * *

Finn gave Ivan one long look and nodded at him. Ivan knew it was time and he didn’t like it, but he had known this day would come.

Ivan stared back at Finn and shrugged. He gestured for Finn to come into the house, and they settled in front of the hearth to have their heart-to-heart about his granddaughter.

“It is time Ivan. Is she ready to travel?” Finn asked.

“No she is not, but how do you prepare a young girl for this type of trial?” Ivan answered honestly.

“You didn’t have to take her. We could have raised her in the Lymir,” Finn countered.

“I would not wish that on anybody other than the likes of you, Finn. I harbor no love for the elf race and I doubt Kenna has even guessed that there are other races out there.”

“Even though she is not completely human?” Finn asked looking pointedly at Ian. He continued, “As a half breed dragon she could potentially be a master of them all. And you have not told her of the other races Ivan shame on you? Once upon a time, we elves didn’t bother you so much.”

Ivan noticed the humor in Finn’s voice and shrugged once again, he was not happy that Finn was here to collect his granddaughter. “I don’t think she is ready.”

“Come now Ivan, you are the one who hated her father. You disowned her mother before her death for being with her father and you wouldn’t even touch Kenna when you took her. Your wife, rest her, took her in. I sometimes wonder if you had any say so in the matter at all.”

Ivan grinned at the memory of the fights he and his wife had had long ago. Kenna had no idea how old she really was. In terms of her father’s race, she shouldn’t even be born yet.

The gestation of dragons could last up to a millennium. Because she is half-human she was born before her time. It had been fifty years since his wife had passed away, and Kenna had been with them for another fifty before that. She was just a teenager in relative terms and going back to the Citadel was not what Ivan wanted for her. Elven magic had sustained his life until he had completed the task of raising Kenna. Soon she would be gone and he knew he would pass away into the night.

“Finn, she will not understand,” Ivan warned.

“Then perhaps you should have told her the truth,” Finn shot back.

“Won’t understand what, Grandfather?” Kenna piped in from the doorway.

“What have I told you about eavesdropping, girl?” Ivan boomed at Kenna, as he turned in his seat to stare at her.

Kenna had the boldness to stare straight back at him. “Well if the talk is about me, don’t you think I should have a say so in what goes on?”

Ivan stood up and faced his granddaughter. “When I feel you are mature enough to not eavesdrop and to do your chores like you were told, then maybe we can have this discussion, but until you learn a small portion of discipline then the answer is *no!*”

As Ivan watched his granddaughter flee with tears streaming down her face, he was thankful that not very many things in the Breakshire could harm her.

“Ivan that was harsh,” Finn chided.

“The girl has got to learn, Finn. We both know it. Her headstrong ways could get her in trouble.”

“Murrock has been spotted. He is out of hiding. We need Kenna now.”

“Murrock? That bastard has far outlived any usefulness he should have,” Ivan retorted.

“It is not so, Ivan. He has grown in power. He is an evil thing, and he knows of Kenna. He knew of her when we banished him.”

Ivan sighed in defeat and watched Finn get up and walk to his cupboard to find the brown liquid that he had forbidden Kenna to drink. Finn poured them both one swallow. Again, he carefully hid the brown liquid in the back of the cupboard and brought one to Ivan. “It is time Ivan. We must take the next step in Kenna’s destiny.”

The two men looked at one another. As one, they gulped down their drinks.

After the brown liquid hit Ivan’s stomach he sank into a deep trance he could hear his wife’s voice come back to haunt him.

* * * *

Ivan try to be calm.

How could you, Kenina?

Father I love him. I am to have his baby.

Unacceptable Kenina. Your child will be the ruin of the world. How could you do this? You knew the prophecy. You knew what would happen and yet you still did this. The people of Tir will all die because you have chosen your happiness over the world.

Ivan enough. She has made her choice. There is nothing we can do about it. You know the laws of our land. Murrock must die.

Finn, they all must die.

Only Murrock will die as what he is and be reborn. The child may yet be turned to our advantage. We will take her to Lymir and teach her the arts of magic.

We will teach her, Finn. Ivan and myself. Your council can accept that. It is our right as the grandparents to raise her. Know that we will abide by all of the rules you set for us in this task.

Fiona, you know not what you ask. The child will outgrow us and live to be a thousand years old. How are we to live that long?

Ivan, my husband, Finn will help us live that long. It is our duty to our kin and to Tir to do this.

As Ivan came out of his trance, tears rolled down his faces. Murrock was the reason they were here, and Kenna was the result of her mother's rash decision.

Finn looked at him knowingly, "I too remember that day my friend."

"Murrock should have been killed then." Ivan said in a tired voice.

"He was the last of his kind. How were we to know what Kenna would be? We had to ensure that his species did not die by our hands. You know what could have happened if we had killed him." Finn was just as tired. "Now it is time for Kenna to come to the Citadel before her father finds her. If she is destroyed, we will have no choice but to restore him."

CHAPTER THREE

Kenna waited in the dark for her grandfather to call for her. He rarely let her have hours of peace, especially when she was throwing a fit.

She waited there and sulked for what seemed like hours until her grandfather and Finn had outwaited her. She was about to go home and pout when she heard a noise behind her.

“So this is where they have stashed you, eh?” A man’s voice rang out with a heavy accent Kenna had never heard before.

“Excuse me?” she whispered, her heart beginning to race.

“My lord will be very pleased when I bring you back to him.”

“I don’t think so. My grandfather is looking for me. I must get back home.”

“Don’t worry young one. Your grandfather will know what has happened to you.” When the man stepped out of the surrounding shadows, Kenna screamed. Before her stood something not human.

She fled on foot, not knowing if she was heading in the right direction and screamed again. *Calm down Kenna*, she chided herself, trying to calm her fright. *Think. Think. You must outsmart him. You know magic and you know you are going the wrong way. Turn around and get back to your grandfather.* Kenna’s inner voice kicked her into action and she slowed her pace and turned into the underbrush. As she picked her way through the forest, she could hear whatever that thing was, cursing her as he chased after her like a boar.

She slowed once again when she came to a familiar spring. She was tempted to stop and have a drink of water but suddenly, the beast landed next to her on the ground. She let out another frightened scream and rushed into the pool.

“Come now, youngster, why make this harder than it has to be?” He asked while she stared in terror at his rows of jagged teeth sticking out of his face at odd angles. Her reaction to his grey tinged skin and his large torso was something akin to shock.

“What are you?” she snapped, letting her anger at the invasion mask her fear.

Chuckling, the figure said, “I am a troll. Haven’t you ever heard of a troll before?”

“No never. I thought only humans existed along with nature’s creatures.” Kenna watched him with wariness, and contemplated what she would do if he tried to grab her again.

She didn’t have long to wait. The troll lunged at her within a matter of seconds, and she did the only thing that came to her. She reacted with magic.

“Rach ‘na lasair,” *Go up in flames*, she mumbled, pointing her finger at the strange creature. Screaming as he went up in flames, Kenna ran for her life. Not waiting to see if she had

killed him, she headed toward home, but was taken off guard when she ran headlong into Finn.

* * * *

Finn whisked Kenna off to her grandfather, and then went back to investigate. All he found was a burnt carcass of what once was a troll. *Impressive. She has the fire in her soul. This could go either way, and I must have her with me when we finally discover what her destiny will be.*

Finn performed a chasing ritual to find out exactly where this troll came from and why he was after Kenna. If for some reason Murrock had found her so easily, then their journey was going to be a hard one.

Placing a hand on the carcass' burnt skull he whispered, "faileas fuirich orm chuige." *Shadow take me to him.* Finn floated with the shadow of the troll back to his worst fear--Murrock.

When Murrock looked up to stare at the troll's shadow and Finn behind it, he cursed them both and Finn raced back to his body.

When he came to, Finn ran back to Ivan's cottage and shouted for him. "We must leave immediately. The troll was sent by Murrock and he knows where Kenna is. We have to leave. I cannot protect her here. I need to get back to Lymir. There we can protect her."

"You must take her. I will stay here. Murrock probably located Kenna through me anyway. Finn, take care of her. She is all the family I have left. If Murrock gets a hold of her, who knows what will happen."

Finn nodded and rushed to gather the girl and what few supplies he would need for their journey to Lymir. He could only hope that Kenna would not fight him on this.

When Ivan handed him a short sword built for a woman, Finn was glad. *Thank god, it seems that Ivan has taught her how to fight as well as some small magic, but I will reinforce everything Ivan had already taught her the on the road to Lymir.*

"Kenna, you must be ready to leave." Ivan bellowed out at his granddaughter.

"Grandfather, I do not wish to leave you alone," she whispered. "Please come with us."

"I can not, Kenna. You must go. I feel beings pushing against my spells. I cannot protect you for much longer. Go, Kenna. Go now!" He shouted this last part, and then he mumbled something and disappeared. Kenna could only imagine he had gone to fight whatever it was trying to get to her, as she and Finn fled on foot.

Instead of heading the way out of Breakshire, Finn led her deeper into the woods. Through twisted brambles and undergrowth, Kenna and Finn fled, trying to outrun whatever was following them.

* * * *

Finn's soul was floating in the air above Breakshire, he could see Ivan fighting for his life. He hovered in order to see their path with a bird's eye view, as well as see how far behind their enemies were. Meanwhile his body raced ahead on the ground, pulling Kenna with him.

Trolls were not far behind, but occasionally Finn saw them burst into flame. Fire had always been Ivan's strongest magic, and it showed. He couldn't see Ivan anymore, but with the occasional burst of flame, he knew he still survived. It had always boggled Finn's mind as to why Ivan chose exile to raise his granddaughter. He could imagine why Ivan wanted to hide it, but Ivan must have known this day would come eventually. And to not have any help from allies while raising Kenna was a risky gamble that he himself would never take.

Still racing ahead, Finn was stopped short by Kenna when she refused to move forward anymore. Kenna pointed at something and he turned to her in anger, ready to explode when he saw what she was pointing at. It looked like underbrush from the air, but when Finn's soul came back to his body, he saw the problem.

Trolls stomped through the woods in search of them and Kenna gestured for Finn to follow her through the traps that Mother Nature had built into her greatest creation--Breakshire Wood.

CHAPTER FOUR

Kenna picked her way through the brambles. One prick and a person would be killed in a matter of minutes. If the thorn bushes were jostled too much, they shot out their poisoned thorns. It was a hard path to take and one she'd learned how to navigate long ago. Her grandfather had insisted on it. The trick today was to get through them before the trolls reached them and ran in. If one person set off the natural traps then all the bushes would follow, and she and Finn would be in the middle of it.

Finn followed her every footstep, held the branches exactly where she held them back for him. It was a slow process, but this was the best escape from Breakshire. Not only was it hard for others to follow, but if one knew the trick, many enemies could be killed before the day was done.

As they cleared the last of the thorns, Kenna could hear the trolls and knew they weren't far behind. She was sure they had to have made it to the start of the thorns and she was also sure many would die before they made it out. Smiling a grim smile to herself, she returned the lead to Finn, and they ran once again into the night, racing against the rising sun to reach a safe place.

* * * *

The rising sun found them exiting the last of the trees into a big open field, full of wheat. It had been a long time since Kenna remembered being out of the Breakshire and she wanted to stop and take in the sights. Finn however had other plans and urged her into the brush to hide while they broke their fast and rested for a small period.

Finn broke their silence and handed her the water jug and a piece of flat bread. "Here, Kenna. Drink this and eat some bread. We can't stop until we reach Lymir."
"Why are they after me, Finn? And will Grandfather be okay?" she asked, taking a drink to quench her thirst.

"Your grandfather will be fine. As to why they are after you, well that is a long tale, better saved for a more appropriate time. We can't dawdle here long. The remaining trolls will be recovering from their losses and tracking us once more. We must have more distance between us."

Kenna stood and stretched her legs as well. "Maybe tonight we can pause long enough for you to tell me this tale," she stated and began to walk towards the direction they were headed. Her grandfather had taught her some geography and she knew Lymir was located in the north. She headed that direction and Finn followed closely behind her.

They had traveled for half the day. Finn did not call for a halt but instead passed the water jug to Kenna as well as more of the flatbread. "Kenna, why don't you tell me about your fighting skills, including any magic you know? It will help me gauge where to start your training on this journey to Lymir." Kenna studied Finn. He was not looking at her but instead scanning the surrounding area for any enemies.

“Well, Grandfather taught me basic magic. The words. I can cast flame as well as water. He said it was in my soul to do magic. He taught me the basic meditation needed to gather strength, and he has begun to teach me sword play.”

“Sounds like Ivan has given you a good base to learn more from me.” Finn said with confidence.

“You speak as though I am not accomplished,” Kenna retorted. “I must warn you, I have done well in my studies.”

“I realize this and having a basic fire spell is not what you did to that troll. That looked like an advanced spell and if it wasn’t, then you have tremendous power.”

Smiling at him, she took the water jug and the bread and nibbled away at it. Thinking back to what she could have done different where the troll was concerned, she felt a twinge of guilt at having to kill the poor man. *No ‘man’ is not the right word, he was trying to kill me, and he was more like a creature. At least I think he was trying to kill me.*

* * * *

“Kenna, it is not good to doubt one’s self. You did what you had to do.” Finn whispered, with a thoughtful look on his face

“I know it is just that I feel bad about taking a life,” she whispered in response.

“Do you feel the same way about the trolls that followed us into the thorns?” Finn wanted to know how deep her empathy ran.

“No. Do you find that strange? Maybe it was the closeness of the kill that makes me regret having to kill another living being.” Kenna sank into thinking and no matter what Finn said she did not respond.

Coming into a small wooded area, Finn paused and motioned for Kenna to stop behind him.

“Finn I feel as though we are being watched,” Kenna whispered to him and watched as he held up a hand to silence her. They stayed frozen in position for a few minutes until the feeling passed.

Finn motioned for them both to move forward, and Kenna, reached out with her senses, as her grandfather had taught her and searched the surrounding area.

* * * *

She couldn’t feel any beings close enough to be a threat. She could sense the farmers in their fields working away at the plow, desperate to get in the last of the crop before the sun sank. She felt the birds flying high and the horses in the field to the east. Concentrating all her efforts on the surrounding woods, she realized the danger too late and cried out as the arrows rained down on them from the highest branches in the trees.

CHAPTER FIVE

Finn and Kenna dove for cover in the underbrush along the side of the trail they were walking on. Kenna heard Finn curse beneath his breath, she watched him and decided he was trying to figure out what to do next.

Kenna, not waiting for Finn to decide, rushed out and spied her targets. She noticed five of them, not trolls but not humans either. Yet another species her grandfather had failed to tell her about.

“Adhar, sagail,” *Air and mist*. The wind picked up and swayed the top of the trees, giving a small respite to Kenna and Finn as their assailants were forced to hang on. The wind brought in a thick blanket of mist with it, so Kenna and Finn could move out from their location and pick a better spot in which to fight back.

While the enemies from above slowly made their way down the massive trunks of the great Oak, Kenna and Finn signaled each other by hand in preparation of the upcoming fight. When the first enemy reached the forest floor, Kenna headed in his direction with her small sword in hand. Silencing him with a slit to his throat from behind, she held him and slid him to the ground. Kenna glanced down at the male and noticed that, aside from the obvious differences, he was similar to humans. He was smaller in structure, had brown skin, four arms and his legs were structured to bend backwards. But as for facial features, he looked just like any human. Wanting to talk this over with Finn, she worked her way back to his position.

She arrived just as Finn moved silently off in the opposite direction, and Kenna opened her senses to track whatever it was he was going after. Finn was a bright violet color, and the strange being he was after, a muddy brown. Even these creature’s auras differed from humans. Kenna had never known a human to have that sort of earthy element and the enemies they were facing confused her. Finn was somewhat of a mystery as well. Kenna watched as with ease, the other three enemies gracefully started to descend out of the trees, and she moved off once again to face a foe. Taking him out with ease, she slinked back to her previous position and met up with Finn. She raised an eyebrow in an unspoken question and just then, the final two dropped down in front of them. The mist had thickened to a fog, and Kenna wanted to take advantage of it. She called off the wind she had summoned earlier, and watched as Finn pulled out a long reed.

Finn slipped something pointy in the reed, brought it to his lips and blew with force through one end. She turned back to the muddy colors of the beings and watched as one of them dropped to the ground.

It was then that the last remaining creature uttered words foreign to Kenna, and the fog started to clear. *It is now or never*, she thought to herself as she rushed the last opponent.

Finn shouted something to her, but she was already engaged with the last brown man. He fainted to the left with some sort of wicked looking curved sword, and Kenna took the bait. She received a small slice into her sword arm for her effort.

She and the brown creature circled one another feinting in turn trying to find out the other's weaknesses. Kenna spied her opening and pressed the attack. It was her fatal mistake. The man's sword came up and met hers, and with a deft twist of his wrist, she was disarmed. *Stupid of me*, she thought as she back peddled far enough away to try to regain her composure. She sensed Finn on the sidelines staying out of sight. It gave her a boost of confidence. What the brown man did next took her by surprise.

He pointed a long skeletal finger at her, and whispered, "Gath-greine." *Sunbeam*. Sunlight hit her directly and Kenna was trapped in its circle. She never expected to be caught unaware by magic. It was her strong suit and she knew this spell. It could kill her. Her natural defenses kicked in, but she knew she could not fight the power of the sun. This could be her downfall, and even if Finn stepped in and killed her opponent, she would still be trapped here in this small circle of light. She could do only two things--she either had to fight the magic and win, or she herself had to kill him in order to cancel out his magic. However, she had to kill him with stronger magic.

Racking her brain, Kenna could feel her resolve failing. She grew hotter from the sun, and knew she had to do something. She screamed aloud, "Gallan gu siorraidh." *Standing stone forever*. She pointed a dirty forefinger at him and watched as he paled. She watched his pallor fade to a softer brown color while surprise at her knowledge of the arcane played about his features. She watched in horror as his feet stopped moving and a pale grayness crawled up his legs to trap him in stone.

The spell she was trapped in lessened in strength, and she could reinforce her own spell with willpower. Reaching deep within her own power she used her hands to cast a small amount of power to the almost stone clad man. She watched him raise his head to the sky to utter one last death cry to the world.

Kenna had turned him to stone, but she knew the effects of this spell. He was not dead, but trapped forever as a living rock. He would starve but never feel the relief of a full stomach, never be able to quench his thirst, never be able to take his own life or rid himself of the curse she had placed on him.

The amount of power it took to finish the spell left Kenna drained, and she quickly succumbed to the horror and exhaustion of what she had just done.

CHAPTER SIX

“You poor, stupid girl. You definitely had to learn a hard lesson,” Finn whispered as he picked Kenna up and carried her to another part of the forest. The last thing she was going to want to see was the cruel thing she had done to the brownie.

Kenna stirred in his arms, and then snuggled deeper into them. Finn smiled down at her. *If she wasn't who she is then I could fall in love with her*, he thought with a grim humor. *Unfortunately, I cannot, and will not.* He continued to hike through the underbrush careful to keep up his awareness on any impending danger.

Finn wondered how far he should hike her out. He could probably carry her slight frame for a hundred miles. *Surely, her grandfather told her about Lymir. But did he tell her it is the home of elves?* He asked himself as he cleared the last of the large oak trees, and entered a farmer's plowed field. *It is too risky to go into this village.* Finn was disappointed but knew the hazards involved in letting people see them. Murrock obviously had powerful allies, if he was able to send a Brownie Wizard and a small hunting party after them. It meant that Murrock had vast amounts of gold in which to bribe them with.

Kenna began to stir and Finn thought it best to stop and camp for the remainder of the day. Setting her down gently he dug in his bag and found some kindling with which to start a fire. He made a small ring of stones and placed the bits of wood in the correct pattern in order for the spell to work on something dead. “Rach ‘na lasair,” he muttered and the wood sprang to life with fire. Searching the surrounding area, he found larger pieces of wood in which to feed the fire, and he added them one by one. When he had finished his task, he turned to find Kenna staring at him intently.

Tears shimmered in her eyes and Finn knew she remembered what she had done. Kenna didn't say a word but rolled over and gave Finn her back. It was a sad day for her, and it was something she had to come to terms with.

Instead of attempting talk, Finn filled a small pan he pulled from his light bag, and set water to boil. Getting up and scrounging the area for herbs, he set them in the pot, and returned to rummage in his bag. He pulled a dried hunk of meat, as well as rice and set them in the pot of herbs and water. Finn turned back to Kenna and found her once again studying him. It was a bit unnerving for him to be watched so closely but there was nothing he could do about it. *This girl is too smart for her own good* he thought as he stirred the pot again.

“Kenna are you hungry?” He asked when the rice was done.

“Yes a bit,” she whispered back. “I am a monster,” she affirmed in a quiet voice, and the tears that had been threatening to spill, did so.

“No, not a monster,” Finn replied as he once again dug in his bag for bowls and spoons. Finding the sought after items, he served them both a bowl of rice and meat.

“Finn, would Grandfather be upset with me?” she asked.

“No I do not think Ivan would be upset. He would understand that you were about to die. I am sorry I could not help you in this task.”

“I know, Finn. I lay no blame at your feet. Grandfather taught me these spells and how to counteract them. I knew when it hit me that I was going to have to kill him.” Taking a spoonful of food, she chewed and thought for a moment. “They were not trolls, or were they another type of troll?”

“They are a species known as the Brownies. They hardly ever align themselves with anybody. If you have enough gold, they can be bought though. Their wizards are very powerful and much respected in their tribes.”

“How is it that they hunt us then?”

“I don’t know Kenna. I just know a very evil man wants you, and he will stop at nothing but death to achieve that goal,” Finn answered, knowing that she watched him closely.

“But why? How is it that I am such a strong magic user? Is that the reason why this man hunts me?” Kenna asked. “I need to know what I am up against.”

“Kenna, I think it best that you rest for awhile and when we reach Lymir, I will tell you this long tale.” Finn doused the fire. The sun would soon set and they had to be moving along again in order to stay ahead of Murrock and his hired henchmen.

“Yes, but two more questions please,” she begged.

“I do not guarantee an answer, but ask anyway,” Finn answered, as he started to put the cleaned dishes back into his bag.

Kenna chewed her lip for a moment and then asked, “I know you are not human. What are you?”

Laughing aloud, Finn turned to her, and let his glamour drop. Kenna watched his appearance change. He looked much the same only more vibrant, wild. His hair grew wild, as if it had a life of its own. His ears were somewhat pointed on the top, and his aura was visible to the naked eye. He literally glowed with a purple tinge to his body. He was handsome, almost beautiful and it hurt Kenna’s eyes to look at him. His magic spoke to hers in whispers, and Kenna knew that they would be linked forever because of it.

Glamour was a disguise that all elves were born with and it let them fool another into thinking whatever the user wanted them to see. “I am an elf. I know Ivan did not tell you of the other species, and I will explain all of it to you when we reach Lymir.”

Kenna nodded her acceptance of his answer. “Well for my other question, did you know my parents?”

Finn balked at her question, and then finally answered. “Yes I did, Kenna.”

“Can you tell me about them, while I rest?”

Evading the question easily Finn replied, “I answered two questions and I will answer no more this day unless it is to further your training.”

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Kenna sank back down her excitement crushed under Finn’s killing blow.

When Kenna and Finn reached the outer most trees of Lymir, Kenna sank to her knees. *I know this place. I feel as if I am home at last. The magic here is strong, stronger than I could have imagined.*

“Kenna are you okay? What’s wrong?” Finn asked panic in his voice. “Is the magic of Lymir hurting you?”

“Yes, Finn I am fine. I just feel like I am home after a long time gone. Does that make any sense?”

Finn smiled back at her and sank into a cross-legged position beside her. “I too feel it Kenna. We have reached the outer boundaries of Lymir. It is best you get used to the magic here, as it will only get stronger the closer we get to the capital.”

CHAPTER SEVEN

The trip through Lymir was hard on Kenna but as they neared the Citadel, the sights she saw amazed her. The forest they had been traveling through thinned and she could glimpse farmed fields through the trees. They came up on a bend and Kenna begged to rest before they went on. The magic of Lymir was taking its toll and Finn assured her that it would pass in a couple of days.

“Come on Kenna. We are almost there,” Finn said in a rush.

“What’s the rush, Finn? The magic is draining me, and I would like to rest for just a few minutes before we reach the Citadel.”

“Something is not right here. We need to get to the safety of the Citadel. There my people can protect us better then we can protect ourselves.”

Nodding in acceptance, Kenna moved forward. As they rounded the last bend in the forest, Finn’s fear was realized. The Citadel was under attack by Brownies and Trolls. Pushing Kenna back into the high wheat fields along the side of the road,

“Kenna I know of a back way into the Citadel but first we must rest. It is a complex spell and you will have to lend me some of your magic in order to complete it,” Finn whispered.

“Grandfather said never to do that. You could kill me that way,” Kenna whispered back into Finn’s outraged face.

“I have protected you since the day we met. I need your trust now, or we shall surely fail in this quest. Murrock is after you, and it appears he will stop at nothing to get you.”

“Why does this Murrock want me so badly? I am just a girl who lived in Breakshire Woods, with a little magic.” Kenna was feeling the pressure Finn was putting on her to do something she didn’t want to do.

“I will explain all once we are safely inside, but I need your consent to do this spell.” Finn sounded desperate to Kenna and it almost persuaded her.

“Listen, I don’t care how badly we need to get inside. I am not giving you open access to my magic. If it is that important, teach me the spell and loan me *your* magic. I can perform it.” Kenna sounded angry and she didn’t care. She would not do it and that was all there was to it.

“Thank the Lymir. Kenna I am glad you didn’t fall for it.” Finn paused and smiled at the astonished look on her face. “Remember once we are inside do not trust anybody, not even me. Follow your instincts. They are good and never open yourself up to what I have asked. When you find out the truth, you are going to hate me. Well at least I think you will, but what I have done is for the best.” With this final statement, Finn muttered a spell under his breath so that Kenna could not hear. He grabbed her arm and they were transported inside the city walls.

* * * *

Everywhere Kenna looked, she was amazed. The Citadel was constructed from wood, and yet it looked like all the spires were made of ivory. Multiple levels of hanging walkways dangled from the ancient trees that made up this amazing city. The people, though under attack from outside, remained remarkably calm.

“Come, Kenna. We must get you to the great hall to meet Aribeth.”

Finn pulled her along by the arm as she gazed up into the heights of the city. Fairies of all colors flitted past on wings instead of using the suspended walkways. Most of the people in the Citadel were human looking but Kenna could tell the difference. There was one race of extraordinarily tall people, which loped like antelopes and were dressed in pastel clothing that looked like dresses but were actually pants. They were fair skinned. Almost see through. The fairies also looked see through in a different way. They glowed with a white light that Kenna considered to be their magic shining through their skin. There was also a light olive skinned race that were short and stout with long beards that reached their waists, it seemed even the women of this race grew facial hair.

Kenna finally looked in front of her and was astounded to see a corral on the ground level that housed the most amazing horses, white shimmering mounts with horns sticking out of their foreheads. Some were already dressed up in armor while others were asked politely if they wouldn't mind being armored. Some had wings, some did not. The armor that lay on them was complicated to say the least with various leather straps dangling about that Kenna surmised was for the rider to hang onto while in the sky.

Finn hurried Kenna on and when they reached a large tree, larger than her grandfather's cottage back in the Breakshire. He depressed a knot on the trunk that was eye level and the entire face shifted inward, then swung open.

“Lord help me,” Kenna whispered, as she watched the tree pulse as the door swung inward. Finn, not looking back, walked in and quickly disappeared into the darkness.

“Are you coming, Kenna?” His voice sounded far off but Kenna followed anyway and after taking three steps, she walked right into his back. “There is no need to be frightened,” he said when she let out a small squeal.

“Where are we, Finn?”

“This is the route to the great hall. Just relax while I get us up there, and remember things are going to be chaotic because of the ensuing war we now have on our hands.”

Kenna understood and let out a long screech as the floor on which they were standing took off upwards at a high rate of speed.

As they reached the top, Kenna was afraid they would be pushed up into the air. However, just before the floor slowed to a crawl so that the stop was smooth. Finn immediately strolled off to their right with confidence and left Kenna to trail behind him.

She hurried not wanting to be far from Finn and was rewarded in a matter of steps with a bright light up ahead of them. She wanted to hurry, though it seemed ridiculous that she would be afraid of the dark, and supposed it was because she felt there was something dark inside of her.

When they reached the light, Kenna the view astounded her. It seemed as though they were above the world itself. No other tree's branches blocked their view of Lymir. Just inside her peripheral vision, a group of people, regal in their poses, talked heatedly. She turned her head to the right in order to watch them. Standing alone in their center was the most beautiful woman Kenna had ever seen.

CHAPTER EIGHT

“Hail Aribeth,” Finn shouted out as he dropped to one knee in front of the beautiful woman.

“Finn. Good of you to return to us in these trying times. I have no idea what has the Trolls and Brownies worked up enough to attack us,” she responded.

Finn stood and turned back to Kenna. He motioned her forward and introduced them. “Aribeth, this is Kenna.”

Kenna watched closely as the surprise at her name flashed through Aribeth’s eyes.

“Pleased to meet you,” Kenna said as she dropped in a curtsy. “I am Kenna McCrea, Ivan McCrea’s granddaughter.”

“Pleased to meet you as well Kenna, and be welcome in Lymir. I am Aribeth leader of this kingdom. I have heard of your grandfather, as well as your parents. You are a most welcome sight, and your presence also explains what has gotten into these misbegotten tribes of Trolls and Brownies.”

“How so?” Kenna knew she'd hit a sore spot when Aribeth turned to look at Finn.

“I did not think it wise to explain to her all that has happened and who she is. Ivan never felt it prudent. I believe he was hoping this would never happen.” Finn answered.

“And now the task is left to me,” Aribeth replied with a grin. “You are so thoughtful, Finn.” She turned to Kenna and said, “The duties of leader are never quite finished. Shall we have some tea?”

Kenna thought for a moment about how she wanted to trust, but was hesitant because everything was so new to her. She weighed her feelings and bobbed her head in acceptance. “Aribeth,” she questioned, “will you tell me of my mother and father? Will you tell me why these Trolls and Brownies are after me?”

“Yes, Kenna, I will. Now let us enjoy some Elven tea and a bit of bread to break the fast of your journey. My army commanders are more than capable of turning back these unruly tribes for the time being.”

Aribeth did not lead her back to the tree trunk, but instead led her off around the far side of the trunk and through a small door to a room encased in glass. There was a looking pool set in a high pedestal as well as a looking mirror centered above it. Kenna’s grandfather had told her of such things, but she had never seen one before.

Once seated, Aribeth started to speak as a fairy flitted over them with a tray laden with small sandwiches, a teapot and golden teacups. “Kenna, I should start at the beginning. I have been a leader for a long time, and at the beginning, we were aligned with the greatest race of all--the dragons.”

Kenna sipped her tea. Her eyes grew round with wonder. She was curious about these dragons, what they would look like with such a fierce name.

“Dragons are a flying race. They can spout fire and hold the greatest of magic. Some say they were the creators of all Lymir. I sometimes think they may have. The dragons were an ancient race.

“It was ruled by their own that they would not breed. They were too powerful and long-lived. There seemed no need for them to mix with other species. One dragon defied these laws and bred with a human woman. His name was Murrock and he was hell bent on taking over all the races, to become the supreme ruler. His magic had been tainted by greed. As thus, he fell in love and procreated. Because of this he was imprisoned and forced to watch the destruction of his human mate.”

Kenna thought of this legend and wondered what it had to do with her, “What happened to Murrock?”

“As the only surviving dragon we could not kill him. That would have meant death itself for all races. It has long been foretold that to eliminate even one race regardless of how powerful they were would throw the balance of Mother Nature out of sync and Ban-dia, the goddess would punish us all with death were this to happen. however; his dragon and magic was forced from his being and he was cursed to live out all eternity as a magi-less human.”

“It seems as though this Murrock is better off with no magic, but to be cursed to live as only half of what you are seems unnecessarily cruel,” Kenna replied as she nibbled on a sandwich.

“I am glad you find pity in your heart. Now as to why you are so important,” Aribeth paused to study Kenna for a moment. “You are the product of that mating, Kenna. Murrock is your father. Ivan is the father of your mother who was put to death after your birth.”

Kenna stared at her in shock, her jaw gaping and her eyes wide. She shook her head no over and over, as the realization hit her. This would mean her father wanted her, and would kill thousands in order to get her.

“I am sorry Kenna, but it is the truth. We never meant to hurt you, but action had to be taken. Your father, Murrock, had defied his own laws and for that, he had to be punished. Your mother fell in love, but knew what the consequences would be if she were found out.”

Kenna finally stopped her head shaking and stared at Aribeth. This woman was apologizing to her, for no reason. Kenna did not hold her accountable for the things that were done. She did however wonder why Murrock wanted her now after all these years.

“Aribeth how old am I?” Kenna could tell the question shocked Aribeth. It was not what she had been expecting.

“You are just over one hundred, Kenna. Why do you ask?”

“It is just that I wondered how long it had taken Murrock to find the power to fight you and all the innocents in the Tir in order to get me. Why does he want me anyway?”

“Well we are not completely sure. If you were to die, then he could never be killed. But first, he would have to find out if you could be turned to a dragon or not. If you cannot then he is still safe from an execution. Tir has suffered for not having any true dragons, the crops do not prosper, and the droughts have affected all of the land. We shall soon need a true dragon, not a human with a dragon’s soul to correct the things that have occurred since our magic punished him. I think he would try to force us into giving back his dragon if you were dead. Lymir sang with your magic the instant you came within its boundaries, and now I think you have the same abilities as your father.”

“He is not my father. If anyone should be considered my father, it should be my grandfather. It takes more to be a Papa than just being there for the fun stuff,” Kenna replied angrily.

“I do believe that you are all goodness, and because of that we shall protect you with our very lives. Right now, you are *the* most important being in Tir. If you are a true dragon then you may be able to change, but alas, you will have a few years of training before you can actually do so. I only pray that Tir can hold out that long. We may be forced by Murrock to give him back something if not.”

Kenna started to deny it when some unknown force hit the trunk of a tree and both women toppled out of their seats.

CHAPTER NINE

Aribeth jumped up and ran outside to convene with her army commanders. Of the six that were present when Kenna arrived, only two remained. Finn watched as Kenna tried to follow as quickly as she could. Instead, she flew through the air when another quaking boom hit the trunk.

Finn watched in horror as Kenna went tumbling over the high railing that was the safety for the command post of Aribeth's army in times such as these. What astonished him even more, as he raced to see if she had fallen to her death, was to watch her being carried off in the claws of a purple dragon. It was then that Finn realized that he and all of the council had been wrong. Murrock wasn't trying to collect Kenna to kill her. He wanted her for an ally. It was the only explanation that made sense.

Finn and Aribeth watched together as their Pegasus army tried in vain to stop the small dragon from taking their one hope of stopping Murrock and his advancing armies. When the purple dragon out flew even the Pegasus', they turned back to count their dead, and Aribeth, Finn and her two remaining army commanders went down the great trunk to see what damage the dragon had wrought.

* * * *

"Where are you taking me?" Kenna shouted up at the monster that had rescued her and kidnapped her away from Finn and Aribeth in one swift movement. *I thought Aribeth said Murrock was the last dragon other than me?* Kenna thought to herself. *If that were true, then what is this creature?*

The steady beat of the wings soon lulled Kenna into a trance, and she didn't notice the landscape or even which direction they were headed. All too soon, the dragon was circling to land in the courtyard of a human settlement deep within the heart of a mountain range, and Kenna was dropped unceremoniously on her butt.

She started to right herself as a man approached and attempted to help. She slapped his hands away and stood by herself. When she looked up to meet the eyes of the stranger, she was wary of the grin on his face. His eyes were the same color as hers, yet they swirled with something akin to magic.

"Kenna, I am sorry to have to bring you to me like this, but I wanted my firstborn by my side. My name is Murrock and I am your father," he stated like it was something she should be proud of.

Kenna being raised by her grandfather knew that she must play some of these games in order to survive. She curtsied low and when he raised her up, she introduced herself formally. "Hello father, I am Kenna. I was just recently told of your existence and it pains me to know the conditions on which my mother died." It was a true statement, and yet Murrock seemed hesitant to accept her at what she was--truthful.

“You sound schooled, Kenna, and yet I can taste the truth of your words. It pained me as well the circumstances of your mother’s death. I truly loved her. Now I have you to love like a daughter. Would you like to meet your brothers?” Murrock clapped his hands together and two men came from the steps of the castle. These are the twins, Marth and Marderick. You have been formally introduced to Savurt. He was the dragon that brought you to us.” Murrock motioned to each in kind, and then turned back to his daughter. “Come. We have much to discuss, most of which is our happy reunion.” He led her up the steps and past the threshold of his domain. Kenna almost collapsed from the evil magic tearing at her soul when the door closed behind her. She glanced at Marth and Marderick and saw that they seemed to slump somewhat. Only Murrock seemed unaffected by it.

“Father what is it that I am feeling?” Kenna did not want him to know she found it distasteful, however he saw right through it.

“You find it leaves a wrong taste in your mouth?” He questioned.

“I do, but it is also invigorating.” As soon as the words left her mouth, she knew they were true. She could feel the magic giving her strength the more she stood there in the grand hallway.

She looked away from Murrock and tried to take in the many sights. Most of them did not appeal to her. There were tapestries of different love scenes, and Kenna feared that Murrock was using sex as a way to gain power. It was a very old and deadly magic. However, Kenna now knew her father could not die, so what was the harm in using this black magic if it gave him a little bit of what he lost.

As the thought of justifying her father ran around her head, she knew he was influencing her somehow, and knew that the thoughts were false.

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Murrock studied her. *She can see through some of the magic, but no matter the power will soon bring her to me. She will be willing to give me whatever I want.* Murrock thought to himself. He had to make Kenna trust him. *I will have to play nice until such time .* He felt a wicked smile light his face. *Then I can take her dragon to supplement my own. It is a shame that Suvar’s dragon is inadequate and that Marth and Marderick have not yet had enough of the power to make them come to me. Those boys are the bane of my existence. They have been here the longest time and I know they each have a dragon hidden somewhere inside of them. Yet I have not been able to force either of them to change forms.* He looked closer at Kenna and said, “Daughter come, let us eat then I will have Marderick show you to your rooms.”

He smiled as Kenna pried her eyes and thoughts away from the tapestries depicting sexual positions and followed him to the dining hall.

CHAPTER TEN

Dinner was pleasant. There was more food than the four of them could eat and there weren't visiting dignitaries or anything of that nature. The meal was over rather fast. Marderick appeared at Kenna's elbow to show her to her room the minute she set her fork down. Getting up and accepting Marderick's arm, she bid their father and her other brother good night.

Marderick stayed silent while navigating her through the maze of corridors. He pointed out various tricky spots without saying a word and Kenna kept her own council the entire time.

When Marderick stopped in front of a door, he pushed it open and mumbled a few words in a magic Kenna had never been exposed to before. She felt it crawl against her skin and knew that even though Marderick used it, he did not like it.

"Kenna, this is my chamber. I have brought you here to talk before I show you to your room. It is safer to talk here than anywhere else in the castle." He guided her to a plush overstuffed chair and as a gentleman would, he helped her to sit.

"Why is it that you wish to speak to me in secrecy?" She jumped straight to the point, not wanting to waste time with small talk.

"You are very unlike any woman I have ever met, and Murrock insists on Marth and I visiting with many women."

"That still does not answer my question, Marderick." Kenna cornered him with a pointed gaze.

"Very well. I was taken captive as you were. Ripped from my home with Marth and forced to pretend to love our father. Murrock has a magic that addicts, and I fear that Marth is falling under his wing. I have found excuses not to use the magic often, but Marth has been using it more and more of late. He even confided in me that he has located his dragon."

"What does this mean 'located his dragon?'" Kenna wanted to know what she possessed and what was in store for her.

"I have not told Marth yet, but I too have located my dragon. It is silver. Murrock would covet it if he knew. Whatever you do, Kenna, you must not let him know you have located your dragon. He is looking for a red, a true leader of all dragon kind."

"Again you have not answered my question," Kenna responded.

"Very well. I can see you are not to be deterred. Finding your dragon deep inside of your being means that you can call your beast and change shapes."

Kenna's eyes grew wide with wonder. "Are you trying to tell me that I can turn myself into a dragon at will?"

“Ahh, you have hit the snag in our dear old Dad’s plans. Savurt was the last to come and the first to find his dragon. A purple. Not as magnificent as a Bronze or Silver but still it has its uses. Our father was disappointed but would have been happy if Savurt could have changed back into his human form.”

“You mean he is stuck as a dragon?” Kenna whispered, afraid of what this might mean.

“Yes. We can communicate with him, but even now, he flies off for days on end, only answering Murrock when he forces the issue. Marth and I followed him on Pegasus’s once and found him hording gold. It is what dragons do after all.” Marderick had a wry grin on his face.

“So you are telling me if we all turn to our dragons we are stuck that way?”

“Murrock insists that we will be able to change back. Only Savurt is not strong enough in magic to do it. His dragon is stronger than the magic he carries. He also said it is because we do not know magic as we should. Only the magic we perform here.”

“I have never done these types of magic before, just what my grandfather taught me,” Kenna admitted.

“What?” Marderick stared at her in disbelief. “You know the magic of the Goddess?”

“If that is the magic the elves use then yes I do,” Kenna stated in a matter of fact tone. *Why is my magic so much better than this magic?* Kenna questioned herself.

“It is the language of the Dragons. Only you can turn back from the dragon form.” He looked at Kenna as if judging her and continued, “When the council stripped our father of his dragon and magic they put a block in his head to keep him from using it anymore. It seems he knows the words but he can not say them.” Marderick looked at Kenna as if beseeching her to give him the answer he sought.

“I have heard of such a spell, I am of course not strong enough alone to reverse it. I do not know all the proper words and spells. I do not even know if I could change myself back.” She answered honestly.

“Sister, will you teach me these spells so that I am better equipped to turn back from my dragon form? It is calling to me and I am hard pressed not to do it.” Marderick seemed trustworthy, but Kenna was sworn not to share the secrets. Her grandfather had forbid her from doing it.

“Marderick, I have sworn an oath not to teach anyone the magic I possess. I have just met you, and I think that you are just as loathe as I am to be here, but can we first build a trust between us?” Kenna wanted to help Marderick. She wanted to give him a means to escape, but she was not a master in the arts of magic, and because he was here for so long, she was more than a little wary to give up anything Murrock might need.

"I understand," he dropped his head looking crushed. When he looked back up at her, she could see that he was sincere. He was willing to build a trust with her and it seemed he would start. "I would ask one thing of you."

"Name it and then I will give you my decision," Kenna responded.

"I ask that you not tell anyone of your magic skills. Act the fool. Murrock will ask you, even pressure you with his own form. Please resist the temptation to tell him. And please do not tell Marth. He is my twin. We have always shared a special bond, but lately I am unable to reach him. I do not trust him. We had a pact to stay strong together and yet he spends more time with Murrock than he does with me."

Kenna knew about twins, not people but because they once had a set of colts that were twins and the two horses refused to leave the other. It seemed when one was scared both were scared.

"Yes and thank you for the warning and now I will teach you a word. This is trust between the two of us. It may not help you with anything, however if you have the blessing you will feel it." Kenna racked her brain for something appropriate. Something that would not anger anybody yet would help to build the trust between the two of them. "Ban-dia," she paused almost afraid to tell him what it meant. "It means Goddess, and you can pray to her if you like. It is not her true name. That I do not know, but she answers it. Try it. You may find your soul less burdened. I have and I think I will be saying her name often during my stay here."

"Ban-dia," Marderick said, and Kenna watched him for signs of any enlightenment. He repeated it again, seeming to wish it would work, and after the third time of saying it, Kenna watched the hunched man turn into something more at ease. When he smiled at her, she smiled back. He had the gift.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Seasons passed like sands through an hourglass. They seemed to creep by for Kenna. Murrock constantly hounded her to tell him about her magic. She did tell him she knew a little magic, but that it was Finn and her grandfather that used real magic. She was only allowed to know the names of the deity.

He seemed to accept this explanation because it was not a complete lie, and as the winter months passed, he began to explain to her the magic that he used. Kenna played along, but every night she prayed to the Goddess. Just saying the Goddess' name soothed her soul.

Kenna and Marderick continued to meet nightly. Mostly they talked about who they each were. Once a week, Kenna would teach him another word, but she had yet to teach him any spells. If he tried, he could probably do a curse but Kenna thought he was waiting for her to trust him enough to teach him one instead. He was learning the 'true tongue' as he called it, and she was taking her time, just as her grandfather had.

It was when spring started to blossom that Kenna was faced with her first true challenge. Murrock summoned Marderick and Kenna to the courtyard. It was there that they saw Marth. Kenna had barely seen him throughout the long winter months, and Marderick had voiced his concerns to her more than once about his scarce sightings.

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Coming to the courtyard as summoned, Marderick and Kenna walked down the steps. They both saw Marth standing next to their father. Savurt was off to one side, bucking against the hold Murrock obviously had on him. The purple dragon looked weak. Kenna couldn't remember all the details of his brilliant color from the autumn before and yet she knew he was not well. His royal purple scale color was faded to a dull violet, and his eyes swirled with a sickly yellow.

Kenna acknowledged her father and brother and went to Savurt. She wanted to heal him but knew her father was watching. Instead, she talked to him in a soothing voice and tried to calm his anger and depression by telling him she would find a cure for him yet. As soon as his eyes turned to a more green color, she walked back to the other three men.

Murrock gave Kenna a look of hatred and then motioned for Marth to get on with it. Marth strutted to the center of the courtyard and uttered a word not in the 'true tongue' and Kenna missed the pronunciation. Before her very eyes and that of the other two men as well as the purple dragon, Marth began to transform. His body elongated and a long strangled, painful scream erupted from his extended mouth. Kenna could not even begin to describe the things that happened. She heard bones pop out of joint, break and form anew. His body grew at an astounding rate, becoming elongated and his back erupted into a flurry of slime and bones extending themselves into wings. She looked away in horror, and when she looked again, Marth was like a long body of muscle and sinew with no skin or scale to speak of.

Bronze scales came next. It was like hearing a blacksmith putting together a piece of chain mail. The clink, clink of each bronze scale made Kenna think of black smoke and red-hot pokers.

When Marth unfurled his wings, they were the most beautiful thing Kenna had ever seen. The veins were bronze and thinly made with sheer looking spans, tinted in a variety of colors. It looked as if it was made of the finest Elven silk and dyed in an assortment of colors. When Kenna moved closer and reached out to touch it, Marth reared back and looked down his new dragon snout with a whirl of red and black in his eyes. Murrock pulled her back seconds before Marth snapped at her arm. His large gaping mouth, full of razor sharp teeth missed Kenna by mere inches.

Kenna looked up at him and smiled sheepishly, "I'm sorry Marth. I couldn't help myself."

"Don't let it happen again," he mind spoke to her. It took Kenna completely off guard and then Marth reared his head and let out a large bout of smoke.

"Change back now Marth," Murrock commanded. All of them waited for what seemed like hours with baited breath for Marth to turn back to his human form.

Kenna felt the tingle of magic that was similar to the magic she felt when she first arrived. When he changed, she watched in horror as his body began to shrink back to normal size. Something was wrong and the three of them knew it. Marth was not changing right. His head stayed a more oblong shape, his wings did not recede completely, and his arms were clawed like his dragon form. Murrock did not wait for Marth to finish. Instead, he strode off back to the castle cursing loudly.

Marderick stared in horror at what had become of his twin, and though he attempted to comfort him, Marth would have none of it. Instead, he brayed for their father and went chasing after him.

"He is gone, Kenna. Marth is gone. I feel it as if he died, deep inside." Marderick had tears in his eyes. The loss of having a piece of him ripped away was evident by the pained expression on his face.

Kenna said nothing but embraced him, whispering words of the 'true tongue' in his ear to try to give him some sort of comfort. When Marderick's quaking stopped, they turned as one and walked up the castle steps.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Kenna and Marderick could not find either Marth or Murrock anywhere and so they went back to Marderick's room to talk things over. After seeing what happened to Marth, Kenna wanted to tell Marderick what she was thinking of doing. She was going to call her dragon with her magic, and then fly off to find Finn to change her back to human and teach her the proper spell to do it. She knew her dragon was the darkness she felt. It was a red shadow deep within her soul. It scared her, but she knew it would wait for her to be ready. The problem was she had no idea how to change back to herself.

"Kenna." Marderick gained her attention. "My dragon is calling to me, more so now than ever before. It wants what Marth had if for only a few minutes."

"Marderick, I would tell you the proper spell if I could, but I haven't the faintest idea how to change you back. I was just thinking of calling my dragon, using my magic and finding Finn to teach me the spell to change back. It is the only way I have come up with to solve the problem of our dragons."

"But do you know how to call your dragon? Murrock taught Marth and me the spell using the magic he uses to do it."

"That's it. It isn't the right magic. If you use it, you will be cursed the same as Marth. Marderick, promise you will not do it," Kenna begged.

Marderick opened his mouth to answer, when the castle shook as if in an earthquake. The siblings stared at each other long enough to know that it wasn't Murrock or Marth's doing and both went running to the courtyard.

* * * *

The castle was under attack. Pegasus's in armor whipped in and out of view, as fairies dropped rocks on the human armies of Murrock's. Kenna and Marderick ran for cover close to the gates in the wall.

The courtyard was in total chaos. Murrock's soldiers had no idea how to combat against fairies and Pegasus's, and they scrambled about as if they were lost ants. Some tried to fight back, but it was no use. It wasn't until Kenna and Marderick heard the hunting horn of the elves, that Kenna ushered them up the stairs to the upper heights of the walls.

They were both almost knocked down by guards trying to escape, and when they reached the catwalks, they were amazed at what they had witnessed.

"Oh my. They must have the entire Lymir here to battle Murrock," Kenna breathed.

"It seems my dear sister, that they want you back and want our father dead in the process. I wonder what will happen to Marth in the event of their victory."

“Not to worry, Marderick. The Elves are a good people, but they will do what they must. They killed my mother you know?” Kenna whispered in his ear, and clutched to his arm as the battling ram once again shook the castle walls.

Marderick looked haunted as he leaned over the wall farther.

“Marderick, remember what I said. If you change, you will be cursed. How long have you been with Murrock that you would take his word for truth? I will go to the elves. They will help us both.” Kenna pleaded with her eyes as well as her heart in this. Marderick was the only person other than her grandfather she was not ashamed to call family. To lose him when the solution was so near would be a shame.

“You!” Murrock cursed her name as he hit the top of the wall. Marderick and Kenna both turned and ran from him. Murrock had their deaths in his eyes, and she knew it was going to be a gruesome death if he got a hold of them.

He chased them around to the east, where the Elven army could not be seen and as Marderick and Kenna came to the end of the wall and were confronted with a solid cliff face, they turned as one to face their father.

Marderick was the first to advance on Murrock. They feinted and attacked trying to find the other’s weakness. Their small skirmish was over in minutes, when Marderick thrust, and Murrock cuffed him along the side of his head with the hilt of his sword.

Kenna screamed out for her fallen brother as his blood seeped into the stone wall. Murrock did not spare a glance for him as he advanced on Kenna.

“You cannot win daughter, but I will kill you swiftly. It was pointless for me to take you. You have taught me nothing. The only thing you accomplished was to turn Marderick against me and his brother.”

“I did no such thing Murrock and you know it,” Kenna denied as she looked into his eyes. They flashed in a red and black swirl and Kenna knew losing his dragon had driven him mad. The elves succeeded in taking the essence of his dragon, but there was still some small remnant of it lurking deep within Murrock.

“I have to say that you look a lot like Kenina, that stupid whore. If she would have run away when I told her, none of this would have happened.”

“Murrock you may speak ill of my mother, but we both know she was punished because of you. You can rot in the depths and be joined by Marth as well. He is tainted just as you are, and regardless of how magic little I know, I would never share it with either of you.”

Kenna crept closer to the wall’s edge next to the cliff. When she glanced down over the edge, she saw that it was much higher than next to the gate.

“Kenna my daughter, do not do it.” Murrock begged. He seemed to think she was going to jump to kill herself.

“Father.” Kenna turned back to him and saw that Finn had cleared the wall behind them. She smiled to him and flung herself backwards.

“No!” Finn and Murrock rang out together as they leaned over to see where she landed.

But Kenna was transforming into a golden dragon. There was no pain involved, just a sweet smile on her face as she finally let go of the dragon and allowed it to take over her body.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Kenna the dragon's wing beat was unsteady. She faltered a few times before she gained her wings, and when she rose up, she could see the enraged look on her father's face. Finn on the other hand looked shocked.

"Gu sealladh saelbh oirnn," *Heaven preserve us*. "It is a miracle. She had transformed into a dragon, a good dragon and it was seemed painless." Finn said to himself, and then turned to Murrock. "You have lost Murrock. Your daughter is better than us all."

Murrock turned to Finn, his expression completely changed. There was no longer a sane bone in his body. He lunged at Finn, who easily sidestepped the point of the sword, and Kenna the dragon bellowed out a warning. The soldiers from both armies stopped to stare as Finn and Murrock fought on the wall. It was a tense fight with both armies watching as Finn easily out maneuvered Murrock and sank a blade deep within his black heart.

Kenna the dragon let out a bellow to inform all of Tir that the evil dragon had been killed and even Murrock's soldiers raised swords in salute to Finn.

Finn returned the salute to both armies, and as Aribeth flew to the heights on a Pegasus, she dismounted and turned her eyes to Kenna the dragon. She smiled a brilliant smile and said, "Kenna, it is good to see you unharmed. Will you meet us outside? I thought you may need our help."

The golden dragon bobbed her head once and began her downward spiral to reach the snow-patched ground outside the castle.

Aribeth and Finn were next to her in a matter of minutes, and examining her from a distance. It seemed they both knew not to touch a dragon unless asked.

"You may touch me if you like," Kenna the dragon spoke to their minds. "I am not shy. I am a good dragon, and there is no reason for me to fear. I ask that you check my brother though. I fear Murrock may have killed him."

Aribeth and Finn both jumped at the chance to examine her wings. They gently caressed their velvety texture and lovingly patted her forearms. Finn was so bold as to reach up to her circular eyes and scratch behind the scales that overshadowed them. Kenna the dragon's eyes turned from the mellow green they were to a molten silver and gold of pleasure.

After a few moments, Finn and Aribeth stepped back.

"Thank you, Kenna for the honor. It has been so long since we have seen a dragon as majestic as you. Now as for your brother, he is being tended to, and I think he will make a full recovery," Aribeth said.

"Would you like me to teach you to turn back to your human form?" Finn asked quietly.

“There is no need, Finn my friend. I have the knowledge already,” the golden beauty’s mind spoke. Kenna turned a bright gold, so bright Finn and Aribeth had to shield their eyes. When the glow faded, Kenna was her human self again. “I would like to see Marderick. He was my only friend and champion here.” Kenna continued speaking aloud.

“Of course. This way, Kenna,” Finn replied, easily taking her arm and guiding her back to their command post of tents they had set up in case of a siege.

* * * *

“Kenna, you are safe. Thank the Ban-dia,” Marderick whispered when he was reunited with his sister.

“Marderick,” Kenna exclaimed as she flung herself into his open arms. “I told you it would be okay, and I was wrong. I didn’t need anybody’s help to change back to this form.” Kenna went on and on, as she recounted to her brother all the feelings and thoughts and dragon memories she had in the short time she had changed forms.

“This is wonderful news, Kenna. Do you think I will be able to accomplish these feats as well?”

“I do and so does my dragon,” Kenna said with confidence. “We think you need more training before you attempt it though. Marderick, it can very dangerous, as we saw with Marth.”

“Wait,” Finn said. “How many siblings do you two have?”

“Six that I know of, but there were only the four at the castle.”

“Where are the other two then?” Aribeth asked.

“Savurt is probably in his lair counting his gold. As for my twin, I have no idea. When he attempted to change back to human form, he became half dragon-half human.” Marderick said with downcast eyes.

“Savurt will probably hurt no one, but we will keep an eye on him. Soon, we will need to track Marth and attempt to help him before we have another situation like Murrock on our hands,” Aribeth said. “As for you two, you will come back to Lymir with us and be our honored guests.

Kenna and Marderick smiled at one another and knew they would be well cared for. They had a home together and once Marderick began his lessons they would be dragons together.

THE END

About The Author

JR Mitchell was born in Montana. From there she moved to Washington state and then on to New Mexico where she now resides with her husband and two small children.

JR has been writing since she was a small child and has finally realized her dreams of becoming published. She works a full time job as a banquet manager, but is still going strong with her writing, making sure she sets aside time from all her other duties as a working mom to jot down ideas as they come to her.

Her first book *Wolf's Den* is slotted for release May 2007. She also is expecting her book *Blood Love after Midnight* to be released in Oct. 2007. JR has many other large products she is currently working on, including the sequels to both of these books, as well as many short stories.