



# GARPET STRENGTH

MELINDA BARRON

Loose Id

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Melinda Barron

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## Dedication

*Thanks to Talya Bosco for her help with the early drafts, and to Valerie Tibbs for answering my unending questions about Rome and the Italian language. Any mistakes are mine. Kudos as always to Maryam and the ladies at Loose Id for their unending support.*

*This one is for those who wrote me after reading Amethyst Eyes to see what happens next. Thanks for sticking around for part two. -- Mel*

## Chapter One

Matlyn wove her way through the crowd, stopping near each column to stare at the assembled witches. None of them would meet her gaze. Instead, they looked toward the ground, then turned their heads completely. The nervous shuffling of their feet and the movement of their hands let her know exactly how nervous they were.

*Good. Let them think they might not walk out of here.* It would make them more pliable, keep them doing her bidding. She leaned down and stroked the head of the beautiful white tiger that weaved around her legs when she stopped walking. The tiger rose up on its hind legs, put its paws on Matlyn's shoulders, and ran its tongue over the witch's chin. Matlyn leaned into the touch briefly, and then gently pushed the tiger away.

She strode to the dais in the center of the room and took the steps quickly before turning and surveying the assembled group. Irritation flashed through her at the low numbers she saw. Fewer than three hundred of the flock gathered to protect the stone. After their failure with the amethyst, there should be thousands here, ready to do her bidding.

"Well?" She put her hands on her hips and narrowed her eyes, waiting for someone to gather enough courage to step forward and speak. The air grew thick with tension, and then finally a man stepped forward.

“Jessup?” She hid a smile as the striking dark faerie climbed onto the dais and stopped three steps from her. He was bold and fearless, which made her crave him, long for his power and his rough touch. But he never should have stepped so close to her. She’d make him pay for that later.

“We’re looking, Mistress, but they’ve put up wards around the city, masking their presence and directing us toward dead ends. The light faeries are strong, and we have been unable to penetrate their magic.”

Matlyn studied Jessup, her mind whirling with rage.

“So that’s it? They’ve stolen the amethyst from us, and you’re just going to follow faerie dust around the city until they find and steal the garnet too? And then what? Will you lead them to the bloodstone as well?”

Jessup’s dark eyes flashed angrily, and Matlyn jumped in response. Let him get angry. The sex that followed would be hard and pleasurable. She stroked the tiger’s fur, then lifted her brow. “Well?”

“Of course not, Mistress. We’re searching every day. Their bond is --” He stopped speaking when she held up a finger.

Matlyn waved her hand, then sat down on the throne that appeared. Looking down at the man who dared not to cower in front of her, she crossed her legs and gripped the armrests. “They’ve not yet completed their triad. Only after they join their powers will the stone speak to them. They may feel it, but they can’t control it until then. You know that as well as I do.”

“Yes, Mistress.” Jessup moved up another step, and the tiger growled in response.

“Easy, my love,” Matlyn said softly, stroking the tiger again. “We’ll make him pay for his insolence. Perhaps a good whipping before I make him fuck me.”

The tiger purred, and Matlyn laughed; the sound quickly disappeared. She looked out over the crowd again, then stood. When she spoke, she kept her voice low and even, knowing it would frighten her minions more than yelling.

“Do you want them to win? It must be the only excuse for your laziness, for your failure to locate them. Or is it that you just don’t realize what happens if they find all three of the stones and return them to the pentagram?”

When no one answered, she sighed in disgust. She traced a life-size pentagram in the air, then held up her hands and blew sparkling dust on it. The lines shimmered, and then a man appeared in the center. He slept quietly, his hands at his sides, his early-twentieth-century clothing reflecting his length of captivity.

Stones glowed brightly at two corners of the pentagram. The other three slots were empty.

“Garmund Monk holds great knowledge in his mind -- information that will help us gain control of the world, help us rule as we were meant to. Yet if we don’t protect the garnet and bloodstone, he will die. They must have all five of the stones by Samhain for their plan to work. We won’t allow that to happen, will we?”

The once-silent room grew heavy with noise, and Matlyn swallowed a smile.

“Good. Then find the two faeries and that miserable little witch and kill them before they fuck. Now.” When no one moved, she threw up her hands, and lightning shot from her fingers into the ancient stone ceiling above her.

She grabbed a bolt, threw it at the crowd, and the tip struck a male witch in the chest. He screamed and fell, flailing around on the floor as he grabbed at the bolt, the smell of burning flesh filling the room.

The witches backed away from him, gathering in small groups near the walls, their eyes trained on his suffering. No one made a move to help him, though. No one dared. They

feared her too much. When he finally lay silent, Matlyn ran her fingers through her long dark hair.

"I trust I've made my point. Now get out of my sight." Men and women scrambled for the exits, all except Jessup, who stood his ground, staring at her. She wanted to smile at him in approval, but that would give him the upper hand. Instead, she walked back to her throne and sat down, her clothing disappearing instantly.

She spread her legs, one foot dangling over a chair arm, her toes caressing the tiger's soft fur. She spread her labia and stroked her folds.

"Eat me, slave." She licked her lips as the faerie dropped to his knees in front of her and lapped his tongue over her clit expertly. She'd whip him after he brought her to orgasm several times, just to remind him that he belonged to her and to never challenge her in front of her other followers again.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jalon Carr wrapped his arms around his bare chest and looked out over the sleepy city of Rome. Four stories below him the streets were empty. Soon, though, people would be going about their work as if they had all the time in the world. What would they say, he wondered, if they knew the end of the world as they knew it might occur this Samhain?

"It won't happen." The deep voice in his ear made Jalon shiver. Strong faerie hands kneaded his shoulders, and Jalon sighed in pleasure. Months ago, he would have growled at Cian to keep his hands to himself. Now, though, he felt a strong burst of need when the faerie touched him. And when Gelsey was in the room, the desire was even stronger.

When his craving for the faeries had first happened, he'd prayed to the Goddess to deliver him from what he thought to be unnatural yearnings. Then he'd prayed they could complete the triad with Jalon making love with Gelsey, and not Cian. But the Goddess hadn't answered either of his requests, and the longing had grown by leaps and bounds until finally Jalon knew that, despite his earlier denials, he had to face the truth.

He was part of a triad, one of three magical beings meant to recover and protect the garnet. The sooner the three of them joined as lovers, the more power they'd have. And the more power they had, the better chance they'd have of finding the stolen stone. It still rankled Jalon that dark forces had been able to find the pentagram that was Monk's prison, much less steal three of the stones.

The fact the good forces had recovered the amethyst boded well for them, but Matlyn and her group had still managed to keep the garnet hidden.

Cian leaned over and whispered in Jalon's ear, "Do you know what bothers me?"

"What?" Jalon leaned into him, hoping that little sign was enough for Cian, hoping he didn't have to come right out and ask the faerie to fuck him.

"Stop keeping secrets from me," Gelsey said. "Or I'll have to spank you both." Jalon turned to her, smiling as she moved toward them, her beautifully rounded form barely hidden by a diaphanous gown.

"Promises, promises," Cian replied. "But we're not keeping secrets. I was going to discuss with Jalon what I told you yesterday: I don't understand how the council can know the stone is in Rome, but not know exactly where it's located. And why the person who found it didn't recover it then."

"Only the triad can recover it," Jalon said, his voice low. "As to the other question, I don't know."

Gelsey stepped up behind him, so he had a faerie at each shoulder. Anyone looking up would think they were three lovers meeting the dawn after a rousing night of passion. They would see three people, two men and one woman, each of them with bright green eyes. The men stood tall and firm, one with light blond hair that hung to his hips, the other with sun-bleached hair that hung around his shoulders. The woman was a little shorter, her curves enticing and full, her silver hair cascading down her back. That is if anyone could see the trio, much less the apartment that they'd magically created on top of a building, then

guarded with wards. Each morning they gathered on the terrace and joined hands to strengthen the wards so the forces they knew were against them could not locate their lair.

They performed their morning ritual now, clutching their hands and chanting the spells, the power flowing between them like currents on a river. When they were done, Jalon squeezed their hands, and they both squeezed back. They knew he was ready for them, that he'd accepted their duty, but they were waiting for him to make the first move.

He needed to do it, and quickly, he knew. His body accepted the fact, yet his mind couldn't fully grasp having sex with another man. A little part of his brain told him that it was wrong to feel arousal for another man, wrong to think about being inside him too. Now, when Cian touched him, Jalon's cock would surge to life, throbbing under his clothing. It was doing it at this very moment, and he thought about telling them they needed to return to bed, to join together and fulfill their destinies.

Before he could open his mouth, though, Gelsey stepped back. "I see it's up to me to cook breakfast again."

She held out her hands and a table appeared, fully stocked with toast, eggs, bacon, sausage, croissants, juice, and coffee. Jalon inclined his head and she laughed, nodding at the table. A dish of kippers, beans, and tomatoes appeared.

"Thank you," Jalon said with a smirk.

"You English," she said, returning his smirk with one of her own. "Who ever heard of beans for breakfast?"

She sat down at one of the chairs that appeared and grabbed a croissant. Jalon sat down next to her and poured himself a cup of coffee. Cian floated above the table, his legs crossed in front of him. A plate passed from dish to dish, magically filling itself before settling before him.

"Show-off," Jalon said with a smile.

Cian inclined his head, then used his magic to fill a plate for Jalon and one for Gelsey before digging in. They were silent as they ate, and Jalon tried to find the words to broach the subject of the triad.

*Instead of searching today, let's go inside and fuck.*

*Cian, would you like to taste my cock instead of that sausage?*

*Gelsey, sweet one, I want to fuck you while Cian...*

His thoughts drifted off. It was the last part he had trouble with. His body craved it, but his mind wouldn't accept it. He had to somehow find a way to let his body win. As he ate, he mentally thanked the faeries for not bringing up the subject that was on his mind.

Jalon knew they read his mind on a constant basis. Not bringing up the triad showed their strength and their willingness to let him come to terms with it on his own, something that hadn't happened in the past. At first, Cian had been heavy-handed, trying to kiss Jalon and touch him. It had led to more than one physical confrontation.

They'd grapple until Gelsey stepped in, chiding them both for acting like children. After a month in Rome, they'd settled into an uneasy truce that moved into the comfortable bond they shared right now. They just had to take it all the way now, had to join together to make their triad whole.

"Are you listening to me?" Cian gently punched Jalon's arm.

"No, I'm sorry. What did you say?"

"I said, we need to search underground, starting today."

Jalon looked around him in surprise. Images of the buildings and fountains they'd searched floated nearby, the Pantheon, the Ostia Antica, the Coliseum, several museums and abandoned churches, and numerous fountains. He toyed with his coffee cup and stared at the images, which reminded him of their failures.

"I agree that it's a good idea." Gelsey took another sip and set her cup down gently. "But from what I've read there are more than forty different catacombs under the city. We have a deadline staring us in the face."

"We all realize that." Jalon knew his statement came out harsher than he'd wanted it to. He took a deep breath to try and calm himself. "It would help if the person who discovered the stone was hidden in Rome told us how they came by that information, and where it was when they saw it."

"For once we agree on something," Cian said. "As I said, the secrecy bothers me. If the powers that be know the stone is here, why don't they know exactly where it's located? And if they do know, why aren't they telling us? Why can't we talk to the person who saw it? And furthermore, why didn't that person just pick it up and take it back to England?"

Those very same questions had popped into Jalon's mind several times. He wasn't sure exactly why they, as guardians of the stone, were being kept in the dark, but it made him nervous. Especially with Matlyn around. Jalon was sure he'd sensed her two days ago in the Piazza Navona as the three of them had walked along, trying to connect with the stone in its possible hiding place.

He'd stopped, chills running up his spine. He'd scanned the crowded area, trying, and failing, to find her. And then a street performer had approached him, intent on pulling Jalon into his act in an effort to get a tip out of him. Jalon had moved away, and when he had, the essence of Matlyn had vanished. He hadn't mentioned it to his companions.

"You should have said something." Cian frowned at him. "That woman frightens me."

"Don't read my mind," Jalon replied, his voice surprisingly calm despite the invasion. He knew Cian was right.

"I only do it when you're less than honest with us, like now. We can't work like that. You may deny the bond we have, but you can't seek to find the stone all on your own. We should have been told."

“Why? The feeling was there, and then gone. What good would it have done to tell you?”

Cian’s hair started to puff out, static electricity lifting single hairs and holding them out, a sure sign of his anger. “Perhaps the three of us could have found her. Perhaps if you weren’t trying to play superhero, we --”

“Enough,” Gelsey said, holding up her hand. “What’s done is done. Matlyn is the most evil of witches. If she is here, we won’t be able to face her on our own. We’ll need help, lots of help. But her presence reinforces the fact that the stone is in Rome. There would be no other reason for her to be here.”

“Do you forget there is still another missing stone out there? Maybe it’s the bloodstone here in Rome. Or perhaps she thinks the amethyst is here and is trying to get it back.”

“No, Jalon, I don’t think so,” Gelsey replied. “She would send flunkies to look for the amethyst. Plus, she knows it’s basically useless without the other two, so she would concentrate on protecting the two they still have. What you felt in the piazza reinforces what the elders told us.”

The three of them fell silent. Finally, Jalon signed heavily. “We start belowground today. Agreed?”

“Yes,” the faeries said together.

“And,” Cian continued, looking pointedly at Jalon, “we promise to tell each other everything, from the slightest twinge of another magical being to absolute proof. Agreed?”

“It was just the once,” Jalon said. “I swear it.”

Cian ignored his words. “Are we agreed?”

“Yes.” Jalon’s body tingled as Cian and Gelsey joined hands. He took her hand and squeezed, and the current shot to his cock. It hardened instantly, and when he dropped her hand, an ache formed inside him unlike anything he’d ever felt. It took hold of his stomach, moved out from there down to his crotch, and squeezed his balls until he thought they

would explode. Then it moved up to his heart and applied the same pressure, with the same response.

*Goddess, please help me make this right. Help me overcome my misgivings and fulfill my destiny.*

## Chapter Two

“What is so special about bones? It’s not as if they’re going to come to life again.” Cian stuffed his hands in his pockets and sighed as if he had the weight of the world on his shoulders. “Plus, why are we standing in line? Gelsey and I can just flit inside and see what’s what.”

“We’ve already discussed this,” Gelsey said. “The more we ‘flit’ from place to place, the more we risk discovery. It’s best to be like everyone else -- walk down the stairs and go through the tunnels.”

Cian nodded his agreement, but silently, Jalon agreed with him. They’d been searching catacombs for three days now, traveling up to nineteen meters underground, and competing with tourists to walk the narrow passageways filled with grave niches. And they’d found nothing, except bones, crumbly with age, and skulls used to make fanciful decorations on the walls.

“That’s not exactly true,” Cian said. “We’ve seen some great examples of artwork. Although, I have to wonder about us visiting the Christian sites. I think the people we’re searching for would stay away from anything that’s been blessed.”

“There are Jewish and Pagan catacombs too,” Jalon replied, knowing it would do no good to keep his thoughts to himself. Cian would just dive into his mind and pluck them right out as he’d done just seconds ago. “But they’ve had blessings put on them, too, just different from the Christian ones.”

“Did they have paupers’ catacombs, run by the state and not the church?” The two men laughed at Gelsey’s suggestion.

“I suppose,” Jalon said. “I don’t think they’ve been identified. Although some sites have been found just recently, and of course, there is always the possibility that others have not yet been discovered.”

The line started to move into the building that housed the entrance to the catacombs. Jalon wasn’t sure what this catacomb site was named; he just hoped that they would finally find something that would help them on their quest.

“I never did understand the practice of burial. And all those bones.” Gelsey shivered. “It’s not very appetizing.”

“You’re a faerie and seeing bones bothers you? I thought nothing bothered faeries.”

“It doesn’t really bother me, but I have to wonder why they stopped burning bodies when people died. The bones just take up space.”

“Some people like to have something to come back and visit,” Jalon said. “They feel it keeps them closer to the people who have moved on.”

“A person is their soul, not their body,” Gelsey said as the line moved toward the stairs leading down to the tunnels. “Some of the arrangements are quite interesting, though. The poses, I mean. I wonder if they were looted through the years, like thieves would loot Egyptian burial sites.”

“I’m sure,” Jalon said. “People don’t change, no matter what the culture. Stealing from the dead is pretty low, though.”

“Very,” Cian said as they gained the bottom step. “We’re on the top level here. There are three more below us. I think we should split up, each of us take a different level, and meet up top in an hour or so.”

Gelsey nodded. “I’ll take the second level.”

“I’ll do the bottom,” Jalon said. “But it will probably take more than an hour. Wait for me at the fountain outside if I don’t make it in time.”

“Don’t worry; if you get lost, my love, I’ll come and rescue you.” Cian winked at him, then took off down a narrow corridor already crowded with tourists.

Jalon fell into step behind Gelsey as she headed for the stairs that would take them lower. They remained silent as they came to the second level. She nodded at him and went down a passage as he traveled farther down. The fact that he was so far underground didn’t bother him. Neither did the bones laid out in the narrow niches cut into the *tufo* rock that made up the burial sites, or the people milling about. The crowds were not so bad down here. He figured most people would stay up top and shy away from the bottom catacombs.

If they weren’t working, Jalon would have used that for the perfect opening about sex. *Let’s play hide-and-seek, and if you find me, you can fuck me.*

He half expected Cian to appear in front of him, his hand reaching for Jalon’s cock, ready to seal the deal now before Jalon backed out. When he didn’t show, Jalon wondered if the rocks made it hard for the faerie to read his thoughts.

A sudden change in the temperature made Jalon stop in his tracks. It was very cold down here, colder than he’d expected. He stood at the center of a circle, with four tunnels branching off it.

Columns guarded the entrances to each tunnel. Torches placed on the wall kept the area dimly lit. He wasn’t worried about getting lost, no matter what Cian teased him about. He knew he’d just come out of the passageway behind him and could choose from any of the three others.

But there was no one down here with him. Not one other living soul. He took the first tunnel and found nothing more than several *cubiculas*, housing the bones of various families.

Carved columns stood before a large grave niche. Sitting in the corner, seeming out of place, was a marble column with a snake carving, which ran from top to bottom. Sitting on either side were busts of a man in a toga. He looked nothing like any historical figure Jalon could remember, and he decided he was the nobleman buried in this room.

The second channel had two *cubiculas*, and two art rooms, frescoes painted on the walls depicting various scenes from ancient Rome. Most of them were Christian scenes. One seemed out of place, that of two gladiators fighting in the Coliseum.

He stepped closer to examine the painting, which seemed almost brand-new compared to others. The colors of the Coliseum painting were fresh and bright, and the people in the stands were...moving.

Jalon took a step back just as a couple came into the room. He watched the painting as the two men clashed, the sounds of their swords hitting filling the air. The crowd laughed and screamed for death, and Jalon's heart beat a little faster.

"Amazing," the man next to him said.

"Indeed," Jalon said carefully. "Have you been to the Coliseum yet? Like the one depicted here?"

The man gave him a confused look and stepped back. "Coliseum? There, on that wall? Buddy all I see is a bunch of solemn priests marching along a hallway carrying a body. I think you've been down here too long."

He ushered his wife from the dimly lit room, and Jalon turned back to the painting. One of the gladiators was on his knees, and the crowd chanted, "Kill, kill, kill."

The victorious gladiator turned to the center box where a woman stood, a dark faerie standing behind her. Jalon took an involuntarily step back as Matlyn looked over the crowd. She leaned over to pet the white tiger at her feet, and then she turned her thumb down.

The loser lost his head in one quick stroke of the victor's sword, and the crowd went wild, laughing and yelling for more blood. The dead man's body disappeared, and the winner floated to where Matlyn sat. A woman sitting next to the evil witch dropped to her knees and began sucking the gladiator's cock as he roughly grabbed her hair. Two more fighters appeared in the ring.

"*Cian. Gelsey.*" Jalon tensed as the dark faerie leaned over and kissed Matlyn, his tongue snaking out to trace the witch's lips. Jalon could almost swear the faerie opened his eyes and looked straight at him.

"*I see it, my love, and I'm coming. Just a few more minutes. There are too many people here to use magic.*" The excitement in Cian's voice made Jalon tingle.

"*I'm on my way also.*" Gelsey's voice was urgent. "*Don't touch it.*"

Their words sent shivers down Jalon's spine. "*Hurry.*" Even as the word floated toward them, the painting seemed to change. Its colors swirled, and the sounds grew louder. There was a loud *pop*, and just as he backed up and out of the entrance to the room, two people tumbled out, a man and a woman, both of them landing on their asses, laughing.

They spoke in Italian and Jalon could make out a few of the words. *Idiot* and *done*.

Jalon felt as if his heart would burst. Were they talking about him? Cian appeared next to him, wrapping his arm around Jalon's waist.

"Did they see you?"

"I don't think so." Gelsey was there seconds later, stepping close to Cian and Jalon as the two people inside the art room continued to talk and laugh.

"Can you understand them?"

"Shush!" She held up her finger.

When Gelsey spoke again, the man's voice came out of her mouth, his words in English so Jalon could understand. "I told you to stay away from there. Can we get back in through here? I don't even know where we are."

The woman's voice came next, as did the sound of a fist slapping against the wall. "Damn you to the devil; this is your fault. You're the one who touched the pillar. She warned us, didn't she, about touching the snake columns? They're portals to who knows where; we might not even be in Rome anymore. And if we manage to find our way back to *La Casa del Piccolo Diavolo*, who knows if they'll let us back in. If we miss the orgy tonight, it's your fault and I'll hate you forever."

Gelsey gulped for air, and then the corridor grew eerily silent.

"Did you hear that?"

"Yes. Someone's outside, listening."

Jalon understood those phrases perfectly well. The couple knew they'd been discovered and were now headed their way. There was no telling what type of powers these people had, or if they would be able to summon help out of the painting.

The three in the hallway exchanged thoughts quickly, going over the pros and cons of staying and taking a stand, or trying to find a different way out of the situation. If they just disappeared their magic would be felt, and they didn't want that to happen -- not since they'd discovered a clue. As the couple made it to the doorway, Gelsey disappeared, and Cian leaned over and put his lips on Jalon's.

Jalon leaned into the kiss, the fear he'd felt for so long turning into pure desire. Cian pushed his tongue against his lips, and Jalon opened his mouth and sucked the other man in, praying the energy they gave off would cover the wisps of magic left over from Gelsey's disappearing act.

Cian caressed his side, slid his hand down to his hip, and pulled their lower bodies together. Both of them were hard, and their erections rubbed against each other.

Heat spread through Jalon's body; the urge to strip Cian naked and take him right there was stronger than anything he'd ever felt. He could feel Gelsey's invisible presence next to

them, stroking both their backs, moving her arms around their necks, and licking first one cheek and then the other.

“Fuck,” Jalon said against Cian’s lips. “Please.”

“Soon,” Cian whispered. “We’ll go home now.”

“*Non qui, voi due. Vergognati!*” Jalon cut his gaze to the woman, who looked older up close. He was amazed that he’d understood every word she’d said. He wanted to tell her that his kissing a man was not as bad as attending the games and watching men get killed for sport.

“I don’t speak Italian, babe,” he said, putting on his best surfer dude accent.

“*Cretinos.*” She brushed past them, motioning for her friend to follow, then headed toward the entrance of the tunnel. When she was gone, Gelsey reappeared. She kissed Cian greedily, her tongue sliding into his mouth as she stroked the back of Jalon’s hair.

When she turned to him, Jalon pulled her close and claimed her mouth the same way Cian had claimed his, hard and fast, his tongue sliding into her warmth quickly. His fingers tingled and he wanted the three of them together, now.

They all gently placed their heads against each other, their hands stroking each other’s backs.

“So good,” Jalon whispered. “What an idiot I’ve b --”

“Shush.” Cian put his finger on Jalon’s lips. “No recriminations, my love.”

“And no time for joining, either,” Gelsey said. “We need to follow our new friends and find the House of the Little Devil she spoke of. I don’t know about you, but I don’t remember seeing it in any guidebook.”

After receiving negative answers, they headed out as quickly as possible.

“Let’s not rush,” Cian said, putting himself in the middle and taking a hand from each of his companions. “I can smell them about three hundred meters ahead. We can follow their scent, and there is less chance of them seeing us that way.”

The trio slowed and Jalon wondered why he didn't feel strange about holding a man's hand in public. They received some odd stares, mostly from older people, but for the most part they were ignored. And it didn't feel weird to Jalon; it felt right, so very right. He wanted to tell them that if Cian could pick up their scent, they needed to go back to the house and make love. Now.

"No, my love," Cian said. "With the number of people here there is every chance that their scent could get covered up. We need to stay with them. That doesn't mean I'm not anxious to be with the both of you. I've said that for weeks now, months even."

"I know. Blame it on me." Jalon laughed softly.

"I do," Gelsey said, her amusement clear. "And you'll get a good spanking for it."

"I don't think so." They wove in and out of the swarms of people who filled the streets. Following Cian's directions, they turned left and right and then left again, finally ending up at the Tiber River. The couple had stopped in front of a large house. They looked around them, then waved to the guards as they vanished inside.

"Let me go, and you two stay here." Gelsey pointed to a bench near the edge of the river. The men walked over and sat while she walked to the guard. There was a knapsack on her back now, and she had a guidebook in her hand. As she walked she would occasionally stop, then look around as if confused. Finally she went up to the guard, who seemed only too happy to help her.

The men watched her as she leaned close, her blouse falling open to reveal her cleavage. She put her hand on the guard's arm, and the two hulking men joined her in laughter.

"She doesn't even have to blind him with her powers," Jalon said. "Just with her charm."

"She has a lot of that, plus a great deal of sex appeal, which we'll find out firsthand in just a little while."

Jalon cleared his throat, then put his hand on Cian's knee. "You must hate me."

"Not at all. I felt love for you the minute I set eyes on you. I admit that I didn't think about it being part of the triad until we were here and searching. Gelsey noticed it first. I never thought the stones would include faeries." Cian leaned closer, his lips near Jalon's ear. "I just knew I wanted to fuck you."

Jalon's heart skipped a beat. "I'm nervous about the idea."

"I'll be gentle, the first time." Cian ran his fingers through Jalon's hair. "I can't wait to be inside you. And, of course, I want you to fuck me too."

"What if we're wrong?" Jalon asked, looking up into the other man's eyes. "What if what we're feeling has nothing to do with the stone, or with the triad?"

"It does, and you know it. That's why your feelings have grown so much, especially since you fought them so hard."

"I fought them because it is --"

"Wrong? Wrong for one man to love another?"

"Yes."

"It's not wrong, Jalon. Society has deemed it immoral, but society has been wrong about a great many things, including this."

Gelsey stepped in front of them and they both looked up at her. "The house is a museum, a smaller one that contains many works of art previously owned by a man known for his cruelty back in the seventeenth century. His name was Ercole de Roma, and his house was called La Casa del Piccolo Diavolo. 'House of the Little Devil.'"

They moved apart on the bench and she sat between them, putting a hand on either knee. "You can feel the evil pouring out from it. Matlyn is there and many others. I had to spell the guards so they wouldn't notice my faerie scent."

"The stone is inside," Jalon said. "I feel it from here."

“Yes, it is,” Gelsey said. “We need to build up our strength as a unit before we go after it. Tomorrow, we come back and assess the situation from inside, but we make sure we cloak ourselves in protection spells first, and pray to the Goddess that they work.”

### Chapter Three

Jalon didn't want to wait the hour it would take them to get to their apartment in the Via Salaria area of Rome. His body craved connection with his two lovers right now. The need coursed through him, his heart pounding, his palms sweating. Never in his life had he felt desire that made his insides burn. But he felt it now, and if he didn't do something about it, he thought he might die.

"Not yet you won't," Cian said, trailing his hand down to stroke Jalon's ass. "Not before I take you deep inside me."

Jalon shivered. "Condoms. We need condoms."

"Nonsense," Gelsey said. "We're faeries. We don't carry diseases, and we can't catch anything from humans. All we'll have is skin on skin, lover to lover to lover."

Her words made Jalon's shivers multiply. His cock pounded inside his pants and when they moved onto a mostly deserted side street, Cian pulled him into his arms and kissed him. The next thing Jalon knew, he was lying in bed with Cian on top of him, Gelsey next to them, and they were all naked.

"It was worth the risk to use magic to get here quicker," Cian said, his tongue snaking out to lick along Jalon's lower lip. Jalon's body responded with pure delight, and he pushed

any lingering seeds of doubt to the back of his mind. He was as nervous as the first time he'd made love to a woman.

"Casandra Winegart? Were you that nervous when you took her the first time?" Cian licked at him again and Gelsey laughed.

"Stop that. If we are to have trust, you can't go probing his mind every chance you get, Cian."

Cian leaned down and gently kissed Jalon, their lips barely touching. Heat seared through Jalon as Cian moved his hips, the friction as their cocks rubbed together almost making him come right then and there.

Cian's movements increased, his hips rocking rapidly. As their cocks thrust together, Jalon could think of nothing more than fucking Cian, or Cian fucking him while Jalon was buried deep inside Gelsey's wet pussy.

"Yes!" Cian moved faster, the look on his face letting Jalon knew he was close to orgasm.

Gelsey cupped both of their balls, gently squeezing and caressing. Jalon reveled in the sensation of the faeries touching him. He moved his head out from under Cian's lips, gasping for air as his orgasm neared.

"Not yet," he whispered over and over, and Cian's hips stilled.

"You're right; it's much too soon for you to come." The faerie crawled up and straddled Jalon's chest, his cock bobbing in front of Jalon's face. "Touch me."

Jalon looked down at Cian's long, thick cock. It bobbed slightly as the faerie moved, and Jalon licked his lips. There was a dab of moisture on the end and he wanted to lick it up, see what it tasted like.

Gelsey knelt beside them and traced the slit on Cian's cock. She offered her finger to Jalon and he licked greedily, the salty taste of man invading his mouth.

“More.” Jalon stuck out his tongue but couldn’t move because of the weight on top of him.

“Feel him,” Gelsey said softly, her lips resting against Jalon’s ears. “See how hard he is for us. Caress his cock, wrap your fingers around him, and pump while I tell you a few secrets.”

Jalon did just that, Cian’s cock pulsing under his touch. Moisture appeared as if from nowhere, making his hand slick as he fondled Cian’s cock. He squeezed Cian like he liked to be squeezed and Cian groaned and thrust into his hands.

“Faerie males can come over and over,” Gelsey whispered, “and they stay wonderfully hard. Do you know what that means?”

“It means I’m jealous,” Jalon growled out, his hand moving faster. He stroked his fingers over the head, moved around the wetness, and took it down the length of Cian’s cock as the faerie groaned and pushed forward at a slow pace.

“It means he can pleasure both of us, again and again.” Gelsey kissed Jalon softly, her lips gentle against his. “And pleasure himself, of course.”

She put her hand on top of Jalon’s, both of them massaging Cian’s cock. “Don’t you love how hard he is for us?”

“Yes,” Jalon replied, licking his lips and snaking his tongue toward Cian’s cock.

“Not yet,” Gelsey said. “Soon I’ll sit back and watch the two of you devour each other’s cocks, licking and sucking. But for now, let’s do this.”

She tightened her grip, and they pumped faster. Within seconds, jets of cum erupted from Cian’s cock, landing on Jalon’s chest, producing warmth unlike anything Jalon had ever felt before. The faerie groaned, bucked his hips, and came again, a second stream following the path of the first.

Jalon’s eyes widened in amazement at the sight in front of him. Two months ago, he’d thought watching another man climax would sicken him. All this did was quicken his blood,

make him want to bend the faerie over and bury himself deep inside him. Gelsey rubbed the cum into Jalon's chest, lifting a finger to offer him a taste from time to time. He accepted it with greed, sucking her digits into his mouth and moaning at the fabulous taste that filled his mouth.

He watched Gelsey, who studied him intently. Cian's cock still pulsed as Jalon gently fondled him.

"My mind's a tangle," Jalon said softly. "I feel like I'm learning about sex all over again."

"You are," she whispered, her voice soft with amusement. "Having sex with a man is one thing, but having sex with two faeries is quite another. I hope you're up to the task."

Jalon wiggled his eyebrows and flicked his tongue over his lips. "I'm more than up to it."

Cian climbed off him. Jalon now had a faerie kneeling on either side. They both looked down, and Jalon's cock throbbed as they studied him. He propped himself up onto his elbows and their gazes drifted back to his face. He studied Gelsey, then did the same to Cian.

They ran their hands down Jalon's chest to his cock, each of them trailing a finger over the head and down a side. Jalon sucked in a deep breath as his cock vibrated with need. Cian's fingers trailed back up while Gelsey's trailed down to his balls. When Cian leaned over and licked the head of Jalon's cock, Jalon thought he would die from the pleasure.

He bucked up as Cian swallowed him, his cock sliding to the back of the faerie's throat easily. Gelsey gently licked Jalon's balls as Cian sucked. The sensations were almost too much to bear. He could feel his orgasm building, his balls drawing up, as Cian teased Jalon's cock with his teeth by gently running them up and down the length of his shaft.

He bucked his hips as Gelsey continued to caress his chest. When he turned his head and licked his lips, she laughed. "Hungry?"

"Very."

“Then I’m happy it’s my turn to cook.” She straddled his face and lowered herself slowly until his tongue met her clit. He lapped at her greedily, the sweet taste of her juices filling his mouth. She lowered herself down more, increasing the pressure, giving his tongue better access to her folds.

Matching the rhythm of Cian’s mouth on his cock, Jalon sucked her clit into his mouth. Images of Cian’s cock appeared in his mind, and within seconds, the faerie shifted and his hard, pulsing cock filled Jalon’s hand.

Jalon pumped Cian’s cock as he feasted on Gelsey’s soft, wet pussy. Their combined groans, sounding like the sweet sounds of a symphony, filled Jalon’s mind.

When Gelsey grasped the headboard and bucked harder, Jalon knew she was as ready to explode as he was. He pulled back a little, alternating between licking her clit gently and nibbling on it as her soft sighs turned into groans of need.

He stopped totally, inhaling the scent of her, savoring the soft folds that tickled his lips as she moved, encouraging him to continue. He lapped at her clit, once, twice, and then on the third pass he bit her softly and she exploded, her juices dribbling down onto his chin.

“Jalon! Cian! Now!”

Cian sucked harder and Jalon burst, his cum shooting into Cian’s throat just as Cian again erupted, his cum covering Jalon’s hand. The bed shook, the sound of the wood hitting the floor reverberating throughout the room.

Brilliant shards of red light filled the space as Jalon felt another orgasm slam into his body, the force of it making him shake as Cian sucked him harder still. Gelsey pushed herself farther into his mouth, begging for more. He bit her clit with ravenous need as she yelled her approval and came again, even as his hand still worked Cian’s hard cock.

When the bed had stopped shaking, Gelsey was the first to react. She stood quickly, motioning to the two men. They joined her, clasping hands and repeating the chants that would reinforce the wards on their hideaway, knowing Matlyn would have felt the blast of

their powers joining, of the beginning of the triad that would recover, and protect, the garnet stone.

## Chapter Four

Jessup ducked, throwing his hand up to send the urn that had been aimed at his head smashing into the wall instead. Shards of glass littered the floor as another piece of pottery flew by him and crashed into the wall.

“You idiot! You swore to me you’d find them and kill them. And now they’ve joined. Do you realize what that means?”

He narrowed his eyes at Matlyn, who sat on her throne, the tiger pacing beside her.

“Perhaps if you’d let the people search instead of playing gladiator games and having orgies, this wouldn’t have happened.”

Fire burned from her eyes as she stood, stepping closer to him. “You dare blame your failure on me?”

“I told you what needed to be done, and yet you let everyone stay and play, trying to alleviate your frustration with senseless death and sex. Don’t blame me for things I had no control over.”

“You idiot.” He stood his ground as she walked closer to him, stopping inches away. “If I didn’t like your dick so much, I’d kill you on the spot.”

“It’s not my dick that keeps me alive, and we both know it. It’s the fact that no one can protect the stone the way I can. I hold the key to its safety. Without me, they would already have it.”

“I can always find another dark faerie to weave the protection spells around the stone’s hiding place.”

“Not one as powerful as I am,” Jessup replied, staring down at her. “Mine is not a skill you find with every faerie.”

Jessup watched hatred spread across her face. For a moment he thought she would slap him or hit him with a thunderbolt as she had the poor, unfortunate witch who’d done nothing wrong but watch his Mistress berate her followers.

Then she sneered at him. “I think at tonight’s orgy you’ll be a spectator only. You’ll stay by my side and watch as I’m pleased. That will show you whom you serve. Your cock will be hard and you won’t be able to touch it, not without my express command.” She turned on her heels and vanished.

Triumph surged through him and he couldn’t help but laugh. She knew he was right, and she wouldn’t do anything to harm him, aside from the whippings she gave him before he fucked her. She took great pleasure in those, thinking they hurt him.

If she’d known he didn’t feel one kiss of the leather strap, her anger would be greater than what he’d just seen. Fooling her was so easy. She had great power, yes, but she allowed her emotions to rule, and that weakened her, something he took advantage of to the fullest.

He laughed to think she didn’t know his powers were strong enough to stop the pain, and for her not to realize a spell was in place. If they gave out awards for acting, he’d win one every night.

He faked every orgasm he had with her, pushing her just enough so she would think he was filling her with his semen. Touching her gave him no pleasure at all, but it would be worth it in the end.

Did she think not being allowed to participate in her orgy made him angry? On the contrary, he preferred it that way. Let the witches enjoy their carnal pleasures. He would watch and revel in the fact she would be enjoying his “discomfort,” a reaction that would only be in her mind.

He glanced at the tiger, which lay near the chair, washing its paws as if unconcerned about the fight between the humans. Then the animal lifted its brilliant blue eyes and focused them on Jessup before standing, stretching, and sauntering out of the room.

Jessup allowed himself another tingle of triumph before leaving in the direction the cat had gone. He needed to check on the stone, make sure everything was in play exactly the way he wanted it to be.

Matlyn might be under the misconception she was in charge, but Jessup knew better. Things would happen according to what he had planned. She would find out the truth soon enough, and when she did, all hell would break loose.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jalon reached for another slice of pizza, then flashed his two new lovers a smile of contentment. He didn't want to eat. He wanted to go back to bed. Wanted to bury himself deep inside Gelsey while Cian's cock pulsed inside his mouth. Or he could bury himself inside Cian while he was deep inside Gelsey.

The pairings didn't matter right now, as long as they were together. He'd never felt such strong feelings in his life. Why had he fought this? The fact that he had made him feel like an idiot. They were a triad now, even though they hadn't had intercourse.

When they joined together would the earth move? He thought that it would, based on what they'd felt earlier in the evening. He couldn't wait.

But Gelsey, always the thinking one of the three of them, had reminded them of the orgy that evening, of how they needed to get there at the right time so as not to arouse suspicion.

“Of course, I could be wrong and the witches could be living inside the house, but somehow, I doubt it. We need to get there around eleven; that’s the number I heard bantered about as the start of the festivities. Then, hopefully, we can just saunter in with the rest of the crowd.”

“What if there’s a password?” Jalon leaned toward her and kissed her gently. She stroked his cheek as their tongues danced together in a gentle cadence that made them both sigh in pleasure. Then he leaned the other way and claimed Cian’s lips, the other man’s tongue pushing inside his mouth, claiming it in a very primal way that made Jalon’s blood stir.

Cian’s hand dropped to Jalon’s cock, squeezing gently. He fondled the head, then tightened his grasp until Jalon moaned deeply, Cian capturing the noise with a kiss. The shaft grew in Cian’s hand, pulsing until Jalon broke the kiss. “Oh yeah, feels so good.”

“Don’t start, you two,” Gelsey said, shaking her head even as she laughed. “We have work to do. And, I’ve thought about the password problem. We can blend in with other partygoers, or we can spell the guards. The guys at the door this afternoon didn’t seem too bright. I can definitely get by them while you two sneak in. Then, there’s always invisibility.”

“For you two,” Jalon said. “Not for me. Besides, that would leave traces of magic behind, and they would know we were there.”

“There’s going to be all sorts of magical people there,” Cian replied. “Our signatures might be a little different, but I’m counting on what Gelsey said: that the guards aren’t the most powerful witches of the bunch. They were chosen for their brutish looks, meant for intimidation.”

“They still have powers,” Gelsey said. “This afternoon, though, I was able to fool them pretty handily. I have no doubt we’ll be just as successful tonight.”

“I wish we had time to fuck,” Cian said. His blunt observation made Jalon’s shoulders shake in laughter.

“We don’t want to hurry things,” Gelsey said. “After the party we’ll spend the whole night exploring each other. No stone will be left unturned.”

“Stone? A little Freudian slip there?” Jalon caressed her knee and he thought it sweet that she actually blushed. He didn’t think Gelsey was the blushing type of person.

“I suppose you’re right; since it was a stone that brought us together.” She picked up an olive, brought it up to her mouth and blew on it. The pimento flew out, hung suspended for a moment, then disappeared.

“Don’t like pimentos?” Jalon fought back a smile. “In all the time we’ve spent together I’ve never seen you do that.”

“I hate snakes.”

“Excuse me?” He frowned at her, then exchanged a “beats me” look with Cian.

“When I was a child, one of my brothers played a prank on me. He spelled an olive so that the pimento would turn into the shape of a snake when it was near my mouth. I looked down and saw it staring back at me, even though it was really just a pimento spelled to look like a snake. I screamed. My mother got angry with both of us, and to this day, I’ve never been able to eat the pimento out of an olive.”

Jalon started to laugh, his shoulders shaking in mirth. Cian joined in and Gelsey held up her hand, rain drenching them both within seconds. They sputtered and tried to fight it off magically to no avail.

“It’s not funny,” she said, crossing her arms over her chest. Jalon could tell she was trying hard not to laugh herself. The rain stopped and she narrowed her eyes at both of them.

“Of course it is, Gels,” Cian replied. “I hope you got him back.”

"I did. I popped him out of his girlfriend's arms right before they were about to 'do it.' It served him right that she dumped him the next day, thinking he'd left because he didn't want her."

"Hear, hear," Jalon said. "Definitely a nice payback."

"Perfect," Cian replied. "Did he try and get you back, though?"

"He's still working on it," she said with a grin, picking up an olive and eating it quickly. "So far he's been unable to come up with anything as good as what I did, though."

"Hmm, I wonder if that means we need to be on our guards," Jalon replied.

"Just let him try it," Cian replied. "He'll be toast."

"Maybe after we find and replace the stone. So after Samhain we all need to worry. Until then, though, he won't mess with us. He knows how important this is." Gelsey stood and waved her hand. A full-length mirror appeared and she spelled herself a dress, a red bustier that showed off her best assets, and a tight red leather skirt slit up to the top of her thighs.

Red boots ended just above the knee. "What do you think? Sleepy enough for an orgy at Matlyn's mansion?" She grasped the top of the leather bustier and pulled up on it, wiggling her breasts farther down.

"Leave them out," Jalon said. "You want to be offering them, not hiding them."

She tugged it back down, the tips of her nipples barely covered by the leather. Her hair began twisting itself into a French braid, and when it was done she stepped back and spun around. "Well?"

"Slut." Cian lifted his brows in appreciation, then looked down at his cock, which stood at full mast. "You pass inspection."

"Most definitely," Jalon said, putting his hand on his own erect cock. He reached over and stroked Cian's hardness, earning a sharp intake of breath from the other man. The feel of

Cian's silky skin made his own shaft jerk, and the fact that Gelsey watched made it all the more enticing.

He lifted his gaze to where she looked between them, hunger burning in her eyes. Jalon could tell she wanted to shuck her costume and join them, hands and lips roaming each other's bodies until they all screamed in pleasure.

For a moment, he thought she might do just that. Jalon thought it was a good idea. It would help them work off sexual tension before being thrown into a roomful of people having sex. But then again, maybe having the tension would be good, would keep them on their toes.

He waited for Gelsey to make her decision, his hand tightening around Cian's cock. The faerie leaned back, allowing Jalon free reign as he stroked and caressed. She watched for a few minutes, then shook her head in obvious frustration.

"Gentlemen, not now. We need to stay focused. Leather pants for both of you, I think, and open silk shirts. And, whether you like it or not, collars and leashes that mark you as my submissives. Leave your hair hanging down."

"Yes, Mistress," Cian said, cynicism dripping from his voice.

"Watch it," she replied, her voice equally sarcastic. "You will obey me."

"We'll see." Cian looked at Jalon, who still gently stroked his cock. "Time to work, my love."

The faerie waved his hands and Jalon wiggled his behind, looking down at his new clothing. "You don't think you could have made them any tighter?" He tugged at the tight leather collar around his neck, the leash swinging with each movement. This would take some getting used to. The pants grew snugger as Cian dressed himself in the same outfit, his leash hanging to the floor.

Cian leaned over and kissed him, and Jalon felt a thrill shoot straight through him. He fought down the pleasure knowing it was time for them to work, time for them to,

hopefully, discover the stone after long months of searching. Whether they could get it out of Matlyn's lair tonight remained to be seen.

He doubted it. She wouldn't just have it lying around, waiting for them to take it. They would need to be on their guard tonight, searching for hidden places, looking for energy the stone would produce when they were near.

Jalon had no doubt it would do that now, since they'd climaxed together, joined their bodies. Maybe not in actual intercourse, but the afternoon's pleasures had definitely given him more energy and better insight into himself, and the two people he would spend the rest of his life with.

Contentment surged through him at that thought. For once in his life he felt as if he belonged to someone outside his family; no, he thought, not outside his family. Cian and Gelsey were his family now, the people he would grow old with, stay with until he died.

That thought brought something he hadn't expected along with it. Pain. Faeries lived much, much longer than witches. When his time came to die, they would still be fairly young.

"Don't think about it," Gelsey said, running her hand along his cheek before kissing him gently. Cian laid his head on Jalon's back, stroking his sides. "We think about the here and now, our love for each other, and the task that lies before us. Agreed?"

"Definitely," Jalon said. "What's our plan of attack once we get inside?"

"We go from room to room, slowly, with our hands clasped," Gelsey said. "The power from our touching each other should radiate to the stone, and it should let us know where it is. From there, we'll decide exactly what to do. If we're lucky we can retrieve it tonight. I don't see that happening, though."

"You're right," Cian said. "I see this as a reconnaissance mission only. We need to be extra cautious to make sure we're shielded against Matlyn. She's the only one I'm really

worried might sense our presence. I think the others are not disciplined enough to play and still be alert to danger.”

Jalon thought about the dark faerie he'd seen standing behind Matlyn in the painting this afternoon. “There is one other we have to worry about,” he said softly. He explained about the faerie, how he'd seemed to spot Jalon watching the “games” the witches were participating in.

“But he said nothing?” Cian's voice was full of the confusion Jalon had felt when the man had stared at him.

“No,” Jalon replied. “Maybe I'm wrong, though. Maybe he didn't see me.”

“He saw you,” Gelsey said. “He was quiet for his own purposes, which means we have to figure out his reasoning. We'll be on the lookout for him.”

They shared a look that spoke of love, and Jalon felt strength pour into him, giving it back to them both in an encompassing wave.

“We need to ward ourselves against discovery while in the den of the devil, and then we need to pray to the Goddess for strength,” Jalon said. “Those two things mixed together will help us find what we need and come out of this expedition alive.”

They kissed again, their mouths moving around to each other with slow, sweet purpose, tongues gently lapping at lips. Then they laid their foreheads together, chanting a spell for protection before asking the Goddess for strength. They all knew they would need it this evening.

## Chapter Five

“That was easy,” Jalon said as he followed Cian into La Casa del Piccolo Diavolo. The guards hadn’t given them a second look. Gelsey had run her finger inside her bustier and tweaked her nipple, and a sentinel had jerked his head toward the inside.

“Too easy,” Cian replied. “We’re in the main part of the museum, you know. We still have to find passage to wherever this orgy is being held, so we shouldn’t pat ourselves on the back too quickly.”

“Spoilsport.” Jalon winked at him, then glanced around. A couple had come in before them, but they were now gone, with not a trace left of them anywhere. “They’ve got a hidden entrance to their secret lair somewhere.”

“I can’t sense a whiff of it,” Gelsey said, her frustration obvious. “Can either of you?”

Both the men shook their heads. Jalon took a few moments to examine their surroundings. The walls were painted solid black, a strange color for a museum, he thought. Then he remembered Ercole de Roma’s reputation for cruelty. The color of the walls and the paintings on display certainly fit that theme.

While he’d expect a collection of works from Renaissance artists, these paintings didn’t fit that description. They displayed various scenes of people being tortured, and Jalon

wrinkled his nose in disgust. In one, a man was tethered to four horses that were about to be sent in different directions. In another, a woman was being burned to death.

“Morbid,” Cian said, his voice low.

“Disgusting,” Gelsey replied. “But what do you expect from Matlyn and her friends?” Gelsey shivered, then stepped closer to her lovers. “Somehow I don’t think one of these paintings about torture is a portal to a sex party.”

“Don’t forget they were beheading beaten gladiators,” Cian said with a snort. “This is probably their idea of fun.”

“What we need is a sign that says, ‘Orgy here.’” Jalon stepped closer to a painting depicting the Coliseum, hoping he’d see something like he’d seen that afternoon. Instead, it was a depiction of a woman being held down by four men while another raped her. The watching crowd had its arms in the air, obviously cheering in approval. But the scene wasn’t moving, something for which Jalon was more than grateful.

He shuddered, then put his arms around his companions, propelling them toward the back of the room. He knew the sentries who’d allowed them access so easily were watching them, and that if they didn’t do something soon, the guards would know something was up.

They made their way across the room slowly, stopping every few steps to trade kisses, using the opportunity to carefully study paintings and look for staircases. The paintings grew more disgusting as they neared the back of the room. Jalon wavered about whether they should go into the lion’s den without knowing exactly what they were getting themselves into, or how they would get out. They had good magical instincts, yes, but they were about to be up against Goddess knew how many dark witches with powers unknown. The idea of being pitted against Matlyn was bad enough, but not knowing who else was there also put him on edge.

He pushed the thought aside as he continued his observations. Nothing popped out at him, and the apprehension he felt kicked up a notch.

If they weren't careful, this outing could be over before it had taken off fully. If the guards decided to investigate the newcomers, then it was possible Matlyn would be notified. And if Matlyn discovered they knew where the stone was, he was sure she would have it moved. Their supposed ignorance was the only thing they truly had going for them at that moment, that and their love for each other.

They were near the wall now, and Jalon could feel someone's gaze burning into his back. They had nowhere else to go and not a clue what to do. Nothing called to them, no paintings came to life and no portals opened as they neared.

"Fuck!" Jalon wanted to slam his fist against the wall, push against every wall until one of them sucked them inside. "Damn Garmund Monk and his followers to eternal flame!"

The air around them shivered, and they all tensed. From the corner, a dim light emitted and a woman walked out, totally naked. She undulated in pleasure, then stroked her body before crossing to Jalon and kissing him, holding his face firmly between two hands.

He fought back the revulsion that rose inside him, putting his hand on her back and pulling her close, but not too close.

"Long live Monk," she whispered against his lips when the kiss broken.

Jalon repeated the phrase and the corner from which the woman had come out glowed brightly. The witch crossed the room and dropped to her knees in front of the watching guard, who turned his attention to where she was undoing his pants.

"Let's go," Gelsey said, hurrying toward the corner. She put out her hand and it disappeared into the blackness of the walls. She pulled it back out, then exchanged glances with the men. They joined hands again, Gelsey grasping the leather between their palms; then they melted into the wall in a line, Cian at the front and Jalon in the back.

Cold seeped into Jalon's bones as they moved through the wall. It felt as if someone had wrapped him in ice and buried him deep belowground. He shivered, and then suddenly everything turned black.

He squeezed Gelsey's hand harder and she responded in kind, her hand a little slippery from sweat. The darkness enveloped them, and then a bright flash of light made him squint, holding up his free hand to shield his face.

Heat instantly replaced the cold, the soles of his feet searing as if he were stepping on hot coals. As suddenly as the heat appeared it was gone, and they were standing on solid ground again. The sounds and smells of sex filled the air and Jalon fought to adjust his eyes to the low lighting. He gasped when an unknown, strong hand grabbed his cock, massaging it through the leather pants.

"Would you like to suck my dick?" He looked up into the brilliant green eyes of a dark faerie, his dark hair hanging to the floor.

"Are you blind? They're mine." Gelsey tugged on the men's leashes for emphasis. "Both of them are mine. Don't touch them without my permission."

"Forgive me, Mistress, but I didn't recognize any of you, and they're both such tasty morsels, especially the witch. May I fuck him?"

Jalon stiffened at the faerie's request. The first, and only, man he wanted in his ass was Cian. He glanced at Cian, who looked as if he wanted to tear out the other faerie's throat. His hands were clenched at his sides, and it looked as if he would shoot daggers from his eyes.

"You may not." Gelsey pushed at the dark faerie's chest. "That's why I have two. They fuck each other for my amusement. I don't need, or want, your dick."

The dark faerie held up his hands in an obscene gesture, then turned and stalked off.

"Good idea with the collars," Jalon said. "I bow to your knowledge."

"You'd better bow," Gelsey said. "Make sure you act submissive. Don't come to my rescue if someone says something untoward, or think you have to save me from anything. That would give us away in a second."

She pulled them into the room and Jalon swallowed his reaction. The pit in the center of the room contained about fifty people, all of them touching, sucking, and fucking. Hands

and feet were everywhere; mouths, both male and female, swallowed cocks; dicks also disappeared into openings, male and female.

Grunts and groans of pleasure and screams of pain emanated from the group. There was no love, or need, in any action taking place here. It was pure lust, in its most raw and primal form.

Jalon scanned the group, then let his gaze settle for a few seconds to where Matlyn sat on her throne, watching the action in avid appreciation. A woman knelt between her legs, obvious pleasuring the dark witch with her tongue. Not that Matlyn seemed to care. She had one foot draped over the arm of the chair, her toes resting in the fur of the white tiger that seemed to be constantly at her side.

To her other side was the dark faerie Jalon had seen that afternoon. Tonight, the man hung from the ceiling, his arms strung above his head, his feet barely touching the floor. Another male faerie jerked the dark one's cock rapidly, stopping before starting again at Matlyn's command. The man was obviously being punished, but for what? Had Matlyn discovered he'd made eye contact with Jalon that morning and done nothing about it? No, he'd be dead if she knew that, Jalon was sure. It had to be something totally different? But what?

It was obvious the man was being kept in a constant state of arousal, not allowed to climax. Jalon searched his face to see how he was taking it. Instead of pain, or anger, Jalon saw only boredom. Matlyn, however, must have seen something different. She turned her gaze to the faerie and laughed, an evil sound that made Jalon quake.

Gelsey tugged at Jalon's leash. "On your knees, slut." He obeyed instantly; then she pushed Cian's head to her now-bared breast. "Eat and suck me, you pricks."

Her skirt disappeared and Jalon touched his tongue to her nether lips, the sounds of Cian sucking her nipple drifting down to his ears.

“The dark one has spelled her,” she whispered. “He must be very powerful to be able to work magic on Matlyn and have her not know it. When she glances at him, it looks as if he’s in pain. Don’t look directly at him. Now I worry about him more than I do her.”

She put her hand on the back of either man’s head, pulling them closer in encouragement. “There are corridors leading off the main room. You need to make me climax, Jalon, and then we’ll get closer to each one of tunnels, see if we can sense the stone.”

Gelsey tugged on Jalon’s leash, pulling his head closer to her pussy. He parted her lips with his tongue, searching out her clit. He found it easily, licking the hard little nub, which pulsed under his touch.

“That’s it,” she said loudly. “Show me your gratitude for allowing you to serve me.”

Jalon glanced up carefully, his gaze fastening on where Cian now twisted both of Gelsey’s nipples before lowering his head again. Gelsey ground herself into Jalon’s face and he savored the taste of her, despite the danger.

She tensed and climaxed quickly, and he lapped at her juices, which flowed over his tongue. She tasted like sweet honey and cream, and he lapped up every last drop. When she tugged him up to his feet, she nodded her approval, then took off at a brisk pace, jerking them harshly behind her.

Jalon followed, remembering to keep his eyes lowered as a good submissive would. He wanted to reach out with his senses and search for the stone. If he succumbed to the temptation, though, he would leave them vulnerable. Some witch or dark faerie would feel the probing and alert their Mistress, and then all hell would break loose.

Gelsey slowly led them through the crowd, past corridor after corridor, and Jalon felt nothing except nausea for the number of people who reached for either him or Cian, begging their Mistress to let them join in the fun.

They'd been there almost forty-five minutes when Jalon caught his first whiff of the stone, a sensation that made his nose twitch as if sniffing a finely cooked meal, and his insides warmed as if he'd just fallen asleep wrapped in the arms of his lovers.

He tugged on the leash, praying he didn't call attention to them as he did. "Mistress, I desire to please you."

Gelsey turned to him, her eyes twinkling, and he knew she'd had the same feeling. He cast a surreptitious look at Cian, who nodded slightly. The tunnel was directly behind Matlyn's chair, and no one seemed to be paying them any attention. There were no sentries down here, and Jalon decided those who were around were probably busy getting their dicks sucked, something that definitely worked in the trio's favor. Gelsey tugged the leashes hard and they disappeared into the dark corridor, moving as quickly as they could without any light.

When the light from the entrance started to fade, Gelsey held out her hand, producing a flame in her palm. She led the way, the men following slowly. They passed several places where the tunnel broke off, bleeding into darkness. They stopped at each entrance, reaching out with their senses to try and feel the stone, coming up empty each time.

It was almost ten minutes later when Jalon stopped, his heart beating so rapidly his eyes pulsed in rhythm. "In here." He pointed to his left, wanting to run down the corridor so they could find the precious stone. But he stayed in place, willing his heart rate to slow. They glanced around them, then slowly traversed the path, picking up speed as they walked.

They skidded to a halt in front of an arched doorway that was devoid of any door. Joining hands, they reached out with their senses; then Jalon sighed in pleasure.

"It's here." They stepped inside cautiously, the torches on the wall lighting when they sensed their presence. They braced for an attack of some sort, their gazes taking in every nook and cranny as if expecting someone to pounce on them. When nothing happened, they lowered their gazes slowly, then took stock of their surroundings.

Columns full of carvings that were hard to make out sat in each of the corners. Two of the sidewalls held nothing more than the torches that now blazed brightly. Against the far wall, a mural depicted a large man, his face mottled with rage and hatred. His arms were outstretched, fire shooting from his fingertips. One foot was on the ground, the other rested atop the earth.

Sitting at the base of the globe on a royal blue pillow, the garnet stone glowed; its color dazzling, bright streams of radiant light shining from it.

“Monk,” Jalon said, taking an involuntary step backward. The painting seemed to stare right at them, its eyes blazing with anger.

The triad stood still for a few long moments; then Jalon stepped forward. “It seems too easy, but I say let’s take it and run.”

“Let’s not,” Cian said. “You’re right; it’s too easy. There should be guards here. Why isn’t anyone watching? It could be a trap of some sort.”

“And if we take it, where do we go? If we exit the way we came, I’m sure Matlyn will sense the stone the minute it’s in the main room,” Gelsey said.

“You’re right,” Jalon said. “We stay close together, and don’t touch anything until we all agree it’s the right thing to do.”

They took a cautious step, and the light coming off the stone brightened, its glow lighting up the room.

“It wants us,” Jalon said, his fingers itching to reach out and grab the garnet. They took another step, and then another. On the third one, the light from the torches dimmed and they froze in place, their breathing shallow.

Movement from the doorway made them all stiffen, their essences flowing into each other.

They turned as one to face the doorway.

The white tiger paced back and forth, anger flashing in its green eyes. It stepped into the corridor, paused, then came back inside.

The sound of cracking bones filled the air, the popping noise reverberating against the tufo walls. Jalon's eyes widened as a beautiful woman took form, her long blonde hair flowing down her back. She looked over her shoulder, then turned a furious glare on the triad.

"What in the hell do you think you're doing here?"

## Chapter Six

“We were trying to find our way out,” Gelsey said, her voice calm and even. “I think we took the wrong tunnel, and --”

“Don’t you dare insult my intelligence, Gelsey. I know very well the three of you are here for the stone, but are you so dense as to walk directly into the enemy’s den while she sits in the other room? I was told you all were smarter than that. Perhaps I’ve been misinformed.”

“Who are you?” Jalon leaned closer, studying her carefully. He was sure he’d never seen her before. And he was just as sure she was an ally and not a foe, something that shocked him to his core. How had someone infiltrated Matlyn’s group, made it to where she sat at her side?

“You have no idea who I am, or the amount of filth I’ve had to endure to get to where I am today. I will not allow your stupidity to bring it crashing down and allow Matlyn and Monk to win.” The woman tensed, then ran her fingers through her hair. “She’s coming. I’m going to hide you. Don’t use your magic or fight it. It was your little burst of flame that made me sense you in the first place. When we leave, the spell will dissolve. She trusts me so she won’t be suspecting danger, and won’t think anything of a slight tingle. When we’re gone,

take the corridor opposite from the one you came down. It's quite a long walk, but take it slowly. I'll spell the tunnel to provide light that will go out once you've passed. There's a stairway leading up to a reservoir from the ancient aqueduct system."

She threw up her hands and Jalon gasped as the three of them flew to the ceiling, flattening against the stone surface.

"Whatever you do, don't use your magic while you're near La Casa del Piccolo Diavolo. They sensed you this afternoon, and will do so again tonight. Be normal and walk. The end of the tunnel is far from here, so you can use magic then, but not before." She huffed in anger. "And for the Goddess's sake, whatever you do, don't come back here until I contact you."

"Regina? What are you doing?"

Jalon stared down at Matlyn. The evil witch's dark hair cascaded over her shoulders. She was topless and wore a loose skirt that could be easily pushed aside. She gently caressed the shape-shifter's cheek, then pulled her close for a harsh kiss. When the kiss broke, she pushed her away. "Answer me."

"I thought I sensed something. I came to see. After all, you were busy torturing Jessup's cock."

Jessup, Jalon thought. That must be the dark faerie.

"Yes, it is so delicious to hear him scream." Matlyn cupped Regina's breast and pinched her nipple. The shape-shifter hissed in pain. "You're lying to me."

"I'm not, my love. I'm just worried about the stone, since the others were nearby today."

"They know nothing." Matlyn stepped around her, striding toward one of the columns. "Besides, my babies will protect the stone."

She caressed the marble, which shimmered in response. Then she held out her hand and an imp jumped to life, landing in Matlyn's palm. The little troll cackled and shook its fur like a dog coming out of a rainstorm.

"If someone touches the stone other than me, they will be ripped to shreds." She stroked the imp, then flicked her finger at it, sending it flying back into the column where it instantly hardened again. She turned to Regina.

"Besides, you're not supposed to worry."

"You're worried," Regina said. "I feel what you feel."

Matlyn crossed to her, pulling the younger woman in for a hard kiss. "I appreciate the empathy you feel for me, darling, but I don't want you to worry. I own you, and I will care for you, and use you, as I see fit. Your only job is to please me."

No mention of love, Jalon thought, just of ownership and how Matlyn would benefit from Regina. Matlyn's idea of owning people made him sick.

"Of course, Matlyn. Let us go back to the party and I will pleasure you in front of everyone, show them all how much I love you."

"That's more like it." They kissed again and then they vanished. The triad floated to the floor slowly. The three of them stared at the columns. Then they crept from the room, taking the corridor opposite from the way they'd come, lights coming on in front of them to lead the way and going out after they'd passed to hide them in darkness.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I think we should rest." Jalon put his back against the wall, then slid down to the stone floor. His feet ached and he desperately needed a drink of water. They'd been walking for hours, and he was beginning to think they were getting nowhere fast.

“What if she lied to us?” Cian sat down next to him and tilted his head toward Jalon, who reciprocated, rubbing their foreheads together. Gelsey sat on Jalon’s lap, stretching her legs across Cian’s legs.

“She didn’t,” Gelsey replied, clearing her throat. “Obviously, she answered a lot of our questions. The elders found out where the stone is from her, a spy. And she wasn’t more specific because she worried we’d rush in and take it, and Matlyn would kill us in the process.”

“We’re assuming she’s not lying to us,” Cian said.

“If she were lying, we’d be dead,” Jalon replied. “She gets nothing from helping us to escape. In fact, if Matlyn found out she helped us, she’d probably kill her without asking any questions.”

They were silent for a few moments, cuddling into each other’s warmth, savoring the feel of each other’s bodies.

Finally, Cian broke the silence, his voice weary. “I just want to go on record as saying I don’t trust her. I think we might be making a huge mistake by listening to her.”

The silence grew thick, and finally Gelsey said, “Your objection is duly noted, but I want to point out we’re still alive, and that is several points in her favor as far as I’m concerned.”

“We need to go,” Jalon said suddenly. “And the first thing we need when we get aboveground is --”

“Water.” Cian finished the sentence for him. “Lots of water. Then I’ll fly us to the house.”

“What is this tunnel anyway?” Jalon patted the stone floor and frowned. “I thought the aqueduct system was aboveground, not below.”

“Maybe the little devil who owned the house used it to steal water,” Gelsey said. “Or maybe he used it to hide from the authorities when they tried to arrest him for those activities we saw in the paintings.”

“Or maybe it was a waste pipe,” Cian said, standing quickly and offering hands to pull up Jalon and Gelsey. “We’re wasting time. I’d like to get out of here and get home to a nice, long soak in a hot tub that turns into rousing sex.”

“I didn’t know we had a hot tub,” Jalon said.

“We will when I get there,” Cian said.

They made it to the stairs about an hour later, climbing up right next to the reservoir, just like Regina said they would. It was obvious from the way the tunnel had a connection tube to the tank that it probably had been used to steal water from the system.

Gelsey produced water jugs from which they drank heavily. Then they leaned against the stone structure, all of them breathing heavily.

“That was quite a trek.” Cian patted the brick of the basin. A mischievous glint filled his eyes and he swirled his fingers. “I don’t want to wait until we get home. We have an empty tank here. Why not fill it and use it for our hot tub?”

Jalon could hear water flowing, obviously flooding the reservoir. Cian grabbed his hand, then wrapped his arm around Gelsey and they lifted off the ground, hovering for a moment before shooting high, and then landing in the vat of hot water.

By the time they hit the water they were naked. He groaned in pleasure as the hot water, rippling around his body with an unseen force, soothed his aching muscles. Jets appeared in the sides and the water started to move faster, the bubbles rising and spilling over the sides. The three of them swam to the wall, turning so the water could pulse over their shoulders, and then turning again almost as one, letting the soothing massage action hit their feet.

They lay on their backs and floated, letting the water soothe them.

Jalon stared up at the stars twinkling above them, then turned on his side and ran his hands over Gelsey's abundant breasts, tweaking her nipples before sliding his fingers over to Cian's flat chest.

Soon hands were everywhere, stroking each other's upper bodies until they all groaned with pleasure. Gelsey created a platform, built of some sort of soft material Jalon had never seen before. They climbed atop it and when they got there, he pushed Cian down, then dived for his cock, sliding Cian's length into his mouth in one fell swoop.

"Oh Goddess, yes," Cian said, lifting his hips at the same time he pressed on the back of Jalon's head. His dick slid in farther and Jalon swallowed every delicious inch, savoring the hard length in his mouth, teasing the head with his tongue before sliding it all the way down and licking Cian's balls where they joined his shaft.

Cian growled in approval, pulsing inside Jalon's mouth, letting go of a heavy stream of cum while Jalon drank greedily. The salty, male taste of Cian made Jalon's blood boil, the feeling surging to his already throbbing cock. His pleasure increased when the sounds of Cian lapping Gelsey's wet folds filled the night air.

He continued to lick and suck Cian as he lifted his gaze to where Gelsey sat, undulating on Cian's face, his tongue moving rapidly. Their gazes locked and she licked her lips.

"Suck him, Jalon. I want to see his cock slide in and out of your mouth."

"Whatever you say, Mistress." He bent to his task, taking great pleasure in her laughter.

"I like this game," she replied. "Me in charge of two strapping, gorgeous men."

"Just remember it's a game." Cian's muffled words made her laugh again.

"Maybe." She pressed down into his face, then crooked her finger at Jalon. "Take my place. I want to watch you suck each other."

Jalon scrambled to obey, straddling Cian's face, his cock quickly disappearing inside the faerie's mouth. Gelsey fondled his balls, her fingers tracing over the vein that ran toward his

anus, circling the tight hole with her finger, applying a little pressure before pulling away and gently stroking his sac again.

Her movements spurred Jalon into overdrive and he sucked Cian harder, the faerie matching him inch for inch, keeping up with him in rhythm and speed. When he felt his balls tighten he stopped, pulling himself up until his dick hung above Cian's mouth.

"I'm not a faerie," he managed to get out, his chest heaving in exertion. "If I blow now...that will be...it for me. I need to...stop for...a minute."

Gelsey still fondled him, cupping his balls and stroking the backs of his thighs, her touch teasingly light. Jalon shivered in need, then ran his hand over Cian's wet, hard cock. It jerked in acknowledgement, its need apparent. The head glistened with Jalon's saliva and he wanted nothing more than to take it back into his mouth, work it until Cian provided him with another tasty treat. But he was sure if he did, he would come just from the pleasure of feeling Cian fill his mouth. When the danger had passed, he bent back down to take Cian into his mouth once more. The faerie shot off immediately, filling Jalon's throat with hot jets. Once again he swallowed it voraciously, Cian's cock hitting the back of his throat, muffling Jalon's cries of delight.

"We can make this our permanent home," Cian said, his hands joining Gelsey's on Jalon's thighs. "If we stayed here forever, I'd be thrilled."

Gelsey scooted to the edge of the platform and the men pounced on her, their hands competing with each other to find her clit as their mouths each claimed a nipple. She spread her legs wider and Jalon found her tight bud, stroking and teasing it until her cries of joy filled the countryside.

Her clit twitched under his fingers and he tightened his grip, rubbing it between his thumb and forefinger as Cian's hands moved lower, his fingers sliding inside Gelsey's soaking channel.

"Take me, Cian." Her voice was thick with need. "Fuck me so that Jalon can fuck you."

“With pleasure,” Cian replied, climbing up Gelsey’s body so that their faces were even. He lowered his mouth, claiming hers in a brutal, noisy kiss while Jalon massaged his ass, his hand straying down to cup his balls, then slid down his length.

Jalon guided Cian’s cock to Gelsey’s entrance, then let go, marveling at the sight of it disappearing inside her. Their groans seemed to melt together as Cian rocked above her, thrusting in and out at a steady rhythm. He sat back on his knees, sliding Gelsey’s ass onto his thighs, pushing in deeper.

He motioned Jalon closer to him, then kissed him hungrily, sliding his tongue into his mouth until Jalon thought it would merge with his own. When the kiss broke, he whispered against Jalon’s lips, “Let’s make her come one more time before you fuck me.”

Cian clasped her thighs and pounded into her, his rhythm picking up speed as Jalon bent and parted her lips, his tongue finding her clit in an instant. Two hard, fast swipes were all it took.

Her scream filled the air again, her hands clutched at the platform, then moved to Jalon’s arm, holding tight, her fingers digging into his flesh as he continued to taste her, reveling in the feel of her soft flesh.

Jalon flicked his tongue over her nub, then kissed it gently before pulling back and glancing at Cian. He’d never taken anyone, man or woman, in the ass, but somehow he knew exactly what to do. He leaned over and kissed Gelsey, her mouth soft under his own, her tongue seeking and finding his, dancing around it.

And then he did the same with Cian, the faerie’s mouth almost as soft, his tongue just as eager to slide into Jalon’s mouth. While they kissed, Gelsey produced a handful of gel. She grasped Jalon’s cock, wrapping her warm fingers around it, coating it with the slick substance. When the kiss broke, he moved slowly behind his lovers, his hands on Cian’s shoulders, massaging.

Cian settled himself into Gelsey's warmth, letting her legs drop from his thighs. Then he reached behind and spread his cheeks. "Take me." He growled the words before dropping his mouth to Gelsey's.

Jalon didn't hesitate. He spied his tight little target, placed the head of his cock at the tip, and pushed. Cian groaned loudly as Jalon moved past the muscles, his shaft sinking into Cian's tight, warm passage. It gripped him firmly, seeming to suck him farther inside.

It seemed to take no time to sink inside; his balls soon lay against Cian's, the warmth sending shockwaves through Jalon's body. They moved as one, setting up a steady in and out rhythm where Cian would slide out of Gelsey while Jalon slid into Cian.

Their grunts of pleasure mingled together, seeming to form bands of ribbon that wrapped around the lovers, pulling them tight. The platform started to move, swirling around as they loved.

Jalon angled himself upward, stroking across Cian's gland, the faerie's deep groan of "Fuck yes, baby, do it again," making him move faster. He thrust harder, picking up the pace until he felt his orgasm building. It was unlike anything he'd ever felt before, and he knew it wasn't just something he was feeling.

Gelsey and Cian were about to topple over the edge too. He slammed himself into Cian's tightness harder; pure sensations of absolute bliss filled him as he spilled inside the faerie. He felt Cian pulse inside Gelsey, then felt another stream release inside Cian when Gelsey wrapped her legs around them both, holding them close as her orgasm overtook her.

The world spun and Jalon could have sworn he saw lightning flash across the sky. Once they were still, he could swear that he could feel not three chests heaving in exertion but one heartbeat, beating inside the three of them, signifying they'd truly found their destiny in each other's arms.

## Chapter Seven

Jalon blinked his eyes rapidly, then nestled under the covers, drawing warmth from the two bodies around him. He was in the middle this time, two sets of faerie legs intertwined with his own. His lovers still slept and he closed his eyes, the sound of their even breathing filling him with love.

Memories of last night's passion made him smile. His balls stirred, making his dick throb. It was something he had to adjust to, this constant state of arousal. He would adjust with great pleasure, though. Last night's climax had been stronger than the first he'd felt with them, and he knew from what the elders had said that the longer a triad was together, the stronger their bond became, the more their powers grew, and the harder it would be for the evil to defeat them.

They were bound to the stone, just like they were bound to each other. When he thought about it, he could kick himself for fighting it for so long. But that was over now, and they would make the most of their time together as a triad.

He moaned softly as Cian's lips descended to his. The kiss was soft, and Cian gently sucked Jalon's lower lip into his mouth, nibbling with tenderness. Jalon cupped the other

man's head, drawing him closer as his other hand sought Gelsey, who leaned over and kissed his neck.

Cian released his lip slowly, his mouth moving down Jalon's body at a snail's pace. Jalon turned his head to Gelsey, placing tiny kisses around her lips before claiming her mouth. He groaned, deepening the kiss when Cian's tongue found his cock, running from head to base and back at that same, leisurely pace. He licked all the way around, then started over, his tongue teasing the vein along the back, then lapping at the slit until Jalon thought he would shoot off like a firecracker. He moved his hips in encouragement, trying to get Cian to take Jalon's cock in his mouth, but Cian refused, pulling away when his mouth neared the other man's dick.

Every time his climax approached, Cian would stop, his fingers tenderly caressing Jalon's balls, the movement soft enough to tickle, but not hard enough to make him climax. When Jalon's hips stopped moving, Cian leaned over and kissed Jalon's sac before starting his sweet torture again.

Gelsey straddled him and bent over, her nipples a tantalizing treat inches away from Jalon's mouth. She held her breasts together and he lifted his head to lick first one, and then the other. He suckled each one until she groaned, then he laid his head back down, licking his lips in appreciation.

She leaned closer and Jalon covered her hands with his, sliding down her soft flesh to her nipples, teasing them with his fingers. When she swiveled her head from side to side, her pleasure obviously building inside her, Jalon lifted his head toward her, pushing her nipples together so he could take both of them in his mouth at once.

"Oh yes." She rocked her hips slowly, and Jalon could feel what she felt. Cian stroked her clit, his fingers as gentle on her tight bud as his tongue was on Jalon's shaft. Jalon nibbled on her nipples, the nubs growing harder under his teeth. When she moved back, he groaned at the loss of her, until he saw what was happening.

Cian's hands were on her hips, moving her backward toward Jalon's waiting cock. The faerie lifted her, placing the jutting tip of Jalon's shaft at her opening. He applied pressure, encouraging her to press down, stopping her at intervals, holding her still while Jalon pulsed inside her tight channel.

He wanted to scream at Cian to hurry up, to let her go so she could take him all the way in, so Jalon could fuck her hard. The leisurely pace was almost driving him insane, but at the same time it built pressure inside Jalon that he knew would burst like a missile leaving the arth when he finally climaxed.

Cian finally settled her all the way down, stroking her shoulders and kissing her neck as she closed her eyes, a passionate smile lighting her face. Jalon throbbed inside her, wanting nothing more than to buck up and come, now. But he knew it would ruin the sensual mood Cian had set.

Jalon remained still, his hands gripping the bedsheets as his cock cried out in protest at its inactivity inside Gelsey's sweet tunnel. After a few minutes of their sweet joining, Cian let go of her hips, then moved to straddle Jalon's face. Cian moved so his balls landed on Jalon's lips.

Jalon tongued them with the same slow ease Cian had used on him, his gaze focusing on where Cian stroked his own cock, his hand moving at a turtle's pace, his palm reaching up to swallow the head and squeeze before sliding back down to the base.

Cian's balls grew heavy under Jalon's ministrations, and Jalon reveled in the taste of them, the sweaty, salty taste of his faerie, one-third of a triad that Jalon would eternally thank the Goddess for.

Behind Cian, Gelsey started to move, her timing matched the slow strokes Cian used on his own cock. They floated in passion, their bodies melding as one.

Time seemed to stand still as they thrust, fondled, and licked. Jalon felt as if he could stay this way forever, joined with his lovers, never leaving this bed or their arms.

When Gelsey tightened around him, he knew she was close. Her movements sped up just a little, her small gasps of pleasure signaling just how close she was. She leaned forward, putting her hands on Cian's hips, then bounced harder, her sharp cry of completion shattering the silence.

Her walls tightened again and Jalon felt as if his cock were in a vise. One, two, three hard movements of her hips and he flooded her, his tongue licking faster on Cian's heavy sac.

The faerie shifted his weight, moving so that his cock was in front of Jalon's mouth. Jalon opened his mouth in invitation, sticking out his tongue. Cian continued to stroke himself, his movements increasing in tempo.

The first stream of warm cum hit Jalon's mouth and he opened wider, swiping his tongue over the head of Cian's cock while the faerie jerked himself. Jalon swallowed as fast as he could, wishing, hoping for more.

When Cian's hand stilled, Jalon swallowed the head, licking it clean, diving into the slit to make sure he'd gotten every last drop.

No one said a word as they stayed in place, their bodies still joined. Then Gelsey moved to Jalon's side, snuggling into his arms. Cian took the other and the two faeries joined hands over Jalon's chest.

"We need to strengthen the wards," Gelsey said, her voice seeming far away. They clasped their hands tighter, chanting the words that would keep them safe from prying eyes.

"We also need to send a message to the elders." Jalon's voice was full of sleepy contentment. "They'll know we found the stone; they would have felt it. But we need to see exactly what they want done next."

"Sleep first, message later." Cian held him close and Jalon closed his eyes. That sounded like a plan to him.

## Chapter Eight

“We’ve already seen all these sights.” Jalon frowned at Gelsey, who turned her head to give him an impervious look.

“Not all of them. Besides, we were working then. Until we hear back from the elders, I think we should do as Regina asked and stay away from La Casa del Piccolo Diavolo. We know the stone is there, so we don’t have to search anymore. One day playing while we wait for an answer isn’t going to hurt anything.”

“Unless they move it,” Cian said, shrugging. “But then I guess we search again.”

“We could have spent the day in bed,” Jalon said, running his hand down her back before gently cupping her behind. She gave him an indulgent smile.

“For someone who fought the notion of a triad, you’re awfully eager for more.” Her smile brightened, but she gave him a small shake of her head. “I’ve got the day planned already: the zoo; a nice, small, out-of-the-way restaurant for delicious pasta; artwork that doesn’t include debauchery; and then gelato on the Spanish Steps where we can watch the stars come out. It will be fun; you’ll see.”

Cian rolled his eyes and Jalon swallowed a laugh. It was obvious Gelsey had seen the exchange. She put her hands on her hips and glared at both of them.

*“You know, I still have those leashes.”*

Both men stood up a little straighter; then Jalon whistled innocently, holding his hands behind his back. Cian just continued to stare.

*“Well, it’s obvious how we need to start tonight’s festivities once we get home. I promised spankings a few days ago, and I’m going to give them.”*

She turned from them quickly and Jalon couldn’t help but wonder if she was telling the truth or if it was just some sort of threat to keep them in line. It could prove interesting. He moved her aside and paid for their tickets, then took up the rear of the pack as they entered the zoo.

They walked in silence, Gelsey between the two men. They each held a hand and Jalon held a map, guiding them to places Gelsey wanted to see. They visited the elephants, hippos, and rhinos before she declared it was time to find the polar bears.

They were watching the seals, laughing at their antics as zoo workers threw balls into the air, then rewarded them with food for catching the orbs. Jalon loved the sound of Gelsey’s laugh as the seals dived into the water, sending sprays of water into the air.

Jalon noticed that Cian seemed more and more morose, as if the weight of the world was on his shoulders. He wanted to ask what was wrong, but he didn’t know quite how to approach it. They neared the large cat area, fighting the crowds to get near the tiger enclosures.

Gelsey moved toward the front, straining her head to try and get a better look. Jalon glanced over at Cian, who stared off into space, his mind not on the animals at all.

“It looks like they have a good selection of monkeys and reptiles,” Jalon said, passing the map to Cian. “Maybe you’d like to see that? You seem distracted.”

Cian wrinkled his nose and passed the map back.

Gelsey was beside them instantly, putting her hand on Cian's arm. "What's wrong?" She turned and led the way out of the crowd and over to a bench under a small grove of trees. She sat down and indicated the spaces on either side of her.

The men sat, and Jalon leaned forward, glancing at Cian.

"Seeing all these animals reminds me of last night and it makes me wonder," Cian said, shrugging.

"Of the shifter?" Gelsey frowned. "You're still not thinking she's lying to us, are you?"

"No," he replied. "Well, yes, I suppose. But I look at the animals in cages, and I have to wonder if any of them are shifters, which I doubt or they would have already broken free somehow. But then I find myself..."

"Jealous?" Jalon studied him carefully, and when Cian nodded, he joined him. "I could see that. Shape-shifting is a talent that fascinates me as well."

"That's not what bothers me." Cian sat back, putting his arm around Gelsey. "Why would I want more? I have two gorgeous mates who will love me until my dying day. I have all the powers a faerie could possibly want, and then I see something I don't have and I want it. Why?"

Jalon leaned forward, putting his elbows on his knees. "It's not something you specifically do. We all want things we don't have."

Cian remained silent. He kept his focus on the crowd around the cats, and Jalon wished he could read Cian's mind. The mental communication only worked when the faeries made first contact, boosting Jalon's powers and enabling him to respond.

"That's what we're fighting, isn't it -- greed? Monk was a good witch, he did what he was supposed to do, and from all I've read, it wasn't until he was older that he started to crave more power, wanted to be master over everyone and everything."

"The difference is you can say you want to be a shape-shifter, but you're not going to try and figure out how to take one's power for yourself, or kill one to gain their power. You

have control over your urges. That's something Monk obviously lost." Jalon stood, then sat on the ground before them. He wanted to watch Cian's face as they talked.

"Which brings me to the shape-shifter," Cian said. "Did you hear what she said last night? That she'd endured a lot of filth to get in the position she's in. She's a good witch, working on the side of evil."

"To help us," Gelsey said.

"So she says." Cian spit the words out as if they were poison. "But can you do evil things in the name of good and not have them affect you? I'm worried that we can't trust her. The more I think about it, the more it weighs on me. True, she let us go, but it could be a trap of some sort."

"No." Jalon shook his head rapidly. "If Matlyn knew we were there last night, we'd be dead right now. I can assure you of that."

"This woman has immersed herself in Matlyn's life. She's her lover." Cian gave Jalon a stony stare. "Unless she's able to turn off her feelings at the drop of a hat, she has to have some sort of emotions about Matlyn."

A tense silence formed between the three of them, their gazes shifting between each other.

"I just think we should go back in tonight and take the stone," Cian said. "We'll find some way past the imps; it can't be that hard. I'm sure someone has a spell somewhere that will kill them. I can go visit some faeries, see if anyone's dealt with them before. We know how to get in now without going through the front door."

"You could be right," Gelsey said. "Maybe we are being too trusting."

"I don't think so," Jalon replied, standing up and dusting off his jeans. "I think we should wait for word from the elders. If they don't know this woman, or disavow her in any way, then we should use the tunnel to get inside and take the garnet. But if we do something before we hear from them, it could prove disastrous. You have to remember the questions we

asked ourselves days ago. How did they know the stone was in Rome, and why didn't they tell us the exact location?"

"Maybe she's meant to bring it out and give it to us," Gelsey said. "Maybe it's the only way."

"And maybe she's at our house right now, waiting to kill us." Cian crossed his arms over his chest, his anger evident.

"No one's at the house, Cian." Jalon put his hands on the faerie's knees. "We'll do a sweep before we go inside like we always do, and I'm sure we'll find what we've always found. Nothing."

"I hope you're right." Cian smiled slightly as Gelsey leaned over and kissed him.

"No more talk of the shifter, or of the stone," Gelsey said, standing. "We're on holiday, remember?"

"That's right," Jalon said. "And I'm starved. We haven't eaten since breakfast, and it's way past lunchtime. We need food. Lots of food."

They made their way out of the zoo, weaving in and out of the hordes of people that crowded the streets. Gelsey had selected a small restaurant not too far from zoo, and when they were instantly seated, Jalon lifted his eyebrows in amazement.

"Magic?" He leaned forward so no one but his lovers would hear.

"I have no idea what you're talking about," Gelsey replied, studying a menu. "It was just luck."

Jalon and Cian both laughed, and then studied the menus. The restaurant was in a fifteenth-century building, with arches and wide-open rooms. Beautiful, leafy green plants hung from the ceiling, and candles provided the perfect light. Their table sat near the windows, and they gazed out for a while watching the crowded streets.

"It's really very beautiful," Jalon said. "It's amazing to me, though, how many people they can fit in these narrow streets."

“Wait until we’re at the Spanish Steps,” Gelsey replied. “Those are truly crowded.”

When the waiter came, they selected a bottle of sparkling wine, then proceeded to order manicotti, lasagna, spaghetti, and ravioli.

“There’s no way we can eat all this,” Jalon said, staring at the number of serving platters on their table.

“I can.” Cian picked up a spoon and started loading down his plate. “You should have noticed that about me by now.”

“I didn’t want to say anything,” Jalon said. “I was afraid I would embarrass you.”

They lingered over their meal, studiously avoiding the subject they’d discussed at the zoo. Jalon knew it would take more than a day for the messenger he’d found that morning to reach London, and then come back with an answer.

They made more of an inroad into the food than he’d thought they would. When they were finished, Gelsey asked the waiter to box the remainder. They paid the rather modest bill, then took off toward the Spanish Steps, deciding to walk in an effort to burn off some of the calories they’d just eaten.

Watching the people reminded Jalon of Monk and the battle they were fighting. If they lost, what would happen to people like this? Would these people be among the first to die, or would they be made slaves?

He pushed the idea aside as they wound their way through the still-crowded streets. The sun had set, but the night was warm and as yet starless. A quarter moon lit the way as they neared the Spanish Steps.

Jalon hadn’t thought they could fit more people into the streets, but as they neared the landmark steps, he found he was wrong. The place was packed with people sitting and standing, talking with friends or hawking wares.

“I’ve heard this place is a haven for thieves,” Cian said, finding an empty spot near the wall and propping himself against it using his elbows. Jalon mimicked his pose, both of them

facing forward. Gelsey wiggled in between them, jumping up onto the stone banister, leaning on the men for support.

They'd decided they were too full for gelato, opting instead to people watch. They'd definitely picked the right spot for it. The crowd was enormous. Ringing cell phones competed against the din of laughter and conversation from those assembled, some running through the crowd and pulling and pushing on people.

Jalon focused on one youth, who looked to be about sixteen. He was quiet as he walked the crowd, careful not to touch anyone. It soon became apparent what his purpose was: to relieve people of the burden of their wallets.

Cian noticed him at the same time Jalon did, and before Jalon could act, Cian flicked his finger and the young man cried out in pain, dropping the wallet he'd just taken from a man's back pocket and holding his hand tightly.

"Shame on you," Gelsey said, her voice tinged with laughter.

"Me? Shame on him."

"You should have done something more effective, like break his nose," Jalon said. "That would have sent him running. Instead, he's just standing there --"

"Trying to decide if he has any broken bones or not, and if he does, how it happened," Cian interrupted, a huge smile on his face. "Serves the little bugger right."

They made it a game after that, trying to see who could spot the most pickpockets, and who could disarm the first, thereby saving the tourists, and locals, their money. Before they started, Gelsey reminded them to keep their magic very simple, so as not to give off too much energy that could be detected by any of Matlyn's followers who might be around.

Cian proved to be the most effective, making what he termed "six kills." Jalon managed four, and Gelsey three. They laughed and congratulated each other for each thwarted crime, and when the crowd started to thin out, Cian held his hands in the air.

"I win. What's my prize?"

“Me,” Jalon replied, leaning over Gelsey and kissing Cian gently. “Or I should more appropriately say my ass.”

## Chapter Nine

They walked home, mostly because Jalon wanted to. He was eager to have Cian inside him, true, but the anticipation of their lovemaking was sweet, and to him, the walk was part of the foreplay. Cian had taken his explanation with a shrug; then he'd put himself in the middle of Jalon and Gelsey.

They wound through the street and reached their apartment in record time. Before Jalon could object, Cian wrapped his arms around both of them, flying them high into the now-starlit sky.

They landed on the balcony, Cian pulling Jalon in for a hungry kiss the second Gelsey had sealed the ward.

"I feel like I've been waiting forever for you," Cian growled against his lips. "Half of me wants to rip your clothes off and take you right here, ramming myself inside you, making you come the instant I thrust. The other half wants to take it slowly, sweetly, savoring every second."

Jalon gasped, his breathing irregular as Cian turned his gaze on Gelsey. "We'll take it slow, though, so Gelsey can play too. She'll help me get you ready."

“Yes, I will.” She stepped into the circle of their arms, kissing Cian with passion before turning her lips to Jalon. They traded kisses between the three of them, some sweet, some hard, lapping at each other until they all groaned.

“Let’s do it out here, under the stars,” Jalon said, his voice unsteady. His rock-hard cock pressed against the tight fabric of his jeans, begging to be released. But he didn’t want to give in to the lust he felt. He wanted this first time to last, wanted to savor every moment of it.

Gelsey produced a mattress, then spelled away their clothing. Jalon gasped when Cian grasped his hard cock, squeezing it with increasing fervor until Jalon rocked into his touch.

“Feels so good.” Behind him, Gelsey rubbed her breasts against his back, her hands on his hips, massaging gently. She kissed his neck, sliding her tongue up and down his backbone. Between the sweet assault from the front and the one in back, Jalon felt as if his legs were jelly.

He pointed to the thick mattress, trying, and failing, to find the words to say it was time to lie down. They both understood him, though, and they lowered themselves as a unit, their arms wrapped around each other, three sets of lips once again trading places on each other’s mouths; they kissed hard and fast, passion flowing heavily between them.

Soon, Gelsey concentrated on his mouth while Cian kissed a trail down Jalon’s chest, stopping to flick his tongue over flat male nipples, tugging on them with his teeth until Jalon, his body on fire, whimpered into Gelsey’s mouth.

Cian grabbed his wrists as Jalon tried to push him away, urge him to move lower. He continued to suck and nibble until Jalon’s cock felt as if it would burst from that sensation alone. Only then did Cian continue his movements, sliding down and sucking Jalon’s stiffness into his wet mouth.

His teeth grazed up and down the shaft as he sucked, bringing Jalon right to the edge before releasing his cock with a loud *pop*.

“Tease.” Jalon growled out the word, and Cian and Gelsey both laughed.

“Spread your legs wider for me, my little virgin.” Cian tickled the insides of Jalon’s thighs and Jalon laughed, opening himself as wide as possible. Cian pulled him to the edge of the mattress. Jalon bent his legs, putting his feet on the ground and lifting himself slightly.

When Cian lay on his back, then lifted his tongue to Jalon’s anus, Jalon bucked up in surprise, then pushed back down, pleasure soaring through him as Cian licked and probed at the puckered entrance. The faerie’s tongue sought, and gained, entrance, sliding inside slowly, Cian wiggling it around as Jalon’s hips bucked in approval.

Jalon felt as if he’d lost awareness of the balcony, of their surroundings. He felt as if he were floating in space with Gelsey at his mouth, her lips soft and sweet, her hand caressing his hard cock and Cian below him, his tongue spearing inside him, opening him for the bulk that was Cian’s cock.

His body begged for it, pushing down against Cian’s tongue and then pushing up into Gelsey’s soft hand as she stroked him. His hand reached for her pussy, but she pushed him away gently, shaking her head with a smile.

“Just for you right now. Enjoy the new sensations.”

His eyes rolled back and he nodded, trying to relax and enjoy. It was hard, though, when all he wanted to do was scream at the man under him to fuck him.

As if reading his mind, Cian sat up on his knees and caressed Jalon’s thighs. “Are you ready for me?”

“More than ready.” Jalon reached a hand out for him and Gelsey took it, kissing each digit before holding it up to Cian’s mouth for him to do the same. The mattress rose under him, placing his anus level with Cian’s cock. The faerie stroked Jalon’s cock as he placed the head of his shaft at the entrance he’d just bathed with his tongue.

Jalon lay still, controlling the desire to push himself down onto Cian’s hard shaft. The better choice, he knew, would be to let Cian control the penetration, despite the yearning burning inside him to take Cian as deeply and quickly as possible.

Gelsey stroked him softly, her hands moving between his chest and his cock. She tightened her hand around his shaft, jerking harder, and Jalon closed his eyes, giving himself over to the sensation. At that moment, Cian pressed forward, the head of his cock slipping past Jalon's muscles.

Jalon hissed at the initial burn of Cian's entry, but Gelsey's hands soothed him, one on his shaft, the other on his chest. He closed his eyes, thinking not about the burn, but about the fact it was Cian, the man he loved. He pressed his knees against Cian's hips, encouraging the faerie to move forward.

Cian closed his eyes and Jalon could tell he was holding back, that he knew better than to do what both their souls wanted, to slide home quickly. This was one time it was better for them both to listen to their bodies and not their souls.

The faerie inched forward slowly, agonizingly slowly, until Jalon's buttocks rested against his thighs. Jalon closed his eyes, reveling in the sensation of the cock pulsing inside him, filling him completely.

He gave Jalon a few moments to adjust, and then he started to push, lifting Jalon's legs up so that his feet hung over Cian's shoulders. The thrusts increased in intensity, and Jalon caressed Gelsey's thighs.

"Please, Gelsey." Without saying a word, she straddled Jalon's mouth, lowering her wet folds down to his lips, bending to take his cock in her mouth. Cian adjusted himself to allow for her body.

The dam that had held the faerie back seemed to burst. Jalon shivered in ecstasy as Cian moved faster, pulling out until just the tip of him remained inside, then pushing back, the nerve endings in his anus burning with need.

Jalon lapped at Gelsey's pussy, sliding his tongue inside her, mimicking the movements of Cian's cock in his ass. She took Jalon deep in her mouth, sliding her tongue up and down his shaft. The three set up a perfect tempo, rhythms matching, passions building.

It didn't take long. Jalon felt their orgasms nearing as the rhythm intensified. His balls tightened, and he pulled Gelsey down, moving his tongue from her luscious opening to her clit, nibbling and licking until the tremors started.

Their orgasms slammed into the three of them at once. Gelsey's sweet juices flooded Jalon's mouth at the same time he filled hers. Hot jets of Cian's cum streamed inside him, filling him as nothing ever had before.

The balcony shook and Jalon felt another, harder orgasm crash into him. Coming twice in a row was another new experience for him, and he knew it was Cian sharing his second orgasm with his lovers.

They rocked in unison until the feelings subsided, tiny jolts of aftershocks sizzling them all as Jalon and Gelsey continued to lick, and Cian stayed still, his dick throbbing inside Jalon's tight ass.

Jalon wanted to stay exactly where he was, their bodies entwined forever, and he knew both of them felt the same. They caressed each other, hands softly stroking backs and arms and thighs, sending messages of their love for each other with each touch.

He wasn't sure if it was Cian or Gelsey, or both of them, who magically transported them to their bedroom, settling them with Jalon in the center, their legs entwined, their hands clasped, energy flowing between them.

Cian kissed him then, the touch tender and sweet, his tongue gently lapping at Jalon's mouth. When the kiss ended, Gelsey took his place, the movement exactly the same, the feelings from both kisses sweet and intense.

He watched the faeries kiss, feeling it deep inside his soul.

"I love you both so much." He watched them intently, even as his eyelids drooped, sleep trying to overtake him. He heard the murmurs of love, felt their heads rest on his shoulder, and knew this was the single most perfect moment in his life. So far.

Each experience with Cian and Gelsey seemed to outdo itself, making him wonder if he would survive the next one, or die from the fervor with which they loved.

“We need to strengthen the wards,” Gelsey said, her voice sounding faraway. Cian’s even breathing was his only response, and Jalon put his lips on her forehead.

“We will. Later.” Within seconds, the three of them settled into a deep, contented sleep.

## Chapter Ten

Jalon woke with a start; the only thing keeping him from bolting from the bed was Cian's arm, thrown over his chest. The scent of someone unknown hung in the air, replacing the sweet smells of their lovemaking, which still clung to their bodies.

*"Someone's here."* Cian's voice sounded in Jalon's mind.

*"It's a male witch,"* Gelsey replied. *"We were careless. We didn't strengthen the wards this morning, and someone slipped through."*

*"You two disappear. Let me face him alone."* Jalon pushed aside Cian's arm and sat up, trying to see if he could catch a glimpse of the intruder.

*"No!"* Cian sat up next to him, and Gelsey followed suit. *"We'll face him together."*

*"Don't you see? If you're invisible, you'll have the chance of a sneak attack; you can blindside him."*

*"And what if he has a dark faerie with him?"* Jalon had never heard Cian so angry. *"It's best to stay united, as we're meant to be."*

Jalon wanted to argue, but he decided Cian was probably right. A faerie could mask his presence, and whoever was in the other room could have one, or more than one. The three of them exchanged nods, then Jalon pointed toward the doorway. Just as they started to

stand, a tall figure appeared, blocking the door. The man chuckled deeply, placing his arms above his head, grabbing the doorframe, and leaning into the room.

“Well, so much for Cian never touching your dick, Jalon. Have you three been enjoying yourselves?”

“Kellen! What the hell are you doing here?” Jalon sat up, propping his back against the headboard and pulled the bedcovers up to cover his lower half. Cian and Gelsey settled next to him, and before he knew it, they were all dressed.

“I’ve asked myself the same question,” Kellen replied. “I was enjoying a nice, leisurely lovemaking session with Tobias and Ansling when a messenger from the elders arrived ordering me to Rome, immediately. So here I am.”

“We don’t need you,” Cian said with a sneer. “We have things handled.”

“Do you?” Kellen shook his head. “Is that why it was so easy for me to find this place, without instructions from anyone? Is that why it was so easy to gain access?”

“The wards,” Gelsey said, springing from the bed and motioning to her lovers.

“I’ve already handled it,” Kellen replied. “They’re back in place, and I don’t think anyone else knows you’re here. Too busy fucking to pay attention, weren’t you? That could be dangerous.”

Jalon balled his hands into fists. “If you weren’t my cousin’s mate, I’d --”

“You’d what?” Kellen stepped forward and Cian stood up.

“Stop it.” The faerie turned to Kellen. “Why are you here, truly? Just to annoy Jalon?”

“No” -- Kellen stepped back -- “that’s just a fringe benefit. The elders sent me with a message.”

“They’ve demoted you, have they?” Jalon laughed evilly. “They must think you can’t handle your part of the triad, so they’re sending you on their errands.”

For a moment, Jalon thought Kellen would take a swing at him. Jalon would welcome it if he did. “You’ve never forgiven me, have you, for marking your cousin without your father’s permission?”

“You overstepped your bounds with her.”

“She’s part of my triad, mine and Tobias’s mate. I don’t answer to you, or any member of your family, on that matter. Only the stones and elders count when it comes to the triads.”

Jalon knew the truth of his words, but that didn’t make it go down any easier. During the hunt for the amethyst stone, Jalon had been sent by his father to watch over Ansling, his cousin. When he’d found out Kellen had placed a claiming mark on her, he’d been furious, sure that he’d failed in his duties.

Jalon knew now there was nothing he could have done to stop Kellen. The power of the triad was too strong. His own situation proved that, the desire overcoming his apprehension about loving another man.

“Why would they send you with a message?” Gelsey swept past him into the other room, sitting down on the couch and conjuring food and four coffee mugs. Jalon and Cian sat on either side of her and Kellen stood, looking down.

“I’m not sure,” Kellen replied. When Gelsey indicated a chair and the food, he sat and poured himself a cup of coffee. “All I know is they told me to tell you to listen to the shape-shifter, and to do exactly as she says.”

Kellen filled a plate, then sat back and started to eat. Jalon ignored the coffee cup hovering in front of him and glared at his cousin’s mate.

:Why would they send you, a triad witch, as a messenger?”

“I have no idea,” Kellen replied. “And I came up with no answer. It doesn’t seem right that they would do it. There’s no good reasoning behind it, as far as I could tell.”

“Did they tell you to stay?” Cian set down his own cup and picked up a piece of toast, slathering it with jam before taking bite.

"I was given no instructions beyond that." Kellen finished with his food, eyed the spread, and took some more. "Why don't you fill me in on what's happened so far?"

It didn't take long for Jalon to tell him about their search, to describe the hours of frustration at not being able to find the stone. He left out the parts where he'd fought his destiny. That was no one's business but the three of them, as far as he was concerned.

He described their visit to La Casa del Piccolo Diavolo, leaving out the details of the orgy, then weaved into view an image of the room in which the stone was held.

Kellen's sneer at the painting of Monk matched the feelings they'd had upon seeing it. In the image, the garnet burned brightly, its glow lighting up the room.

"The imps are cast into the columns," Cian said. "If someone touches the stone, they're meant to attack. Do you know anything about imps?"

"Just what you know, I'm sure. Lesser demons with sharp teeth that serve higher evil beings, like the bitch, Matlyn." His lips curled in disgust as the witch's name passed his lips.

"We've got to figure out a way around them," Jalon said. "Maybe we should visit a library today, do some reading on imps while we wait for the shifter to contact us."

The idea of the shifter being a spy for the elders still raked on his nerves. They should have been told someone was in place. And to be told they had to wait for her instructions rankled him even more. She wasn't part of the triad for the garnet. Why was she calling the shots?

"The more people know about a secret, the more chance it has of getting out," Gelsey said, rubbing his thigh. "I can understand why the elders kept her identity secret."

"She obviously has something in play," Kellen said, relaxing into the chair. "If she's been working on this for quite some time, she would know the bitch's moods and movements, and it would make it easier for her to figure out a way for you to get the stone. Who is this shifter?"

Jalon conjured an image of Regina, first in tiger form, then in human form. “Every time I’ve seen her, she’s been at Matlyn’s side. They’re lovers.”

He turned to Kellen, whose face had lost all its color, his hands gripping the side of the chair as he gaped, obviously dumbfounded, at the shifter’s image.

“Kellen? Do you know her?”

“Yes. I know her.” His voice shook as he talked, and Jalon feared from the lack of color in his face that he would pass out cold. It looked as if every drop of his blood had drained to his feet. “But this can’t be right. That woman is dead. I know because I killed her.”

## Chapter Eleven

“Obviously you didn’t,” Cian said. “She’s very much alive. We’ve talked to her.”

Jalon watched his cousin’s mate carefully. He held his fisted hands in his lap to control their shaking, the expression on his face passing between rage and disbelief.

“Why do you think you killed her?” Jalon tried to keep his voice even, without showing the shock he felt. He knew Kellen had been part of Matlyn’s group before he’d met Tobias, but he had no idea to what extent his connection had been.

“Give me a minute,” Kellen replied. “I need to try and rein in my emotions. If I’m not careful, Tobias will feel it, and he’ll want to come here, and that can’t happen. They can’t bring the amethyst into the same city where Matlyn is. There’s too much danger she would find it and take it again.”

They all nodded and the silence grew thick. Jalon cleared away the plates, then filled everyone’s coffee cup. When he sat back down, Kellen seemed more in control. His hands were no longer shaking. He opened his mouth to speak, shut it, then opened it again.

It took a full minute before any sound emitted from his mouth, and when it happened, Jalon could hear the acute pain involved with the tale he was about to tell.

“When I was a young pup, I fell into Matlyn’s crowd. She was so vibrant, and her group had such adventures. The sex was incredible, and the highs of being bad were just as pleasurable.” He swallowed hard, pain etched on his handsome face. “One night, Matlyn watched me have sex with one of her followers. She ordered me to kill the woman while I fucked her. She built me into such a blind passion that I obeyed. When I realized what I’d done I ran, and kept running until I met Tobias.”

Kellen closed his eyes and the three of them exchanged glances, clasping each other’s hands and squeezing. Jalon got up and crossed the room, sitting on the edge of the chair and putting his arm around Kellen.

“You didn’t kill her, though. It was some sort of test, I guess.”

“No, that woman I killed wasn’t a shifter. She was human. She had no powers.”

“Regina can hide her powers,” Gelsey said. “We’ve seen her do it when she hid us from Matlyn. She was right under us and had no clue we were there. The shifter is very powerful.”

“You have no idea the guilt I’ve felt, the disgust for myself that one...act...”

Jalon knelt before him, clasping his hands around Kellen’s fists, which had started to shake again. “It led you to Tobias, and eventually to Ansling. And now it’s led you to your part in recovering the stones and destroying Monk, forever.”

“I thought I’d killed a woman in cold blood, strictly for the amusement of others. I wanted to kill myself.”

“But you didn’t.” Gelsey’s voice was soft and soothing, and Jalon felt his love for her grow even stronger.

“She’s right,” Cian added. “The elders obviously brought you here so you would learn the truth. Your story proves to us, to me most of all, that Regina is telling the truth. She’s a friend, not a foe.”

“All we can do is wait for her to contact us,” Jalon said. “But I think we won’t have to wait long. The elders wouldn’t have brought you here now if things weren’t about to come to a head.”

Jalon tightened his grip on Kellen’s hands. Kellen shot him a look of gratitude, which he quickly masked, then stood. “I need to rest. I didn’t get a lot of sleep on the train, and this has drained me. Plus, I need to call Tobias and Ansling. I’ll tell them you and I got into a fight over Ansling. That’ll cover the power surge they felt coming off me, and both of them will believe it.”

“How is my cousin?”

“More beautiful than ever, and coming into her own. Tobias is teaching her to harness her powers and use them as she’s supposed to. In fact, she foresaw this trip long before the messenger came.”

Regret over not knowing his cousin any better flowed through Jalon. Her father and his father were brothers, long estranged before her father died. When Ansling met Jalon, she thought he was nothing more than an employee, a beach bum, at the resort where she worked.

She didn’t know he’d been sent to look after her, and he’d had no idea where that looking would take both of them: parts of two separate triads, guardians of the pentagram stones.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jalon was at odds about how to proceed next. Kellen, repeating the fact that he needed to sleep, had locked himself away in the spare bedroom. Jalon worried about the man, though. Finding out about Regina had been a huge shock to his system.

Now, Jalon sat in the same chair Kellen had vacated earlier. He couldn’t imagine carrying around the guilt of thinking you’d murdered someone in cold blood, much less how you would feel if you found out it was all a hoax. He’d taken it better than Jalon would have,

or so he thought. His initial shock had faded to rage, and now who knew what was going through the man's mind. And who knew what would happen next, and when.

He was pretty sure something would go down today; what would happen and when remained to be seen. Thinking about Regina ensconced in the enemy camp for years baffled him and made him think about what Cian had said yesterday. Could a person do evil things and still keep goodness in their soul? Or would they get to this meeting and find out Regina had let them live, knowing the elders would call for Kellen. That way she and her friends could kill one whole triad, and part of another, in one big swing of their mighty fists.

What sort of woman was she, really? Had she willingly participated in Matlyn's test of Kellen, or did she do it to ingratiate herself to the witch, bringing them closer together, building trust? If that's what she had done, it was a hell of a way to go about it.

Still, he couldn't help but think maybe Cian was right. Could you keep goodness in your heart when your body indulged in evil, even if you were doing it to fight the evil that you faced every day? That you slept next to? That you made love to? No, not love, Jalon corrected himself, sex. Matlyn didn't know how to love.

Warm afternoon air wafted in from the balcony and Jalon looked over at Gelsey, who slept on the couch, her silver hair outlining her face. He'd love to do nothing more than go to her, pull her into his arms, and kiss her. Then they would call for Cian, go into the bedroom, and spend the afternoon making love.

"You wouldn't have to shout," Cian said, leaning over and kissing his shoulder. "It's a wonderful idea."

"Wonderful, but not practical." Regret tinged Jalon's voice. "We need to be ready for a message from Regina."

Cian sat down in Jalon's lap, wrapping his arms around his neck. "How's that tight little asshole this morning?"

"Itching for you."

"I'm very glad to hear that." Cian stroked his cheek, then leaned forward and claimed his lips in a soft kiss, sucking on Jalon's lower lip. He trailed his lips over Jalon's cheek and over to his ear, nibbling on the lobe. "Shall we wake Gelsey? We can go into the bedroom and play. Or we can stay out here. How do you think Kellen would react if he came out and saw me with your dick in my mouth?"

"He'd be no more shocked by that than by anything else that happened today."

"True." Cian released his ear, leaning back against the arm of the chair. "I feel sorry for him, even if he can be an arrogant SOB."

"He needs our support, not pity. And we're going to need his help today. Another set of magical hands always comes in handy when you know they're on your side."

"My reasoning is rubbing off on you." Cian ran his finger down Jalon's chest, probing at his belly button. "I could be wrong, you know. It's happened before."

"I hope we are," Jalon said, his voice drifting off.

"You're both wrong." Gelsey lifted her head. Instead of glaring at them for again expressing doubt, she smiled. "Have a little faith, and never forget that good will conquer in the end."

A loud crack from the balcony brought them all to their feet. Kellen came racing out of the bedroom, stopping next to where Jalon and Cian stood.

The four of them cautiously made their way to the balcony doors. A large stone column sat in the center of the space; writhing snakes covered the surface, making the marble seem alive.

"A nice cryptic message," Cian replied.

"No" -- Jalon walked toward the column, bending to pick up the silver sword that sat at its base -- "I understand perfectly." The sword gleamed despite the waning sunlight. It felt heavy in his hand as he tested its weight.

“Somehow I don’t think we’re being invited for tea,” Gelsey said. “Tell us how you understand this, Jalon.”

“The column. That day in the crypts, the couple flew out of the painting when they touched the column with the snakes, which is a portal. There were no columns in that room, but I saw four others in a room down the hall.”

“This is our message from Regina,” Gelsey said. “She’s letting us know they’re at their fake coliseum and that we can go in and steal the stone.”

“I don’t think so,” Jalon said. “It’s from her, yes, but I think she’s telling us to take the portal to go to the coliseum. We have to trust that she has a plan in play.”

They all glanced at Kellen, who stood near the door, his face impassive.

“I agree with Jalon. The elders said to do as the shifter said, and I would count this as a sign from her. The sword obviously means someone is going to fight. And I’m sure it will be a fight to the death, just like the gladiators.”

## Chapter Twelve

The message had not included a time, but the nine snakes on the column were the clue Jalon needed. The others hadn't had that many. The games would start at nine; he was sure of it.

They made their way through the streets, heading toward the catacombs they'd visited just a few days ago. They were open until midnight, but no one was allowed in after eight, so they would have a little time to spare before using the portal.

"I still think we should have brought the sword," Kellen said as they neared the entrance.

"No." Jalon paid for their tickets, then led the way inside. "If we had a sword when we arrived, Matlyn would know we'd been tipped off. Better to show up empty-handed."

They hurried down the stairs and corridors. The clientele was different at this time of night. On their previous visit, the halls had been filled with tourists and their families. Now the visitors were younger, and Jalon couldn't help but wonder how many of them were Matlyn's followers, and if she was, at this very moment, being tipped off that they were on their way toward the columns.

The bottom level was relatively empty, and Jalon found the room with the columns easily. "Anyone could have touched these and disappeared," he said, his anger rising at Matlyn's arrogance.

"I would say they only work with magical beings," Cian replied. "She wouldn't want a mere mortal stumbling into her world."

"She'd just use them as a play toy," Kellen replied.

They stepped into room and stopped, running into each other. The silver sword sat in front of the post to the left, and Jalon crossed to pick it up. He kicked it with his foot, first, and when nothing happened, he leaned over, grasping it tightly in his hand.

"A map." He tried to paste a smile on his face to show he wasn't worried, at least too much. The fact was he was terrified. He'd been in one battle with Matlyn's forces before, when he, Kellen, Tobias, and Ansling had recovered the amethyst stone. They'd been losing the battle until they received help from faeries.

A glance at his watch showed it was not nearly eight thirty now. "Should we go ahead?"

"The minute we go through there, she's going to know we're coming," Cian said. "Is it rude to show up to a party early? If the invitation says nine, should you wait until nine or go early and crash the party?"

"We have no idea what we're getting ourselves into," Gelsey said, standing with her hands on her hips, studying the sword. "That's the worst part."

Jalon thought for a moment, then headed for the door. "Yes, we do," he said over his shoulder, crossing the hallway to the room with the coliseum painting. Sure enough, the painting moved. The games were in full swing and the four of them stood in front of it in a long line, watching the scene play out. Matlyn sat on her throne, Regina, in her tiger form, at her feet.

Behind her stood the dark faerie. “His name is Jessup,” Cian said, glancing at Kellen. “Do you know him?”

“No, he doesn’t look familiar from my time in Matlyn’s court.”

“He seems to be around her all the time,” Jalon said. “Although at the orgy, he was being punished.”

“Let’s go early.” Cian stepped toward the painting, then wheeled toward his friends. “It will give us an advantage to be there before they expect us. That way we hold the upper hand.”

“You’re right,” Jalon said. “Let’s go to the games, shall we?”

They crossed back to the room, and Jalon placed the sword next to the column. It disappeared immediately and Jalon knew they’d made the right decision about not taking it with them. It also told him that it was a sign from Regina, and not from Matlyn.

They exchanged silent nods, then formed a line, hands held tightly together with Jalon in the front and Cian in the rear. He touched the marble, which heated instantly, pulling him inside.

The sensations were the same as they’d been in the museum. The darkness wrapped around them, and was followed immediately by a brilliant flash of light.

Heat replaced the cold, searing up through their feet and into their legs. Then it disappeared and they stood on solid ground, right in the center of the coliseum.

Swords clashed around them and the crowd screamed for blood. The din lessened, though, as their presence became known. Even the fighters stopped, staring at the newcomers.

“Kellen!” Matlyn’s voice filled the arena and they all turned to her. “Darling, you’ve come back to me and you’ve brought gifts. How wonderful.”

The sarcastic tone of her voice made Jalon stiffen, and he put out his arm in an effort to stop Kellen from picking up one of the swords littering the grounds and rushing the stands.

Silence filled the area until Matlyn sighed heavily. “You hurt me so, Kellen. Of course you’ve proven what sort of *man* you are, haven’t you?” When she still didn’t get a rise out of anyone, Jalon sensed her anger flaring. She glanced at the three of them, then took a step closer to the stone railing.

“I don’t believe we’ve had the pleasure. I know who you are, of course; I just can’t believe you’re stupid enough to walk straight into the lion’s den, so to speak.”

Jalon sensed her unasked question, of exactly how they’d found this particular lion’s den, and it made him smile.

“So, we have two faeries, a child that looks as if he’s never grown up, and half a man, come to challenge me. And the fact they’ve assigned two faeries to help recover the stone lets me know how low they’re running on proper witches these days. But of course, all one has to do is look at you, Jalon Carr, to know that. Are you even out of diapers yet?”

The crowd roared in laughter and Jalon took a step forward. “Give us the stone and we’ll let you live.”

“Such bravado. I’m very impressed. I’ll make sure we inscribe it on your tombstone. ‘He was very brave, right before he lost his head.’”

“I won’t repeat it again,” Jalon said, strength from both Cian and Gelsey pouring into his chest, bolstering his will to defeat the woman standing before them.

“You don’t need to.” She snapped her fingers and the dark faerie stepped forward. Jalon watched as she whispered in his ear. The man nodded, then took flight, and landed in front of Jalon. Two swords appeared in his hands and he threw one at Jalon.

Jalon caught it, testing its weight as he had the sword he’d found at their home. He had no doubt it was the same one, and it made him wonder about the smartness of following Regina’s “invitation.”

“When in Rome,” Matlyn said with a laugh. There was a loud clanging noise and Jalon turned to see a steel cage erected around Cian, Gelsey, and Kellen. He turned to rush to them, stopping when Cian’s voice sounded in his mind.

*“Fight strong, my love. My heart and soul are with you.”*

*“As are mine.”* Gelsey stroked her arm and Jalon felt as if her fingers were on his skin. Jalon took another step toward the cage, falling backward when he hit invisible wards.

“To the death,” Matlyn said, glaring at Jalon before turning her gaze to Jessup. “Kill him.”

Jessup made a half bow, then rushed at Jalon, his sword raised. Jalon lifted his to meet it, the sound of the steel clashing making the crowd go wild again. Jalon and his friends had trained with swords before, but it had been many years, and the weight of the instrument, coupled with his surprise at having to use it, caught him off guard.

Jessup pushed against their swords, using his arms to knock Jalon to his ass. The crowd laughed in approval and Jalon rolled as Jessup’s sword hit the dirt, landing right where Jalon had just been.

He came up swinging, connecting but failing to catch the dark faerie unawares. Jessup pushed back, but this time, Jalon kept his footing, his confidence growing as he fought, his aim improving with each lunge.

They battled back and forth, sidestepping each other, their sword tips landing from time to time on arms and legs. Jalon fought to catch his breath, and the dark faerie didn’t even seem winded. He vowed that when this was over he would train every day, work with weights and build up his strength. He’d allowed his skills to falter during the search, worried more about finding the stone than about how he would recover it when needed.

He’d just thought it would take a bit of magic and that would be it. In that sense, he had been young and naive, just as Matlyn thought. Still, he thought he was gaining ground, matching the faerie swing for swing, getting in as many cuts as he was receiving.

Then he realized he was allowing his mind to wander, wasn't paying attention to what was happening. Jessup's sword caught him on the arm, flicking into his skin and drawing blood. He pressed his hand against the wound, then grunted as Jessup disarmed him, his sword flying in the opposite direction. One firm sweep of the dark faerie's legs sent Jalon flat onto his ass.

"Ah!" Jalon reached for his sword, using all his powers to try and bring it back, but it lay firmly in the ground. Jessup fell to his knees above him, straddling Jalon's body and holding his sword right above Jalon's heart.

Their gazes locked, and Jalon saw an emotion in his eyes that he couldn't read.

"Do it!" Matlyn's voice broke the eerie silence that had fallen. Jessup looked down at him and shook his head almost imperceptibly. Then he whispered, "Be a good boy and play dead."

He pushed the sword down and the crowd roared its approval. Jalon gasped, expecting pain. When nothing came he glanced down. Blood poured from a nonexistent wound and he swallowed hard, glancing back up at the faerie.

Jessup gave him the same small shake of his head. "I do this for the woman I love." An image of Regina and Jessup together, making sweet, gentle love, flashed in Jalon's mind. And he saw more still. They crept into the room with the stone, spelled the imps, and took the garnet, replacing it with an identical gem. They kissed and Jessup pulled Regina into an embrace, lowering his mouth to her breast as she held him tight. Jalon gasped at the images in his mind. He looked down to see the garnet nestled firmly in Jessup's hand. And then the dark faerie placed it in Jalon's hand.

"Remember, play dead," Jessup whispered again. And so Jalon did.

## Chapter Thirteen

Jessup stood, raising his blood-covered sword high above his head in victory. Jalon held his breath, trying to keep his chest from showing he was still breathing.

*“Be still, my love.”* Cian and Gelsey said the words together, their voices like music to his ears.

“Kill his lovers.” Matlyn’s voice sounded a million miles off, and Jalon wanted nothing more than to lift his head and scream at her to go back to hell where she belonged. “Do it slowly, the female first. Then the other. But bring Kellen to me.”

The stone pulsed with power and Jalon held it tight in his fist, saying quick prayers to the Goddess for their safe journey from this hellhole. He also thanked her for the help of Regina, who obviously had a confederate in the dark faerie.

The realization hit Jalon like a ton of bricks falling from ten floors up. Jessup had indeed seen him that first day in the crypts, had made eye contact and remained silent. Perhaps he and Cian were wrong about good and bad people, and how often they could mix and change.

A loud commotion from the cage almost caused him to turn his neck. Then he remembered he was supposed to be dead. He lay perfectly still, the strength from the stone

flowing through him, reaching out to the faeries he loved so much, and who were now “fighting” their way past Jessup to get to Jalon’s “body.”

The clanging of swords filled the air again and Matlyn’s scream of rage made him laugh deep inside. If she only knew exactly what was going on, she would be doing more than screaming.

Cian’s strong arms scooped him up, placing his body over his shoulder as if Jalon weighed nothing.

“Stop them!” Matlyn threw orders around at her men, and the ground thundered with the footsteps of men running toward them. And then suddenly it was quiet. The air was frigid, and then hot, and Jalon knew they’d touched a portal of some sort. They were not back in the crypts, as Jalon had expected, but standing in the middle of the Spanish Steps, the crowds moving about them hardly noticing the woman and three men who suddenly appeared. Cian set him down, pulling him into a hard hug that felt as if it would crush his ribs. His lips came down hard, almost punishing, as if Cian had to see for himself that Jalon still breathed.

When he released him, Jalon pulled Gelsey to his chest, kissing her softly as she half laughed, half cried against his chest. When she stepped away, he held out his hand and showed them the stone, and the four of them laughed in victory before vaulting down the steps and running for their home.

\* \* \* \* \*

They made it to their lair in record time. Jalon had expected to be assaulted by Matlyn’s minions before then, but no one came. It occurred to him they probably didn’t know where to look. In time, they would probably be able to figure out where the portal had deposited them, but for now, they were safe.

“How did you know I was not dead?”

“We could feel your heartbeat,” Gelsey said, pushing him down on the couch and straddling him before smothering his face with kisses. She moved off to the side to allow Cian to claim his mouth. Their kisses were hot and passionate, their need great. Each touch of their lips made the stone in his hand pulse even more.

“We also saw the images Jessup sent you,” Cian said. “All of us, even Kellen.”

“We need to get out of Rome as quickly as possible,” Jalon said. “If Matlyn finds out the garnet she has is fake, all hell will break loose.”

“They will be searching for two faeries and a male witch,” Cian said. “They think you’re dead, and they’ll want to kill us. I think the four of us leaving right now is a great idea. We’ll go to London and show the elders, await their instructions.”

“Not me,” Kellen said. “I’m going home to Tobias and Ansling. I’ve half a mind to tell the elders to go to hell. But you can tell them for me, I’m not their puppet.”

He stormed for the door, then turned around and took a few steps back into the room. “Are you all right, Jalon?”

Jalon pulled his bloodstained shirt away from his chest, looking down at it. “Yes, despite what you see, there’s not a scratch on my chest. Jessup is much too handy with that sword, if you ask me.”

“Thank the Goddess for that,” Gelsey replied, standing. “Take that shirt off, and then let’s get out of here before they find us.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Regina opened her eyes slowly, staring at the stone ceiling above her. Her heart wished for Jessup to be next to her when she turned, but she knew he wouldn’t be. He’d been in her mind, touching her, kissing her, loving her.

She touched her lips as she remembered his touch, then cut her gaze to the woman lying next to her. Matlyn slept deeply, the contented sleep of a woman convinced she’d won

a great battle that afternoon. Regina slipped from the bed, waiting at the edge for the witch to wake, to question where her lover was going in the middle of the night.

When Matlyn didn't stir, she hurried from the room, silently slipping down the hallway to the room where she knew Jessup waited for her. The door was ajar, and she shut it behind her, stopping to let her eyes drink their fill of him.

He stood near a fire in the middle of the room, his black hair cascading down his back, caressing his naked ass. Her body stirred at the sight; her nipples hardened; her clit twitched. His body was absolutely perfect, and the feelings he aroused in her scared her half to death.

"Here." He didn't turn, but he didn't need to. She knew his gaze would be full of the hunger he had for her, hunger that sometimes frightened her. He'd entered her mind just after Matlyn had fallen asleep, claiming her mouth in a brutal kiss, punishing her lower lip with his teeth, exploring her nipples and pussy with his fingers. How had she fallen in love with a dark faerie, one who could enter her mind as she slept and arouse her with his harsh touch, make her wet for him in an instant?

The elders had been furious at this development, but she didn't care. Jessup had proven himself this afternoon, proven that he loved her as much as she did him. She moved slowly, stepping next to him. Her gaze landed on his cock, hard and full. He turned a dark gaze toward her, then stepped behind, putting his hands on her hips, his fingers digging into her soft flesh.

"Open." Regina spread her legs, gasping when he slammed inside her. The instant pulse of bliss sent her flying as he pounded into her. She arched back into him, lifting her arm over her shoulder, caressing his neck, grabbing his hair.

"Yes, fuck me." He didn't answer, but she didn't expect him to; his thrusts increased in intensity, and he pushed her forward, wrapping an arm around her waist as his fingers expertly found her clit.

She cried out as he pinched and pulled on the nub, the pain turning into sweet tendrils of pleasure as her orgasm washed over her. He continued to squeeze the pulsing flesh, sending her even higher as she clenched him tightly inside her. The flood of his seed warmed her as it always did.

He took them to the floor then, dropping them down on all fours, his hard cock never leaving her body, his pounding relentless as his hands grasped her shoulders, holding her in place.

Regina screamed in ecstasy as his cock slid over her sensitive insides, setting her on fire again. Her legs and arms shook as he continued to ride her, even as a second wave of his passion flooded her insides, his growl of completion calling to her inner self, binding them. He made her climax once more, pinching her nub even harder than before. And then they collapsed onto their sides, his cock still pulsing inside her as he held her close.

“You are pleased?”

She knew he didn’t mean with what just happened, although each time they joined she felt the bond between them growing. He was referring to the garnet stone.

“Yes, Jessup, I am more than pleased.” She turned her head so she could see him. “Thank you.” She kissed him gently, her tongue licking against his lips.

“I love you so much, Regina.” His voice cracked just a little, and it reinforced the fact these emotions were new to him. He’d never loved before, and didn’t know how to handle what he felt. It endeared him to her all the more, and strengthened what she felt for him.

“I love you too. I want nothing more than to end this charade now, to stay with you, safe in your arms. But we can’t.” She snuggled against him and he tightened his hold, putting his lips against her temple. “After Samhain, we will be together. I promise.”

## Chapter Fourteen

“Not a bad little hovel, hum?” Cian patted the stone wall, then walked to the window. “A bit rustic, but it has some nice amenities, like a hot tub.”

“There’s a hot tub?” Jalon stepped onto the balcony of their new home, nestled deep in the mountains of Switzerland. The house was courtesy of the elders until the Samhain ceremony when the stones would be placed back in the pentagram, and Monk would be defeated forever.

It didn’t surprise Jalon that the elders had been informed of everything that had happened. He wondered how Regina relayed messages without Matlyn finding out. And then he wondered if Matlyn had found out she’d been duped.

The elders had been aware of Regina’s lover, but Jalon could tell by the looks on a few of their faces that they weren’t happy about it. A dark faerie, after all, was unpredictable and could turn on someone, even someone he professed love for, in a second.

The elders did tell the triad that the bloodstone was being held captive in a castle in the Black Forest in Germany. They would discuss the matter no further with them, though.

“There will be a hot tub here soon enough,” Cian said, pulling him into his arms and bringing his mind back to the room he was in. “All it will take is the flick of my hand. You know I’ll want to fuck you there, and in every room in the house.”

“I should hope so.” Their kiss was long and passionate, their tongues melting around each other. Cian cupped his buttocks, pulling him closer. Their hard cocks rubbed together, separated only by two pairs of pants, which quickly disappeared. Jalon licked Cian’s lower lip, grabbed Cian’s cock as the faerie stroked his own length. “Gelsey! Get in here.”

She appeared in the doorway of the kitchen, crossing her arms over her chest and leaning against the doorway. “Horny little bastards. Is that all you want to do, fuck?”

“Yes,” they said in unison, holding out their hands toward her.

“Good.” Her clothes disappeared as she walked toward them. They wrapped her in their embrace, their lips moving from mouth to mouth, sealing the love they had for each other.

“So good,” Jalon said in a low voice.

“Yes, it is,” Cian replied, stroking his neck.

“About that,” Gelsey replied. “I think someone needs a spanking for making us wait so long, don’t you, Cian?”

Jalon’s eyebrows shot up at Cian’s murmur of approval. He shook his head in disbelief, then huffed out a laugh. “I don’t think so.”

“Don’t you?” Gelsey’s seductive smile made Jalon’s insides roll with delight. “Well, I’ve told you this was coming, haven’t I? Things moved so quickly once we’d joined that I didn’t have the chance to deliver on my promise. Well, now it’s time.”

Jalon stiffened, then tried to run. But Cian was too fast for him. The faerie pulled him into a hug, locking his arms around him in an instant. Pulling them to the ground, with Jalon on top, Cian hooked his legs around Jalon’s so Jalon was tight in his grip, his ass in the air.

Cian thrust his hips against Jalon, their cocks rubbing together as Gelsey stood above them.

“Perfect.” And then she knelt next to them and slapped Jalon’s ass.

“Ouch!”

“Oh please,” Gelsey said in exaggeration, slapping his cheeks harder. “That was barely a love tap.”

Jalon fought Cian’s hold as Gelsey continued to spank him, her hand coming down harder with each slap, alternating between cheeks. He felt warmth gather in his buttocks, but it competed with the warmth spread by the friction of his cock rubbing against Cian’s.

Pressure built inside Jalon as Gelsey continued to spank him, the burning sensation on his ass intensifying. He could smell her arousal, feel the need building inside her, and Cian.

“Need to come,” Jalon whispered, moving his hips in time with Cian’s.

“Not yet,” Cian said, stopping his movement instantly. “Not until you’re inside sweet Gelsey, and I’m inside you.”

“Yes, fuck yes.” Jalon tried to stand, but Cian held him fast as Gelsey continued to spank him, his ass tingling from her continued slaps. The pain was almost sweet, unlike anything he’d ever felt before. Of course it went with the bond he had with these two. Everything, including a spanking, was new and perfect.

“Bad Jalon.” She smacked his bottom harder, and he groaned. Cian cupped the back of his neck, pulling their lips together as Gelsey. Their tongues meshed together, flicking against each other, and Jalon could swear he tasted Gelsey in the kiss too, felt her lips in with theirs, her tongue competing for attention. But that was impossible, wasn’t it?

“*We’re faeries, remember? Nothing is impossible for us.*” He shivered as her voice filled his mind, then threw back his head and groaned at a particularly harsh slap.

“There, that ought to do it. A spanking for fighting our love for so long.” This time her lips were real, claiming his in a deep, searing kiss. Jalon moved quickly, tackling Gelsey and

moving on top of her, using his knee to separate her legs, putting the weight of his thigh against her soft folds and pushing until a sweet groan escaped her lips.

Cian was above him now, massaging Jalon's shoulders and caressing his back, leaning over to lick the burn on Jalon's buttocks until Jalon's groans matched Gelsey's. He pressed harder, her wetness coating his thigh. She clasped her thighs tightly around his own, thrusting against him, her hands clasping at his hips.

Delight spread across her face and Jalon felt it deep in his belly.

"I want you inside me," she said, her voice trembling with need. "Now."

She spread her thighs in invitation and Jalon accepted greedily, sinking into her wetness with one smooth stroke. He moved slowly, savoring the feel of her slick warmth, gazing down at her as she gazed back up, love filling her eyes.

Cian's fingers were at Jalon's anus, spreading warm gel, readying it for his entrance. The sensation of Cian's gentle touch thrilled Jalon just as much as the feel of the woman under him.

The addition of Jalon's weight increased the pleasure for them all; it coursed through them and they held each other tight until Cian pressed the tip of his cock against Jalon's anus, pushing gently, widening the opening, sliding inside as Jalon held still, relishing the feel of Cian's hard cock as it filled him.

The three of them remained still, their bodies connected. Jalon looked down at Gelsey, then turned his gaze on Cian. Both faeries had love in their eyes, warming his insides the way the touch of their bodies warmed his flesh.

"I love you both so much." He moved his hips slowly, sliding farther into Gelsey's heat as Cian started to move inside him, their tempo perfect. They didn't have to repeat the words, for he felt them in his heart and in his soul.

Their climaxes built together on a steady plane, and when Gelsey, shivering under him, cakked out first his, then Cian's name, the dam broke, and the three of them came together, soaring high as they clutched each other.

When Jalon came back down to Earth they were lying on their sides, arms and legs wrapped around each other, hands stroking and lips seeking.

"One room down, a few more to go," Gelsey said with a laugh. "Let's try the bed next, and then the kitchen. After that, I'll want that promised hot tub, Cian."

"A promise I'd love to deliver on, with Jalon's help, of course."

The elders had warned them not to use too much magic, for fear of discovery. Still, Jalon didn't want to spend his time building a hot tub the old-fashioned way. He wanted to spend it in the arms of his two lovers.

"As long as we do it the quick and easy way, keeping more time for us, more time for loving you both."

"Agreed," the faeries said in unison, and Jalon thought he'd never loved one single word so much in his life.

 THE END 

## **Melinda Barron**

Melinda Barron loves to explore Egyptian tombs and temples, discover Mayan ruins, play in castles towers, and explore new cities and countries. She generally does it all from the comfort of her home by opening a book.

Melinda is the fourth of five children born to an Army officer and his wife. A longtime newspaper journalist, Melinda has loved to read and write from an early age. Now she lives in the Texas Panhandle with two cats, Amelia and Pippin, and enough books to, according to her brother, open her own library. In addition to reading and writing Melinda enjoys travel, cross-stitching, watching movies and spending time with her friends and family.