



# FAIRE JUSTICE

By

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Dedication

To my Wonderful Husband, my Knight in Colorful Armor

## Chapter One

*Renaissance Faire, Tuxedo, New York*

“Mmmm, I see great change. It’s good. You need change. You’re too involved with work,” Madame Serilda, or whatever her name was, said. “You work too hard.”

Leda turned her eyes briefly to the woman dressed like some gypsy out of a bad historical documentary. The fortune teller’s Romanian accent was worse than her outfit, which was amazing, considering the cheap imitation velvet of her dark red and green medieval gown was trimmed in white gauze and gold cording. Her dark hair looked like it hadn’t been washed in weeks as it frizzed about her head.

Leda tried to hide her rueful smile. The smell was the most authentic medieval thing about her. Wryly, she insisted, “Oh, really, go on.”

The woman waved her hands in haphazard patterns through the air and Leda knew she thought she looked mystical by doing so. Sadly, the fortune teller wasn’t out of place. She was just as extravagant at the rest of the re-enactors walking around the fairgrounds.

People really got into this Renaissance Festival thing. The makeshift village looked like something from the 1500’s with stone siding and tightly woven thatched roofs on the few permanent buildings. Tents and booths formed haphazard rows, creating winding trails through the village. The dirt paths were rutted, as if someone intentionally had driven a cart through the mud just to make it more genuine, and each person seemed to stick to their role within the fake caste system.

Vendors sold everything from leather boots to swords and horseshoes, flower wreaths for the hair to custom clothing, roasted nuts to sticks of lumpy, suspicious meats. One woman walked around as if she were mad, screaming at the heavens in her muddy gown, crawling around in puddles. Another stopped her to talk about dragon footprints she saw “yonder”. There was even a procession of royal couples representing many European countries. They rode horses and Leda was a little put off by the piles of the manure some of the wretched creatures left behind for the rest of the crowd to walk through.

All the women wore period dresses, from peasants to nobility. The gowns hugged along chests and flared from waists in a sweep of lightweight linen. The embroidered edges were simple to nonexistent on the peasants, with more elaborate decoration for the fine noble ladies. Some of the noblewomen even had jewels, glass bead belts and hair pieces over upswept locks, which twisted into a complicated series of plaits and coils.

The men were no different in their commitment to their roles, though they did have a more rugged appeal. Some were dressed in amour, others in breeches and tunics ranging from the poorest of villains to the richest of noblemen. Leda only knew what she

did about this time period from reading her mother's historical romance novels in high school.

She looked down at her own noblewoman's gown and frowned. Tugging uncomfortably at the long sleeve of her overtunic dress, she fidgeted to make it more comfortable. The gown hugged to her chest to flare from her waist in a sweep of lightweight linen. It would have been cool, but for the undertunic beneath. Embroidered edges lined her sleeves and squared neckline. Along her waist was a chained belt of glass beads. The emerald green was beautiful, she had to admit, but she didn't belong in it. Leda couldn't understand those who thought they did. Sure, life could be boring, but what kind of person lived like this? Day-to-day, on purpose?

However, regardless of how she felt, today she was a freak, too. How did her boss ever talk her into this? Who ever heard of going undercover in a Renaissance Faire as some sort of serving wench? Already she'd been propositioned by a few of the knights. Clearly, sexual harassment wasn't around in the Middle Ages. Though, if she were honest, there were a few knights she wouldn't mind harassing a bit herself.

Actually, she was here for a very important purpose—to catch some mace-wielding psychopath that had been killing innocent women. Being that she was female, her boss didn't like her working on this assignment. Leda wasn't one to let the fact she had boobs interfere with what needed to be done.

A team of men, just as uncomfortably dressed as she, also roamed the campground. She'd seen them several times in her area and knew that their director had told them to keep an eye on her. Most days she would've hated their over-protectiveness, but she'd seen the photos of what the killer had done and she was lucky to have such devoted co-workers.

At first, the murders had baffled them. What kind of object could inflict so much damage? But, thanks to the help of FBI intelligence, they'd narrowed the weapon down to a medieval mace—a stick with a chained ball of spiky metal on the end of it. Luckily, the man in charge of the scientific team was into role-playing games, otherwise it might have stumped them longer. After that, it was a matter of narrowing down known makers of such period weaponry, matching metal content with shards found on one of the victims, and here they were ready to catch a very bad guy.

And Leda was the bait—unofficially, of course. She fit the profile perfectly—athletic in build, green eyes and long red hair. All the victims even had a sprinkling of freckles over their noses like she did. But, there were a few things she had that the victims didn't—Federal training, a gun and the innate ability to “feel” the future. She wouldn't call it foresight so much as a natural instinct that allowed her to be in the right place at the right time. Beyond that mild psychic ability, she also could read people—not their exact thoughts, but impressions of what they were thinking and it wasn't often that those impressions were wrong.

*They have been a little off lately, though,* her brain reminded her.

*Shut up,* she answered herself. *A few bad calls don't mean anything.*

*Tell that to the pizza guy you drew a gun on last week.*

“Yes, yes,” the fortune teller droned, her eyes lifting in her head as she made a

whirling noise. The annoyance successfully drew Leda from her thoughts.

Leda tried not to be too aggravated. She knew there were tellers out there who didn't act like this at all, and would probably be offended by the way this woman was representing them, but it didn't make her a believer in such divining arts at tarot cards. Leda's sister had been into them as children, but the cards were merely a waste of time. Both of them were much more in tune with the future without the use of visual aids. Psychic ability was just something inside a person, a gift. It couldn't be taught or learned, though it could definitely be suppressed or nurtured.

The woman flipped over another card. "The swords are strong with you. Very strong."

"Ah, thanks." Leda glanced down at the strange spread of cards all neatly placed in a jumbled pattern. She hummed softly, trying to remember what the swords were. Some distant memory made her think nature, but she couldn't be sure beyond that. Although, looking at the layout, she saw a lot of the cards had swords on them. Too bad she was looking for a mace.

"Hmm," the woman shook her head and tapped the table. "But look at this one. Not a sword."

Leda glanced down, but the card didn't mean anything to her.

"The ace of cups is with the ace of swords."

*Blackjack!* She thought, wondering if the lady would appreciate it if she said the joke out loud. Somehow she doubted it.

"Oh, yes, I feel it. Yes. Yes. Yes."

Leda drew back as the woman's voice grew. If she kept it up much longer the passersby were going to think she was playing footsy with the woman's crotch under the table cloth. Leda drew her legs to the side so they were within view.

"Mmmm, can you feel it? So much energy." The fortune teller began to sway.

"And that means ...?" Leda prompted, hoping the woman would stop the theatrics. The Bureau better reimburse her for this job-related mental distress. The only reason she was sitting for the reading is that the tarot sorceress had set up her booth next to the knights' tent. It was a perfect position to watch the weapons that went in and out of the place.

"Mmmm, the Ace of Cups and the Ace of Swords, together like this means a new force will be entering you life, a spirit—one of justice, yet love."

*I want to bring justice to the women, and psychopaths often kill out of a belief of love. Hmm, maybe this woman is gifted,* Leda mused doubtfully. Her mother and grandmother would be rolling in their graves if they knew she was even listening to Madame Whatever-Her-Name-Was. They taught the females in their family to cherish their gifts and not exploit them for cash—unless it was like Leda using them for a good cause in her day-to-day work.

"Ah, love," the woman repeated, smiling as if she'd just predicted next week's lottery numbers. Now that was something Leda could use. "Love."

"Let me guess, tall, dark and handsome," Leda said dryly.

The woman glanced to the side, her smiling widening. "Mmmm, yes, I'd say so."

Leda followed her gaze. Her heart nearly stopped in her chest—a reaction that wasn't exactly the most favorable in her line of work. Only instead of the sharp pain of a bullet, it was the sharp stab of instant attraction. Dark, sinful eyes were surrounded by a sea of wind-swept hair. Deliciously thick muscles formed the most attractive body she'd ever seen. It took her a moment to even distinguish that he was wearing chain mail and breeches. He was one of the knights ready for mock tournament.

She'd seen the man before, walking the grounds and this wasn't the first time he met her gaze. Though they had yet to speak, they exchanged smiles and a crystal-clear sexual energy a dead man could pick up on. The man was definitely interested in her and she had to admit she was interested in return. He was one of the fine specimens she was thinking of harassing. What was he doing near her yet again? Was he following her?

"Yes, the swords are strong with you," the fortune teller said, her words a low hum to Leda's ears.

Leda couldn't pull her eyes away. A man joined the knight, drawing his attention from her. She watched him laugh and nod, before pointing in the opposite direction toward the tournament grounds. He had a great laugh, so rich and full and happy, and an even better smile.

"But this Ace, it has a very strong vibration near you. Can you feel that humming?"

Leda glanced over. The woman had her hand out expectantly and Leda reached forward to put her hand in the woman's. The fortune teller placed it over the card. "There, feel that? This is the symbol of opportunity. I feel that it's close. If you stay open, it might even happen today."

"What might happen today?" Leda asked, glancing back to discover the man was staring at her, his friend gone. All she felt beneath her hand was a flat surface and if she, a mild psychic as she referred to herself, couldn't feel anything then there was a good chance there was nothing to feel. A slow smile curled the knight's mouth as she watched him, making her thighs tighten in response.

"Truth. Justice—"

"Sanity?" Leda broke in wryly, unable to help herself.

"No," the woman said, letting go of Leda's hand. "Clarity."

"Ah, my mistake."

The fortune teller kept talking, but Leda stopped listening. How could she pay attention when the man licked his lips like he could taste her? Several knights passed behind him into the tent. Leda glanced at them. Seeing a glint of a metal sword, her mind was instantly brought back to her task. She was here to work, not stare at knights in shining armor in hopes that he'd strike up a conversation.

Or perhaps she could do both ....

Glancing at the fortune teller, she pushed up from the round barrel she sat on and said, "Thanks, Madam Saline, this has been really... ummm ... insightful."

"That's Sabena," the woman corrected. "Madame Sabena."

"All right, then." Leda didn't care. She set her eyes on the knight, her heart thumping violently in her chest, a combination of nervous tension from approaching a

man she liked and the anticipation of going into “battle”. It was the same rush she got moments before taking the bad guy down.

“My lady,” the knight bowed as she went straight for him.

Leda’s step faltered. She didn’t expect a Scottish accent. Too bad he didn’t have the kilt to go with it. She imagined his legs would’ve looked good in a kilt. And reminded of the very naughty email picture her sister forwarded to her showing what Scotsmen did and did not wear under their kilts, it would’ve been fun to see if it were true. Now there was a sword she wouldn’t mind seeing. It was her “card” after all.

She would be the first to admit that she didn’t understand, nor get into, the whole Renaissance Faire, role-playing thing. But seeing Mr. Knight towering before her was quickly changing her mind. The weapon was a particularly nice touch to the fantasy world.

*Fantasy world?!*

Leda wanted to hit herself upside the head. She was supposed to be here looking for a murderer, not entertaining men in armor. Doing her best to focus on her assignment, she knew the best way to get an escort into the very private knights’ tent was to flirt.

Hoping her butchering of an Old English accent was adorable and not annoying, she said, “My lord, ‘tis a really big sword thou have ... hast ... uh, there.”

He smiled good-naturedly and she was glad he wasn’t as snooty as some of the others she’d run into at the fair. Didn’t they know it wasn’t real? Jeesh! She’d even had one lady refuse to sell her a hairpiece because she didn’t know the “proper” name for it and didn’t want to stand around long enough to learn. The flower wreath had been for her baby niece’s birthday, anyway. It’s not like she had time to go to a toy store with the hours she’d been keeping lately.

“My enemies think so too, lass,” he answered, lowering his chin. Her heart flipped a little in her chest.

“*Leda, you got something?*” Bret asked, his voice coming from the earpiece hidden by her hair. She lifted her hand to the side, knowing his binoculars were on her. Lifting her hand, she stretched her wrist in what looked to be an absentminded movement, signifying that all was well and she couldn’t really talk at the moment.

“Is my lord—?” she began.

He leaned forward and whispered. “Sir. I’m no’ a lord, merely a knight, and those who are noble might take offense to ya saying so.”

“Ah,” she said. “Is my sir ...?”

He grinned, a completely enchanting, heart-thumping look.

“Oh, forget it,” she grumbled, losing the accent. “I can’t flirt with you and concentrate on my horrible accent at the same time.”

He arched a brow, as if surprised by her forthcoming statement.

“Hi, I’m Leda,” she held her hand out to him. “You may call me Lady Leda, as I so christened myself this morning when I was getting dressed.”

He gallantly took her hand, leaning over to brush his lips over her knuckles. Warmth caressed her and she knew he’d opened his mouth ever so slightly. A shock of

sexual excitement lit in her blood at the kiss. She shivered as he let go, the moisture on her hand cooling in the breeze. "I come from the future, in a time where the coffee pours freely and we all take plenty of showers."

He chuckled. "Are ya telling me I need a bath?"

"What? No," she quickly denied. The sting of where his mouth touched her hand thumped a trail along her skin, like a snake of desire slithering over her flesh, working its way slowly over her arm to her shoulder and neck. It was as if the kiss continued, moving to erect her nipples with longing and curl around her waist.

"You smell nice."

You smell nice? Leda groaned. She should've been able to come up with a better line than that—even if he did smell great.

"Ya are no' into this, are ya?"

"Is it that obvious?" she drawled, laughing.

*'Leda, what are you doing?'*

"A wee bit," he agreed. "So, what brings ya to our tournament on such a fine day, Lady Leda?"

*'Leda, it's about time for the tournament. Ditch the knight and get over to the bleachers.'*

She grimaced.

"Lady Leda?" he asked when she didn't speak.

"Oh, the weapons."

He gave her a look of surprise.

"I'm in the market for a sword and I wanted to see some examples in use before I purchased one." She glanced down his body, unable to help herself, before looking at the tent. "I bet there are a lot of swords in there."

Following her gaze down and then over, he nodded. "Yea."

"Do you think you could ...?" She batted her lashes, letting her eyes dip down. It was an obvious ploy, they both knew it, but that's what made it so effective.

"Would ya like to see inside the tent, my lady?" He offered her his arm. "I'm due in the lifts, but I can take ya through after."

"I'd like that." She smiled. "Thank you."

"Though," he leaned forward. "I have to warn ya, it's no' that interesting."

*'Leda Williams, what are you doing? Do you need back-up? What's happening?'*

Leda lifted her hand behind her back and waved for Bret to shut up. They hadn't been working together long and he obviously wasn't used to her tactics as of yet. Being a woman, there were certain ways she could get things done that the men couldn't.

"I don't know about that. I'm plenty interested." Leda didn't mean for the double meaning she implied with that statement, but now that it was said, she rolled with it. She gave him a smile. "Escort me to the tournament?"

"I can no'. I'm riding."

Leda glanced back, seeing Madame Sabena smiling and waving at her. The woman lifted her hand, blowing a small kiss toward Leda. Biting her lips, Leda

mumbled quietly as she lifted her hand weakly to the side to wave half-heartedly back, "Okay, crazy woman. Hi. How ya doin'?" Yeah, we're friends now 'cause you read some cards. Okay then."

"That's no' way to speak about a seer," the knight said.

Leda laughed and gave him a guilty look. "Trust me. She didn't see anything."

"Ya did no' like your future?"

Leda thought of the whole, 'tall, dark and handsome' bit and smiled. "The future was just fine. It was how she went on about my present that bothered me. Oh, and the part about the cards vibrating was a bit silly."

"Oh?"

"She said I work too hard, which is crazy. So what if I work a lot of hours, if I love what I do and that doesn't mean that I work too hard."

"And what is it ya do?"

"I'm a ... ah," Leda hesitated, knowing she couldn't tell the truth. "A barmaid."

"Mmmm, a lady-serving wench," he said, grinning. "Well, wench, I'd be honored to take this tournament for ya."

"What? Win the tournament for me?" Leda felt giddy. There was something about this knight that made her forget she was an agent and made her feel like a woman.

"Yea." His smile deepened, reaching his eyes. A thin thread of desire drew their bodies closer. She looked at his mouth, desperately wanting to kiss him.

*'Leda! The tournament is starting soon. You need to get in there. Stop fucking around and get moving.'*

But now was obviously not the time. Bret was the last person she wanted in her head as she made out with a hunky knight.

"And what do I get if you win?" she asked.

"Prestige." He laughed.

"And what would you get?"

His laughter faded and he turned somewhat serious. "A kiss."

Leda smiled, nodding her head. "Okay, Sir Knight, you have a deal."

Gallantly he bowed and walked away, whistling as he went into the knights' tent. Leda stood, watching after him, her body shaking slightly with desire.

"I told you. The cards never lie. Tall, dark and handsome."

Leda jolted in surprise, turning to see Madame Sabena stood next to her. "We'll see. It's early yet and he's got to take the tournament first."

Sabena laughed.

"What's so funny?" Leda asked.

"That shouldn't be too hard," Sabena said. "He's been the tournament's champion for nigh five years now."

"Five year?" Leda turned around in awe to stare at the tent.

"Mm-hmm," Sabena said, chuckled knowingly. "Come on, let's go watch. The crowds always thin out during the main event anyway and I won't have any customers."

Being roped by the fortune teller wasn't exactly how Leda wanted to spend the tournament, but what else could she do? She glanced back at some nearby tents to see if

any of the agents were following her. Bret's blond head poked up from around the side and he nodded once.

"This way, my lady," Sabena said, dragging her along toward the bleachers.

"Right behind you, Leda," Bret's voice said. "Stay sharp."

\* \* \* \*

Calum tried to remain calm as he entered the knights' tent. All his life he'd been told this day would come—the day he met a woman who sent an electrical spark through his entire being. Lady Leda. His eyes had been drawn to her since he saw her walking in the distance. The second he saw her across the fairgrounds, he knew.

He'd instantly gone to Aunt Sabena to confirm his fate. The psychic was only too happy to help him ease his mate with a tarot reading. Only, from the looks of it, Leda was too skeptical to pay attention to what his aunt was telling her. Then, when Leda approached him, he thought to make easy conversation. Only, she'd looked too sexy, her big eyes staring at him, her body calling to him as only a mate could. He'd been unable to resist the invisible bond between them and had to kiss her.

"Done trailing your lass? Or should we announce that ya will no' be at the lifts?"

Calum gave his father, Thomas, a rueful smirk as his uncles began to chuckle. Inside, the tent was plain, set up with long rows of tables. Half-way back a flap blocked the back section of the tent from view. As champion, the back area was for his use. It was nothing fancy, but it did afford him some privacy during the day when the rest of the knights drank themselves into a stupor.

"I will no' give ya the satisfaction, old man," Calum glanced over his gathered uncles—Stephan the Short, Henry the Bald, Peter the Wise and George the Mad. Though, they only went by the old names during the faire. Otherwise, they just used the last name of McKibben.

"I have a feeling today is my day," his father answered, chuckling as he fingered the sword at his waist. "Your brains are no' in your head."

"And your liquor is no' in your cup," Calum gestured to the man's empty goblet. Almost instantly, it magically filled with ale. It was one of the few perks of being born into a family of wizards.

Thomas nodded. "There's a good lad."

"And ya wonder why I always win," Calum muttered.

"I wonder nothing," Thomas said. "You're a fine warrior. Your ma would have been proud o' the man ya turned out to be."

Calum knew his father must already be drunk to mention his late mother. Since Bridget died, a piece of Thomas had withered. Most of the time, the man seemed to only go through the motions, throwing himself into drinking and sport, even wenching. But meaningless sex could never touch a broken heart. Having witnessed the change for himself, Calum had second thoughts about the path he took with Lady Leda. He felt something different when he looked at her, something more than animalistic lust and need. But was it worth being with her to someday end up like his father? Drunk and broken?

Calum eyed his father as he tipped back his goblet. His parents had married in the

thirteen-hundreds. The wizard clans had been locked in a war back then and Calum was raised by his mother's family after her death—thus the slight cultural difference between he and his father.

The war had been about many things, most predominately the fundamental questions. Did wizards interfere with the lives of humans and change the course of mortal history? Calum and his family believed they should not. Humans were not their personal slaves or pawns, who should be made to serve a wizard's whim. On the other hand, mortals were not meant for magic and often abused any power they had. It was best to keep magic separate. Who were the wizards to decide who should be king, or which side should win a war? To influence such things became equivalent to playing God.

It was only several years after his mother's death that Calum got to know his father. The wars had ended, though nothing had been resolved on either side. Both factions agreed to avoid the other. With so many bad memories of loss, their family decided to flee the old country for a new start. They came to America.

Calum still wasn't sure how it happened, but they'd found a home within the Renaissance Festival. Maybe it was because swordplay was second nature to them, as natural as breathing or walking. Calum couldn't remember a time when he hadn't held a sword in his hands. Calluses on his palms attested to the fact. They'd been using the weapons for centuries, and performing for crowds of mortals was an easy way to make a living. Not to mention they could cast their own blades. But, perhaps most importantly, there was comfort in the reminder of the past that the faire gave them.

"The water's gone into the well." George chuckled.

Calum stopped briefly, glancing at Uncle George, not bothering to tell the man that whatever it was he'd just said made no real sense and wasn't even a real saying. Everyone in the family was used to George's idiosyncrasies.

"Did the lady hit ya over the head?" Peter laughed, pounding his fist over the table.

Calum blinked, realizing he'd been staring blindly at his father. Thomas lifted a brow, his expression asking if he should be concerned. Shaking his head, Calum said, "Ach! Ya are reading too much into my interest."

The defense only made his uncles break out in boisterous laughter. Calum waved a dismissing hand and strode across the tent to gather his sword. Blocking an onslaught of jests that followed him, Calum determined he really didn't have much of a choice. Fate had showed him Lady Leda and he would follow where his destiny led. Right now, destiny demanded he take the tournament and win his prize.

## Chapter Two

The wooden bleachers weren't the most comfortable, but it was no different than being at a high school football game. Oh, except that there were knights on horses running around the track, demonstrating skills of agility and grace. She knew it was all for show, but some of the players' moves looked downright real and vicious.

Sabena was only too happy to explain the rules of the sword fights. Leda watched the knights' skills as they pitted sword against sword. The sound of real metal clanged over the field and she had to admit she was slowly gaining an appreciation for what they did. One man even demonstrated how sharp his sword blade was by slicing through a large melon with one clean hack.

"That is Lord Barfeld," Sabena said, pointing at a burly man who towered over his shorter opponent. "And he fights the gallant Sir Thomas."

Swords glistened as the two men squared off, shining in the sunlight. The squat Sir Thomas struck the weapon of Lord Barfeld in a surprising show of strength, cracking the noble's blade in two. The crowd cheered, wildly stomping their feet.

"See over there," Sabena pointed across the field to where canopies covered a portion of the bleachers. The royalty procession she'd seen walking through the encampment earlier had moved to the honored seats. "Those seats are for nobility, and beneath is where the peasants and servants watch."

Sure enough, peasant-looking actors were beneath the nobles.

"I thought those were all royalty," Leda said.

"Nay, only the one in the middle—the crowned king. The rest are foreign nobles," Sabena explained.

The nobles all wore bright colors and flashy jewels. It was a stark contrast to the drabber people below them. A few of the upper class, looking as if they truly were getting drunk, rowdily tossed bits of food at those below. They really did make a ceremony of the whole affair. Before each fight, the men made pretty speeches and pledges of loyalty to the mock king.

Finally, it was time for the joust. The rules were simple, from what Leda could see. One man with a stick tried to push another man with a stick off his horse. Several of the women pretended to faint as certain knights were called forth. Other's waved handkerchiefs at the men.

*Medieval groupies.* Leda tried not to laugh.

And then her knight came onto the field, looking regal astride his stallion. Leda squirmed in her seat, instantly a little hot. A dark green tie fluttered from his blunted lance, matching her gown.

*'I got nothing,' Bret said. 'I've been all over the back section.'*

Leda frowned. The man really did have a knack for speaking up at the worst

times. Every part of her wanted to yank the earpiece and Bret's voice out of her ear, but duty kept her hands still.

*'Where are you, Leda?'*

She couldn't answer. The earpiece only went one way.

*'Stand up so I can see you,'* he demanded.

Leda moved to stand. Her knight's eyes instantly caught hers, as he found her in the crowd. With a gallant show, he motioned out to her, lifting a handkerchief to his lips. The crowd went wild and several of the noblewomen stood, craning their necks to look at her. Leda could suddenly see the appeal of having a knight's attention. Her heart flopped in her chest, as if carried by tiny butterflies. She swallowed, unable to pull her eyes away from the handsome man.

"Ah, so Sir Calum has truly agreed to champion you," Sabena said. "Though, I'll bet he has more in mind than that."

"What?" Leda looked down, realizing she was the only one standing in the crowd of hundreds. She blushed slightly to know that she'd just made a public display of herself.

*'Go ahead and take your seat. I see you,'* Bret said. *'Try not to disappear on us again. As far as I'm concerned, all of these people are freaks. Any one of them can be the killer.'*

Silently, Leda answered him, knowing he wouldn't hear the response, *Well, if the killer is here, there is no way he didn't see me in the crowd.*

"You're knight," Sabena drew her attention back to the immediate area. "He's championing you. Many of the ladies will be jealous to see you chosen for such an honor. He never champions anyone and, believe me, those harlots have tried."

"Ah?" Leda didn't know how to answer, but found herself smiling. Maybe she'd been too hasty in her first dismissal of Sabena. Leda realized she didn't really mind the woman. When Madame Sabena wasn't acting like a freak, waving her arms around and predicting the future, the woman was actually quite nice.

"I told you your cards were strong," Sabena said.

*And then there she goes ... predicting the future.*

Leda suppressed a wry laugh.

A herald made his announcements and dropped a flag. Calum nudged his horse. Leda bit her lip, not wanting to watch as the two men went for each other at full speed. Yet, she couldn't look away from his strong thighs gripping the bareback horse combined with the taut line of his armored body, moving seductively with each gallop of his mount. Suddenly, Calum's lance broke on the man's chest, exploding into bits of wood. The man didn't fall. Leda frowned. It looked all too real. The men went back to their starting points to do it again. Both times Calum's lance struck home, showering the men in splinters.

She relaxed, thinking it was over, only to realize there were more rounds between the men. The more she watched, the more she couldn't stop from squirming in her seat. She pictured Calum's strong form shifting beneath the armor. It would have to be strong after five years of this kind of constant physical exertion. Determination and sweat lined

his face. His body moved with strength and precision, and it was arousing to behold.

Looking around for a mace, she frowned. It turned out to be a fruitless search.

*'Freaks,'* Bret swore under his breath.

Naughty little fantasies about Calum started popping into her head. His tight naked body over hers, his arousal striking her like his lance to an opponent, hard and sure. Maybe being trapped in the Middle Ages wasn't such a bad thing—especially if it included being conquered by a sexy knight. Leda automatically fanned her face with her hand, feeling very hot. The sun beat down from above, but that was hardly the cause of her discomfort.

*'I don't think we're going to find anything here,'* Bret said.

*I found plenty,* Leda thought by way of an answer.

*'The guys are going to make another round at those weapon-maker people and then they're going to call it in until tomorrow.'*

Leda stared at the field for so long, fantasizing about all the wickedly delicious ways she'd like to lure Sir Calum into her bed that she didn't realize the game had ended. She'd even missed the fact that Calum had taken the tournament as champion until it was announced by the herald. Her eyes found his heated gaze staring at her for all to see.

*'Go right when you come down,'* Bret said. *'I'll be waiting.'*

"Watch out for the noblewomen. They're probably drunk by now and tend to get a little mean when they think a commoner might have a chance at their knight—especially since he won't take any of them into his bed." Sabena stood, prompting Leda to do the same. Leda gave another glance to the field, but Calum had ridden away. "I have to get back to my booth. The crowds are on the move."

Leda thanked the woman and went to meet up with Bret. He stood at entryway pretending to read a map of the campground.

"I'm going to see what's in that knights' tent." Leda passed by him and didn't spare him a second glance.

He didn't speak, as he moved to walk with the crowd, following her toward the tent. She looked over her shoulder, seeing him several paces behind her. When she neared the tent, Sabena was already at her booth with a line of people waiting for readings.

"Madame Sabena, I can't tell you how right you were about him! Please, tell me, what you see next for me?" A woman sat before the mystic, holding out her hands with an almost desperate look on her face. Leda frowned, almost feeling bad for the delusional fool.

"My lady." Sir Calum's voice caused a chill to shudder down her spine. She turned to see him standing close. Beads of sweat made his dark hair cling to his forehead. Potent heat radiated off of him, making her want to gravitate closer.

"My champion," she answered, wondering where the slight breathiness to her tone came from.

He grinned. "I've come for my prize."

*'Leda, he bothering you? You need backup?'*

Leda thought of Bret watching and touched her ear lightly. "Not out here. I've

been warned about your jealous following of noblewomen. I would hate for them to attack me.”

“Jealous?” He glanced at Madame Sabena. “Ach, the seer talks too much.”

*‘Leda, damn it, what’s going on?’*

She took the knight’s arm and lifted her hand behind her back, motioning Bret to shut up. Before they left, she wanted to see inside the tent—just to be sure no one was hiding out. The case was going nowhere and Bret already indicated that the team planned on calling it a day and trying back tomorrow. There was no guarantee that the killer would even be here, at this particular festival. It was just a good hunch and they had to try as all other roads had failed.

*‘Damn it, Leda, fine, but you watch yourself in there. I can’t see through the tent.’*

*Damn it, Bret, she thought. Get out of my head already.*

She waved again. Her knight glanced back in question, clearly feeling the gesture. Giving him an innocent smile, she explained, “Just a bug.”

*‘Ha, ha,’* Bret drawled.

“Ya might no’ like what ya see. It could ruin the affect for ya to discover the knights’ secrets.” Even as he said it, he led her toward the flap.

“Let me guess,” she mused. “You’re hiding air conditioning, a big screen TV and—”

“I have no knowledge of such contraptions, my lady,” he teased. “And consider yourself warned.”

She glanced down over his tight ass as he looked away. “Oh, don’t worry about me. I think I’ll survive the shock.”

## Chapter Three

“Eh, I warned ye once, lady, I’ll not do it again,” a guard cautioned Leda from the entrance to the knights’ tent. He was the same one who’d kept her from getting inside earlier when she’d tried. Experience told her that no amount of eyelash batting or sweet talking would make him change his mind. The man put his hand on his sword, as if he’d actually intended to draw it if she tried to disobey. Leda wondered what he’d do if she whipped out a badge. “No one is to disturb the knights.”

Her Scottish knight pulled her firmly to his side, wrapping his strong arm around her waist as he held her close. The tight press of him sent a shockwave over her skin, more so than a polite kiss would have done. Her knees weakened as she smelled mint and soap on his skin. He’d managed to clean up after his excursions. His voice a territorial growl, he said, “The wench is with me.”

“Oh, my apologies, Sir Calum,” the man instantly said, bowing. He went so far as to hold the flap open to let them through. Leda ducked under, unable to help giving the man a victorious look. The man winked at her knowingly. Leda’s smile turned into a grimace.

Inside, knights sat at the long rows of tables, their voices soft as they drank what she could only guess was liquor out of mugs. The area was plain, an open tent with a dirt floor. Swords and daggers lay across the tables. A few packs lay on the floors toward the sides. Leda didn’t see a single mace.

“Ah, there is our champion!” said one knight. It was the short, stout Sir Thomas she’d seen fighting swords at tournament. He lifted his mug toward Calum. “How about a pint of mead?”

“Methinks ya have drunk enough for the both of us, Sir Thomas,” Calum answered.

“Yea, but methinks I’d like to trade ya for that fair maid ya got there.” Thomas wiggled his brows suggestively. Leda found him a little on the “weird” side, but dismissed it. The feeling was probably due to the fact that she detected a trace of truth to his offer, though by his demeanor she doubted he’d ever act on it. Where these men so withdraw from reality that they actually thought they were in the Middle Ages?

“Do no’ be touching my lady, ya ken?” Calum warned, standing tall. He continued to speak in rapid Gaelic, the words nowhere near anything Leda could translate. The men laughed at the display and her knight took her by her arm and led her down the tent toward the back. He lifted a flap and she ducked under. The back section was smaller than the front. He dropped the flap and it overlapped the entryway, hiding the others completely from view.

The room was sparse with a wooden chair and a table. There was no breeze, so the heat of the day was only a few degrees cooler under the shade of the canvas than it

was outside. Wood posts held the sides up, forming corners, and an old tapestry covered the floor. Clearly, the makeshift home had been thrown together, decorated much more sparsely than the rest of the fairgrounds. A small cot sat close to the ground in the corner, barely big enough for the man in front of her to fit, let alone two people.

"Impressed?" he chuckled.

"Well, it's not a castle, but I guess it will do." Leda made a show of strolling around the area. Her body slightly tense, she saw they were alone. She wasn't a weak woman, could easily defend herself, but something deep inside of her told her to stay where she was. She'd gotten far on instinct and wasn't about to doubt it now. A loud cough sounded in her ear and she jolted in alarm.

'Sorry,' Bret mumbled.

"Would ya like me to escort ya back out?" Calum asked softly. "I do no' want ya to be uncomfortable."

Leda wasn't going to lie to herself. She knew what she wanted and it was right here in the tent.

She turned to look at Calum, her mouth open readying to continue the small talk. Nothing came out. Hands wrapped around her upper arms, so quick she couldn't jerk away, and lips crushed against hers. She gasped in surprise, not having expected him to be so forward, so fast. Hot desire coursed through her and her panties became soaked in within seconds. There was no denying their attraction since that first glance across the fairgrounds and it would seem she was not the only one who went with her instincts.

The sound of men talking on the other side of the tent was muffled by the flap. There was the thrill of knowing they could be caught—caught by the knights, caught by her fellow agents. But even more thrilling was the taste of his mouth, the smell of his body, the crush of warm, hard chain mail against her breasts.

Just as suddenly, he let her go.

"The prize is well worth the fight, my lady," he said, his voice husky with desire.

She shivered, expecting him to come to her again. He didn't, instead stepping aside to a small table. A large pitcher was on it and he poured it into a bowl. Cupping the water in his hands, he splashed his face and moistened his hair. Leda watched, letting her eyes roam down over his tight body. His back was to her and she suppressed a moan. Maybe it was the danger in her everyday job that made her unafraid. Or the stress inside her, needing to be relieved. Or maybe, just maybe, it was that he was a handsome man with a commanding presence and she was a woman in need of being controlled.

Slowly, he pulled the chain mail over his head, dropping it on the chair. She stiffened to hear the loud clank of the falling metal. Laughter sounded in the tent, but she didn't care at this point. His kiss had drugged her. If just his mouth and the touch of his hands made her this weak and aroused, what would the feel of his cock, inside her, do? Soon, his tunic shirt followed as he cleaned his chest and arms with a rag. She'd smelled the fresh scent of him and wondered if this little bathing show was for her benefit.

"Ya ken, love, those caught in battle and brought back to a knights' tent were often made to serve him."

Leda's sex was already so wet that the low implication of his words rushed over

her like molten lava. "Are you saying you caught me in battle?"

"I fought to win ya." He didn't turn around as he lifted his arm, washing his body. Little trails of water slid down his tight flesh. She licked her lips. If this was a show, she'd gladly pay to keep watching.

She went to him, taking the cloth from his hands. He glanced back as if surprised at her easy acceptance. Leda started washing of his back, her hands shaking to explore him. The tent added to the fantasy and she felt like he medieval princess being conquered by the warrior knight. Her heart beat faster at the thought. Suddenly, it all made sense why people liked to role play. If this was part of the Renaissance Faire experience, count her in as a loyal attendee!

Every instinct pulled her toward him since that first glimpse across the fairgrounds. Her senses tingled, not just her body but her mind, her soul. The innate psychic ability flew into overdrive telling her she needed to be by this man, that she was close to her goal, that through him she'd find her killer. Leda knew to trust her powers.

"Ya are a fine prize, Lady Leda," Calum whispered, stroking back a stand of her hair.

Leda bit back a weak moan, mindful of the fact that they needed to be quiet. His eyes dared her to continue washing him. Her body stirred, aching to be claimed. So help her, if he commanded her to fall to her knees and suck him hard, she'd do it. She wanted the fantasy, the escape. She wanted to be the princess captured by the demanding, sexually starved knight.

With that thought, she reached for his breeches, surprised to discover she could barely wrap her fingers around the thick girth of his arousal. Already it was fully erect, ready to be called to action. Leda massaged it through his breeches, stroking it with the material of his pants.

Groaning quietly, Calum eagerly worked laces free at his waist. She moved to thrust her hand down the front of his pants. The large, thick mass was like tight silk to her palm, so hard she could make out veins along the sides. The rounded mushroomed head pushed against her palm, dropping beads of pre-cum along her flesh as if ready to ease its own way.

Her bodice felt tight against her breasts as her breathing deepened. Beneath the gown she wore modern undergarments. Even the panties felt tight.

"Mmmm," he said softly so only she could hear him. She stroked his length, gripping and twisting her hand tight against him. His hips bucked against her, thrusting as he fucked her hand.

How could a stranger turn her on so much? So fast? So mindlessly? She bit her lip and it took great effort not to make a sound. The anticipation was too much and she couldn't force herself to dwell beyond the small room in the tent. If ever she needed to be taken, now was that time. How long had it been since she'd been ridden good? How long since she'd been controlled? Fucked? Aroused to the point that merely feeling a man's body almost made her orgasm?

No, not just any man. Calum the knight, with his tight perfect muscles and strong thick form. He'd undoubtedly be a fantastic lover. She bet he knew just how to take her,

hard and fast, pounding into her, making her feel.

He touched her arms, running his palms up and down them as he leaned forward to heatedly whisper in her ear, "Ah, lass, ya know how to touch a man."

"Call me my lady," she demanded, stroking him faster. "Show me how you knights took conquered women after battle."

"So ya need to be persuaded, do ya, my lady?" he answered, automatically slipping into the role he was dressed for. The burr of his accent thickened. "Taking your lands was no' enough to make you bow before me?"

"I'll never bow to you, heathen scum," she whispered, shivering at the way his hot breath hit against her neck. This role playing was damned fun.

"Ya dare to call me a heathen, wench? By the time I'm done with ya, ya will know who your master be." Calum pushed down on her shoulder. Leda went to her knees a little too eagerly. Her hand moved with her and she pulled his pants down. She opened her mouth, expecting to take him between her lips. Her eyes rounded as she looked at his glorious, thick cock.

Instead, he pushed her roughly back. Leda fell on her butt, gasping in surprise as he towered over her. She'd asked to be dominated and that is exactly what she was getting. Calum's eyes looked at her with superiority. She couldn't speak. Her eyes were caught by the way his chest lifted with each breath. Damn, but the man was nothing but valleys and peaks of pure muscle. So wet she could barely breathe without feeling the twinges of her desire all the way down to her pussy, her thighs tightened.

His heated gaze met hers, commanding and sure, as he fell to his knees before her. She watched his hands on her gown, pulling on her skirt. The hard ground pressed into her backside. Calum didn't stop as he exposed her thighs, finally coming to her panties. With a growl, he pulled on them, ripping them as he freed her body to his steamy gaze.

He leaned forward, whispering, "It would seem my lady does no' require much convincing."

As if to prove his point, he thrust a finger into her slick folds. Lena arched, falling all the way back. Calum wiggled the tip, dancing it along the hard pearl of her sex. Then, thrusting it hard, he slipped it up into her passage. Her muscles clamped down on him.

Mmmm, yes, this is what she wanted!

She forced her lips together tight, trying to concentrate on not making a sound. Calum kept his hand moving, fucking her with first one, then two, then three fingers. His thumb found her clit as the other slid behind to probe along her ass. His knees settled between her thighs, holding her legs open. With his free hand, he grabbed at her bodice. She waited for him to rip it, vaguely aware that she'd not have any other clothing to put on if he did. Instead, he pulled, shaking it, so it slowly worked down to expose a breast without tearing the material. A low sound came from him and her breath caught, hoping he didn't make it louder.

Needing more than a hand between her thighs, she pushed at his to get him to pull out. He grinned, instinctively understanding the primitive gesture. Calum withdrew his

fingers. She closed her eyes, breathing hard, tense and ready for that first filling thrust. He was so big and she just knew it was going to feel so good and tight.

Warm lips crushed over her exposed nipple, sucking and biting.

*'Agent, we're being called to go home,' a voice said in his ear. 'Don't worry., I'll wait thirty minutes before coming in after you. That should give you plenty of time to make a graceful exit.'*

The sound jarred her but Calum's lips soon drew her back to the matter at hand.

*'Leda,' Bret insisted.*

Leda suppressed a groan, dislodging the earpiece by throwing her hand next to her ear. Calum instantly grabbed her wrist, as if thinking she wanted to be held down. He pinned her wrists and she forgot all about Bret and their assignment. Calum's knees nudged her thighs open wider as he angled his hips close to hers. She gasped, feeling the blunt tip of him at her opening.

"Protection," she moaned quietly.

"On," he said in such a way she knew she could believe him.

He rubbed his shaft along her folds, searing her with his heat. She parted her thighs wider, instinctively ready for that first thrust. Breathing hard, he panted, as if he was seconds away from roughly riding her. The whole day filled with glances and hot looks had built to this moment. Her stomach tensed, as she became almost frightened by the size of him. Calum's mouth found her neck, biting at it like a wolf about to attack. He thrust hard, slipping inside her without testing her depths with his size. It didn't matter. She was more than ready and her body took him tightly in, squeezing him hard.

"Ah," she breathed. "Yes, fuck me. Take me. Ride me hard."

Leda wanted to be conquered and so she was as he began pumping his hips hard into her. She bit her lip, aching against him, liking the powerful, fast way he took her. Her ass hit against the hard ground as she rocked her hips, meeting his violent thrusts, taking his mighty sword to the hilt.

He reached around, grabbing a cheek of her ass. "Come for me. Get me good and wet."

Leda pushed her lips tight, biting the insides to keep them shut. The laughter from outside grew, punctuated by periods of male conversation. Thinking of how close they were to getting caught, combined with the tight fit of his demanding body was too much. She shook, jerking hard as she came. Calum's gorgeous face was strained. His mouth opened wide as he shivered, but no sound escaped. She was glad he didn't feel the need to call out, alerting his probably suspicious friends to what happened behind the tent flap.

When she started to calm down, he grinned, a truly wicked look. That's when she realized he was still hard, his hips moving in shallow circles inside her. He pulled out. Her body was weak and her mind confused. What was he doing?

He pulled back, his hard, condom covered dick still erect. Before she could think to protest, he was flipping her over onto her stomach. Her face met with the dirt of the floor, where the rug didn't cover. His hands cupped her ass, kneading it several times before letting go. She gasped in surprise.

"This ass has been making me hard all day," he said hotly, his mouth close to her

ear. "I'm going to fuck it good until your body is ruined for any other man. Ya are going to be my wench, are ya no'?"

Before she could answer, he pulled her hips up. His erection slid along the crack of her ass, moving to her pussy once more. He eased it in, as if wetting himself on her cream once more. Her body jerked as he filled her once more. Then, as if satisfied, he drew the tip up to her tight rosette.

"Mm, sweet virgin ass," he groaned.

How did he know? Leda tensed, was it that obvious?

"My ass," Calum said possessively. He rocked his hips forward, easing into her, making her body burn at the invasion, taking it much slower than before. "So tight. Ah, that's it. Relax. Take me in. Ya feel the connection between us."

Pleasure soon built, taking away all traces of uncomfortable pressure, as she came again. He kept thrusting, gently at first and then harder as he neared his climax. Heavy breathing came from him, echoing with the sound of her heart racing in her ears. It wasn't long before he was groaning, jerking his release along with her. He fell forward, trapping her to the rug. She became aware of the tent canvas above them and the dirt floor beneath her cheek. It pressed, hard and unforgiving into her ribs. A soft moan left her lips and she mumbled incoherently, not even sure what it was she was trying to say to him. All she knew is that she felt wonderful.

Slowly, Calum pushed up. His breathing slowed by degrees, as did hers. Sitting back, he reached to pull her up with him. Leda smiled, reaching to push her hair from her face. Feeling the earpiece stuck in a lock, she wanted to grimace. She tried to be delicate, as she cupped her hand around the device and held it as she adjusted her bodice.

Calum got dressed, his eyes smiling as he gave her a sated look. Concentrating on getting her earpiece back in, she stood. She slipped it back into her ear.

*'... suspect in the tent with you and is armed with a mace. This is confirmed. Armed with mace. Leda, damn it, did you hear me? Leda? You'd better give me a sign.'*

Leda gasped. Her body went from sated to stressed in a millisecond. Did he mean Calum? Shit! Why did she take her earpiece out?

"My lady?" Calum asked.

"Ah," Leda bit her lip. Damn it, why wasn't Bret talking?

*Come on, Bret, repeat that. Where is the suspect? Who is he?*

## Chapter Four

Calum could barely breathe. The moment had been hard and fast and so not what he thought his first time with her would be like. Still, it had been perfect. Leda was more than he could have hoped for. Maybe there was something to this ‘perfect true mate’ the older wizards had talked about. He never expected it to happen to him so hard and fast. Even yesterday, he would have laughed at the thought of marriage, let alone proposing it. But, he couldn’t deny what he felt. He saw Leda and he was in love.

Love.

The emotion flowed through him, as much a part of his soul as his magic was. He knew to trust his powers, his instincts. They screamed that Leda belonged to him, and he to her. Nothing would ever be the same.

However, the same instinct that told him how right there were together yelled that something was wrong. He saw the look in her eyes—the hesitation, the panic, the worry. She’d enraptured him, to the point he’d thought little beyond getting to know her better. Now sated, his thoughts began to clear and focus. She wasn’t just here looking for a collector’s piece. All was not what it seemed.

\* \* \* \*

Leda glanced around the tent, her mind racing for a graceful way to get out of the back area and into the main part. If the man with the mace had come in, she needed to find him.

For the first time in her life, her personal wants warred with her work needs. Duty demanded she find the maniac. Her emotions wanted to stay until she could make sure she and Calum were on good terms. Running out after sex wasn’t exactly the best way to get a second date.

Did watching him joust count as a date?

Why the hell was she thinking about the tournament when she had a serial killer to catch?

Leda had never been so torn. She knew what she had to do. She couldn’t let the maniac kill again. Calum would have to wait. Just like all the other personal things in her life. She opened her mouth, trying to think of the best thing to say.

*‘Leda, damn it, I knew you shouldn’t go in there alone. I’m to the east. Try to bump the tent wall so I can see where you’re at.’* Bret panicked, his voice breaking up some but not so much that she couldn’t make out the words. *‘We just got confirmation. The man is in the tent with you. He’s one of the knights. I repeat, he’s one of the knights—maybe several of them. You’re in danger.’*

Calum eyed her strangely, but she still couldn’t think of what to say. Bret said the killer was in the tent with her—possibly even right next to her. She returned Calum’s steady gaze, her stomach tight and her mouth suddenly dry. Had she just slept with a

mace-wielding maniac? What did she really know about this man? Working for the FBI she knew better than most that you couldn't pick killers out of a crowd just by appearances. Sociopaths could charm the pants off anyone—possibly even her. She glanced at the ground, the dirt still messed up from where they'd thrusted around in it. What had she done?

Calum had the strength to commit murder. He had the training with medieval weaponry. He had access to women. According to Madame Sabena they apparently threw themselves at him. Intelligence didn't turn up a link to Renaissance Faires between the women, but it's not like these places kept detailed guest lists. The women could have detoured here for various reasons.

"Do you only," she motioned weakly along his body, "fight in these tournaments, or do you work elsewhere too?"

"Only here," he answered carefully.

"Does this keep you pretty busy?"

"Are ya asking if I have the means to take care of ya?" He crossed his arms over his chest, looking like he wanted to smile, but the look didn't quite make it into his gaze.

"Take care of me?" Leda swallowed nervously. As in a serious relationship after one romp in the dirt? Warning bells when off in her logical head, warring with her instinct that still screamed he was for her. Damn. Her grandmother had been right. If she didn't nurture her gifts, she'd lose them. "I don't need anyone to take care of me. I can take care of myself."

Is this the part where he'd go crazy? She rejected his all-too-sudden offer of whatever-this-was and he got angry?

"Ya do no' look happy," Calum said, acting as if he'd touch her cheek. Suddenly, he stiffened glancing up. "Ya regret it?"

"No," she said, suddenly worried she was going to set off a psycho. This was just her luck. She finally found a man who knew the difference between talk and action and she was going to have to arrest him—or die trying.

She stiffened, not liking the look on his face.

"Who are ya with, lass?" he asked. "Ya are no' here looking for a sword to buy."

"With?" she asked weakly. Her heart hammered. He still looked so good and, to her shame, the idea of danger thrilled her adventure-seeking personality. Her nerves tingled, begging her to go to him, to trust him. The war between logic and instinct intensified.

"Yea, with." He reached for her earpiece so fast she couldn't think to stop him. He held it before her between two fingers. "Who are ya with?"

She swallowed, not wanting to answer. His suspicion only confirmed her worse fear. Calum was a killer. "Those transmit both ways. They can hear you."

How did she always manage to attract the crazy ones?

Calum crushed the earpiece as easily as a marshmallow, dusting it from between his fingers so it sprinkled on the ground. "Ya think I'm a fool because I dress like a knight? I already searched your body. Ya are no' transmitting anything, love."

"If you hurt me ..." She backed away. Leda had been trained to take down

assailants, but Calum was huge and packed with muscles.

“Hurt ya?” He snorted in disbelief. “I would never hurt—”

“Bret!” Leda yelled, knowing there was no way she could take Calum on her own. He was too big, and besides which, he had a sword nearby. Every self-defense move she knew paled in comparison to a skilled swordsman.

“Bret?” He repeated.

“Bret!” she yelled again, smacking her hand against the side of the tent.

“Ya bitch!” Calum thundered. “Ya would be on his team, wouldn’t ya?”

How did Calum know about the FBI’s teams?

Leda reacted, moving to punch Calum in an effort to bring him down. Just like she’d feared, he didn’t even flinch. She panicked. Her blow should’ve done something, but he absorbed it like a superhuman. Swinging her leg, she kicked him again. He caught her arm on her way around and held out his fist like he wanted to punch her and then stopped.

“Ya just can’t leave us supernatural’s be, can ya? Does your man know ya were in here fucking me?”

Supernatural?

*Oh. My. Gawd! The man really is crazy.*

She jerked her hand away, ready to fight to the death.

“Where’s your mace, you psycho?” she demanded. “Can’t kill a girl without your precious mace, can you?”

He frowned. Then, before she could go on, his eyes began to get an eerie glow. They filled with blue neon, shining with an impossible inner light. She gasped, falling away from him.

Supernatural?

Now she was the crazy one.

She shook her head. None of her training with the FBI prepared her for this. Nor did her meager experience as a mild psychic. Recognizing the enhanced abilities of the human mind was a big leap away from the existence of non-human supernatural beings with glowing eyes.

“Calum?” a man asked, coming to the door. She looked, only to see the man he’d called Thomas. The stout man glanced first at her and then Calum. Instantly, Thomas’ eyes began to glow as well, only his were slightly red in tone.

“What are you?” Leda asked, backing toward the tent wall.

“Watch out!” Calum yelled and she wasn’t sure who he was talking to.

The sound of a long, hard rip echoed over her and the tent exploded into a chaotic symphony of movement. Calum lunged forward. Thomas fell into step a second behind him. A hand grabbed her from behind, jerking her through the torn canvas of the tent. Leda let loose a small yelp of surprise.

“Leda,” Bret said, pulling her roughly to her feet when she stumbled. They were hidden from the rest of the fairground. “Run!”

“Where’s backup?” she asked, automatically following his lead around the side of the tent as they took off into the thinning crowd. Evening encroached in a brilliant

display of magentas and golds. Bret wore period clothing like the rest of them, but he didn't look at ease in the tunic shirt and tight hose. A telltale bulge at his hip indicated he carried a gun. The clean cut of his short hair and well-groomed appearance of his face made him the perfect poster child for the American justice system. Normally, he could be found in dark suits and his favorite blue and grey tie.

"I told you this already, they left," Bret answered. "You were supposed to give a sign if you needed them to stay. Where's your earpiece? What happened in there? Did they attack you? You're clothes are stained. Did you find out who ...?"

He wove through a couple display booths and they ignored the confused looks of those they passed. Leda glanced over her shoulder as they slowed to a brisk walk to blend better. Calum's hot gaze burned on hers. She felt his anger pouring out of him as he watched them run away.

They disappeared into the crowd. She felt into stride next to Bret. "What do you mean they left? That's not proper procedure. The team wouldn't—"

"Let's get to safety first," he ordered. "Any of these freaks could be in on it with them."

\* \* \* \*

"Calum?" Thomas made a move to run after Bret and Leda.

"Da," Calum put his arm on his to stop him. "Get the uncles. We'll go after them smart."

"I can no' believe she's with Breton." Thomas swore venomously in their old tongue, the Gaelic curses coming as easily as English after all their years of living. "How did he find us? We've kept our presence cloaked. The whole Renaissance Faire is protected." Thomas glared, an old anger rising inside him to feed Calum's.

"They'll never give up," Calum said flatly, "no' until we're dead. For them, the war will never be over."

"I can no' believe she was with him," Thomas stated again, his disbelief evident. "I did no' feel it in her. How could she, a mortal, join the side of those who'd imprison her kind?"

"Ya felt the surge of Breton's magic keeping us back when he tore through the tent. He's protecting her. She's working for him." Calum's rage boiled. How could he have been such a fool? Love? Even now, his heart broke over her. Every ounce of him wanted to erase the entire day. If he convinced the others, they could do it. He'd forget Leda existed. Unfortunately, they'd also forget Breton had paid them a visit.

"Mayhap it's no' what ya think," Calum soothed. "Mayhap she is misled. She seemed frightened by our eyes."

"She did look worried when I mentioned being supernatural," Calum admitted reluctantly.

"What did she mean about a mace?"

"I intend to find out," Calum motioned his father toward the back of the tent so they could slip in through the hole Breton had made. If the damned English wizard wanted to renew the war right here in New York state, then so be it. "Get the uncles. We're going hunting."

“Go in with your head,” Thomas warned. “Ya always act rash when it comes to those ya care about. Ya need to hear her side of things.”

“What makes ya think I care for her?” Calum asked, trying hard to block all tender feelings inside him.

Thomas gave a short laugh. “Because we’re connected, lad, and I ken well the look of love when a wizard’s found his bride. Ya chose her, for better or worse, and her mark on your soul and your magic is there for all to see. It’s too late for ya.”

“Magic help me,” Calum whispered, leading the way to get the others.

## Chapter Five

“Shouldn’t we call for backup?” Leda pressed her fingertips hard against the stitch in her side. Bret had taken them on a strange, haphazard path through the fairgrounds. He’d finally stopped in the dense underbrush near the tree line.

“Phone’s dead,” Bret answered curtly.

“Why are you carrying a gun? I thought you said our orders were to go in unarmed because of the civilian element.” Leda didn’t necessarily understand the order at the time, but she’d obeyed it. “You said this was just to gather intelligence and we weren’t to make a move against the killer if we found him.”

“Like I’d go into a nest of freaks without my gun.” Bret snorted. “Besides, you know I have your back. I’m not letting either one of us go into a dangerous situation without being prepared.”

“Can we drop the freak talk?” Leda peaked through the brush and watched the crazy woman spouting off about a dragon attack walk by. “These people aren’t freaks. They’re just ...”

“No need to get all sensitive.” Bret defended, only to add under his breath, “I didn’t mean to insult your boyfriend’s people.”

Leda took a deep breath, keeping her eyes off him. There was no way he could know what she’d done. “He’s not my boyfriend.”

“Uh-huh,” he muttered.

That time Leda did turn. Having decided on her lie, she ran with it unflinchingly. “I was flirting with him to gain access to the tent to look for a mace. It seems my instincts were right. The killer was in there. You said so yourself.”

“And that’s why you took out your earpiece?”

“They saw it. I had no choice. Besides, the transmission was breaking up. I could barely hear you.” With the equipment broken on the tent floor, there would be no way to disprove what she said. “Would you mind telling me what’s going on now that I can hear you clearly? Why did our backup leave?”

“I told them to. It’s getting late and they all have families to get to.”

“We have a job to do,” Leda defended. “That doesn’t make sense. They wouldn’t just leave. Not on this case.”

“I didn’t see any reason to believe they needed to stay later because you were busy getting it on with a murder suspect.” Bret scowled. “I did it to protect you. That’s what partners do.”

Leda gasped at the certainty in his expression. “Then who told you they were our suspects?”

“If you want all the answers, maybe don’t ignore me next time I’m giving them to you. I don’t have time to go into everything. Here’s the situation. We’re the only one’s

here. The guys think it's a bust and are on their way home. The knights are in on it and we've got to get moving. We're the only one's here and we've got to do some recon. You know as well as I do that killers usually escalate between kills." He paused, reaching out to touch her shoulder. "This could make our careers, Leda. What do you say? Do we go the extra mile and take this chance? Will you help me bring down a murderer?"

Why couldn't the guys be called back to the fair? Whoever had alerted Bret could tell the others. Why couldn't they run to the parking lot and drive away? Or at least hook his phone up to the jack so they had enough power to call headquarters? Why was Bret looking at her like that? Like she'd whored herself for the sake of the department? As if she was beneath him.

So many tiny holes filled Bret's explanation of things. She thought to question him, but Leda's arm tingled where he touched her, not pleasant, but influencing. She couldn't trust her instincts, not after they led her down such a wanton path. Instead, she had trust in her FBI training.

"You agree, don't you?" He said, his tone soothing. The tingling in her arm intensified and she glanced down.

Leda found herself nodding in agreement, the questions slipping away as she accepted all he'd said. They had to capture a killer. Who wouldn't agree with that? She'd seen the pictures, knew his crimes. "Okay, let's do this. Tell me what you want me to do."

"Good girl, Agent Leda Williams." Bret patted her head, but she only vaguely thought of it as demeaning and inappropriate. "Now, listen to me very closely. You're going to be a hero. You're going to solve a horrific crime. You're going to catch a killer." He leaned closer to whisper in her ear. "You're going to kill Thomas and Calum McKibben."

\* \* \* \*

"What if they left?" Calum paced the narrow tent. His father and uncles had stopped drinking and sat solemnly around the long table. The knights who were not family had been urged to seek other quarters this night. Not all of them knew the wizards' secrets.

"Breton does no' run, lad," Stephan the Short said. "It's no' in him."

"He'll keep coming, destroying anything in his path," Peter the Wise inserted.

George the Mad added, "That one's head is golfing with muddy bog sand."

Henry the Bald slapped his brother on the shoulder. "Right you are, George!"

George mumbled and nodded.

"We can only hope he does no' realize what this woman means to you, Calum," Peter the Wise said thoughtfully. "Maybe he'll let her go."

Calum reached for the front flap and peeked out. Madame Sabena instantly stood before him. "The guest cars are leaving, all but one. Lady Leda has a distinct signature to her energy. She's here."

"What signature?" Calum asked.

Madame Sabena arched a brow. "You feel she's special. Don't ask what you know. Your instincts are as strong as mine."

“There’s the wench that stole the apple,” George said, grinning. Sabena laughed and went to kiss her husband on the head. The others looked away from the loving couple. None would wish the pain of loss on George, but seeing their happiness only reminded Calum’s uncles and father of the loss they all suffered.

“What do you say, lad?” Thomas asked.

“I’m tired of being hunted for his sick ideals,” Calum said. “I say it’s time to stop Breton once and for all.”

\* \* \* \*

Leda didn’t think, didn’t question, as she made her way across the nearly abandoned fairgrounds. Evening was much different than day. The crowds had parted, leaving behind the re-enactor staff and they were partying like it was 1499. Most of them hung out at the bleachers—cheering and carrying on in drunken fits of laughter. The sounds of horses hooves could be heard beating over the grounds. A few couples walked, hand in hand in the moonlight. They were more interested in each other than in Leda’s covert movements.

Somewhere out in the surrounding landscape, Bret hid from view. She felt him watching her, but didn’t care. She had her mission. She knew what she had to do.

The knights’ tent came into view. Looking at her hand, she gripped the gun Bret had given her and remembered his words. “Shoot them in the heart. Hit Calum, then Thomas and get whoever else you can. I’ll be right behind you, backing you up.”

Leda had pursued perps through numerous landscapes—from forests to rundown city blocks to some really high-class neighborhoods. None compared to the Renaissance Faire fairgrounds. Magic filled the night, infusing everything around her until nothing seemed real. Staying completely focused on the job was normal, but not like this, not with a single-mindedness that couldn’t be swayed no matter how hard she tried to think of other things. The soft sound of music filled the night. She couldn’t be sure what any of the instruments were, but they sounded like flutes and guitars. Canvas flapped in the breeze. The country air smelled fresh and clean, yet tinged with dust and hints of nature.

She didn’t need the map to know where she wanted to go. Her body was drawn forward, perfectly in tune with her surroundings. She knew where Calum waited for her, that he waited. The fact didn’t frighten her.

The knights’ tent seemed to stand out eerily amongst its smaller neighbors. Its canvas walls seemed brighter than what would be considered natural, as if absorbing and reflecting the rising moon. The guard was gone, leaving the opening unattended. As she neared the front flap, she glanced around to make sure she wasn’t being watched. No sounds came from within the tent. Had the knights left? Ran because they knew the FBI was onto them?

She pressed lightly at the flap, opening it by small degrees as she held her gun at the ready. Whipping the flap aside, she quickly scanned the dark room, unable to see anything. Her breathing caught in her throat. None of this felt right—charging into dark tents, leaving herself exposed to attack.

Suddenly, a light grew over her and she gasped. Seated at the long table, Calum stared at her. “Looking for me, my lady?”

His tone held none of the pleasure it had earlier in the day. Gone was the light playfulness to his expression. She couldn't see beyond his handsome face and the sinful eyes that had captured hers all day. Tousled hair framed his strong, perfect face. Her hand shook as she lifted the gun and she knew what she had to do.

"Is that what ya really want, Leda?" Calum didn't make a move to stop her. His gaze remained steady.

"I'm here to do a job," she whispered, trying to steady her hands.

At that, he stood, giving her a clear shot of his chest. The hard, thick muscles shifted beneath his tunic shirt, reminding her of how he felt naked against her fingers. Her body tingled, begging her mind to reconsider. Could she really kill him?

"Is that what ya want, Leda? To kill me?"

She nodded, though the shaking movement could hardly be called convincing. Could a man with those penetrating eyes really be a serial killer? Intelligence had to be wrong on this one. Looking at him now, he couldn't be what they said he was. He just couldn't.

"Then why haven't ya taken a shot? I'm right here. I'm no' moving." He lifted his hands to the side, giving her full view of his delicious body. Despite her desire to do her job, the attraction she'd felt for him was still there. It pulled at her, begged her, tempted her to throw her weapon aside and run to him.

"Bret said ...." She couldn't finish the words. Shooting an unarmed perp in the chest seemed wrong. She blinked heavily. "I have to."

"I'm no' up on your laws, love, but I do no' think killing unarmed men is what your government encourages." He came from behind the edge of the table. Now nothing blocked the distance between them. His hand naturally curled at his side, as if wrapped around an invisible sword. Even weaponless, he exuded power.

"I saw your eyes." She lifted the gun once more and aimed at his chest to keep him back. "What is going on? What are you?"

"I'm a wizard," he answered, "and as for what's going on, I think you're trying to kill me. But if ya decide to put the gun down ..."

She tilted her head to the side, not budging.

"... I could be your wizard, if ya will still have me."

"My wizard." Leda shook her head. "Did I just fall into a video game?"

"Excuse me?"

"Never mind. Just, don't move," Leda warned.

Bret frowned and motioned his hand to the side. The gun flew from her fingers as if smacked by an unseen hand. Leda yelped in pain.

"It's natural that ya have questions, lass." Bret took a step forward. "I will gladly answer all of them, but first you're going to tell me where your friend is."

"Bret?" Leda looked at the gun. Her orders had been to shoot. She'd never failed a mission before. Something about Calum had mesmerized her. She dove for the weapon, but it slid out of her reach. Turning, she struck out at Calum. Her fist smacked against his forearm.

At the feel of flesh, Leda automatically went into fight mode, striking in a series

of blows. Calum's defenses were strange and unlike anything she'd come up against. He took the full force of her blows, absorbing them. Before the fight even got started, she somehow knew she'd end up the loser.

Calum grabbed her wrist and spun her around, trapping her back against his chest. The hard, flat plains of his stomach pressed into her, leading down to the unmistakably form of his erection. "I smell Bret's power all over ya. Who is he to ya?"

"Partner," she answered, breathing hard.

Calum's grip tightened. "I see. Then you're here to help him."

"Yes." She nodded, liking the way his stomach flexed against her. "He told me to."

Calum cursed. She didn't understand the words, but the venom was definitely there. Swinging her around to face him, he grabbed her chin. "Look at me."

Leda drew her eyes up to his. "I don't want to shoot you in the heart."

\* \* \* \*

"He's entranced ya." Calum touched the side of her face, just now seeing the cloudy glaze over her pupils. He released the jealous anger he'd been holding onto since she'd ran out on him. "If ya are dealing with a wizard like him, why did ya no' take precaution?"

"Wizard?" She said the word like she read it from a fairytale.

Calum let go, feeling the fight leave her. He wanted to keep her in his arms, but had a feeling it was best to give her space for the moment. The altruistic gesture didn't last. Her round, wide eyes looked into his and he had to touch her. Gripping her arms, he pulled her into his chest.

He had to kiss her. Calum leaned forward, bringing his mouth to hers. It wasn't like the first time. Leda hesitated against him. She'd been confident and wild before. This time, she seemed fragile and unsure.

"I'm confused. I think you'd better start at the beginning," Leda said against his mouth, not moving to deepen the caress. "None of this seems real."

"All right." Calum didn't release his hold, but he withdrew his mouth. His lips ached to press forward. He wanted nothing more than to repeat what had transpired between them earlier in the day. "I was born in 1313 during the supernatural wars. My mother and father were split for a time and I was raised by her family. Later, I moved in with my father. He taught me to sword fight and—"

Leda closed the distance, pressing her mouth hard to his, cutting off the answer she'd asked for. She moaned softly. "I don't know what's going on, but I don't want to wake up."

## Chapter Six

Leda gave into the dream. It was the only explanation that made sense. Wizards? Sexy knights? Strange missions that didn't follow protocol? Every nerve had itched to pull the trigger and kill him. But one look into his eyes and she couldn't do it, not even in a dream.

The taste of Calum's lips felt right, so firm yet yielding beneath her own. When he touched her, she couldn't think beyond the next caress. Her hands slid into his hair. The silky locks tickled the backs of her fingers.

Suddenly, the canvas of the tent slapped noisily behind her. Calum swung her around, jerking her mouth from his as he threw her hard through the back flap. She caught a fleeting glimpse of a figure in the doorway. Arms caught her easily as she stumbled into the back room, gripping her with a hard strength as she struggled to break free. The firm hold brought her mind crashing back to reality.

Calum ducked through the back flap, his back facing her. She blinked, terrified to see a flash of metal tear through the tent, nearly crushing his head. It was the mace, the spiked ball swinging wildly as a man stepped through the hole.

Leda tried to process what was happening. She looked over her shoulder to see her captor. Thomas nodded at her, before turning his eyes back to Calum.

Thoughts crashed in on her and she quickly sifted through the facts. This wasn't a dream. Calum wasn't the mace-wielder. Than who ...?

Leda tensed, seeing Bret. His fingers curled around the base of the mace. Wild eyes darted about the room as he swung the weapon over his head. The green glow was something she'd never seen in the stoically work-oriented man before. Was he possessed? Surely, her mild psychic ability would've detected anything evil in him. He was her new partner after all.

"How the hell did I not see it?" she whispered, more to herself than anyone around her. This couldn't be right.

"You can't have a gift, deny it and not use it, then expect it to be strong," Thomas said seriously, still holding her. How the hell did he know about her gift?

"Let me go," she demanded. Thomas laughed softly. "Bret! Stop! Something's not right. This isn't our mission."

"Easy there, my lady, Calum's got this," Thomas said.

"No, but, I'm—" Leda again tried to break free, but Bret's vicious swing cut her off. "Bret!"

The knight finally let her go, leaning down to grab his discarded sword from the floor. Bret swung again, keeping the blow steady as he kept Calum back.

"You should've known we'd find you," Bret said.

"Ya should've given up in Cincinnati," Calum answered. That's where Bret had

lived before he moved to the New York branch. What was going on? She was so confused.

Leda slowly backed away, scanning the room for a weapon. She wished she had the gun, but vaguely recalled dropping it on the floor.

"Calum!" Thomas yelled.

"Thanks, da," Calum answered holing out his hand without looking. Thomas tossed the sword. The weapon landed perfectly

Da? Thomas was his father?

"Enough!" Leda yelled. "FBI. Everyone put your weapons down. Now!"

Not a one of them listened and it only served to make her angry. She was not used to being dismissed.

"Bret," Leda ordered, noticing how quiet the other room of the tent suddenly was. "Stop. I'm not hurt. If you need to arrest him, this isn't the way."

"Shut up, whore," Bret spat. "I sent you to do one simple, little job and you couldn't even do that. All you had to do was shoot him and this would all be over. You'd have been a hero. But instead, you threw it all away for a lousy fuck."

"Hey," Calum interrupted, drawing Bret's attention back to him as he put his body between Leda and the madman. "It was no' lousy."

Leda gasped. "Oh, that's it. Bret, put the weapon down. Make it easy on yourself." She tried to charge forward, but Thomas showed surprising agility as he flew in front of her. She jerked away from the sword. Bret didn't listen, instead swing for Calum as if completely unconcerned by her.

"Da!" Calum yelled, not turning to look at her.

"Got her," another voice answered. There as a sweep near the opening Bret had cut in the tent. Leda's arms were once again grabbed from behind. She was too confused to react like she was trained to. Bret was the killer? Her partner, Bret? And she never realized it? Never suspected? What kind of agent didn't see the evil right next to her every day?

And what was this with Calum? Was he a bad guy, too?

Bret swung the mace. It clanged with Calum's sword and the chain wrapped around the blade. Calum jerked the hilt, trying to free it. The mace slid across the blade, sounding like a knife sharpening on whetstone. Leda hit her captor in the gut, making him drop his arm with an unexpected grunt. She ran forward, determined to do her job and arrest both men until she could call for back up.

"Ah, Leda! Stay back!" Calum yelled, as she passed his side, ready to tackle Bret. His cry alerted Bret just as she was jumping. He turned, the mace flinging awkwardly in her direction. The sharp spikes of the end cut into her flesh. Leda cried out in pain as white heat ran up her arm. Calum lunged forward, embedding his sword deep into Bret's stomach. Bret's mouth opened, but no sound came out. Leda continued forward, falling partway on top of him. Her partner was dead before she even had time to look up from the ground.

"Bret?" she whispered, instantly moving to confront Calum.

She tried to lift her hand, but her arm didn't want to work. Feeling lightheaded,

she looked at her arm. Blood ran from the gaping wound. Her mind began to clear from a fog she hadn't even realized plagued her.

"Ach, Leda, why did no' ya stay back?" Calum growled, lunging forward to catch her. "Da, get the others. We need to perform the old magic."

"Old magic?" Leda shook her head. The day had turned from ordinary to surreal to impossible. What other feasible explanation could there be than magic?

Thomas left them alone in the tent, taking the other knight with him.

"Why do I feel like I've been drugged?" She tried to focus her thoughts as they slowly cleared.

"Breton had ya under his spell. Ya should have known better, dealing with a wizard such as him."

Leda took a deep breath, unable to hold her own weight. "You're under arrest ... for the murder of ..."

"Ya are trying to arrest me?" Calum shook his head in disbelief, careful not to touch her arm.

"You killed an agent," she said, her vision blurring from the blood loss. "You can't take the law into your own hands."

"Really? Where's the body of that agent then, love?" he asked.

Leda glanced to the ground. Nothing was there. "What?"

"Sleep now," he ordered, pressing his palm to her forehead.

Leda moaned, falling into a peaceful blackness.

\* \* \* \*

"I warned ya, son. Ya always act too rash," Thomas said, sitting at Leda's head. His legs were crossed as were the rest of his family's as they sat around her unmoving body on the floor of the tent.

Calum gave a sheepish grin. "What was I to do, da? Look at her."

"I can't believe after all these years my son has a bride," Thomas announced to the family.

Leda moaned and Calum said, "Focus, would ya?"

Thomas frowned, closing his eyes as the older men pumped their energy into healing Calum's future wife.

Leda's arm slowly healed—the wound closing and her color returning to normal. He'd been sick to see her hurt, but knew she'd live. They'd had sex recently and her body had taken in some of his magic. Actually, he'd let her have it. His body recognized her and would gladly give every ounce of himself to her. It dazed her senses somewhat, causing her to react slowly, but it was also what saved her life. Unfortunately, Breton had also cast a little spell of his own. Poor Leda hadn't stood a chance. He'd just have to show her how to protect herself in the future so it never happened again. In time, she'd handle his magic better. She's have to, since his magic would become hers.

Leda blinked several times, moaning softly. Then, jerking violently, she opened her eyes wide and looked at Thomas. Her gaze darted around the circle to his uncles. She pushed up, demanding, "What are you doing to me?"

"We saved ya," Thomas said, slower to stand. His uncles did the same.

Leda grabbed her head.

"The dizziness will go away. Calum can help ya with that. His powers will help to center ya."

"Powers?" she whispered, blinking in confusion. Calum felt sorry for her. She didn't have a clue just how deeply she'd jumped headfirst into his world. "Old Magic. Wait, you know about my abilities?"

Thomas chuckled. "My sister, Sabena can help ya focus them. It's a shame ya let your gift waste itself like that. Denial is no way to live."

Leda didn't answer. Her eyes had found him. The men spoke in soft Gaelic, wishing him luck, before leaving them alone in the back of the tent. Outside it was late and many of the faire workers would have found their place for the night. Most of them would be by the bonfires that had been lit to give way to a party like they had in the old days.

"What did you do with Bret's body?" Leda demanded.

"Nothing. A wizard's body goes back to the earth upon his death," Calum answered.

"Wizard," she repeated softly. "Bret is a wizard."

"Ah," Leda touched her healed arm, studying and probing it. "I think you better start talking and make it good. Who are you people?"

"It's a long story," he said.

"I have time," she assured him, still poking at her arm and refusing to look at him.

Calum nodded. "As ya wish."

He spoke, telling her of the old wars, his dead mother, immigrating to America and ultimately how they'd come to work at the Renaissance Faire. "We found a home here. We fit. We do no' have to worry about how we speak or what we say, or the fact that we ken more about history than modern historians. Here we can be a family."

Finally, she met his gaze straight on. "And Bret?"

"He was the last of a long line of the evil we'd been fighting. For nearly a century he's been hunting my family here in America. He's even killed a few of my cousins. But, he hunted without his family. His magic was off and he had a hard time finding us. I can only deduce that he's been killing humans to get our attention. Wizards like him don't care who they hurt, so long as they get what they want. What better way to find men from the Middle Ages than to frame murders on a medieval weapon? A little magical help and everything pointed to here. We've suspected he might be up to something and have been trying to stop him, but until now, he's never been within our reach."

"Bret is the murderer?" she said, her tone saying she'd already figured it out.

"Trust your instincts, Leda," Calum urged. "Ya will know the truth."

"I do know it," she said. "It seems so clear. My gift has never been so clear, but this is all so ..."

"That's the power of your new family in ya," Calum said, watching her reaction to his words carefully. "My power."

He waited, heart hammering in his chest, stomach tight, for her to answer.

Slowly, she gave a soft laugh and he felt his whole being fill with love for her.

“I think it’s time I took a vacation because, crazy as it all sounds, I really like the sound of that,” Leda said, nodding her head. “I really do.”

## Chapter Seven

The cool night transformed the fairgrounds into an even more surreal world, unlike the life she knew as Leda Williams, FBI Agent. Here it was easy to get lost in the sound of Medieval music, in the sight of tents over the distance, in the abandoned tournament grounds and the orange glow of the bonfire under the stars.

Leda glanced shyly at Calum, as he walked with her along the back of the bleachers surrounding the tournament field. The sound of laughter came from the bonfire in the distance. When she had been passed out, she'd felt him inside her, felt his whole family. They called to her, comforted her and whispered lovingly to her. All fear left her in that moment and she understood some basic truths about herself and her situation. She was meant for Calum. Her body had known it right away but her logical head would never have conceived it. Serious FBI Agents didn't believe in love at first sight.

But maybe it was time for Leda to embrace the part of herself that worked on pure instinct. Maybe it was time that she believed in fate and destiny like the women in her family before her. She felt the goodness of Calum and his family inside of her, just as she felt the goodness in herself. Maybe it was her reawakening gifts that allowed her to be so accepting, but suddenly she felt more complete than she'd ever been in her life. And Calum was the reason.

Her sister was never going to believe this!

"What are ya smiling about?" Calum asked. She felt him hesitation around her and wished he wouldn't. It felt as if a lifetime had passed between them over the course of a few short hours. After meeting his uncles and being welcomed into his family, she was introduced to a Madam Sabena who looked nothing like the flake she'd been during the fair. Apparently, it had been her idea of having fun at Leda's expense—good-naturedly of course.

"A killer's off the streets," she answered, "even if he was my new partner and I'll have some explaining to do at work tomorrow—"

"Ah, there's no need to worry about that, love," Calum said. "We'll take care of that. There'll be no explaining to your bosses."

Leda sighed, slightly relieved. "That's good to know. I was a little worried."

"I know. I felt it," he said.

Leda bit her lip, stopping so he was forced to look at her. "What else do you know?"

He stepped closer. "I know that I love ya and I will love ya for the rest of my days."

Her heart nearly stopped beating. No man had ever said those words to her like that, so sure, so confident and unashamed. "Love is not supposed to happen this quickly. What if tomorrow changes things?"

“Love is not supposed to be anything, it just is,” Calum said. “Trust your feelings. They will no’ betray ya. And do no’ worry about tomorrow. It always changes things, but if we stay strong and true, we’ll survive it.”

Leda felt them already. Without flinching, she said, “I love you, too. Maybe it’s this magical place or .... You know what, I’m not going to make excuses or reason it out. I’m just going to say, I love you, too.”

He grinned, his eyes shining with his pleasure. His hand brushed her cheek as he leaned over to kiss her. Unlike the urgency of before, he took his time, letting his mouth glide softly against hers.

Leda wasn’t so patient. She grabbed his face, her palms scratching against the light shadowing of whiskers as she deepened the kiss. Drinking in the sweet taste of him, she explored his depths with her tongue.

Her body naturally thrust against his harder length. His hands roamed over her back, moving to squeeze her ass. It felt so right, being in his arms. Every inch of her longed to pull him closer, but already she was pressed tight along his frame. He pulled away, gasping for breath, even as he trailed hot, wet kisses along her throat. Light moans sounded between them, mingling with the distant laughter, the sound of insect chirping in the night. The moon was bright, shining over them and the stars sprinkled the heavens. It was the perfect setting for what they were about.

Pulling back at the thought, she asked, “We’re safe now, right?”

“Mm-hmm,” he moaned, nodding as he moved to pull her against him once more. “No harm will come to ya, my bride.”

“Bride?” that wasn’t the first time someone had called her that. “Don’t you think we should talk about that?”

“Yea, love, we will.” He grinned. “We’ll have a ceremony later, when ya feel it is right to tell your family. I understand that to humans, this is sudden.”

Again, he read her like no one ever had. “They’d be hurt if I didn’t introduce you and tell them first.”

“I understand, love. Now, quit talking and come here.”

Calum took all of her attention, again taking her mouth, controlling the kiss as he penetrated her with his tongue. Pleasure exploded over every nerve, centering in her pussy. When she was with him, nothing else mattered. It was the first day of a perfect life. She could feel it in her bones. Sure, they were likely to have their problems as all couples did, but she had no doubt that this was meant to be.

Pulling at his tunic shirt, she worked it up until he was forced to pull back and tug it over his head. He dropped it on the ground. She ran her fingers over the taut play of muscles along his chest. Reaching to her bodice, he tore the gown, ripping it down the front seam. Leda moaned as the cool night air hit her breasts and stomach. Calum pushed the dress down her arms. She wore no underwear, having lost them during the first coupling.

“I’ve got your panties in my pocket,” Calum said. “Don’t worry, they’re not lying somewhere on the ground for all to see. Besides, I like knowing your body is naked and ready for me.”

"I really need to learn how you read my mind like that," Leda said, giggling.

"Ya will in time." His gaze went to her breasts. She wore a bra that enhanced cleavage, and a feeling of intense sexual approval washed over her. It was Calum's feelings.

He touched her breasts, massaging them through the bra. Slowly, he pushed the straps aside, running his hands around to her back to unlatch it. The bra fell to the ground.

"You're so beautiful," he said, his tone husky. He thumbed her nipples until they erected into stiff peaks.

Leda reached for his waistband, pulling at the laces along the side, clawing the material in an effort to get it off. The sensations overwhelmed her, coursing urgently in her blood. Her sex ached to be filled, to have his stiff arousal pounding into her. There was a determination to his touch, as if he tried to caress everywhere at once. She pulled his waistband, jerking the pants free. They fell to the ground. His erection stood proud, lifting tall from a soft bed of hair. Veins threaded over the sides of it, leading her eyes to the impossibly thick tip of his powerful cock head moist with pre-cum. She licked her lips, automatically wanting to taste him, touch him, fuck him hard and long. Moisture gathered between her thighs, releasing a torrent of cream.

"I want to look at ya," he said, taking her hand and leading her back. They drew farther away from the bonfires, into the night lit by the full moon. Blue light caressed their naked bodies. Each hard, chiseled curve of his form dipped with light and shadow, a moving statue of perfection. It excited her to feel his eyes on her, taking her in as she did him. Bringing her to the backside of a long row of wooden bleachers, they entered the shadows.

No longer able to see him as well, she moved to feel him with her body. The shock of his naked flesh sent a ripple so intense over her that it took her breath away. She gasped, engulfed within the smell of him, the seductive fragrance of his body. Her pussy tightened in anticipation. He shifted his hips until his cock wedged next to her, hot and so very alive. Nails scratched against her spine, not hurting but definitely erotic.

Kissing his chest lightly, she began to kneel, thoroughly exploring his delicious body with her mouth and hands. She'd never been so turned on her in life. Even if her mind was slower to catch up, her body knew him as sure as she knew herself. Leda bit his hip. His body tensed beneath her hands. Calum leaned back against a post, bending his knees as she kneeled before him.

The sexual prowess—from his potent, masculine smell to the intense energy humming off his body—called to her. She felt his power inside her, his need to claim her, and it only added to her own hunger.

Her hands skimmed over his hips, gripping them lightly. His skin was hot and smooth, as hard as stone. She flicked her tongue over the shadowy outline of his cock. He tasted sweet and she did it again, each time growing bolder. Calum made an animalistic noise of approval. Thrusting forward with each pass of her mouth, trying to slip inside.

She giggled, knowing she was teasing him. They were out in the open, but she

somehow got the sense that they wouldn't be disturbed. Parting her lips, she kissed the thick head of his cock, letting it pass into her mouth. It was too good. She wanted more. She pulled his hips forward, thrusting his cock deep into her mouth so she could get a better taste. The more pleasure she gave him, the more she felt his intoxicating power inside her. A hand grabbed the back of her head, directing her movements. He was too big, not even fitting half way in as he nearly choked her. Grabbing his extra length, she twisted her hands around his shaft to help give him pleasure before moving to cup his balls, letting her finger hit the sensitive flesh just behind them.

Calum groaned, suddenly reaching down to haul her to her feet. His mouth crushed against hers, roughly kissing her as he turned her around. It was her turn to be forced up against the post. He kissed her neck, running his hot tongue over her pulse. Cream practically dripped from her thighs, making her squirm. She parted her legs, opening herself to him in offering. Hands glided over her flesh, kneading her ass, spreading her cheeks. Energy hummed where he touched her, cocooning them in the feel of his power. It was life, potent energy, pure power. He slipped a finger along her hip to her pussy, finding the bud hidden in the moist folds.

Calum drew the tip of his cock near her folds, rubbing up and down along her wet slit, parting her, easing his way to slip inside. Her stomach tensed, eagerly awaiting that first thrust. Energy flowed from his most intimate of areas, vibrating along her clit until she wanted to scream with her desperate need. Gently, he pushed forward, stretching her to fit him. She lifted her hands to his shoulder as he pulled at her thighs. Her foot came off the ground, opening her body wider to him. With each push he went a little further, holding her open as he stretched her out to fit him. All she could do was hold onto the couch and enjoy the ride.

Leda waited for that first deep thrust, biting her lips. And then finally, it came—a hard, swift thrust. Calum cried out in pleasure, the sound mimicking her feelings exactly. A soft blue glow that had nothing to do with moonlight began to surround them, humming along her flesh until she was a mass of sensitivity. He kept himself buried deep.

“You feel so good,” she whispered, holding him close.

Groaning, he finally pulled back, only to thrust forward. At her continued urgings, he dove harder, picking up the pace as he drew pleasure from her. Tension pooled in her hips, driving her to the brink of perfect madness. Her body began to shake as her climax hit her. He kept going, his primal grunts echoing around her. His nails raked her skin before his hand tightened on her thighs.

When he came, she could feel his seed entering her. Energy pulsed from where they were joined, spreading over her entire length, filling her with warmth and intense pleasure. Her vision blurred and it felt like her heart stopped in her chest. An eternity passed in mere seconds, punctuated by their harsh breathing.

Slowly, he pulled from her, his eyes boring into her. She smiled, pleasure and happiness pouring over her.

“I can't believe this is happening,” she whispered.

“If it's a dream, my sweet lady wife, then let us never wake up.”

The End