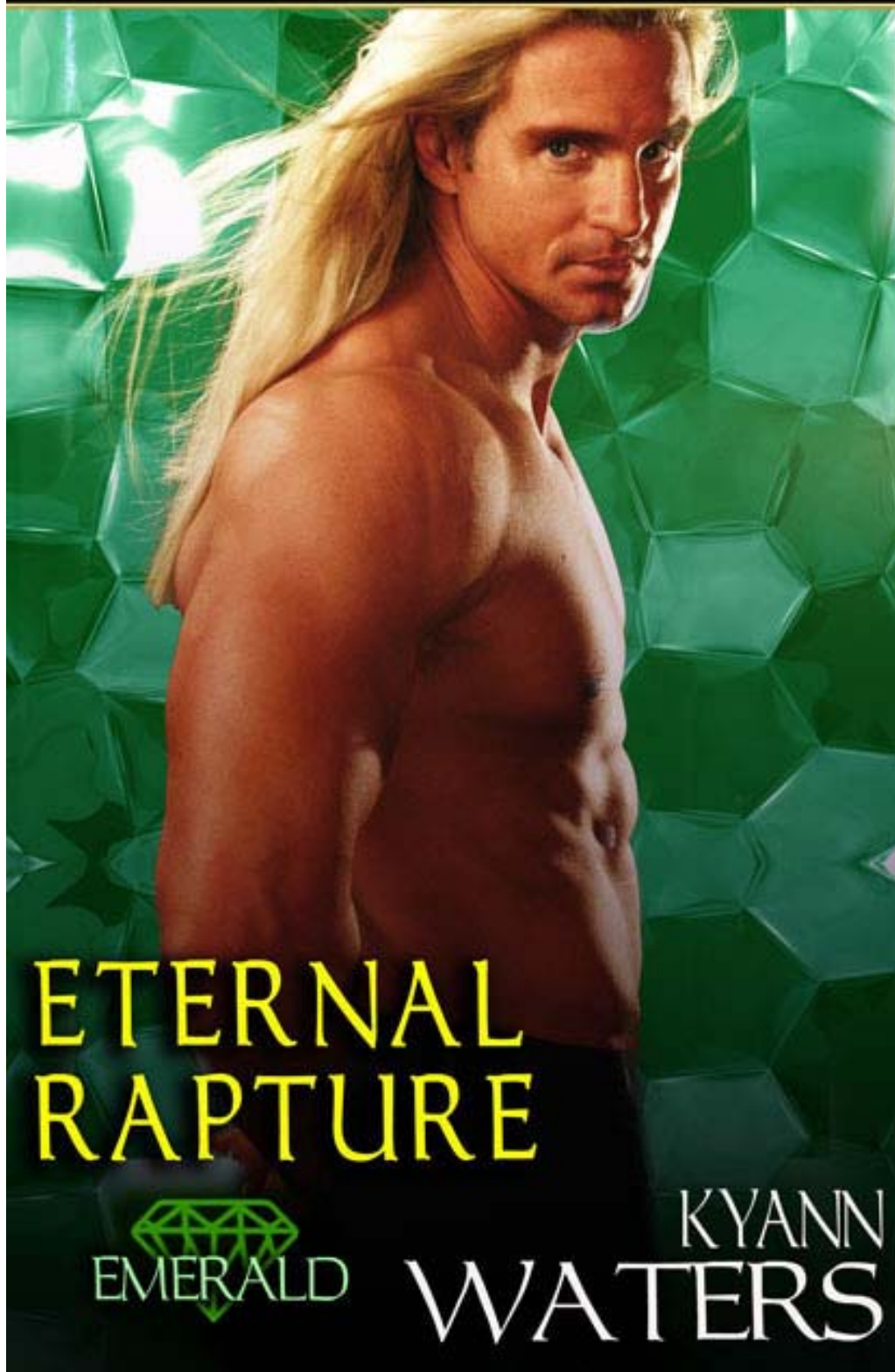


ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS



ETERNAL RAPTURE


EMERALD

KYANN
WATERS

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



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Eternal Rapture

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ETERNAL RAPTURE

KyAnn Waters

Chapter One

Long ago on the shore of the Sea of the Arabah five brothers were born...all immortal. To defend their destiny they must protect their eternal love.

"I've never seen such exquisite examples of emeralds from the Ptolemy Dynasty." Selene Ferrell adjusted her glasses. "You have an impressive collection."

Anthony Mager leaned against the wall of his office, cloaked in shadow, and quietly watched. The still air around him pulsed with anticipation. The woman had her dark hair pulled into a conservative knot at the nape of her neck. And if she was whom he believed her to be, there was a highly sexual woman simmering beneath her reserved outward appearance.

She hummed a soft tune and shifted her weight from one foot to the other.

Anthony relished the sight of her trim hips and rounded backside. She had a small waist and narrow shoulders. The faint scent of her perfume drifted on the air—he closed his eyes long enough to deeply inhale—he could also detect the essence of her feminine musk. His heart pounded. "I'm glad you're impressed."

She leaned forward for a closer look at the stones displayed on black velvet on the desk. "Well, yes, when I received your letter I couldn't resist your invitation to this castle." She glanced around the dark-paneled room, masculine elegance with leather furniture and lived-in comfort. "And the chance to examine Cleopatra's emeralds," she grinned, "was simply too tempting. I should tell you that I hadn't really believed they were genuine."

"I assure you, the pieces did belong to Cleopatra."

"Were they part of the 1817 find in northern Etbai?"

The answer to her question was no, but she wasn't ready to hear the reason why these emeralds had never been documented. If all went as planned, within a few hours she wouldn't need his explanation. She would remember.

He didn't need the appraisal. The emerald pieces were genuine artifacts from Cleopatra VII's emerald mines. Commissioning Selene to appraise the emeralds had been an easy guise to lure her to the castle. His heart rate jumped. Even now, watching her at his desk, he could scarcely believe his soul mate at last sat before him. As he'd followed her through eternity, weaving in and out of many shared lifetimes, she had been the only salvation in his immortal life. And now she was here, in his castle for the weekend...for another lifetime.

Selene selected a ring with an oval stone in the center. She twisted it in the light, scratched some findings on a sheet of paper, then numbered and photographed the piece with her compact digital camera. None of her efforts were necessary because Anthony would never part with the stones regardless of their value.

Selene set her camera to the side and picked up the long tubular artifact. "This is beautiful." The piece was ten inches in length and had a nearly three-inch diameter. A rounded, natural emerald capped the top. The stones along the sides were polished until smooth, yet the emeralds shone with a brilliant green in the sunlight streaming through the window. "I believe the base is made from bone."

"Yes," he replied. The piece she held in her hand was one he had given to Cleopatra on a warm spring night. The memory returned in vivid detail.

He lived as Mark Antony then, and had found his eternal love in Cleopatra VII.

He stood over her, motionless, understanding the silent command of her gaze sliding up his body. His cock pulsed in response, and a hint of approval tilted the corner of her mouth upward. She threw an arm over her head and stretched, cat-like against the bedding, spreading her legs enough to invite, yet keeping her deepest secret hidden. He raked his gaze along every curve of the lithe, naked body until he could stand it no longer.

Antony stretched out on his side next to her, devouring every delectable curve. He caressed the soft flesh of her arm, tickled the inside of her wrist with his thumb, until finally pressing their palms together. When he brought her knuckles to his lips and kissed them, she sighed. Slipping her fingers into this mouth, he sucked them one by one while staring into her smoldering eyes. Pleasure tilted Cleopatra's lips into a promising smile. His breath quickened.

Antony nibbled along the inside of her arm, then gently sucked on the smooth skin of her shoulder and the swell of her breasts. Her heavy globes filled his hands. Craving a taste of her raspberry-hued, taut nipple, he opened his mouth over the crested peak.

Cleopatra moaned and arched. Mark sucked more of her creamy flesh into his hot mouth before trailing wet kisses down the soft, smooth skin of her rounded belly. She opened her thighs for him. "Taste me." She reached down and slid her fingers into the damp curls, parting her luscious pussy lips. Erect and dark pink, her clit strained for his attention. He breathed in her musk before tasting, savoring her flavor.

His queen's gasps of pleasure as he tongued her sweet pussy, drinking the nectar of her arousal, brought his cock to agonizing hardness.

"More," she pleaded and pushed his head deeper between her legs.

Mark reached for the emerald-encrusted dildo lying beside her and rubbed it against her pussy lips and clit. Juices made the gold inlay sparkle and brought out the luster in the green stones adorning the sides. A large emerald created the crown of the phallus. He eased the smooth head into her vagina. Cream dripped from her cunt. He slid it a fraction deeper and she whimpered.

Cleopatra pinched and rolled her nipples between thumbs and fingers. When he crammed her full of the bone and jeweled phallus she bucked and arched. She released her nipples and clawed at his arms until she screamed. Her head thrashed on the soft bedding. Hot fluids coated the dildo that he'd had made just for her. "Mark," she pleaded in desperation. Her chest rose and fell. Sweat glistened on her skin.

"Come for me," he whispered, and pulled the emerald back an inch, then shoved it in. She strained against the stone. He brought the dildo out, then in and out until she writhed with each thrust. When she ground herself against the stone, he leaned forward, took a nipple in his mouth

and sucked. She screamed in climax. He sucked harder and she arched against the emerald, her breath coming in hard gasps, then climaxed again, and collapsed back against the bed.

The tool slipped from her body into his waiting hand. "Do you know how much I adore the taste of you?" He licked a trickle of her cream from the dildo.

She gave a soft chuckle. "It's a good thing since it pleases me to have your face between my legs."

"But not as much as you love to be fucked?"

"True." She tossed her arms above her head. "But what if I said I'm perfectly satisfied already?"

"I'd say you have never been satisfied. You, my love, could fuck for days. Now get to your hands and knees."

"Will you spank me if I'm disobedient?"

"Later. First I'm going to sate my appetite as much as yours."

She rose onto hands and knees then glanced over her shoulder at him.

Mark held her gaze as he dipped his fingers into her cunt, coaxing her honey to flow. "Ah, still so wet for me." He easily plunged his cock into her slick channel. Hot walls enclosed him and he basked in sheer bliss. Fierce need drove him to possess every part of her. He pounded into her welcoming body with powerful strokes. Then, knowing Cleopatra's needs, he pulled from her and replaced his cock with the dildo. Her internal walls gripped and held it inside.

He spread her cheeks and licked her tight little rosette. With the dildo stuffing her channel and his tongue playing in her ass, she couldn't stop wiggling.

"Damn you, fuck me."

Pushing his thumb into her anus, wet from his mouth, he stretched her open. She flinched from the momentary sting that comes from anal play then backed into his hand, wanting more.

"I'm ready," she said breathless.

Taking his shaft in his hand, he fit the crown to her small, puckered hole. His muscles bunched as he controlled the glide of his cock into her sweet ass. Once the bulbous head pushed

past the tight rim, her muscles relaxed. The speed of his thrust built slowly to keep the dildo in place.

Cleopatra arched. Mark gripped one hip to steady himself and reached between them with his free hand and grabbed the end of the dildo. As he plunged into her ass, he pushed the tool deeper.

Cleopatra cried out. Her body convulsed. Violent spasms rocked her as she careened into orgasm. Pressure tightened around his shaft. As he continued to pound into her body, he exploded. Jets of hot come spurted from his shaft. While buried in her ass, he could feel the hard contours of the bone and jeweled phallus still lodged in her passage.

"This is so unusual and unlike anything I've ever seen," Selene said.

Anthony jarred from the memory. He ground his teeth at the pressure that had built behind the fly of his jeans. He shifted his stance to give room to his rigid erection. The change of position helped, but the woman before him blended with the memories of his eternal love.

Too many years had passed since he'd seen her. Three hundred and four to be precise. However, a thousand years could have passed and he'd still remember the feel of her writhing beneath him. A day was too long. And now his hunger for her had left a constant, piercing ache in his gut.

"It's very unusual in shape." Selene held the long artifact to the light and traced the inlaid gold with her fingertip. "It doesn't fit with the other pieces. In my opinion, it's not from the same collection. The unique scrolling—" She fumbled the piece as if suddenly singed, nearly dropping it on the black velvet.

Anthony straightened. Had she realized what she caressed?

"Oh, I...um," she gave a nervous laugh. "I may need more time to determine the value of this piece."

Anthony stepped from the shadows and Selene sucked in her breath. He wrested the piece from her and ran his thumb over the emerald crown. "The inlay is flawless." He grasped her finger and traced the golden scrolls along the sides. "Feel how smooth,

but with enough definition to produce ribbing.” Her eyes widened. He breathed deeply, his stare never wavering from hers.

The pleasing essence of the mouthwatering wetness between her legs tightened his jaw. Her cheeks were flushed and fluttering beats of her heart were visible in the delicate skin of her neck. She was aroused by him. More proof that Selene was once his queen. Unlocking her memories would bring forth the woman he’d loved for five millennia. In all their lifetimes together this was the longest they’d been separated.

Selene pulled her hand free and grabbed another stone. “Let’s move on.” Her voice broke. She cast a sideways glance before clearing her throat and pointing to the next stone. “Look at the intricate carving of this particular emerald.” Picking up her pencil, she pointed to the fine details of the grooves etched into the stone with the point. “This is astonishing. You can see Cleopatra had her image carved into the stone. It is believed these were gifts to visiting dignitaries.”

She was right. But it was the unfamiliar piece he wanted to discuss. Studying the artifact aroused her. Sexual energy brought awareness of their lives together. Although their connection transcended time, it was the physical connection of their joined bodies that strengthened their eternal bond.

They had lived in the Nile River Valley for a thousand years, then traveled across continents, and since the Crusades, they had called England home. She was always born where she died, only the physical body and attributes changed. Her heart, soul, all he loved about her remained the same.

Selene studied the stone. “Emeralds adorn many mummies from the Middle and New Kingdoms. But it is these from 51 to 30 B.C. that are the most prized. You have an extensive collection, Mr. Mager. In fact, I don’t believe I’ve ever seen such a vast amount and the quality is extraordinary. The few pieces known in existence are documented and in museums.” She raised an inquiring brow.

“Remember our contract. No one is to know of my collection.”

She stiffened, thrust out her pointed chin, and looked up at him with her petite nose proudly in the air. "I've been paid a commission. I have no plans to renege on our agreement."

She wouldn't have to. If he was right, by tomorrow she wouldn't be able to leave him.

Selene willed her rampantly beating heart to still. How was she supposed to determine the value of some jeweled replica of a penis? She couldn't concentrate when the space between her and this mysterious man was rife with sexual tension. She needed to be able to focus on details.

Since receiving the email and subsequent letter from Anthony Mager, her interest had peaked in unnatural proportions. Egyptian artifacts had always fascinated her and then there was her affinity with Cleopatra. The Emerald Mines in Upper Egypt were synonymous with the queen.

This wasn't Egypt, but Britain. And she didn't normally go to castles in the hills of North Wales. At least not alone. The temptation had proven too great. So here she was appraising an ancient emerald *sex toy*.

What she hadn't expected was the attractive, virile man hovering in the corner. He was off par from the men who usually drew her attention. He wasn't studious, with an air of superiority. Perhaps Mr. Mager had a bit of the arrogance, but he wore it as confidence. At any rate, Selene didn't date the most dashing men. Good-looking men tended to make her nervous. Pompous she could deal with. Mysterious, formidable men who radiated sexual energy didn't look twice at her, so she'd adapted her needs to what was available. In the exciting world of antique appraisals the men she knew were either too old to have fun or were homosexuals. That Anthony Mager gazed at her with hunger in his eyes baffled her.

Even in light, his features appeared cast in shadow. Dark brows arched over heavily hooded, piercing eyes. Thick black hair slicked back and hung to his broad

shoulders. Full lips hinted at a smile. Fine lines creased the corners of his eyes. Although his nose was large, it suited his face. Whiskers covered his strong, square jaw, but he didn't grow a beard, more that he'd neglected to shave. Men she usually dated – if you could call the few recent excursions dates – never wore facial hair.

"Please don't let me keep you from your usual tasks." She returned her attention to the jewelry. "This is quite boring for most people." She needed him to leave. Her concentration was nil with his brooding stare inflaming her wanton libido. *Wanton*. She mentally snorted. About as wanton as the Queen of England.

"You'll find I'm not like most people."

She started. *Bloody hell not*. Now he stood directly behind her. She hadn't noticed him move from the corner. Moist breath warmed her bare neck. Awareness chased up her spine. Feeling flushed, she waved her hand in front of her face. Simply his proximity heated her flesh. Dampness soaked her panties and if he came any closer she'd likely spontaneously melt.

A clock chimed the hour. "Dinner will be served shortly."

Yes, a reprieve from this confounded intimate atmosphere. "I am famished. We missed tea." She carefully placed the stone she held on the velvet then faced him. "I'd like to go to my room for a few minutes if you don't mind."

"Of course not."

He escorted her out of the office. "Don't think me forgetful, but I won't be able to find it."

He chuckled and she stumbled. An arm shot out around her waist and steadied her. She jerked her gaze to meet his.

Something in his smile made her heart lurch. Achingly familiar, as if... No. She was sure they'd never met before today.

Gentle pressure of his fingers on her hip made her weak. The room began to spin.

Cleopatra gazed into the heavens. The swaying motion of the Felucca sailboat kept pace with the plunge of Mark Antony's enormous cock into her heated cunt. She wrapped her legs around his hips and met his rhythmic strokes with forward thrusts. Her heart beat in tandem with his. "I love you," she whispered.

Stars winked in the canopy of black above. The gentle lap of water against the hull and the wet sounds of their joined bodies blended with the sounds of the jungle on either side of the Nile. Intermittently, the splash of a crocodile rippled the waters.

She held him with unabashed longing. Heart and soul eternally bound to her lover.

"Are you afraid?" Mark's gentle voice intruded on the rustle of reeds and flowers of papyrus that grew densely along the banks.

"Never with you." She clung to his shoulders as her body crested. His cock stretched her on each down stroke, sliding smoothly into her drenched heat and creating intense friction when he retracted. Her walls tightened around his thickness in an effort to keep him buried deep. Blood surged into her swollen folds. Burning pleasure rolled through her body. Closing her eyes, she breathed deeply the intoxicating aroma of their blended arousal. Her cunt melted around him. "Yes," she cried. Her words echoed over the water into the cocooning night. With this man she feared nothing...not even the water that could claim her eternal soul if she drowned. Mark protected her, loved her, and had for millennia.

Moist air dampened their slicked skin. Mark slid against her and her breasts pressed against his chest. Leveraging higher, he thrust deeper. The boat pitched and gently swayed. Their lips met and tongues sparred in an erotic dance of taste and retreat.

Mark growled as he neared the precipice of release. His cock surged, felt thicker, and pounded deeper. She took all of him. Locking her legs around his hips, she rocked her pelvis. Muscles in his back bunched beneath her fingers. She held tight while spasms jolted his hips. He roared into the solitude. Shudders racked his body. Finally, he rolled to the side, gasping for breath, and draped an arm over his eyes.

Cleopatra rolled over and nuzzled against his chest. Sex always left them breathless and spent. Without each other they weren't complete, which is why with every rebirth she returned to him...why she stayed away from open water.

"Bassam has prepared fresh fish."

She stared, trying to keep Mark in focus, but he began to fade.

The dream lover morphed into the master of this castle, the same, yet with subtle differences. Selene blinked a few times. Tamping down her arousal was difficult with her pulse throbbing between her legs. The lingering effect of the vision still strummed her fervid longings. Her heated desires had moistened her thighs and demanded release.

Selene scrutinized Anthony. Could he tell she was aroused? If he did, he didn't make issue of it. "Fish sounds heavenly. Who is Bassam?" The unusual name was familiar to her.

"He's my brother."

"Do you have a large family?"

"Four brothers. I've become closest to Bassam since he came to live with me...a few years ago." Anthony escorted her through the castle. "Andreas, the youngest, lives in America but he visits. He's the rebel in the family. And I don't see much of the twins."

"That sometimes happens in families. Lives become too busy. A person can forget what is most important."

"I can assure you I haven't."

Selene stared into his face. No, this man would be possessive of those important to him. "I didn't mean to imply anything disparaging toward you."

He chuckled and the hard lines in his face softened. "You haven't offended me." They continued on to her guestroom.

Anthony paused at the door. "Do you think you can find the dining room?"

"I'll follow my nose. I can smell the dinner and I'm ravenous."

"Then you're in for a treat. Bassam is a magician in the culinary arts. We have staff, but he occasionally prepares meals for special guests."

"Then I'm honored."

Anthony left her. The massive oak door to her room creaked open. Selene crossed the room to the large bed. Ornate tapestries hung on the whitewashed walls. The castle had been modernized but the history of the building was still discernable in the stone flooring and high ceilings. Large windows with wide sills revealed the thickness of the fortress. While she was here, she'd enjoy doing some research on the castle. Perhaps Mr. Mager would share what he knew. That was if she could be next to the man without thinking about banging him on a table in the great hall.

Selene opened her suitcase and chose a brightly colored gypsy skirt and black tank top. She'd brought the outfit and a couple of gold bangles for her wrist on the off chance she made it into the village for sightseeing or a meal. She chose a bendable bracelet and manipulated the metal, wrapping it around her upper arm.

Before heading to the kitchen to meet Anthony she glanced into the antique beveled mirror above the stout dresser. Maybe it was handling Cleopatra's emeralds, the vision of Mark Antony, or because she was in a castle with a lord named Anthony, but she didn't feel like herself. Instead, a seductive and alluring woman emerged.

She stepped into the hall. The door closed behind her. She'd paid careful attention when Anthony had walked her to the guestroom. If she was going to spend the weekend in the monstrous fortress she needed to get her bearings. Her soft-soled shoes were whisper-quiet on the stone flooring. Finally, she turned a corner and the great hall lay before her.

Anthony turned from the massive hearth he faced at the opposite end of the room. "Selene," he breathed. She blushed under his stare. "You look stunning. Join me in a drink." He strode to the dining table in the middle of the room.

Selene started forward, her gaze glued to his strong fingers as he reached for the decanter and poured deep red wine into a heavy goblet. She accepted the glass. Her fingers wrapped around the base and a wave of dizziness washed over her. The modern world vanished. But this wasn't ancient Egypt either.

This was sixteenth century England. Her name was Cara.

She whirled around, her gaze taking in the crowded room, but she didn't recognize anyone. Or maybe she did, but the memories were vague. Yet she knew she was home...but that was impossible.

Her heart spiked. This was the same castle...the same room where Anthony had just poured her wine, but he was gone. Only the room was the same.

Voices chattered around her amidst chaos and noise. The squeal of a pig pierced the air. Women gathered around the fire in the hearth. The postern door was thrown open and men entered the great hall. Leading them was Markus, her warrior. His sculpted chest was bare. His hair hung in thick locks to the middle of his back.

He crossed the room with purposeful strides. Her breath hitched as lust heated her blood.

"Miss me?" His hands twisted in her hair and savagely pulled her mouth to his. His clever tongue swept past her lips with bold strokes while his palm firmly kneaded her breast. He shifted his hips so that his erection ground into the moist juncture between her thighs. Fierce desire raged through her being. She didn't care about the men and women around them. She needed his hands on her...in her. Passion flared and she crushed her body to his.

Markus pushed her against the thick wood table. She scooted onto the top and spread her legs. He hiked up her skirts and slid his hand between her thighs. His fingertips trailed along her sensitive flesh. She tried to wriggle into a better position.

"Ah, my sweet is ready for me. Would you like me to fuck you here on the table?" His blunt finger slid between the soaked folds of her pussy lips, but she wanted more.

"Yes." She dug her fingernails into his thick forearm and urged him deeper. With a chuckle, he plunged a second finger, then a third. Cara cried out as he finger fucked her hard. Twisting, turning, and pushing deep until cream trickled from her honeyed core. Flashes of euphoria caused a quickening deep in her channel. Liquid heat flowed through her veins. Her body convulsed around Markus and she thought of nothing but him.

Having had enough foreplay, he tossed up her skirts. Her ripe pussy waited for him. Those around them were accustomed to their ardent desires. A few men hollered good cheers, and then went back about their business.

Markus loosened the ties of his pants and stepped onto the bench so his groin was level with her eyes. Swollen and dripping with precome, his cock thrust toward her face. "I'm going to fuck your mouth, then fuck your hot little cunt." He put a hand on the back of her head and guided her mouth to his bobbing penis.

Cara opened wide and licked the pearly moisture from the head. She circled her tongue around the silken crown before sucking him into her mouth. Up and down, slurping him deep, flicking her tongue against the slit while she glanced up into his face and smiled. Her tongue traced the bulging vein along the underside of his rigid shaft. Then she kissed the heavy sac hanging beneath. Pulling the smooth ball into her mouth she rolled it between her tongue and the roof of her mouth. All the while her hand pumped his shaft, working the heated flesh in a gentle vise made by her fingers.

"Ah, my sweet wench is hungry for me."

She pulled back, but continued to stroke him with her small fist. "Aye." Then she swallowed his cock again and wrapped her hands around his thick thighs and inched her fingers over his firm arse. After kneading the muscles, she moved her hand back to his shaft. Her fingers wrapped tight at the base of his length, worked his taut flesh as he pumped his hips, thrusting his cock into her mouth in a frenzied gyration. His hands held the sides of her head.

Markus roared and pulled from her mouth. Climbing onto the table, he positioned Cara on her back. Grabbing her ankles, he brought them to his shoulders. With his knees braced against the table, he guided his cock into her sweet heat.

Cara moaned shamelessly. She didn't care who watched. This was her warrior and she'd spread her thighs for him anywhere. Markus ripped her bodice open, baring her breasts. He played with the firm globes, pinching the nipples, while he pistoned into her drenched cunt.

"This is how a man shows a woman she's loved." Markus continued to slam into her heated depths.

Pleasure sizzled. Her body spiraled out of control. "Yes, yes, yes!" She cried out as her walls milked his cock. Her heart thundered. Panting for breath and throbbing from release, she clutched her lover. Markus threw back his head and hollered into the great hall. His body jerked and he filled her full of his hot cream.

Selena blinked her surroundings into focus. The great hall was quiet.

"Where am I?"

Anthony's lips tilted into a smile.

"Oh my, I'm sorry," she said breathless. "I'm not sure what's come over me." Selene wiped beads of perspiration from her brow with the back of her hand. The man was going to think her insane. Granted she'd missed tea, but lack of sustenance could hardly be blamed for her lapse in time.

The last thing she recalled was taking a goblet of wine from her host. Next thing she knew she was getting banged on the table in a crowded room without a care for propriety. She glanced down to see she still gripped the goblet.

Her knees weakened and she sat on the chair beside her. Anthony caught the goblet as her fingers loosened and he set it on the table. He took the seat to her right. Selene nodded her thanks.

The door opposite where she sat opened and a large, bald man entered the room.

"Selene, my brother, Bassam."

Selene inclined her head. "It's a pleasure to meet you." She prayed he wouldn't attempt to take one of the hands she kept clasped in her lap. If either man noticed her shaking fingers she'd never be able to explain the mental breakdown she was having in their castle.

She was alone with two virile men. Neither wore a wedding band. If they had women in their lives, they hadn't been invited to dinner. Her cheeks flushed hot. A few minutes ago she'd imagined sex approximately where she now sat. The man next to her

had savagely claimed her as a room full of people watched. And she'd reveled in the unbridled ecstasy.

As if Anthony read her mind, his smile turned hungry. He had to have carnal instincts. Blood flowed into her pussy engorging the plump lips. She shifted in her seat but it only served to rub her panties against her clit. Tamping down her rousing urges, she focused on the brother.

Muscles bulged beneath Bassam's casual tunic. He crossed to the sideboard and poured a drink. He seated himself opposite Anthony. Sipping his cocktail, his eyes never wavered from her face. The intensity of his stare made her nervous. Not that it was heated the way Anthony's brief glances set her skin ablaze. But his eyes lingered longer than was polite. He smiled, yet there was no mistaking the irritated underlying quality in his expression. She wondered why, but encouraging more interaction meant enduring more of his presence. Spending hours with Anthony was difficult enough...for a completely different reason. Her awareness of Anthony scared her because of the voracity of the sexual attraction she had for him.

Two servants appeared from the kitchen carrying silver platters filled with poached salmon, potatoes, carrots, lamb, and roast pork. Bassam smiled as they set the trays on the table then began serving.

"So what do you think of Cleopatra's emeralds?" Bassam asked.

Selene nodded to the servant who offered her salmon. "Wondrous." She released a breath of relief. Emeralds and her work were easy topics of conversation. "Several truly unique pieces will require some additional research." She felt the blush staining her cheeks. Maybe the appraisal wasn't a safe topic. She certainly didn't want Anthony to offer further explanation of one particularly unique object. "I'm not at all certain I can ascertain their value without proper documentation of origin."

"Anthony can answer all your questions. He's an expert in the artifacts. Most of the pieces are one-of-a-kind." He glanced at his brother. "I'm sure you could enlighten her on the intricacies of some of the most obscure examples."

Anthony cast a sharp glance to his brother. "After a day in the library, I think she'd rather hear about this meal you've prepared. You've outdone yourself."

The servants filled their plates with food then withdrew. Selene tried the fish. "Bassam, the salmon is divine." She reached for her wine, remembering too late the erotic encounter with her host she'd experienced only moments ago. She sipped her wine, gripping the stem tightly to keep herself from spinning into another imagined, delicious encounter. Then she set the goblet on the table. "Anthony, I would appreciate anything you can tell me about the jewels." She furrowed her brows. "But I'm curious why you commissioned me to document and appraise the pieces if you're already aware of their value."

She caught a flicker of hesitation before he answered smoothly. "We need appraisals for insurance purposes."

She nodded, her thoughts turning to the treasures throughout the castle. The jewels although priceless, only comprised a small amount of their fortune.

"Then have you lived in the castle all your life?"

Anthony glanced up at the high ceilings and the thick stone walls. His expression softened. He turned his attention back to Selene and she felt physical warmth from his visual caress. "Our family has been in England since the Crusades. But no, I haven't always lived here. Perhaps later I can tell you about...my adventures. I think you'll find them fascinating."

Anthony didn't look English and certainly didn't sound English. Truthfully, she couldn't quite decide where he hailed from. His dialect seemed to be a blend of cultures.

"It must be comforting to know your history." She flaked the fish with her fork. "I'm an only child. I have researched my family's genealogy. I suppose that is what fascinates me about Cleopatra's emeralds." She met his stare. "Would you be surprised to know that I can trace my family back to the region of Upper Egypt? Because of

limited record keeping, I couldn't claim to be a direct descendant, but my imaginative side has fancied the idea."

She could almost hear his thoughts. If he didn't think her a loon before, he surely would now. What made her rattle on so? If she wanted to continue to appraise and catalogue his collection she had best keep quiet.

"If you're interested, after dinner I'll give you the grand tour. All you've seen of the castle is this room, the library, and the guestroom."

"That would be wonderful." Excitement laced her voice...and her heart raced. Dare she spend more time alone with this alluring man? "Are the two of you alone here or are either of you married?" She bit her tongue the instant the words were out of her mouth, but both men chuckled.

Anthony glanced at his brother. "No woman would have Bassam."

"Yes, and Anthony has been married too many times to count."

"Oh." That should give her comfort, only it didn't.

"Bassam only jests. But I have been married...to one woman." Brothers' eyes met. "She died."

"I'm so sorry. My father died when I was very young." She glanced out the window. "We lived a few miles from here. After his death, my mother moved us to Norwich." She shrugged off the morose memory. Moving away had devastated her as a child. When she was older and could've returned, an irrational fear kept her away.

Selene had a fear of open water. So she lived in the city and avoided the coast. Had it not been for the emeralds she wouldn't have returned. "My mother passed a few years ago." She smiled. "This is quite the glum conversation for such a delightful dinner. And I believe I would like a tour."

Chapter Two

A short time into the tour, Selene noted an interesting and curious fact about her host. Anthony knew too much about the artifacts to need her assistance in determining their value. The castle was a shrine of antiquity. She wondered why she'd been commissioned to appraise the emeralds when clearly his knowledge of their value and origin far surpassed hers.

But that wasn't her only concern. She was alarmed with the anxiety heating her blood and causing her heart to race. Selene calmly inhaled, but the exhale only made her shiver. Anthony's statuesque presence beside her was unnerving. Something familiar in the way he moved tugged on a memory.

"Have we met before?" She had to know if he also had this feeling of déjà vu. "I keep thinking we must have." She scrutinized his face.

He grinned. "I'm not certain, but I believe you might be right."

She sighed in relief. "I can't imagine where, perhaps at an auction or an estate sale."

He arched a dark brow. "Or perhaps in our dreams."

She managed a nervous chuckle. Marvelous, now he was reading her thoughts. Well, she hoped he hadn't read past chapter one because it certainly hadn't taken long for her to imagine him naked.

"I'm sure we'll figure it out. Come, I want to show you the grounds."

They turned a corner in the hallway and two large, solid doors straight ahead opened to the moonlit night and the property leading out to the sea. Selene hurried forward through the doors. Moonlight cast a glow over the cresting waves crashing into the rocky shoreline. She paused. Fear snaked up her spine and clawed her scalp. Her heart pounded painfully. Knees weakened. Tears burned the back of her eyes and she didn't know why.

Anthony stepped beside her and she instinctively moved closer. The heat from his body warmed her arm. Still the fear swelled in her throat making each breath a challenge.

Selene felt Anthony's arms around her, but she couldn't speak. Darkness closed in.

The Year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and three...

Rocks and sand bit into Cara's back. The air chilled her quivering flesh. Seawater covered her feet, washed over her body and stung her lip. Her soaked dress clung to her skin. Licking her lip, she touched her tongue to a wound and flinched. Somehow she'd split the skin. Blood oozed into her mouth. Her limbs were heavy and she couldn't move. A shadow neared her. A large man. "Markus." Her voice was barely a whisper over the crashing waves of the churning waters. Thank God, he'd come for her.

"No, he isn't here to save you."

Panic welled in her chest. She knew the voice, had loved the man like a brother. With perfect lucidity she recognized the grave error. Tears seeped from her eyes. There would be no rebirth after drowning.

She moaned as she was lifted and carried onto a boat. "Why?" she croaked. Her lips were swollen and she struggled to form words. "We're family. I love you."

He paused. "It isn't me you love." The boat pitched and swayed in the angry sea. Keeping her eyes open grew more difficult. With startling clarity she knew his intentions. If he tossed her overboard, she'd drown. Death in the sea would mean she couldn't return to live another lifetime. "Markus."

Suddenly she was thrown from the boat. She crashed into the frigid water. Her body broke and bruised as it was tossed about in the swirling black. She couldn't fight the sharp stabbing pains of the icy water. Gulps of salty sea choked her as she was pulled beneath the roiling waves. In a final act of desperation she screamed for help.

"Selene! Selene!"

Her eyes startled open. Anthony held her shoulders in a steel grip. He gave her another shake. "What is it?" His mouth formed a thin line and his brows furrowed over his concerned eyes.

Selene staggered under the naked emotion reflected in his blazing irises. Tears threatened. Something was wrong. Unnatural emotions bubbled forth. She needed to cling to him and at the same time she desperately needed to get away. A moment ago she'd mourned this man, felt the acute pain of her own death in the deepest reaches of her soul.

"Perhaps—" She gulped air. "I'm just a bit fatigued. I think it'd be best if I retired for the evening." Her voice quavered. A part of her longed to wrap her arms around Anthony and be assured that he was real, that he was mortal. Ridiculous. She was wrong, but about what? The fact that he strummed something in her heart, that she felt possessive over him, or that he was *mortal*.

"Are you sure?"

She startled, certain in that instant he'd read her mind. Then she nodded, realizing he referred to her desire to retire. Anthony escorted her into the castle. His hand resting on her lower back provided a small amount of comfort. But she still felt the needles of cold water numbing her skin...and the horrible knowledge that she was going to die—again.

* * * * *

"Is it her?" Bassam paced. "Does she have the mark?"

Anthony couldn't know until he had her naked. When he placed intimate kisses over her delectable body, he'd find the beauty mark, a small, dark circular mole over her pubic bone. Ten generations had passed since he'd last seen her, last slipped his pulsing cock into her slick drenched heat. In every lifetime she had a new name, a new appearance, but the same heart, same soul—his lips twitched—same mole.

"How can you be sure? Shouldn't she have remembered by now?" Bassam demanded.

Anthony growled and stalked across the room. "I don't know!" Yet, he did. He had no doubt at least some of her memories had returned. "I think she recalled a memory while we overlooked the water. She trembled in my arms." He paused and remembered the terror in her voice when she called for him.

"Do you think she recalls how she died?" Bassam's tone wavered.

Anthony shook his head. "In the past all her memories returned in an instant. But this time...I just don't know. I've relived the night of her death for over three hundred years." He faced his brother. "What would make her go into the water?"

"You know what I think."

"You're wrong, Bassam. She would never take her life."

"She has before."

"No! And if you are right, it was because Cleopatra was lied to. She thought I was dead."

Bassam shook his head. "She knows only an immortal can kill another immortal. Who could've convinced her that an immortal took your life?"

Anthony rolled his shoulders. "We've spent a thousand years together in a single lifetime." Although mortal, Selene lived his eternal existence. While they were together she didn't age. Therefore he had to stay away from her until she reached maturity. After she recalled their past lives, protecting her was his responsibility. Death could still claim her...and had numerous times throughout the millennia. She'd died in the black plague of the fourteenth century, and had succumbed to the poisonous bite of an asp.

"Even if she isn't the one, you'll likely still have a pleasant night." A mischievous grin stretched Bassam's lips. "She blushes every time she looks at you." He wagged his brows.

"Not tonight. She's already gone to bed."

“Actually she’s working alone in the library,” Bassam said. “I saw her before I came looking for you. Do you think it’s safe? Perhaps I should watch her, make sure her discoveries are limited to the emerald pieces.”

“Leave her to snoop.” In this lifetime, Selena had an analytical mind. She’d need the proof.

Bassam nodded and left the room.

Bassam.

Anthony wasn’t sure what to do about his brother. They hadn’t always gotten along, although certain centuries had been better than others. Perhaps some of the anger stemmed from the fact that Bassam had never been in love. Spending an eternity alone could make the strongest souls resentful.

Bassam coming to live in Wales had been an unforeseen blessing. When he moved into the castle, Cara, as her name had been during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, had mellowed the bitterness in the man. Bassam had taken her death hard. In their shared grief, Bassam had been an anchor for Anthony in the last few centuries. Without his brother, Anthony would have gone mad from sorrow.

Anthony stood at the windows overlooking the rolling, luscious green hills to the east. Without her, he’d wallowed with his morose emotions. Moods were gray like the skies over the cold waters of Caernarfon Bay in the distance.

He closed his eyes. A crisp evening breeze lifted his hair and cooled his heated flesh. After such a long absence from his life, it took all his strength not to slam Selene against the castle wall, fling the studious glasses from her face, tangle her thick, lustrous locks in his fingers and ravage her sweet mouth with ardent kisses. In five thousand years, this was the longest they’d been apart. His immortal life had been hell on earth without her.

A heavy sigh heaved from his lungs. His jaw clenched. In the past century he’d wondered if their time had finally come to an end. The sea nearly took her life. They’d found her pale and unresponsive on the rocky shore. She’d never opened her eyes, but

he'd been sure she took a last breath. Damn it, she hadn't died at sea. But as the years passed and he didn't find her, he'd wondered if he'd only imagined that final breath. Maybe she had perished in the dark, churning waters. Grief weighted down his heart. How would he exist without her?

Anthony blinked moisture from his eyes. Now that Selene was here he wouldn't have to. More exposure to him and their possessions would hasten the recollection. If she'd held her emerald phallus for more than a brief moment, he had no doubt all her memories would've returned. Once he pleased her, drove his cock into her heat, no more barriers between their past and the present would exist.

Anthony slid his hands into his front pockets. Part of him hoped Selene took the moments alone to peek through his possessions. Journals in the library chronicled their numerous lives together.

Once her memory returned, he could prove their intertwined past lives. Not only had he been her immortal protector through the millennia, but he had loved her unconditionally. That love transcended time.

Anthony went to the sideboard and poured a drink in an attempt to dull his libidinous thoughts of Selene. Normally, the castle had a full staff. Knowing that Selene would spend the weekend, Anthony allowed only a trusted few to remain. If Selene was his eternal love, he needed privacy for her to discover the secrets of their association. Bassam would insure no one entered the castle and wouldn't allow Selene to leave until they knew for sure.

An hour passed and darkness cloaked the countryside. Anthony remained at the window sipping his drink until his goblet was empty. Then, taking a deep breath and holding fast to the emotional pull he had to Selene, he went to the library.

Once there, Anthony stood in the shadows of the doorway. Selene sat at his desk. Harsh white light from a small table lamp illuminated her workspace. Several pieces lay on black velvet. Her glasses had slipped down the bridge of her nose. Pencil scratches

sounded in the room as she made notations on paper about the intricate details of the jewels.

Disappointment briefly settled in his chest before he pushed the sentiment aside. None of the expected signs revealed she'd remembered anything more about the sensual woman lurking in her memory. If she had recalled their past lives, she was covering well. After the episode on the grounds, he'd hoped she'd experienced a breakthrough. But the haughty erudite persona seemed firmly in place with hair tightly knotted at the nape of her neck, squared shoulders and pursed lips. However, the tank top and flowing skirt gave him reason to hope his queen would gradually emerge.

He cleared his throat and stepped into the room.

"Antony, look at the beauty in this."

He froze. Yes! He'd heard her correctly. She had called him Antony. The name, although different because of her accent, still held the mellifluous quality of his memories. He stepped up behind her and marveled at the progress she'd made going through the pieces. "You called me Antony."

She stilled. The angle revealed the quick rhythm of her breathing in the rise and fall of her chest. "I have a request if you wouldn't mind," she said.

"Anything."

"Will you kiss me?"

The ground could open up and swallow her whole for her brazenness, but she had to know. For the past few hours she'd been thrown back and forth in an erotic history lesson. In each memory the man standing behind her now, kissed, inflamed...bloody well fucked the life out of her. Her drenched panties couldn't take another orgasm—real or imagined. Exhaling slowly, she shuddered from the physical release, only it had been vivid daydreams wreaking havoc on her libido.

Selene spun the chair so she faced him and stared into the piercing depths of dark desire reflected in his eyes. Heat smoldered beneath the surface.

Anthony gently grazed her cheek with a fingertip then drew his thumb in a sensuous pull along her bottom lip. She licked her lip, inadvertently touching him.

He sucked in a breath. Calloused fingertips moved along her jaw and wrapped around her neck. The tugs on her bun had her hair falling about her shoulders. Anthony combed the locks with his hands, rubbing a few silken strands between his fingers.

"I've wanted to see your hair draped down your back since you walked through the castle doors."

"I haven't felt like myself since I arrived. I've been having these...visions. I don't know if it's because of the emeralds. Maybe it's the castle. Do you know if it's haunted?"

"Old souls have been known to wander the halls." His mouth lifted into a gentle smile.

Selene had asked for a kiss and if she didn't feel those lips on hers soon, she'd lose any grasp she had on her tempestuous desires. She'd imagined too much, sensed too much that now she needed to feel...him. Hard and demanding. First she wanted his mouth and then, heaven help her, she wanted all of him.

Anthony's fingers trailed over her bare shoulders and a tingle followed. Awareness of her simmering need snaked up her spine. Tracing circular patterns, he touched along her arms. He paused briefly to outline the bracelet banded around her biceps. Then he took her hands and pulled Selene to her feet.

He bent, closing the distance between them. His warm breath held the hint of alcohol. Blooded pounded in her ears. Flutters swarmed her stomach. "Anthony?" She put her hands on his chest and clutched the fabric of his linen shirt. The room started to spin. "Something happens whenever you're near me. I've never felt like this before."

"Yes you have." His mouth crashed against hers. Soft yet firm, his lips commanded hers to open. He gripped fistfuls of hair and held her head immobile. She pressed

closer, eliciting a long, low moan from Anthony. Hot strokes of his savory tongue swept the soft tissues of her lips then slipped into her mouth.

Selene's knees weakened. She knew Anthony kissed her, but in her mind she saw him as he appeared in her visions. She whimpered and pushed against his chest, but she didn't have the strength to resist the sweet intoxication of his kiss. Confusion warred with understanding. Sucking her tongue into his mouth, running his hands over her back and pulling her flush against him gave the perfect alignment to crush the rigid length of his erection into her swollen cleft. Widening her stance, she gave him room to undulate his hips and stimulate her clit through the thin fabric.

He whispered words in a language she didn't understand. Leaving her mouth, he kissed along her jaw to the soft skin below her ear where her heartbeat rapidly pulsed.

His thumb grazed her nipple. Beneath her blouse and the lace of her bra, the crested peak hardened. Intense pleasure traveled from her breast into the center of her sex. "Although delicious, I want more than your kisses," he whispered against her flesh.

Anthony wasn't saying anything he hadn't implied with his hard demanding cock ready to break from his jeans. The friction of his simulated sex against her heat seared through her skirt. She wanted to be flesh to flesh with nothing between them but the raw, carnal hunger sweeping through her. Unfamiliar cravings grew into ardent, dangerous needs.

Selene worked the buttons free on his shirt while he continued to nibble her lips. Demanding strokes of his tongue blazed into her mouth and tantalized the soft tissues of her inner cheek. Finally she had his shirt open. A moan escaped her lips as she touched his smooth muscular torso. Her thumb grazed his beaded nipple, sending quivers over his rippled muscles.

A feral growl rolled from his chest. And in a swift motion, Anthony lifted her into his strong arms and held her close. He moved quickly through the deserted castle corridors. Selene buried her head in his chest. The sound of his beating heart mingled with the echo of his booted footfalls off the walls.

Selene's tongue traced the shell of his ear. Anthony moaned and angled his head to give her room to kiss and suck the whisker-coarse edge of his jaw. She moved her lips lower, over the smooth column of his neck. He tasted spicy, tangy, and male. Opening her hot mouth over his pulse point, she nipped his warm skin with teeth and lips.

"Hurry," she said.

"Almost there."

They reached his room. One hard kick to the door caused it to split from the hinges. He strode to the bed then dropped her to the mattress.

This was what it was like for him, the possessive need to be inside her, the demand for more than simply sharing their bodies.

Anthony shrugged his shirt off and tossed it to the floor. He bent down and removed his boots. Then he stood, pulled on the fly of his pants and lowered the zipper. Shoving his jeans over his hips, he had a thought as they dropped to his ankles. Selene's passion-clouded eyes widened. His cock strained against the front of his boxers. He was about to strip to the skin, but all she'd asked for was a kiss. Yet he couldn't stop with a mating of mouths.

Selene scooted into the middle and knelt on the king-sized bed.

"You asked for a kiss," he said. "But I want more."

"Good. So do I." She tugged her tank top from her skirt, grabbed the edge, and rolled it up and off her body. He watched spellbound as she reaching behind her back and unhooked her bra. She slid the straps, one then the other, down her arms and let the lacy bra fall to the bed. She didn't hide her nudity. The reserved antiques appraiser blatantly offered more than a kiss. Pert rosy nipples sat high on her rounded breasts. The skirt bunched on her thighs. Raking the fabric up her legs, she teased him with a glimpse of her smooth skin. Then her pink tongue darted out of her mouth and moistened her bottom lip.

His chest swelled and so did his cock. She wanted him. Anthony stepped out of his jeans then tucked his thumbs into the waistband of his boxers and shoved them to the floor.

Selene's eyes closed and she swayed.

Anthony sat on the edge of the bed. "Selene, stay with me."

Oh hell no. This wasn't the time for her to have a memory breakthrough. This was where they began making new ones. He climbed onto the mattress on his hands and knees and kissed her. Her lips parted and his tongue ventured into the sweet heat of her mouth. His finger brushed against her nipple, teasing it into a tighter bud.

"Selene, don't leave me."

She leaned back, thrust her chest forward, and offered her breasts to him. "Touch me, Vitus," she whispered.

Anthony nearly wept. "Lift your hips." She adjusted on the bed and he pulled her skirt down her hips and off her body. There was no question he'd found her. Selene was the reincarnated love of his eternal life. Her slip of the tongue to his given name revealed all.

Relief quickly morphed into demand. Crushing his mouth to hers, thrusting his tongue in frenzied need, he plundered, savored, demanded. Selene snaked her arms around his neck and he slowly lowered her to the bed. Once she was lying on her back, he stretched over her, hovering above her petite body. He pinched her nipples, causing them to tighten further. Then he rolled the hard bud against his palm while he massaged the firm, succulent globes.

Her eyes, heavy with desire, darkened. Spreading her thighs with his knees, he nestled his cock against her panties, feeling the moist heat at the apex of her legs. Her body went taut with unreleased energy and arched off the bed. Anthony bent his head and pulled one crested peak into his greedy mouth and gently bit.

"Yes," she cried, and gripped his hair, holding him firmly to her jutting nipple. He pressed his tongue to the sweet wrinkled areola. While sucking on her breast, he slid his palm down the softness and curves of her stomach.

"Please," she begged spreading her thighs wider.

Anthony snapped the string of her panties and tore them off. He sucked in a breath at the sight of her plump, damp pussy lips...and her delectable little mole.

"Please...kiss you here." He inched down her body, placing wet kisses on a trail to her downy thatch of brown hair glistening with her juices. "Here." He dipped his tongue into her navel, licked, and then blew on the moist skin. He lifted his head and their eyes locked. Then, with a sigh of pleasure, he sank his mouth into soft curls.

Essence of musk, woman, and arousal flared his nostrils and fired his blood. Parting her pussy lips with his thumbs, he savored the first sweet taste of her cream. His tongue slipped downward and licked the length of her weeping cunt.

Selene gasped, rocked her pelvis, and grabbed the bedding in her fists. Gentle rolls of his tongue circled her clit. He sucked and licked, dancing his tongue across her folds then stabbing into her channel. Cream flowed over his tongue and bathed his face.

Anthony eased a finger deep into her hot, slick vagina, followed by a second. He slid in and out making her wet walls tighten on his fingers. Thrashing on the bed, grinding against his face with each brush of his tongue, she reached for release. He pushed her higher, worked his mouth against her heated flesh, and drove her over the edge. Flicking his blunt fingers back and forth...in and out...harder and deeper, he fucked her with his tongue and hands.

"OhYesOhYesOhYes!" Her thighs locked against the side of his head. Her cries of pleasure spurred his ministrations. Using his thumb, he pressed against her engorged clit, rubbed it with fast little movements then brought his mouth back to her heat and sucked the erect nubbin into his mouth.

Spasms jolted her, nearly jackknifing her off the bed. She shuddered, her back arched and she exploded into his mouth. With tight fists, she grasped Anthony's hair

and pulled, tugging him closer and as she rode her orgasm to the peak. He continued to dart his tongue into her hot little hole.

Although Selene was sweating and still trembling from her convulsions, Anthony denied her any respite. He pressed kisses to her inner thigh, licked her hip bone, and tickled his lips over each rib as he worked his way back up her body.

Selene spread her thighs, and Anthony settled between them. "I missed you," he said on a breath. With a slow smooth motion, he eased his hard, thick length into her slick, tight sheath and back into her life.

"Oh." Selene tensed. Internal muscles clenched then softened, welcoming the rigid length of Anthony's cock. He burrowed in, plowed deep, and stilled once he was buried balls-deep inside her. A shiver rolled across her skin.

Selene wrapped her hands over his shoulders, startled to feel him trembling beneath her fingertips. Tears welled and spilled from her eyes. A raging flood of memories rushed into her mind. Instantly she chronicled their past lives together. The visions she'd had since she'd arrived rang with understanding and perfect clarity. She held him tighter. Kissed his jaw, his neck, his mouth. The ancient awakening created a maelstrom of acute emotions.

Anthony, no, his birth name was Vitus. He'd changed to adapt to the era and region of her rebirth. He'd adjusted his existence to suit hers.

She placed her hands on his cheeks and held his face. "I remember," she whispered.

Anthony smiled, kissed her lips, and then drove his hips forward. She felt every inch of his cock stretching and filling her. A dance of entry and retreat in a rapturous rhythm. Pressure built and she squeezed on his next thrust. Yet the throbbing pulse deep within her core wasn't quenched. Tilting her hips allowed him to slide farther into her heat. Again and again. Harder. Faster. Anthony leveraged up on his arms and pistoned his hips.

Her legs circled him and her heels forced him deeper. Wetness drenched the bed. Her cream flowed hot and trickled along the crack of her ass. Her breath came fast. Panting and sweating, she met each stroke with a thrust of her own. "You feel so good."

Anthony undulated his hips, hitting her pleasure points from another angle and Selene cried out.

"Do you like that?"

She nodded unable to speak. Her only thoughts were of Anthony and how many times he'd awoken her memories with the exquisite plunge of his heavy, solid penis.

In a flash of blinding light, her orgasm rocketed through her. Tremors racked her body. Violent spasms in her channel gripped his shaft and held him tight. Friction increased. Anthony's cock swelled and slammed into her. Thrusting, plunging, again and again. Each savage stroke mounted in intensity. With a feral growl, Anthony exploded. Jaw clenched, muscles bunched.

Moments passed. Finally Anthony rested his forehead against hers. Their labored breaths blended. Gentle kisses led to mating tongues. Hot wet licks were followed by sealed lips. She sucked his tongue into her mouth.

Their erotic play slowed. Selene's heavy rapid panting eased. He slipped from her body then rolled to his side, pulling her close. She sighed and relaxed against his chest. This she knew.

"Welcome home."

"What took you so long?" She chuckled and nuzzled against his sternum.

"Me?" He laughed. "Where have *you* been?"

* * * * *

Anthony stretched out on the bed. Selene stood naked, in profile, at the window and gazed into the darkness. Her hair hung in tangled curls to the middle of her narrow back. As he stared at the gentle contours of her shape, the void from the last three hundred years drifted away. The time apart didn't matter now. She was home.

He climbed off the bed and stalked toward her. Wrapping his arms around her waist, resting his chin on her shoulder, he pulled her flush against him. Their image reflected in the window glass. "Come to bed." He placed sweet kisses along her neck. "It'll be morning soon."

She tilted her head to the side and hummed as he flicked the lobe of her ear with his tongue, then nibbled. She pressed her delectable ass into his hardening cock.

Embers of remembered lifetimes burst into flames of need. Anthony traced her spine to the curve of her ass, ran his hand over the cleft of her cheeks, and reached between her thighs to her hot, soaked folds. He closed his eyes and slipped his middle finger deep into her channel until his palm was flush against her.

"Wet and ready to make love."

She moaned and arched her back. "I see you haven't forgotten your technique."

"I haven't forgotten anything."

"Neither have I, my love, neither have I."

Chapter Three

Selene paced the cold stone floor, chewing her fingernail to the quick. She had to think and think fast. All of her memories had returned...including her near death at sea. In a quandary as to what to do about that dark night, she considered two options. Deal with the circumstances on her own, or bring Anthony into a situation that would tear his soul apart.

She turned and watched him sleep. Time didn't age his appearance, nor did it alter how she loved him.

Crisp air blew through the open window. Outside, dawn turned the early morning skies a pale gray. Seagulls hovered above the incoming tide. The birds glided effortless and free...just as she wanted her life with Anthony to be. But that couldn't happen until she was assured they were safe. And this war was one that she couldn't let Anthony fight. His immortal soul would die...whether he survived the battle or not.

Anthony groaned and stretched. His arm reached out in sleep searching for her, just as she was sure it had for the past centuries. Selene crossed the room, slid back onto the mattress, and curled into him, drinking in his spicy warm scent.

"Hmmm." He pulled her close and buried his nose in her neck. "Morning."

She combed his hair with her fingers, gently dragging what was left of her nails across his scalp. Telling a man "we need to talk" probably wasn't the best way to start the day, but... "Anthony, we need to talk."

"Mmm hmm." His sleepy mumbles didn't convince her he wanted to talk. Instead his hands sought her beneath the blanket. "A perfect morning." His finger skimmed across the seam of her sex, then dipped into her heat.

Anthony held tightly and rolled her onto his chest. She slid against his growing arousal, working the hardening length between her slick folds.

“Take me in your hands.”

Selene sat up, leveraged on her knees and wrapped her palm around his shaft. She stroked him, sliding the taut skin over his turgid length.

“Please.” He thrust into her hand. “Take me inside.” Anthony closed his eyes and inhaled deeply through his nose.

Selene smeared her juices over the crown of his penis. Sinking and then lifting up, she slowly stretched her internal walls to accept his voracious morning erection. He was harder, bigger, and poised to take her to the edge of euphoria. Moaning in bliss, she impaled herself. Anthony’s fingers dug into her hips, anchoring her. With a long thrust, he pressed his rod deep, and impacted the very top of her channel.

Selene cried out. Her hands braced against his hard pectoral muscles. Then she rocked her hips. Moving faster, digging in, she rubbed her clit against his springy dark pubic hair. Momentum moved them in a continuous ebb and flow.

Ragged gasps of air burst from her lungs. Burning, needing, reaching for that pleasurable destination that would send them both to delicious ecstasy. Anthony slid his hands around to the well-rounded cheeks of her ass and helped to lift and lower her in frenzied pursuit of euphoric release.

Numbing intoxication flooded her mind. Cream flowed from her cunt, and stars erupted behind her closed eyes. Internal vaginal muscles milked Anthony’s cock. Selene felt glorious riding him. Energy surged through her veins. She threw her head back and laughed. He was incredible, bringing her back to life.

Anthony’s balls tightened and a primal, keening cry filled the room. Within her she could feel violent spasms of his orgasm and the hot come spurting deep inside.

Spent and breathing hard, she collapsed onto his chest. Tears burned behind her eyes. “I want to spend eternity making love with you.”

His fingers tunneled into her hair and caressed the nape of her neck. “This time you will.”

Anthony slipped from her body when she rolled to her side. He stretched and groaned before sitting up. "Breakfast." He kissed the tip of her breast then left the bed. "Get dressed and we'll go eat." He grabbed his jeans and stepped into them.

"I want to talk first." She sat up and tucked the blanket around her torso.

"Sure." Anthony sat on the edge of the bed. Concern reflected in his dark eyes.

She smiled and took his hand. "Nothing to worry about." *Yet.* "Actually, I have a favor to ask."

"Anything. You know that."

"I'd like you to keep my identity a secret for just a little while."

The worried look returned to his eyes.

"The last time you found me, you stormed into my father's keep, tossed me over your shoulder, and carted me off. Leaving my life in London won't be as easy. I have obligations, a career, my flat, friends, and debts."

An easy smile tilted his lips. "Then we go to London. My only obligation is to you. Money has never been an issue. Tell me how much you need, and where to send it, and I'll have Bassam transfer the funds to you."

"No."

"The money is ours —"

"No, as in I don't want Bassam to handle the transfer."

Anthony stood and paced across the room. Then he turned and met her stare. His eyes narrowed. "Why?"

He was too inquisitive and much too intuitive. "I don't want Bassam to know that I've regained my memory, and I don't want him to know where I live in London. Please, you'll have to trust me."

"What aren't you telling me?"

How could she tell him that she feared for both of them? She remembered that night on the beach, when her eternal life nearly ended. She bowed her head. Until she

talked to Bassam and determined the truth for herself, she couldn't—dared not say anything to Anthony.

"Vitus," she whispered knowing that using his given name would add impact to her request. "Please, I'm asking for a few days to mesh the life I've been living for twenty-seven years with the ones I've lived with you for five thousand."

After a moment, he nodded.

She crossed the room and wrapped her arms around his waist. "Ready for breakfast?"

He grinned then kissed her forehead. "I'm starving."

"Me too."

Anthony took pleasure in watching Selene quickly dress. Gone was the prudish woman who'd walked through the castle doors yesterday. Selene's hair hung in sexy disarray, her red lips were slightly swollen from his bruising kisses throughout the night, and her skin held a healthy glow from multiple orgasms.

"Why are you smiling?" She combed her hair with her fingers.

"Because you're a ravishing woman. We won't have to say anything. Bassam is going to know you've changed."

She shrugged. "I just want a little time."

He didn't know exactly what, but she was hiding something. A grin stretched his lips. He'd find out because she couldn't keep secrets...not from him.

The furrow in her brow softened and she forced a smile. "Yesterday, I couldn't find my way out of a paper bag, but today the castle is familiar as my home in London."

Arm in arm they made their way to the great hall.

"So tell me everything I've missed. Your brothers, well besides Bassam, how are they?"

Anthony chuckled. "I would say someday Andreas will grow up and settle down, but how many millennia should it take?" Andreas had a perverse pleasure of using his immortality for entertainment. Death-defying occupations for mortals were sport for Andreas. He considered himself something of a scholar of the human condition, claiming his purpose on the planet now was to discover the meaning of life. Anthony had hoped someday Andreas would grow up and figure out how he could best serve the world with his gift, but that day had yet to arrive.

"I suppose in all people there are qualities we wish we could change."

His arms wrapped around her shoulder. "You, my love, are perfection."

She laughed with an unladylike snort. "I'll be sure to remind you of that the next time we have an argument. Speaking of arguments, what about Justus and Kyros?"

"They'll be happy to know you've returned."

Selene answered with a chuckle and Anthony knew she was remembering the four others born that dark night. Justus and Kyros were identical twins. They once had an argument that lasted a thousand years.

"Oh, I'm sure they'll be thrilled. They loved my meddling."

"You won't have time or energy for meddling...only for me. I've missed you too much to let you out of my sight."

They entered the empty great hall. Their footfalls echoed hollow off the walls in the vacant room.

"Breakfast will just be the two of us."

She leaned in closer. "I like the sound of that. Yesterday I had a deliciously wicked memory of one particular meal at this very table."

Anthony whistled low and squeezed her ass.

She wrinkled her nose. "One thing is certain, the place smells much better in modern times than it did with animals running around."

"I'll show you animal." Anthony pulled her tight. Selene squealed and twined her arms around his neck. Laughter drifted on the air.

"Good morning."

Selene stumbled at Bassam's voice behind them.

"Hope you're hungry because I've made breakfast."

Selene untangled herself from Anthony's hold and crossed to the sideboard. "I'll just have coffee, then I'll get back to the appraisals." She filled a cup, trying to keep her trembling hands still. Anger, fear, remorse swirled together in a vortex of tempestuous emotions because she knew once she acted on the revelation of that last night three hundred years ago, life for her and Anthony would change. Panic seized her heart and squeezed. She turned to Anthony. *He'll be devastated.*

She picked up the cream and then changed her mind. Perhaps she shouldn't drink the coffee either. Bassam couldn't be trusted. "My tummy is a bit upset. Perhaps I'll wait a spell then have something." She hoped Bassam saw the prim and proper woman from yesterday and not the madly in love woman she'd become in Anthony's arms.

Anthony approached her and touched her cheek. "You were fine a moment ago. What's going on, Selene?"

She blinked rapidly to keep tears from her eyes. "Remember your promise." After setting her cup on the sideboard, she fled the room hoping Anthony or, worse, Bassam didn't follow.

A shudder racked her body. No one was in the corridor to question her perceived erratic behavior. Selene hurried to the library on shaky legs.

Sweat beaded on her brow and trickled between her breasts. The cold room chilled her heated skin. She stood at the open window and let the salty ocean breeze dry her skin and calm her nerves. Amazing the one element that could end her existence also offered her solitude and peace. She breathed deeply through her nose.

"Selene, can we speak?"

Hairs on the back of her neck prickled. Should she claim ignorance or had the time finally come for the confrontation? Selene slowly pivoted around to face her nemesis. Bassam stood in the doorway like a specter of death. His eyes narrowed, then widened as he surmised the truth.

"Yes," was all she said.

"I suspected."

She sauntered to the desk, feigning unconcerned. Her indifference was a ruse to lower Bassam's defenses because she still didn't know exactly how she would defuse the volatile situation. Inside she trembled. "Do you want to kill me, Bassam?"

He entered the room. "Selene! Why would you say such a thing?"

A beguiling smile tilted her lips. "Because, dear Bassam, you see me as the bane of your existence." She sat behind the desk. "Last night, while lying in your brother's arms, I remembered everything. Three hundred years melted away." She tilted her head and studied Bassam's stoic expression. He was trying not to let his emotions show. He failed. Fear filled his eyes. Sweat glistened on his scalp.

"Does it feel like three hundred years for you, Bassam?" She let the statement hang in the air between them, gathering significance. "Or does it seem like yesterday that my pale, lifeless body washed ashore?" Her voice dropped to a mere whisper.

"Cara?"

Selene leaned back in the chair and steeled her nerves. She refused to show weakness. "You poisoned me with the bittersweet nectar of Dwale. Last night, when I was with Vitus on the grounds, I remembered the night you took me out to sea." She ran her finger over the desk. "You pitched me overboard."

Bassam shook his head. "Your memories are distorted."

"Liar!" Her palms slapped the desk. Rage boiled in her being.

Bassam jumped.

"I couldn't move to stop you." She stood. Tears burned her eyes. "I fought the water. I knew I had to get to shore. I tried to swim, tried to fight the cold." She sharpened her gaze and stared into his eyes. "Well, I fought the cold, swam for my life...swam for Vitus."

His eyes darkened. "You should've died. The sea was angry, a storm had moved in. I don't know how you survived." He crossed his arms, stretching the tunic he wore tight to his mammoth biceps.

"Why?"

"Andreas chooses not to have a mate, preferring solitude. Kyros and Justus are reclusive and only need each other. I have nothing. Vitus is all I have and when you're around he lives for you."

"You're brothers, not lovers! He can have both."

"No. He was fucking you in the great hall! On the battlefield he called your name while he slaughtered armies. He lives for you!"

Selene ran her fingers through her hair. "You can't be trusted and we can't live together ever again. You're evil." Bassam had to leave. With every breath she drew, if he were around, she'd wonder if it would be her last. Bassam's hatred ran deep and contrary to his words, he had to hate Vitus. "When you love someone you want to see them happy." Slowly she lifted her gaze to meet his. "He's mourned me for three hundred years." Her voice lowered. "How long do you think he'll grieve for you?"

Anthony stood immobile outside the library door. His heart hammered in his chest and his stomach rolled. Fists clenched at his side. He ground his teeth and locked his jaw. The struggle not to burst into the room took all his strength. Now he understood Selene's fear at breakfast. Bassam had poisoned her once...he could again.

Anthony continued to listen from the shadows in the hall.

"You can't kill me," Bassam's voice loomed dark and dangerous.

"You're right, I can't, but Vitus will when he finds out what you've done." Selene chuckled. "You look scared, Bassam. Is it because you know I speak the truth?" Her voice was strong and confident.

Pride filled Anthony. Even upon threat of death Selene was his warrior woman.

"Why haven't you told him?" Bassam asked.

Anthony heard movement but not voices. Then Selene spoke. "Because I love him. And unlike you, I don't want to see him destroyed by your betrayal."

Emotion choked Anthony. Viselike pressure clamped his chest. Like Selene, he too was a warrior at heart. Throughout his battles, her soft comfort always waited at home...until Bassam murdered her.

In these modern times Anthony didn't require a sword. Men wielded the might of their minds. However, tonight the warrior in Anthony raged.

"I want you to leave the castle," she demanded. "Go find a life for yourself. Once you're gone, I'm going to tell Anthony the truth. Hopefully you can redeem yourself in the world. Find a purpose, Bassam, and leave us alone," she sighed. "To live."

"And if I don't."

"Then I'll tell him now. I know Vitus better than you. He'll draw his sword. Do you dare tempt his wrath? You're a thinker. He's a warrior. You won't survive."

The room grew quiet. Long moments passed and Anthony struggled to remain quiet. He didn't want to fight his brother. But he couldn't risk Selene. Banishment didn't solve the underlining problem, just postponed the inevitable. But perhaps time was what they needed. As if reading his mind, Selene spoke.

"You are an immortal. You have all the time you need to find your destiny."

Anthony heard the soft sounds of her footsteps. He didn't want her near Bassam. She wasn't immortal. Without drowning her at sea, Bassam couldn't take her soul, but he could retake her life.

"Redeem yourself, find your purpose. I won't tell you to never return. But know the next time you meet your brother, he will know the truth."

"I'll go." Defeat laced Bassam's voice. Selene spoke the truth. Had Bassam not taken her generous offer, Anthony would have taken up arms and slain his brother. He was immortal and Anthony's destiny was to defend his eternal love.

Movement drew Anthony's attention. Bassam appeared in the doorway and Anthony stepped from the shadow.

Bassam sucked in a breath. "Vitus," he whispered.

Anthony took another step forward. "Do not speak my name." He narrowed his eyes, clenched his jaw. "Just leave...now."

Color drained from Bassam's face. Without a word he nodded and fled down the hall. Anthony swallowed the boulder of sorrow in his throat and only allowed himself to feel the anger. Then he crossed the hall and entered the library.

Selene stood at the window. She turned at his footfalls. Tears streamed down her cheeks. "You heard?"

He nodded.

"I'm sorry."

"It isn't you. Bassam's hatred and his fears run deep."

She lowered her head. "Did we make a mistake? What if he seeks revenge?"

Anthony crossed the room and took her into his arms. "We won't fight without help." His fingers trailed up her spine, calming her trembles. "My brothers need to know what's happened. Bassam's fear is being alone." He touched her cheek. "My fear is losing you." He stared into her luminescent eyes, detailing her face in the morning sunlight. He touched a thumb to her quivering lips, slightly parted and whispering hot, damp breath against his skin. Her hair was still a tangled beautiful mess from their bout of lovemaking.

Damn, she was his.

He bent his head and captured her lips in an open-mouthed kiss. His tongue slid possessively between her lips. A low moan rolled between them. She draped her arms over his shoulder. Her fingers played with the flesh at the nape of his neck.

A blazing fire heated his blood and quickly fanned into an inferno of need. He had to be joined with her, now, to prove her safe and in his arms forever. He ran his hands down her sides until resting on her hips. Angling her body, he nestled the strength of his erection into the soft cushion of her mound. His cock jumped and the muscles of his groin tightened.

Every part of her was in perfect compliment to him. He tugged on her shirt, lifting to reveal her toned belly, then higher to her beautiful breasts. She was just the right size to fill his hands and topped with pert rosy nipples, sensitive to his touch. He bent and pulled one taut tip into his greedy mouth.

She gripped his head and her back bowed. He sucked more of her creamy flesh into his mouth, applying pressure with his tongue to the beaded nipple.

Selene grabbed the hem of her shirt, pulled it over her head and tossed it to the floor. Then she clutched his shirt and tried to tug it from his waistband.

Anthony took off his clothes and helped her with the rest of hers. She shivered.

"Are you cold?" He traced her collarbone, watched her nipples tighten.

"Not cold...but I need your warmth." She stepped into his arms and pressed her body against his.

Reaching behind her back, he cleared the desk with his forearm. Papers scattered to the floor. "I guess you don't need the appraisals anymore," she said teasingly.

He placed hot wet kisses along her neck. "On the desk." He cupped her ass and lifted. Selene scooted onto the desk. Slowly spreading her thighs, she opened herself to him.

Springy curls glistened with the evidence of her arousal. She slid her fingers between the damp lips and exposed her engorged pink folds.

Anthony wouldn't have believed it possible, but his already profound feelings for her deepened. She'd risked her life by confronting Bassam, and she'd protected his heart.

"Vitus, please."

Never wanting to refuse a request from his love, certainly one as tempting as this, he went to his knees and licked the length of the distended flesh. Her head fell back and her moan of pleasure filled the room. The heady scent of her arousal burned into his mind. He flared his nostrils and breathed in more of her unique scent. His woman, his destiny. Tasting her heat, lapping her nectar, he feasted like a king on his queen. Speaking of queen...

Anthony stood.

"Nooo."

"Shhh," he said going to the shelf. "I know what you need."

"I need you...here, with your face between my legs."

He chuckled. "It seems I've heard that before. But I know my queen." He turned to her and Selene squealed.

Anthony held the emerald dildo.

"Absolutely not! That is a rare artifact."

He chuckled and went back to his knees. He kissed her curls. "We'll see how long your argument lasts." Bracing her feet on his shoulders, her knees bent nearly to her ears, he attacked her pussy in frenzied licks, sucks and nibbles. Her inner thigh muscles began to quiver. Her butt came off the desk. And Anthony continued to drive his tongue into her hole, tease her folds, and gently pinch her clit between his lips.

Selene cried out. Her knuckles turned white as she gripped the edge of the desk. Spasms jerked her pelvis. Sweet cream flowed into his mouth. He lapped up every

delicious drop. Anthony growled and shook his head back and forth, driving her over the edge. Another wave crested then crashed over her before she'd caught her breath from the previous orgasm.

"Oh Selene, my sweet."

"Okay, damn you, fuck me with the priceless emerald cock!"

About the Author

KyAnn Waters lives in Utah with her husband, two children and two dogs. She spends her days writing and her evenings with her family. She enjoys sporting events on the television, thrillers on the big screen, and hot scenes between the pages of her books.

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