



T. A. CHASE
DREAMING OF
DRAGONS

Loose Id

DREAMING OF DRAGONS

T. A. Chase

LooseId^(R)
www.loose-id.com

Warning

This e-book contains sexually explicit scenes and adult language and may be considered offensive to some readers. Loose Id LLC's e-books are for sale to adults ONLY, as defined by the laws of the country in which you made your purchase. Please store your files wisely, where they cannot be accessed by under-aged readers.

*** * * * ***

DISCLAIMER: Please do not try any new sexual practice, especially those that might be found in our BDSM/fetish titles without the guidance of an experienced practitioner. Neither Loose Id LLC nor its authors will be responsible for any loss, harm, injury or death resulting from use of the information contained in any of its titles.

Dreaming of Dragons

T. A. Chase

This e-book is a work of fiction. While reference might be made to actual historical events or existing locations, the names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, business establishments, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Published by
Loose Id LLC
870 Market St, Suite 1201
San Francisco CA 94102-2907
www.loose-id.com

Copyright © May 2009 by T. A. Chase

All rights reserved. This copy is intended for the purchaser of this e-book ONLY. No part of this e-book may be reproduced, scanned, or distributed in any printed or electronic form without prior written permission from Loose Id LLC. Please do not participate in or encourage piracy of copyrighted materials in violation of the author's rights. Purchase only authorized editions.

ISBN 978-1-59632-918-8

Available in Adobe PDF, HTML, MobiPocket, and MS Reader

Printed in the United States of America

Editor: Georgia A. Woods
Cover Artist: Anne Cain

Chapter One

Mortal world – six months after the appearance of dragons

Dr. Hugh Price, owner of AngleLow Labs and former government agent, waved a hand toward the boxes lining the walls of the vault at AngleLow Labs. "We have diamonds from Africa and pearls from the South Pacific."

Being a herpetologist and not a gemologist, Kael Hammerson couldn't begin to calculate the total worth of all those gems.

"Where else are the gems going?" Kael ran a finger over a rough diamond.

"Nowhere. Ireland is the only country being invaded by dragons. Other mythical creatures seem to be appearing in other places, though. Mermaids off the coast of Australia. A minotaur in Crete. Vampires in Eastern Europe." Hugh scrubbed a hand over his face and sighed.

"What makes Ireland so special that we get dragons?" He wandered over to Hugh and rubbed his lover's shoulders.

"I don't have a bloody clue," Hugh snarled.

Before Kael could comment, Hugh covered his hand.

"I'm sorry, love. I'm frustrated."

"We all are, Hugh. I wish we had better news for you."

At the sound of the new voice, Hugh and Kael turned and watched Sir George St. Albans and Mordred appear. The knight looked tired and his elf lover looked as unflappable as ever. Kael wondered what could cause the elf to lose his cool.

"Still no idea who is causing any of this?" Hugh embraced Kael, bringing him around to stand in front of him.

The elf shrugged. "I have some possibilities, but no proof. I need evidence before I can go to Gaia."

Mordred gave each of them a kiss and strolled off to study the diamonds. George hugged Kael and nodded to Hugh.

"Why are dragons appearing here, George? There've been reports of other creatures showing up elsewhere, but no other country has dragons."

"When magic ruled the world, Ireland was where it was concentrated. The elves held their councils here. Gods met in the sacred groves to decide the fates of their worshippers." Mordred eased back toward them. "The very rock and dirt making up the island is imbued with power. If you're trying to invade earth and you're a being of magic, where would you go?"

"To the spot that offers me the best advantage," Hugh murmured.

"Exactly. So we get dragons." Mordred faded out of sight.

The door to the vault opened and the group of dragon slayers filed in. Captain Wellmine gave each one their orders before strolling over to where Kael, Hugh, and George stood.

"Dr. Hammerson, Dr. Price, St. Albans," Wellmine greeted them, keeping his gaze on the other soldiers.

Kael noticed how the captain's gaze seemed to linger on Bailey Stevenson, the logistics man for the slayers. George had mentioned in conversation once that he thought Wellmine was interested in Stevenson. George might be right. Something was happening between those two men.

"How did training go?" Hugh asked.

Wellmine frowned. "Not well. I'm not sure what we're going to do. We don't have enough people to fight these creatures at the rate they're appearing." He nodded at the others. "They're getting tired as well. I'm afraid if they don't get rest soon, we're going to have a serious injury on our hands."

Kael didn't want that. He'd grown to like the members of the team, even the obnoxious Larkin. His opinion of the man had changed when he saw the way Larkin talked to Irene, Kael's assistant. Irene had managed to break free of her abusive boyfriend, and she was leery of getting involved in any kind of relationship. Larkin seemed to understand that, approaching her with gentleness and respect.

"Are you coming with us?"

Hugh's question broke through Kael's thoughts. He glanced up to meet Hugh's hazel eyes. Blushing, he ducked his head. Hugh's expression was tolerant exasperation. His lover was used to him taking detours in his brain. The only time Hugh got annoyed with him was when it happened while they were making love.

His blank stare must have clued Hugh in on the fact that he had no idea what Hugh was talking about.

"We have to meet Von Offerman. He's coming to update us on governmental progress toward finding the source of the dragons." Hugh grinned.

Kael chuckled, shooting a look at George, who shook his head with a rueful grimace.

"A waste of money."

"Why do you say that?" Wellmine gestured for Kael to lead the way. "Do you think the best scientific minds in the British Isles won't be able to figure it out?"

George shrugged. "It's irrelevant if we know where they come from or not. What we need to figure out is how to stop them from coming."

"Maybe by figuring out where they come from, they'll discover a way to stop them." Bailey joined them, his steps slow and a little unsteady.

Kael could tell the long continuous hours were beginning to wear on Bailey. The sergeant never complained, even though everyone knew his wounds were causing him pain. Stevenson never spoke about the injuries he'd received in Afghanistan, but Kael had seen tears in Bailey's eyes when the sergeant didn't think anyone was looking.

"I'll catch up with you in a few minutes. I need to check something in the lab."

Hugh met his gaze, and Kael kept his expression innocent. His lover's eyes narrowed, but Hugh didn't say anything, simply nodded. Waiting until the others had left the vault, he spun around to look at the corner where Mordred had disappeared.

"Mordred, I need to ask you something."

The blond-haired elf appeared, sitting on one of the gem crates. "Ask away, little one, though I'm not sure I'll be able to give you an answer."

"I was wondering if there was something you could do for Bailey. He's in a lot of pain." He wandered over to stand next to the crate, resting his hand on Mordred's leg.

Mordred stroked his hand through Kael's curls. "I'm afraid I can't heal him, love. Those injuries are permanent."

Laying his head on Mordred's thigh, he sighed. "I know, but I wasn't looking for you to heal him. I was just wondering if you could do something about the pain. Some herb or potion he could take. He's working so hard. In many ways, harder than the others. Bailey stays up later and comes in earlier than the rest of us as well. I think he feels he has something to prove or that he's not pulling his weight because he can't go out and fight the dragons. I'd really like to see him feel better."

Warmth flowed from Mordred's fingers as he caressed Kael's forehead. The tension that had been building eased, and he closed his eyes. He was feeling so much pressure to fix the situation or make the dragons disappear. He couldn't. No matter how hard he tried to explain it, no one listened.

"I'll see what I can find for him. One of our healers might know of an herb or potion we can give him to take the edge off. He is a proud man, I think. It's hard for him to watch his comrades go out and risk their lives without him." Mordred sounded thoughtful.

"Bailey does help the others. The logistics and supplies wouldn't happen without him." He pulled back and looked up at Mordred. "Do you think they realize how important he is?"

His friend shrugged. "I can't begin to imagine what the others think of Stevenson." Mordred leaned down, brushing a kiss over his mouth. "Let me go talk to some people. I'll come see you when I know something."

"Thank you, Mordred. They've become my friends."

Mordred pressed a long elegant finger to his lips. "You care for him. That's all that is important to me."

Kael smiled. The elf faded away, and Kael headed to his lab. He really did need to check on an experiment he'd had Irene set up for him.

* * * * *

Realm of Dreams

Mordred watched Kael leave the vault. He couldn't help but feel left out by the camaraderie that existed between Kael and the other men. He knew it wasn't their fault. He also knew it was best if the other mortals didn't see him.

"I'll talk to you later, love," he thought to George.

"See you in a little while."

His lover sounded distracted and Mordred wasn't happy with that. So many years had passed since he'd had to share George with anyone. He frowned. Was he jealous? Elves didn't get jealous. They also didn't form long-lasting relationships, but from the moment Mordred had seen George, he'd known the man was the only one for him. He'd set out to seduce the knight with single-minded intention.

"Mordred, you must present yourself to me in court as soon as possible."

Gaia's summons made him grit his teeth. Mordred hated the court at Gaia's palace. The goddess surrounded herself with sycophants and ambitious creatures. He wasn't interested in achieving a place on her advisory committee or the ruling council. As narcissistic as he was, he always felt dirty after spending a night being stared at by those beings.

With a thought, he materialized in the antechamber to Gaia's throne room. He replaced his jeans and T-shirt with linen trousers and a blue silk dress shirt the color of George's eyes. A nod to the chamberlain let the elderly man know Mordred was ready to be announced.

"Lord Mordred de St. Albans." The stentorian voice of the man echoed through the room.

Snickers were heard, but Mordred ignored them. He hated using his true title and chose to take George's last name as his, just as he would if they were married in the

mortal world. He gave a silent snort. Marriage between men in the unmagical world wasn't possible, but he still liked to pretend.

Gaia gestured for him to approach. He dropped to one knee before the goddess and bowed his head.

"You choose to challenge my authority any chance you get, my pet." Gaia touched his hair briefly. "You may rise."

"What do you mean, my lady? I arrived as quickly as possible." He regained his feet and turned, offering her his arm.

She slid a pale hand on top of his arm. They moved off through the crowd.

"You know how I feel about human garb in my court."

Mordred glanced down at the shirt and pants he wore. "I have found they are rather comfortable, plus these happen to be made with natural fabrics."

The goddess bestowed a warm smile on a pixie, but her words were cold. "I don't care what fabrics those things are made of. They are offensive to me."

"I will return to my room and change, my lady." Anything to get away from the tension in the room.

"Not this time. Simply remember my patience runs only so deep, even for such a beautiful being as you."

He smothered the gasp as her nails dug into his forearm with biting precision. Blood welled from the wounds. Inclining his head, he said, "Yes, Your Majesty."

"Where is your handsome consort? We have not seen him in several months." Gaia laughed and offered her free hand to a tall blond man. "Beowulf, how pleasant it is to see you."

Beowulf bent over Gaia's hand, not having the nerve to touch her skin with his lips. "Your Majesty is looking as beautiful as ever. The centuries have been kind to you."

"Flattery will get you somewhere, my lord." She nodded toward Mordred. "I believe you have met Lord Mordred."

"Yes, my lady, we have met." Mordred managed a civil tone. He'd had a torrid yet brief affair with the tall Englishman. It ended badly when Beowulf accused Mordred of using his magic to seduce Beowulf into his bed.

Mordred had never needed to seduce anyone into having sex with him; plus, he wouldn't have chosen to waste power on a cretin like Beowulf. He knew the immortal's problem with Mordred was because he'd broken their relationship off as soon as George entered the court. Beowulf was the type of guy who wanted to end things on his terms.

Beowulf sneered. "St. Albans."

Gaia watched the interaction between them with intense interest. Mordred wasn't willing to indulge her. He knew the goddess liked nothing better than vicious sparring between her attendants.

"Beowulf." He inclined his head. Turning his back on the other man, he bowed. "I'll tell Sir George you were asking after him, and I'm sure he'll be joining us tomorrow night. He's been busy with other things."

Her kaleidoscope eyes studied him, and he kept his mind blank. Mordred tried to make sure that nothing in his demeanor said he was lying. Technically, he wasn't. George was busy with other things. He just wasn't saying what things his lover was busy doing.

"I'll let you go, Mordred, but make sure George graces my table with his presence soon. I don't like being ignored by my friends." She moved away, dismissing him.

He whirled around, getting ready to head out, when Beowulf grabbed his arm.

"Don't be overconfident. Your influence with Gaia is coming to an end. You'll regret your ill treatment of me," Beowulf snarled at him.

Mordred shrugged off Beowulf's touch. "I have nothing to regret in regard to you, Beowulf. Never touch me again."

"Or what? You'll get St. Albans to beat me up?" Beowulf scoffed.

He grabbed Beowulf's shirt, twisting his hand into the fabric and pressing his knuckles against Beowulf's windpipe. "I don't need George to take care of you for me. I can do it quite ably on my own."

He pushed Beowulf away before strolling off while the other man coughed. Anger surged through Mordred's nerves. How dared that ruffian think Mordred couldn't take care of himself? He'd dealt with scarier creatures than Beowulf. George was his lover, not his defender or protector.

Mordred flashed into the suite of rooms he shared with George. Flinging his clothes off, he stomped into the bathing room and turned the shower on. He would have to cool down before he went to talk to a healer about Bailey.

Chapter Two

Mordred grunted as George climbed out of the bed the next morning.

"Where are you going?"

George glanced over his shoulder to see the blond-haired elf sitting up in bed, letting the blankets pool around his waist. The knight traced Mordred's lean body with his gaze, enjoying a view he never got tired of.

Centuries had passed since Mordred could claim to be young, but the elf looked no older than thirty. A stunning combination of white gold hair and coal black eyes turned heads even among the beings who call the Realm their home.

Lightly tanned skin stretched over firm muscles created a man George was more than happy to share a bed with. His eyes trailed down over Mordred's chest to where the sheets were tented by his lover's erection.

"Like what you see?" Mordred stretched, baring more of his groin where blond curls peeked out from under the dark blue blanket.

"I always like what I see when I look at you. Have since the first time we met." He dropped his robe and crawled back onto the bed.

"Hmmm...really? I'd think after all these centuries you'd be getting a little bored." Mordred pouted slightly.

Frowning, George wondered what would make his lover think that. The sheet slipped away from Mordred's hips, revealing the long thin cock he liked to feel in his mouth as much as possible. He tugged the sheet the rest of the way off and spread Mordred's thighs farther apart to fit his shoulders between them. Licking a line from behind Mordred's balls to the tip of his cock made George forget everything except the taste of his lover.

He glanced up to see Mordred drop his head back and groan. George loved the sounds Mordred made when he was making love to the elf. He sucked the tip of

Mordred's prick into his mouth, teasing the slit with his tongue. Wrapping his hand around the base of Mordred's shaft, he pumped as he bobbed his head up and down. He took Mordred in until the flared head of the elf's cock hit the back of his throat.

He swallowed and massaged the length of flesh in his mouth. Sliding his free hand down, he squeezed Mordred's balls firmly.

"Uh," Mordred grunted, spreading his legs wider.

George took that as an invitation. His finger joined Mordred's cock in his mouth, and he made sure it got good and wet. He pulled it out and pressed it against Mordred's puckered opening. He hummed a little. After centuries of being together, George knew what he wanted. Mordred relaxed and pushed toward him. His finger pierced the tight ass in his hands, easing in up to the knuckle. He crooked his finger and rubbed Mordred's gland.

Mordred jerked, shoving more of his cock into George's mouth. George removed one digit and replaced it with two. A second later, he put three in, needing to get Mordred stretched, so he could feel that tight channel encasing his cock like a glove.

"Now, love," Mordred tugged on his hair.

He moved away, reaching for the little jar of oil they kept next to the bed. He opened it and poured some into his hand. He put a thick coat of oil on his prick and inserted three slick fingers into Mordred's ass.

Slapping Mordred on the hip, he said, "Hands and knees, my heart."

Mordred turned over and settled, forehead resting on his arms, hips canted, offering the tight ass George was addicted to. George took his cock in hand and positioned it at Mordred's opening. He gripped the lean hip in front of him and thrust in.

"Goddess," Mordred moaned.

George bit his lip, savoring the feel of Mordred's ass surrounding his flesh. Mordred's heat made George whimper a little as he slid in and out of his lover.

The elf rose up on his knees, grabbing the top rail of the oak headboard. George shoved in and Mordred slammed back. The smell of sex and sweat filled the room. No words. Just grunts and groans. Pressure built in George's balls, warning him of his impending climax. Prying his hand off Mordred's hip, he reached around and started jerking the elf off.

"Ah..." Mordred shouted.

Wet heat spilled over George's hand, and the clenching of Mordred's ass milked his pleasure from him. He shot his cum deep into his lover, marking the elf as his. Staying draped over Mordred's back, he caught his breath and waited until his softened cock slid from his lover's ass before rolling onto his back, gasping.

"Nice way to start the day," Mordred murmured, letting go of the headboard and snuggling close to him under the blankets.

George chuckled weakly as he fought off the need to sleep. He climbed out of bed and grabbed the robe he'd dropped. As he headed toward the bathing room, he glanced back at Mordred, curled around a pillow in the middle of the bed.

"I have to go and meet with Hugh and the others this morning."

Mordred mumbled something and waved a hand at him. He went in and started the water running. He wet a cloth under the warm flow before returning to the bed. He jerked the sheet off Mordred.

"What the hell is your problem?" the elf growled.

"I'm cleaning you off since you're going to be lazy and stay in bed all morning." He gently wiped his lover's cock and ass off, covering Mordred back up when he finished.

"Not all of us are in a hurry to save the world, love." Mordred buried his face in a pillow and turned his back on George.

"What does that mean?"

"Nothing. You go and talk to Hugh and give Kael a kiss for me. Tell him I'm checking on the information he wanted."

Mordred hadn't sounded like he was joking, but George had learned over the centuries to leave his lover alone when the elf was in a mood.

He climbed into the bath and picked up the soap. It was plucked from his hands. Looking up, he watched Mordred join him.

"Turn around," the elf ordered him.

The mini waterfall they'd built in their bathing room poured over his shoulders, soaking his hair and easing aches in his muscles. Fighting dragons for six months straight was rough on a body, even an immortal one like his. Mordred's soap-slick hands massaged George's back, hitting all the tight places he didn't even know existed.

George braced his hands against the stone wall, letting his head drop forward, and moaned.

Mordred laughed. "It's been a while, love."

He nodded, voice strangled in his throat as Mordred knelt behind him and spread his cheeks, baring his hole to the water rushing down. He widened his stance and tilted his hips slightly, offering Mordred what he knew his lover wanted.

Mordred placed a kiss on the soft skin at the small of George's back before licking from behind George's balls to the top of his crease. Another groan oozed from him as Mordred pushed his tongue in past the ring of muscle. The first time the elf had pleased George with his tongue, the knight had been surprised. He'd never dreamed Mordred would enjoy doing that.

George pushed back and soon Mordred was fucking him with his tongue, loosening George up for what was to come. George's erection bumped into the rough wall in front of him. Mordred reached around, wrapped a hand around his shaft, and pumped.

"Soon, love," George demanded as he thrust his cock through the tunnel Mordred created with his hand.

He bit back the protest as Mordred pulled away from him. Shooting a glance over his shoulder, he saw Mordred open the small bottle of lotion they kept in the bathing room. His lover squirted some of the slick lotion in the palm of his hand and tossed the bottle down outside the pool. George turned back to rest his forehead against the wall.

The flared head of Mordred's cock rubbed George's hole. George felt Mordred smooth his hand over George's spine, encouraging George to push back. He did and Mordred slid home like George's ass was made to fit him. They moaned as the elf pulled out and slipped back in, easy and gentle.

George groaned. "Harder. Damn you."

Mordred's chuckle held a hint of cruelty. Shivering, George clenched his muscles around Mordred's cock. Mordred pulled out and George forced his body to relax. The elf slammed back in and George cried out.

"You want it hard and fast, my knight?" Mordred's warm breath caressed George's ear as Mordred bent over his back, burying his prick deep inside George.

"Yes, please," he begged.

There was a time when he'd never beg for anything. He would never have made himself so vulnerable, but he'd learned through the centuries that Mordred would never hurt him. Not deliberately to cause pain. Only pleasure.

"You have but to command me, Sir George."

He tensed his arms to keep from banging his head as Mordred started reaming his ass. George rocked in time with Mordred's thrusts, causing the elf to nail his gland with every stroke. Tingling spread through his body, dancing along his nerve endings and drawing his balls tight to his body.

"Gonna come, Mordred," he warned.

Mordred growled. Obeying the unspoken order, George arched his head back, giving his lover access to his throat. He climaxed as Mordred's teeth pierced his skin and his lover's prick nailed his gland hard.

"Yes," he shouted, cum spurting from his cock in time with each suck of Mordred's mouth.

The elf rocked with him, thrusting until pleasure overpowered his control, and Mordred bathed George's inner channel with his own seed. Mordred moaned, taking more of George's blood.

When they stopped jerking and their climaxes eased off, Mordred pulled out of George. The knight groaned at the emptiness of his ass now that Mordred was gone. Mordred rinsed them both off as George tried to adjust to the blood loss.

Mordred found the small jar of ointment the healers gave them to seal the wounds Mordred's fangs made in George's neck. George let Mordred take care of him until he could trust his own legs to support him instead of leaning on the wall.

He reached out and wrapped his hand in Mordred's blond hair. The elf didn't fight it as he brought their lips together. Swiping his tongue inside Mordred's warm mouth, he tasted the metallic tang of his own blood. He shivered and his cock twitched, but he didn't have the energy for another round with his lover.

"It's been too long since you've taken my blood, love." George stepped out of the waterfall shower to grab a towel.

"We've been busy." Mordred shrugged, drying himself off.

"True, but you shouldn't deny yourself what you need." He padded out into their bedroom to get dressed.

Mordred didn't answer, and George's mind had skipped to the meeting he would be having with the mortals in an hour. He dropped an absentminded kiss on Mordred's cheek as the elf strolled past him.

"I'll see you later tonight."

Mordred gave a vague wave. "See you whenever you show up, love. Remember to tell Kael I'll check on those things we talked about earlier."

"Okay."

He left, already planning the day and forgetting about how Mordred's tone of voice worried him.

Chapter Three

Mordred watched George leave before he dressed and wandered out of their suite. He headed toward the willow groves where the healers congregated.

He looked for one healer in particular. Hester was one of the oldest healers in the Realm. She could have lived in the mortal world like most healers did, but her talent was so strong she could literally “raise the dead,” and most humans didn’t deal well with that.

Hester hated that aspect of her magic, and Mordred couldn’t blame her. There was a limit to her talent. Depending on how long the person had been dead, they could become zombies if Hester touched them. They would be soulless, mindless monsters.

During the Inquisition, her healing power was witnessed and she was accused of witchcraft. She was sentenced to burn at the stake for her heresy. Hester had begged for Gaia to save her, but the fickle goddess chose to ignore Hester’s pleas. Mordred couldn’t allow his friend to die, and he went against Gaia’s wishes to rescue Hester from the fanatics.

He had earned Gaia’s wrath for it. His punishment was banishment from her court until she got over her pique. Mordred admitted it wasn’t a harsh punishment in his eyes, but for most of her followers, it would have been agony.

“Mordred, what are you doing here?” A harsh voice broke through his memories.

Turning, he grinned at the stoop-shouldered woman shuffling toward him. He hugged her carefully. Healers lived almost as long as elves did, but the torture she endured during her imprisonment had made her bones rather brittle. He didn’t want to bruise her.

“I’ve come looking for my favorite lady.” He winked.

“Such a flirt.” Hester slapped his chest. “Would you like some tea?”

“Is it your special brew?”

Mordred followed her into a stone cottage. The walls and floor of Hester's cottage were carved from stone brought from Stonehenge in England. The power in the gray rock supplemented Hester's and also blocked her from some of the unpleasant magic moving in the Realm.

"You know I'd only serve the best for you, Mordred." She cackled. "How is your handsome lover?"

He didn't really want to think about George at the moment. "George is fine. Very busy, though."

"Yes. I've heard that dragons are reappearing in the human world." Hester shot him a sly glance before she lifted the kettle off the fire and poured two cups of tea.

Mordred took the tray from her and carried it outside to the small table behind the cottage. Silver birch trees ringed the clearing and a warm breeze teased their leaves. He set the tray down and helped Hester with her chair.

"I've also heard the goddess has given some poor mortal certain powers that are supposed to help with this unfortunate occurrence."

He stiffened and glared at her. "Who did you hear that from?"

Butter wouldn't have melted in Hester's mouth from the innocent expression on her face.

"Even here in the Realm where not everything is what it seems to be, there is a tendency to ignore the very old. People talk and don't think about who is close enough to overhear."

Mordred paced, hands clasped behind his back, mostly to keep him from strangling the old woman. "Hester, who have you heard talking? Do you realize that not just dragons are appearing in the mortal world? All kinds of magical creatures have been spotted throughout the world."

"I've heard that as well. Seems someone is interested in returning magic to the humans." Hester sipped her tea.

"Do you know who?" He whirled to look at her. Frustration clipped his words. "If we end this now, George can stop spending all his time with them."

Hester cackled like the old hag she was. "And that is the real reason you want to know. You can't stand to share that knight of yours."

He started to deny it. His oldest friend raised her hand and stopped him.

"You might be able to fool yourself, Mordred, but I know the truth. You're a selfish creature, and you hate the fact that George's attention isn't focused directly on you anymore. You don't know what to do when you're not the center of George's world."

He wanted to protest. To prove to Hester that he wasn't selfish. He was willing to let George help Kael and Hugh. He actually liked those two mortals. The lies stuck on his tongue. Oh, he did like Hugh and Kael, but he didn't like the fact that George seemed to spend more time with them than he did with Mordred.

Groaning, he flopped into his chair and covered his face with his hands. "Am I really that selfish, Hester?"

She patted his arm with her shaking hand. "No, dear. I was just teasing. You aren't used to sharing George, but it doesn't make you selfish. Simply spoiled."

Hester settled back into her chair with a sigh. "I suggest you look to one of your old lovers for more information on the dragons. Dark times are ahead unless Gaia takes a firm hold."

Mordred snorted. "A firm hold? She is more likely to encourage any sort of rebellion, merely because she is bored."

"Hush now, Mordred. You don't want to anger her," she warned him.

He leaned back, resting his head on the back of the chair and staring up at the blue sky peeking through the silver birch leaves. He didn't care about angering Gaia. He was tired of always playing by her rules. He was weary of bowing to her and being her errand boy. Maybe his encouragement of George helping Kael was a veiled attempt at rebellion in his own way. No matter how jealous he might be about the amount of time his lover spent with the humans, he wouldn't say a word to stop George.

"Maybe feeling some kind of emotion would be good for the old girl." He smirked.

Hester shook her head. "Don't bring me into this, Mordred."

He took her gnarled hand and stroked the parchment-thin skin. Her knuckles hurt, but she wouldn't take anything for the pain. He whispered a word and eased some magic into her bones, strengthening them and taking the ache away.

"I would never do anything to endanger you, Hester. You're my oldest friend, and Goddess knows, I don't have many of those."

She clasped his hand with a surprisingly firm grip. "You won't be getting rid of me that easily, Mordred. You saved my life, young man. I owe you more than just my friendship. Now why did you come looking for me?"

"Wanting to see your beautiful face isn't reason enough for me to stop by?" He winked.

Her laughter filled the clearing. "You are a charmer."

He relaxed and let go of her hand to pick up his teacup. "I was wondering if you have a spell or potion for pain. I have a friend who was severely injured. His wounds have healed, but he's still in a great deal of pain because of them."

Hester studied him with a shrewd gleam in her eyes. "A friend, huh? It wouldn't be one of those humans you seem to despise so much."

Mordred thought for a moment. "To be honest, it's for a friend of a friend. I don't have much of an opinion on the one who's in pain. I'm asking because Kael asked me if I knew of anything."

"Let me think. I assume you don't want anything that could become addictive." Her eyes became thoughtful.

"If there is such a thing, then yes, I don't want it to be addictive. He has enough issues to deal with. We don't want to add addiction to them."

Hester got to her feet. "Come with me. I might have a potion he can take each morning, but there are a lot of ingredients, and I can't be gathering them all. Especially since we aren't supposed to be helping humans."

He collected their cups and tray before following the healer into her cottage. "That's all right, Hester. I'll get all the stuff if you can just make it for me."

"You can help, but I'll also grab Niall. Leprechauns are a lazy lot. He needs to do more than sit around drinking ale and talking about the good old days," she grumbled, rooting around the crowded bookshelves in her study.

"You must be willing to overlook his drinking habits, Hester. After all, he is a leprechaun. As for reminiscing about the good old days, there are days when I'd like to join them." Mordred propped his body up on the doorframe and watched her.

"We all have those days, yet that silly little man seems to wallow in the melancholy." Her exasperation with Niall was plain in her voice.

"There's nothing for him to do, Hester. No one chases rainbows anymore. They've almost forgotten where their pots of gold are." He smirked.

Hester caught his grin and shook her head. "You haven't been messing with them, have you, Mordred?"

"Me?" He tried to look innocent, but knew he failed by the sigh Hester gave. "Okay, so maybe I moved one pot of gold, but I guarantee they haven't gone looking for it because there hasn't been an uproar about it."

She shook her head. "It's your funeral when they find it missing." Pulling a book off a shelf, she crowed in delight. "Found it."

He grabbed the heavy tome from her and carried it over to a table. He set it down, then moved out of the way. Hester opened it, running a finger over the words to find what she was looking for. She flipped the pages.

"Bring me a pen and some paper."

Moving stuff around on her messy desk, he finally located a pen and some paper. He brought it to his friend, and she proceeded to write up a long list of ingredients. When she finished, she handed him two sheets and kept one for herself.

"You need to find this stuff, and I'll get Niall and Seamus to find this list."

Mordred glanced over the list and cringed. He'd be spending two days collecting it and a good amount of coin as well. Some of the stuff wasn't easy to come by. He didn't know Bailey that well, but making Kael happy was worth it, he thought.

Hester waved. "I'll make sure the other items are here when you return."

"I'll try to bring this to you in a couple days." He strolled off, already thinking about his journey.

Chapter Four

George arrived in their suite as Mordred finished dressing for dinner at Gaia's table later that night. He dropped the end of his braid and turned to look at his lover.

"You have just enough time to shower and change before we are to present ourselves for dinner."

A grunt and George fell onto the bed, burying his face in the pillows. Mordred wandered over to the side and stared down at George.

"Come on, love. We can't be late. Gaia is getting peeved at us as it is."

"I'm not going," George mumbled, loud enough for Mordred to hear him without removing his face from the bed.

Anger rose in him, but he took a breath, trying not to yell.

"You have to go. She asked about you last night. What am I supposed to tell her? You ignored a direct summons because you were out helping the humans she told us not to help?"

"You'll think of something. You're good at lying, Mordred. I'm too tired to play nice with her or those arrogant, toad-eating brownnosers she surrounds herself with."

Good at lying? He couldn't believe George had just said that. He leaned over and slapped the knight as hard as he could on the ass.

"Bloody hell, Mordred. What the hell did you do that for?" George rolled over and glared at him, rubbing the spot Mordred hit.

"Good at lying? What do you mean by that?" He crossed his arms and stared down at his lover.

"I meant you're good at all that double-talk that goes on at Gaia's court. Being polite when you'd rather rip the person's head off." George slid to the other side of the

bed. "I barely have the patience to spend time there on a good day. I've been fighting dragons and all kinds of other creatures all day. I'm tired and I'm not going."

"You're tired? What do you think I've been doing all day?" He paced the room, spinning around each time he came to a wall.

"I wouldn't know. I assume you hang out with your friends and read." George managed to shrug without getting up.

Mordred gritted his teeth. "Hang out with friends?"

George sighed. "Come on, Mordred. It's not like you do anything important."

His mouth fell open, and for the first time Mordred could ever remember, he was speechless. Not like he did anything important? Did George really see him as a useless piece of eye candy who did nothing all day except lie around with friends and eat bonbons? Anger and hurt welled up in him and his throat closed. There wasn't any way he could get the words out to yell at George.

Turning, he stalked toward the door. Before he left, he looked back over his shoulder and spat, "Don't wait up for me. I don't know when I'll be dragging my useless ass home."

A grunt was the only thing he heard as he slammed the door behind him. Muttering, he stomped up the hallway leading to the dining room. He was so caught up in his own anger he didn't notice the figure in front of him until he ran into it.

"Trouble in paradise, Mordred?" Beowulf's words dripped venomous delight.

He jerked away from the Englishman. "I'm not in the mood for you. Go bother someone who isn't wise to your tricks."

"Such fire. That crude dragon killer has no idea what he has in you. You are such a treasure and yet he lets you wander around alone." Beowulf frowned. "Odd way to treat someone he cares for."

The other man's words mirrored Mordred's thoughts, but he wasn't willing to let his ex-lover know that.

"Fuck off, Beowulf."

He moved away as Beowulf's laughter followed behind him. Mordred headed away from the Great Dining Hall. He'd never make it through dinner without stabbing someone with his fork or slitting his own wrists. He left the palace and moved through the gardens toward an abandoned gazebo.

For centuries after Gaia created the Realm of Dreams, the gazebo served as the only entrance to and from the Realm for humans. Everyone always knew when a new mortal had been snared. The gazebo lit up as bright as gold in sunlight.

They would fight to be the first one the captive saw, because a spell ensured the human would fall in love with the first creature his gaze fell upon.

Mordred lay back on one of the benches inside the gazebo, ignoring the puff of dust rising from the cushions. Staring up through one of the holes in the roof, he studied the stars.

Those were some of the best moments in Mordred's life. He would spend hours staking out the gazebo, wanting to be the one the mortal fell in love with. Of course, he grew bored with the fawning and complete obedience after a few days, and he'd sent them back home.

Maybe that was why he fell so hard for George. Well, that and the fact that George was the most gorgeous man he'd ever seen. No one would deny George was stubborn and intelligent. He always questioned Mordred's commands and had to know every detail before he made a decision.

Mordred accepted the fact he was a spoiled brat. It was easy to be one when everyone catered to him. He'd been Gaia's favorite for centuries. Not wanting to risk the Goddess's wrath, no one had ever told him no. Folding his arms behind his head, he closed his eyes and thought about the first time he saw George.

* * * * *

The knight knelt in front of Gaia, head bent and dark curls covering his face. Mordred joined the crowd around the Goddess and the stranger. Others whispered about the mysterious mortal who had entered the Realm without getting ensnared by the protection spells.

"Who is he?" he asked a blushing nymph standing next to him.

She shrugged. "I don't know. He strolled in here as calm as you please and demanded to see Gaia."

"And Gaia didn't strike him dead?"

"No. She simply laughed and gestured for him to approach her." The nymph giggled. "He certainly is a strapping man, isn't he?"

He eyed the firm, leather-covered ass presented so perfectly by the man's position. "Hmmm...yes, he certainly is," he purred and started to move.

The nymph grabbed his arm and glared at him. "No, Mordred. It's not fair. You always get the good ones." She pouted.

"I get the ones with good taste, sweets." He patted her on the cheek and pulled away.

Chapter Five

Mortal World

"Kael, do you have those test results on the green dragon we killed last week?" Hugh asked, walking into Kael's lab.

"Sure. They're right here."

He looked up to see Kael holding out a sheaf of papers. His chest tightened at the sparkle in Kael's eyes.

"Kael was explaining to me the parameters of the test he ran, Price."

Glancing over, he saw Von Offerman standing close to Kael. Too close in Hugh's opinion. Jealousy surged through him, and he fought the urge to jerk Kael behind him.

"I didn't know you were here, Von Offerman." He shook the man's hand and tried not to growl at him.

"I just arrived and came straight to talk to Kael." Von Offerman flashed Kael a smile. "I needed his expert advice."

Kael blushed and looked pleased. Hugh hated the idea that anyone else could make his lover blush. He surprised himself with that thought. Mordred flirted with Kael so much, Hugh was sure Kael's cheeks would be permanently red. Why did it bother him to have Von Offerman do it?

"Opinion on what?"

The question came out gruffer than he wanted. Kael shot him a puzzled look and Hugh shrugged.

"Some strange creatures are appearing in Europe. I brought some pictures to ask Kael if he had any thought about what they might be." Von Offerman waved a hand toward a pile of pictures on Kael's desk.

"Are they snakes?" Hugh wanted to smack his hand against his head after that question.

Von Offerman's lips tightened. "No, but Kael is an intelligent man. He can make informed opinions without it being in his specialized field."

A hurt expression crossed Kael's face, and Hugh touched Kael's hand, getting his lover's attention.

"I'm sorry. It's been a long day already."

He knew it wasn't a good excuse, but it was the best he could offer at the moment. He didn't know why he was reacting so possessively of Kael, and he didn't want to scare the young scientist, considering how controlling Kael's ex-lover had been.

Both Kael and Von Offerman gave him skeptical glances. Hugh decided it was time to beat a hasty retreat.

"I have to get these results back to Wellmine." He kissed Kael on the cheek and nodded at Von Offerman.

Kael's laughter drifted after him as he left the lab. Hugh fought the urge to invent some reason why he needed Kael to leave with him.

The rest of the day, every time he went looking for Kael, Von Offerman was with him. They sat at a table in the cafeteria, heads close together, talking quietly. When Von Offerman hugged Kael in the hall, Hugh had enough. He stalked toward them, muttering under his breath.

"Oh no."

Monica, his personal assistant, grabbed his arm and pulled him back into his office. She shut the door and leaned against it.

"What do you want?" He glared at her.

"I want to know what has got you all tied up in knots and why you're taking this out on Kael." She folded her arms over her chest and watched him with a stubborn look on her face.

"There's nothing wrong," he mumbled, as he dropped down into his chair and swung his feet up on his desk.

Monica laughed and settled into the chair across from him. "Right. That's why you've been stomping around all day, bitching at everyone, and staring daggers into Dr. Von Offerman."

His cheeks warmed and he ducked his head. "I am not."

"Did you and Kael have a fight this morning before you came in?"

God, he didn't want to talk about this with Monica. He scrubbed his hand over his face and shook his head.

"No. I'm just having a bad day, Monica. Everyone's entitled to one once in a while."

She smiled. "Sure, but I get the feeling it has more to do with Doctor Von Offerman spending so much time with Kael than you having a bad day."

Hugh laid his head on his desk. "I'm an idiot, I know that, Monica. You don't have to point that out to me." He gestured to several files somewhere in front of him. "Take these to Sergeant Stevenson. He'll need those lists to figure out what to request from the military."

He heard the thud of her feet as she stood and the scrape of the paper when she picked the files up. The door opened, but he didn't hear her leave.

"I don't think I've ever seen you jealous."

The amusement in her voice made him cringe.

"Just go, Monica."

She chuckled and left.

As soon as the click of the door alerted him that she was gone, he jumped to his feet and locked the door. He flung himself on the couch against the wall and closed his eyes.

"Mordred, I need to talk to you."

Opening his eyes, Hugh stared up at the star-studded night sky. Trees swayed in the breeze. He was no longer in his office, but the clearing where he'd met Mordred and George all those months ago. Movement to his left caught his attention, and he turned his head to see Mordred standing there. He approached the elf. Hugh didn't flinch away as Mordred reached out to caress his rough jaw.

"What do you want, Hugh?"

Hugh stared up into the black, fathomless eyes of Mordred and told himself he was crazy for coming to talk to the elf. The insufferable creature had never had a moment of self-doubt or jealousy in all his thousands of years of life.

Mordred must have sensed his hesitation because the blond elf took Hugh's hand and led him to where a blanket appeared on the ground in the middle of the clearing. He dragged his feet, thinking this was the worst idea he'd ever had.

"I've changed my mind. I'll just go back to my office and continue to embarrass myself in front of everyone."

"Nonsense. It must be important for you to have called me here." Mordred's smile was self-deprecating. "I know I'm not your favorite person in the world."

"That's not true," he protested. "I like you."

"You like me well enough." Mordred shrugged. "You get along much better with George, and who wouldn't, really? I mean, he's perfect."

The hint of anger in Mordred's voice caught Hugh's ear. Maybe things weren't all rainbows and butterflies in Mordred's world.

"It's not that I like George better than you. I'm more comfortable with him because we're both warriors and I've worked with him. I've never spent time one-on-one with you." He blushed at how suggestive that statement came out.

"What's sad is that we'll never find out how well we suit." Mordred leered at him.

"Like you would ever cheat on George." He joined Mordred on the blanket.

"You're right. I'd never want to hurt Saint George," Mordred mumbled.

Hugh punched Mordred in the arm. "What the hell is wrong with you?"

Mordred glanced away and shrugged. "I guess I'm not in a good mood."

He studied the elf for a moment, deciding it probably wasn't any of his business.

"Why is it so different here? Back home, it's raining and daytime." He waved a hand up at the clear night sky.

Shifting around, Mordred laughed. "What's the point of creating a paradise if you're subjected to rain or snow? It's never too hot or too cold. Everything is so blasted perfect in the Realm. It's enough to make me ill."

Hugh grunted and flopped back to lie flat on the ground. "Quit it. Your mood is depressing enough to make a clown cry."

Mordred visibly shuddered, shaking off whatever foul mood he carried. When he leaned on his elbow and looked down at Hugh, his dark eyes gleamed with mischief and interest.

"Now that I've stopped being such a self-absorbed whiny snot for at least a few minutes, tell me why you brought me here."

Hugh closed his eyes. "I didn't think I could. I thought Kael was the one who could get in touch with you."

He was avoiding the question, but being here and talking to Mordred made him feel silly. He'd never had bouts of jealousy or low self-esteem. And no matter how crabby Mordred was, Hugh doubted the elf ever questioned his place in George's world.

"As your connection with Kael grows stronger, you'll be able to call us anytime."

A golden glow emanated from the hand Mordred held up. Hugh watched it pool in Mordred's palm before trickling down his arm to flow toward Hugh. His muscles tensed, and he wanted to avoid being touched by the light, but running from uncomfortable situations wasn't in him, so he froze.

"Don't worry," Mordred whispered. "It won't hurt. It feels good actually."

Warmth raced up his leg from where the thread wrapped around his ankle. He gasped as the light ran up his thigh, over his groin, and sank into his chest.

"This is what the connection looks like. It runs from George and me through Kael to you. It enables both of you to call us and we must obey."

"Like a compulsion or a *geas*?" He didn't like the sound of that.

"In a way. A geas can be used in several different ways, good or bad, depending on who cast the spell." Mordred shrugged. "It would seem like our fair goddess tied us together for some reason we'll never really understand, I'm sure."

"Why would she do that?"

Rolling over on his back, Mordred stared up at the sky. "I don't know. Most of the time, she does what she wants, and the rest of us deal with the fallout."

Hugh nodded. After serving in the military and the intelligence branch, he understood what Mordred meant.

"Why me?"

The expression Mordred shot him was confused.

"I mean you're such good friends with George, why didn't you drag his ass out of bed to talk to you?"

"He's been so busy, helping us out with the dragons and things. I didn't want to bother him when he should be sleeping."

Mordred sighed. "And since I don't do anything all day except drink wine with my friends and flirt with pixies, I have all the time in the world to talk to you."

Hugh wondered at the bitterness in the elf's voice. "No, that's not why I wanted to talk to you. I don't know what you do to keep busy, but I'm sure it's important. George wouldn't love you if you sat around on your ass all day." He scrubbed his hand over his face before staring down at the blanket. "I'm worried."

The stillness next to him made him look over at Mordred. The elf was staring at him with a shocked expression on his face. God, he felt like an idiot. He jumped to his feet.

"Look, this wasn't a good idea. I'm sorry for dragging you out of bed for this. I should go." He took a step, thinking he'd just head back to Kael and kick his own ass for mentioning this to the elf.

"I don't think so, love." Mordred grabbed his hand and yanked him back down on the blanket.

He found himself pinned to the ground with Mordred draped over him, a living breathing cover. Looking up into the elf's black eyes, he drowned in the swirling emotions that broke to the obsidian surface like dolphins to breathe, only to disappear underneath the ripples. His thoughts drifted away and he reached up, threading his fingers through Mordred's long blond hair. Whatever the elf was thinking, it was hidden behind those beautiful eyes. Mordred dipped his head and placed a quick peck on Hugh's lips before rolling off him. Mordred folded his arms behind his head and closed his eyes.

"What the hell was that?" Hugh shot up, glaring down at the elf.

"That was nothing. Something that happens when a human stares too long at an elf. We are different from you, plus I think we give off some pheromone to attract you to us which makes it easier for us to seduce you."

He snorted. "Why am I not surprised?"

"Anything to get an advantage over you and what does it matter? It's not like it did us any good. We're still stuck in this stupid realm while you live in the real world." Mordred poked him in the side. "Stop changing the subject."

"What do you mean?" He tried to look innocent.

"Innocent isn't a look you can pull off anymore, love."

It was worth a shot. He should have known the elf wouldn't give up that easily. He gave up.

"What if this doesn't work and the mortal world is overrun by mythical creatures? What if magic takes over again?" He plucked at the blanket. "What if I'm just a rebound relationship for Kael?"

Chapter Six

Mordred's mouth dropped open. He wanted to ask Hugh to repeat the last question, but didn't think the mortal would.

"We'll get to the question of what happens if the barrier falls in a moment. I want to address the doubt you seem to be having in Kael's love." Mordred sat up and folded his legs under him. He reached out to grip Hugh's chin in his hand and turned the man's face toward him. When Hugh's eyes met his, he thumped the mortal in the forehead with his other hand.

"Ow...what was that for?"

"I wanted to knock some sense into you. Do you seriously think Kael is just using you until he gets his confidence back?" He shook his head. "For such an intelligent guy, you aren't very smart."

"Are you telling me you've never doubted George in the hundreds of years you've been together?" Hugh eyed him skeptically.

He tucked one hand behind his back and crossed his fingers before he lied. "No, never. I mean really, why would George's attention wander when he can have me any time he wants me?"

That statement had been true up until the first dragon appeared. Now, Mordred wasn't so sure. Not so much about George's attention wandering to someone else, but that George didn't need him or see him as useful. No one needed to know that, though, especially Hugh, who doubted his own lover.

"True. I know Kael wouldn't use me like that, but still there's a small part of me that worries about it. Maybe my love for Kael is helping him regain his confidence and self-esteem. Once he gets those back, he'll find someone else to love."

Hugh seemed to be forcing the words out like he understood just how stupid they sounded, but couldn't help thinking them. Mordred rubbed his forehead and frowned.

Maybe he should have made Hugh get George up. He hated dealing with relationship issues. Being an elf, he didn't understand the emotions humans dealt with. Mortals felt things in a way that he didn't. Living for centuries tended to ease the urgency of life.

"You were the first man to look at Kael and see what a wonderful man he is." Mordred rested his hand on Hugh's shoulder. "Trust me. What you and Kael have is solid. What's going on that makes you question him?"

Hugh plucked at the fabric and shrugged. "Nothing, really. When he's with Von Offerman, I feel like a third wheel. I know he had a crush on the man and his partner during school."

"And you're afraid that Kael wants to have a little fun with this Von Offerman, right?"

Mordred chuckled and Hugh flushed.

"I know it's stupid, but I can't help feeling that way at times."

"Humans can be so strange," Mordred commented thoughtfully. "You are very prudish when it comes to sex."

"It's not about sex. It's about love," Hugh protested.

Mordred shook his head. "No. If Kael were to join with Von Offerman and his partner, it would be sex and maybe mutual caring. With you, it is love. The kind of love you and Kael have is the simplest and purest form. Nothing will destroy it."

He rested his hand on Hugh's thigh and squeezed. "Trust me. I know the difference. I've had both in my life. Most of the relationships I had before I met George were the casual, fun kind. No attachments or commitments. Once I met George, it all changed. I'm not opposed to having a little fun once in a while with someone else, but only if George is with me. I would never share anyone's bed without him. He is mine at levels deeper than the mere physical."

"Soul mates?"

He cringed. "I hate those words."

"Why?" Hugh tilted his head, staring up at the sky.

"It implies there wasn't any choice in the relationship." Mordred grinned. "Trust me, there were a lot of choices made between us and any sort of relationship almost didn't happen."

"You weren't sure you wanted to settle down with one person?"

"Goddess, no. I knew I wanted George anyway I could have him. I didn't care what kind of hoops he made me jump through." He lay back down, folding his arms behind his head, and closed his eyes. "You see, George had never had feelings for guys before he met me."

Hugh stayed quiet and Mordred drifted through his memories.

* * * * *

The knight wiped his hand across his lips and glared at Mordred. "What the hell was that for?"

Mordred shrugged. "I wanted to see what you tasted like."

He trailed a finger over the slope of George's nose before rubbing it over the man's plump bottom lip. The dark-haired knight jerked away.

"Don't touch me," George growled.

"Are you tempted, Sir Knight?" Mordred purred. His groin throbbed with desire for George.

"No."

If George's vehement denial was supposed to convince Mordred, it didn't work. He stared into those flashing blue eyes and saw the truth. George wanted him, but fought his lust tooth and nail.

"Hmm. A pity really because I am very tempted by you."

He stepped closer to George, placing his hand in the middle of George's chest to feel the man's heart race. George pushed him away and he stumbled, hiding his smile beneath the swirl of his hair.

"Stop touching me."

"Mordred, leave my newest courtier alone." Gaia's voice rang over the crowd.

"I was only teasing, my lady. He is much too serious for your throne room." Mordred swept his arm back and bowed with a flourish.

Gaia's smile was indulgent. "You are incorrigible, Mordred."

"I know, my goddess, and that is what you like so much about me." He winked at her before turning to George.

Strolling past the knight, he managed to brush the back of his hand against George's groin. The knight snarled at him and Mordred chuckled. As much as George protested Mordred's touch, the elf had felt the rock-hard flesh beneath his hand. The knight wasn't as unaffected as he wanted everyone to believe.

* * * * *

"Did you seduce him?"

Hugh's question drew Mordred out of his memories. Mordred propped himself up on an elbow and pursed his lips. Was the campaign he waged to get George into his bed seduction or desperation? He had never been completely sure.

"I'm not sure whether I seduced him or if I just wore his resistance down. It could have simply been he grew tired of my constant attention and decided to succumb so I would leave him alone. I never asked." Mordred traced a pattern on the blanket. "I do know for my part, it started out as a game. I'd never been denied anything I wanted. George intrigued me with his dogged determination not to fall under my spell."

Hugh tugged on a lock of Mordred's hair. "I bet resisting you was the most difficult thing he'd ever done in his life."

"You flatter me." Unhappiness surged through him. He wanted it to be George sitting beside him under the night sky. He wanted George touching him and teasing him.

A lightening of the black warned them morning was approaching. Mordred sprang to his feet, holding his hand out to help Hugh up.

"Try not to buy trouble, Hugh. Kael loves you and wouldn't do anything to hurt you. Make sure you give him freedom, though. Crowding him and acting jealous will only push him away." Mordred kissed Hugh quickly. "I wish I had better wisdom to give you, but I have no experience with human emotions. All I can really say is trust your love."

Hugh nodded. "I guess you're right. Thanks for listening to me whine."

"It seems to some that I have nothing else to do. I'm at your disposal if you should ever need me again."

He bowed and sent his body to his suite. Stripping, he climbed in bed next to George. He wrapped his arm around George's waist and snuggled up against George's back. "*Trust in your love*" was what he had told Hugh. Maybe he should take his own advice.

Chapter Seven

Mortal World, two days later

Something dripped on the back of Kael's neck. Absently, he reached up and wiped it away without looking up from his microscope. He needed to get the formula worked out. One of the dragons that had appeared seemed to have venom similar to a scorpion's. So he needed to work out some antivenom, but it wasn't going well.

Another drop and again he wiped it away. *Hugh's going to have to do something about the ceiling if it's leaking again.*

A third drop.

Sighing, he turned and looked up.

"Fuck," he shouted.

George stood behind him, one hand outstretched to touch his shoulder. The other hand clutched his side where a gaping wound marred his chest and abdomen. Kael leaped to his feet and caught the knight as he collapsed. His own knees buckled. He wasn't built to support George's weight. He managed to lower George to the lab floor.

"Irene," he called for his lab assistant.

"D-D-Dr. H-H-Hammerson?" Irene came running out of the back room.

"Get Dr. Price and Captain Wellmine. I'm going to need their help," he ordered while stripping his lab coat off.

"Yes, s-s-sir."

He heard the door slam behind her as he pressed the fabric as hard as he could to the wound. George grunted in pain, but he didn't stop Kael. Lifting the pad a few inches, he looked at the wound and felt bile roil in his throat.

"What the hell happened to you, George?" He settled the coat back down and stared into George's brilliant blue eyes.

"Got bitten by a wolf," George forced out through gritted teeth.

"A wolf? Were you at the zoo? There haven't been wild wolves in Ireland for centuries." He frowned, trying to remember if he'd heard anything about wolves being reintroduced to the country.

Hugh and Wellmine raced through the door with Irene and Bailey Stevenson right behind, carrying towels and medical supplies. Hugh dropped to his knees next to Kael and lifted the blood-soaked lab coat off George's wound. Kael forced himself to take another look at it.

A large chunk of George's side, from the top of his hip to just below his nipple was missing. It was a massive wound, but Kael had a fleeting thought that it wasn't bleeding nearly as bad as it had been when George arrived.

"Fucking hell, George, what got you?" Hugh gestured for Irene to give him more towels.

Kael's lab coat was saturated with blood. Wrinkling his nose in disgust, he tossed it out of the way.

"He said it was a wolf, but I told him that was impossible. There haven't been wolves here in centuries, and no one's managed to convince the public that reintroducing them is a good idea." Kael knew he was babbling, but he'd never dealt with such a horrifying injury.

Hugh reached over and squeezed his hand. He felt better. Hugh was here and would handle this because it was way out of his league. Wellmine tapped him on the shoulder.

"Go over on the other side and hold his hand. I need to look at this to see how we can go about bandaging it."

Kael scooted out to George's right side. He picked up the knight's red-streaked hand. "We should get Mordred here."

George shook his head. "He's busy. Don't interrupt him."

"Busy? You've been lovers from more years than I can even dream of, and you think he'd be too busy to come and take care of you?" Kael shook his head.

Irene set a dish of clean water next to Hugh. "H-H-Here's s-s-some water. Maybe if w-w-we w-w-wash off the b-b-blood, you'll be able to s-s-see how m-m-much d-d-damage there is."

Kael didn't like the torn flesh in front of him. "Did the wolf escape from the zoo?" That was the only place he could think of that might have a wolf.

George hissed as Wellmine washed the blood from his skin. "Not a real wolf. Werewolf."

"You're fucking kidding, right?" Wellmine stared at George with his mouth open. "There's no such thing as werewolves."

Kael reached over and smacked Wellmine on the head lightly. "There's no such thing as a dragon either."

"You've got a point there." Wellmine went back to cleaning George's wound.

"Will it affect you?" Bailey held the first aid kit out, allowing Wellmine easy access to it.

"No." George closed his eyes and panted. "Lost a lot of blood, though."

"The bleeding has slowed down." The captain's eyes narrowed.

Kael could see the wheels turning in Wellmine's mind. The captain had been suspicious of George since they started training the dragon slayers.

"Meow."

M.A. stood just out of reach and glared at George.

"Get that damn cat out of here," Wellmine barked. "We can't have cat hair in the wound."

"He's not going to die, Captain." Hugh's voice was calm. "I don't think he can."

"He can't, but he'll need more blood to heal faster." Kael grabbed M.A. by the scruff of the neck. "You get your furry ass moving and find Mordred."

M.A. hissed and swatted at Kael. He shook the cat. "Don't be stupid. I know you can find him, and he's the only one who can give George blood."

He dropped M.A. on the floor, keeping hold of George's hand. The cat sneezed and meowed loudly, voicing its displeasure at being manhandled.

"Marcus Aurelius, don't push me. You know what Mordred will do if something happens to George and we didn't let him know." Kael pinned the cat with a stern gaze. "I'll make sure to let him know you didn't cooperate with us."

The cat turned, flipping his tail as he leaped to the windowsill and out. Bailey watched it all happen without saying a word, but Kael had the feeling the sergeant would be asking questions once the crisis was averted.

"Mordred's busy. Won't come." George's voice faded and those pain-filled eyes closed.

"Shit." Kael shot an anxious glance at Wellmine and Hugh. "He's all right, isn't he?"

"Yes. The loss of blood made him pass out." Hugh motioned to Irene. "Bring some of the lab coats. We'll bunch them under his head for a pillow. We aren't going to be able to move him. I think we need to wait until Mordred shows up."

Irene raced from the lab. Wellmine bandaged the wound the best he could for the size of it. Bailey carried the blood-soaked towels to a bin where he dumped them. Hugh moved to sit beside Kael and wrapped his arm around his waist.

"We'll wait here until Mordred comes," Hugh said softly.

Kael nodded. He didn't want to leave the knight lying on the lab floor alone. He rested his head on Hugh's shoulder.

"Why do you think George said Mordred wouldn't come?"

Hugh's shrug made Kael's head move up and down. "Don't know. We haven't seen a lot of the elf since George started helping us."

"Do you think Mordred has changed his mind? Maybe he doesn't care if the dragons destroy our world." Kael felt a tight ache in his chest.

"Price. Hammerson." Wellmine stood beside the door to the lab. "We need to talk."

"Come on."

Hugh pulled him to his feet as Irene tucked a pile of coats under George's head. They walked over to where the captain and sergeant were standing. Kael kept his eyes on George. The knight opened his eyes, caught Kael's gaze and nodded, giving his tacit permission for Kael to tell the men what they wanted to know.

"Who is he?" Wellmine jerked his chin toward George.

"It's sort of hard to explain." Kael hesitated.

"Try us. He's not some SCA re-enactor. His armor is too authentic. Where the hell did he come from? Stevenson and I were standing out in the hall the entire time. I didn't see him come in." Wellmine crossed his arms and stared at him.

"You know England's patron saint?"

"Sure. Saint George. Everyone knows that."

Stevenson stayed quiet, though there was a dawning gleam in his eyes.

"There you go." Kael waved a hand toward the prone man.

"No fucking way." Wellmine shook his head. "Saint George wasn't real. Or if he did exist, he certainly wasn't the hero everyone made him out to be."

"Fuck you, Captain. What do you know of my exploits?" George glared at them, his face pale from the loss of blood.

"George, don't talk." Hugh leaned down to whisper in Kael's ear, "That damn cat is taking his own sweet time finding Mordred."

"M.A. has no love for anyone except himself and Gaia. Of course, we have no idea where Mordred is." Kael shrugged.

A shift in the air flow and Mordred appeared, kneeling beside George. Stevenson's mouth dropped open.

"Where the hell did he come from?" Wellmine straightened.

"He's George's lover." Kael pulled away from Hugh and went to Mordred.

The elf's dark eyes burned into his. "What happened?"

"He was bitten by a werewolf. Lost a lot of blood. I wasn't sure what to do which is why I sent M.A. after you." He rested his hand on George's shoulder.

"Stupid cat. Just told me you were in trouble." Mordred met George's gaze. "Why didn't you come to me for help?"

George sighed. "You were busy."

"Busy? I'm never too busy to help you heal." Mordred looked up and gestured to the others standing by the door. "They need to leave."

Kael nodded. He pressed a hand to Mordred's cheek, leaned forward, and kissed the elf. "We'll be outside if you need us."

Anger and fear warred on Mordred's face. "Thank you, Kael."

"You're welcome."

He stood and herded the others out of the lab. "Mordred will take care of George now. We'll continue our discussion in the conference room."

* * * * *

Realm of Dreams

Mordred glared at George. "Too busy? I could be saving the world, and if you needed me, I'd come to you. Even if it meant everyone else had to die. You know that, George."

George didn't say anything. Mordred shook his lover.

"You know that, don't you?"

Dull blue eyes met his and George nodded. Mordred wanted to continue yelling at the knight, but he knew George's biggest problem was loss of blood. They needed to get more into him. Without flinching, he tore open the vein in his wrist and pressed it to George's mouth. George grimaced.

"I know you don't like doing this, but it's the fastest way. I'm not going to waste time setting up a transfusion. Drink," he ordered.

George's gaze dropped as he fastened his lips over Mordred's wrist. The tug of George's mouth on Mordred's skin caused heat to course to the elf's groin. Fuck. Now wasn't the time to get turned on. He ran a hand over George's curls, letting the strands catch on his calluses. After a minute or so, he gently pulled his arm away, not worrying about the wound. It would heal on its own in seconds.

Color returned to George's cheeks and the injury to the knight's side closed. Mordred moved so George's head rested on the pillow of lab coats and leaned over his lover. Those eyes he loved so much met his and his fear flowed through him.

"Don't ever do that again."

George blinked.

"We seem to have slipped away from each other. Perfectly good reasons as to why, but still, as much as I like Kael and Hugh, I don't need them. I need you." He pressed his lips to George's, trying to convince him that Mordred's words were true.

A soft knock sounded. Mordred pulled away as Kael peeked around the door.

"Is everything okay?"

Mordred nodded and helped George to his feet. "He'll be fine. Just needs a little rest and I'll have one of our healers take a look at the wound. Werewolves shouldn't bother him, but you never know."

He caught the look Kael threw him and he smiled. Letting the nearest table support George for a moment, Mordred walked over to Kael. He cupped the slender man's cheek and brushed a kiss over Kael's pale skin.

"Don't worry, little one. George will be fine. I want to take him back to the Realm now. I'll come find you in a day or two."

Kael nodded. "We'll be waiting."

Mordred watched Kael hug George, taking care not to bump the knight's side or squeeze too hard. George whispered something to the younger man.

"You've trained us, George. We can handle it. Don't come back until Mordred says it's okay." Kael stepped back.

"Let's go."

Wrapping his arm around George's waist, Mordred took them to the Realm. When they appeared in their suite at Gaia's palace, he helped his lover into bed before summoning a healer.

He managed to keep his cool until after the healer had come and gone. Leaning against the door frame, he glared at George.

"Stop glaring. Why don't you come over here and kiss me?"

Propped up on several pillows, George's tan skin was slightly pale from the blood loss. Mordred wasn't willing to forgive the knight that easily.

"Why did you go to Kael when you were bit?"

Scrubbing a hand over his face, George sighed. "You've been so busy working with Hester I didn't want to bother you."

"Bother me? Since when is coming to me for help a bother?" He frowned. "You're the one spending all your time with those mortals."

He bit his lip. Shit. That came out sounding whiny and jealous.

Puzzled blue eyes met his. "I thought we agreed to help Kael and his friends. We both know you have no experience killing dragons, so I was the logical choice for that job." George grimaced, shifting in the bed. "You have a higher tolerance for backstabbing and court politics. You're perfect for finding out who's behind the whole dragon invasion."

Mordred didn't want to agree, but George was right. His knight was straightforward and honest. George didn't believe in lying for any reason. Intrigue and knowing how to sift through the bullshit was what Mordred did well. Still, he didn't like George going to anyone else when injured.

"Come here." George held out his hand.

"Hmph."

He pushed away from the door frame and joined George. He made sure to lie down on George's uninjured side. Resting his hand on his lover's stomach, he brushed a kiss over George's lip.

Their moans mingled as he swiped his tongue inside of George's warm mouth. George thrust his large hands into Mordred's hair, holding him tight when he would have pulled away. He rarely allowed George control over their kisses or lovemaking, and the knight didn't argue.

Mordred eased away, ignoring George's protest. "We aren't doing anything until your side is completely healed. I don't want to risk causing you more pain."

He snuggled close, laying his head on George's chest and twining his fingers with his lover's. Humming, he used the sound of his voice and the gentle touch of his fingers to soothe George into sleep. They would discuss the problems later.

Chapter Eight

"Things are getting worse," George murmured as he ran his fingers through Mordred's hair. It was after midnight, and they had awakened an hour ago to eat a late night snack.

"As terrible as it was for you, I'm happy the werewolf bit you instead of one of the mortals." Mordred rested his hand on the bandage covering George's side.

"They would never survive an attack," he agreed.

Tugging Mordred until the elf covered him like a blanket, he stared into his lover's dark eyes and sighed.

"What can we do to stop it? It's only a matter of time before the worst of the creatures get free."

"Dragons aren't bad enough?"

Before he could answer, Mordred commented, "Who would have believed we'd reach the day when we longed only for dragons to fight?"

Mordred placed his chin on his folded hands and closed his eyes. George trailed his fingers up and down the long line of Mordred's spine, not wanting to think of the destruction giants and cyclops could cause, or the damage krakens and sirens could inflict if they were released into the seas.

Mortals would find themselves under siege from magic everywhere, and they would resort to what mortals did best: destroying all of the creatures, even harmless ones.

Mordred shifted and met George's gaze with a familiar expression. It was the one he wore when he knew George wouldn't like what he had to say.

"I know a way."

"Why do I have a feeling I won't like it?"

The elf grimaced. "Maybe because you don't like most of my suggestions."

He thought about that and cringed. Unfortunately, he had the feeling Mordred was right. He never gave the elf enough credit for having experience in planning strategies. When it came to intrigue or courtly maneuvering, he trusted Mordred to excel, but anything else, he tended to pat Mordred on the head and brush his suggestions off.

George cupped Mordred's cheek and smiled. "I'm sorry, love. It does seem that I haven't been giving you any credit."

Mordred nuzzled his palm for a second before pulling away to wrap his arms around his knees. George leaned back against the headboard and gestured for Mordred to continue.

"It's been no secret that I'm becoming fed up with your spending time with the mortals."

He opened his mouth to say something, and Mordred held up a hand to stop him.

"I know why you're doing it. Trust me, I care about Kael and Hugh as much as you do, but I can't help it. I'm selfish and self-centered, George. You knew that about me when we met. I don't like it when I have to share you with anyone."

Mordred's description of himself made George chuckle. The elf knew his own personality well. George couldn't argue with him.

"Beowulf has approached me twice making comments about you. I've ignored him, but what if I listen to him? Let him think that I would be willing to hear what he has to say. I think he and Morgana have something to do with all of this. I've seen them together more often lately. I don't believe the rumor that they are lovers. Beowulf has never been inclined to fuck women and I don't think he's going to start with her."

George's first reaction was to say no. He didn't want Mordred anywhere near the elf's ex-lover. Trusting Mordred not to be seduced by the English hero wasn't the problem. He knew Mordred loved him beyond anything Beowulf could offer the elf. George didn't trust Beowulf. The other man was violent and jealous. He didn't want Mordred risking a chance of getting hurt to help them out.

"I know you're fighting the urge to say no. You don't want me to get hurt, and you think Beowulf would do something to me if he figured out I was playing him like that." Mordred rose up on his knees and brushed a kiss over George's lips. "My hero. Your warrior heart doesn't want me to take any risks. That's what you are supposed to do."

He buried his hand in Mordred's hair, keeping his lover's mouth pressed to his. As much as he wanted to say no, he knew better. No matter his protestations, Mordred would do as he chose. Easing back, he nodded.

"How do we set your plans in motion, love?"

Mordred ran his fingers over the satin comforter he sat on. "I guess continue on the way we have. I'll appear at Gaia's court, unhappy and pouting. None of them will suspect anything other than me being selfish."

"How will you hide our plan from Gaia?"

"I believe Gaia has been waiting for us to part ways. You are a warrior, used to fighting battles and changing the world. I'm a useless piece of fluff, pretty to look at, but not very capable of making any sort of difference. I'm eye candy, as the mortals say." Mordred grinned. "When it gets out that you and I have called it quits, she won't doubt that it's the truth. The only thing she's likely to ask me is what took me so long."

"Aside from that, how do we get you into the inner circle of those bastards?" He hated the thought of Mordred being at the mercy of anyone crazy enough to create dragons.

"After we break up in some spectacular way, I'm sure Beowulf will come running to me. He's been waiting for his chance. I'll lead him a merry chase, and we'll see what we can hook."

"I hate this," he murmured.

Mordred shrugged slender shoulders and moved, straddling his hips before settling in his lap. "So do I, but it is what it is. We have to take advantage of what we have, and what we have is me. Beowulf wants me back, and I have a feeling he'll be willing to brag to me once he believes I'm on his side."

Cupping Mordred's firm ass, George rocked their groins together. Mordred gripped his shoulders and kissed him. He opened his mouth to the elf. Mordred stroked the roof of George's mouth, causing shivers to run down his spine. He sucked on Mordred's tongue, drawing a groan from his lover.

He slid his fingers down Mordred's back to tease the top of Mordred's crease. Mordred tilted his hips to encourage George's touch. He pulled one hand away and blindly searched the top of the stand next to the bed. Got it, he thought, as his hand closed around the bottle of oil they kept there. He yanked the cork out with his teeth and spit it over the side of the bed.

Mordred ground their erections together. George noticed how Mordred kept his knee away from the bandage at George's side. After pouring oil over his fingers, he rubbed the tips over Mordred's hole lightly before he breeched the puckered open.

Moaning, Mordred relaxed, taking George's fingers deep into his tight passage. George twisted, brushing Mordred's gland with his knuckles.

"Damn," Mordred groaned.

George scraped his teeth over Mordred's shoulder, not breaking the skin, but drawing the blood to the surface. He never drank Mordred's blood unless he was severely injured, as he had been with his recent wound. He'd gotten used to letting Mordred do it when they fucked because he knew the elf needed the connection it created between them.

He continued fingering Mordred's ass until his lover's smooth rhythm faltered, telling him Mordred was about to come. He removed his fingers to pour oil in the palm of his hand and slicked his cock up.

"Time to ride me, love," he murmured, gripping his prick in one hand while urging Mordred to impale himself.

He lifted his hips as Mordred sank down, enveloping him inch by gloriously tight inch. Mordred pushed against his chest and shook his head.

"Let me do the work, George. We don't want to aggravate your wound." Mordred winked at him. "Do you really want Hester to lecture you about having sex after a life-threatening injury?"

George shuddered and not from desire. Mordred's witch friend, Hester, scared George. His fear could be a residue left over from his mortal life when he'd been superstitious about women like her. He lay back on the pillows, kept one hand on Mordred's hip, and fisted Mordred's cock with his other hand.

"Move," he commanded the elf.

Mordred shot him an imperious look that was spoiled when the elf moaned as the head of George's cock stroked over his gland.

"You are a bit of a slut."

He kept his grip snug around Mordred's prick, knowing just the right amount of pressure his lover liked. He raised his knees to help Mordred balance better. Watching Mordred fuck himself turned George on. He admired the long, lean lines of his lover's body.

"So beautiful," he whispered, taking his hand off Mordred's waist and trailing it through the cascade of blond hair swirling around them as Mordred rocked.

"Gonna," Mordred ground out between clenched teeth.

"Come. I want to feel you."

With his feet planted, he met each of Mordred's downstrokes with a thrust of his own. Sweat rolled down the elf's thin nose to drip onto George's chest. The room filled with the scent of sex mixed with Mordred's unique smell.

"Love!" Mordred shouted, hot cum spurting from his cock to cover George's hand and stomach.

The viselike grip of Mordred's inner channel massaging his cock drew George's own climax. He held the elf's body tight to his as he flooded Mordred's ass with his own seed.

When every drop had been drained from him, he pried his hands away from Mordred's hips and let them fall to the mattress under him. Mordred slumped on him, the cum on his stomach sealing them together. They both moaned as his softened prick slid out of Mordred.

"It never gets old," he said, caressing Mordred's back.

Mordred's reply was muffled as the elf kissed his shoulder, then climbed off to pad over to their bathing room. George sat up straighter, wincing at the pull of the stitches in his side. He studied Mordred while his lover washed, remembering how he'd felt the first time he saw the blond elf.

* * * * *

Standing among the fawning crowd, George managed to keep from snarling at a blue-haired, almost naked woman who kept pinching his ass. What was with these people? Didn't they understand about not touching strangers?

"Ompf..."

He wrapped his arms around a blond-haired man who fell against him. Elegant hands gripped his shoulders as the stranger regained his balance and stepped back without letting go.

"A little enthusiastic, aren't they?"

Black eyes twinkled at him. He gritted his teeth as another person patted his ass. The blond reached out and slapped the offending hand.

"Hands off, sweetheart."

Fangs flashed as the stranger in his arms sneered at the nymph reaching for him. George let go of the man and moved away.

"I'm Mordred." His bow caused the blond's hair to sweep the floor.

"I'm George St. Albans." He didn't bow.

"Oh, I know who you are. You're Gaia's dragon slayer. The gossips have been talking about you ever since you arrived here."

Mordred snagged two drinks off a passing tray. He handed a stein to George while keeping the bubbly golden liquid-filled goblet for himself.

"Be careful with that. It's leprechaun ale. Packs a powerful kick."

George ignored the advice. He was a knight, for Goddess's sake. He could handle it. He drank half the stein before the burn started. Doubling over, he coughed, and Mordred slid closer, hitting him on the back.

"Tough guy, huh? Mmm," Mordred purred.

George jumped when Mordred's hand rubbed over his ass. Straightening, he turned to glare at the elf. Mordred eased closer, a scent of cloves swirling around and filling George's nose. The stiffening in his trews puzzled him. He'd always attributed that to women, but there was something about this blond elf.

"Skittish, aren't we?" Mordred grinned and shrugged. "Don't worry. I've got time for you to get used to me."

He didn't protest the kiss Mordred brushed over his cheek before disappearing into the crowd.

"I hope you're prepared to fight him."

Turning, he saw Gaia standing next to him. Her kaleidoscope eyes following the path of Mordred through the room.

"What do you mean?"

"Mordred has declared war on you, Sir Knight. Should I make a bet with you on how soon you'll be sharing his bed?"

"His bed?" George's mouth dropped open. "I don't...that's not natural."

"All love is natural, Sir George."

* * * * *

George held out his arms, letting Mordred clean his stomach and cock off. After throwing the cloth into a basin on the dresser, Mordred climbed back in bed with him and cuddled close.

Lying there, he embraced the only man he'd ever loved and smiled. Gaia was right. All love was natural.

Chapter Nine

Mortal World

"You're telling me that the man who has been helping us fight these creatures for the last six months is a myth himself?"

Kael sighed. They had been discussing who George really was for the past hour, and Wellmine still wasn't willing to believe him. Hugh shrugged when Kael looked at him.

"If you're willing to believe in dragons and werewolves, why aren't you willing to believe my explanation about George?"

Wellmine rubbed the back of his neck. "Dragons exist because I've seen them. George hasn't done anything to make me think he's special. He's human like the rest of them."

"Captain, you saw his wound. It began to heal while we were treating him. A mere mortal wouldn't have survived such an injury. He couldn't have passed you and Stevenson in the hallway, not losing blood like that." Hugh's voice was calm as he appealed to Wellmine's logical brain.

"Climbing through my window was beyond his capabilities with that wound," Kael pointed out.

Bailey sat next to Wellmine and rested his hand on the Captain's shoulder.

"It's hard to understand, but there's no proof that what they're saying isn't true."

Wellmine grasped Bailey's hand absently. Kael shot Hugh a thoughtful look. Bailey blushed, but didn't pull away.

"Okay. We have St. George, the dragon slayer, as our instructor. Who the hell was the man who appeared out of thin air?" Wellmine stared at Kael.

"That was George's lover, Mordred." He cringed, imagining how the captain was going to react to the next part.

"Mordred? Why does that name sound familiar?"

"Didn't Mordred kill King Arthur in those legends?" Bailey shifted, pain deepening the brackets around his mouth.

"Ummm...yes."

Wellmine sighed. "I suppose he's the real Mordred, not just some guy whose parents were into Camelot."

"Yes. Gaia, the Mother Goddess, needed more time to create a haven for all the magical creatures on earth. Arthur needed to be stopped, so Mordred agreed to kill him."

Hugh moved behind Kael and massaged his shoulders, Kael let his head drop forward, trying to relax.

"Since George got bitten by a werewolf, I can assume we'll see more of them."

A knock sounded on the conference door.

"Come in," Hugh called.

Larkin, one of Wellmine's slayers, stepped in as a pop filled the air.

"Captain, they delivered news reports of wolflike creatures in County Kildaire." Larkin's eyes widened as he spotted the little man standing on the table.

"Which one of you is Kael?" the miniature man asked.

"I am." Kael raised his hand.

"Where'd the short guy come from?" Larkin inquired.

Placing fists on hips, the stranger snarled, "I'm a leprechaun, you big bloody idiot."

Larkin blinked, and Kael managed to conceal his laugh with a cough. When the leprechaun shot him a glance, he smiled.

"Nice to meet you, sir."

He figured it wouldn't hurt to be polite.

"I'm Niall. Mordred said to watch out for vampires." Niall wrinkled his nose in disgust. "Those blood suckers don't usually wander this far north. Gets too cold for them. But you might end up seeing them."

Kael nodded at the warning and grimaced at the thought of vampires appearing. It was starting to sound like a plot of a B movie.

"Do you know how George is?"

Niall grinned. "St. Albans is a right tough bastard. It'd take more than a bite from a wolf to hurt him."

The leprechaun winked at him. "Besides, the elf wouldn't let anything happen to him. Mordred said George will be back to fighting trim in a day or so."

"Thank you, Niall. We were worried." Kael relaxed. Worry drained out of him.

Niall shook his head. "You shouldn't be. Gaia isn't about to let anything happen to her darling dragon killer."

Bowing, Niall flipped Larkin the finger and disappeared.

"Was that real?" Larkin looked around the room, confused.

"I'm afraid so." Wellmine closed his eyes, dropping his head to rest on his folded arms.

"Fuck. I should have grabbed him." Larkin flopped into a chair next to Bailey.

"Why?"

"Didn't you ever try to find the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow or go looking for a leprechaun? If you capture one of them, they have to show you where their gold stash is. I could have been rich and retired before I got my ass fired by some stupid lizard."

They laughed and the tension left the room. Kael stood and moved toward the door.

"Where are you going?" Hugh asked.

"You need to talk strategy with George gone for a couple of days, and I have several experiments I need to check on." He blew his lover a kiss.

"I'll walk with you." Larkin leaped to his feet and followed Kael out of the room.

They started down the hallway, and Kael wondered what Larkin wanted. The lieutenant had never gone out of his way to spend time with him before.

"Is Irene in today?"

Larkin's question was casual, but Kael could tell it was important to the man.

"Yes, she is." Kael pushed his lab door open.

"Do you think she'd have lunch with me if I asked?"

He didn't remember ever seeing Larkin so nervous, not even when faced with dragons.

"I don't know." He stopped and turned to face the soldier. He gave Larkin his most serious look. "Be very careful with her, Larkin. She just got out of a terrible relationship. Irene deserves to be treated like the wonderful person she is."

Larkin straightened his shoulders and nodded. "You don't have to worry, Dr. Hammerson. I know what she's been through. I'm not perfect, but I won't ever hurt her."

He studied the man's face, not sure what he should be seeing in it to convince him Larkin was telling the truth. Hugh was the only man he'd ever truly trusted. Will didn't count. His ex-lover had never been a person Kael could rely on.

There was nothing he could do except hope that Larkin meant what he said.

"Irene," he called, tugging on a clean lab coat.

His lab assistant emerged from one of the vaults. "D-d-did you need s-s-something, Doctor?"

She stopped short when she saw Larkin standing there.

"Lieutenant Larkin wanted to talk to you."

Kael sat at his desk, doing paperwork and trying not to stare at the couple. He couldn't help but overhear.

"How are you today, Irene?"

Irene shot a questioning glance at Kael, who shrugged. He wasn't going to talk for her. She needed to learn how to deal with men, especially now that she was out of the abusive relationship she'd been in when they met.

"I'm f-f-fine, L-L-Lieutenant."

Larkin smiled. "I was wondering if you would be free to have lunch with me today?"

She blushed and ducked her head. "I d-d-don't know. It d-d-depends on how m-m-much work Dr. H-H-Hammerson has f-f-for me t-t-to do."

Kael sat back and met her gaze. Did she want him to make up something for her to do or did she want to go with Larkin? He sighed. He wasn't very good at reading body language.

"There aren't any experiments needing attention at the moment, Irene. You can take your lunch whenever you want."

Relief flared in Larkin's eyes. Something other than fear crossed Irene's eyes. She came over to the desk to grab her purse.

Leaning over, she whispered, "T-T-Thanks a lot."

"Don't you want to go with him?" He hated doubting himself.

"Yes, b-b-but you c-c-could have s-s-said you n-n-needed me for s-s-something. It d-d-doesn't h-h-hurt to not b-b-be available the f-f-first t-t-time they ask."

He rolled his eyes. "What kind of twisted logic is that?"

"M-M-Must be f-f-feminine logic." She flashed him a nervous grin.

Touching her hand, he said, "Don't worry. He's a good guy and you'll be in the cafeteria. People all around if you get uncomfortable."

She patted his shoulder. "T-T-Thanks, Dr. Hammerson. I'll b-b-be okay."

After they left, Kael threw himself into the different experiments in progress, the most important being the different antidotes he was trying to find for each of the dragon's venom. Scribbling formulas out, he immersed himself in the familiarity of the numbers.

A hand fell on his shoulder and he jumped. Looking around, he saw Mordred standing behind him. Kael jumped to his feet, turned, and flung himself into the elf's arms.

Mordred embraced him, crushing him against his slender body. A sigh issued from both of them. Kael found comfort in Mordred's touch... almost as much as when Hugh touched him.

"Niall stopped by. He said that George would be okay." Kael pulled back, looking into Mordred's eyes.

"Yes. Hester treated his wound and it'll be fine. He just needs a day or two of rest before he returns to fight dragons again."

Mordred brushed a lock of Kael's hair off his forehead and smiled.

"I'm glad to hear that. I'm sorry he got injured helping us."

Mordred shrugged as he stepped away, stuffing his hands in the pockets of his jeans as he wandered. "It was bound to happen. No one is lucky enough to escape wounds their entire lives."

"True. Oh, and thank you for the instructions on werewolves. We're starting to get more reports of sightings, and we need to let people know how to defend themselves."

"Uh-huh..." Mordred moved between the lab tables, not touching anything.

A melancholy air drifted over Mordred. Kael noticed the unhappy tilt to the elf's lips. He intercepted his friend, took Mordred by the hand, and led him to the desk. He pushed Mordred into the chair, resting his own hip against the edge of the desk.

"What's wrong?"

"Wrong? Why do you think there's anything wrong?" Mordred grinned, but the usual matching twinkle wasn't there in his eyes.

"I don't know. Maybe because you aren't flirting with me like you normally do." He folded his arms over his chest and studied the elf. "Are you and George okay?"

Mordred waved a hand vaguely. "We're fine. I wanted to let you know that I wouldn't be around much."

"Why? Did one of us offend you in some way?" Panic crept in.

"No, that's not the reason at all." Mordred shook his head. "Things are getting worse, Kael. Werewolves are only the precursor of more dangerous creatures crossing the barrier. I have to double my effort to find out who is behind all of this."

He grabbed one of Mordred's hands and held it tight. "We'll miss you, but George will be able to keep you up-to-date with what's happening here."

Mordred's laugh sounded forced. "You're right. I also wanted to give you these."

Three small vials appeared in Mordred's palm. Kael took them, holding them up to the light. A deep purple fluid swirled in them.

"What are they?"

Mordred pushed to his feet and began to pace. "You asked me to find something to relieve your friend's pain. My friend, Hester, did some research and this is the best she could come up with. It's a very powerful painkiller, but it won't cloud his mind."

Kael set them on his desk and accepted the piece of paper Mordred handed to him. "What's this?"

"Instructions. One drop on the tongue will last for three days, but he can't take anymore than that. More than one drop in three days could kill him."

"It's not addictive, isn't it?" He eyed the vials suspiciously.

Mordred shook his head. "We tried to find the least addictive plants we could. Not addictive, just deadly if too much is taken."

He put the instructions with the vials and stood, hugging Mordred tight. "Thanks, Mordred. I knew you'd be able to find something for Bailey."

"I didn't do it for him. I did it because you asked me." Mordred brushed off his thanks with a small wave and eased away. "I have to go. Keep an eye on George for me."

"I will, but it's not like you won't be seeing him again." Kael frowned.

The elf blew him a kiss, winked, and disappeared. An uneasy shiver danced down Kael's spine. Something strange was going on. He made a mental note to talk to Hugh about it later that night.

Chapter Ten

"Mordred stopped by today."

Kael's comment stopped Hugh in his tracks. He shot a glance at his lover.

"What did he want?"

Had the elf told Kael about the conversation they'd had earlier? He assumed Mordred would keep it a secret. Hugh set the plates on the table and turned to lean against it, looking at Kael.

"He dropped some stuff off I had asked him for. Also, he wanted to tell me that he wouldn't be around for a while." Kael didn't look happy.

"What stuff?" Hugh frowned. "Why won't he be around?"

Kael brought the bowl of pasta over to the table, gesturing for Hugh to sit down. He held out Kael's chair, pushing it in after Kael sat.

"I asked him for something that would help Bailey with the pain he's in." Kael dished out the spaghetti while Hugh tore off a piece of garlic bread for each of them.

"I'm surprised he did it."

"I was too, but he likes me, and he did it for me." Kael took a bite of the pasta and moaned. "This is good."

"Thanks." He sipped his ale and watched Kael eat. "Does it work?"

"We'll see if it does tomorrow. I gave the vials to Bailey before we left the lab." Kael put down his fork and set his elbows on the table, resting his chin on his hands.

"How did he react?"

"He seemed surprised that anyone would do something for him. I told him he was so important to the team that we couldn't let him keep hurting like he was."

Hugh reached over and took one of Kael's hands. He lifted it, brushing a kiss over his knuckles. "You are a wonderful person, love."

Kael blushed and Hugh chuckled. He loved complimenting Kael. His lover wasn't used to being told he was a good person. Settling back, he ate his dinner while chatting with Kael about the rest of their uneventful day. He could tell Kael wanted to talk to him more about Mordred, but he wanted to wait until after they ate.

After putting the last clean dish away, he wrapped an arm around Kael's waist and they went to the living room where he sat on the couch. He pulled Kael on his lap, cuddling him close.

"What's bothering you? Did Mordred say anything to you?" He nuzzled Kael's hair.

Kael shrugged. "It's not so much what he said as how he said it. He didn't seem happy."

"I talked to him the other day," Hugh mentioned, deciding it was best to admit to their conversation before Mordred let anything spill.

Inching back a little, Kael gave him a surprised look. "Why?"

"I didn't think it was such a big deal. I needed to talk to him about some stuff." Hugh smiled at Kael. "It's not like I hate him or anything."

"I know. It's just weird that you'd talk to him instead of George." Kael settled back in his arms, laying his head on Hugh's shoulder. "I got the feeling there was more going on between Mordred and George than we're aware of."

Hugh thought for a moment. "You could be right. Mordred stays out of the mortal world. They might not be getting along."

"But they've been together for so long, Hugh. I'd hate to see their relationship end, especially because of us." Sadness and worry warred in Kael's voice.

Hugh eased Kael away from him, cradling his lover's face in his hands. "Hush, love. Every couple goes through rough periods. Goodness knows those two have been together for centuries. They're bound to have moments when they need to be apart for a day or two. Don't borrow trouble."

Kael didn't look convinced, but he seemed willing to let it go. "Speaking of rough periods, what was your problem the other day? I don't think I've ever seen you in such a bad mood."

He was not going to duck his head and feel stupid for the way he acted. "I was jealous."

"Jealous? Of who? Why?" Kael sounded confused.

"I was jealous of all the attention Von Offerman was giving you."

"You were jealous of Timothy?" Kael shook his head.

"Stupid, I know, but I can't help not liking any other guy except me putting a sparkle in your eyes." He shrugged. "Mordred and George don't count. Mordred flirts with everyone, and George only really sees Mordred."

A bright smile burst over Kael's face, and Hugh couldn't help but smile back at him.

"What's that goofy grin for?" He rubbed his thumb over Kael's bottom lip before swooping in for a kiss.

"I never thought you'd be jealous of anyone."

Kael licked his lips, teasing Hugh with a glimpse of his pink tongue. Hugh's cock remembered what it felt like to be bathed by it.

"It doesn't make you think of Will controlling you or anything like that?" Hugh managed to force out before he lost all coherent thought.

Kael's expression turned serious for a moment while he thought about Hugh's question. He shook his head. "No. It makes me feel special and cared for. I can tell the difference between Will's controlling me and you being jealous of a man I admitted to having a crush on."

Hugh pulled Kael around so he was straddling Hugh's lap. Cupping Kael's slender ass, he nuzzled Kael's throat.

"I trust you, Kael. I'm not so trusting of Von Offerman, even if he does have a partner. Any man in his right mind wouldn't be able to resist you."

He trailed kisses from Kael's jaw to the base of his throat, sucking on the pulse beating under his skin. Kael moaned and let his head drop back, baring more of his body for Hugh to play with.

Hugh unbuttoned Kael's dress shirt and pushed it aside to reveal the gold rings piercing Kael's nipples. He tugged on the rings and Kael arched, pressing their groins together.

"God, I love when you do that," Kael muttered.

He hid his smile. Yes, Kael loved him playing with his rings. They'd experimented one night and Hugh had brought Kael to climax just by touching his nipples.

"We need to get naked before this goes any further," he pointed out.

The last time they didn't make it to naked, and Hugh ended up having to run back to his apartment for clean pants for both of them.

"Right."

Kael sprang to his feet and stripped, crawling back into Hugh's lap before Hugh could do anything more than unzip his own pants. Hugh's lover eagerly pushed his pants down far enough to free his cock.

"Hold me," Kael ordered him.

He gripped Kael's hips, and his prick twitched when Kael sucked on his own fingers before reaching behind to get himself ready.

"I love when you do that," Hugh murmured, moving one hand to wrap around Kael's shaft and pump.

Kael began to rock, fucking Hugh's hand while pushing back on his fingers. Hugh leaned forward, flicking one of Kael's rings with his tongue.

"Oh," Kael exhaled and his eyes rolled back.

The precum leaking from Kael's cock eased the movement of Hugh's hand. After making love to Kael for months, he knew exactly how much pressure to apply and how fast to stroke to bring his lover to the edge. Kael's own movements became jerky, and the noises he was making told Hugh Kael was on the brink.

Gripping the base of Kael's shaft, Hugh nipped Kael's flesh hard and moved back.

"I want in that ass before you come, Kael," he growled.

Kael nodded, cheeks flushed and eyes glazed with need. "Please."

Hugh licked his hand and slicked up his own cock, positioning the head right at Kael's opening. His hands on Hugh's shoulders, Kael balanced and slowly lowered himself onto Hugh.

Their moans mingled and filled the air as Hugh filled Kael's warm channel. As soon as Hugh was buried as deep as possible in Kael, they started rocking together. He made sure, with each stroke, to nail Kael's gland.

His climax built along his spine, pooling in his groin, and Hugh's balls drew tight to his body.

"Coming soon, love," he warned Kael.

Kael grunted, reaching down to pump his own cock. "Please," Kael whimpered.

One more surge in and his cum flooded Kael's passage. Kael came seconds after, his hot seed coating Hugh's stomach and chest. Hugh caught Kael as he slumped forward, and they cuddled close, slowing their breathing, and getting strength back to their legs.

Hugh buried his face in Kael's sweat-drenched curls and sighed. "We should take a shower and head to bed, love. It's been a long day."

Kael's grunt was the only acknowledgement his lover made for a few seconds.

"Get up. I'd carry you, but my pants would be around my ankles and I'd end up dropping you."

Hugh chuckled and pinched Kael's skinny ass. Kael squeaked before climbing to his feet. His lover held his hand out for him. Hugh tugged his pants up and zipped them. Taking Kael's hand, he let Kael pull him upright. They made their way slowly to the bathroom.

After their shower, they fell into bed and snuggled close. Hugh wrapped his arms around Kael, holding him tight and running his hand over Kael's back. The younger man wasn't as thin as he had been before they started dating. Being in a steady relationship eased Kael, and it made Hugh happy to know he was helping Kael heal.

He felt the softest touch of a hand over his arm and heard Mordred whisper in his ear, "I told you it would be all right."

Smiling, Hugh said a silent thank-you. He let his eyes drift close. Something was building and he wanted to be rested when the storm broke.

Chapter Eleven

"Fuck. What the hell is going on down there?"

Kael turned to see Bailey staring down into the valley, eyes wide and horror-stricken. He moved next to the sergeant and glanced down.

Shit. Two of the dragon slayers were lying flat on their backs. Kael couldn't tell if they were still breathing or not.

"Which ones are down?"

Bailey handed him the binoculars. "I'm not entirely sure. With the uniforms all being black, it's hard to distinguish them apart. I just know that Captain Wellmine is still up and moving."

Kael scanned the battlefield, ignoring the large orange and green dragon in the middle of the carnage. Three of the slayers were mounted on their motorcycles and three were moving on foot. The fighters on foot were in the most danger from the dragon. As Kael watched, Wellmine hopped off his bike and gave it to Maksur.

He forced his body to turn and look at the two prone figures. One slowly sat up, holding her head with her hands and blood pouring down her cheek.

"Thompson's injured. She's sitting up though," he informed Bailey.

"What about the other one?" Bailey's voice was tense.

Kael looked for the other body and bit back a groan. The dragon stood over the body like it was protecting its kill. Each attack by the slayers moved the dragon's feet closer to the body.

"I can't be sure, but I think it's Greenfield. Is he responding to your radio call?"

"No, but neither are Newton, Castle, and Larkin. So it could be any of them."

Kael heard Bailey mutter into his radio and hoped the man was calling for a medivac or something. They would need to get everyone to a hospital after this attack.

"So we have three accounted for. Wellmine, Thompson, and Maksur. Maksur is one of the mounted riders. Wellmine is on foot and Thompson is down." He watched Thompson push herself to her feet and stagger to the edge of the clearing. "Thompson's removed herself from the battle. I guess they won't have to worry about her getting hit again."

The dragon screeched, and Kael covered his ears with his hand, banging the binoculars against his head. The creature charged, leaving the injured slayer behind to go after one of the dismounted fighters. Kael cringed as with one swipe of a clawed foot, the dragon smacked the fighter head-over-tail into the trees.

"Who was that?" Bailey turned back to the battle, his face grim.

"Just a moment." Kael raised the glasses and checked. "Bloody hell. It's Wellmine."

A strangled gasp sounded from beside him, and Bailey's hand gripped his arm. "Is he moving?"

"I'm not sure. I can't see him. He's too far into the trees. I only know it was him because he has gold bars on his uniform and none of the others that are still there do."

Bailey's grip on his arm grew painful and he tried not to shake the other man off. Whatever the relationship was between Wellmine and Bailey, it was obvious Bailey cared deeply for the Captain.

"What fuck is going on here?"

Hugh's warm presence at his back eased Kael slightly. He handed his lover the binoculars and leaned against Hugh's side while the older man scanned the valley below them.

"Where the hell is Wellmine?" Hugh glanced at him and Bailey.

"The dragon threw him into the forest. We haven't seen him come out yet." Kael shifted his gaze to Bailey's white face and back to Hugh.

Hugh shoved his hand through his hair and growled, "I wish George was here."

Kael gave Bailey a gentle push back to the radio. "See if you can raise any of them on the radio and find out what's happening down there."

After Bailey moved off, Kael turned back to Hugh. "Why would it be any different if George were here?"

"He knows how to fight these creatures. We're still learning." Hugh cringed as the dragon screamed again.

They looked down to see a knight and horse charge from the forest around the clearing. The lance the knight lowered drove deep into the under jaw of the dragon. The beast reared up on its hind legs and batted at the lance hanging from its jaw. That move exposed its soft underbelly for one of the motorcyclists to slam his oak spear into the creature's chest.

"Bull's eye," Hugh murmured.

Kael watched in disgusted horror as the dragon exploded, bloody pieces of flesh raining down over the dragon slayers, and Kael gagged. Hugh encircled his waist, letting him rest on him. They watched as the other soldiers regrouped and Thompson and Greenfield were checked over.

"Stevenson?" Larkin's voice barked over the radio.

"Yes, sir?"

"Have you called for a medivac yet?" Larkin sounded tired and annoyed.

"Yes, sir. It's on its way. Has anyone found Captain Wellmine?" Bailey managed to not sound too worried.

"St. Albans is going in to look for him. He'll let us know if the Captain needs help."

Bailey swallowed loudly enough for Kael and Hugh to hear before the sergeant said, "Fine, sir. I'll let you know when the medivac has arrived."

In the next hour while they waited for the helicopter to arrive, they gathered together, making sure all of the equipment was accounted for and the injured were triaged on-site. To Kael and Bailey's relief, George carried Wellmine out of the forest.

"It looks like Captain Wellmine has sustained a broken leg. There might be other injuries, but I didn't want to leave him in the forest. The benefits outweighed the risks." George lowered Wellmine gently to the ground.

Bailey rushed over and hovered like he didn't know if his touch would be welcomed by the captain. Kael caught Hugh's eye and nodded toward Bailey. Hugh winked and moved over to the young soldier.

"Why don't you support the captain, Bailey, while I check his leg?" Hugh gestured for Bailey to kneel next to Wellmine and let the captain lean on him.

A little shiver of shock rushed through the others; Kael could tell by the dropped jaws when Wellmine didn't argue, just accepted Bailey's help.

"I told you there was something going on there," George murmured to Kael. "Walk with me."

He allowed George to lead him away from the others. Keeping his eyes on them, he saw exhaustion in every line on their faces.

"I'm going back to the Realm for some things. I'll be back when you return to the lab." George frowned. "It's time to put some plans into action."

Placing his hand on George's chest, Kael stared up at the knight and wondered at the sadness he saw there. There was worry mixed in as well, and he understood that. Things were getting out of hand faster than anyone thought possible.

"We'll be waiting to see you."

George smiled, bending to brush a kiss over Kael's cheek. "I'll be back as soon as possible."

Kael sighed, not wanting to let the knight out of his sight, but knowing he couldn't keep him there. "Tell Mordred hello and that we miss him."

"I will, little one. Take care of them." George tilted his head toward the slayers before disappearing.

Moving toward the group, Kael heard the distinct thump of helicopter blades. It was about time they got their wounded to doctors.

Chapter Twelve

Realm of Dreams

"It's time, love," George murmured in Mordred's ear.

Mordred snuggled closer to George's pillow, not wanting to put their plan into motion. He knew it would mean not being with George for days or longer. He climbed out of bed, brushed a kiss over George's cheek, and began dressing.

The knight stood next to the window, dressed and looking like he'd just arrived home. Dirt and dust coated his clothes, and George looked tired.

"You look tired. Are you sure you want to do this now?" Mordred tied his hair back and went to cradle George's face in his hands.

George grimaced. "No better time than the present. The dragon slayers are being worn down from exhaustion and injuries. We need to implement the next step and hope we can find the answers we need. Besides, I think they have someone watching our suite, and they'll have seen me return just now."

Mordred kissed George hard and fast. "Ready?"

Nodding, George straightened his shoulders and drew in a deep breath. Before Mordred started yelling, he went and opened the door, leaving a crack through which people listening in the hallway could hear.

"Where the hell have you been?" Mordred made sure his question was loud and angry.

"You know where I was, Mordred, unless you conveniently forgot because it wasn't with you," George sneered at him.

"You were with those horrible mortals again, weren't you?" Mordred spat out.

George's chuckle was harsh and cruel. "Of course, I was. They're far more interesting than you or this place is. Why wouldn't I want to spend time with them?"

"How dare you? I give you the best years of my life and you throw them away like cheap baubles."

George's eyebrows shot up and Mordred shrugged. It wasn't like he'd written a script for their fake argument. They yelled at each other for a few more minutes before Mordred threw his hands up in the air and thrust the door open all the way.

"Fine. I'm leaving. I don't care if you're here when I get back or not."

The door slammed shut with a loud bang and he stalked away, ignoring the shocked looks of the servants in the hallway. He didn't pay attention to any other people in the corridor. One of them would run to Beowulf and let him know about their fight.

Mordred found his way to the gazebo and flopped down on his bench, arms crossed behind his head. He studied the stars and prayed that their scheme worked.

"Excuse me. I didn't mean to interrupt you."

Mordred broke off his contemplation of the stars to see an auburn-haired man standing at the entrance of the gazebo. Sitting up slowly, Mordred let his gaze drift over the man. It hadn't taken Beowulf very long to send someone after Mordred.

"Like what you see?" The man's grin was seduction in its purest form.

"Of course, but you already know that." Mordred didn't see the point in lying. "I'm Mordred."

"I know. You're lovers with that gorgeous knight I've caught glimpses of around Gaia's palace." The stranger stepped closer and held out his hand. "My name is Aiden. I'm new here."

"New to the Realm? I didn't think that was possible." Mordred ignored Aiden's hand.

Aiden shrugged and let his hand drop. "Not sure how I got here, but there you go. It's a beautiful place."

Standing, Mordred found that he towered over Aiden. He sent little threads of his magic out to investigate Aiden's aura. Nothing flared. Aiden leaned against the railing, crossed his arms, and grinned. Mordred didn't like the arrogant smirk, but he hated the flare of attraction racing through his body.

"What are you?" he demanded with a scowl.

"Your guess is as good as mine."

Mordred grabbed a hold of his temper with both hands and gritted his teeth before saying, "What does that mean?"

Aiden glanced up at the lights sparkling in the night sky. "It means I have no real memory of who or what I was before I woke up here."

"Uh-huh..."

Something didn't ring true in Aiden's story. Mordred opened his mouth to ask another question and to his surprise, Aiden shot forward, wrapped his arms around Mordred's neck, and pressed a hard kiss to his lips.

A footstep on the stone path caused Mordred to jerk away while swiping his hand over his mouth. He looked over Aiden's shoulder to see George standing there, a frown marring the knight's forehead.

"Oh my. How awkward. I'm sorry, Mordred. I forgot you already have a lover. The night air must have bewitched me." Aiden blushed and dashed down the path, flashing George an apologetic smile as he passed.

Mordred ignored Aiden's fake apology. His gaze stayed on George.

"Do I have to start worrying about whom you might be seducing?" George's harsh words made Mordred flinch.

"Maybe if you spent more time with me, I wouldn't be vulnerable to flattery and pretty young things." He winced at the shrillness in his voice.

George stalked closer, but Mordred stood his ground. He tried to keep his expression blank, not wanting George to know how hurt and angry he was.

"Are you jealous? I didn't think you needed me to spend every minute of the day with you." George shook his head. "You truly think my world should revolve around you."

"Why not? I thought you loved me. You told me I meant everything to you. Now you're hanging around mortals for days on end. You seem to care more about those weak creatures than me."

He cringed. Goddess, he sounded needy and pathetic.

Utter disgust and disappointment rolled across George's face. Turning, George walked away.

"Wait. Where are you going?" Mordred cried, managing to keep himself from running after George.

"When you get back to the suite tonight, I'll be gone. You've changed, Mordred. You're not the elf I loved."

He watched George disappear down the path. Mordred's feet remained glued to the gazebo floor. It hurt to hear those words from George, even though Mordred knew it had all been an act for Aiden. The man stood hidden among the trees, listening to their argument.

Stumbling to one of the benches, Mordred sank down and buried his face in his hands. Shudders wracked his body. Mordred didn't have to pretend to be upset. Knowing that George really would be gone when he returned to their rooms filled him with fear.

Soft footsteps moved away, and Mordred knew their bait had been taken.

He stood and made his way slowly down the path toward Gaia's palace. He wondered how long Aiden would wait before approaching him again.

Knowing Mordred disliked the fact that George spent more time with the mortals than with him would lull the traitors into revealing themselves.

Mordred would have to control his temper. He hated the idea of George being in danger, and because of their break-up, he couldn't help his lover. He wondered where George would be staying. The knight never told him when they made their plans.

He hoped he looked annoyed and not upset when people looked at him. Everyone had to believe he was fine with George's leaving or even pissed at the knight.

He stepped through the door, then paused, wanting to cry out for George, but knowing no one was in the room. His suite had the same empty feeling it used to have before George moved in with him.

He smiled as a memory crowded into his mind.

* * * * *

"You aren't serious about hanging that thing in here?"

Mordred stood, hands on hips, staring at the dragon's head mounted over his bedroom fireplace.

George grinned, the proud hunter eyeing his trophy. "Yes, I am. It's the last dragon, Mordred, and I killed it."

"Bully for you, but there's no way that gruesome thing is staying here." He waved a vague hand to encompass the room. "I wouldn't be able to sleep with it glaring down at me."

The knight spent several minutes staring at him before shaking his head. "It's staying."

"No, it's not."

* * * * *

They'd spent an hour arguing about that stupid dragon's head until finally Mordred allowed George to put the silly trophy in a small study off the main room.

He wandered into the study and looked at the blank wall. Blinking, he turned away. It was horribly pathetic that he was going to miss the stupid thing.

Making his way back into the main living room, he saw a note on the table by the window. He picked it up and read.

All the items I've left are things that don't mean anything. Now's the time for your best tantrum, love. Make them believe you hate me. I love you more than anything. I'll see you in our dreams. Love, George.

A misshapen bowl set on the table; a present from one of the disappointed nymphs when George moved in with him. God-awful thing, he thought.

He hefted it, letting it balance in his hand for a second before he threw it across the room with a scream. The glass shattered and scattered over the floor.

Satisfaction swelled in him. His lover was right. A temper tantrum would have been exactly what he threw if George had really walked out on him.

Chapter Thirteen

Mortal World

"Things are escalating." Kael said what was on everyone's mind.

Thompson and Greenfield had been severely injured. Both slayers would be recovering for months. The general consensus was that Wellmine should have been hospitalized as well, but the captain took the doctor's recommendations under advisement, but declined further medical treatment.

"The new slayer units aren't being trained fast enough. My men are exhausted and more creatures appear every day." Wellmine stomped around the conference room, his crutches thudding with each step.

"We know, but there's nothing we can do except fight them the best we can," Maksur pointed out.

George walked in, carrying a glass. He held it out to Wellmine. "Drink this. It'll help with the healing and the pain."

Wellmine eyed the knight with suspicion. Kael sighed.

"You can trust him, Captain. He did manage to save you all today."

The captain took the glass and drank it quickly. He gagged a little at the end, but he kept it down.

"What's in that stuff," he asked, wiping at his watering eyes.

"With Hester's potions, I've found it easier not to ask." George settled into a chair and glanced at everyone. "I have a secondary plan I've put into motion while I was gone."

"Good. Do you have any other suggestions?" Wellmine rested a crutch against the table and tried to sit.

Bailey jumped to his feet and helped Wellmine sit.

"Even though they aren't trained to our level, we're going to have to send the new units out. They're never going to learn if they don't get hands-on experience with dragons."

The room filled with conversation. Kael didn't feel like he needed to be there, so he headed to his lab. He knew George would seek him out before the knight left.

* * * * *

George knocked on Kael's lab door before he walked in. The good-looking herpetologist glanced up, blinking a little as his focus changed from what was under the microscope to who stood in front of him.

"Hey, little one," George said softly.

"George." Kael threw his arms around George's waist. "I was never as happy as I was when you showed up this afternoon. I'm glad to see you're back and able to fight."

He laughed and nuzzled the dark curls on the top of Kael's head. "Yes, I am and you'll be seeing more of me than you'll want to for a while."

Kael frowned. "What's going on? Mordred stopped by a few days ago and told me I wouldn't be seeing him much. Are you two fighting?"

George leaned against Kael's desk and shook his head. "No. We decided the best way for us to find out who is behind the dragons' reappearance is for Mordred to join their ranks. We staged a fight and a break-up, making everyone believe it's because I'm spending too much time with you."

"Which means?" Kael went back to his microscope.

"It means I moved out of our suite, and we won't be talking to each other, at least not face-to-face."

Kael looked horrified. "That sounds terrible."

"It won't be fun for either of us, but we'll muddle through."

George didn't want to discuss it. To have any success, Mordred would have to get close to Beowulf again, and George hated the idea of the other man touching Mordred.

He trusted Mordred because, even though the elf flirted with every male he encountered, Mordred would never do anything to break George's faith. It was Beowulf he didn't trust.

"George."

Kael's uncertain tone made him look up.

"What, little one?"

Kael shoved some papers around his desk. "Mordred really isn't mad about you helping us out, is he?"

George rubbed his chin. It was going to be hard to explain Mordred's feelings without hurting Kael. "It's not that he's mad because I'm helping you, Kael. It's simply that he's not used to sharing me with anyone. We've been together for centuries and nothing's ever come between us. Or taken our interest from each other." He grinned. "You have noticed how spoiled the elf is."

"Just a little spoiled." Kael chuckled.

"There's something about him that makes me want to spoil him. When his face lights up in a smile, I feel like the sun has come out." He grimaced. "He's got me turning into a damn poet."

"I think he affects all of us like that at times," Hugh commented as he walked in. "Even when we don't want him to."

George slapped Hugh on the shoulder. "Mordred is a master of getting what he wants."

"So what's your secondary plan? You didn't go into it during the meeting." Hugh kissed and hugged Kael.

"I was explaining it to Kael. Mordred and I manufactured a fight, and I've moved out of our suite at Gaia's palace. We're hoping whoever plotted this whole debacle will try to recruit him, and we'll get enough proof to go to Gaia with it."

Hugh pursed his lips and shook his head. "Doesn't sound like fun for either of you. Where are you staying?"

Hugh's comment was an understatement. It was a good thing Mordred had fed from him earlier or the elf would begin to experience weakness and get very cranky.

"I'm staying with another elf, Seamus. He doesn't live in the palace with Gaia. He hates all the sycophants that surround the goddess. In the legends, I guess, you'd consider him a dark elf."

"You mean the Unseelie?" Kael's face lit up with curiosity. "Aren't they dangerous?"

George burst into uproarious laughter. He managed to catch himself before he fell to the floor. When he gained control and wiped the tears from his cheeks, he glanced at the men staring at him. Kael wore a slightly hurt look, and Hugh's lips twitched like he couldn't decide whether to laugh or frown.

"Are you done?" Kael poked him in the chest.

Nodding, he wrapped his arms around Kael and hugged him tight. "Sorry, little one. Once you meet Seamus, you'll know that all those legends are false. Mordred is more of a danger to you than Seamus is."

"In what way is Mordred more dangerous than Seamus?" Hugh asked. "I've had the legends of the Unseelie bottle fed to me from birth by my mother and grandmother. They say being charmed by any of the fae is dangerous, but the dark ones are the worst."

George rested his chin on Kael's head and stared at Hugh for a moment while he thought. "Maybe the other dark elves are dangerous. I've never met any of them besides Seamus. They stay to themselves in the birch forests of the Realm. They rarely make an effort to come to Gaia's court. The Unseelie don't see Gaia as their goddess, so they don't see the point in worshipping or thanking her for creating a safe place for them."

Kael moved to Hugh and settled next to him. George smiled to himself when he saw how Kael didn't hesitate to snuggle close, forcing Hugh to wrap his arm around Kael's waist. Like Mordred and me, Kael is sure of his place with Hugh, George thought. A wave of unhappiness swelled through him. He hated knowing that he wouldn't be able to go home and cuddle with Mordred. As far as he was concerned, that was one more thing he could lay at Beowulf's feet. If he got the chance, he'd make the man pay.

"Why is Mordred more dangerous than Seamus?"

George re-focused to find Hugh and Kael waiting to hear his explanation. "What makes Mordred dangerous is the mere fact that he's not conscious of how much damage he can cause. He does magic without thinking, and sometimes that can cause problems." He chuckled. "Believe me, I've seen it."

Convincing the angry elf to change a pissed-off alley cat back into the nymph it had originally been was one of the most difficult things George had ever had to do. All the nymph had done was pinch George's butt.

Who knew Mordred would turn into such a possessive lover? Mordred had spent most of his adult life moving from one flirtation to another without his heart ever being involved. George figured the elf was just as surprised as everyone else when he'd fallen for a stubborn knight.

"I bet it'll be rough on both of you not being able to see each other for however long it takes to figure this out." Hugh gave him a sympathetic smile.

"We'll see each other. There's a place we can go to in our dreams that no one else can find. Only way we can really communicate." He pushed away from the counter and stretched. "I think I should look at the new dragon-slayer units and see which ones we can get into the field right away."

"Good idea. Wellmine is still in the conference room. He'll have any information you need."

George nodded at both of them and left. He needed something to take his mind off of Mordred and Aiden.

Chapter Fourteen

Realm of Dreams

Mordred's voice was gone and his throat ached. He glanced around at the sheer destruction in his suite. Perfect.

The last chair cracked into pieces as a knock sounded on the door. The ability to speak seemed to have deserted him. He went to the decanters on the sideboard and poured a drink. Curiosity would drive whoever knocked to open the door sooner or later.

"Mordred?"

He snorted into his drink. Beowulf had probably come to view the damage his lies had wrought.

"Get the hell out of my room," Mordred snarled at his former lover.

Beowulf's eyes widened as he moved further into the room and saw the mess Mordred had created.

"Come to gloat, Beowulf?"

Mordred wandered over to the window seat and curled up in it, leaning his cheek against the glass. Goddess, his head ached. He stiffened when Beowulf's hand landed on his shoulder.

"I would never do that. I know how much George meant to you, and to see you hurt this much because of that worthless knight makes my heart ache."

Beowulf sounded sincere, but Mordred wanted to punch the man and defend George. To do so would be to tip their hand too soon. He needed to get on the inside of the circle and get solid evidence. It was the only way Gaia would believe him.

"How did you know about our fight?" He didn't look at Beowulf, preferring to keep his gaze on the garden outside his window.

"Aiden told me. He's very concerned that he was the cause of it."

Cloth rubbing against itself caught Mordred's ear, and he turned to see Beowulf gesturing to Aiden. The auburn-haired man strolled across the floor, picking his way through the debris like a cat. Mordred didn't see a hint of concern in the man's green eyes. It was more like he was studying them, intrigued by their emotions.

"I'm sure he was." Mordred waved a limp hand at the chaos around him. "I'd offer you a seat, but I seem to have broken all of them."

"I'll sit right here, then." Aiden perched on the window seat right next to Mordred's feet.

Mordred fought the urge to move. He didn't want Aiden to know how nervous he made him. It was disconcerting how easy it had been for Aiden to get under his skin. Mordred had never been around a person he couldn't read, and not knowing where Aiden came from bothered him.

"I'll leave Aiden here to cheer you up, my friend. You are welcome to join us for dinner tonight. I know it will be lonely for you until you adjust to St. Albans not being around." Beowulf winked and started walking out.

"Why should it be any different now? He hasn't been around much for the past couple of months anyway."

He stretched, being careful not to touch Aiden, and stood. Staring around the room, he sighed. "I should probably get some of the servants to clean this mess up."

Aiden stood as well, cupping Mordred's elbow. "Let us go for a walk while they do. You don't need to be here to see the ruins of a past relationship being thrown away."

Goddess, this boy is good, Mordred thought with surprise. It was like Aiden knew exactly the right thing to say or do to make a person think he cared. Mordred would have to be careful with this one. Aiden seemed to have his own agenda, and Mordred wasn't sure how closely it fit with Beowulf's.

"A walk sounds like a good idea." He glanced down at his wrinkled clothes. "I believe I'll go change."

"Certainly, though I don't think you could look bad in a burlap bag." Aiden winked at him. "I'll go get the servants to come and clean up for you."

"Thank you."

He moved to his dressing room. Leaving the door open a crack, he changed while listening in on what Beowulf and Aiden were talking about.

"You have got to get Mordred interested in you. He'll be able to tell us how the mortals are killing our dragons. We need to figure out how to make them less vulnerable. Also, I don't want him thinking about St. Albans anymore. Once we're done

taking back the mortal world, I plan on making him mine again." Beowulf's leer was evident in his voice.

Aiden's laugh was scornful. "I don't think he'd ever be interested in you again, especially not after having both St. Albans and me as lovers."

Beowulf growled. "Remember who controls sending you home, Aiden. If you anger me, I can ensure you stay here for the rest of your unnatural life."

A hiss sounded from the other room and Mordred's eyebrows shot up. He'd never heard any creature in the Realm make that sound. Well, except for the cats. He yanked a tunic over his head and flipped his hair out of the way.

He'd have to figure out a way to introduce Aiden to Hester and see if the witch could guess what he was.

"You may think you hold all the power, Beowulf, but you and your friends hold nothing that isn't given to you by your goddess. If she chooses, she can take it all away from you. You need me, but I don't need you. I can make a life just fine here in this Realm."

The door slammed, signaling Beowulf's retreat. Mordred finished dressing before Aiden decided to come looking for him. He slipped into a pair of shoes and secured his hair back with a silver dragon clip George had given him.

"Ready," he called out, sailing into the outer room with a smile.

Aiden met his smile with a sneer, and his green eyes had an unusual red tint to them. Mordred didn't stop. He wasn't going to be intimidated by a show of anger. Placing his hand in the bend of Aiden's arm, he gestured to his door.

"I'll flag down a servant when we leave. I could give you a tour of the palace and some of my favorite places."

Aiden grunted, and Mordred took that to mean yes. He dragged the man out of his rooms, grinning to himself. Beowulf seemed to annoy everyone, not just Mordred and George.

After giving Aiden a dreadfully dull tour of Gaia's palace, Mordred directed their steps outside and toward the willow groves. Hester would be getting ready for breakfast, and he planned on getting them invited to join her.

"Do you know all the naughty things you can do under willow trees?" He shot a sideways glance at Aiden and fluttered his eyelashes. "The oldest trees with all those leaves and branches drooping to the ground are perfect to hide under."

Aiden looked surprised that Mordred was flirting with him. Two can play at your game, boy, Mordred thought.

He caught Mordred around the waist and pulled him close. "Would you be willing to show me what one can get up to under the weeping willows?" Aiden purred.

Mordred, in a manly manner, resisted the stupid urge to giggle. They were close to Hester's, so he knew he wouldn't have "put up or shut up," like the mortals said.

"Maybe, but first you have to tell me a secret of yours." He trailed a finger down Aiden's nose to tap the end. "I only exchange secrets for secrets."

He wanted to gag. Had he ever acted this foolishly? Mordred was glad George wasn't around to see him act like this. The knight would be rolling on the ground in laughter.

"What do you want to know?" Aiden cupped Mordred's ass and squeezed.

Mordred clenched his hand, but managed not to punch Aiden in his pretty green eyes. Goddess, he hated being manhandled without permission.

"Out of all the wonderful people you could hang out with in the Realm, why that boorish oaf Beowulf and his slutty little girlfriend?" He wrinkled his nose.

Aiden narrowed his eyes and studied Mordred. Keeping his eyes wide and innocent, Mordred thought, That's right, boy. I'm innocent and dumb as a rock. You can tell me anything.

"He's the first person I met when I woke up. He doesn't seem too dangerous, so I thought I'd stay with him while trying to figure out how to get back home." Aiden shrugged.

"Oh, you poor dear, are you homesick?" Mordred leaned down and brushed a kiss over Aiden's cheek.

Throwing his head back, Aiden gave Mordred a wild-eyed stare. Mordred gasped and covered his mouth with his hand.

"I'm sorry. Don't you kiss where you're from?"

It was a silly philosophy as far as Mordred was concerned. Kissing was one of the purest actions a person could share with another.

Shaking his head slowly, Aiden said, "No, we don't. Kisses are used for other things and aren't seen as friendly gestures."

"Oh, that's awful." Mordred jerked away from Aiden and skipped down the path the last few yards to Hester's house. "Hester, my dear lady, come out and meet my new friend."

Chapter Fifteen

Hester's eyes bugged out of her head when Mordred dragged Aiden down the path up to her door. She shot him a quick glance and he gave her a wink. Relaxing slightly, she held out her hand to Aiden.

"Any friend of Mordred's is a friend of mine."

Aiden bowed over her hand, but didn't say anything.

"I was about to sit down to breakfast. Would you and your friend like to join me?" Hester asked, just as Mordred knew she would.

"We'd love to."

"I'm not hungry."

Mordred and Aiden's voices overlapped. Mordred practically clapped his hands in joy, but he pouted instead.

"I was hoping you would join Hester and me for breakfast, but since you're not hungry, I guess, you can just head back to Gaia's. I'll catch up with you at dinner tonight, all right?"

He didn't give Aiden a choice. Within minutes, Aiden was gone and Mordred was sitting down to a marvelous hot breakfast with Hester.

"Who was that person, Mordred?" Hester poured out some tea for them.

"That would be Aiden. He's one of the reasons George and I are no longer seeing each other."

Hester's cup rattled in its saucer. "Not seeing each other? What happened?"

"I'm only going to tell you the truth. No one else can know at the moment."

"You know I'll keep your secrets, Mordred. What's going on?"

He settled back in his chair, crossed his legs, and took a sip of tea before he started. Hester kept quiet during his explanation. When he finished and took a bite of his eggs, Hester leaned forward, resting her elbows on the table.

"Do you think this little subterfuge of yours will work?"

Shrugging, Mordred cleaned his plate. "I don't know, but we're getting desperate here, Hester. More dragons are appearing every day, and there aren't enough slayers to fight them. Soon worse things will be breaking through, and we can't sit back and watch it happen."

She nodded. "I have no love for the mortals since they've seen fit to try and burn me at the stake, but they do deserve their own place in the universe." She started to stand.

Mordred waved her back down. "I'll take care of the dishes. Aiden is supposed to enchant me so much that I'll spill how the humans kill the dragons, so Beowulf and Morgana can make the creatures stronger." He piled the plates up and carried them over to Hester's sink.

"Where did Aiden come from?"

"That's the interesting part. We don't know. He tells me he can't remember. He just woke up and he was here. Yet I gave him a kiss on the cheek before we showed up here, and he freaked out. Said they don't kiss where he comes from, and it isn't seen as a friendly gesture."

Hester looked surprised. "You kissed him?"

Mordred brushed his bangs out of the way and glared at her. "It wasn't a full-on lips and tongue sort of kiss. It was more like a peck on the cheek. I'm not going to sleep with him, Hester. Give me more credit than that."

"Sorry." She didn't sound like she was.

He waved off her apology. "I'm glad to get rid of him for a while."

She didn't say anything, just looked at him.

"He's so intense. Always watching me to see what I'm going to do or how I react to something. I mean it was fun when I was young and selfish, but I don't think I'd be able to deal with it for long." He dried the dishes and put them away before joining her back at the table. "So will you help me figure out where Aiden came from? I think if we can get him back there, he might decide to help us instead. He and Beowulf don't really like each other."

"Nobody but Gaia and Morgana likes Beowulf." Hester nodded. "I'll help, but you'll have to get me more information than he doesn't like to kiss."

"Of course." He stood and moved to her side. Bending over, he kissed her cheek. "Thanks for the help, Hester. Now I need to go and sulk some more. If I don't, people will start to wonder what's wrong with me."

"Heaven forbid." She shooed him out. "I'll start looking through some of my books. Maybe something in there will give us a clue about Aiden."

He blew her another kiss as he made his way down the path back to Gaia's palace.

Chapter Sixteen

Mordred strolled into the dining hall next to Aiden and couldn't help but laugh at the shocked expressions on all the guests' faces. So they hadn't been sure the rumors were true about his break-up with George. Well, he was just going to have to show them it really was over between them, especially if he wanted Beowulf and Morgana to believe in it.

Gaia waved for him to come to the head of the table where she was sitting. He nodded and leaned down to whisper in Aiden's ear, "I'm being summoned."

Aiden glanced over at the goddess and grimaced. "I'll sit down here. If she lets you come back, you can sit with me." He gestured to two chairs closest to the door.

"Will do, cutie." Ignoring Aiden's aversion to kissing, he gave him a peck on the cheek.

Mordred walked over to Gaia, chuckling at Aiden's quick duck away. He'd almost missed the man's cheek, but Mordred wasn't persistent for nothing.

He bowed and kissed Gaia's hand before sitting in the chair she imperiously pointed to. She studied him, and he kept his mind clear of any serious thoughts. No way was he willing to let the goddess know what they were doing.

"I see you are quite brokenhearted about losing George." Her gaze shifted to Aiden and back to Mordred. "Replacing him already?"

Lounging in his chair, he picked at the napkin on the plate in front of him. He gave a vague shrug. "Oh, you know me, my lady. I can't stand not having the spotlight and the attention of a handsome man." He snapped his fingers at Aiden. "He's a convenient distraction from my pain."

Mordred valiantly kept from rolling his eyes at the insipid crap spilling from his mouth. If Gaia bought all the saccharine sweet he was vomiting out, the goddess didn't know him as well as he thought she did.

"Um-hmm..." She didn't sound convinced. "Where is George now? I know he's disobeyed my orders and has been helping the mortals fight the dragons."

"I don't know and I don't care." He pouted. "He likes those awful humans better than me, so I don't care where he's sleeping tonight."

The dining bell rang and Gaia stood, signaling for everyone else to get on their feet. She said a blessing over the food and wine. When she sat, she ordered the servants to start serving.

"I must say I am impressed with the humans' ability to fight the creatures being sent through the barrier. I thought it would be an overwhelming battle for them." Her voice was thoughtful.

"You did give Kael powers to help them." He kept his words low. He didn't want anyone to overhear the conversation. There was no way any secrets were going to be spilled from his lips.

"I gave him what was in my power to do in mortal realms. In every successive generation, I'm losing a foothold there. Fewer and fewer believe anymore in the earth and Mother Goddess." A hint of sadness danced upon her words.

Mordred chose his next words carefully. It wouldn't pay to upset Gaia. "Is that why you decided not to stop whoever is making the dragons appear? Are you doing it to convince the non-believers that magic and magical creatures still exist?"

She closed her elegant fingers around a crystal wine goblet and drank from it. Her drawn-out silence convinced Mordred she wasn't going to answer him.

"I can't stop them, Mordred."

"Bullshit, my lady. In the Realm of Dreams, you are all powerful. You can stop whoever is doing this. Why aren't you?"

Gaia put on her "I am Mother Goddess" look and glared at Mordred. "Who are you to question my motives? I am not answerable to you or anyone else for that matter. Just accept that I choose not to lift my hand to stop the dragons or the traitors who defy my orders. Why is irrelevant."

Clamping his mouth shut, Mordred decided retreat was the better part of valor at the moment. When Gaia got that look on her face, there was no point asking her anything; she wouldn't answer.

The person on the other side of him jostled his elbow, and he turned to find a black-haired, blue-eyed elf smiling at him.

"Ailill, my friend, where have you been?"

Mordred and George had both tried to find the elf right after they'd heard Kael's story of being helped by a man named Al in Brisbane. When they went looking for him, Ailill seemed to have disappeared.

Ailill's gaze danced over to Gaia and back to Mordred with a slight shake of his dark curls. Right. He got the message: no talking about that stuff around Gaia.

Fine with him. He could talk about silly things all night. He leaned over to whisper in Ailill's ear while pointing at one of the blue-haired nymphs across the table.

"Would you be willing to meet me at the old gazebo later tonight?"

Ailill laughed like Mordred had told him the funniest joke. "Yes."

"Marvelous."

Mordred sat back to finish dinner. He wondered what George was doing. Time in the Realm and the mortal world worked differently. He didn't want to bother George if he was in a meeting or fighting a dragon.

Standing, Gaia pronounced dinner done and the ballroom ready for dancing. Mordred stood, dropping his napkin next to Ailill's chair. As he bent to pick it up, he murmured to the dark-haired elf, "I'll meet you at the gazebo at one."

Ailill nodded, smiling at something his dinner partner said, but Mordred knew the elf had heard him. Glancing down the room, he saw Aiden in a heated conversation with Morgana. Mordred strolled slowly toward them. He knew he should be trying to listen in on their discussion. Morgana's cold, dark eyes met his and he shivered. He'd never liked the crazy witch. She had a vindictive streak a mile wide. Look what she'd done to Arthur.

Aiden ended the conversation with a sharp shake of his head before moving toward him. Mordred slipped his hand through Aiden's arm and smiled down at the man. Aiden vibrated with anger.

"Sorry about not being able to eat dinner with you, love, but when the goddess demands, we subjects must obey." Which wasn't entirely true. Mordred had disobeyed Gaia more times than he could count and lived to tell about it.

"I understand." Aiden's words were clipped.

"Hmm...what did Beowulf's slutty girlfriend say to make you so angry?" Mordred rubbed his free hand over Aiden's arm.

"Nothing important."

Mordred would let it go for now. Biding his time ensured resentment built in the enemy's camp, and then he could weasel his way in to destroy them from the inside. He chuckled to himself. That sounded dramatic.

"Are you interested in dancing or mingling with them?" Mordred tilted his head at the throng of bodies heading to the ballroom.

Aiden shook his head.

"Good. I'm not, either. I'm going to call it a night. Being all happy has tired me out." He sighed. He didn't want to, but he did it. "Would you like to come back to my suite for a drink?"

"I'm not feeling in the mood actually."

Aiden's refusal rushed through Mordred, overwhelming him with relief. He didn't really want to continue to flirt with the strange man. He wanted to curl up in his bed, hold George's pillow and pretend the knight was with him.

"At least walk me to my suite. You can slip away from there and hide from Beowulf and his obnoxious crowd. I promise not to tell that you didn't spend the night with me." He winked.

Aiden stayed silent as they made their way back to Mordred's suite. He hugged Aiden before going inside and shutting the door behind him. Leaning against it, he let his breath out in a whoosh. Goddess, it had only been one day. If he had to continue seducing Aiden much longer, he'd go crazy.

Stripping while he headed for the bathing room, he thought about the stranger. He admitted to himself that there was some low-level attraction to Aiden, but it wasn't strong enough to overtake how Mordred felt for George.

The warm water ran over Mordred and his tight muscles relaxed. The first day was always the hardest. He'd get the hang of leading Aiden on. He'd just fallen out of practice after being with George for so long.

After he dried off, he checked the time. A nap sounded good before he headed to the gazebo to meet Ailill. Crawling in bed, he embraced the pillow George always used and buried his face in it, breathing the faint scent of his lover. Goddess, it had been a long time since he'd slept a whole night without George.

Chapter Seventeen

Ailill stepped into the gazebo, and Mordred greeted him with a hug.

"It is good to see you, my friend." He gestured to one of the benches. "Sit and tell me where you've been."

"Gaia sent me on some silly, unimportant mission to gather brownies in the oak groves. Those little things are devilishly hard to round up." Ailill leaned against the railing and stared at Mordred. "What did you want to talk to me about?"

"Not into small talk, huh?"

The other elf looked at him with eyebrow raised. "Have I ever been into idle chitchat? Besides, I know you, Mordred. You didn't ask me to meet you here so you could catch me up on the newest gossip."

He laughed. "You do know me well, Ailill."

Sitting, Mordred made himself comfortable. He drew one leg up, setting his heel on the edge of the bench and resting his chin on his knee.

"Dragons have returned to the mortal world."

Ailill didn't seem surprised by that. "I have heard those rumors."

"Yes, I'm sure you have. Gaia sent George and me to keep an eye on a certain mortal by the name of Kael."

Ailill stiffened and Mordred pinned him with his gaze.

"Ah, I see you recognize that name. Imagine our surprise when Kael explained how a man named Al helped him get away from his abusive ex-lover." He chuckled softly. "We were even more surprised when Kael described you."

Sighing, Ailill sat next to Mordred, elbows on his knees and hands dangling between his legs. The elf stared at the floor.

"Why did Gaia send you there, Ailill? Why did you let Kael get beat so badly he almost died?" Mordred wanted to grab his friend and shake him.

"Some of us don't break the rules lightly, Mordred." Ailill's voice held guilt. "I hated that assignment. You don't know how many times I wanted to step in and stop it. How many times M.A. had to restrain me from going over there and killing Will with my bare hands."

Mordred kept his chin down, but his hands clenched into fists. "Why didn't you? I know Kael is merely a mortal and you had your orders from Gaia, but I didn't think you'd be the type to let orders get in the way when someone is being hurt."

His friend shoved a hand through his dark curls. "I know, but Gaia put a spell on me, Mordred. It was impossible for me to do anything until she was ready for me to help him. All I was there to do was to ensure he didn't die."

"I've never been clear on why Gaia picked Kael of all the mortals to be her contact with the human world," Mordred thought out loud.

"I asked her one time," Ailill admitted, shifting on the bench. "I guess one of Kael's ancestors was a powerful Druid priest. He dedicated his service and those of any future progeny to Gaia if or when she ever needed it. That's where he got the ability to read minds."

Mordred snorted. "Now that's a great talent. It doesn't work all the time and makes him feel like a freak."

"No one ever said it was perfect. It merely gave Gaia a link to his family. It made it easy for her to track him down."

"Another question."

"Why am I not surprised? Why don't you ask Gaia these?" Ailill shot him a glance from the corner of his eyes.

He rolled his eyes. "You know what she's like. Gets that 'holier than thou' look and says 'I'm the Mother Goddess. Who are you to question me?'"

Ailill chuckled at Mordred's perfect impression of Gaia. "Annoying when she does that, isn't it?"

"Yes. That's why I'm asking you." He fluttered his eyelashes at the other elf.

"Stop that." Ailill punched his arm. "If I really believed you and George had ended your relationship, I might take you up on that unsubtle offer."

Mordred flopped back on the bench to study the stars through the holes in the roof. "I thought I was doing a good acting job."

"For anyone who doesn't know you or who wants to see what they want instead of what is real." His friend turned slightly to look down at him. "Remember, I grew up with you. I know how you would really react if George left you. There wouldn't be a stone standing in Gaia's palace. M.A. is keeping an eye on Kael like members of his family have been doing throughout the centuries."

"They're bound together?" Mordred was surprised. M.A.'s people didn't bind themselves often and never willingly.

"You know how devoted those silly cats are to Gaia. They'd do anything she asked of them."

It was amazing that some of the most independent creatures in the world would attach themselves so strongly to a goddess not of their own kind.

"I'm surprised M.A. hasn't told her what we're doing. He has to know we're breaking her orders not to help the mortals."

Ailill stood and began to pace around the gazebo, his hands clasped behind his back. "I don't know why he's chosen to keep silent. Maybe he feels more of a connection to Kael than we thought."

Mordred thought through what Ailill told him. "You said Gaia wouldn't let you do anything until she was ready for you to help him. Help him in what way?"

Ailill frowned, thinking for a second. "She wanted him to come to Ireland, but it had to be at the right time."

"Leading me to believe she knew the dragons were going to start appearing."

"She is a goddess, Mordred. Not a lot gets past her."

"True, but if she knew about them, she could have stopped the whole thing from happening. I asked her why she hasn't done anything on this side of the barrier to keep the creatures here, and she pulled that goddess shit with me." Mordred thumped his fist on the cushion underneath him. He coughed as a cloud of dust rose. "It's almost like she's biding her time to see who'll win out before she plays her hand."

"Can't really blame her." Ailill strolled over to him and bent to give him a kiss. "I have to be going. It wouldn't be good if someone saw us talking and told Gaia."

Mordred gained his feet and hugged Ailill. "Thank you for coming. Unfortunately, your answers just give me more questions."

Ailill trailed his hand over Mordred's cheek to grasp his chin. "Elves are supposed to be enigmatic, honey. It gives us our charm."

Laughing, he waved Ailill off. "Go to bed, friend. I don't want you to get in trouble with Gaia. I'm trying to not take my friends down with me."

He stayed in the gazebo, watching Ailill leave. The night air had a bit of a nip to it, so he conjured a blanket to wrap up in. His bed was empty and he didn't feel like going back there just yet. Curling up on the bench, he closed his eyes and thought about the first real kiss he and George had.

* * * * *

Several months had passed since Mordred began his campaign to seduce St. Albans. He had the feeling he was wearing the knight down. Each protest to his suggestive

advances got weaker and weaker. Mordred could be persistent when he wanted to.

They were celebrating the winter solstice, and mistletoe decorated the ballroom. All night, he maneuvered George in the direction of a hidden alcove where he'd hung a swag of mistletoe earlier. It was time to get a true taste of the knight.

George shot him nervous glances, but he ignored them, using his subtle nudging to get the bigger man where he wanted him to go.

When George stood next to the alcove, Mordred grasped the knight's arm and tugged him into the hidden space. The knight didn't say anything, just folded his arms and waited for Mordred to speak.

Yanking the curtains closed, he turned and pointed at the mistletoe above them.

"Why am I not surprised?"

"I am nothing if not persistent, my beautiful knight," Mordred purred, placing one hand on George's chest and sliding the other around the man's neck.

George didn't stop him, but he didn't encourage him, either. The knight hadn't figured out yet that Mordred didn't need encouragement.

He urged George to lower his head and brushed their lips together. Licking along the seam of George's mouth, he begged entrance. When George didn't open for him, he teased with nibbles and wet kisses along George's jaw to George's ear.

"Let me in, love. You know you can't fight me much longer," he breathed, tracing the curve of George's ear with his tongue.

A hard shudder wracked George's body, and those muscled arms wrapped around Mordred's waist to drag him close to George's heat.

"Yes," he whispered, embracing George with both arms. "No one will know if you give in. I promise not to say a word."

He'd keep that promise if it was what George wanted. The knight had become more than his usual conquest. He pressed as close as he could get to George, savoring the heat and solidness of the man. He ran his fingers through those dark curls.

"What do you want, elf?" George pulled a few inches away to look at him.

"Only a kiss tonight, my love. Nothing more."

George studied him with brilliant blue eyes, searching for something in Mordred's gaze. Mordred tried to look as sincere as possible. His statement was the truth.

"And only if you want to give it to me. I'll not take what you aren't willing to give."

A low growl issued from George's throat, and Mordred found his mouth being devoured. There was no hesitation or doubt. Not gentle or soft. George took like he was plundering the treasure room. Mordred let the kiss continue for a little while before he started pulling away, lightening the pressure, turning it from plundering to seducing.

He rolled their hips together, getting George used to another cock touching his. He stroked his tongue along George's, asking it to come out and play. George's touches were slower now, more tender, and when Mordred sucked on his tongue, he groaned deep.

Applause broke out in the room beyond the curtain, and Mordred stepped away from George. The knight's eyes burned with lust and need, but Mordred wasn't ready to let George give in to those emotions.

He'd given him a taste of what sex with Mordred would be like. The next step was George's.

Chapter Eighteen

Mortal World

"We have a giant problem."

Larkin burst into the planning room where George and Wellmine sat. The knight and the captain had been discussing how best to utilize the new slayers. They looked up with varying degrees of annoyance at the lieutenant.

"Literally or figuratively?" George cringed at the thought of giants rampaging through the countryside.

Larkin blinked at his question, and he could see the soldier imagining what a giant might do. Larkin paled and shook his head.

"Larkin?"

Wellmine shifted in his seat. His leg was still in a cast, and George knew it bothered the soldier to not be able to move without pain.

"This picture was taken a few minutes ago out by Delphi in Greece."

Larkin brought the picture up on the screen and George swore.

"What the bloody hell is that?" Wellmine glanced over at George.

"You're not a fan of Greek mythology, are you, Wellmine?" George scrubbed his hands over his face. He nodded at Larkin. "Get the others in here. We'll need to brief everyone about it."

"I only read a few Greek myths in public school." Wellmine shrugged. "Not interested in reading that much."

George laughed. "I don't blame you. I like spending time doing things."

"There's nothing wrong with reading," Kael said as he opened the door, leading the others into the room.

Standing, George grinned. "You and Mordred are two peas in a pod. There is nothing my love likes better than to curl up with a book and pass the day away."

"Nothing?" Hugh's eyes sparkled as he teased George.

His cheeks were warm and George knew he was blushing. "Okay, so that's his second favorite thing to do."

Everyone laughed and George was glad to see the slayers seemed slightly more rested that day. He waved them all to their seats.

"I had Larkin call you in here because we've received a rather disturbing image from Greece." He nodded toward the screen behind him, moving out of the way so the others could get a clear view of it.

"What the fuck is that?" Maksur blurted out, horrified fascination in his eyes.

"That, gentlemen and lady, is a chimera." He rested his hip against the table and let them think about it.

Kael frowned. "What is a chimera, exactly?"

"It looks like some kind of monster out of a psycho's nightmares," Newton commented.

George glanced at the picture again and nodded, agreeing with Newton's assessment. "Well, the Greek gods were rather crazy by the time the chimera came about. As you can see, she's a hybrid. Head of a lion, midsection of a goat, and the hindquarters of a dragon. Like her equally as monstrous and famous counterparts, she has three heads. If you encounter her, be careful. The goat's head spews fire."

Stevenson sat next to Wellmine, his hands shaking a little. "How can we kill it?"

"It took both Bellerophon and Pegasus to kill it. They flew high enough to get out of the reach of the goat's head. Nowadays, I'd say bomb it with an airplane. No reason to get any closer than you have to." He rubbed his forehead. "The reason I called you here is not to make you worry about having to fight this creature. This one is one of the easier ones you could come up against. It's what the chimera represents that I wanted to talk to you about."

Tension eased through his muscles and he could feel his back tighten. Responsibility weighed heavily on him.

"It's not your fault, George."

He glanced up to see Kael studying him. He realized the slender man had read his mind.

"You didn't have anything to do with the dragons or the weakening of the barrier." Kael reached out and touched his hand. "You're the only one who can teach us what we need to know to kill and protect ourselves."

Castle looked puzzled. "What does any of that have to do with the chimera thing?" He waved a hand at the screen.

George gave Kael a small smile and turned to Castle. "The chimera's appearance shows that the barrier is weakening all over, not just in Ireland and England. That's not

a good thing since more creatures can cross over, and once that starts, you'll be seeing some truly terrible things."

"Barrier? I guess I'm not following you." Castle chuckled hoarsely. "I'm not the brightest bulb in the lamp."

"Don't worry. You're not alone with not understanding." Wellmine looked around at everyone. "So St. Albans, explain the barrier issue to us."

"Hugh, can you have Monica bring a glass bowl to us?"

Hugh buzzed Monica, and they waited for her to bring what George asked for.

"Thanks, Monica."

Hugh's assistant left and George flipped the bowl over, letting the rim settle against the table. "Imagine the bowl is the barrier and the space inside is the Realm of Dreams where magic is still alive and creatures out of nightmares and dreams live. Everything else outside the bowl is the mortal world."

The group nodded.

"Now watch."

Drawing a dagger from his boot, he tapped the hilt against the glass, causing a crack to form in the bowl.

"Hope that wasn't Monica's favorite bowl," Kael murmured.

George waved away his concern. "I'll fix it before I give it back to her."

He made sure he still had everyone's attention. "This crack weakens the entire structure. What happens if you have several cracks around the bowl? You'll have leaks and run the risk of worse happening."

The glass shattered as he slammed the dagger down on it, causing everyone to wince.

"Without the barrier of the glass, whatever was inside the bowl is free to destroy whatever they wish. This is the reason why you see mermaids in Australia and werewolves in Ireland and Germany. Vampires show up in Romania, and the chimera appears in Greece."

Waving his hand, George used a little of the magic he'd gained by living in the Realm. The bowl went back together, and the breaks mended themselves. The group's mouths dropped at his open display of magic.

"Who created this Realm and barrier thing?" Stevenson's question sounded loud in the growing silence.

"Gaia, the Earth Goddess, did when she realized mortals were moving away from belief in magic to a faith in science. She wanted all magical beings to have a place to live unmolested by humans," Kael informed them.

"Why doesn't she stop this from happening?" Castle gestured to the bowl. "If she has enough fucking power to create a Realm, then she should have more than enough to stop what is happening now."

"You're right, Lieutenant. Unfortunately, she won't do anything about it." Kael grimaced and George amended his comment. "I should say, she's done very little to help."

Wellmine grunted and shifted in his seat. "What about your secondary plan? How is that working out?"

Goddess, I wish I knew, George thought. "It just went in motion a couple of days ago. Mordred needs time to get the group to trust him."

"Love, we must meet in our clearing." Mordred's familiar touch brushed against his mind.

"I'll see you tonight." Knowing he'd see his elf eased some of his tension.

"I might be able to update you on that tomorrow."

His body hoped he would get more than information from Mordred. An image of Mordred on his knees in front of him popped into George's mind. Gasping, Kael turned bright red. George chuckled and Hugh shot looks between the two of them. Kael shook his head while George shrugged.

"See what happens when you eavesdrop on people's thoughts?" He winked at Kael.

"I'm not doing it on purpose." Kael's hesitant thoughts stuttered in George's mind.

"I know, little one. I was teasing." George kept his tone gentle.

Kael's ability to read thoughts grew stronger every day. George knew Kael was bothered by it because the scientist felt he was listening in on private conversations.

"Von Offerman is here," Kael announced a second before the door opened and Von Offerman walked in.

The government agent stopped when everyone turned to stare at him. "What?"

Larkin jerked back to Kael. "How the hell did you know Von Offerman was about to walk in?"

Kael ducked his head and Hugh started to say something. George touched Hugh on the shoulder, getting his attention and shaking his head. Kael's confidence was growing, but he still needed to learn how to stand up for himself.

Taking a deep breath, Kael straightened his shoulders and met Larkin's gaze. "I can read thoughts."

Larkin's eyebrow shot up. "Seriously?"

Kael nodded. "Since I was a kid. It was one of the reasons why my parents dumped me in boarding schools. A kid who spills everyone's dirty secrets is an embarrassment."

"I imagine." Larkin didn't seem uncomfortable. His expression looked more interested.

"What did you want, Von Offerman?"

George decided to move the conversation away from Kael back to the important issues.

Von Offerman glanced at Kael for a second before turning to George and handing him a sheet of paper. "Werewolf sightings have doubled in the past two days. Should we be worried?"

Chapter Nineteen

"Like is this some sort of advanced attack, testing our defenses?" George leaned a hip against the table and rubbed his chin. "It's hard to say. I wouldn't give the people responsible for this that much credit. They aren't really known for thinking things through."

Wellmine's eyebrows shot up. "You have suspects? Why didn't you tell us?"

George shrugged. "There isn't anything you can do about them. As soon as I have the proof against them, I'll take action. At the moment, I only have my own suspicions. I have someone working on gaining their trust. It'll take time, though."

"We don't have time. Things are rapidly getting out of hand, and innocent people are getting hurt every moment we wait to act." Wellmine slammed his fist on the table and everyone jumped.

"I know you all are frustrated and angry. I am too. I've been here before. I've been involved in situations where all I could do was stand my ground and hope someone came to save my ass or figured out how to win. Unfortunately at the moment, that is the only option we have. Holding our ground and hoping we can figure a way out of the problem."

George rubbed the back of his neck and found himself wishing Mordred was around. The elf would have gotten these men to follow him through a hailstorm of bombs and bullets. Of course, Mordred had a way with words. If ever there was a person born with a silver tongue, it was Mordred.

George smiled, remembering how Mordred had slowly seduced him into his bed. Gentle touches, stolen kisses, and the whole time telling George he would only go as fast and as far as George wanted him to, ignoring all the times George voiced doubts or fears. It got to the point when George had believed it was inevitable that he'd end up in Mordred's bed.

At first, it had been hard for him to accept touching and being touched by another man. In the world he'd come from, he could have been killed for something like that. He'd never even thought about men in a sexual way. There had been moments when he admired the physique of other knights, but that's as far as it went. He'd spent time dallying with serving wenches and ladies' maids.

Though there was nothing feminine about Mordred except for his cascade of blond hair, the elf turned him on more than any woman he'd ever met. He never dreamed he'd enjoy not only taking, but being taken. The pleasure they both received when Mordred fed from him was so great, he knew he could easily become addicted to the sensations. Mordred understood the danger and only drank rarely from him.

"Is there any way we can fight the werewolves? They're appearing in packs, and I'm worried about the smaller villages being destroyed by them." Von Offerman's worry colored his words.

Before George could say anything, Niall appeared.

"Shit. Would you quit doing that?" Larkin jumped to his feet, his chair sailing across the room.

The leprechaun chuckled at the lieutenant. "How else am I supposed to give St. Albans here the information Hester and Mordred found for him? I can't email it to him."

"Niall." George didn't want the leprechaun getting in a fight with Larkin. He wasn't worried about Niall; he was afraid for Larkin. Niall didn't fight fair.

"Hester said these are the best ways to fight wolves and vampires." Niall held out some papers to George. "They're home remedies, so even smaller, more rural villages should be able to gather the ingredients."

He gestured for Stevenson to take them. "Make a set of copies for our own use before letting Von Offerman fax out the information to all the units fighting the vampires and werewolves."

Stevenson left, dragging Von Offerman with him. George looked at Niall.

"How are things in the Realm?"

The leprechaun shrugged. "Have to admit tension's in the air. Most folks don't know what's going on, but they know something is. Morgana and Beowulf are wandering around, whispering into people's ears." Niall glared at George. "I don't know what got your shorts in a twist, but you need to make things up with Mordred. That stranger is sniffing around him like he's the most expensive cream a cat could have."

Jealousy fought to raise its ugly head in George, but he wasn't going to let it. "I trust Mordred."

Niall snorted. "Of course, you can trust Mordred. The elf doesn't see anyone but you. The guy you can't trust is Aiden. I get the feeling that with the least bit of encouragement, he'd jump Mordred in a New York minute."

Frowning at how weird it was to hear Niall use that phrase, George shook his head. "Mordred would never encourage him."

"To get the information you're looking for, he just might have to, and we all know Mordred can flirt with the best of them, whether he means it or not." Niall crossed his arms in front of his chest and stared up at George. "You're playing a dangerous game, St. Albans. Let's hope nothing gets permanently damaged because of it."

"Get out of here, Niall. Don't stir up more trouble than you're ready to handle," George growled at the leprechaun.

Throwing back his head, Niall's laugh filled the room. "You don't scare me, you big idiot. I know all your tricks, and besides, Mordred likes me. He wouldn't let you hurt me."

"Don't count on that. Thank you for delivering the papers." George turned away, effectively dismissing the leprechaun.

Pop. He knew Niall had left by the way Larkin grumbled under his breath. Leprechauns had a way of annoying people without even trying, but most took great delight in bugging people.

Monica walked in with an armful of copies. "Bailey said to pass these out and have you go over the instructions with the other slayers, Mr. St. Albans."

"Good idea. Can you hand those out to everyone, Monica?" He went back to the front of the room. "Pay attention, everyone. We don't know yet how many wolves or vampires have crossed over, but it doesn't hurt to be prepared to deal with them if we see them."

George settled in a chair, shifting mental gears to the overall threat and pushed the threat to his relationship to the back of his mind. He would deal with that later.

* * * * *

George sat in the middle of the clearing. Mordred would be there any moment, and he'd get a chance to taste his lover again. Goddess, he'd gotten spoiled always being able to come back to Mordred. Now that he couldn't, he missed the arrogant elf.

"Such a ferocious frown, love." Mordred's hand brushed over George's hair before Mordred knelt beside him. "What's upsetting you?"

"Nothing." Turning, he looked at Mordred.

"Come, George. Don't ever lie to me. I know you too well." Mordred kissed him hard.

Burying his fingers in Mordred's hair, George opened for Mordred's questing tongue. He slowly fell back until Mordred was sprawled on top of him. George freed one of his hands and slid it down Mordred's back to cup his ass. The firm muscles in his grasp flexed as Mordred ground their cocks together.

He wasn't interested in talking at the moment. "I want you," he whispered, trailing kisses down Mordred's throat.

"I'm yours."

In an instant, they were naked, lying on a soft blanket under the stars of the Realm's night sky. George groaned, watching Mordred licking his fingers, getting them wet. Leaning forward and bracing a hand on George's chest, Mordred reached behind him and started to prepare himself for George's cock. Goddess, he loved when Mordred did that.

He wrapped his fist around Mordred's leaking cock, encouraging him to fuck his hand. Soon Mordred was rocking between George's hand and his own fingers. Precum beaded at Mordred's slit, and George swiped his palm over it, letting Mordred's movements spread the liquid and ease the friction of his grip.

"Ah," Mordred moaned. "George, please. I need you in me now."

"Then let me in, love." He tugged slightly on Mordred's cock, forcing him to rise up on his knees.

Mordred placed both hands on George's chest and brushed a kiss over his cheek before lowering his ass onto George's cock. George closed his eyes, fighting the need to thrust and bury himself balls deep in Mordred's ass. He would let his lover control the taking for now.

Goddess, there was something so primal in making love to Mordred. Being allowed to sink into Mordred, to take possession of his body in the most basic way drove George to the brink. Each time they made love, they became a part of each other at a deeper level than George had gone to with a woman in his mortal life.

Mordred froze when George's cockhead nailed his gland and a look of pure ecstasy crossed his face. George planted his feet on the ground and shoved up with his hips, driving his prick deeper.

"No teasing this time, Mordred. Ride me." George gritted his teeth and prayed Mordred wouldn't be in the mood to play.

More than once, George had been in the mood for a quick fuck, and Mordred had tortured him by drawing the loving out until he was begging to come. George admitted he liked those moments for the most part, but not tonight. Not when he wanted to mark Mordred deep inside where no one else would ever touch him.

Mordred gripped his shoulders and rolled, keeping them connected as George ended up on top. "Then do it."

George curled his hands around Mordred's shoulders, buried his head in the crook of his neck, and slammed into Mordred's ass, making him cry out.

He became lost in the advance and retreat of each thrust, the rhythm of their loving soothing his worry and jealousy. Mordred gripped George's ass, fingers biting into his muscles each time he flexed them.

Changing the angle of his thrusts, he hit Mordred's gland with each stroke. Grunts filled the night air as they rocked together, racing toward their mutual climax. Desire tingled in his spine, causing his balls to tighten, and he froze. His cum flooded Mordred's passage, marking the elf as his.

"George," Mordred cried, heat splashing between them as Mordred came, his head thrown back.

When his strength gave out, George collapsed to the side, trying not to squash Mordred under him. He stared up at the stars and sighed.

"Werewolves are being seen in Germany and Ireland. Vampires walk among the living in Romania. A chimera was spotted in Greece."

"Did Niall get Kael the information about the werewolves?" Mordred didn't seem surprised by George's litany of monsters appearing in the mortal realm.

"Yes. Thanks for sending that. Bailey ordered what we would need and they made sure all the other countries were notified as well." George glanced at Mordred. "Why did you need to see me?"

"Besides wanting...no, needing to make love to you?" Mordred winked. "I spoke to Ailill and found out what he was doing down in Australia with Kael. Gaia sent him down there to keep an eye on him until the time was right for him to come to Ireland."

George grunted. "He didn't do a very good job."

"Oh, he did a fine job of keeping an eye on Kael. He wasn't supposed to interfere unless Kael's life was in danger." Mordred ran a finger along George's arm.

Frowning, he thought about what Mordred had said. "Ailill kept an eye on Kael until the time was right for him to come to Ireland. Did Gaia know what was going to happen?"

Mordred shrugged, climbed to his feet, and clothed himself with a casual wave. "I tried asking her the other night why she hasn't stopped whoever is creating the dragons and weakening the barrier. She got all 'Goddess' on me and told me it wasn't my place to question her."

"Meaning she knows who's behind it and has chosen not to stop them." George sat up and slammed a fist against the ground. "Damn her. Why doesn't she care about the mortals? Why force Kael into a position he isn't suited for and make us have to defy her?"

A glass of wine appeared in Mordred's hand and he handed it to George. "I don't know. I guess that's why we're doing this little charade. I know what makes Kael so special that Gaia sent Ailill and M.A. to look after him."

Drinking the wine, George pushed his anger back. He couldn't act on it at the moment or maybe he'd never be able to do anything because it was the Goddess who chose to treat Kael this way. "What makes Kael special, aside from the obvious?"

Mordred chuckled. "One of his distant ancestors was a Druid high priest who pledged his service to her, along with the service of any of his descendants she might need. That explains the ability to hear thoughts as well, I believe."

"It could," he grunted, scrubbing his hand over his face in frustration. "I don't know what to do. How do we make this stop for them?"

Flowing like water over the ground, Mordred sat beside him and embraced him. "I'm not sure yet, but we'll come up with something, my knight. I know your honor won't let you walk away from them."

"Admit it. You wouldn't walk away, either, because you like Kael and Hugh."

There were times when he hated the way Mordred acted like he was selfish and indifferent to others. George knew better than that. He'd seen the way Mordred took care of Hester after the witch suffered her burns and how the elf watched over Niall, even though the leprechaun drove them both crazy with his attitude.

Shrugging, Mordred looked down, combing his fingers through the grass. "True, I do like Kael and Hugh. More than like them at times, but my main reason for helping them is because you want to, and I can't refuse you anything."

George laughed. It would take torture to get Mordred to admit out loud that he was helping someone out of the goodness of his heart. He threaded his fingers through Mordred's blond hair, letting the strands glimmer in the moonlight before they fell to Mordred's shoulders.

"Have you learned anything about Aiden?"

"Yes, and it's all very mysterious." Mordred grinned.

"I'm sure it is." George didn't like the twinge of jealousy in his gut. "What's so mysterious about him?"

"He doesn't remember where he's from. All he knows is that he woke up and Beowulf was there. Beowulf told him he knew how to send Aiden back to his home, but Aiden had to help him first. He's suppose to distract me and make me forget about you, so that when Beowulf is finished taking over the mortal world, he can get me back."

Surprise raced through George and he couldn't help but laugh. "Does he really think you'd come back to him?"

"Well, that is the same question Aiden asked him, though he said that after having you and him as lovers, did Beowulf really think I'd settle for him?"

At least Aiden included George in the lovers category.

"Beowulf reminded him who held the power in their agreement. That didn't sit well with Aiden." Mordred rose up on his knees and brushed a kiss over George's lips while sliding his hand between his thighs. "That's all the important information I have for you. Let's not waste the rest of the night talking about them."

George pulled Mordred on top of him, kissing Mordred back. They could discuss options later, and he'd have Seamus go help Hester to figure out what Aiden was. Right now, he wanted to surround himself with the scents and sounds of his lover.

Chapter Twenty

A knock interrupted Mordred's intense study of a dew-covered spider's web in the corner of his window. He'd been sitting, letting his mind wander back to two nights ago and how his body still ached in a good way.

"Come in," he called, not moving from his seat.

"There you are. I've been looking for you everywhere." Aiden stepped into the room.

The bright smile and eager expression on Aiden's face was supposed to convince Mordred that Aiden had spent all morning searching for him. The cool calculation in Aiden's eyes told Mordred another story.

The more time they spent together, the more Mordred realized that Aiden didn't do anything that wasn't beneficial to him. The man watched every move Mordred made, listened to every comment, and was slowly recreating himself into Mordred's perfect man.

It would have worked if Mordred was anyone else and if Mordred didn't already love the most perfect man in the Realm.

"Don't lie, Aiden. I doubt very much you searched everywhere in Gaia's palace." Mordred brushed a lock of hair from his face. "It's not that late in the morning. You know I don't leave my bed until noon."

That wasn't entirely true and hadn't been since George moved in. The knight didn't believe anyone should laze around in bed until noon or later. Mordred had figured out there were two ways to get George to stay in bed after sunrise. Wear him out with late-night sex or distract him with early-morning sex.

"You're thinking of him." Aiden's sentence was a statement, not a question.

Mordred didn't apologize or deny it. "I can't turn off my feelings, Aiden, no matter how much I might want to."

Aiden looked puzzled. "Really? St. Albans hurt you and chose mortals over you. I think it would be easy to erase him from your mind." Aiden shrugged. "He loved you for centuries and yet left you for weak humans he only met six months ago."

"True." Mordred pretended to consider what Aiden said. "You've heard about the dragon problem?"

Moving closer, Aiden sat in a chair facing Mordred. "Beowulf mentioned something about them when he found me."

"Where did my old friend find you?"

Mordred was curious about where his new suitor came from, since his own magic couldn't read Aiden's aura.

"I was out past the birch forests when I woke up to see Beowulf standing there." Aiden frowned.

"What's wrong?"

"It was almost like he had summoned me, but I have no idea from where."

"Beyond the birch forests, hmmm..."

Mordred made a mental note to talk to Seamus. If anyone knew what else was out there, it would be the dark elf.

"I came to see if you wanted to go riding with me." Aiden seemed to remember his original purpose in looking for Mordred.

Raising an eyebrow, Mordred looked at Aiden. "Are you serious?"

"You don't ride?"

"There's only one thing I ride and it's not a horse." Mordred pushed to his feet and held out a hand to Aiden. "Let's go for a walk in the garden."

Aiden grimaced, and Mordred managed to hide his smile as they made their way out into the palace gardens. Aiden was stubborn, because he stuck around for an hour of a terribly boring stroll before he begged off, insisting he had another commitment.

Mordred watched Aiden race away and grinned. Now that he was alone, he'd see if he could find Seamus. The dark elf might know more about what lay beyond the birch forest.

Returning to his rooms, Mordred settled on the window seat and stared at the spider's web again. He let his gaze wander along the lines of silk the spider spun, focusing his magic into an ever tighter ball.

When he had it as condensed as he could get it, he whispered Seamus's name and cast the spell like a fisherman throwing his net out into the sea. Mordred marked the spell with his signature, so Seamus would know who was looking for him.

He stood, his hands trembling slightly. Casting a seeking spell always took more out of him than most other magic. He could have asked George to talk to Seamus, but he figured the less contact he had with George, the more believable their break-up would look. It would take a couple of hours for the spell to find Seamus. Mordred

curled up under the blankets on his bed and decided to take a nap until he heard from the dark elf.

* * * * *

"Mordred."

Rolling over and staring up at the ceiling of his room, Mordred blinked, trying to get his mind up to speed.

"Mordred." The voice was more insistent this time.

"What?" Goddess, he hated being woken up out of a sound sleep by someone shouting in his head.

"You were looking for me." Exasperation made the words sharp and clear in his mind.

"Seamus?"

A sigh. *"How many other people are you looking for?"*

"Right. Sorry, I know it was a stupid question, but you woke me up." Mordred sat up, rubbing his face.

"Without George there, you've reverted back to your spoiled, lazy ways, I see."

There were times when Seamus annoyed him, and it looked like this was going to be one of them. *"The seeking spell sapped more of my energy than usual. I was sleeping to recover from it."*

"Right. So what did you want?"

Mordred could tell Seamus didn't believe him. *"Can we meet at Hester's house? I need to talk to you about some things."*

"Hester's? Do you really think I'd want to talk to you after what happened and how quickly you've replaced George in your bed?"

"Seamus, just meet me there and I'll explain." And as much as it galled him to do it, Mordred added, *"Please."*

Seamus laughed. *"Sure, Mordred, I'll meet you there. All you ever had to do was ask nicely."*

"I'll be there in an hour."

He climbed out of bed and went to the bathing room. Mordred grumbled to himself while he brushed out his hair.

"Am I really that useless that everyone believes I just lie around, eating bonbons and flirting with every person I see?" He grimaced as his brush hit a snag in his hair. *"I mean, come on, I killed Arthur. I helped buy Gaia time for her to build this stupid Realm."*

Tying his hair into a tail at the base of his neck, he stopped and stared at himself in the mirror. Anger flushed his cheeks and his eyes flashed.

"Deep breaths, Mordred. The opinion that matters is George's, and he knows better than to think you're useless." He frowned. "At least he better know better," he muttered.

He stomped out of his room, ignoring the furtive whispers following him. It wasn't the first time he'd caused the servants to gossip.

By the time he reached Hester's house, he had cooled down enough to know he was acting childish. He paused before knocking on her door.

"George?"

"Yes, love?"

George's immediate response warmed Mordred's heart. He smiled. *"Nothing important really. I'm going to talk to Seamus about what's beyond the birch forests. Aiden said that's where Beowulf found him."*

"If Seamus doesn't know the answer, he'll know who to contact to find out. Be careful, love. I miss you."

The wistful tone of George's thoughts surprised Mordred. *"Do you?"* Mordred had to ask.

"Of course. How could I not miss you? We've been together forever, and now I don't have you to tease anymore."

"I guess I thought you'd be too busy with the dragons, Kael, and Hugh to miss me."

He sensed George shaking his head. *"I love Hugh and Kael very much, but they aren't the other half of my soul like you are, Mordred, and no matter how exciting the dragons are, they don't compare to fucking you."*

"Thank you, Sir Knight. Now I'll let you go, and either Seamus or I will let you know what we figured out."

"Good-bye, love."

Hester jerked open the door. "How long are you going to loiter on my doorstep?"

"Good day to you as well, Hester." He brushed a kiss over her cheek as he walked in.

"What has you in such a good mood?" She waved him to a chair at her table where Seamus sat.

"It's a lovely day. Why wouldn't I be in a wonderful mood?" He nodded at Seamus. "Thank you for taking the time to meet me, Seamus."

Seamus nodded, his dark green eyes studying Mordred from under heavy black brows. "When George asked to stay with me, he told me it wouldn't be for long. Do you want to tell me what the hell you two are playing at?"

"Not much into the niceties of conversation, are you, Seamus?" Mordred smiled his thanks at Hester as she set a cup of tea down in front of him.

The dark elf just stared at him, and he laughed.

"Fine. We're trying to find proof that Morgana and Beowulf are the ones responsible for creating dragons and weakening the barrier enough for the creatures to get through. We want to help out some mortals we've met."

"I thought it must be something like that. I couldn't see George sitting back and letting dragons destroy the mortal world. Now, you being willing to help him is a little strange for me."

Mordred didn't bite. He knew Seamus was trying to irritate him and he wasn't willing to let that happen anymore.

"You know I'd do anything for George, and this sounded like fun, because I would also do anything to annoy Beowulf." He grinned.

"Can't say I blame you for that." Hester bustled around, putting plates of sandwiches on the table.

Mordred waited until Hester sat before he told Seamus why he needed to talk to him.

"I was wondering if you could tell me what's out beyond the birch forests."

A puzzled frown creased Seamus's forehead. "Beyond the birch forests? Why would you want to know what's out there?"

"Aiden, the young man Beowulf has recruited to seduce me, says Beowulf found him out there. He doesn't remember where he's from, and I can't read his aura, so I have no idea what he really is." Mordred drummed his fingers on the table.

Seamus took a bite of his sandwich and chewed slowly while he thought. As much as Mordred wanted to push Seamus for an answer, he knew it was better to let the dark elf organize his thoughts or he wouldn't tell Mordred anything.

"I try not to spend much time on the other side of the forest. Too many strange creatures reside there, and I'm not sure all of them come from our Realm." Seamus eased back, pushing his plate away.

"Not from our Realm?" Mordred leaned forward, intrigued by Seamus's words.

Seamus and Hester laughed.

"There are more Realms out there besides ours and the mortal one, Mordred." Hester chuckled.

He shrugged. "I never cared to know that. What realm do you think Aiden comes from then?"

"I don't know. Does he have wings or horns?"

"Um...mm...to be honest, I haven't gotten that close to him." Mordred chuckled. "He gets freaked out when I kiss him on the cheek. Said something about it being too dangerous or something where he comes from. He's very intense, watches me all the time, and I get the impression he's trying to become my perfect man."

"He doesn't realize that your perfect man doesn't exist." Seamus grinned at him.

"Oh, the perfect man does exist for me, but unfortunately we need to pretend like we broke up so that I can infiltrate Beowulf's little group and see what I can find out about them."

Seamus's eyebrows shot up. "That's why he's staying at my place when he isn't hanging out with those mortals."

"We didn't really break up. I wouldn't have let him leave me." He finished his tea and stood. "Will you look into the other realms? I'll try and find out more about Aiden and get the clues to you."

Hester nodded. "Both Seamus and I will look." Her eyes held worry and concern. "I think we need to hurry, Mordred. The signs are saying worse is coming with each day. The dragons cannot be allowed to get a foothold in the mortal realm."

"I know, my dear lady, and we're doing our best. Let's just hope it's enough."

He left, determined to hunt Aiden down and see what other clues he could charm out of the man.

Chapter Twenty-one

"Aiden, there you are, my dear man."

Aiden whirled, surprise skittering across his face, and Mordred coughed, disguising his laughter. Aiden should be surprised, because Mordred had never hunted him down before.

"Mordred, is something wrong?" Aiden moved to him, seemingly without a thought about abandoning the group he stood near.

"Nothing's wrong. I was wondering if you'd like to take that ride now." He reached out and stroked a hand over Aiden's arm.

Looking up at the darkening sky, Aiden asked, "Now? It's getting dark and dinner will be soon."

"I know, but I have no interest in eating with all those gossipmongers who will just stare at me, waiting in breathless anticipation for me to burst into tears or something silly like that."

"Because of your break-up with St. Albans?" Aiden didn't pull away from Mordred's touch.

"Yes." Mordred pouted. "Why would they assume I'm the one who should be upset? George left me without looking back. It was his loss, not mine."

"You're right. St. Albans is crazy for walking away from you. If you were mine, I'd never let you go." Aiden cupped his cheek and smiled, causing a flutter in Mordred's chest. Holy Goddess, the man was gorgeous when he chose to be charming.

Mordred shrugged, drawing Aiden's attention to the saddlebags hanging over his shoulder. "So you'll go for a ride with me? I convinced the cooks to pack us dinner. We can go to a special place I know, away from all these annoying spies."

After shooting the curious onlookers a glance, Aiden's smile turned seductive and he practically purred, "I'll go anywhere you want to go."

Mordred's heart fluttered again, but he barely managed to stop from rolling his eyes. Like he had told Hester, he was too old to be drawn in by such obvious admiration.

"I hoped you would agree to go, so I ordered the grooms to saddle up our horses for us."

Aiden offered his arm and Mordred took it, allowing the man to lead him to the stable. By the time they got there, one of the grooms was leading their horses to them.

The little grey mare Mordred usually rode whickered to him, and he let go of Aiden to offer her a carrot and a pat on the neck. She nudged him with her nose before being pushed out of the way by the large chestnut gelding Aiden was going to ride.

"Get out of the way, you oaf." Mordred shoved him away. He scratched along his mare's neck. "Sorry, little girl. I'll try to keep him away from you. It's not like riding with George and Simon, is it?"

George had taken Simon with him when he moved out to Seamus's. He couldn't have left the stallion behind. Simon was trained to hunt and help kill dragons, and George needed all the help he could get.

Mordred attached the saddlebags and mounted. Ready to go, Aiden gestured for Mordred to lead the way. He took the nearest trail, heading away from the palace and deeper into the oak forest surrounding them. He wasn't worried about the creatures who called the dark woods home. They wouldn't bother him or Aiden.

"Is this place you're taking me to very private?" Aiden's question drifted forward to him on the night air.

"Yes. No one but me knows about it. I've never taken anyone else there."

Well, that was a lie, but a lie he'd told so many times he didn't worry about anyone not believing him. The only person he'd never taken to the clearing was George. Mordred had used the clearing to seduce humans and others into his bed, but George had always been more than a casual fuck, so the knight had never seen this place.

"Thank you for sharing with me."

There was a hint of smugness in Aiden's tone telling Mordred that Aiden believed Mordred was falling for him. Even with the flutters in his heart at the sight of Aiden's smile, Mordred wasn't about to be played like he himself had played so many others. He knew all the tricks of seduction and couldn't be fooled into thinking them real emotions.

"Here we are."

The horses pushed through a thin barrier of bushes to burst into a clearing where a cascade of water fell lightly into a pool and green grass danced along with the breeze. Mordred urged his mare closer to the pool before dismounting and throwing her reins over the lower limb of an oak tree. Aiden did the same, and they settled on the blanket Mordred conjured up next to the water.

He emptied the saddlebags of their food, handing Aiden the bottle of wine and the glasses. Leaning back on his hands, he stared at the ripples of the pool and wished George was with him.

"Mordred."

Glancing over, he saw Aiden holding out a wine glass for him. He took it, brushing their fingers together. Aiden's pupils dilated, and a flash of red in them caught Mordred's attention. Aiden wasn't human, Mordred was sure of that.

"Pretty night, isn't it?" He nodded at the stars shining in the dark velvet sky.

"Not as pretty as you."

Aiden brushed Mordred's hair back from his shoulder, and Mordred cringed inside. It had been centuries since anyone aside from George had touched him like that. He found he resented it.

"I'm famished and I know the cook made all my favorites. She's quite smitten with me." He cast a quick peek at Aiden through his lashes and saw him frown.

Obviously the man didn't like it when his moves were ignored by his intended lover. Giving a mental shrug, Mordred started filling a plate for Aiden. As much as he knew he needed to encourage Aiden, he would only go let the relationship go so far before he drew the line.

"Here you go."

Handing the food over, Mordred made sure they didn't touch this time. He quickly gathered his own dinner and started eating, working out scenarios in his mind on how to get more personal information out of Aiden.

"What do you think about our Realm?"

Aiden shrugged and swallowed. "It's very bright and rather happy, all things considered."

What the hell did he mean by bright? "Is it dark where you're from?"

Setting down his plate, Aiden wrapped his arms around his knees and stared out over the water. "Not dark necessarily, but there isn't much sunlight, and it's far warmer there than here."

"Are you starting to remember more about your home?" Mordred tried to keep his tone casual.

"Little things like it being dark and warm." Aiden held out his hands and grimaced down at them. "I know this isn't the form I take in my own world."

"Mmm..." Mordred didn't want to interrupt Aiden's memories with more questions.

"My skin isn't this light. It's darker, almost black, and I'm not this small." He ran a hand over his shoulder to touch his back. "I think I might have wings as well, but I can't be sure. At times, I feel like I'm off balance, like I'm used to being heavier and carrying something else around."

Wings, black skin, and heavier. Mordred made a mental list to give Hester when he got a chance. Each little item would narrow the search for her.

An expression of profound confusion crossed Aiden's face, and Mordred's conscious perked up. It had to be difficult for Aiden to deal with all of the odd things he saw in the Realm along with not knowing who he really was.

With a wave of his hand, Mordred cleared the plates and food. He stood, holding his hand out to Aiden. "Let's go for a walk."

"I know you don't like me, Mordred, so why are you being so nice to me?" Aiden took Mordred's hand and let him pull him to his feet.

"It would seem that I can't be completely selfish anymore. George must have rubbed off on me more than I thought." He snickered at the image that popped into his mind.

"Oh, I know you didn't mean it that way." Aiden chuckled and moved them closer to the pool. "Aside from being nice and not wanting to upset me, why are you doing this? You can barely stand to be in the same room with Beowulf, yet you tolerate me."

Mordred stayed quiet for a few moments, sorting things out in his mind before saying anything. "Beowulf and I have some history together, and though it might be childish of me, I love to irritate him as much as possible. I know my preferring you over him drives him crazy. I also have the feeling you can handle him if he were to try anything to you."

"I would love to take him down a peg or two. Unfortunately at the moment, he's the only one who holds the key to getting me back home."

Mordred almost told Aiden what George and the rest were trying to do, but he stopped before spilling all his secrets. He'd have to talk to George first. Distracted, he didn't see the root in the path and hooked his foot on it, pulling both of them off balance.

Closest to the water, Aiden tilted and slipped, grasping at Mordred, who tried to keep him from falling into the water. A large fountain of water rose from the pool as Aiden fell into it. Mordred swallowed his laughter when Aiden stood, clothes plastered to him and swearing.

"Here let me help you out of there."

He braced his feet and pulled while Aiden climbed the bank until Aiden was back on the path. Mordred held out the towels he'd conjured so Aiden could dry off. Aiden tore his soaked shirt off and turned away to wring the excess water out of it over the pool.

Mordred's gaze fell on the swirling tattoo marking Aiden's entire back. It was black circles, interlocked like a chain, and yet it looked like they moved with an energy all their own. Before he thought about it, he reached out to touch them.

Aiden jumped back like he'd been shocked, whipping around with a snarl to crouch and glare at Mordred. Mordred held his hands up in the universal gesture of "I'm harmless."

"Don't touch me," Aiden warned.

"I think you don't want me touching those marks. I've touched you several times already." Staying calm, Mordred shook the towels at Aiden. "Dry off and we'll head back to the palace. I think we've had enough alone time."

He let Aiden yank the towels away and stomp off. It didn't bother him if the other man was in a snit or not. Mordred had gotten what he'd come after. Those tattoos weren't casual, and Mordred had a feeling they were more of a clue to who or what Aiden was than anything else the man had told him tonight.

Aiden dressed, and they went back to the palace. Mordred waited until the man disappeared inside, not wanting Aiden to ask him where he was going. Hester needed this information right away.

Chapter Twenty-two

Mortal Realm

Kael shoved his dirty laundry into the washer. He'd been too busy lately to be able to clean his apartment. Not that he was much of a housekeeper to begin with, but the dust bunnies were getting bigger, and with the way things had been going, they would come alive soon. He sighed. Maybe he should take Hugh up on his offer to let Kael move in with him. He spent almost every night over at Hugh's anyway.

He checked the clock. Hugh had a couple of meetings at the lab with George and the other slayers about the best ways to get the new units up to speed on fighting the dragons. Kael didn't need to be in on the meetings, so he'd taken advantage of a rare afternoon off to refresh his memory of what his apartment looked like.

"Thank the Goddess, you decided to come back. I thought for sure I'd be fighting the dust bunnies for living space soon."

Turning, Kael glanced down at M.A. The gray tabby glared up at him. He laughed.

"Like you need me to take care of you. All you have to do is transform and push open the window. You can leave whenever you want."

M.A. shrugged as best as he could in his cat form. "True. So when are you going to move in with Hugh?"

The question didn't cause the usual shiver of fear to race down his spine. He must be getting used to the idea. The first time Hugh brought it up, he'd freaked out. Kael was unwilling to give up the illusion of his freedom. It came from the belief that as soon as he moved in with Hugh, he'd be under the man's control like he had been with Will. Oh, Kael knew Hugh would never treat him like his ex-lover had, but at times his mind wasn't rational about those things.

There was a knock on the door. He frowned down at M.A. He wasn't expecting anyone and usually visitors had to be buzzed up.

Kael closed the washer and turned it on before heading for the door. He yanked it open, took one look at who stood there, and tried slamming the door shut again.

"Finally."

Will shoved his way into the apartment, his face red with anger. Kael opened his mouth to shout for help, but Will rammed a fist into his jaw. His lip split and the familiar metallic taste of blood filled his mouth.

"Fuck," he cried, dodging the next blow.

He wasn't quick enough to escape the third punch. Stars exploded in front of his eyes, and all he wanted to do was curl up in a ball.

Will's voice seared his ears. "Thought you could get away from me, you fucking pussy."

Kael shook his head, ignoring the pain and trying to clear his head.

"Should have known you couldn't get away from me. Your scrawny fag ass is mine. I don't appreciate anyone else fucking it."

No, I'm not yours, he wanted to scream, but he couldn't. His mouth wasn't working.

A high-pitched yowl assaulted his ears. His vision cleared, and he saw M.A. launch a frontal attack from the top of the couch.

"Son of a bitch. Fucking cat."

Will flung the gray cat across the room. Kael watched in horror as M.A.'s body slammed against the wall opposite them.

Kael shrieked, "You asshole."

Seeing M.A. lying there, limp and unmoving, cleared his mind. There was no way he could trade blows with Will. His ex-lover was taller and stronger than Kael.

He managed to duck below Will's swinging arm and dive for the bowl on his coffee table. It held his keys and change. The bowl weighed a ton, but Kael didn't care. He heaved it at Will, hoping to slow the man down long enough to buy some time.

The bowl shattered when it hit Will's head. Coins clattered to the floor. Will stopped for a second, swiping a hand across his blood-covered face. It was all the time Kael needed to grab his cell phone, scoop M.A. up, and head for the bathroom.

From experience, he knew a locked door wouldn't keep Will out, but again it would buy him time. Hopefully enough to call the police.

Kael laid M.A. in the tub, making sure the cat was out of the way. Will flung his body at the door and caused the flimsy barrier to shiver.

"This isn't going to stop me, Kael. Stupid fuck. Doors never have in the past."

He could hear conviction in Will's voice. It was true. More than once, Will had broken down a door to get to Kael. Each time had resulted in an emergency room visit for Kael.

"You're mine, Kael. When that British bitch told me where to find you, I knew it was time to reclaim you."

Blood dripped into Kael's eyes, blurring his vision. His hands shook so badly he couldn't dial the number for the police. In desperation, he pushed one on his speed dial and hoped Hugh would answer.

* * * * *

Mordred sat at Hester's kitchen table, digging through her books about magical beings.

"There must be information somewhere about what Aiden might be," he mumbled at the witch. "I want to figure out what he is because we need to send him back wherever he came from."

Hester chuckled. "He testing your willpower, elf?"

He shook his head. "Not really. Hell, he's sexier than just about every nymph I know, but there's something hard about him."

His friend's upraised eyebrows made him drop his glance back to the book. "What?" he muttered.

"Something hard? Since when are you concerned about a man's hardness if it doesn't have anything to do with his cock?"

Slamming the book shut, he glared at Hester. "Listen, I may have been a slut when I was younger, but I'm more mature now, and I'd like to fuck a guy who wants me to fuck him. Aiden kisses me or tries other things, and I get the feeling he does it because he's supposed to, not because he wants to."

"Uh-huh..." Hester's grunt could have been in agreement or it could have been sarcastic.

Mordred didn't have time to figure it out. George's voice burst into his head.

"Something's wrong with Kael." George's words were tinged with worry.

"I'll go." He left without another glance at Hester.

He locked on the thread of light connecting him and Kael. It throbbed with pain, fear and anger.

Fuck. Mordred flashed into the apartment just as an angry stranger burst through Kael's bathroom door.

"No."

Mordred heard Kael yell and the stranger screamed, doubling over to reveal Kael standing there. His friend held a spray can of cleaner. While the man clawed at his face, Kael swung a punch at the man.

The elf watched in stunned pride as Kael pummeled the man. It was only when Kael's crazed gaze met Mordred's that he snapped out of his shock and pulled Kael off his attacker's prone body.

Kael struggled, not willing to risk the man getting back up. Mordred wrapped the slender man in a tight embrace, murmuring softly in Kael's ear.

"It's all right, Kael. He can't hurt you anymore. The police are on their way. Hugh will be here soon."

"It's Will."

Chapter Twenty-three

Will moaned and rolled over. Mordred winced at the sight of the furrows down Will's cheeks.

"I see M.A. got in a hit or two," he joked.

Kael stiffened. "Oh God, M.A."

His friend jerked away from him and rushed back into the bathroom. Mordred shook his head when Kael emerged, carrying the cat in his arms.

"I don't know how badly he's hurt." Kael looked at Mordred. "Would your healers be able to help him?"

"It's possible." He took the feline and sent a thought into the Realm.

"Niall."

"What do you want, elf?" Niall sounded annoyed.

"I need you to retrieve M.A. and take him to a healer." He stroked a hand over M.A.'s side, encouraged by a faint heartbeat.

"What's my payment?"

"Couldn't you do something out of the goodness of your heart for once?"

The leprechaun snickered. "Can't go against my nature, Mordred."

"Fine. I have a stash of Greek gold coins. They're yours if you'll help me."

Mordred had earned them while being a student of Socrates in Ancient Greece. He hated the thought of giving them to the greedy little man, but for Kael's piece of mind, he'd give up just about anything.

"Done."

Niall appeared in the hallway long enough to take M.A., but not long enough for Will to notice.

"Niall will take M.A. to a healer."

Mordred conjured some rope and tied the groaning Will up, making sure the knots were tight.

"Love, we're on our way up. The police are with us."

George's thoughts eased into Mordred's mind.

"The police are here, Kael. Go wait for them by the door. I'll keep an eye on scum bag here."

He hugged the shaking man and pushed him toward the apartment door. When Kael disappeared into the other room, Mordred bent down and grabbed Will by the hair at the back of his head.

Forcing Kael's ex-lover to look at him, Mordred grinned, flashing his fangs. Will whimpered.

"I think you should forget Kael," Mordred snarled. "If you come around, I'll kill you, and unlike mortals, I can get away with it."

Will squeaked, his eyes rolled back, and the jerk fainted. Mordred shook his head with a disappointed sigh. Mortals had no spunk anymore. He remembered the good old days when the humans would fight back if he flashed his fangs.

He let Will drop to the floor with thud. Rubbing his hand on his pants, he glanced up at the police filing into the hallway. An officer gestured for him to join the rest in the living room.

Kael was being looked at by paramedics. Hugh hovered close by, anger and worry warring in his gaze. George stood out of the way. Mordred nodded when his lover's blue gaze met his.

"You should go to the hospital, Dr. Hammerson." The medical technician put his gauze away.

Kael shook his head.

"I'll make sure he gets there," Hugh interrupted before Kael could say anything.

"Okay."

The police came out, pulling Will between them. The instant the bloody man saw Mordred, he dug in his heels.

"That man threatened me." Will tried to point at Mordred.

"Me?" Mordred put on his most innocent expression. "There's no way I could do anything to you."

George's snort almost caused Mordred to smile. He couldn't ruin it. He worked a little magic to make the police see him as non-threatening.

"He has fangs like a vampire. Don't let him at me," Will cried out.

Mordred moved closer, flashing a bright smile at the men. "Fangs? My orthodontist would be horrified to hear you say that after all those years of braces."

Everyone chuckled. Two officers took Will away while another sat down to talk to Kael. Mordred could tell Hugh's looming over Kael was starting to annoy the scientist. Mordred took Hugh's arm, tugging him toward the kitchen.

"Hugh, why don't you help me make some tea? I'm sure the gentleman would like some, and it would help calm Kael's nerves."

Hugh protested, "I should stay with Kael."

"George will keep an eye on him, and you'll only be in the other room."

Mordred jerked him into the kitchen and pinned Hugh to the wall with a thud. He covered Hugh's open mouth with a hard kiss. He didn't step back until Hugh relaxed.

Easing back, he grinned at Hugh's stunned expression. Hugh grimaced when his mind started functioning again.

"What the hell was that for?" Hugh hissed as he moved to the stove and the tea kettle.

The elf leaned against the counter and crossed his arms.

"You needed to get your mind off Kael's injuries. I figured this would be the best way." He winked at Hugh.

Hugh mumbled something Mordred didn't catch. He sighed.

"Kael will be fine. Once the police are gone, I'll heal him. That sweet man out there will be as good as new within a day or two."

"Physically, but what about mentally or emotionally?" Hugh shoved his hand through his hair. "Will beat him up again, Mordred. Kael moved here to get away from the violence, and it followed him."

Mordred reached out, smoothing a hand over Hugh's shoulder. "You know as well as the rest of us, there's no place safe from violence, love. We just have to hope that when it finds us, we're prepared."

"Thank you for saving him, Mordred. I don't know what I'd do if Will had killed him."

Hugh lifted the whistling kettle and made tea. He seemed to derive comfort from the ritual.

"It was pretty much over when I got here. Kael and M.A. put up a good fight." He picked up the tray with the tea and coffee. "That's how Kael will get through it, Hugh. He fought back, and he knows he can save himself now."

"Great. Now you're saying he doesn't need me anymore," Hugh grumbled.

He bit his tongue. George should have done this. His lover had more patience with fickle humans.

"Kael wants you for a hundred reasons, but he doesn't need you. You don't want a needy lover. He's proven that he can take care of himself."

Mordred stopped, blocking the doorway. He waited until Hugh glanced at him. Bending, he brushed a kiss over the dark-haired mortal's cheek.

"Kael loves you and nothing will ever change that. He's addicted to your hard body if nothing else."

Hugh blushed as Mordred leered at him. He noticed the relief in Kael's eyes when Hugh joined him on the couch. Mordred set the tray down, making sure everyone got a drink before fading back. George joined him in the corner.

The knight encircled his waist and pulled him tight to his side. "Did you threaten Will?" George asked softly.

Mordred nodded. "Of course, I did. I showed him my fangs and told him if he bothered Kael again, I'd kill him. I also told him I knew how to get away with it."

"Not very subtle," George commented.

"Maybe not, but who will believe him? I'm not very threatening. Vampire teeth? Come on."

He grinned. George caressed the tip of Mordred's fangs.

"You're as harmless as a kitten." A thought must have hit George. He looked around. "Where's M.A.?"

"I had Niall take him to a healer. He must have gone after Will at some point and the bastard hurt him."

Sucking on George's finger, he clasped his lover's hand in his, teasing with tongue and teeth. He rubbed his erection over George's thigh. He loved the salty taste of George's skin.

George jerked away from him with a growl.

"Not now."

He pouted. "Why not?"

"It's not very appropriate, considering Kael just got attacked by his ex-lover, and we aren't alone." George moved further away.

"When did you become a prude? If having people watch bothers you, I can hide us." He gestured and a shimmering veil appeared. "One of the perks of fucking an elf."

Glaring at him, George shook his head and went to stand next to Hugh. Hugh was escorting the police officer out. Letting the veil drop, Mordred sat next to Kael, embracing the slender man and cuddling him close.

Kael sighed and eased as close to Mordred as he could get without sitting on his lap. Mordred ran his fingers through Kael's dark curls, murmuring spells to help his friend heal.

Hugh came back, sat, and laid a hand on Kael's back. "Are you all right?"

Kael mumbled sleepily.

Mordred touched Hugh's hand with his fingertips. "Don't worry. He'll be fine."

"How can you say that?"

He nodded, looking down at Kael's split bottom lip. "He's healing. That's why he's tired."

George placed a kiss on top of Mordred's head. "I'm sorry, love."

Mordred shrugged, acting nonchalant about the whole thing. "No big deal."

Hugh's phone rang. Checking it, he swore. "It's Wellmine."

"Go. I'll stay with him until you get back."

They looked unsure. Anger welled in him, but he managed to keep it in check. He didn't want to disturb Kael.

"Have I ever made you doubt I wouldn't take care of Kael?"

His tone was even, almost jovial, yet he knew George could tell he wasn't happy.

"That's not it, Mordred. I'm his lover. I should be the one watching over him." Hugh didn't like the idea of leaving.

"You will be. Tonight and the next couple of nights will be difficult for him, Hugh. This is going to dig up some bad memories. He's going to need you to hold him and reassure him." Mordred leaned forward without dislodging Kael and hugged Hugh. "Besides, once he recovers from the healing I'm putting on him, he'll want to screw like a rabbit."

Hugh groaned, but his worried expression was gone. "Don't you think about anything else?"

"Not when there are three handsome men in the room with me."

He settled on the couch, drawing Kael down to lie on top of him. He blew a kiss to George and waved them out of the apartment.

"Go back to saving the world. Kael and I are going to take a nap."

Closing his eyes, Mordred dozed off. He was asleep within seconds.

Chapter Twenty-four

A blanket covered him and Kael when he woke up. He glanced down to see Kael's sleep-glazed eyes staring back at him.

"George and Hugh go back to the lab?" Kael asked softly.

Mordred nodded. "Yes. They had a few things they needed to finish. Hugh will be back soon."

"I know," Kael muttered.

"You'll have some nightmares, but let Hugh take care of you. Your lover feels bad because he wasn't here to protect you."

Kael braced his hands on Mordred's chest and pushed up to look at him. "I didn't need Hugh to protect me. I fought back. I saved myself."

He grinned at Kael's fierce expression. "Yes, you did, Kael, and we're all proud of you, but warriors like Hugh and George need to protect the ones they love whether we need protecting or not." He laughed gently, thinking about George. "It's that bit of male chauvinism that makes them the men we love."

Kael eased back down, trailing fingers over Mordred's chest. "Why do you love George?"

"When I don't care about anyone else besides myself," he commented.

His friend looked horrified. "I didn't mean it that way."

Mordred chuckled before nuzzling Kael's curls. "I know, love, but you don't have to be polite or try to spare my feelings. I don't lie to anyone else, why would I lie to myself?"

He encouraged Kael to tuck his head under his chin and ran his hand up and down Kael's back.

"I know what others think and say about me. Sometimes behind my back, but most of the time to my face. I'm self-centered and vain. I have nothing to talk about if the conversation isn't about me. I'm coldhearted and spoiled."

Kael started to protest, but Mordred stopped him with a finger on his lips.

"Don't try to make me feel better by saying all that stuff isn't true. I'm not into self-delusion, Kael. I know my personality. The truth is I'm all those things and a hundred other things no one's thought to say to me."

He let his mind wander back through his life.

"I agreed to help Gaia with Arthur because I was bored. Boredom sets in when you've been around since men stood upright. By the time Camelot and the disappearance of magic rolled around, I was ready for something different. I didn't kill Arthur to give Gaia more time to create the Realm. I killed him because it was something different to do."

Kael shivered. "Didn't it bother you to kill him?"

Mordred shrugged. "I'll be honest and say it didn't bother me at all. I didn't know him, and he was a hindrance to Gaia's plans, so he had to be removed. I know it doesn't make me sound like a nice person, but I never claimed to be."

Chuckling, Kael agreed. "I think that's what I love most about you, Mordred. You're never anything other than what you appear."

He thought for a moment, trying to decide if he should be insulted or pleased by the comment. He went with pleased. No point in getting pissed off because Kael bought the image he presented to the world.

"That's me. As deep as a mud puddle." He stroked his hand over Kael's shoulders. "How did Will know where to find you? I thought Hugh used his secret agent contacts to cover your tracks."

"A red-haired woman told him," Kael said sleepily.

Red-haired woman?

"How do you know, little one?"

"I read his mind. Strong emotions make thoughts like daggers in my brain. I couldn't block them out."

He rubbed the back of Kael's neck. "It's all right, love. Can you show me an image of the woman?"

An image of Morgana popped into his head. "That witch. I should have known she'd pull something like this," he muttered.

Kael shifted and Mordred stood to carry Kael to the bedroom. After tucking the blankets tight around the sleeping man, Mordred sat on the edge of the bed and sent a thought to George.

"When will you and Hugh be home?"

His connection with George hummed. *"We're on our way there now."*

"Good. We need to come up with a plan to stop this once and for all." He painted his words with anger.

Surprise shot from George. *"What's happen, love? Is Kael all right?"*

Mordred glanced over at Kael and smiled. Kael curled around a pillow with his face buried in it, and he snored softly.

"Kael's fine, but if you don't give me a good reason not to, I just might strangle Morgana."

Tension resonated down their connection.

"Morgana? What does she have to do with Kael? We'll be there in thirty minutes."

Kael's apartment door opened, and Mordred frowned at the sound of voices. He made sure Kael was still sleeping before heading out to the living room.

A tall man who looked remarkably like Hugh and the woman Mordred had seen at Hugh's lab stood in the middle of the mess Will's attack created. When Mordred stepped out of the hallway, they turned to gape at him.

"Who are you, and what the bloody hell happened here?" The man's tone demanded an answer.

Mordred bit his tongue and managed a civil reply. *"I'm Ed, a friend of Kael's. His ex-boyfriend paid him a visit today. I just got Kael resting and haven't had a chance to clean up."*

"Is Kael all right," the woman asked, concern in her eyes.

"He'll be fine. A few bruises and some nightmares, but that's to be expected."

"Mordred, we need to talk." Hester's voice echoed in his mind. It had to be something urgent for her to contact him that way.

"Hugh's on his way back. Would you be willing to wait until he gets here?" Mordred sighed. *"I'm afraid I have some urgent business to take care of."*

"Sure. We can start cleaning up." She started moving around the room.

"Mordred!"

He cringed at that strident tone of Hester's mental voice. *"I'll be right there, Hester."* He switched threads. *"George, I have to go see Hester. A couple is here. They said they'd watch Kael until Hugh gets home."* He sent George a mental picture of the pair.

"Thom, Hugh's brother, and Monica are good people. What does Hester want?"

"Not sure. I'll tell you when I'm done talking to her."

Mordred smiled and nodded at Thom before stepping out into the hallway of the apartment building. He thought about Hester's cabin and disappeared.

Chapter Twenty-five

Hester and Seamus jumped when Mordred appeared in the middle of her cabin.

"What is so important you demanded my presence?"

Seamus gestured to a book they had sitting open on the table between them. "We think we've figured out what Aiden is."

"Really?" He jerked out a chair and sat, pulling the book closer to him. Looking over the list in the book, he frowned. "Okay, what is he?"

Hester pointed to a paragraph halfway down the page. "He's an incubus."

"What's that?" He didn't have the time to read the whole thing.

"An incubus is a male demon who has sex with women while they sleep. Repeated visits by the incubus could mean death to whomever he is fucking." Seamus gave Hester an apologetic smile. "Sorry."

The witch waved off his apology. "We've wondered what was beyond the birch forests. Seamus says he's talked to others who live closer to the southern edge of the forests. They've seen creatures with both feathered wings and bat wings."

The dark elf nodded. "Mere glimpses of these creatures seen through the fog and the barrier."

"Why do you think he's an incubus?" Mordred didn't doubt their claim. He wanted proof for when he confronted Aiden.

"The tattoos you said that covered his entire back." Hester gestured to a picture of a dark muscular creature with leathery wings and black markings along the length of his back. "Every picture we came across showed those same brands, tattoos, or whatever they are. Also, the other things he mentioned to you helped narrow it down."

"You said he told you he thought he had wings, was darker skinned and bulkier than his body here – that and your comments about his need to please you and become

what you saw as the perfect mate. The way he didn't mind you flirting with him, and if you'd been willing, he would have slept with you already." Seamus grimaced. "Hell, he's slept with most of the nymphs and pixies already, plus he's working his way through the vampires."

Mordred wrinkled his nose. "Why would anyone sleep with those cold fish?"

"I imagine he's not picky about who he has sex with, Mordred. It's in his nature to prey upon their sexuality. Besides, George sleeps with you and you drink his blood." Hester pushed to her feet and walked over to her shelves of books. Running her finger over the spines, she mumbled the titles under her breath.

"I'm not a vampire. I only need his blood once in a while to keep our connection strong." He turned to Seamus. "Do you think Beowulf brought Aiden here on purpose, or was catching an incubus an accident he chose to exploit?"

His friend tapped his fingers on the table. "I'm not sure. He might have gone there with a spell to enslave one and got lucky, though it seems like Aiden is biding his time and not really obeying Beowulf."

He agreed. "I know Aiden doesn't like Beowulf or Morgana. I think we can use this to our advantage. Now if we could just figure out how to send Aiden back to his realm, we'd have a bargaining chip."

"I thought I had a spell book that deals with demons." Hester crossed her arms and glared at the leather-bound books. "I guess it must have been burned during the Inquisition."

"Makes sense since they thought you were in league with their devil."

Mordred stood and paced the length of the room. "Do we know anyone who might have a copy of the book? If we can find a spell that will send him back, we can dangle it as a carrot to get him to help us."

"Aiden will help you if you promise to send him home? Are you sure about that?" Seamus leaned back in his chair, crossing his legs at the ankles and raising his eyebrows at Mordred. "Why would he go back when he has a smorgasbord of sex partners here?"

Stopping, Mordred thought for a second. "He'd go back because this isn't his world. Who wants to live in a place where nothing is familiar and no one knows you?"

Seamus didn't reply, and Mordred wasn't sure if the dark elf agreed with him or just didn't want to argue anymore.

"Hester, do you know anyone who might know the spell or where you could find a book with it in there?"

Hester pursed her lips as she thought. "Ah. Yes."

She clapped her hands once before grabbing a bag off a cabinet and stuffing things into it. Mordred reached out and stopped her.

"Who, Hester?"

"Merlin."

"Shit. You're kidding, right? There's no way we have to hope that crazy old man has the book. Do you even know where to find him?"

"I have a general idea, and Seamus can come with me. Have you never heard of Merlin's birth? If anyone knows how to banish an incubus back to the realm it is from, he would." Hester swung the strap of the bag over her shoulder and poked Seamus. "On your feet, young man. We don't have time to waste."

Seamus led the way out of Hester's cabin with Mordred following them and keeping his misgivings to himself. Merlin had never been the same since Morgana had trapped him in a cave and tried to suck all his magic from him. Luckily, Gaia had arrived in enough time to stop the man from dying, but his mind was shattered in some subtle way.

"What does Merlin's birth have to do with getting rid of Aiden?" Mordred rested his hip against the picket fence edging Hester's front yard. "Where is he anyway? I haven't seen him at any of Gaia's events for a while now."

"He's out in the poppy fields herding unicorns. It eases him to be with them. Less jabbering and he stays away from Morgana." Hester pushed open the gate. Turning back, she grinned at him. "Merlin's mother was visited by an incubus who fathered Merlin on her. He has a vested interest in them."

"Hell, I don't know what kind of hold Gaia has over him, but I'd have killed her for what she tried to do to him," Seamus sneered.

"Gaia saved his life, and the payment she asked him for that favor is that he leaves Morgana alone. The goddess has a soft spot in her heart for the witch." Hester shrugged, saying without words what she thought of Gaia's choice.

Mordred growled. "Morgana's on my list. She better hope she doesn't cross my path any time soon. There's nothing Gaia could do to stop me."

"What happened?" Seamus inquired.

"Somehow she managed to appear in Brisbane and tell Kael's ex-boyfriend where Kael was."

Hester gaped at him. "The boyfriend who used to abuse him?"

"The very same."

"Why would she do that?" Seamus looked puzzled.

"As a warning to us, or she thought Will would hurt Kael bad enough Kael wouldn't be able to help us anymore." Mordred kicked at a clump of dirt. "She wasn't counting on M.A. jumping into the fight, and she doesn't know about the connection Kael has with George and me."

Seamus laughed harshly. "Morgana and Beowulf think they are the smartest people in the Realm. They've never formed connections with anyone, so they don't know anything about those."

"Don't do anything to Morgana, Mordred. We don't want Gaia to banish you because you killed her pet witch." Hester hugged him. "We'll contact you as soon as we have either the book or the spell."

Seamus shook his hand, and Mordred watched his friends move down the trail in the direction of the poppy fields. He still wasn't convinced Merlin could help them, but he'd trust Hester knew what she was doing.

Chapter Twenty-six

"Love."

George appeared beside him. Mordred grinned and wrapped his arms around George's neck.

"How's Kael?"

Cupping Mordred's ass with one hand, George speared his other hand into Mordred's curls. He tilted Mordred's head for better access to his throat.

"Kael was sleeping when I left, and I took it as a good sign that he wasn't dreaming yet. Hugh's the one who is having problems at the moment." George nibbled along the line of his neck.

He moaned, pressing his ass harder into George's palm. "Hmm...I love your hands."

His lover scraped his teeth over Mordred's jugular, and Mordred shivered.

"I love your mouth," he murmured.

Chuckling, George pulled away a few inches. "You love everything about me, don't you?"

"Of course." He glanced around. "We need to be somewhere else. It won't do our plan any good to have someone come up on us kissing in the middle of the path."

Not saying a word, George nodded, and Mordred found himself standing in their clearing with George's arms still wrapped tight around him.

Shivering, he groaned. "I love when you do magic."

All he got from George was a grunt before George kissed him. Using the simple magic Gaia gave him when he became immortal made George uncomfortable. Knowing that was why Mordred always got a thrill when George used it. Most of the time, it was to please Mordred in some way.

Mordred opened for George, moaning as George plundered his mouth. Encircling George's neck, he tilted his head and allowed the kiss to go deeper.

George crushed Mordred to his hard body, and Mordred sighed. It had been too long since they'd last shared their bodies. Aside from keeping Kael safe, kissing George whenever he wanted was the true reason he rushed this whole situation to a conclusion.

He rocked his ass back into George's hands, begging without words for what his body and soul needed. With a thought, their clothes disappeared, and they sank onto the blanket he barely remembered to conjure before they dropped to the hard earth.

Placing his hand on George's chest, he got his lover to lie down. In the Realm, time was relative, and Mordred didn't worry about rushing. Hugh would keep an eye on Kael, and the dragons would just have to rampage through Ireland without George to stop them. For this brief moment, he was going to be selfish and make love to his knight.

"Brief moment?"

George looked at him with one raised eyebrow.

Shrugging, Mordred winked. "Okay, so me being unselfish is a bigger deal. Sue me."

He let George pull him down and nibbled along George's chin. Licking a line from the sensitive spot behind George's ear to the pulse beating at the base of his neck, Mordred savored the salty taste of his lover's skin. He sucked a mark upon George's shoulder and let his hand wander down to cup George's balls.

"Please." George dropped his head back and spread his thighs, giving Mordred easier access.

"Anything you want, love. What do you want, my mouth, hand, cock, or ass?"

"All of it."

He chuckled. "I'm not sure either of us would last that long."

But he proceeded to do his best to grant George's wishes until George writhed under him, his voice hoarse from pleading. Mordred decided he wanted his cock buried deep in George's ass. A small jar of oil appeared beside them on the ground, and he dipped his fingers into it.

"Let me in, love."

He pressed his fingers to George's hole, and George relaxed, his body almost sucking Mordred in. Their sighs mingled as Mordred set about stretching George, preparing him for his cock. George rocked, fucking himself on Mordred's fingers until his skin flushed, and Mordred knew George was on the edge. He yanked out, poured more oil in his palm, and slicked up his cock.

George protested and Mordred rested his other hand on George's stomach, soothing him with his touch.

"I want you to come on my cock, dear heart. I need to be a part of you when you let go."

"Hurry," George forced out between gritted teeth.

"So impatient," he teased, positioning the leaking head of his cock at George's opening.

Sinking slowly into George, Mordred bit his bottom lip and blinked back tears. Goddess, how he loved the warmth and perfection of George. It was strange how none of his other lovers had ever felt like home to Mordred, even when they weren't making love. George suited him.

Their minds linked, they moved at the same time, driving each other closer and closer to climaxing. Mordred angled his thrusts to bump George's gland each time, and George reached down to stroke the small of Mordred's back with light caresses.

Mordred shivered, electricity dancing along his spine with each touch of George's rough fingers on his smooth skin. His balls drew tight to his body, and his easy languid rhythm grew hard and jerky.

"Soon," George grunted, his hands gripping Mordred's ass tight now, leaving bruises.

Mordred nodded, words beyond him at the moment. Hard, deep, and fast, he rode George, demanding he give him everything, even his soul.

George tensed and wet heat spilled between them, covering their stomachs and chests. Mordred slammed in one more time and froze, flooding George's inner passage with his cum. He collapsed on top of George only after every last drop was drained from his body.

After their breathing slowed, Mordred ran his hand over George's chest, wallowing in the satisfied afterglow.

"Hugh was really upset about Kael," George commented.

Mordred sighed. George couldn't relax while his friends were trouble.

"Hugh is a warrior like you. He's not doing his job of protecting if Kael gets hurt." He kissed George's shoulder. "You'd feel like a failure as well if someone beat me up."

George's chest rumbled as he chuckled. "Only if you didn't deserve it."

He pinched George's nipple. "When have I ever deserved to be beaten?" He covered George's mouth. "Don't answer that."

George licked his palm and Mordred jerked away. They rolled around the blanket for a few seconds, laughing and tickling. Soon George pinned him to the ground and licked the side of his face.

"Eeww..." Mordred wrinkled his nose and pouted.

"Why are you pouting? You don't mind when I lick you in other places."

George slid to the side, and Mordred settled next to him again.

"What did Kael say to make you so upset? Your anger surprised me."

Mordred growled low and rage swelled in him, spoiling his good mood.

"Morgana got to Will and told him where to find Kael. That's how he showed up at Kael's door."

Cheeks flushed, George started to climb to his feet. "That little bitch."

He threw his weight onto George, keeping him from standing.

"What are you doing? We need to go and punish her for that." George glared at him.

"I'm doing the same thing Hester did to me. We can't touch Morgana or Gaia will get pissed. You know how she feels about the witch." He grimaced.

"We just let her get away with hurting Kael and causing all this damage to the mortal world because Gaia will get upset at us?"

Mordred jumped to his feet and started pacing. "Don't be stupid. We'll pay her back, but we have to make sure we have proof before we try anything. Seamus and Hester have figured out what Aiden is. They've gone off to get the spell we need to use to send him back to his realm."

George leaned back on his hands and stretched out his legs, crossing them at the ankles. Mordred forced his gaze to the grass in front of him and not on George's body. It would be too easy to get distracted by sex again.

"How did Hester and Seamus find out what Aiden is?"

"I got some information from him about his own realm, plus I saw some markings on his body that helped clue them in to what he might be."

"So what is he?" George clothed himself before standing and stretching.

"He's an incubus or male demon who feeds off sexual energy. They've gone to talk to Merlin and see if the crazy wizard has a spell to send Aiden back to where he came from." Mordred tossed his hair over his shoulder and grimaced.

George shot him a skeptical look. "Does Hester really think Merlin can remember anything that might help us?"

"She does, and I think if she explains to him that it would screw up Morgana's plans, the old man will jump at the chance to give us the spell."

"Mordred?"

Hugh's hesitant thought interrupted their conversation.

"Yes, sweetheart?"

"Can you help me?"

Without answering, Mordred went to Hugh.

Chapter Twenty-seven

Hugh lay in bed, holding Kael as he thrashed and cried out. He didn't want to restrain Kael, figuring it would bring back even worse memories, but he also didn't want Kael to hurt himself.

"Oh you poor, lovely men."

He looked up to see Mordred and George standing beside the bed. There wasn't time to be embarrassed at his nakedness in front of them.

"Help me. I don't want to hurt him."

Mordred nodded. "Embrace him, Hugh. Don't worry about his bruises. He's not feeling those right now."

He wrapped his arms around Kael, tugging him tight to his chest. Mordred slipped in on the other side of Kael, resting his hands at the small of Hugh's back, and George snuggled up to Mordred. Kael murmured, burying his face in the crook of Hugh's neck, his hands stroking along Hugh's chest and Mordred's arms.

"Talk to him and let him know who is holding him. He needs to hear your voice along with the beat of your heart," Mordred murmured to Hugh.

Talking wasn't something that came easy to Hugh, but he'd do anything to keep Kael from getting lost in his nightmares. Mordred and George's presence soothed him as well.

"It's safe for you to wake up, Kael. Will isn't here anymore. I'm here and so are Mordred and George. We'll keep you safe, though you don't need us to do that. You protected yourself perfectly. You stopped Will all on your own, love."

He kept talking, not really paying attention to what he said except to make sure it reassured Kael. Mordred and George kept touching both of them, petting and stroking to keep all of them connected.

"Hugh?"

Kael's voice startled him, and he pulled back slightly to look down into Kael's brown eyes. He smiled and brushed a kiss over Kael's lips.

"Yes, it's me, love." He nodded to Mordred. "Mordred and George are here with us too."

Kael wiggled, trying to look behind him at Mordred. They shifted around, so Kael faced Mordred. Hugh spooned close, figuring Kael wouldn't mind his erection pressed against his ass.

"Thank you," Kael told Mordred.

The elf gave a puzzled chuckle. "Why thank me, pretty man? I did nothing but clean up after you took care of the problem." Mordred kissed the tip of Kael's nose.

"Thank you for coming to help me until Hugh could get here." Kael reached back and patted Hugh's side. "What did I say that angered you? I could tell you were furious before I fell asleep the second time."

Mordred seemed reluctant to tell Kael, and Hugh wondered what he knew.

"Tell him. He has a right to know since he was the one put in danger." George laid a hand on Kael's hip, the tips of his fingers grazing Hugh's stomach.

Sighing, Mordred nodded. "The woman you saw in Will's mind, the one who told him where to find you, is Morgana. Somehow she managed to slip past the restrictions binding us and went to see Will."

Anger built in Hugh, and he stopped his hands from clenching into fists. He tried to calm down. Kael was safe, and Will would never hurt him again, but he hated the fact that they were bound by rules that the other side seemed to be able to ignore without being punished for them.

"She's the redhead I saw?"

"Yes." George's anger made his words brittle. "Trust me, Kael, if we could have, we would have taught her a lesson about harming you, but she is Gaia's pet witch, and it could mean our lives to punish her."

Reaching out, Kael brushed his fingers over George's frown. "It's okay, George. I'm sure you'll come up with something to get back at her. I have confidence in Mordred's vengeful tendencies."

They all laughed, and Mordred nuzzled Kael's neck, placing a kiss there. Kael's head dropped back to rest on Hugh's shoulder, and Hugh enjoyed the view of Mordred's fingers playing with Kael's rings.

Kael's ass rubbed against Hugh's cock, and he realized that all four of them were slowly rocking, hips and bodies moving in time with each other. He shivered as George slid his fingers down Kael's crease, which brought the back of George's hand in contact with his prick.

"Oh," Kael moaned, and Hugh wasn't sure if it was in response to Mordred's lips wrapping around one hard nipple or George teasing Kael's hole.

"Where's the lube?"

Hugh glanced up to see George grinning at him. He glanced around, trying desperately to remember where they had put the tube the last time they used it.

"George, stop being mean and making Hugh think." Mordred swatted George's bicep before holding out a hand where a bottle of lube appeared. "Here you are, love. Why don't you and George get us ready? I'm going to play with Kael some more."

He squirted lube out on George's fingers and coated his own fingers as well. With all the limbs and body parts, Hugh thought it would be awkward, but it wasn't. He slipped his fingers over Mordred's ass to his puckered hole. There was no resistance to his invasion, just a sigh and a push back from Mordred. He went in as far as he could.

"He should still be pretty loose from our session earlier today. You don't have to be careful with him." George bit Mordred's shoulder and winked at Hugh.

Mordred's reply was muffled, but the way his hips moved told Hugh he was enjoying what Hugh did to him. Kael trembled and a breathless "oh" issued from his throat. Hugh looked down to see George stretching Kael's hole as well. He became so caught up in watching someone else touching Kael, he forgot about Mordred, until the elf pinched his ass.

He glanced up to see Mordred's reproachful look, and he shrugged with a little grin. Mordred's eyes rolled when Hugh shoved two fingers in his channel and nailed his gland.

"Oh, right there," both Kael and Mordred said at the same time.

With a nod to George, he started working Mordred with two fingers for a few seconds before adding another. Mordred and Kael wrapped around each other, kissing and licking while their lovers got them ready.

"Please, Hugh, take me now." Kael's pleas rang in Hugh's ears and made his cock twitch.

Mordred's protest at the removal of his fingers was cut short as George filled the emptiness with his own cock. Hugh placed the flared head of his prick at Kael's opening and eased in, not stopping until he was buried balls deep in Kael's ass.

The four lovers froze for a moment, absorbing the feeling of connection surging between them. Hugh never knew who moved first, but soon they were rocking and rubbing. Skin slapping skin filled the room, mingled with grunts and moans while sweat and sex scented the air. Hugh's climax tingled and built at the base of his spine, pooling in his groin. The intensity of the feelings rushing through him, shoved him over the edge, and he took Kael, Mordred, and George with him.

Collapsing together like a pack of puppies, they lay panting and touching, easing the last tremors of their climaxes away. George was the first to recover, and he climbed out of bed to pad to the bathroom. Hugh slipped out and joined him.

They cleaned up in silence before getting washcloths wet and heading back to their men. Mordred and Kael were still doing their best impressions of octopi. Kael mumbled something when Hugh wiped the cum off his body, but didn't really wake up. As far as he could tell, neither did Mordred while George took care of him.

George nodded to the living room while Hugh covered Kael and Mordred. Hugh went to the kitchen and grabbed two bottles of Guinness out of the refrigerator. George handed him a pair of sweat pants, and he laughed. Somewhere during the last seven months, he'd gotten used to George and wasn't uncomfortable wandering around naked in front of him.

Sitting on the couch, he took a drink from his bottle and looked at George, who settled in the chair across from him.

"What are we going to do? If Morgana is crossing over into the mortal realm and trying to hurt Kael, how do we stop her?"

George massaged the back of his neck and shrugged. "I'm not sure at the moment if we can do anything to keep her from crossing over, but we made a slight breakthrough in other areas. It'll just take a few days to figure out if we can use what we found out to our advantage."

"Until then?"

"You keep an eye on Kael and don't let him go anywhere without you. Will's been dealt with, but we don't know what else she might try. Morgana's figured out that Kael is more important than she first thought. I think she believes if she tries enough times to hurt him, the rest of us will give up fighting her and let her have her way." George shook his head. "She doesn't realize that we won't stop fighting. We'll just protect him better."

"Damn right we will. I'll hire bodyguards if I have to."

"I don't think it'll come to that. We're bound to have a streak of good luck soon, and when it comes, we'll stop her and Beowulf."

Hugh rested his head against the back of the couch and stared up at the ceiling. "I still can't believe we're being attacked by dragons because Morgana and Beowulf don't want to live in the Realm of Dreams anymore. I mean who would have thought that the witch who seduced Arthur and an Old English legend would be causing all this trouble?"

George's chuckle washed over him. "It sounds like a fantasy movie or book, doesn't it?"

"A bad one at that."

He let silence fall between them, finishing his beer and trying not to worry. George set his empty bottle down on the coffee table and stood.

"I'm going to grab Mordred and head back to the Realm. I'll see you tomorrow. We'll deal with that pack of werewolves taking over one of the local villages. It's strange to say that when we're in the twenty-first century and most people believe werewolves are figments of imagination."

"I would have said the same thing if I hadn't seen them with my own eyes."

He followed George back into the bedroom where he watched George sweep Mordred up and disappear. Kael grumbled at the loss of Mordred's body heat. Hugh

stripped and went back to bed. There were still a few hours left before he had to return to the lab. He planned on spending them holding Kael and assuring his heart that his lover was fine.

Chapter Twenty-eight

George cleaned off his sword after dispatching the last of the werewolves. It had taken three days to clean the village out, and he still wasn't sure they had gotten all of the wolves.

Glancing over his shoulder, he saw Kael and Bailey make their way into the town square from the abandoned building they had used as a staging area. Kael walked beside Bailey, not offering any help, but close enough in case Bailey needed him for balance over the rough streets.

"Report in, soldiers." Wellmine hobbled in as well from the opposite direction.

The captain wore a soft cast and was close to being back to normal. The doctors were amazed by Wellmine's startling recovery. No one felt the need to explain the healing potions George made Wellmine drink.

He let the other members of the unit surround Wellmine and break down the battle for him. George wandered up to Kael and Bailey, smiling at both of them. Hugh stood nearby, talking on his phone. The frown on his face told George it wasn't a pleasant conversation.

"Who is he talking to?" He nodded at Hugh.

Kael shrugged. "I don't know. The call came in just as you engaged the wolves. I think it might be some member of the government harassing Hugh to get this problem solved quickly."

"Like he has any control over this. Why don't they send out some of their men to observe what we're doing?" He shook his head. "Stupid question. They aren't going to risk anyone other than soldiers to deal with this. Soldiers are expendable."

"Unless you're the soldier, sir," Bailey pointed out.

"True, Bailey."

"George!"

The excitement in Mordred's thought made George take notice. *"What is it, love?"*

"Hester and Seamus are back. They have the spell, and I'll be approaching Aiden tonight with our offer."

George's chest tightened, and he took a hold of his own excitement. Having the spell wasn't the same as being able to stop the dragons, but it was close.

"Do you need me there?"

"No, but I'll want to meet with you afterward. We'll have to discuss the best way to trick Morgana."

"Okay. Let me know when you're done, and I'll meet you at Hester's."

"Will do. Love you."

"Love you too."

Kael tilted his head and stared at him. "What did Mordred want?"

"You couldn't hear that?"

"No. I just know he contacted you."

George slid his sword back in its sheath. "The break we've been waiting for has come through. We'll be putting the second phase into motion tonight."

"Why won't you tell me what any of this is?" Kael crossed his arms over his chest and frowned.

"It's better for everyone if only those in the Realm helping us know about it, which is only three other people. We know Morgana will cross the barrier at any time, and if she does, she could easily read your mind and find out what we're doing. She could stop us if she knows, merely by going to Gaia and letting her know we're helping you out way more than we should be."

"My God, do you really think she doesn't know what you're doing? You haven't been very secretive about spending time with us, George. I doubt she's stupid."

"Being stupid has nothing to do with it. Being self-centered and uninterested in anything that isn't directly related to herself does. Unless we do something that affects her or her world, she doesn't care. She's probably forgotten about you for the most part." He held up his hand to keep Kael from arguing with him. "Let's not argue about this, Kael. Trust me, I've been dealing with her for centuries, and she hasn't changed once."

Kael snapped his mouth shut and turned. "Come on, Bailey. Let's go and see if we can help with the cleanup."

George stood, watching Bailey, Kael, and Hugh join the other slayers. He let his shoulders slump for a second, fighting the exhaustion that seemed to follow him everywhere. He said a prayer to whatever god or goddess would listen to him that Aiden would take Mordred's offer, and they could end this soon.

"St. Albans, we need your help."

Straightening, he pushed his worries aside. Mordred could convince a leprechaun to give up his gold, so one incubus wouldn't be able to resist Mordred's persuasiveness. He would wait for Mordred's call, and they would work out how to get the proof for Gaia.

* * * * *

"George, meet me at Hester's."

George woke instantly, and after pulling on a shirt and pants, he went to Hester's house. Seamus, Hester, and Mordred were waiting for him. Mordred's energy was barely contained. His lover bounced on his toes and couldn't sit down.

He gave Mordred a quick kiss, nodded to Seamus, and hugged Hester. "Tell me what happened."

"I arranged to meet Aiden at the gazebo. When he got there, I confronted him about being an incubus. He seriously didn't remember what he was, but when I explained things to him, it was like a lightbulb went off in his head."

Mordred smiled his thanks at Hester, who handed him a cup of tea. He took a sip and George refrained from demanding he continue his story.

"He still doesn't know how Beowulf caught him, but he doesn't really care. All he wants is to go home. I let him know that we had a way of getting him home and would be more than happy to help him out, but he needed to help us out first."

Mordred paused, and Seamus growled a little.

"What did he say? Did he agree to it?"

"You would think he'd jump at the chance to go home, but he told me he had to think about it. I mean, really, what's to think about? We're much more trustworthy than Beowulf is." Mordred frowned, indignation in his eyes.

"We know that, love, but all Aiden sees are two sides fighting over him. You have to let him decide which one he trusts more." George paced. "Did he say when he'd get you an answer?"

Mordred shook his head. "No. I told him he could find me here if he made his decision tonight."

Stopping, George stared down at the floor and sighed. "I guess all we can do is wait now."

"No."

Everyone jumped when Aiden spoke from the doorway. Turning, they found the incubus leaning against the frame, his arms crossed and a slight smile gracing his lips.

Mordred raced over to Aiden and tugged him inside. "What did you decide? Are you going to help us? We'll send you back to your realm."

George hid a smile behind his hand. It had been a long time since he'd heard Mordred babble like that.

"Hush, Mordred. Let the young man speak." Hester waved at Mordred.

Aiden picked up Mordred's cup and took a sip, drawing out the drama.

"Spill it, Aiden. We don't have all night." George didn't have the patience to let Aiden play his little games.

"I'll help you. All I've ever heard about you, St. Albans, is that you're an honorable man. If you and Mordred tell me you'll get me home, I can trust that you'll do your best to fulfill that promise."

"Great. Now we have to figure out what you can do for us." George started pacing again. "Have you overheard or been told what Morgana and Beowulf are planning on doing? Are they looking for something specific?"

Aiden took another sip while he thought. "I believe they are looking for a way to bring the barrier down entirely. Sending dragons, werewolves, and all the other creatures through is weakening it, but not to the point where it will disappear."

"Why do they want it to disappear?" Seamus looked confused.

"Without the barrier, they can use as much of their power as they need to take over." George shivered at the thought.

Mordred got that gleam in his eyes that told George he was making plans.

"What are you cooking up in that devious brain of yours?" he asked.

"Morgana knows that in some way Kael is important to this whole scheme, right?"

"Yes."

"What if we let Aiden tell her that Kael's come up with a formula to destroy the barrier once and for all? He can say that I let it slip in a postsex conversation we were having. They'll never know that I didn't sleep with him. Beowulf believes I'm fickle enough to go straight to Aiden's bed only days after breaking up with you."

George stared out the window into Hester's backyard, but he wasn't looking at her flowers. Everything that could wrong with that plan was vastly outweighed by everything that could go right.

"After he tells her that, how do we get the proof we need, Mordred? Telling her isn't the same as catching her in the act," Hester pointed out.

"True. Aiden will have persuaded me to tell him where the formula is, and it'll be in Kael's office at the lab. George and I will stake out the office. Seamus, I'd like you and Niall to keep watch at the clearing where most of the dragons have been coming through. I'm sure once they get the formula, they'll go there to try and take the barrier down." Mordred looked expectantly at them.

"It could work." George turned back to the room. "Kael will have to write something up that looks authentic and leave it in his desk at the lab. Aiden, do you think you can convince Morgana and Beowulf that what you're telling them is the truth?"

"Yes. The only person in this Realm who has been able to resist my charms has been Mordred. Morgana and Beowulf will be putty in my hands." Aiden's grin was predatory.

"Good. When you're done and they've left, you can come back here, and Hester will make sure you get back to your realm." He held out his hand to the incubus. "Wait three hours before you go and tell them. We need enough time to get in place."

"Certainly. Thank you for helping me as well."

Aiden bowed to all of them and left. George glanced at Seamus. His friend stood and headed for the door.

"I'll go round up Niall, and we'll go to the clearing. Niall will come and get you when Morgana and Beowulf show up there."

"Hester, you'll be fine getting everything ready to send Aiden back home?"

She nodded. "I gathered everything I'll need already. As soon as he returns, I'll cast the spell."

George held out a hand to Mordred. "Come, love. Let's go talk to Kael and have him write something up for us. It's time to end this silly power play before anyone else gets hurt."

Chapter Twenty-nine

They settled in the hallway, invisible to the people working at the lab. George stood, resting his back against the wall. Mordred sat, cross-legged, with his eyes closed, thinking about their plan.

"Do you think Aiden really will uphold his part of your deal?" George drummed his fingers on his thigh.

Mordred shrugged. "He'll do it if he wants to go back to his realm. It still amazes me that Beowulf brought Aiden here to seduce me."

Reaching out, he ran his hand up and down George's calf. The knight smiled at him.

"Once you've had the best, it's hard to accept second-rate lovers."

George chuckled and knelt down, threading his fingers through Mordred's hair and kissing him. Mordred moaned, trying not to think on how much he had missed being able to taste his lover whenever he wanted to.

Easing away, he inhaled George's warm breath and sighed. "I don't ever want to be apart like that again, love. You are a vital part of my life."

"Don't worry. I have a feeling once we take care of Morgana and Beowulf, we won't have any more problems."

Mordred rested his head on George's shoulder, savoring the warmth of George's arms around him. The lights in the hallway dimmed, alerting them to the fact the lab was shutting down for the day. As much as Mordred would have enjoyed tasting more of George, he knew it wasn't the time or the place for it.

A soft *pop* warned them of Morgana's presence, and Mordred double-checked the spell concealing their hiding place. Grinning, he watched her sneak down the hall toward Kael's lab. She'd taken the bait, and he said a silent word of thanks to Aiden for planting the story in her ear.

"You're sure Kael isn't around?" This was the third time George asked him that question.

"Yes. I told Hugh to make sure Kael was out of the building by now." Mordred caressed his lover's cheek. "I'd never risk Kael on purpose."

"I know. I just worry about him." George winked. "I worry about you as well, but you're far more capable of defending yourself against any kind of attack than Kael is."

"True. Though he did hold his own against Will." He smiled at the memory of all the bruises Kael's ex-lover had by the time the police had arrived to arrest him.

"You taught Kael well."

Morgana stood in front of the lab door, and Mordred gestured for George to be quiet. He braced himself for her to blow the lock out, but she whispered a few words, and the door opened with a *click*.

"Restraint," he murmured. "I'm impressed."

They moved to stand in the doorway as the red-haired witch searched the lab.

"Where did Kael put the file?" He pressed his lips to George's ear.

"In the bottom left-hand drawer. She'll have to unlock it. We didn't want to make it too easy for her."

"Good idea. Though I don't think she's smart enough to be suspicious if you had left it out and clearly marked on the desk."

Morgana popped the lock and crowed in triumph when she opened the drawer. Holding the file in her hand, she disappeared.

"Niall and Seamus are at the grove, right?" George tensed.

"Yes, they'll alert me when she and Beowulf show up. Now, you go get Hugh, Kael, and the others, and I'll get Gaia. We need to catch them in the midst of trying to bring the barrier down."

George's kiss bruised Mordred's lips before his lover disappeared. Mordred breathed deeply, preparing himself for petitioning his goddess.

Within the space of a second, he appeared in Gaia's throne room. The goddess's perfect eyebrows shot up as he dropped to his knees.

"Goddess, I've come to ask a boon of you." He kept his eyes focused on the floor in front of him.

"A boon, Mordred?" Gaia's voice held skepticism.

"Yes, my lady. I've found the ones responsible for the weakening of the barrier and the appearance of magical creatures in the mortal world."

He hoped the goddess was in a forgiving mood since she had forbidden his involvement in the situation.

"Interesting. Have you been helping the mortals?"

He saw the glittering hem of Gaia's dress come into view, and he managed to resist the urge to raise his head.

"No, my lady." It wasn't really a lie. He never helped any of them to fight the dragons. He'd only helped Kael learn how to defend himself.

"Hmmm..." She didn't sound like she believed him.

"Please, my lady. If I can prove to you their perfidy, would you at least listen?"

"I'll listen, Mordred, but I'm not prepared to forgive you just yet." Gaia gestured for him to stand. "Come with me. I'm sure this is something you wish to keep quiet."

"Yes, ma'am."

Once they entered the private chamber behind the throne, he started explaining to her everything they'd discovered. He described in detail Morgana and Beowulf's actions and why he suspected them. Mordred tied up his explanation with the trap he and George had set.

Gaia never interrupted, her rainbow-colored eyes inscrutable as she watched him. Before she could reply to his accusations, Niall appeared.

"They're there, Mordred. Get your skinny ass over there." Niall disappeared.

"You've even corrupted my leprechauns." Gaia shook her head.

Mordred grinned. "Can't corrupt the already corrupted."

Gaia's laughter rolled like church bells over a clear summer day. "True, Mordred. Let's go see what that witch and her idiot lover are doing."

Mordred offered his arm; Gaia tucked her hand at the bend of his elbow, and they made their way outside.

In the instant it took to step from the room, Gaia's power transported them to the grove. Mordred cringed when heard Beowulf swearing.

"You said this would work, Morgana." The huge blond warrior glared at the witch.

"Aiden said Mordred told him about this. Somehow one of those mortals figured out a formula to take the barrier down." She grimaced as she studied the papers. "The man's handwriting is horrible."

"You promised if I helped you, we could return to the mortal world and become gods." Beowulf crossed his arms and pouted.

"I believe I have that position already filled."

Gaia's soft words caused Morgana and Beowulf to freeze. Facing the goddess's displeasure was never fun. Mordred was glad he'd only faced it a few times in his long life.

The goddess strolled over to Morgana, grasped the redhead's chin, and lifted. Their gazes met, and Mordred saw fear grow in Morgana's eyes.

"You always were more ambitious than smart, Morgana," Gaia commented. "To lead one of my most trusted courtiers astray with your lies wasn't very well done of you."

"Gaia. Goddess, please. I was only doing it for you. To restore you to your natural place in the mortal world," Morgana pleaded.

"Certainly. You never once imagined yourself in my place or on my throne. Don't lie to me, witch. I am indeed more powerful than you will ever be. I know your deepest secrets and the truth you hide even from yourself."

Gaia squeezed Morgana's chin and shook the witch's head. Mordred saw bruises begin to appear and shuddered. Gaia was one goddess it didn't pay to piss off.

"Did you really think that once the barrier fell, I'd let you take my place as Mother Goddess? You need to disappear while I decide what to do with you." Gaia let go of Morgana and waved her hand.

With a screech, the witch disappeared. Glancing around, Mordred caught sight of Hugh, Kael, and George standing on the other side of the glade. He nodded at them.

"You promised," Beowulf shouted, his crazed stare focusing on Gaia. "Morgana said you told her if she brought the barrier down on her own, you would place her on the throne of the mortal world."

"I never promised anything. It would seem mere mortals are smarter than their legendary counterparts." Gaia gestured in the others' direction.

Beowulf whirled, his hand flashing to his belt. Before anyone could move, he pulled a dagger and hurled it at Kael.

"This is your fault. I'd be a god now if it wasn't for you."

Hugh pushed Kael out of the way, and the weapon buried itself hilt deep in his chest. Surprise and shock warred for prominence on Hugh's face. Kael caught him, dropping to his knees to soften Hugh's fall.

"Fuck." Mordred raced to the mortal's side.

* * * * *

"No," Kael whispered. Fear sealed off his throat. He wanted to scream for someone to help.

Pressing against the wound, he cringed as the warm, sticky liquid coated his hands. He met Hugh's gaze and saw the surprise slowly morph into pain and relief.

"You okay?" Hugh's voice held worry.

"I'm fine, love."

Someone knelt beside Kael. He shot a quick look to find Mordred next to him.

"Help me," Kael mouthed.

Mordred stared at the wound and the dagger protruding from it. The elf's eyes clashed with his and he saw the apology in them.

"George." He appealed to the knight on Hugh's left.

"The dagger sliced his aorta, Kael. I can't do anything. Besides, this is one of Hercules's daggers. Only a god could remove it without causing instant death." George caressed Hugh's pale cheek. "I'm sorry."

Kael wasn't sure who George was talking to, him or Hugh.

"Take care of Kael for me." Hugh coughed.

The jerk of Hugh's body caused the oak tree pendant Hugh wore to hit Kael's hands. Kael remembered what Gaia had said to him the night she gave them to him.

"The tree of life is my symbol along with the gems. These will protect you as much as my power can in your realm. You may use the pendant to call on me for help, but it can only be used once, and I will ask for a sacrifice in return."

"Gaia," Kael cried. He grabbed Mordred's hands and placed them on the wound.

Standing, he located the goddess in the middle of the clearing, watching the drama with unearthly calm. He stumbled to her, dropping to his knees in supplication.

"Please help him," he pleaded.

Gaia studied him. The pendant he wore grew warm, and Kael yanked it from his neck, offering it to her.

"I'm asking for the favor now. Save Hugh. Heal him and I'll do whatever you ask."

He heard a brief cry of protest from the other side of the clearing. He wasn't sure who voiced their displeasure.

"Are you sure, Kael?" The power in Gaia's voice reminded him she was the Mother Goddess.

"Yes."

Kael was sure. No matter what she asked for in return, Hugh's life was worth it.

"All right."

His mouth dropped open at her answer. For some reason, he figured he'd have to beg longer to convince her he meant what he said.

George and Mordred moved out of the way. The goddess knelt beside Hugh, took his hand in her right hand. She placed her left hand over the wound. A flash of light blinded him. When his vision cleared, Hugh was gone.

"No."

Kael climbed to his feet and ran over to Gaia. Grabbing her arm, he shook her. "Where is he? What did you do to him?"

Mordred embraced him and dragged him away from the goddess. "I'm sorry, my lady. He's very emotional at the moment."

Kael struggled to free himself from the elf's arms. "Damn right, I'm emotional. Where did you send him?"

Gaia's gaze wandered around the clearing. "He's at Memorial Hospital in Dublin. The staff is treating him for a stab wound to the chest."

He looked up at Mordred. "I have to get to him, Mordred. I need to be there."

Mordred started to speak but Gaia interrupted him.

"He won't know you, Kael."

"What do you mean?" Terror raced through him.

She laughed. "I should have said he won't remember what you've become to him. In fact, he might not remember any of this." She waved her hand in a vague gesture.

Kael swore his heart stopped. "Not remember?"

"Hugh won't know he's supposed to love you."

"Why?"

Gaia shrugged. "It's the price you must pay for my help."

Tears welled in his eyes, and he turned to press his face against Mordred's chest. His friend cradled his head, stroking his back.

"Niall," George called out.

Kael stepped back as the leprechaun appeared. Mordred kissed Kael softly and George hugged him.

"Let Niall take you to the hospital. M.A. will make sure Wellmine and Stevenson are there to meet you." George gestured for Niall to take Kael's hand. "Stay with him until the other mortals arrive."

The short man nodded, squeezing Kael's hand.

"We'll come and see you as soon as we can."

Kael didn't know what to say. He knew he should be thrilled that Hugh was going to live, but to know the man he loved might never remember their love broke his heart. He gave his friends a weak smile and let Niall lead him away.

Chapter Thirty

"Did you have to do that, Gaia?"

George's question surprised Mordred. The knight had never challenged the goddess before.

"Are you really questioning me, George?" Gaia sounded as surprised as Mordred felt.

"You've put the outcome of this rebellion on Kael's shoulders. He has been in danger from the beginning." George stood, hands braced on hips and anger in his blue eyes.

Mordred joined George. He didn't know what his lover thought to accomplish by speaking to the goddess like that, but he would support him.

"Kael's done everything you've asked of him, and you repay him by taking away his love. I think I might go live with the mortals." George's disappointment colored his words.

"George, don't you understand? For a life given, something equally important must be taken. I didn't make up those rules." Frowning, Gaia pushed back her curls.

"You are the Mother Goddess. You can change the rules if you want to." George scrubbed his hand through his dark hair.

Mordred rested his hand at the small of George's back, showing his support for his lover.

"See, that's the thing, George. I don't want to change the rules. If I do that for Kael, then others will be expecting me to do it for them as well." Gaia shook her head, a look of false sympathy on her face.

"Cold-hearted, aren't you?"

"He's just a mortal, George. There's nothing special about any of them." Gaia examined her nails.

"Is that why you didn't stop Morgana from sending the dragons and why you actually encouraged her to do it?"

Mordred stayed out of the discussion, knowing what Gaia was capable of if she got really angry. He was intrigued, though. George didn't sound angry, he sounded disappointed.

Gaia shrugged. "Maybe I decided that if by chance, they did manage to bring the barrier down and let magic back into the world, it would only be beneficial to me. People would start believing in the gods and goddesses again instead of just one god or variations thereof."

"It didn't matter that mortals were being injured or killed by the creatures Morgana and Beowulf let cross over." George shook his head.

"Oh, for my sake, there are millions of mortals. Who cares if one or two die? It's not like they can't make more." She threw her hands in the air.

With a sigh, George turned to cup Mordred's cheek. "I love you," he said softly, kissing him deeply and with passion.

Mordred wasn't sure he wanted to know why George looked so sad. He clung to George's arm, holding on as if his strength alone could keep the man from doing whatever crazy thing he was planning on doing.

George broke away from him and turned back to Gaia. "You demand a sacrifice for your help. Take my immortality. Send me to the mortal world where I will grow old and die like the rest of them. Don't take Hugh's memory of Kael and their love away. Let them keep that."

"No, George."

Mordred held out his hand, trying to halt George's offer. It was an offer Gaia was bound to take because the goddess was angry at them for their interference. Mordred didn't want to lose his love. He wasn't sure how he'd continue on living without the man who held his soul in his hand.

Gaia gave him a quick glance. Her gaze turned to George and narrowed like he was a particularly annoying bug she was studying.

"You know that you will die. Once you step outside the Realm into the mortal world, your immortality will be stripped from you. You will age and die like the others."

"I know and I accept that."

Mordred bit back his sob. No way would he break down. Not now and especially not in front of the bitch goddess.

"You'll never be able to come back here, and I won't allow Mordred to visit you. You will cut all ties to this Realm."

Gaia's proclamations cut deep into Mordred's heart. As much as it hurt to know George was going to die, Mordred's soul shivered at never being about to see him again.

Tears filled George's eyes and he swallowed. Knowing his lover well, Mordred understood the difficulty of George's decision, but also that George wasn't going to change his mind. The only reason George had stayed in the Realm for so long was because of Mordred. He knew that and cherished the time he'd spent with George.

"Send me to the hospital, Gaia. It's time I finish out my life the way I was meant to." George clasped Mordred's hand to his chest and smiled sadly. "You are my life and love. Each day we had together was worth the centuries I spent here, but this is not how I want to live anymore. I don't want to be alive forever. I don't want to watch any more of our friends die."

Mordred wrapped his arms around George's waist, burying his face against his lover's familiar broad chest and letting a quiet sob escaped him.

George buried his face in Mordred's blond hair. "You've never known what it's like to be mortal. You've always been the wonderful magical creature you are, and I wouldn't want you to be any different. It is the very thing I love most about you, but I can't do it. I want to be mortal again, Mordred."

"Let me go with you," he whispered.

George tensed under his hands. He tried to keep from being pushed away from George's body, but George forced him. Mordred lifted his eyes to meet George's astonished blue eyes.

"What did you say?" Gaia demanded.

Mordred didn't look away from George.

"Let me go with you."

George shook his head. "You can't survive in the mortal world, Mordred. Not without your magic."

"I don't care. Did you think I would let you leave me?" Mordred jerked away and flung his arms wide. "None of this matters without you. What's the point in having magic if you're not there to irritate with it? Why would I want to live forever alone, knowing you're dead or I could have been with you for as long as I get to live?"

He shoved George back. He understood why George was choosing to become mortal again, but he didn't have to be happy about it. Pacing, he gestured wildly.

"I can't believe you thought I'd just let you leave. Stiff upper lip and all that shit. You weren't going to leave without me. I'm not going to be left behind while you play martyr for Kael and Hugh."

"Mordred." Gaia stepped in front of him, forcing him to stop.

Glaring at the goddess, he rested his fists on his hips. "What?"

Her eyebrows shot up. The goddess seemed surprised that both George and Mordred would choose to address her in such a disrespectful tone. George eased forward like he wanted to protect Mordred from Gaia.

"You do realize that if you join George in the mortal world, you will age and die." Gaia reached out and stroked a finger over his cheekbone. "All this smooth, beautiful skin will dry and wrinkle. You'll lose your pretty looks."

He jerked away from her touch. "I don't care. George will still love me no matter what I look like."

Unease wiggled through him, and he looked over at his lover. George grinned and nodded.

"I'd love you if you didn't have any teeth, were blind and bald. As gorgeous as you are, it's not your looks I'm in love with."

Mordred chuckled. He should have known George would say something like that.

"Are you sure, Mordred? What will you do? How will you eat? Where will you live?"

He shrugged. "None of that matters. Kael and Hugh will help us out. We'll figure something out. As long as George is with me, I'm willing to live in a box in an alley somewhere."

George doubled over laughing.

"What?" Mordred didn't appreciate being laughed at when he was being noble.

"Sweetheart, I know you mean well, but you wouldn't live in a box in an alley. Trust me. You're used to living like a prince." George sobered. "Are you sure, love? There's no going back when you step out of the grove with me."

Mordred kissed George deep and long, pouring all his love and passion into the kiss. Pulling away, he took George's hand and tugged his lover to the edge of the grove.

"Mordred, I won't take you back when you come crawling to me, begging to return," Gaia shouted at him.

He stopped and turned. Her eyes widened as he strolled toward her. Gripping her shoulders, he leaned down and planted a wet, sloppy kiss on Gaia's lips. He grinned at her shocked expression.

"I won't be crawling back, Gaia. You aren't the one I need."

Mordred raced back to George and grabbed the knight's hand, pulling him out of the clearing. He felt the tingle of passing through the barrier.

Chapter Thirty-one

Kael glanced up when Mordred and George walked into the waiting room. Without hesitation, he leaped to his feet and flung himself into Mordred's arms. Mordred folded the younger man close to his body, running his hands over Kael's back and whispering softly in the man's hair.

"It's all right, little one. We're here." He brushed a kiss over Kael's ear and eased him back. "How's Hugh doing?"

Kael's brown eyes filled with tears, but he didn't fall apart. "I don't know. They took him back to surgery an hour ago."

After hugging Kael, George looked around. "Where are Wellmine and Stevenson?"

"They went down to the cafeteria. I told them they didn't have to stay, but they wouldn't leave. Bailey's not comfortable here. I think it brings back memories from his injuries."

"It does, but I'm not going to leave you alone." Bailey stood in the doorway. "You were there for me when I needed someone to talk to." The sergeant blushed as Wellmine joined him.

Mordred noticed the captain's hand resting at the small of Bailey's back and the way Bailey leaned into him. The elf stepped back to let Kael go and hug the other men. George touched his arm.

"I'm going to check with the nurse. See if there's a progress report."

"Where's George going?" Kael returned to Mordred, snuggling close under Mordred's arm.

"He's going to talk to the nurse at the desk. See if he can get an update." Mordred led Kael back to the chairs, sitting next to him.

Bailey and Wellmine joined them. Kael hid his face in his hands and shuddered. Mordred rubbed his friend's shoulder.

"What will I do if he doesn't remember me, Mordred?" Kael met Mordred's eyes with a fear-filled gaze.

"You deal with it. You'll make him fall in love with you all over again." Mordred grinned and winked. "But I don't think you'll have to worry about it."

"What makes you think that? Gaia seemed pretty definite about the whole thing." Kael sounded puzzled.

"George discussed things with her, but even if she doesn't change her mind, Hugh will fall in love with you the moment he sees you." He cupped Kael's cheek. "If I wasn't already infatuated with George, I'd be trying to steal you away from Hugh."

Kael blushed and laughed. Someone coughed, and they looked up to see George walking in with a man in scrubs. The surgeon looked them all over.

"Which one of you is Mr. Price's partner?"

"I am." Kael held out his hand. "I'm Kael Hammerson. How is he?"

"Price lost a lot of blood and there was substantial damage to his aorta. We managed to repair it and replenished his blood. He's in post-op right now, but as soon as he wakes up, we'll be moving him to a private room. He'll be weak and it'll take a couple of months for him to recover completely." The surgeon shook Kael's hand and reassured him.

Relief shot through Mordred. He didn't doubt that Gaia would keep her word, but it was good to hear Hugh would survive. Now they would have to wait and make sure the goddess accepted their sacrifice. If she didn't, Mordred would figure out a way to return to the Realm of Dreams and repay Gaia in kind.

"When can I see him?"

"When they move him to a room, they'll come and let you know. You can go up and see him then."

"Thank you, Doctor."

The surgeon left. All the men stared at each other for a moment before a big grin broke over George's face. The knight swept Kael up and whirled him around. Soon they were hugging and laughing.

After they settled down, Wellmine and Bailey went home, saying they'd stop by the next day. George ran down to the cafeteria to get them something to drink. Kael and Mordred sat, silently absorbing all that had happened that day.

An hour later, a nurse came to take them to Hugh's room. Mordred and George hung back, letting Kael go in first. Kael touched Hugh's hand.

"Hugh?"

Hugh blinked, his hazel eyes blurry as he stared up at Kael. A faint smile graced Hugh's mouth.

"Kael, love."

Mordred sent a little prayer to Gaia, thanking her.

Epilogue

Two months later –

Mordred stared around Kael's old apartment. He sighed as George wrapped his arms around his waist and pulled him back against his chest. Leaning his head onto George's shoulder, he gave his lover access to his neck.

George nuzzled his throat. "How does it feel?"

"Hmmm...nice." He hummed, enjoying the slide of George's lips over his skin.

"I meant knowing this is your new home. You've always liked my kisses."

The warm rush of George's chuckle brushed over his ear.

"Oh." He shrugged slightly, not wanting to dislodge George's lips or hands from his body. "It's fine."

Turning, he threaded his fingers through George's curls, bringing their mouths together. Their lips met in a loving kiss, stroking tongues over teeth and teasing each other. George slipped his hands down to cup Mordred's ass and squeezed.

Mordred moaned, pressing his body closer to George's heat. "Take me. Make me remember why I left the Realm."

George growled, picking Mordred up. The elf encircled George's waist with his legs, secure in the knowledge that his lover would never drop him. The bigger man carried him into the bedroom and tossed him onto their bed, following him down.

They rubbed and kissed, bit and sucked while tearing clothes off. Mordred's hips lifted off the bed when George settled between his thighs and lined their cocks up. Precum slicked them, easing their movements as they rocked together.

"Where's the lube?" George asked in a strangled voice.

"Don't know."

Mordred grabbed George's fingers and sucked them in, getting them as wet as he could. Hooking his hands behind his thighs, he pulled them back, giving George better access to his ass. George caressed Mordred's hole, pushing two fingers in at once.

The burn made Mordred hiss, but he pushed back, taking the pain and relaxing. George's fingers eased the emptiness Mordred was feeling, in a way, but they drove Mordred's need higher. Tilting his hips, he rocked, working on stretching his opening so George could fuck him.

George bent forward and took the head of Mordred's cock in his mouth. He played with the weeping slit, tasting the precum and humming with appreciation.

"Goddess, George, fuck me already." Mordred fisted the sheets, undulating between fingers and mouth with increasing speed. "I want to come on your cock."

George pulled away and Mordred cried out in protest. He opened his eyes to see his lover holding a bottle of lube with a triumphant grin.

"I knew Hugh or Kael would have left some in the nightstand."

Panting, Mordred arched off the bed, offering himself to George without thought or question. George popped the top of the lube and squirted some of the slick stuff into the palm of his hand. He tossed the tube over his shoulder before coating his cock with the lube. Positioning his cock at Mordred's entrance, he pushed forward, taking Mordred slowly but without hesitation.

When George was buried deep in him, Mordred wrapped his legs around George's waist, hooking his ankles together. He massaged the thick prick inside him.

"Love," George gasped.

"I know."

Mordred cradled the back of George's head in his hand, sitting up enough to drive George deeper into him and bringing their lips together. Their tongues played while George started moving, short hard strokes, nailing Mordred's gland with each one.

He clasped his lover's shoulders and met each of George's inward strokes with a downward push of his own. Their rhythm quickened. Bodies slammed together. Flesh rubbed against flesh. Heat and sweat built. Mordred thought about taking his own dick in hand, but he couldn't command his hands to let go of George. He let the hard muscles of George's stomach bring him to climax.

Pleasure shot through him, firing every nerve ending and causing lights to spark in front of his eyes.

"George," he cried out.

George grunted, moving faster. Mordred knew how to bring his lover over the edge with him. Leaning forward, he set his teeth on George's chest right above the knight's heart and bit. A shudder shook George and hot liquid flooded Mordred's inner passage.

"I love you," George whispered, collapsing to the side of Mordred.

"I know."

Mordred held George while his lover fell asleep. They had time for a nap before they had to meet Hugh and Kael at the pub.

He ran his hand over George's arm, thinking about all the things that had happened since they left the Realm. Hugh had gotten them the needed paperwork and jobs. Kael moved in with Hugh, letting Mordred and George have his apartment. It had taken Mordred some time to figure out how to cook and do things without his magic, but he was learning and finding out that he liked it. George spent his days cleaning up the dragons and monsters left behind in the mortal realm when Gaia raised the barrier again, much like he had all those centuries ago before Mordred had met him.

George pulled him close and he sighed. Mordred knew the truth in his heart. It didn't matter if he was immortal or human; all that mattered was sharing whatever kind of life he had with George.

 THE END 

T. A. Chase

I'm a day dreamer and a person who loves to wonder 'what if' all the time. That's how my stories have gotten started with that one little question. I'm intrigued by life and the world. The interactions of humans amaze me. The lengths we go to shut each other out, but also the pain we are willing to endure to love someone.

I live in the Midwest with my partner of nine years. We're doing our best to prove that couples like us can stay faithful and together forever if we so chose. We're owned by two slightly neurotic cats.

Visit me on the Web at <http://tachase.blogspot.com/>