

Changeling Press

Hannah Beckham  
**DOUBLE SHIFT**

# **Shift Work 3: Double Shift**

## **Hannah Beckham**

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ISBN: 978-1-60521-178-7

Formats Available:

HTML, Adobe PDF,

MobiPocket, Microsoft Reader

Publisher:

Changeling Press LLC

PO Box 1046

Martinsburg, WV 25402-1046

[www.ChangelingPress.com](http://www.ChangelingPress.com)

Editor: Sheri Ross Fogarty

Cover Artist: Reneé George

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## **Shift Work 3: Double Shift**

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Trinity Staten has seen better days, hell, better years. Between keeping her men happy and avoiding a homicidal father, life has gotten pretty complicated. Newton Price, telepath and Trinity's hunka-licious lover, has been distant and keeping himself and his mind at arm's length while Merlin Davitch, her other lover and genius best-friend -- very hot in a geek chic kind of way -- is distracted by science. Not good, when Trinity needs them now more than ever.

Trinity is pregnant with the Triune, a child fathered by both her lovers, and the true heir of Caledon. An unexpected side effect of the pregnancy is her hormones are out of whack, and not the usual ones. The sex hormone she acquired from an incubus demon bite has been secreting exponentially. The only cure -- fantastic sex. Without it, the levels are becoming toxic and deadly.

When Trinity is separated from her men, can their love bridge the distance to save her? And can Trinity get her growing powers under control enough to save herself when it counts?

## **Dedication**

For my friend, Emma Ray Garrett -- your phone calls in the middle of the night gave me the kick in the pants I needed. Again to my husband, for putting up with "fend for yourself" nights. I'm not thanking the dog and the cat. They were nothing but pains in my ass during the process. To Stephanie, for being a great fan and reader. You rock! Last, but certainly not least, I'd like to thank my editor Sheri for helping me to shape this series and bring it to life, and the fans who have supported Trinity and her boys. You keep me inspired.

“Creationists assert that all living creatures are part of some big Intelligent Design. That somewhere there is a maker. Maybe not God specifically, but a kind of intelligent cause that has nothing to do with natural selection and evolution.

“I’m here to tell you, if living things are created by design, the designer is whack and completely out of control. I think if the theorists knew about the *other* species walking and talking on this planet, they’d rethink the whole concept. Because their designer is definitely giving the *others* the edge.

“Of course, Merlin Davitch, being the pure scientist that he is, says the only intelligent design he believes in is cloning. He’s seen proof of that shit. Say helloo to my little sheep (Imagine Al Pacino here, folks). Anyhow, I’m kind of rooting for evolution at this point, because if someone designed my crazy life, I think I might have to take a contract out on his ass.”

-- *Trinity Staten, slayer (well, not as much lately), sex fiend (not by my design), pregnant (yeah, yeah, still), tired (side effect of the first three titles), and kind of, sort of, still kickass*

## Chapter One

Another day, another house and Trinity Staten wished it were another time. She was tired of moving and always having to look over her shoulder. Afraid, constantly afraid, for Newton, Merlin, their unborn child. Absently her hands drifted over her slightly bulging tummy. If she'd been human, she'd be a blimp by now, but as an *other* she still had six months to go on a twelve-month pregnancy.

Trinity piled another blanket around her body, her lips shivering against the deep bone chill running through her body. She'd turned up the thermostat to ninety degrees and it still felt freezing in the house. Turning off the television, she hunkered deeper into the cushions of the couch. Newton Price and Merlin Davitch, her lovers, had both gone out. Merl, who held doctorates in chemical and molecular biology, had gone to meet with a fellow scientist about a stupid experiment he'd done on himself.

Trinity worried her lower lip. How dumb could a smart guy be? He'd managed to isolate some of Trinity's genetic material and inject it directly into his own stem cells. The results so far were completely unpredictable. Newton, on the other hand, had an appointment to be head shrunk. Therapy he needed for post traumatic stress over the kidnapping and torture that had occurred a little over two months ago.

Newton had survived the experience, but only barely. Trinity was afraid he'd never completely recover, at least not emotionally. Goose flesh raised tight bumps on her arms, and she rubbed them hard in an effort to warm herself. It was getting damned near ridiculous. The throbbing headache pounding against the temples of her skull didn't help matters.

For over a week now, it seemed like her body had been rebelling, with heartburn, having to pee all the time, and a wonky body temperature that made her feel either overly warm or cold. Pregnancy could explain most of it, but since she wasn't

human, she only had the midwife's expertise in *other* reproduction to go by. She had an appointment in a couple of days and had a full list of questions to ask. Though it wouldn't seem like a good antidote, sex appeared to be the cure for most of what ailed her.

Merl had speculated it might have something to do with the incubus hormones coursing through her. She bet the midwife didn't have experience with that particular side effect.

For now, she'd just be happy if she didn't feel so goddamn cold. And her head, if it would just stop hammering. Her eyes felt hot and tired, such a contrast to the rest of her. This was the worst she'd ever felt. She needed to be touched, and unfortunately, she couldn't satisfy herself -- not for lack of trying.

A brush of warmth fluttered inside -- fleeting. Was it her men? Could she intuitively feel them, or was it wishful thinking? Could they sense the need in Trinity? Her fingers slipped between the folds of her slick pussy. It was the only warm part of her body. Or at least that's how it felt. Rubbing her forefinger over her swollen clit, Trinity vigorously massaged, trying without success, once again, to bring her body to some kind of release.

Her vision blurred as the headache worsened to the point where she thought her brain might start leaking from her ears. Where were they? Where were Newton and Merl? They were supposed to take care of Trinity, to love her. And even though they'd only been gone for a few hours, it seemed as if an eternity had passed.

Writhing on the couch, Trinity buried herself deeper. They were coming. She knew it. But why weren't they already there? "Newt? Merl?" A form of delirium settled in. "Where are you? You said you'd be here for me. You promised. You promised you wouldn't leave me..."

\* \* \*

Merl had picked up Newton on the way back to the house. He had sympathy for what the man had gone through, even worried a little for him, but he spent most of the time worrying about Trinity. Newton was unstable. No telling when the dude would



snap, and Merl didn't want Trini in the crossfire when it happened. He glanced over at his sullen roommate as he pulled into the driveway. The air around Newton was rife with seething agitation. "You okay?"

Newton grunted.

"Guess that's a yes."

As they neared the front door, Merl felt the tug of Trinity, as if his body instantly reacted to a distinctive distress signal. He held out his hand to Newton. "Do you feel that?"

"Yes," Newton replied. The sullen expression had been replaced by alert intensity. "Get the fucking door open."

Merl jiggled the key into the lock. It wouldn't go in. The anxiety and distress grew more acute. "It won't work."

"Damn it to hell. Give me the keys." Without waiting, Newton yanked the keys out of Merl's hand. They went flying out into the dark yard.

"Jesus, Newton!" Merl turned and banged on the door. "Trini. Open the door."

Next Newton pounded. "Trini. Let us in."

Trinity's stress level was skyrocketing, and Merl could sense it as if it were his own. Adrenaline kicked in and before he could blink, the door blew inside the house, flipping once then sliding across the floor to stop just short of the couch.

"Overkill, my friend," Newton mumbled. He stepped inside and rushed to where Trinity lay all bundled except for her face. Her skin was flushed, nearly baked.

Merl stumbled forward into the house. He hadn't meant to break the door. Hell, he hadn't even known he could do it. Which was why he'd been trying to understand all the changes taking place inside him since he'd spliced his own DNA with Trini's.

"Trini?" He cupped her face. Her skin was hot, really hot, and dry. "She's running a fever."

Newton took off his jacket. "It's like a fucking sauna in here." He walked toward the back room. "What's going on with her face?"

Merl took a closer look. Trinity's skin was changing color, which by itself wasn't so unusual. She had a chameleon-like ability that allowed her to blend in with her surroundings, but this was different. Dark areas were appearing, then disappearing as her skin transformed. He pulled the covers back. It was happening with her entire body -- like a Christmas tree light with bad wiring, winking and blinking all wrong. He pressed a finger against one of the darker areas on her shoulder, and it was like nothingness, a small black hole. Instantly, the area firmed and pushed his finger out of the empty space.

"So cold," Trinity said through chattering teeth.

"It's all right, baby." Merl smoothed her thick red hair. He noticed her hand resting between her legs as she curled into a tight ball.

"Here." Newton handed Merl a thermometer, one that worked from the ear.

A quick *beep* later, Merl handed it back. "105.6. Too high, way too high."

"I'll get some aspirin, you get some cold clothes." Before Newton could leave, Trinity's hand snapped out and latched onto his wrist.

"No. I need you. I need you both. Touch me. Please, please." She turned, stretching herself before both of them. "Take off your clothes. Off. Off."

Merl quickly pulled off his clothes. Trinity's own urgency ran through him, a combination of lust, fear, anxiety. He didn't have any embarrassment about being naked in front of Newton anymore. All that mattered was Trinity's needs, and the baby. "Do it, Newton. She's sick. Can't you feel it?" His mark, the violet line and circle on his back, throbbed. "She's dying without release."

Newton nodded his head, but undressed. "I can feel it."

Trinity pushed back her hair, which had grown out just past her shoulders. She spread her legs even wider as her fingers tangled in the dark red curls then slipped between the lips of her sex. "Come, make love to me. I need to feel you inside of me." The dark swirls appearing randomly on her body disappeared as her gaze swept across both men.

Her startling violet eyes caused Merlin to catch his breath. They were the only part of her that never changed. The rest of her body normalized and transformed around the beautiful electric irises.

Merl's cock stiffened as he stared at her gloriously nude form, her pale, pale skin with slight freckles, her soft breasts with erect nipples. Even if her own lust hadn't been driving him, he'd be completely turned on. Blood rushed to his groin, his cock hardening even more at the thought of stroking into her throbbing sex, already wet, dripping.

He glanced at Newton, just as hard.

Newton's pupils dilated. "She's so damned beautiful." He lowered to his knees in front of Trinity.

Trinity met Newton's mouth with a fiery kiss. Merl watched him rub his palms over her breasts. She moaned against Newton's mouth. Strangely, the mark on Newton's back, a mirror twin to Merl's, pulsed with light as he teased one of her nipples between thumb and forefinger, his tongue flickering over the tightly drawn crux. Merl wondered if his own was doing the same.

He knelt next to Newton as the man moved further down her body. He and Trinity both watched as Newton slid his tongue down her stomach. Her skin visibly quivered under his touch. The back of Newton's hand traveled up her thigh until his fingers reached the soft folds of her damp sex. He spread the lips of her pussy and twirled his tongue around her clit, sinking a finger into her wet channel.

"Yes," she groaned.

Merl's hand went to his shaft, stroking steadily. When they'd all first started having sex together, he'd been uneasy, to say the least, at how excited watching another man with Trinity made him, but over the months, he'd learned to embrace the sensation. She was glorious to behold in the throes of passion.

Newton glided his fingers in and out of Trini in the same rhythm he used to lick and suck her swollen pussy. Every hormone in Merl's body sizzled at the sight of her writhing movements.

Newton thrust another finger in and she cried out again in pleasure. Merl's hand rubbed across his chest, while his other stroked his cock even faster. His breathing and heart rate increased as well.

"Merl," Trinity said, heady and husky.

Merl's body shivered with anticipation. She pulled his head down, her lips parting as she kissed him hard. Her tongue darted past his teeth. Merl closed his eyes, savoring her as he fed from her lips.

Trinity's mind began to clear the more Newton touched, groped, and sucked -- and the more insistent Merl's kisses more. She squirmed her hips, pressing her pussy to Newton's mouth. She gazed at Merl until he looked back. His green eyes looked so lovely, especially this close. Merl's lips parted to suck in her tongue. She traced his straight white teeth, tasting him with a hunger food could never satisfy.

"I need you to fuck me," Trinity said, talking to both of her lovers.

Newton sat back on his heels and Trinity's pussy twitched at the loss of his lips and tongue. Without needing direction, Merl moved Trinity over, sat down next to her on the couch, then pulled her on top of him. She positioned her slick sex over his shaft and slid down on him with one swift easy glide. Instantly, she felt more connected, more alive.

Newton scooted his body behind her and between Merl's legs. Lifting her ass to him, Trinity arched in anticipation. She could feel Newton's fingers lubricating her anus. Only a minor disappointment, since it felt really good to have him inside her however he decided, but he rarely penetrated her pussy anymore, and he never let her face him. Not since...

It didn't matter. All that mattered was the feeling of them taking her, the marks on her back thrumming as Newton pushed his way inside. Merl rocked his hips upwards to meet Trinity. She squeezed her muscles around him, and in doing so, did the same to Newton. Noises of pleasure sounded from both men. She rolled forward then arched back to take the long, thick lengths of their cocks deep within her.

Trinity raked her nails down Merl's back until they rested under his firm buttocks, digging in. Her headache was gone, the cold was gone, all she felt was rapture and bliss as they fucked her so good. Stroking, gently, rhythmically, in sync with each other. Pressure built in her groin, burning bright with the promise of gratification. It didn't take long.

Her upper body jolted at the shockwave emanating from her vibrating cunt, and she could feel her ass contracting around Newton's length. She sang out her pleasure in one long blissful moan. Her climax triggered Merl's and his head flew back, his hands gripping her hips as he drove his cock deep. A howl of final ecstasy poured from his mouth. He collapsed back onto the couch.

The heat of his body soothed her every nerve.

Newton withdrew from her, slowly, as if trying not to disturb the serenity. He disappeared to the bathroom, and came back a few moments later, dressed in boxers, holding a towel. He handed it to Trinity, and sat down beside them.

"How do you feel?"

She heaved a breath, and moved to settle between the men. "Better." Sweat seemed to leak from every pore in her body. She was soaked with it. "Damn, it's really hot in here."

Newton shrugged. "You had the thermostat set on tropical." He felt her forehead with the back of his hand. "Your fever's broken."

Merl had covered his lap with the towel. "Let me check your temp." He grabbed the thermometer and put it to her ear. "Yep. Down to 100.2 now."

"I don't understand what's been happening lately. It seems like I'm getting sick all the time. It can't just be the pregnancy."

Nodding, Merl put his arm around her shoulders. "I agree, babe. Another thing to ask the midwife."

"Already on my list." Trinity bit the inside of her lip. Her body's strange behavior had been growing increasingly whack over the past week or so, but she'd noticed it was worse when... "I... no, that's crazy."

"What?"

"I don't want you guys to think I'm trying to manipulate you."

Newton sighed. "Just say it."

"Well." Trinity tapped her chin. "It might sound nuts, but it seems like the headaches and stuff, and feeling bad and all, seem to get worse when you guys aren't around." The dull throb of her marks acted to confirm her theory. No Merl or Newt, bad stuff. With Merl and Newt, all better.

Merl wiggled his nose, something he did when in deep thought. He shrugged. "Could be."

"Great," Newton said. "I'm going to bed."

After he left the living room, Trinity turned to Merl. "Is he going to be okay?"

"Sure," Merl replied, but Trinity could tell he didn't believe it.

## Chapter Two

Newton lay in bed for a long time counting the ceiling tiles. He hated himself for what he was doing to Trinity, or rather what he wasn't doing. He longed to share a life with her, even if that included Merlin Davitch. But a part of him had been lost in Jessie's chamber, and he still felt the void, the empty space.

He avoided real intimacy with Trinity, not because he didn't want to be close. God knows his body yearned for her constantly. He did it to avoid hurting her by accidentally allowing her to see just how broken he really was. There was a place inside where terror reigned supreme, along with anger, rage, and hate. He couldn't let Trinity see that place. Ever.

Besides, his cellmate, who he was nearly sure was mostly delusion, still followed him everywhere, constantly speaking. Crazy talk. He peeked at the naked, filthy man huddled against the wall. At least Newton was ninety-nine percent sure he was a hallucination, but sometimes it was hard to tell what was real. "Shut up."

Per the norm, the lunatic ranted more, ranted louder. Newton had stopped paying attention to the actual words nearly a month ago. The deranged phantom was insane, and by association, Newton feared he was losing his own mind.

The light went out under the door to the living room, which meant Trinity and Merl were coming to bed. Closing his eyes, Newton simulated sleep. He couldn't face them. Face her. Every time she looked at him, he feared she'd know the truth.

\* \* \*

Trinity rolled onto her side, watching as Merl softly snored -- so peaceful. She looked over her shoulder at Newton; he twitched, his face grimacing with unknown horrors. Horrors he'd suffered at the hands of Trinity's biological father, Jessie. Not so

peaceful. He'd been freed, and while the physical wounds had healed, the psychological ones still ran deep.

Newton hadn't been able to talk about the trauma of his torture with Trinity or Merl, and when she'd asked Dr. Gray about their sessions together, her uncle (psychiatrist and also *other*) had cited doctor-patient confidentiality.

Sighing, Trinity shifted onto her back and placed her palms on both men, skin to skin. She felt the tingling of the marks on her back. She was part of a Triune, the central part, the necessary part.

She hated it. Hated being *other*. Trinity had been raised to hunt and kill demons - - at least that's what her adoptive parents called them -- never knowing she'd been used as a weapon against her own kind. It didn't matter. She still hated them, with a few exceptions. Her uncle being one, and the triplets who'd risked their own lives to help her gain access to the Caledonian compound to rescue Newton. Her uncle, Myron Gray, wouldn't speak to her about the triplets. He told her it was for their safety, and she could only pray they managed to stay safe.

She wanted to run away, but it wasn't possible. Not anymore. The baby, her baby, couldn't survive if it was too far away from the Caledon. He or she was tied to the Caledonians as the true and royal heir. Her father Jessie had killed her mother, and her other father, because of jealousy and to gain power. He'd tried to have Trinity killed as well. Why? Because she was really queen.

Ugh. She felt a wave of disgust at the thought. She didn't want to be queen of jack shit. All she'd ever wanted to do was work her little clerical job, and kick some evil demon ass occasionally. Was that too much to ask? Of course it was.

Truth be told, all that mattered to her anymore rested beneath her fingertips. She brushed a curled brunette strand of Merlin's hair from his eyes. *My genius*, she smiled. Merlin Davitch had earned his double doctorate at the ripe young age of eighteen. He'd come to her rescue as soon as he'd graduated.

Trinity shuddered as she remembered the four years of hell she'd endured at Haven's Mental Hospital. Merlin had gone away to college at the age of fourteen. He



was two years younger than her. When she was sixteen her parents had been killed in a fire. Merlin's parents had taken her in, but her talk of demons and forces of evil had convinced them she needed *professional* help.

Merl had never forgiven them. Until she'd met Newton Price -- a telepath who she'd gone to for help -- Merl had been Trinity's only family in the world. For that, she would always love him.

She turned to Newt, unsure of why she'd chosen him, or rather the Triune had chosen him. It wasn't just because he was handsome, even though he was, very much so. Tall, muscular, thick black hair, bright amber eyes, and an ass that would make most women fall out of their seats. No, it hadn't been just the looks. A lot of men she'd met had been good-looking. Something else in him had called to her baser self, the part of her that coveted what it craved and wouldn't let anything get in its way.

"Mine." Trinity breathed the words as she nestled her fingertips in the soft black hair on his chest. She felt the rise and fall of his chest, his breath shallow and quick. Newton's heart raced beneath, and Trinity worried for him. As usual, his dreams were dark, his sleep restless. *Please, let me in.*

He could if he chose to. Newton's talent didn't stop at being able to read thoughts. He could join thoughts as well with such clarity that it was hard to determine if what you were seeing was reality or not. But he'd closed her out. Part shame, part fear. There was nothing he could show her that would make her look at him with anything other than love. But he didn't trust her.

Gray had said to give Newton time, he would eventually come around, but time was not on their side. More and more of Jessie's henchmen had been catching up to them. With every move came a new battle. She needed Newton to be whole again. As much as she needed her genius, she needed her warrior as well.

Leaning over, Trinity kissed Newton on the forehead. The warmth of his skin pressed into her lips. Feverish -- he always felt feverish. Trinity had noticed it the first time they'd kissed. She lingered for a moment, comforted by the pressure and heat.

Newton had shied away from real intimacy since his captivity. He'd been content to join in with Merl and Trinity for sex, but he kept his distance when they were alone.

"I miss you," she whispered.

Newton's eyes opened, startling gold, framed by his dark, dark lashes. "Trini?"

She smiled and caressed his cheek. "I'm here."

He stared at her, long and hard, grim, until Trinity felt the smile leave her eyes.

"Why won't you talk to me?"

Newton shook, slight, barely perceptible, like a dog settling his fur. For a moment, sexual energy pulsed between them. Until Newton turned away from Trinity, and got up from the bed. The line of his naked body glowed against the moonlight pouring in from the bedroom window. The effect was ethereal, beautiful... disturbing. Newton was a ghost, and Trinity could feel him slipping further away with each day.

She watched as he turned the light on in the bathroom. Trinity sat on the edge of the bed when the door closed behind him. Merl's soft snoring sounded behind her. A twitch of a smile formed on her lips. She wished she could sleep as soundly.

With a weary sigh, Trinity walked softly across the floor. She rested her hand on the knob. "Newt?"

"Don't come in, Trini."

"I just want to talk."

"Leave me alone." His voice sounded strained. "Please."

Trinity turned the knob. It twisted easily; the door wasn't locked. Quietly, she opened the door a crack, no more, then peeked in.

Newton, staring at his own reflection in the mirror, eyes dead, held a razor in his left hand. His right hand cupped his cock, semi-erect. Shakily, he placed the corner of the razor against the thick scars running across his chest. Scars he'd incurred at the hands of Jessia.

"What are you doing?" she asked casually, carefully, worried she'd spook Newton.

"I told you not to come in."

"What are you doing?" Trinity repeated.

"What I have to."

"And what is that? What do you have to do?"

"You won't understand."

"Try me."

"No. It's too terrible." He dropped the razor in the sink and turned to her. "It's fine. I'm fine now. Go back to bed, Trini."

"I know you're fine," she lied. "But I'd like to stay up with you for a while. If that's okay."

Newton sat down on the edge of the tub, cock still in hand, soft now, no longer even semi-hard. "Okay."

Trinity entered the small room, closing the door behind her. The toilet seat was down, and she moved to sit on it.

"Not there," Newton said.

Trinity sat anyway. "Why not here?"

Newton looked surprised, his gaze going from the toilet to the door. He shook his head. "Never mind."

"Do you want to talk about it?" It was a question she'd asked once a day since his return.

As usual, he said, "No."

"You can't go on like this, Newt. You can't keep shutting everyone out."

Anger edged his voice. "Everyone, or you?"

Trinity was on the verge of anger as well. The energy coming from Newton made her shudder. "Fine. Me. You can't keep shutting *me* out. I need you." She rubbed her abdomen. "We need you. Not just in body, but all of you."

Newton didn't respond. He let go of himself and gripped the edge of the tub with both hands.

Trinity slipped to her knees on the linoleum floor. Newton had built a steel wall around himself designed to keep in the pain. If Trinity had a metaphorical blowtorch,

she'd cut a big hole in it and let the shit run out. Unfortunately, Newton gripped his pain like a child would a comforting toy. A freaking *wubbie*.

She grimaced at the thought. "How long do I have to wait?" She slid her palms against his thighs. "A day? A week? A year? Forever?"

"Wait for what?"

Trinity stared at Newton, forcing him to meet her eyes. "For you to love me? To let me love you in return."

Newton snorted, a derisive laugh. "You're kidding, right?"

She held her breath for a moment, allowing it to sit in the pit of her stomach. Placing her fingers on either side of his face, she breathed, "Let me in. Let me take some of your bad stuff from you."

He tapped his temple. "Believe me, you don't want what's in here."

"Yes, I do."

"For a bright woman, you're goddamn stupid sometimes." He pushed her hands away.

A spark of fury formed like a tiny bomb in Trinity's chest, ticking away. She pressed it down, fighting to keep it from going off. Since she'd been bitten by the *scrofa* demon, she'd acquired the hormone that made the species go into a berserking rage. Under Dr. Gray, who specialized in behavioral psychology, she'd managed to keep this particular side effect, and some of the others she'd acquired, at bay.

Focusing inward, she counted back from ten, carefully working the tension from the top of her head to her fingers and toes. The spark ebbed, but didn't fully go away. "You're the stupid one."

"You're right. I'm goddamn stupid too. Stupid to think this could ever work." He stood up and walked past her, his thigh brushing her shoulder, as he made for the door.

The ball burst. Without word or thought, only deed, Trinity tackled Newton into the wall. The switch in her brain shut off as the fulminating madness took over. She screamed, pounding and punching his body, and when he tried to hold her, she kneed

him in the stomach. Newton sidestepped the oncoming kick and managed to get behind Trinity.

His strong arms wrapped around her waist while she kicked and struck out at the air. He pulled her to the ground, both arms holding hers in place. As she squirmed to get out of his embrace, he looped his legs over Trinity's and locked them in place.

"No," she roared. "No!"

The door opened, Merl, looking startled, gazed down at both of them. "What's going on here?"

Merl's presence alone helped Trinity's mind to clear.

"Get out," Newton said, and Trinity felt his muscles tighten like a coiled rubber band. "This is between Trini and me."

Wheezes escaped Trinity, along with the rage, in heavy exhalations. Merl raised a brow.

"Go, Merl." It pained Trinity to say it. Merlin was her comfort, but if she was ever to get through to Newton, she'd have to do it alone. She closed her eyes as Merl stepped out, mostly to keep herself from begging him to come back. She waited until she heard the click of the closing latch.

She turned in Newton's arms when he loosened his grip. She wanted to touch him, to run her hands over all his tightly bound muscles. He wouldn't want her to, so she resisted the impulse. "You've already left on an emotional level. Would you leave me physically? Would you really leave me alone?"

He wouldn't make eye contact. Instead he stared at a space beyond Trinity's shoulder. "You have Merlin. You won't be alone."

"I need Merl, true. But I need you too. You're just as important to me."

"Am I? I don't think you can honestly say so."

"You think I don't want you, care for you, as much as I do Merl?" Newton hadn't had sex with Trinity without Merl for over a month. She'd attributed his personal distance strictly to the torture. It hadn't dawned on her it could be something else altogether. "Is that why you avoid being alone with me?"

"You didn't answer me."

"Newton." Trinity touched his chin. "Look at me. I want you to believe me when I answer. You can't do that unless you see me. Really see me."

His eyes traveled slowly until his gaze rested on her face. He blinked. It felt to Trinity more like a flinch. "You're not going to believe anything that comes out of my mouth. So take a peek inside my mind. The one place no one can lie to you." Trinity opened her heart and let the emotions overwhelm her thoughts.

The hard lines around Newton's eyes softened. "It's too late for me, Trini." His voice had lost its edge. "I'm damaged."

"I don't care."

"Neither do I." He shrugged. "That's the problem."

He was doing his damndest to push Trinity away. She'd be fucked if she'd let him. She leaned back and grabbed his cock. "Care now?"

"No."

He'd already gone mostly stiff in her fingers. "How about now?"

Newton rolled his eyes. A small half-smile formed on his cupid's bow lips. He shook his head. "Uh-uh."

She stroked his shaft, now rigid to the touch. "I think you kind of do."

He chuckled, albeit reluctantly. "Stop," Newton said.

"You have such a lovely laugh." A glimmer of happiness? Maybe. Truth be told, Trinity was kind of missing the joy that occasionally graced her life before she found out she wasn't human.

The smile on his face faded. "Trinity. It's too hard."

"I know." She gave his cock a squeeze. "I can feel it."

"That's not what I mean, and you know it."

"Newt, I don't know anything. That's the problem. Tell me what you need from me, and I'll do it. If you want me to crawl around on all fours, bark like a dog, lick your toes... anything, just ask."

Newton smirked. "The barking like a dog might be a start."

"Ruff."

"Kidding."

"I know."

Newton's expression grew dark with memory. "It was awful."

"I know. It kills me when I think about all the pain and stuff you went through. How bad my father hurt you."

"You don't understand. Pain I can handle. It wasn't my first time being captured. Or tortured."

This little tidbit of information came as a surprise to Trinity. "You were a mercenary?"

"Yes, black ops for the government as an independent contractor. Believe me, the people we were tracking had no qualms about taking prisoners to the brink of death then bringing them back just to enjoy round after round."

"How long did it take you to recover?"

"Physically, not long. A few broken bones. Sepsis. Counseling for post traumatic stress, but really I just wasn't that fucked up about it."

"Then why this time?"

Newton looked away, covering his right brow with his hand. Shame. "I miss the pain."

"What?" Trinity was stunned. There was fucked up, then there was *fucked up*. Newton fell in the latter category. Trinity placed her cheek on his chest. "Oh, baby. What did that bastard do to you?"

"I... I can't..."

Trinity pulled Newton's face toward her and placed a gentle kiss on his lips. "Show me then."

"You shouldn't see me like..." His expression was so bleak, it broke her heart.

"Show me," Trinity insisted. She wanted to add "Don't make me hurt you," but under the circumstances, maybe it wasn't so funny.

When he turned back his face seemed gaunt, eyes a little sunken, like a man who'd spent too many days in the desert without water. And he showed her. Not everything, but glimpses of what Jessie had ordered his guy Connor, a brute of a man with pale blond hair and even paler blue eyes, to do to Newton. A training of sorts, mixing pleasure with pain, heaping one humiliation on top of another. All this cruelty from the very same man who'd placed the battered Newton at her feet.

Trinity vowed if she ever saw him again, she would make him eat his sword.

Newton's hands went to his ears. He began to rock back and forth. "Shut up, shut up, shut up."

"Newt?"

"Make him stop talking. I can't stand it. I can't take it any more."

"Who?"

Shakily, he pointed a finger at the corner of the room. "Him."

Trinity turned sharply. There was no one there. "I don't see." She curled her arms around Newton and held him closely. "Help me to see him."

A disheveled figure came into view. He was covered in bruises and blood and filth. His naked body curled into the fetal position. His black hair was clumped and greasy. He kept murmuring something over and over. Trinity moved closer and was hit with the smell of feces and urine.

The frenetic murmurs grew louder. "Never getting out. Never. Stop. Stop screaming. Stop crying. Never. Never."

"Hello," Trinity said.

"Stop. Stop. Don't. Never. Scream. Cry. Never getting out."

"Don't get too close to him, Trini. He's insane. He's been gibbering since the cells."

Trinity ignored Newton. She tried again. "Hello."

The man continued his maniacal rambling.

She reached out. The incoherent babble came to a sudden halt. His head jerked up. Alarmed, Trinity scrambled backward and fell on her ass. His eyes were golden



brown -- the color of pale ale. Under the bruises, the blood, the filth, was a man she knew all too well.

Stretching her hand to the tub, Trinity turned on the water. Hot first, until steam rose from the white porcelain, then she added cold, testing it on her forearm. Just the right amount of warmth. She pulled up the shower button and didn't mind the spray spattering her body.

"What are you doing?" Newton asked from behind her.

Trinity kept her focus on the crazy dude in the corner who had continued prattling again. She crouched next to him, one knee to the ground. "Can you stand up?"

He didn't answer. Trinity took his hand. He felt so real and solid to the touch. Even the greasy skin was palpable. She led him, hunched and keening, to the tub and she stepped in.

"Don't," Newton whispered.

Trinity stripped her wet nightshirt over her head and slipped her underwear off to the base of the tub. "It's okay." She kept her voice steady, soothing. She took his hand again and tugged him in to join her.

The disordered figure lifted his leg up and over, then tumbled into the wet cradle of porcelain. Trinity maneuvered to ease him down, careful to protect his head and back. She sat behind him, her legs straddling his back, her hands stroking his hair.

She looked up, her gaze resting on Newton as he stared in horror from across the room. Without looking away, she reached for a bar of soap and began to wash the body, working the soap into a creamy lather. Tenderly, she washed him. His voice softened, his babble a dull whisper as the warm shower water washed the dirt and grime down the drain.

## Chapter Three

Newton didn't want to watch, but he couldn't look away. It was as if an invisible string had been sewed into his forehead and pulled toward Trinity. Why'd he let her into his madness? Why had she embraced it so?

As the filth washed away from his cell mate's body, Newton found himself mesmerized by the way Trinity lovingly cared for the fractured man who was looking less and less animalistic, and more human. He realized in that moment he didn't know the man's name. He knew nothing about him, other than he'd been Newton's constant companion for three long months.

Trinity slipped around the man, straddling his lap as she cleaned his face and hair. Newton tried to close his eyes, but couldn't. He didn't want to see him as a person. It was easier to think of him as the monster beside the bed.

He watched as she put the soap down and washed the last of the suds from him, then she leaned to the left and turned to face Newton. "Look."

Newton did, but he found it hard to reconcile what he saw.

"It's you, sweetheart." Her words were tender, moving. And Newton noticed her eyes glistened with more than just the falling shower droplets. "See?"

His gaze swept the man's face once more. "It's..."

Suddenly Newton found himself in the tub, warm water tumbling over his skin with comforting pelts. Trinity stared down into his eyes. The missing piece, it no longer felt missing. The void inside no longer empty. "...me."

"Yes," Trinity said. Her violet eyes, electric, fantastic, held his face in view. "You."

Newton smiled.

"Oh my God, Newt."

"What?" he asked.

"Your smile." She kissed him. "It went to your eyes. It actually went to your eyes. Your lovely, amber eyes."

*I love you so much*, he projected into her mind.

"Oh, hot damn, you're back." *I love you too*.

Newton heard her thought loud and clear. He'd built so many walls around his telepathy, he'd forgotten how good it felt to be inside her mind. He turned off the water and wrapped his arms around her back. Lacing his fingers in her drenched red hair, Newton plunged his tongue between Trinity's lips, his cock painfully swollen and mashed against her stomach.

*Fuck, yes!* Trinity's mind rang out as Newton pulled her close enough that they could share the same skin. Her hand slipped between them, and Newton felt her fingertips brush across the tip of his cock smearing the slick of pre-come. She brought it to her mouth, and he leaned back from the kiss to watch as she slipped her finger between her lips.

"Mmm," she hummed. "So good."

Her lips mashed against his once more with fired passion. The combination of saliva and his own secretions heated Newton's appetite to boiling. He hadn't come earlier when they'd been on the couch, and now he felt like he'd explode any second. "God, I want to fuck you. I want you so bad I ache."

Nips and bites flitted along his throat, chest, abdomen, as Trinity worked her lower body over Newton's erection. He froze, afraid to move, afraid not to move. Air whooshed from him when his cock entered her hot swollen pussy. A throaty hum of delight escaped from Trinity as she rocked her body over his rigid shaft, milking the length with her tight, slick sex. Newton growled with a passion he hadn't allowed himself to feel for a very long time.

Trinity's mouth met Newton's fiercely, a fresh, hungry desire filling her. She wanted to weep her joy at being in Newt's open arms. He'd allowed her in, trusted her, and now he was back. Her warrior was back!

Every stroke of his cock inside her caused a rush of blood to her pussy. The strain on her engorged clit felt wonderful and painful at the same time. She bit her lip as his amber gaze bore straight through her. Keeping hers fixed on him was a much tougher task with every plunge of his rock-hard length, and he was relentless.

"Yes, yes," she mumbled, because it was all that she could manage, other than grunts and moans of pleasure. "Shit." Her eyes started to droop and a sharp tug of her hair snapped her to attention. "Shit, this feels so good."

"Say my name," he rasped, his thrusts solid and deep. "Say my name and make it real."

"Yes, yes, oh, hell, yes!" she screamed out as her back bowed. "Newton!" A wave of spasms wracked her and a frenzied euphoria danced through her body. Grinding herself onto him, she milked his cock for every ounce of pleasure, riding the ecstasy as Newton's orgasm tore through him and a roar ripped from his throat. He held her tightly, almost vise-like until the last of his climax ebbed, and he softened inside her.

They held each other for a long moment, neither of them saying a word, just pure, unadulterated, and silent happiness. The door opened.

Trinity and Newton looked up, Trinity feeling just a smidgen of guilt.

Merl brushed his fingers through his curly locks and pursed his lips. "Glad to see nobody's dead." He closed the door behind him.

Newton and Trinity turned back to each other. Newton was the first to sputter, then laugh. Trinity followed soon after. It was like air had been vented into a vacuum and once more she could breathe easily and carefree. She felt so fucking good and she wanted the feeling to last forever.

You don't always get what you want.

## Chapter Four

“Interesting.” Leanolla Downing, midwife extraordinaire, well versed in *other* reproduction, tapped her lower lip with the bell end of her stethoscope. She had a round face with gray hair and gray eyes, which all went with her gray skin and rotund figure. Needless to say, Trinity trusted her about as far as she could toss her, which judging from Leanolla’s stature, might be a whole two inches.

Newton and Merl stood beside her, looking at the ultrasound picture as if it were some ancient text no one could decipher. “Interesting?” Trinity rubbed her slightly bulging tummy. The cold gel for the ultrasound was still tacky to the touch. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

The midwife blinked rapidly and worried her lower lip. “Not sure.”

“Is there something wrong with the baby?”

Trinity’s lovers said nothing. More blinking from the midwife.

“Is there some kind of weird abnormality?” Trinity groaned and closed her eyes. “Please don’t tell me it has two heads.”

“Sort of.”

“Holy shit! I have a two-headed baby?”

“Not exactly.” The midwife pulled the ultrasound monitor into Trinity’s line of sight. “You have a triple uterus.”

“A what?”

“Triple uterus. It’s like you have three uteruses in one. Sort of looks like a *fleur de lis*. But that’s not the unusual part...”

Irritated, Trinity yanked her gown down and sat up. “Of course, having three wombs isn’t unusual enough. There has to be more.”

“I don’t know how to tell you this, but you have two fetuses.”

"Twins?" The room started spinning. "I feel sick."

"Not twins. I'd say the fetus in the middle is about six months, while the one on the right is approximately twelve weeks."

Covering her eyes, Trinity lay back on the exam table. "This is not happening."

"I recommend we terminate the younger fetus."

"First, could you stop calling it a fetus." Trinity sat up again. Her balled fists clenched and unclenched. She narrowed her eyes at Leanolla. "It sounds like you're talking about a pickled pig ready for dissection. Second, get the fuck out of here before I figure out the most efficient way to kill your stupid ass."

The midwife took several steps back, but didn't leave the room. "But your majesty, terminating the second fet... baby may be the only way to make certain the baby conceived of the Triune will survive."

Up until this point, Merl and Newton had been smart enough to keep their mouths shut, but now they were gaping. "Two kids?" Newton asked.

Merl leaned forward, examining the ultrasound picture again. "If the second isn't part of the Triune does that mean it has only one father?"

Newton and Trinity both turned to stare at him.

"Either way, I think we should consider Leanolla's recommendation."

"Oh, shut up, Merl!" There was no way she'd do that. It might have been irrational, but Trinity loved Merl and Newton, and she couldn't imagine any circumstance where she'd willingly kill a little person they'd created together.

Waving his hand, Newton said, "It doesn't matter. I don't care if you're the father, or I am, I'm with Trini."

A bad rendition of "Papa Don't Preach" ran through Trinity's head as she channeled all her anger and determination into four little words. "I'm keeping my babies." Then added, to make her point, "Both of them."

The colorless midwife shuffled her feet. "As you wish, but I'm afraid your little problem is going to get worse."

Trinity put her hands on her hips. "And just what problem would that be?"

Leanolla tapped her notes. Irritatingly, it reminded Trinity of Dr. Gray. "The sex problem."

"You've got to be kidd... oh." The sex problem. She'd almost forgotten in all the excitement. "Is there a problem?"

"Oh, yes, very much so. I've encountered similar problems with hybrid pregnancies. Not this kind of situation specifically, but, well, I'm afraid the second child has put your system out of balance. The blood tests confirm that the multiple glands in your body secreting the sex hormones are hyperactive, and as you well know, the only way to expel the hormone is through, well, satisfying sexual intercourse."

"Oish. Okay, so fine. I get that I'd want sex all the time." That had been happening before everything went out of whack. "But I don't understand why I'm getting so sick, especially when Newton and Merl are away from me."

"This is only speculation, but I've consulted with Dr. Gray, and he concurs with my theory. Think of this imbalance as a pressure cooker. As the hormone is excreted in your system, it builds up and spills over into the rest of your body like steam in a sealed pot. Now, if that steam has nowhere to go, then the pot explodes."

"Are you calling Newt and Merl release valves?"

The midwife blinked a whole bunch more. "I wouldn't call them that, but apparently your child seems to think they are. It appears that the Triune, in an effort to protect herself from the hormone's toxicity, is doing her level best to keep her fathers nearby as protection."

Newton patted Trinity's stomach. "Smart girl."

Trinity swatted him away. "Stop that."

He smiled. "Well, she is."

Merl's expression was more thoughtful, but he nodded his head in agreement.

Leanolla sighed, heavily. "There's another problem."

"Of course there is." Trinity had just about had enough. "A father trying to kill me, three uteruses, two babies, overactive and apparently toxic sex hormones... why would one more problem come as a surprise?"

"It's another reason for termination of the second... child. While sex will relieve the toxicity, the amount of intercourse you require to do so will put a strain on the second pregnancy, which could cause a miscarriage, and in turn cause the Triune to go into distress, and you could lose both. That's what I was trying to tell you before."

"Sort of sounds lose-lose." Trinity rubbed her eyes, tired, weary, sad. Could she really terminate a pregnancy? On the other hand, how could she not? "I need a minute alone."

Leanolla placed a tentative pat on Trinity's shoulder. "Yes, of course. I'll be out in the hall."

Merlin wrapped his arms around Trinity first, then Newton. "Whatever you decide..."

The air became thick and Trinity felt claustrophobic. "Can you guys wait out in the hall too? I just need a minute to gather myself. Then we'll talk. Okay?"

They each kissed her, murmured comforting words, but in the end, Trinity sat on the exam table in an unflattering hospital gown feeling utterly alone. Her breath quickened, and it felt harder to get air in. Stupid anxiety attack. She'd had them before.

She crossed the floor to one of the three windows, covered by blue curtains, and opened it. As she gulped in the fresh air, trying to catch her breath, she didn't notice the shadow slipping into the room.

"Hello, daughter."

Trinity's eyes widened as she pivoted around. Standing less than six inches from her was Jessie. He was wearing a sweater vest over a man's blue dress shirt, buttoned tight from the collar to the cuffs, looking all Mr. Rogers meets *Nightmare on Elm Street*. The short, neatly cut gray hair and fashionable wire-framed glasses finished out the effect.

Before Trinity could scream, his hand went over her mouth. She smelled pungent aroma of a sweet liquor. Her legs felt suddenly wobbly and her mind fogged. A couple seconds more and she passed out cold.



## Chapter Five

"The compound is impenetrable, even if we knew for sure Jessica had her, which we don't. He's taken precautions to make sure no one can sneak back in." Dr. Myron Gray, a small man, balding, with thick pop bottle glasses, paced the room of his office.

Newton picked up a book off Gray's desk and chucked it against the wall. "He fucking has her and you know it."

Gray raised a bushy brow. "Likely. But until we know for certain, there's no sense in rushing in blindly and getting ourselves killed in the process."

Merl shook his head. No amount of education had prepared him for something like this. "I have my doubts. I have to agree with Myron. We need more information."

Newton punched the top of the desk, his body vibrating with sheer rage. "I'm getting sick and tired of you disagreeing with everything I say, Davitch. That bastard has her, and there's no telling what he's already done to her by now. I can't allow it. I won't..."

The silence after Newton's outburst sat in Merl's stomach like three-day-old tuna. He knew Newton was thinking of his own circumstances with Jessica, but the same scenario didn't make sense for Trinity. "I'm not trying to be contrary."

"Right."

"Seriously. Just think about it. For seven months, the man has been trying to kill Trinity."

"Yeah, and?"

"And... he captured you to try and get information on her whereabouts so that he could find her and kill her."

"Been there, done that, don't want the T-shirt."

"You don't get it. His objective has always been to kill Trinity, as in deceased, dead, no longer amongst the living."

Newton's head snapped up. "Oh."

"Yes. He wouldn't kidnap her, and if he did, it would only be long enough to carry out her execution. He's weak in the eyes of Caledon, not the rightful ruler, as long as she lives."

"She's alive." His hand went absently to his shoulder.

"Exactly." Merl threw up his arms. Finally, Price was getting it. "She's alive. We both know it. So..."

"Need more information."

"Yes."

Newton half-mused, "You know, you're pretty fucking smart sometimes."

"I have my moments." If he'd been really smart he would've never left Trini alone in the room. That would've been genius. Instead, Merl felt like a schmuck. He turned to Myron Gray. "Whatever happens, it needs to happen fast. Before Trini becomes toxic to herself." He didn't add *and the pregnancy* because if they couldn't save Trinity, then nothing else mattered.

\* \* \*

Trinity's mind drifted, heavy with fog and disorientation. The last thing she remembered was the triumphant look on Jessie's face, right before... She bolted upright, ready for him this time.

*Ow.* Her head throbbed with the sudden movement and the brightness of the room. As her eyes adjusted, she took in her surroundings. The king-size bed she rested on was soft and plush, covered in rose pink silk sheets and down pillows. The floors were white marble with blush pink veins. The high white walls were accented by billowy curtains of a darker rose color, making the tile colors pop.

Confused, she propped herself up on one elbow. Not what she expected. Instead of shackles, her arms were adorned with gold forearm cuffs, her legs with three-inch

wide anklets, and she felt a metal collar on her neck. The hospital gown was gone and replaced with a diaphanous floor length lingerie number.

"Oh man." A sinking feeling formed in her gut. "I'm dead." She scrambled from the bed and padded across the cold floor to the nearest window. There were white bars no more than two inches apart behind the pane of glass. Every window was the same. She tried the door.

Locked.

If this beautiful prison turned out to be the afterlife, Trinity felt like she'd been ripped off somehow.

Voices carried from beyond the door. Trinity scooted her body tight against the wall, positioning herself so that if the door opened, she'd have the element of surprise. The jiggle of a key in the lock brought her to full alert. She shimmied from the gown as her skin rippled and changed to adapt to the white wall and marble floors, everything except those flipping gold bands. Trinity tried to slide them off. They wouldn't budge. She looked for a latch, anything that would pop them open. They appeared to be solid. "Crap."

Trinity scouted the room looking for something, anything to use as a weapon. Other than the bed, the room was bare. She didn't think a pillow fight would be the best means of defense.

She ran to the nearest window and yanked down the high curtain. An aluminum dowel fell with it. "Fan-fucking-tastic." It was flimsy and blunted on both ends.

Keeping it anyway -- if nothing else it might startle whoever came in -- she ran back toward the door, sliding the last couple of feet as it opened.

The pale blond barbarian of a man, Connor, the one who'd tortured Newton, stepped inside. He wore black pants with black leather boots and a white shirt, which fit him snugly across his broad chest. A jagged scar ran down the left side of his face, red and puckered, fresh. His left eyelid had been sewn shut, while his other eye, ice blue, stared down at Trinity with cold contemplation. The effect was instantly terrifying.

So much for the element of surprise. She screamed, bringing the curtain rod around in an arcing swing. Unsurprisingly it snapped in half as it hit the hulking man's shoulder. Without flinching, Connor kicked the door closed behind him.

Trinity followed with a palm heel strike, thrusting her arm straight up with her hand flat and her wrist locked. She missed connecting with his nose as he easily moved his head to one side.

He grabbed her arm mid-air and she turned into him, sending her leg out in a sweeping back kick. As if made of rubber, Connor jumped and flew in a high arc over Trinity, landing in front of her, still holding her wrist.

She punched out, twisting her arm, trying to land a blow to his neck. Unfortunately, with the gold cuffs highlighting her camouflaged limbs, Trinity lacked her usual element of surprise.

Connor grabbed her other wrist. Trinity roared as he brought both her arms down to her side, twisted her around, then pushed her to the ground. He held her arms behind her back in an awkward and painful position, while his knee rested in the middle of her spine. "I don't want to hurt you," he said. His voice had the same unnatural, metallic quality she'd noted when he'd presented her with Newton. "I just came to see if you wanted breakfast."

Other than the fact that he was freakishly strong, and fast, and a psycho, Connor sounded almost reasonable. But sociopaths usually did, until they had you helpless and strapped down on their table slicing and dicing you. "What do you want from me? Why am I here?"

He leaned forward and she could feel his cool breath against her neck. "I'm to see to your comfort. It's your father's order that you be afforded every luxury."

"Fine. Let me leave. Then I'll be comfortable."

"Alas, your highness, that's the one request I cannot grant you."

Trinity seethed with frustration. "When this is over, I'm going to kill you."

"If you survive, I'll gladly let you." He let Trinity up. "So, did you want breakfast?"

She rubbed her wrists and glared at him. "No."

"Suit yourself." He glanced at the door. "Guards are posted every two feet in the hallway outside the three-inch-thick security doors. The windows are barred with reinforced steel. I tell you this not to frighten you, but only as a warning. Escape is impossible. Even if you manage to overpower one guard, there will be at least twenty more to stop you from stepping foot out of this room."

"What does Jessica want from me? Why didn't he just kill me?"

An inky shadow Trinity hadn't noticed before shimmered into solid form in front of the door. "Plans change, my daughter."

Trinity glared at Connor, as if he'd somehow betrayed her. He shrugged, his one good eye narrowing. The headache she'd felt when she first awoke thrummed and throbbed with dull tension. "Oh, for the love of Pete."

"I was wrong. I should have raised you myself. Brought you up as a proper heir to Caledon."

"So what? You're planning on handing me the keys to the kingdom now? Just like that?"

He stretched his arms, long and languid. A breeze from his direction blew across Trinity's hot skin. "Not exactly. I think it's too late for us to have a real... connection. But your child, my granddaughter, well, we can have something magnificent. And if I am guardian to the Triune, the people will have no choice but to... fall in line."

After an initial "oh crap" moment, the complete weight of her circumstances came crashing down around her shoulders. "No."

"I'm thinking of the name Serene. What do you think?"

"I think you're nuts." Trinity involuntarily hugged her stomach.

"I'll teach her respect." He transformed to shadow once again. "She shall rule by my side, and Caledon will be united once again."

Trinity sat in stunned silence for a moment. Then she turned to Connor. "He's insane. You know that, right?"

The blond man shrugged. "If you change your mind about breakfast, just let the guard outside your door know." He pointed to a smaller door on the other side of the room. "There's the bathroom. Towels and soap are in the small wall closet, and toilet paper is under the sink."

After he left, Trinity shrieked at the top of her lungs. She'd been relegated to nothing more than an incubator. Another means for Jessie to assert and keep control. Which meant one thing -- the rebel forces of Caledon were building in force. Enough that Jessie was willing to keep Trinity alive, at least until after she gave birth. "Don't worry." She rubbed her belly. "Your fathers will find us." She thought about the new infants developing inside. "All of us."

She could only hope it wouldn't be too late. The hormone inside her was already developing to toxic levels. The headache was a sure indication. She had maybe three days she guessed until the fever and madness would completely take her. If that was the case, so be it. Better to die than allow her child to be raised by an insane murderer. Maybe better all around.

The point of the "V" at the small of her back throbbed. "Newton, Merlin... don't come for me." She feared they were no match for Jessie and his warrior guards. Trinity would be okay with whatever happened as long as they lived. She poured every intense emotion, love, fear, and grief, into two single words. "Don't come."

## Chapter Six

"Did you hear that?" Newton rose from the chair in Gray's office, fully alert. "Did you?" He addressed Merlin who'd been on the phone for the last five minutes.

Merl turned his back, finishing his call.

"Merl!" Newton grabbed the phone and slammed it down. "Did you hear her?"

Taking his glasses off, Merl rubbed the bridge of his nose. "What are you talking about?"

"Trini." Newt questioned whether he might be losing his mind again. The words had sounded distant, barely audible, but he'd heard her say their names. He was certain. "I swear I heard her." He tuned his mind, stretching out with his telepathy, opening all his senses in a widespread net. The thoughts just inside the building alone were overwhelming, but Trinity was out there, he could feel her.

"You sure?"

Newton shook his head. "I think so. Far. Distant. But she was there. Just out of reach."

Merl called Dr. Gray back in the room while Newton continued a mental search for Trinity. He was taking a beating psychically as every petty emotion and thought crossed his purview. When he felt his telepathy reaching its boundaries, he found the strength to stretch even further. Still no Trinity.

The mark on Newton's right shoulder began to burn as if a branding iron had pressed white hot to his skin. The searing pain brought him to his knees.

Merl cried out, holding his left shoulder with his right hand. "What's happening?"

Gray's voice penetrated the chaos in Newton's mind. "You must join with him in Mark and mind. It's the Triune. It calls to you both."

Newton couldn't move, not under the weight of visions and thoughts, but he refused to close his telepathy. He wouldn't shut it down, not as long as she was out there.

He felt Merlin's hand slip into his palm from behind him. The weight of Merlin's back pressed against his own, and in that singular moment, when the marks joined, time stopped, the voices stopped, and the world stood still.

Suddenly Newton could breathe, think. His mind sharpened with clarity. "Help me, Merl." He leaned his head back until it rested against Merlin's.

They joined minds. Newton found it oddly comforting having his bedmate near him as they searched out the furthest reaches to find their common destination. He'd always viewed Merlin as an obstacle, something to overcome in his relationship with Trinity, but in this they were well suited. Allies.

In one voice, they called out to Trinity, seeking the connection.

"No," they both heard her voice, clear as a bell.

\* \* \*

Trinity heard them calling, Newton and Merl both. She had to stop them from seeking her out. It was hard not to reach out to them, the way they were reaching for her. How could she explain? Jessie had already won. It didn't matter anymore; they couldn't reach her in time, and even if they did, they would likely not survive. "No," she said, pushing her will and thought in their direction.

Her mark along with her body burned for them, needed them. Where were they?

*We're here. Tell us where you are.* Newton's voice penetrated the melancholy.

"It's too late."

*As long as you're alive, it's not.* Merlin spoke this time.

"Merl..." How many times had he come to her rescue? He'd been the one person in her life she could count on. Always. She laughed, a short barking sound. "Quite a mess I've made, huh?"

*Not you. Where are you?* Merlin's voice licked her mind like silk across bare skin.

"You can't come swooping in to my rescue this time. He'll kill you."



*Who?*

"Jessia..." She felt the alarm in them and realized they hadn't known. "Please. I love you. Don't come for me." It was the last thing she said before she reluctantly broke off the connection.

A weariness settled in. Her head was beginning to pound as her internal temperature rose. She was already starting to feel the chill of fever. Maybe three days had been a generous estimate. Maybe the end would come sooner than she thought. She prayed it would.

\* \* \*

"He has her," Newton said. He kept his grip on Merlin's hands. "What can we do?" he asked Gray.

"I'll make some calls. You two stay with her."

"She's gone." Merlin sounded stricken.

"She's not. Not yet." Newton turned to Dr. Gray. "Bullets help?"

"They couldn't hurt."

"I know some people." He let go of Merl's hands and reached into his jacket for his wallet. He dug around until he found the small worn piece of paper he'd kept there for years. On it was ten digits. "Call this number. Code name: Hindsight. Pass phrase: I can see clearly now the rain is gone."

Gray took the paper. "CIA?"

"Something like that. The man on the other end of the line, he owes me. Tell him I need an extraction team." There wouldn't be any sneaking into the Caledonian compound this time. Newton planned on going in hot enough to make Jessia believe World War III had begun. "Let me know when you're ready."

He took Merl's hands again. "Let's find our girl." More determined than ever, he stretched out his mind once again.

\* \* \*

The first night had ebbed into another day, then the day back to night. Trinity stretched out on the silk sheets, then twisted. She'd refused food and drink, hoping to

hasten death. She turned, then drew up into a ball. She couldn't find a comfortable position, one not bringing any more relief than another. Why had she let them go? No, she told herself, she'd done the right thing. To distract herself, she watched the gold cuffs on her arms and legs move like ghosts around her as her skin took on the dusty rose color of the bedding. Her hand touched a wet spot. Damn, she was already slick with need and lust.

She needed Merl and Newt. Needed them right then and there. Where were they? Wait. Wait. She'd sent them away. "I'm sorry." Fevered thoughts picked at her brain.

The impulse to claw her way through the darkness and call out to her lovers pulsed within Trinity, palpable and urgent. Her need to protect them was overwhelmed by the Triune's need to connect. She'd heard people say stuff like "I'm dying to get laid," but in Trinity's case it wasn't figurative.

Ecstasy burned brightly in her body, causing her skin to tingle and buzz. Like a boat adrift in open water, Trinity closed her eyes, opened her mind, and reached out for her anchors. A wash of relief flooded her system when their auras mingled with hers.

It wasn't enough, not physically. She drew them closer. "I need to see you. To touch you and be touched." With a swift intake of breath, she reached out her hands and gripped them tightly, amazed she could actually feel the weight of them beneath her fingertips.

She knew Newton's remarkable ability could allow her to see and feel them as if they were real. Trinity willed it so. Gradually a figure began to materialize before her, and she held her breath with anticipation. Would it be Merlin or Newton? Black hair, definitely Newt. But no... green eyes. Merl?

Trinity's eyes widened as the rest of the figure formed, so solid and real in front of her. Confused and dumbstruck, she inched back across the bed. "Who are you?"

"It's me," he said. "Newton." The voice sounded like Newton.

"I'm here, too, Trini."

"Merl?" Confused and confounded, Trinity studied the man. He had Newton's coarse black hair, straight nose, and bow lips, but he was tall like Merl, with Merl's green eyes and narrow face. "Newt?" He wore a bomber jacket and a pair of black jeans. Classic Newton. But he had on a T-shirt with the slogan "Talk Nerdy to Me," definitely one of Merl's.

"Yes," the man said, and she heard both their voices in unison.

That did it -- she'd finally lost her marbles. She hadn't reconnected, merely allowed the fever to take her to a very strange -- and, she decided as she looked at the handsome man before her, the best of both her lovers -- wonderful place.

She was dying. Why shouldn't she embrace these last moments? "Take off your clothes. Come lay by me. I want to feel your skin against mine."

"Trini, listen, we need to know where you're located in the house. You need to concentrate."

This was her fantasy, and the hunka-hunka combo-man was trying to ruin it. She ran her fingers over her breasts and licked her lips. "I need you to shut the fuck up and take off your clothes."

"Go to the window. Tell us what you see."

She pinched her nipples between her fingers, teasing them until they tightened. "Come fuck me. I want to feel your cock in my pussy." Trinity dipped her fingers between the folds of her slick and swollen sex, then licked her juices from the tips. "Don't you want to taste me? Do you think I'm good enough to eat?"

The extra hormones emboldened Trinity, though she was getting a little pissed that she had to work so hard to seduce a figment of her imagination. It seemed like it should be easier somehow.

His hands trembled. "You need to focus."

The bulge in his jeans let Trinity know just how focused she was. Fine, she thought, if he wouldn't come to her, she'd go to him. She slid off the bed, crawling on all fours, cat-like in her movements. When she reached his side, she sighed, rubbing her

face against his calves then up his thighs. Her pussy twitched as she felt a quiver of lust roll through his body and down his legs.

With quick fingers, she had his jeans unbuttoned and pulled them down around his thighs. The head of his cock brushed against her hair.

Holy shit, it was definitely a combo of both men, long and straight like Merlin's, but with the juicy thickness of Newton. She ached to have him place his hands on her breasts, plunge fingers into her dripping cunt, then fuck her until the scorching rapture took all the bad shit away.

His skin smelled softly of green tea and cucumber. Crisp and clean. She breathed him in deeply, her body tingling with excitement. She placed her nose and mouth where his testicles met his thigh.

"Oh, how I'm going to fuck you so good. Let me count the ways." She breathed the insistent words over his skin and could feel his sac tighten in response. She wanted to roll his balls in her mouth and swallow his swollen cock until it pressed into the soft part of her throat.

He wended his fingers into her hair and yanked her head back to look at him. "Stop. You have to clear your mind. Pay attention."

The small stab of pain when he'd pulled her hair added to her desire. In response, she sucked his ball into her mouth, rolling it around on her tongue. The wrinkled skin felt silky as it drew tight against the inside of her lips. She licked up the large vein under his heavy shaft then rimmed the underside of his engorged head. Her lips parted over the glans and her tongue flickered out to taste the pre-come pearled on top.

The sharp exhalation from him was all the encouragement she needed. Trinity slid his thick cock into her giving mouth. A moan spilled from his lips. "Trini." His voice sounded gravelly, raw.

She sucked and licked the rigid shaft, the weight of it in her mouth making her feel less crazy, more solid. Trinity needed more. She grabbed his muscular ass and

swallowed his cock deep until she thought she would gag. Her throat opened for him, past the reflex, until the head of his cock touched the back.

"Ah!" he cried out, grabbing her hair once more and holding her steady as he pushed his hips back, then thrust forward, forcing his cock back in.

Trinity splayed her fingers across his ass. She spread his buttocks to play with his anus. She didn't mind ass play; on the contrary, she enjoyed it. And since this was her fantasy, she was going to play.

His legs shook as she slid her index finger, lightly wet with spittle, past the first tight circular ring. He clenched around her, but kept moving in and out of her throat, each backward movement pressing her finger deeper into his ass. She felt his prostate, spongy and round, giving to the touch.

His hips lunged forward. "Fuck!" he cried out, distinctly Merlin's voice alone.

The man yanked Trinity off the floor and tossed her on the bed. She landed on the plush mattress, face down. She turned her neck to view him over her shoulder. His jacket fell from his shoulders. The T-shirt hit the floor, along with the jeans. The possession in the startling green eyes surprised her more than anything as he stalked to the edge of the bed. His strong hands wrapped around her thighs, pulling her until her feet touched the floor.

"I'm going to fuck you so good, so good." And with that promise, he thrust his cock in one smooth motion deep inside her waiting pussy. She cried out as he took his pleasure without mercy, his large, rigid shaft sliding in and out, big enough she felt a small pain with every forward thrust. Just the right amount of pain.

She felt the pressure building in her clit, her channel swelling against his cock as he thrust in and out of her with a steady pace. Trinity screamed as a hard orgasm rocketed through her, causing her entire body to drop forward in quaking ecstasy.

The thrusting continued, even as her orgasm subsided.

"It's so good," she murmured, pressing her face into the sheets while arching her back to meet his strokes. Her fingers dug into the mattress as she rocked her hips. "Faster," she panted. "Deeper."

His length hitting every pleasure center, wild desire filled Trinity with each penetrating assault. She felt his fingers move to her ass, wet with spit as he pushed one finger in.

"Yes," she begged, wanting more.

Another digit slipped inside her, rimming the muscle until it gave, allowing both fingers to easily slide inside. Her body felt heady and high on sex. She clenched her pussy around his thick shaft and rolled forward, milking his cock. The sensation of his fingers in her ass made her hips buck with an uncontrollable jerk.

A keening wail filled the room. It had come from her own lips. A sudden rush of power flowed within Trinity as she melded with Newton, with Merl, their joined body. A bellowing roar resounded from her man as his hips pounded against hers in climax. The sound triggered Trinity's orgasm, hard, wicked hard, and fast, and her brain burned bright with pleasure so intense it made her lightheaded.

Trinity rolled beneath him, taking in his dark, twisted beauty. He withdrew his softening cock from her pussy and sat beside her on the bed. It was then she noticed the marks. Both Newton's and Merl's, one on each shoulder.

She traced them with her fingers as she straddled his body from behind. Her mind sharp, she felt in control. More so than she ever had. Trinity felt invincible. She laid her head against his back. "Thank you."

Her hands began to sink into his skin, or rather he began to sink into her. The mark on her lower back flared to life, then she felt a throbbing sensation on her left shoulder, then on the right as the man completely absorbed into her body.

*Ready or not, darling. We're here and we're coming to get you.*

Trinity lay back onto the bed, then rolled onto her side. Connor stood just inside the bedroom door staring at her with his one good eye.

"Son of a bitch!" Trinity yanked the sheet up her body.

"Forgive me, your highness. I've never seen anything like what you just did. And trust me, that's saying a lot."

"And what exactly do you think you just saw?" She stood from the bed, still holding the sheet to her body. The feeling of invincibility still coursed through her veins. Without a doubt, she knew, she could take Connor in a fight without breaking a nail.

"I saw my liege, true and sure, born in a power dance before my eyes. You have become Triune, not just a symbol, but true strength and potency. You are undeniably the Queen of Caledon. Jessie will not allow you to live now. Not even to strengthen his power base by raising your child as his own."

As if summoned, Jessie materialized in the room. "Connor is correct. I can't permit you to be seen by my people. Not now."

Trinity smiled, calm and unafraid. "You should have killed me when you had the chance."

Jessie pulled out a small pad and pushed a button. The wrist and ankle cuffs yanked together magnetically, pulling Trinity to the floor like a calf, roped and tied. "I don't think the chance has passed. Do you?"

Connor stood to the side, arms crossed against his chest. His expression was one of distaste along with stoic resolve. A crashing boom of thunder shook the room, dashing the smile from Jessie's face.

Trinity heard semi-automatic gunfire, along with two more explosions. She struggled to pull the cuffs apart. They wouldn't budge.

"Kill her," Jessie ordered Connor.

The pale blond man didn't move.

Jessie ordered him again. "Kill her, Connor. Or do you want me to take your other eye as well?"

"He did that to you?" Trinity asked. "Why?"

"For not killing your man," Connor said, matter of fact.

"But... I don't understand."

"Connor..." Jessie said through clenched teeth. "Don't defy me again."

The blond man turned to Jessica. "I'm sorry, Father. I can no longer do your bidding." He dropped to his knees in front of Trinity. "I serve at the pleasure of my liege."

Jessia screamed, his shadow-self leeching lightning quick across the floor. Before Trinity could breathe out her disbelief, Jessia had shoved a dagger into Connor's chest. The large man crumpled to the floor.

"No!" Trinity rolled onto her side. She had a brother? No, she'd had a brother.

Jessia drew the dagger from Connor's chest. Blood spilled easily from the wound onto the white marble floor. "Your turn, daughter."

Screams and shouts out in the hallway spilled into the room. Trinity forced herself to ignore the battle. A war, much greater, waged inside the room. She felt the full weight of the triangular mark on her back flaring with life, filling her with the will to overcome and triumph.

Her wrist and ankle cuffs slipped through her skin as she took a note from Jessia and shadowed her limbs. He hesitated, surprised when they clinked against the stone tiles.

"You are so fucking through."

"Ah, but you forget, daughter, you can't kill what you can't catch." His body turned to shade. "I'll live to fight another day."

"The hell you say." Trinity reached out with a speed she'd never achieved before, punching through the darkness.

Jessia laughed, until his body rematerialized around her hand. She grasped his heart, still beating within his chest, and squeezed.

Mouth open, gaping, unable to breathe, Jessia dropped to his knees. Trinity kept her hold, tight and certain. "Who's laughing now, Daddy?"

She clenched his heart tight in her fist until her fingers burst through the wall of muscle protecting the valves. One beat, then no more. Jessia fell next to Connor. Father and son.



Trinity ripped her hand from his chest, blood splattering across the floor as she shook her hand.

The fighting out in the hallway stopped. With the exception of a few shouts, the silence as she stared at the two dead bodies unnerved her.

Newton ran in the room, wearing his bomber jacket and jeans, holding a sword wet with scarlet blood high in his hand. Merl raced in after. He looked disheveled, his "Talk Nerdy to Me" T-shirt ripped across the shoulder, but very much alive and ready to fight.

They both came to a screeching halt as they took in the scene. "We came to rescue you," Merl said, sounding only slightly disappointed, but mostly in awe.

"Yeah," Newton agreed, less than eloquent.

Trinity gazed at them, her mind melding them into one dashing man. She laughed, more from relief than joy, but joy was in there. "You did rescue me. You really did."

Merl and Newton crossed the floor, embracing Trinity in their arms. She felt warm and safe. It felt symbolic, but Trinity knew they did it more because they needed to be near her than anything else.

Trinity had managed to get the sheet wrapped around her before Myron Gray came in, followed by the triplets Eustan, Dustan, and Max. Along with dozens of more people she'd never seen. All dropping to their knees, prostrating themselves before her. "Stop that," Trinity said, feeling uncomfortable and certainly unworthy. The conga line of subjects came to a screeching halt.

Gray approached her with the identical triplets. "Very well done, niece. Your mother would be proud."

"Thank you, Uncle." She kissed his cheek. She looked around at the bloody mess, feeling a little nauseous. "I need to get out of here. I'm trying real hard not to ralph, but it's getting tougher."

"Getting squeamish?"

“Hardly.” She didn’t care one bit about Jessie’s dead carcass on the ground. Trinity had killed many, many bad *others* in the past. No regret. Not even for Connor, whom she felt sorry for. But he’d made his choice, and had carried out some really awful things on Jessie’s orders. What he’d done to Newton, well, she might never forgive him for that, but it didn’t matter now. They were both beyond anyone’s forgiveness.

Dustan or Eustan, Trinity wasn’t sure which, other than it wasn’t Max, considering he didn’t have a tongue, said, “We’ll take care of the clean-up, cousin. You go get some air.”

“Cousin?” Trinity looked at Gray for an explanation.

He scrunched his brows. “Oh, yes. Didn’t I mention I had some sons?”

“No. No, you did not.”

“That’s right.” Gray smiled. It made his face look a little off balance. “I didn’t, did I?”

The other speaking brother crossed his arms and thrummed his fingers across his elbows in quiet contemplation. “Damn, Newton. Your government buddies sure blew this place to shit. It’s going to take a while to get it in living shape for you all. I’d say we can have it ready in four weeks?” He looked to his brothers.

Max nodded. The other brother said, “Three.”

“Okay, three.”

“We have to live here,” Newton whispered in her ear.

“Can you build me a laboratory?” Merl asked with barely contained excitement.

Trinity snorted. “Oh, lord. Here we go again.”

“What?” Merl shrugged, palms out.

“Nothing,” Trinity said. She linked her arms in theirs. “Let’s get the hell out of here. I could use a hot shower and about a week of sleep.”

Newton stopped mid-step. “The babies?”

The new power within Trinity flared. For once she was completely in charge and in tune with her body. She could feel them both, little hearts beating fast and healthy. "They're fine. Perfect even." She grinned at her lovers. "Just like their fathers."

## Epilogue

One year later...

Being queen had its perks, but Trinity never imagined all the paperwork involved. She had a stack in front of her that she was told couldn't wait until morning. They had to be signed and faxed tonight, and Eustan, who'd volunteered to be her go-to guy, was waiting for her to finish.

Apparently, the Caledonian Empire incorporated several large businesses including computer software and pork bellies. Luckily, Newton had a great head for numbers and legalese. Without him, Trinity would be lost ninety-nine percent of the time.

Merlin no longer treated Trinity like a lab rat, constantly exploring what made her tick. He'd concentrated his efforts toward re-growing vital organs that could be used for transplant candidates. His first test subject had been a success, and while not a vital organ, Max hadn't stopped talking since Merl had grown him a new tongue.

Uncle Myron had moved back to the compound now that his exile had been lifted and he no longer needed to hide. The strangest part was that he now looked like a slightly older version of the triplets, dark hair, blue eyes, rather good looking actually. It seemed he had the ability to alter his features.

The underground tunnels of Caledon were really vast. Trinity couldn't believe just how far they reached. It was an entire city beneath the earth housing thousands of her people. She'd finally convinced them to stop bowing every time she was amongst them.

She dotted her i's and crossed her t's on the last document, and pushed the button on her desk. "Finished."

Eustan walked into her office and quickly grabbed the stack of paperwork. "Finally."

"Are you really bitching at me?"

He rolled his eyes. "No."

"Yes."

"Yes." He smiled.

"Go on, get out of here." This was Trinity's life now. She'd gone from demon slayer to paper shuffler all in the span of eighteen months.

Tired, she stretched her limbs to restore blood flow. She couldn't wait to go to bed. Quickly and quietly, she walked down the hallway to her bedroom. She managed to open the door without even a squeak.

A heavy blissful sigh escaped her lips as she took in the beautiful sight of little Marta Lisa, seven months old now, sprawled across Newton's chest in their California king. Both Newton and Marta were asleep. She was such a pretty baby. Trinity had chosen her name using her biological mother's name along with her adoptive mother. Merl and Newton had been great about it. The tiny princess was perfect, and Trinity couldn't have been happier.

On the other side, Merlin cradled Leopold Ray in his arms. Her son had been born two months after his sister. He'd been a little early, but Trinity had never felt more grateful to be done with pregnancy. His birth had been difficult, but man, was he worth it. He'd been named Leopold for Merlin Leopold Davitch, and Ray, for Newton Ray Price. Even if only one of them was the father, the three of them had agreed it didn't matter. They would raise the children equally.

They weren't a traditional family by any sense of the word, but they *were* family.

Merlin looked up at Trinity, smiling. "He's been a very good baby today."

Trinity walked to Merl's side of the bed. "We did good, huh?"

"Definitely."

Leaning over, Trinity kissed Merl's forehead and picked up her son. "Leo, my sunshine, my boy," she sang softly to the infant. Merl's hand slipped between her thighs, making her lower bits grow warm and tight.

She chuckled. "You trying to make me drop the baby?"

"My parents dropped me. Didn't hurt me one bit."

Trinity smacked his shoulder. "Who says?" Gently, she settled Leo into his crib.

"Come on." Trinity took Merl's hand. He followed without question. She walked to the other side of the bed and softly kissed Newton and Marta on the foreheads, then led Merl toward the master bathroom.

He pinched her ass on the way in. "Feeling frisky tonight?"

"Oh, I just thought it'd be nice to have you loofah my back."

"Is that the euphemism we're using these days?"

Trinity turned in his arms and whacked him on the shoulder. "You gonna talk or are you going to kiss me?"

"Kiss you, definitely."

"Still talking."

"Nag."

"Geek."

Newton's voice entered their minds. *Can you guys keep it down? You're going to wake up the kids.*

Merl raised a brow and gave Trinity a crooked smile. She grinned back. *You can always join us.*

He didn't bother to answer. A few seconds later, the bathroom door opened. Newton pursed his lips. "I think I might need help with the loofah as well."

## **Hannah Beckham**

Hannah Beckham is ready to be fitted for her own straightjacket and a magical stay in the rubber room. After a stint in the Army, Hannah found writing a great way to escape the insanity that is her life. She likes tough heroines with a sense of humor, and heroes who are hunkishly supernatural and a little damaged. She's always up for email. Readers can write her at [hannah@hannahbeckham.com](mailto:hannah@hannahbeckham.com) or visit her website at [www.hannahbeckham.com](http://www.hannahbeckham.com).