



Darcy Abriel

BEHIND THE
BLACK DOOR

Behind The Black Door
by Darcy Abriel

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By

DARCY ABRIEL

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CHAPTER 1

Satyr's Court, Reate, Italy

The wide braided red leather collars were a striking improvement over the boring black of her father's court. The father of whom she'd only recently learned the identity.

Red marked the members of her newly-appointed attendants. Gulietta rose from the green vine-entangled cedar throne. She pulled a succulent purple grape from the wooden tray and popped it into her mouth. As she bit down, sweet juice flooded her mouth. Gulietta's gaze drifted around the courtyard as she stepped off the dais. Dancing stopped. Flute music and drums ceased as all eyes turned to her. Who would have thought this was where she would end up? Who could have known that her curiosity about the big black door in the photograph would lead to her destiny? This was certainly not what she had envisioned for herself.

She brushed a hand down the curve of her naked hip. She pushed her long black hair over her shoulder. In this land, behind the black door, clothing was optional. An afterthought.

"Continue with the music," she said as she strode across the garden, elves and fairies and lesser satyrs of the court making a path. Immediately the sound of music filled the courtyard once again. The fauns and nymphs began to dance, twirling and swaying to the light, cheerful music.

"Take care, Gulietta. You push me too far."

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The smile was wiped from her lush lips. Her horns tingled. A rack of antlers, feminine, yet deadly. She whirled around to face the tall Roman who shadowed her every move.

"Your duty is finished, Quintus. You have returned me to my supposedly rightful place. You have done your duty to my father. Why are you still here?"

Without warning he fastened his hand to her slender hips and yanked her toward him. Too close for her to drop forward and use her horns. She beat her hands against his iron-hard chest.

"Let me go. I've let you bully me as much as I'm going to."

He shoved her backward until her back was against a stone wall. Only then did he remove one hand from her waist and fist it into her hair, effectively stilling her movements.

"Bullied you? I've protected you. I've guided you." He leaned closer until his hot breath brushed across her ear. "I've claimed you. And now you belong to me, Sabine woman. Your father promised you to me if I brought you back safely."

She struggled against him to no avail. That was the whole problem. Gulletta was a duty and nothing more. A means to an end for Quintus. More than a thousand years had passed since Sabine women had first been the coin of prosperity for Romulus, nothing but a way to populate Rome.

Gulletta beat her fists against Quintus's chest, he arched her head to the side, exposing her neck, taut and bare. His mouth fastened onto her flesh, fangs scraping across and then piercing her skin. She felt the rush of hot connection as he quelled her anger, forcing her to submit.

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His tongue licked across the aching wounds as she felt her resistance ebb away. And yet the blood rushed hotly through her veins. When he finally raised his head and forced her to look at him, his eyes burned like molten steel newly forged in fire. His expression dark and lusty. This man—no, this immortal Roman guardian—a servant to her father—dug deep into her heart. And she hated that she could not find the strength to resist him. She would give anything to not want him—to not need him—as badly as she did.

She felt the familiar pain, a tug of lust that shot straight down to her vulva. She throbbed with desire, a need that thus far she had been unable to deny. And that only Quintus could ease.

"Quintus." His name, an ache of longing. The smell of him. She leaned forward and licked at a nipple, tasting him, then suddenly drove her teeth into his flesh. His blood filled her mouth. She drew deeply of his essence, swirling her tongue over the erect nipple.

He lifted her effortlessly and slammed her back against the wall. She wrapped her long legs around his waist, locked her cloven feet behind his back. His cock drove into her. Splitting her, burying deep inside her, and then pistoning in and out, splintering her again and again. His stamina was superhuman as he rocked her against the hard stone wall, pummeling her with his fierce rigid prick.

She held onto him, a pillar in a storm as she climaxed again and again, shuddering with emotion, driven to the edge of her sanity.

"Quintus," she screamed. Her fingernails dug into his back, dragging great furrows down his flesh, but it was as though he didn't feel a thing as he continued to fuck her.

"Quintus." Her jaw went slack, her head lolled back as her passionate delirium consumed her, forcing her submission. His arms wrapped around her, pulling her close as his hot seed poured into her womb.

Antius would be pleased. Her father had already informed her that he had chosen her mate for her. She was the first of her kind in Antius's region. Satyress. And her mate must be strong. Strong enough to control her.

Bastard.

Quintus pulled from inside her and lifted her into his arms. She had no strength left and fell across his arms like a rag doll whose stuffing had been ripped out. Even her newly-formed antlers seemed to want to droop with fatigue and now felt like a heavy weight. And only Quintus was able to render her to this state.

He carried her inside the manor and up the stone staircase to the bedchamber above. He tossed her onto the carved oak bed.

"You may have power here as Antius's daughter. But you belong to me. The nymphs, the fauns, the other satyrs may bow to you, Gulletta. But I am of Roman blood, not Sabine."

He towered above her. She leaned up on her elbows, glaring up at him. After what had transpired she was still weak, the punctures throbbed, her antlers itched. He was hard and never gave an inch. She wanted to tear into him to make him feel her anger.

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The weakness claimed her and she fell back onto the bed, too weary to fight him. Her pussy still pulsed from the aftermath of his possession.

He looked past her to the other side of the room.

"Assist your mistress."

She turned her head and saw the Sabine women who served her at her father's command. A shapely woman with long flame-colored hair disentangled herself from the arms of one of the lesser satyrs who had trailed the women from her father's castle, and stepped forward. Gulletta couldn't help noticing that the woman's pussy mound glistened and the scent of sex permeated the air in the room. There were a number of things she was more aware of now that she had never noticed before. Things that heightened her arousal and kept her at the pinnacle of sexual need.

She turned back to Quintus. "Where are you going?"

His steely charcoal gaze arrowed back to her. "I have a duty to Antius. There are things I must attend to. I will return later."

"You don't need to bother. I'm quite fine without you around. If my father has something for you to do, don't feel you must return here."

Quintus smiled coldly, making it look more like a grimace. He reached out to trace the pale scar that ran from breast to hip. "My full duty will soon be my devotion to you, sweeting. Never fear. Soon you will have my complete attention."

She remembered well the confrontation back in Kansas City. Before she knew who her father was. Before she knew what she was. If it hadn't been for Quintus she might have

gone on through life quite happily oblivious and thinking she was human.

Well, except for the pain that haunted her. And the need for constant sex.

Suddenly, he wheeled around and headed toward the door.
"Quintus."

He halted with his hand on the door handle, but he didn't turn to look at her.

"When will you be returning?" She could already feel her womb beginning to cramp at the thought of him leaving her.

He didn't answer and she knew he was going to make her beg. He enjoyed her vulnerability. Sometimes she hated him for making her realize how susceptible she was around him. It was this place. At least that's what she tried to tell herself.

"Please, Quintus." Damn him for making her beg.

Only then did he turn his head to look at her. His stony expression revealed nothing of his thoughts. The man had not an ounce of emotion in his body.

"When my tasks are completed, Satyress."

And then he was gone.

"It's hard to believe Antius paired you with the Roman," Lydia said as she moved toward the bed carrying a wet cloth.

"I've already learned to understand my father. He's at a game of some sort. I just wish I knew what it was. The only reason he brought me back here was to entertain him."

She rolled over and stared at the door. She reached up to touch the sharp tip of an antler. Then looked down at the lush tan fur of a calf. She curled her legs close. A satyress. No one

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back in her home town would ever believe this. She had trouble believing it herself.

It was curiosity that had gotten her into this mess. The photograph of her mother in front of the huge black door. And the desire to find out who her father really was.

She should have said no. She should have burned the photograph and just let the past stay buried as her mother had begged her to do upon her deathbed.

A soft hand on her thigh rolled her onto her back. The warm, wet cloth was pressed between her legs. She spread her thighs wider and the cloth slipped between her lips. She looked up at Lydia. The woman was focused on Gulietta's pussy, pressing the cloth against her clit. Her gaze heavy, her hand working its own form of magic on Gulietta's body.

She saw a pair of dark hands curl around Lydia's waist and fasten onto the woman's lush hips. Lydia gasped, her eyelids fluttered, and then she bit her lip as the lusty satyr thrust his immense prick into her pussy. Lydia dropped forward, digging her cloth-covered fingers into Gulietta's slit. The satyr rose up behind Lydia, a lascivious expression on his face as he pumped into her.

Gulietta fell back onto the bed, thrusting against Lydia's hand, the climax claiming her quickly.

Sex, lust, and fornication was what this place between worlds seemed to be all about.

But what about love?

The vision of Quintus emerged before her eyes. She moaned as another climax claimed her.

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Damn him for finding her. Damn Titus for trying to take what wasn't his. That night in Kansas City had started out like any other, with the familiar pain grabbing hold of her until she couldn't even see straight. It was not a night she would ever forget.

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CHAPTER 2

Kansas City, Six Months Before

Quintus watched her from the darkening shadows of a damp, garbage-infested alley, having only just arrived in Kansas City on orders from Antius. To approach the woman too quickly would send her running like a doe sighting its murderer. He glanced up at the black sky. No, the moon would drive her to him. He slowed the breaths in his huge body, and his cock surged as he watched her pass slowly along the dark, wet pavement.

"She's beautiful," the man standing next to him murmured.

"She won't be happy when she discovers what Antius has planned for her. You should go to her apartment and wait there. I will bring her along when she is more ... agreeable."

Within moments the other man had shifted to wolf form and loped off, swallowed by the darkness. Quintus turned back to watch Gulietta as she made her way down the deserted street.

She was not what he'd expected for the daughter of a Sabine woman and a powerful, lusty satyr. Although, as far as Quintus knew, she was not aware of her heritage and perhaps that was the reason for her easy grace. She didn't look the predator. She looked human. Thus, his purpose for being there—to make her aware of her ancient lineage. To return her to her proper place at the side of her father, Antius.

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She was ... striking. A fitting mate for a man of Roman blood. She walked with purpose, her strides measured yet graceful, shoulders back, forcing her firm, young breasts up. Temptingly full. Lean hips, strong flanks. Perfect proportions. Not as tall as some of the women of Antius's court. Many of them were almost Amazonian in their lusty proportions. Strong, fierce women.

Not this wench. She intrigued him. More dangerous than the others. Her sexual energy, a gift from her sire, undulated, crackling the night air, surrounding her, calling lovers to her side. No problem for this female to assuage her sexual hunger.

Man after man passed her, giving her hungry looks that she scorned. She could take her pick of the lot. Humans unable to resist her. Quintus could tell she had not yet peaked. He had chosen the time with care. The only way to bring a female like her to heel was to take her at her most vulnerable moment.

She rode the edge carefully. Quintus had never seen such self-control in a Sabine of the satyr court. They usually gave in to their instincts quickly and effortlessly. This one fought the natural order.

She staggered and clutched at the hard edge of the brick building, hunched over in pain. Her knees started to buckle, but she didn't drop. It was the satyr blood—it had to be what kept her on her feet. Most of the women of his acquaintance would have shed their clothes long before this, flat on their backs, legs spread, welcoming man after man to quench the lust.

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He smelled the earthy cinnamon scent of her and dragged the smell deeply into his lungs, entrenching her aroma inside him.

Another man passed by. Quintus saw her clench her fist. She fought valiantly against her sexual nature. He was impressed by her control. But he knew that eventually she would have no choice. She would give in to the lust. The need for that connection only fucking would provide. Straightening her shoulders, she staggered forward. Two steps and another attack claimed her. Her natural-born instincts would win out.

Quintus heard the soft groan. The breathless siren's call spun through him. Her need was desperate. Twenty feet more and she would reach where he stood in the shadows. And the full moon would drive her passion. It would be her most vulnerable moment. And then he would take her. Binding her to him in the most elemental way of their immortal kind. Only then would he take her back to Antius. The old satyr would not cheat him of the prize. Not this time.

His cock pulled hard, demanding surcease. His muscles knotted as he readied himself to pounce. A deep growl rolled from his throat. Fangs bared, he gathered strength, calling from his animal core. There would be time for explanations later.

Would she fight him? Or would the need be too fierce? Would she spread her thighs for him without a battle? Did she cry out when she climaxed? Would the juices of her quim taste of honeyed mead, sweet enough to quench his millennia of thirst?

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The night reeked of danger, cutting through the scent of her. Could she smell it as well? Did her mother's warrior blood flow hot and heavy through her veins? Or was she too far gone to be able to detect the danger, her drive now only to appease the lust burning her up?

How soft would the female petals between her legs be? How tightly would her cunt grip him? By the gods, her strength crackled through the air. The need to mate her ruined his mind. Quintus studied the light and shadow of the street.

His preternatural awareness heightened, honed in and caught the scent of immortal attack. But who?

And then he saw what he had missed. A portion of the mist solidified into form.

"Fuck."

As soon as he formed, the man rushed at Gulletta, shoving her to the pavement. One who would usurp his right to her. Quintus shifted to his wolf form and leaped at the attacker, fangs bared, a growling rage erupting from his throat as he fastened his teeth onto the thick wrist of the satyr.

The satyr howled and struggled to free himself. These lesser satyrs were by no means fighters. The woman was no victim. She curled her fingers and scratched at her attacker's face, causing him to yelp even louder with pain. Tracks of blood decorated his dark skin.

Quintus used his large furry body to shove him off Gulletta and onto his back. A human corner of his brain warned him not to kill the fool beneath him. Too many questions if his

kind where discovered on human soil. Quintus shifted back to human form.

"Leave now, Titus, before I forget Antius's law and kill you right here. You will not claim what does not belong to you."

"Damn you, Quintus. You can't have it all. She doesn't have a speck of Roman blood."

"She is not for you. Try it again and the next time you will die and your satyr's horns will hold a place of honor on my mantel. Now get out."

He cautiously lifted off the blood-streaked satyr.

"One of these days, Roman, you will pay." He flung the words at Quintus.

"She's Antius's daughter. Do you really think he'd let her mate with you? All you want is the power you think she has or will have. I am here to safeguard her from the likes of you."

"She doesn't even know what she is. How can she begin to use her power? She doesn't even look like one of us."

"Leave, Titus. Now."

"This is not the last of this, Quintus." And then he was gone, a trail of mist rising into the sky and vanishing.

Quintus whirled around only to find that Gulletta was no longer where Titus had dropped her to the ground. Already one block farther along, she was on her hands and knees in front of a man. Her hands at his belt.

Quintus raced down the street, ripped her away from the stranger, and shoved her back into the dark alley. He turned and growled at the man, baring his fangs. It was enough. The man spun around and ran down the street.

Quintus turned back to face Gulletta.

"You don't need him. I'll give you what you need."

Her arms were wrapped around her waist. When she looked up at him, her eyes blazed with blue-violet fire. Her teeth clenched tight, her lush, red lips drawn back in a grimace. He saw the war waged behind that look.

The lust was upon her. He saw it in the lines of her body as they softened and yet the sexual aura intensified, the look of the siren predator in every line. Her fingers slowly unfurled to shove her jeans down over her hips. He gripped her hand and felt the red-hot heat of her skin that almost singed him. The glow of sex, ruby silk flesh, the scent of hot cinnamon, spicy and enticing flooded the air as she revealed her sex.

"Then take me, damn you. I can't stand the pain any longer."

Quintus shoved her back into the alley as he released his cock from the confinement of his pants. It bobbed thick and tall. Larger than most men's. But Gulletta was not most women. She would take him. Again and again and again.

She was a satyress and was meant for him.

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CHAPTER 3

Reate, Italy

Gulietta's mother should have warned her. The transformation might have gone easier. Instead, she'd let her daughter believe the bumps on her head a deformity and as Gulietta had gotten older and the need for sex had become voracious, her mother should have told her it was natural.

Instead, she'd told Gulietta on what felt like a never-ending basis that she was unnatural and must curb her desire for sex. She was twenty-five when Quintus walked into her life. And all those years before his arrival Gulietta had thought of herself as a tramp with the loose morals of a she-cat.

But what she hadn't realized was that sex for her wasn't the same as it was for other women—human women. For Gulietta it wasn't just for pleasure—it was a necessity of survival. The real agonies of going without sex hadn't fully manifested until she turned eighteen. Before that, it was more like monthly cramps that went along with her period. Except the cramps were a nightly occurrence starting when she was fifteen. When she had her first period.

But at eighteen the pain escalated into nightmarish proportions. Excruciating pain that could not be controlled. At twenty she'd learned exactly what it took to stop the pain, or at least control it. And after the sex she always felt a sense of invulnerability. That lasted for maybe an hour before the cycle started all over again. She reveled in it, until she began

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to think maybe it was all in her head and she was a sex addict.

It took her one night of searing agony in an attempt to go without the sex, to accept that it wasn't just mental. She truly needed the primal intimacy to maintain her sanity. And then she began to wonder if that was the way she wanted to survive. Tied to a desperate need that drove her every action. She tried to fight it, but as she grew older, the demands of her body magnified.

By the time she was twenty-three she took no pleasure in sex. It was more like a diabetic with the need for insulin each and every day.

Until the night she met Quintus. Then, everything had changed.

She stood at the entrance to the woods, staring at the spot of greatest power. Just behind the iron black gate that separated the human world from Antius's dominion. She could have refused to come here. Quintus didn't force her, he gave her a choice. More or less. If she'd stayed on the other side, she wouldn't have to worry about a rack of antlers. Or about every male satyr in sight trying to fuck her just to gain a speck of the power they thought she had.

She looked down at the small photo album she'd brought with her. The only thing she had left of her mother. She dropped to the grass, crossing her legs and laid the open album across her thighs. She opened to the first page—a picture of her mother standing in front of the largest oak tree she'd ever seen.

She'd now stood beneath that tree in reality. Touched it, made love beneath it. She reached beneath her black silk gown to stroke across her swollen labia. A shudder of pleasure escaped her. Her fingertip brushed across her wet inner lips. Suddenly her skin began to itch. Which seemed to happen a lot since coming here.

She knew the signs. It was the cramping pain she was used to on the other side of the wall. Compared to that, this was just a slight irritation. She set the album aside and rose up onto her knees. Reaching for the hem, she yanked off the silk gown and dropped it to the ground. So much for human modesty. Sometimes she didn't even know why she tried to affect rituals of her former world in this place. Then she dropped back onto the cool, silky grass, stretching out like a cat.

She stopped fighting the desire. For her it was natural. Fighting the effects only made it worse. She lay back and spread her legs. Her fingers delving between the engorged lips, circling her stiff clitoris. There was no urgency to her movements, she had learned to take joy in self-pleasure. Almost as much as when Quintus fucked her.

"I can help you with that, if you'd like."

Gulietta turned her head to look at the elf carrying a pile of books almost taller than himself. Her dominion tutor. Embarrassment was not a part of life on this side of the wall. And Latek's inquiry was simply a polite offer of assistance. She had learned since her arrival months ago that polite offers such as Latek's were the norm in this realm, a bit skewed compared to the other side, but normal here.

She sank her finger into her channel. "No, Latek. You know how Quintus gets. But you may watch."

Latek dropped the books and then sat down. He opened his pants and freed quite the impressive cock and began to masturbate.

"Quintus is very ... territorial. It's that primal wolf nature of his. I'm sure he'll ease off soon enough."

"He doesn't own me, though he thinks he does." She sank two fingers into her vagina. Damn the man. Just thinking about him had a way of bringing on a climax.

She thought of him naked. Tall, and big-shouldered. A thick chest pelted with dark, silky hair. Oh, gods. Never the same when it came to sex. One time he might be hard and very alpha. Another soft and sensitive. She could never get quite a handle on what the man was all about. His personality seemed to shift like the sands of the desert, never the same way twice. And there were times when it was so easy for her to lose her way. Damn the man.

And then she came, rising up, her pelvis thrusting. Eyes closed she fell back onto the soft grass. Slowly she brought her legs together, her slick thighs rubbing against each other.

Then she heard Latek's groan as he spewed his seed.

It was long moments that she lay there beneath the heat of the noon-day sun as the warmth bathed her body. She remembered her mother, a tall woman much like some of the Sabine women still in Antius's court. Throwbacks from a bygone age.

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"What was he like, Mother?" It was the question she always asked. Who was her father?

Her mother would get that far off look in her eyes, like she ventured into the mystical realm, a place Gulletta couldn't follow.

"You know I don't like talking about him."

"But I want to know, Mother. All the other kids talk about their dads. Even the kids who don't see their fathers. Am I like him?"

Her mother gazed at her for a long time, as though she was trying to decide what she should say and what she shouldn't.

"Did he leave because I'm deformed?" She reached up to touch the nubs hidden by her thick hair.

"No, of course not. It wasn't like that." Gulletta's mother leaned forward and brushed a hand over Gulletta's hair. "It wasn't you. It was me. I didn't want that life for you."

"What life?"

Her mother's hand dropped away and she looked past Gulletta. "He was very big. And handsome. Sometimes, I guess he seemed more beast than man. His eyes—oh, his eyes—could melt you or destroy you. And his hands, just his touch could ... Well, never mind. To me, he was the most beautiful thing on earth."

"But you left him?"

Her mother turned to look at her. "He was beautiful and handsome and a superb lover. But he was also very powerful and very dangerous. I was with him for one fortnight, no more. Once he had me. When I knew I was pregnant, I also

knew I had to leave." She had looked at Gulietta at that moment, the intensity of her eyes almost terrifying.

"What is it, Mother?"

"I won't let him have you. You can never go back there. You have no idea what kind of life you would lead."

"Have me?" Gulietta had asked.

Her mother had leaned closer, her dark eyes glittering with a fanatic gleam. Her grip on Gulietta's arms unforgiving. "He'll give you to them. And once you've had one, you'll never be able to come home again. They change you. Don't ever go back there. Promise me, Gulietta, that you'll never go back to Italy."

"I promise. I won't go there."

Only then did her mother release her from the tight grip and she dropped back against the chair.

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Of course, she had given her promise, not wanting to upset her mother. But after her sudden death from unknown causes, when Gulietta was twenty-four, Gulietta had discovered the photos in an old chest in her mother's bedroom. One old black-and-white photograph showing her mother looking like she was in her twenties standing in front of a large black door. There was something written on the back.

Sabine descendent. Reate.

It was a year later Gulietta broke her promise to her mother. She didn't want to think it was just the sex with

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Quintus that made her break that promise. She blamed it on the fact she wanted to meet her father.

But the sex. When he'd pulled her into the alley that night. It was something she would never forget.

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CHAPTER 4

Kansas City

Gulietta didn't really care who the imposing, attractive man was who followed her after the attack. Nor did she worry about the big dog that came to her rescue. Her mind had totally been focused on relieving the pain that raged through her. Like a junkie who could have cared less where her next fix came from. And she knew exactly how to relieve the pain. She needed sex. He'd scared away the other guy. At this point she simply didn't care. Common sense played no part in her actions when the pain got this bad. This man was more than adequate to give her what she required.

She reached for him, but he stopped her. His big hands locked around her fragile wrists.

"Slowly," he said.

"I can't wait. I need you now."

"And so you shall have me. Calm yourself. I know the rage is upon you. You'll enjoy it so much more if you relax."

"Enjoy it? You've got to be kidding."

He tilted his head as he looked at her. "You've never enjoyed the mating?"

"Not that I can remember. Now stop talking and fuck me. Or I'll find someone else who will." She reached for his cock and again he pushed away her hands.

He leaned toward her, and his lips brushed against hers.

"Open your mouth," he whispered.

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If she wanted to ease the pain, she was going to have to do what he asked. She couldn't bear the cramping of her womb any longer. The medicine the doctors gave her never helped. There was only one way to ease the ache.

She opened her mouth. He licked across her lips, then buried his tongue inside. She sucked for all she was worth. The clench of her womb increased as though to say, "Yes, this is the one. I want him."

And so you shall have him, bane of my existence. As soon as he allows me to have him.

He withdrew his tongue, then began to lick along her jaw, circling over her chin. Tilting her head slightly, he tracked down her throat. Then he unbuttoned her shirt, peeling it back to expose her breasts. The cool night air brushed across her skin, heightening her awareness. She shivered from the exquisite contact.

The cramping continued, but something else curled inside her. A heat that spiraled through her. A wetness that pooled between her thighs. Wetter than she'd ever been before.

A sound somewhere between a purr and a moan escaped from her. He lifted his head and looked at her. Then she gasped as he spun her around and pulled her even deeper into the alleyway. Not a sound but their heavy breathing. The long, drawn-out yowl of a cat suddenly echoed through the deserted passage. She stiffened, but then the stranger captured her attention once more and she forgot about anything else.

His kisses drugged her as he claimed her lips, then dipped lower and sucked a nipple deep into his mouth.

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A tight arrow of ache and ecstasy shot through her, from her breasts to her cunt. Oh, God, it felt so good. Too good. Her womb clenched tighter, and her pussy dripped more cream onto her thighs. One of his hands gripped her calf and lifted her leg. He yanked off her boot and she heard the thump as it landed on the pavement.

She didn't care. She wanted him more than she'd ever wanted any man before. However he wanted to do it, she was more than willing. There was a difference. Yes, she had needed the sex before. But on this night she *wanted* it. And that was unusual. He shoved her pants down her legs, all the way, then yanked one leg of her jeans complete off, freeing one of her limbs.

He raised the bare leg, anchored it against his powerful thigh, opened her wide, then shoved his cock into her wet pussy. He lifted her with huge muscled arms, and she wrapped her free leg around his waist. His mouth found hers once more, fusing them together. Not a space for breath, from willing mouth to wet cunt, locked lips to rigid cock, and she felt him so deeply the world rocked, splintered and fell away.

He forced her to remain still, just holding her close, her pussy wrapped tightly around his cock, lips wide, hairs tickling. Sanity shifted.

"I have come for you and you alone, woman," he said.

"W-who are you?" His cock nudged deeper and she whimpered as the tip brushed against the opening of her cervix.

"I am Quintus, the Roman. Servant of your father."

Her eyes widened. "My father!"

And then he began to move inside her and she thought she would die from the pleasure. Slow surges, in and out as he ground against her. Her back wedged against the brick wall, he drove his cock into her channel. The first climax shattered her.

And still he thrust, deep, then shallow, over and over again. His prick fit her more perfectly than it should, deeper than any other. Each climax released another gush of her fluid, coating him, allowing him to slide in and out with ease.

Groans and grunts filled the darkness, echoes of passion, the rasp of clothing as bodies melded together, the crunch of gravel beneath Quintus's boots.

Again she came. And then again. He captured her cries, swallowed them whole. Until at last she felt him come, spurting deep into her womb.

It wasn't until long moments later, as he was sliding from inside her, lowering her to her feet, that she realized she had never even thought of using a condom.

Thank goodness she was on the pill. She redressed with shaking hands, unable to believe what had just happened. And the full shock of where she was settled over her as a couple sauntered past the entrance to the alley.

"Jesus, what did I just do?" The question was more rhetorical than anything else, because she knew exactly what she had just done. And then something else shocked her back to reality. Her head shot up and she narrowed a looked at Quintus.

"You said my father sent you?"

He was leaning back against the wall, legs crossed, watching her with the intentness of a hunter. It made her feel like a predator's prey, wondering when he would pounce. She eased away from him, ready to hightail it out of that alley as fast as possible. What had she been thinking? At least now she could think clearly without the haze of lust fogging her brain.

He seemed to sense her intent and fast as a rattler's strike grabbed her arm and yanked her forward until she fell heavily against his chest.

"You are not leaving here without me. Or is it that you don't want to meet your father?"

Yes and no to that question. All these years, she'd never met him. Only knew what her mother had told her. And now, out of the blue, this man said her father wanted to meet her. Was it just a line? Or was this real?

"Oh, it's very real, Gulletta. But I don't think you want to discuss it here. I think we should return to your apartment. Where there's more privacy."

She had to be in shock to even be thinking about taking him back to her apartment. But that's exactly what she was going to do. Why had she not been curious at the time about how he had known where she lived? She'd never questioned it.

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CHAPTER 5

Reate, Italy

"Your mother wouldn't have died if she hadn't left me."

Gulietta quickly grabbed for the gown she'd set aside and pulled it on. Even here she was not going to remain naked with her sire in proximity. She didn't care how lax the customs were. "What are you doing here?" she asked as she looked up at Antius. She still had a difficult time thinking of him as her father.

"I came to see my daughter. To see how you are faring. You look well."

She picked up the photograph album from the ground where it had been setting next to her. She wondered where Latek had gotten himself off to. And why he hadn't warned her that her father was close by. The pile of books he'd been carrying were scattered across the grass.

She turned back to look at her father. Right now he appeared more animal than man with the most amazing golden ram's horns of anyone in the satyr's kingdom, making him look very powerful and kingly, in a manner of speaking. "Word is that you've adapted well since arriving."

He circled her as she stood there. "The rack," he waved a hand to indicate her antlers, "looks good on you. There must have been some antelope in your mother's heritage at some point."

She shook her head, still unable to believe where she was. There were days when it felt so totally unreal, like a dream.

"It's quite real, Gulletta."

"Stop doing that. Get out of my head. Quintus does that all the time."

"He's going to be your mate; it is his right."

"He's not my mate. And I don't belong here."

A deep roll of laughter erupted from her sire. "You are exactly where you belong. Didn't you feel it when you were out there? I know you must have. You didn't belong there and I think you knew it."

"I don't belong here either. My mother wasn't like me. She didn't have horns, nor did she have hooves. Why am I like this?" She tapped her antlers, then looked down at her feet. "I wasn't like this when I lived out there."

"You've matured and come into your destiny. If you'd stayed out there you never would have been fulfilled."

"If it's so great here, why didn't my mother stay here?"

"Your mother was always questioning things. She was a Sabine woman from the line pacted to me. She never should have left and she suffered the consequences because she did so. She belonged with me. Just as you do."

"I promised her I would never come back here."

"It was a foolish promise. She never should have asked you to make it. She knew. From the beginning she knew. The oracle foretold your birth. There are few satyresses in the world. Even fewer now because of nonbelievers and surgeons who try to remove the evidence of their magic. And end up killing our kind in the process."

"She never would let me have surgery," Gulietta murmured. "I had an appointment with the doctor, but Quintus arrived and everything changed."

"Those of our kind who stay too long outside our world die. As your mother did. She could have had a long and happy life if she would only have returned to us. To me."

"She was afraid. Of you. Of this place."

"It was her father who did that. Poisoning her mind. He took her away from Reate after your grandfather was murdered. He blamed us. He poisoned your mother's mind against us."

"But she must have come back here. Or she wouldn't have met you."

He tapped the book in her lap. "A funeral for her grandmother is what brought her back. But you are all drawn back here one time or another. Sooner or later. She couldn't help herself. But she let her father's words override the joy she found with me. And she denied her destiny." He leaned toward Gulietta. "Don't let the same happen to you. Don't let fear drive you away from what you truly desire. Or from where you belong."

"I had plans. I had just finished college and had a degree in interior design. I was looking for a job. But you changed everything."

"You lived with the blood of your ancestors running through your veins all this time. Do you really think you could have fought it for much longer?"

"My mother did."

Antius sighed. "She was not satyress as you are. Quintus and—Quintus is guardian of our gateway. He has care of a villa and the surrounding lands for as long as he serves me. He moves between worlds. As you may with a bit of glamour."

"He doesn't love me. He wants me because of what I am. Because of what you'll give him—his freedom."

"Quintus has sacrificed much to protect our kind. It was he who came to me seeking help for Rome. We came to an agreement. With the help of Bacchus we brought the Romans and the Sabines together."

"You mean you let them kidnap women. Which ended up in war."

"And then it was settled. The women agreed."

"You turned the tables from what I'm told. The one Sabine woman who came to you for help to stop the bloodshed ended up your mistress, agreeing to have your child. And all of her line had to swear an oath to you."

He shrugged. "Nothing is free. It is all negotiation. And the Sabine women have always been of fine stock."

Gulietta jumped to her feet. "We are not stock."

"Of course not. As you wish." He rose to his feet, towering over her. "My women await my return. Quintus is different. You might give him a chance to prove himself to you. I think you may find that he does care for you. In his own fashion."

"Like you care for your women?"

He drew himself up. "I care for them very much. They want for nothing. As you want for nothing. You are in a

position of great respect. Raised higher than any other of my get."

"Yeah, well I'm the only female within light years with horns, aren't I?"

"You are needed here, Gulletta. The women look up to you. The men are devoted to you. Give it a chance."

He turned and walked away, leaving her standing there. So unsure of herself, of where she truly belonged. And wondering whether Quintus did care for her or if she was just a duty. A consolation prize for all his centuries of loyalty to Antius.

"Are you ready for today's lessons, Satyress?"

"Latek, where did you run off to?"

"When Antius arrived I figured you might want some time with him. Alone."

"Hmmm. So what are we studying today?"

He pulled one of the larger books from the pile. It looked old. He opened it and she saw the illuminated pages and neat, old-style handwriting. She had to wonder how many centuries it had been in existence.

"A book of spells. You should know how to cast, just in case you might have a need. You have the power, you just need the focus. Come, sit with me and let us begin."

If only she could keep her mind on the present and not keep returning to the past. She didn't want to think about Quintus. She wanted to forget about him. Unfortunately, that wasn't as easy as she would like it to be.

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CHAPTER 6

Kansas City

As Gulletta awoke, she recognized her bedroom, but also realized she was naked and groggy with no real sense of how much time had passed. Her body ached, but it was a pleasant ache, not the cramping she was so used to experiencing. This was her apartment, but something was different. The last thing she remembered was being in the alley with Quintus and for the first time the cramps had disappeared completely. How could that be? What was so special about him that she could be, for the first time in her life, pain free?

She pulled the sheet up around her as he walked into the bedroom carrying a tray with a teapot and several cups.

"Where did you get that?"

"It was in the back of one of your cupboards."

"I've never seen it before. The teapot was black china with strange gold markings all over it. Why had she never noticed it before? She and her mother had shared this apartment. She guessed it just meant she really wasn't as thorough at cleaning as she thought she was.

Quintus poured some tea into a cup and held it out to her. She looked into his eyes. They seemed to be a softer gray than they had been the night before. His expression calmer, not as ... hard.

"I don't drink tea. The coffee was on the first shelf. It would have been less trouble to locate that."

"Coffee isn't what you need right now. The tea is much better for you. Here, drink it."

With little recourse, she accepted the cup and took a sip. She grimaced at how sweet it tasted. She really would have preferred a nice cup of leaded black java.

"Oh, God, how do you drink this stuff? It's disgusting."

"You'll get used to it. The sweetness is natural, no additives."

She leaned back against the pillows, a firm grip on the sheet. She looked at him as she sipped at the disgustingly sweet tea. There was something different about him, she wished she could put her finger on exactly what it was. "Who are you and why are you here now?"

"Your father heard of your mother's death. Without her protection he thought it best to bring you back to Reate."

"He thought it best? He hasn't been in touch with me all these years and *now* he worries about me? I can take care of myself."

"You have no idea do you, of who you are and who your sire is? Your mother never told you?" He pointed to the cup. "Drink the tea, it will help to soothe any aches and pains."

How had he known she felt the first twinges of the cramps returning? She took another sip from the cup. "Ugh."

Quintus leaned toward her. "Would you prefer to ease the cramping another way? As we have done over the last forty-eight hours?"

Her gaze widened. "You've been here for two days?" How could she have lost so much time?

"Your mother used what she knew to contain your impulses. There was magic in her, you know. She apparently used strong safeguards to keep you from feeling the full brunt of your nature. But she never took the time to explain what you should do to care for yourself apparently."

"Her death was unexpected. There was no time to prepare for anything." She felt the need to defend her mother.

"She still should have begun your lessons when you were a child. She never taught you anything, did she? About how to quell your needs."

"I can't say that she did. She never really shared much of anything. Something tells me she wanted to forget anything that had to do with my father."

"She was foolish to have run away from Antius. He would have cared for her, and protected you. And you would now know how to handle your powers. And your needs."

Another twinge and she drained the cup. Quintus refilled her mug. "And exactly why are you here?"

He leaned back against the bed frame, stretching his legs out parallel next to hers. She couldn't stop looking at him. Clothed now, but she remembered those muscled thighs. She remembered her buttocks resting upon the unforgiving muscular flesh as she rode his cock for what seemed like hours. Her mouth plastered to his as though she could draw the very essence of the man through their joined lips.

She remembered feeling like she'd gone for ages without nourishment and only he could quench her thirst.

She remembered strange things from that first night. A man materializing out of the mist. A large dog with huge

fangs. And then sex. Lots of sex. With this man. They were fragments of memory. At least she thought it was memory. Could it have been a dream?

"Oh, my God," she said. She shook her head, trying to clear her mind.

She wanted to hit him when he smiled at her. The color of his silver eyes turned shimmery in the sunlight. And suddenly it was quite evident what he was thinking.

"In your dreams."

"I would rather stay in yours. It works both ways, Gulletta."

"Are you saying you know what I'm thinking?"

"Of course. You and I are tied. An ancient pact with Antius. We ... I've waited for you a very long time."

"You think I'm ... You can't be serious. Are you trying to tell me he arranged a marriage for me? Are you crazy?"

"You're telling me you can't feel the connection? We have just made love in every way conceivable. We've hardly left this bed for the last two days, and you don't accept it?"

"That was just sex. So I like sex. Okay, I like a lot of sex. So what?"

"Do you often lie to yourself this way? Is that how you get through it?" He leaned forward. "And what do you tell yourself about the pain? Do you remember what it was like before I arrived? And what about now?"

She almost spilled the remainder of the tea as she reared back against the headboard. She would not acknowledge that there was some truth to what he was saying. She dared not.

Suddenly a sharp pain stabbed through her head and she dropped the cup, reaching up to grab hold of her head.

"What is it?" He was immediately beside her.

"My head. It hurts." She moaned as another sharp pain shot through her. "What's happening? What was in that tea you gave me?"

He looked at her and his expression tightened as he gazed at the top of her head. She reached up and then screamed. "What the hell did you do to me?" The nubs were no longer just small bumps, but sharp protrusions that were suddenly longer than they had been before. "What have you done to me?"

"It's simply the maturing. We have to get you back to Reate."

He shoved the blanket aside and exposed her legs. It looked like they were altering as well. And her legs from just below her knee downward all of a sudden had a profuse amount of furry stuff on them.

"I have to be in the middle of a nightmare," she said. "Somebody wake me up. Oh, God, wake me up!"

"It's beginning and there's no turning back. I had hoped it would be a slower process, more time for you to understand. I'll see if I can dig up some glamour to help mask the transition until we can get you to safety. Gather what you wish to take with you, because we are leaving now."

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CHAPTER 7

Reate, Italy

Quintus had given her little choice. And the changes to her body pushed her to do as he said. The antlers were by far not what she'd expected. At all. But then who would? It had taken her a long time to become acclimated to her situation in her father's kingdom. To say the least, she had been shocked when she was first introduced to him. Most assuredly more beast than man.

"He cared for your mother, you know," Latek said. "He's always known where she was. He respected her decision not to return. I believe he always hoped she'd change her mind before it was too late."

"But she didn't. And I can't say I blame her, considering his harem. I expect she didn't want to be just one among many."

Latek stroked his white-bearded chin. "They're both stubborn. No, she never would have been happy being one of many. But your destiny was always assured."

Gulietta leaned back in the grass and stared up at the blue sky. "Tell me why I'm here. You seem to know everything about what goes on in this place. Quintus is like trying to get answers from a stone wall. And my father is just as mysterious. I want to know ... where did I come from? How was it that I was chosen for this rather dubious honor?"

"It goes back a long way, Gulietta. Back before Romulus came here. Back when Antius was a young man and came to

an agreement with Silvanus, the nature god, for this territory. He had a bit of leverage in that there was some talk that Silvanus had sired Antius. Although there was no solid proof. It was in a time when magic folk were appreciated and honored. The story goes that Silvanus wanted a special favor of Antius. Antius agreed and bartered for his own kingdom. There were no doors, no gates back then, just the knowledge of the veil between our world and the human world."

"Why was the wall built then?"

"The Sabine tribe settled in the area. And then Romulus wanted women for his followers in Rome. None in Rome would have them, being all thieves and fugitives. Antius made a deal with Romulus to gain him access to the Sabine women. Then Antius made a deal with Bacchus. He always was a master at getting what he wanted. And then he forged another deal with the Sabine nation. In the end it got him Quintus, as wolf guardian of the gates, and ... well, that Romulus's men would build the wall, providing a more solid separation between our worlds, well guarded by Quintus and a few of his Roman followers. Antius's shrewd deals also gained him a certain control over some of the Sabine women. Their bloodline is forced to serve Antius until the end of time. But there was a shrewdness to their deal as well. I think Silvanus had a hand in that. The other way out for the women involved the birth of the fabled satyress of Reate."

"And that's supposed to be me."

Latek laughed. "No one ever thought it would happen. Your existence ends the Sabine pact with Antius. You are the savior of the Sabine women in Antius's court."

"And what of Quintus? Why am I supposedly promised to him?"

"Quintus was one of Romulus's protectors. Part man, part wolf, a gift of the gods. He watched over the ruler as a child. Supposedly he was suckled by the same she-wolf as Romulus and his brother. And his life was dedicated to Romulus's protection. But Romulus wanted wives for his men more than to protect a man who had served him so well. In exchange for the women, he, for all intents and purposes, sold Quintus to Antius."

"Good Lord. People have so little value to these rulers it seems. Like pieces of a chess game."

Latek nodded.

"But there is more that you don't know." Latek hesitated before he continued with his story. "I shouldn't tell you this, but Quintus has a twin brother," he said quietly.

"A brother? Why haven't I met him?"

He shifted as though uncomfortable. "Well, I think you have. Quintus is the warrior, Marius is the peacemaker. If you think back, you may recall seeing two different sides to the man who has been your lover. Marius tends to stay quietly in the shadows."

"I-I don't remember. I don't understand."

"Quintus does the dirty work so to speak, and Marius cleans up the messes." He leaned closer. "When Quintus came for you, do you remember anything out of the ordinary?"

"It's all such a blur. He said he was with me for two days. I have these images of fierce and yet tender. His eyes—the color kept changing. And his manner. It's the oddest thing."

"They were afraid of scaring you. All their lives the brothers have shared everything. When Quintus was given to Antius, Marius offered his own freedom as part of the bargain. He was one of the counselors to Romulus at the time. They agreed to a new bargain with Antius, knowing it could mean the death of one if you chose the other."

Gulietta wondered if she would ever understand this world that she'd been thrust into. Treating people like pawns, playing with feelings and with lives.

She rose to her feet. "Take me to him, Latek. I want to meet him."

"But you have met him."

"Obviously, I thought he was Quintus. I want to meet *Marius*. I want to see them together." She shouldn't be shocked, knowing the antics Antius pulled in his own court. Hadn't she witnessed his enjoyment of the games when she was staying in the castle? That was before she demanded her own villa, sick of watching his machinations. This was just the final straw.

"Marius prefers to live outside the gates. At the villa on the hill. Do you remember it?"

She nodded. "Yes, I remember." Quintus had distracted her when she'd asked about it at the time. No wonder.

"You'll need glamour in case someone sees you. The outside world today isn't what it was in Romulus's time. It's a

dangerous place for our kind. There's not the same respect for our world. I can't let you go alone."

"Then you'll come with me."

"Neither of them will be happy if I let you go. Antius will be very displeased that I spoiled his game. But I thought it was time you knew. Enough is enough. And besides, I like you." She had to smile when she saw the ruddy color surge into his face.

She reached out to squeeze Latek's small hand. "You'll always have safe haven in my home, Latek. Don't worry. You've taught me so much since I arrived. Help me now. Meet me in an hour near the side door. Few people use that door, so we are less likely to be discovered. Why is it things I should know are kept from me and I have to find them out in bits and pieces?"

"Antius will be angry I revealed the truth."

"I'll take care of my father. Don't worry about that. You just get me to the villa."

On a mission, she stalked back through the gardens and into the villa. No one was going to stop her from doing what she had to do.

There was a brother. And he was a twin. Why hadn't she realized? As she thought back to when she first met Quintus, those first two days, some of the fog that had kept details from her finally lifted. And she had a feeling that she now knew why some of that time was foggy. They had done some sort of spell to keep her from remembering too much. Damn them.

She forced herself to recall more about those lost hours. There had been two men, identical in almost every way. Except for the way they handled her body. One with hard, callused hands, the other gentle and sensual. Why hadn't she realized?

With each of them there had been that sense of distance and yet they had loved her so well, that she hadn't even considered there might be two of them. They'd kept her far too occupied with other matters on her mind. Exhausted and sated.

She walked into her room at the villa and was brought up short as she saw one of her maids in full engagement with two satyrs. In her bed.

"What's going on here?"

The tableau pulled apart and scrambled off the bed.

The Sabine woman quickly knelt before Gulietta. "I'm sorry, Satyress. We should have gone somewhere else. But it was—we were—"

Gulietta held a hand up to halt her words. "Forget it. I don't have time for this now. Just get out of here and find somewhere else to fornicate."

"Yes, Satyress. Right away."

Could she really discipline the woman? This was satyrville after all. Fucking was an everyday occurrence. This was a sexually permissive society and certainly not a part of the human world in any way, shape, or form.

Her mind came back to trying to absorb this new information that Latek had provided. There were two of them. Looking exactly the same. And she'd fucked them both. One

Behind The Black Door
by Darcy Abriel

of them willing to sacrifice his life—his freedom—for the happiness of the other. Could she feel any more like a pawn in someone's game?

Well, she'd just see about that. The gamemaster was about to be replaced.

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CHAPTER 8

"Marius, there is every chance that she will choose you. You have a softer way about you. Women like that."

Marius closed the book of poetry and set it back on the shelf. "Don't be a fool, Quintus. She's not just a woman, but a satyress. Mixed with Sabine blood. She revels in your strength. She needs your firm hand to keep her to a steady course. Don't forget I've seen you together. Your children will be a strong force to be reckoned with."

"Don't speak ahead of yourself. Remember, I watched her with you as well." Gods yes, he had watched. From the shadows as the proud beauty responded so wantonly to his brother. As she had to him. He wanted her, but if she chose Marius he must abide by her decision.

"I wish Antius had not forced the promise on us. It's not fair to her. And I have a feeling she won't be happy when she finds out she's been lied to."

"We had no choice. We either play the game his way, or both of us lose the chance to have an opportunity for love and freedom. Anyway, I think I've become too disillusioned over the centuries. She is best with you. You are much better with children anyway."

"Stop it, Quintus. She will choose whom she will choose. I've a feeling we both have come to admire her more than either of us cares to admit. But in the end one of us will be mate and the other will remain in Antius's service."

"What if she chooses neither of us? There is the possibility when she discovers what has happened she will deny us both." Quintus knew it was more than possible she would be so angry with both them and her father that she would chose neither to sire her children.

"Mating with her and combining Roman with Sabine blood—"

"And satyr."

Marius nodded. "And satyr is a great gift."

"Right. One of us will be freed from Antius's domination. The other will remain forever under his thumb, subjects to his whims. And his games. One of us will have another carrot dangled before us as we race for the finish. How many more centuries for either of us without hope of warmth of family and children? And an end to service to the satyr."

"Or maybe that is his game. For her to discover what he has done. Then he retains both of us. He is sly enough to do such a thing. To torture us with freedom and then snatch it away." Leave it to Marius to consider all the possible alternatives. Neither of them had considered the possibility that she would scorn both of them when she discovered the truth. They had jumped at the chance for freedom for one of them. With one of them free, there was always the chance of finding a way to free the other.

"She will choose one," Quintus said with more confidence that he felt. "It was Romulus who put us in this position. He made the choice for us. He had the right, as our ruler, to do so."

"He should have felt some responsibility as a man, as our pack brother, not to use us as chattel."

"Romulus did what he felt best for Rome. We have done our duty and protected him as we swore an oath to do. We have served."

"We should both walk away. Now."

"We have fought too long and too hard. One of us must win. Or it has all been for nothing."

Quintus stared out the window. "I don't want a mate on these terms. I don't want Gulietta to be forced to choose between us. This is not how I wish to win her."

Marius placed a hand on his shoulder. "It will work out. You'll see. Whatever happens, it will be for the best."

Quintus whirled around to confront his brother. "That's the way it has always been with you. The peacemaker. Why don't you fight for what you want?"

His brother tipped his head to the side and looked at him curiously. "You want me to fight you for her?"

Quintus shoved him back with both hands. He felt so impotent with the situation the way it stood. He wanted to roar with frustration. Hounds of hell, he wanted to demolish everything in his path right now. Even his own brother. He shoved again.

Marius dropped back. "I won't fight you. You're my brother."

"You don't want her?"

"Of course I want her. She beautiful and strong and exciting. Are you saying you don't want her?"

"Damn you, Marius. Damn us both." He whirled around and punched a hole in the wall. Several picture frames crashed to the floor. An ancient Grecian vase toppled off the table and shattered when it hit the stone tile.

"I am not your enemy, Quintus." The words came from his brother in a quiet tone from behind him.

"Maybe I am," a female voice said from the other side of the room. Quintus whirled around.

"Gulietta." Both men uttered her name at the same time.

For the moment she was without her horns, a sparkling glow of glamour surrounding her that only those of the magical kingdom could see. Her legs and feet were shapely female. Much as he remembered her from that first night.

"So, Latek was right. There are two of you."

She unbuttoned the burgundy wool cape. Removing it, she tossed it onto the sofa. She gazed around the room. "Quite a few books." She looked at Marius. "So you are the studious one I take it? Marius? Is that your name?"

"H-how did you know?"

She pointed to Quintus. "He carries a dagger in his belt. You don't. It's sort of telling, you know."

"You are not supposed to be here. Antius will not be happy."

"And when exactly were you going to tell me that two of you have been making love to me all these months?"

Quintus jutted his jaw. "When Antius commanded it. When the time was right for you to make a choice. Antius doesn't like his game spoiled before he's ready to end it."

"Men. Stupid males." She folded her arms across her chest and paced the floor. "If my father thinks he's going to run my life, he's got another think coming. I have more of my mother in me than he could possibly imagine."

She whirled around on the two males. "Why would you allow yourselves to play his game?"

"We owe him our allegiance. He will free one of us, but only the one that you choose as your mate."

"And you agreed to this asinine bargain?"

Quintus glanced at Marius and then back to Gulietta. He didn't want to make a choice between his brother and this woman. It wasn't right that he must give up his brother for a chance at freedom. But it wasn't fair to his brother either.

"We have agreed between us. One of us will go free and then be in a position to gain freedom for the other."

"Ah, I see. And this is how you will use me."

Marius stepped forward. "That's not the way it is, Gulietta. We don't want to use you."

"Really. That's going to be awfully hard to prove." She first walked up to Marius, studying him closely. And then she turned to Quintus. Then she stepped back. She turned to look at Marius again. "Kiss me."

"Now?"

"Right now. Kiss me, Marius."

Quintus watched his brother step close to Gulietta and take her in his arms. He'd watched them before, but never under these circumstances. Those times it was with the knowledge that she had only thought she was making love to one man. This was different.

The kiss ended and Marius stepped away. Gulietta licked her lips and then turned to Marius. "Now you."

"Me?"

She arched a brow. "Yes, you. Kiss me." She already had the authoritarian tone that he knew so well from Antius. She was definitely his daughter.

He strode forward and swooped her up into his arms, arching her back over his thickly muscled arm and claiming her lips like a conquering warrior in Romulus's guard. Possessing what he wanted to claim for himself.

Long moments later he released her. She swallowed hard as she staggered backward. Righting herself, she glanced at each of them. Her lips were now red and engorged having been possessed by both men.

He felt his cock thicken, needing more than just a kiss. That tantalizing taste was simply a prelude to more. He saw it in her stance, in the heavy, glazed look in her beautiful blue-violet eyes, the color of pansies on a spring day. He knew the rhythm of her body too well by now.

"Which shall it be?" he asked.

She turned to look at Quintus. Her hands went to the dress she wore and quickly she stripped it from her body and tossed it aside.

"Show me where the bedroom is and then I'll tell you."

"Which will you have?"

Her gaze narrowed. "Both. Now. And then I will give my father my decision."

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CHAPTER 9

It was Marius who lifted her into his arms. He looked over his shoulder at Quintus. "Don't dawdle, brother." And then he moved toward the staircase and mounted it with hardly a hesitation in his step.

Gulietta gazed around when they stepped into the large, airy bedroom on the second floor. The bed was massive.

"Whose room is this?"

"Mine," growled Quintus.

She smoothed a hand over the gold coverlet. "Big bed."

He flashed her a set of perfect white teeth. "Big man," he responded, dropping his pants to punctuate that statement.

Gulietta rose to her knees and reached for the huge cock bobbing between his legs. "Very big," she commented. She gently pulled him toward her and leaned forward to enclose his prick with her mouth. She swirled her tongue over the mushroomed tip—hot, silky, and leaking pre-cum—then sucked him deeper. She fastened one hand on his hip.

She released his glistening cock and looked up into his eyes. Quintus had eyes like newly honed steel, hard and impenetrable.

"Which of you has taken me in the ass?" Oh yes, she had an idea who it was.

Dark lust flickered across his expression. He yanked her up against his chest. He snagged her earlobe with his teeth.

"Ow. That hurts," she said.

He gripped her head from behind and held her fast. "We've both had you, Satyress. In all ways."

Something in her stomach fluttered at the thought of that. Hadn't she known that all along? And they wanted her to make a choice?

"Who will take me there now?" She couldn't help asking, a shudder of anticipation rippled through her.

"I will," Marius said from behind. "At least the first time." And then he nipped her other earlobe. The two men imprisoned her between them, holding her fast so she couldn't move, her breasts against Quintus's chest, her back flattened against Marius's chest. Like being thrust into a fierce column of fire, their heat consumed her.

Oh, God. Her stomach twisted into a knot of desire.

They both released her at the same time. Quintus picked her up and tossed her onto the middle of the bed, one man fell to either side.

"You asked for this, Gulletta," Marius said as he fastened a hand to one of her legs and spread her thighs.

Quintus settled between them, lifted her hips and delved between her pussy lips with his mouth. She almost shattered instantly.

"Oh, yes. Yes." She would have thrust her hips, but he had complete control. His tongue burrowing in and out, twirling over her clitoris, then dipping inside once again, sipping at her juices.

It was Marius who claimed her mouth, his tongue working in sync with Quintus's action and she found herself swept

away on a formidable tide of pleasure. One she had no wish to resist.

Within moments she was climaxing, a rush of pleasure that spilled from her, her cry caught by Marius, her cream consumed by Quintus.

They flipped her onto her stomach, and switched places as Marius licked at the flesh of her rounded bottom and Quintus trailed his tongue over her shoulders and down her back.

She felt Marius delve between the crease of her cheeks, his tongue circling around her anus, before dipping inside. He lifted away and then she felt the spill of liquid along her crease. She gasped when two fingers entered her. Groaned as they penetrated.

Which was how they caught her by surprise when Quintus cuffed her hands to the iron headboard.

"What are you doing?" She tried to break free.

"Making certain you go nowhere until we have given you everything you've asked for. That and much more. We will not let your decision between us be an easy one, sweetling."

After struggling for a few minutes, she finally relaxed. Why not let them have their way? She had a feeling it was going to be utterly delicious.

"That's better," Quintus said. He turned her onto her back and rose over her. His dick fisted in one hand, he brushed the flared tip against her lips. No words were necessary, and she opened her mouth to suck him inside.

At the same time Marius lifted her legs and draped them over his shoulders. As she fondled Quintus with her tongue, Marius entered her ass. Oh, God, the friction of his entry

almost sent her over the edge once more. Shallow at first and then deeper, harder, and finally she did explode. Her scream was stifled by Quintus's cock.

Quintus thrust his hips, again in counterpoint to Marius's rhythm. She circled her tongue beneath the plumed head, dipped into the slit, causing Quintus to gasp. His fingers curled into her hair, holding her steady.

The sighs and groans, undulating bodies, male heat and aroma had her climaxing again and again, pulsing orgasms that seemed to never let her hit the ground.

Moments later both men were shouting out their own climaxes. But it was only the first.

Long hours later Gulletta knelt in the Roman-styled bath on the first floor, her body opened and eager to embrace both of these men. She knelt beneath the statue of Pan, which was spewing water, and this time Marius's cock filled her pussy and Quintus was buried deep inside her ass. Their movements were slow, with no urgency to the powerful, synchronized thrusts of the two men.

She tipped her head back and water poured into her mouth. Quintus wrapped a hand in her wet hair, arching her neck still farther back. His fangs scraped across her skin. And then her eyes flew open as she felt another set of sharp teeth rake across her breast. And once more she shattered with her orgasm accompanied to the sounds of twin, deep-throated growls.

"I think," she managed to gasp out, "that talking with my father can wait for another day. These decisions are so difficult to make. I must be certain, you know."

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She heard the twin chuckles as first Quintus eased from inside her anus and then Marius pulled his hard prick from her pussy. They all fell into the water, heading for the deeper end of the room-sized bath.

Her mind was dizzy with possibilities. She lifted onto the lip of the pool, her feet dangling in the water. She watched the two men as they swam a race across the pool-size bath. Late afternoon sunlight filtered in through the windows. The shock of realizing that she was in love with not one man, but two, had her thinking hard about what she was going to tell her father when the time for a decision finally arrived.

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CHAPTER 10

Gulietta lifted a hand to touch the front of the main, black iron door that separated what was now her world, from the human world. She looked at Quintus.

"So, your soldiers built this wall and it has lasted all these centuries."

"Yes. And no one passes through unless I authorize it."

"And what does Marius do?"

"He keeps the books. Who passes through, when they do so. He also maintains the records of Antius's children. Which women, when conception took place. For the most part there is no other record of the births except in Marius's book. No record in the human world, that is."

"I have a birth certificate. I could even collect Social Security, I expect, if I took a job in the States."

It was Marius who answered. "True, you are the exception." He brushed a hand over her hair. "But then you are the exception in so many ways, sweetling."

She turned around to face them, her back flush against the black door, and looked at each of them. "I have a photograph of my mother standing in front of this gate. I always wondered what she was thinking. And now I think I know."

"What do you know?" asked Quintus.

She stared up at him. A Roman warrior, no doubt about it. Lethal and yet the way he made love to her took her breath away.

"I know she had a decision to make. She must have known she was pregnant."

Just as Gulietta knew she was carrying a child. There was a sense of another soul existing inside her. She looked at Marius. So much like Quintus and yet so different. The afternoon she had spent with them had turned into four delicious weeks. She had wanted to stay there forever.

But she couldn't put off facing her father any longer. She knew when she got up that morning what she had to do.

Until she came to Reate, she'd been using contraception, but for some reason once she'd entered her father's kingdom she'd forgotten all about it. Hadn't even brought the pills with her. Making love on the other side of the gate did not necessarily culminate in pregnancy. So she'd been told. That's part of the reason there was such sexual freedom. No disease. No pregnancy. No guilt.

Except for those days surrounding the fertility festivals. Then whatever procreative veil kept the women pregnancy free, fell away. And no one seemed to mind. They seemed to embrace the opportunities.

But she had been having sex on almost an hourly basis outside of the gates while at the villa. Beyond the veil, in the human world. They all should have realized there would be consequences.

Or maybe she instinctively knew it and ignored what might happen.

"My mother didn't have an easy time with her decision. I think she loved Antius, but she also knew that once she

passed through this gate there would be no going back." She tilted her head to look first at Quintus and then at Marius.

"Will there be other wives, other lovers in your life once I've made my choice? Once I'm pregnant with your child?"

The men looked at each other and then back at her. It was Marius who answered. "You realize you are a satyress and unable to maintain fidelity to one man. For a satyr to remain true to one person simply doesn't happen." He looked at Quintus.

And it was Quintus who finished. "We have accepted the reality of mating with a satyress. To be honest, neither one of us expected to fall in love with you. But you might as well know, we are in love with you. But the one you will have will give an oath of fidelity. Once that choice is made, the other will walk away. Neither my brother nor I will cross that line. Whomever you may take as lover, we have agreed. Once your choice is made, you will never bed the other of us again."

"I see. So you've made that pact between yourselves then. It doesn't matter what I want."

"We have to accept that you are a satyress and there are ingrained instincts of that magical breed. We accept that."

"You accept it in exchange for your freedom from my father."

"Partly, yes."

This world was so strange to her. "Unbalanced" was the word that came to her mind. The human part. Or maybe there was some sort of odd balance that she didn't quite understand yet. Surprisingly, considering her so-called

nature, she'd had no desire for another man since encountering these two gorgeous Romans. Their words made her wonder if it would last.

She thought of her father's court, the many Sabine women there, the numerous children. They all seemed happy and content with their lives. She'd been told Sabine women birthed fraternal twins of a sort—one female, usually with only human qualities, and one male, usually satyr. There had never been a birth like hers. A female who was also satyress. Not in this region. She was one of a kind. And what would her child, or children be like?

In one sense that scared her; in another it exhilarated. One of these men had sired the child she now carried. Or maybe both. Who was to know in this crazy world she'd been thrust into? And thus her need to see her father.

"All right. Let's go to my father. I'm ready to tell him my decision."

Quintus pulled out the large iron key and unlocked the door. Gulietta stepped through the gate without a second thought. Immediately her antlers and hooves reappeared. While at the villa she had almost completely forgotten about them. Okay then. "Well, I guess we're back. Let's go to my father."

They made their way to Antius's castle and entered his greeting room.

"Gulietta. Where have you been? Everyone's been searching for you." He gave a dark look to Quintus. "You should have brought her back immediately."

"Let me do the talking," she said just low enough for both Quintus and Marius.

She strode forward, both men flanking her to either side. "I've been at Marius's villa in the human world. It was my choice and no one was going to make me come back here until I was ready. I heard you were trying to dupe me and play my lovers against each other."

Her father leaned back in his throne. Two Sabine women knelt to either side of his chair. A third brought him a glass of wine, then sat on the step at his feet.

Gulietta was certain she knew exactly why her mother had left this place. She had to have been a strong woman to make the choices she did. Gulietta had never realized how much determination it must have taken to sever her relationships with someone she had loved so deeply.

"Would you like some wine, daughter? A new blend from Bacchus. I think you'd like it."

"No thank you. I've come to inform you of my choice. Your game is at an end."

"So, you've decided on one of them then. Which shall it be?" He lifted the glass to his mouth.

She reached first for Quintus's hand and then for Marius's. "I'll have them both, thank you."

Antius almost spilled the wine as he surged to his feet. He shoved the glass at one of the women, who fumbled to catch it before it dropped to the stone floor.

"You what! You will do no such thing." He glowered at her.

"Look at you, Father. You have women scattered all over this realm. And you think to confine me to one man." She

laughed as she released her hands from the firm grip of her lovers. "I think not. It may have been your game, but you gave them both to me for a trial run, so to speak, and now I have accepted them both. They are mine and you will release them from your service."

"That was not the wager. Only one was to be set free."

Hands on hips she strode toward her father. "That wager was not with me. I claim both. Marius may continue to do your books, but you will free him to be my lover. I have need of my men on a regular basis. They will not have time to run errands at your beck and call. They have done enough of that for the last centuries."

"You would take it all. My Romans, my women. Everything. Who do you think you are to assume you have that kind of authority in my kingdom?"

"Your daughter, Antius, but my mother's as well. I am one of a kind, the only satyress in your kingdom. In the future any woman who you take as lover must come of her own free will, not because of a blood pact. The world is changing, Father, and you will have to learn to change with it."

"How dare you think you have the authority to demand anything from me?" He took a step toward her. Immediately Quintus and Marius stepped closer. Antius halted, his expression showing his shock.

"So, I see the way it is. They would betray me for you. You must spread your legs quite adequately."

"Antius," Quintus's tone was more of a warning growl. "Be careful what you say."

"Father, you brought me back here. You sent your Romans to me. I think you wanted to set me on a pedestal, a show of your power and magnificent stud status. But I am not a thing to be manipulated by you. And now you must pay the price for your vanity."

"Damn you. Just like your mother. Stubborn and territorial."

"Are we agreed? Or do I take my lovers and leave this realm forever. I think they will come with me. And I will soon be powerful enough to stop you from achieving any retribution." She added one last twist. "And you'll never see a grandchild of mine. And that's what you really want, isn't it? My power transferred to a male who will inherit your throne. It's not me you want, but a satyr child bred of strong Roman blood and satyr's get."

She saw something in his eyes and knew she had struck very close to home.

"Get out," he said. "I'll summon your return when I decide to forgive your ill manners, brat."

"Very well, Father. As you wish. But Quintus and Marius come with me."

"You'll mate with one of them at the next fertility festival. I want that child."

She smiled slowly. "You'll be happy to know the breeding has already been accomplished. I'm with child. So your price is already met."

Both Quintus and Marius looked at her with shocked expressions. "What!"

She spun around, reached for each of their hands and with head held high, walked out of her father's throne room.

They both halted her once they were outside the castle.

"You're pregnant?" Quintus asked.

"Who?" Marius wanted to know.

"Does it matter which of you sired this child?" She reached up to cup each of their jaws. "I love you both. You both satisfy me and please me. I'm afraid I can settle for nothing less than both of you. For now, you are all I want. I think all I have ever needed. I don't know what my nature will bring down the road. I expect I'll have a long life living here and much to learn."

First Marius leaned forward and kissed her. And then Quintus did the same. She smiled contentedly.

"Let's go home. We really need to get a different bed. I've become used to that big one at the villa." She looked at Quintus. "Maybe you can get a few of your Romans to build us a good solid one."

He leaned forward and kissed her. "The only ones getting near your bed will be Marius and me."

Marius cupped her jaw and turned her to face him. "Well, Satyress, I would say the fates certainly do have a way of getting back at Antius for his game playing and bartering over the last centuries."

Gulietta laughed. "We shall see." She was certainly looking forward to having these two gorgeous Roman wolves in her bed for a very long time to come. Antius was very likely to be sorry he ever asked for her return. How splendid was that?

This one's for you, Mother. And for me.

Behind The Black Door
by Darcy Abriel

Her laughter trailed behind her as she headed back to her new home.

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Darcy Abriel

Darcy Abriel delights in writing the stories that rouse the dark side of emotion and passion. Going back to the days of *Saturday Night Chiller Theaters*, series such as *Twilight Zone* and *The Outer Limits*, toss in a little Alfred Hitchcock, and these are the stories that have always fascinated Darcy. That edgy sense of danger that leaves one tingling. Be it a roller coaster ride, a Dracula movie, or a good erotic horror read at the darkest slice of night. Visit the dark side with mystery and passion, eroticism and tingling fantasy. Explore what makes your heart pump faster, your blood run hotter, and the adrenalin surge. Edgy, mysterious emotions are what drive a Darcy Abriel story.

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* * * *

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When Madigan's sweetheart, Bridget, becomes the killer's next target, Sean determines he will find the man and his connection to the ball gowns. But the murderer has other designs, and it soon becomes a race against time and the police to discover the fiend's identity before he silences Sean or Bridget ... permanently...

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