

# LOVE'S CARESS

Kinross Triad Series  
Book 3



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Love's Caress

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ISBN: 978-1-55487-345-6

Cover art by Martin Jardin

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Published by eXtasy Books

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# Love's Caress

By

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& Tianna Xander

## Dedication

*To our readers. You've asked for some more triad action and so we present the Kinross Triad series. And to our editor, Janet. Thanks for being so darn understanding with our last minute changes. You're a gem!*

## *Glossary for the beginning of the book*

'tis - it is/it's

A - I

aabody - everybody

auld - old

aye - yes

bairns - children

basturt - bastard

brither - brother

cannae - cannot/can't

daft/looby - crazy

dee'd - died

dinnae - do not/don't

fash - worry

fither - father

hae - have

hae nae - have not/haven't

intae - into

ken - know

kent - knew

ma - my

mithier - mother

nae - not

naught - nothing

nye - no

o' - of

o' course - of course

sot - drunk

tae - to

tu braith - soul mate

verra - very

wad - would

wadnae - would not/wouldn't

wee - little

wis - was

wisnae - was not/wasn't

ye - you

ye'd - you would

ye'll - you'll

yer - your

yeself - yourself

## Chapter One

“You want me to what?” Mercy Webber couldn’t believe her ears. All three of her sisters were crazy, nuts, absolutely certifiable if they thought for one infinitesimal moment that she’d give up the practice she’d worked night and day for, for the last twelve years just because there *might* be someone out there who *might* come after her.

She loved her sisters dearly and she was terrified for them, but she didn’t look all that much like them. For one thing, she was nearly a decade older than they were. Besides, she had platinum blonde hair, like their father, not the fiery red hair the triplets inherited from their mother. No one could possibly mistake her for one of them. *What was the worry?*

Continuing to the stairwell, she went through the door and started down. Mercy took the steps so she could continue her conversation with Faith, confident no one would overhear something they shouldn’t, besides, she’d lose signal in the

elevator. She headed toward the parking garage, still holding her cell phone to her ear.

"I don't think so," Mercy said as she hiked her purse up onto her shoulder, trying not to let it fall to the crook of her elbow. It was the last thing she needed with her hands full of paperwork, her dinner leftovers and her phone.

"Mercy, you have to get out of town. If the man who's after Charity finds out about you, he may go after you to get to us." Faith paused for a moment, probably hoping the desperation in her voice would influence her older sister's decision. Not!

Mercy snorted. "Are you crazy? I can't just up and leave. I have a practice, patients to consider. I can't just drop everything, Faith. I have responsibilities. In fact, I have two patients about to give birth and Mrs. Mortimer is now under hospice care because of her spreading cancer. I need to be here right now. You all should realize that. I've worked hard to get where I am. I can't just give it all up because Charity has one of her damned feelings."

Really, they should know better than to ask her to leave her practice at the drop of a hat. It had taken her years to set up her practice as a general practitioner, treating everything from sprained ankles to childbirth to cancer. She couldn't just



walk out on her patients now. Her career may never recover from such a blow.

"I know you three think I'm in danger, but I'm not. Really." She sighed as she juggled her armload of stuff to dig into her pocket for her car keys. "I've not seen one strange person lurking about. But I promise, if things change, I won't stick around. It's the best I can do, sis, until I can make other arrangements for my patients."

"You can't take care of anyone if you're dead, Mercy."

Exiting the stairwell, Mercy glanced around the nearly empty parking garage and headed for her car on the far side of the parking area. The doctors had special parking close to the building, but Mercy refused to use it unless they'd called her in on an emergency. Walking wouldn't kill her and besides, it's great exercise. *How can I expect my patients to listen to me if I didn't follow my own advice?*

"I'm alone now, for crying out loud. There isn't a person in sight in this garage, so stop worrying. No one is after me. It's late, my feet hurt because I've been on duty here at the hospital for the last two days and it's finally time for me to go home where, hopefully, I can put my feet up before I'm called back in to deliver one of those babies." Pausing, she bit her lip worried about her three siblings despite how she sounded. Maybe she *was*

being stubborn about not leaving, but she had to act responsibly, no matter what her sisters wanted. Until something changed anyway.

"Are you three doing okay?" Her stomach clenched with worry as she thought about her sisters and the danger they were in. *What kind of madman attacked a man in a hospital bed then went after three women just because one of them saw him?*

"Yes," Faith sighed. "At least for now. The men expect another attack but don't know when it's coming. They're keeping us under guard."

Mercy stopped and stared at her car, which listed to the side at an odd angle. She sighed. Not tonight. She was tired and wanted nothing more than to go home and soak in a hot tub for an hour.

She knew which men Faith spoke of. They'd met them on the road while running away from the people who wanted her sisters dead.

Her sister Charity had fallen in love with a pair of them. Their mother predicted something like that would happen, though Mercy didn't believe in prophecies or fate. If her fate *was* preordained and she had to put up with two men in her life, she decided she'd fall in love with a pair of doctors she could open up a practice with. Since she didn't see that happening in the near future, she'd just have to settle for Dr. Frank. He was kind, gentle and...boring. She sighed, trying not to think of his proposal in such a poor light.

"Yeah, they've pretty much taken over our lives," Faith groused. "I don't like it, but if they can keep our sisters safe, I won't complain. Much," she added with a chuckle.

"Damn. I have a flat tire."

"A flat tire?" her sister paused as she spoke with someone on the other end of the phone. Then she was back, shouting into the phone, "Run, Mercy! Run!"

Just as Faith's warning reached her ears, Mercy heard a noise from her left. She spun around, ready to protect herself as best she could. A man stood near a white van, windows were dark. The side door stood open, engine running.

Fear clogged her throat as she realized what was happening. She backed toward the building, the safety of the hospital. Almost too late, she saw the other man. He came out of the shadows, reaching for her with a cloth in his hands.

Reaching out with both hands, he flipped the towel over her head and gave it a yank. It reeked of sickening-sweet chloroform. Mercy held her breath. She wouldn't inhale, not until she couldn't stop herself. It was her only chance.

Even though she was terrified, her years of Yoga and martial arts training paid off. Mercy suddenly went limp, releasing her dinner and paperwork. She dropped into a squat and swept the man off his feet with a well-placed, low sweep

kick. The man went down hard, totally unprepared for an offensive move.

Mercy crammed her phone into her pocket as she turned and ran for the stairwell. Her heart beat frantically in her chest as she headed for the building. She had to get out of here, get inside and to safety. Faith was right after all, they *were* after her. *What can I do?* She couldn't just leave her practice. She had to find someone to take her rounds, see her to patients and run interference with the hospital board for her.

After running up three flights of stairs at top speed, Mercy slammed through the door, uncaring of how much noise she made. There was no telling if the men were able to follow her. Her ID card made it simple for her to open the door, she had no idea whether the ones after her could find a way in or not.

She hurried to the nurse's station where Emma Johnson sat filing her nails as she listened to the monitors.

"I thought you left, Doctor Webber." Emma stared up at her through her thick glasses, her heavily penciled eyebrows raised, her brown eyes wide. "I figured you'd be halfway home by now."

"Call the police, security..." Mercy paused to catch her breath. Bending over, she placed her hands on her knees and concentrated on breathing. In the background, she heard Emma

call security to the floor and asked them to phone the police.

"Care to tell me why I just did that?" Emma reached down in front of her, placed her nail file in the drawer over her lap and closed it. She stared up at Mercy with a concerned gaze.

"Someone just tried to kidnap me in the parking lot." Mercy was still out of breath, the stitch in her side didn't make breathing any easier either.

"Oh, my goodness!" Emma's drawn-on eyebrows crawled even farther up her forehead. "What happened—how—what did you..." She let her words trail off. Obviously alarmed, she didn't seem to know what else to say.

"Can you call me a tow truck, too? I think they flattened my tire to give themselves a chance to get me before I got away." Mercy smiled wanly at Emma's shocked expression. "I think I shocked them with my karate training." She frowned as she realized she wouldn't have the element of surprise next time. Now that they knew she could defend herself, they'd be prepared. Getting away wouldn't be so easy if they came after her again.

Mercy drove away from Virginia and her grandmother's old cabin. She knew they would expect her to head that way. Still, she drove on, hoping to lead them west and in the opposite

direction from where her sisters were, constantly looking in her rearview mirror. She felt certain someone followed her but saw no one behind her as she drove down highways and even small, unmapped dirt roads.

After two days, she couldn't keep her eyes open any longer and, like her sisters, she opted for public transportation. Only Mercy didn't take buses. She shuddered at the thought as she boarded the plane that would take her to Virginia. From Norfolk, she would rent a car and drive the rest of the way back toward the cabin their grandmother left to the four of them.

Finally able to relax, Mercy slept the entire trip. She'd never been so glad to get a non-stop flight in her life. After three glorious hours of uninterrupted sleep, one of the attendants woke her up and handed her a napkin to wipe the drool from the corner of her mouth.

Mercy grimaced. "Boy, I'll bet *that* was attractive."

The flight attendant merely smiled. "We've arrived and everyone else has disembarked. I didn't have the heart to wake you until now."

"Thanks." She glanced around, her brain a bit foggy from lack of sleep. "We're there all ready, huh?" Standing, Mercy grabbed her carryon from the storage compartment over her head and hiked it up onto her shoulder.

Stumbling a bit as she walked down the aisle toward the door, she shook her head to clear it. With several hundred miles between her and her would-be kidnappers, perhaps she'd make it to the cabin where she would be safe.

The drive to Grandmama's cabin seemed to take forever, most likely because she felt exhausted despite the nap she'd taken on the plane. After what seemed like days—but lasted about five hours in reality—and a stop at the local grocery store, Mercy pulled into the driveway of the cabin located about a twenty-minute drive north of Schuyler.

She sat in front of the cabin for a few minutes, her head on the steering wheel, her eyes closed. Her mind spun from lack of sleep and she knew she'd been lucky to make it to the cabin without wrecking the vehicle.

Sliding out of the car, Mercy opened the back door, grabbed out the bag with the refrigerated items in it and went inside. Reaching out, she flipped the switch for the porch light and sighed with relief when it came on. Turning it off again, she let the screen door slam behind her and kicked the inside door closed.

Entering through the kitchen had its rewards. She stuffed the entire bag of groceries into the refrigerator, went back and locked the deadbolt on the door, then headed for the bedroom. She wasn't

taking any chances. Goddess only knew who the people were who were after her sisters and she refused to let anyone use her as bait.

"Aha!" Mercy practically danced with joy when she found her daddy's old shotgun buried under extra linen in the hall closet. The shells were in the top drawer of the dresser. Loading the gun, she set it next to the bed, then fell exhausted onto it. It took mere seconds for her to fall into a deep sleep.

\* \* \* \*

"So what did the Alpha hae tae say?" Ewan Garrick asked as his best friend, Cameron Steel, shoved his cell phone back into his pocket.

"He said tae go south along this trail until we get tae some place called Skyler. Pull that map out and hae a look, will ye? A dinnae think A remember a Skyler on that map. Leastways, nae anywhere near the mountains." He frowned, thinking.

"A dinnae recall it either. What say we look and if we cannae find the place, one o' us should call the alpha back and see what he has tae say on the matter."

"Aye." Cameron nodded with a sigh. "'Tis a good plan, though A hate tae be asking for help if we dinnae need it."



Ewan pulled the map from his back pocket and checked the list of towns and cities. "Nye. There's nye Skyler as far as A can see." Reaching into his left front pocket, Ewan dialed his cousin's number. He'd rather ask the boy he grew up skinny-dipping with than bother the Alpha so soon.

After three rings, he heard the familiar, deep, "Hello?" His cousin, Alastair McTavish was never one to leave a phone ringing for long, no matter the time of day or night.

"Alistair? 'Tis Ewan. A hae a question for ye."

"What is it ye need, cousin?"

"Where is this Skyler, Virginia? We dinnae see it on the map and we've nearly reached Charlotte where the Alpha assured us it wis. And why are we going tae this cabin tae fetch a lass, is she lost or just daft that she cannae find her way tae ye?"

"She's in danger and she's sister kin tae me and tae Connor." He spoke of their other cousin, Connor McTavish.

"She's what? When did ye get sister kin? Last A heard, the McTavish hae naught but boys." Not that anyone had many bairns these days, but when they did, anyone bearing the last name of McTavish only had boys.

"Hae nae ye heard?" Alistair sounded shocked. "We've found our *tu braith*. She's an identical triplet and her sisters are with us. We've been

hoping that one o' her sisters will be a mate tae ye and Cameron."

"So that's why we hae tae find this Skyler place?"

Alistair chuckled. "'Tis nae spelled like it sounds. 'Tis spelled, S C H U Y L E R. Look that one up. With any luck at all, ye won't be far from the place. Our mate and the two sisters that are with us hae another, older sibling who is also in danger. We need ye two to bring her to us. If ye're lucky, and A hope ye are, one o' the three sisters will be yer *tu braith*. Will ye go get her and bring her tae us and help keep them all safe until we can rid them o' the threat?"

"Aye, that we will, cousin. And do ye hae an address for us now? The Alpha said he dinnae ken and would find out before we reached the place, but A hae tae tell ye, we're here already."

After a few more minutes, Ewan disconnected the call, then turned to Cameron. "We hae an address now. Shall we go find our newest cousin and welcome her to the clan?" He grinned, then clapped the other man on the back as they fell into step together. "Alistair and Connor hae found their *tu braith*. Can ye believe it? We come tae this country to find a Tree o' Life and now a o' us pairs hae found their mates."

"Makes ye wonder what the Fates hae in store for us, now, doesn't it?"

## Chapter Two

A loud banging woke Mercy from a sound sleep. Sitting up, she looked frantically around the room. For a moment, she forgot where she was. The unfamiliar surroundings frightened her. At first, she could only remember someone followed her, that danger lurked around every corner and she must find her little sisters.

Fear clogged her throat, made it difficult to breathe. Her heart slammed against her ribs as the pounding on the front door grew more insistent.

*Get a grip, you idiot. It's got to be Faith, Hope and Charity. Who else knew I would come here...hide out here of all places? Who else would actually knock on the door instead of picking the lock or bashing it open? Besides, would someone wanting to harm me advertise his or her presence like this? Unless...Could the group after Charity know about this place?*

Gathering her courage, she stood, then donned her robe, snatched up the shotgun and headed out through the darkness.

Her stomach clenched, fear making it roil as she moved through the cabin. The absence of light made it difficult, she stumbled a few times, afraid she'd blow her own head off with the cumbersome gun that made her so off balance.

Mercy tried to see through the sheer curtains by the door. No luck. *Why didn't I leave the porch light on?* She'd have been able to see who was there, or at least she'd be able to see their silhouettes. She hadn't thought of that. The thing uppermost in her mind after she'd gotten here was getting her groceries put away and getting some sleep. In that order.

Now, she stood here in the darkness, staring at the sheer curtains that would have helped her had she just left the porch light on. If she turned it on now, she would be able to see, but they would, also, know someone was here and awake.

Sneaking out through the back door, she tiptoed around the side of the cabin, wincing every time she stepped on a rock. She should have put her shoes on. The damned pebbles in the grass surrounding the small cabin hurt like hell on her tender feet.

"A dinnae think she's here."

Mercy stopped walking at the sound of a deep voice. It wasn't just deep. It was very deep and it didn't have a southern accent. It was Scottish. Startled, she rubbed her free hand over her leg

and tried not to gasp. Just the sound of the man's voice gave her goose bumps.

"O' course, she's here. Ye see her car, dinnae ye?"

At least now she knew there were two of them. Peering around the corner, she made sure there were no more. She only had two shots with the gun. If there were more, she didn't have a chance if they intended to harm her.

Gathering her courage, Mercy raised the gun to her shoulder and stepped around the corner of the cabin, keeping both of the men in her sights.

"Don't move." Damn! Her voice came out shakier than she'd thought it would.

Of course, they didn't listen to her. The first thing the two men did was turn to face her, silly grins on their too-handsome faces.

The full moon made it easy to see them now that she didn't have the curtains between them. Both powerfully built, just standing there, the two of them took up most of the space on the front porch.

They were huge. Both with legs like tree trunks and arms to match, their powerfully built bodies did little to assuage her fear. She stood still, the gun pressed to her shoulder as she looked down the sights.

"There ye are, lass." The larger of the two said as he crossed his arms over his chest and leaned

negligently against the railing. "Yer sisters said we'd find ye here."

The other stood with his hands on his hips, glaring at her. "What do ye think ye're doing with that gun? Hand it over before ye hurt yerself."

Mercy bristled. *Who the hell did he think he was?* She glared at the Neanderthal bastard and aimed more squarely for his chest. "You don't give me orders, you ass. I'm the one holding the gun."

"So ye are, lass," The other said pushing away from the rail to smack his friend on the arm. "What do ye think ye're doing? That's nae the easy way to get the lass's trust, ye daft basturt."

He turned and looked at her, smiling. "We're here to protect ye, lass. Yer sisters sent us."

Like she'd believe a stranger that readily after all she'd been through—after all her sisters had been through. "I don't have any sisters," she lied, still keeping the two men in her sights. "I have no idea what you're talking about."

"O' course, ye hae sisters. Charity, Hope and Faith sent us for ye. We come tae see ye tae safety. They said someone attacked ye in a barn."

"Garage," the other supplied. "Parking garage." He stepped closer to the rail and Mercy's aim grew more focused on him in case he should make any sudden moves.

The movement drew him further into the moonlight and with her enhanced night vision,

she could see almost every detail of his face. His blond hair framed his too-handsome face. Eyes that appeared silvery-gray in the darkness peered back at her, filled with laughter. His nose, though not perfect, fit his handsome face. A small lump on the bridge told her it had been broken at least once.

"A'm Cameron Steele." He waved a hand toward his companion. "This is ma partner and best friend, Ewan Garrick. " He indicated the other, who merely nodded his head, choosing to stay within the shadows beneath the porch roof.

She tried to see what he looked like, but it was too dark where he stood. It was almost as though he blended into the darkness. His skin appeared dark, his hair black as pitch. All she could see from where she stood was that the man was big, huge and both their scents did something to her that set off her internal alarm.

"Whether ye choose tae believe us or nae, we hae been sent by yer sisters tae protect ye. Perhaps ye should call them if it will settle yer nerves."

Mercy turned the idea over in her mind a few times. She could do that. She had the drop on them after all. Maybe she could tie them up in the cabin and wait for her sisters to get here and vouch for their characters. After all she'd been through in the last day or so, she wasn't about to

just take them at their word no matter how good they looked.

“Okay. Get your hands up and step slowly off the porch. We’re going into the cabin so I can call them and I’m not letting either of you out of my sight.” At least not until she had them both tied to the sturdy kitchen chairs her grandfather had made.

After a glance between themselves, the two men slowly moved from the porch to stand in front of her. Backing up, Mercy circled around behind them, steering them toward the back door.

“Okay. Into the house and sit down on the kitchen chairs.” Shutting the door behind her, Mercy turned on the light and glanced around the room, trying to decide what to tie them up with. “Don’t move,” she warned when it looked like the one called Ewan would have stood.

“Sorry, lass. A wis...” His face reddened a bit, like he was embarrassed. “Sitting uncomfortably.”

Reaching out, Cameron slapped him on the arm. “A told ye, those shorts were too baggy, but ye wadnae listen.”

“Shut up,” Ewan bit out between clenched teeth.

Cameron leaned forward and winked. “A told him he shouldn’t wear boxer shorts, but he insists. Ma,” he paused, jamming a thumb in the center of his chest, “A wear tighty whities.”



Ewan stretched out and landed a well-placed kick on Cameron's thigh. "What kind o' small clothes we're wearing has naught tae do with this. Get on track, man."

Mercy kind of liked the fact that the big man, who was so intimidating, could get so embarrassed. Perhaps they were who they said they were. She almost lowered the gun. Almost.

*What if they're just acting? What if this was just some contrived...thing to catch me off guard and capture me?* Mercy raised the gun with more determination than ever and held it aimed at them while she thought of a way to tie them up. She could use the belt of her robe.

Her face warmed at the thought. She wore nothing beneath the robe but a pair of bikini underwear. She'd really give them a show if she took it off. Still, she didn't see another option.

Moving away, she rested the gun on the table, the barrel still pointed in their direction and removed the belt with her free hand. Tossing the belt to Cameron, she tucked the robe around her and picked the gun up again.

"Tie him up."

"Whatever ye say, lass."

Cameron moved from his chair and tied Ewan's hands to the arms of the chair then sat back down on his own chair. *Now what?*

Mercy bit her lip. She couldn't stand here forever. Sooner or later, the lack of sleep would catch up to her again and she'd have to rest. That time would come long before her sisters got there.

The clothesline! She'd brought new clothesline the last time they were here, but they'd never used it. It should still be in the junk drawer. Moving to the side, careful to keep the gun trained on Cameron, she opened the drawer and reached blindly inside, searching for the thin rope she'd brought here six months ago. She almost sighed with relief when her fingers closed around the cool plastic packaging.

Bringing the package out of the drawer, she tossed it at Cameron who caught it smoothly in his right hand.

"Tie yourself to the chair."

"Now how do ye expect me tae do that, lass?" He threw her a look like he thought she was a few fries short of a kid's meal.

"Tie one arm to the chair. I'll tie the other."

Sighing, he quickly complied, making it look easy. Too easy.

She frowned at the ease with which he tied his left hand to the chair. "Have you done this before?"

He threw her a look that made her uneasy. "Nay, lass. A dinnae make tying myself tae kitchen chairs a habit." His eyes darkened to

pewter. "However, A hae dreamed o' having a beautiful lass such as yerself tie me to a bed and hae her wicked way with me." He waggled his brows and Mercy couldn't help the blush she felt crawl up her neck into her cheeks.

*Goddess, if he turned up the wattage of his smile or the level of his sex appeal just one tiny bit, I'd melt right on the spot!*

Taking a deep breath, Mercy set the gun down and looked at them for a minute. It was now or never. She had to leave the gun on the table and finish tying the two up before she could try to get any sleep. Even then, sleep would be difficult. There was no way she would just fall into an uninterrupted sleep with these two men in her house. The Goddess help her if they should turn out to be just who they claimed. She was having a difficult time keeping her hands off them as it was. If she found out they weren't off limits, she just may throw Dr. Frank's proposal to the four winds and throw herself on these two men like some oversexed groupie.

Leaving the gun on the table, she approached the two men keeping her eyes open for any type of subterfuge. If either of them moved so much as an eyebrow, she'd rush back to the gun and shoot them, just because she could.

Gingerly picking up the clothesline, she wrapped it around Cameron's wrist and drew it

tight against the chair. After anchoring it, she wrapped the line around both of their legs, tying them as securely as she could to each other as well. Standing, she reached between them, trying to make sure they couldn't help each other.

She didn't realize how close she was to the men until she felt the warm, wet slide of a tongue against her nipple.

Pulling back, she glared at Ewan and tugged her robe closed. "What the heck do you think you're doing?"

"Well, lass, A figured ye had it jammed intae ma face for a reason."

*Crack!*

Mercy smiled at the satisfying sound of her slap against Ewan's cheek. Her palm burned both from the force of the contact and the fact that her hand came in contact with the warmth of his skin and the rough five-o'clock shadow that covered the lower half of his face.

"Don't you ever touch me again, you pig."

## Chapter Three

Cameron wanted to laugh at the surprised expression on Ewan's face. What he could see of it anyway. He looked completely shocked that the lass had slapped him. *When would he learn that a woman in the States was not like the women o' their clan?* You couldn't just go around touching lasses intimately, even if she was your *tu braith*, your soul's mate.

As soon as they'd driven into the lass's driveway, they'd scented the truth of things, scented what she would be to them. He had to admit, at least to himself, that if he'd been in Ewan's place, he probably would have done the same and took a taste while he had the chance. But he wasn't in Ewan's place and thank the Goddess for that, because he'd be the one wearing the pink palm print on his face and the one she'd be furious with.

Still, they needed to ensure their mate that she was safe with them and he could think of only one

way to do so, by letting her speak with her sisters so she'd know the truth of things. "Lass, why dinnae ye reach inside ma pocket and pull out ma cell phone. A've programmed it with the number where yer sisters are staying. If it would ease yer fear, give them a ring and see the truth o' things for yerself."

"You have my sisters on speed dial?" Cameron could hear the surprise and doubt in Mercy's voice as she slowly approached him. He could sense her wavering as she decided whether to actually put her hand in his pants pocket, probably wondering whether it was just another lecherous move or not, thanks to his best friend.

"A assure ye, lass, the phone is in ma right front pocket. A'd nae use this opportunity tae put a move on you when A've yet tae receive that right by first earning yer trust."

Mercy smirked. "That's more than I can say for your friend here. Ewan doesn't seem to understand the concept of waiting for an invitation before accosting a woman apparently. I don't know how he could ever manage to actually get a woman to agree to lay with him with such a lack of charm, despite how absolutely gorgeous he is."

A fiery red blush stole up his *tu braith's* neck and spread over her cheeks. Obviously, she'd said more than she'd intended. He'd love to call her on

it, but he didn't see how that would help their cause, especially after Ewan's rudeness earlier. The fact that she hadn't reached for the shotgun gave him hope that she would continue to trust her instincts and, in the end, trust them never to do anything purposely to harm her.

She took a deep breath, straightened her back and kept her hands fisted down by her sides, then as if giving herself permission to relax, she shook out her hands and crouched down next to his chair. Slowly, she reached toward his right pocket, her gaze never leaving his. He did his best to project calm unconcern, but it wasn't easy, not with her hand so close to his thickening cock. Thank the Goddess that she was looking into his eyes and not at the obvious bulge growing in his jeans.

Ever so slowly, she reached forward and brushed her hand on the outside of the pocket, obviously wanting proof before she actually stuck her hand down his pants. When her fingers touched the lump that was his phone, she jumped as if burned.

If he wasn't fighting his instincts to pull her into his arms, he might have chuckled at Mercy's apparent uneasiness. As it was, it took all of his control to sit still while her fingers dipped into his pocket and fished around for his cell phone. By the Goddess, he hoped she pulled it out soon,

because his cock had thickened behind his fly and even a slight brush of her wrist against his slacks would show just how aroused he'd become.

A few seconds later, he exhaled in relief as she pulled the cell phone from his pocket and stood up, moving away from him as if he were poison ivy and she didn't want to catch it. Again, it took all his control to keep from breaking out in laughter. His mate was turning out to be much more fun than he imagined.

"Which number are my sisters programmed under?" Mercy asked, her voice a little less wary than when they first arrived.

With luck, by the time she finished speaking with Charity, Faith and Hope, she'd be more at ease with the men and would release them from the bindings. Now, if once they'd mated, she wanted to tie them up or be tied up, they could work with that and give her more pleasure than she could imagine, but for now, he'd settle with getting out of the chair.

He could, of course, break the bindings now if he wished, but that wouldn't build trust with his *tu braith*. So, until they could be honest with her about who and what they were, he'd give her whatever she asked for. For now, it was answers. "Press memory, then the number four. That should connect ye to yer sisters."



Retreating a few steps so she was out of their reach, Mercy opened the phone and did as he'd directed. It took only a few seconds for one of her sisters to answer the call.

Despite the fact that Mercy stood more than five feet away, he could hear her sister's voice on the other end of the phone. *Which sister?* Well that was something he didn't know as he had only spoken with his cousin up to now and he was surprised that the female answered his cousin's phone at all. Cameron couldn't help but wonder if there might not be a psychic connection between the sisters similar to what he and his clan had with their people.

Cameron waited patiently while his *tu braith* spoke with her sister. As her voice rose in apparent agitation, he focused on what she said.

"You're sure that this Cameron and Ewan are related to your mate, Charity?" she asked.

"Yes, Mercy. Well, Ewan is, but Cameron is his best friend and they're near to third or fourth cousins or some such. Listen, there is something you need to know about them. Something that will either put you at ease or scare you even more, but you should know before you make your decision whether to untie them or not—though I hope you do untie them since they are there to help."

"What's that?"

Cameron tensed as he waited for Charity to drop the bombshell about what he and his clan really were and what they were doing here in the States. He looked to Ewan to see his response to what was about to happen. Like himself, Ewan now kept his hands fisted by his sides, his knuckles white with tension. He needed to put him at ease despite the fact that he himself didn't feel at all comfortable with the turn the women's conversation had taken either. *She'll either run screaming through the night, Ewan, or she'll untie us, because she'll realize that we could hae gotten loose at any time instead o' letting her tie us up.*

*That doesn't really make me feel any better. A'd hoped tae nae hae tae tell her too much about what and who we are until after she'd bonded with us.*

Cameron shook his head. *Well, at least she'll ken right from the start and cannae say that she dinnae ken going intae the relationship. Charity telling her our tale takes pressure off us from having tae explain, while all the time she listened tae us with doubt and outright disbelief. She's more apt to believe her sisters, dinnae ye think?*

Ewan mentally snorted. *Keep thinking that. She's still going tae want us tae shift tae prove that we can.*

*So, at least she'll believe once we do and cannae say later on that we kept anything from her. Despite the reassurance he was giving his best friend, he feared what would happen once she knew what they were.*

Ewan nodded slightly. *There is that.*

They turned their attention back to their mate just as the color leached from her face. "Would you say that again, please?"

The voice on the other end grew louder and he heard a female's voice say, "Mercy, they aren't human. Well, at least, not entirely. Remember those stories mama told us of men who could change into other shapes?"

"Yes, I remember. I also remember telling you and the others that none of it was true that mama was just out of her mind when she spoke of prophecies, mating and everything else she spouted."

"She wasn't, Mercy. That's what I'm trying to say. Cameron and Ewan and my mates, Alastair and Connor, they can change. They shift, Mercy...into jaguars."

When she plopped down on one of the kitchen chairs, her face blanched white, Cameron almost felt sorry for his *tu braith*. She had to come to terms with so much, so quickly. Apparently, she'd shrugged off her mother's stories, but now would have to face what learning differently meant, not only to the present and future but to her past as well. Add that to their current situation and the fact that someone had attacked her because of what her sister had witnessed. Well, it all added up to one very stressed mate. He could feel the

tension washing off her in waves, see her body shuddering in her seat and wanted nothing more than to take her into his arms and hold her against his beating heart, a heart that would forever belong to her if she would but allow it. He didn't see that happening quite yet, but his jaguar could sense its mate's sadness and fear and wanted to nuzzle her and wrap itself around her shaking body in comfort.

"You're sure. You've seen this?" Mercy asked, her green eyes huge as she looked between him and Ewan.

"Yes, sis, I've seen it. If they are sitting there patiently, tied up to the kitchen chairs, it's because they let you tie them there. They could have taken that shotgun from you at any time and made you eat it. Instead, they let you confine them to set you at ease."

Cameron shook his head in disbelief. *How long had ma mind drifted that A hadn't even heard her tell Charity that she'd tied us tae the chairs?* Oh well, her sister did have a point and maybe that would give Mercy some relief and maybe start her on the road to trusting her new mates.

When Mercy licked her lips and slowly relaxed in her chair, he almost sighed in relief. But they weren't out of the woods yet. Not until she released them, anyway. When she started to nibble on her bottom lip as Charity continued to

talk, it took all his control not to groan at the enticing sight. He wanted to be the one nibbling on her lush lips or sucking on her nipples while Ewan tasted her lips. Either way, he'd be one happy man if he could touch and taste his beautiful, fiery mate.

Mercy shook her head and sat forward, most of the tension she'd had in her body earlier was gone now. "Thanks, Charity. I'm not sure I believe they can shift, but they should be able to prove that one way or another, but at least from your description, I know that they aren't the ones after us."

He could see the question in his mate's eyes, knew she was silently challenging him and Ewan to prove her sister's claim one way or the other so he slowly nodded. He had no problem shifting for her. Perhaps seeing them strip down to their skin as they prepared to shift would, also, spark her desire. He could only hope.

Mercy closed the cell phone and sat there for a few moments before apparently coming to a decision. She stood, slowly placed the cell phone on the table, then looked him in the eye before meeting Ewan's gaze. "My sister says you aren't human. Prove it."

Ewan nodded, shifted his hand just enough that his claws grew and sliced through his bonds, effectively getting loose with excessive ease.

Mercy's sharp gasp echoed around the eerily silent kitchen.

"You could have gotten loose at any time." she whispered, her voice filled with fear and even what Cameron thought was a touch of awe.

"Aye," Ewan admitted. "But we wanted tae put ye at ease." He gave a one-shoulder shrug. "Letting ye tie us up seemed an easy enough way tae give ye peace o' mind."

Mercy's confused gaze jumped from Ewan to Cameron. "Why?"

Cameron licked his lips, nervous now despite the fact that she was halfway to believing they were there to protect her rather than hurt her. "Because ye're our *tu braith*, Mercy. Because ye're our souls' mate and we'd do naught tae scare or harm ye." Cameron admitted. Now it was up to her. *What would she do? What would she say now that she kent?*

## Chapter Four

Mercy's gaze alternated between the two men. Part of her wanted what they offered. Another part of her thought it was insane. *How can I put aside so many years of thinking my mother was as nutty as the proverbial fruitcake?*

Still, the proof sat right here in her grandmother's kitchen staring at her like she was haggis and they were starving Scotsmen out looking for a bit of something tasty to eat. Not that she thought for a second that haggis was tasty. She shot them a suspicious sideways glance. They probably thought it was tasty though. Shaking her head, she brought herself back to the present and the situation at hand.

She was in a small cabin in the middle of nowhere with two men who thought she was their mate. *Two shape-shifters*, she amended her last thought.

The whole situation was like something out of the weird romance novels Hope read. *Jiminy*

*Christmas, what am I supposed to do with these two men?*

Mercy felt her face heat as her gaze immediately dropped to both of their crotches in turn. *Holy crap!* She'd seen her fair share of men's naked bodies, but not once had any of them intimidated her the way these two men did fully clothed.

*What the heck am I supposed to do now?* She refused just to jump in bed with them.

"Take a look at that, will ye, Cam?" Ewan said to his companion. "She's a thing o' beauty isn't she?"

Putting the butt of the shotgun to her shoulder again, Mercy glared at him. "At least he's got enough brains to keep his thoughts to himself."

Goddess. She'd never felt like injuring someone so much in her life. *What was it about the tall, dark Scot that made my blood boil so easily – was it because the oaf personified everything I'd always wanted in a man besides brains?* Whatever it was, it didn't appear as though the irritation was going to end any time soon, unfortunately.

"Nah," Ewan disagreed, shaking his head. "It has less tae do with what's inside his head than it has tae do with what he thinks ye want tae hear."

"Is that so?" She shot Cameron a narrow-eyed glare. "Look, you may think you're my mates, but



I don't just jump in bed with every Tom, Dick and Harry, you know?"

"That's mighty good tae hear, Mercy."

Mercy almost toppled over at the sound of her name said by that smooth-tongued devil Ewan. The way he rolled the R actually made her go weak at the knees. She grimaced and leaned back against the counter for support as she held them in her sights.

"We dinnae expect ye to jump in bed with us tonight, love." Ewan shook his arms, as though he'd lost feeling in them.

Cameron still sat bound to the chair, looking for all the world like there was nowhere else on Earth he'd rather be.

"There *is* nye place A would rather be."

The shotgun clattered to the floor just before both barrels exploded and the men jumped.

"Are ye daft, woman? Trying tae kill us now, are ye?" Cameron shouted.

He didn't bother with shifting, he merely brought his hands up as he stood, breaking the line that bound him to the chair and stood glaring at her as though she'd dropped the gun on purpose.

Turning his gaze on her, it softened a bit. Mercy wasn't sure if it was because she looked up at him with undisguised fear now or because she was stammering like a schoolgirl with her first crush.

"I-I..." She cast her gaze around the kitchen as though something would spring up out of the floor and give her something to say.

"'Tis all right, lass. Dinnae fash yerself." Cameron held his large hands out before him. He looked like he wanted to take her into his strong arms and keep her safe forever. However, Mercy knew that wasn't what he had in mind. It wasn't what either of them had in mind.

She remembered the stories her mother told. She never really believed them, but she'd listened. *How could I not when our mother spouted such fantastic fairytales and insisted they were true? How could I have known that our mother wasn't really crazy, that she was merely one of the last of a dying race who hoped to see her daughters mated to some faraway males?*

*How could I have known that our mother wasn't some nut job who thought shape-shifters were real? That a group of men would come from some far off place to save them from whatever evil she'd conjured up in her unstable mind?*

Covering her mouth, she stared at them wide eyed and scared. They wanted more from her than any other man she'd ever known. They wanted her to let them share her. While it sounded fun in theory, it wasn't really how she'd planned her life.

She was a doctor, for the Goddess's sake. She couldn't have two husbands. She wasn't positive,

but she was pretty-darned sure the hospital board would frown on her having two live-in lovers.

*Who says the board has to know?* Mercy was shocked to find that part of her already considered the possibility.

Mercy stood with her hips pressed tight against the edge of the counter, her hands tucked behind her back so as not to do anything else as foolish as dropping her only weapon and stared at the two men who merely stood and stared back at her.

"What—" She licked her lips and tried again. "What now?"

Ewan crossed his arms, his feet shoulder-width apart, looking for all the world like a pirate on a ship with his dark hair and devil's looks. Blue eyes stared at her, piercing her with a sharp gaze.

"For now, we stay here and get some sleep. There's time enough tae head out tae see yer sisters in the morning." He moved to look out through the curtained window over the sink into the inky darkness beyond the glass. Despite the mirror effect from the light in the cabin, his enhanced eyesight because of his jaguar allowed him to see clearly outside "Ye're nae safe here in yer family home. They'll find it soon enough. We cannae be here when they do." He turned away from the window to face her. "There's safety in numbers. That saying's true enough. We need tae

get ye tae yer sisters where ye can keep each other company while we keep ye safe.”

Safe. That was a relative term. Right now, Mercy felt she'd be safer in this cabin without the two men. They were large, too large, and too damned cocky for her tastes. She knew the next thing they'd be telling her what to do and expecting her to cook and clean for them. They looked the type.

Both were tall and handsome, one with dark good looks and killer blue eyes, the other with blond hair and the most intriguing gray eyes she'd ever seen. They weren't slouches in the size area either. Both of them topped six foot four, at least, and they were both so muscular that their upper arms were easily the size of her thighs.

*The better to kill ye with, ma dear.*

She shook her head when they both gave her a knowing look and raised a brow. They were so similar looking one might think they were brothers. She bit her lip. Taking a deep breath, Mercy knew she had to broach the subject. They couldn't all stay up all night and then drive. Still, she was loathe to bring up the subject of sleeping arrangements with two large strangers.

Sighing, she raked her hands through her hair and bent to pick up the shotgun that still lay on the floor at her feet. She'd have to explain the large

hole in the laundry room wall to her sisters, but for now, she needed something to do.

Both men dove for the gun and wrestled it from her hands, no doubt, because they were scared she'd blow an appendage off the next time she dropped the damned thing.

Mercy found herself on the fence between anger and laughter as she watched them both give her a sheepish grin as Ewan handed the gun off to Cameron.

"We'll hang ontae this, if 'tis all the same tae ye."

Staring at the floor, Mercy pressed her lips together so she wouldn't laugh at their nervous expressions. Humor won out and she almost gave in to the urge to giggle.

Instead, she gave both men a sideways glance and said, "Whatever."

Their relieved expressions gave her enough courage to finally broach the subject it seemed none of them wanted to bring up.

"Sleeping arrangements," she paused to take a breath.

"We'll be sleeping together, lass. Make nye mistake about that."

"I'm not sleeping with you, you ass." She glared at Ewan. "You're awfully full of yourself, aren't you?"

"Nye." He shook his head. "A just ken A dinnae want ye in another room where someone can steal ye away in the dark o' night. A dinnae want ye behind a closed door where if someone should crawl through yer window tae murder ye in yer sleep, we wadnae hear them until it wis tae late tae help ye." He shook his head. "Ye can sleep fully clothed if that's yer wish, but ye will nae be sleeping alone."

Ewan stared the girl down. He knew she'd give in in the end. They always did. Females usually knew what was best for them and they would let the men take control. He leaned back against the table and crossed his arms.

"I am *not* sleeping with two strange men. If you think I am, you're as crazy as the creeps trying to kill my sisters."

Straightening to his full height, Ewan glared at her through narrowed eyes. He knew full well the look he gave her. Men from his clan, strong men, cowered under the same glare.

"Don't you *dare* give me that look, you, you cretin!"

Ewan felt his lips twitch as she poked him in the chest. Not once had anyone stood up to him who wasn't one of the Alpha's elite forces. Men older and larger than this little slip of a girl feared him—feared what he would do to them if crossed.

Here she stood, toe to toe, her nose practically touching his nipple, and gave him hell like nobody's business.

He wanted to shout, to laugh with joy. They made a great achievement today. They found their mate, that much was true, but what a mate she was. Nothing was better than finding a strong-minded, courageous mate like this one.

*We are lucky basturts, ye and A, Cameron said through their mind link. How long do ye think it'll be before she tries tae kill us again?*

Ewan grinned. Nothing was more important than getting her to come with them peaceably. Her sisters had seen to it that she didn't kill them, but it was up to Cameron and himself to keep her alive long enough to get her back to the campground where they could join forces in their efforts to keep the girls safe.

Grasping her shoulders, he lifted her about a foot into the air, where she gave a little squeak, then he set her down.

"We sleep in the same bed or nae at all, wee one. Ye dinnae understand. These men will stop at naught where yer sisters are concerned. We hae tae be sure they cannae get tae ye. Yer sisters are counting on us tae keep ye safe. What do ye suppose we tell them if something should happen tae ye, because we didn't force yer compliance?"

He held up his hand before she could make an angry retort. "A ken ye dinnae like the idea o' us forcing yer compliance, but make nye mistake, lass. We will do just that if we feel that ye're endangering yerself." He shrugged. "Wadnae it be easier on all o' us if ye just went along for the ride?"

Mercy bit her lip. Ewan could practically see the wheels in her mind spinning as she weighed her options and made up her mind. Sighing, she headed for the other side of the cabin and a dark hallway off what looked like a living room.

"The bedroom's this way." She glanced back at them and smirked. "I get the bed, you two get the floor. There's no way either of you are sleeping in the same bed with me."

The words *anytime soon* hung in the air unspoken but were there just the same. She seemed to overlook the fact that they could read her mind.

Ewan decided that, perhaps, he wouldn't remind her of that fact just now.

Grinning, he and Cameron fell into step behind her. If having them sleep on her bedroom floor gave her some feeling of security, he would not be the one to steal it away from her...not anytime soon anyway.



## Chapter Five

After nearly three hours of tossing and turning, Mercy sat up, turned and started beating her pillow. *Why can't I fall asleep?* The men had drifted off hours ago as though they didn't have a care in the world, but she couldn't even close her eyes without imagining what Cameron and Ewan would look like naked. *How was this fair?*

Frustrated, she let herself fall backward onto her pillow. Just a few days ago, her life seemed perfect, even if her love life didn't have much passion. She had a boyfriend who had many of the same things in common with her. Sure, the chemistry between them sucked, but sex wasn't everything. Dr. Frank was a well-respected heart surgeon who gave to charities and traveled to third-world countries with Physicians for Peace during his vacations. *Why couldn't I have just said yes to his proposal last week instead of asking for time to think about it?* Then she'd have already committed herself to another and she wouldn't be

having erotic thoughts about the two men lying on her grandmother's bedroom floor. Her bedroom floor, now that Grandmama had passed. Well, it belonged to her and her sisters.

*If ye're still calling him Dr. Frank, Mercy, then A doubt ye would hae wed him. A woman in love with her man doesn't call him by his title instead o' his first name.*

Mercy shrieked, then slapped a hand over her mouth. Leaning over the edge of the bed, she was surprised to find both Ewan and Cameron awake, their heads resting on clasped fingers, one lying toward the head of the bed, the other, the foot, taking up all the space between the window and the bed. Anyone trying to get in through there would find a surprise the likes of which he probably wouldn't survive. She didn't know whether to be thankful for that or scared out of her mind.

"Can you read my mind, Cameron?" she asked while gritting her teeth. She wanted to just reach over and bash him in his head with her pillow. Holding up her hand, she shook her head. "Never mind. I don't want to know. Of course, you can read my mind," she muttered. "Can this get any worse?" She flopped backward, spread eagle on the bed, her face burning with mortification.

"Do ye want us tae answer that, lass? Truly answer ye?" Ewan asked.

Mercy raised her brows in surprise, rolled back onto her side and peered over the edge of the bed at them. If she didn't know better, Ewan actually sounded sorry that her life was in the mess it was. Rubbing her eyes in frustration, Mercy sighed, then shook her head. "No. I know things could be worse, but a week ago, my sisters and I were all leading fairly normal lives. Now, everything has changed. Someone wants my sisters and me dead and now we've learned that all the crazy stories our mother told us before bed weren't so crazy after all. It's a lot to take in."

Closing her eyes, Mercy rubbed the back of her neck, exhausted and stressed but unable even to catch a twenty-minute nap. Working in the ER, she was used to being able to fall asleep within seconds of her head hitting the pillow, but tonight, tonight she couldn't get even a wink of sleep.

When the bed dipped and a muscular arm wrapped around her shoulders, she was surprised to find Ewan holding her when she opened her eyes and looked up into his deep blue gaze. Just to make sure she hadn't started to hallucinate from sleep deprivation, she looked toward the floor. Still lying on his pallet, Cameron winked at her, then closed his eyes. "Try tae sleep, lass," he whispered. "We hae a long day ahead o' us tomorrow and if ye aren't rested, ye won't be as

sharp as ye should be if danger comes calling on ye."

Next to her, Ewan tightened his arm around her and used his left hand to hold her head to his chest, keeping her in his embrace as he lowered them to the bed, lying side by side. "Cameron's right, love. A ken ye hae to deal with one crisis after another, but ye can rest tonight. Ye're safe from the basturts after ye. Sleep. We'll nae let anything happen tae ye, nae tonight, nae ever. Ye hae our solemn vow as nae only yer mates, but as members o' the Alpha's Elite Hunters."

"You promise?" she asked even as her eyes drifted shut. Maybe she would sleep, just for a little while. As sleep finally claimed her, Mercy had one last thought flutter through her mind. Ewan ended up in bed with her after all. *How had that happened?*

*Destiny, ma love. Destiny.*

\* \* \* \*

Cameron woke from a sound sleep, all instincts screaming that he needed to get Ewan and their *tu braith* out of there. He could feel the danger closing in. The hairs at the back of his nape were standing on end. He could feel his jaguar's fury and need for blood. As silent as possible, he scooted off the bedding and knelt to peer out the

blinds of the window. With his enhanced vision, he could make out shapes of at least three people approaching the window from the woods in the distance. Who knew how many were actually surrounding the house right this minute.

Glancing over at the bed, he wasn't surprised to see Ewan sitting up, holding his hand over Mercy's mouth as he explained their need for speed and silence in getting out of there.

*Make sure she puts on something dark if she has it, Ewan. A'm going tae slip out the backdoor and try tae reduce the numbers o' them out there. Keep our mate safe.*

*Ye hae ma oath. A'll protect our tu braith. Keep yerself safe. A doubt they left the cars untouched so we need tae go out the window and through the woods.*

*Good thinking, Ewan. A'll clear that side o' the house first.*

Since they promised not to touch her sexually until she was ready, they'd all worn some form of clothing to bed, so it only took a few seconds for Cameron to pull on and lace up his boots. He spotted a faded and dusty black ball cap hanging on the post of the footboard and used that to cover his blond hair. It was the best he could do for now.

After glancing at his mate and best friend one last time, he eased out of the bedroom and slid along the wall, doing his best to make his way through the house as silently as he could. It took

only a couple minutes to reach the kitchen door at the back of the cabin. If their luck held, the men coming at them would be ordinary humans and not shifters of some type. He should have asked more questions of his cousin to find out just who were after the Webber sisters. Then he'd have some clue as to how best to get Mercy to safety right now.

Shaking his head, he shoved those thoughts to the back of his mind. Kicking himself in the ass for not finding out more about the danger surrounding his mate would have to wait until he got them all out of the mess they were in. Opening the door just far enough to slide his body through, Cameron scanned the meadow surrounding this side of the cabin looking for his prey. He could see naught but three men, but his nose could smell nearly half a dozen different men closing in. He'd have to see what he could do to even the odds a bit more before they moved Mercy. He wouldn't take chances with her life.

Using the porch swing as cover, Cameron dropped to his belly and began to crawl through the grass toward the closest of the three intruders on this side of the house. With the clouds of an approaching storm covering the moon, the men could probably see nothing but a few feet in front of them. They wouldn't be expecting an attack, so for now, he had the advantage—until the first man

went down, anyway. After that, he would need to hurry to eliminate the threat enough that Mercy and Ewan could climb through the bedroom window while the team on the other side of the house entered through the front. That meant he had two, maybe three, minutes to get the area clear enough for them to escape. Any longer and chances were good the other team would gain access first. He couldn't let that happen.

Sweat poured down his face as he continued to approach his first target. He kept a slow, steady pace, trying to stay as low to the ground as possible so the men wouldn't see him until it was too late to help them escape.

*Cameron, shift intae yer jaguar. Then the authorities will just assume a wild animal attacked. We cannae throw suspicion on our mate and her sisters.*

*Yer right. Thank ye for thinking ahead. A just reacted.*

*Dinnae thank me. It wis Mercy who thought o' it.*

*Then thank Mercy. A am approaching ma first target. Be prepared tae come out the window when A give the word.*

*We're ready. Be careful. We've only just found our tu braith and hae much to live for.*

Closing his eyes, Cameron reached for his jaguar. The feline embraced the change faster than ever before, transforming from man to beast in mere seconds. More animalistic in this form, he

snarled, announcing his presence to the intruders. As he expected, the men started talking to each other, fear thickening the voices and souring the smell of his prey.

Creeping through the grass, he approached the first target, stopping less than a yard in front of the man. He could smell the bastard's gun oil. If one was armed, then all of them were. They wouldn't come unarmed to capture or kill his mate. When the man was about to step on him, Cameron lunged up and planted his entire body against the front of the intruder, bearing him to the ground with his body weight. Before the male could react, he bit down on the male's skull, piercing it with his teeth. Seconds later, the male died.

Cameron wasn't surprised to see the other two men running in different directions. It took but a few seconds for him to take down and eliminate target number two who had the misfortune of heading toward the cabin rather than away from it. *Only one more tae go on this side, but he's heading toward the woods, Ewan. Time tae leave.*

Cameron could hear the window rising behind him. As Mercy and Ewan scrambled out the window, he kept watch. It wouldn't surprise him if the others heard the window open so he'd stand guard while he waited for his family to join him.

Family. Despite the seriousness of the situation,



he felt almost giddy with happiness. Now that he'd found his *tu braith*, he and Ewan had a chance at having a family of their own—if they could find the Tree of Life. He could only hope that the Alpha of their clan was making progress in the search while he and Ewan helped their mate and her kin stay safe. They couldn't leave the States soon enough for him.

The air here wasn't like the air back in Scotland, not clean and pure but filled with car exhaust and chemicals. And the food. Though he loved a good burger now and then, that's about all that you could find to eat while traveling. They didn't have pubs here where you could find a good meal and conversation with your ale. Never mind that with Mercy and her sisters on clan land, they'd be safe from whomever it was gunning for them.

Lost in thought, Cameron didn't notice that they'd reached his side until he felt the unexpected touch of a small hand tentatively scratching behind his ear. If that had been an enemy, he would have died right there. He had to keep his mind on the here and now, or they were all in trouble—well, more trouble, anyway.

Though the mating bond had yet to be established with Mercy, he reached for her mind anyway. If the stories told about mates were true, then she should be able to talk to him even before they established the mate bond. *Get atop ma back,*

*Mercy. We'll head in the direction our attackers came from. A imagine they've left a vehicle parked out there somewhere.*

When she climbed atop his back, he felt like purring. Having her hear his unspoken words was just one more sign that she was indeed their *tu braith*. As they loped across the field and into the trees, he felt Mercy's tentative probing in his mind. *Did you look for keys?*

Ewan rubbed against Cameron's leg as he took the lead. The big cat looked back toward them, sent a message of his own. *We dinnae need keys. A can hotwire anything, but A imagine they left the keys and their identification in the vehicle in case o' capture—unless they're very smart and used stolen vehicles and chanced naught by leaving nae a shred o' evidence as tae who we're dealing with inside the vehicle. Besides, keys make noise in a man's pocket and would hae announced their arrival. These are pros. They wadnae hae made that kind o' mistake, love.*

As they raced through the woods, it took but a couple minutes to pinpoint where their intruders had parked. The sound of an engine turning over was like painting a neon sign telling them which direction to run. Cameron only hoped that their attackers had taken more than one vehicle. Otherwise, they'd be traveling on foot to the nearest town so they could call in reinforcements to come pick them up.

As they reached the side of the road, Cameron could see the taillights of the man who'd gotten away. If they'd only been a little faster, they would have been able to get the make and model of the car and perhaps would have a lead into who was going through so much trouble to rid the world of the four remaining Webber women. Still, they weren't completely out of luck. As he hoped, the bastards after Mercy did take two vehicles. Looking over at the basic four-door sedan parked on the side of the road, he reached out to both Ewan and Mercy. *We are in luck. They've left us a means tae escape. A suggest we hurry and take it before the others we left at the cabin show up.*

When Mercy climbed off Cameron's back, he almost wished they had more time. It was nice to have her so close while they ran. He didn't sense any fear from her at all, as she rode atop his back. More and more, he wanted to thank the Goddess for gifting him with so courageous a mate but that, too, would have to wait. Embracing the change, he once again called forth the magic within, shifting from feline to man. Again, it took but seconds to shift back into his human form with his clothing reappearing through the magic of his people. By the time he finished, Ewan already had the car running. Grabbing Mercy's hand, he led her to the front seat and buckled her in before getting into the back seat so he'd be able to watch for anyone

trailing them before they could find another means of transportation.

Once in, he tapped Ewan's headrest. "Let's go. 'Tis time we met up with the others at the campground. Then maybe we can figure out who wants tae harm our woman."

Ewan nodded and pulled onto the road. Within minutes, they were on the highway, heading toward safety, or so Cameron hoped. Only time would tell.

## *Chapter Six*

Mercy sat between them, biting her lip. She was squashed like some sort of pickle in a jar. The two large men left not a bit of room to slip a sheet of paper between them, let alone a grown woman. Still, she didn't complain. She was alive because of these two Neanderthals. If it weren't for them, the men who invaded the cabin may have killed her or worse, taken her hostage to convince her baby sisters to give themselves up.

Regardless of how she may feel trapped between the two men in the front seat of the mid-sized sedan with the crack between the split bench seat and the seatbelt sticking in her rear making her uncomfortable, at least she was alive to feel it. Mercy kept telling herself that every time the need to strike out at someone arose. She was still alive and that's all that mattered.

It didn't matter that she'd left behind the beginning of what seemed like a very promising career. It didn't matter that she'd studied for most

of her life to be a doctor. It didn't matter that she'd left everything, including her clothes, behind in the cabin. At least she'd had the presence of mind to grab her purse off the nightstand next to the bed. Right now, all that mattered was that she and her sisters were still alive. She had to keep things in perspective.

Staring blindly through the windshield, she watched the lines on the road blur as they moved faster and faster away from the cabin and toward her sisters. Cameron reached around her and made sure her seatbelt was secure. The pressure of his hand against her hip and rear was difficult to ignore. Her heart threatened to slam from her chest and she fought to keep her breathing normal.

Just the smell of him, of them, surrounding her in the car was enough to make her want to fall at their feet and worship the ground they walked on. *How can I keep myself from jumping them like some sex-starved lunatic the next time the vehicle came to a halt?* Her worst fear was finding out she wouldn't want to stop herself.

Rose light shone over the horizon as Cameron leaned his head back and closed his eyes. The sun poured its rays over the fields of corn as they moved steadily north in their stolen car.

Soon they'd have to stop. Her stomach growled and her face burned at the thought that either of the men heard it. If she was starving, they had to be as well. The Goddess only knew how much fuel those huge bodies took to survive.

She glanced at Cameron who still rested his head back against the headrest with his eyes closed and took the opportunity really to look at him.

He was hot, hotter than hot, truth be told. If she'd had the opportunity to choose the man she would spend the rest of her life with, he would have looked like him or his companion. She'd never once dreamed the tales her mother told of two men for each woman were true. She hadn't dared.

Mercy, determined to keep her gaze from Ewan while he drove, stared out the passenger window for a moment. Just looking at Cameron made her heart race and her womb clench. Liquid heat poured from between her legs and she hoped to the Goddess that they couldn't smell her arousal.

Taking a deep breath, she released it slowly. All she needed was to get all worked up while they were stuck in the confines of this tiny car. The thing seemed tiny from her vantage point, at least. The last thing she needed was for any of them to forget the danger that followed her, even for a minute.

Part of her felt like elbowing them in the ribs until they moved away from her, but she didn't. Instead, she daydreamed about what it would be like to strip naked and let them rub themselves all over her like the cats they obviously were beneath that thin layer of humanity they presented to the world.

Nothing could convince her that their humanity was stronger than the cats hidden within them. She had excellent night vision. She always had. Killing easily was not something normal humans did, nor was it a trait she wished her mates to have hidden deep inside them.

“‘Tis never easy tae kill a man, lass.” Ewan’s words surprised her and she jumped, feeling a guilty blush warm her face. “We never kill easily, though it may look like we do.”

“I-I...” *What can I say to that?* She certainly hadn’t expected him to say anything let alone prove, once again, they could read her mind. Mercy wondered if that was significant, because the last time, when they spoke to her through some sort of mind link, they seemed ecstatic or something. Besides all that, she certainly hadn’t expected him to invade her privacy again and comment on her thoughts. For a moment, she’d forgotten they could read her mind.

“Ye dinnae hae tae say anything, love.” Ewan glanced over at her with a soft smile before



shifting his gaze back to the road. "We ken how new all o' this is tae ye, though ye must admit, ye're mither tried tae prepare ye."

*She didn't do a very good job.* Mercy's thoughts toward her mother were, for a change, quite uncharitable. She could have proven it somehow. Taken them to the ritual instead of leaving them sleeping in their tents as though saving their kind was something they should hide—something of which they should be ashamed. Perhaps if they'd allowed their four girls to attend, things would have been different. Perhaps they would have gone looking for the elusive men in her mother's nightly fairy tales.

"Now, dinnae go blaming yer poor mither for nae telling ye things ye wadnae hae believed in the first place." He took his right hand from the steering wheel and reached down to pat her thigh. "It seems tae me and," he nodded toward his friend, "tae Cameron there, that she did a fine job of raising four open-minded women who were bright enough tae elude hired assassins for a time on their own." He grinned. "Nae tae mention women kind enough tae nae kill two men who show up in the middle o' the night telling what hae tae be are tall tales."

"Tall tales?" Mercy heard her voice crack with fear. She hadn't thought of that before now. *Had they tricked me somehow? Had the woman on the other*

*end of the phone been an imposter? Why have I taken them at their word so easily?*

Mercy shook her head in an attempt to clear it. Her thoughts were irrational. She knew it. On some level, she even believed her thoughts weren't as they should be, but nothing could dispel the little, niggling doubt his words planted there.

It couldn't be like that. She refused to believe anything had happened to her sisters. She would know if the worst had happened and they were dead. She wasn't sure how she knew, but Mercy was certain her sisters were fine.

"Well, ye worked that one out for yerself well enough." Cameron sat up straight in his seat and stretched.

*Good grief!* The man took up more room awake than he did asleep. His thigh pressed tighter against hers, along with the rest of his substantial form. His side pressed against hers, their arms pressed together until he raised his and rested it against the back of the seat behind her. It gave her a bit more room but also served to make her warmer with the heat radiating off his extended limb and into her shoulders and neck. It also went a long way toward making her more uncomfortable as she tried to sit forward a bit to keep from touching him.

Mercy couldn't help but think she felt squashed between these two men like the cream in a sandwich cookie.

"And just as sweet, A'd reckon," Ewan said with a grin.

Cameron leaned over, his lips nearly touching her ear, his accent thicker than she'd ever heard it. "Remember, love, our other half is jaguar, a verra big cat. We both love tae lap at cream." He closed his eyes, took a deep breath and groaned. "And A smell fresh cream right now." He whispered the words in her ear, his breath stirring her hair, sending little tingles rushing over her skin as she felt true desire for the first time in her life.

Mercy swallowed thickly. Closing her eyes, she grabbed her knees, squeezing tightly, afraid that if she let go, she'd reach out and place her hands against their raging erections. They were hard to miss, tenting the front of their jeans like some sort of pole or bat shoved down their pants. The doctor in her knew they couldn't possibly be that big, but the wanton, sex-starved woman who had abstained since senior prom night, despite Dr. Frank's not-too-subtle come-on's thought otherwise. Mercy swallowed again, determined to control herself. She couldn't, wouldn't do this. She was human, not some animal that couldn't control its base urge to mate.

The last thing she wanted was to lose control of herself and finally come to her senses after it was too late and they were out in the woods that stretched for what seemed forever on either side of the car as they drove, naked and committing acts in which she was certain she wasn't ready to become involved.

There was no denying it. The two men with her were exceptionally handsome, well-built males in the prime of their lives. It was only natural for her to feel attracted. That's all it was though. That's all she could allow it to be. It wasn't some predestined crap like the unbelievable stuff her mother always spouted just before bed. Those were fairytales, nothing more.

She was a doctor, for the Goddess's sake, not some child, not some simple, superstitious person gullible enough to believe her mother's tall tales. She knew how pheromones worked. She also knew it was healthy for her to feel such an attraction for these two almost-perfect males. Only a dead woman could ignore their heady scents, dark good looks and animal magnetism.

"Where are you taking me?" She stared through the glass at the mountains. She recognized some landmarks, but she hadn't been here since her mother died. Tears filled her eyes. So many years were lost to them. There were so

many questions they should have asked and didn't. Now it was too late.

On the phone, her sister had said they were near the ritual site, which meant they weren't far. Still, something within her didn't want to go, couldn't face the site where they'd last seen their parents together, happy.

Swiping at her face, she wiped her eyes before the tears had a chance to make streaks down her face. She wouldn't cry. Not again. The time for mourning her mother and father were long-since past. Now was the time to concentrate on finding her sisters and keeping them all alive.

## Chapter Seven

“Do ye recognize anything yet, lass?” Ewan asked as he stared through the windshield, a frown on his face. He glanced over at Cameron. “Call the others, get them tae tell ye their GPS coordinates.” It was a good thing they all had that handy device on their phones. Otherwise, he and Cameron might be lost deep in the woods somewhere. He’d heard America was large, but he’d had no idea exactly how huge the place was until they landed and began looking at local maps in an effort to find a likely spot for the splinter of the clan to have hidden the Tree of Life.

He ignored Cameron as he spoke on the phone and looked for the landmarks described to him before. He saw the dilapidated red barn in a field overgrown with weeds. By the looks of it, the forest would soon reclaim the field and that landmark would be gone, hidden by the forest. With the landmarks gone, it protected the tree that

much more by the loss of ways to identify its position.

They passed a small restaurant and gas station. He felt Mercy's disappointment more than his own hunger and slowed. "A think we should stop and get a bite tae eat. A dinnae ken how ye feel, but ma belly thinks ma throat's been slit."

He stole a glance at Mercy as he made the turn and headed back to the restaurant. He read the sign above, *Eat and Get Out* and grinned at the hospitality of the place.

"A dinnae ken, lass. It doesn't look like they relish the thought o' company."

She shrugged. "They're nice people. My parents knew them. They used to..." Her voice trailed off as though she remembered something she'd been coached not to talk about.

Her face turned red and she looked down at her hands clasped in her lap. "I'm sorry. My parent's always demanded secrecy about where we went, what we did."

"And ye feel as though ye're breaking a sacred trust by telling us?"

She nodded and he reached down to squeeze her knees.

"'Tis all right, lass. Ye'll soon come tae realize that we're part o' their secret. Until then, we're content tae wait until ye can give us yer trust."

The inside of the restaurant was like most others they'd seen since coming to America. The smell of grilled beef was strong in the air. He liked that he could get beef in abundance here, but he missed his haggis and traditional Scottish breakfast and wondered when they'd return. He and Cameron, not to mention most likely all the men who came to America were likely wasting away here.

The inside of the restaurant smelled heavenly. If he wasn't mistaken, he smelled kippers and spice kidneys. Shaking his head, he led the others to a nearby table and sat down. His mouth watered as he dreamed of a full breakfast, something he hadn't had since leaving home.

An older woman entered the dining area from a door behind the counter where there were several seats filled with old timers smoking cigarettes and drinking coffee.

She approached their table, stopped by a small cupboard and pulled some menus from it, then headed their way again. After setting the menus on the table in front of them, she pulled a pencil from the auburn bun she sported and held it to the order pad in her other hand.

"What can I get ya to drink while ye're deciding what ya want?"



"I'll have coffee with lots of cream and artificial sweetener," Mercy said before opening her menu. "And a glass of water, if you don't mind."

"Do ye hae tea?" Cameron asked, knowing the answer. They would have it, but it would be served still with the bag steeped in a cup of hot water. It wouldn't be served in a pot with milk.

"Of course we hae tea."

The woman sounded indignant, the slight accent he'd thought he'd heard grew stronger.

"Is that what ya want then, a good cuppa?"

Grinning, Cameron nodded.

"A'll hae the same," Ewan added, looking at his menu. "This says ye hae a full English breakfast." He pointed to the menu and Cameron felt his stomach grumble. The thing was so empty, it felt as though it was turning inside out.

"We hae the best and only full breakfast in the state." She stood up straight, her chest out, obviously proud of the fare.

Perhaps, if they were truly lucky, he and Ewan would finally eat their fill and feel as though they'd had a real meal for the first time since arriving in this country.

"That's what we'll all hae, then."

He glanced at Mercy when she would have protested. "Ye'll like it and what ye cannae eat, we will." The Goddess only knew they were half-

starved. They'd eat everything set in front of them, provided it was what they expected.

Ewan sat back and rubbed his full belly. "A dinnae expect tae find such a delicious breakfast all the way out here." He glanced toward the kitchen and lowered his voice. "Ye dinnae supposed these people are descendants o' those who brought the taproot here?"

Just the feeling of satisfaction of his belly full of porridge, eggs, bacon, kippers with the toast and marmalade gave him a better outlook on their whole situation. It was no wonder women always said the way to a man's heart was through his stomach. He may have offered to marry that waitress if he hadn't all ready found his mate.

Standing, he pulled his wallet from his back pocket and left the woman a sizable tip. She deserved it after bringing Cameron three helpings of spice kidneys and him the four bowls of porridge. They'd have to come back to this place and bring the others. He was certain they, too, missed the full breakfast and felt starved in this land of fast food.

Picking up his cup, he drained the last drop of milky tea and set it back in its saucer. Nothing could have prepared them for this place and they would never forget it. He knew he wouldn't, especially as it may lead them to the object of their

hunt, the very reason they'd come to America, the taproot to the Mystical Tree of Life. Now that he had a mate, finding the root had even more meaning for him and Cameron.

"Come on. We've wasted a lot o' precious time here." They had wasted time, but nothing could stop him or Cameron from eating their fill once they started. He grinned as he remembered the expression on Mercy's face as they continued to eat nearly everything in sight. "We must find the others today. A dinnae want tae spend the night in the woods unprotected."

He was sure Cameron didn't want to either. Protecting their mate was something they both took seriously and they would not allow her to come to harm. Not while they lived.

## Chapter Eight

As they left the restaurant, a sense of anticipation practically hung in the air. She knew something big would happen soon. Whether that something would be a good thing or not, she didn't know. There was something she did know and that was they were very close to where her sisters were camping. Instead of her mind being on their reunion, she'd spent most of the time they'd been driving thinking about tonight's sleeping arrangements.

She felt so much attraction for Ewan and Cameron, an irresistible pull to be near them. *Can I really give them up, walk away from them and go on with my life once they went home?* Just thinking about being without them caused her heart to skip a beat. The sense of loss battering her at just thinking about letting them leave without her made her pause. *Can I really do it? Can I leave my home, my medical practice I worked so hard to attain, to*

*travel to Scotland, and take these two warriors as my husbands?*

As she continued to worry about the future, she stared out the passenger-side window. She could hear Ewan mumbling in the back seat, probably on the cell phone again, either with his Alpha or with Charity's mates. Either one would be viable as the men seemed to think that the restaurant they stopped at would end up leading them to what they were searching for.

The trees were a blur outside her window, but soon, though she couldn't see the campground where they'd be staying, she could feel her sisters through their bond. It wasn't the same as her mates where they could speak to one another, but they always had a sense of where they were in location to one another. As children, it made playing Hide & Seek difficult, but right now, when trouble hovered nearby, it could only be a good thing.

Turning to Cameron who had taken over driving at their last pit stop, she reached out and clutched his forearm. "We're getting close. I can feel them."

Cameron nodded then let loose one of his devastating smiles. The deep blue of his eyes practically sparkled with fire. Only then did she realize that for the first time, she'd voluntarily reached out to him. Hesitant to move her hand,

her heart felt lighter when he placed his hand atop hers, while he continued to drive with the arm she still held. "Then ye'll be with yer sisters soon enough, love."

From the back seat, Ewan cleared his throat. "And we'll hae more men to stand guard. Until the Alpha arrives at the campground, which A suspect will be sometime tomorrow, Alastair informed me that we'll be staying in a cabin within spitting distance to the ones yer sisters are staying in."

Surprised, Mercy quirked her eyebrow. "You mean my sisters aren't staying in one cabin?"

Shaking their heads, both Cameron and Ewan started to chuckle. "Whether they ken it or nae, all three o' yer sisters hae met their mates and they're staying in separate cabins with their *tu braiths*. This way, they hae time to get to ken the men our Mither Goddess Morrigan chose for them."

Mercy rubbed a hand over her face, then looked from Ewan to Cameron and back again for any hint they were joking. It took only a second to realize they were telling her the truth. "I imagine Hope took that well, but Faith is going to give her mates hell. I have no doubt about that at all. She doesn't believe in fate, destined mates, or even her own abilities though she's had them all her life. It's not easy to see what a person is made of, but rather than accept it as the gift it is, she calls it

intuition and mocks anyone who says that it's more than simply reading a person's expressions. Her favorite lie she tells herself rather than be different is she's a freak in others' eyes."

Ewan grimaced. "Only a man could make a woman with such a gift feel like she's a freak, so much so that she won't have anything to do with her ability."

Mercy nodded, confirming his guess without verbally telling him he hit the nail on the head. "Now, she won't listen if any of us talk about our gifts in front of her. She'll just walk out of the room or change the subject."

The beginning of a tension headache started behind her eyes and Mercy rubbed them trying to get some relief. Every time she thought about what Michael Feduci had done to her sister, she'd get a whopper of a headache. She hoped he rotted in hell for hurting their sister the way he did. Now, she didn't trust herself or the part of herself that made her so very special and it was all *his* fault. Sighing, she returned her gaze out the passenger-side window. She couldn't think about that dirt bag now, she had more important things to consider—like tonight's sleeping arrangements, for example. Everything inside her insisted that she take them to her bed tonight, let them make love to her. Yet, she knew if she did, nothing would ever be the same again. She'd belong to

them forever.

*Just as we'd belong tae ye, Mercy, Ewan added. Once we mate, that will be it for all o' us. Ye'll be ours as much as we'll be yers. 'Tis the way o' things between tu braiths.*

Turning toward the back seat, she glared at Ewan. "Don't be spying on my thoughts, Ewan!"

He shrugged. "A cannae help it when ye're projecting all yer worries. Dinnae fash, love, normally yer shields prevent spillage, but that headache ye're sporting is letting some thoughts through that ye didn't intend for us tae hear."

Before she could cross verbal swords with Ewan again, Cameron took her hand and kissed her palm. "We're here, ma love. Ye'll be able to see that yer sisters are safe and well taken care o' in just minutes."

Mercy reluctantly withdrew her hand from Cameron's, giving him a small smile and nod in thanks. "I do appreciate all you and your people have done to keep my sisters and me safe. You didn't have to do that."

Cameron shook his head. "Even if ye weren't our souls' mate, we'd hae helped anyone in need. 'Tis the way o' our people to help others when their need is great."

Shaking her head, Mercy sat back in her seat as Cameron drove through the campground and toward the cabins set up near the back of the



national park where they'd be staying. *How could there still be men like Ewan and Cameron out there?* She'd thought chivalry long dead, but she didn't doubt Cameron's words. He and his people, they really cared about those less fortunate or weaker than they were. *How can I deny them, deny the bond already building between us just for a life with someone predictable?* She couldn't. She'd never take Dr. Frank up on his proposal.

Besides, she may have to get more medical school training or redo her internship, but she could always doctor in Scotland once she met all their requirements—especially as more than likely, all her sisters will be living there, too. *What do I really have to keep me here besides my job and my sisters?* Not a thing in retrospect. Not a thing that would prevent her from pulling up stakes and leaving America when they found the taproot for the Tree of Life that her sister told her they were hunting so desperately for.

Feeling better now that she'd made her decision, she smiled as they made their way up the mountain to the cabins she and her sisters would stay in for now. Now that she knew what she'd do, she could sit back and relax because before the night ended, she'd be taking Ewan and Cameron to her bed and accepting them as her mates.

From the backseat, Ewan watched the expressions chase across his mate's face. He'd done his best not to pry into her thoughts unwanted, but every now and then, she'd let a stray thought free that intrigued him so much, he found himself using his talents to actively listen to her mental ramblings. If she knew he'd heard her last statement, she'd probably want to geld him. All the more reason not to tell her.

As they pulled in front of the row of cabins, Ewan wasn't surprised when three of the five cabin doors opened at once with three identical women rushing to meet their car. Apparently, the sisters could sense one another's presence. That's something he and Cameron hadn't known and if something were to happen that forced them to separate, might help in retrieving whichever female had either been taken from them or had wandered away for whatever reason.

It didn't take a genius to know that, at times, women could grow tired of being sequestered, even when their lives might be in danger and a simple walk around the cabin could land them in danger if they were unaware. When Mercy threw open the door and raced to embrace her three sisters, he shook his head, putting his thoughts about what could happen away for now. It was good that Mercy could reassure herself that her kin were safe, because tonight, he and Ewan had

plans of their own. By this time tomorrow, they hoped she'd agree to be their mate and if it took all night to pleasure her into agreeing, then they were more than up to the job—had been since they first scented her yesterday.

As the sisters all began babbling at once, he rested against his car and took the scene in. He couldn't believe it'd only been a day since he'd discovered his *tu braith*. It seemed so much longer, almost like they'd known her forever. And yet, the way his cock had been pressing against the fly of his jeans, thick and ready for what seemed like days, he could only be thankful that they were at a place where, hopefully, before long, he would find relief. But as in all things with relation to his mate, it would be her decision to take them to her bed or not, but if what he'd heard unintentionally earlier, she had reached the decision to do just that. In all honesty, he and his cock couldn't wait.

*What are ye feeling so happy about, Ewan?* Cameron asked as he joined Ewan as he leaned against the car, their arms crossed, their gazes locked on the excited women.

*Just a wee something A accidentally picked up from Mercy's thoughts. She's decided tae take us tae her bed and will come home with us tae Scotland. A dinnae want tae get ma hopes up yet though. We've nae yet proved ourselves tae her.*

Cameron nodded. *A think A'll wait tae celebrate*

*when she actually tells us what she's decided. Until then, A am going tae do ma best tae woo our woman and convince her that in our arms and in our homes is where she wants tae be.*

*It took all Ewan's control not to chuckle. A choose tae let her do the wooing. If she wants tae seduce me tae her bed, then far be it from me tae stop her.*

## *Chapter Nine*

Mercy embraced her sisters, happy to see for herself that they were all well and in apparent good health. Her sister Charity had a glow about her that Mercy had never seen before. Apparently, mating her two Scots agreed with her. Even Hope had a twinkle in her eyes, even though she didn't think she'd claimed her men yet or let them claim her.

Of all her sisters, it didn't surprise Mercy to see that Faith was the only one with the look of battle in her eyes every time she snuck a peek at the men standing in the doorway to their right. Those must be Faith's destined mates and as she thought, Faith was fighting not only the attraction, but the entire thought that her mom might not have been as crazy as they all assumed. Perhaps it would be better if Faith's mates just overwhelmed her defenses rather than wait for her to accept them. It would probably be the only way she'd accept them. She needed men who were strong and

willingly to knock down the walls she'd built before agreeing to be their mate.

She'd have to let Faith's men know that little tidbit but not until she felt confident that they *were* the right men for her little sister. All that would have to wait though. Satisfied that her sisters were safe, she stepped back and smiled at the triplets. "Well, it seems we're all safe and well for now. I'm beat from traveling so I am going to go lie down. Perhaps we can all meet up for breakfast tomorrow. I'd love to meet your mates, Charity."

Charity smiled and looked over her shoulder at what had to be her men, Alistair and Connor. "That sounds good. I'm in need of an early night as well." None of them had any doubt that Charity would not be getting to sleep anytime soon.

If things went her way, Mercy hoped to find herself in the same position shortly. With that in mind, she hugged her sisters again, then headed toward her mates who patiently waited by the car for her to come to them. *Had they read my intentions?* She hoped so, because she'd never really taken the lead in lovemaking before and didn't really envision doing so this first time with Ewan and Cameron—at least not entirely.

Mercy bit her lip then looked at her mates who seemed to be completely at ease now that they were surrounded by many of their clan members. "Which is our cabin?" she asked.

Before either of them could answer, Charity's mates approached and handed a set of keys to Cameron. "Ye're in the farthest cabin. The one on the end," he said pointing toward the first cabin in the row."

Cameron nodded. "Thanks for seeing tae our mate's comfort and preparing for our arrival, Connor. We shall see ye next rising."

Connor and Alistair just smiled, then headed back to their cabin—the one in the middle of the row of five—while Faith entered the cabin to the right of Mercy's and Hope entered the cabin to the right of Charity's. The one on the end stood empty.

Mercy shook her head and followed her mates to the cabin they would be staying in for the night. Nervous apprehension worked its way down her spine, but she'd come to the decision she wanted and she'd not let fear of the unknown stop her from embracing her future.

The cabin, though small, felt cozy, not cramped. Instead of one main room, she was pleasantly surprised to find that it had a separate bedroom and kitchen. As she looked around and noticed all the candles on the tables, she had to smile. This had to be Charity's doing. She never went anywhere, stayed anywhere, without filling the place with candles. She said the candlelight made everything seem better, even when you knew the

world outside had gone to shit. Tonight she was grateful that Charity had thought ahead and supplied the candles. She'd use them in the seduction of her own mates—probably exactly what her sister had planned.

Searching the kitchen drawers, she found a lighter and set about setting the scene, and all the while, she felt her men's gazes on her back. She could do this—seduce them. She would. She just needed to stop her hands from shaking as she lit the candles, because she didn't want them to know how much of a novice she was at this type of thing. Sure, she'd had sex before, but this was more than sex. This would be a mating, a joining of their lives, for the rest of their lives. She couldn't screw this up.

It was all Cameron could do not to order Mercy to take off her clothes and go to the bedroom and get on the bed the moment they entered the cabin they'd rented next door to the one her sisters were staying. Instead, he waited for her to finish lighting candles and setting the mood. He needed her to give them some indication of how she wanted to proceed, because they'd not force her to take them to her bed and mate with them if she weren't ready to do so. That would go against everything they believed in. Their *tu braith's* needs were all that mattered right now.



Mercy turned then, the last of the candles lit and spread across every hard surface in the living room and bedroom. Once she finished, she headed their way, stopping in front of them.

Cameron's intentions to hold back disappeared in a heartbeat when she licked her top lip, then bit the bottom one, nibbling on it with her teeth. With his control in tatters, he growled, "Strip, Mercy."

She chuckled as if she meant to disregard his demand. When she boldly raked her gaze over his body, stopping momentarily at his cock before moving down to his feet then back up. His control was fast becoming nonexistent.

"Hmmm," she murmured. "That almost demands my disobedience, don't you think, Ewan?"

Cameron's nostrils flared as his beast battered his mental shield. His instincts demanded he mount her right here, right now and mark her as his mate.

Ewan moved behind her and pushed her blonde hair to one side as he nibbled on her neck. "Perhaps A should step in. If A remove yer clothing, then neither o' ye will have tae stand down. It would be a mighty great pleasure—and great sacrifice—tae reveal yer body tae both our sights."

Even as he spoke, his hands slid down her waist to the hem of her t-shirt, lifted it up and over

her head without waiting for an answer and tossed it on the living room floor. Cameron sucked in a deep breath as her breasts were revealed. Even covered by the lace of her bra, he could tell that they would be a perfect handful for him—for both he and Ewan.

The flickering candlelight made her skin glow. She was exquisite. A goddess he and Ewan would cherish until the day they died. They would take great pleasure in showing her just how much they already adored her, even after only knowing her such a short time.

Ewan's hands cupped her breasts as if offering them to him. When his thumbs brushed Mercy's nipples through her lacy bra, it took every ounce of Cameron's control not to pounce on her but to stay where he was.

As Ewan's fingers plucked Mercy's nipples through the material, Cameron groaned. He wanted to be the one standing behind her, taking possession of the taut buds, tugging and twisting them so she arched her back and shuddered in pleasure.

When Mercy groaned and gripped Ewan's thighs, Cameron swallowed the saliva pooling in his mouth.

"That feels so good," she moaned. And when she began to gyrate, her ass pressing against Ewan's clothing-covered cock, Cameron wanted to

rip his best friend away from her and take Ewan's place. If anything, he was the one receiving punishment rather than Mercy.

Cameron didn't remember even shedding his clothing, but when he rubbed his cock and gripped the shaft, stroking it to Mercy's grinding against Ewan, he knew he'd lost whatever control he had. When her gaze dropped to his cock, he rubbed his thumb over the head where a bead of pre-cum already waited. She licked her lips. Cameron's cock jerked in reaction.

When her eyes widened and she licked her lips again, he spread his thighs, allowing her to see exactly what she did to him.

"You're gorgeous, Cameron. I could watch you do that all day long," she whispered, her voice filled with hunger.

He was just as hungry. If he didn't take her soon, it would be all over for him. He'd spew his seed on the floor instead of inside his mate and that he didn't want.

Ewan's fingers left Mercy's nipples and traveled down her tummy to the waistband of her jeans. "Ye cannae mean that, love, nae when ye can have us both pleasuring ye instead," he murmured. He unfastened her pants and shoved them down her thighs without waiting for an answer from her. They both could sense her arousal, could feel the need building in their mate.

The bond between them had already grown strong enough for them to sense her moods, her needs. Soon, it would be strong enough to allow telepathic communication between the threesome, as if they were one mind, one soul.

As Mercy's jeans slid down her legs to pool at her feet, Cameron stepped forward. He could not stand it a moment longer. Ewan was having all the fun and he could not wait another minute to touch their mate, to feel her skin beneath his hands. He continued stroking his cock as he looked over Mercy's shoulder and met Ewan's gaze. "Finish it already. Remove her bra and panties. A can smell her arousal and it's driving me insane with desire, Ewan."

When Ewan complied, stripping her lacy green bra and of the tiny green panties, revealing the blonde triangle of hair and her swollen, glistening folds, both he and Ewan groaned.

The panties joined the rest of the clothes on the floor. Cameron sank to his knees in front of her as Ewan took possession of her breasts again, covering them with his hands as his teeth raked her shoulder, her neck, nibbled on her ear. When Cameron gripped her thighs and stroked his tongue through her sodden folds, she gasped and quivered in Ewan's arms.

Cameron looked up into Mercy's emerald-green gaze even as he continued to inhale her

womanly scent. “Ye are perfect for us, ma mate. Will ye allow us tae take ye tae bed, tae pleasure ye until ye cannae take it a moment more?” he asked.

She nodded and closed her eyes. Cameron met Ewan’s gaze. It was time. Time to take her to their bed and make her theirs — forever.

## Chapter Ten

Cameron's wicked tongue swirled around her clitoris, then rasped over it, sending icy-hot blasts of pure fire from her pussy to her nipples, then back again. When Cameron growled against her pussy, the vibrations sent another wave of sensation through her. *How am I to survive this?* The pleasure was almost too much to bear. Panting, she bucked her hips, grinding her bottom against Ewan, who still held her steady for Cameron's seduction.

"Please," she begged, rubbing her pussy against Cameron's face, trying to entice him into giving her what she needed. Ewan's fingers tightened on her nipples instead. Pleasure-pain zipped from her breasts straight down to her clitoris as if connected by a single nerve.

Need and desire surged through her, stronger than ever before, so raw that it frightened her with the intensity of it. *How will I ever survive their lovemaking when already I think I'll die if they don't*

*take me now. Shouldn't they somehow mark me as theirs?* In that moment, she knew that she wanted to belong to them—only them. That she hadn't made this decision to be near her sisters or because she had nothing here. She made the decision to accept them simply because she needed them, was destined for them alone. This was what she needed, what she hungered for, the love of two men who would cherish her and show her a love that she'd only ever imagined.

Ewan's mouth and teeth settled on the spot where her neck met her shoulder, then bit down. Marked her. His tongue swirled over the bite, easing the momentary pain. Against her cunt, Cameron growled, turned his face toward her thigh, where he, too, bit down, repeating the process that Ewan had just completed, swirling his tongue over the mark he'd left, easing the pain as if it'd never been. No sooner did the pain cease before he sealed his lips around her clit and suckled it.

Sensation ripped through Mercy, eradicating her ability to think as their hands and mouths, lips and tongues continued to explore her body. She writhed and arched between them, caught in a whirlpool of craving and need from which she had no desire to escape.

Reduced to pure need and helplessness, she begged them to let her come, both in her mind and

verbally. "Pleasepleaseplease," she cried. "Please let me come." Cameron answered by picking Mercy up and carrying her the short distance to the bedroom and the bed that awaited them there.

After Cameron placed her on the bed, she watched as Ewan quickly stripped, tossing his clothes haphazardly on the floor and across the chair in the corner of the room. She smiled, feeling smug at the knowledge that he was in such a hurry to get naked.

As Ewan's cock was exposed, she licked her lips. Dark and thick, weeping pre-cum, its length and girth equaled Cameron's. She knelt on the bed, her palms rested on Ewan's thighs, framing his testicles that hung heavy with seed. "Can I?" Mercy whispered, her eyes lifted to meet Cameron's, begging for his permission to take Ewan's cock in her mouth. She had to taste him, even more than she needed to come. *How had that happened when only moments ago I'd begged them to ease my need?*

Ewan's fingers circled his cock, stroking up and down in strong, slow pulls. "Get on yer hands and knees, Mercy."

When she complied with sensuous grace, the sultry desire they saw in her eyes, could feel through their forming bond, commanded them to follow her, to position themselves in front of and behind her. Ewan's cock rested just in front of her



face, while Cameron's hands rested on the globes of her ass, his cock a mere inch from her needy pussy.

Ewan wanted nothing more than to plunge immediately into her tight sheath, to feel her vaginal muscles fist around his cock as it desperately tried to hold on to him, but her mouth called to him like a siren's song. At this point, he didn't know how he wanted to take her first.

As he knelt in front of her and Cameron behind her, they had their *tu braith* just where they wanted her.

"Take him in yer mouth, Mercy," Cameron growled.

Immediately she complied. Her tongue darted out, licking up the bead of pre-cum weeping from the slit at the head of his cock. As he watched Mercy pay loving homage to his cock, he could sense Cameron's own hunger growing. Never before had he wanted to take a woman this badly. Watching her take his erection in her mouth as Cameron knelt behind her, his hands massaging the globes of her ass only made his own arousal that much sharper.

Mercy moaned around his cock when Cameron slid his fingers into her pussy. Ewan watched as Cameron fucked them in and out of her channel in the same rhythm that he took her mouth. Ewan shuddered, started to pant as he felt his orgasm

approaching. He'd thought it torture to watch while Cameron tasted her cream, but that paled in comparison to the feel of her mouth, the hot lash of her tongue as she worked his cock. His thighs bunched, his legs quivered as lips and tongue concentrated on the head of his cock. Need tore through him, raw and urgent, burning through his veins hotter than ever before.

His ass clenched as he desperately tried to stave off his orgasm. He didn't want this moment to end. His breathing grew harsh and ragged, testimony to how difficult holding off his climax had become. Seconds passed and he knew he could hold out no longer. He moaned her name, then surrendered his control, surging into her mouth harder and faster. Pleasure, the likes of which he'd never known, whipped through his body as he spilled his seed down her throat. He continued to shake and shudder as she cleaned him with her tongue. He pulled from her mouth, already regretting that he hadn't lasted longer, then collapsed on the bed.

He watched as Cameron mounted her, thrusting deep and hard, his face a mask of feral pleasure and awestruck possessiveness. As he watched the pleasure spread on Mercy's face, Ewan's cock hardened as if he hadn't just come minutes ago. A new wave of hunger roared through him as Cameron continued to forge in

and out of her clasp channel. Ewan captured Mercy's lips, could taste himself on her lips and tongue.

Opening the bond between him and Cameron, he shared exactly what it felt like to have her mouth ravishing his cock. Cameron grew more savage, taking her deeper and harder than before, until the headboard began to pound into the wall.

Mercy moaned. Her nipples grew even harder as she gripped the bedding in her fists and met Cameron thrust for thrust.

Cameron's growl rumbled through Ewan's mind, but he didn't break the telepathic link. His tongue tangled with Mercy's and her moans of pleasure rippled down his spine, making his cock rigid with need. When Cameron's teeth pierced her flesh where her neck and shoulder met, opposite the site he'd claimed, he swallowed down her cry of ecstasy, yielding her lips only after her orgasm pushed Cameron over the edge and into his own.

"Ma turn," Ewan murmured, his arm curling around Mercy's waist as he pulled her from Cameron's grasp and guiding her onto her back so he could cover her with his body. He'd waited. He'd been patient. He could wait no longer to take her despite the fact that she'd already made him come once today. He needed to claim her channel just as Cameron had, needed to feel her sheath

clench around his cock and milk him of his seed. He moaned as her skin, glistening with sweat, pressed to his. Her legs automatically parted, wrapped around his hips. Her heated mound and dripping slit tempted him to take her just as Cameron had taken her.

"I need you, too," she whispered, lifting her head and touching her lips to his, slipping her tongue into his mouth, cajoling him to join with her, to slide his cock into her already-wet channel. His cock throbbed with urgency, ready to do just that.

Ewan clasped her hands with his, held them to the mattress. Ecstasy shimmered through him as he joined his body to hers, filling her in one smooth stroke. Mercy. Always and forever it would be her name that sang through him. Once fully seated, he tried to stay still, not wanting to end their mating too soon, but the feel of her inner muscles clutching his cock was his undoing. When she canted her hips and thrust upward, he completely lost it, fucking her with ruthless abandon.

He threw the bond wide open, solidifying the link between the three of them as he thrust into her grasping channel. In. Out. In. Out. Faster and faster. Harder and harder. His hips bucked, jerked, as he pistoned deeper and faster than he'd ever had before. He couldn't stop. Didn't want to

stop. And when she shouted out his name as her muscles clamped down on his cock, he'd thought he'd died and gone to heaven. Nothing had ever felt as sublime as emptying his seed into his *tu braith*, into his soul's mate. It took every ounce of his remaining strength to roll to the side as sleep tugged at his consciousness. He was only barely aware when Cameron returned with a wet cloth and cleaned their mate, then tossed the washcloth in his direction. Reaching up and snagging the cloth from the air, he wiped up and tossed it on the floor just as Cameron joined them in the bed, wrapping his arm around their mate, his chest to hers while Ewan pressed his chest to her back, placing his arm over her waist. Knowing they'd thoroughly exhausted their mate, Ewan smiled and allowed sleep to claim him.

## Chapter Eleven

*Several hours later...*

Mercy woke sandwiched between her mates, sore in places she'd never been before. Her mates still slumbered peacefully beside her though full dark had come and dinner had long passed them by. Despite the fact she remembered Cameron washing her, she still felt sticky and in need of bathing.

Sliding out from between her men, she quickly dressed and knocked on the door to Charity's cabin. In muttered whispers, she asked her sister for a bathing suit and headed toward the pond at the back of the campground. She'd only been swimming a short while when she sensed both her mates approach.

She watched Cameron stop at the edge of the water and place his hands on his waist. "Ye should have woken us, lass, if ye wanted a swim. It isn't safe for ye tae be wandering alone."

"I wasn't alone. Connor was watching me," she yelled back, slowing swimming toward her upset mate.

"Aye. That he wis, but we sent him back tae his mate so that we may hae some more time alone with ye."

Coming to her feet, she walked out of the water and stopped in front of her mate. Cool air kissed her newly exposed skin as Cameron reached behind her neck and released the thin straps of her bikini top. The tips of her breasts pebbled in the chilly night air. Mercy trembled as his lips caressed her bare nipples, his fingers gently pulling and twisting the hardened nubs. Closing her eyes, she reached up and held him to her, unable to keep herself from sinking her fingers into his hair and pulling him closer.

*What in the name of the Goddess are you doing?* she asked herself as he knelt before her and removed what was left of her attire. She bit her lip. "Um..." *What can I say?* She wanted this and if she told him otherwise, her scent would give lie to her words. She wanted them both. Her body already creamed with anticipation.

"Um...what?" He leaned forward, took a hardened nipple into his mouth and suckled.

Her protest was lost when Ewan moved up behind her and suckled her neck, the hard

evidence of his desire pressed between the cheeks of her rear.

"We can't." She panted then threw her head back onto Ewan's broad shoulder. "Someone could see us." *What did it matter? What is modesty when I could have so much pleasure with these two men – my two men?*

"Nye one will see us. The enemies are not here—at least for now—and the others are probably engaged in similar activities. We moved a bench near the stone table under the trees and intae the soft grass. There's nye reason we cannae explore each other here." Cameron chuckled.

The action sent little tingles through her body to nestle deep within her core. Her clit throbbed with anticipation, or perhaps it was impatience, as she waited for their hands to give her pleasure, as she waited to give them pleasure in return.

They walked with her, moving her sideways a bit, then backward until she felt Ewan leave her and the cold hard stone of the ritual altar pressed against the back of her legs.

Mercy felt an instant trill of fear. *What if they intend to kill me?* This was an altar for pagan practices after all.

Cameron pressed her back until she lay flat on the hard stone altar. Ewan took his place nuzzling her breasts as Cameron reached down, spread her



thighs and moved between them. "Did ye ken that sexual magic is the most powerful magic o' all?"

He leaned close, one hand moving between her legs to sink deep into her flesh. Long fingers expertly circled her clit and she groaned. If they planned to kill her, they'd decided to do it with pleasure. Mercy spread her legs wider, giving him easier access to strum the sensitive nerve endings of her sex.

Ewan continued to suckle and lave her breasts as Cameron dropped to his knees at the end of the table and pressed light kisses to the insides of her thighs.

She couldn't help but scream as the rough pad of his tongue stroked her nether flesh, lapping up the cream that gathered between her spread thighs. He continually brought her to the edge of a climax before deliberately slowing down. He stopped, kissed her thighs, her calves. He even once stopped to suckle her toes, causing her a pleasure-pain she never thought possible before tonight.

The dark forest surrounded them, the scent of pine filling her senses. The sound of small animals scurrying through the brush was a distraction she held on to in an effort to keep from going insane. If they didn't let her come soon, she'd certainly go mad.

"Tell me ye love us," Cameron said, his cheek resting on her thigh. Leaning down, he gave her clit a long slow lick. "Tell me or A'll leave ye wanting."

Mercy gasped. *He wouldn't be so cruel, would he?* Determined not to take any chances, she nodded then gasped, "I love you." She glanced over at Ewan. "I love you both." *Now make me come, damn it, before I break into a million pieces.* Mercy stared up at the patches of sky above her, floored by the realization. As impossible as it was, she did love these two all ready. She cared for them more than should be possible in such a short time. *How had they wormed their way into my heart so quickly and thoroughly?*

Nothing could stop this now. She wanted it at least as bad as they did and damn any other campers. It was dark enough that no one should be able to see them. Every time she screamed, Ewan covered her mouth with his, so no one should hear them. Not one thing remained of the excuse to go back inside.

She stared up at the smattering of stars that she could see through the trees. She wanted this. She'd dreamt of the day when she would become one with her husband. Only then, she hadn't dared dream there were two men destined to be her mates.

Once the words left her lips, Cameron's lips circled around her clit and suckled, finally giving her the release she needed. Mercy screamed, raising her hips, her climax so intense, she nearly bucked herself off the altar. Cameron held her, his face pressed deep between her legs as he continued to suckle the sensitive bud at the apex of her thighs.

Cameron pulled away after one long, last swipe of his talented tongue. He looked up over her torso, his head resting against one quivering thigh as he kissed and bit it gently. "Time tae sit up, love. Ewan has need o' ye."

Mercy glanced over at the other man; her eyelids lowered and licked her lips.

"Nae that, love," Ewan grinned and moved to sit on a bench nearby, leaning back with his hand caressing his massive erection. "Cameron means for ye tae ride me."

The whispered words made her insides clench and, swallowing thickly, she stood on wobbly legs. With Cameron's steady hand, she moved to Ewan. The latter reached up and cupped her breasts, taking each of the turgid tips into his mouth in turn while Cameron caressed her from behind, one hand moving gently over her rear, the other's fingers buried in her tight channel. Mercy threw her head back, reveling in the sensations both the men gave her.

“Climb ontae Ewan, love.” Cameron murmured, his voice gruff. “Put his cock in ye.”

Glancing down, she again licked her lips. Ewan’s cock jutted up from the nest of hair reaching his navel. Even in the moonlight, she could see it was full and flushed...waiting.

Nodding, she moved over Ewan, facing him as she climbed into his lap and lowered herself over him, using her hand to help guide the large shaft into her waiting sheath. She whimpered softly, her eyes glazing over as her vision blurred. Nothing felt as wonderful as having these two men telling her what to do, bringing her pleasure.

Ewan wrapped his strong arms around her, holding her still when she would have rode him. He pressed his face into the crook of her neck and suckled a bit before burning a trail to her ear with his tongue. “Relax, love.”

*Relax? How can I relax when every part of me, every last nerve ending, screams for Cameron to enter me from behind?* She could barely breathe as she waited for him to press his cock against her rear. She needed this, needed them and wanted to feel the sensation of his cock tunneling into her ass as she rode Ewan’s large shaft.

She bit down on her lip to keep from whimpering her frustration as Ewan reached down and cupped the cheeks of her ass. Cameron fumbled in his pants for a few seconds, then

returned to them and she felt him drop to his knees. Mercy had little time to wonder what he'd done when she felt the slick fluid coat her back hole. Oil. She relaxed a bit, realizing they would do everything in their power to make this good for her.

Her heart raced, waiting. She needed this, needed them. They had to come together as true mates. If there was one thing she remembered from her mother's stories, it was that she must have a tie with both of them to have their children. She wriggled on Ewan's shaft, trying to convey that she couldn't wait, that she didn't want to wait.

Cameron slapped her ass cheek, not hard, but the sensation was enough to make her whimper again, though not from pain.

"Dinnae move, love. This is...this is already difficult."

*What did he mean by that?* She wasn't any different from any other female. If there were something wrong with her, she'd have figured that out by now.

"'Tis difficult tae keep myself from driving intae ye with wee regard tae yer feelings. Ma control is a fragile thing. Dinnae test it."

Mercy settled down onto Ewan, trying to wait patiently for Cameron's ultimate possession.

First, she felt one finger enter her from behind, then another. When he'd squeezed three fingers inside her back hole, he scissored them, stretching her, causing darts of sensual pain to zing through her body, straight to her already-diamond-hard nipples. She groaned. It was difficult to keep herself from grinding down onto Ewan's cock. She still felt as though something was missing and her body demanded she find out what it was and acquire it.

Heat flared out from her middle. She felt the liquid gush from her vagina, coating Ewan's already-drenched cock. "Just do it," she managed to groan the words between clenched teeth. "Do it before I die."

With a groan Cameron leaned over, covered her body as he gently pressed his cock deep into her ass. They filled her, both of them. She felt herself moving, rocking with them as they worked out a rhythm with each other, one withdrawing while the other surged back in. In. Out. In. Out. Mercy thought she would die from the pain-pleasure of their ultimate possession of her. *How can I have ever doubted this, doubted my mother? How can I go back to what I had experienced before?* She couldn't. This was her destiny, these men, her fate blessed by her Goddess. She could no more turn her back on them than she could her own sisters.

She screamed her pleasure over and over as they continued to thrust and counter-thrust deep within her. When they both sank their teeth into her neck, injecting their saliva into her overly sensitive body, she went rigid with one final release before succumbing to exhaustion, sinking into the darkness that awaited her in her mates' arms, secure in the knowledge they'd take care of her.

*Now and always, Cameron promised.*

*Now and always, Ewan repeated.*

## Epilogue

Mercy woke with the eerie sense that someone was watching her, but as she looked at both her mates, they continued to sleep as if everything were fine. Running her hand through her hair, she used the movement to hide the fact that she scanned every corner of the room in search of what woke her from sleep. Heck, she didn't even remember coming back to her room, never mind climbing back into bed, but that was a worry for another time.

As she continued to scan the room, her gaze kept straying to a corner of the room filled with shadows that seemed to move. When that corner filled with light, she reached out for both her mates.

"Do not worry, Mercy. I'm not here to hurt you. I could never hurt you, the eldest of my daughters."

As the glowing white light faded, Mercy strained to see who was in the room with her.



When she watched her mother approach the bed, she thought she'd started to hallucinate. Her mother had been dead many years now. It couldn't be her. *What kind of cruel trick was this?*

"This is no trick." A ball of light seemed to hover over the woman, shining light on her. Before her eyes the woman changed, became another, an old, wise woman, then shifted back into the shape of Sarah Webber, her long dead mother. "I'm the Goddess Morrigan and I'm Sarah Webber. The fates decreed I could not raise you to adulthood after your birth, but I tried to tell you of your heritage in what years I had with you, tried to prepare you for what would come."

Mercy licked her lips, looked at Cameron and Ewan who in sleep, each had a hand on her hip. *Why weren't they awake?* She reached out to shake them, to make sure that nothing had been done to them, but the Goddess reached out, then dropped her hand.

"Please, Mercy, they only sleep so that we may talk."

"You didn't do anything to harm them?" She had to ask, because she'd only just found them and she couldn't lose them, not even to a mother back from the dead – a Goddess at that.

"I wished to have children of my own flesh and in the doing, I crossed the fates. Their punishment was my human death. You four are the only

children I have after many millennia of existence. I did not choose to leave you when I did. As I visited Charity upon her mating, I'm now visiting you. You've done well, my daughter. You've accomplished so much in the years since my death. I came to wish you many blessings on your future, though the fates will not be happy with my interference."

Mercy shook her head, trying to process it all. "What interference?"

"I knew that, as my children, you would live more than one lifetime and I didn't want you to suffer as I have, losing your only love because of old age. Long before I became the human, Sarah Webber, I altered the lifespan of the clan of all of my daughters' mates so that they wouldn't suffer the same loss I did. So that you wouldn't suffer that loss because of my selfish desire to have children of my own, not just the men I created many eons ago."

"I don't understand."

Morrigan shifted her head. "In time you will. I've already spoken to Charity of this. I come to you with a message, a warning of danger I've seen surrounding you and your sisters. Though you may be doing well to take out the men that attack you, the humans that are no match for my shifters, the head of the serpent won't be so easy to kill. He will do whatever he must to ensure that his secret

never comes out even if that means killing every one of you and your mates."

A shiver worked its way down her spine. "What secret?" she whispered, afraid to know the answer.

"That he is no more human than I. That he is a weakened god, hiding behind the men who worship him as they would any benevolent God. But Bres is not benevolent. He ruled the *Tuatha Dé Danann* for seven years, treating his followers as slaves before Nuada ousted him. Many myths have Bres eventually dying by Lugh's hand. Yet instead, he took ill and went into hiding, greatly weakened. He has lived millennia hiding from the other gods and goddesses as his powers healed and will do what he must to keep his secret buried. He has grown used to living in this time, worshipped as only a crime boss while manipulating events to his liking. You must be careful, my darling, especially now when you and your sisters have so much to lose. When the time comes, I will be there to protect you and the rest of my children including the Gordon Clan and its Alpha. But the time has not yet arrived."

A sense of sadness washed over Mercy as she realized her mother was about to leave. She'd only just now got her back.

Morrigan smiled. "You will see me again. This I promise. I will never be far away. Should you

need me, you need only think of me and I'll be here. Until I see you again, you carry my love and blessings upon your mating. They are good men who already love you immensely."

Mercy reached out as if to call her mother back but already the room had grown dark, leaving her alone with her two sleeping mates. Tomorrow, she had much to tell her men and her sisters, as they had to prepare for more than just a criminal, some faceless crime boss, attacking them. Instead, they'd have to prepare to fight a god as well as find that taproot of the Tree of Life. Chilled and needing comfort, she lay back down and blessed the warmth of her mates as they snuggled up on each side of her. Tomorrow looked to be a long day indeed. With thoughts of war filling her mind, Mercy settled into a troubled sleep knowing that things were about to become a lot more complicated than just mating and moving to Scotland. A lot more complicated.

## *About the Authors*

Tianna Xander is the author of several paranormal, time-travel and science fiction romance novels. She loves reading everything from romance novels, murder mysteries and encyclopedias, to handbooks on solar energy. Tianna is the first to admit she spends far too much time surfing the internet and chatting with her online friends and critique groups.

Having written many novels and working on at least one more at any given time, Tianna still finds time for her family, friends and her many pets. She currently lives in Michigan with her husband, two children, three cats, two big dogs and one occasionally terrorized Netherland Dwarf bunny. Her life is anything but boring.

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Bonnie Rose Leigh has been enthralled with the written word since childhood. When she ran out of things to read, she created her own stories. Now, she is a multi-published author and lives in a small town in Upstate, New York. She spends most of her time on the computer either writing or visiting with friends. When not busy on the computer, her free time is consumed with reading. It doesn't matter what genre the book is either, though she is partial to romance novels. Her favorite after-hours hobby is sprawling in a chair with a book clutched in her hands and a cup of cocoa sitting nearby.

Bonnie would love to hear from each and every one of you. Make sure you subscribe to her monthly newsletter or check out her blog as it will be updated regularly with release dates, excerpts and online appearances. And, as always, feel free to drop her email if you have any questions, concerns or just want to chat, and she'll get back to you as soon as she can.

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