



Scorcher

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Chapter One

Brant's girlfriend was going to be the death of him. Again. Oh, she hadn't meant to blow him up that one time before... But it'd happened, and he'd had to pretend to go on some "vacation" while he spent a day or two rising from the ashes. Folklore was not entirely accurate in that respect. Sure, phoenixes came back from the dead...eventually.

Right now, he was feeling that telltale ache in his gut, letting him know that a fire was eminent. Something he'd been able to do since he was knee-high to his grandpa. Some three hundred years now.

Long ago he'd broken from tradition and decided to live alone, working fires and saving lives with his ability, living as a human and searching for his fire mate at every turn. By now, he'd figured that a mate wasn't in the cards for him, and he'd found himself a gal that made his heart nearly stop every time he saw her.

Half the time it stopped from her beauty both inside and out. The other half of the time his heart nearly disintegrated was because something else around her old ranch house had caught fire or blown up while she stood inches—sometimes less—from the flames. She was unlucky as all get out in some respects, and the luckiest woman alive in others.

Thank fire.

Brant took a break from his paperwork, endless paperwork since he'd become the chief and fire investigator for the town, and stepped outside. The wind whipped around him, caressing his face, warming and cooling him at the same time, calling to his bird. His back tingled, wings fluttering beneath the surface, and he ached to take flight, searching for the fire. Then again, he knew exactly where it would be. He could feel a pull toward the north and west of the station. Open fields of dirt, rock and brush, as well as Phoebe's place, laid out that way. He didn't think the brush spontaneously combusted, which meant his Phoebe had gotten into trouble. Again.

He sighed and ran a hand through his hair, tugging on the long ends. He needed a haircut, needed to tidy up, but after he made sure his girlfriend survived this newest round of Phoebe versus catastrophe.

Brant ambled toward his truck, noting how the house's badge, along with the big black words that proclaimed him chief and investigator, contrasted with the four-by-four's pristine white paint.

Brant's right-hand man, Damon, was lounging on the picnic table, reading a book and seeming to enjoy the cool weather. "She at it again, Chief?"

Dang, he hadn't realized he was that predictable. "It seems so."

"Gut got you headed out that way, or is your dick doing the talking?" Damon cackled, his laugh carrying through the yard.

Yeah, predictable. "Gut this time, ya jealous bastard." He smiled good-naturedly. He hated talking about Phoebe like that, but boys would be boys and he didn't want to alienate his crew. They depended on each other when they went into fires and harmony was essential. "I think she's busted something else, and knowing her, she's mad as a hornet."

"And mad sex is the best sex..."

Brant scooped up a rock from the ground and tossed it Damon's way, making sure to miss the idiot. "Shut it, fucker."

Damon dashed out of the way, laughing, a smile on his face. "Just fuckin' with ya man. Just fuckin' with ya. Tell Phoebe I said hi."

With that, Damon returned to his book and Brant continued his trek toward the truck, Phoebe on his mind. The woman just had the worst luck in the world, but at least it let him come to her rescue pretty often. And any time spent with her ultimately led to time in her bed. He just wished her heart would follow through.

Damn, but he loved that woman. If only...

Thoughts of fire mates and the penalty of mating with non-firekin occupied his thoughts while he backed out of the station's parking lot. Part of him thought Phoebe might just be worth mortality.

With her pale brown skin that seemed to glow in moonlight and reminded him brown sugar, her shoulder length dark brown hair that he loved to run his fingers through regardless of

her screams, and her ass that he liked to squeeze and grasp whenever he could... Yeah, she was worth dying for. Permanently.

* * * *

Frozen pizza could not be that difficult to cook. Seriously. Only, for Phoebe, it seemed equivalent to cooking an eight-course gourmet meal.

She read the directions again. The oven temp was set to three hundred degrees. The pizza was placed directly on the rack and the oven door was closed. Yet the damned oven wasn't HEATING. Everything was plugged in, power running, doing its "power" thingy. What more could she possibly do?

"Gah!" She threw her hands up and stomped toward her living room. Calm was a necessity. Maybe she just needed to give the oven more time. Electronics, especially those related to cooking, didn't work well around her. Perhaps she just needed to give the oven some "personal space".

In the living room, Phoebe snuggled into her favorite 1970's plaid corduroy chair and clutched the matching pillow to her chest, watching the clock as the seconds and minutes ticked by. Who would have thought that little Phoebe Williams would end up in the middle of Arizona, a zillion miles from her family and friends? Well, obviously, her grandma did or Phoebe wouldn't be living in the dead broad's home.

She rubbed her cheek against the pillow, the worn fabric sliding easily against her skin and soothing her with scents of her grandmother. The woman had been exactly like Phoebe in so many ways. They'd been two peas in a pod when she was growing up, and her heart still ached, two years later, with the loss.

Phoebe glanced at the mantle clock and noticed that a good fifteen minutes had passed since she'd sat down. The stupid pizza was supposed to take eighteen, so she figured she'd pop over to the kitchen and take a gander.

She padded down the hallway, fingers stroking the retro wallpaper that she couldn't quite gather the courage to change. Everything about the house reminded her of times past and she still hadn't been able to remodel. The old pictures of her parents as teenagers still hung on the walls, as did the baby pictures of her mother and aunts and uncles. Images of Phoebe also lined the hallway, the family's brag wall.

The slapping of her feet against the old cherry wood flooring was the only other sound in the dilapidated farmhouse. Again, cause Phoebe and electronics didn't mix too well. No TV or radios. Didn't matter though, she had her books and plenty of time to wander the plains of Arizona in the early evenings to keep her occupied. Plus, occasionally she made her way into Winthrop for some *personal* stimulation of the man-I'd-like-to-marry-but-just-fuck kind.

Okay, he was a fuck buddy. There.

But damn, what a buddy was he. And then there was the whole, "in love with him" thing she had going on. Damn it.

If only...

Inside the kitchen, Phoebe approached the stove carefully, as if it were a wild animal just waiting to pounce and devour her like its mid-day meal. And for all she knew, it was.

She eased the door to the oven open slowly, careful of any heat that could come rushing out and felt...nothing.

She poked her head into the oven and a burst of flames came spitting at her, singing her tank top. Thank God for her fiery nature. Instead of getting mad at the darned thing, she got even.

Phoebe opened the door fully, making sure it'd stay ajar, and brought her palms together, rubbing them back and forth and curving her hands until they formed a ball in which flames began to build. Faster and harder she rolled her hands together, and bigger and bigger the ball grew until she held an orb of fire within her outstretched palms.

Then she threw the ball at the appliance. And blew up the stove.

"Take that!"

No pizza for her tonight.

And she'd have to come up with another reason to have a stove delivered from the Sears in town. Unless she ordered it online. But having a UPS truck out to the ranch would cause just as much talk as the hot Sears man. Yeah, better to have people thinking she's lusting after the Sears guy than having them figure out the truth.

Phoebe was a lousy excuse for a Salamander.

Only, no one but she and the family knew about her inability to do even the simplest fire maneuvers. Their nature was a secret to all but those that were firekin, and since no one in Winthrop or the nearby cities qualified, that meant that she lived a more solitary life than most of

her family. Then again, for all she knew, a firekin could be under her nose and she'd never know. She had the worst ability to scent another firekin, and most of the kin could mask what they were. Phoebe's sense seemed to be permanently in the "off" position, and her own abilities were so whacked out that even her parents couldn't scent her as kin. And they did the whole "birthing" thing to have her! At least they had each other and she had...a broken oven. She also had a fuck buddy that had turned into more of a boyfriend and less of a plain buddy.

Maybe it was time to put him out to the trash along with the stove. She couldn't afford attachments to a human. Not when she lived forever.

Phoebe glanced out the kitchen window that faced the road and noticed a high dust trail coming toward her. Great. Think of the devil with the biggest cock west of the Mississippi and he shall appear.

Brant had an uncanny ability to show up whenever she blew something up. Damn it.

She really needed to get a handle on the whole "fire" and "temper" thing. Cause she could not afford to continue replacing appliances every time she had a temper tantrum. It was getting expensive.

She watched Brant's (that's the fuck buddy turned guy she loved) truck meander down the road and finally come to a stop in her driveway, the tall man unfolding himself from the county issued Fire Investigator's truck with ease. She often chuckled to herself about his profession considering her propensity to light shit on fire at every turn. He was responsible for figuring out why and how a fire started. If only he spent some time with her when she was cranky...

Brant was easily six feet tall with dark black hair and a pair of bright blue eyes that rivaled the color of the ocean on a clear day. He was well built, his shoulders wide, muscles well defined, and she loved tracing each and every one with her tongue whenever possible. Which was pretty damned often considering that Brant came over whenever she managed to blow something up. It made her wonder which of her neighbors kept watch on her so closely that they called him whenever she had a mishap.

Damned nosy Arizona folks.

And damn Brant for being so sexy that she couldn't stand not touching him when he was around.

Phoebe raced to the front door, smoking oven and destroyed metal forgotten. A man that rugged, walking away from his truck, torn jeans and tight t-shirt on...he was just begging for a woman to come dashing out the door and launch herself at him with all her might, getting caught in his muscular arms.

She was applying for the job. Nah, forget applying, she was outright taking the job, fire mate and firekin law be damned. This guy... he could be worth going mortal over.

She picked up speed with every step, smile plastered across her face as she approached her man. Her. Man. He slammed the truck door and spread his legs, bracing himself for her and she increased her speed yet again. Feet from him, she leapt into his arms, her legs wrapping around his waist, ankles locking at his lower back and mouth going straight for his lips.

Brant opened to her immediately and she licked the inside of his mouth, absorbing his very taste, the essence of his being. She loved their kisses, slow and sweet or fast and hard and everything in between. Their tongues dueled and stroked, playing and then getting serious. She slanted her mouth over his, taking control of the kiss, delving deeper, searching for more of his taste. She wanted all he could give and then some.

Phoebe tightened her hold around his waist and neck, pulling herself higher on his body, plastering them together until she hated the clothing between them. Brant gripped her ass, fingers digging into her abundant flesh, massaging the globes of her behind while she rocked her hips against him, pussy clenching and aching to be filled. The ridge of his hardened cock rubbed against her panty-clad slit, making her desire for even more.

She broke their kiss, breath coming in harsh pants. "Inside." Inside her house and inside her. She wanted it all and then some. She would have done the outside sexing thing, but there were two reasons she didn't: 1) Obviously, she had a nosy neighbor who called Brant on her when the smoke from the stove escaped her small kitchen, and 2) Cactus needles. Ow!

"Yes." He hissed in agreement and walked toward the house.

"Brant," she shouted. "Put my fat ass down. I can walk."

He stopped at the bottom of the steps. "But, baby, I like having that sweet pussy right on my cock, teasing my dick, rubbing and kissing me so sweet." He brushed his lips across hers and she felt the sweet kiss all the way to her toes. "Gonna make me come in my pants."

She moaned and wiggled her hips, grinding herself on his hardness, loving the way the jeans pulled and tugged on her panties with each rocking of her hips.

“Take me inside and fuck me, Brant. Want you.” She also *didn’t want* him to see her latest blow-up. Literally.

Brant lowered her to the ground, their bodies writhing against one another, inch by agonizing inch her breasts rubbed against his chest while he let her feet touch the ground. He popped her on the ass, one small smack and he had her undivided attention. “Walk for me, baby.”

Oh. A shudder of desire raced down her spine. He wanted to play and she was all for that game. She stepped up one step, placing them at eye level. “Want your coffee to walk for you?” She brushed a kiss across his mouth and spoke against his lips. “Want to watch my black ass swing and sway just for you? Always for you?”

“Mine,” he growled, deep and low. “Mine.”

“Always yours.”

“Walk for me.”

Phoebe turned on her heel and took a step, fingers tugging and pulling at her dress as she sashayed away from him. Two steps and the hem was just below her ass. Three steps and her ample bottom was exposed, and she was thankful that she’d put on a cute thong that morning. Five steps and the dress was gone, leaving her in her thong and nothing else.

What? She’d been home alone and to her a bra was only necessary when leaving the house.

She cupped her breasts, covering them with her hands, teasing her nipples. Stopping just inside the threshold, she glanced over her shoulder, a satisfied smirk in place. “You coming?”

Brant was rubbing his dick through his jeans, big strong hands stroking and petting his thick, long cock with long, even caresses. “Damn, baby, you make my cock hard.”

She turned her upper body to face him, revealing one breast, finger circling and toying with the nipple. She dropped her head back, moaning with the ecstasy and want the motion created. She tugged on the hardened nubbin, cupping and stroking her aching mound. “I want your cock hard. Want it hard and deep in me, fucking me.” She raised her head and looked him straight in the eyes. “You going to fuck me, Brant?”

“Damn right I am.” He growled and dashed up the steps toward her.

Heart racing, she spun back toward the house and ran up the nearby stairs to her bedroom, Brant hot on her heels. He popped her on the ass half way to her room and she moaned with desire. She wanted him exactly as she'd described, hard and deep and now.

Once inside the bedroom, steps from the bed, she turned to him, laughter filling the room, a smile on her face. She opened her arms to her lover and he scooped her up and tossed her on the bed, following her down with his body and settling between her legs.

“Love me, Brant?”

“Always. Forever.”

She stared into his eyes, reading the love and emotion fleeting and dancing across his face, and believed every word. He loved her, deeply, forever. She loved him just the same. Forever.

Forever, and he meant it down to his bones. His cock ached, his small head demanding that he fuck Phoebe senseless, yet he couldn't get past staring at his ebony beauty, memorizing the planes of her face, the deep honey of her eyes, the full lips and pert nose that seemed to get into a twist over this and that fairly often. But he didn't give a damn if she was persnickety. Cause he wanted her, now and forever. And this most recent encounter just proved it even more.

Damn but the woman made his cock hard.

He rocked his hips against her heat, drinking in her moans and groans of pleasure with each stroke of his denim-clad cock against her thong-covered pussy. A thong he needed to get rid of pretty quick.

She tugged on the back of his shirt. “Well, Mr. Always Forever, you owe me a good fucking—”

“How about a good lovin' instead?”

His cock pulsed and ached and protested slow love making when his woman demanded a quick fuck, but he couldn't help it. He wanted to lick every inch of Phoebe's body and then some. Maybe lick it all twice.

“Lovin'?” She smiled, a mischievous twinkle in her eye. “I can do that.” With nary a grunt, she gripped his shoulders and flipped him to his back before he had even a second to object. “I can really do that.”

“Baby?” He’d meant to be the one to start the kissing and stroking, but it seemed that Phoebe had other ideas.

She didn’t answer his question, just smiled that sweet smile he’d come to learn meant trouble and moved her hands toward the buttons of his shirt. One by one, she flicked the buttons open, revealing his heated skin to the cool air-conditioned room. His nipples pebbled, from arousal or the air, he didn’t know...didn’t really care either.

Brant dropped his head back and moaned the closer she got to the waistband of his jeans. If anything, his baby was the best cocksucker in all of Arizona.

He lifted his head when her fingers began fiddling with the snap of his jeans and nearly came at the sight before him—with hair fluffed and mussed, lower lip caught between her teeth and fire in her eyes, his baby looked about ready to burst with desire and wanting. And it was all for him. He was a lucky bastard.

Inch by inch she lowered the zipper of his pants, his cock pushing free of the cotton confines with every millimeter she let the zipper down. His cock pulsed and throbbed to the beat of his heart, body aching and demanding release, and he hadn’t even felt her mouth on him yet. His lover had perfected the art of the tease.

He raised his ass when she tugged on his jeans and sighed when the constricting fabric allowed his dick to spring forward fully, jutting up from his nest of curls and flopping back against his abdomen. Phoebe tossed aside his pants and returned to him, settling between his legs as if she belonged there and loved every moment of it.

“Mine.” She growled and licked his cock from root to tip, saliva coating his shaft. “All mine.” She sighed and circled the end of his dick with her tongue.

Brant closed his eyes tight, fighting back his orgasm with each and every stroke and lick of her tongue. She suckled the spot just beneath the head of his prick and then licked a path from the head to the base. Up and down, she licked, not taking him into her mouth, but simply teasing him with tiny nibbles and touches. Then she suckled one of his balls, pulling and sucking it into her mouth, surrounding him with her wet heat.

Brant moaned in response, fighting the instinct to thrust and writhe against her mouth, fighting to stay perfectly still while she worked her magic. “Phoebe...” He whined. He needed, wanted more. Had to have her, everything, something.

She let one of his balls fall free of her mouth. “What do you need, sweetheart?”

As if she didn't know. "Suck me." He didn't care that his voice was more growl than anything. Didn't give a fire.

He fisted the sheets when she rose over him, her hot breath blazing a trail along his cock as her mouth traveled up his length. First, she suckled the tip as she'd done before. An inch in, an inch out. Over and again, she repeated the process, his body fighting and aching to come the entire time. Tiny tingles of pleasure built at the base of his spine, gathering pressure and speed, demanding to be released. *Not yet.*

Finally, in one deep swallow, she engulfed him with her mouth and throat. Hot, wet heat surrounded him. Pure pleasure so great it was almost painful encircled him, a heat so great and strong, he felt close to tears at the ecstasy she granted him. Her hand wrapped around his shaft while she worked him over, sliding along his length with practiced ease, sucking and fucking his prick until...

"Gonna come, baby. Gotta stop."

"Nu uh," she grunted around his cock, letting him know that not just no, but hell no, she wasn't stopping.

He'd thank her later. After he recovered from having his brain sucked out through his dick, maybe.

The climax he'd been pushing back, holding with all his might, threatened to overtake him then, threatened to push his sanity right over the edge. He approached the precipice, easing forward with tiny steps, drawing out the immense pleasure of being inside Phoebe, having her suck and lick his cock. She moaned, letting him hear her enjoyment.

It was his undoing.

The gathering tingles of electricity at the base of his spine burst forth, wrapping around him in a blanket of pleasure, pushing and pulling his release out through his prick, throbbing and dancing in time to the accelerated beat of his heart. Panting and fighting for breath, he screamed her name as he came, the only name he wanted on his lips. Forever.

His orgasm came in waves, his body tensing and releasing, the pleasure shot through him from head to toe, intensifying with every swallow of her throat. He could feel his cum spurting and pulsing out of the head of his cock, shuddered with each swallow as the muscles of her throat massaged him. Again and again, she drank down his seed, showing without words just how much she loved him, cared for him.

Yeah, she was worth going mortal over. But when? And would she still want him after she found out the truth?

Phoebe swallowed the last drop of cum that leaked from the tip of Brant's cock and pushed back to sit on her haunches, fingers stroking every inch of skin she could reach while she waited for him to regain his strength.

It didn't take long.

"Your turn." He growled and pounced on her, pushing her back onto the mattress and diving between her legs, tearing her thong from her body.

She can't say she was disappointed. Or minded. And when he rubbed his scruff against her inner thighs, five o'clock shadow tickling the sensitive skin, she didn't give a flying fire.

Phoebe spread her legs, opening herself fully to him, granting him access to everything and anything. He didn't waste time. Within moments, she felt his fingers separate her labia and he breathed against her moist skin. The heat burned and aroused her, making her ache and need. Her pussy clenched and throbbed in time with her heart, desiring to be filled and stretched by this man.

"You have the perfect pussy." He inhaled deeply and exhaled over her pussy. "Smells delicious. Let's have a taste of this sweet cunt." Brant delved between her lower lips, tongue licking her from anus to clit and back again.

"Mm...mm...mm..." Delicious, just as I thought.

She didn't care what he thought, she wanted him to do it all again. She fisted her fingers in his hair and pushed his head back between her legs, silently demanding what she wanted most.

"Oh, baby... I'll give you what you want." He lapped at her clit, long, slow, languorous licks.

Tiny shocks of pleasure coursed through her body, starting in her toes they worked their way up her legs, through her hips and centering on her throbbing pussy. The ache and heaviness increased with each passing second. She needed more from him, wanted more.

He gave it to her.

Brant placed a hand on her pubic bone and used his thumb to pull back her clitoral hood, exposing her bundle of nerves to the cool air. Within moments, his mouth was latched onto the aching nubbin, sucking and licking and flicking her clit with practiced ease, circling and

pressing, drawing her pleasure to the fore. With his other hand, he plunged two fingers into her spasming pussy, fucking her with his fingers, filling and stretching her, but not quite enough.

“Yes!” She rocked her hips against him, fucking herself on his hand, rolling her hips and following his movements, bucking and shifting.

Brant adjusted his positioning, fingers slipping and sliding, moving this way and that until... She screamed when he touched that special spot inches within her pussy. He worked her G-spot, tickling her from within in a gentle “come here” motion, rubbing the bundle of nerves while his tongue circled her clit.

Around and around, back and forth, again and again he massaged her until...

“Gonna come...” Her breathing was labored, words forced out with her harsh pants.

He moaned against her pussy, letting her know that he’d heard her over her groans of pleasure.

“Yes! Brant, yes!” He increased his pace, working harder and faster at giving her what she desired most.

The tingles that had begun in her toes and settled on her pussy spread outwards, engulfing her in pure pleasure and ecstasy. Her muscles tensed and released in a rhythm as old as time, pussy clenching around Brant’s invasion in conjunction with her breathing, increasing with each passing second. Her body was preparing itself, gearing up for a release like she hadn’t had in a while. Higher and higher, she climbed, closer and closer to the edge she eased until...

She convulsed in a chain of spasms, over and over she clenched and tightened and strangled his fingers with her pleasure. Wave after wave of ecstasy coursed through her veins, dancing along her nerves and alighting every inch of her with renewed joy. She tightened around him, shuddering with her climax, loving every second of his loving.

He lessened his ministrations, fingers stilling, tongue lapping lazily with tender strokes while her breathing slowed. Seconds ticked by and the remaining shivers and shudders lessened until just their breathing filled the room, a soft contented rhythm.

“Oh, Brant...” She eased her knees closer together, pussy still pounding.

He kissed her mound, a soft brush of his lips. “Love you. Want you still.”

Oh, she wanted him too. The oral sex had been wonderful, but there was nothing compared to being filled by the man that she loved. “Love you, too. Now show me.”

She opened her arms to him and he raised to his knees, cock hard and jutting out from his groin, tip glistening with pre-come. He braced himself above her on his hands, cock nestled between her legs and against her still aching core.

“Ready for me, Phoebe, love?”

“Always, forever.” She repeated the words he’d spoken recently.

In one fluid thrust, he seated himself fully within her heat, stretching her pussy almost to the point of pain, and filling her like she’d never been filled before. This man, her lover, was her one true match. He fit with her in every way, and she thought, for not the first time, that he truly was worth going mortal over. Truly.

She arched against him, rolling and rocking her hips, raising them in time with his thrusts and retreat. In and out, he moved against her, taking her to higher heights with every stroke of his cock against her inner walls. Places and nerves that had been long dormant awoke within her, burning her from inside out with each passing second.

Again, she felt herself rising higher, reaching for the precipice as she had just moments before. Closer and closer the edge became, dragged along by the gyrating motion of her lover’s hips, the expert lovemaking of her boyfriend and mate.

She moved against him, slithered, writhed, and stroked his cock with her sheath, her pussy clenching around his dick with every plunge. He fucked her with abandon, eyes locked on hers, sweat dripping from his brow onto her chest.

Phoebe pinched and rolled her nipples, enjoying the pleasurable pain of the act, relishing the heat in Brant’s eyes as she took care of herself while he took care of them both.

“Pinch those nipples, baby. Stroke them for me.”

She did as he asked, moaning and groaning with the sting that accompanied the deed. Brant nudged her hand away from her breast and took over with his mouth, suckling the aroused nub and drawing it deep into him. He circled her nipple with his tongue and nibbled on it with his teeth, teasing her while his cock slipped in and out of her wet pussy. The slapping sounds of their bodies meeting intermingled with the harsh pants of their breaths.

Her pulsing, vibrating need overtook her, every pull of his mouth on her breast shooting her closer to the edge of ecstasy until she came in a rush, body climaxing and releasing and bursting with pure pleasure.

“Brant!” She screamed his name in the throes of passion, unable to hold herself back, to remain quiet. Not when he’d taken her to such heights.

Brant’s rhythm increased, pounding against her in erratic thrusts, and she was sure he was inching closer to his own release. To help him along, she tightened her pussy around him, forcing her body to clench rhythmically and in time to his thrusts. Thank God for Kegel exercises.

“Yes,” he hissed and doubled his pace. She rose to meet his every thrust, dragging him to the edge, silently begging him to come deep inside her.

When she became mortal, they’d make beautiful children. Until then, his seed wouldn’t take hold. And she was okay with that. Someday...someday, they’d have little ones of their own.

Brant froze above her, hips jerking three final times until he didn’t move, face scrunched as if he were caught somewhere between pleasure and pain and dying. He moaned, body unmoving, until he finally slumped over her, panting, warm breath fanning over her ear.

“Love you, Phoebe.”

“Forever and always.”

Chapter Two

Phoebe was a woman with a plan. No frozen pizza this time around. Nope. Just as soon as the Sears guy graced her with his presence, she was heading straight into town and buying the best damn dinner Brant had ever tasted. Of course, she wouldn't tell him she hadn't cooked the darned thing. She'd been lying about her true self for so long, what was another white lie going to hurt? Especially since today was *the* day. She was coming clean, then hopefully coming, and then working some magic to become mortal. Then maybe more coming, if she was up to it.

She snorted and wiped her rag across the kitchen table again, picking up more remnants of the fire from blowing up the stove. Soot had coated just about every surface in the small kitchen after that fiasco, but she'd done well at cleaning everything. She should, considering the many fiery accidents she'd had over the years. Some things a body just knows how to do.

The deep rumble of an engine pulled Phoebe away from the table and she stepped gingerly over broken bits of tile toward the kitchen window. A great big Sears delivery truck was kicking up dirt and dust as it sped down the open road toward her. Idiots. The drivers that weren't from around these parts always tore up the drive like a bat outta hell and didn't seem to care that the dust and debris would hang in the air for what seemed like forever, creating a great big cloud on the ground that bothered everyone.

Didn't matter. They were here for one thing and one thing only: to deliver her new stove so she could get on with her life. She'd even gotten lucky when she ordered this one. Sears had a new line of "retro" appliances, and damn if the stove didn't match what she'd had originally, down to the knobs and everything. Woohoo! Now her kitchen wouldn't look like a mish-mash of old and new as she'd anticipated.

Phoebe pushed the few broken tile pieces from in front of the stove, shoved the kitchen table aside and tossed her dirty rag into the kitchen sink before heading toward the front door to meet the delivery guys.

Except, when she got to the porch, only one man was in the truck.

She shaded her eyes with her hand, squinting as the sun filled her gaze, and waved to the man. “Hello. Is your partner in the back already? I’ve got things ready to go inside.”

The driver of the semi hopped down from his perch. “No, ma’am, just me. I’ll be in with your new stove in just one sec.”

“Oh. Okay.” She took a few steps back and placed the screen door between her and the outside world, getting a better, unfettered look at her deliveryman. Something about the way he spoke ate at her, regardless of the fact that he hadn’t said more than a handful of words. There was just...

Alone? How could one man deliver a stove, let alone all of the other appliances she was sure were in the back? Like refrigerators. She shuddered at the thought of lifting and installing one of those suckers by himself.

The driver re-appeared from around the end of the truck, no stove in sight. *Uh-huh.*

“Can you just come around her for a second? Want to make sure that I’ve got the right appliance before I haul it down.”

Phoebe’s fingertips burned and tingled with apprehension, her fire inside coming to life with her sense of something not right. Her body screamed “danger” and yet, she felt herself taking a step forward, and then another and another, as if hypnotized by this stranger.

For not the first time she wished her senses were whole, that she could feel the true heart of mortals and elementkin alike. The pull she felt, the inexplicable inability to stop her feet from moving, let her know that she was dealing with some kind of kin, but what?

She’d never heard of kin being able to draw another forward without their consent. And yet, she was being led as if on a tether, pulling and yanking her closer and closer to the man. As the distance between them grew less and less, she could see the blue of his eyes, the churning, swirling water that lived within him, and fear stole down her body, settling in her heart.

Her heat flared then, uncontrolled and unable to be extinguished. Without thought, glowing orbs of fire formed in her palms and shot out toward this stranger, this waterkin. There was no love lost between the polar opposites and she’d heard of waterkin assassins searching out firekin, depleting their numbers day by day, drowning them with their powers over water before the fire could scorch them into non-existence.

The unknown staggered under her assault, lessening his hold on her body. Now she could fight in earnest, before he had a chance to recover and heal from his injuries.

Gathering her strength, she swirled her hands together in a circle, forming a giant ball of energy, pulling the heat from the sky and earth. She shot her ball of fire at him, incinerating the man and igniting all of the nearby brush. Fire burned in all directions, killing and destroying everything within reach. The cacti shriveled, bushes burned and the ground seemed to melt under her unnatural, yet natural, powers. The metal of the truck next to her sagged and dipped as the heat grew and grew with each passing second, her fear and anger fueling the flames.

And not of hint of it touched her, bothered her. In fact, she relished in destroying the waterkin, she enjoyed the heat of the fire and letting her repressed powers loose.

“Phoebe!”

So lost in her own powers of destruction, she hadn’t heard the fire and water truck’s approach, the flashing lights from hundreds of feet away working to douse the flames, extinguish all of her hard work. She’d won, she’d destroyed, and this was her right as firekin. She had earned the right to proclaim her win however she saw fit. Firekin, Salamanders in particular, often celebrated in this way. But her lover, her true love, was at stake.

The firefighters worked tirelessly at the edges of the blaze, trying to extinguish the inextinguishable.

Easing toward her, dodging and dancing around the flames, Brant edged closer to her with each passing second. She knew, without a doubt, that his gear wouldn’t protect him for long. The closer he came to her, the hotter it became. Her fire was part of her and her anger still fueled the magically induced flames.

Breathing deep, she wished her body to calm, draining the power from the inferno and feeding it back into the earth. At its very core, the world was fire, and her flames would be welcomed there, welcomed into the fold of heat that lurked beneath the earth’s crust.

One by one, the smaller fires, the burning bushes and cacti, extinguished before the firemen’s water could touch them. Second by second, the air around her cooled until the only heat left was that of the Arizona desert.

As if he could sense the lessening of the heat surrounding her, Brant sped up his pace, following the extinguish line until she was gathered into his arms, wrapped in layers of fire resistant material, his face pressing against her neck, helmet spinning on the ground at her feet.

“You have some explaining to do, Phoebe.”

Oh. Shit.

Unwilling to explain *just yet*, Phoebe did the only thing she could think of to get her out of revealing anything. She fainted. Or, at least, pretended to faint. She was pretty sure she did a good job, especially when the ambulance showed up and stuck needles in her arms. Damn, but that hurt.

* * * *

Phoebe closed the hospital room door with a soft click and dragged her IV pole and oxygen tank back toward the uncomfortable bed that occupied half the room. After her “fainting spell”, the hospital insisted that she remain there for observation. They thought that maybe she suffered from smoke inhalation, being in the center of the fire as she’d been. She snorted behind her oxygen mask. As if.

Quiet as a salamander, she eased the phone from its cradle and dialed the number from memory. It took her mother three rings before she picked up.

“Hello?”

“Heya, Mom.”

“Phoebe! How are you dear heart?”

Now or never. “Fine. Started a massive fire today, nearly lost Brant. Decided to go mortal, you know, the normal stuff.”

“What?” Her mother screamed. “You... And... Fire...” Her mother’s deep breaths could be heard over the phone. “No! Start a firekin portal this instant.” The cracking of tile echoed across the lines and Phoebe imagined her mother standing in her pristine kitchen, stomping her foot in frustration.

“Mom, I’m in the hospital. Not exactly ‘portal’ friendly.” Especially considering a firekin portal was essentially a fire started by one of the firekin.

“Hospital? Phoebe, I’m warning you, if you don’t open a portal this instant...”

“Mother, I just wanted to let you know what’s going on. I’m not a very good Salamander anyway...”

“No. Don’t do a thing until I get there. Do you hear me, young lady?”

Her mother kept rambling, but the knob on her door was turning, so Phoebe cut it short. “Love you, Mom. Talk with you on the mortal side.”

She dropped the phone in the cradle and lay back against her bed, pillows cushioning the flop of her head. *Well, that went well.*

* * * *

Brant snuck into an empty hospital room and closed the door behind him, anxious for privacy. After nearly losing Phoebe forever, he knew his decision was the right one. No way could he live an eternal life without her by his side. There was only one choice.

The phone rang once before his Dad answered. “No.”

It really sucked that Phoenixes were able to read each other’s minds within the family. Damn it. “But Dad—”

“No buts. You are not going mortal over some...girl! You’re throwing away your life, for what? Love? No. Find a nice little phoenix and settle down like your brothers did.”

“I am settling down, with a mortal.” He sighed. “I love her and almost lost her today.”

His father scoffed. “Love her? Boy, love has nothing to do with giving me grandchildren. Period. I don’t want some little mortal brats that I’m going to lose in seventy years. Do you hear me, Brant? No, I won’t—”

The knob on the door turned and Brant cut his father off. “Love you, Dad. See you on the mortal side.” With a snap, he closed his cell phone and cut his Dad’s protestations off before they could continue.

A nurse walked into the room and Brant plastered on a smile from ear to ear. “Sorry, was just using the room for a little privacy.”

He skirted around the startled woman and headed toward his lover’s room, anxious to see her again and assure himself that she was okay, his father’s objections forgotten.

Immortality was overrated.

* * * *

Stepping onto the plane in Atlanta, Virginia Williams, Phoebe’s mother, was thankful for her immortality and the ability to heal at an amazing rate. Otherwise, she’d be driving to Arizona and not flying. Flying was for the birds. And considering her alternate form, a salamander, she wasn’t all that suited to being in the air. Damn her daughter for not opening a portal for her, and since the only safe place to open one was within Phoebe’s house, she had to honor her daughter’s wishes and not pop in unannounced. Last time she’d done that, well...she’d seen her daughter’s birthday suit for the first time in a long time, and she didn’t feel like seeing it again anytime soon.

Navigating the pathway up the aisle, she paused near row three and sized up the attractive man sitting in the window seat. Dark hair with a hint of silver at his temples, a strong square jaw, and what looked to be a well-muscled chest that flexed under her gaze. She smiled, unashamed at being caught appreciating the man's attributes.

Her kin sensing abilities told her exactly what sat in seat 4A. "Phoenix." She tilted her head in greeting and lowered herself into the aisle seat, crossing her legs to show off her thigh.

The man smiled in return and placed an elbow on the armrest between them, edging closer to her. "Salamander."

"What is bringing you out to Arizona, and why aren't you fluttering along on the winds?" *And how can I finagle some time with you?* "Is it your final destination or..." She let the question trail off, hoping he'd finish it for her.

The attraction between them seemed instantaneous. He reached for her hand and she allowed him to bring it to his mouth, a kiss brushed across her knuckles. "Skies are dangerous with all of the planes, and yes, it's my final destination. A bit of family business to attend to with my son, and then I can be all yours."

The word "son" piqued her interest. "A son? Really? Hmm..."

"And is Arizona your final destination, or will I have to follow you around the world?"

Oh, he was a smooth one. "I'm actually heading to Winthrop, Arizona. My daughter has gotten this harebrained idea and I'm hoping I'll be in time to stop her. Seems she's decided to..." She leaned close to him and whispered in his ear. "Go mortal."

She nibbled his ear, gratified by the moan that she drew from him. If she didn't know better, this man, this phoenix, was destined to be her second mate. The attraction, the need she felt for him, was something she hadn't felt in years and years.

"Really? Sounds similar to my boy's problem."

"Hmm... What should we do about that?"

He nuzzled her neck, and she felt her pussy grow heavy with desire, aching to be filled by this firekin man. "I think we should deal with our little problem by bringing them together, forcing them to fall in love, and then we can begin our own lives together for all of eternity. How does that sound?"

"You feel it too?"

“Oh, darling, if I thought for one moment that the airplane lavatory could hold us, I’d mate you here and now.”

His words sent a shudder of desire down her spine. “Let’s give it a shot.” She smiled mischievously. “Then we can deal with our wayward children.”

“What about your mate?”

She shook her head. “We parted ways after my daughter’s birth. We weren’t true mates. You?”

“The same.” He smiled wide. “Now, I believe we were headed somewhere.”

“To the lavatory to join the mile high club, if I’m not mistaken.”

“Sounds like a plan I can definitely get behind.”

The plane taxied and took off without a hitch. The moment that the fasten seat belt sign went off, Virginia was on her feet, heading toward the first class lavatory, the phoenix hot on her heels.

They burst through the door, pushing it closed behind them and locking it with the flick of the latch, their lips crashing together in a passionate, scorching kiss.

“I don’t even know your name,” she panted and moaned while he unbuttoned her blouse, exposing her bra-covered breasts to the cool airplane air.

“Brenton. And you, lover?”

“Virginia Williams.”

He froze.

Oh hell no! He was not stopping now.

“Brenton?” He better not be putting on the breaks.

“Williams? As in mother of Phoebe Williams?”

“Your son?”

“And your daughter.”

“Are idiots,” they both spoke together.

They laughed, foreheads pressed together, lips barely touching. “Does this change anything, Ginny-mine?”

Oh. Oh, no one had... “Not a thing.” She kissed him, lips coming together, opening the barest hint to allow their tongues to touch and stroke and learn. “You?”

“Never. I’ve found a true mate and I refuse to let you go. I understand my son’s reasoning now. Because you, my dear, would be worth going mortal over.”

Chapter Three

Hours later, Brant entered Phoebe's hospital room, ducking the fireball that came at him the moment he crossed the threshold. He tucked and rolled, hiding behind the other bed. He peaked over the edge, searching for the source of danger.

Turned out it was his girlfriend. *Good thing she's throwing small balls of flames. Otherwise, I'd have my entire department down here witnessing this. Sheesh.*

"You." Fireball. "Are." Wall of flames—at least she kept the heat down and away from the sprinklers. "Firekin." Two balls that time.

She didn't give him a chance to get over the fact that she was, in fact, firekin as well.

A quick glance around the room revealed no other hiding spots, so he just yelled from where he was. "So are you!"

"How could you not tell me? The more I thought about it—no one but firekin could have made it through the lava-hot flames at the house." She tossed a smaller ball his way and got him in the shoulder. The burn hurt for a split second, but within moments, it healed. "I was going to give up my immortality for you!"

"How could you not tell me?" he hollered back, anxious to hear the answer himself.

Then it hit him. His woman, his lover and mate, was firekin. Which meant no mortality. Woo-freaking-hoo!

"Seems like you two should talk. Without the fireballs, dear." A woman's voice broke into the barrage of fire.

Considering the cease-fire, Brant stood, facing Phoebe. "Phoebe?"

He looked toward the woman and recognized her as Salamander immediately. But it was the person at her side that shocked him to his shoes.

"Dad? What are you doing here? And with? And who?" He couldn't wrap his head around it all.

“Brant, this is Virginia Williams, my second mate and Phoebe’s mother.” His Dad wrapped an arm around the woman’s waist and pulled her close, burying his face in her dark brown, nearly black hair. The woman, his mother-in-law for all intents and purposes, looked a lot like Phoebe. Or rather, Phoebe looked a lot like her. Smooth chocolate skin, full lips that his dad was kissing at the moment, and curves for miles. Yeah, it seemed son was a lot like father. And gross, parents kissing in front of their kids. Ew.

“Phoebe? How come I can’t...?” Cause he couldn’t. He couldn’t sense her nature worth a damn.

Virginia smiled ruefully. “Oh, that’s a bit my fault... It seems, way back in the family tree, there’s a Salamander or two with the same affliction. Her father didn’t have it, so we’d hoped that it would skip our Phoebe. Unfortunately, not only can Phoebe not sense firekin, she can’t be sensed by other firekin. Though waterkin seem to not have that problem.”

“It could never be your fault, Ginny-mine.” Then his Dad did that disgusting thing again. He kissed Phoebe’s mother. Double ew.

“Ew! Dad! Come on, kids here!”

Brant eased around the bed toward Phoebe. She seemed just as disgusted as he was by their parents’ display. When he was close enough, he reached out and traced one smooth as chocolate cheek. “Phoebe.”

“Brant, I...”

“I love you, Phoebe. Mate with me? I don’t know if we’re true mates like our parents seem to be, but I can’t imagine my life without you.”

“But you *lied*.”

“So did you.”

“I like to think of it as miscommunication,” Virginia interjected. “And dear, since Brenton and I are true mates, it makes sense that the two of you would be as well since you *are* our children... Just a thought...”

Phoebe took his hand, soft fingers brushing his knuckles. “So maybe...”

“More than maybe.”

Brant captured her lips in a searing kiss, tongues dueling for dominance.

And in the background, Brant heard Virginia say, “Come darling. I think this reunion will be a scorcher.”

In the end, it wasn't. Just as their parents left, a nurse entered, breaking up their party before it had a chance to get going, and informing them that Phoebe was being released and could go home at any time once she completed the paperwork.

Brant filled it all out and held it for his lover's signature before the nurse had a chance to remove all of the monitoring devices from Phoebe. To say he was anxious to be alone with her was an understatement of gargantuan proportions.

Chapter Four

Phoebe dressed in record time. She tossed on her dress, thankful for the built-in bra (easy access), slipped her feet into her sandals, and decided to forego the panties. In the blink of an eye, she was ready to go home. Whichever home, whether it was his or hers with its singed exterior, she didn't care. She just needed to be *alone* with him.

They walked hand in hand out of the hospital, quietly walking side by side as they strode across the parking lot, straight toward Brant's waiting truck.

At the truck, he held the door open for her, following her in and stealing a quick kiss between heartbeats.

"Yours or mine?"

She leaned out and kissed him in return, anxious to have his lips against hers. "I don't care."

"Mine is closer," he reasoned.

"I can blow things up during the mating at mine. You know I will." She smiled, half-hitching up one corner of her lips.

"Very true. Yours it is."

Darkness had descended by the time she was released, and she could only see Brant's silhouette as he walked around the front of the truck. Watching him in his tight jeans, and catching a glimpse of the hard ridge in his slacks, she knew immediately what they needed to take the edge off.

He slid into the seat next to her and she scooted over, reaching between her legs to pull on the lever that would allow the seat to scooch back.

"Phoebe?" He sounded concerned, but not overly so. "What—"

"Need you, lover." She rubbed the ridge of his cock, squeezing and massaging the hard dick beneath her hand. "Want you. Here. Now."

“Now?” He moaned and thrust against her hand. “Now.” This time it wasn’t a question, but an absolute statement.

Phoebe nibbled his neck, enjoying the musky, fiery scent of man and smoke and nature all rolled into one. She couldn’t figure out how she hadn’t realized that Brant was firekin so long before. He tasted like kin, felt and loved like a kin. She should have figured it out long before now, should have known and then they could have been enjoying the life of a mated pair. Too many years had been wasted, and now she was ready to make up for them all.

Brant turned his head and captured her lips in a searing kiss, their tongues twining and dancing, fighting for dominance. Before long, they were mimicking the act they’d soon be performing: the sweet lovemaking and fucking and touching and stroking of lovers.

Her pussy clenched in anticipation of what was to come, aching to be filled and filled and filled again. By only one man. Brant.

She unsnapped the button of his jeans and pulled the zipper down. With his assistance, she freed his cock, the tip wet with pre-come. Swollen, purple and heavy, she rubbed her thumb over the slit in the head of his dick, spreading his seed, rubbing and stroking his shaft, using the pre-come as lubrication for the act.

He thrust against her hand. “Yes,” he hissed. “Oh, yes.”

His lips were on hers again, tongues sweetly shifting and gliding and tasting. His flavor was of smoke and man, and something more that she couldn’t define. But she didn’t care. She just needed to have him, only him, forever.

Phoebe shifted in her seat, swung her leg across his lap, and straddled him. She rose up on her knees, the head of his dick teasing her opening, and she decided to do a bit of teasing of her own.

She circled her hips, rubbing the opening of her pussy over the head of his cock, coating him in her juices.

“Baby, baby, please,” he begged.

She took pity on him by sinking down and accepting his dick fully into her body. Her pussy stretched around his invasion, and she continued her descent until her pussy rested on his lap.

Their gazes met, and she saw the emotions that she felt reflected back at her tenfold.

“I love you.” She leaned forward and kissed him, then nuzzled his neck.

Brant did the same, burying his face in her hair. “I love you, too, Phoebe.”

Phoebe made love to him then. Slow, sinuous circles of her hips, along with the tightening of her pussy, filled her mind. She went round and round, grinding down and then sliding up only to shift down once again. Circling, twining and dancing with his dick inside her. They breathed into one another, mouths centimeters apart, eyes locked as she took control.

Any passerby would see two people locked in a tender embrace; they wouldn’t see the slow gyrations of her hips, the sensuous way in which she moved, bringing them closer to orgasm with the tiniest of movements of her lower body. They wouldn’t see lovemaking, but they would see love.

She continued her shifts and grinds, thrusts and retreats, working them both toward climax. She tilted her hips, searching for just the right angle and found it with the contraction of her pelvis, tipping her hips forward.

“Right there,” she whispered, breathing in his breaths.

“Yes, take it, baby. Fuck yourself on my dick.”

She did as he asked, rising up and down, rocking back and forth, shifting and moving in time to her heartbeat, speeding up and slowing down at just the right moments. She pushed and pulled and gripped his shoulders for support, body climbing and climbing, edging toward that moment...

Her body exploded into a thousand pieces, electricity and pure pleasure and fire of a thousand suns bursting inside her like a tidal wave, a tsunami. Again and again, she came with him inside her. Then he froze, groaning her name, and she felt his dick flex and shift within her of its own accord, coming as spurt after spurt of hot seed filled her.

And for the first time, she wondered about protection.

She laid her head on his shoulder, breath fanning over his sweat soaked skin. “Babies,” she whispered.

“Someday. If we’re lucky.” He cupped her lower abdomen, hand rubbing small circles where their children would one day grow and develop.

“I’m surprised we haven’t conceived yet.” Considering all the unprotected sex they’d been having. It hadn’t actually been a “discussion” per se, but one day the condoms were used, and then suddenly, they weren’t. Irresponsible? Absolutely.

“We could have...”

She snorted. “I would *know* something like that. Salamanders get sick the very instant a child is conceived. It hasn’t happened yet, but who knows? Maybe soon.”

His cock was softening within her, but it was still long enough flaccid to stay buried in her pussy.

“What do you say we head home and try again? Maybe we can get it right this time.”

Oh, how she loved this man. “Do you still have the flame resistant blankets in your truck?”

“Of course...” he sounded unsure.

“Good. I have a feeling that things are about to get even hotter. Now, take me home and fuck me good and proper so that we can have little Salamander-Phoenix babies. Salnix, that sounds like a good name for our little ones,” she mused and rose up onto her knees, allowing his dick to slip free of her pussy with a moan.

Phoebe eased back over to her side of the truck and settled into the seat, content for the moment that their lives were back on track, sans mortality.

“What about Phanders. That sounds better to me...”

“Salnix. Salamanders are the superior species.”

“Ha! Who can come back to life, thankyouverymuch?”

“Who can blow you into the next life?”

Brant snorted. “You have once already. Only I thought it was because you were simply accident prone, not—”

“Don’t even finish that sentence, Mister. I have “familial traits” as my Mom calls them. That’s all.” She harrumphed.

Brant lifted her hand to his lips and brushed a kiss across her knuckles. “Let’s hope that our babies don’t have your “familial traits” or we won’t have a house to live in.”

“Babies? Plural.”

“Of course, sweetheart. As many as we can manage.” He winked at her. “Now, let’s get home, mate like true firekin and get started.”

The drive home took a hell of a lot longer than Phoebe ever remembered. Or maybe it was just that Phoebe was anxious to scorch the very ground they’d be lying on in their first true mating as kinmates. The heat necessary to bind them would melt the earth, turning the sand into glass and creating a memorial to their first time together as mates.

She couldn't wait.

Phoebe directed him off the main road to her home and deeper into her ranchlands until nary a light could be seen. This is where their love would eclipse the moon and shine brighter than the sun. And hopefully, not send her soon-to-be kinmate "poof" in the process. She really didn't want to spend the next two days with a mound of ashes. Seriously.

Brant prayed his fire blanket in the back could protect him from their fiery lovemaking to come. He also had an extra suit from work, but he wasn't sure if that would protect him either. He really didn't want to spend the next couple of days as ashes. Seriously. Of course, internally she wouldn't go supernova, so his cock would be okay, but what about the rest of him?

He followed Phoebe's directions, truck bouncing over the rough terrain, lights growing dim until he couldn't see a single man-made light source for miles. That's where he stopped the truck.

Brant grabbed Phoebe's hand in his, holding it tightly, fingers entwined. "We can wait if you want. I don't want to rush you."

"Screw waiting. I've wanted this for what seems like forever. I was willing to go mortal for you, Brant. I want you. I want this. Do you?" Tears gathered in her eyes and he brushed one away with his thumb.

"Of course, baby, I almost went mortal for you as well. I want you as my kinmate, I just don't want to rush you—"

She placed her fingertips over his mouth and he resisted the urge to lick the fire-scented digits. "I promise not to get so hot you turn to ash. Better?" And the imp winked at him.

He nibbled her fingertips and she pulled them away, giggling. "Much. Now mate me already, woman."

"Gladly." She jumped from the truck and he was right behind her once he'd grabbed the fire blanket to protect him and the ground. They'd probably burn through it, but it might protect him just enough.

Brant laid the blanket on the ground and began stripping, watching his soon-to-be mate in the process.

Inch by inch she raised her dress, baring more and more of her light chocolate hued skin to his gaze. Sculpted calves led to thick thighs and wide hips. There was a small smattering of

dark chocolate curls at the juncture of her thighs and he couldn't wait to run his fingers through the sparse hair, discovering the wetness that lay beyond the hidden depths. Her waist dipped in before flaring out to her chest, large breasts beckoning him, teasing and tantalizing him with their berry-tipped nipples.

By the time his focus was on her face, her brow was arched, teasing him. "Like what you see, fireman?"

"Absolutely."

"Then you better get to reciprocating before *I* lose interest." She winked at him again and crawled onto the blanket, full breasts hanging down, tantalizing globes just begging to be licked and suckled.

Brant didn't waste any time. He brought his hands to his shirt, fingers working on the buttons, pulling the bottom free of his jeans. He snapped the button of his pants and worked the zipper down, still damp, hard cock springing from the cotton confines. He kicked his shoes away, socks quickly following, and then his jeans were gone. He stood naked as the day he was born in the middle of the Arizona wilderness ready to claim his kinmate.

He gripped the base of his cock, stroking himself from root to tip and back again, gathering the pre-come that leaked from the head to use as lubrication. He counted on his seed still filling Phoebe, counted on being able to use some of his cum for what he had in mind.

He stroked himself again and just stared at the woman he loved. Under his gaze, she remained on all fours but turned her back to him, giving him exactly what he needed.

"Are you ready for me, Phoebe? Ready to be mine in *all* ways?"

She looked at him over her shoulder, love shining in her eyes. "Yes, Brant. In all ways and for always. Burn me."

He couldn't be gentle any longer. Gone was the sweet lover of times before, and in its place was a feral bird looking to claim its mate for all time. He closed the distance between them in the blink of an eye, as if flying across the ground.

Brant covered her then, cock just barely venturing inside her entrance, prick head stretching her hole, sliding easily in and out of her well-lubricated heat. Already the air around them shimmered and burned, her arousal turning the surrounding grasslands to ash in the blink of an eye.

"Don't tease," she begged, trying to ease her hips back, trying to take him deeper.

He wouldn't let her take control. She may have the active power, but he was the alpha in the relationship and the mating would go *his* way. Hopefully. As long as she didn't ask him.

"Not teasing... loving, baby. Just loving."

That seemed to settle her and he returned to his teasing, regardless of what he told her. He leaned back and gripped his dick at its base, swirled the head through her cream and his seed dripping from her pussy. Round and around he circled, gathering her moisture before pressing against her back hole.

"Yes," she hissed and pushed back against him. She loved anal sex just as much as he did and it seemed the perfect way to join. Tomorrow would be a day of baby making, tonight was about fulfilling each other's desires and burning the place down.

Brant pushed forward, tip of his cock breaching the tight ring of muscle that formed her anus. Carefully, as if she were made of glass, he eased forward, spreading her, stretching her to accommodate him. In and out and in and out he eased, feeding inch after inch of his cock into her ass until he was fully seated, balls resting against her sweet pussy. The wet, hot velvet glove of her ass gripped and massaged him in a way her pussy never could. It milked him with her every breath.

Completely inside her, he held still for a moment, giving her the opportunity to grow accustomed to his invasion. When she wiggled her delectable heart-shaped ass against him, he knew it was time to move.

"Remember your promise."

"I remember," she grumbled. "Now, love me already."

Well, at least she hadn't demanded to be fucked. Ass play tended to make her commanding with her arousal.

Brant gripped her hips, thumbs digging into the globes of her ass, fingers resting in her hipbones. Inch by inch he eased out of her until just the tip of his cock rested inside and then he slowly thrust forward, taking care not to go too hard too soon. Again and again, he repeated the process: ease in, ease out, and ease in again. He held on to his orgasm by a thread, attending to Phoebe's pleasure before he would take his own. A true kinmating would occur if the two participants didn't come together, at the same time.

The air around them heated further, a wider circle of destruction surrounded them with her heightened arousal, with her climax coming closer.

Brant increased his tempo, speeding up in time with the rise in temperature. The hotter it became, the harder he pumped in and out of her tight, hot sheath. His cock felt as if it were on pleasurable fire, burning with ecstasy while inside her. This act eclipsed all others. He'd never felt closer to his lover, his mate.

Harder and harder he pumped, bringing them closer to the edge, easing them toward the same goal, mating.

His skin reddened under the heat, ash sticking to his sweat-soaked skin as seconds passed and the sand surrounding them melted and formed liquid glass. This would be their place from now on, the one place they could come and relive memories, and someday conceive their children. This would be the place their first clutch would come into being. He just prayed he'd live through the process and not get ashed by his hot-blooded lover.

Brant's breathing was coming in harsh pants now, breath catching fire the moment it left his chest, the air so hot it destroyed all within their bubble. The blanket beneath his legs was wilting and disintegrating beneath him, and would give way to the molten glass at any moment. He was surprised that it lasted as long as it had.

And still his orgasm approached, roaring closer with each passing second like the fire surrounding them.

"Phoebe..." he warned.

Her ass milked him. Clenching and releasing in rhythm to his thrusts, pulling his orgasm inexplicably closer with every touch of their bodies.

"Yes," she hissed. "Now," she demanded.

He couldn't hold it back any longer.

From toes to head and back again, his muscles bunched and tightened then released in a great rush of climax centering on his cock and balls. His seed erupted in great waves into her ass, joining them together forever. The world around him exploded, fire burning everything within a mile. Bushes, cacti—anything and everything that was not a physical being—was scorched and removed from the earth with their lovemaking. Their mating.

He jerked within her, last vestiges of his seed pouring from his body and into hers, filling those last few places, melding them as one soul forever and until the end of time. Theirs was a true kinmating, and it would last the perils of time without question. They would have children

and raise them in the firekin way, treating others with respect and, hopefully, having control. Though, considering their mother, blowing up things from the get-go was a strong possibility.

“Whew.” Phoebe ease forward until his cock popped free of her ass, then she rolled to her back, the cooled glass cradling her back. “Well, that was a scorcher.”

* * * *

The darkin watched the unnatural mating from the ridge overlooking the Williams ranch. They hadn’t succeeded in their ploy to rid the world of the flawed firekin. Still she lived and now mated to another firekin, making her that much stronger. No, they’d failed with this one. But the next...perhaps the next would go quieter into the night.

He would keep a watch on this newly formed kin family while he moved on to the next kin to meet the darkin’s wrath.

With a wave of his hand, the darkin brought up the list of targeted, those that gave the kin a bad name with their inability to master their elements.

The darkin were a secret society of night worshipers whose sole purpose was to cleanse the world of these broken kin and ensure only the strongest survived. The darkin didn’t control just one element, but had mastered them all through the years. And now, they would ensure that others mastered at least their single gift. It was the darkin creed.

Master one.

Master all.

Master none.

You shall fall.

About the Author

Celia would have loved to have written her own biography, but she just didn't know what to say. In a fit of desperation, she turned to me, her most trusted confidant and friend. I realize you're asking yourself, "Who is this?" I am Cali, her cat. I also go by a few other names, but those may be too strong for your delicate ears. Suffice it to say my mommy is very creative and not just with writing.

My mommy, Celia, began writing in August of 2006. I know this because it was around that time our meals started coming later and later in the day. As months passed, she spent more and more time in front of the boring screen. Though, it was fun to chase the little arrow around every once in a while. You should hear her scream! But I digress.

She's worked hard to give readers sexy, quirky heroines they can relate to. And you better damn well appreciate it. All I got was late night feedings. And I didn't even make it into one of her books by name! That damn kitten, Katie O'Meghan, did. Bitch.

Well, enjoy her writings and if you want to praise her for her work... don't. I'd like to get fed at some point, people.

Fine. If you must contact her, her website is at www.celiakyle.com or you can send an email to celia.kyle@gmail.com. But when I go hungry, I'll blame you all!

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***What the Cuff?* By Celia Kyle**

God really should have reconsidered making werewolves. That, or Lyssa needed to get better taste in men and stay away from those with wandering eyes—and other things. Drunk as a wolf, she stumbles to her best friend’s house to sleep off her whiskey induced haze and wakes to...*cuffs*?

Caleb sees his chance and takes it. His buddies on the force ribbed him but good for buying silver plated cuffs. But with a werewolf in his bed, the woman he’s yearned for since they were teens, he wasn’t taking any chances. Lyssa was his. She just didn’t know it yet.

***Rules of Fire* by Tia Fanning**

Once upon time, a long time ago, in a far away land, a young girl journeyed to a magical desert temple and met a handsome prince...

To most, this sounds like the start of a beautiful fairytale. To me, it’s the start of a horrible nightmare.

My name is Angel, and I am that young girl all grown up. You might have noticed me around. I am that “strange chick” everyone talks about— the one who enters a room and somehow causes all illuminated candles to extinguish. The one who has an irrational fear of salamanders. The one who freaks out and runs away every time she sees a large bird with crimson and gold feathers.

But if you knew the rest of the tale, you would understand.

I have spent the last seven years of my life secretly following the Rules of Fire. My family and friends have no idea of the danger I’m in, nor can they fathom how something as simple and elemental as fire can be my undoing. They don’t know that, just beyond the flickering flames, *he* beckons me...

And I yearn to go to him.

***Dragon’s Blood* by Brynn Paulin**

For centuries, there have been legends of Vampires—the fault of one careless dragon. But humans only know part of the story. Walking amongst us are Dragons, shape-shifters who feed on blood.

Reluctant Dragon Elder Janos Aventech's vacation in New York is about to come to an abrupt end. Riding on the subway, he stumbles across a Dragon mate—one of the few human women with whom his people can unite and be truly happy. And his people's enemies are out to get her. As his attraction to this woman grows, he knows he must find her mate and see her safely into that man's arms. It's destined. But as every minute passes in her company, Janos begins to see he'll never willingly let her go, mate or not.

If only she were his mate...

On the subway, Scarlett couldn't stop staring at him—then he turned crazy. When he essentially kidnaps her off the train, she knows she should be irate and terrified. Instead, she finds her initial attraction growing. But what's all this stuff he's spouting about mates and enemies? She only wants to return to her life, not get caught in the middle of a war. But it's too late for that. She's destined for a Dragon's bed, and in Janos' arms, she can only hope it's his.

Red: A Seduction Tale by Maddie James

Garnet Boudreaux is going home. Not back to her nice little apartment in New York City, but to her childhood home in the bayou. She doesn't want to go, and isn't certain what will be waiting for her when she arrives. But standing there in the voodoo shop on Bourbon Street, in the middle of one helluva party, she's told by Madame Madeleine Dupuis that she has no choice. She presses two pouches into Garnet's hands, wraps a red cape around her, and tells her she must go—and go now—to see to her grandmother.

Max LeBlanc spies the lovely redhead across the street and knows in a heartbeat that she is the one. A rougarou always knows when he's met his mate. Some may call him a lycanthrope, a werewolf if you will, but in Cajun bayou lands, he's known simply as *The Rougarou*. He'd waited several hundred years for this moment, and for her. There is nothing left for him to do but mark her and claim her as his mate. Soon.

Oriana and the Three Werebears by Tia Fanning

Oriana Ricci has taken over the family business—flying cargo and rich tourists around Alaska's barely inhabited Kodiak Archipelago. When her plane malfunctions and she's forced to make an emergency landing, she finds herself stranded in the middle of a National Wildlife Refuge. With no civilization for miles and no hope of rescue, she thinks all is lost...

Until she stumbles upon the entrance to an underground bunker.

Jack, Jordan, and Jonathan McMathan own and operate a secret intelligence firm contracted by the US Government. Hidden away in an old Cold War spy station located the middle of the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge, the brothers are not only able to do their top secret jobs safely without fear of discovery, but are better to protect their other, more personal secret: They have the ability to shift into Kodiak bears.

Like a fairy tale gone bad, the brothers return home to find their lunch tasted—or eaten, their computer chairs adjusted—or broken, and a beautiful blonde sleeping in one of their beds. This situation poses a big problem for the brothers...

Their location is now compromised. But more importantly, what are they to do with the lady?

***Extinction* by Carol Lynne**

Professor of Environmental Science/Wildlife studies at UNLV, Jack McBain has spent his adult life trying to track a legend overheard during his youth. Born and raised in the Canadian Province of Newfoundland, Jack remembers his grandparents telling stories of a race of people eradicated by European settlers in 1829. According to the legend, the Beothuk people didn't die out as first thought, but were transformed into wolf shifters.

When Newfoundland wolves began to appear in great numbers, the European settlers began killing them under the guise of population control. In 1910, the last of the Newfoundland wolves was shot, making them one of the few extinct species of wolves in the world.

Following spotty leads, Jack begins to track what he believes are Beothuk/Newfoundland shifter wolves. His search leads him to the Lake Mead National Recreational Area outside of Las Vegas. There, on Spirit Mountain, he finally comes face to face with not only the shifter he's been looking for, but the man of his dreams he didn't know he needed.

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